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Which Road?

If you Americans, sated with bread and sleep, want to curse people and back Chiang Kai-shek, that's your business and I won't interfere. What we have now is millet plus rifles, what you have is bread plus cannon. If you like to back Chiang Kai-shek, back him as long as you want. But remember one thing. To whom does China belong? China definitely does not belong to Chiang Kai-shek; China belongs to the Chinese people. The day will surely come when you will find it impossible to back him any longer.

Mao Tse-tung, 1945

IN LONG BOW, the eight-year-long Anti-Japanese War had come to a sudden end. With the surrender of the Fourth Column not only the Japanese occupation but centuries of landlord rule were also terminated. The end of an era carried in its wake the end of a millennium. It happened so quickly that neither the new forces nor the old were able to grasp the profound significance of the change. It was to take at least three years before the shift wrought in the course of one night of battle could be consolidated by popular action, before a new pattern of life based on the equal ownership of the land could be created.

In China as a whole, a much longer period would be needed before the forces left in command of China's destiny by the destruction of Japan's overriding threat established a new balance. In August 1945, a resistance so prolonged that it had become a way of life suddenly gave way to reconstruction. But what kind of China would the Chinese people reconstruct? Would it be the China of the past, stagnant, all but helpless, its great potential strangled by the weight of domestic reaction and foreign intervention and investment, or would it be a new, vigorous, revolutionary China, a China fundamentally remade, a China that stood on her own feet?

Mao Tse-tung compared the victory won by the people of the Liberated Areas to the liberation of a peach tree heavy with fruit. Who should be allowed to pick the fruit? Those who had tended and watered the tree with their sweat and their blood, or those who had sat far away with folded arms?

Mao's answer was clear. Only those who had tended the tree had the right to pick the fruit.

Chiang's answer was also clear. The logic of his "Trojan Horse" surrender strategy left no room for doubt. He who from distant Chungking had preached and practiced victory through a curved road intended to pick the fruit himself. With some three million troops, with hundreds of thousands of puppet soldiers, with the Japanese Army itself under his command, with the support of a huge American military establishment, with a "great rear" encompassing some 300 million people ravaged very little by war at his disposal, and with the ultimate sanction of the *bomb* behind him, he felt strong enough to conquer the Liberated Areas and restore their traditional rulers.

What about the people, the 100 million who lived in the Anti-Japanese Bases in the plains and mountains of North, Northeast, and Central China, the myriad progressives who lived in the "great rear," all the people who had learned to look to the Communist Party for leadership? They wanted peace, they demanded peace, they were willing to make concessions for peace, but in the long run the question of peace or war was not entirely in their hands. Chiang, with American backing, meant to enforce his own peace terms. Did they have the strength to defend themselves? Did they dare? This was the crucial question that faced the Communists and all other revolutionary leaders at that fateful moment.

Many people, including many Communists in responsible positions, were afraid. They did not see how the war-ravaged guerrilla areas of the North could survive the kind of attack that Chiang Kai-shek was mounting. It had taken the resources of much of the world to defeat Japan. Could a fraction of the Chinese people hope to defeat a Kuomintang backed by the resources of the United States? And if they did indeed have some initial success, would the Americans not use the dread bomb which had ravaged Hiroshima and Nagasaki rather than lose influence over a continent? These leaders could hardly help reflecting on various forms of compromise, could hardly refrain from cautioning against actions which they thought might provoke a showdown.

Among the compromisers were many people of landlord or middle-class origin. They had come to the support of the Communist Party during the period of the National United Front. They were not prepared for the sharp break in this front that followed Japan's surrender. Without close ties or deep sympathy with the common people, they lacked faith in the ability and determination of workers and peasants to fight on and win.

Other equally sincere people of similar background were confused

by the political climate. Talk of a negotiated settlement, talk of a coalition government, Marshall's peace mission, promises of a national assembly, all these generated illusions. People were so tired of war, so exhausted by eight years of horror, so desirous of a peaceful settlement that they could not believe anyone could contemplate the invasion of the Liberated Areas and demand the surrender of the heroic Anti-Japanese Bases as the price for peace. As the guns, tanks, planes, and ammunition left over from the war in the Pacific poured in to arm Chiang's many-millioned legions, they looked the other way, placed their hopes entirely on negotiations, and refused to face the prospect of open armed conflict.

In this situation Mao Tse-tung and the other leaders of the Chinese Communist Central Committee found it necessary to carry out a dual policy. On the one hand they made serious efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement. To this end they agreed to reduce the size of the Eighth Route Army and ordered abandoned eight Liberated Areas in South and Central China. On the other hand, they prepared the 100 million people under their administrative control for the attack on the Liberated Areas of North China which they expected Chiang Kai-shek to mount. A most critical part of this preparation consisted in refuting the capitulationist ideas outlined above. Mao undertook this task in good time. Patiently but firmly he insisted that the people of the Liberated Areas could defend themselves, and that the people of all China possessed sufficient strength to bring about fundamental changes in the country as a whole. The strength of Chiang and his Western backers, Mao said, was more apparent than real. Money they had, resources they had, arms they had, but the hearts of the people they could never win. In the long run people, not weapons, would be decisive. "The people," said Mao, "will destroy the bomb; the bomb will not destroy the people."

This strategic concept was summed up in the phrase, "Imperialism and all reactionaries are paper tigers." This was Mao's paraphrase, in August 1946, of Lenin's famous dictum that imperialism is a colossus with feet of clay. Imperialism and all reactionaries are paper tigers, said Mao, in the sense that they can be defeated by an aroused people. At the same time they are real tigers in the sense that they are capable of inflicting serious damage, terrible wounds. Therefore, said Mao, the Chinese people should slight the enemy strategically, but take full cognizance of him tactically. On the one hand they should dare to defend themselves, dare to struggle, dare to win. On the other hand, they should take the struggle seriously—i.e., devote full attention to each campaign and to each battle, seek out all possible allies and mobilize as much support from the people of the whole

world as possible. Not to struggle was to surrender to Right opportunism. Not to take the struggle seriously, to ignore allies, to go it alone meant to surrender to Left sectarianism. First and foremost, however, was the decision to struggle, to dare to fight, to dare to win. Unless this basic decision was made, defeat was certain.

In Long Bow those who were for transforming the village gave full support to the Communist Party, to the Eighth Route Army, to the People's Militia that had liberated them, and to the program which these forces brought to the village. Those who were undecided, those who were afraid worried about the possibility of a "change of sky." They feared that the Communist Party, the Eighth Route Army, and the People's Militia would not be strong enough to hold what they had taken, that a counter-offensive from the nationalist areas, backed by the enormous strength of the United States might well succeed in bringing back the old sky, the old way of life, the old oppression. To go all out, to fight and struggle, or to hang back, to wait and see, to hold a finger in the wind—this was the big question that the people of the village, like the people of the Liberated Areas as a whole, debated in the days that followed the surrender of the Fourth Column.

For the young activists who had fought in the underground the answer had never been in doubt. They were for struggle.

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Beat the Dog's Leg

All actions labelled as "going too far" had a revolutionary significance. To put it bluntly, it was necessary to bring about a brief reign of terror in every rural area; otherwise one could never suppress the activities of the counter-revolutionaries in the countryside or overthrow the authority of the gentry. To right a wrong it is necessary to exceed the proper limits, and wrong cannot be righted without the proper limits being exceeded.

Mao Tse-tung, 1927

THE VICTORY celebrations that followed the surrender of the Fourth Column lasted several days and nights. They had hardly subsided when the peasants of Long Bow in their huts and hovels, on their clay brick *k'angs*, and in their packed earth courtyards, on streets and in alleys made muddy by the monsoon rains, and even in the crop-laden fields far beyond the last adobe walls that marked the settlement, heard a strange sound that many at first mistook for the hoarse braying of a donkey. It came, so it seemed, from the heavens. Looking upward all eyes were drawn to the highest point around them, the square tower of the Catholic Church. There they saw, not some skyborne donkey, but the figure of a young man silhouetted against outer space and holding to his face a megaphone which he directed first toward one quarter of the earth and then toward another, shouting all the while at the top of his voice:

"There will be a meeting—a meeting today—in the square after the noon meal—an anti-traitor meeting—everybody out, everybody out—there will be a meeting—today—."

Whichever way the young man turned his body, the people directly in front of him heard the words distinctly, while those to the right and the left and the rear heard only an unintelligible roaring, but since, before he finished, he boxed the compass with his megaphone, the people in each quarter of the village were alerted in turn.

A meeting! Not since the quarrel with the Church over the ownership of the vegetable garden 20 years before had there been a public meeting in Long Bow. The call, coming just before noon, aroused the whole population and set the village buzzing like a hornet's nest that

has been struck. It had always been a mealtime custom for both men and women to take their bowls of steaming millet or corn dumplings outdoors, there to gather in congenial groups for random talk and gossip. On this day the groups eating in the larger courtyards and in the streets were double or triple their normal size as every person able to walk and carry a bowl gathered outside to talk over the news. Old women leaning on sticks and canes hobbled out on their bound feet. Young mothers, holding their babies to their breasts with one hand and wielding chopsticks with the other, balanced their bowls on their knees and strained to hear what the neighbors had to say. Barefoot, half-naked boys and girls ran from group to group and alley to alley helping spread the rumors that flew in a matter of minutes from one end of the village to the other. Only the notorious traitors and their families made themselves conspicuous by their absence; but even they, consumed with curiosity and fear, sent relatives and friends to circulate among the people in order to pick up what incidental intelligence they could.

What puppet leader would be accused first? Would he be shot? How much property did he own? Who would get it? Had there been a victory at Changchih? Were the Japanese coming back under Yen Hsi-shan's command? Did the Eighth Route Army seize conscripts? These and a hundred other questions were on every tongue.

Long before the usual noon siesta had run its course the people began to gather in the square. Animated small knots grew and merged until the whole open area beside the village pond was filled with ragged, soiled, work-worn humanity. The predominant color of the gathering was dark blue merging into black for this was the hue of the cheap, machine-made cloth from which wives and mothers had cut the majority of their clothes. This dark background was leavened however with dashes of white or dirty gray for this was the color of the hand towels which both men and women wore on their heads. It was also the head-to-foot color displayed by those few peasants who could afford neither dye nor machine-made cloth. They wore bleached homespun. To this somber black and gray a brilliant flash of color was added here and there by the bright red tunic of an unmarried girl, or the dragon cap in blue, green, or yellow of some precious boy child held tightly in his mother's arms.

The men of the village naturally gathered toward the front of the crowd. They faced the inn. Before it a slight rise in the ground made a convenient platform for those who would lead the meeting. The women, reticent and shy, hung back in clusters of their own. Milling about in front of the men and shoving each other right up the slope to the door of the inn itself were scores of children, laughing, shouting,

and pushing, each intent on finding a place in the very front row so that he or she would miss nothing. The men talked quietly among themselves and smoked; laboriously they took small pinches of shredded tobacco from the leather pouches that hung at their waists, pressed them into the pea-sized brass bowls of their long-stemmed pipes, and struck flint against steel to get a spark with which to light up. A pipe, once lit up, was passed from hand to hand so that from each effort four or five peasants had at least a taste of smoke before the tobacco burned itself out and the process had to be repeated.

While the men smoked and talked, many of the women busied themselves with work brought from home. The children had to have clothes to wear even if the sky should fall, and the days were too short to allow a single moment to go to waste. Some of them spun the small blocks of wood that twisted hemp into thread. Others used the thread already made to sew together the many layers of cloth that made up the soles of the shoes worn in the Taihang Mountains.

Tempted by the prospect of sales to such a large gathering, a few peddlers had even appeared, as if out of nowhere. They made their way among the people hawking dried thorn dates, roasted peanuts, and fresh-baked, unleavened cakes.

Mingled throughout the crowd but conspicuous only on its fringes were the militiamen, organized only a day or two earlier. A few had rifles. The rest carried red-tassled spears. Regardless of the weapon, each stood proud, erect, watchful. All were conscious of the sidelong glances of the young women, both married and unmarried, who, because they were rarely allowed to leave home at all, now looked about wide-eyed and curious.

The mood of the gathering was expectant, yet skeptical. The peasants were full of hatred for traitors, yet afraid of the revenge traitors might inflict. They were ready to believe in the Eighth Route Army and in the Liberated Areas' Government, but doubtful that either would act in the end. And if action were taken, who could foresee what the final result would be? After all, everyone knew that the puppet running dogs had powerful connections. Had not the priest himself wined and dined the Japanese? Had not Sheng Ching-ho, the richest man in Long Bow, backed up "Chief-of-Staff" Chou Meisheng?

All talk stopped abruptly as a man, hands bound behind his back, body twisted slightly, head lowered, walked slowly into the square from the south. He was urged on from behind by a heavy-set militiaman who carried his rifle as if it were a hoe. The bound man was Kuo Te-yu, who had replaced the executed Shang Shih-t'ou as puppet village head, a position he had held until three days before.

"So they're going to begin with the turtle's egg village head," said an old peasant at the edge of the crowd.

"It's the village head, rape his mother!" said another.

This word spread through the gathering.

Behind Te-yu and his awkward guard came several young peasants. They immediately took charge of the meeting. To the astonishment of all, one of these peasants was Chang T'ien-ming. Another was the underground district leader, Kuo Huang-kou or Yellow Dog Kuo (about whose exploits many had heard, but a man whom few had actually seen). A young cadre of local peasant origin still in his early twenties, Huang-kou had taken the steps that made this meeting possible. On that night in August 1945 when the Fourth Column surrendered, neither Yellow Dog Kuo nor anyone else in Long Bow had any conception of the scale of the revolutionary changes to come. One thing was clear, however; if the political and military vacuum left by the surrender of the garrison and the collapse of the puppet village government was not quickly filled by the resistance forces, the gentry would fill it themselves by reshuffling their old political machine and varnishing it with a resounding new title such as "Anti-Japanese Patriotic Government." Such maneuvers had already taken place in other areas. Determined that no such thing should happen in Long Bow, the young district leader moved to set up a new administration while the battle for the village still raged. Since the whole puppet organization, including the important civilian leaders, had fled to the fort for protection, the village itself was already free. Setting up his headquarters in the abandoned village office, Yellow Dog Kuo called together all those who had been active in the struggle against the Japanese and, in addition, a few poor peasants untainted by collaboration—the most oppressed, the most *lao shih* young leaders that he could find.* About a dozen men, all of them in their early twenties, met that evening. As the Eighth Route Army and the massed militia began their final assault on the fort, these 12 established a new "People's Government."

District leader Kuo asked T'ien-ming to assume the post of village chairman. T'ien-ming (who had just returned from his dangerous mission inside the fort) felt himself too handicapped by illiteracy for such a big job. He declined and asked to be allowed to continue the work he had done in the underground, that of public security officer. Kuo himself temporarily assumed the post of village chairman. Kuei-ts'ai, a life-long hired laborer who had arrived in Long Bow 20 years

* *Lao shih* literally translated means "honest," but in Chinese it means more than that; it means genuine, without guile, steady, hardworking, easily imposed upon perhaps, but formidable when aroused.

before suspended from his father's carrying pole, became vice-chairman. Chang San-ch'ing, a young man who had worked as a clerk in a drug shop in occupied Taiyuan and knew how to write and to figure on an abacus, became secretary for the group. Chang Chiang-tzu, a very brave and steadfast peasant, was appointed captain of the militia and head of military affairs. Shih Fu-yuan, who, next to T'ien-ming, had the longest underground record of them all, missed that first meeting. He was still staying with relatives in the faraway village where he had gone to avoid having to betray his brother, Ts'ai-yuan, to the puppet forces.

By the time the puppet garrison walked out of the fort as captives, the new People's Government had already taken full control of the village. The young men asked nobody's permission. They were not elected or appointed. They took power on the assumption that the underground work of their key leaders had earned them the right to administer the liberated village. A large majority of the people held them in high regard. With an armed force of militiamen hastily organized and the moral support of most of the peasants, no one was in a position to challenge their *de facto* rule. Recognition by the Fifth District Office and consequently by the People's Government of Lucheng County, now in its eighth year, made this rule *de jure* as well.

Under Yellow Dog Kuo's guidance, the group proceeded at once to tackle two great tasks: the mobilization of the whole community in support of the drive on Changchih and a settling of accounts with the personnel of the puppet administration. To accomplish the first task, grain was collected, loaded in carts, and dispatched to the front. A large group of men followed, armed with shovels and hoes. They went to do whatever labor the army found necessary. Even the militia were no sooner organized than a group was sent south to join in the battle. Most of them had no firearms; some had never even handled a rifle. But numbers were needed so they marched off with spirit enough to make up, at least in part, for the deficiencies of their equipment and training.

As for the puppet administration, none of the leading collaborators had run very far. Some of them were captured in the fort as they fought alongside the Fourth Column; others were picked up on the road to Changchih as they tried to escape and were escorted back to the village by the Fifth District militiamen. As soon as they found guarantors who pledged that they would not leave the village, they were set free to await trial.

The People's Government of Lucheng County, now permanently housed in the *Yamen* at the county seat, launched its first postwar campaign with two slogans—"Down with Traitors, Down with Kuo-

mintang Agents, Down with Local Despots" and "Liquidate the Bloody Eight Years' Debt." These slogans were directed at the puppet officials, but since, in many cases, the actual officials were but fronts for the real rulers who operated behind the scenes, they also raised a third slogan—"Beat Down the Dog's Legs to Find his Head; Beat Down the Little Fellows to Find the Leaders."

At Yellow Dog Kuo's suggestion, T'ien-ming called all the active young cadres and militiamen of Long Bow together and announced to them the policy of the county government, which was to confront all enemy collaborators and their backers at public meetings, expose their crimes, and turn them over to the county authorities for punishment. He proposed that they start with Kuo Te-yu, the puppet village head. Having moved the group to anger with a description of Te-yu's crimes, T'ien-ming reviewed the painful life led by the poor peasants during the occupation and recalled how hard they had all worked, and how as soon as they harvested a little grain the puppet officials, backed by army bayonets, took what they wanted, turned over huge quantities to the Japanese devils, forced the peasants to haul it away, and flogged those who refused.

The young men agreed to conduct a public meeting of the whole population the very next day.

And so it was that Kuo Te-yu, running dog of the landlords, informer, torturer, grafter, and enemy stooge, found himself standing before a crowd of several hundred stolid peasants whom he had betrayed. His face was ashen, his tunic shabby and soiled. A stranger might well have taken him for a thief caught stealing melons, hardly for a village tyrant.

As the silent crowd contracted toward the spot where the accused man stood, T'ien-ming stepped forward.

"Comrades, countrymen," he began. Immediately his short, handsome figure became the center of attention. Was this dark, assured young man with the quick, piercing eyes the same T'ien-ming they had seen running barefoot and ragged in the streets only a few bitter years ago? Was this the reticent laborer they had all stood guarantor for? Who would have thought a few days earlier that he could speak before a crowd? Yet now his words came naturally, passionately: "This is our chance. Remember how we were oppressed. The traitors seized our property. They beat us and kicked us. Now the whole world is ours. The government and the Eighth Route Army stand behind us. Let us speak out the bitter memories of the past. Let us see that the blood debt is repaid."

He paused for a moment. The peasants were listening to every word but gave no sign as to how they felt.

"In the past we were despised. Who did not feel it every day? Only now can we hold our heads up and speak like men. Look, the village is ours." He swept his arm in a wide arc that took in the crowd clad in dark cloth all patched and faded, the crumbling compound walls that bounded the square, the pond green with slime, the sagging doors on the weathered brick church, the partly caved-in roof of the Buddhist temple, the rutted street leading out to the fields, and the fields themselves with their crops trampled in the rainy season mud as a result of the battle—a vista of neglect, collapse, and decay universal enough to discourage even the stoutest heart, the most optimistic spirit. "What is there to be afraid of? When we beat down the traitors, we can stand up. We can divide the fruits of their corruption and start a new life."

He spoke plainly. His language and his accent were well understood by the people among whom he had been raised, but no one moved and no one spoke.

"Come now, who has evidence against this man?"

Again there was silence.

Kuei-ts'ai, the new vice-chairman of the village, found it intolerable. He jumped up, struck Kuo Te-yu on the jaw with the flat of his hand. "Tell the meeting how much you stole," he demanded.

The blow jarred the ragged crowd. It was as if an electric spark had tensed every muscle. Not in living memory had any peasant ever struck an official. A gasp, involuntary and barely audible, came from the people and above it a clear sharp "Ah" from an old man's throat.

Te-yu, in a spasm of fear, could utter only a few incoherent sentences. This so angered Kuei-ts'ai that he struck him again.

"One bag of tax grain . . ." Only those who were standing very close could hear Te-yu's hoarse whisper.

"One bag! You took only one bag?" shouted Kuei-ts'ai.

"But it was not my fault. There were seven pecks . . ."

"Now you deny it. Not even one bag. It was not my fault . . ." Kuei-ts'ai strode back and forth in front of Te-yu and mimicked his words.

Kuei-ts'ai, like T'ien-ming, was short and husky, but he could not be called handsome. He had a heavy brow, and a high-bridged nose that made his eyes appear extraordinarily deep-set. Now his whole face was contorted with anger like the head of a war god on a New Year's poster.

"Don't lie to us," he shouted, shaking his fist in the cringing man's face. The cry was taken up by the rest of the militiamen who had moved in behind Te-yu: "Don't lie to us."

This frightened the village head still more. Words gagged in his throat. Further blows only made him cringe. He bowed his head low before the meeting but revealed nothing of the graft he had wallowed in.

The people in the square waited fascinated, as if watching a play. They did not realize that in order for the plot to unfold they themselves had to mount the stage and speak out what was on their minds. No one moved to carry forward what Kuei-ts'ai had begun.

T'ien-ming was upset. Without the participation of hundreds the record could never be set straight. He called a hasty conference of his fellow village officers. They decided to put off the meeting until the next day. In the interim they hoped to mobilize at least a dozen people who would speak out and lead the way.

When T'ien-ming announced the postponement a murmur went through the crowd, but it was difficult to say whether it was a murmur of approval or a murmur of disappointment. Kuo Te-yu was led away to the village lockup, a crowd of small boys following closely on his heels. Slowly the people in the square dispersed until only a small knot of cadres and militiamen remained in front of the inn. There they vigorously discussed the failure of the people to step forward, until their children came to call them home for supper.

That evening T'ien-ming and Kuei-ts'ai called together small groups of poor peasants from various parts of the village and sought to learn what it was that was really holding them back. They soon found that the root of the trouble was fear. The landlords and the Kuomintang Party organization of the district, headed by Wang En-pao, son of the Carry-On Society's chairman, Wang Kuei-ching, already had a fairly clear idea of what was coming and had taken vigorous steps to forestall and divert the attack. They spread rumors to the effect that Yen Hsi-shan, with the help of the Japanese Army, would soon be back. That this was no idle boast had been made clear by Yen's acts. The old warlord had no sooner re-entered his old capital, Taiyuan, than he ordered General Roshiro Sumita, Commander of all the Japanese forces in Shansi, to re-occupy his imposing wartime headquarters and mastermind the campaign for the recovery of the Liberated Areas. General Sumita threw 40,000 men into the battle. Lest anyone have the nerve to act in the face of this offensive, the gentry also let it be known that lists were being drawn up of active revolutionaries who were to be dispatched by firing squads when Yen's troops returned. Along with these threats went a campaign to discredit the resistance movement; rumors were spread that women were nationalized in the Liberated Areas, ancestral graves violated,

and all peasants forced to eat *ta kuo fan* or "food out of one big pot." The other side of this coin was the claim that collaboration had really been resistance, that by bending temporarily to Japan's will the puppets had worked for national salvation along a curved path. Was not the final surrender of the Japanese proof of this?

All this activity was not without effect. Many peasants who might have been eager to strike a blow against collaborators hesitated. They were afraid to act. They had little confidence that the Eighth Route Army, soldiers without boots, without helmets, and without heavy weapons could hold the region. Fighting was still heavy around Changchih, only ten miles away. Who could tell? Perhaps the "sky would change again" and the old regime would return with fire and sword. Was it not better to lie low and see how things turned out? The old reluctance to move against the power of the gentry, the fear of ultimate defeat and terrible reprisal that had been seared into the consciousness of so many generations lay like a cloud over their minds and hearts.

The mere collapse of the fort and the arrest of the puppet leaders were clearly not enough to bring the peasants of Long Bow into action. The mobilization of the population could spread only slowly and in concentric circles like the waves on the surface of a pond when a stone is thrown in. The stone in this case was the small group of *chi chi fen-tse* or "activists," as the cadres of the new administration and the core of its militia were called.

That evening they talked plain facts to the selected people in the small groups that they had called together. They discussed "change of sky." Could the Kuomintang troops or the Japanese ever come back? "Even if they do," T'ien-ming said, "we younger men can go off to the higher mountains with the Eighth Route Army, so why be afraid? If we don't move now, the chance will be lost." He reviewed again the evil record of the traitor clique, the death of So-tzu and Lai-pao, and the beatings suffered by himself, Fu-yuan, and countless others, the seized grain, the forced labor.

Emboldened by T'ien-ming's words, other peasants began to speak out. They recalled what Te-yu had done to them personally. Several vowed to speak up and accuse him in the morning. After the meetings broke up, the passage of time worked its own leaven. In many a hovel and tumble-down house talk continued well past midnight. Some people were so excited they did not sleep at all. As the village cocks began to crow they found themselves still discussing whether or not to act, and if so, how.

On the following day the meeting was livelier by far. It began with

a sharp argument as to who would make the first accusation and T'ien-ming found it difficult to keep order. Before Te-yu had a chance to reply to any questions a crowd of young men, among whom were several militiamen, surged forward ready to beat him.

At this crucial moment the district leader, Yellow Dog Kuo, strode between the young men and their victim. He blocked the assault with his own body and then explained to the crowd that the puppet leader was but a "dog's leg"—a poor peasant who had been used. To kill him would gain them nothing. It was the manipulators behind him who had to be exposed.

"Let him tell what he knows," Kuo urged. "Let him expose the others."

Once again T'ien-ming demanded that the prisoner talk.

This time Te-yu finally found his tongue and spoke out so that the whole gathering could hear him, but he rambled so much in his explanation, and went into such detail making clear the extenuating circumstances of his every act that no coherent account of money and grain emerged. Furthermore his own statements and the memory of his accusers conflicted. The cadres decided to charge him with ten hundredweight of grain for good measure and set his case aside for the time being. They searched his home for the grain that same afternoon and swapped it in Lucheng for four rifles for the militia.

With this inconclusive action the local struggle was called off for a few days while the more important and notorious puppet leaders of the district were brought before large representative meetings. Shih Jen-pao, of the Fourth Column, had unfortunately escaped, but Wen Ch'i-yung, commander of the puppet garrison in Long Bow fort, Shen Chi-mei, head of the Fifth District police, and Ch'ing T'ien-hsing, his assistant, were brought face to face with 190 peasants from all over the district—more than ten from each village—who came together in Long Bow's square as delegates from their respective communities. These were the people who had suffered the most from puppet depredations, whose homes had been looted, whose sons and husbands had been killed, whose wives and daughters had been seduced or raped.

Hundreds of accusations were made that day against the leading traitors and all those who worked with them. A Long Bow woman told how her son, Chin-mao, had been killed. When she came to the part where the police threw him, gagged and bound, into a well, she broke down weeping and could not go on. Many in the crowd wept with her. Shen Ch'uan-te, also of Long Bow, charged the puppet regime with the death of his brother. "My brother was killed by the Eighth Route soldiers," he said, "but they killed him because he was

carrying a message for the traitors. The traitors forced him to carry it. Why didn't they carry their own messages? They are the real killers."

Yellow Dog Kuo finally asked, "What is the origin of these murders? Who stood back of these puppets? How was it possible for their puny troops to have such power? Who served as their eyes and ears? Who informed on the peasants and exposed them to attack?"

Many then spoke out and said it was Shen Chi-mei and the landlords who backed him that lay at the root of the disaster that had befallen them. Before the meeting ended, Commander Wen and Police Officer Shen were condemned to death. They were taken to an empty field at the edge of the village and there, in sight of the fort they had done so much to build and to defend, they were shot. While the dead Shen Chi-mei lay still warm on the ground where he fell, a Long Bow militiaman, Yu-hsing, stripped a sweater off his corpse. Someone else took off his shoes. They left the body to his relatives to bury as they would.

Ch'ing T'ien-hsing, the third prisoner, was not sentenced that day. He was handed over to the County Court at Lucheng for investigation. He escaped from the lockup in the middle of the night but the militiamen from Long Bow who had taken him to Lucheng the day before, hunted him down, caught him in Horse Square, and killed him on the spot.

During the next few days the militia led thousands of people in a search for all the property that the soldiers of the Fourth Column had stolen. The loot had been placed in various village homes for safekeeping. Many families volunteered information that led to its discovery. Several hundred suits of clothes, several thousand feet of cloth, and many other valuable household articles were recovered and returned to their rightful owners. A large cache of this looted property was found in Landlord Wang Lai-hsun's home. The land, tools, stock, and household effects of the executed men were confiscated.

12

Find the Leaders

How was the question of Toryism dealt with by the Revolutionary fathers? Up to the time of Lexington, the main resort of the patriots was persuasion and exhortation, liberally spiced with extra-legal pressures ranging from boycott to physical assault. After Lexington, persuasion gave way to compulsion, which took five main forms. These were: (1) deprivation of all civil and some social rights; (2) confiscation of property; (3) exile; (4) confinement; (5) execution.

Herbert Aptheker

THE DEATH of the two most notorious puppet leaders of the Fifth District dispersed some of the fear that still hung over the village. Victories on the battlefront dissipated it further. The Eighth Route Army took Changchih early in September and drove the front back another 30 miles. The offensive launched by Yen Hsi-shan toward Hsiangyuan, Tungliu, and Lucheng later in the month was also smashed. With an army made up of some 38,000 Japanese, former puppet and regular Nationalist troops, Yen tried to subdue the Shangtang plateau and seize the autumn harvest. But in October this whole force was surrounded, and 35,000 of the invaders were killed, wounded, or captured. The rest ran away.

Peasants who went to help the army with shovels and mattocks saw with their own eyes how shoeless fighters struck fear into the hearts of heavily armed troops who had nothing to fight for. The militiamen who joined the battle with spears even brought back some rifles as their share of the spoils.

In this triumphant atmosphere peasants who had attended the district-wide meeting in Long Bow and had seen the traitors shot went back to their villages in every part of the territory and sparked a fierce campaign against collaborators. Important leaders who had gone into hiding were found, arrested, and tried. Several men, as much hated by the people as Shen Chi-mei, were shot. In Liu Village a list of Kuomintang Party members was unearthed. This led to the arrest of many collaborators hiding out in parts of the district never occupied by the enemy. They had secretly gathered information the

enabled the puppet troops to ambush and kill resistance leaders and fighters.

As this mass anti-traitor campaign got under way the Fifth District leader, Yellow Dog Kuo, was transferred by the county government to the First District. An experienced organizer named Liang was sent to Long Bow to take his place. Liang had no desire to be both Fifth District Leader and village head of Long Bow as Kuo had been, so he looked around for someone to fill this latter post. By that time Shih Fu-yuan was back in the village and already deeply involved in the campaign against the puppets who had caused him such suffering. The new district leader picked Fu-yuan as head of Long Bow Village.

Under Fu-yuan's leadership the village office brought Kuo Te-yu, Kuo Fu-kuei, Li T'ung-jen and many other active collaborators before new village-wide meetings. Each time more people stepped forward to accuse than had dared to do so before. When the damages brought out by these accusations were totalled, all the property owned by the collaborators was not enough to repay their victims. It was not a question of graft alone. The collaborators had seized outright many valuable things and had avoided terms of labor service that added up to many months of labor. This last item was figured as grain now owed to those who had been forced to go in their stead.

From "dog's legs" such as Te-yu the movement spread out in both directions attacking, on the one hand, those who had only been street or block leaders, and on the other, those who had been the real pillars of the puppet regime, men such as Chou Mei-sheng, secretary and key organizer of the village administration throughout the occupation, and Father Sun, the priest of the Church, whose liaison with both the Japanese and the group of Catholic landlords who were the real power behind the puppet office, was notorious.

A special meeting was called to confront Chief-of-Staff Chou with his crimes. Particularly bitter were the complaints about salt. Throughout the occupation salt could not be bought or sold freely. It was handled as a government monopoly and was supposed to be rationed on a per capita basis. Chou Mei-sheng got the salt ration from the county office and then passed it out, not according to need, but according to political expediency. Relatives and friends got an extra share. Those who quarrelled with him got less or none. By controlling the salt, a necessity of life, he wielded tremendous power and rewarded or punished people according to his whim.

Chou Mei-sheng was also responsible for many tax abuses and for discrimination in the allocation of labor service. He dispensed forced labor as freely as he withheld salt, and to the same end—to punish

his enemies and reward his friends. Those who resisted were beaten. Of those who went off to work, some never returned.

When the cadres figured out how much he had grafted it came to over 100 large bags of grain. To settle this debt to the people he had to give up all his land and houses, all his grain and property. They left him but one room to live in and grain enough to last only until winter.

In the course of this struggle no one came to Chou Mei-sheng's defense. As soon as the new cadres led the village against him, the landlords who had backed him disowned him without hesitation. To clear their own skirts they pretended that they had had nothing to do with him. But Father Sun was not so easily isolated. As the one remaining priest of the Church he was the leader of more than 200 people in the village. Most of them believed strongly in his teachings even if they disapproved of his pro-Japanese views and activities. Some backed both his politics and his religion. With their support Father Sun felt secure enough to openly denounce the Eighth Route Army, the liberation of the village from puppet and consequently from Kuomintang control, and the "Anti-Traitor Movement" itself.

When the Eighth Route Army soldiers entered the village and moved on down the valley he told everyone he met that misfortune had fallen upon the Church and the faithful. His sermons predicted a "change of sky." "The Eighth Route Army is nothing but a bandit rabble," he declared. "The Eighth Route soldiers do not believe in God. They oppose Catholicism, they tear down temples, they smash Buddhas. They don't even wear shoes. How can they long remain? Surely the troops of the Central Government will soon return."

When the village government punished collaborators by the confiscation of their land and property and distributed this wealth among the landless and the land poor he scathingly denounced the practice in his sermon. He said, "Man was created by God, food is given by God, everything in the world happens by God's will. We must obey God's orders. God determined that the poor should be poor. They should not aspire to be rich. Only those who can endure pain and suffering in this life can hope to enter heaven after death. The more patient you are, the more suffering you bear, the sooner you will enter heaven and see God."

When Shen Chi-mei, the traitor, was executed, Father Sun went out of his way to say mass for the salvation of his soul and soon thereafter announced that this man's spirit had entered heaven from purgatory.

These acts and statements invited retaliation. T'ien-ming, who was responsible for public security, ordered Father Sun arrested. All the

cadres of the village office then began to mobilize the people against him. They went among the Catholics and found several who were already disillusioned with the religion and were eager to attack the Church. Among them was one potential leader, a former hired laborer named Kuo Cheng-k'uan. He had worked many years for the Catholic landlord Fan Pu-tzu, and later had hired out as a mule driver to the Cathedral in Changchih. All his life he had suffered nothing but abuse from the Church.

With Cheng-k'uan's help the cadres called the Catholics of the village together to discuss the case of Father Sun. Experience in other villages had already shown that a direct attack on the Catholic religion was not an effective tactic. While a few were ready to repudiate their faith, most believers were not. Whenever the teachings of the Church were attacked the majority of the faithful only rallied more strongly around the institution itself. For this reason the Long Bow cadres did not challenge Father Sun's theology, but concentrated their fire on his secular activities. District Leader Liang adopted a selective approach when he opened the meeting. "After all," he said, "no one knows about God. No one has seen him. Whether or not God exists, whether there is one God or whether there are many, is not the question before us here. The question before us is Father Sun, his collaboration with the Japanese, the heavy charges he made for giving protection to your property, the way he tried to force the whole village into the Church, his discrimination against the poor in all things."

This speech moved even some of the most faithful believers. They began to recall one instance after another of injustice at the hands of Father Sun. Within a few hours more than 60 grievances were registered against him.

The next day the whole population of the village was called together. When the cadres asked the people if they dared accuse the priest everyone kept silent at first. Then District Leader Liang spoke again. He reviewed Father Sun's record and this time stressed the exploitation he had practiced. "For every mass the Father read he spent but a few minutes, but for that few minutes he charged a whole quarter bushel of millet. He wouldn't take a quart, he had to have a quarter bushel."

At this point Sheng Kuei-t'ing, a former secretary of the Carry-On Society, a man who had managed the finances of the Church before the job fell to Wang Kuei-ching, stood up. " I will be the first to accuse," he said. "I know in detail how the whole system worked. I myself was peeled and pared," and he told all he knew about the income and the expenditures of the Father, the Church, and the

Carry-On Society. When he had finished, many others volunteered, saying to one another, "If you will speak out, I will follow. If you are not afraid of God, then neither am I."

As the meeting progressed Father Sun was brought from the lock-up and made to stand before the crowd. One after another his own parishioners accused him to his face.

"You preach suffering and hardship for the people," shouted Cheng-k'uan. "You say the poor should eat plain food and endure cold, never get angry and never do bad things. Then why should you eat meat and white flour every day? And if the taste doesn't suit you, you order the cook to make it over again. And every night you sleep with the nuns. It's suffering and virtue for others but for yourself, it's comfort and sin."

Father Sun did not deign to answer this. He stood before them defiantly and kept his mouth shut.

"And as for the mass," continued Cheng-k'uan. "If anyone gave you a lot of money, you said it for him very quickly. If anyone gave you a little money you did the mass after a while, but if anyone had no money at all, there was no mass at all either. Is your mass a service to the people or is it just a business to earn some money?"

This brought the peasant Hsiao-su to his feet. "You told us a lot of lies," he said, walking straight up to the priest and shaking his fist in his face. "You said that no one must bite the wafer you handed out. You said that if we bit it with our teeth blood would flow from it and we would be punished by God. But I didn't believe it. One morning I took the wafer to the privy behind the church and I broke it with my teeth and crumbled it up. I found nothing but wheat flour. Not a drop of blood flowed out of it. Your words are nothing but lies. All you do is deceive people."

"That's right, all you do is deceive," said Cheng-k'uan, joining Hsiao-su in front of the priest. "The Carry-On Society is supposed to help people, but the best land is farmed by the head of the Society and the landlord Fan Pu-tzu. When the Japanese came, we all asked for shelter in the Church. You found room for the landlords, but we poor Catholics could only wander about the yard until we were finally driven back onto the street. And of everything we brought to you for protection, you took 20 percent. Is that the way you help people?"

"Help people! Help people! They never help people," said Wang Ch'eng-yu. "I have been a Catholic all my life and all I ever got for it was beatings." The words poured from him in a torrent as he told how his little sister was taken into the orphanage and how he himself was beaten for joining the Buddhist rites. "When the Japanese came I was a match peddler," he sobbed. "I was afraid they would seize my stock. I brought 70 boxes of matches to the Church for safe-

keeping. Society Chairman Wang put them in a drawer, but three days later when I returned there were only three boxes left. When I asked him what became of the matches he said, 'Better ask the drawer.' When I asked him again, he beat me up."

By the time Ch'eng-yu had finished, other people were angry enough to speak out. A storm of accusations followed, many of them somewhat wide of the target, which was supposed to be the priest and his relations with the enemy. The fire tended to concentrate, instead, on the many-sided exploitation practiced by the Church and its leaders —a portent of the hurricane to come.

A non-Catholic, P'ei Shing-k'uan, said that he owed $50 to a church member. When he was unable to pay, Society Chairman Wang stepped in with an offer to mediate. He suggested that P'ei sell an acre and a half of land to the Church and then remain on it as a tenant. "I sold the land to the Church," said the unhappy P'ei, pointing a finger at Father Sun, "but my creditor got nothing. It went to the Church as a contribution to God. When I asked to rent the land, I was told that I myself must join the Church. I refused and to this day I have not been allowed on that land."

A Catholic, Yin Ch'in-ch'un, said, "Now I know that Catholic or not makes little difference. In the famine year I had nothing to eat. My children were sick. I was forced to sell four *mou.* The land was worth $50 for each *mou* but the Church demanded that I sell at $20. I was told I could have the crop, but when harvest time came round, I got nothing."

Altogether more than 100 grievances against the Church and the Carry-On Society were voiced that day. Before the meeting was over, Father Sun was attacked by several angry peasants and badly beaten up. That night, with the help of persons still loyal to him, he escaped to Horse Square, and from there fled to Hungtung, a city in the Nationalist-held area to the west.

Father Sun fled with nothing but the clothes on his back. He left behind a gun, many vestments, a desk full of personal papers, and five acres of land that included an irrigated vegetable garden, one of a handful in the whole village. Among his papers were found a letter of introduction from Japanese headquarters in North China and instructions issued by the puppet New People's Society for the improvement of the work of the rural Church.

Father Sun's personal property was added to the wealth confiscated from 26 other families that had been brought before the village on charges of collaboration. Altogether the People's Government took one hundred bags of grain from the accused as payment for grafted property and abuses of power made possible by their position as Japanese stooges.

All of this property was divided among the poorest people of the village according to the losses of each made public at the meetings. Those who took an active part and spoke out about the damages they had suffered got compensation. Those who did not speak out got less or nothing. In the course of these early distributions the leaders of the movement—Fu-yuan, T'ien-ming, Kuei-ts'ai, and the leading militiamen—took nothing, on the advice of District Leader Liang. They adopted this policy in order to demonstrate that the movement was for the benefit of all the people who had suffered from the occupation and not just for the leaders—a clean break with all the traditions of the past.

These early distributions did not go smoothly by any means. One of the main problems was fear. Many people who should have been compensated with property were still afraid to accept it. This was particularly true of the valuable and conspicuous things which could easily brand a person as a participant in the struggle. If the counter-revolution should gather enough strength to strike back, those who had property that originally belonged to collaborators would be the first to suffer. No lists would be necessary.

For several days two militiamen led one donkey all over the village begging household after household to accept it, but found no takers. A fine cart belonging to Wang Lai-hsun, the landlord who had been a puppet street captain, also stood for days without a claimant, even though it was the best cart in the whole village. It was worth at least 1,000 pounds of grain. The cadres, who had agreed not to accept anything themselves, had to knock on doors and persuade someone to be brave enough to take it. Finally a middle peasant named Chang-hsun, a man with a village-wide reputation for greed and stinginess, found the cart too tempting to resist. His ingrained shrewdness overcame whatever fear he had and, even though he already had one cart, he bought the cart that had belonged to Wang Lai-hsun for three hundredweight of grain—a real bargain. Later, when others began to lose their fear of a counter-attack, they complained that he had no right to buy a cart when many families had no cart at all. Then Chang-hsun offered to give the cart back to the village, but the cadres told him to keep it. To turn it back at such a time might lead some to think that he had lost confidence in the ability of the Eighth Route Army to hold the region.

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The Anti-Traitor Movement in the whole Fifth District was brought to a close in December 1945. In the course of the struggle, important

gains were made, but serious shortcomings also marred the record. The gains, as seen by a leading district cadre who made a report to the County Committee of the Communist Party, included the complete rout of the gentry-Kuomintang attempt to set up a regime based on the old political machine and the wartime collaborators. In the course of this rout, half the landlords and rich peasants in the district were attacked and punished with the confiscation of some or all of their property, thus cutting back considerably the holdings on which the old system was based. Many people were mobilized, organized, and educated by these events and learned to see some connection between collaboration and the dominant feudal class.

The shortcomings consisted of failure to draw the majority of the population into active participation—the cadres and militia did too much, the people as a whole too little—and lack of discrimination in the attack, little or no distinction having been made between collaborators on the basis of their class origin or motivation.

While some Communist leaders, at least on the county level, saw the Anti-Traitor Movement as an initial skirmish in an all-out war against the landlords as a class and tried to guide it in that direction, the majority of the active peasants saw it only as a movement of revenge for wartime injuries. They hated the traitors and wanted to strike them down once and for all. But the traitors, in Long Bow at any rate, were drawn from all classes. When the gentry withdrew from open participation in the village government, they found others to carry on for them. Hence there were middle peasants, poor peasants, and even hired laborers among the puppets. The members of the village police or Self-Defense Corps were all poor peasants, the block and street captains mostly middle peasants. Many of these people went along under economic pressure or were drafted into action under threat of violent reprisal. Some of them served the enemy only a few months, a few weeks, or even a few days. This latter group were known as the "one meal of wheat" traitors. By striking them all down as if they were equally to blame, the village cadres and the active peasants took shadow for substance, confused puppet with master, and punished the poor as heavily as they did the rich who were considered to be the real source and backbone of the collaboration. The poor were punished more heavily, in fact, for the main form of punishment was the confiscation of property, an effective and justifiable policy when applied to the gentry who had plenty of property to spare and had acquired most of it by exploitation past or present in the first place—but a disastrous policy when applied to poor working people who had very little to begin with, earned most of it by their own hard labor, and were reduced to beggary by

the loss of it.* The collective nature of the punishment was also unjust. The whole family had to pay for the collaboration of one leading member.

Such a policy atomized the community, frightened many people, drove many middle peasants who were potential allies of the coming revolution toward, if not into, the arms of the opposition. In Long Bow Village alone, 16 middle peasant families and six poor peasant families were expropriated, in whole or in part, for collaboration. In the whole Fifth District the figure reached 181.

If the class question was obscured by the indiscriminate attacks of the Anti-Traitor Movement, the religious question was disastrously sharpened. Even though the charges centered on the activities rather than the religious beliefs of the collaborators, the fact that almost all of them were Catholics gave the movement a definite sectarian slant. This religious sectarianism reached a fever pitch with the escape of Father Sun. Since the Father himself was suspected of being a Kuomintang agent, all those suspected of aiding him were arrested, beaten in an effort to extract confessions, and accused of being agents also. The landlord Fan Pu-tzu's second son, Fan Ming-hsi, and two poor Catholic peasants, Hu-sheng and Hsien-pao, were held in the county jail for eight months while the incident was investigated. Hou Chin-ming, a third poor peasant, was charged with actually opening the door for the father. He was badly beaten and ran away to Hungtung while he was still able to use his limbs. He left behind half an acre of land, three sections of house, and a young wife bought from the church orphanage a few years earlier.

The indiscriminate attack on all collaborators and the sectarian overtones that accompanied it gave the real agent, Wang En-pao, and his followers, a lever in their counter-campaign. As secretary of the Fifth District Kuomintang, Wang En-pao had organized a group of about 20 men, most of them landlords, in the various villages of the district. They attacked the new cadres for real abuses and spread rumors about imaginary ones. In Long Bow Kuei-ts'ai became a chief target. He was always in the lead when direct action was taken and had beaten many people. Wang Man-hsi, the man who tied up and led Kuo Te-yu into the first meeting, a 19-year-old of tremendous strength and enthusiasm, was another target. For the blows he meted out he was already admired by some and feared by others as the "King of the Devils."

* Inherited property was no less suspect than property bought with incomes acquired through rent and interest since there would have been no property to inherit had not the previous generations "peeled and pared" the landless and the land poor of their day.

In Long Bow these verbal attacks produced no incidents, but in other places the landlord clique managed to incite certain people to action. One South Market militiaman named Ming Chun was found one morning hanging on the limb of a tree. A group of angry peasants strung him there after hearing rumors that he had taken valuable property to his own home and had forced his attentions on several women, all of them wives and daughters of collaborators. In Li Village Gulch, a strong Catholic center, the former district leader Yellow Dog Kuo, was thrown into a dry well and badly injured.

The hesitancy of some middle peasants, the anger of many Catholics, and the occasional counter-attacks that were the backlash of the sharp campaign could not halt or even delay the rising tide of struggle. A description of the reverse eddies should not be allowed to obscure the enormous enthusiasm which the punishment of the collaborators and the distribution of their property aroused in the great majority of the peasant families, whether or not they themselves had been active. When, in late December, the Eighth Route Army called for volunteers to strengthen the region against attack, Chang Chiang-tzu, the conscientious young head of the militia, led 25 men to the recruiting office at the county seat. Five were rejected for physical reasons, among them Chang Kuei-ts'ai, the vice-head of the village, who had syphilis, but 20 went on to join that army which alone could guarantee continued control of Long Bow by the landless and the land poor. This was the first example the people had ever seen of a government in power that asked for volunteers. Under the Kuomintang the young men had been led off to war with ropes tied around their necks. Now an expensive banquet was spread for the volunteers before they departed from the village, and each was given some spending money as a token of appreciation. They marched off with red carnations pinned to their jackets in a cacophony of beating drums, clashing cymbals, and the gay shouting of a crowd of small children who followed them all the way to Horse Square.

13

Dig Out the Rotten Root of Feudalism

*In a very short time, in China's central, southern, and northern provinces, several hundred million peasants will rise like a tornado or tempest, a force so extraordinarily swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to suppress it. They will break all the trammels that now bind them and rush forward along the road to liberation. They will send all imperialists, warlords, corrupt officials, local bullies, and bad gentry to their graves.**

Mao Tse-tung

OUT OF the confusion and near anarchy of the tempestuous Anti-Traitor Movement that followed the Japanese surrender came an assault on the land system itself. From chaotic revenge against collaborators, the young men of the resistance were led by the district Communist Party to a conscious planned attack on the landlords as a class. With this shift in emphasis, China's 20-year-old land revolution, temporarily suspended by the war, began again in earnest and rapidly gathered a momentum too great to be checked by any political party or leader.

The campaign in the Fifth District of Lucheng County started with a famous meeting in Li Village Gulch, the first settlement south of Long Bow on the road to Changchih. This meeting was held on January 16, 1946, in an effort to educate the young revolutionary cadres in the fundamentals of class relations and class consciousness so that they could, as they themselves said, "get at the root of calamity." All the young men who had just led the Anti-Traitor Movement to completion were brought together by the district leaders. The meeting lasted three days and three major issues were discussed: (1) Who depends upon whom for a living? (2) Why are the poor poor and the rich rich? (3) Should rent be paid to landlords?

* This quote is from a 1927 report written by Mao Tse-tung. The phenomenon which he predicted was delayed for two decades. Nevertheless it took place much as he had foreseen and, historically speaking, within a short time.

The participants had no trouble voicing grievances against individual landlords. They protested all kinds of feudal services, such as the forcing of tenants to pick up and deliver landlords' relatives, carry sedan chairs at weddings, give gifts at the New Year. They condemned the gentry for having taken the peasants' wives and daughters to their beds almost at will, made concubines of them, or simply raped them and left them. They also catalogued the ways in which the landlords cheated when loans were given out or rents paid: the use of the small measure for passing out grain, but the substitution of the big measure when grain was collected; the adulteration of grain given out, but the thorough cleaning and winnowing of grain taken in. They pointed out how the landlords took advantage of the illiteracy of the peasants by keeping dishonest records.

The cadres were all in favor of a reduction in rents and interest. They went further and demanded that past overcharges be paid back and that families who had avoided taxes, throwing all the burden on the poor and middle peasants, be charged with all the back taxes they had not paid over the years. But when it came to the land system itself, there was some confusion. Many thought that where the land belonged to the landlords, through legitimate purchase or inheritance, rents should be paid. "If the landlords did not let us rent the land we would starve," they said. Others disagreed sharply with this. "Can land be eaten? No. Land itself cannot produce food without labor and only those who labor have the right to eat. Why should one man have the right to say, 'This land is mine,' and then, without lifting a hoe himself, demand half of what is grown on it? Rent itself is exploitation."

But many still said, "When I worked for the landlord he fed me, and at the end of the year he paid me. That was the agreement. If he had cheated me of my pay or refused to feed me I could accuse him, but since he did feed and pay me there is nothing wrong."

Hour after hour the discussion went on in small groups and large meetings where the district leaders made reports and explained to the cadres the economic basis of the old society. They figured up how much grain the labor of one man could produce and then calculated how much food and wages a hired laborer received from the landlord for a year's work. From these figures it became clear, not only that there was exploitation, but that the exploitation was heavy. The atrocities committed by the traitors were open and vicious. Everybody could see them and oppose them. The open oppression of some landlords was equally cruel and vicious. Everyone could see that too and oppose it. But the *jan po hsueh,* the hidden exploitation, of the average landlord, the exploitation inherent in land rent itself had to

be pointed out and exposed, for was it not the root of all the other evils?

When the meeting broke up on the third day the three main questions had been settled in the minds of most: (1) The landlords depended on the labor of the peasants for their very life. (2) The rich were rich because they "peeled and pared" the poor. (3) Rent should not be paid to the landlords.

With this conclusion the peasant leaders of Lucheng County jumped beyond the official policy of the Communist Party of China and the Liberated Areas Government as a whole. Official policy was still "double reduction"—reduce rents and reduce interest rates. This was the policy of the wartime united front against Japan. Chairman Mao Tse-tung had proposed that this should continue to be the policy in the immediate postwar period because, although fighting had begun and had even developed on a large scale in some areas, it had not yet escalated into all-out civil war. It was incumbent on the Communist Party to explore every possible avenue of compromise that might bring peace while still preserving the basic gains won by the people of China. During such a period of exploration, the continuation of "double reduction" was mandatory. To have called for land expropriation at this time would have been provocative.

The initial talks between the Communist Party and the Kuomintang seemed to make headway. With General Marshall, special representative of the United States, acting as intermediary, a truce was signed on January 13, 1946. The two parties agreed that all fighting should cease for a six-month period while the possibility of a political settlement through some form of coalition government was explored. Pending such a settlement, the policy of the Communist Party Central Committee in Yenan was to carry into effect all coalition agreements, including "double reduction," and hold the gentry to them. However, demands for land kept coming from below. The arming of the people for resistance had placed the peasants in a position to challenge the landlords and usurers in the countryside, and not even the tremendous prestige of the Communist Party or the critical situation of the country and the world could prevent this challenge from breaking out in one form or another and carrying with it many lower echelon cadres and Party Committees.

This increasingly explosive force was channeled for a time into forms of attack against the gentry that did not formally violate the provisions of "double reduction," yet nevertheless transferred land from the gentry to the peasants. Conventional grievances concerning lower rents and lower interest rates were made retroactive to cover the war years in villages where the occupation had given the landlords

a free hand not only to continue the collection of rent and interest but to increase the rate of both. Now the peasants demanded not only the correction of abuses but also the repayment of overcharges and the restoration of lands and property seized in default of debts which were, by "double reduction" standards, illegal. In practice, when the grievances were totalled up, the charges almost always mounted up to more than most gentry families could pay, and everything they owned was expropriated for distribution. The peasants even matched the excesses of the 1930's by a policy of *sao ti ch'u men*, or "sweep the floor out the door," which meant to clean the family out of house and home and drive them from the area. They called this whole movement "settling accounts."

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In Long Bow the young men returned from the district meeting full of enthusiasm. Chang San-ch'ing, the secretary of the village government, who was one of the participants, later said: "I was very happy when I returned from Li Village Gulch. Up until that time I had been just a little afraid. I carried a burden on my back. I figured that if all those who had worked for the Japanese were to be struggled against, then I too would become a victim, for I had worked for a Japanese drug company for more than one year. But at that meeting we were told that the Anti-Traitor Movement was over. We decided that we would now struggle against the landlords who had oppressed us for so long. Everyone who had been oppressed or exploited, who had borrowed money or rented land could now make accusations and get revenge. I was very happy. I was no longer the least bit afraid for I thought—I too have been oppressed. From childhood my family suffered under loans at high interest and I worked out as a hired laborer for so many years, and later, when I went out to work, I just served the master of the shop. So all my life I have been oppressed and exploited. Now my time has come."

The first task faced by this group when they returned to the village was to organize a local Peasants' Association. This was a voluntary organization of all working peasants recognized by the Liberated Areas Government of Shansi-Honan-Hopei-Shantung as the only legal organ for carrying out agrarian policy, conducting the struggle against the landlords, receiving confiscated property, and distributing it to the landless and land poor.

Farm laborers, poor peasants, middle peasants, rural handicraftsmen, and impoverished intellectuals such as schoolteachers, letter writers, and clerks sympathetic to the new land policies were all en-

titled to join when approved by the elected committee of the Association. All members had the right to speak, vote, elect, and be elected, and also the right to criticize and replace elected officers. They were obligated to abide by the rules of the Association, carry out its decisions, and pay dues. These dues amounted to one catty of millet a year.

Two cadres from the old Liberated Area in the Second District, where village Peasants' Associations had existed for a long time, came to help organize the local group in Long Bow. Thirty of the poorest peasants in the village were first called together. They included women whose sons had been killed in the fort, peasant families whose able-bodied members had been forced into rear service far from home, and long-term hired helpers who owned nothing but the clothes on their backs.

Some of these families had already received food and clothes as a result of the Anti-Traitor Movement. Fu-yuan and T'ien-ming explained to them that the preceding distributions were only the beginning, that such a small amount of goods could not solve any real problems, that they should tackle the land question itself. Fu-yuan posed to them the question of "who lives off whom?" He urged each member to tell his or her life story and to figure out for himself the root of the problem.

Once again Kuei-ts'ai led off. In order to move the others he told his own history. "In the past when I lived in Linhsien I stayed with my uncle," he said. "In order to get married my uncle borrowed 20 silver dollars. Within a year the interest plus the principal amounted to more than 300 dollars. We could not possibly repay this. The landlord seized all our lands and houses and I became a migrant wandering through the province looking for work."

This reminded poor peasant Shen T'ien-hsi of the loss of his home. "Once when we needed some money we decided to sell our house. We made a bargain with a man who offered a reasonable price, but Sheng Ching-ho, who lived next door, forced us to sell our house to him for almost nothing."

Then poor peasant Ta-hung's wife spoke up. "You had to sell your house, but my parents had to sell me. We lived in a prosperous valley but we owned no land. In the famine year we were starving and my parents sold me for a few bushels of grain. If we had had some land I could have found a husband and been properly married. Instead, I was sold like a donkey or a cow."

Story followed story. Many wept as they remembered the sale of children, the death of family members, the loss of property. The village cadres kept asking "What is the reason for this? Why did

we all suffer so? Was it the 'eight ideographs' that determined our fate or was it the land system and the rents we had to pay? Why shouldn't we now take on the landlords and right the wrongs of the past?"

T'ien-ming finally challenged them to action. "Now, the only question is, do we dare begin? The Eighth Route Army and the Liberated Areas Government stand behind us. Already in many places the landlords have been beaten down. We have only to follow the example of others. We have only to act with our own hands. Then we can all *fanshen*."

"There are not enough of us," said one.

"Then we have to find more members. Each one here should go out and find others. All the poor are brothers together. If we unite no one can stand in our way."

Each of the 30 went home, visited with neighbor and friend, and each found two or three more peasants who could be approved by the whole group. Soon over 100 families had joined the Peasants' Association. Most of them were poor, but among them were scattered a few middle peasants. Kuo Cheng-k'uan, the poor Catholic who had led the attack on Father Sun, a man who had worked all his life as a laborer, and whose wife had died of starvation in the famine year, was elected chairman.

Another Catholic, Wang Yu-lai, was elected vice-chairman. He came originally from Lin County, high in the Taihang range. He had once been a member of the local Kuomintang army, had later taken up banditry as a way of life, and was said to have joined the "Red Rifle" secret society as a young man. He had always been poor. Throughout the ten years he had lived in Long Bow he had worked as a hired laborer. During the Anti-Traitor Movement, and especially in the struggle against Father Sun, Yu-lai and his 18-year-old son, Wen-te, were noted for their courage and energy.

Several days of intense activity followed the establishment of the new Association. Many active members neglected all their regular work in order to mobilize the majority of the people for the struggle to come. And so, toward the end of January, the campaign to "settle accounts" with the landlords finally began.

The committee of the Peasants' Association decided to tackle Kuo Ch'ung-wang first. He was not the richest man in the village but he was one of the meanest. His close association with the puppet Chief-of-Staff Chou Mei-sheng tarred him with the collaborationist brush. More important was the fact that while his tenants died of starvation during the famine year, he seized grain and hoarded it for speculation. The cadres, having learned from the failure of their first big meeting,

held small group meetings ahead of time in order to gather opinions against Ch'ung-wang. Those with serious grievances were encouraged to make them known among their closest neighbors and were then mobilized to speak out at the village-wide meeting to come.

While the small meetings were in progress, the militia arrested Kuo Ch'ung-wang, searched his house and unearthed tons of grain. Much of it was rotten. On the day of the big meeting, the grain, which could have saved the lives of dozens of people, lay in the courtyard in a stinking mildewed heap. The people who crowded in to accuse walked over the grain and, as the courtyard filled up, some of them sat down on it. The smell and the sight of it reminded them of those who had died for want of a few catties and filled them with anger. Next to the grain stood two jars of salt water—salt that had been hoarded so long it had undergone hydrolysis. While the landless and the land poor went weeks without salt, Ch'ung-wang had let salt go to waste.

At this critical meeting, Fu-yuan, the village head, was the first to speak. Because he was a cousin of Ch'ung-wang, his words carried extra weight with the rest of the village. When a man was moved to accuse his own cousin, the provocation had to be serious.

"In the famine year," Fu-yuan began, talking directly to Ch'ung-wang, "my brother worked for your family. We were all hungry. We had nothing to eat. But you had no thought for us. Several times we tried to borrow grain from you. But it was all in vain. You watched us starve without pity."

Then Ho-pang, a militiaman, spoke up. His voice shook as he told how he had rented land from Ch'ung-wang. "One year I could not pay the rent. You took the whole harvest. You took my clothes. You took everything." He broke down sobbing as a dozen others jumped up shouting.

"What was in your mind?"

"You took everything. Miao-le and his brother died."

"Yes, what were your thoughts? You had no pity. Didn't you hound P'ei Mang-wen's mother to her death?"

"Speak."

"Yes, speak. Make him talk. Let's hear his answers!"

But Ch'ung-wang had no answers. He could not utter a word. When the peasants saw that he could not answer them they realized that they had him cornered, that they had already won a victory. Many who had been afraid to open their mouths found themselves shouting in anger without thought of the consequences.

The meeting lasted all day. In the evening, when the committee reckoned up all the charges against Ch'ung-wang, they found that he owed one hundred bags of grain. That night, under a full moon, the

militia went to the fields with measuring rods and measured Ch'ung-wang's land. They found that he had three acres more than were listed in his deeds and that for 20 years he had evaded taxes on that land while others had paid and paid. When they added this to the other damages claimed against him they realized that all his lands, all his houses, his grain, his clothes, his stock, and everything else that he owned would not be enough to settle the debt. Yet when they looked in his storeroom they found not hundreds, but only a paltry six bags of grain that could be seized.

The next morning when the people met again to carry on the campaign against Ch'ung-wang excitement ran high. Women even went so far as to bring food with them so that they and their families could stay right through the day and not miss a single minute. Liang, the district leader, opened the attack. He said, "This is our only chance to settle the blood-and-sweat debt of the landlord. Even if you take all his property it will never be enough. Ask him where he has hidden his gold and silver. Make him give up his precious things."

"Yes, speak out. Where are the coins? Where have you buried the money?" came the shouts from the crowd. But Kuo refused to say anything beyond the fact that he had no silver and never had had any. Since nobody believed him, the militia were ordered into his house to make a search. They were joined by more than 60 peasant volunteers. They dug up the floors, ripped the mud bricks off the tops of the *k'angs,* tapped the walls. It was all in vain. They found nothing.

When the search proved fruitless, a few of the cadres took Ch'ung-wang aside. They told him that it was no use trying to hide his wealth. Since all his ordinary property was not enough to settle his account with the people, they would surely find his hidden wealth sooner or later. It would therefore be much safer and wiser for him to hand this over voluntarily than to face their wrath once they found it on their own. After several people had talked to him in the same vein Ch'ung-wang finally gave in. He told them where to dig. They found 50 silver dollars in an earthen crock.

When this money was brought before the people at the meeting, they became very angry. Here was proof that Ch'ung-wang had lied to them. Scores of people jumped up, ran forward, and began to beat him with whatever came to hand.

"Tell us where the rest is. You know that is not all," they shouted.

Someone struck him a blow in the face. Ch'ung-wang held his bleeding mouth and tried to speak.

"Don't hit me. I'll tell you. I'll tell you right away. There is another 80 dollars in the back room."

The meeting adjourned immediately while the militia and their

enthusiastic helpers again went to search. They very soon found another cache of coins, but this only whetted their appetites and angered them still further. Ch'ung-wang was playing with them as a cat plays with a mouse in spite of the fact that he was their prisoner. First grain, then salt, now silver dollars—the bastard was richer than they thought! When they got back to the courtyard, they beat him again.

That day he gave up more than 200 silver dollars.

In the evening they let him go home but, unknown to him, set several militiamen to watch his house and listen in, if possible, on the conversations that went on inside it.

Landlord Sheng Ching-ho, the richest man in the village, sat at home all that day and listened to the angry shouts of the people as they accused Ch'ung-wang and swarmed over his house. After dark he crept out onto the street and stole to Ch'ung-wang's door hoping to learn something about what had happened. Perhaps some plan could be worked out to counter this new offensive. He knocked quietly on the wooden door that was the sole entrance to Ch'ung-wang's courtyard, but before anyone appeared to open it he was seized from behind by several militiamen and dragged off to the village lockup. It was then two days before the Chinese New Year. The wealthy families had planned all sorts of good things to eat and their wives and servants had been preparing and cooking for days. The leaders of the Peasants' Association decided not to let Ching-ho pass such a happy holiday. They set the attack on him for the next day, even though that meant they had no time to mobilize opinions against him. As it happened, a blunder on the part of Ching-ho's brother, Sheng Ching-chung, aroused the people more than several days of mobilization could possibly have done.

As soon as Sheng Ching-chung heard that his brother Ching-ho had been detained, he took a bag of wheat flour on his shoulder and went calling. He found the assistant village head, Kuei-ts'ai, at home talking with San-ch'ing, the village secretary. He set his bag of flour by the door, greeted them both warmly, and sat himself down to have a friendly chat. It did not take him long to get to the point. "I know your life is hard," he said. "Since we are people of one village please do not stand on ceremony but help yourselves to this flour and pass a happy New Year. Later on, if you should meet with any difficulties, you should know that my door is always open and I am always ready to help."

The two young cadres could hardly believe their eyes and ears. What did he take them for—rats who could be bought with a bag of flour? They drove him and his burden out of the house and went im-

mediately to T'ien-ming. The next afternoon Kuei-ts'ai and San-ch'ing told a village-wide meeting how Ching-chung had tried to bribe them. Their story aroused a storm of protest and a flood of accusations.

"In the famine year he gave us nothing. He even drove beggars away from his door, but now suddenly he weeps for our hard life —now we are 'people of one village,'" said one.

"It is clear he only wants to buy off the leaders and undermine our ranks. We should never be taken in by such tricks," added another.

"This should be a lesson to all of us," said T'ien-ming. "Never trust a landlord; never protect a landlord. There is only one road and that is to struggle against them."

The cadres had been afraid that the people might hold back their accusations against Ching-ho, but Kuei-ts'ai's report broke the dam. There was no holding back. Over 100 grievances were registered at that one meeting. So vicious had been Ching-ho's practices and so widespread his influence that more than half of the families in the village had scores to settle with him.

What happened on the following day was told to me by Kuo Cheng-k'uan, Chairman of the Peasants' Association:

> When the final struggle began Ching-ho was faced not only with those hundred accusations but with many many more. Old women who had never spoken in public before stood up to accuse him. Even Li Mao's wife—a woman so pitiable she hardly dared look anyone in the face—shook her fist before his nose and cried out, "Once I went to glean wheat on your land. But you cursed me and drove me away. Why did you curse and beat me? And why did you seize the wheat I had gleaned?" Altogether over 180 opinions were raised. Ching-ho had no answer to any of them. He stood there with his head bowed. We asked him whether the accusations were false or true. He said they were all true. When the committee of our Association met to figure up what he owed, it came to 400 bags of milled grain, not coarse millet.
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> That evening all the people went to Ching-ho's courtyard to help take over his property. It was very cold that night so we built bonfires and the flames shot up toward the stars. It was very beautiful. We went in to register his grain and altogether found but 200 bags of unmilled millet —only a quarter of what he owed us. Right then and there we decided to call another meeting. People all said he must have a lot of silver dollars—they thought of the wine plant, and the pigs he raised on the distillers' grains, and the North Temple Society and the Confucius Association.
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> We called him out of the house and asked him what he intended to do since the grain was not nearly enough. He said, "I have land and house."
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> "But all this is not enough," shouted the people. So then we began to beat him. Finally he said, "I have 40 silver dollars under the *k'ang*." We went in and dug it up. The money stirred up everyone. We beat him again. He told us where to find another hundred after that. But no one believed that this was the end of his hoard. We beat him again and several militia-

men began to heat an iron bar in one of the fires. Then Ching-ho admitted that he had hid 110 silver dollars in militiaman Man-hsi's uncle's home. Man-hsi was very hot-headed. When he heard that his uncle had helped Sheng Ching-ho he got very angry. He ran home and began to beat his father's own brother. We stopped him. We told him, "Your uncle didn't know it was a crime." We asked the old man why he had hidden money for Ching-ho and he said, "No one ever told me anything. I didn't know there was anything wrong in it." You see, they were relatives and the money had been given to him for safekeeping years before. So Man-hsi finally cooled down. It was a good thing for he was angry enough to beat his uncle to death and he was strong enough to do it.

Altogether we got $500 from Ching-ho that night. By that time the sun was already rising in the eastern sky. We were all tired and hungry, especially the militiamen who had called the people to the meeting, kept guard on Ching-ho's house, and taken an active part in beating Ching-ho and digging for the money. So we decided to eat all the things that Ching-ho had prepared to pass the New Year—a whole crock of dumplings stuffed with pork and peppers and other delicacies. He even had shrimp.

All said, "In the past we never lived through a happy New Year because he always asked for his rent and interest then and cleaned our houses bare. This time we'll eat what we like," and everyone ate his fill and didn't even notice the cold.

That was one of the happiest days the people of Long Bow ever experienced. They were in such a mellow mood that they released Ching-ho on the guarantee of a relative, let him remain at home unguarded, and called off the struggle for the rest of the holiday season.

But Ching-ho did not wait around to see what would happen when action resumed. He ran away the very next day. So did Kuo Ch'ung-wang. He and his wife fled to another county where they found temporary employment as primary school teachers. Later they fled that school and disappeared altogether. Nobody in Long Bow heard of their whereabouts thereafter.

In Ch'ung-wang's absence, his brother and partner in business, Fu-wang, was brought before the Peasants' Association. He was beaten so severely that he died a few days later, but in spite of this violent treatment he gave no hint as to where any further wealth might be found.

14

Wang Lai-hsun Is Next

A revolution is not the same as inviting people to dinner, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing fancy needlework; it cannot be anything so restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an uprising, an act of violence whereby one class overthrows another.

Mao Tse-tung

WANG CH'UNG-LAI'S WIFE returned to Long Bow late in 1945. Driven out by the family that bought her as a child wife and forced into beggary, she and her husband had lived in another village for 20 years. When they heard that the landlords would be brought to account and old debts repaid, they hurried home only to be met by a stone wall of hostility from the local cadres. T'ien-ming, Fu-yuan, Kuei-ts'ai, and Cheng-k'uan had never heard of the couple. They were reluctant to let them join the struggle for they didn't want to share the "fruits" with outsiders. When Ch'ung-lai's wife went to the district office and protested, Fu-yuan was directed to call in Wang Lai-hsun's mother for questioning.

The old lady denied that Ch'ung-lai was her son. "I only borrowed him," she said. "He lived here half a year and then he ran away. I never ill-treated him."

"Then why did you buy a wife for him?" cried Ch'ung-lai's wife in anger. "And why, if he was not your adopted son, did I live in your family and suffer six years of beatings? Everyone in this village knows how C'h'ung-lai worked hard for more than ten years like a hired laborer in your family. Can you cover the sky with your hand?"

Fu-yuan believed her then, but since she and her husband were still strangers to most of the younger people, the Peasants' Association gave them no property. They were allowed to live in part of Lai-hsun's house and to farm one and one-half acres of Lai-hsun's land, but nothing was turned over to them as their own. Ch'ung-lai and his wife had waited a long time; they could wait some more. They moved into their borrowed quarters and looked forward to the day when the struggle against Lai-hsun would come. They did not have long to wait.

Wang Lai-hsun followed Kuo Fu-wang to the tribune. When he appeared before his tenants and laborers, Ch'ung-lai's wife was standing in the front row. She was the first to speak.

"How was it that you stayed at home while we were driven out?" she asked, stepping in front of the astounded landlord on her small bound feet.

"Because Ch'ung-lai had a grandfather. He had another place to live," said Lai-hsun looking at the ground. He did not have the courage to look her in the face.

"But you too had in-laws. You too had a place to go. Why did you drive us out and make beggars of us? During the famine year we came to beg from you, our own brother, but you gave us nothing. You drove us away with a stick and beat me and the children with an iron poker."

"I remember that day," said Lai-hsun.

"Why?" shouted Ch'ung-lai's wife, tears rolling down her dirt-stained face. "Why?"

"I was afraid if you returned you would ask to divide the property with me."

This answer aroused the whole meeting.

"Beat him, beat him," shouted the crowd.

Ch'ung-lai's wife then took a leather strap from around her wasting body and she and her son beat Lai-hsun with the strap and with their fists. They beat him for more time than it takes to eat a meal and as they beat him Ch'ung-lai's wife cried out, "I beat you in revenge for six years of beatings. In the past you never cared for us. Your eyes did not know us. Now my eyes do not know you either. Now it is my turn."

Lai-hsun cringed before them and whimpered as the blows fell on his back and neck, then he fainted, fell to the ground, and was carried to his home.

After that meeting, Ch'ung-lai and his family were given outright the ten sections of house and the acre and a half of land that had only been loaned to them up until that time.

Wang Lai-hsun's debt to the people added up to a very large sum but the militia found very little wealth in his home. In addition to the land and the houses he had only a few bags of grain. Even when beaten severely he insisted that he had not hidden silver or gold. He was a heroin addict, he said. He had spent all his money on heroin.

The peasants did not believe him, however, and, after getting nowhere by beating him, decided to carry the struggle to his wife. The meeting that day was held in the temple. When the people questioned Lai-hsun's wife, she said that she did have some coins but

that she had given them to Ch'ung-lai's wife for safekeeping. This angered everyone. The militia ran to find Ch'ung-lai's wife. When they brought her to the temple they asked her, "Why did you hide money for that landlord?"

"I never did," said Ch'ung-lai's wife. "Who told you that?"

"She did," said the cadres, pointing to Lai-hsun's wife.

Ch'ung-lai's wife went livid with rage and rushed at the woman who had been her bitterest enemy for so long. But the cadres tore her from her victim and questioned her further. They didn't believe her story. They thought she had fooled them.

"Tell us where you have the money," they demanded.

When she answered, "How could I do such a thing? She is my enemy!" they started to beat her. Chin-chu, one of the poor peasants who had been a hired laborer for Lai-hsun, got out a pair of scissors and cut her flesh with them. Blood gushed out over her tunic.

But Ch'ung-lai's wife screamed and fought back. "She didn't even hide a needle in my home. She hates me because we moved back into the courtyard that she ruled for so long. She is accusing me to make trouble and you believe her!"

At last the young men decided that Ch'ung-lai's wife was telling the truth. They let her go. Wang Lai-hsun and his family were driven from the courtyard just as they themselves had driven out the other half of the family so long ago. Now it was their turn to go and live in abandoned temples and beg for food. But they could not stand such a life. After a few weeks they left Long Bow altogether. All their land, property, houses, clothes, tools, and furniture were confiscated. Only the old lady, Lai-hsun's and Ch'ung-lai's foster mother, remained in the village. She stayed in an abandoned hovel just off the main street. One day she came to Ch'ung-lai's home to beg a little food. The boy, her grandson by adoption, remembered her. He ran into the street and beat her with a stick, saying, "I'll give you some of your own medicine."

This old woman finally maimed herself badly trying to get warm in front of some burning straw. A gust of wind set her clothes on fire. Large areas of her skin were scorched. The pain was so great that she could no longer go out to beg. She died of starvation.

Thus were old scores settled one by one. The brutality of the old system echoed again and again in the convulsions of its demise.

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As soon as the Peasants' Association finished "settling accounts" with Wang Lai-hsun, the other wealthy families were tackled one

after the other. The landlords Li Tung-Sheng, Shih La-ming, Fan Pu-tzu, Hsu Cheng-p'eng, and Cheng Lin-so were all dispossessed within a few days.

Because Li Tung-sheng had two adopted sons who had joined the Eighth Route Army, he was at first treated leniently, allowed to retain some land, and left to live in his own home. But the hunt for buried treasure soon changed all this. When the peasants asked him where his silver was buried he refused to tell them anything. Angered by his defiance, they beat him severely. They did not mean to inflict mortal blows but he died nevertheless a few days later. His wife and child thereupon handed over $200. They were allowed to stay in their house.

Shih La-ming was beaten to death at a large public meeting by an aroused group of his accusers. His daughter-in-law died of starvation after she was driven out of the family home. Her husband, the puppet officer and local despot, Shih Jen-pao, was already far away serving once again in the army of Yen Hsi-shan.

Fan Pu-tzu died of illness after being driven from the village. His surviving son, Fan Ming-hsi, was beaten to death as a Kuomintang agent, and his 17-year-old grandson ran away. His two daughters-in-law remarried in the village.

Cheng Lin-so had a brother who was a battalion commander in the Kuomintang Army. The peasants took no chances with him. They drove him and his whole family out.

Hsu Cheng-p'eng, the Kuomintang general, was an absentee landlord and he never came back to the village to be tried. His sister and her husband lived in his enormous house and tilled half his land. A cousin paid rent and tilled the other half. The Peasants' Association took over all the land but took pity on the brother-in-law, who in fact had never been more than a hired laborer for Hsu. They gave him three acres. The cousin also received land of his own to till.

While the outright landlords reeled under this broad attack, other gentry whose status was not quite so clear also came under fire. Yang Kuei-sheng, a prosperous landlord's son who himself labored on the land, was driven from the village with his whole family. Wang Ch'ang-yi, professional livestock castrator and self-proclaimed veterinarian, whose savings had been invested in Long Bow land, was deprived of seven acres. Yu Ken-ch'eng, the owner of several large tracts, lost eight of nine acres. Only the widow, Yu Pu-ho, who owned eight acres, escaped expropriation.

In the heat of the campaign even relatively minor exploiters were not safe. Families that rented out small plots of land, hired some labor, or loaned out modest sums at high interest were called rich

peasants and attacked as such. To the 16 families of moderate means who were wholly or partly dispossessed in the Anti-Traitor Movement another half-dozen were added. Among them were Wang Ch'un-le, who owned six acres and a mule; Kuo Chao-ch'eng, who owned eight acres and an ox; K'ang Chen-niu, who owned ten acres and a donkey; and the three Ts'ui brothers, sons of a landlord, who between them owned 20 acres.

While individuals who exploited others in some degree constituted the main target of the Peasants' Association, the various gentry-dominated institutions of the village were by no means forgotten. In these institutions the gentry had accumulated and effectively controlled more wealth than was privately possessed by all the landlords put together. All the assets of the North Temple Society, the Confucius Association, the village school, and several other religious, cultural, and clan organizations were liquidated. Over 30 acres of land were seized from such sources, not to mention grain, money, and buildings.

All this was but a warm-up for the main assault, the attack on the Catholic Church itself, for the Church was the primary center of wealth in the whole village and its financial arm, the Carry-On Society, was the largest single landholder. The campaign against the Church in Long Bow had begun, months before, with the arrest of Father Sun as a collaborator. Then it had died down, to flare up anew as the dispossession of the gentry aroused the population of the whole plateau region. The region-wide campaign reached its climax with a large mass meeting in Changchih where Catholics from 27 villages in three counties gathered to make accusations against their bishop, several foreign fathers, and the whole staff of the great South Cathedral that was the heart and nerve center of the Catholic faith in the Shangtang.

As a result of this huge meeting the property of the central institution was expropriated. Only the Cathedral itself and its immediate grounds were left to the Church. Everything else was distributed to the Catholics of the tri-county area, for it was well known that it was their contributions, voluntary and otherwise, that had made possible its accumulation. Lucheng County's share was taken to Horse Square and there divided up. Long Bow alone got about half a million Border Region dollars' worth of property (about $500). Fifty-two Catholic families of the village shared nine tons of grain, over 200 sets of fine clothes, and thousands of dollars among them. In cash alone, each person got $1,500 Border Region currency ($1.50 U.S.).

Taking the expropriation of the Cathedral at Changchih as prece-

dent, the cadres of Long Bow and the leaders of its Peasants' Association moved against the local institution soon afterwards. From the Church, the orphanage, the orphanage hospital, and the Carry-On Society they confiscated more than 40 acres of land, four milk cows, large stores of wheat and corn, 100 new quilts, 15 sets of priestly vestments, many sets of new children's clothes, two bicycles, glassware, stocks of medicinal drugs, hundreds of candles, bronze crosses, bronze candelabras, 16 bronze lamps, and 2,000 silver dollars.

This time the property was not distributed to the Catholics alone but was pooled together with the property seized from the rest of the gentry for use by public organizations and for distribution to all the village poor.

As a final blow at Catholicism the leading lay leader of the Church, the manager of the Carry-On Society, Wang Kuei-ching, was attacked as a landlord. Judged by his landholdings alone, this man was only a middle peasant, but in the eyes of the peasants he deserved a landlord's fate as one of those people who "collected rent and managed landed property for the landlords and depended on the exploitation of the peasants by the landlord as his main means of livelihood."

When Wang Kuei-ching was brought before the village, feeling against him mounted to such a pitch that he was beaten to death then and there. The peasants might not have taken such drastic action had it not been for his two sons, Wang En-pao and Wang Hsiao-wen, both of whom had been exposed as leaders of the Kuomintang underground organization only a short while before, an exposure which revived all the open and latent suspicion of the Catholic community as a nest of agents and traitors.

The man who cracked the secret Kuomintang organization was a former clerk in the puppet administration of the county, one K'ang T'ien-hsing. K'ang wanted to become a teacher in one of the new village schools. The new county administration sent him to a special school where "old style intellectuals" received political instruction. There he began to question his past activities. He turned over a Kuomintang Party membership card to the school office and said that he had received it from Wang En-pao of Long Bow. The latter was immediately arrested. He admitted that he was the district secretary of the Kuomintang Party, that he was the leader of a group dedicated to the destruction of the Liberated Area, and that he was in contact with Yen Hsi-shan's organization in Taiyuan, the provincial capital. T'ien-ming, who was responsible for police work, ordered Wang En-pao held for further investigation. That night the militiaman sent to guard him fell asleep. In the morning Wang En-pao had disap-

peared. After a thorough search the militia found his body at the bottom of a well.

The Kuomintang leader's younger brother, Wang Hsiao-wen, accused the cadres of having killed En-pao. He publicly vowed to take revenge and was put under close surveillance by the militia. Hsiao-wen lived in a courtyard next to an old couple who could not see well. They were loyal supporters of the new government. One day they discovered some broken needles in a pan of millet that they planned to eat. They suspected their neighbor and warned T'ien-ming. After that the militia kept an even closer watch on Hsiao-wen. They found that he had struck up a friendship with several former Kuomintang officers who were quartered in the village as part of the student body of the Anti-Japanese Political and Military University, an institution housed at that time in the church compound. The officers were prisoners of war assigned to political training in anticipation that they could be won over to the side of the revolution. Within the confines of the village they came and went without supervision. Before Wang En-pao's arrest and suicide they often visited with him. Afterwards, they got in touch with his brother, Hsiao-wen.

One day one of these officers escaped. Hsiao-wen was arrested and sharply questioned. Before the meeting he confessed that he had carried on the work interrupted by his brother's death, that he had gathered information about the struggle in Long Bow—who had been attacked, who beaten, who killed, who were the leaders and who the active followers; that he had drawn up lists of names, given them to the captured officer, and helped him to escape. In this way he hoped to take revenge for the dispossession of the gentry and the death of his brother. This confession so aroused the people—and especially the militia—that Hsiao-wen was also beaten to death. They carried this anger with them into the struggle against his father, Wang Kuei-ching, and this is why he suffered the same fate.

Before the Liberation there had been 15 members in Society Chairman Wang's family. Now none were left. Two had been killed, one committed suicide, and the rest ran away. Thus did the peasants settle accounts with the leading Catholic family of the village and at the same time erase an important center of counter-revolutionary activity.

With the destruction of the Wang family the Church ceased to exist as an organized institution in Long Bow. Although scores of believers remained, many of them bitter and angry over the struggle against the Church, no services were held, no sacraments were administered, and no offerings were collected. The sanctuary itself was

turned into a warehouse for government grain. The great tower, minus its bells, was used only as a platform for megaphone announcements of village meetings and news of the world. The rest of the extensive compound was borrowed by various government organizations as temporary headquarters. Among these were the Anti-Japanese Political and Military University and the Fifth District Office.

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The campaign to "settle accounts," launched in January 1946, lasted about four weeks. The destruction of the feudal land system, well begun by the Anti-Traitor Movement, was almost completed in this one month of drastic action. As a result of these two movements together, 211 acres were seized from exploiters, large and small, and 55 acres from various institutions. This amounted to more than a quarter of the village's 931 acres. The situation was the same in regard to livestock, implements, stocks of grain, and housing. Twenty-six draft animals were taken from their owners. This was more than half of all the large farm animals in the community. Of a total of around 800 sections of housing, 400 were confiscated. Over 100 tons of stored grain were seized. Hundreds of silver dollars, much jewelry, many rooms full of furniture, dozens of implements and tools, and hundreds of sets of clothes of all descriptions were also taken.

It is difficult to make an estimate of the total value in U.S. dollars of all this property, movable and otherwise. Assuming the land to be worth $200 an acre, the stock $100 a head, the housing $40 a section, the grain $50 a ton, and other goods in proportion, everything added together could not have exceeded $100,000 in value. In terms of the capitalist West this was a ridiculously small figure. It was hardly enough to set up one large modern dairy farm in any fertile region of the United States in the late 1940's. But in terms of Long Bow Village, its prevailing standard of living and the productivity of its peasant labor, this was an enormous sum, representing approximately five years' average income for every man, woman, and child in the community.

The peasants called the expropriated property *tou cheng kuo shih* —the fruits of struggle. On these fruits they based their hopes for a new life.

15

The Fruits of Struggle

How can republican institutions, free schools, free churches, free social intercourse, exist in a mingled community of nabobs and serfs; of the owners of 20,000 acre manors with lordly palaces and the occupants of narrow huts inhabited by "low white trash"? If the South is ever to be made a safe republic let her land be cultivated by the toil of the owners or the free labor of intelligent citizens. . . . This country will be well rid of the proud, bloated, and defiant rebels . . . the foundations of their institutions must be broken up and relaid, or all our blood and treasure have been spent in vain.

Thaddeus Stevens at Lancaster, Pa., 1865

MARCH CAME IN cold and clear. The sun moved in brilliant splendor across a cloudless sky but cast so little heat upon the earth that it did not even begin to melt the light mantle of snow that had fallen in the night. The glistening snow miraculously transformed the dusty, crumbling, adobe village and turned it into a fairyland of black and white, as pure and clean as the day the world was born.

In the reflected brightness of the open street that ran past the gate of South Temple stood two militamen. As they shuffled their benumbed cloth-shod feet and blew on their frost-bitten fingers, an impatient crowd of peasants in tattered winter garments, frayed shoes, patched shawls, and worn-out quilts grew in size before them.

Behind the massive wooden gates of the temple yard a dozen other militiamen ran to and fro, called to each other, carried out goods, led livestock back and forth, placed furniture in rows, and dumped clothes in neat piles as if preparing for a fair. As a result of these efforts the ancient temple, with its heavy wooden columns and upturned tile roof was soon surrounded by what amounted to a veritable exhibition of domestic artifacts, agricultural implements, and animal husbandry. On the street side of the yard stood the restless livestock section, its prime exhibit a yellow bullock with manure-caked flanks. Beside him stood a black mule, brushed until it glistened and decorated with strands of red yarn woven into its mane and forelock. Underfoot, tied by one hind leg, was a black sow, her dry

shapeless teats dragging in the snow. Beside her romped two fat piglets from her fall litter. Close by, in a woven bamboo basket crouched a dozen chickens, their feathers bright with all the colors of the rainbow. Six longhaired sheep baaed and milled about in a flimsy stockade of kaoliang stalks.

On the right, behind the livestock, the farm implements were lined up. They included a large two-wheeled cart with iron-rimmed wheels, a wooden plow with an iron-tipped point, a harrow made of woven wattles, four heavy mattock-like hoes, a dozen three-pronged wooden pitchforks made from tree limbs that branched three ways, wooden shovels, rakes, seeders, manure buckets, a winch rope and a winch for raising water from a well, and many other useful things too numerous to mention.

To the left stood the great crocks, jars, and tightly woven baskets that the gentry used for storing their grain. There were also reed mats that could be made into field shelters, storage bins, or sleeping covers for a *k'ang*.

In the very center of the yard, tastefully arranged, were several finely shaped yet sturdy hardwood chairs and stools. Behind them stood tables, dressers, sideboards, and carved chests of cherry and mahogany, the latter fitted with massive brass corner guards and locks. Here also were displayed three large mirrors, one a full-length glass free from a single blemish. On the tables and on boards laid across wooden horses sat dozens of household implements—a loom, several spinning wheels, reels for winding cotton yarn, round-bottomed iron pots, bamboo baskets for steaming bread, and a stout press for forcing specially treated corn meal through holes in a steel plate to form corn noodles. Here also were needles, shuttles, a strong bow for fluffing cotton, and a flour sifter made of very fine mesh copper screen that was worth its weight in gold.

Other makeshift tables, closer still to the temple steps, were laden with clothes of all shapes, sizes, colors, and styles, from crude homespun work cottons to silk gowns and satin caps, embroidered undergarments, embroidered slippers, silk handkerchiefs, and kerchiefs of lace. Three great fleece-lined gowns for men lay at one end of the central table and beside them several silk-padded undertunics highly prized for winter wear. Here also were babies' caps with silken dragons' jaws and ears sewn on, a silver rattle, several silver bracelets, some earrings and other jewelled ornaments, bolts of machine-made cloth, odd bits of cotton, dyed and undyed, sleeve protectors for women who cooked, two alarm clocks, a chest full of rags useful for making shoe soles, and a whole table full of shoes, new and old, large and small—from satin shoes for the exquisite bound feet of a

bride to coarse cotton and hemp workshoes already half worn through in the sole. Another whole table was piled high with cotton and silk quilts of every bright color—flowered, striped, and plain.

Here on display was the whole domestic and agricultural wealth of several prosperous gentry families, all of which had been transformed by bitter struggle into "fruits" belonging to the people.

Every item had been carefully recorded by a committee of poor peasants whose members, at that very moment, sat conferring at a table on the raised platform of the temple. Before them were scrolls of paper many feet in length, rolled up for convenience on round wooden sticks. On these scrolls, in black grass characters, were written the name and value in millet of every article in the yard.* Several young peasants who knew how to write, even if it was only by means of a brand of phonetic shorthand that would have shocked a true scholar, were busy trimming their writing brushes and rubbing their ink tablets in water in preparation for recording the decisions of the crowd that now filled the street, growing noisier with each interval of delay.

Finally everything was ready. The militiamen on the outside threw open the gates. People poured through waving in their hands the papers that showed they had been chosen, because of extreme poverty or proved grievances, for the privilege of first choice. The militiamen turned back all those without a paper and, after about 50 people had gone in, shut the gates entirely.

The bustle that had characterized the preparations in the temple gave way to pandemonium as the excited peasants surged from table to table, from display to display. Large items such as the farm cart, the bullock, and the mule had already been allocated by the committee. The men of the households that were to share the animals gathered round to look them over, push, feel, examine, and discuss them. It seemed that they would never tire of leading the animals up and down, holding their mouths open to judge their age, patting their flanks, or just standing back to admire their shapes. These were the first livestock many of them had ever owned. Even if each individual share was one leg, they were proud that leg was so sound.

While these lucky few looked over the livestock and the cart, the rest of the men and women, with all the enthusiasm of a crowd of country people at a big city fair, made the rounds of the courtyard, turned piles of clothes inside out and upside down, tried on gowns for size, paraded with silk tunics held up in front of them, put on the one large wolfskin hat and gesticulated with it before the full-length

* Grass characters are ideographs written free-style by hand as contrasted to ideographs blocked out in square form and printed.

mirror. They spread out quilts, felt the texture of bolts of cloth, seated themselves in chairs, tested tables for steadiness, and all the while called to each other, joked, laughed, and carried on in the highest of spirits. Never since the world began had there been a day like this.

Each peasant had the right to choose one item. Before making a final decision all wanted plenty of time to look over the goods that were there, yet all hesitated to delay too long lest they lose their heart's desire to some more decisive soul. Before many minutes had passed first one and then several more had made up their minds. With their chosen articles in hand they walked up to the steps of the temple and showed the committee what they proposed to carry home.

"Are you sure that's what you want?" asked San-ch'ing, the most skillful writer in the whole village, of old Tui-chin the bachelor, who balanced on his shoulder a baked clay jar almost as large as himself.

"That's it," said the old man cockily. "I haven't anything at all for my grain. Never had that much grain before. This is just the thing."

After some searching through the lists San-ch'ing found the crock on the scroll where it was catalogued along with other storage items and entered Tui-chin's name alongside it.

"It's listed at 50 catties," he said, a note of doubt in his voice.

"That's all right with me," said old Tui-chin. "It's worth all of that."

Tui-chin was given a slip of paper listing the item and its price. This he handed to the militiaman as he went out the gate. As he trudged home he greeted all he met on the street with a broad grin.

"Fan shen le ma?" (Have you turned the body?) asked several.

"Fan le i ke k'ung shen," (I've turned an empty body) replied Tui-chin, pointing to the huge jar and laughing heartily at his own pun. To "turn an empty body" meant to get nothing in the *fanshen* movement.

Others did not find what they wanted as easily as old Tui-chin. Or if they did they were not alone in their choice. Two old women decided at the same time on one flowered quilt. They fell to quarreling over it and ended up in a tug of war, each pulling the quilt to her with all her might while shouting oaths and insults at the other at the top of her voice. Cheng-k'uan, the Chairman of the Peasants' Association, who was supervising the clerks at the table, had to rush down and step between them.

"If you fight that way you'll tear the quilt in half and no one will have it," he admonished good-humoredly. "Now tell me, why do you both want that one?"

Both women started talking at once, but Cheng-k'uan, who knew them well, hardly needed to listen. He decided that the quilt should go to the one with the largest family. He advised the loser to pick out a different quilt. "After all," he said, "there are plenty more, even if this one is the best."

In less time than it took to cook a noon meal over a straw fire the courtyard began to empty out, and soon thereafter in every lane and alley peasants could be seen trudging homeward with their newly acquired possessions. As soon as the first group had cleared the gate the call went out for the second, the representatives of households just a little better off, who were to get second choice. Most of them had already been waiting their turn for a long time. When the gate was opened they rushed in as eagerly as their poorest neighbors had done earlier.

And so it went all morning and all afternoon until the snow in the temple yard had all been trampled into the dirt and the whole area took on once again an ancient, dilapidated look that matched the growing disarray of the much-handled goods on the tables and the ground. Before night fell the last peasants had made their selections and carried or carted them away. Still there were quite a few things left behind. The militiamen, who had been on duty since before dawn and now had to clean up, decided that each of them had earned the right to pick out something and, though it was not strictly legal, each man set aside a small article before carrying the remaining wealth back to the storehouse.

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Such was a typical distribution in the course of the Settling Accounts Movement. The system described above was arrived at only after much trial and error, many meetings of the cadres and the officers of the Peasants' Association, and several county-wide conferences at which the experiences of many villagers were pooled. When the first confiscated property was distributed in Long Bow, it was handed out not according to need but according to the grievances expressed at the meetings. This was done under the slogan *shui tou, shui fen*—"he who struggles gets a share." This was logical at the time and based on a rough measure of justice. Those who had been robbed and cheated should have their property restored; those who had been exploited most heavily should get supplementary wages and benefits. Also, since many did not yet dare attack the gentry for fear of reprisal, those who dared accuse should be rewarded.

The actual distribution of property based on openly made accusa-

tions had a tremendous impact. People said, "Now we have proof that the Eighth Route Army really backs the poor. They take action and are not satisfied with empty talk. Yen's troops talked well but cared nothing for us. They only seized our property and dragged us off to the front." When they saw that active struggle actually paid off in land, houses, clothes, and grain, more people joined each succeeding movement. But even so, after several distributions it became clear that the more active peasants, the brave and the vocal, were getting more than their fair share of the "fruits," while many a poor family that had suffered as much if not more, and needed land and chattels as much if not more, went without. It thus became obvious that active participation alone could not be the only criterion. Distribution on the basis of need had to be introduced. To handle such distribution the Peasants' Association set up a special committee of 60. It was composed of the village cadres, the elected leaders of the Peasants' Association, and delegates elected by the working peasants of each village neighborhood. (There were three such neighborhoods —southwest, southeast, and north.)

Where land was concerned the task of fair distribution was not too difficult. Since the village as a whole possessed approximately an acre of land per capita, those families who had less than the average were given enough to make up the difference. Complications that arose by virtue of the fact that the plots varied in fertility and that all plots were not equally close to the peasants' homes were adjusted by painstaking calculation and juggling until most families were satisfied.

The redistribution of housing was handled in the same way. The village as a whole had less than a section of house per capita. Families without this average were given additional sections wherever possible. Here complicating factors were personal prejudice—some families would not share a courtyard with others whom they disliked —and the location of privies and wells. Privies were vital to every family's economy. They were also very expensive to construct. They were deep, stone-lined cisterns large enough to hold all the solid and liquid excrement of a large family for a whole year. From them came the night soil, in semi-liquid form, on which almost the entire yield of the land was based. Since there were not enough privies to go around, families had to share them. If the families were on good terms, the sharing went well. If not, endless quarrels ensued.

As for wells, no one expected that every family should own one, but it was important that no one should have to walk too far for water. Judicious allocation of housing sections solved this problem in the main.

Draft animals and carts were even scarcer than privies and wells. Since there were only 50 animals in the whole village and since no animals owned by working peasants could be expropriated, the available animals had to be shared. It was common to allocate one ox to as many as four families, each of which thus became the proud possessor of "a leg." This led to quarrels, but it also solved problems. At least those with one leg were better off than those who had none; for even when the draft animals were shared four, six and in some cases even ten ways, there were still not enough to go around. Carts were distributed in about the same proportion as the livestock.

The headaches encountered by the distribution committee in dividing land, houses, and stock were as nothing compared to those encountered in redistributing the miscellaneous property in a way to satisfy everyone. The village cadres and the delegates to the committee met for days on end to evaluate fairly all expropriated property in terms of millet, the standard grain, and to set up a system of grades which would properly classify all families on the basis of need. Various systems for making everything come out even were adopted, but in the end the most successful was a system that combined the direct adjustment of grievances with extra aid for the poorest and most needy.

The system worked as follows: The total value of all the goods available—grain plus household articles, tools, implements, and livestock—was first figured as a grain equivalent. Then every family was put in a "grade" based on need. Those families who had serious grievances against a landlord or rich peasant also had the value of the damage due them figured as a grain equivalent. If the family was already comparatively well off and therefore in a high "grade," its damages were then reduced by a certain percentage. For example, a grievance worth one hundredweight of millet might be cut back to 70 pounds if the family had most of the things needed for carrying on production. The grain left over after the serious grievances were accounted for was then allocated to all the rest of the families based on their "grade." As a result of all this figuring, each family was entitled to take home a certain amount of grain or its equivalent in other forms of property. When an article was chosen, its value was deducted from the total grain allowance for that family. The balance, if any, was paid in grain. Should the article chosen amount to more value than the grain allotted to them, the family had to pay the difference in money or grain according to the same scale.

This was a very complex system, but so too was the problem. Since the movement had a dual purpose, the rewards had to be based on a dual principle—repayment for past injuries and damages,

and the *fanshen* or economic turnover of every family in the village. That it worked at all was due to a very definite measure of correlation between the grievances and the poverty of the families that made them. It was those who had suffered the most who made the most charges in the long run and at the same time needed the most to put them on a par with the rest of the village.

In order to insure that no one should take advantage of his or her newly won power, the village cadres and militiamen did not share in the first few distributions. "Wait until the people see that you are getting nothing and they themselves suggest that you should get a share," was the advice given to Fu-yuan and T'ien-ming by District Leader Liang. But although the cadres were patient and waited unselfishly, no one suggested that they also should benefit from the struggle. Many militiamen decided that it was better to be a common peasant than a leading "activist" and asked to be mustered out. This brought the matter to a head and it was decided that everyone should be put in a "grade" according to his economic position and that everyone—cadres, militia, and ordinary citizens—should share and share alike.

At the same time, in recognition of the special burden borne by the militiamen, a certain amount of property was turned over to the corps for the benefit of that organization as a whole. This property included several acres of wheat land that had belonged to the collaborator Wang Hsiao-nan. The militia harvested the wheat and used a portion of the harvest plus some millet from a later distribution to set up a little shop where cigarettes and other articles of daily use were sold. There the militiamen doing guard duty at night could gather for a cup of hot water and a chat. The little shop became a sort of militiamen's club.

The militia corps was the first but not the only organized body to receive "fruits" for common use. The Peasants' Association took over the Western Inn from the Fan family and invested several hundredweight of expropriated grain as operating capital. Wang Yu-lai, vice-chairman of the Association, managed the inn and managed it so well that its capital increased several-fold in one year. From its profits came funds for the village school, oil for the lamps used at public meetings, and other incidental village expenses.

The Western Inn grew into the same sort of center for the cadres that the little shop had become for the militia. Cadres gathered there for meetings, for figuring up accounts, and for pleasure. As a result, many a free meal was eaten there in the course of the next two years, an incipient form of corruption that boded no good for the future.

The two confiscated distilleries also became public property. They were turned over to the Border Region Government liquor monopoly and operated thereafter as part of a wide network of publicly owned distilleries, the revenue of which helped in great measure to finance the cost of the Liberated Areas Government and the military effort necessary to defend it. Certain other "fruits of struggle" were turned over to the distilleries to help them maintain production. Other "fruits" were given to the consumer co-operative to put it on its feet. Most important among the latter were a cart and a mule which the co-op used to haul supplies.

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By the middle of March, when all the "fruits" had been distributed, the landless and land-poor found themselves living in an entirely new world. Two hundred and forty-two acres of land had been allocated to the families in this group, thereby doubling the acreage in their possession. Their holdings had jumped from an average of .44 acres per capita, to an average of .83 acres per capita. This amount of land did not make them wealthy by any means, but it was sufficient to maintain a minimum standard of living. It meant that they had moved from the ragged edge of starvation into relative security. Peasants who formerly grew only half enough to live on and had to work out or rent land for the remainder of their subsistence suddenly became peasants who could raise enough to live on, on their own land.

What was true of land was also true of other means of production. Families who had not possessed adequate shelter, draft animals, implements, and seed grain became families who owned all these things in sufficent quantity to maintain life. This happened not to just a few individuals but to more than half the population of the village. A hundred and forty families with 517 members "turned over" economically in the course of this movement.

The impact of this shift on the outlook and morale of the landless and land poor was tremendous. For the first time in their lives they felt some measure of control over their destiny. They slept under their own roofs, walked on their own land, planted their own seed, looked forward to harvesting their own crops and, what was perhaps best of all, owed neither grain nor money to any man. They were completely free of debt.

Shen Fa-liang, the former hired laborer in Sheng Ching-ho's household, said, "Life is much better than before. Now I have land and house and work to do. There is grain in my house. I work very hard but I enjoy the results of my work because I carry all the results of

my work back home and put it in my own jars. But in the past it was just the opposite. I labored very hard regardless of rain or shine, but all that work was for others, not for me. All the crops were very beautiful, but all the crops I had to carry to someone else's granary. I couldn't even see them any more, not to mention eating them. So in the past I worked for others. Now I work for myself and no longer suffer the painful life, the unhappy life of working for others."

Ch'ung-lai's wife felt the same way. "In the old days I worked as a servant; I was busy every night until midnight, and I had to get up before dawn. Now I am very busy too, but now I work for myself. This is happy labor. No one oppresses me and the money that I earn is my own. My condition now is good. I've got house, land to till, clothes to wear, and the right to speak. Who dared speak before? In the past when I served in other families, even when they didn't beat or curse me, still, if I committed some trifling error their eyebrows and their eyes met. It is hard to eat with another's bowl. To live in one's own house and eat out of one's own bowl is the happiest life."

Wu-k'uei's wife, a woman who had been forced to sell her son and who had been sold twice herself, summed up her feelings in one sentence:

"It seems as if I have moved from hell to heaven."

Such feelings, when multiplied by 500, made for an atmosphere of extraordinary elation that soon changed even the everyday vocabulary of the village. The peasants all began to call one another "comrade" after the custom of the Eighth Route Army, and in place of the age-old greeting, "Countryman, have you eaten?" many poor peasants asked one another, "Comrade, have you turned over?"* To that question a large number could already answer, "I have turned."

* The use of the word "comrade" as a general form of address was universal in all the Liberated Areas during the Civil War period. Copied after the custom of the Communist Party, which later spread to the Red Army, it eventually came into common usage throughout revolutionary society.