



*Ting Ling*

THE SUN SHINES OVER  
THE SANGKAN RIVER

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UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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## FOREWORD

It may be of some help to the reader if I give a brief account of how I wrote this novel.

In July 1946, I joined the Huailai land reform work team. Later on I left for Cholu, and returned to Fuping at the end of September. There was no chance to summarize this stage of our work satisfactorily. However, since I had no other work to do at Fuping and my mind was full of the people I had seen, I decided to start writing this novel. All I hoped to do at that time was to describe this stage of land reform and give a fairly faithful picture of a village with all its troop of living people. I would feel satisfied if I could just avoid making them too abstract. My original plan was to divide the book into three parts: the struggle, the distribution of land and the peasants' voluntary enlistment in the army. While I was writing, I received some very moving materials about the land protection corps in the Sangkan River area. The leader of the corps is the original of Comrade Pin, the county propaganda commissioner in the novel. I had travelled over that country several times too, so I hoped to go back there in order to be able to write the second part. Thus, while I was writing, I made constant allusions to material that would be more fully developed later. The manuscript was half written when the final checkup of land reform work came in

1947. That made me hesitate to go on with my work and wish to go back again to the country-side to make good the deficiencies in my experience of life and in the novel by taking some part in the mass struggle. Accordingly, I set my manuscript aside, and went with a team to Hsing-tang in central Hopei, then came back to Fuping. This experience of life proved of value, but failed to provide me with much actual material for my book, so I went on writing for another three and a half months, till the summer was over. I devoted most effort to writing the first part, about the struggle, and was just about to start on the second part when the land reform programme was promulgated, and I took part in the land reform conference. As a result, I felt renewed doubts about going on with my writing, and decided to go back to the country first to take part in the distribution of land. I worked in a village in Huailu for over four months, and as a result of this experience made certain changes in my original plan. I felt there was no need to write the second and third parts I had originally decided on, because the distribution of land and the joint-army movement the previous year had been somewhat superficial and carelessly carried out. This was a result, of course, of war conditions, but still these working methods were not good enough to be worth describing. So, after thinking it over, I decided to compress the book, and since there was no way of adding other relatively new material, my first plan had to be modified. I did not, therefore, develop the two later topics. Just at that time, too, I was to take part in the Congress of the Women's International Democratic Federation; thus I had to bring this work to a hasty close. If there is time in future, I hope to be able to revise this book further.

June 15, 1948

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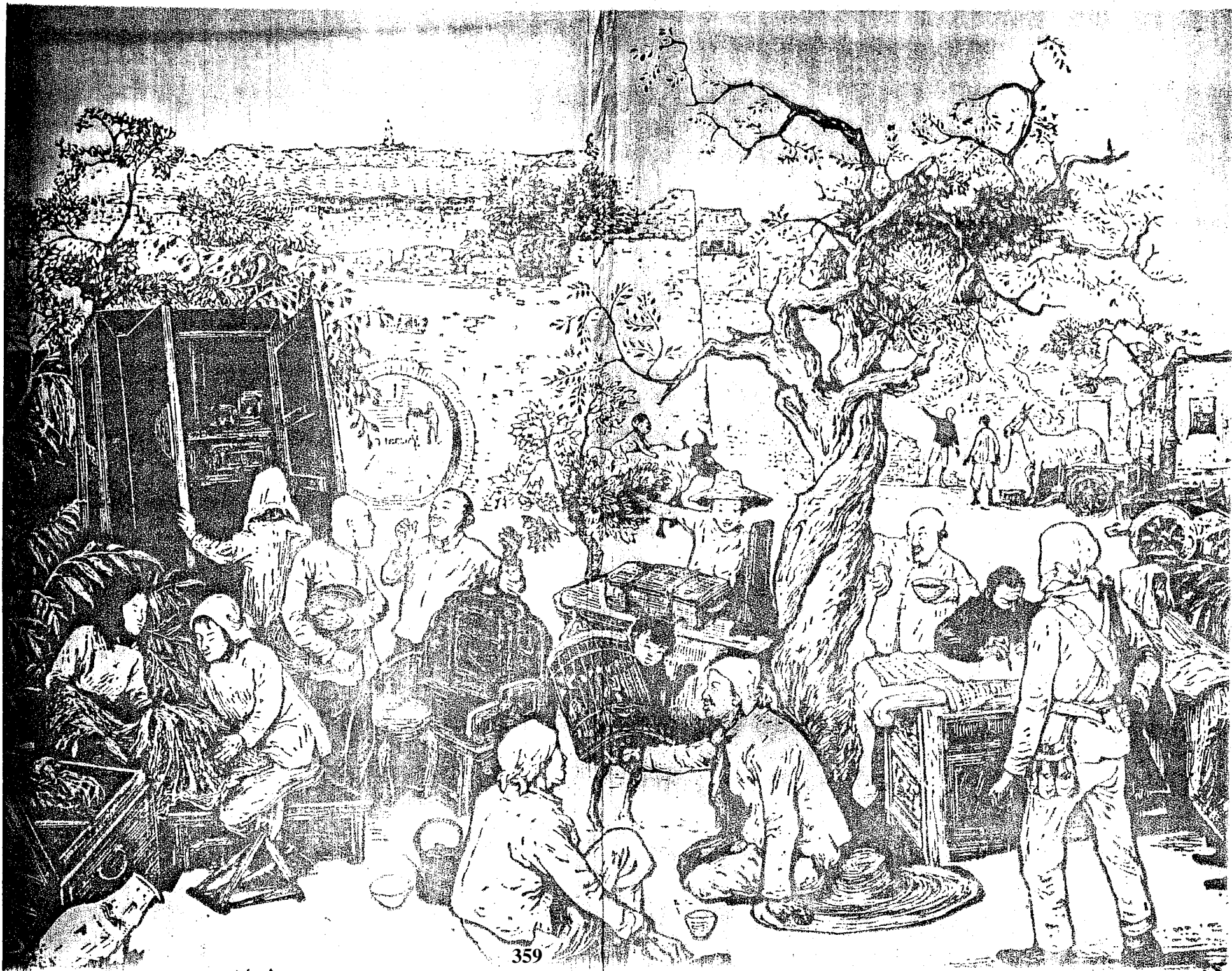
## CHARACTERS

*For the convenience of readers, the original Chinese names have been shortened. The full names are given in brackets.*

- OLD TUNG *chairman of the district trade union*  
COMRADE PIN (CHANG PIN) *propaganda director of the county Party committee*  
WEN (WEN TSAI)  
YANG (YANG LIANG) } *members of the land reform work*  
HU (HU LI-KUNG) } *team*  
YUMIN (CHANG YU-MIN) *secretary of the Nuanshui Party Branch*  
CHUAN (KUO CHUAN) *Yumin's uncle, a poor peasant*  
VICE HEAD CHAO (CHAO TE-LU) *vice village head of Nuanshui*  
YOUNG CHENG (CHENG JEN) *chairman of the peasants' association*  
SECURITY OFFICER CHANG (CHANG CHENG-TIEN) *son-in-law of Schemer Chien*  
SWARTHY KUO (CHANG CHENG-KUO) *captain of the militia*  
ORGANIZATION CHAO (CHAO CHUAN-KUNG) *Party organizer in the village*  
CO-OP TIEN (JEN TIEN-HUA) *chairman of the village co-operative*  
FRECKLES LI (LI CHANG) *Party propaganda officer in the village*  
PUKAO (CHANG PU-KAO) *organization officer in the peasants' association*  
KUEI (TUNG KUEI-HUA) *Vineyard Li's wife, chairman of the women's association*  
YUEH (CHOU YUEH-YING) *the shepherd's wife, vice-chairman of the women's association*

TEACHER LIU  
 TEACHER JEN (JEN KUO-CHUNG)  
 LANDLORD LI (LI TZU-CHUN)  
 LANDLORD HOU (HOU TIEN-KUEI)  
 SCHEMER CHIEN (CHIEN WEN-KUEI) *chief of the village racketeers*  
 TRADE UNION CHIEN (CHIEN WEN-HU) *chairman of the village trade union, Schemer Chien's cousin*  
 YI (CHIEN YI) *Schemer Chien's son, in the Eighth Route Army*  
 CHIENLI (CHIEN LI) *Schemer Chien's son*  
 TANI *Schemer Chien's daughter*  
 HEINI *Schemer Chien's niece*  
 WENFU (CHIEN WEN-FU) *a poor peasant, Schemer Chien's brother*  
 LANDLORD CHIANG (CHIANG SHIH-JUNG) *village head*  
 OLD KU (KU YUNG) *a rich peasant*  
 YOUNG KU (KU SHUN) *Old Ku's son*  
 DA *Old Ku's elder daughter*  
 ERH *Old Ku's second daughter, married to Schemer Chien's son Yi*  
 HUTAI *father-in-law of Old Ku's elder daughter*  
 SHENG'S MOTHER (KU CHANG-SHENG'S MOTHER) *a middle peasant*  
 TENANT HOU (HOU CHUNG-CHUAN) *nephew of Landlord Hou*  
 YOUNG HOU (HOU CHING-HUAI) *Tenant Hou's son*  
 TENANT KUO (KUO PO-JEN) *tenant of Landlord Li*  
 YOUNG KUO (KUO FU-KUEI) *Tenant Kuo's son, tenant of Landlord Chiang*  
 YOUNG WANG (WANG HSIN-TIEN) *a poor peasant, tenant of Landlord Chiang*  
 ORCHARD-KEEPER LI (LI PAO-TANG) *relative of Landlord Li and his hired hand*  
 LIUMAN (LIU MAN) *an ex-Party member. His family has been ruined by Schemer Chien*

LIUCHIEN (LIU CHIEN) *Liuman's brother, a former ward chief, now mad*  
 VINEYARD LI (LI CHIH-HSIANG) *a poor peasant*  
 SHOU (LI CHIH-SHOU) *Vineyard Li's cousin*  
 OLD HAN *a poor peasant*  
 YOUNG HAN (HAN TING-JUI) *Old Han's son, formerly a soldier of the Eighth Route Army*  
 EX-SOLDIER CHANG (CHANG CHI-TI) *formerly a soldier of the Eighth Route Army*  
 RED-NOSED WU *primary school cook and town crier*  
 WHITE SNAKE *a loose woman who acts as a medium and quack to deceive the villagers*



The heat was sweltering. Although it was only about four miles from their starting point, Pali Bridge, to the river Yang, White Nose's chest and flanks were soaked with sweat. However, she was Hutai's best mule, and pulled well, though the cart track was so muddy. The sun hanging in the west was hidden by a clump of roadside willows, but the heat was still intense, and the muddy water splattered into the cart from the wheels felt warm against bare legs. At last leaving the flooded road, the cart came to a dry place. Only then did Old Ku, who had been urging on White Nose continuously, relax. Sitting up straight, he reached for the tobacco pouch behind him.

"What a downpour there must have been, Dad! Look at the state this road is in, like a muddy stream!" Da, his elder daughter with her son on her knee, was sitting to the right of the old man, a little further back. She wore a new cotton gown with blue flowers on a white ground. Her hair had been cut and hung straight down at the back, combed up high in front. She was looking about her cheerfully, for to be going home with her father was a piece of rare good fortune.

"The river's in flood, you sit still!" The old fellow beat a rat-tat-tat with his pipe. It was proving a difficult journey.

When they started across the river, the two cart wheels were practically submerged, and all that could be seen of White Nose was her big spine which seemed to be writhing through the water. Old Ku's daughter held her child more tightly and gripped the side of the cart, while water from behind splattered forward. The old man flicked his whip,



calling out encouragement to the mule as the cart rocked from side to side. The stretch of water in front of the cart, lit up by the sun, dazzled the eyes so that the old man could not see clearly, and sweat poured down his wrinkled face. The cart bogged down, then was extricated again, rocked violently, then righted itself again, till at last White Nose emerged from the river, and slowly planted her four hooves in shallow water. On the river's south bank, the cart once more reached the road and a gust of wind rose, delightfully cool!

As on the north bank of the river, rice was growing here in great profusion. The shoots were thick and tall, the height of a man's shoulder. Kaoliang screened everything else, its leaves as wide as maize leaves. The soil was moist and black, and a rich odour emanated from the thick growth. Then there came vegetable gardens encircled by irrigation ditches, the land neatly divided into patches of dark and light green. Each time Old Ku passed this way he felt an inexpressible longing to own such a fine piece of land. He could never have enough land, and he could not resist saying to his daughter: "In the section north of the river the land round Pali Bridge where you live is the best. In our Cholu County this Sixth District is the best. See how rich this soil is. Every three years a crop of rice, and a bigger harvest in one year here than in two years elsewhere."

"Planting rice one gets more out of the land, only you have to put more work into it. The water has to be changed every other night, and you have to keep at it all the time. . . . My father-in-law says the orchard land in our village is good. I hear this is a bumper year." Thinking of the orchard trees at her old home, laden with bright red fruit, Da recalled how she and her family used to burn piles of weeds in the orchard and pick fruit there, piling it up into little mountains, then packing it into baskets to take to market—what fun it had been! But

that reminded her of the pear tree which had been crushed by a neighbour's willow tree.

"Has that willow of Schemer Chien's been cut or not?" she asked, frowning.

The old man shook his head without saying anything. "Humph! And we're supposed to be relatives!" she said impatiently. "But couldn't you ask the village cadres to settle the matter? Or if it's beyond them there's always the district court."

"I'm not quarrelling with him over that. One tree can't ruin me, and I can make it up by sweating some more in other ways. Besides, only half of it was torn down, and we're getting quite a few pears from it this year." He sighed. Last spring when Old Ku's son was digging an irrigation ditch he had grazed a willow tree belonging to Schemer Chien and growing on the ditch. Later the tree fell in a high wind, coming down across the ditch and crashing into Ku's pear tree, tearing half of it off. Chien wanted the Ku family to pay for the damage to his willow and would not let anyone move it. Young Ku wanted to argue it out with Chien and ask why he didn't look after his own tree. But his father would not let him. The whole village could see quite well the pear tree was slowly dying. They thought it a shame, but only discussed it in private, not wanting to meddle in other people's affairs.

Now the old man turned to look at his daughter with eyes that constantly watered. Only after a long look did he wipe his eyes, turning round again and saying to himself: "Young people have no sense!"

He devoted all his attention once more to the mule. The cart had passed Paihuai Village, and the Sangkan River could be seen ahead. The sun was sinking towards the western hills, and from the fields on both sides of the road rose swarms of mosquitoes. They bit the little boy so badly that he cried. His mother flapped her handkerchief to drive them off. Pointing to the trees at the foot of the mountain on the other side of the river she soothed the

child: "We're nearly there, we're nearly there. Look, all those are fruit trees, filled with red and green fruit. We'll go and pick it, and it'll all be for you, Little Paitzu. There, there. . . ."

Once more the cart was rocking through the river. This was in the lower reaches of the Sangkan River; five miles further on, at Hochuang, it joined the river Yang. The Sangkan flowed from Shansi to southern Chahar, carrying prosperity with it, and here its lower reaches were even richer.

Now Old Ku was giving all his attention to White Nose, mentally thanking his stars for such a good beast and for Hutai's strongly built cart with its rubber tyres. It would have been no joke travelling that muddy road and fording two rivers without it.

Once more the cart gained the river bank. When it reached the farms, the peasants who were still hoeing the fields stared at both cart and passengers and wondered: "Has the old man bought another cart? The crops aren't in yet, where could he have got the money?" But they had little time for speculation. It was getting dark, and they bent again to their painstaking weeding.

Gradually the ground began to rise. Slowly the cart passed fields of kaoliang, millet, flax and peas, and reached the area of orchards. Both sides of the road were thickly planted with trees surrounded by low mud walls, some branches overhanging the walls. Most of the fruit was still green, but some of it had already turned an inviting red. Voices could be heard from the orchards, for people liked to go there to look at the fruit growing riper every day. Passing the orchards the cart turned into the street. Idlers were squatting outside the gate of the primary school in front of which was a stage, while a group of villagers were sitting beside a wall. Others were leaning against the window of the co-operative keeping up a desultory conversation with the people inside, while watching the street. The rubber-tyred cart attracted the attention

of these chatterers, some of whom came running over. A few called out: "Where did you get that cart? What a fine mule!"

With a mumbled reply Old Ku jumped down from the cart, took the bridle and hurriedly turned off at the crossroads in the direction of his home, giving his daughter no time to greet her friends.

Old Ku was fourteen when he came with his brother to Nuanshui. He had been a shepherd while his brother worked as a hired hand. The two of them had toiled for forty-eight years, their blood and sweat dripping into the barren land to which their hopes were fixed. As year after year passed and the country changed hands repeatedly, their hardships began to tell on them. However, thanks to their hard work they gradually acquired land and became able to hold up their heads. Since their family grew fast they needed more and more land. Because they had many hands and the whole family of sixteen, men and women, old and young alike all worked on the land, they were able to conquer it. Their acreage increased until they had to hire a number of day labourers. People in need of money sold their land to Old Ku, and spendthrift sons of ruined landlords' families after a bout of gambling made over their title deeds to him too. At first he used paper to wrap up these title deeds, then a piece of cloth, and finally a small wooden case. He also bought a house with two large courtyards from Landlord Li, and everybody said that in recent years his was the only family to prosper, since both his family and fortune were increasing. His third son was lucky enough to attend school, and brought home a primary school's graduation certificate.

He could write and calculate, and was a hard worker. Being a straightforward youngster who took part in village activities he was made vice-chairman of the Youth Association. And so long as this chairmanship did not interfere unduly with his work, his father raised no objection.

Ku's elder daughter Da had married into Hutai's family at Pali Bridge. Hutai's family was quite well off. In the past two years they had bought carts, and owned a mill. Pali Bridge was on the railway, so the Hutai family did some business in trading too. As the women in the family did not have to work on the land they gradually grew a little sophisticated, liking to dress in foreign materials. Da was in her late twenties. Old Ku's other daughter Erh had married Yi, younger son of Schemer Chien who lived in the same village. Chien was one of the most prominent men in the neighbourhood. When he sent someone to arrange the match, Old Ku, fearing to offend him, had to agree, although he disliked Chien because he was not a proper farmer. After her marriage Erh often came home and cried to her mother, although the Chien family led a comfortable life, the women doing little work and not cultivating the land. They depended on rents and, even more, on Chien's other activities. Hence, although they owned little more than ten acres of land they lived better than most people.

The previous autumn the village cadres had urged Ku's second son to join the Eighth Route Army. Old Ku considered that since the Japanese had surrendered, his boy would not have to stay in the army long. The farm could do without him because the family had been fairly well off the last few years. Since he had three sons he could very well let one go. And he had not asked for any compensation. His son, stationed in Cholu County town, often wrote home. As long as there was no fighting Ku felt easy about him. He would wait for a while and see.

That spring Schemer Chien had sent his son too. The young man wanted to join the army, but his wife, Ku's daughter Erh, was unwilling. She dared not say anything, however, seeing that her father-in-law approved. Chien said he was supporting the Eighth Route Army, that the communists looked all right to him. He also reasoned with Ku: "It's better for him to go. Nowadays things have changed, and to have people in the Eighth Route Army is all to the good. You know, we're called 'army dependents.'"

The arrival of Hutai's rubber-tyred cart gave the Nuanshui villagers something new to talk about. Nuanshui and its neighbouring villages were in the mountains, off the main line of communication, and none of them could boast of so fine a cart. In the past, Landlord Li had only owned an iron-wheeled cart which he had sold to Landlord Chiang two years ago, and this year the co-operative had bought an old cart from Li's brother. Now how had Old Ku got hold of such a fine cart? Some of the more curious made enquiries and found there was no mystery. It was because Hutai at Pali Bridge was ill and could not use the cart, that he had let his relative borrow it for a few days. Sure enough the next day and the day after Old Ku made two trips with the cart to fetch coal, whereupon all were satisfied and asked no more questions. The only person in the village not to believe his story was Schemer Chien.

Schemer Chien came of a peasant family, but during the past years the villagers had virtually forgotten his origin. Although they all knew quite well that Wenfu, who cultivated two *mou*<sup>1</sup> of vegetable garden, was Chien's elder

<sup>1</sup> One *mou* is about 1/6 of an acre.

brother, Chien himself seemed like a rich man from another world rather than a peasant. Though he had only studied with a tutor for two years he behaved like a city gentleman. All he said and did was premeditated. In his youth he had liked to travel. He had been to Kalgan and even to Peking one year, coming back wearing a big fur cloak and hat. While still in his twenties he grew a moustache. He knew all the ward chiefs and was on very familiar terms with them. Later he got to know the members of the county government, and when the Japanese came he established contact with higher circles. It had come about that if any of the villagers had to be chosen as ward chief, made to contribute money or act as porter, his word was law. He never held office either as *hsiang*<sup>2</sup> leader or ward chief. Neither did he engage in trade. Yet everybody treated him with respect and sent him presents and money. He was spoken of as the man behind the scenes and wielded great power. His family lived just like city people, with wine and fragrant tea every day and white flour and rice as regular fare, not seeing a kaoliang or maize dumpling from one end of the year to another, and they all dressed fashionably.

Now that the Japanese had gone and the communists were in power, with the arrival of the Eighth Route Army people on all sides were settling old scores. The previous year the villagers of Nuanshui had given Landlord Hsu, the former *hsiang* head, a public trial, and confiscated his property. He had fled to Peking and his family had gone to Kalgan. That spring they had also tackled Landlord Hou and fined him one hundred piculs of millet. But Schemer Chien sat at home not doing a stroke of work, smoking cigarettes and fanning himself. Because his son had joined the Eighth Route Army and Chien had found a village security officer to be his son-in-law while many village cadres were his friends, no one dared to lift a finger

<sup>2</sup> An administrative unit composed of several villages.

against him. When villagers met him they smiled and greeted him politely. But they preferred to keep out of his way, because if he took a dislike to you he would take secret steps to injure you. He only had to say a few words, and you suffered without even knowing it was his doing. Behind his back the common people called him a "racketeer," the foremost of the eight racketeers in the village.

When Chien heard that Old Ku had borrowed Hutai's cart he chuckled to himself: "A straightforward fellow like you, Old Ku, learning to tell lies too? If Hutai were really ill, would he let his daughter-in-law come home? Isn't it time to get in the garlic? Hutai must have planted at least four or five *mou* of it this year, for this is the year for them to grow vegetables at Pali Bridge. And the women in his house alone couldn't string all the garlic. There must be more in this than meets the eye." Chien felt he must get to the bottom of the business, for he was incorrigibly inquisitive. It upset him if he could not get to the bottom of any secret at once. He set about investigating this matter which everyone else believed to be plain and above-board.

At breakfast time he watched his daughter-in-law carefully. After hurriedly setting rice and dishes on the table on his *kang*,<sup>1</sup> Erh turned to go. She was very afraid of her father-in-law.

"Have you been home?" he asked her.

"No." Erh stopped, and glanced suspiciously at Chien. She was a grave-looking girl.

Eyeing her glossy black hair, her father-in-law went on: "Your sister is back."

"She came back yesterday evening with your father. People say she was dressed very finely. After all Pali Bridge is a big village, all the women there like to dress

<sup>1</sup> An enclosed brick platform through which heat is piped. It serves as a bed at night.

well." The speaker was Chien's wife of nearly fifty, who had already lost two or three teeth, and yet wore a wig to which she often fastened flowers. She had just begun eating, and now joined in the conversation.

Chien's glance had fallen on the silver bracelets on the girl's wrists. His searching scrutiny made her feel her rough hands very awkward, and she crumpled the corners of her dress till her snow-white tunic hid the ruddy hands from sight. When her father-in-law took up his winecup she made another attempt to leave, but he spoke to her again: "After the meal go home and have a look. Ask your sister how the harvest is there."

When she left the room Erh hurried to the kitchen where her sister-in-law and nephew were eating, and her cousin Heini was boiling water to make tea. In her excitement she could not help exclaiming: "Heini!"

Everybody in the kitchen stared at her. Heini blinked her great black eyes, then broke into a laugh: "Erh! Whatever's the matter with you?"

Erh was about to tell her when Chien called for Heini from the northern room. Heini hastily made the tea and took a tray with two cups and the teapot in to her uncle. Erh followed her out, then stood looking at the two pomegranate and oleander trees in the courtyard. A butterfly was fluttering among the flame-coloured flowers.

Chien told his niece that he wished her to accompany Erh home to see the visitor from Pali Bridge. She should ask what illness Hutai had and what news there was, because living by the railway they heard all the news quickly and were the first to know of any changes. He was worried about the Kuomintang troops and the possibility of civil war.

"What does that matter?" said Heini. "I shan't ask. It's nothing to do with us." But she was scolded, and dared not protest any more. Still she thought to herself, "Uncle just likes to poke his nose into other people's business."

But when she had had breakfast and changed her dress she went with Erh to the Ku family. She meant to be sure to ask the questions her uncle had told her to, without necessarily telling him all the answers. She had grown a little fonder of him, because she felt he had become more understanding recently, and seldom scolded her. Indeed he sometimes showed signs of sympathy.

After leaving her father-in-law's home Erh felt like a bird released from its cage, grown younger again. She was only twenty-three. Like a wild date tree she loved the fresh morning wind and blazing sun. She was not pretty, but sturdy and strong, with something charming in her awkwardness. However since her marriage she had changed. She had never worn the complacent look of some brides, but seemed like wild grass torn from the earth and wilting. She got along all right with her husband who was a simple young fellow. They made a respectable couple and did not have to use wiles or ruses to get along with each other.

That spring she had been unwilling for Yi to join the army, and cried for some indefinable reason—not entirely because she would miss him. Yi too had felt rather reluctant to go, because she was so young and had no children. But since his father insisted, he braced himself and left. She had wanted to live on her own, because that spring her father-in-law had divided eight acres of land between his two sons and registered them as separate families. But in practice he did not let them separate. Schemer Chien said that if the family separated there would be no one to cook for him, and that he was now one of the proletariat and could not afford a servant. As she

came of a peasant family, Erh enjoyed working in the fields. She liked hard, simple labour and felt thoroughly bored just cooking, sewing and waiting on her in-laws. She had asked permission to go with Heini to the literacy class, but had been refused. Actually none of these things accounted for her uneasiness, which was due largely to fear. Fear of what? She dared not admit it, even to herself, but she feared her father-in-law.

Coming out of their lane they reached the centre of the village. The primary school occupied the best building in the place, the former Dragon King Temple. Usually clear, well-conducted singing and happy laughter could be heard from here, and only in the evening did things quieten down. Under two big trees outside the school gate where some stone benches had been set at random, men often came to enjoy the cool and smoke. Women would sit a little further off sewing shoe soles or minding children. In the space opposite the school was a big, empty square platform, the remains of what had once been a stage. In front of it were two large locust trees, their dense leaves intermingling to weave a natural canopy over the space before the platform. An occasional pedlar or melon vendor often rested here. On the left behind the stage was the co-operative, and on the right a beancurd mill. Beside the co-operative a big blackboard news had been set up, and on the beancurd mill wall was written in large characters the slogan: "Follow Chairman Mao forever!" A wide road ran south, with brick houses on either side where the rich families of the village lived. To the west were small lanes where all the houses were of mud, squalidly packed with people.

Coming out from the northeast corner of the village Erh and Heini took the road leading south. Old Ku's family had moved several years previously from the west section to this central street, and were living in a house that belonged to Landlord Li whom the villagers called "Moneybags."

Mrs. Ku and her grandchildren were at home, and Da was washing her nephews' and nieces' clothes. In the morning half the courtyard was in shade and it was not too hot. Mrs. Ku was sitting beside her daughter stringing runner beans, the two of them chatting together. The children were dragging a stool which they had set upside down in the yard. On the front they had tied a string, and inside placed a brick.

As she rounded the gate-house Erh called out a greeting. Da looked round, and seeing Heini's tall figure behind her younger sister she stood up, holding out her wet hands, and went to meet them. After looking one another over from head to foot they started chatting, and Mrs. Ku said: "Heini! What good wind blew you here today? Have you had a letter from Yi recently?"

When they had sat down in the shady part of the courtyard Da brought a fan from the house for Heini, who opened it and looked at the picture on it.

While Erh helped with the beans Da described to them how someone in her village had changed into a wolf. It was all hearsay, but the people who told her believed it was true, and it made a good story. Then she talked about a well-known Mr. Ma in their village, an old scholar who had written a petition to the county government accusing the village cadres of "ruining the country, injuring the people and plotting high treason." He had denounced them as puppets. When the village cadres brought this letter back from the district nobody could understand it, but all asked, laughing, "What are puppets?" Now nobody in the village would have anything to do with him. Even his son refused to talk to him. Formerly it was because of him, the lecherous old brute, that the son's wife had run away. He really was the limit: although over sixty he couldn't keep his hands off women. He had a terrible reputation.

After Da had hung her washing out to dry, they went in to the northern room. The screen window was broken and Mrs. Ku had never had it mended, so the room was full

of flies. Even Mrs. Ku admitted they had spoiled a good house.

Mrs. Ku took the stringed beans to the kitchen and brought back a pot of tea, and they went on gossiping. Da described an opera she had seen recently, called "The White-haired Girl," in which a tenant's daughter was ill-treated by the landlord. The girl's father was driven to commit suicide, after he had been forced to sell his daughter to repay debts. Then her mistress beat her and the landlord raped her. When she became pregnant she dared not face people, and finally they wanted to sell her again. . . . Da said this opera was so well acted many of the audience were moved to tears. A woman living next door to them had cried the most bitterly, because her life had been much the same. She had been sold like that too. When the opera was over no one wanted to leave. And on the way home all cursed the landlord, saying, "He got off too lightly. He ought to have been beaten to death, but they just arrested him and took him to the county court. Who knows when he'll be shot?"

After a while Heini grew tired. She said good-bye and went home first. Forgetting her uncle's orders, she had not asked a single question, and the others did not detain her. After she had left they started discussing her, her age and her misfortune in having no parents. Because even though she dressed fairly well, nobody cared for her, and she was not married yet. What would become of her no one could tell.

Last of all Da spoke of all the rumours at Pali Bridge. Their village cadres had attended a meeting in the town of Pingan where everything was humming with daily meetings to share out property and divide up land. It was said things would start moving soon at Pali Bridge. Her father-in-law was worried because last year when a mass trial was held, someone had been killed and his property confiscated. And now they wanted to share out property again — plenty of people had their eyes on Hutai's land. Her father-in-law

intended to plead with the cadres. If they wanted to share out land, well and good, but they shouldn't try him at a mass meeting. Because he was afraid they would take both carts he had let her father bring one back. He would tell people he had sold it until this trouble blew over.

Then miming her father-in-law, Da said: "The communists are all right, but they only help poor people. Anyone with a little property is in for trouble. The Eighth Route Army doesn't beat or curse people, and what they borrow they return. The last half year or so we've made a little money in business and, frankly speaking, life is much better than when the Japanese were here. There's just one thing — they're always telling poor people to stand on their feet. But a man can only stand on his feet if he himself works hard for a living. The poor can't get rich simply by dividing up other people's property."

Heini's father had died when she was five. Her mother struggled along for two years, but they had little land. Things went badly, and having no son she was forced to marry again. At first she wanted to keep her daughter with her but Schemer Chien would not agree to it, saying the child was his brother's flesh and blood. And so Heini went to live with her uncle. Neither her uncle nor aunt was fond of her. They decided to bring her up as a maid-servant, and hoped later to make money out of her, because even as a child she was good-looking, with a pair of clear limpid eyes.

Chien had a daughter older than Heini called Tani, who was not pretty but artful like her father and fond of bullying people. Heini could not get on with her. Her aunt had no will of her own, and though not exactly bad, she

think of a way to take this container. We thought it was a small one, so we didn't bring any rope."

"I'll carry it on my back, Uncle," Heini answered. "You take the vase." So saying she picked up the container, laughed again heartily, and said: "This container's from our house, Uncle. I know it quite well, Uncle Chien bought it that year from the county town. It's a good container. See how thick the glaze is. . . ."

"Well, Heini, don't keep chattering, put it on my back."

"No, I'll take it."

"Come on . . . let me have it."

"It's too heavy for you, Uncle, better let me. . . ."

Young Cheng stood dazed. This unexpected encounter bewildered him for a moment. He thought, "Why, she's still so happy! What's she happy about?" Then he realized, as if suddenly waking up from a dream, how ridiculous his past worries had been. "Why shouldn't she be happy? She used to be a poor child. When Schemer Chien was attacked, the people he had oppressed were liberated. Wasn't she one of the liberated? How could she be in the same boat with him?"

Then Young Cheng felt like a released fighter. He rushed over to Wenfu, and said loudly: "Uncle, let me carry it for you." Without waiting for his consent, he hoisted the container on to his back. The old man looked at him, spreading his hands, not knowing what to say, while Heini turned her face away as if to dissociate herself from them. Then Wenfu followed him slowly out, muttering to himself: "Well, well!" Heini had stopped smiling, and walked some distance behind them in silence. And a crowd of people pressed after them.

Presently all the things had been taken away, but what a scene in the courtyards and hitherto empty rooms of the peasants' houses! Some small rooms were stuffed with red lacquer furniture. In the peasants' own houses these things naturally looked much better than in the place for

distribution, much more delightful. Every lane or street was filled with happy laughter.

That evening, during the meeting of the peasants' association, Old Tung came back from the district sweating from his walk, presenting a strange appearance for a cool autumn evening. Without waiting for the meeting to finish he took Wen out and gave him a letter. He had brought news of the raising of the siege of Tatung. The attack on Tatung was being excellently carried out, and in a few days the city should be taken. Only Fu Tso-yi had brought up reinforcements, and although the communists had wiped out some of his men at Chotzushan and another division at Fengchen, still he had led his cavalry into Fengchen. Kalgan lay between two battlefronts, and the capture of Tatung would not solve this problem. Confronted with this predicament, their main forces would have to move east to prevent the enemy from advancing west from Chinglung Bridge. They had the strength to throw back the attacking forces of Chiang Kai-shek and Fu Tso-yi. The men's morale was excellent, many troops who had not had a chance to fight at Tatung were delighted now. Each man swore he would capture several dozen American rifles. The fortifications at Yenching were not bad, quite strong, but it was imperative to send all available manpower at once to the Huailai region to build more. This was an urgent task, and even though the next day would be the Moon Festival, that could not be helped, men would have to be sent off at once!

Naturally this news did not throw Wen and the others into a panic, but it was quite unexpected. Living in the country, at some distance from any city, the newspapers



they saw were all two days old. They were not well-informed about the situation, and now that there was a sudden change in the military situation they had to consider the future work in the village carefully. However, at the same time Old Tung had brought them additional instructions, namely: "When this phase of land reform is finished, you need not return to Kalgan for the time being, but should go to the Eighth District of Cholu where you will be assigned work." The nature of their new work need not concern them now. The one thing certain was that they must leave the village very soon. Naturally nothing could go wrong with the work in the village, because the village cadres and active elements were well able to shoulder the responsibility. Only at this juncture it was very possible rumours might arise, and the fear that the country would change hands. That was something they could not help worrying about.

The meeting went with a swing. Organization Chao, called to account by the masses, was rather indignant, and shouted: "What land do you accuse me of getting! I haven't got anything, and if I haven't got anything why should you criticize me?" Chuan acknowledged his mistake to the whole community, saying he had been an incompetent fool. He announced that in the past they had given the cadres some good land, but after the quarrel Wen had called all the cadres and land assessment committee members to a meeting, and criticized certain people, and after that they had stopped, realizing their mistake. Previously he had thought the cadres deserved special treatment on account of their past services, but that was wrong, he had been wrong. . . .

Some people raised questions in connection with their own land. Young Cheng, Co-op Tien and Freckles Li explained matters, then everybody was free to speak. Whenever possible to remedy a mistake in distribution, they exchanged land. At first a great many people were dissatisfied, but gradually they stopped being

so. The meeting did not last unduly long, and everybody left feeling relaxed, now that three weeks and more of tension were practically at an end. They were looking forward to the festival the next day, the Moon Festival, the festival of emancipation. Someone said: "This is easy to remember: I shall tell my children and grandchildren they mustn't forget. It was the mid-autumn festival this year our family got land, got a start so that we could really stand up." And they calculated with delight what preparations they ought to make for the harvest. Truly it was a brave new world.

Yumin and the others went back to Wen's courtyard, feeling their work had been successful. Freckles Li in particular was singing happily, while Young Cheng was smiling his rare smile. They brought with them bunches of ripe grapes—the grapes of their district were famous, sweeter than honey. They ate themselves and invited others to eat. Freckles Li wanted to fetch his fiddle, however presently they realized there was something in the air, and asked Old Tung: "Has something happened?"

"Nothing serious," Wen reassured them, "only we must discuss the work in the village thoroughly this evening. A new job has come up!"

Yumin had joined the Party during the White Terror, and was not easily disconcerted, so he said: "Never mind, whatever job we're given we'll do it! Tell us."

They made very detailed plans for the harvest and for sending porters and assigned tasks. The porters should leave by the following afternoon at the latest, and since the fighting made it more imperative to speed up the harvest they ought to organize shock troops. Women and old people would have to be incorporated in the harvesting teams, the grain should be distributed according to their new plots of land. They also reorganized the militia, accepted a number of new members, inspected the rifles and ammunition. Old Tung and Wen, in the name of the district authority, appointed Ex-soldier Chang deputy

captain. Since Chang was a veteran soldier, the Nuanshui militia was strengthened by his appointment.

They also appointed Liuman in place of Security Officer Chang. The security officer's work was very important at this period, when landlords and bad elements had to be strictly watched, and this had to be done with reliance on the masses. Liuman was firm and would make a good security officer whom the masses would support. They checked upon the number of new Party members too. There were now thirty-nine in all, new and old. They talked about how to improve their education and give them some practical work, who should be helped, guided or watched. These matters were left to Freckles Li and Organization Chao who were told to try their best to fulfill their duty. They must not allow the blackboard news to lapse, and must find a crier to broadcast news.

The former village head Chiang had been removed. Vice Head Chao became village head with Orchard-keeper Li and Young Kuo as his deputies. Later there might be rear service work, in which case there would be too much for one man to do. The peasants' association was still headed by Young Cheng, who had to speed up the harvest and maintain the new allocation of land, not letting people return some of it as they had done that spring. There must be more group meetings to express the views of the community and to educate them. Only by unity and stubborn opposition to the forces of feudalism could they safeguard their victory.

Matters had been precipitated. They had not expected to be leaving so soon. All felt an indescribable emotion, but there was no time for regrets at parting. It was very late and they had to prepare for the next day.

As soon as it was light, things started humming outside the primary school. Men had brought pine branches cut from the hills, the stage was filled with people working, who stacked the planks here. Red paper flowers had appeared too, woven into a bright archway where hung a big red cotton banner on which was written: "Celebrate the return of the land to its owners." On both sides at the back hung rush mats on which were pasted red and green slips of paper with slogans written on them: "Destroy feudalism root and branch," "Support land reform," "The land returns to its rightful owners, everybody will have food," "In unity is strength," "Chairman Mao is our Saviour," "Forever follow Chairman Mao," "Support the Eighth Route Army," "Long live the Communist Party!" Then the gongs and drums from the primary school were brought out and sounded triumphantly on the stage. Some people came to watch the fun, others hurried home for a meal. Many people were drinking wine and eating meat dumplings.

Wen and the rest had dumplings too, and their host said: "Oh, so sorry, we didn't buy meat, it's calabash." Wen strolled out to see several families, some of whom were eating very well. The worst-off at least had pumpkin dumplings. Many villagers brought them fruit: pears, apples, and grapes. When they refused to take them the givers were angry, so they let them leave them there. Before breakfast they had held a meeting of cadres and prepared all the porters. After the meeting one hundred able-bodied men would set out, to return in three days.

Everybody in the village knew what the meeting that day was for, and meant to enjoy themselves. They had put on their new clothes and put their houses in order early. Some of them knew of the change in the situation, but were not alarmed. Gunpowder had been bought from

Shacheng, and their old rifles which had not been used for quite a few years were to be let off too. These rifles were kept for birthdays and weddings and made a loud, sharp report, good to hear. Some of the villagers could perform. They got together and formed an orchestra, regretting they had been so busy the last few days they had not thought of it before. If there had not been a meeting the previous evening they could have put on an opera without difficulty. These people cleared up a corner of the stage and started playing on their instruments. The men in the street knew they liked fun, and surrounded them asking if they would sing or not.

Tenant Hou came to watch the fun too. All the old people remembered what he had been like as a youngster and told the others how handsome he had looked dressed up, his voice was strong and his acting good: he was the best performer Nuanshui ever had. The young people laughed, looking at his wizened, monkeyish face and said: "Uncle! Give us a demonstration. Work off your bad luck by singing. Wash out all these years of disappointment! What about it?" The old man said nothing, just smiled, but he kept standing by the stage, listening to the music.

When everybody had arrived some pedlars set up stalls at the back by the wall, and had a good many customers for fruit and melon seeds.

Presently the primary school dancers came out, and danced through some of the lanes and the big streets, ending up before the stage where they gave a skilful performance of whip dances, followed by so many songs and such a variety of dances, that the audience was amazed and marvelled at the children's good memories.

Villagers were greeting each other as if it were New Year.

When they had finished their meeting all the cadres came, bringing a portrait of Chairman Mao which had just been painted. It was a fair likeness, and they pasted it on a board and stood it on a table at the back. Some

people wanted to light incense before it, but the majority disagreed, saying: "Chairman Mao doesn't like superstition." People stood on their toes to look, and the school children pushed their way to a corner in front and sang:

*From the red east rises the sun,*

*There appears in China Mao Tse-tung!*

There were now over fifty militiamen, all wearing plain white shirts, towels on their heads and leather belts at their waists, each with a cartridge belt over his shoulder and a hand grenade belt containing two hand grenades. These two belts crossed over their chests, and made them look very martial. Ex-soldier Chang was similarly equipped. He and Swarthy Kuo directed the others and they formed a column, standing together during the meeting. They sang the Eighth Route Army March with its heroic and impressive air.

All the cadres crowded onto the stage. Young Cheng stepped forward and declared the meeting open, saying: "Elders! Neighbours! Our meeting today is to celebrate the return of the land to its rightful owners! We suffered, generations of our ancestors lived like beasts, because we had no land, nothing to eat and nothing to wear—where had our land gone?"

"Stolen by the exploiting landlords!" answered several voices from below.

"Now the communist policy is that every peasant shall have land of his own to till. The land is for those who have suffered. Do you approve or not?"

"Yes!"

"In a moment we're going to distribute tickets, stating where the land is. The old title deeds are no longer valid. We're going to burn them."

Excited murmurs swept the assembly.

"Chairman Mao thought of this for us," Young Cheng went on. "Chairman Mao is the champion of the poor. There in Yen-an he is thinking of us and working for us day and night. Today we've invited him here. See, here's

his portrait. We ought to bow to him "to express our thanks."

"Bow to Chairman Mao!" came the response from below the stage.

"It's right for us to bow to Chairman Mao!"

Young Cheng turned round and called out very respectfully in front of Chairman Mao's portrait: "Bow!" There was not a sound from the men and women below as they all bowed their heads after him. They bowed three times. Then Young Cheng turned round again to go on, but the crowd had started shouting slogans: "Support Chairman Mao! Long live Chairman Mao!"

Next Orchard-keeper Li reported on the distribution of land and problems connected with it, explaining to the masses why they must leave Schemer Chien and the others enough to live on: "As long as they submit and mend their ways, and are willing to work, they should be given land. You don't want to drive them to become thieves or beggars, do you? If we don't give them land to cultivate, they'll have nothing to do, and if they beg, won't that mean eating our food?" When he explained this everyone laughed, and no one insisted on their original idea of leaving nothing to the landlords.

When the land slips were distributed, all the villagers listened carefully as one cadre announced the size of each plot of land and its boundaries. The eyes of all the crowd eagerly followed each one who went up to take a slip. When he came back the people nearby craned their necks to look, while he held the red paper slip tightly, as if it weighed a hundredweight. Some put it in the wallet of their belt, and kept their hands outside. Some quietly showed their slips to people who could read and asked if what had just been announced was right or not.

The names were called out one after the other. The proceeds from the fruit were divided too, taking a considerable time, but nobody felt impatient. Even when the slips

had all been given out, nobody left, and Young Cheng called out: "Sound the drums and let off guns to celebrate."

Once more Freckles Li led the others in shouting slogans, which echoed far and wide. Gongs and drums were beaten frenziedly, whistles were blown, the old rifles were let off one after the other, the people shouting all the while. Then the school children sang again. Nobody could quite make out what they were singing, but all the grown-ups seemed to have become children again, enjoying this tumult of noise. Their extreme happiness and deep emotion impelled them to rejoice wildly.

However Young Cheng called out again from the stage, and a number of cadres shouted with him: "Stop talking please! Be quiet! Don't sing!" The noise still continued for a moment, but presently the crowd quietened down, and they heard the order: "Start the demonstration!"

The red banner on the stage was mounted on two bamboo poles and lifted down to be carried at the head of the procession. Immediately behind it came the band, next the militiamen, then all the villagers, the men in front, then the women and last the school children. They proceeded from the main street to the lanes, from the lanes to outside of the village, forming a long procession, and a few people left at home stood in the street to watch them go by. Whenever they passed a landlord's house they shouted: "Down with the feudalistic landlords!" with voices like thunder. The gates of the landlords' houses were wide open, but nobody came out. Only a few families had one or two standing by the door to stare round-eyed at the angrily shouting masses.

When the procession passed Schemer Chien's house they roared out: "Down with the local despot!" Chien's wife did not hide, but stood there nervously, watching with a blank face as they marched by, as if she had no special feeling but were just watching the fun, as if the demonstrators had nothing to do with her but were all strangers. Suddenly, however, she seemed struck with astonishment,

she shook her head in amazement, her hand trembled, and she called out towards the procession: "Heini!" But no one answered. The column passed rapidly forward, and scratching her head she hobbled back inside. She felt the world had turned topsy-turvy.

The procession made a tour outside the village, and just as they reached the point for turning back Liuman and a group of men stood out from the column. Liuman had recovered from his exhaustion and regained the energy he had displayed at the mass trial. He shouted: "Those going to Huailai to dig trenches, this way!"

The procession stopped, a number of men went over to where he was, among them some cadres and some militiamen.

"Have you brought your things?" Liuman asked.

They lifted up their mattocks; they had come prepared.

"If you don't take bedding, why not take padded clothes? The evenings are very cool," Yumin said to some who he saw only wore lined clothes.

"Fall in!" shouted Liuman. "Look sharp!" They immediately formed a small column, over a hundred strong, all sturdy young men.

"We're going to build fortifications to defend our land! March!" Liuman marched at their head to the big road outside the village. They shouted slogans. Those left behind did not stir, only followed them with their eyes, while Yumin and Freckles Li led them in shouting: "Defend our land, down with the reactionaries! Three cheers for the Eighth Route Army!" The children started singing again. The small column receded into the distance, sturdy, quick and in high spirits. When they were out of sight, the villagers turned back and returned to the stage. By now there were fewer of them. Yumin spoke of the plans for going into the fields the next day. Everybody must join a harvesting team, everybody must work as directed. They listened contentedly, feeling that the plan was thoroughly drawn up. Only a very few asked quietly:

"What does it mean? Is there going to be fighting in the east too?" However, most people had confidence. After the meeting had dispersed, they went home to eat dumplings and celebrate the festival.

After eating an early supper Wen and the two others, as well as Old Tung, put on their packs and let Yumin, Young Cheng, Chao and Swarthy Kuo see them off to the east of the village. They were all racking their brains to think if there were any business they had forgotten in the village, hoping that they had prepared for all eventualities. Although they seemed to have said all there was to say, the village cadres kept asking: "Is there anything else?" Or saying regretfully: "Oh! We'd only just got to know each other! You must come again when you have time! Come to help us with the work!" Wen asked them not to come any further, but they insisted, and when at last the time came to part, all Yang could find to say was: "Keep close to the masses. That's the only way to be strong. If the masses aren't awakened, try to arouse them. When the masses do rise don't be afraid, but take your stand firmly among them to lead them. Be firm with your enemies but united among yourselves. You know all this quite well. Just carry it out with all your might!"

When they had said good-bye, Wen and the others headed for the county town and their new work. Along the road they met group after group of porters going to dig fortifications, all of them peasants from villages which had had land reform, all filled with a new spirit, brimming over with happiness, all seeming to say: "The land is ours, it's the result of our hard struggle for emancipation. Do you want to come and invade it, Chiang Kai-shek, you dog? It's no use! We have our people's army, the Eighth Route

Army. We have millions of liberated peasants. We are united in one common aim, to defend our land!"

Halfway, Old Tung left them to go to the district, while the others continued on their way. They were like the porters headed for the front, full of self-confidence and satisfaction! Just as they were about to ford the river before reaching the city, the bright moon started rising behind them. They turned to look at its brightness, and at the villages under the moonlight. Over there was Nuanshui, where they had spent three weeks—what were the villagers there doing? Celebrating the Autumn Festival, celebrating the festival of their emancipation. Willow tendrils along the road stirred lightly. They pressed forward, waded into the water and across the Sangkan River, and the villagers across the river, no, not only the villagers but the peasants at the south gate of the city also were sounding gongs and drums. It was the same everywhere! Everywhere there had been a complete change during the last month or more! Now the world belonged to the toilers. There were no difficulties that could not be surmounted.

That evening they reached the county town and reported on their work. The next day when the sun was just rising over the Sangkan River they set out again, headed for a new post in the Eighth District where they would help in the work of political training.

## ON "THE SUN SHINES OVER THE SANGKAN RIVER"

Feng Hsueh-feng

This is a novel about land reform. The novel starts with Old Ku, a well-off middle peasant who is "carelessly classed as a rich peasant." In him the author gives us an excellent picture of a prosperous middle peasant. Then there is Hutai, related to Old Ku by marriage, a rich peasant who runs a small business. Although he plays only a small part in the novel, his character is clearly delineated. These two men—a rich and a well-to-do middle peasant—form one class of characters described by the author. At the start we see Old Ku coming back with his elder daughter from Hutai's house to Nuanshui, his own village, riding in a cart with rubber tyres. This cart not only gives an indication of Hutai's and Old Ku's class ideology, but also of the background and the time. Hutai, hearing that land reform was imminent, was afraid his cart would be confiscated, so he had asked Old Ku to take it back and keep it for him; moreover Chiang Kai-shek was planning to attack the Liberated Areas, and the land reform we had just begun in this region had to be rapidly concluded. The second thing we notice about this middle peasant is the way he talks, all the way back, about the rich soil and crops on either side of the road. We realize how much he longs to own more land here. The third thing we note is Old Ku's relationship by marriage to the village despot, Schemer Chien, which shows up the conflict between them.

Beginning, then, with this rich middle peasant, and while she is laying bare his heart to us, the author creates an atmosphere which pervades the whole novel and makes us

realize the close relationship of landlords, rich, middle and poor peasants and farm labourers to the land and the class conflict between them. We sense the atmosphere of the place and time (land reform started slightly later in Nuan-shui than in the villages around, so when the novel starts the peasants there are conscious of an impending storm, and it is in this atmosphere of fearful expectancy that the characters of different classes make their appearance).

Schemer Chien, landlord and local despot, is an important character because he represents the landlord class and is the chief object of the peasants' struggle. He is connected with all the villagers, and the current situation is reflected in his actions. To unfold this Machiavellian landlord's class character and actions, the author has created the primary school teacher, Jen. As an individual, this intellectual who acts as running dog for the landlords is quite successfully drawn; but he is created largely to throw light on Schemer Chien and, to a lesser degree, Landlord Li. Again, Schemer Chien's niece, Heini, is introduced largely for the sake of the hired hand, Young Cheng, but also for Schemer Chien. Landlord Chiang, and the loose woman, White Snake, also derive their importance from their connection with Schemer Chien. In her description of these characters, Ting Ling presents not only the main conflict between the peasantry and the landlord class, but also the conflict between the landlords themselves, and their home life.

Particularly noteworthy, however, is the fact that Ting Ling has not made a caricature of this landlord, Schemer Chien, nor has she described him as an out-and-out villain. Her treatment of him is true to the actual facts about this type of local despot, and she attempts to make her description strictly realistic. Ting Ling's success with this character is proof of her profound observation and analysis of village life, for this crafty landlord has taken steps in good time to cope with the changed situation by becoming an "army dependent" and winning allies among the village

cadres. Outwardly, he appears quite calm and "enlightened." At the same time, his estate is a small one, and his secret sabotage is not of the most vicious type, so that even Comrade Wen of the work team considers him as a middle peasant. Yet the villagers are so afraid of him that they dare not mention his name. It is Schemer Chien who symbolizes the age-old rule of the landlord class. It is he too who constitutes a connecting link with the Kuomintang reactionaries. The peasants' scruples, fear of the reactionaries' return, and fatalism are on account of him. And these scruples and fears on the part of the peasants increase the landlords' actual power. Hence, although Schemer Chien is not one of the greatest despots, his power is by no means small.

This approach to problems, not only by describing facts, but by noting the psychological effect on the peasants of the landlords' power, is absolutely correct and shows great insight on the part of the author. In describing both Schemer Chien and the peasants, Ting Ling pays special attention to these psychological factors and goes into them very deeply, and this is one of the chief reasons for the success of this novel and the delineation of its characters. Only towards the very end does the struggle between the peasants and Chien become an open one. The peasants do not realize at first that Schemer Chien is carrying out sabotage, but from the very beginning they feel in their hearts that he is their chief enemy. So, psychologically speaking, the class struggle begins early, to grow more and more intense as time goes on. This method of presenting the struggle is in keeping with actual fact, and artistically effective. Moreover, by using the analysis of characters and the creation of atmosphere to unfold her main theme, the author is able to give a really penetrating picture of the development of the class struggle.

Landlord Chiang and his place in the landlord class are also clearly depicted. He belongs to Chien's camp, not just

because they are members of the same class, but because they are in league together.

The loose woman, White Snake, who does not come from a landlord family herself, is introduced not simply to give a picture of one aspect of the old society and throw light on the landlords, but also to describe the struggle and the peasant masses. She fits organically into the novel because she is connected with both landlords and peasants, and she plays her part too in the struggle. Her position is the same as that of Teacher Jen.

Though little is written about Landlord Li, readers understand what he is like. And his wife is one of the most striking and successfully drawn characters in the whole novel.

However, Heini — Schemer Chien's niece — does not strike one as too well depicted. Ting Ling seems to have shown some bias in her treatment of Heini, evidently wanting to portray a sweet girl who should win the hearts of readers as well as of the characters in the novel. But she pays too little attention to the contradictions in Heini's relationship to Schemer Chien, the social roots of such a character and the contradictions in the girl herself and makes too little attempt to analyse them. In general, however, the author is able to describe the contradictions in a character as a reflection of the contradictions in objective reality, so that she rarely expresses the development of character in isolation from the development of the conflict in real life. This method is the basic reason for her success in characterization. Nearly all Ting Ling's characters are portrayed in this realistic manner; Heini, however, is something of an exception.

The third group of characters are the men of the work team sent by the county Party branch. Comrade Wen, who leads the work team, is an impractical, high-flown intellectual, unable to get close to the masses and hence quite unable to understand them. The other two youngsters, Yang and Hu, although inexperienced, are able to mingle more

closely with the masses, and gradually come to understand the village cadres and peasants and the actual conditions of the village as a whole. The author uses the work team to present the stages of the mass struggle of the peasants, but also makes use of the differences of opinion between Yang, Hu and Comrade Wen to bring out the ideas and emotions of the peasants and the chief difficulties of the struggle.

These three cadres are described to the life, and from Ting Ling's criticism of Comrade Wen and her description of the other two, we can learn much about the actual work of land reform. However, it is clear that her main purpose in writing the novel is not to describe the cadres, and they are relegated to a secondary position.

The most important set of characters in the book is, of course, the village cadres — Yumin (secretary of the Nuan-shui Party Branch), Young Cheng (chairman of the peasants' association), Vice Head Chao, Swarthy Kuo (captain of the militia), Kuei (chairman of the women's association) and many other cadres. It is they who lead the peasant masses. These cadres and the ordinary peasants are the chief characters of the book. The author gives a graphic description of all the village cadres and many of the peasants connected with them.

Ting Ling gives us a clear picture of what is the ideology of Yumin, Young Cheng and the other cadres, and makes them wage a struggle of ideas with the peasant masses; and in her eyes the victory won in this struggle of ideas is just as important as the victory over the landlords. The author's central aim is to describe the peasants, or, it would be more correct to say, to describe how the peasants in the course of their struggle overcome their ideological weaknesses and develop and grow in stature. Here, on a broad social basis, she describes the strength engendered when the peasants become class conscious. We know it is not easy in places where the reactionaries still reign for the peasants to rise up and struggle, largely because they are



too weak by themselves. But in liberated areas where several struggles have already taken place, although they have strength to spare to overthrow the landlord class, it is still difficult to start the struggle. It is easy to understand the true nature and power of the personal scruples, fear of the reactionaries' return, fatalism and other anxieties that beset the peasants at this time. There is undoubtedly a historical reason for these anxieties, but they are also a reflection of the continuing existence of the landlords' power. Hence, in order to expel these anxieties, the real cause for them must be uprooted — the landlord class must be overthrown. Must be overthrown, though, by the peasants themselves. Unless the peasants are awakened and use their own strength against the landlords, even if the latter are overthrown, fear of their return will still linger in the peasants' minds. The landlords' power will still hold sway over their hearts.

So to overthrow the landlord class is no easy matter. In the first place, the peasants themselves must act, nobody else can act for them. In the second place, if the peasants are to act, not only must they wage a class struggle in actual practice, they must also wage a class struggle in their own minds. Only when this class struggle in their minds has been won, will they be truly awakened and able to overthrow the landlord class. The author has a deep understanding of village society and its class relations, as well as of the peasant mentality. She also shows profound understanding of the Party's directives on the mass line in land reform. So, taking as her basic point of departure the relationships to the land which determine the village class relationships, she can give us concrete and penetrating analyses and descriptions of the extent of the villagers' dependence on the land, the various aspects of the landlords' influence over and enslavement of the peasants, the rise of the peasants' struggle and the source of their strength, and the complexity of the relationships between different classes and groups of individuals. The author's deep un-

derstanding of the peasants arises from her understanding of the complexity and importance of the class struggle in land reform. From a broad social and historical basis and amid complex human relationships, she observes the unfolding of the class struggle and the peasants' own ideological struggle; then the peasant masses and their very real strength are displayed so vividly to us, and so convincingly, we can detect no exaggeration or falsification.

Comrade Pin, propaganda commissioner of the county Party branch, has an important role towards the end of the novel. Although he comes to Nuanshui very late and stays only for a very short time, it is he who sets a match, as it were, to the pile of fuel already prepared. That is to say, the author uses Comrade Pin's words to point out the real historical victory of the peasants. Thus, although Comrade Pin plays a part of the utmost importance in guiding Nuanshui's land reform struggle, and the author sketches his admirable qualities and likable character in a few vivid strokes, he is not one of the chief figures in the novel — the chief figures are the village cadres and peasants, as already mentioned.

In characterization too, the author pays most attention to the village cadres and peasants. To mention specific cases, the chief characters, like Yumin, Young Cheng, Vice Head Chao, Swarthy Kuo and Freckles Li, impress us as strongly individual figures, true to life. While, of the peasant women, we cannot but admire the lifelike and striking figures of Kuei and Yueh. It is clear, however, that the author is less intent on individual characterization than on depicting a group of people. We are given a relatively detailed analysis of Yumin and Kuei, but with the other peasants we feel the author is analysing and describing the development of the struggle rather than depicting characters. Yet, even in the case of Yumin and Kuei, it is only because the plot requires them to appear relatively often that the author has occasion to devote more space to them. It is not because the author wants to go into

greater detail with these figures that she makes them appear more often. However, although the author does not write more fully about any particular character, practically all the cadres and peasants in the book, regardless of their importance and the space devoted to them, make a marked impression on us. That is to say, virtually all the characters have distinctive individuality, and this is undoubtedly one reason for the author's success.

It is clear that the author describes people in order to describe the struggle, to describe society and life. This means the portrayal of characters is subordinated to the portrayal of society and life. Here, that is to say, it is subordinated to the portrayal of the class struggle in the countryside (land reform). Works of literature must describe people; if there are no people, the value of such works will be very low. But the description of characters, while it is not the aim, is an indispensable method. People are the agents of all that takes place in society. Without the description of people, there can be no description of society in literature. Hence both the aim and method of literature demand that, on the basis of society and life, from the development of the struggle, authors must write of people. This is a fundamental rule. It is in fact the method of realism in creating types. In *The Sun Shines over the Sangkan River*, Ting Ling in her creation of characters may be said to have succeeded, in general, in using the method of realism.

To my mind, the fact that the author has achieved such success in this direction is due to her relatively deep understanding of life, her study of society, her knowledge of many people, of their life and struggle, of how they act and think in the struggle, and what part they play. Hence she can write of people in the framework of society and life, during the course of the struggle. Her characters develop step by step following the development of the struggle, in the closest connection with the struggle. Individual characteristics are chosen for their importance and social

significance, and all actions, words or ideas which fail to accord with or are not necessary to the laws of development of the struggle are not forced upon the characters, for they would be unsuitable and superfluous. This does not mean, however, that her characters are placed in a passive position, for the struggle is waged by people who develop in the struggle of contradictions. And then the author is always on the alert to see that her characters are realistically portrayed.

All Ting Ling's characters have individuality and yet are, to a greater or lesser degree, types. What is typical in them is expressed through their individuality, which is, of course, the only way it can be expressed. There is nothing mysterious about the fact that characters can be both individuals and types. When you have seen many people, you can distinguish both their individual features and what they have in common (that is, what makes them typical. Class character is the main factor here). Then, no matter whether you describe an individual or a type, in each case the description will be based on actual people. And so long as this is the case, your characters will naturally have both individuality and typicalness; while, the better you write, the more striking and penetrating these features will be. Our basic demand is for characters true to life, and this applies whether we write of individuals or types.

It is true that in this novel the author has not given us any types so outstanding that we are absolutely bowled over by them. But she has skilfully and realistically created real people, and some of her characters, we must admit, are unforgettable types.

Moreover, these real people are peasants. If Ting Ling could write only of intellectuals like Comrade Wen, and not of peasants, she would not have won so much praise. Similarly, if she could paint successful pictures of Schemer Chien, Landlord Li's wife, Old Ku and his two daughters, but not of Yumin, Young Cheng, Vice Head Chao, Swarthy

Kuo, Kuei, Yueh and the others, we should not be paying such tribute to her today.

To consider this work from another angle, we should take the author's outstanding achievement in this work as representative of the achievements in our literature in recent years. During the last ten years our socialist realist literature has been growing. A number of writers have created or are beginning to create real people. This novel of Ting Ling's is only an outstanding example of this. We should note this achievement, and the achievement of all our best writers, in order to affirm and develop the realism already growing in our literature.

Another point we should note is the way in which Ting Ling, in this novel, links up the leadership of the Party (*i.e.*, leadership of the proletariat) with the peasants' own struggle, according to the inner relations of the class struggle in the villages, presenting this as one historical condition of the peasants' demand for land and the development of the revolutionary struggle. This means that the Party leadership cannot be described as an outside force, unconnected with the peasants. This is another very important feature of this book. Many people recognize superficially that without the leadership of the Party the peasants cannot stand up, so they often consider the peasants quite simply as being liberated by an outside force, as if the peasants themselves were unable to revolt or struggle. They fail to realize that the peasantry is a revolutionary fighting class, and that the leadership of the proletariat and the Communist Party is one of the historical conditions which enabled the peasants in this period to rise up and struggle. Hence the leadership of the proletariat and the Communist Party has an inner historical connection with the peasants' revolutionary struggle. Thus, to recognize the necessity for Party leadership, one must recognize the inner historical relationship of the proletariat and peasantry. That is to say, one must recognize that the leadership of the proletariat and the worker-peasant alliance are

historically inevitable, and not view this alliance as the juxtaposition of two forces which have no inner historical connection.

When I think back to the contents of the book as a whole, I am struck by the author's mastery of artistic expression. Without a highly developed artistic technique, the book could not have been what it is. In this novel Ting Ling has painted a great canvas, but on this canvas beauty of scenery is relegated to second place. What takes first place is characterization, penetrating and correct analysis of ideas, and a rich atmosphere woven of poetic sensibility and the joy of living. I hope the author will pay more attention in future to polishing her language and making use of popular expressions—although this must not be done at the expense of the artistic qualities already mentioned. I was most struck by the large canvas covered in this novel, and the poetic character of the book. And all readers must, I think, have admired the poetic prose of the chapter describing the orchard, where the language achieves a standard seldom attained hitherto by our young literature.

In brief, the faithfulness to life and artistry already observed in this work make it an epic of our great land reform, small although its scale may be, and in spite of the fact that it was written before most of China had been liberated, and before land reform had been carried out in most parts.

Of course, if we say there should be epics to record our great land reform movement, this work cannot be considered the most brilliant or greatest epic it deserves. For our country is so vast, land reform has been carried out over such wide areas since liberation, such complex social relationships have been involved, and the historical significance of the movement is so great, it is understandable if readers are still waiting for a more comprehensive work to appear to reflect all the relationships and aspects of this great movement with wider vision and deeper insight. This

is a sign of the increased demands our people are making on literature.

Several works on land reform have already appeared and won the respect of readers. And the fundamental reason for this is the people's respect for this great historical period. All works that can reflect this era in our history will have epic significance and will be acclaimed by the public. And so we prize a work like *The Sun Shines over the Sangkan River*, not just because it is one of the best books on land reform and gives a good picture of this movement, but because it shows that our literature has already achieved the power to reflect reality, and is growing in stature.

Peking, May 14, 1952

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ting Ling was born in 1906 in Hunan Province, in an impoverished landlord family. Her father died while she was still a child. Her mother, influenced by the revolutionary ideas stirring the country at the end of the Manchu dynasty, broke with the feudal clan and took her daughter away with her to live an independent life in town. So Ting Ling hated the reactionary feudal ruling class from childhood, and when in her teens she gave up her formal education and went to Shanghai to find the road to revolution.

In Shanghai she studied in a girls' school set up by the Communist Party, where most of the teachers were Party members or progressives. Afterwards she entered the College of Arts of Shanghai University established by the well-known communist Chu Chiu-pai. Later, she left for Peking, where she studied translations of foreign literature, her favourite authors at that time being Balzac, Tolstoy and Gorki.

In 1927, she started writing novels. Her first works, *Meng Ko* and *Miss Sophie's Diary*, were published in the *Hsiao Shuo Yueh Pao* (Fiction Monthly), the only literary journal of that time, and excited considerable attention. She followed them with a number of stories, including *Flood* and *Mother*.

In 1930, Ting Ling joined the League of Left-wing Writers, and the following year became editor of its magazine *North Star*. In 1932, she joined the Communist Party. In 1933 she was thrown into jail in Shanghai by the reactionary Kuomintang authorities, to be released only in 1936, thanks to the efforts made by the Party. She then went

to Yen-an. After the outbreak of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression in 1937, she headed the Northwest War Service Corps, and edited the literary supplement of the Party paper *Chieh Fang Jih Pao* (Liberation Daily).

In 1946-47, Ting Ling spent many months as an active member of land reform work teams in North China. *The Sun Shines over the Sangkan River* is the work not merely of a writer who went to the villages to observe land reform, but one who took part in the struggle.

Ting Ling is now member of the standing committee and head of the editing department of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, Vice-Chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers, and member of the Cultural and Educational Committee of the Government Administration Council of the Central People's Government.

Ting Ling's works include many short stories (of which *Flood* and *When I Was at Hsia Village* have been translated into English), several novels, notably *Mother* and *The Sun Shines over the Sangkan River*, and a volume of essays entitled *Step into the New Era*.

*The Sun Shines over the Sangkan River*, which in 1951 won a Stalin Prize, has been translated into thirteen languages.