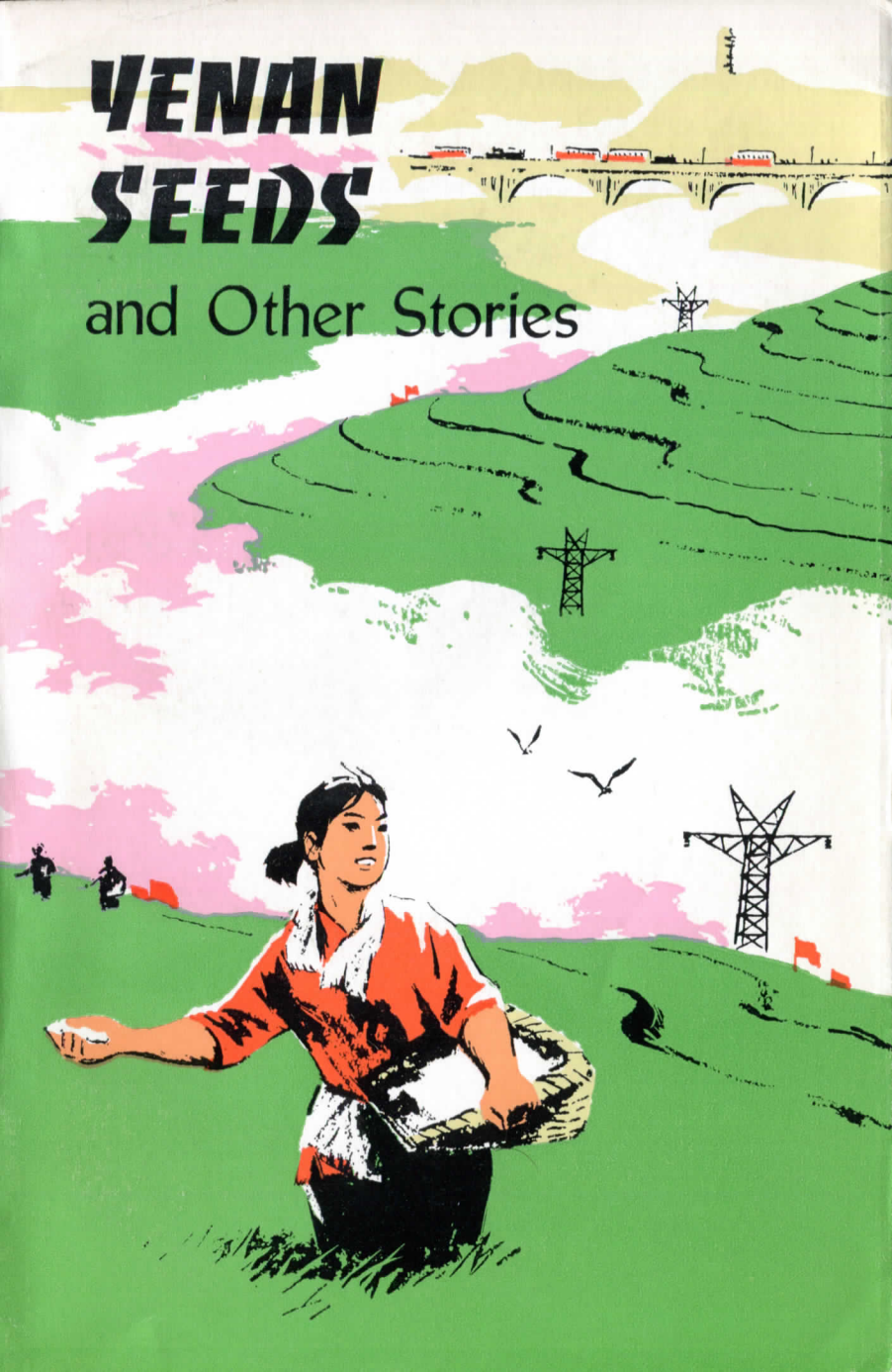


YENAN 'SEEDS'

and Other Stories



THIS collection of short stories reflects the Chinese people's new life of struggle since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution from several angles. The "Yenan Seeds" relates how a young girl fresh from school settles down in the countryside and plunges boldly into the struggle for building socialism. "Not Just One of the Audience" depicts the working people who are at once the creators of the social material wealth and the masters of literature and art. "Leading the Way" describes how a Party branch secretary leads the workers in a commercial organization to fight capitalist tendencies. "In the Shipyard" and other stories tell of the lofty ideals of the workers, both old and young. In short, refreshing and inspiring, these stories are rich in the revolutionary flavour of the times and have an artistic attraction of their own.

With illustrations.

Yenan Seeds

and Other Stories

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(a worker)

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Yenan Seeds

Hua Tung

A production conference on spring ploughing called by our county Party committee had been in session for three days. I was so busy that I had no time even to read the paper. After supper that day I picked up a county paper two days old and was immediately struck by the headline: "A Good Successor of the Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants." I began to read the story, which went like this:

Early one cold winter morning when rosy clouds decked the sky, the Chunfengyu Production Team of Hungchi Commune was busy cutting through the hills to open an irrigation canal. A sturdy-looking young girl was working with a crowd of young men, swinging the hammer and hitting the drill rod. She worked with such energy that her cheeks flamed and sweat dripped from her face. Her hammer hit its mark every time, and with each blow the rock split amid a shower of sparks. Suddenly someone shouted: "Danger! Run!" When the young girl raised her head, she saw on the hillside above her a big rock that had been split by two young fellows, about to roll down. It would hit a commune member of poor peasant origin named Wang Shih-chu, who was collecting broken steel rods. The young girl dashed forward and shoved Wang aside, but before she could get away the big rock crashed down and bowled her over. . . .

Who was this young girl who had incurred a serious injury herself to save the commune member from danger? She was one of the young people who had come to settle in the countryside on leaving school in the city. Her name was Chi Yen-feng. . . .

"Chi Yen-feng!" I cried out in surprise. Why, wasn't she the daughter of Commissar Chi, my old comrade-in-arms? I opened my drawer and re-read a letter I had received from him a month earlier.

Cheng Min, my dear comrade-in-arms and friend:

Imagine! It's twenty years since I last saw you. I was in Peking recently for a meeting and learned from an old colleague that you had been transferred to a new job. . . .

Remember my daughter Yen-feng—or Nan-nan, as we called her then—who was born amidst the roar of guns in the Huai-Hai campaign? She went to the very county you are working in three years ago, to become a member of a commune production team. Before she left I gave her some presents which you would recognize. I hope that she will conquer all difficulties and advance along the road pointed out by Chairman Mao just as we did after we left Yen-an. She hasn't written for a long time. If you see her, please see how she is getting along with her re-education. . . .

There could be no mistake! Chi Yen-feng must be Commissar Chi's daughter. But just to make sure, I phoned the secretary of the Hungchi Commune Party Committee.

"Yes, yes, Chi Yen-feng is a member of our commune! Didn't you read in the paper about what she did?" I could tell from the way he talked he was rather proud of having such a person in his commune.

"Yes, I read about it. How is she?" I asked with concern.

"She's in the county hospital. I've been to see her. She had a back injury, but she's already better. I was told that she could leave hospital pretty soon."

"Good! You must use her act to educate the young school graduates in your commune."

"Yes, we're proposing to the county Party committee that we do that. But, Secretary Cheng, won't you be

coming over soon to inspect our preparation work for ploughing?"

"Yes, I'll be over in a day or two. See you then." I rang off.

It was quite certain that the young girl who had dashed out so boldly in spite of the danger was none other than the Nan-nan who had been carried in a bamboo basket on horseback during the war.

I took up the paper with the intention of finishing the article, but I could no longer concentrate on it. The lines of print ran together before my eyes, congealing finally into a mass of clouds and smoke. The guns of the Huai-Hai battlefield boomed once again in my ears. It seemed as though I was back again in the days of the revolutionary war when Nan-nan was born. . . .

In the autumn of 1948, our column was ordered to take part in the Huai-Hai campaign and advanced to the northern Kiangsu front from southern Anhwei. As comrade Fang Wei, the wife of our regimental commissar Chi, was pregnant and couldn't keep up with the troops, she stayed in Anhwei to keep up the struggle there. When we arrived in northern Kiangsu, I heard that Fang Wei had been surrounded by a Kuomintang landlord's armed forces when she was doing political work in a village. I went to break the news to Chi and found him bent over a map, pondering battle plans. He uttered a simple "oh." Then he straightened up slowly, his brows quivering a little. Looking out of the window, he said: "This was only to be expected. There are always sacrifices in revolution." And he bent over his work and went on with the battle plan again.

The Huai-Hai campaign lasted two months. Under the personal command of our great leader Chairman

Mao, we won a victory that shook the world. After the final battle in Chinglungchi district, I hurried back with Chi from the battlefield, which had still not been completely cleared, to our regimental headquarters. On the way, Chi hummed softly, unable to suppress the happiness and excitement of victory. As we walked, his attention was arrested by something and he stopped dead.

To our right, I saw Liu, a young messenger from the divisional headquarters, approaching in the company of a woman in civilian clothes. He was leading a horse loaded with luggage on one side and a bamboo basket on the other.

I looked closely at the woman comrade and cried out in astonishment: "Comrade Fang Wei!"

Apparently, Chi had recognized her first, for the corners of his tightly closed mouth had begun to quiver.

"Chi! Cheng!" she addressed us first. It really was Fang Wei. She looked lean and sunburnt, but on her face was a look of joy.

As she came up, Chi took her hand, grasped it tightly and said: "So, you haven't yet made the final sacrifice for the revolution?"

"No, the people in the base areas in southwestern Anhwei protected me. . . ." So excited was Fang Wei that she could hardly finish a sentence. Her eyes glistened with tears.

"Commissar Chi!" the messenger Liu saluted and said, "the divisional commander got news of Comrade Fang Wei four days ago and ordered me to escort her back here."

"Thank you so much, we've given you a lot of trouble." Pointing at the bamboo basket on the horse's

back, Chi asked: "What's in there?"

"Your daughter!" answered Fang Wei proudly.

As we drew nearer, we saw the bamboo basket was cushioned with a cotton pad on which lay a pale baby, sound asleep.

Chi looked at his child and his eyes became moist with tears.

"How old is she?"

"Three months."

"What's her name?"

"My pet name for her is Nan-nan.*"

"Why?" asked Chi.

"When the village was surrounded, the villagers gave me cover while I got away. I took shelter in the mountain gully where our troops used to be stationed. A few days later, the baby was born. I was in poor health and my milk soon dried up. Sweet potatoes brought by the villagers and pumpkins left behind by our troops fed us both. I thought that since she had tasted pumpkins so soon after she was born, her name should be Nan-nan." As she was speaking, she took a small packet from her pocket. "See, I've brought back some pumpkin seeds!"

Chi took the packet, looked at the big pumpkin seeds and asked me: "Cheng, do you remember these? They are the Yen-an seeds!"

"How could I forget them? Everything from Yen-an is deeply rooted in my heart!" Looking at the tiny face of the baby in the basket, I said: "This is also a Yen-an seed!"

* Pumpkin.

"Yes, you're quite right. She's a Yen-an seed. She must carry on the Yen-an revolutionary spirit!"

That must be why she was later given the name Yen-feng — the wind from Yen-an.

Now, more than twenty years had passed. From the past of the older generation to the emergence of the younger, from a baby in that bamboo basket on the horse to the description in today's paper, how much loving care must have been given to this seed before it put forth sprouts, grew up and bore fruit!

I decided to go to the county hospital to see her the next day.

2

The next morning, I went to Ward Four in the county hospital. I was just going to push open the door when a man in his sixties beckoned me over to where he was sitting in the corridor outside the ward. As I approached he asked:

"Have you come to see Yen-feng?"

"How did you guess?" I couldn't help feeling surprised.

"Are you a reporter?"

"What makes you think that?"

"I've met several of them here, some from the county paper and some from the county broadcasting station." The elderly man filled up his long-stemmed pipe as he spoke.

"So you think I look like a reporter too?" I asked with interest.

"Just about, only you look a bit old."

I burst out laughing, and taking off my cap to scratch my head, which already had quite a few white hairs, I said, "Then, I'm an old reporter!"

"Yen-feng's asleep. She's lost a lot of weight lately. Let her have a little more rest." His voice was full of affection.

"All right, we can have a talk." I sat down on the long bench and started to size this elderly man up. He wore a jacket lined with goatskin, his hair was silvery white but his ruddy face glowed. It was the face of a labouring peasant, well seasoned by wind and frost. He was smoking. A carter's whip was propped up beside him.

"Uncle, you are —"

"My name is Tien. I'm in the same team as Yen-feng. She's coming out of hospital this afternoon. I'm here to take her home."

"Uncle Tien, since you say I'm a reporter, let me get some information from you!" I wanted to take this opportunity to have a chat with him.

The old man smiled and said, still smoking his pipe: "I've already been pumped dry. A few days ago, when I came to see Yen-feng, I met a reporter — he was wearing glasses, that one — who had come to get information from her. I don't know whether he works with you or not. Since Yen-feng wouldn't tell him her story, he came to ask me about it. I told him: Don't just write about how she saved someone. Come to Chunfengyu and see more people. You should write about how she studied Chairman Mao's works, how she trusted us poor and lower-middle peasants, and how our words went deep in her heart and strengthened her. We used to

say: The pines towering up to a thousand feet do not grow in a day. Yen-feng, this young seedling, has been growing up on our soil in Chunfengyu Commune."

"Well said, Uncle Tien." I felt he was no ordinary person.

The door of the ward flew open and out ran a round-faced young girl with short plaits.

"Uncle!" she greeted Uncle Tien cheerfully.

"Are you quite well now, child?"

"Uncle, look!" She bent her back and stretched out her arms. "I could do thirty strokes in one stretch."

"Don't push yourself too far! Whatever you say, we won't let you use the hammer any more!"

"That won't do! Aren't you always telling me that a good knife can be ground, and a good smith tests his iron? If a knock from a stone makes me soft, am I still like the poor and lower-middle peasants?"

"You certainly know how to stump me with my own words," Uncle Tien said, pointing at the young girl with his long-stemmed pipe.

Listening to this conversation between the old man and the young woman, I knew this really was Yen-feng, or Nan-nan of all those years ago. She had her father's eyes.

When she turned around and saw me, she was surprised.

"Yen-feng, do you recognize me?" I asked, smiling.

"No. . . ." She gazed at me attentively, shaking her head a little. But when I took off my cap, revealing a scar on my forehead, she cried out: "Oh! you . . . aren't you Uncle Cheng?"

Not waiting for an answer, she turned, ran into the ward and brought back an old military knapsack from

which she took out something wrapped in red cloth. Opening it, we found a mimeographed copy of Chairman Mao's work, "On the Chungking Negotiations." My heart warmed at the sight of this little pamphlet. From between its pages she took out a photo yellow with age.

"Look!" She held it before me.

In the picture were several people, among them her parents and myself, wearing the armbands of the Eighth Route Army. The group photograph had been taken against the backdrop of Paotashan Mountain in Yen-an. In 1945, when her parents and I were about to go south with the troops, a reporter from the *Liberation Daily* had taken the picture for us before we left Yen-an.

"Hah, twenty-five or twenty-six years have gone by! We were as young then as you are now, but these days we're getting old," said I, half joking, half in earnest.

"A revolutionary's spirit doesn't age." Although we had just met, Yen-feng seemed quite at ease with me as if she knew me well. "Uncle, my parents often talked about you. Only they didn't know where you were." Having said this, she introduced me to Uncle Tien.

I grasped his hand and said: "We've already met!" Uncle Tien laughed.

I took the little mimeographed pamphlet from Yen-feng, stroking its familiar cover and much-thumbed page corners, my thoughts running wild.

"My father gave it to me before I came to the countryside, Uncle Cheng. I've kept it with me all the time." As she spoke, she turned the pages, took out a flat red paper packet and opened it, "Look!"

There were two pumpkin seeds inside.

"My father kept them for twenty years." Yen-feng, sitting between Uncle Tien and me, began to tell us the story of the precious gifts.

It was all so familiar to me but I felt it touched my heart! It had been a period sparkling with life, a period that could never be forgotten. . . .

In 1942, during the hardest days of the Anti-Japanese War, Yen-feng's parents and I were in Yen-an where Chairman Mao himself was. In order that we might conquer difficulties and overcome the enemy encirclement and blockade, Chairman Mao called on us to promote production by self-reliance. In the Liberated Areas, people carried out large-scale production campaigns with tremendous enthusiasm. Chairman Mao was busy day and night to save the Chinese nation from destruction. Although very much occupied, he himself took part in productive labour. We were stationed then near the Central Guards Regiment. In the autumn of 1943, this regiment gave our unit a small packet of pumpkin seeds, telling us that they were from the pumpkins planted by Chairman Mao himself. The next spring, we planted them on the mountainside. Our comrades tended the plants with special devotion and care, and in autumn we harvested many large, round pumpkins. The year after that, all the soldiers in our unit tasted these very special pumpkins.

In 1945, when Yen-feng's parents and I were preparing to go south with the troops, Chairman Mao gave a report, "On the Chungking Negotiations." He said: **"We Communists are like seeds and the people are like the soil. Wherever we go, we must unite with the people, take root and blossom among them."** He also said:

"Hard work is like a load placed before us, challenging us to shoulder it." Commissar Chi kept the mimeographed copy of Chairman Mao's talk in his knapsack and carried it around with him all the time. How often we studied it together!

We were sad to leave Yen-an. Everyone wanted to take something with him as a souvenir. Chi wrapped up some pumpkin seeds, saying: "Chairman Mao has taught us that we must, like seeds, take root and blossom among the people. I'll take with me a packet of seeds from plants tended by Chairman Mao himself."

Later on, when we were fighting a guerrilla war in southern Anhwei, we planted these seeds in the mountains. Then we went to take part in the Huai-Hai campaign in the autumn of 1948, before the pumpkins could be harvested. Later they became the food on which Yen-feng's mother lived.

Looking at the mimeographed copy of Chairman Mao's work, the seeds and the photo, I understood the profundity of the lesson which my old comrade-in-arms was passing on to the younger generation.

I wrapped all the things up and said to Yen-feng, "Your father's gifts are full of significance!"

"Yes, he wants me to be a seed of the revolution!" answered Yen-feng with quiet firmness.

"Yen-feng has lived up to the expectations of the older generation of revolutionaries. She has tempered herself very well. Last month, at a branch meeting she was unanimously accepted as a member of the Communist Party. As her sponsor, I was very happy about it," Uncle Tien said warmly.

Watching Yen-feng's face, which was a bit pale from her stay in the hospital, my thoughts ran back to that

pale little face in the bamboo basket on the horse. . . .
How time had flown!

3

Amid loud cracks, a rubber-tyred cart drawn by a horse and two mules was moving rapidly along the highway to Hungchi Commune from the county town.

That afternoon, when Uncle Tien drove Yen-feng back to Chunfengyu, I decided to take a lift with them to Hungchi Commune so that I might have another talk with Yen-feng.

"You may get a bit shaken up on my cart, Secretary Cheng!" warned Uncle Tien, smiling at me as he raised his long whip.

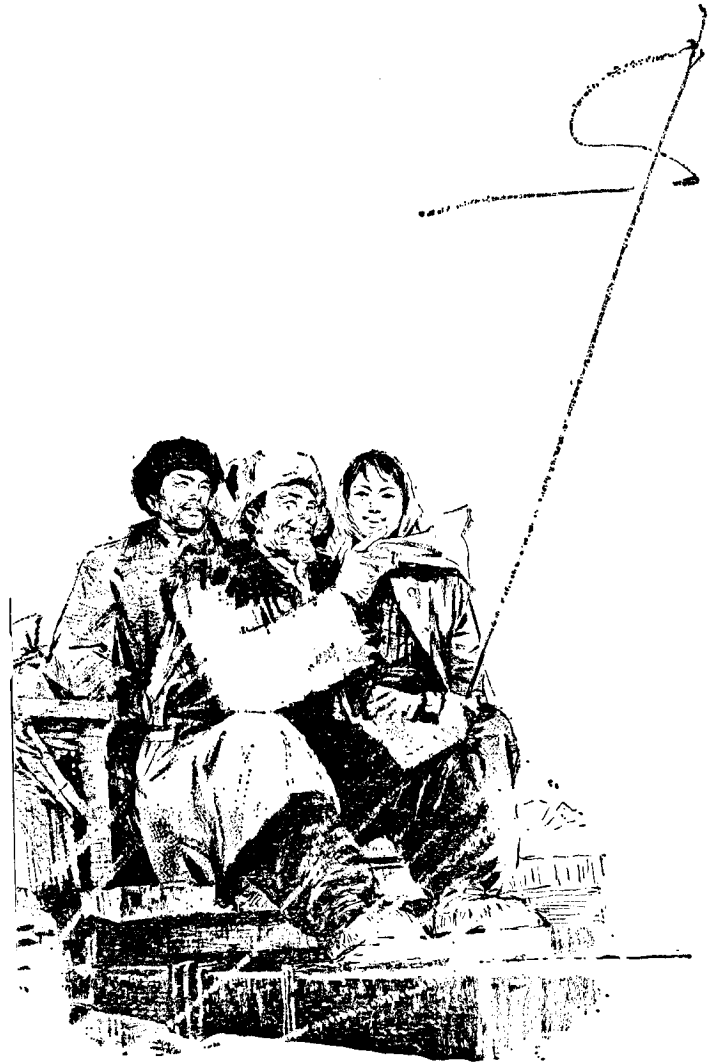
"That'll be good for me. Sitting on a chair all day makes my bones soft. Go ahead. I'll hold tight, I promise," I called back.

In the sun, Yen-feng's face took on a better colour. I felt a deep satisfaction on seeing how the child of my old comrades-in-arms had grown up.

"Tell me, Yen-feng, what has impressed you most in these years you've spent in the countryside?" I asked.

"Most of all? I can't say at the moment." Looking at Uncle Tien's back, she added: "I'm very much impressed with Uncle Tien. You only knew how I tried to save someone, you haven't heard what Uncle Tien has done!"

The hoofs of the horse and the mules clattered on the gravel road and the cart shook gently. Yen-feng,



her eyes fixed on the way before her, began her recollections:

Three years ago, when Dad gave me these precious gifts, I thought that I was a Yenan seed and that I would surely put forth revolutionary blossoms. I came to Chunfengyu with several other Red Guards. We were in high spirits. The evening of our arrival, I told Uncle Tien, our host, about the presents. Doing farm work, I tried to pick the heaviest and most troublesome jobs and to put up a better show than the others. But before long I became down-hearted. Fatigue was one problem. Every night when I lay on the *kang*,* my legs and my back ached so much I didn't feel like moving any more. The other thing was that life seemed so monotonous. When I first arrived, everything was new and interesting. But now I saw the sun rising over the hills in the east every day and setting behind the western hills each evening. The thatched cottages and the *kang* were always the same at home, and so were the fields and rocky hills outside. A fellow called Tu, who was sent back to the village from outside, saw a lot of us young school graduates. Sometimes he mouthed things like: "It's good that educated youth should come to the countryside." But if no one else was around, he would show his "concern" for us by saying: "It's good that you should come to the countryside, but all that you have learned in over ten years at school is going to waste. What a pity that you have to stay here your whole life digging up clods of soil." His words

* An earthen or brick bed heated by flues, widely used in northern China.

made me pensive. I became more and more depressed. This, of course, did not escape Uncle Tien's notice.

One evening, when he and I were selecting corn seeds by lamplight, Uncle Tien took up a full-sized seed and asked me: "Yen-feng, what do you think about this seed?"

"It is excellent. It will produce a good sprout," I said.

"We can't be certain," he replied. "The quality of the seed is one of the important things, but, if you just plant it in a flower-pot or a greenhouse, it won't grow well. When a seed sprouts, we have to guard it against insect pests, weed it, water it and apply fertilizer around it. It has to stand up to wind and rain. Otherwise it won't grow up to blossom and bear fruit. How much labour and *struggle* we must expend on it!" Uncle Tien looked at me seriously and emphasized the word "struggle." I reflected on his words carefully, for I felt they embraced a deep principle.

"Now you've been here for two months, what do you think of our little village?" Uncle Tien went on, seeing that I was silent.

"I know everything here now, right down to the number of hill-tops around the village," I replied.

"Yes, it's a small place without much in it, so nothing is a novelty after a while. I have spent over sixty years here. I even know how many trees there are on each hill-top. Yet I feel that our Chunfengyu is wonderful!" Uncle Tien paused for a moment and eyed me again.

I bent my head and busied myself selecting the seeds.

"Yen-feng, what do you think of me as a Communist?" asked Uncle Tien.

"You had joined the Party before I was born, and have always worked hard for the revolution. Everyone in this village has the deepest respect for you. Why should you ask me that?"

"No, I haven't done my duty as a Communist, I have done very little for our country!" Uncle Tien deliberately heaved a deep sigh.

"Why?" I didn't quite understand.

"I can neither read nor write. I can only work in the fields."

"You plough and produce grain for our country. Isn't that a great contribution? Agriculture is the basis, what would happen if there were no peasants?" I said earnestly.

"But some people say there is no future in digging up clods of earth."

"That is the ideology of the exploiting classes!" I said.

"Oh, so that kind of idea is no good? I have spent my whole life farming by these hills. In the past I had to work for the landlords to fill my stomach. Times are different now. As a member of the Communist Party, I must consider what I can do to support socialist revolution and socialist construction, what I can do for the people of the world, and how I should fight for communism. What you have just said has set my mind at rest. I am an old man now, but I will give whatever time I have left to me for the realization of communism in these hills. In our poor barren hills we must make greater efforts to strive for communism."

Only then did I realize that what Uncle had said was meant to educate me. Hot tears pricked my eyes.

"Uncle!" I raised my head and addressed him in

agitation.

"Child," he went on very seriously, "recently you've been in low spirits! Didn't you tell me of your father's gifts when you first arrived here? Don't disappoint the older generation. Have you inherited the Yen-an revolutionary spirit? Don't you often read the pamphlet by Chairman Mao which your father gave you, and bear in mind Chairman Mao's teaching that **'We Communists are like seeds'**? Have you, like a seed, taken root in Chunfengyu? Yen-feng, I know that fellow Tu is always trying to get at you. He's no good. Have you analysed this according to Chairman Mao's view of class struggle? Never forget class struggle!"

Every word he said touched my heart. Tears welled up in my eyes: "Uncle, I've been wrong!" I poured out everything I had been thinking to Uncle Tien and all that fellow Tu had said to me. The next day, Uncle Tien reported the case to the Party branch committee. The commune investigated, and it was proved that Tu was not only a bad element at present but had a history of counter-revolutionary activity. In the repudiation meeting I took the lead in criticizing him. Afterwards Uncle Tien said to me: "Yen-feng, now you are thinking and talking like us poor and lower-middle peasants."

It was then that I made up my mind to stay in our hilly village for my whole life.

Gradually the villagers began to praise me. Although I said quite humbly, "No, no. I haven't done enough!" I felt at heart that I was doing pretty well. It was at this time that Uncle Tien did something which taught me a lesson I will never forget.

One winter day two years ago, I went with Uncle

Tien, Chang Hsiao-hsia and several other young school graduates to the back of the gorge to dig out earth for mud bricks. We worked the whole morning and filled more than ten carts with soil. We tunnelled further and further into the hill. Hsiao-hsia and I were busy digging. Uncle Tien called out warningly: "Don't dig too far in, or the top may fall down on you!" He hadn't finished his sentence when I saw a large crack appear above Hsiao-hsia; it was about to cave in! "Oh!" I cried, and stood there paralysed. Uncle Tien jumped forward and pushed Hsiao-hsia out of the way, holding the clay up with his back. As he did so, he shouted: "Hurry up, get out quickly!" The clay crumbled as he spoke. Luckily it was a thin layer, but Uncle Tien got a back injury anyway.

That scene lingered on in my mind a long time. How big was the step between Uncle Tien and me! It was not an ordinary distance. It was a difference in world outlook. . . .

"So you see, Uncle Cheng, it was Uncle Tien who guided me in this three-year journey, and each step of mine also bears his mark."

"Your summary is not complete." Uncle Tien who remained silent all this time looked back over his shoulder to interrupt. "The basic reason for your progress is that in Chunfengyu you have not only studied Chairman Mao's works seriously, you have put his teachings into action. You have cared deeply for us poor and lower-middle peasants and learned from us deeply too. All I did was to give a cupful of water to the seedling."

Yen-feng's reminiscences and Uncle Tien's comments made me think of many things. Yen-feng's growth seemed to me worth using to educate people.

As Uncle Tien cracked his whip, and the rubber-tyred cart sped on, Yen-feng sat bathed in the glorious sunshine of the early spring, gazing at the distant mountains. . . .

Not Just One of the Audience

Tuan Jui-hsia

SPRING comes early south of the Yangtze. And spring was very much in the air in the Worker-Peasant-Soldier Theatre as an announcer in army uniform stepped out from behind the curtain. His face glowing in the spotlight, after a brisk salute he announced: "We now present the revolutionary modern Peking opera *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*.*" Then the orchestra struck up the martial strains of the *March of the People's Liberation Army*, the curtain rose, and the performance began.

All eyes were so intent on the stage that no one paid any attention to the curious behaviour of one of the audience. This was a tall, broad-shouldered fellow in his thirties, who appeared to have no seat and to be searching for a suitable place. Although powerfully

* The chief character of this opera, Yang Tzu-jung, is a wise and courageous model hero of the proletarian vanguard. Pursuing the Kuomintang remnants entrenched in the mountains, he is sent by his detachment to the bandits' lair disguised as a bandit and outwits their crafty chief. In co-ordination with the detachment, he attacks from within, and together they wipe them out. The passage "The greater the danger the more bravely I advance," which will come up later in the text, is an aria sung by Yang Tzu-jung to express his lofty revolutionary sentiment.

built he moved lightly, now bending almost double to approach the stage, now skirting the wall at the back. If not for his faded army uniform, he might well have been taken for a gymnast. Presently he raised his head to stare at the amplifier suspended from the ceiling. A frown of concentration came over his face as he listened to the music. Clearly he was very interested in the acoustics.

"Are you looking for your seat, comrade?" asked an attendant with a torch in his hand.

"I've got a place up front, thanks," was the somewhat embarrassed reply. Then this odd theatre-goer went quietly to the front and sat down in an empty seat there.

"Where have you been all this time, Chi?" a plump fellow next to him asked.

"Just looking around. . . . Well, how do you find it, Su?"

"Not bad, especially the actor playing Yang Tzu-jung," replied Su, keeping his eyes fixed on the stage.

"It's a fine opera all right. What a pity. . . ."

"What's a pity?" Su looked at him with surprise.

Chi pointed to the microphone above the stage. "Good resonance, but not enough clarity. Hear all that background noise?"

Su listened carefully, then said: "There's something wrong with the high pitch too."

Chi nodded. "The best thing would be to listen to the singing close up and make a comparison."

Su mumbled something non-committally, and they went on watching the opera.

The performance didn't end too late, and Chi urged: "Come on, let's go." Without waiting for an answer,

Chi grabbed Su by the arm and went backstage.

They found the players changing and removing their make-up, while some of them tidied up. At their request, they were taken to see the young actor Cheng Ta-hsiung who had played the main part.

"We're from Feiyao Radio Equipment Plant," said Chi, who had shown so much interest in the sound effects. "It seems to us there's something wrong with your amplifying system. Do you mind singing something for us, so that we can compare your real voice with the sound relayed in the auditorium?"

Cheng Ta-hsiung eyed them with interest and readily agreed. "Sure. What shall I sing?"

"How about that passage, 'The greater the danger the more bravely I advance'?"

After a moment's pause to get into the spirit of his part, the actor threw back his head and sang: "Well I know that there's danger ahead, but I'm all the more set on driving forward. . . ." His voice vibrant with emotion, conveying the fearlessness of a proletarian fighter, had a powerful impact on his two listeners, who cried out in admiration.

"You're young to sing so well," remarked Su. "Who taught you?"

"I'm in Cast B. Comrade Lin Ying who's in Cast A has gone on a tour abroad. Lin's a better singer than I am. As for who taught me, my teachers are the workers, peasants and soldiers. We can't sing well unless we really enter into their feelings. And that's why I still can't play a hero's part well. Lin told me a moving anecdote about this, when coaching me in this passage. But that's a long story. . . ."

"We've fallen down on our job, comrade," cut in Chi.

“We must revolutionize your amplifying equipment, or it will affect your performance.”

“Of course, this is your line.” After a moment Cheng added reflectively: “I heard that three years ago our sound technicians asked a research institute to design us a high-fidelity loud-speaker system. At first the technician who received us agreed; but after learning our requirements he backed out, saying that though they were anxious to help, he was sorry to say they were unable to do it, because such equipment had to be imported and couldn’t yet be made in China. Later, he helped us overhaul and improve our old equipment slightly. We had to be content with that.”

“Why don’t you come to our factory and discuss it with us workers?” suggested Chi.

Cheng’s face lit up. Grasping the other’s hand he asked: “What’s your name, comrade?”

By way of an answer, Chi produced a notebook, tore out a page and wrote on it: “Chi Chang-chun, Feiyao Radio Equipment Plant.”

“He’s a member of our Party branch committee and head of the trial-production section,” added Su.

Gripping Cheng’s hand, Chi assured him earnestly: “We look forward to hearing from you.”

It was already eleven by the time the two workers left the theatre. The night wind was chilly, but warmth filled Chi’s heart as he swung along with great strides. His friend Su, less volatile, followed in thoughtful silence. Neither said a word till they parted at the corner to take different buses home. Then Su warned Chi: “You know, this theatre’s requirements are very high. I imagine they want equipment as good as any made abroad.”



"I expect so. It will be a challenging job. But even if the difficulties pile up as high as Tiger Mountain, we must learn from Yang Tzu-jung and overcome them."

"Well, we can discuss it tomorrow," was Su's ambiguous answer.

2

The next morning Chi rose earlier than usual. After washing in cold water, he did exercises on the balcony. Although already demobbed for several years, he retained a number of old army habits and still thought of himself as a fighter. A fighter, that was a title to be proud of! A fighter lives for battle. He must be truly spirited and struggle bravely for communism. Wherever the tide of revolution swept him, Chi knew how to man his post and how to find a target for attack. While watching the opera he had discovered another enemy stronghold to take by storm.

It had been his habit in the army, when confronted by some difficult task, not to lie awake at night worrying over it but to analyse the problem first thing the next morning. The thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art* was not long off. To ensure good sound at the performance to commemorate the occasion, he was determined to turn out a high-fidelity loud-speaker system. He decided to report the matter to the Party branch committee, ask for permission to tackle it, and then enlist the help of his mates in mak-

ing the equipment. The designing, the materials required and the division of labour would all present problems. Chi jotted these down as they occurred to him and carefully thought them over. He must consult deputy section chief Su again, for Su as an experienced technician was bound to have some valuable suggestions. Taking deep breaths of the fresh morning air, Chi finally closed his notebook. Of course, the idea was sure to meet with resistance. Building a bright new world, a magnificent future for the Chinese people, would naturally involve plenty of difficulties. But revolution means braving storms; a revolutionary's life can never be plain sailing.

Putting the notebook back into his pocket, he hurried to the plant.

After hearing his report, the Party branch committee agreed to support the project and mobilize the entire workers and staff for its realization. Then Chi went to consult Su.

Rubbing his chin rather dubiously, Su said: "Though the leadership has agreed to try this out, we must go about our planning carefully. We have to work out a schedule and calculate when we can deliver the goods and what standard we can reach. We must be scientific and make a full assessment of difficulties."

"Right. We must make a correct analysis of problems too. Here are some that have occurred to me." Chi handed over his notes.

After reading them Su nodded. "You've thought of all the things I had in mind. Now I feel reassured." He agreed readily to Chi's proposal to call a meeting of the section to discuss the plan.

The other workers took a lively interest in the project.

"Trial production in a vacuum's no use," said one.

"Our stage art's outstripped our technique," put in another. "People have a right to say: You workers in electronics have fallen down on your job. It's really shaming."

"Just feeling ashamed won't do," retorted another. "That technician in the research institute apologized too, didn't he? It's up to us workers to take effective action."

"Right. We must revolutionize our old equipment," chimed in several others.

Su's face coloured as he listened to the heated discussion. "But their technical requirements are very high," he demurred. "As far as I know, we haven't yet manufactured such high-fidelity equipment in China. So —"

Chi cut in: "So we've got to raise our standards."

It was after working hours, but now Chi and Su were called to the administration office where the opera company's sound technicians had arrived to sign a contract for the new equipment.

"All right, the meeting's adjourned. Let's go, Su," proposed Chi.

Su had been lost in thought. Now he said hastily: "Suppose you go. I must get home early today. . . . I have some business." With that he picked up his kit.

"All right," said Chi, rather surprised. "I'll tell you the details later."

As Su was hurrying out he turned back to call, "Mind you leave us some margin, Chi."

"Of course I will."

After signing the contract that evening, Chi went to Su's home. The technician, sitting in an easy chair,

offered him some tea. Su was nearing fifty, and decades of hard work had turned his hair grey and etched lines on his forehead. Slow and sure was his motto. He undertook no job unless confident that he could carry it through. Su had signed plenty of work contracts in his time but this present contract struck him as injudicious. Chi had even guaranteed "optimum performance"—this was promising too much. He could have kicked himself for not helping draw up the contract. As his eye fell on Chi's signature at the end of it, he grimly shook his head. "I warned you to leave some margin. Now you've stuck your neck out."

"It's our customers who need a margin," retorted Chi.

"Each clause of a contract should be completely explicit, but here you've guaranteed 'optimum performance.' A promise of this sort is asking for trouble. We should have left ourselves more leeway."

"It's our job to open up new paths. The greater the risks, the harder we should press forward, like the scout leader in the opera. If we just think of leaving ourselves some way out, we'll never blaze a new trail."

As Su had no answer to this, he simply laughed drily. Then he raised another objection. "Their original requirement was for no more than one per cent distortion, wasn't it? How come that's been changed to 0.5 per cent?"

"That was my suggestion. The old target was too low. We should aim higher," said Chi. Inwardly he was wondering how Su, who had not been present at the signing of the contract, knew the original requirement.

"That's too steep. It's easier said than done. This isn't a wooden table we're making, Chi. It's a high-

fidelity loud-speaker system, involving hundreds of components. Of course high specifications sound good, and to sign a contract is easy. But what if we can't produce the goods on time?" The technician was worked up.

"Then we shall lose face. Right?" Chi answered cheerfully. "That would be a big defeat. We won't allow it. But we shall lose more face if we shirk this challenge and dare not storm this stronghold. Sure, there are difficulties ahead, but there are favourable factors too. In the first place, since this is a special assignment, the Party branch committee has mobilized the whole plant and everybody's keen to do the job. And then, we've produced sound equipment here for years, so that we have a good deal of experience. What other countries can do, we should be able to do too—and better. If we all throw fuel on the flames, they will rise high. Provided we work together, we can move mountains."

Su lit a cigarette and started smoking in silence. Chi, finding the atmosphere oppressive, opened a window.

"Maybe I'm too conservative, Chi," resumed Su slowly. "But I still think you've been too hasty, and we're taking a big risk. I've learned from experience that to be scientific we must be cool-headed."

Chi did not answer at once, but picked up his cup and took a deep draught of tea. He then said earnestly: "Su, I agree that we should be cool-headed and realistic. But I think it's still more important to have high political enthusiasm. It's drive we need, and the determination to forge ahead for the sake of the revolution. We must go all out, aim high and achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism. This isn't an ordinary task we've taken on!

We're fighting to defend Chairman Mao's line on revolutionary art. Your idea about contracts is wrong. Just think, in the old society what chance did working people have to see operas? My Dad was a rickshawman. He pulled customers to theatres in Shanghai every evening, but never set foot in a theatre himself. When I was a kid, I used to collect cinders. Once, hearing the music from a small theatre, I tried to peep inside. But a fat fellow in a long gown seized me by the ear. 'Get out, scum!' he swore. 'This is no place for you.' That's what it was like in the old days. After liberation Liu Shao-chi, Chou Yang and their clique controlled the literary and art circles, putting on decadent, feudal, bourgeois and revisionist operas to help pave the way for the restoration of capitalism. It was not until the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution achieved victory that the true masters of the arts, the workers, peasants and soldiers, took their rightful place on the stage, and now we have our own new operas. To present the heroes well on the stage, our artists persist in going into the thick of life, study hard and do their best to perfect their skill constantly. We working-class people must help them perfect their productions, not snarl them up. Don't you see, this isn't a purely technical job?"

"True enough," conceded Su. "But I was thinking of our plant's reputation. . . . Isn't there a safer way?"

"Of course there is. Just tell them that though we're anxious to help, we're sorry to say that we can't produce such equipment. They must make do with what they have."

"Nonsense!" responded Su vehemently.

"Or advise them to buy equipment from abroad."

"That wouldn't do either."

"Quite. We workers can't give them either of those answers. Our answer can only be: We accept the challenge."

Su thought this over, then stubbed out his cigarette. "I suppose there's no backing out now."

"As long as we're on the right track, Su, we can forge straight ahead," declared Chi incisively, clapping his hand on the table.

3

Two months went by. With full support from the Party branch committee, the workers went all out to produce a top-quality amplifying system to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*. When something was needed urgently, the comrades in charge of supplies, on receiving the purchase application, would say, "Just a minute!" and rush out. If anything was needed for the amplifying system, the drivers would get the car out and fetch it. In the workshop the machines worked day and night. Those comrades in the trial-production section were so absorbed in the job that they would forget to say "Hello" to each other when they met on the way to or from work or in the dining-room. Their only greetings would be: "What about your part?" "Does it work well?" or "Get a move on with it!"

Su studied all the reference books on amplification systems in their library, as well as material from other

organizations. He was deeply stirred by the workers' enthusiasm and infected by Chi's energy, which made him seem a human dynamo.

Chi was the commander-in-chief of this campaign. A tense battle of this sort suited him down to the ground. He was in his element. Whenever a difficulty cropped up, he was sure to be there, taking notes. He couldn't work miracles, of course, or solve all problems at once; but he would check up after a couple of days. "Is your problem solved? No? Then go and see Wang about it." Or "Go to such-and-such a factory. They have this know-how." Sometimes, naturally, youngsters who groused met with a rebuff. "You're not that stupid. Go back and use your brain."

After two months of hard work they finally produced a new sound-control panel the size of a piano, impressive, shining, stream-lined. But Su, sitting by the new equipment, looked gloomy. He had been in high spirits that morning when the job was finished, and had phoned the opera company to come and try it out. Just then, however, Chi had carefully checked the equipment. He attached an amplifier and, pressing his ear to this, cried out in dismay, "No, that's not good enough!"

"What?" demanded Su.

"Come and listen. There's some interference."

But all Su could detect was the faintest of murmurs, as unobtrusive as a wisp of cloud floating across a clear sky.

"That? It's nothing—softer than a sigh," Su protested. "With all the noise in the theatre, who'd catch this tiny sound? Besides, people don't press their ears to the amplifiers."

"What about the times when there's silence on stage?"

This would spoil the effect."

Su flared up. "We can't be such perfectionists. The delivery date is almost here, remember. Don't forget the contract you signed."

"Of course, we must speed up to meet our deadline. I'll go and tell the comrades that we'll have a meeting after work to discuss this. We must guarantee high quality." Chi strode off without waiting for Su to reply.

"Why attempt the impossible?" The technician plumped down on his chair, quite unconvinced. To eliminate that faint murmur would mean endless trouble. The wiring in the new equipment was as complex as the human circulatory system. Any readjustment now would be no joke. Why did Chi always think in terms of warfare? Why keep on the offensive all the time? After sweating their guts out for two months, why not deliver the goods with no further ado? He must find some way to talk the fellow round. . . . Su sat there moodily, marshalling arguments.

"Is Comrade Chi Chang-chun here?" A voice interrupted his thoughts.

Su turned and saw two young men at the door: the actor Cheng and a stranger. He rose to greet them.

Cheng who recognized Su introduced the other man to him. "This is Comrade Lin Ying, who plays the scout leader's part. He's just back from abroad to take part in the performance to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*. Our sound technicians are busy today, so we've come in their place. Besides, Lin here wants to see Comrade Chi."

"Chi will be here soon. My name's Su. Please take

a seat. The equipment is basically ready. I'll put on a tape-recording for you to hear." Su hoped this try-out would meet with their approval.

After hearing a recording of music, the two visitors exchanged elated glances.

"Now I'll switch off the tape," said Su, "to hear whether there are any murmurs."

As they listened carefully, Su concentrated on watching their expressions.

"Well? Is it satisfactory?" he asked them.

"It certainly is." Cheng was beaming. "You must have worked hard."

"Well, the contract guarantees 'optimum performance.'" Su chuckled complacently.

"We're all working for the same goal," put in Lin. "We had a wonderful reception abroad in our last performance tour. But our foreign friends probably don't realize how much our socialist art owes to the hard work and enthusiastic support of our workers, peasants and soldiers. Whenever I sing that passage, 'The greater the danger the more bravely I advance,' I always remember what I learned from Chi."

"What you learned from Chi?" Su was puzzled.

Lin smiled and nodded.

Cheng explained: "I told you last time, didn't I, that there was a story attached to singing that passage? Well, it seems your Chi was the hero of that story."

"I'd like to hear it," said Su eagerly.

"All right. It happened four years ago," began Lin. "I went that summer to live with a naval unit on the coast of the East China Sea. After one performance, a PLA man came to give me some criticism. He said

I didn't bring out the scout leader's heroic spirit well enough, that my interpretation of the role wasn't life-like. That man was Chi Chang-chun, then in charge of a radar squad. But I couldn't take his criticism at first.

"One evening I went out with a torpedo boat on a military exercise. In calm weather it would have been a pleasant outing, but that day a storm blew up. The PLA men welcomed this chance to train under tough conditions, but I felt very sorry for myself as I huddled on the top deck, seasick. Above me, on a mast over ten metres high, the radar antenna was revolving slowly. The sight of it made me dizzy. Squad Leader Chi saw the state I was in and helped me to the cabin.

"The boat ploughed boldly through the waves till suddenly the radar operator reported that he had lost track of the target. The aerial had broken down. What was to be done? Without the radar, the vessel was like a blind tiger. Normally, a man could have climbed up to repair it; but the boat was tossing so badly that the crew could hardly keep their footing on deck, let alone climb the mast in such a raging storm. All looked in dismay at the captain, who was knitting his brows.

"'Better turn back,' I suggested feebly.

"Chi threw me a disapproving glance, then quickly assembled his tools and started out.

"'It's too dangerous!' I tried to stop him.

"'This is war, understand?' Stripped to his vest, he flexed his powerful muscles.

"I protested, 'No, it's only an exercise.'

"'Listen, comrade,' he said. 'You're an actor. Can you play the part of a hero well on the stage if all the time you remember you're only acting?' Then he ran

to the captain and volunteered to repair the aerial.

"With him giving the lead, several other men volunteered too. The captain examined Chi's safety-belt and said firmly: 'To smash the enemy, go ahead. But be careful.' At once Chi started climbing the mast. Great waves were tossing the boat so savagely that the long pole rocked and swayed like a pendulum. I watched with bated breath. When at last he reached the top, all eyes were riveted on his sturdy figure as, buffeted by the gale at that perilous height, he calmly got on with the job. Before long he started down again, and we surged forward to meet him.

"'Report, Captain! Repairs completed,' he cried in a ringing voice as he reached the deck. At an order from the captain, the radar started scanning again. As everyone crowded round to congratulate Chi, I gripped his hand, too moved to speak. But Chi just smiled and went back to his post. Then I felt something wet on my hand, and when I looked I found it stained with blood. . . .

"That's how Chi taught me by example, and showed me how to advance in the teeth of danger. Since then, when I play the part of Yang Tzu-jung, I remember Chi's fine spirit. On my return from abroad, Cheng told me how Chi had volunteered to improve our sound equipment. So I'm very keen to see him again, and to know how a hero like that has made out in your factory."

Moved by this anecdote, Su blinked back tears. "He's just the same still. Nothing can hold him back."

At this moment the subject of their talk strode in. Looking at him with new eyes, Su exclaimed, "Chi!" while Lin bounded forward to grip his old friend's

hands.

"This equipment you've made is fine, Squad Leader Chi. We're simply delighted with it."

"No, it's not up to scratch. There is still some murmuring, but we're going to fix that for you." It was Su who said this. As Chi stared in pleased surprise, Su turned and told him, "I'm learning from you how to tackle difficulties."

"We must all learn from your spirit," chimed in Cheng. "That technician from the research institute ought to come and learn from you too."

"He has," said Su quietly. This puzzled everyone. Mopping his face, which had suddenly flushed, Su added, "I was that technician, if you want to know. Later I studied for a time in a 'May 7' Cadre School,* then was transferred here to work. I'm remoulding myself and learning from the workers."

"So that's how it is!" Chi was genuinely glad.

"What a coincidence!" was Cheng's reaction.

"Not only a coincidence, but one with significance," amended Lin.

That evening Chi, Su and the other workers set about further improving the new equipment. Like people

* This is a new type of school set up in accordance with Chairman Mao's directive of May 7, 1966. Based on the established idea of requiring cadres to go down to the countryside to do manual labour, it is a socialist innovation that emerged from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. All the personnel of Party and state organs, except those who are old, weak, ill or disabled, go to such schools in rotation, to study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, take part in the collective productive labour and seek re-education by the poor and lower-middle peasants. These measures help cadres to mature as revolutionary fighters, aware of the struggle between the two lines, give them close links with the masses and help them to serve the people wholeheartedly.

doing embroidery, they repeatedly readjusted the circuit; like scouts reconnoitring the most complex enemy conditions, they listened again and again; and like doctors consulting on a difficult sickness, they held one discussion after another until they located and ironed out the last snag. Little by little the noise intrusion faded, to be swallowed up in the silence of the spring night.

To make revolution means to attack! Victory belongs to those who dare to attack!

4

In May the Worker-Peasant-Soldier Theatre celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of the *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*. Like blossoms in spring, the revolutionary modern operas symbolized a fresh, glorious flowering of proletarian literature and art. During one enthralling performance, all eyes were so intent on the stage that nobody noticed two members of the audience testing the high-fidelity loud-speaker system.

At the end of the opera they went backstage again. Cheng and Lin, still in stage costumes, gave them an enthusiastic welcome.

"The sound was first-rate," cried Cheng. "We've the working class to thank for this."

"We've done no more than our duty," answered Chi. "It's good to see an audience of workers, peasants and soldiers watching a play about themselves."

"Your singing was tremendous," Su told Lin. "Especially that passage 'The more bravely I advance.' It's

an inspiration for us in our work."

"We must keep learning from the audience and improving our technique," replied Lin. "Art has to be closely linked with real life. We ought to ask our script-writers to write an opera about the two of you."

"You're kidding," laughed Chi. "We're just two of the audience."

"Just two of the audience? No. The life of the workers, peasants and soldiers is the inexhaustible source of our art. In our audience there are many real-life heroes like the worker Fang Hai-chen,* the peasant Chiang Shui-ying,** the fighter Yang Tzu-jung. They're the real masters of our theatre."

"Hear, hear!" cried Cheng.

"In that sense," said Chi thoughtfully, "none of the workers, peasants and soldiers here is 'just one of the audience,' because all of us are involved in the fight against decadent bourgeois art. I say, Su, that's a subject for the spare-time correspondent in our plant."

"Right. And I should be included in it too. Because only when intellectuals like myself really integrate with workers, peasants and soldiers, do they have a future that grows brighter and brighter." Su, his eyes glowing, rounded out the discussion.

And that was how this story came to be written.

* Fang Hai-chen, the heroine of *On the Docks*, a modern revolutionary Peking opera, is the heroic image of a docker imbued with the spirit of proletarian internationalism.

** Chiang Shui-ying, the heroine of the *Song of the Dragon River*, another modern revolutionary Peking opera, is a typical example of a Communist Party branch secretary in the countryside with selfless communist spirit.

Leading the Way

Chu Min-shen

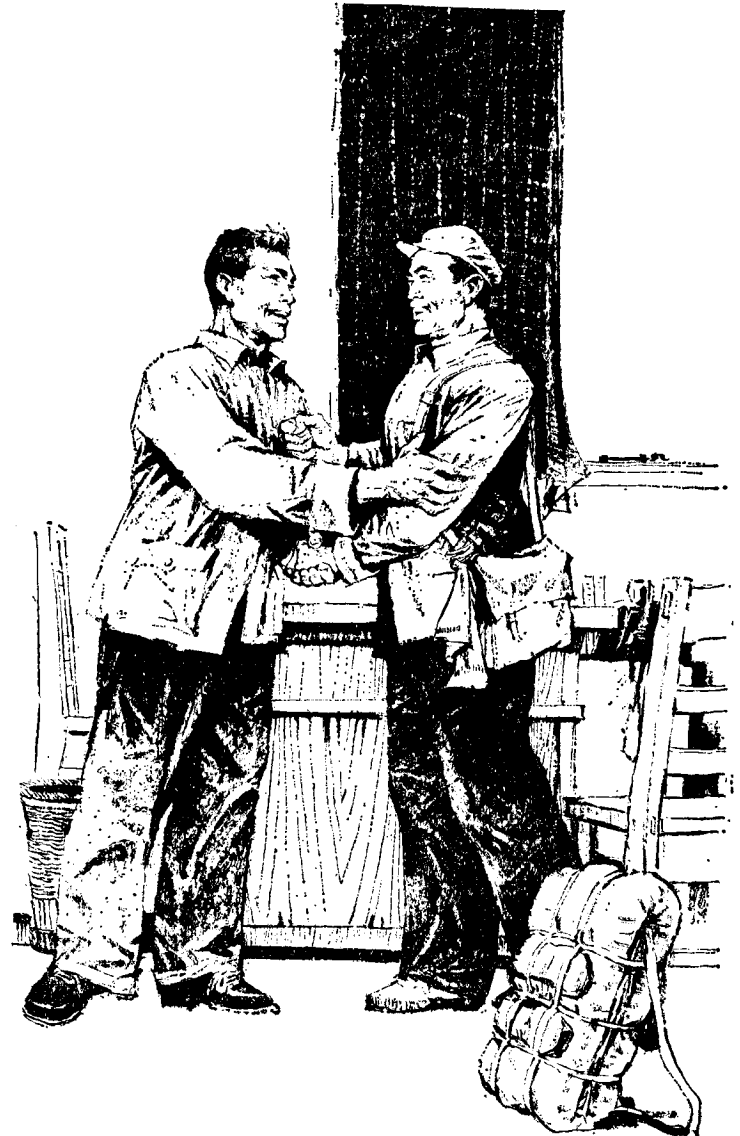
LU Chen-chiang, a sturdy middle-aged man, sat on a bench in the office of the organization section of the Hardware Company. He was being transferred from a railway construction site, and had come to report for work. His new job was as Party branch secretary in a hardware shop. A woman comrade in the office had told him that the manager of San Chin Hardware Shop would arrive at nine a.m. to take him to the shop, but it was a quarter past nine and there was still no sign of him.

Suddenly, the door flew open, and before Lu Chen-chiang could stand up, a man rushed in with arms outstretched and grabbed both of his hands. He said apologetically: "Chen-chiang, I've kept you waiting, haven't I? I was tied up with some old customers and barely managed to tear myself away."

Lu Chen-chiang took a closer look at the man, who was none other than his former senior fellow apprentice Lu Ken-sheng.

"Why, it's you, Ken-sheng," he said excitedly. "So this means we'll be working together again!"

Lu Ken-sheng was equally excited. A few days be-



fore, when he'd heard that the new Party branch secretary was his fellow apprentice of twenty-odd years ago, he was elated.

Not long after Shanghai was liberated, Lu Chen-chiang had joined the Chinese People's Volunteers and fought in the war to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea. After he came home and was demobilized, he was assigned to work in a railway engineering corps. The twenty years since they had parted had passed in a flash. And now, the old partners who had struggled side by side against Baldy, the old boss, were thrown together again. Who would have dreamed it possible? How wonderful!

As soon as the two of them got to talking, Lu Chen-chiang found out that San Chin Hardware Shop was actually where he had worked as an apprentice — the Hung Li Hardware Shop. "If I'd known that earlier," he said, "I would have gone straight there myself. After all, I know the place pretty well."

"I'm not so sure you would any more. It's changed enormously since you left. Old Baldy is dead, and there's not a trace of the old Hung Li Hardware left." Lu Ken-sheng smiled and added: "If you're all through here, we can get going. Come on, let's go have a chat on the third floor of the shop."

This expression, "have a chat on the third floor," had been a favourite "ultimate weapon" of old Baldy's. He used to live on the third floor of the shop, and if you were called to "have a chat" there, it meant that he was going to fire you. So in the old society, with no job security, to "have a chat on the third floor" became an ominous threat. Hearing this phrase now, Lu Chen-chiang couldn't help laughing aloud. "Funny

to hear *you* use that expression," he said.

"Ah well, there are few people around who would understand it any more. The young people in the shop. . . . Well, you'll see, the third floor belongs to them now!"

Lu Chen-chiang noticed the great satisfaction with which the older man said this.

Lu Ken-sheng kept up a steady stream of chatter all the way: "To tell you the truth, no matter how busy we are, it's not like before—it's much easier to do business now. Of course, with the constant increase in agricultural and industrial production, there's a great demand for hardware and tools, and we're always under pressure. But the capitalist practices of hoarding when prices are rising and selling when they are falling are things of the past. In other words, we're not in business to make a profit. Well, you're an old hand in this trade, and now that you've come back, San Chin Hardware Shop is bound to do well!"

Lu Chen-chiang didn't say much. He'd had a lot of questions to ask, but he was put off by what Lu Ken-sheng was saying. He thought of what the secretary of the Party committee of the Hardware Company had said the day before: "Commerce is an important battlefield, and it's got many stubborn remnants of capitalism. The significance of strengthening Party leadership in economic work lies precisely in thoroughly wiping out these remnants."

He had taken this down in his notebook, but he hadn't had much of an idea how to apply it to his actual work. Now, Lu Ken-sheng was helping him deepen his understanding, and he thought carefully about what the Party committee secretary meant. It

looked as if his first task would be to work on this shop manager. At the time, however, he simply said: "I really fell in love with the tool warehouse at the construction site. If only we can make our shop like a factory warehouse!"

Somewhat disappointed, Lu Ken-sheng jokingly replied: "You must be kidding! Well, anyway, here we are."

The shop was still quite far away, but Lu Ken-sheng had stopped walking and stood still as if to appreciate a painting from a certain distance.

Lu Ken-sheng was right, the shop really had changed a lot. From afar, the shop-front had quite a sparkle. The tinsmith shop and the soap and candle shop, originally on either side of the hardware shop, had disappeared. Further west, outside what used to be another shop, hung the sign: "San Chin Dispatching Office." Just as seeing the steel rails stretching for miles along the construction site had made Lu Chen-chiang's heart soar, looking at this row of shop-fronts gave his spirit a great lift as well.

As they stepped into the main shop, someone stood in front of them, blocking their way. This somebody was a round-faced young man with a certain boldness in his demeanor. He wore a greasy, rust-stained glove on his left hand, and in his right hand was a stack of charts bearing different kinds of rubber-stamp impressions.

"Listen, how are we going to distribute this batch of tool-steel saw-blades?" he brashly demanded of Lu Ken-sheng.

"The old rule, give priority to the big factories and take care of the small ones as best we can," Lu Ken-

sheng brusquely shot back at the youngster, as he started to lead Lu Chen-chiang past him into the shop.

The youngster discovered someone standing behind the manager: a man with a square, bronze-coloured face and unusually spirited eyes under his thick brows. He remembered having heard that morning that a new Party branch secretary was coming—this must be him! So, disregarding Lu Ken-sheng, he said to the newcomer:

“Comrade, what do you think? How should we handle this distribution?”

Lu Ken-sheng hastily turned around and said sharply: “Ku Hsiao-hu, this comrade’s just arrived. He’s not familiar with the situation here. Don’t try to take advantage of that. You won’t stop until you can satisfy all those old customers of yours, will you?”

The young man, true to his name Hsiao-hu, meaning Little Tiger, really had something of the tiger in him. He wouldn’t give an inch. “Don’t get me wrong,” he said. “He’s not up on the situation, I know. But I’m not asking him for specifics—I just want him to set a rule, that’s all.”

The new Party branch secretary was not unfamiliar with this type of young person. They were all over the Army and the railway construction sites. Their enthusiasm for socialism knew no limit. They thought only of going forward, refusing to retreat even one step, whether what lay ahead was a river to cross or a tiger to slay. Until you answered their questions, they refused to shut up.

Without thinking, he replied: “We must guarantee satisfaction of urgent needs in distributing tools.”

Having said this, he began to wonder whether or not

it was appropriate, as he’d just arrived and didn’t know very much about the situation at the shop—without realizing it he had mechanically applied the rules of the construction site warehouse to this question. So he added in a questioning tone: “Are all the places which have put in orders equally in need of tools right away? Can this be looked into?”

The manager wasn’t in the mood to argue. He quickly answered: “It’s hard to say. Industry and agriculture are developing rapidly, so there’s always a pressing need for hardware—it’s good enough if we can be reasonably fair as we do our distribution.”

For a moment Lu Chen-chiang could not grasp what Lu Ken-sheng meant. He was looking at the young man whose youthful face suddenly took on a lively expression before he turned and ran off.

The Party branch secretary kept thinking of Ku Hsiao-hu’s behaviour. He didn’t have a chance to talk to him that day, and the next day the boy was off very early to the factories. It was on the third day that Lu Chen-chiang finally found him on the third floor at lunch time.

Ku Hsiao-hu was in the middle of a ping-pong game, sweat all over his face. Lu Chen-chiang didn’t want to interrupt his fun. With a burst of energy, the boy kept winning game after game, so Lu Chen-chiang had to stand by and watch. The young player was in the lead again, and was sure to be the winner in this match too. After a steady rally, the ball suddenly missed the table and came bouncing over to Lu Chen-chiang, who picked it up and handed it back. Taking the ball, Ku Hsiao-hu suddenly noticed the Party branch secretary. He quickly put the ball on the table and the bat on top

of it, and said: "That's all for me." Wiping the sweat from his face, he walked over to Lu Chen-chiang, saying:

"Comrade Lu, I was really inspired by what you said!"

"How's the saw-blade distribution going?" asked Lu Chen-chiang, gesturing to Ku Hsiao-hu for him to put on his shirt.

"Yesterday I went around to some of the places which have put in orders, to figure out the order of priorities. Distribution according to the principle of guaranteeing urgent needs satisfies the factories and solves the shortage of resources problem too. Come on, I'll show you a letter of appreciation we got this morning from one of the factories. They said that this way we're supporting our country's socialist construction."

There were always some comrades on night duty in the shop anyway, but now Lu Chen-chiang slept there too. He had developed the habit, from so much time in the army and on the construction sites, of carrying his bedding to wherever his job was. Here in the shop, he put two tables together, spread his bedding on top, took off his shoes and socks and lay down.

He hadn't had any tea or cigarettes, but still he didn't feel the least bit sleepy. He remembered what the secretary of the Party committee of the Engineering Bureau said to him when he was being transferred from the railway construction site, after having been in hospital for a month: "We're changing your job now, not only because you injured your shoulder saving state property in the mountain flood, but more importantly, to put you on a new battlefield!"

He imagined himself still living in the mat-shed by the river, with the rumbling of bulldozers outside, the explosion of opening tunnels in the mountains in the distance, and the sound of argument in various local accents. There was constant debate all over the construction site — people getting hot under the collar as to how to raise the quality of construction and how to finish the project ahead of schedule, to win the race for time against the imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries. In this was reflected the great spirit of **self-reliance** and **arduous struggle** of the Chinese working class.

In that intensely active environment, groups of young people were forever rushing in to get tools at all hours of the day and night, but Lu Chen-chiang could fall sound asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow. Now he was in different, very peaceful surroundings, yet he couldn't get to sleep. What the Engineering Bureau Party committee secretary and the Hardware Company Party committee secretary had said raised a serious problem for him: to bring the revolutionary ideology of the working class onto the commercial battlefield. He recognized profoundly that "**Political work is the life-blood of all economic work.**" The job before him now was certainly not just a matter of "doing good business," but was rather an actual struggle!

Gazing at the wall, his glance fell on the night-duty chart, and he saw a red arrow pointing to the two names, Lu Ken-sheng and Ku Hsiao-hu. His former fellow apprentice Lu Ken-sheng's words came to his mind: "Not a trace of the old Hung Li Hardware is left. . . . It's much easier to do business now."

The shop had indeed changed, and so had the methods

of management. However, goods were being distributed not according to urgency of production needs, but on the principle of being "reasonably fair." Wasn't this "doing business" pure and simple? Wasn't this a trace of the old Hung Li Hardware? Buyers from big factories and old customers now came right to the door to put in orders — Lu Ken-sheng called this "easier to do business"!

Having been at the shop for a few days, Lu Chen-chiang had had some contact with everyone working in the place and was beginning to understand the situation. In order to do a good job of supply and distribution, Ku Hsiao-hu had gone down to the factory level to investigate, and all the comrades were in favour of this. Manager Lu Ken-sheng, however, wasn't taking the matter seriously. It looked as if he was satisfied with mere changes of form.

By now, Lu Chen-chiang felt even less like sleeping and decided to go find his old work-mate Lu Ken-sheng, who was on night duty.

The night-duty office was on the third floor of the shop. This place which had been the boss Baldy's "Hell" for firing workers, was now the workers' lounge and conference room. Ku Hsiao-hu was already asleep on the ping-pong table in the middle of the room. Lu Ken-sheng was poring over customers' order forms. A lighted cigarette gave off an acrid smoky smell.

When he caught sight of Lu Chen-chiang, the older man indicated the ping-pong table and said: "Young people are really carefree — he was arguing fiercely with me until just a moment ago, and now look how soundly he's sleeping!"

"What were you arguing about?" Lu Chen-chiang asked.

"What else would we be arguing about but distribution? Thirty different units have ordered a total of 402 10-inch adjustable wrenches, and we've got only half that number in stock. Now does anyone mean to say that we should disregard the relative sizes of the plants and allocate equally? That would hardly be fair! We'll have to discuss this at the meeting tomorrow morning before work."

"You're right, we can't just distribute equally. It's absolutely correct to give priority to bigger plants, which contribute more to our country's socialist construction and so need more tools. But this is only one side of the question. We should look at the other side too — bigger plants have more resources to fall back on. This factor doesn't show up in requisition plans!"

The Party branch secretary felt it his duty to help the manager, because even though the older man had been through twenty years of education by the Party and many political movements, his thinking had been cramped by being so long in the shop. Being a straight-forward person and always speaking his mind openly, Lu Chen-chiang said: "You say the shop has changed, and I've seen the changes. But it still hasn't changed thoroughly. It smacks too much of 'doing business.' Our construction-site warehouse wasn't like this at all."

"You're joking again. This is a shop, how can you compare it with a warehouse on a construction site?"

"What I'm saying is that we've got a socialist hardware shop here, and we're not just 'doing business.' We should rather become a 'warehouse' for industrial and agricultural production! What Ku Hsiao-hu is doing is

right—we should go to the factories and investigate, to grasp the first-hand information needed in the job of distribution.”

Ku Hsiao-hu turned over in his sleep, and his bedding slipped off. Lu Chen-chiang walked over to the ping-pong table and covered him up again. He lit himself a cigarette and continued: “Perhaps I’m thinking too far ahead, but I always feel one *should* think this way. Take this shop for example: the shop itself has expanded; the third floor, which the old boss used specially for firing workers, has become our meeting, studying and recreation room; it was a capitalist shop and now it’s a socialist one. But is there still struggle here? I believe the answer is ‘yes.’ We must make the third floor and the whole shop into a ‘battlefield’ of struggle against bourgeois ideology!”

Lu Chen-chiang stopped, took a deep puff of his cigarette and then added solemnly: “This often means struggling against bourgeois thinking in our own heads.”

Neither of the two slept well that night. Lu Chen-chiang was thinking about how to use proletarian ideology to transform the shop. Lu Ken-sheng was thinking: the shop has changed all right, but Lu Chen-chiang has changed even more. With only a few words he got right through to my deepest thoughts, forcing me to think about how to run a socialist enterprise.

At the next morning’s meeting, the question of how to allocate the wrenches was discussed. Lu Chen-chiang’s proposal to divide up and investigate the situation in the various factories was quickly passed, to the joy of all the workers.

When they were about to start out, Lu Chen-chiang

asked: “What are we going to take with us?”

Lu Ken-sheng answered: “We’ll take their order forms and when we figure out the situation we can talk figures on the spot.”

Lu Chen-chiang said: “We’ll go with some centre pins.”

“But what for?”

“If we find any wrenches which can’t be used because of damaged centre pins, we can give them new ones right there. That should solve some problems.”

The two arrived at a steel spring plant together. They walked through two noisy workshops and found the tool shed, surrounded by three willow trees. Lu Ken-sheng asked a youngster where the man in charge of the factory’s purchasing was. The young man said: “I’m looking for him myself, because if we can’t get hold of any adjustable wrenches, at least we could get a few centre pins to replace the damaged ones and keep using the wrenches we have.”

“Comrade, we’ve brought you your centre pins,” said Lu Chen-chiang.

“You’re from — ”

“San Chin Hardware Shop. Now, would you go check every workshop and bring all the wrenches which need new centre pins as soon as possible?”

After a short while, the young man came back with an armful of wrenches, and on his own initiative kept track of the numbers, to facilitate the calculation of repair fees. By midday, they had repaired seventeen wrenches.

Lu Ken-sheng kept silent all morning. When they had first arrived, he had been looking anxiously for the man in charge of purchasing, but now he didn’t feel

like finding him, because they had repaired even more wrenches than had been asked for. He was filled with a profound admiration for Lu Chen-chiang and wanted to express it, but couldn't find the right words, so he just said: "Chen-chiang, you certainly are conscientious!"

"Conscientiousness is a very important part of making revolution," replied Lu Chen-chiang. He turned, noticing the youngster's excited expression, and said: "It would be quite easy for you to make this kind of centre pin here. Our shop can do both selling and repairing, and your factory can also do some repairing instead of buying everything. This way we can save money for the state and facilitate production at the same time."

The young man said: "That's a great idea. I'm going to pass this suggestion on to all the workers!"

The two work-mates, one younger, one older, left the factory, the roar of the machinery lingering in their ears. Lu Chen-chiang said in a voice full of emotion: "Wrenches, saws, hammers—all these tools have a different significance in the eyes of different classes. The capitalists used them as commodities to trade and make money, while the working class uses them as weapons in making revolution and in construction!"

Lu Chen-chiang said this because he felt it from his own experience. On the railway construction site, he had seen how desperately the comrades needed tools. At times, when shock work on the project was necessary, and there weren't enough tools to go around, the workers would take turns using them around the clock. Some people even used their hands when they had no tools. Recalling this now gave his spirits a great lift.

He looked at Lu Ken-sheng deep in thought at his side and said: "With distribution in the field of commerce, we can't be satisfied with cleared accounts and balanced supply and demand. We must consider our country's socialist revolution and socialist construction as a whole, and use each piece of hardware to its very fullest potential. This is our duty, and it's also the fundamental difference between us and old Baldy the boss!"

Lu Ken-sheng walked in front as they headed towards another plant. He had been in and out of all these plants many times. But now he felt that he himself was not really leading the way, but that Party branch secretary Lu Chen-chiang was leading the way for him, on a new path towards new and thorough changes in the hardware shop. He was moved by this thought and said with feeling: "In our socialist hardware shop, we're doing business not for the sake of doing business. It really is a bit like a factory warehouse. This is a step towards communism, isn't it?"

Striding ahead firmly, Lu Chen-chiang said: "Wars are fought battle by battle. We're engaged in a long-term fight, and we must keep on waging battles in earnest!"

In the Shipyard

Shih Min

THE busiest and most hard-pressed part of the Pukiang Shipyard was the dry dock where the ten-thousand-ton ship was under construction. And the busiest and most hard-pressed man in the dock was its director Tu Chin-ken. To use his own words: "For most people, a day's work is a day's work and that's that. But when you're in charge of a section, you have to fit three days' work into one." In order to do that he rarely slept in his bed. When he was tired, he would cover himself with the coat he used both as overalls and blanket, and snatch a quick nap in some corner. He rarely had time to sit down for a meal. He would grab two pieces of steamed bread and eat them while he was working. But lack of sleep didn't bother him — he could keep going however tired he was. It was dealing with people that caused him headaches. To be more precise — dealing with the question of the young people. Every year since the Cultural Revolution, with the development of socialist construction, many young people joined the ranks of the working class. As the ship-building industry expanded, more and more came to work in the shipyard. They were full of energy and

enthusiasm for the job, but they kept coming up with all sorts of strange suggestions, and Tu really didn't know how to deal with all the trouble they caused.

Suddenly he caught sight of a crowd of people in front of one of the workshop walls. What was up now? What were they all looking at? It was bound to be one of those big-character posters covered with criticisms and new proposals! Another awkward situation to face. He didn't really feel much like going across to find out, but what else could he do?

The crowd of youngsters were standing round the wall chattering noisily. When they saw Tu walking slowly towards them, with a solemn expression on his face, they exchanged meaningful glances and made way for him.

He saw at once that it was indeed a big-character poster and he read:

Let Us Get into Work on the Ship!

We, a group of Chairman Mao's Red Guards, have been working in the ship-building industry for five whole months now. During this time, we have watched the building of two ten-thousand-ton ships, the *Victory* and the *Huashan*, from beginning to end. Although we are supposed to be ship-builders, complete with white overalls, all we've done is stand on one side practising welding on bits of scrap metal and doing the simplest jobs. We've never been near the hull of a real ship. Imagine how fed up we are with just looking on and how our hands are itching to get to work! After five months' training, we've acquired the basic skills in electric arc welding. We've just heard that the date for the completion of the ship *Progress* has been brought forward. We've already suggested several times to Director Tu that he test us earlier than planned to see if we can start work sooner. But he insists that nothing can be done till we've finished six months' training, welding scrap iron. We consider this to be

repression of our revolutionary initiative! Where there's repression, there's bound to be resistance! We can't wait any longer! Director Tu, we demand to be allowed to go and work on the ship now! We are waiting for your reply!

Hsin Hsiao-lung and other apprentices

April 26

"So, I'm repressing the revolutionary initiative of the young . . ." Tu thought, the blood rushing to his head.

"Well, Director Tu, what do you say to our demand?" one of the youngsters walked up to him and asked.

"Nonsense!" Tu could hardly believe it was his own voice.

They all stared at him, amazed by his abruptness.

Tu felt his heart thumping and wanted to say something but could not think what. Then he felt a strong, heavy hand on his shoulder, and turning round, saw a familiar face, tanned dark by wind and weather, with a pair of penetrating eyes under thick eyebrows.

"Master Wei!" exclaimed Tu, happy and at the same time relieved to find it was Wei Chuan-pao, the man who had taught him his craft. Wei was now a member of the Party committee of the shipyard and was in charge of the production department under the yard's revolutionary committee. "Is the study class finished?" Tu asked.

"Mmm," nodded Wei. "Let's go for a chat, Chin-ken."

The two of them walked away slowly along the tarmac path flanked by all kinds of piles of metal and bits of machinery. Wei Chuan-pao was of giant build, tall and sturdy, like one of the tall cranes in the dry dock. You felt that however heavy a burden life put

on those shoulders, they would bear it lightly. Tu Chin-ken was shorter by a head, but he was strong and well-built. He was like one of the bollards on the quay, so firm that it could never be budged.

"Master Wei, when did your study class finish?" Tu asked seriously. It was three months since Wei had started attending a study class arranged by the Bureau. They hadn't seen each other for some time.

"Yesterday evening," Wei replied. "Chin-ken, are you happy about the youngsters writing up posters about you?" He went straight to the point.

"This. . . ." Tu didn't know what to say for a moment. Was he happy? To be truthful, he wasn't at all happy about it, but he couldn't very well say that outright. He avoided answering directly: "Of course it's a good thing for the masses to write posters criticizing the leaders, but —"

"But you don't like this kind of poster too much, is that it?" Wei smiled thoughtfully.

"Master Wei!" Tu stopped suddenly and cried out with great feeling. You could tell from the tone of his voice that he expected help and sympathy but there was much pent-up resentment in it too. They were standing on the edge of a football pitch where a group of young lads were energetically kicking a football around. They were quite close but Tu was so lost in thought that he didn't seem to notice their excited shouts. He was thinking how to get Wei's support on this matter, because everyone working in the yard held him in great respect.

"Master Wei, you know . . ." he began.

"What?" Wei was surprised at his hesitation.

Tu was so upset and angry about the whole thing that he could not decide how to begin, what to say, or how to say it most persuasively. Suddenly he pointed at the football pitch and said:

"Look at them! They fool around all day, playing football and joking. What do they know about ship-building? Isn't it right that they should spend six months learning the basic skills by practising welding on scrap metal? What's wrong with that, I'd like to know!"

"That's all right," Wei said clearly. "But the problem isn't simply six months or—"

But Tu didn't wait to hear the rest. "That's what I think. But they think that after four or five months' training they can make a lot of noise and insist on starting on the real work. When I won't let them, they make a great fuss. I've tried explaining patiently to them. I've told them they ought to be content. Before liberation, when we learned welding, after three years' training, we still wouldn't have dreamed of doing anything but assisting an experienced welder—handing him tools. Even before the Cultural Revolution you wouldn't have dreamed of being allowed to work on the ship after a year! But now it's all different. In fact, six months isn't a long time. But I can talk my head off and they never listen, especially that fellow, Hsin Hsiao-lung. . . ." Suddenly a football came zooming across the pitch and landed with a thump on Tu's behind, giving him such a shock that he jumped.

A lanky boy in white overalls came running over. He was wearing a cap slanted at a comic angle on his head. He had felt quite proud of his good kick but

couldn't help feeling a bit nervous when he saw where the ball landed.

"Ah," said Tu, holding onto the ball and glaring at him. "It's you again!"

"I'm terribly sorry," said the boy with his eyes twinkling.

"Forget it, give him back his ball!" Wei intervened. The young lad straightened his cap and ran off in a flash.

"Who was that?" Wei felt Tu was over-reacting to the situation.

"Who else could it be? That's Hsin Hsiao-lung!" Tu burst out angrily.

"Oh, no wonder you were annoyed!" Wei couldn't help smiling. "The last person you'd want to meet just now!"

"You see how cheeky he is." Tu pointed at Hsin's back as he ran off in the distance. "He's no bigger than a green bean, but he's not afraid of anyone. He'll argue with anyone. It's enough to drive you mad. Huh!" He heaved a great sigh.

"What's the matter?"

"Do you remember what it was like when we were apprentices? Think how obedient and respectful we were. We did what we were told to do. But young people now. . . . It's all very well for them to be full of rebellious spirit, but you can have too much of a good thing. You tell them to do one thing and they do the opposite. They don't understand that they should behave with respect to older skilled men who are teaching them a craft. They don't even take any notice of me and I'm in charge of the whole dock."

"The obedient and respectful apprentices of the past . . ." Wei murmured to himself. He felt uneasy as he remembered the words on Hsin Hsiao-lung's poster.

"Yes." Tu thought that Wei was thinking along the same lines as himself and was relieved. "These youngsters have grown up in a world of milk and honey where everything's been sweet and easy. They don't know anything. But we. . . ." He stopped suddenly, noticing that Wei was not looking at all pleased. In fact, he was frowning so hard that his eyebrows were knit together and there was an expression of deep dissatisfaction on his face.

After a short silence, Wei shook his head and said softly: "Oh dear, what can I say?" Tu looked aghast.

"Oh, Director Tu! What are you thinking of—standing here watching football?" It was one of the dock's young accountants, Fang, who came running over in a great hurry. "We just. . . . Ah! . . . a directive just came down from management. They want to transfer thirty electric welders away from our dock to go and help in a shipyard which has just been set up."

"What?" Tu looked as shocked as if someone had punched him. He stared at Wei: "Is that true?"

"I've heard about it, yes," Wei nodded.

"How will we manage?" Tu looked at Wei desperately. "We were short of people at the start and then we had new people come in. It's just one thing after another. Master Wei, you must. . . ."

"Helping out in a sister shipyard is important. I think you should follow the Party committee's directive."

"Ah!"

Fang said urgently: "Management say that we've got to hand in names within two days. Everyone's discussing it in the office, we're just waiting for you to decide. Hurry up!"

"All right. I'm coming right away." Tu realized this could not be put off and said: "I'm off then, Master Wei." He went off with Fang without waiting for a reply.

Seeing how agitated Tu was, Wei became thoughtful. Before liberation, Tu had been an apprentice under Wei. Since liberation they had been together almost all the time until last year when Wei had been transferred to management and Tu, then a section chief, had taken over Wei's position as director of the dry dock. Although transferred higher up, Wei always paid great attention to what was going on among the workers in the dock. Yesterday, when the study class finished and he came back to the yard, he heard a lot of praise of Tu's work, but at the same time he heard that some of the youngsters in the dock were criticizing him. Even though these were individual opinions, he still took them very seriously. In the present revolutionary situation, with ship-building developing, more and more young people were arriving to join the ranks of the working class. How to train and direct these youngsters was no ordinary problem. He had immediately requested the Party committee to allow him to go and work at the dock to look into this question more closely. And now, on his first day back, there was this poster. What were the youngsters really thinking? And why was Tu so set against them?

The next morning Wei dealt with some routine matters, had his lunch and went down to the dry dock. As he was walking along the path by sub-section 101 he ran into Tu Chin-ken.

"I have to report to you, Director," he said jokingly.

"Hello, Master Wei, uhhh . . ." Tu kept nervously ruffling his hand through his hair.

"Did you settle the question of transferring those men?"

"Yes . . . that's settled. They're being transferred." Tu didn't seem enthusiastic about it.

"What are you going to do about the shortage of welders then?"

"What can we do? The men we have got will have to do two men's work."

"Will Hsiao-lung and the others be able to take the test early then?" asked Wei tentatively.

"Impossible, impossible!" Tu shook his head and said evasively: "I must go for my dinner now. Let's talk about it later."

Wei shook his head thoughtfully as he continued slowly along the path by 101. This sub-section was the underwater part of the stern of the *Progress*; the steel plating was thick and the structure complicated; the rudder and propeller had to be installed here — it was the most crucial part of the whole structure of the ship. The whole section had been inverted to enable the men to get on with the job and was supported underneath with wooden blocks, which raised it about a metre off

the ground so that the men, by bending down, could go in and out. All round everything lay quite silent as it was the dinner hour, so the sound of someone inside welding came over particularly clearly. Who was it, working so hard? Wei was just thinking of going to look when the noise stopped suddenly, and he heard a hammer knocking on the plates — bang, bang, bang. It was a short and forceful knock — one long and two short — the signal used by welders to ask someone outside to help by feeding more electric flex into the hull. Wei quickly picked up the flex which lay entangled on the ground and fed it inside. Then he heard the knocking again. He knew that meant that filler rods were needed, so he took some out of the box and went inside the hull himself. It was like a dove-cot inside with many small double-bottomed compartments. There was no proper ventilation and the entire hull was full of fumes from the welding. Wei crawled in bent double, straightened up his massive body and crossed two small rooms to come to the room where he could see the flash of light from the welding. He shouted: "Who's there? Why aren't you taking time off? It's dinner time!" The worker took off his head shield and in the light of the lamp Wei was startled to see that pair of bright cheeky eyes and that crooked cap. "It's you . . . Hsiao-lung!"

"Oh!" Hsiao-lung was even more startled. He had just been thinking of crawling out to get in a length of electric flex when he caught sight of a pair of work boots and the bottom half of a pair of overalls under the plating. Recognizing another worker, he remembered what he'd seen the others doing and had knocked on the side. But he hadn't thought that he'd been

giving orders to such an important person. He shifted about uneasily.

Seeing how alarmed he was, Wei said gently: "Don't be afraid of me!"

"I'm not afraid of you!" Hsiao-lung replied saucily.

"I'm sure you're not," Wei nodded. He really admired the lad's obstinacy. He teased him: "But if you're not afraid, why did you fidget about like that?"

"That's. . . ."

"Ha . . . ha . . ." Wei laughed.

His laughter broke the tension and Hsiao-lung relaxed. Well, this famous master of my master Tu must be all right after all, he thought.

"Tell me, Hsiao-lung, who gave you permission to come in here?" asked Wei jokingly.

"Permission? Do we have to ask permission for a revolution? I wanted to come, so I came."

"Amazing!" Wei looked approvingly at the lad and patted him on the shoulder. He was not someone who went around lavishing praise on people but he really admired the lad's determination. That was probably what Tu had meant when he talked about "too much of a good thing." But Wei felt that if he was going to understand these young people this was the place to start. After a moment, he said seriously:

"Of course you don't need permission for a revolution, but you do need organization and discipline."

"Yes . . . I . . ." Hsiao-lung looked away and fiddled with a corner of his overalls. Then he burst out: "I didn't have any choice. Director Tu forced me into this."

"Ah!"

"We've been working here for five whole months

now. We've seen how all you experienced workers are going all out to build big ships which it has not been thought possible for our country to build. But we . . . we've even written up a poster, but it's no use."

Wei said smiling: "It's good that you're prepared to work hard building ships, but you also need certain skills. What's your welding like?"

"Come on, I'll show you," Hsiao-lung said eagerly.

Wei pointed at a seam in the plating and said: "All right, try there."

Hsiao-lung picked up the welding torch and got the filler rod ready. He had watched the veterans doing it many times and studied what they did. Now imitating them, he gave the rod a few strokes on the plate like a professional and then set to work. There wasn't a spare shield so Wei could not watch. He turned his face to one side to avoid the fierce glare and listened attentively. Hsiao-lung soon finished and knocked off the slag on the joint. He asked timidly: "Well, is it any good?"

Wei took a look. The joint was a mass of tiny wavy patterns all completely even. It wasn't at all bad for a welder of only five months' experience. He looked at the lad and nodded. Hsiao-lung heaved a sign of relief and said confidently:

"That's what it looks like when you skilled men do it. . . ."

But before he had finished, Wei picked up a bit of chalk and drew two big white marks at the very end of the seam he had welded.

"Only this bit won't do. There are holes in it."

"Where?" Hsiao-lung stared at the places marked

but it all looked smooth and shiny to him.

"I'm sure there are," Wei said firmly. Picking up a file that lay handy, he went on: "If you don't believe me, I'll file it away so you can see." Straight away he started filing away and removed a layer of welding from the seam. Taking the light over to it, he said: "Look, Hsiao-lung."

Only half believing, the young man stretched forward to look. Sure enough, there were some tiny holes the size of a pinhead. He felt even more in awe of Wei. What an amazing fellow! His eyes were even sharper than X-ray! "How on earth did you see them, Master Wei?" he asked.

Wei smiled: "I couldn't see them but I heard them. Tell me, when you were using the torch, what could you hear apart from the regular sound it makes?"

Hsiao-lung looked at him and, after a moment's thought, said: "Nothing else."

"There was another noise, you know. When you started, the sound was regular, but just before you came to an end, there was a kind of 'plop' noise like porridge cooking. Not very loud but quite distinct."

Hsiao-lung nodded, remembering.

"What were you thinking about just then?" asked Wei.

"Nothing."

"Are you sure?"

"Well, at first, I wasn't thinking about anything. But when I was finishing, I was thinking that I hadn't done badly and that you'd think it was all right."

"That's it!" Wei slapped his thigh. "There were gaps in your concentration, so there are holes in the welding! When your mind started to wander, you let

your hand gradually move further away from the plate and that meant that air could get in. You see, it's important for a revolutionary ship-builder to be a skilled man, but what's even more important is how he thinks. He can't afford to let any private thoughts interrupt him when he's operating that welding torch; he must guarantee the quality of his work. Don't underestimate the harm those tiny holes could do, lad, it's those tiny holes, if we allow them, which will be the cracking point of the ship when it goes to sea and runs into a storm and fierce waves. Those tiny holes could sink the whole ship. People are the same. If we allow our minds to be stained with bourgeois thought and don't struggle to overcome it, we too can drown and sink in life's great ocean."

Hsiao-lung looked up and followed his words closely with his wide, pure, childlike eyes.

Wei felt warm towards the lad and went on: "Although you've acquired some basic skill, you're not skilled enough yet. So from that point of view, Director Tu is quite right to insist that you practise some more. When you're welding, you must keep the rod and the plate at a steady distance, and this depends on using your wrist properly. Come on, let's try again and this time I'll hold onto your wrist."

Standing up eagerly, Hsiao-lung fitted the rod, put on the gloves and then realized there was only one pair of gloves. What would Master Wei do? But Wei just laughed and stretched out his hands, and what hands they were! His fingers were huge and strong and the backs were a mass of tiny scars from burns. "Look at these hands! A few more sparks won't hurt them!" As he grasped hold of Hsiao-lung's hands, the

lad felt their warmth spread into his own body. . . .

"Pay attention, Hsiao-lung, your wrist must be flexible like this. . . . That's it. . . ." Keeping a firm grip on the lad's hands, Wei talked as he began welding and had soon finished two seams. By then, Hsiao-lung saw that there were some fresh marks on these scarred hands.

"Master Wei!" he burst out. It was the first time that he, usually so carefree and cheeky, had been so deeply moved by the strength of the class solidarity of an older worker. "Do you think I'll be able to take part in the battle to finish the *Progress*?"

"Yes, we'll tackle that together," Wei said enthusiastically, nodding. Suddenly a call rang out outside: "Calling Comrade Wei Chuan-pao! You are needed urgently. Please come to the shipyard office."

"I'll be back as soon as I can. . . ."

Hsiao-lung felt as though he was dreaming, and before he could utter a word of thanks, Wei had vanished. He sat there, murmuring to himself: "Now my long-cherished aim will soon be realized! I'll be able to go and build real ships too!" It was only ten minutes since Wei had first appeared, but Hsiao-lung felt as though he had grown up in those few minutes. He leaned back on the plating, breathing in the strong fumes from the welding and remembering every word of their conversation.

He waited for some time for Wei to come back. He didn't know how long it was but it seemed like a long time. Leaning down, he looked out. There was that pair of work boots and those white overalls! Wei really had come back! He tugged at a trouser leg and said: "Come on inside quickly!" The other man leaned down

and came in, saying:

"Who is it? Why aren't you taking your break?"

Hsiao-lung realized it wasn't Wei's voice. The two of them stood up face to face, and it was difficult to say who was more shocked.

"What are you doing here?" Tu Chin-ken cried out when he saw the place filled with welding fumes. "You really do have a nerve, coming in here and using the torch."

Hsiao-lung just stood there, hanging his head and biting his lip.

"Comrade, you've got to be clear about one thing—building ships isn't like playing football." He paused and then started again: "You aren't at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution any longer, you're not a Red Guard making rebellion, you can't go rushing around doing what you want any longer, you're supposed to be a worker!"

"So what?"

"Workers have to obey orders."

"The most important orders for the working class are the words of Chairman Mao!"

"You. . . ."

"When your orders are right, I'll obey them. But am I supposed to obey wrong orders too?"

"You. . . ." Tu felt as though something was blocking his throat. He shook his fist angrily. "All right, I'm not going to argue with you. But coming here of your own accord and using the tools without permission, that's simply undisciplined anarchist behaviour which I must criticize you most severely for."

"I accept your criticism. But look at this bit of welding. . . ." Hsiao-lung said hopefully.

"There's no point. You've only just learned how to use the tools and you're boasting about your work already. You young people, your greatest fault is you are —"

"Over-confident and over-ambitious."

"You. . . ." Tu glared angrily at Hsiao-lung.

"And you. . . ." Hsiao-lung stood his ground and stared fixedly at Tu. Why was it that the two men had reacted in opposite ways to what he had done? Wei had watched him eagerly and then helped to teach him, while Tu wouldn't even bother to look at his work. Why were they like that?

"Well, what about me?" Tu said furiously.

"I can't explain," Hsiao-lung said, shaking his head. "Director Tu, I'll tell you one thing though. Your old master, Comrade Wei, watched me work and then took hold of my hands and guided them, but you —"

"Don't talk nonsense!" Tu interrupted loudly.

"I'm not talking nonsense. He was here a minute ago. That's the seam he welded guiding my hands."

"Huh!" Tu felt he was being mocked and could not think straight. "That was wrong! Quite wrong!"

"Oh . . . you're. . . ." Hsiao-lung looked at him in confusion. "All right then, I. . . ." But he stopped and ran off in a flash.

3

"How could you — a leading cadre — how could you let the youngsters run riot like this? How could you treat them so laxly?" thought Tu to himself, feeling

more bitter and resentful than ever. He had planned to go and find Wei straight away and have it out with him. But on his way he met a worker from the fitting section, who had some urgent job that kept him occupied till evening. Normally he was a man of endless energy, but today he was so upset that he felt exhausted. He decided to go and have a rest in the office before he looked for Wei.

Wei was waiting for him in the office. "Oh, Master Wei, here you are. . . ." His face went grey. He had never thought that Wei would come to find him.

"At your service, comrade. . . ." Wei was imitating his tone.

Tu felt the blood rushing to his head. He knew they had to talk about it all now, however hard that was going to be. Well, sooner or later it had to happen. Walking over to the teapot, he poured himself a drink which he swallowed at one gulp. "I hear that you helped Hsiao-lung with the welding on 101?"

"Mmm."

"Master Wei!" Sweat was pouring down his face. "That's no way to help him. In fact it just does more damage!"

"Why?"

"He just took it on himself to go in and start work on 101, without permission — that's simply undisciplined anarchist behaviour and he deserves to be criticized severely for it, but you. . . ."

"Of course he should be criticized for that and taught how to do better. But try and think of it another way. It's like a child learning to walk. He's not going to learn without falling down several times and we can't forbid him to walk just because he falls down! Chin-

ken, we have to see their mistakes and faults, but it's even more important to see the revolutionary initiative that makes them do what they do!"

"Revolutionary initiative, indeed!" Tu would have laughed if Wei had not been his master.

"Chin-ken, I say you're —" But noticing the expression on Tu's face, Wei changed his mind. "Let's go," he said at last.

"Where to?"

"Let's go and find Hsiao-lung and talk about it with him. It's your attitude that's wrong. I've just been talking to Hsiao-lung and the others, and they've taught me a lot. To tell you the truth, there's a lot that we don't understand about these youngsters."

"If you don't understand them, it's because you don't come across them much at work. But I am with them twenty-four hours of the day, and that bunch of lads just chatter and fool about. They're rather cocky, I should say. . . ." He waved his hand. "That's all there is to it."

Wei said nothing, his face was red with emotion and his hands shook slightly. In all their years together, Tu had rarely — never, in fact — seen Wei in such a temper. He was somewhat surprised.

"Let's get going . . ." Wei said softly after a while, in a tone that couldn't be ignored.

One after the other, the two men, one tall, the other short, left the yard in silence. Evening was just falling, and crowds of workers were pouring out of the factories, going home on bikes or on foot, chattering and laughing. Wei had already found out the address of the estate where Hsiao-lung lived. It was a new cream-coloured four-storey block, and going up four flights

of stairs, they found his number on the door. Wei didn't speak to Tu who was following him with bowed head, but indicated the door.

Tu had not relented, but he went up to the door and knocked. In reply there was a furious shout:

"I'm not coming, I tell you!"

The two men looked at each other, alarmed, but Wei was not put off. Tu knocked again on the door, even louder this time. The reply to this sounded even more impatient: "Are you trying to drive me crazy?" And the door of the room flew open, revealing an angry face.

"Hello, Hsiao-lung, who's put you in such a temper?" Wei asked with a smile.

"I . . . I thought it was Ah-san from next door wanting me to go and play football again . . ." Hsiao-lung managed to stammer out. He felt nervous especially when he caught sight of Tu's sulky face. He stood to one side to let them in, not looking too welcoming.

Wei went in first and took in the contents of the room in one glance. It was an ordinary worker's room. Apart from the usual furniture, he noticed a board on the wall covered with photos of ships. On the table there was an unfinished model ship with a file, chisel and other tools next to it.

Tu stood there without a word. Hsiao-lung looked awkward too. In order to break the tension, Wei started to chat with Hsiao-lung in a friendly way:

"Are you alone? Where's your mother?"

"Not back from work yet."

"Your Dad?"

"He's away at sea."

"Away at sea?"

"He's a seaman on an ocean-going ship — the *Red Flag*."

"No wonder you're so keen on ships." Wei picked up the model ship from the table and was impressed to see it was called *China*.

"If I'm not allowed to build big ships, at least I can build small ones," Hsiao-lung remarked.

Tu had been against the idea of coming here in the first place. He felt it would lead to nothing except strengthening Hsiao-lung's nerve and a loss of prestige for himself. Hearing this sarcastic remark, he lost his temper and said loudly:

"Who's stopping you building ships? The state has laid everything on for you, provided you with the means and funds to come here and learn a craft, but you're not prepared to stick at it and work hard. All day. . . . Now you end up acting completely without discipline, in an anarchist way and secretly slipping into 101 to do some welding. You disobey your leaders and don't have any respect for anyone. If it goes on like this, not only you but. . . ."

Wei knew that this was not only addressed to Hsiao-lung but was meant as a rebuke to himself too. But Hsiao-lung wasn't going to take this and answered back, his eyes flashing with anger:

"Haven't you spent enough time lecturing me at work? Why do you have to come to my home to . . . ?"

"You've got a cheek. . . ."

"Chin-ken!" shouted Wei who could not stand by and listen any longer. They both fell silent, a bit shocked, and for a moment there was a strange quiet in the room. The only noise was the loud tick-tock of



the alarm clock on the cupboard.

Suddenly, Tu turned round and, crossing the room in big strides, was soon out of the door slamming it behind him.

"Master Wei, he . . ." Hsiao-lung started up and looked hesitantly at the firmly-closed door.

Wei stood staring into the distance through the window. Night had fallen, but everywhere the dark was broken up by countless clusters of bright flashing lights from men welding in the yard. The slam of the door had hit him like a blow in his heart. In the last twenty-five years there had been numerous conflicts between the two of them, but they'd never had such a sharp, deep disagreement. What grieved him was not that Tu had made a mistake—anyone can make mistakes—but that he couldn't see his mistake and kept insisting that he was right. But, he thought that though the path was tortuous, the future was bright. He was sure Tu would eventually come back on to the right track. Hearing Hsiao-lung speak, he turned round and said:

"He'll come back!"

"He'll come back?" Hsiao-lung misunderstood and looked at the closed door, puzzled.

Wei nodded confidently.

Hsiao-lung just looked at him dispiritedly.

"Your little ship *China* isn't badly done." Wei picked up the model with great interest. "Only the rudder isn't in the right place. Its centre should be in a perfectly straight line with the centre of the propeller. . . . I'll help you fix it."

Hsiao-lung felt rather embarrassed. How could he let this man, who was in charge of building ships of thousands of tons, help him with his model? Then, re-

membering how Wei had guided his hands welding, he felt reassured. Wei began to fit the pieces together seriously.

"Tell me, Hsiao-lung, why are you so enthusiastic about getting down to the real work of building ships?"

"Why?" Hsiao-lung raised a clenched fist. "To oppose imperialism, revisionism and reaction!"

"To oppose imperialism, revisionism and reaction?" Wei repeated thoughtfully.

"That's right," said Hsiao-lung proudly. "For a century before liberation the imperialists invaded and bullied us and now they are still thinking of any way they can to make things difficult for us and even attack our country. We must do as Chairman Mao has told us: resolutely oppose them and struggle with them to the end!" He lifted the model ship from the table. "We must build a great railway on the seas to defend our country and support the world revolution."

"Oppose them!" Wei repeated to himself. Hsiao-lung's words seemed to have shed a great light over his mind. He had always thought of the "rebel spirit" of Hsiao-lung and the other youngsters as a pure and valuable thing, but now he realized it was more than that. Hearing the determination and confidence in Hsiao-lung's voice, he saw how strong and deep this spirit was. These were the thoughts and hopes of the new generation of young people, tempered in the Cultural Revolution. He realized now that it was not only Tu who hadn't understood; he himself had only had a faint idea of what was going on in their minds.

"Yes, Hsiao-lung, that's a really good answer! Really good!" Wei gripped the lad's hand tightly. Hsiao-lung looked at him sheepishly, because, to tell the truth, he

had not imagined that these simple words would have had such an affect on Wei.

"But, Master Wei. . . . For the moment, I'll give up the idea of going to work on the ship," Hsiao-lung suddenly said, shaking his head.

"Why?" Wei was surprised.

"Director Tu will never allow it. I can see it's causing a great contradiction between the two of you. I wouldn't want to cause you any trouble."

"You don't want to cause trouble for me!" Frowning a little, Wei continued seriously. "That's not right, you know. Contradiction? You've studied Chairman Mao's *On Contradiction*, haven't you? Everything in life contains contradictions, everything contains struggle. Development occurs when you have the struggle of opposites and only then do you get progress." Having said that, he put his hand on Hsiao-lung's thin shoulder affectionately and went on: "You're young now and full of revolutionary enthusiasm. That's very precious, but you can't rely entirely on such simple feelings. You must seriously and painstakingly study Marxism-Leninism and the writings of Chairman Mao in order to remould your world outlook and steel yourself into a self-aware revolutionary. That's the only way we can maintain our revolutionary vigour." He was staring out into the distance where blue flashes from the welding, rising and falling in the dark, perfectly matched the stars in the sky. "We must dedicate ourselves to the revolution and shine as brightly as those lights there — to the very end of our lives."

"Master Wei, don't worry, I will never disappoint the trust of the Party and the working class." Hsiao-

lung clenched his fist tightly, determination and sincerity were shining in his bright eyes.

4

It was late when Wei left Hsiao-lung's home, excited but disturbed: excited to have discovered the bright inner world of the youngsters, but disturbed about how to help Tu Chin-ken understand.

He was walking along a quiet path shaded by trees, with paddy-fields on the left and orchards on the right. The night was as still as a pool of water and only glimmers of light came through the thick trees. The air was full of the warm, damp and sweet smells of plants and flowers. He walked along, lost in his thoughts, when he heard a familiar voice call him. He could tell without looking it was Tu.

"I'd like to talk to you." Tu hurried up. He seemed to have taken some decision and to have been waiting for Wei there.

"We should get to the bottom of this matter." Walking slowly forward, Wei pointed at some big stones and said: "Let's sit down."

Taking a couple of "Flying Horse" cigarettes from his pocket, Tu handed one to Wei and struck a match. In its light he saw the agitated expression on Wei's face as he took two long drags on the cigarette. The moon was reflected in the small waves in the paddy-field where they could hear frogs croaking.

Neither of them spoke for a time. How strange people are! For twenty-five years, they had fought side

by side, sharing each other's lives; they had both worn the same overalls made of old sacking; they had shared the pain of defeat and the happiness of success. Now they were still together, side by side, but their minds were miles apart. What was this barrier that separated them?

"Master Wei," Tu lowered his head and began to speak, obviously in distress. "It was you who brought me up. You taught me my craft. You —"

"First and foremost, we are class brothers!" Wei waved his hand. "We've no need to beat about the bush. Let's be quite frank and open."

"I'll be blunt. I think you're too easy on Hsiao-lung and the others."

"Too easy on them?" Wei smiled. "What should I do?"

"These youngsters have grown up in the new society under the red flag and have never experienced the bitter life in the old society."

"That's a fact. They can never equal us older men in that." Wei blew out a mouthful of smoke. "But don't forget, everything in life obeys the rule 'one divides into two' and this is no exception. If you look at it from the other side, there are things in which we can never equal them: they are more ambitious, more enthusiastic, less weighed down. As Chairman Mao has said: **The young people are the most active and vital force in society. They are the most eager to learn and the least conservative in their thinking. This is especially so in the era of socialism.**' Chin-ken, in many ways they look much farther than we do."

"That may be so, but still we should be strict in our demands as we educate them."

"Of course we should be strict. But what's the aim of what you call being strict?"

"The aim? . . . It's for their own good." It was some time before Tu could give this reply.

"Ha . . . ha . . . my dear Director Tu, you're wrong," Wei said laughing. "You should say it's for your own good."

"For my own good?" Tu looked at him in surprise.

"Yes, for your own good. The aim of making strict demands on the younger generation is to help them grow up into revolutionary fighters. But what you've been doing has been aimed at making life as simple as possible for yourself and making them into obedient little sheep or slaves who obey every command of their instructors! Didn't you complain that they're not what you would like them to be?"

Tu felt as though he had been hit over the head with an eighteen-pound hammer. He opened his mouth to say something but closed it again. A little frog crawled out of the field and crouched in front of him, observing him quietly.

"But in fact," went on Wei, "even you yourself weren't all that obedient when you were an apprentice. Don't you remember how you stole into the boiler room to do some welding and got the sack as a result?"

"That . . . of course I remember." He was disturbed. That was before liberation when he had started work at the age of sixteen as an apprentice in an imperialist-owned shipyard. Although Wei, who was his master, taught him all the necessary skills, the foreign boss had insisted on the rule that apprentices could not handle the welding tools before their three years' training was up. They were only allowed to hand rods to

the skilled workers and do odd jobs round the yard. One day after work, Tu had slipped into an old ship tied up in the dock to practise welding. Unluckily for him he was discovered by a foreign foreman, beaten fiercely and given the sack. When Wei had pleaded for him to be reinstated, he was sacked too. Many years had passed since then, and although many other incidents were lost now in the sea of memories, this particular incident was engraved on his heart. He would never forget it.

"But I don't understand what that's got to do with the current question of Hsiao-lung and the others," he said, unable to see the point.

"Of course it's relevant," Wei said firmly. "Tell me, what gave you the courage to disobey the rules of the foreign boss and slip into the boiler room on your own?"

"I wanted to get skilled as soon as I could. And I refused to be a slave to imperialists!"

"That's right," Wei nodded. "Just think for a moment, why do Hsiao-lung and the others feel so anxious to do real welding?"

"That . . ."

"I know, you're going to say the past is different from the present. Of course it's different. But the principle still applies. The only difference is that Hsiao-lung and the others are even more far-sighted and ambitious than you were. Why are they in such a hurry to work on the ship? Because they won't sit by and wait for the imperialists to come and interfere with us, they want to oppose them, to make our country strong and to make their contribution to the emancipation of mankind. But you think. . . ."

"Master Wei!" Tu's voice trembled. He was completely shaken. What had he been thinking? How could he have treated such lofty revolutionary aims as something designed just to annoy him, to cause him trouble? How could he have treated the youngsters' pure revolutionary ideals as over-ambitious fantasies? How could he have treated such brave fighters as a burden to be supported on his back? "I was wrong," he said softly, and buried his head in his hands.

The chorus of croaks from the frogs grew clearer and louder while everything around seemed even quieter. As a gentle breeze stirred the trees, the drops of dew from the leaves and flowers fell down on to Wei's forehead, cool and refreshing.

5

Under Wei's supervision, Hsiao-lung and fifty other apprentices were tested earlier in arc welding, and forty of them who passed the test were allowed to go and work on the *Progress*.

Under the direction of Wei and other older workers, a dozen young men formed a Youth Shock Brigade with Hsiao-lung as leader. They took on the most difficult part of the work — the welding of part of the stern — sub-section 101.

The shock team battled away for over twenty days and nights to complete their task. The original plan was to go on until they finished the welding and then have the section hoisted up and fitted to the rest of the hull ready for the launching. But the main column for

the stern was cast at an outside workshop. Because of the complexity of the job it was delivered two days late. Besides they had successive days of rain. So finally, only 101 was left uncompleted when all the other sections had been hoisted into place.

The battle had been going on for a day and half the night. When they were hungry, they ate a piece of steamed bread. When they were too tired, they leaned against the plating and snatched a moment's sleep. Their eyes were red and sore from the continuous glare of the welding. But not one of them would lay down his weapon — the welding torch.

It was midnight: they had eight hours to go before it got light. If the job was not finished by then, 101 could not be hoisted into place on time, and the launching of the ship would have to be delayed. Hsiao-lung and his team members were getting agitated and their director, Tu, was even more worried. Without saying a word to anyone, he walked around examining the section all over, inside and outside. Judging from the amount of work left to be done, he calculated it would take at least sixteen hours to complete. As they had only eight hours left, whatever they did would be of no avail. Since the conversation a few days before with Wei, there had been a fierce struggle going on in his mind. After Wei had personally given the youngsters an early test, Tu had seen for himself how fast Hsiao-lung and the others had progressed. But he still felt uneasy about entrusting them with such a difficult task as 101, and it looked as though his misgivings were going to be proved right.

Wei got everyone together to discuss the problem and find a solution.

"I've got an idea," said Hsiao-lung, his eyes fixed on Tu.

"Be brave and speak out," Wei encouraged him.

"At the moment we've got one man in charge of one seam in the plates, so there are people standing around without any work and we're slowed down. I've been thinking that if a couple of men, or several at a time worked one seam, we could speed up a lot."

"Several men work one seam?" Wei said thoughtfully, glancing at Tu.

Tu thought it was a bold suggestion and considered for a moment before saying: "It would certainly speed up. The only snag is that when we come to examine the welding under X-ray, if we find places not up to standard, how will we be able to assign responsibility for them? It'll lead to rows and will be detrimental to our unity."

Hsiao-lung said: "We must certainly guarantee the quality of our work and make sure it's one hundred per cent good. But . . ."

"Hsiao-lung is right. As revolutionary welders, the most important thing for us is to ensure the quality of our work, so that there are no faults in it. But that doesn't mean assigning blame . . ." Wei said.

"That's correct, that suggestion! And the reasoning behind it. Only a youngster like Hsiao-lung here could have had such a bold idea," said one of the older workers, nodding approvingly. "What's so good about our usual method—one man to one seam! When a fault is found, we can assign responsibility, and the one concerned will feel embarrassed. Does it signify anything? No!"

Tu nodded silently. He admitted to himself again:

although he was older and had years of experience of this work, he was way behind these youngsters in thinking.

"There's another problem," another worker said. "There's so little space inside that if we have two men working one seam, they're going to be cramped right up together, and the man underneath will get covered with sparks."

"That's bound to happen," said Wei. "We'll just have to shake them off. A welder isn't afraid of a few small burns. Come on, Hsiao-lung, we'll work together. You take the top half and I'll do the bottom."

"Master Wei!" Tu grabbed Wei, trying to stop him.

"Don't worry, it'll be all right," Wei freed himself determinedly.

So when they had redivided the work among the team, they all eagerly set to work again. Wei and Hsiao-lung took the narrowest, most difficult section where a man could not even stand up straight. It was so cramped and stuffy that even before they had started work they began to sweat. As Hsiao-lung leaned over to weld the top half and Wei crouched down working at the bottom, the light of the torch flashed, sparks flew all over, and the air was filled with fumes.

Hsiao-lung was working away when he suddenly smelt burning cloth among all the other fumes.

"Master Wei!" he cried out, looking down in fright.

"Pay attention to your work! Concentrate!" Wei replied without even taking his eyes off his work.

From the serious and forceful way Wei said these words, Hsiao-lung understood the breadth of vision of this man, one of the older generation of workers. He clenched his teeth and, keeping a firm grip on the torch,

concentrated all his energy on his work. The sweat poured off his forehead and dripped down his spine. But he didn't pause to wipe it off. Through his shield, he happily watched the metal melting into a blue liquid, filling up the seam, joining up and hardening.

He didn't know how long went by before he took off his shield and, soaked with sweat, relaxed. Suddenly he noticed that Wei's cloth hat and overalls were covered with hundreds of burn marks. He cried out:

"Master Wei, you must stop welding! Go out and take a break!"

"Oh, I'm all right," Wei insisted.

"Master Wei!" Tu rushed in and grabbed him by the arm. The two of them stared straight into each other's eyes and at once understood what was going on in the other's mind. Gradually Wei relaxed and let go of the welding torch, and Tu picked it up firmly and said:

"Hsiao-lung, let's finish it. You do the top and I'll do the bottom!"

Hsiao-lung was dumbfounded for a moment. Then he said in an excited voice: "Yes, let's get going!"

In a moment, the glare from the torches and the rising light of the dawn melted together, reflected on the men's faces, on the great ship they were building, and all over the land. . . .

Many Swallows Make a Summer

Lin Cheng-yi

IT was time for the morning shift to begin. Greeting each other with lively banter and laughter, workers streamed through the gate of the textile mill, like water pouring through an open sluice.

Beside the main thoroughfare in the mill was a propaganda board, before which a large crowd had gathered. An old worker, hurrying by, asked casually: "What's everyone reading?"

"An article by the Meng Hsin-ying Group. They've set themselves a new target," someone answered.

The old worker halted and elbowed his way through the throng, eager to see what this new target was. . . .

The Meng Hsin-ying Group of the weaving shop was known to all the workers of the mill. Ever since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution it has been a Red Banner winner. And people agreed that it was good all round: A1 in ideology, A1 in production and A1 in unity.

However, the group's leader Meng Hsin-ying kept urging her fellow workers not to rest on their laurels but to strive to do still better. This attitude of hers won the approval of the older women, who used to say:

"Hsin-ying, you're perfectly right. 'Good, better, best; never let it rest till the good is better and the better best.'" To this the younger ones would add: "Sister Hsin-ying, just you give the lead and we'll back you up to the hilt."

Yet things always develop through struggles between contradictory aspects. While people were reading this new article on the blackboard, friction was arising within the group itself.

The mill had recently started trial production of polyester fabrics. Since this called for better weaving techniques, the weaving workshop had decided to transfer Shen Ah-fang, a skilled hand in the MHY Group, to another section to pass on her technical know-how. A worker from that other section would take her place.

That very morning before the shift began, the news of this exchange reached the group as they were changing in the locker room. It aroused a buzz of excited speculation. The bringer of the news was Yang Pei. Tucking her short thick plaits into her cap, she announced that while passing by the office of the workshop's Party secretary she had overheard a conversation between Meng Hsin-ying and Secretary Wei. "The secretary was asking Sister Hsin-ying if she had anybody special in mind. It sounds as if she can take her choice. We can trust her to pick someone good."

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched. You may be in for a shock," rejoined Chu Ting, a smile dimpling her plump cheeks.

"Know what I think? Hsin-ying will most likely choose Ku Ya-chin," added forty-year-old Hsu Hsiao-mei, who, having put on her working clothes and white apron, was picking some fluff off her sleeve.

"What?" Yang Pei's eyes nearly popped out of her head. "Ya-chin? Haven't you heard that jingle about her?"

Ya-chin won't speak at meetings,
To work she's not inclined;
No matter how you push or pull,
She always lags behind."

"Aiya! Just listen to the girl!" Hsiao-mei chuckled. "So you don't think Ya-chin's up to the job, eh?"

"Whether she is or not is none of my business. But our A1 group shouldn't take anyone so backward," retorted Yang Pei, pouting.

"What's this about an A1 group? And who's backward?" demanded Meng Hsin-ying, who had just entered.

Suddenly aware of her unguarded utterance, Yang Pei blushed while the others flocked round Hsin-ying to ask her about the newcomer.

"Go on with your discussion. I'd like to hear what you think," said the young group leader whose face was radiant.

"All right then. I'll give it you straight. Anyone else will do but not Ku Ya-chin," blurted out Yang Pei, her face redder than ever, one of her plaits escaping from her cap.

"Why not?" Hsin-ying stepped up to the girl to tuck her plait back.

"Never mind why. Just tell us whom you've chosen," insisted Yang Pei. Only nineteen and a member of the Communist Youth League, Yang Pei had just finished her apprenticeship. Being quick-tempered, she looked ready to burst if Hsin-ying delayed her answer any longer.

"All right, I'll tell you, but mind you take the news in the right spirit. Our replacement is Ya-chin."

With a cry of dismay Yang Pei seated herself on a locker and said no more. Hsin-ying looked round to see the expressions on the other faces, some showing approval and others obviously worried. As she changed her clothes the scene of her talk with the Party secretary came back to her mind. . . .

Early that morning when Hsin-ying reached the mill, Wei Lin-ti, secretary of the general Party branch, had just knocked off after the night shift. She beckoned Hsin-ying to her office.

"Hsin-ying, we've decided to take Shen Ah-fang out of your group. Any objection?" Wei asked without any preliminaries.

"No, none," answered Hsin-ying equally briskly. "We have the most skilled hands, so we ought to help other groups."

"But we'll send you a replacement. Whom would you like?" Wei looked squarely at Hsin-ying.

"Give us Ya-chin," replied Hsin-ying readily.

"Ya-chin? Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

Wei looked into Hsin-ying's sparkling eyes and was touched. Memories of the past flashed into her mind. Eight years ago when Meng Hsin-ying, just turned seventeen, came to this factory, Wei, a loom-tender of thirty years' standing, took her on as her apprentice. At first the girl had clung to her like a shadow, turning to her for every little thing. However, with the help of the Party, the Youth League and the older hands, Hsin-ying, a third-generation worker, had made rapid progress. Well steeled in the Cultural Revolution, she

became a Party member and was put in charge of over two dozen workers operating several hundred looms. Work in her group went with such a swing that veterans in other shops held it up as a model. Thus Meng Hsin-ying became a standard-bearer in the eyes of the youngsters, and the group under her was acknowledged by everyone to be an advanced unit. Secretary Wei, now greying at the temples, could not suppress a smile of satisfaction as she recalled her former apprentice's progress and her political and ideological maturity. She fully approved this offer to take on Ku Ya-chin.

"Now tell me, Hsin-ying, why you choose Ya-chin."

"You know, Secretary Wei, that both Ya-chin's mother and mine worked as 'contract labourers' before liberation, and that Ya-chin and I came to this mill at the same time. When I was a group leader of the Youth League, she was in my group and eager to make progress. But after she married and had a baby she began to change. . . ." Hsin-ying, a little worked up, paused a moment before going on: "I've never missed any chance for a talk with her, but since we're not on the same shift we haven't seen much of each other. When I heard that jingle about her, I was really worried. I feel that one of our young people shouldn't lag behind like that."

"Don't worry, Hsin-ying," said the older woman warmly. "The Party branch has talked over this problem and we're going to transfer Ya-chin to your group. It's true she's not made much progress politically and has some unhealthy ideas, but she's essentially sound. Remember both her father and grandfather were workers too. Your group as an advanced unit should help

her to catch up with the rest of you.”

“We will!” Hsin-ying sprang to her feet. “Ya-chin has quite a few good points, actually. Just after she finished her apprenticeship she was elected an advanced worker.”

“Get your whole group to work on this, Hsin-ying,” was Secretary Wei’s parting advice. “Your Party branch secretary won’t be back for some time from that study course. As a member of the Party branch committee you must do more ideological work yourself.”

This advice was in Hsin-ying’s mind as she took a look at her anxious fellow workers.

Since she was silent for so long, Hsu Hsiao-mei put in, “Hsin-ying, I don’t see anything wrong with taking on Ku Ya-chin. I’m not worried about her being backward, we can help her along.”

“Right,” said Chu Ting. “We’ve just been studying philosophy, let’s put it into practice by turning something negative into something positive.”

“Ya-chin can mend her ways, can’t she?” added another.

Only Yang Pei, still unconvinced, sat tight on the locker with her back to the rest. “Help her along, help her along!” she grumbled. “With Ya-chin pulling us back we’ll never get anywhere. Aren’t we preparing to break another record? If so, our group. . .” She left the sentence unfinished.

“Our group should have a meeting after this shift.” Hsin-ying completed Yang Pei’s sentence with hers. “We’ll thrash the problem out and decide how to view it and how to cope with it. Now let’s get to work.”

Hsin-ying took Yang Pei’s hand and pulled her up.

The girl, still pouting, couldn’t repress a chuckle as she met Hsin-ying’s eyes which were disapproving yet so full of concern. Yang Pei pulled a long face and tossed her head. “Why are you staring at me? I don’t agree, and that’s that.”

Ignoring this, Hsin-ying walked along with her to the weaving shop, where she patted her on the shoulder and said something, her voice being drowned in the roar and clatter of the machines.

2

Some people thought Meng Hsin-ying rather “peculiar,” because whenever she was asked at meetings to introduce her Red Banner group’s successful experience, she always pointed out its shortcomings. And in reply to praise she would say sincerely, “We’ve a long way to go yet. If we keep looking backward, we’ll slow down. We should look forward and never stop advancing, just as when making our rounds between the weaving frames. Besides, compared with other groups, we’re still behind in many ways.” Normally, when chatting or laughing with fellow workers, twenty-five-year-old Hsin-ying was as gay as a lark, giving no one the impression of an old head on young shoulders. But from her study, work and handling of problems, people could easily see that she used her head and was far-sighted.

Now the news of Ku Ya-chin’s selection spread like wildfire through the whole mill, causing a wide discussion. Most of the workers admired Hsin-ying’s bold spirit, but some feared that, strong as her shoulders

were, she might find Ya-chin too much of a "burden."

Hsin-ying did not falter in her determination to give the new replacement a hearty welcome. And Ya-chin was surprised to find the rest of the MHY Group equally warm-hearted. Even Yang Pei showed up well: she didn't say anything at the welcome meeting but neither did she sulk. Since Hsin-ying had pointed out the fact that Ya-chin might change, she was watching to see how the newcomer would behave. As long as Ya-chin did not handicap the whole group, Yang Pei would be satisfied.

Ya-chin's transfer to the well-known MHY Group had taken her completely by surprise. Though she never considered herself "backward" she knew that she was far behind Hsin-ying, who was her own age and had come to this mill at the same time. Now that she had a home, a husband and a child, it was no longer so easy to go all out and work wholeheartedly. To complete her quota each month, she thought, was enough. As to such group activities as study and meetings, she thought nothing of, often excusing herself from them. Besides, she was quite contented with her life, especially when compared with what she had gone through in the bad old days when her parents had died of hunger. She felt lucky to live in the new society, not only with a job guaranteed but with a snug home too — something her parents never had enjoyed. That being so, she did not care what people thought of her. As long as she fulfilled her quota, what else mattered? Her close friend Liu Wei-chih, a nurse in the clinic, often said to her: "Enjoy life while you can. You're only young once. When you're getting on for forty like me, you won't enjoy life half so much. Why not just take it

easy and have a good time? You're not out for a name, so why should you strain yourself?"

Nevertheless, Ku Ya-chin did feel a little tense when she came to the MHY Group. She was touched, of course, by the genuine warmth of her welcome, and particularly by being assigned Hsin-ying's twenty-four new looms instead of the old looms left by Shen Ah-fang. After a couple of days, however, she found herself quite out of step with the rest of the group. If she kept to their tight schedule of work, study, meetings and talks, it would disturb the happy home life she was used to. The group's trial production of polyester fabrics only added to the tension, which made her feel unable to stand the pace any longer. Knitting her brows, she ventured to say at a meeting, "I just haven't got the skill to raise my output."

Meng Hsin-ying who worked in the lane next to hers knew what was in Ya-chin's mind. Sometimes on an inspection tour, Hsin-ying would come over to help her re-start a stopped loom. She observed that Ya-chin was not slow at all when it came to knot-making. But she wasted a lot of time by day-dreaming, when she would stop to stare absently at the loom until reminded to get on with her work.

This made it clear to Hsin-ying that Ya-chin's trouble was not due to lack of skill but to her way of thinking. Hsin-ying used to say: Lack of enthusiasm in work can always be traced to wrong thinking. What was Ya-chin thinking about all the time? To find this out, Hsin-ying determined to have a good chat with her.

One evening the group met for a discussion after work. No sooner did it end than Ya-chin got up to go home. "Ya-chin, come here and let's have a talk,"

Hsin-ying called out to her fondly.

Before Ya-chin could refuse, Hsin-ying led her to sit down by the window, handing her some of the cotton waste she was holding. Ya-chin knew what this meant for it was the custom in the group to practise knot making in every spare moment.

"Ya-chin, you've been here a week now, haven't you? What do you think of the work here?" asked Hsin-ying as her fingers deftly making knots.

Ya-chin lowered her head, simply twisting a thread round her fingers. She kept silent for a long while then said, "I haven't really thought about it."

"Do you remember the day we first came to the mill?" Hsin-ying glanced at the rows of brightly-lit buildings outside. "What a tremendous change!"

Ya-chin remained silent.

A faint smile flitted across Hsin-ying's face at the sight of those compressed lips. "There's been quite a change in you too, Ya-chin," she said.

"In me? What sort of change?" was the rather tense rejoinder.

"From a middle-school student who'd just left off a Young Pioneer's red scarf to a textile worker; from an ignorant apprentice to a skilled weaver — isn't that a great change?"

Ya-chin, raising her head to glance at her group leader, realized that Hsin-ying was completely in earnest.

"You surely haven't forgotten the year you and I finished our apprenticeship and were cited as advanced workers? When we went up the platform to receive our prizes, I was so nervous that you had to push me forward. 'Don't be shy,' you said. 'This is only the

beginning. We must do our best to keep this title every year.' Remember?"

Ya-chin hung her head again, mechanically tearing at the cotton waste in her hand.

"But you began thinking differently later on. How did that happen?" Hsin-ying paused in her knotting to look at Ya-chin's elaborate hair-do.

"I . . . I'd household chores to attend to after my marriage. That made a big difference . . ." Ya-chin muttered, wondering why she couldn't give her group leader her usual reply to those who criticized her, namely that as long as she completed her quota that should be enough.

"If that's the case," Hsin-ying said smiling, "then Hsu Hsiao-mei, Chu Ting and the others in our group who have a large family and more housework than you have more reason to mark time. Right? But look at them, how keen they are in their work and studies!"

Ya-chin darted a look at Hsin-ying, then answered half in fun and half in earnest, "How can I compare with them? People say I'm backward. How can someone backward compare with advanced workers?"

"It's not what people say that counts but your own behaviour." Hsin-ying's tone was grave now. "How many women textile workers are there in our mill, how many women factory workers in our country? When they get married and have families, does that stop them from making any further progress? Can that be used as a pretext for seeking something disapproved by the working class?"

Stunned, Ya-chin flushed up, saying, "What do you think I am seeking, then?" She tore up a skein of yarn.

Hsin-ying stood up and put a hand on Ya-chin's shoulder, adding gently: "Ya-chin, we're all workers, young workers in the socialist period. We must be a credit to our class. Seriously, what did you have in mind when you first started working, and what are your ideas now?"

Ya-chin just sat there in silence, looking worried. Hsin-ying helped her up and said, "It's late, and you've got the child to fetch from the nursery. Let's go. I'll see you home."

On the way back Ya-chin continued silent, too confused to put her thoughts into words, uncertain even whether what she felt was resentment or remorse. Hsin-ying was silent too. Secretary Wei had repeatedly told her that ideological work required great patience and attention to detail. Now Ya-chin's case was a good test for her.

3

In the June sunshine the cream-coloured factory buildings were a sight to dazzle the eye. In the weaving shop looms were roaring, shuttles flying; lengths of smooth white fabric were growing inch by inch. . .

Meng Hsin-ying and her group were hard at work minding their looms. Their faces were perspiring. It was not too hot there, actually, as the place was well ventilated, but they were working like a house on fire!

Since trial production of the new fabric started, the whole group had gone all out to improve their skill and their output had been rising day by day. Their joy

over this was tempered by worry about Ku Ya-chin, and Hsin-ying, it goes without saying, was most worried. Recently Ya-chin had been attending meetings and study classes more often than before, but she was still very unpredictable. In order to keep up with the others she paid more attention to stoppages of the looms than to checking the fabric woven, so that several times she turned out defective products, affecting the quality standard of the whole group. Hsin-ying decided to hold an on-the-spot meeting to study the problem and find ways to solve it. But the morning the meeting was set for, Ya-chin did not turn up. Why? Hsin-ying was speculating about this while tending her own looms when someone behind her called out loudly, "Group leader!" She spun round and saw it was Yang Pei.

"Look!" bellowed Yang Pei, shoving a slip of paper into Hsin-ying's hand. Unfolding it, Hsin-ying found it was a sick-leave permit from the clinic, entitling Ku Ya-chin to two days' rest for gastritis.

At noon when they knocked off for lunch, Hsin-ying stayed on to clean Ya-chin's twenty-four looms. She did the job meticulously, outwardly calm but inwardly much perturbed by Ya-chin's absence.

The previous evening the problem of how to help Ku Ya-chin had been discussed at a Party meeting. Hsu Hsiao-mei and several other veteran weavers had mentioned the close relationship between Ya-chin and the nurse Liu Wei-chih. Ya-chin obviously modelled herself on Liu in many ways, even down to her hair-style and dress. This was what could be seen outside. What worried them more was Liu's influence on Ya-chin's thinking.

While they were talking, Hsin-ying conjured up a picture of a woman of nearly forty with ivory skin, plump cheeks and a stylish hair-do. That was Liu Weichih, daughter of a merchant. She had been brought up by her aunt, wife of the capitalist boss of this mill before liberation. At the time of liberation when Liu had just graduated from middle school her uncle gave her a job in the mill's accounting department, but she was quite unable to keep accounts. In 1960 she was transferred to the clinic to be a nurse. Having picked up the bourgeois outlook on life from her aunt, she not only ordered her own life by it but was always propagating bourgeois ideas.

Hsin-ying blamed herself for not having noticed the close relationship between Liu and Ya-chin. As a Communist she ought to have been sensitive to everything going on around her. Now that a class sister like Ku Ya-chin had fallen behind, she must help her for the sake of the revolution.

"Hsin-ying, why cut your lunch?"

Hsin-ying wheeled round and found Hsu Hsiao-mei had brought her two steaming-hot buns.

"You should take care of your health, Hsin-ying. You look thin these days," added Hsu amiably.

Hsin-ying's heart immediately flooded with warmth. She said, "I'm wondering how to help Ya-chin to forge ahead."

"Ya-chin? She's come."

"Has she? Where is she?"

"She was changing when I came in," answered Hsu.

Hsin-ying started for the locker room but was intercepted by Ya-chin who had come back to her lane.

Seeing her group leader standing beside the looms

with a pile of dusters before her and the buns Hsu Hsiao-mei had been carrying in her hands, Ya-chin understood everything. She was very moved and thoroughly ashamed.

"Ya-chin, are you all right now?" Hsin-ying asked with concern. "You should be resting at home, why come to work?"

Ya-chin, flushing, hung her head and said nothing.

From her expression Hsin-ying knew how she felt. By now the rest of the group were coming back. Hsin-ying said to Ya-chin, "Tending looms requires concentration. If you have anything to say to me, wait until after the shift. If you feel unwell, let Chu Ting help you. Don't overdo it."

Ya-chin nodded.

In spite of Hsin-ying's kind advice Ya-chin couldn't control her uneasiness. While working she watched the expressions of those around her. She could have kicked herself for her stupid behaviour.

When she reached the far end of her lane she found a stoppage. Having tied up the broken thread she was just about to switch on when she saw Yang Pei glaring at her from the opposite lane. This made her lose her head and jerk the lever. Abruptly the loom started and jammed. Crack! The shuttle broke. Sweat beaded Ya-chin's nose, her head seemed to be bursting. Truly, troubles never come singly. And she could imagine Yang Pei's caustic comment: "Some weaver you are, breaking shuttles!"

Of course, Yang Pei was exasperated by Ya-chin's clumsiness — after turning out inferior work all these days she had now gone and broken a shuttle! But in order not to disturb the whole group the girl bit back

the acid remark on the tip of her tongue and went on making her rounds.

Nevertheless, Yang Pei was Yang Pei. It was impossible for her to hold back her feelings for long. Soon after the shift she stirred up a storm in the workshop.

Ya-chin was just entering the locker room when she found Yang Pei close at her heels. The girl's stern face dismayed her. Taking off her cap, she turned away to fish out a mirror from her handbag, and as she picked some cotton fluff off her hair she watched the girl in the mirror. Yang Pei seized this opportunity to attack.

"Go on, have a good look!" she sneered. "Your face is so lovely, red and white. And there's red and white, too, on the lovely fabrics you weave." This was a reference to the red and white "strings" tied on defective products in the inspection room.

Instantly Ya-chin flared up. "What do a few rejects matter?" she snapped back. "Who hasn't turned out a reject? You're only a greenhorn, it's not for you to gripe."

This so enraged Yang Pei that she bawled, "How lightly you take things—only a few rejects! You've lowered our whole group's standard. You do as you please—you didn't show up at this morning's meeting and now you've spoiled a shuttle. Anyone working in our group must keep up its good name. We can't let one stinking fish spoil the whole soup!"

"So I stink, do I! All right, why not have me transferred? Who wants to share in your glory?"

With this Ya-chin snatched up her handbag and flung out of the room. Hsin-ying, Hsu Hsiao-mei and Chu Ting who had just come in went after her, calling to

her to stop, but she dashed off without even turning her head.

Returning to the locker room, Hsin-ying saw Yang Pei sitting on a locker with tears in her eyes. . . .

"Sister Hsin-ying, you should have heard her . . ." Yang Pei protested bitterly, frowning and pouting.

Hsin-ying was both amused and exasperated. Yang Pei studied hard, used her head and dared to speak up, act and fight for what was right. There was no holding her back. But it was time she grew up, raised her level of understanding and made fresh headway.

"I've just heard you!" Hsin-ying retorted, sitting down beside Yang Pei. "Is that the way for a Youth League member to help a comrade? All you can think of is our group's good name. Have you ever reflected why we should help Ku Ya-chin? Is it just because she may spoil our good name? Think it over. . . ."

By this time the rest of the workers had come in. They clustered round to listen, forgetting to change.

With a look at them all Hsin-ying continued, "Ya-chin is one of our younger generation, a member of the working class. She should take up the responsibility history imposes on us workers, be worthy of our Party's expectations and go forward with us together. How can we allow her to lag behind and even fall a victim to bourgeois ideas? We must look further, keeping in mind the interests of the working class and the revolution. Remember Chairman Mao's call: **'Unite to win still greater victories!'**" As she said this Hsin-ying was gazing into the distance and she had lowered her voice as if talking to herself.

"The interests of the working class and the revolution," repeated Yang Pei in a murmur as if her thoughts

were following Hsin-ying's into the distance. Her knit brows smoothed out. Her cheeks were still wet with tears but her wide-open eyes took on a thoughtful expression. . . .

4

Night was closing in. It was growing dark indoors. Back at home Ku Ya-chin sat motionless on her bed, a tumult in her heart. . . .

Since her marriage she had felt contented and happy. It had never struck her how her interest had shifted from the mill and her fellow workers to her home, family and personal problems. It would be incorrect to say, however, that Ku Ya-chin had from the start been used to a snug life like this. Not to speak of the glorious time when she had gained the title of advanced worker, even in the early days of her marriage she had not behaved as she did now. The first time she played truant from a meeting in order to go to a film with her husband she had felt rather guilty. But when Liu Wei-chih heard about this she laughed. "Don't be a fool," she said. "You're only a rank-and-file worker, you needn't take things so seriously. As long as you finish your quota, that's good enough." So before long Ya-chin thought nothing of playing truant, and Liu Wei-chih became her closest friend. If the reproaches of the management and her work-mates sometimes caused her a twinge of remorse Liu soon talked her out of it.

Her experience in Hsin-ying's group had thrown Ya-chin off balance again. The warm-hearted help given

her made her feel bad. She realized how far she had lagged behind the others, who were speeding ahead all the time like flying shuttles, while she had ground to a stop like a rusty loom. She was not clear why this had happened and did want to catch up with the others in production. Unfortunately those defective products turned up and an on-the-spot meeting to discuss her bad work was more than she could take. Then Liu Wei-chih supplied her with a way out—a bogus sick-leave permit.

At home that morning Ya-chin's conscience had plagued her. The faces of her work-mates rose before her: the anger and disappointment on Hsu Hsiao-mei's lined face; the fury and contempt in Yang Pei's ingenuous eyes; and, most often, Hsin-ying's familiar kindly smile. Yet Ya-chin fancied that a stern look had come into Hsin-ying's sparkling eyes as if to reproach her: "Ya-chin, we are all workers, we must be a credit to our class. . . ."

Suddenly Ya-chin's eyes fell on a photograph on the bookcase which Hsin-ying had brought to her a few days before. It showed the two of them in work clothes and caps, hand in hand and smiling as they gazed into the distance. It had been taken just after they were cited as advanced workers.

"Have I really changed so much?" Ya-chin asked herself. Looking at the picture, she recalled the talk Hsin-ying had had with her here a couple of days ago.

In fact, ever since Ya-chin's transfer to this group, if there was no meeting after work Hsin-ying used to call at her home. Sometimes Hsin-ying talked of nothing in particular, only keeping her company as she read or studied; at other times she discussed with her problems

of interest or helped her with her housework. This had stirred Ya-chin very deeply.

Hsin-ying had given Ya-chin this picture with the remark, "I like this photo so much I've brought it along for you in case you've misplaced your own print." The sight of the picture took Ya-chin's breath away. It reminded her of a scene she should never have forgotten.

One Sunday she had asked Hsin-ying to go with her and have a photograph taken. Hsin-ying was not too keen.

"This is a special occasion," urged Ya-chin. "After all, we've both been cited as advanced workers."

"I'd rather wait till I've really become one of the vanguard of the working class."

This was looking too far ahead for Ya-chin. "Let's take a picture now as a memento," she pleaded. "From today on we'll try together to join the vanguard, how about that?"

To this Hsin-ying had readily agreed.

But by the time Hsin-ying became a Party member, Ya-chin's aim in life had shifted.

Now, looking at the picture, Ya-chin re-lived that scene in retrospect.

"Ya-chin, remember what you said at that time?" asked Hsin-ying.

Ya-chin hung her head.

"It seems to me that your goal in life has changed. In those days you were active, eager to go forward, and understood your responsibilities as a worker and young revolutionary. But now you've thrown all that overboard," said Hsin-ying gravely.

When Ya-chin recalled this talk and her bogus sick-leave permit, she felt a great pang of remorse.

Time slipped by. Suddenly Ya-chin heard a click and the room was flooded with light. She raised her head to find Hsin-ying standing before her. Her friend was perspiring and out of breath. Obviously she had come here in a hurry.

The sight lifted a great load from Ya-chin's mind. She blurted out, "Hsin-ying, I've been wrong. . . ."

5

One morning after rain, the sky was tinged with red-gold in the east.

Carrying a bulging satchel, Hsin-ying was heading for the mill in high spirits. Her rosy cheeks glowed with health. As she swung along she was pondering the encouraging changes in Ku Ya-chin.

In the past fortnight Ya-chin had put her whole heart into her work, into the trial production of new fabrics. To everyone's amazement, her output had jumped from the lowest to the highest in the group. She clearly had the makings of a first-rate technician. The last few days she had been trying out a new method of knotting polyester threads. . . .

Those who had enjoyed reciting the jingle about Ya-chin were the most astonished. To them Yang Pei said, "What's so strange about it? This is what we call spirit changing into matter." This made everybody laugh.

What pleased Hsin-ying specially was that Ya-chin

had spent two evenings writing a report on her gains in her recent political studies, a description, in fact, of how her thinking had changed. Hsin-ying read this through twice, then spent a whole evening copying it out in the form of a big-character poster. This was what she was now carrying in her satchel. Posting it up, she thought, would not only encourage Ya-chin but teach the rest of them a good lesson too.

When Hsin-ying reached the mill and put up the poster, it caused quite a sensation. People flocked to read it.

Meanwhile laughter was ringing through the weaving shop where the Meng Hsin-ying Group, after a day off, were preparing for the first shift. Since it was still early they had gathered round Ya-chin to watch her demonstrate her new knot-making method.

Ya-chin's fingers moved so nimbly that Yang Pei cried, "Hey, really fast! Sister Ya-chin, will you teach me how to do that?"

"So Yang Pei's stopped calling Ya-chin a fish," someone joked, setting all the onlookers laughing.

"Who's picking on me?" retorted Yang Pei, pouting. "I admitted I was wrong, didn't I?"

At that moment in came their group leader. The workers immediately surrounded her.

"Comrades, let me tell you some good news," began Hsin-ying. "Secretary Wei's just told me that the factory's Party committee has decided to put polyester fabrics on the mill's regular production schedule next month which starts tomorrow."

The weavers cheered and applauded.

"Not only that," continued Hsin-ying. "The Party branch of our shop has decided to popularize Comrade



Ya-chin's fast knot-making method and to commend her for the marked progress in her thinking. . . . Another thing: with the help of the management and the workers, Liu Wei-chih has made a self-examination and admitted her faults."

"Hurrah! Good for Ya-chin! Congratulations." Over a dozen pairs of hands were extended to Ya-chin. The one who grasped her hands most firmly was Yang Pei. After that Ya-chin sprang forward to grip Hsin-ying's hands and promised, "Hsin-ying, I'm going to do my best . . . to be Chairman Mao's good worker."

Hsin-ying beamed and nodded, thinking to herself: "Wonderful! This is unity: a real good fight and, finally, victory!"

Trial Voyage

Wang Chin-fu, Chu Chi-chang and Yu Peng-nien

IT was already early autumn, but the sultry heat lingered on. The afternoon sun beat down on the trunk road through the ship engine works, while lorries rumbled back and forth, sending up clouds of dust behind them. Despite the heat, everybody in the workshops was full of go, the machines hummed rhythmically round the clock. Down near the waterfront, a mat shed, as tall as a multi-storeyed house — the workshop for the assembly and test of a 10,000-h.p. engine — bore eye-catching couplets whose bold red characters stirred the hearts of the passers-by:

A ten-thousand-h.p. engine is our pride,
The workers of China aim high!
Forward! Braving the wind and storm,
The ship from the east sails the high seas.

A mere dozen metres away, a two-roomed hut made of sheets of iron bore a small placard: Production Headquarters for the 10,000-h.p. Engine. Inside, a tall, sturdy young man was looking intently at a dark brown piece of wood on the table. It was the blade for a sampan oar, which had tarnished with age. After examin-

ing it, he wrapped it up carefully with a big piece of wax paper.

The phone rang, and the young man, having put down the parcel, strode into the outer room. "Hello, Lu Ta-lu speaking. The Marine Transportation Bureau, did you say? Yes? Hello, Comrade Chen Tsung-chieh. What? A trial voyage tomorrow?" He lifted his eyebrows and replied after a moment's thought, "I'll have to consult comrades here and let you know."

Slowly replacing the receiver, Lu Ta-lu, deputy director of the production headquarters, muttered to himself, "What's he up to? Time and again he's put us off when we proposed a trial voyage, and now suddenly he wants to make it tomorrow." The young man frowned as he recalled all that had happened in the past fortnight. . . . Following China's great success in the ship-building industry, the workers of this engineering works had proposed that they follow the line of self-reliance and make a 10,000-h.p. engine in their own way. It would be the first ever made by the works. Their suggestion had borne fruit, and a fortnight previously the workers had fitted their new product in the *Tungfang*, a 10,000-tonner built by the neighbouring shipyard. The trial run had gone smoothly except that the piston in the main engine had jammed near the end of the voyage. Happily the workers celebrated their first success and began to tackle this technical problem. A three-in-one team, made up of cadres, technicians and workers, was organized by Lu Ta-lu and his mates with the support of the factory's Party committee. They improved on the cylinder design and processing technology, and much to their satisfaction, the engine passed the dock test. A few days ago, the

workers had proposed to Chen Tsung-chieh, deputy leader of the engine-testing team in the Marine Transportation Bureau, that the freighter make another trial run with a heavy cargo. But Chen kept putting them off with various excuses: he couldn't find the seamen; the schedule was full up and so on. . . . Now the same man had suddenly called up to fix a trial voyage. . . . Most peculiar!

Having got this far, Lu Ta-lu picked his wicker helmet up off the desk and walked out.

Before him the broad concrete road stretched off to the waterfront. Crates of ship engines awaiting delivery lined both its sides, while lorries loaded with new products streamed out through the factory gates.

The young deputy director walked round the tall, spacious premises. The majestic form of a silvery new 10,000-ton freighter at the wharf came into view, colourful flags fluttering on its tall masts. On its towering bow, the forceful brush strokes of the Chinese characters *Tungfang* caught his eye in dazzling sunlight.

Just as Lu Ta-lu was entering the huge mat shed, a worker from the neighbouring shipyard hurried up to him with the news that the Marine Transportation Bureau was likely to reject their new project and find a substitute engine somewhere else. He told Lu that he hoped they would be able to reverse this idea.

The news took Lu Ta-lu by surprise. "If this is the way things are," he thought to himself, "why did he call for a trial voyage just now?" Having taken leave of the comrade who had brought the news, the young director stepped into the mat shed where the workers were in heated discussion. "Come in, Ta-lu," Master Liang, the assembly and test team leader, led him quick-

ly to the work bench. "Will you sign this too?" he asked, pointing to a big-character poster, still wet with ink.

The young director scanned it. When he came to the headline, "The *Tungfang* Will Make a Trial Voyage; Let's Go Forward," he broke into a laugh and asked, "Have you heard the latest? We've been asked to make a trial run tomorrow!"

This astonished everyone. One of the young workers jumped up and down in excitement. "At last, the time has come!" he shouted.

"But do you realize a typhoon warning has been given?" demanded Lu Ta-lu.

Master Liang rubbed his jaw and commented, "It's strange that of all days they suddenly chose tomorrow, with the typhoon on its way."

"Smells fishy to me."

"What's he up to!"

"Let's call the voyage off and bombard him with big-character posters. Is that the way to receive an engine we've made ourselves?"

All eyes were turned on Lu Ta-lu.

"I think we should make the voyage." The answer was unexpected.

"What? In spite of everything?" someone queried.

Lu Ta-lu looked around and said raising his voice, "Somebody is up to something, but it doesn't scare us. An engine test is a test for us all. Are we going to let ourselves be cowed by a bit of a storm? No, we'll meet it head on!"

Master Liang laughed out loud, clapped Lu Ta-lu affectionately on the shoulder and said, "Right, Ta-lu.

You know best. Now just tell us what to do, Deputy Director!"

Looking somewhat diffident before the master, from whom he had received his training, Ta-lu waved his hand and said, "Well, let's make the most of the time we've got. We'll give her a thorough check-up. Get everything ready for the trip, and be sure to bring extra spare parts along. I'm going to report what we're doing to Kao Tien-yu."

The workers crowded out of the workshop and made for the *Tungfang* at the waterfront.

On the trunk road, Lu Ta-lu met Kao Tien-yu, the factory's production team leader and director of the production headquarters for the 10,000-h.p. engine.

Kao greeted him, "I was just going to consult you about this." He took out some papers from his pocket and handed them to Lu. It was an application to the leadership for permission to import a sample engine from the Didem Company.

"What!" The younger man was amazed.

"You know, the *Tungfang* is a sea-going vessel," Kao explained in a low voice. "It's meant to serve the revolutionary line in China's relations with other countries. This is an important mission and our engine isn't up to it. What if it gets out of control? Besides, I've heard some people weren't very impressed with our engine."

"What do you suggest, then?" Lu asked with a frown.

"I think we'd better take the engine back. Wait till we have an imported one, and we'll be able to do better."

Lu could hardly restrain his anger. He thought to



himself: So that's how you, the director, assess the workers' self-reliant effort, and their "first" of a 10,000-h.p. engine. What foul wind has made you lose your bearings?

Lu had been quite clear about Kao's attitude towards this matter. Before the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution Lu, then a young fitter, together with Master Liang and a group of workers and technicians, had proposed making a 10,000-h.p. engine and had actually produced a design. But to their surprise Kao Tien-yu, then deputy director of the factory, bluntly rejected the proposal with remarks in red pencil: Conditions inadequate! Rash to the extreme! The blueprints were shelved for good. Kao Tien-yu's mistakes had been criticized during the Cultural Revolution when everybody in the factory got up and spoke his mind. Not long ago the idea of making a 10,000-h.p. engine was put forward again in the big-character posters. Kao busied himself behind closed doors for a few days. After working out the manpower and equipment needed in the project, he stuck to his old conclusion of inadequate conditions. Though he doubted the feasibility of the proposal, he said to the workers, "If that's what comrades want, then start on it and we'll see. . . ." Now the workers had made the engine and were improving on it. Why had Kao Tien-yu made this application when they were already well on the way to victory?

"Kao, I'm against this," said Lu Ta-lu. "You'd better go to the rank-and-file to find out what they think. Be sure we'll always look ahead and keep to the right track, and never forget what we've been through. . . ."

Kao Tien-yu flushed a little, the letter of application in hand, but said nothing.

"By the way," continued Lu Ta-lu, "the Marine Transportation Bureau just called up. They said the *Tungfang* is scheduled to make a heavy loaded test run tomorrow."

"What?" Kao was amazed and demanded, "Who made the call?"

"Chen Tsung-chieh."

"What does he think he is doing?" Kao Tien-yu complained. "There's a typhoon on the way, and it'll be risky. If the piston jams again, the engine will break down and the ship will be out of control in the storm. Don't you agree. . . ."

Lu smiled quietly and said, "But the workers have all agreed."

"No, we mustn't." Kao was upset. "Once the ship runs into trouble, it means a risk of life. I can't be responsible, and you can't either. . . . I'm going to find Chen Tsung-chieh. . . ."

"You and your 'responsibility,' that's all you care about," said Lu gravely. "You never think how to lead us all to challenge winds and storms."

"Ah. . . ." Kao was at a loss for words. After a while he said, "Well, you decide," and turned away.

Back in his office, Lu Ta-lu called up Chen Tsung-chieh, and in a proud, confident voice, he declared, "We agree to make a trial run tomorrow."

Early next morning, the wharf was a scene of fluttering red banners and enthusiastic crowds, animated by the beating of drums and clashing of cymbals. The *Tungfang* stood majestically awaiting orders to sail.

Lu Ta-lu went onto the deck, a travelling bag in his hand, and a package of wax paper under his arm. Master Liang who greeted him at the head of the stairs caught sight of the package. "What a good idea to bring that along, Ta-lu," he said approvingly.

The young man smiled meaningfully. Looking down onto the wharf, he was overwhelmed to see the heart-warming grins and expectant looks of the crowd. There was a poster on the dock with the boldly written slogan: "Maintain independence. Keep the initiative. Be self-reliant."

The siren sounded, and the *Tungfang* moved towards the open sea amid thunderous cheers.

A storm was brewing. The winds gathered up heavy dark clouds which quickly blotted out the sky. Wave after wave surged forward, overlapping one another. The vessel began to pitch; steel cables clanked against the derrick. Flocks of seagulls screeched in its wake, now gliding over the water, now pecking at the fish stunned by the propellers. On deck the crew were making adjustments, ready for the test.

In the meeting room, Kao Tien-yu and Chen Tsung-chieh were sitting on a settee talking in low voices. A lanky fellow in his fifties, Chen had a trim appearance, his thin hair sleekly combed, broad-rimmed spectacles perched on his nose, his white collar well starched and ironed, and his grey worsted trousers pressed to perfection. He was an old hand at engine-testing. Soon after he graduated from university, he had found a job with a foreign firm in which his father had shares. He had dallied away a few years there, and then got a new job in the Kuomintang-controlled China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company. After liberation he was

transferred to the Marine Transportation Bureau and became deputy chief of the technical section. For a time, he was a favourite with some of his superiors. Whenever people were sent abroad to test ships China had ordered, he was likely to go with them to give final approval. Because of this some people gave him the title "the authority" which tickled his pride, but he always responded hypocritically, "Oh, I don't deserve that. I'm not up to it."

Then came the Cultural Revolution and the Bureau went through the stage of struggle-criticism-transformation. He was taken by surprise when many big-character posters were put up to attack his attitude of worshipping everything foreign and fawning on foreigners. When people insisted that he should not be given assignments abroad for some time, it was more than he could swallow. Looking gloomy and downcast, he sought to stand aloof on the pretext of "weak nerves." However, the leadership and masses patiently talked him round and assigned him some responsible jobs when he began to acknowledge his errors.

Now, in the meeting room, Chen Tsung-chieh flicked the ash off his cigarette as he bent towards Kao Tien-yu, saying with affected concern, "Look, how crude is the equipment you've used to make the engine with. I'm really. . . ." He stopped short and shook his head.

"Then why did you decide on a trial voyage in weather like this?"

"It's just the weather we want. Isn't that deputy director of yours always saying they want to challenge wind and storm?" Chen Tsung-chieh chuckled.

"I'm worried something may go wrong again."

With a cunning smile, Chen Tsung-chieh queried,

"D'you think I can rest assured without such a trial? Besides, your application. . . ." He patted Kao Tien-yu on the shoulder and said insinuatingly, "I'm doing this for *your* good, my old friend!" He took a colour photograph from his portfolio and said with complacency, "This is the *Oceanic* which I took delivery of abroad before the Cultural Revolution. The Didem Company had worked for decades of years on this design. They know all there is to know in this business — it's a world away from what we're doing. . . ."

Kao Tien-yu took the picture with great interest.

Fresh from the engine room, Lu Ta-lu walked in briskly, mopping the sweat from his brow. Seeing the two so engrossed in conversation, he asked with a smile, "What's up?"

"Here, have a look." Kao Tien-yu passed him the picture.

"That body is really up-to-date, and the main engine is from a famous company," Chen Tsung-chieh put in.

Lu Ta-lu glanced at the picture and placed it on the table with an ironical smile. "Foreign vessels aren't our own make, no matter how good they are," he concluded. "Our own engine has just had its first test. Of course there will be defects. But it has a bright future." He sat facing the pair and fixed his eyes on Chen Tsung-chieh. He had always felt something alien in this man.

Chen Tsung-chieh uneasily evaded Lu Ta-lu's piercing gaze. The sea breeze blowing through the window swept the picture to the floor, and he hastily bent down to pick it up.

Ill at ease, he said smilingly when he had resumed his seat, "Now, let's talk business, since Comrade Lu

Ta-lu who's in charge of this trip is here." Taking a sheaf of papers from his pocket, he said deliberately, "After some consideration, we've decided to test 35 items altogether."

Kao Tien-yu was so amazed at the figure that he could not help crying out, "What, thirty-five?"

"How about it, Kao?" Chen Tsung-chieh pursued him.

Kao Tien-yu looked upset and after a moment's silence, pointed to Lu Ta-lu and said, "He's in full charge of this trip. He has the final say."

Lu Ta-lu took his time. Taking a list of test items from his pocket, he handed it to Chen Tsung-chieh and said, "This is what the master workers of the assembly and test workshop worked out after discussion. Fifty items in all."

Chen Tsung-chieh was stunned. His small eyes fixed on Lu Ta-lu from behind his spectacles. He seized the list and peered at it.

Lu Ta-lu waited for a few minutes and asked, "What do you think?"

Chen Tsung-chieh blinked and smiled. "Fine, fine," he said. "The master workers certainly aim high. But . . . the piston-jamming is the key problem. To make sure of the main engine's efficiency, I suggest we fill the forward hold with water. That'll make it more of a test."

Lu Ta-lu was filled with indignation. The man was deliberately making things difficult!

If this had happened at a time when he was still young and impetuous, he would surely have exploded. But seasoned by years of struggle, he now knew how to cope with the complex situation with a cool head.

It was not his first experience in dealing with this man. Before the Cultural Revolution when Lu, Master Liang and the others proposed the manufacturing of a 10,000-h.p. engine, it was not only Kao Tien-yu but Chen Tsung-chieh who took part in making the mistaken decision to shelve the blueprints. Chen had cautioned Kao with remarks such as: "Conditions are inadequate for China to make a 10,000-h.p. engine!" "What if the engine breaks down?" "Who'd take the responsibility? I wouldn't!" Kao was frightened into retreating. Now that the 10,000-h.p. engine had been made and was being tested, what new mischief was Chen up to? Something must be in the offing!

Lu squared his shoulders and stood up. "Let's compare it to this," he said with a stern look at Chen Tsung-chieh. "Suppose I put a load on your head and make you walk scores of kilometres. How would that be?"

Chen Tsung-chieh blushed red but quickly defended himself. "Oh, that's not how it is at all. I only want to play safe. After all we must be responsible to the state."

Lu Ta-lu followed up, "Of course it's admirable to be responsible to the state. But I'm interested to know whether you make such tests on imported vessels. I've heard you only spent 20 to 30 hours on an imported ship. Was that being responsible to the state too?"

Chen Tsung-chieh was in a fix.

The captain, a veteran, was passing at that moment and could restrain himself no longer. He said loudly, "Some people are so used to lowering their heads before foreigners, they expect us to sail that way. No! In all my years at sea, I've never sailed that way. Lu Ta-lu and the others have been strict in their demands

on themselves, but you're just being unreasonable."

"And we workers do know how to be responsible to the state," said Lu Ta-lu proudly.

To cover up his embarrassment, Chen Tsung-chieh lighted a cigarette. Composing himself and then looking out of the window, he thought, "The storm is coming. We'll see what happens." Aloud he said, "Well, we'll do as you say."

The force-10 typhoon shrieked and howled as it chased dark clouds over the ship. Breakers followed one another with gathering momentum against the bow, and sent foam shooting all over the deck. The ship pitched and rolled at one moment on the crest of a wave, at the next gliding down the ridge. She tore ahead through the strong winds and mountainous waves. In the cabin, some enamel mugs which had rolled off the table clattered about on the floor. Through the loud-speaker came songs which stirred the hearts of the crew:

We of the working class are tough.
Following Chairman Mao we go forward,
We rely on our own efforts in hard struggle,
And never tarry on our revolutionary road. . . .

In the engine room the machines and generators were humming away. The signals on the control panel of the main engine flickered red, yellow or green. The assembly and test team stuck to their jobs, though several were feeling seasick.

Lu Ta-lu made the rounds, speaking encouragingly to everyone and giving out pills to them.

"Ta-lu," a young worker nicknamed Fatty cried out spiritedly, "we've done 100 hours already. Just another

20 and this main engine, the first we ever made ourselves, will have passed the test!"

Ta-lu poked him in the ribs affectionately and said, "Don't let's count our chickens before they're hatched. Remember what happened in the last trial with the light load? It was right at the end that the piston jammed. We'd better stay on the alert."

Just then, Master Liang came up. "The temperature in the second cylinder is a bit too high," he said to Lu, "and it's still rising."

Lu's heart missed a beat. This was a sign that portended piston jamming. How could such a thing happen after all the efforts they had made to improve it?

The news brought the workers together. All looked anxiously at Lu. The atmosphere at once became tense.

Meanwhile, Chen Tsung-chieh staggered towards the engine room. The rough seas had made him weak and giddy, but nothing in the voyage escaped his notice. He was surprised that the main engine was still running smoothly but he still didn't believe it would stand the storm. He had calculated that if the piston was going to jam, it would do so now. So he pocketed a stopwatch and headed for the engine room.

As he poked his head in, he saw Lu Ta-lu wave the crew back to their posts to make checks. So finally some problem had come up.

Having descended the stairway quickly, he went straight to the control platform. He skimmed through the log, and his eyes sparkled as if he had made a great discovery. Then he switched the transistor thermometer on the panel to the second cylinder. The fluttering of the red needle indicated a quick rise in temperature. "The piston has jammed, just as I expected," he thought.

A smile crept to the corners of his mouth, and he drummed his fingers on the log-book. "I've long told them that making a 10,000-h.p. engine under our present conditions would be beyond us," he said to himself, "but they kept criticizing me, saying that I worshipped everything foreign, and that I was dead against self-reliance. Now see what's happened! The engine's broken down again." He nodded triumphantly. "So they'll still have to import! See if they can do that without me."

He went up to Lu and feigned deep concern. "Comrade Ta-lu, what's this last-minute break-down?"

Turning, Lu could see through the man's pretence. "You can rest assured," he said unperturbed, "that this China-made engine will withstand wind and storm."

"Bragging won't get you anywhere. Better leave room for retreat. Isn't it as clear as the daylight that . . . ?"

"What do you mean?" Lu cut in. "Retreat? Where to? You were always against making a 10,000-h.p. engine, but we've gone ahead and succeeded, in spite of you. Now this engine of ours has kept running with a heavy load for over 100 hours. Is that what you call bragging?"

"Comrade Ta-lu, you shouldn't be so sure of yourself."

"But we *are* fully confident about our policy of maintaining independence and relying on our own efforts," said Lu Ta-lu firmly.

Kao Tien-yu came up to smooth things over. Chen Tsung-chieh greeted him in a business-like tone. "Kao," he said, "what are you going to do, now that the engine has run into trouble?"

Kao Tien-yu looked grave and heaved a deep sigh.

After a few moments' silence, Chen nudged Kao and led him into a corner. "Why worry about nothing?" he asked in a low voice. "As far as your import application goes, this is all to the good."

Kao looked startled.

Just then, Master Liang hurried over to report, "We've made a check-up, Ta-lu. There's nothing wrong with the engine. There's not a squeak in the No. 2 cylinder and the oil-pressure is normal. The high temperature may have been caused by leakage in the oil pipe. That would prevent the cooled-off oil from filling the cylinder."

Now that he had a better grasp of the situation, Lu Ta-lu raised his voice and said briskly, "Good! Let's switch off for check-up." The engine slowed as he pressed the control bar. Then, he went to the air-tight door and, helped by the workers, quickly loosened the nuts. The door opened, and a wave of hot air smelling strongly of oil gushed out. Lu Ta-lu took a lamp and crawled towards the engine body.

Chen Tsung-chieh was delighted to see the engine cut. According to the test rules, if the engine stopped more than 15 minutes, the 100-hour record became invalid, and the whole process had to be started all over again. He took out the stop-watch and got it going. He strolled up and down in front of the control platform while Master Liang and the crew waited at the door.

After a few moments, Lu Ta-lu came out. He was covered in grease but his sunburned face was glowing. "The main engine's in good shape," he said. "But the joints of the oil pipes had shaken loose. I've tightened them up and so we'll start the machine in a

few minutes." He wiped his greasy hands on some cotton waste Master Liang gave him, went over to the platform and pushed up the control bar. The engines began to rumble again. Master Liang came over with a bottle of soda water. Lu took it and swallowed it in a gulp. Turning, he saw Chen Tsung-chieh quietly tucking his stop-watch into his trouser pocket. He went over and asked, "What did your stop-watch say?"

"Thirteen and a half minutes," mumbled Chen Tsung-chieh.

Everyone broke into loud laughter.

Chen Tsung-chieh joined them awkwardly saying, "Good, good." But a minute later, he came up with another suggestion, "We've done nearly 120 hours now and passed all the test items as planned. We might as well finish this one off early and start on the backing test. How about it?"

"Do the backing test early?" questioned Lu. It seemed odd. Chen had been finding fault from the very moment they had weighed anchor, and now all of a sudden he was "relaxing." Lu decided to watch very carefully, but he agreed calmly and pulled down the control bar. In a minute, the engine slowed down again.

"Quick! Back up!" Chen Tsung-chieh urged breathlessly.

"But how can we? The engine is still making 70 to 80 revolutions per minute," said Lu.

"Anything might happen at any minute on the sea. That is what you call a real test." Chen Tsung-chieh reached out for the control bar as he spoke.

"Stop. What are you up to?" With an immediate reflex action, Lu pushed him hard. The man staggered and nearly fell to the floor.

"You're trying to make difficulties every way you can," Lu Ta-lu pointed out fiercely.

Master Liang flared up. "You've been testing new engines all these years," he said. "Haven't you any common sense about this? Suppose you were running fast yourself, and you were suddenly ordered to run the other way at the same speed. Could you do that?"

Lu stepped forward and faced Chen. "You babbled about being responsible to the state. Is this being responsible? This manoeuvre shows you are dead against our self-reliance. But, we'll never let you turn back the wheel."

Next morning, the dark clouds slowly faded away, and the morning stars began to twinkle in the pale white sky. The wind-gauge turned leisurely. The lantern tower threw a beam of light on the rippling water, occasionally lighting up the shoals of silvery hair-tail fish tailing after the ship. Before long, bright colourful clouds emerged on the horizon of the East Sea. The red sun rose above the water, gilding the crests of the waves.

Lu Ta-lu walked onto the deck. He took a deep breath of the fresh, moist air and looked far across the resplendent sea, the hint of a triumphant smile on his lips.

Suddenly, Kao Tien-yu appeared at his side. After the struggle the previous day, the man passed a restless night. He said in a tone of self-reproach, "It seems I get it all wrong when it comes to the new socialist things like making engines on our own."

Lu Ta-lu greeted him with a warm smile. "This is

a struggle in itself. And we should stand firm and steady in the storm.”

As if reminded of something, Kao Tien-yu fumbled in his pocket for the import application. He was about to speak when the old captain called down from the bridge, “Comrade Ta-lu, please come up here, quick.”

On the bridge, Lu learned that a 10,000-ton ship, two to three nautical miles ahead, had radioed an SOS. Its main engine had broken down. Through binoculars, Lu saw the two black balloons which had been put on its mast as a signal. The men looked at each other, and said almost in unison, “Come on, let’s get on with it.”

“Forward, three miles,” ordered the old captain.

Lu saw Chen Tsung-chieh nearby and handed him the binoculars. “Look,” he said, “isn’t that the *Oceanic* which you took delivery of abroad?”

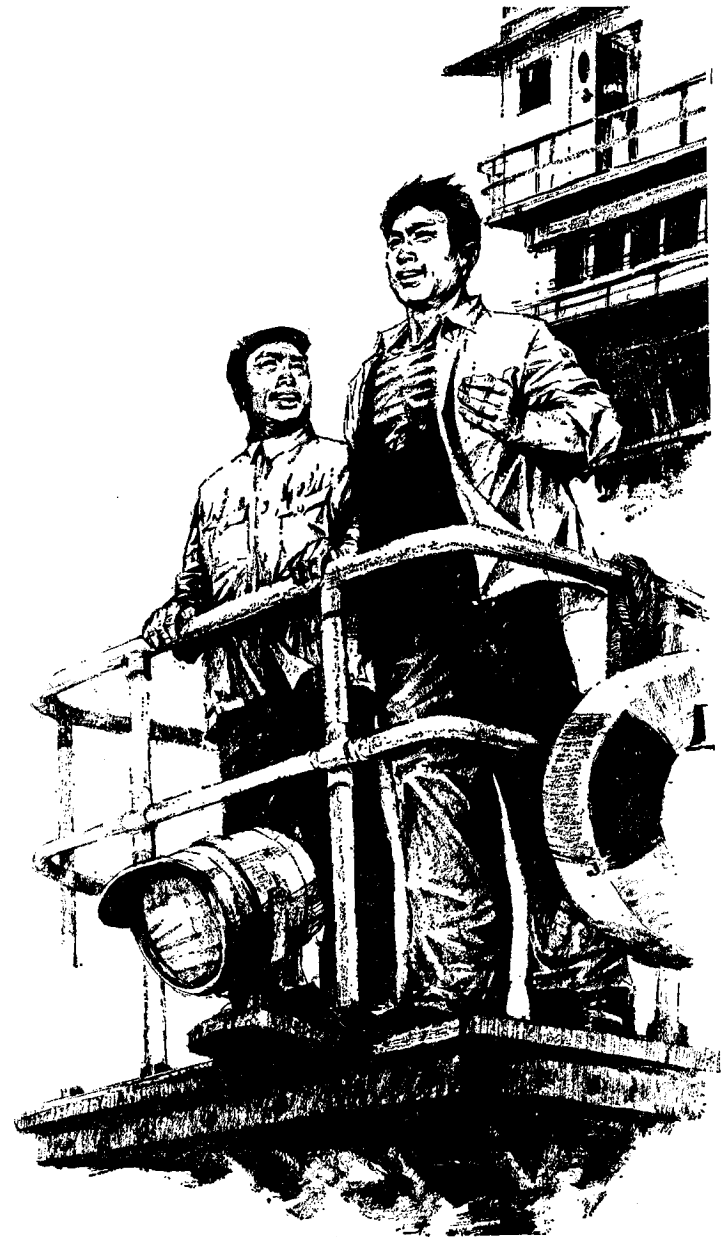
“Oh, could it be . . . ?” He looked through the binoculars dubiously and then started. But the next minute, he said nonchalantly, “There can’t be anything wrong with the engine, most likely our crew didn’t handle it properly.”

Really he was absurd. “Chen,” Lu Ta-lu commented, “it seems that you have two opposite approaches, one for Chinese engines, and the other for imported ones.”

Chen Tsung-chieh didn’t know what to say.

The two 10,000-ton ships drew near to each other. From the deck, they could see people along the bulwark of the cream-coloured *Oceanic* waving to them.

As soon as the *Tungfang* cast anchor, Lu Ta-lu went over in a small boat with the team. They were greeted warmly as they boarded the *Oceanic*. “Sorry to bother you,” said the engineer clasping Lu by the hand. “This is an ‘ace-product’ of the Didem Company and just look



at it! It's only a few years since it was imported and the engine has already broken down several times. Now the piston's jammed again."

"Let's have a look," said Lu.

The top of the cylinder was already off. Lu peered in and ran his hands round the inner walls. They were soon covered with iron filings. "It's really tough inside!" he cried. Then turning to Master Liang, he urged, "Hurry up, let's get going." The workers pitched in at once, clanking and hammering away in the engine room.

When the sun was high above the mast, the engine on the *Oceanic* came to life again and she began to puff out smoke through the funnel.

The engineer thanked them for their help. Lu Ta-lu felt someone pat him on the shoulder. Turning his head he saw Chang, a member of the Party committee of the Marine Transportation Bureau. "Why, what's brought you here?" he asked.

"I've been out on an inspection tour," Chang replied with a laugh. "I was going back on the *Oceanic*. I didn't expect to meet you here. What a happy coincidence."

"Fine," Lu said. "Our *Tungfang* is doing her test run. We'd be very happy if you would inspect her and come back with us."

Chang agreed and went aboard the *Tungfang*.

The *Oceanic* saluted by sounding her whistle and sailed off, while the crew aboard the *Tungfang* gathered to wave her good-bye. The scene impressed Chang. He said to Lu, "The comments and information you gave us on your last visit were quite helpful. It's true

there are people in our bureau who worship everything foreign. Now the masses have been aroused to expose the contradictions in our work." Pointing to the *Oceanic* which was moving away, he said, "Do you know that ship is carrying a newly-imported 10,000-h.p. engine, another 'ace-product' of the Didem Company? Some of our people have been making every effort to get it to replace our domestic-made engine on the *Tung-jang*."

This news caused an uproar among the workers.

"So, that explains all Chen Tsung-chieh's tricks," Lu thought to himself. "This was what he had up his sleeve." Now he could see the pattern of events more clearly. He realized it was time to give the crew some ideas about the two-line struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. He exchanged views softly with Chang and then leapt atop a hold. "Comrades," he said, "we've seen all that's happened in this trial voyage. Why is it that some people are sceptical about the 10,000-h.p. engine we made ourselves? Why are they bent on tying our ship-building industry to the apron strings of foreign capitalists? Where do they want to lead our ship-building industry to? Why should all this happen even today, after we have had the Cultural Revolution? Doesn't it give us much food for thought?"

All eyes turned towards Chen Tsung-chieh who sat sullenly on the capstan, smoking. As he listened, he took out the handkerchief in his pocket to wipe the sweat off his nose. The stop-watch slipped out with it and dropped onto the deck.

Chang went over to pick it up and hand it back to him. "You still need it," he said sternly. "What it matters is the way you use it. It's easy to tackle an

engine when the piston jams, but when the mind of the man testing the engine gets 'jammed,' it's dangerous."

"And his ideas should be repudiated without mercy." The engineer was indignant.

"Yes . . . yes," Chen Tsung-chieh said in a flurry. "My mind's jammed . . . jammed. I have to remould my world outlook. . . ."

Lu Ta-lu turned to Chang and said, "The trial trip is nearly over, but our task of making 10,000-h.p. engines has just begun. There is certainly plenty of room for improvement. We hope that our leadership in the Marine Transportation Bureau and the crew taking part in this trip will give us their valuable comments and suggestions. We would also welcome any helpful reference materials about ship-building from abroad. All this will help us produce better engines and bring about a radical change in our ship-building industry. Now, as we'll soon turn this engine over to you, here's a souvenir to go with it."

As Lu Ta-lu opened carefully the wax-paper parcel Master Liang had handed him, curious glances focused on the dark brown fragment of a sampan oar.

"Ta-lu, please tell us all about it," urged Master Liang.

So he began with great feeling:

"This oar blade has a history of sixty or seventy years. Back in the days before the fall of the Ching Dynasty, a sampan workshop stood where we now have our engine workshop. There lived a worker who was known in these parts for his superb skill in making wooden oars. He often saw foreign steamers arrogantly plying China's rivers. The sight angered him and he used to ask himself, 'When will we Chinese people be able to build steamers on our own?' One day, some

foreign soldiers led by an obsequious Ching official burst into the shop. A shipyard was to be built there financed by foreign capital. The worker had no choice but to leave regretfully with his unfinished oar which he kept ever after. At the end of his life, he gave the oar blade to his son, saying, 'I've worked on wooden oars all my life and have never seen a China-made motor boat. I'm resting my hopes with you, the younger generation.' However, under the reactionary Kuomintang regime, the shipyard became a government-run ship-repair plant. That worker's son managed to get into the plant, but his job was to repair or make spare parts for foreign steamers, or build sampans. It was only after liberation that a radical change took place. To develop China's ship-building industry, the repair shop was transformed into our engine workshop. The worker's son retired ten years ago, giving us this blade as a constant reminder of the past. He hoped we would be self-reliant and struggle hard to win honour for our socialist motherland. There were times when our ship-building industry suffered from the revisionist ideas of 'worshipping everything foreign,' but today we have succeeded in making a 10,000-h.p. engine on our own. Here on behalf of the workers, I give you this souvenir in the hope that we will make even greater efforts together in developing China's ship-building industry."

Chang took over the oar blade and nodded in deep reflection.

The old captain, his hair greying at the temples, was most impressed. "I've been at sea for decades, but this is the first time I have captained a China-made 10,000-ton steamer with a 10,000-h.p. engine. I feel confident and proud to see our ships sail across the high seas."

Meanwhile, Kao Tien-yu had secretly taken the import application from his pocket and let it blow off in the wind. He went over to Lu Ta-lu and said with a catch in his voice, "The storm is over at last."

"Oh, no," Lu Ta-lu responded as if answering him and at the same time reminding himself. "The gale may pass off, but life's struggle never does."

Sea breezes swept by and Lu's open shirt revealed his broad chest. A few petrels flapped their strong wings and flew swiftly over the bow, while foam-crested waves rolled in the azure sea. The *Tungfang*, with its towering bow, rode majestically through the waves. "Whoo, whoo," its vibrant whistle echoed across the broad expanse.



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