

The Story of the Modern Ballet

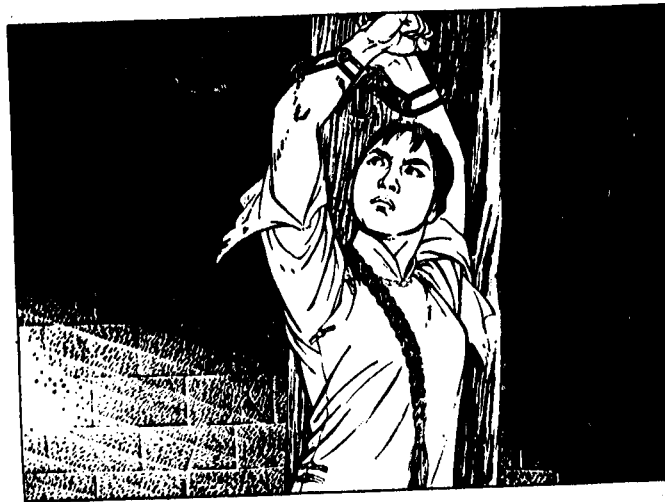
Red Detachment of Women

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Pointing Out the Road

The scene of the action is China's Hainan Island. The time is the period of the ten-year civil war, 1927-37.

A slave girl was chained to a post in a dungeon of Coconut Grove Manor, which belonged to the Tyrant



of the South, a despotic landlord. Beaten black and blue, the girl stood with head up and chest high, her eyes flashing defiance. If she could only use her strong

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fists to smash the bloody slave shackles that bound her!

Her name was Wu Ching-hua, daughter of a poor peasant. The girl hated being bondmaid and slave in the Tyrant's manor and had tried to run away several times, but had been caught and dragged back. Now again she was lashed and locked in the dungeon.

With her were two other peasant women who had been beaten and confined in the dungeon because they were unable to pay their land rent.

Footsteps were heard outside the dungeon and then the grating of the heavy iron gate. Two of the Tyrant's strong-arm men burst in. The one in front, a villainous-looking fellow called Lao Szu, was dressed in black and carried a whip. He was followed by a guard with a lantern in his hand. Lao Szu was the Tyrant's watch-dog and chief of his guards, bullying the people at the Tyrant's direction.

Lao Szu, who had been ordered to take Ching-hua out that night and sell her, went over to the post, unlocked the shackle and released her. Ching-hua's deep proletarian feeling made her forget her pain as she rushed to her fellow prisoners. Tugging at their hands, she said warmly, "Take heart, sisters! We'll fight the Tyrant to the end!"

Lao Szu shook his whip at Ching-hua, then shoved her rudely towards the dungeon door. Ching-hua, seething with anger, tenderly bade her cellmates goodbye and then mounted the steps, head high. Catching Lao Szu off guard, Ching-hua seized his whip and gave him a good kick in the chest so that he tumbled back down the steps. The guard rushed to the aid of his boss. A gust of wind blew out the lantern in his hand, plunging the dungeon into darkness and terrifying the two. Lao Szu picked himself up and yelled, "Hurry up! Bring her back!"

But the two peasant women prisoners threw themselves

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on Lao Szu and the guard and held them fast so that Ching-hua could get away.

"Flee with me, sisters," she called to them.

But they knew they could not, and called back, "Remember to avenge us!"

Helped to escape by her class sisters, Ching-hua sped away and made for a cocoanut grove.



Lao Szu sent the guard to report the slave girl's escape to the Tyrant. Then, lanterns in hand, he and a bevy of guards set out in pursuit. Equipped with whips and ropes, they prowled like beasts of prey in their search of the dark cocoanut grove but did not find the girl. Lao Szu was enraged and ordered his men to scatter for a more thorough search.

But Ching-hua was still in the cocoanut grove, hidden behind a tree. She said to herself: "You Tyrant of

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the South. You arrested me, flogged me and threw me in your dungeon. I swear I'll settle accounts with you. You'll get your just deserts. Death by a thousand cuts to you!"

Ching-hua crept from one tree to another, keeping out of the bandits' sight till they left. Then she sped swiftly into the depths of the cocoanut grove, where she saw two of the toughs with lanterns coming her way. To avoid them, Ching-hua nimbly took a few steps back.

But in the darkness she backed into someone who she recognized was Lao Szu, her bitter enemy. As an old saying goes, "The road of sworn enemies is narrow and they're sure to meet."

Ching-hua had already made up her mind that if she could escape, she would, while if they caught her she'd fight. She preferred death to slavery. She struck Lao Szu a blow on the head with her bare fist and he ducked to avoid her surprise attack. Then he got hold of her right arm.

"Come back with me!" he demanded.

"I'd die first," she replied defiantly.

Ching-hua's courage doubled in the struggle, while Lao Szu was exhausted. She twisted his arm and bit it, then kicked him to the ground. She turned to run, but guards swarmed up and surrounded her.

By this time the Tyrant himself had been aroused and came on the scene. He was stout and middle-aged with a small moustache, and his face bore the vicious features of the coldblooded murderer that he was. Hand in glove with the Kuomintang reactionaries in exploiting and oppressing the local peasants, he was the plague of Cocoanut Grove.

Ching-hua's stubborn resistance enraged him and he pressed the tip of his cane into her temple. Still she re-

fused to bow her head. He flew into a rage and struck her savagely. Ching-hua got hold of the cane and fought him desperately. The Tyrant drew back, his face purple with fury, and he yelled, "Beat her to death!"

Ching-hua stood proudly against the pain of the lashing, until finally her head swam and she fainted away.



"Cold water!" ordered the Tyrant, and Lao Szu fetched a bowl of water and dashed it over her. Then another, but she remained unconscious. Lao Szu placed his hand before her face and announced that she was dead. The Tyrant, pointing to other slave girls, said, "Any of the rest of you who dare to run away and are so stubborn will get the same."

Lightning flashed, and there was a heavy clap of thunder. The Tyrant hurried away before the storm should break. The other slave girls were sad and threw themselves before

Ching-hua, repeating her name and caressing her bruised arms. But the cruel guards cracked their whips and drove them back.

The driving rain deluged the cocoanut grove, and Ching-hua revived. She opened her eyes and realized what had happened. Her body was a mass of wounds and she felt a sharp pain.

Exhausted, cold and hungry, where could Ching-hua go in the dark night? Was there no way out for those like her — slaves through generations? Ching-hua stood up in spite of her pain. Dark night would pass, and there was also an end to the deep cocoanut grove. The day would come when slaves would stand up. "I must settle accounts," she said as she made her way along. "I'll go on all fours if I have to." Then an excruciating pain made her lose consciousness again.

The rain stopped and the sky cleared. Dawn broke through the mist. Two men dressed as peasants came out from the depth of the cocoanut grove. The first, a sturdy figure steady and alert, had a split bamboo hat in his hand. He was a Red Army cadre in his late twenties whose name was Hung Chang-ching. With him was a lad of about seventeen who had a similar hat slung across his back and a pistol in his hand. He was Pang, Chang-ching's messenger. They were carrying out a scouting mission.

Chang-ching took the towel which was tied at his waist and wiped the sweat from his ruddy face. Then he handed Pang the towel and asked, "Are you tired?"

Smiling, Pang replied, "No. Not at all." He wiped his sweat away and returned the towel to Chang-ching. Chang-ching noticed the pistol in his hand as he returned the towel and said, "Your pistol. . . ." Pang realized his carelessness and stuck the pistol back into his belt at once.

Chang-ching looked around, then suddenly discovered someone lying on the ground not far ahead. He turned to Pang and said, "Be careful!" Then he went over to the wounded girl and raised her head. Ching-hua slowly opened her eyes, then gave a start at the sight of the strangers. Who could they be? she thought. She struggled to her feet and tried to run away.

Dizzy and weak, she nearly fell, and Chang-ching quickly supported her. Seeing the bloody wounds on her arms, he gently patted her wounds with his towel. "Don't be afraid," he said kindly. "We're poor working people like you." His simplicity and sincerity dispelled all doubts. Then he asked, "Who has beaten you like this?"

The full fury of Ching-hua's hatred returned at mention of her wounds. Pointing in the direction the Tyrant had gone, she denounced him. "That fiend who kills without blinking an eye — the Tyrant of the South!" Burning with class hatred, Chang-ching and Pang clenched their fists and vowed to collect the bloody debt owed by the Tyrant of the South.

"What's your name?" Chang-ching asked.

"Wu Ching-hua," replied the escaped slave girl.

"Have you any idea where you're going? Where do you live?"

"Live? I have no home. Wherever poor working people can raise their heads and assert themselves, there is my home."

Chang-ching felt profound proletarian sympathy for this poor peasant's daughter. He explained to her that the working people's drawback was that they had no armed forces, that only by taking up guns against the evil landlords could they achieve emancipation. "Beyond the cocoanut grove and over the mountain red flags wave in

the bright sun," he said. "There is a worker-peasant armed force led by the Chinese Communist Party and its leader Chairman Mao Tsetung, liberator of us poor working people. Go to them, join that force and settle accounts."

Chang-ching's words gave Ching-hua strength. She raised herself on tiptoe and peered into the distance, as though seeing there a place where poor working people were freed from landlord exploitation and oppression. Smiling, she said earnestly, "No matter what the hardship and danger, that's the road I'll take." And with that she started off, only to be stopped by Chang-ching who took two silver coins from his pocket and, offering them, said kindly, "Here's something for the road."

Silver! Ching-hua stared, stunned. A tender shoot sprouted from under a stone who grew steeped in bitter water, a slave girl who had toiled since childhood as less than a human being, with neither kith nor kin.

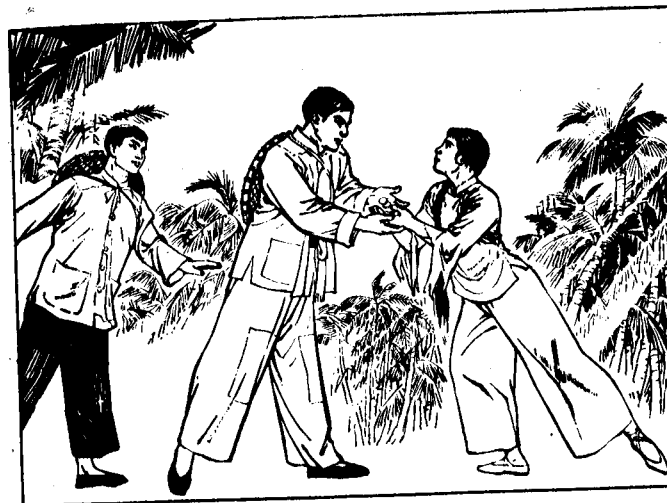
Tears misted her eyes. She surveyed Chang-ching from head to toe, not knowing how to express her gratitude.

"Is... is this for me?" she asked.

"Yes, for you," Chang-ching nodded. Pang also urged her to take the coins.

"What a fine man I met today!" Ching-hua thought to herself, unable to fathom such kindness. First wiping her hands on the front of her tunic, she held them out, trembling, to accept the silver. As the coins dropped into her hands, she felt a lump in her throat. "I'll never forget you all my life" was all she could say. She bowed low to Chang-ching, then ran off in the direction where he pointed.

Rays of the rising sun lighted the road Ching-hua took, and Chang-ching and Pang watched her until she was out of sight. The way she took was the bright course charted



by Chairman Mao, the road of seizing political power by armed force. It is the only correct road for the poor and toiling masses in their struggle for liberation. Chang-ching and Pang looked about the dense grove, continuing their scouting.

Joining the Ranks

Having completed his reconnaissance task, Chang-ching was assigned as Party representative of the Women's Company that was to be formed. On the morning of the meeting to celebrate the establishment of the Women's Company, with Chang-ching and the company commander

leading off, the fighters sang the vigorous and ringing "March of the Women's Company":

*Forward, forward!
Important the soldiers' task, deep the women's hatred.
Smash your shackles, rise in revolution!
We're the Women's Company, taking up arms for the
people.
Forward, forward!*

.....

They marched briskly to the drill field as the Red Army flag fluttered bright in the breeze. The star at the centre was set off with hammer and sickle, and at the left, in black on a white background was inscribed: "The Women's Company of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army." The company commander was a bright, brave young woman. Party representative Hung Chang-ching wore a neat grey uniform with red tabs at the collar, and the red armband and red star of the Red Army. He was in high spirits as he heard a group of children shout, "They're coming!"

The drill field was suddenly in a ferment, with old people and children, Red Militiamen and youths of Li nationality. "Attention!" shouted the company commander, and the fighters snapped to order. At the grand celebration Chang-ching solemnly proclaimed: "Comrades, villagers! Under the wise leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao, the first women's force of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army — the Red Women's Company — is established!" The people cheered and applauded, and raised their hands to shout: "Long live the Communist Party of China!" "Long live Chairman Mao!"

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The company commander ordered practice drill, and the fighters went through rifle practice with high spirits. Chang-ching taught the girls swordplay, advancing in firm, long steps and bold leaps, brandishing his sword in broad swaths. The fighters too shouted loudly as they charged. With swords and rifles flashing, and red-tasselled spears flying, all to the accompaniment of militant cries, the drill field was a demonstration of the might of people's war.

Then a Children's Corps sentry rushed up to announce that a girl had come who had run away from Cocoanut Grove Manor. "There she is," said the small sentry. The girl stumbled onto the drill field and people came up to support her.

"Where is this place?" asked Ching-hua. And the children told her it was a Red base. A red flag rippled from its stand on a tree, and she could not contain the feeling that swelled in her heart.

"Red flag, oh, red flag, today I've found you!..." she said, going up and taking it in both hands. She had never cried when she was cruelly tortured in the Tyrant's dungeon, even when she was beaten to within an inch of her life. But now, as she looked at the bright red banner, it was as though she saw the Party and the working people's liberator Chairman Mao, and tears streamed down her face. The fighters and villagers gathered around her. Ching-hua admired the armywomen in their new uniforms and went up to touch them — the red star on their caps, their red tabs and armbands. She excitedly touched the girls' hands and cried out: "I want to be an armywoman too!"

A young fighter went up to her and said, "Do you remember me, Wu Ching-hua?" She shook her head. Then, when he took off his cap and smiled, she remembered. "Oh, it's you!"

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"I'm Pang, a messenger," he said. "And here's Hung Chang-ching, the Party representative of our company."

Ching-hua looked at the man in uniform and thought: Is this not my benefactor? What brings him here? She grasped his hand firmly. "We've been waiting for you for a long time!" said Chang-ching with a smile. He told the company commander that this was Wu Ching-hua whom he had found in the cocoanut grove.

"Welcome!" she replied warmly.

Then Chang-ching introduced her. "Comrades, this is a class sister who has been cruelly oppressed and whose hatred is strong. Beaten nearly to death several times, she finally escaped from the hell of Cocoanut Grove Manor."

"Come, Ching-hua!" offered the company commander, handing her a bowl of cocoanut milk. "Drink it! This is your home now. We're all your class sisters." As Ching-hua raised the bowl in both hands she was thinking: For more than ten years I've been a bondmaid, a slave. No one treated me like a human being then. But today beneath the red flag, how warm the sunshine, how friendly the people! She quickly drank the cool sweet cocoanut milk and returned the cocoanut-shell bowl to the company commander. It was then that the company commander saw the bloody marks on Ching-hua's arms and said, "Ching-hua, you must have had great hatred for the enemy when you escaped from the den of the Tyrant of the South!"

The huge blood debt of generations suddenly welled up in Ching-hua's heart. "Dear villagers, just look!" She pulled up one sleeve and then the other, revealing bloody whip marks. "That Tyrant!" she exclaimed, pointing in the direction of his manor house. "He killed my parents long ago, and I fell into his tiger mouth when I was very

young. As a slave girl I lived as less than human, and was determined to run away. I tried several times, but each time they caught me and locked me in the dungeon. They bound me to the post with heavy shackles, beating and kicking me in tortures designed to break me. This time the Tyrant's toughs caught me in the cocoanut grove and beat me there, their cane and whip blows falling on my body like rain. I thought I must die."

Ching-hua paused. The drill field was very still. Then the company commander said with deep emotion: "The Communist Party and Chairman Mao support you; keep on!"

Ching-hua went on with her story. "If I hadn't been waked up by the storm and rescued by the Party representative, I would have died there." She threw herself into the embrace of the company commander and cried bitterly.

Taking Ching-hua's hand, the company commander said, "We poor people have blood debts to collect, and we must collect them in kind."

Ching-hua wiped away her tears and replied, "I want to join the army. I must get revenge and kill the Tyrant of the South!"

Chang-ching stepped forward and, raising his fist high, said, "Comrades, her suffering is our suffering. Her hatred is our hatred. Slaves must arise. But only by taking up guns and waging revolution under the guidance of our great leader Chairman Mao and the Chinese Communist Party can we win a new world and liberate hundreds of millions of suffering people." These words, like a torch, roused the fighters and villagers, who raised banners with the words: "Down with tyrants! Share out the land!" "Capture the Tyrant of the South!" They determined to overthrow the Tyrant and liberate Cocoanut Grove.

Chang-ching and the company commander approved Ching-hua's request to join their forces.

Ching-hua was overjoyed and went to the company commander, who placed in her hands a brand new rifle. "To gain liberation we poor working people must take up guns and wipe out the reactionary Kuomintang clique. We must destroy the evil old society," said the company commander. "Today we give you a rifle, hoping that you will hold it firm, to carry the revolution through to the end."

Ching-hua nodded. "With this rifle I'll go to the front and kill those wolves!" she declared. Thus Ching-hua took her place in the fighting ranks of the Women's Company.

Night Raid

The Tyrant's birthday. To celebrate it the guards carried in jars of wine, platters of meat, chickens and sheep they had grabbed from the people of Coconut Grove.

By dusk the manor was a scene of hectic activity, with gift-bearing local tyrants, evil gentry, Kuomintang scoundrels and bandit chieftains arriving one after another to pay their respects. The Tyrant and his wife ordered bondmaids to bring out the choicest fruit and cakes to serve the gang of scoundrels. The guards used whips to force girls of Li nationality to dance at the birthday feasting.

A guard hurried in with a red calling card which he handed to the Tyrant, announcing: "An important guest has arrived."

The Tyrant looked at the name, that of a big Chinese merchant from overseas whom he did not recall. However, when the greedy old landlord read on the card a list of the gifts the stranger had brought, he turned to his guests and asked, "Come on, what do you think?"

"This is no ordinary guest," one old despot suggested. "It's a chance you can't afford to miss."

Goaded by his desire for fame and money, the Tyrant would certainly not let this influential and rich man slip by. So he ordered the guards: "Line up and present arms to welcome the important guest!" The gentry and the Tyrant himself hastened to straighten their gowns and then went out to greet him. The newcomer strode into the courtyard, calm and dignified, a fan in his hand. He was dressed in white, very much in the role of the merchant from overseas which he was playing.



Now this "important guest" was none other than Chang-ching. After scouting and learning that there would be a birthday celebration for the Tyrant, he had discussed with the rank and file and worked out a plan to attack Coconut Grove Manor. Chang-ching was to enter the enemy's lair disguised as a wealthy merchant. His messenger, Pang, was to accompany him, as well as other fighters dressed as "retainers" and "maids." At midnight, shots would be fired as attack signal for the Red Army waiting in ambush outside the Tyrant's lair, while Chang-ching and the others struck from within. They would wipe out the Tyrant and his gang and liberate Coconut Grove!

Inside the courtyard, Chang-ching took careful note of the situation. Then the Tyrant, grinning from ear to ear, hastened to greet him, "My respected good sir, I'm sorry not to have met you sooner!"

Chang-ching took off his tropical helmet, handed it to Pang, closed his fan and clasped his hands in front of him. "The honour of meeting, my good sir, is mine. I'm returning from the South Seas and passing through your honourable precincts. I've come purposely to extend my congratulations to you." Then, at the wave of Chang-ching's hand several fighters brought up favourite and expensive gifts, at which the Tyrant was highly pleased. "What costly gifts! I'm really not deserving of them," remarked the Tyrant with a great show of humility.

"A small token of regards."

"Please, please take a seat on the veranda," said the Tyrant with excessive courtesy, bidding Chang-ching to take the seat of honour. Then he directed Lao Szu and the guards to put on a swordplay demonstration, which quite wore out the guards so that they ended up panting and sputtering. As they waited greedily for a tip, Chang-

ching scornfully flung them a handful of silver coins which rolled on the ground, the Tyrant's guards scrambling after. The Tyrant was embarrassed, but could say nothing before his guests. "Never mind them. Now, let's go in to the banquet hall." Chang-ching rose and went in with the others. The guards collected the coins, then Lao Szu, stretching out both hands, took them all and left with the coins in his pocket, the guards mumbling curses behind his back.

Late that night, the manor looked exceedingly gloomy. A down-at-the-heel sentry stood at the gate, holding his gun upside down. Two women appeared at the gate. Then, sooner done than said, one stuffed the guard's cap into his mouth while the other struck him with his rifle butt. The two who disposed the sentry were Ching-hua and another girl fighter who had stolen into the manor house disguised as bondmaids to contact Pang. Ching-hua explained the arrangement of the manor as the two looked around. But someone was coming, and they must hide. Two guards were savagely beating a little bondmaid. Ching-hua watched in fury. "You devils, I shall punish you!" She rushed towards them, but was stopped by the other girl.

"You mustn't!" she admonished.

"Let me go. I must save this class sister!"

"No. We have our task. And our Party representative has said that the victims will be freed only when Coconut Grove Manor is liberated." The girl pulled Ching-hua to cover.

Soon, from the courtyard came two cuckoo calls. "It's Pang's signal," said Ching-hua, "answer him." The girl answered the call and Pang appeared. Ching-hua asked him how the situation was.

"Everything's set. We'll proceed according to plan and strike when Chang-ching fires a shot." With that Pang swiftly returned to his post. The two "bondmaids" were about to withdraw when they heard loud laughter from the banquet hall and quickly took cover. There was the Tyrant, obviously drunk, coming out to see guests off. At the sight of him Ching-hua's whole being cried out for vengeance. The unsettled, generations-old blood debt leapt to her mind, and her pistol butt grew hot in her hand. "You Tyrant, swallow these bullets from your slave!"

The girl fighter tried to hold her back, saying, "Ching-hua, what are you doing?" But Ching-hua turned and shook the girl off.

"I want to get revenge! Revenge!" Burning with hatred, Ching-hua pushed her companion aside and fired two shots, wounding the Tyrant. But she had given the signal, and the company commander, who lay in ambush outside, gave the order: "Fire!" Shots crackled on all sides, and the Red Army unit surrounded the manor.

Chang-ching, too, heard the shots and calmly prepared to meet the unexpected change. With pistol in hand he said to the fighters, "Follow me!" and they poured out of the hall. Two guards who rushed out after them were dispatched by Chang-ching with two shots. "Who gave the signal, Pang?"

"I don't know."

Chang-ching carefully scanned the surroundings and said, "Comrades, the battle's premature. Wipe out the Tyrant to greet our main force!"

"Yes," said Pang and the other fighters, and bravely attacked the foe. The Women's Company led by its commander assaulted from outside, and they fought well under Chang-ching's direction. The Tyrant's party and his

guards scattered in cowardly flight. The flag of victory was planted over Coconut Grove Manor and the once dark den was liberated. Poor peasants surged into the courtyard with tears in their eyes, to grasp the hands of their liberators. The battlefield was soon cleared and Chang-ching announced: "Fellow villagers, we've opened the Tyrant's granary. All that grain was produced by the sweat and blood of the poor, and it's going to be distributed back to you."

Loudly cheering, the peasants rushed for the granary. The stores were opened, the grain distributed, and Coconut Grove became the scene of rejoicing. Chang-ching personally placed a basketful into the hands of an old poor peasant. "This is what we've been waiting for day and night!" exclaimed the old man, deeply moved.

"It's Chairman Mao and the Communist Party that have brought us all this!" Chang-ching explained. And all cheered: "Long live Chairman Mao!" "Long live the Chinese Communist Party!" "We thank our beloved Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!"

Just then the messenger Pang went to Chang-ching with the Tyrant's cane in his hand. "They've all been wiped out," he reported, "except for the Tyrant and Lao Szu, who are missing." Pang had searched for them and found the Tyrant's cane near the rockery. Chang-ching asked them to make a thorough search, and they found an old landlord despot trembling with fear, who begged them to spare him. Chang-ching questioned him sternly, "Where's the Tyrant gone?"

The old despotic landlord promptly showed them the Tyrant's tunnel. Wounded by Ching-hua's shots, he had been helped by Lao Szu to escape, leaving his cane behind.

Ching-hua was enraged and impatient at hearing of the Tyrant's escape and she tried to plunge after him with her gun. Chang-ching stopped her. "What are you thinking of?"

"I fired the shots. I'll go after him." But Chang-ching would not listen to it. Suppose the tunnel was a trap. They must consider.

The company commander took Ching-hua aside and said, "Did you give the signal?"

Ching-hua felt very sad as she looked at the pistol in her hand. "What a pity I didn't get him."

The company commander was angry and said, "You broke discipline and spoiled the whole battle plan."

Ching-hua was very upset to be relieved of her gun, and asked, "Was I wrong?"

"Yes, very wrong," the company commander replied.

Her girl fighter companion also criticized her. "You shouldn't have fired at all."

Ching-hua kept asking dejectedly, "Was it really wrong?" Then Chang-ching thought how necessary it was for a fighter to be guided by revolutionary thinking, and asked Ching-hua what had actually happened. As Ching-hua looked up at Chang-ching, she was very distressed.

Maturing

When the Women's Company was back at camp Chang-ching called a meeting of the Party branch committee to sum up the day's battle. Political education was needed among the rank and file.

In the first rosy sunlight of dawn the next day, a blackboard was set under the cocoanut trees. On it was written: "**Only by emancipating all mankind can the proletariat achieve its own final emancipation.**" Chang-ching was conducting political class for the women fighters.



"We join the revolution not for personal revenge," he said, "but must foster the revolutionary ideal of emancipating all mankind and dedicating our lives to the realization of communism. It is not only the Tyrant of the South that tramples women underfoot, but the whole man-eating system of exploitation. A revolutionary fighter risks his life on the battlefield not for personal vengeance, but to smash the old and usher in the bright new communist society."

The truth of revolution enlightened the fighters. After the class, some of the women fighters practised shooting,

others helped in the fields. Only Ching-hua sat alone on a tree stump, staring at the words written on the blackboard.

Chang-ching saw her and thought: A fighter who suffered as she has as a slave is thirsty for revolutionary truth. Ching-hua would certainly mature quickly. He smiled and joined in the work in the fields. As Ching-hua read again the words on the blackboard, she thought over and over what the Party representative had said. Her head felt hot and she was upset. The Party representative had suffered terrible injustice and had many scores to settle. So had the company commander. So had all the comrades. In fact, who of the proletariat hadn't? Why did I think only of avenging myself? Why hadn't I the least sense of discipline? What was I after? She stood up and paced back and forth, her head drooping. Chang-ching's words rang in her ears: "It is not only the Tyrant of the South that tramples women underfoot, but the whole man-eating system of exploitation. A revolutionary fighter. . . ."

How true his words were! But I joined the Red Army because I wanted to kill the Tyrant of the South. As if the man-eating system of exploitation and the criminal old society would crumble, or the communist society would come if only I avenged myself! I should never have fired those shots! She turned to the blackboard and read the words again. She knew she was wrong. She would tell the Party representative that she realized that now.

The company commander returned from shooting practice and greeted Ching-hua with a warm "hello." Ching-hua went up to her and apologized: "Company Commander, I was wrong. I shouldn't have fired those shots. I accept discipline."

"Just so you understand where you were wrong, Ching-hua!" replied the company commander with a smile.

"Ching-hua, what's that?" She pointed at a caricature of Chiang Kai-shek that was used for target practice.

"The people's enemy Chiang Kai-shek."

"What shall we do?"

"Wipe the devil out."

"Good! The target is the enemy. Fire!"

The company commander passed a hand-grenade to Ching-hua, and together they practised throwing. With deep class hatred, Ching-hua took accurate aim at the target and hurled the grenade. She was thinking that she must not only wipe out a Tyrant of the South but must overthrow the reactionary ruling classes. She put great spirit into the drill.

Chang-ching came by and saw Ching-hua practising. She certainly knew better now what she must fight for. He took out Ching-hua's pistol and said, "Company Commander, do you think. . . ?"

The company commander smiled, took the pistol and turned to Ching-hua. "Here you are," she said.

Ching-hua took the pistol, her face radiant. She knew now the importance of the gun. She took one step forward and stood at attention. "I'll follow the Party's instruction and use the pistol well."

"How? Shoot the Tyrant of the South only, I suppose?" Chang-ching chided.

"No, not only him, but all enemies."

"Who do you rely on? Yourself?"

"No. On every one of us. There are still a lot of Coconut Groves to be liberated. Many class brothers and sisters still suffer. This can't depend on me alone."

Chang-ching and the company commander laughed, and Ching-hua had to laugh too.

Then Chang-ching said seriously, "We should unite closely around Chairman Mao and the Communist Party and form a strong revolutionary force. That will go a long way towards smashing the old system."

Raising her fist, Ching-hua pledged to the Party representative and company commander to follow Chairman Mao and the Party, to be a conscious vanguard fighter of the proletariat and dedicate her life to mankind's emancipation.

The sun in the east shed brilliant light far and wide. Educated by Mao Tsetung Thought, Ching-hua was maturing rapidly.

The majestic Five Finger Mountains jut into blue skies, while beneath, the limpid waters of the Thousand Spring River ripple in the breeze. Fighters with rifles captured as war trophies from the Tyrant of the South returned from drill to report to Chang-ching on their military training. Chang-ching encouraged them, "That's the way. We must wipe out more of the enemy and arm ourselves with their rifles and bullets. Chiang Kai-shek is chief of our transport corps. Let the Tyrant of the South be chief of a transport column."

They all laughed at this.

Some fighters with baskets of fish and vegetables they had raised were taking them to the river to wash them. When Chang-ching saw them and wanted to help them, they asked him to rest for a change. But he insisted.

"Aren't we all people's servants?" he said. And together they carried the big baskets to the river. This heroic Red Army detachment certainly had the unity, alertness, earnestness and liveliness that marked armed forces guided by Mao Tsetung Thought.

*The river water is clear, oh clear,
Hats we weave for the Red Army dear.*

.....

The song grew louder as local peasants approached with hats and deep-red lichees for their worker-peasant Red Army.

Chang-ching shook the hands of the peasants to thank them. "We're very grateful to you. We'll wipe out more of the enemy and win greater victories to show our appreciation of your support."

The army and people were indeed closely united, like one family. Songs and laughter rang out.

*The Red Area is a scene of beauty.
Army and people are united as one.
The army men cherish the people, the people support
the army.
With people and army united, forward march.*

Suddenly, quick hoof beats were heard approaching, and the young messenger Pang arrived on horseback.

"Reporting!" He handed a message to the company commander, who read it and passed it to Chang-ching. Headquarters was reporting a large-scale assault on the base area by Kuomintang bandits. The Women's Company should meet the main force and shift position.

Immediately there was the booming of guns. The detachment must set out at once. A bugle sounded and the Red Army fighters and Red Militia formed ranks and marched off, bidding farewell to the peasants. Chang-ching waved to them and called out, "Neighbours! We'll soon fight our way back!"

Then he led the fighters off to a mountain pass position.

Intercepting

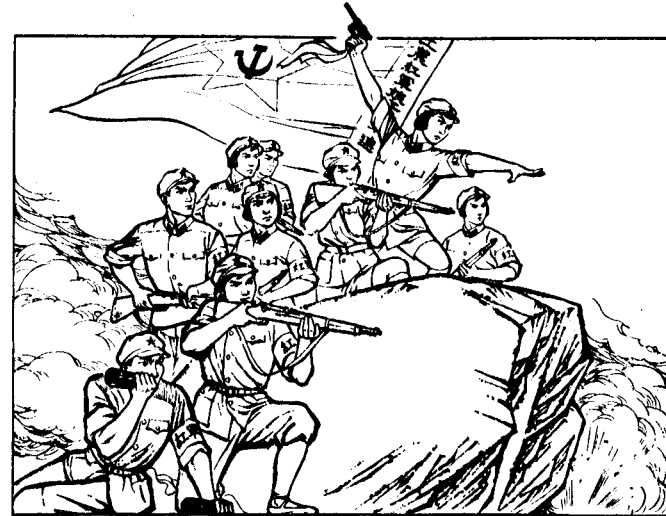
The mountain pass position was obscured in cloud and smoke, the firing fierce. The Red Army main force was sweeping around to the enemy's rear in order to wipe him out, and the Women's Company commander led a group in support. A Red Army and Red Militia intercepting platoon was formed up under Chang-ching to hold the mountain pass till our main force safely completed its move.

Heavy firing was heard from the foot of the mountain. The enemy was attempting a pincers assault. Chang-ching said to Ching-hua, "I'll take a few comrades to protect the flank. You take command at the pass."

"We'll carry out the task," Ching-hua and the others replied, their voices subduing the noise of the enemy's guns. Chang-ching and the comrades set off in face of enemy bullets whistling through the pass and rubble falling into the position.

Ching-hua crouched behind a rock, her trigger finger ready on her pistol. "Comrades," she ordered the fighters, "take your time. Wait till they're nearer before you fire." This was not easy, as every one of them hated the enemy bitterly and had got into position to pick off these enemy troops who were stumbling up the hill in confused formation, firing blindly from guns held over their heads. A hundred metres, 50, 30, till the enemy was only 20 metres from the position.

"Fire!" ordered Ching-hua, and the fighters' bullets, each charged with righteous hatred, poured down and felled the first of the enemy to climb up the hill. A rain of hand-grenades then sent the enemy back down the hill,



Ching-hua and the fighters after them. Completely demoralized, the enemy retreated back down the slope as best they could.

Ching-hua noticed a girl fighter hit in the arm and bandaged her wound. Meanwhile Chang-ching's group had frustrated the enemy's flanking attempt and returned to the position. "How about your wound?" he asked the girl fighter in concern.

"It doesn't matter," the girl replied. "I'll not leave the firing line. I've got to pick off a few more of those White devils!"

Another wave of the enemy rushed up, but the Red Armymen fighting against heavy odds were nearly out of ammunition. Chang-ching grasped his sword in his strong right arm and said, "Now is the time to prove our worth to the Party. When our bullets are gone we'll have

our swords, then rocks. We must defend the position with our blood and lives!”

“So long as we live the position’s ours. We must wipe out the enemy!” was the fighters’ reply, and they brandished their swords and picked up rocks to deal the enemy a head-on blow.

As the Whites swarmed up, cursing and looking fierce, Chang-ching gave the call: “Communists follow me!” A hand-to-hand battle ensued, Chang-ching and his fighters using swords and rocks to good effect, while Ching-hua gave a good account of herself in the battle. Spotting a



guard trying to get away, she rushed up and slashed at him with her sword. The guard dodged, but he staggered, dizzy. Then Ching-hua’s sword flew out of her grasp and the guard thrust at her with his sword held high. Pulling his weapon down, Ching-hua kicked it out of his

hand, he, too, being thrown off balance and banging his face against a rock some distance away. Ching-hua grabbed him by the collar. Today, she thought, is my day to avenge the many class sisters you murderers have killed in cold blood. She gave him a swift kick and he crumpled to the ground. Then, stepping on him, she pulled out the dagger he had concealed in his boot and plunged it into his heart.

The red flag of victory waved high and the Red Army fought with growing strength, while the enemy became confused and scattered as they left their dead over the pass. The heroic fighters remained in control of the position, which was like a bastion of iron. Chang-ching looked at his watch. “By now our main force has moved out according to plan,” he announced, excited. “Our intercepting platoon has succeeded in delaying the enemy.”

Then, as the platoon prepared to go, the sound of gunfire announced yet another assault by the enemy. Chang-ching made a prompt decision: Ching-hua should lead the comrades out at once. “I’ll remain here and cover the withdrawal,” he said.

Ching-hua stepped forward and protested, “Party Representative, allow me to remain.”

“I’ll stay.”

“And I too,” the fighters offered.

But Chang-ching solemnly unstrapped his dispatch case and gave it to Ching-hua. “If we should lose contact deliver this to the battalion Party committee,” he instructed.

Ching-hua, a new Party member admitted on the firing line, repeated, “Party Representative, I’m a Communist and must be the first to charge and the last to retreat. Let me stay and fight.”

But Chang-ching was firm. "Carry out orders!" he said, and Ching-hua reluctantly led the comrades out of the position.

Only three were left — Chang-ching, a Red Army fighter and a Red Militiaman — to grapple with the enemy's feverish attack. Chang-ching fought the foe surrounding him on four sides. The Red Army fighter was hit, and



Chang-ching ordered the militiaman to support him. Then the Red Militiaman spotted an enemy soldier aiming at Chang-ching and rushed forward, taking two bullets in his own chest. An enemy guard and a White soldier charged into the position where Chang-ching, alone now, fought with the courage and indomitable spirit of a proletarian revolutionary. Chang-ching knocked an enemy's rifle out of his hand, then both the guard and White soldier

rushed at him. Chang-ching stepped aside, and the soldier fell flat on his face. Chang-ching pinned the soldier down with his foot, so that the enemy could do nothing but wriggle beneath it. Then with his sword Chang-ching stabbed the enemy guard who plunged at him, and also killed the one under his foot. But more enemy soldiers swarmed on, pointing their guns at Chang-ching, and surrounded him shouting, "Capture him alive!" But that was all, for they saw the sword in Chang-ching's hand and dared not move another step. Swinging his sword, Chang-ching knocked the guns in their hands. Then he plunged his sword into one of them, sending him screaming down the mountain together with the sword. Finding Chang-ching without his weapon, the enemy swarmed up, and Chang-ching took out his last hand-grenade, pulled the cord and raised it over his head as he drew nearer to the enemies. Seeing the grenade smoking, the enemies fled for their lives. Chang-ching flung the grenade into their midst.

Supporting his two badly wounded comrades, Chang-ching had started out of the pass when suddenly a fusillade of bullets from behind killed both of the brave heroes, while Chang-ching got a bad wound. Chang-ching gently lowered the two to the ground with his remaining strength. Then, rising by sheer force of will, he staggered towards the pass. Those who had left would be safe now, he thought, and he smiled. But his wound gave a sharp stab of pain, and he fell in a faint.

Dark clouds gathered, thunder rumbled. The Tyrant of the South accompanied by a Kuomintang army officer with a gang of ragtag soldiers fearfully crawled to the pass, where they discovered Chang-ching lying unconscious. Chang-ching awoke and indignantly pushed aside the enemy

soldiers on each side of him, rising before the cliff like a towering pine. Lightning ripped across the cloudy night sky illuminating Chang-ching's militant figure, his piercing gaze defying his foes so that they dared not even look up at him.

Advancing

Having completed its strategic shift, the Red Army main force concentrated to launch an offensive against the Kuomintang. A bright red battle flag at their head, the Red Army unit, powerful and courageous, pursued the foe over the mountains. The Kuomintang troops, quite the opposite, suffered crushing defeats everywhere and fled like dead leaves swept before an autumn wind. Hiding out in Cocoonut Grove Manor, their defeated remnants became like turtles bottled up in a jar.

One dusk, the Tyrant's manor was like a hornets' nest on fire, with guards cursing and complaining. Desperate to halt the collapse of the manor, Lao Szu threatened the guards at gunpoint that he'd kill anyone who tried to run away. The Tyrant of the South, already in alarm at the news of the Red Army's successive victories, caught the defeated Kuomintang officer running for his life and pleaded, "Don't go away! You can't go!"

"Get away!" the officer cried. "How can I help you when I can't even save my own skin? Go away!" He was followed in his flight by the defeated remnants.

The Tyrant's wife was frantic. Her jewel box in her hands, she was busy ordering the servants to move her other valuables, while the Tyrant, his long hair dishevelled,

thumped his chest and bellowed. "Terrible! Those Communists! They've left me neither a way to heaven nor a place on earth. How can I swallow this?"

Lao Szu pulled out his pistol and made a show of loyalty, mouthing, "As your servant, sir, I'll go with you to the ends of the earth and fight to the finish."

"Good for you," the Tyrant said. "You'll have fortune on your side when we defeat the Red Army."

"Yes sir."

Facing their death, master and servant sharpened their swords for a last-ditch struggle. A guard ran in panting so that he could scarcely give his message. "Reporting, sir, the Red Army's approaching Cocoonut Grove Manor. Our soldiers were either killed or ran away and surrendered. We're finished!"

The Tyrant, furious, ordered his bandit gang: "Put the manor on full alert, pile dry branches beneath the banian tree and bring in Hung Chang-ching." In his death throes, the Tyrant was going to make one last attempt to force a "confession" from Chang-ching.

Four of the Tyrant's guards pushed Chang-ching into the courtyard. His eyes shining, Chang-ching stood there, head high and chest out. He was very calm. The Tyrant held out a sheet of paper and yelled, "Hung Chang-ching, there're two roads before you: one's to live and the other's to die. Write out everything if you want to live. Otherwise. . . ." Pointing at the banian tree with his cane, he said, "I'll light those branches and send you to the nether world."

Chang-ching threw off the guards with a shake of his arms. He glanced scornfully at the pyre and torches beneath the banian tree, then strode forward, his strong arms outstretched. He looked up at the sky and fields. How

beautiful was the motherland! How rich and vast! For the past century fiends had been running amuck, spreading ruin. Chang-ching clenched his fist. If only he could smash the old man-eating society! But then there was the revolutionary base which Chairman Mao had built in the Chingkang Mountains, pointing the way to victory — the seizure of political power by armed revolution. No one could stop the spreading prairie fire! His right fist held high, he stood listening and seemed to hear the battle song of the Women's Company:

Forward, forward!

Communism is the truth, the Party leads the way.

Slaves will arise, slaves will arise! . . .

Chang-ching felt the warmth of his comrades, who he knew were fighting the enemy. Ching-hua, a Communist now, had certainly matured in battle, and the others of the Women's Company too. The Red Army's main force would already have started a general offensive against the enemy, and the Tyrant of the South was doomed. Chang-ching regarded his execution ground as a battlefield, and as if with a weapon in his hand marched straight up to the Tyrant. The Tyrant and Lao Szu cringed beneath his piercing gaze, the Tyrant moving about with the sheet of paper in his hand till Chang-ching snatched it, tore it up and flung it in his face. At that the Tyrant, sweating profusely, shouted: "Light the pyre!"

What does death matter? Communism is the truth! Chang-ching pointed at the villains and declared: "Communists are not afraid to die! You'll never escape the people's punishment!"

The Tyrant's guards fell trembling at this Communist's courage and heroism. Chang-ching shook himself free

of the guards and stood towering like a giant. He straightened his collar with its red tabs, and smoothed his hair. Then with dignified calm he mounted the pyre beneath the banian tree. Extending one hand as if to caress the beautiful motherland, he gazed afar and saw the glorious, triumphant new China that was to be. The flames leaping around him, he raised his right fist and shouted: "Down with the Kuomintang reactionaries! Long live the Chinese Communist Party! Long live Chairman Mao!"



It was like spring thunder shaking the earth and echoing over the Five Finger Mountains. "To the Internationale's stirring strains a wild whirlwind swoops from the sky." Chang-ching, a good son of the Party, a Communist, towered above the blaze as magnificent as the motherland's mountains and rivers. His martyrdom, like a red flag,

called China's revolutionaries to the fore to fight bravely for the liberation of all mankind.

The red flag soared, clarion bugles sounded, and the sun in the east shone into Coconut Grove Manor. The Red Army charged in and the villagers responded. The manor was like an upturned ant hill. Lao Szu grabbed the Tyrant's wife's jewel box and was making off with it when he bumped into somebody and yelled, "I surrender!" only to find it was the Tyrant himself. The two began fighting, and Lao Szu gave his master a kick, sending him sprawling. Lao Szu was about to escape when Ching-hua rushed in and shouted, "Halt!" Lao Szu was scared and ran for his life, but Ching-hua killed him with one shot in repayment of his many crimes. The Tyrant got up and was escaping when Ching-hua whirled and kicked him to the ground. She pointed her gun at him and ordered him to stop. With the black muzzle of her gun at his head, the Tyrant knelt down, threw up his hands and cried, "Don't shoot! Spare my life just this once, please!"

"Stop dreaming! The proletariat will not shed blood in vain. Get along!"

Pretending submission, he peered at Ching-hua as he stealthily pulled a dagger from his boot and thrust it at her. She dodged and sent the dagger flying in the air. The Tyrant ran and Ching-hua ran after him. With two shots she ended the life of the Tyrant, depraved criminal and counter-revolutionary chieftain that he was, avenging the slave girls and other toiling people he had so cruelly oppressed.

Coconut Grove was liberated. The Red Army freed the slaves and poor peasants who had been locked up and beaten in the Tyrant's dungeon. An old poor peasant was reunited with the granddaughter whom the Tyrant



had snatched away. Tears of happiness in their eyes, they told of their unending gratitude to Chairman Mao, the Communist Party and the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

Ching-hua and the company commander inquired everywhere about Chang-ching. Then a freed slave girl from the manor sorrowfully told Ching-hua what had happened under the banian tree.

The news came as a terrible blow to Ching-hua, and she ran to the tree and wept. The Red Army fighters and the liberated people gathered near the banian tree and bade sad farewell to their beloved comrade-in-arms. Chang-ching would live forever in their hearts! Slowly raising her head, Ching-hua wiped away her tears and said with clenched fists, "Comrades, we must convert our sorrow into strength to deal the enemy still harder blows!" The company commander also called on the fighters to

carry on the cause of the fallen hero and wage revolution till final victory. Thus, with their guns, swords or fists high they pledged to avenge the martyr and carry the revolution through to the end.

The battalion commander took Chang-ching's dispatch case in both hands, went to Ching-hua and announced: "Comrade Wu Ching-hua, the battalion Party committee appoints you as Party representative of the Women's Company."

Ching-hua solemnly accepted the dispatch case. Recalling how she had been rescued and educated by the Party, she said, "I pledge to model myself after Comrade Chang-ching. I shall be a revolutionary and never leave the battlefield until the red flag waves over all the land!"

Chang-ching had given his life, but millions of new revolutionaries sprang up. Beneath the red battle flag, toiling

and slave women, newly freed, stepped forward to join the ranks of the Women's Company. The people's army grew in size and strength. The torrent of the revolution could not be stemmed. In the bright sunlight the swelling ranks marched forward along the path crimson with the blood of the fallen.

Onward, onward! Under the banner of Mao Tsetung Thought, onward to victory!

