FANSHEN
A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village
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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
Berkeley  Los Angeles  London
For

CARMELITA
whose life began with and remains part of New China
and
JOANNE, MICHAEL, ALYSSA, and CATHERINE
for whom a better world is long overdue
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Long Bow Village

Times and seasons, what things are you,
Bringing to my life ceaseless change?
I will lodge forever in this hollow
Where springs and autumns unheeded pass.
Tao Yun

Long Bow village lies in the southeast quarter of Shansi Province on the high plateau country that butts against the back of the Taihang Mountains. It is 400 miles southwest of Peking and 100 miles from the gap in the mountains directly to the south, through which the Yellow River flows out onto the North China plain.

The South Shansi plateau, known as the Shangtang (associated with heaven) because of its elevation, is itself creased with barren mountains, but between the ranges are wide valleys containing considerable areas of fertile soil. In the heart of one of these valleys lies the old county town of Changchih. The road running north from Changchih proceeds on the level for seven miles, through and past numerous mud villages, and then climbs gently over a long hill. Just beyond the hill, where the land levels out again, is the village of Long Bow.∗

The land revolution in Long Bow began with the retreat and surrender of the Japanese Army and its Chinese puppet forces in 1945. For how many centuries prior to that year this village had endured in this place almost without change I do not know. Certainly for hundreds of years, any tired traveler who paused to rest at the crest of the hill and looked out over the flat to the north saw substantially the same sight—a complex of adobe walls under a canopy of trees set in the middle of a large expanse of fields. These fields

∗ Since the county line runs along the southern edge of the hill, Long Bow is not in Changchih County but in the County of Lucheng, the next walled town to the north. The counties of China have traditionally been divided into several districts, or ch‘u, for administrative purposes. The southwestern district of Lucheng County was called the Fifth District. If Long Bow had any distinction at all it was as the seat of the Fifth District administration.
were barren, brown and desolate in winter, while in summer they were green, yellow and clothed with diverse crops.

To look down on this valley in January was to look upon a world of frozen immobility. Through most of each day not even a wisp of smoke could be seen curling up from the squat mud chimneys that poked above the gently sloping roofs marking the settlement; the rich, who kept their fires burning day and night, burned a coal and earth mixture that gave off no smoke, and the poor, who burned roots, straw, and wild dry grasses, lit their fires only at meal time, and then only long enough to boil a few handfuls of millet.

In the depths of winter the temperature often went below zero. Rich and poor alike stayed indoors. Only on the main north-south road could any sign of human activity be seen. This was the route taken by the carters who hauled freight out of the mountains regardless of weather. In the stillness of the cold mountain air the crashing of their iron-shod wheels against the frozen ruts could be heard at a great distance. From the top of the hill it sounded like the rumbling of distant drums or the busy pounding of some tireless carpenter knocking together a hollow barrel.

With the coming of warm weather this all but lifeless scene was transformed. From the first cock-crow in the semi-darkness before dawn until the red sun went down behind the western mountains at night, peasants by the hundreds came and went on the land, plowing, hauling manure, planting, harvesting. There were always so many people in the fields that they could talk to one another as they worked without leaving their own plots.

From the hill this scene took on the likeness of some slow-motion ritual dance of man and nature that completely obscured the painful, backbreaking labor that was in progress. The stage never seemed to be crowded. Yet everywhere the eye rested something was sure to move—here a donkey strained at the plow; there a man, stripped to the waist, raked together corn stubble; nearby a barefoot boy spread night soil, three women on their knees thinned millet, a child, naked as the day he entered this world, played with some sticks in a ditch. Over the traveler's head the warm, motionless air hummed and whistled as a flight of swallows swooped low. Birds, people, oxen, sheep, children, dogs—it was like one of Breughel's marvelously crowded paintings—and always in the background, the heavily laden carts moved in both directions, their iron thunder muffled now by the long-thawed resilience of the loess-like soil.

If the traveler, rested at last, walked on down the hill, he found that the village street was but the continuation of the long gully that had brought him from the heights. During the heavy July rains the run-off from all the higher ground to the south rushed down the gully, poured along the village street and emptied into the village pond, a large natural basin conveniently located at the center of the community. In this way the supply of soft water for washing clothes was periodically replenished, and in the shade of the willows by the water's edge a few women and girls could always be found scrubbing away on the flat rocks that served as washboards.

Both sides of this gully-like main street were lined with mud walls six to eight feet high, broken here and there by covered gateways that led into the courtyards of the people. Beside each gate was the family privy, hopefully placed at the edge of the public road in anticipation of a contribution to the domestic store of fertilizer from any traveler who might be in need of relief.

Running off at right angles from the main road were several smaller lanes, also lined with walls set at intervals with courtyard gates. From these lanes, still smaller alleys ran off in turn to other entrances so that the whole village was rather like a maze, regular in outline, yet haphazardly filled in with lanes, alleys, walls enclosing courtyards, and low mud houses built against these walls.

Over the centuries, in spite of much new construction, the village persisted in presenting a crumbled look. Built of adobe from the earth underfoot, any neglected wall, any unattended roof soon returned, under the hammering of summer rains, to the soil from whence it came. Always there were walls that had collapsed, gates that had fallen down, roofs that had buckled. In places one could wander into courtyards directly from the street through great gaps in the adobe, and people continually found new shortcuts and created new paths along which to move from house to house. Only the rich could afford to keep their walls standing sharp and clean, capped with the lime and straw mixture that alone could withstand a few seasons of weather. Some of the gentry even built with fired brick. Such houses stood through many generations, while the peasants' huts washed out, were rebuilt, and washed out again and again.

Beside the village pond, whose banks served as a social center as well as a laundry for the women, was an open space large enough to park many carts and still leave the main road free. Day and night there were always carts in this square, for while the most heavily-traveled route skirted the village to the east, many a driver, on reaching Long Bow, was hungry enough, tired enough, or lonely enough to direct his animals into the village street and pull up in the square in search of refreshment, rest, and companionship. All three were offered by the village inn which served hot water to all comers and to the hungry steamed bread, noodles, or unleavened pancakes chopped
up in order to be fried or boiled together with whatever vegetables were in season. Owned at different times by various prosperous gentry and run by one or another of their agents or dependents, this inn was nothing more than an adobe hut with a canopy of reed matting built out over the street in front to shelter a table or two. Behind the hut a long shed contained a platform for the carters to sleep on and, at the far end, a set of feed troughs from which their animals could dine on chopped straw and kaoliang stalks.

Beside the inn was a little store that had also changed hands many times. It was a down-at-the-heels adobe structure with a squeaking door and tattered paper on the windows. Out front, sheltered from the sun by a reed mat similar to that which adorned the inn, the storekeeper could usually be found sipping hot water from a cracked teapot as he concentrated on a game of Chinese chess. Inside he sold tobacco, soap, towels, needles, wine, bean oil, salt, sugar, biscuits, a little cloth, and other assorted articles necessary to daily life that could not be made at home. There was no hurry about such sales. Customers, as often as not, joined the storekeeper in a game of chess before going inside to make their purchases.

Soldiers could usually be seen loitering about the store and inn. In earlier times they were the troops of the Imperial Garrison commanded by Manchu officers. In 1911 these were replaced by the conscripts of Yen Hsi-shan, warlord governor of Shansi, who were ousted in turn by the Japanese in 1938. These soldiers, regardless of their allegiance, were quartered on the people, lived a dissolute and corrupt life, and took whatever they wanted for their pleasure, including the wives and daughters of the poor peasants. Their officers, wined and dined by the gentry, pursued the same pleasures in more genteel surroundings and by more subtle means. In this they had the tacit consent of their hosts, who found in the troops a guarantee of their personal safety and the continued smooth collection of land rents.

Just to the north of the store and also on the edge of the square was a solid brick and timber Buddhist temple, whose upturned roof corners might well remind the traveler of the propped-up flap of a Mongolian tent. This temple was built by the Shen clan and was managed through the years by leading gentry of that name. There the people came to burn incense and offer prayers for good fortune, abundant crops, and many children. At several other points in and around the village there were small mud temples or shrines adorned with the clay likenesses of various minor gods—the god of agriculture, the god of fertility, and the god of health. At these temples also the people burned incense, murmured prayers, and left the offerings of steamed bread and sweet cakes that enabled many a poor beggar to survive. In the southern part of the village, a second clan temple sat in the center of a large courtyard. It was surrounded by numerous outbuildings, all of which, along with the temple itself, had long been abandoned to rats, dogs, and mischievous children.

The only other points of interest in Long Bow outside the village homes themselves were the distilleries and hole-in-the-wall craft establishments manned by peasants skilled at different trades. The number of distilleries varied over the years, depending on the prosperity of the landlord families that owned and ran them, but all of them made the same thing—a hard white liquor called *paikar* that was distilled from fermented sorghum or corn. The craft shops included a blacksmith's forge, a drug dispensary that carried in stock a few hundred of the many thousand drugs and herbs sold by Chinese apothecaries, a number of carpentry shops that made everything from wooden shovels to cartwheels, and several weaving establishments with looms capable of turning out rough cloth about two feet in width. No matter what these craftsmen did, in the summer they also worked on the land. It took every able-bodied person in the village to plant, hoe, and harvest the crops—every able-bodied person, that is, save the landlords, who, with their inch-long fingernails and ankle-length gowns, never dreamed of soiling their hands with labor of any sort.

The population of the village varied drastically in size. A poor crop year could easily cut the number of residents in half, a part of the poor dying in the huts where they lived and the rest fleeing to other regions in a desperate gamble for survival. By and large, however, the thousand acres of land that encircled the village could support between 200 and 300 families and no sooner did famine on the Shangtang plateau cut down the number of Long Bow people and drive them to other places than famine in other parts of North China drove new people to the plateau to settle in their place.

The erratic nature of the weather was thus responsible for a very heterogeneous population. There are many villages in China where the majority of the inhabitants have the same surname, consider themselves to be of one family and are in fact related by common descent from the original settlers. Not so in Long Bow. The various families living there often bore as many as 40 different surnames. Even though the village itself was called Changchuang or Chang Settlement by its inhabitants, often only a small minority of families bore that name. They were at times outnumbered two to one by the Wangs, and even the Kuos surpassed them in households more than once. Other names common in the village were Shen, Li, and Shih, to mention but a few.
Counting noses among the 200-odd families one could ordinarily tally up about a thousand persons altogether. This meant that on the average there was one acre of land for every man, woman, and child.* The crops from this one acre, in a good year, were ample for the support of a single person, considering the very low standard of living that prevailed. But the poor who rented land or worked out as hired laborers got less than half the crops they tilled, while the rich got the surplus from many acres. That is why some were able to build enormous underground tombs marked for eternity, or so they thought, with stone tortoises bearing obelisks inscribed with the family name, while others when they died were thrown into a hole in the ground with only a reed mat wrapped around them and a few shovelfuls of earth to mark the place.

Graves large and small dotted the land around Long Bow. As if this were not enough obstruction to tillage, the fields were divided into countless narrow strips and plots, each one owned by a different family. Even on the level there were few fields larger than half an acre, while on the hill, where the land was terraced, there were strips only a few yards wide that ran in great S curves around the slopes, and small triangles at the top end of gullies that contained but a few square yards of ground. Land was so valuable in the Shangtang that the peasants found it necessary to build stone walls as high as 15 feet to hold back a few feet of earth and make it level. Where the hills were too steep to terrace, they ploughed anyway and cropped the ground for a year or two until the soil washed away completely. In the mountains to the east of Long Bow Village men plowed hills so steep that an extra person was needed to stand on the slope above and keep tension on a rope tied around the ox lest he slip and roll away.

Although on level ground roads and paths led out through the fields, no hill fields could be reached with a cart, and farm implements had to be light enough for one man to carry. The plows, harrows, seeders, and other equipment used were all light enough to be picked up with one hand and were made entirely of wood except for the point of the plow itself. All of these implements, although in use for centuries, were still only supplementary to the main tool, the hoe, handed down almost unchanged since prehistoric times. The hoe used in Long Bow was a great iron blade weighing several pounds and fastened to the end of a stick as large as a man's wrist. This tool, which was designed to turn soil and sod, was also used for the delicate work of thinning millet and weeding corn. By hard work a man

*The acres mentioned here and throughout the text of the book are English acres, each being equivalent to six Chinese mou.
rid of lice from day to day. Their constant biting and the interminable scratching that accompanied it generated a fair amount of heat. On any warm day in winter a large number of people could always be found sitting in various sunlit corners with their padded jackets across their knees. There they hunted the lice, picked them out, and crushed them expertly between their thumbnails.

Children under five were exposed from below in all weather because their padded clothes were not sewn together at the crotch. The slit, which ran upward from just above the knees to a point a little below the tip of the backbone, was very convenient when nature called but was drafty in winter. It must be said, however, that the children didn’t seem to mind at all and ran about in the bitterest weather just as if they were all sewn in like their elders.

Shangtang shoes were also made of cotton cloth but, because the soles consisted of many layers sewn through and through with hemp thread, they were as tough as any leather and lasted from four to six months even with hard wear on the mountain roads. Only the women had no need for such heavy shoes. Their feet were bound, the toes bent under, and the bones stunted so that they formed a crushed stump not more than two or three inches in length. Women walked as if on stilts. They could not run at all. Yet widowed women among the poor often had to work in the fields from dawn until dark. Foot binding came to an end almost everywhere in the period between the two world wars but even in 1945 young girls with crippled feet could still be found in the mountain counties of Shansi.

The food eaten in Long Bow was very simple. Since maize was the major crop everyone ate corn dumplings, called keita, in the morning, and corn meal mush, or noodles made of corn at noon. At night they ate millet porridge with a few noodles in it. After the wheat harvest in July everyone ate noodles for several days, but this was considered quite a luxury and only the most fortunate carried the custom on into August. These same families were the only ones who ate three meals a day throughout the year. Most people cut down to two meals, or even one when winter set in. Thus undernourished they moved about as little as possible and tried to conserve their strength until spring.

In addition to the cereal grains people ate salt turnip all year round, cabbage when they had it, and other vegetables such as eggplant, scallions, chives, and wild herbs in season. But these were simply garnishment to the main dish which was always corn, millet, or wheat. The big problem facing the peasants over the years was not to obtain some variety in their diet, but to find anything to eat at all. They often had to piece out their meager harvest of grain with bran, chaff, wild herbs from the hills or even the leaves from the trees or tree bark as the ch'un huang (spring hunger) set in. Each day that one survived was a day to be thankful for and so, throughout the region, in fat years and in lean, the common greeting came to be not “Hello” or “How are you?” but a simple, heartfelt “Have you eaten?”
occupied villages were liberated within a few hours. Leaving the militia to mop up the rear, the main attack units then moved southward to surround the walled city of Changchih where the Japanese troops still held out in force.

PART II

Sunrise in the West
The Year of Expropriation

There were two "Reigns of Terror" if we would but remember it and consider it; the one wrought murder in hot passion, the other in heartless cold blood; the one lasted mere months, the other lasted a thousand years; the one inflicted death upon a thousand persons, the other upon a hundred millions; but our shudders are all for the "horrors" of the minor terror, the momentary terror, so to speak; whereas, what is the horror of swift death by the axe compared with lifelong death from hunger, cold insult, cruelty, and heartbreak? What is swift death by lightning compared with slow death by fire at the stake? A city cemetery could contain the coffins filled by the brief Terror which we have all been so diligently taught to shiver and mourn over; but all France could hardly contain the coffins filled by the older and real Terror—that unspeakably bitter and awful Terror which none of us has been taught to see in its vastness or pity as it deserves.

Mark Twain
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.

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 mealt ime 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 Mei-sheng?

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

a 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, graver, and enemy stooge, found himself standing before a crowd of several hundred stout 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 idle boast had been made clear by Yen's acts. The old warlord had no sooner re-entered his old capital, Tai-yuan, than he ordered General Roshiro Sumita, Commander of all the Japanese forces in Shanxi, 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,
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 Chi-yung, commander of the puppet garrison in Long Bow fort, Shen Chi-mei, head of the Fifth District police, and Chi’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.

Chi’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.
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 Shantang 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 soldiers 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 much 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 Tung-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 drafted 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. Tien-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 safekeeping. 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’iu-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 gain 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 someone 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 Hung-tung 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."

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.
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.²

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?

²This 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.
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’un, 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 Taishang 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 Pei 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 ordered him 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'ungs, 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.

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.

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."

"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.

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 Ch'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’aang-ji, 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 dispossessment 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 to 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 dispossessions 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.

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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 militiamen. As they shuffled their numbed 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 home-spun 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 over them—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 fanned 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’uuan, 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?”

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Both women started talking at once, but Cheng-k’uuan, 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 fanghsen 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.

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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.

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 sufficient 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 Fá-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.

Half of China

How sad it is to be a woman!
Nothing on earth is held so cheap.
Boys stand leaning at the door
Like Gods fallen out of heaven.
Their hearts brave the Four Oceans,
The wind and dust of a thousand miles.
No one is glad when a girl is born:
By her the family sets no store.

Fu Hsuan

While the dramatic, violent, and often macabre scenes of the “settlement of accounts” and the exuberant, lively, often humorous incidents of the “distribution of the fruits” unfolded like the intricate plot of some day-long Chinese opera, another struggle began whose object was the liberation of women from the oppression of their husbands and from domestic seclusion.

A few poor peasant women in Long Bow, the wives of leading revolutionary cadres, early organized a Women’s Association where brave wives and daughters-in-law, untrammeled by the presence of their menfolk, could voice their own bitterness against the traitors, encourage their poor sisters to do likewise, and thus eventually bring to the village-wide gatherings the strength of “half of China,” as the more enlightened women, very much in earnest, liked to call themselves. By “speaking pains to recall pains,” the women found that they had as many if not more grievances than the men and that once given a chance to speak in public they were as good at it as their fathers and husbands, as had been proven by Chin-mao’s mother in that first district-wide anti-traitor meeting.

But the women found as they organized among themselves, attended meetings and entered into public life, that they met more and more opposition from the men, particularly from the men of their own households, most of whom regarded any activity by wives or daughters-in-law outside the home as “steps leading directly to adultery.” Family heads, having paid sound grain for their women,
regarded them as their private property, expected them to work hard, bear children, serve their fathers, husbands, and mothers-in-law, and speak only when spoken to. In this atmosphere the activities of the Women's Association created a domestic crisis in many a family. Not only did the husbands object to their wives going out; the mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law objected even more strenuously. Many young wives who nevertheless insisted on going to meetings were badly beaten up when they got home.

Among those who were beaten was poor peasant Man-ts'ang's wife. When she came home from a Women's Association meeting, her husband beat her as a matter of course, shouting, "I'll teach you to stay home. I'll mend your rascal ways." But Man-ts'ang's wife surprised her lord and master. Instead of staying home thereafter as a dutiful chattel, she went the very next day to the secretary of the Women's Association, militiaman Ta-hung's wife, and registered a complaint against her husband. After a discussion with the members of the executive committee, the secretary called a meeting of the women of the whole village. At least a third, perhaps even half of them, showed up. In front of this unprecedented gathering of determined women a demand was made that Man-ts'ang explain his actions. Man-ts'ang, arrogant and unbowed, readily complied. He said that he beat his wife because she went to meetings and "the only reason women go to meetings is to gain a free hand for flirtation and seduction."

This remark aroused a furious protest from the women assembled before him. Words soon led to deeds. They rushed at him from all sides, knocked him down, kicked him, tore his clothes, scratched his face, pulled his hair and pummelled him until he could no longer breathe.

"Beat her, will you? Beat her, and slander us all, will you? Well, rape your mother. Maybe this will teach you."

"Stop, I'll never beat her again," gasped the panic-stricken husband who was on the verge of fainting under their blows.

They stopped, let him up, and sent him home with a warning—let him so much as lay a finger on his wife again and he would receive more of the same "cure."

From that day onward Man-ts'ang never dared beat his wife and from that day onward his wife became known to the whole village by her maiden name, Ch'eng Ai-lien, instead of simply by the title of Man-ts'ang's wife, as had been the custom since time began.

A few similar incidents, one of which resulted in an errant husband spending two days in the village lockup, soon taught the poor peasant men to be more circumspect in their treatment of their wives, even if it did not teach them to appreciate women in public life any more than they had before.

The institution of wife beating was, of course, not ended in a few weeks by such means. But having once shown their power the women did not have to beat every man in order to make progress on this question. Thereafter, a serious talk with a strong-armed husband was often enough to make him change his ways, at least for the time being.

Chou Cheng-fu was a bare poor peasant who got land and house for the first time in the distribution that followed the "settling of accounts." Land and house made possible the acquisition of a wife. Through a go-between he made a match with a puppet soldier's widow ten years his junior. Perhaps because of the difference in their ages, Cheng-fu proved to be a very jealous husband. He would not allow his wife out of his sight for even an instant. Over this issue they soon fell to quarrelling. To settle the matter, he beat her, and she, being a woman of some spirit, went to the Women's Association as Ch'eng Ai-lien had done before. Instead of retaliating against Chou Cheng-fu with sticks and kicks, the women sent a delegation to talk to him. They reminded him how hard it was for a poor peasant to get a wife at all. Once married he ought to treat his woman with great respect, be patient with her, and help her to overcome her mistakes, especially since she was younger than he. If he beat her she would only learn to hate him, their relations would steadily worsen, and in the end she might demand a divorce. In that case he would lose his wife completely. Since Chou Cheng-fu did not like the idea of a divorce he decided to be gentle with his wife thereafter. Later, when he went away to do rear service at the battlefront, he got a literate companion to write a letter thanking the Women's Association for their help. The letter was written in the formal style used by scholars of the old school: "After I left home I thought it over and realized that you were kind enough to try and help us. Now I know that it is only through mutual love and respect that husband and wife can live happily together and build a good life."

When asked if, as a result of these actions, women had yet won equality, one of the leaders of the Association said, "No, not yet. Things are a little better than before. Still, there are beating cases and most men still despise women's words and think women are no use. We have to struggle for a long time to win equality. When we have land of our own it will help a lot. In the past men always said, 'You depend on me for a living. You just stay home and eat the things I earn.' But after women get their share they can say, 'I got this grain from my own land and I can live without you by my own
Counter Measures

Men revolted in earlier ages too,  
There's nothing rare about such an ado.  
Strange things pass on earth, as in the sky;  
How else can the Heavenly Dog eat the moon on high?  
In it goes at one side, and out it pops again;  
Brightly as ever the moon shines then.  
It's always the good who come out on top,  
The devil's disciples soon have to stop.

Landlord Ts'ui in  
Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang

The reaction of the gentry to the devastating blows of the Settlement Accounts Movement was as drastic as those who remained behind could make it. As far as the privileged classes were concerned, permanent expropriation was unthinkable. If the peasants could enforce the confiscation of land and property or even “double reduction,” then life was not worth living. Therefore, even though their sword—the local Peace Preservation Corps—had been broken, and their shield—the provincial and central armies of the Kuomintang—had been cast out, the landlords, the rich peasants, and their “dog’s legs” inside the Liberated Areas desperately contested the field. Those who ran away fled with the intention of returning to take revenge, and those who remained used all the resources at their command to disrupt the developing peasant power, neutralize as many people as possible, isolate the active young cadres, and preserve whatever was left of their power and prosperity. They hoped, at a minimum, to have something left to build on when the great offensive, being prepared in Chungking with American support, turned the tide of history, crushed the Liberated Areas, and put the traditional rulers back in power. It never entered their heads that this offensive too would be defeated in the long run.

As an elementary precaution the gentry concealed what valuable property they could in the homes of poor relatives, friends, tenants, and employees. Many peasant families who had little basic sympathy
Appendix A

Basic Program on Chinese Agrarian Law Promulgated by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, 1947.

North Shansi, October 10: The following is the full text of the basic program on Chinese Agrarian Law promulgated on October 10th by the publication of the program.

Resolution:

China's agrarian system is unjust in the extreme. Speaking of general conditions, landlords and rich peasants who make up less than ten percent of the rural population hold approximately 70 to 80 percent of the land, cruelly exploiting the peasantry. Farm laborers, poor peasants, middle peasants, and other people, however, who make up over 90 percent of the rural population hold a total of approximately only 20 to 30 percent of the land, toiling throughout the whole year, knowing neither warmth nor full stomach. These grave conditions are the root of our country's being the victim of aggression, oppression, poverty, backwardness, and the basic obstacles to our country's democratization, industrialization, independence, unity, strength and prosperity.

In order to change these conditions, it is necessary, on the basis of the demands of the peasantry, to wipe out the agrarian system of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation, and realize the system of "land to the tillers." For 20 years, and especially in the last two years, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, Chinese peasants have obtained enormous achievements and rich experiences in carrying out land reform. In September of this year, the Chinese Communist Party convened a nationwide agrarian conference, and at the conference did detailed research into conditions of the Chinese agrarian system and experience of the land reform, and enacted the basic program on Chinese agrarian law to serve as a proposal to the democratic governments of all areas, peasants' meetings, peasants' congresses and their committees. The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party is in complete accord with the basic program on agrarian law, and is furthermore publishing it. It is hoped that the democratic governments of all areas, peasants' meetings, peasants' congresses, and their committees will discuss and adopt this proposal, and furthermore will work out concrete methods appropriate to local conditions, to unfold and thoroughly carry through a nationwide land reform movement, completing the basic task of the Chinese revolution.

Central Committee Chinese Communist Party
October 10, 1947
Basic Program:

Article 1: The agrarian system of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation is abolished. The agrarian system of “land to the tillers” is to be realized.

Article 2: Landownership rights of all landlords are abolished.

Article 3: Landownership rights of all ancestral shrines, temples, monasteries, schools, institutions and organizations are abolished.

Article 4: All debts incurred in the countryside prior to the reform of the agrarian system are cancelled.

Article 5: The legal executive organs for the reform of the agrarian system shall be the village peasants’ meetings, and the committees elected by them; the assemblies of the Poor Peasants’ League and organized and landless and land-poor peasants of villages, and the committees elected by it; ch’u, hsien, provincial and other levels of peasants’ congresses, and committees elected by them.

Article 6: Except as provided in Article 9 Section B, all land of landlords in the villages, and all public land, shall be taken over by the village peasants’ associations, and together with all other village land, in accordance with the total population of the village, irrespective of male or female, young or old, shall be unified and equally distributed; with regard to the quantity of land, surplus shall be taken to relieve dearth, and with regard to the quality of land, fertile land shall be taken to supplement infertile, so that all the village people shall obtain land equally; and it shall be the individual property of each person.

Article 7: The unit for the distribution of the land shall be the hsiang or administrative village equivalent to hsiang. But ch’u or hsien peasants’ associations may make certain necessary adjustments between various hsiangs, or equivalent administrative villages. In areas where the district is extensive and the population sparse, and for the purpose of convenient cultivation, comparatively small units below the level of the hsiang may be taken as units for the distribution of the land.

Article 8: Village peasants’ associations shall take over the landlords’ animals, agricultural implements, houses, grain and other properties, shall further expropriate the surplus animals, agricultural implements, houses, grain and other properties of rich peasants; and these shall be distributed to peasants lacking in these properties, and to other poor people, and furthermore an equal portion shall be distributed to the landlords. The property distributed to each person shall be his personal property, thus enabling all the village people to obtain proper materials for production and for life.

Article 9: Methods for dealing with certain special lands and properties, provided as follows:

Section A: Woods and hills, irrigation and waterworks, land in reeds, orchards, pools, waste land and other distributable land shall be divided in accordance with the ordinary standards for land.

Section B: Great forests, great hydraulic engineering works, large mines, large pasture land, large waste lands and lakes shall be administered by the government.

Section C: Famous sites and historic spots shall be securely protected. Special libraries, antiques, works of art, and so forth, which are of historic or academic value, and which have been taken over shall be inventoried and turned over to the high government of the area.

Section D: Ammunition, arms, and those large quantities of money, valuables, and grain left over after satisfying the needs of the peasants shall be inventoried and turned over to the high government of the area for settlement.

Article 10: Methods for dealing with certain special questions in the distribution of the land, provided as follows:

Section A: Poor peasants with only one or two persons in the family may be given land equivalent to that of two or three people by the village peasants’ meetings, in consideration of prevailing conditions.

Section B: Rural laborers, individual professionals, and their families, in general, shall be given land equivalent to that of peasants; but if their profession is sufficient for constant maintenance of all or most of their living expenses, they shall not be given land, or shall be given a partial portion of land, as determined by the village peasants’ meetings and their committees in consideration of prevailing conditions.

Section C: For all personnel of the People’s Liberation Army, democratic governments, all people’s organizations, whose home is in the countryside, they and their families shall be given land and properties equivalent to that of peasants.

Section D: Landlords and their families shall be given land and properties equivalent to that of peasants.

Section E: For KMT army officers and soldiers, KMT government officials and personnel, KMT party members and other enemy personnel, whose homes are in rural areas, their families shall be given land and properties equivalent to that of the peasants.

Section F: For all national traitors, collaborators, and civil war criminals, they themselves shall not be given land or properties. If their families live in the countryside, have not taken part in criminal activities, and are willing to cultivate the land themselves, they shall be given land and properties equivalent to that of the peasants.

Article 11: The government shall issue deeds to the ownership of the land given to the people, and moreover recognize their right to free man-
agreement, buying and selling, and under specially determined conditions to rent out the land. All land deeds and all notes on debts from prior to the reform of the agrarian system shall be turned in and shall be null and void.

Article 12: The property and legal operations of industrial and commercial elements shall be protected from encroachment.

Article 13: For the sake of making the land reform thorough and complete, people’s courts shall be established to try and punish those who resist or violate the provisions of this law. The people’s courts shall be organized from personnel elected by peasants’ meetings or peasants’ congresses and from personnel appointed by the government.

Article 14: During the period of the reform of the agrarian system, for the sake of maintaining the order of the agrarian reform and protecting the wealth of the people, the village peasants’ meetings or their committees shall appoint personnel, by definite procedure to take necessary steps for carrying out the responsibilities of taking over, recording, liquidating and holding all transferred lands and properties, to guard against damage, waste, corruption and destruction. The peasants’ associations shall forbid anyone from, for the sake of interrupting equitable distribution, deliberately butchering animals, felling trees, destroying agricultural implements, irrigation and waterworks, buildings and construction works, or crops or other materials; and the act of thieving, seizing, secretly giving away to others, concealing, burying, dispersing, or selling their goods. Violations shall be tried and punished by the people’s courts.

Article 15: For the sake of guaranteeing that all measures of land reform shall be in accord with the will and interests of the overwhelming majority of the people, the government shall take the responsibility for securing earnest democratic rights for the people; securing full rights for the peasants and their representatives at all meetings freely to criticize and impeach all cadres of all kinds and levels; and full rights at all appropriate meetings freely to remove and change and to elect all cadres of the government and peasants’ organizations. Anyone who infringes on the above democratic rights and powers of the people shall be punished by the people’s courts.

Article 16: In places where the land has already been equally distributed before the promulgation of this law, and provided that the peasants do not demand redistribution, the land need not be redistributed.

Appendix B

Supplementary Measures for Carrying Out the Basic Program on Agrarian Law

Draft Promulgated by Hopei-Honan-Shansi-Shantung Border Region Government on Dec. 28, 1947

1. “Landownership rights of all ancestral shrines, temples, monasteries, schools, institutions and organizations are abolished,” as provided in Article 3. This includes land ownership of churches.

2. “To cancel all debts incurred in the countryside prior to the reform of the agrarian system,” as provided in Article 4, does not include debt relations contracted in commercial buying and selling.

3. “In accordance with the total population of the village,” as is said in Article 6, denotes the present population at the time of even distribution of land. All even distribution should be made according to the present population with the only exception as provided in Section A of Article 10, i.e., “Poor peasants with only one or two persons in the family may be given land equivalent to that of two or three people by the village peasants’ meetings, in consideration of the prevailing conditions.”

4. Supplements to Article 6:
   (a) All the newly reclaimed land since the 34th year of the Chinese Republic should be owned by the reclamer, and exempted from even distribution.
   (b) Land of the rich middle peasants may be taken, in consideration of the prevailing conditions, according to the principle of taking surplus to relieve dearth and fertile to supplement infertile; but their houses and properties should not be touched.
   (c) Refugees and migratory persons should settle in one place and receive a share there. No duplicate shares should be extended to them in two places.
   (d) Refugees not at home and no longer heard of should be given land according to law, and not properties. Such shares of land should be put under the charge of the peasants’ associations and be tilled for the time being by the poor and hired peasants or other poor people; no rent should be paid but only taxes. But the period for keeping such shares of land is limited to three years (beginning from the date when land is distributed). If they don’t come back before the time limit, such shares should be reallocated. If they come back to receive the shares within the
time limit they must produce credentials of the peasants’ assembly of the village where they come from, if it is in the Liberated Areas.

(e) Land of the mosques should be dealt with by the Moslems themselves according to the principle of even distribution of all land in the respective villages.

5. Supplement to Article 7:

In areas where the population is dense and the land is scarce and where the poor and hired peasants cannot have enough means to live on after the distribution, migration may be encouraged on the principle of voluntariness.

6. Supplements to Article 8:

(a) In case the landlords also rent out houses in town or townlet, such houses should be confiscated and distributed as well. In general the principle should be to distribute them to the poor people in the said town or townlet. Method of distribution should be decided by the people’s assembly (or its committee) of the said town or townlet. In case of some dispute arising with the village, solution may be made in co-ordination with the county peasants’ congress (or its committee). If the tenant of such houses is carrying on industrial or merchant business by means of them, the relationship with him should be dealt with in accordance with the accustomed measures on renting houses; the principle is not to influence the carrying on of industry and commerce.

(b) Extra fruits seized by cadres since the Anti-Traitor and Settling Accounts Movement should be recalled.

7. Supplement to Section A of Article 9:

Forests, mulberry patches, bamboo patches, irrigation and waterworks, land in reeds, orchards, pools, swamps, and lotus pools should be dealt with through the public discussion of the peasants in the respective places. Those which may be evenly distributed should be so; in case that even distribution is not advantageous for managerial purposes, joint-stock management may be adopted.

8. Supplements to Section B of Article 9:

(a) Mines which are being exploited by the government or are going to be exploited should not be distributed; the already discovered mines which government does not work for the time being may be distributed to peasants for management, and should be recalled when it is necessary to work the mine; when recalled, the local government should make adjustment with the land for the peasants by some other means and make proper redemption for the losses in production.

(b) Public land attached to the tracks along the original railroad line, land ready to be used for the railroad which is going to be built, and land belonging to the present agricultural stations, public buildings, parks, mausoleums, and appointed highways and waterways should not be dis-

9. Supplement to Section B of Article 10:

Any unemployed worker whose home is in the countryside but who finds no means to make a living may go back to his native place to divide land with proofs given by the government of locality where he now lives.

10. “The People’s Liberation Army” as mentioned in Section C of Article 10 includes liberated soldiers (defectors from Chiang’s forces).

11. Supplements to Section C of Article 10:

(a) All martyrs who gave their lives on the battlefront since the beginning of the Anti-Japanese War (including soldiers of the People’s Liberation Army, militiamen, civilian cadres, and other personnel) should get a share of land and property equal to that of a peasant for themselves.

(b) Land for placement of honorable soldiers and veterans should be preserved by the Director’s Administrative Bureau on a unified plan, and should not be distributed; but the amount of such land should not surpass one thousandth of the total quantity of land in the Director’s Administrative Bureau area. Such reserved land should for the time being be handed over to the poor and bitter peasants and other poor people to cultivate through the county peasant assemblies (or their committees) in the counties under the administration of the Director’s Bureau. No rent should be paid but only the burden to the government.

12. Supplement to Article 11:

The form of title deeds (literally land ownership certificates) should be designed by the Hopei-Honan-Shansi-Shantung Border Region Government in a unified way, should be printed by the Director’s Administrative Bureau according to the form, then given to the respective county governments which should be held responsible for the filling out and issuance of the title deeds.

13. Supplement to Article 13:

Regulations for the Organization of the People’s Court on different levels should be made by the people’s assembly of Hopei-Honan-Shansi-Shantung Border Region.

14. Supplements to Article 16:

(a) “Areas where land has already been evenly distributed” as mentioned in this article denotes areas where the land distribution has been done in accord with the principle and spirit of the Basic Program
on Chinese Agrarian Law. If illegal holding of extra portions or inequality in fertility and infertility still exists, so that the poor peasants have not enough means to make a living, redistribution according to petitions of adjustment should be made.

(b) If, in areas where land has already been evenly distributed before the promulgation of the Basic Program on the Chinese Agrarian Law, the landlords and rich farmers cannot make a living though they have labor power, land may be given to them, in the way of making up, according to law.

15. These measures may be revised at any time when necessary.

16. These measures begin to take effect on the date when they are promulgated.

Appendix C

How to Analyze Class Status in the Countryside
From: The Agrarian Reform Law of the People's Republic of China

1. Landlord
A person shall be classified as a landlord who owns land, but does not engage in labor or only engages in supplementary labor, and who depends on exploitation for his means of livelihood. Exploitation by the landlords is chiefly in the form of land rent, plus money-lending, hiring of labor, or the simultaneous carrying on of industrial or commercial enterprises. But the major form of exploitation of the peasants by the landlords is the exacting of land rent from the peasants. The management of landholdings owned by public bodies and the collection of rent from school land also belong to the category of exploitation in the form of land rent.

Some bankrupt landlords who, despite their bankruptcy and their ability to work, do not engage in labor, and whose living conditions are better than those of an ordinary middle peasant, shall continue to be classified as landlords.

Warlords, bureaucrats, local despots and villainous gentry are the political representatives of the landlord class, and are exceptionally cruel and wicked elements among the landlords. (Among the rich peasants there are also small local despots and villainous gentry.)

Any person, who collects rent and manages the landed property for landlords and depends on the exploitation of peasants by the landlords as his main means of livelihood, and whose living conditions are better than those of an ordinary middle peasant, shall be treated in the same manner as a landlord.

Supplementary Decisions Adopted by the Government Administration Council

(A) Any person who rents large areas of land from landlords, who does not himself engage in labor, but sub-lets the land to others for rent, and whose living conditions are better than those of an ordinary middle peasant, shall be classified as a sub-landlord. Sub-landlords shall be treated in the same manner as landlords. A sub-landlord who cultivates part of his land should be treated in the same manner as a rich peasant.

(B) Revolutionary army men, dependents of martyrs, workers, staff members, professional workers, peddlers and others who rent out small portions of land because they are engaged in other occupations or because
they are unable to work, shall not be classified as landlords. Their class status shall be determined according to their occupations or they shall be referred to as small land lessors, whose land holdings shall be dealt with in accordance with Article 5 of the Agrarian Reform Law.

(C) The class status of any person who receives income from some other occupation and who at the same time owns and rents out a large area of agricultural land the size of which exceeds the average landholdings of each landlord family in the locality, shall be determined according to the major source of his income. He may be referred to either as a person of other class status and concurrently as a landlord, or as a landlord having other class status. The land and property used directly for his other occupations shall not be confiscated.

(D) The average landholding of a landlord family in the various localities shall be computed by taking one or several counties as a unit, and shall be determined only after the people's government of a special administrative district* or of a county has submitted it to a provincial government and obtained the latter's approval.

2. Rich Peasant
A rich peasant generally owns land. But there are also rich peasants who own only part of the land they cultivate and rent the rest from others. There are others who own no land but rent all their land from others. Generally speaking, they own better means of production and some floating capital and take part in labor themselves, but are as a rule dependent on exploitation for a part or the major part of their means of livelihood. Exploitation by rich peasants is chiefly in the form of exploiting the wage labor (hiring long-term laborers). In addition, they may also let out part of their land for rent, or lend out money, or carry on industrial or commercial enterprises. Most of the rich peasants also manage the landholdings owned by public bodies. Some own a considerable amount of fertile land, engage in labor themselves and do not hire any laborers. But they exploit the peasants in the form of land rent and loan interest. In such cases, they should be treated in the same manner as rich peasants. Exploitation by the rich peasants is of a constant character, and in many cases the income from such exploitation constitutes their main means of livelihood.

Supplementary Decisions Adopted by the Government Administration Council

(A) If the area of land rented out by a rich peasant exceeds in size the land cultivated jointly by himself and by hired laborers, he shall be referred to as a rich peasant of a semi-landlord type. The land and other properties of rich peasants, or of rich peasants of a semi-landlord type shall be dealt with in accordance with Article 6 of the Agrarian Reform Law.

(B) Where a landlord family has some members who are engaged in major agricultural labor all the year round, or at the same time hires laborers to cultivate part of its land, the said family shall be classified as a landlord family and not as a rich peasant family if the major part of its land is rented out and the rented-out land is three times or more the size of the land cultivated jointly by the family and by hired laborers (for instance, 150 mou of land rented out and less than 50 mou cultivated by the family and by hired laborers); or in a case where the family possesses large landholdings and the rented-out land is twice or more the size of the land cultivated jointly by the family and hired laborers. (For instance, 200 mou rented out and less than 100 mou cultivated by the family or hired laborers.)

The land and other properties of such a family shall be dealt with in accordance with Article 2 of the Agrarian Reform Law. However, the part of the land cultivated by the family's own labor shall, after appropriate readjustment, be mainly retained by the family. The status of those members who take part in labor, if their position in the family is not a dominant, but a subordinate one, should be appropriately determined as laboring people in order to distinguish them in status from other family members who do not participate in labor.

3. Middle Peasant
Many middle peasants own land. Some possess only a portion of the land which they cultivate while the remainder is rented. Some of them are landless, and rent all their land from others. The middle peasants own a certain number of farm implements. The middle peasants depend wholly or mainly upon their own labor for their living. In general they do not exploit others. Many of them are themselves exploited on a small scale by others in the form of land rent and loan interest. But generally they do not sell their labor power. Some of the middle peasants (the well-to-do middle peasants) practice a small degree of exploitation, but such exploitation is not of a constant character and the main income therefrom does not constitute their main means of livelihood. These people shall be classified as middle peasants.

4. Poor Peasant
Some poor peasants own inadequate farm implements and a part of the land they cultivate. Some have no land at all and own only some inadequate farm implements. In general they have to rent land for cultivation, and are exploited by others in the form of land rent, loan interest, or hired labor in a limited degree. These people shall be classified as poor peasants.

In general, the middle peasants need not sell their labor power, but the poor peasants have to sell their labor power for limited periods. This is the basic criterion for differentiating middle peasants from poor peasants.
5. Worker

Workers (including farm laborers) generally have neither land nor farm implements. Some of them have a very small amount of land and very few implements. They depend wholly or mainly upon the sale of their labor power for their living. These people shall be classified as workers.

Index

A major function of this index is to help the reader keep track of the multitude of names mentioned in this book. However, no attempt has been made to index the names of all the Long Bow villagers or other local personnel mentioned only incidentally. Also, no attempt has been made to make an exhaustive index of all those names which do appear. The page listings for villagers, work team members, local officials, etc., refer only to certain events or discussions in which they played an outstanding role or which are of particular human interest.

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