

張天翼：「新生」

“A New Life”

By Chang T'ien-yi

Translated by Carl B. Durley

WHEN MR. LI first came to the middle school looking for Principal P'an, many teachers and students were shocked. What? Was *this* the writer and artist, Mr. Li Yi-mo?

Both his heavy, Chinese-style overcoat and his two heavy valises were gray with dust. He was tall and spare; his complexion was on the dark side. He had not washed his face for perhaps two weeks; on his chin a stubble of beard stuck straight out—a man of forty-odd years looking as though he were fifty. Even the myopia-correcting lenses of his glasses appeared to be stained yellow by wind-blown dirt, just like window panes which have not been wiped for a whole year. If you had read his fine and delicately-wrought essays, if you knew that a review had styled him a “pure” artist, then you would undoubtedly have felt how inconsistent such a physical appearance was with his works.

However, Mr. Li Yi-mo told Principal P'an with great emotion, “It's as though everything in the past were dead. Old friend, I have been living a grand and glorious dream-life for years like the Governor of Nan-k'o;¹ only now have I awakened. I really should thank the Japanese bandits for this; if the thunder of their guns hadn't aroused me, I'd still be living there as a hermit!”

As he told of the situation when his home was about to fall into the hands of the enemy

¹From *Nan-k'o t'ai-shou chuan* (南柯太守傳), or *Chronicle of the Governor of the Southern Bough*, a satire by Li Kung-tso (李公佐) of the T'ang dynasty. The story recounts the adventures of a young man who, having fallen into a drunken stupor, dreams he is taken down a hole under an ash tree into a strange land. He “spends” twenty years there, initially as a prosperous governor with a wife and seven children, but ultimately experiencing a slow but steady decline in his fortunes. He wakes to find all was but a dream and that he had been asleep only a short time.

and recounted the circumstances of his flight, he spoke rapidly, his protruding cheekbones becoming slightly flushed. Sometimes he suddenly stopped, as though he could not remember anything further. Then his body would move restlessly and the words would again pour forth quickly. Old P'an knew that Yi-mo was boiling over with anger. But Old P'an felt that this close friend ordinarily conducted himself with great calm and self-control and was not given to outbursts; now that he wanted to give rein to his outrage he did not know how and merely seemed to be excited and impatient.

When the enemy was only twenty or so miles from Li Yi-mo's house, he had fled, taking his wife and daughter with him. Usually, each year he collected seven hundred piculs of grain as rent; this year that was a total loss. He settled his wife and girl at his in-laws' in the country in the south of Chekiang. He then hurried here alone to find his old friend.

“What is the point of accompanying my wife into hiding in the country? I made up my mind; I wanted to come here to the rear to do some work. I wanted to start my . . . my new life!”

When he learned that here, at the senior middle school, there was a vacancy in a four-hour art class, he consented to be responsible for this course. He realized that he ought to supplement his main work of serving the country by finding such an occupation as this.

“Heavens!” Old P'an said with a smile, half jokingly and half seriously. “So you really are willing to work as a substitute teacher at our school. I really feel a bit overwhelmed.”

But Yi-mo gravely stood up. “Nonsense! The Yi-mo of today is not the Yi-mo of the past. The Yi-mo of the past was a disciple of T'ao Ch'ien, but, as for the Yi-mo of today—

why, he is a disciple of Mo Ti.² I want to work, I want to suffer. Millions of people are undergoing hardships, suffering, while I—while I— Actually, working as a middle-school teacher can't be considered suffering. I would even be willing to work as a primary-school teacher!"

THEN OLD P'AN had a room in the schoolyard which was used as an infirmary cleared out and requested Yi-mo to move in. Thereupon Yi-mo began his new life. He participated as advisor in the school's literary club. Moreover, he contributed articles to a small weekly publication that they edited. He also planned to do some painting, to paint something with propagandistic value.

"We should direct our propaganda toward everyone." He spoke to the students very rapidly, his fingers moving in a strange, agitated manner. "We want to inform the whole world—how upright, magnanimous, and peaceful our China is. But the enemy—bestiality, barbarity. We are not only fighting for the preservation of our country, but for the dignity of mankind."

He restlessly paced about the art room as if he were looking for something. All the strength of his body was gathered into his right hand; he clenched and unclenched his fist spasmodically. His face was a bit hot; the tip of his nose gave him a very strange sensation as though it forebode his bursting out into tears.

Several students stared intently at him. He swept his gaze over them; as his eyes met each pair of theirs, he felt that there was an almost audible collision. Then he withdrew to the window and looked out for four or five minutes.

The weather here was always this foul; black clouds that became leaden sheets, seeming to press down on your head. The withered branches on the trees in the schoolyard had gathered several rooks which swayed to and fro

²T'ao Ch'ien is the poet T'ao Yuan-ming (365-427) who early retired from a minor official post to enjoy life as a farmer and recluse. Mo Ti, known as Mo-tzu, is the 5th-4th century B.C. philosopher who advocated altruism as the proper foundation for organized society and had a contemporary following that rivaled that of Confucius.

in the frigid wind. Although it was not yet five o'clock, the room had become dark; but the sky was still pierced by drab, cold rays of light that caused the person who looked at them to feel like shivering.

Suddenly he thought of his home: every time he had worked himself into exhaustion, he had stood like this in front of his study window, looking out at his exquisite little yard. He recalled the moss in his goldfish pond—even during winter it was a bright green.

"That wax-bush³ is probably already in bloom," he said to himself.

He was afraid that people would divine his innermost thoughts; he glanced at a student beside him. Then he interlaced his fingers and cleared his mind of such reminiscences. He very dispassionately told himself, "In such a great age of suffering no one is able to seek the comfortable life of his past again, no one is able to just close his gates and live a secluded life."

But here, it's a completely new environment.

He heaved a long, silent sigh. Even he himself did not know what was the matter—he had been feeling that this new environment lacked a little something. He felt that he was under some kind of strain that caused both his body and spirit to be depressed. Even now, when he was full of rage on behalf of mankind, it was not a hot, searing anger; rather, it had become a brooding thing, a thing soaked through with depression and melancholia. Because he wanted to get away from these unhappy emotions, he deliberately made himself think of other things.

"Really! Why have all four hours of class been arranged for Wednesday afternoons?"

Behind him a student made a sound; he did not know if it was a snicker or a snuffle. He started and slowly turned around. His face was wearing an embarrassed expression as though he were a child who was ordinarily well-behaved but who had just been crying and yet still had to face a guest.

³A bushy shrub (*Chimonanthus fragrans*) with long, dark green leaves and fragrant yellow and purple flowers. It blooms within the period November to March.

He asked sheepishly, "Concerning your. . . Ah, do you draw and paint outside of class?"

Several students exchanged glances and smiled.

"Art, for you second- and third-year students, is elective," Yi-mo said, a little cross. "Since you chose this course, you must have some interest in art. But I hope that you will all go and draw some propaganda pictures and put them up on the outside to arouse the masses. Just draw so that people will understand them; if your abilities still aren't very well developed, that isn't important. Anyway, now is—now isn't the time for us to talk about art. Now art is useless."

Several students again looked at each other, probably exchanging winks. Then one with his head shaved like a monk's barely lifted his buttocks from the seat in pretense of standing respectfully and said, "Mr. Li, as to those propaganda drawings. . . are they art?"

"They are not art!" Mr. Li answered, a bit excited.

"Are no propaganda drawings art?"

The teacher felt a little pity for the student. Oh, he will ask even this! But he patiently explained it through once: propaganda is only propaganda; by no means is it art. Several times he spelled it out: that which we need at present are simply those things which urge the people on, which arouse our fellow countrymen. He used his right hand to slice the air as he talked, and gradually spoke faster and faster.

"We should take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth! If the enemy blows us up with artillery, we should answer him with artillery! Today the greatest men are those soldiers battling at the front, the most useless are we so-called artists. We should quickly abandon art for now and do the sort of work that every Chinese ought to be doing. . . ."

"Mr. Li," shouted the one with the shaven head, this time very casual and not even bowing, just sitting behind his easel. "Then, Kaethe Kollwitz's⁴ political cartoon strips, the

⁴Kaethe Schmidt Kollwitz (1867-1945), German painter and sculptress; basically an expressionistic artist, but also noted for her social realism.

many Soviet woodcuts—all contain propagandistic ideas—are these things considered to be art?"

"Here is another disciple of Lu Hsun!⁵" thought Li Yi-mo.

The teacher and pupil stared at each other. An instant of intolerable silence. A rook flew over the rooftop with a "Caw!", as though it had been beside them secretly listening from the first, and now could not help exploding with a raucous cry.

Yi-mo guessed that his own face revealed some strange reaction, for one student emitted a little titter and looked out the window. Then the teacher, with great effort, also put a little smile on his face and expressed complete indifference. But as soon as he opened his mouth, he himself felt that his voice was not very natural.

"Concerning this problem, well. . . Ah, this can't be explained clearly right now. Well. . . this. . . a problem of aesthetics. That which finally comes to be art. . . is very complicated to speak about. . . It will be all right if you come up to see me after class; I'll help you to understand gradually."

But that student with his head shaved like a monk's never came to seek him out. Every Wednesday afternoon he brought several cartoons to show his teacher and that was all. As for the problem—it was never raised again.

None of the students got very close to him; it was as if they either treated him as a celebrity and so did not dare trouble him or as though they held him in low esteem. Sometimes a student would come to ask him to write an article for the small weekly or to ask him how to arrange the make-up so as to make it more attractive. As soon as they had finished talking about the business at hand, the student would always leave.

When he passed a place where there were students, he would frequently hear someone say behind him, "That's Li Yi-mo." But he really did not know if this expressed awe or ridicule.

On the other hand, they seemed to like that Mr. Ch'en, the teacher who taught physics and math. He was short in stature; his face was

⁵Pen name of Chou Shu-jen (1881-1936), one of the most celebrated of Chinese leftist writers.

To the newspaper-reading public of Republican China, the artist Feng Tzu-k'ai (豐子愷 1898-) was well-known for his subtle but lively sketches of contemporary Chinese life. The six reproduced here, all published in the 1930's, are from The Complete Cartoon Works of Feng Tzu-k'ai.

Refugees.



somewhat pock-marked. His activities were varied: here a discussion group, there a reading group, and each Saturday night a trip to the Mass Education Hall to lecture an hour on wartime civilian defense. The articles he put out were many-faceted—now popularized essays such as those discussing dum-dum bullets, now one on the economic crisis of the enemy. When he saw Yi-mo, he always nodded respectfully.

Old P'an spoke of him to Yi-mo many times. "Among the faculty the highest-spirited is Mr. Ch'en. He's both enthusiastic and humble. He's very knowledgeable in the social sciences. . . . Would you like to talk with him?"

"I feel kind of sorry for Mr. Ch'en; his life is very uninteresting." He stopped a minute, the corners of his mouth drifting up into a smile. "You probably enjoy this sort of man very much; you are so alike in your ways of life."

It was true. Old P'an had sat in this principal's chair right through nineteen years. Recently he had even sent his family to the

country, so he hung around the school day and night, passing his days in the same rut. It was as though only such a life matched these drab school buildings and the drab sky; the seven or eight colleagues who were living in the teachers' dormitory all carried on like this.

ONE SATURDAY, near evening, Yi-mo could not stand it any more. Like a sleepwalker he wandered into the principal's office.

"Old P'an, you all really have a strange sort of sickness here. It's already infected me. It's already infected me. It's the disease of monotony, otherwise called boredom. . . . I am really very depressed. . . . Let's go out and have a little something to drink."

"All right." The other quietly nodded his head. "But I don't dare drink. I have a heart condition. . . . Do you want to find another to accompany you? Ah, get Mr. Ch'en to come, OK?"

"Does he drink?"

The principal, forcing a smile, shook his



Occupied territory.

head, then said with a partially apologetic expression, "We at the school . . . uh, I'm afraid there's just old Mr. Chang who knows how to quaff a few. . . ."

"Get him to come; how about it? Is this person pleasant company?"

"Pleasant?" Old P'an started laughing. "To put it bluntly: His talk is boring, his face is repulsive."⁶

He continued to speak of Mr. Chang, switching to the idioms of a school principal. Mr. Chang might be a well-read, learned man and his calligraphy was quite good, but he certainly was not a good teacher of Chinese. He strictly forbade the students to use the colloquial language in compositions. Once a student wrote a paper using a colloquial phrase; the old man blew his stack and drew a big X over the words.

Old P'an spread out his hands and patted his knees. "You can see . . . he's that sort of

teacher, but he's been teaching here sixteen years! In no summer vacation can you fire him, however; he has a big shot here to back him up. And this is our sacred educational system! Speaking truthfully, the condition of our local educational system may be considered above average. What can you do about it? Unless you really don't plan to work in society at all. If you want to work, then you must compromise, bow your head, restrain your anger!"

The other yawned, took out a cigarette and lighted it, then looked at Old P'an with sympathetic eyes.

"You can say that that old man is a hundred per cent rotten." Old P'an still wanted to add something. "Speak with him about current events, or about the war of resistance . . . he, why, he's nothing but a verbal traitor!"

That evening the two friends sat in a restaurant for more than two hours, Yi-mo alone drinking a catty of wine. He ceaselessly lifted the pewter pitcher to his cup to pour, ceaselessly sipped, and his thin face became grayer and

⁶A popular phrase expressing derision.

grayer.

When the other was afraid that he had had too much to drink, Yi-mo grabbed the wine pitcher. "Old P'an, I'll tell you a story. There was a tippler who said to someone, 'Warm wine is not good for my lungs, cold wine is not good for my liver, but as for not drinking wine—that isn't good for my peace of mind. I am willing to damage my lungs and liver, but I don't want to damage my peace of mind.' That person really knows how to live. . . . None of you drink. . . . I'm really sad for you."

Then he took a loud sip, smacked his lips, and leaned back in the chair very comfortably. His eyes were happily fixed, but the whites were a bit red and would cause people to think that he had just been crying.

"At first, I didn't plan on drinking Shaohsing wine here." He pointed down to the ground. "In fact, I thought the Shaohsing wine here must be very bad. But—it's much better than I expected. Old P'an, you taste it and see. You ought to try its flavor. . . ."

The other was compelled to drink some, then said as though very ashamed, "I used to drink a little. But I couldn't distinguish the good from the bad."

"This does not compare with ours at home. In my house there are nine earthenware jars of Shaohsing wine, said to have been mellowing for sixty years. Probably not sixty years, more likely thirty or forty. I often invited a few friends to come to our village to stay a few days for leisurely talk and drinking. I myself didn't drink much; I merely enjoyed that wine-drinking atmosphere. . . . Well, you've passed a few days in Hangchou; did you go into the wine shops?"

"No."

"Ah! You ought to have gone and tried them!" Yi-mo excitedly raised his hand. "Those wineshop patrons . . . that sort, that sort . . . oh, they really know how to drink. A plate of dried bean curd seasoned with mushrooms, two bowls of old wine, and they will slowly savor them for more than two hours. . . . You should have gone yourself and really appreciated such enjoyment."

He closed his eyes and expelled a breath as though tired. He thought of the set of fine

porcelain at home especially used for his wine drinking. He also recalled his box of seals, his books and scrolls of painting and calligraphy. Suddenly he remembered his village's several witty, convivial artists and connoisseurs of bronze and stone inscriptions—today he didn't even know where they had fled.

He sighed. He *had* to speak out, to talk of his old life at home, talk of his thirteen-year-old daughter—whenever he drank wine, she would bend down by the side of the table to put her lips to his cup so she could take a sip. And his wife would laughingly scold from aside, "Look at the little devil."

Old P'an resembled an eager student in a classroom, patiently listening. Although Yi-mo guessed that this sort of talk did not necessarily hold any interest for another, he still felt that if the many things which had accumulated within him were not spewed out he could not be comfortable.

But he had a dizzy spell. He put his arms on the edge of the table and cradled his forehead in them.

"Are you tipsy?" the other asked. "We'll go back, OK?"

He shook his head.

All the other patrons had left and it was quiet, very unlike a restaurant. There were obviously not many people on the street, but sometimes you could hear a sort of coughing sound outside sweeping past from somewhere, causing one to be unsure whether it was the wind or an automobile.

Yi-mo suddenly raised his head. "Ah, Old P'an, is your wife living at your in-laws' or at your folks' home?"

"At my folks' home. Why?"

"That's good, that's good," he mumbled.

"In this world in-laws are the most annoying sort of creatures. I'm not opposed to marriage, but in-laws . . . in-laws . . . oh, I'm really afraid of them!" Thereupon he opened his eyes wide. "Had my home-town not fallen to the enemy, I would not have sent my wife back to my in-laws', even if I had had to beg for a living. My in-laws, my in-laws . . . from my father-in-law right on down to my wife's nephew—not one that isn't mean, narrow-minded, or selfish! All are vulgar louts; not one is human! She . . .

she . . . a letter . . . expresses her discontent . . . tells of her troubles . . . can't get used to living with her family . . . wants to come. What can I do? I! If they come, how will we live? What sort of work can they do? If they can't work—why should they come here? If I weren't thinking of doing a little work, I'd be damned if I would come here. Here . . . here . . . this dead-end town! Not even a breath of life! Gray!"

It was not until after nine o'clock when they returned to the school. Much earlier the shops on the streets had shut up their rows of doors tightly as though they wanted to turn people away. The street lamps very pitifully emitted a gloomy light, causing one to feel more dark and miserable than if there were no lamps.

As soon as Yi-mo thought about that room where he lived his heart sank within him. An isolated, lonely room. As though aside from Yi-mo himself there simply was not another living thing in the world. The four walls were all painted a lemon color, spotlessly exhibiting even more monotony. There was no artistic arrangement of anything nor any ornamentation, just some simple furniture, some necessary stationery and writing implements, and, for the rest, only those two valises of his. The snow-bright electric light shone down on this one room, especially causing him to feel cold and lonesome.

In just such an environment he had to begin his "new life".

Here he was suddenly heartsick. He felt that he was alone, utterly alone, no family, no friends. No one came to concern themselves with him; no one came to care for him. This actually was the new, strange environment which he was encountering for the first time. When he was small he had had a mother and older sisters; later, a wife. They had always known what he wanted as soon as they saw his expression. His several good friends all had gathered together around him, making him the center of attention. But now . . . ?

"Perhaps I'm dreaming. . .," he said to himself, bewildered.

He hoped this all was a dream. As soon as he awakened . . . still at home, in his own

downy, warm bed. On the little tea-table by the bed a pot of strong black tea that his wife had earlier brewed for him, a tin of Old Castle Cigarettes, and a copy of *Mei-ts'un Chia-ts'ang kao*⁷ were already laid out. His daughter picked up a cigarette and put it near his lips, lit it for him, then, child-like, laughed at him:

"Daddy, you've slept so long!"

As on each morning of old, the window curtains were opened half-way, allowing the sunlight outside to shine in; the shadows of scattered bamboo leaves slanted onto the floor, imparting a quiet, greenish tinge to the whole room. As usual, he lay there and finished the cigarette, reading a few of Wu Mei-ts'un's poems; only then did he slowly get up. Indeed, the world and his innermost being were exactly the same; harmonious as ever, without the least trace of anger.

"In such a tranquil world, to say that a war is actually occurring really is unimaginable. . .," he thought. "This has been really a long dream. . . . But in famous old tales like the *Nan-k'o*,⁸ why, some dreams last several decades . . . but actually, but actually . . . are over in an instant."

He belched, so he reached into his sleeve, pulled out a handkerchief, and wiped his mouth. He was still sitting on that old sofa in the principal's office, not yet willing to return to his room. All the school servants were already asleep, so Old P'an himself was in the kitchen boiling water for him.

Then he made every effort to calm his jangled nerves, to make them sober up somewhat. He planned to carefully call it to mind—just when this present dream of his began.

The Marco Polo Bridge Incident was definitely just something seen in a dream . . .

⁷ Wu Mei-ts'un (1609-1672), the name-style of Wu Wei-yeh (吳偉業), a Ming-Ch'ing dynasty scholar, poet, and painter. The *Mei-ts'un chia-ts'ang kao* is his collected poems and essays, edited by his sons after his death.

⁸ See Note 1, above. In the original the author mistakenly mentions a "student Lu" in connection with the *Nan-k'o* story. Lu is the protagonist of another tale of the same era, the *Huang-liang meng* (黃梁夢), by Li Mi (李泌), which has a similar dream plot.



Teacher and student.

What was more, the Shanghai battle was not an actual happening . . . How about the Mukden attack? This he must think over. And the 1932 hostilities in Shanghai? We Chinese lost those four provinces, but shouldn't we have fought back at those savages a little? . . . At this point he determinedly stood up and, using his handkerchief, vigorously wiped his mouth; with a fully resolute spirit he told himself: "That's not right! That's not right! Neither the Mukden attack nor the 1932 fighting in Shanghai is fact. Now it is still . . . it is still prior to September, 1931. . ."⁹

⁹This passage recalls the four major events that marked the beginning of Japanese aggression in China, 1931-37. They are, chronologically, the Mukden Incident of September 18, 1931, which initiated Japan's seizure of Manchuria (China's four Northeastern Provinces); the "undeclared war" which broke out at Shanghai on January 28, 1932; the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of July 7, 1937, which led to China's eight-year "War of Resistance"; and the Shanghai Battle of August 13, 1937.

"I have made a pot of strong tea for you, Yi-mo!" Old P'an walked in looking cheerful. "But first take a *pa-kuu* pill.¹⁰ How about it?"

Yi-mo sighed, accepted the little pellet from the other's hand, and carelessly put it in his mouth. He sat down anew. His fingers stroked his right temple just where it was pulsating.

Wearing the air of one confessing his sins, he told his old friend, "I really don't know what I was thinking just now! I am too sensitive, too imaginative; recently my nerves have been under a bit of a strain."

"You'd better go to sleep early. I think you've drunk too much."

"That's of no moment," he replied a bit impatiently. "You don't understand me—my . . . that . . ."

¹⁰Literally, "Pill of the Eight Hexagrams". This is a brand name for a tiny lozenge, made partly of licorice, which is similar to the Sen-Sen sold in the West.



Painting demonstration.

Seeing the principal's face, he cut short the words he was about to utter. When the two of them were still in Peking during the May Fourth Movement¹¹ they had become friends, but afterwards each had his own life and each his own development. Now—Yi-mo thought that with one glance he could understand Old P'an completely, but Old P'an—as regards Yi-mo—really did not understand a thing about him.

However, in this entire school, this entire city . . . he only had Old P'an to keep him company in a bit of a chat. He always had to face that long, honest face of Old P'an's, always had to listen to that high-pitched voice of Old P'an's. This was tantamount to forcing you to eat a single dish, day after day to eat the same dish, not allowing you to have a taste of some-

thing else. He longed for any other colleague to look him up, no matter if it were that shorty, Mr. Ch'en; even that old Mr. Chang would be welcome. Otherwise . . .

"Otherwise I'll really have a stomach ache."

AFTER THAT WEEK, Yi-mo drank a little Shao-hsing wine daily. If he did not go to the restaurant he would have a school servant go to get some. But he always got Old P'an to keep him company. Once he almost lost his temper in loudly asking Old P'an: "Aside from that old Mr. Chang, we simply can't find any drinker here, can we? Even among the students we can't find one, can we? Even among the school help we can't find one, can we?"

As to that short fellow, Mr. Ch'en, he had finally made his acquaintance. On the whole he was an uninteresting guy, knowing only how to busy himself with duties, to talk about how to improve that small weekly publication, and to request more articles of him, Yi-mo. After

¹¹A term used to designate the whole Chinese intellectual movement from about 1917 to 1921, but the name derives from a student patriotic demonstration in Peking on May 4, 1919.

discussing these serious affairs, the man just respectfully nodded his head and left as though afraid someone would grab him and make him take a drink!

"After all, I have my work too," Yi-mo told himself.

Although he was not very happy, still, after drinking, he drew a cartoon: a soldier and the common people walking hand in hand down a road. He captioned it, "Cooperation Between the Military and the People", but suddenly felt a bit ashamed. He was irresolute a moment, then decided to put it out unsigned like this.

"Terrible! Terrible!" As soon as he had seen his name printed in the publication beneath his cartoon, he suddenly had a feeling as though someone had slapped him on the face. "Publishing my true name—that's a rotten trick! From now on, the name 'Yi-mo' is mud—To think that Yi-mo did this sort of drawing. . .! Ugh, really a rotten trick! Really rotten!"

He felt that Mr. Ch'en and those with him had deliberately slandered him. And that student with his head shaved like a monk's obviously was in league with them. This Wednesday in the art classroom that student had openly asked Mr. Li again to contribute some article.

"I don't have it!" Mr. Li had coldly replied. "Recently my mood hasn't been right and I haven't done anything!"

As soon as classes were out, he returned to his room full of a sense of having been somehow wronged. Taking a Silver Dragon cigarette from an Old Castle tin,¹² he reclined on the bed and smoked. That day's newspaper fell, fanning out on the floor, but he did not gather it up. This was the paper to which he himself subscribed. Although the school received seven or eight newspapers, all were set out in the common reading room and there was always a number of people clustered together reading them. This he could not become accustomed to.

By the same token, none of the routine

of the school was suitable to him, as though they deliberately were at odds with him. As to the cook, someone should have sentenced him to prison for several years: always the same old dishes with the same old insipid taste. Yi-mo did not care to eat with the others in the dining hall and so ordered his meals brought separately to his room; they then treated him even worse, causing him to become angry as soon as he saw the food. Mornings when he wanted some tea he always had to waste a great amount of energy before being able to get a servant to come. And the tea leaves—he went and bought them himself; they were said to be of the best Ch'i-men tea.¹³ But, after having been steeped in boiling water, they proved to be harsh and bitter, without a trace of fragrance.

"Strange!" He threw down the cigarette in his hand. "That these people here can live with such verve, such joy!"

He stretched, got up, and took a sip of cold tea, then angrily slammed the teacup down on the table. "Ahhh, let's go have a few drinks." He locked the door and went out.

Who to get to go with me? Old P'an again?—Yi-mo hesitated. As soon as he thought of the principal, he had a very strange feeling, as though he had just eaten something too sweet and was uncomfortable from his gullet right down to his stomach. At this point he walked more slowly, pretending that he was taking a stroll and had inadvertently walked to the principal's office.

There, the row of willow trees in the schoolyard had begun to send out tiny shoots and was illuminated from above by dark red clouds, thus resembling a piece of dirty green gauze. The gray school buildings also resembled objects that had been splashed with purple water and, as such, exhibited strangely dissonant hues.

But from the basketball courts came joyful shouts. There were some students there boisterously singing "The Sword March".¹⁴ From the teachers' dormitory burst the laughter

¹²The Silver Dragon brand was manufactured by a joint Chinese-British company and was the best of the Chinese cigarettes. Old Castle cigarettes were of British make and superior to Silver Dragons. The implication is that Li had come down somewhat in the world.

¹³One of the best black teas in China, a product of Ch'i-men, Anhui.

¹⁴A popular patriotic song urging the people to resist the Japanese.

of a group inside, and afterwards a snatch of conversation floated forth: "How can the common people understand these abstract theories of yours...?"

This probably was that little guy, Mr. Ch'en, again! He was probably in there once more talking shop!

Yi-mo walked close to the noisy window on purpose and glanced in. Perhaps Mr. Ch'en would discover him, would ask him in to sit awhile. His pace became slower and he bowed his head as though taking the measurements of the path. For a fraction of a second he thought that he would rebel against his usual inclinations and rush quickly into Mr. Ch'en's room. But he walked on without stopping.

"Why don't they come seek me out instead of my going to them?"

The way things stood then, when he drank that night it was as usual with that same old dish—Old P'an.

"I really can't get used to living here; I'm bored beyond belief!" He peeked at Old P'an with dissatisfaction, as though everything were his fault. "I'm really thinking of leaving... but where will I go? I have no friends elsewhere; just living will become a problem. I'm simply stuck here!"

HE HENCEFORTH did not write any more articles nor draw any more cartoons. He was depressed. After he became acquainted with Mr. Chang, he borrowed a lithographic copy of *The Stone Drum Inscriptions*¹⁵ from that gentleman and daily copied from it.

Mr. Chang was a beet-faced old bird, somewhat hunch-backed and slightly lame. The way Yi-mo saw it, this teacher of Chinese literature really did not seem as detestable as Old P'an had made him out to be. Moreover, he was possessed of some vices that were highly compatible with those of Yi-mo: he also loved to buy rubbings of stone tablets; he also enjoyed playing around with seals. In the teachers' office they exchanged comments concerning their common regard for rubbings from the Mt. T'ai Diamond Sutra;¹⁶ in this they simply found

¹⁵Ten stone "drums", believed to date from the Warring States period or the Ch'in dynasty, were unearthed in a field in Shensi during the early T'ang dynasty.

an extraordinary mutual attraction.

"I have already collected one thousand and five characters from this inscription," Yi-mo said. "Yi P'ei-chi¹⁷ hasn't collected as many as I. But now..." He sighed deeply. "Now I don't know if they've been burned or have been carried off by the Japs."

"Precisely!" Old Mr. Chang hastily interposed, disdainfully narrowing his eyes. "I too am disheartened; recently I have been too lazy to search out such things. In this troubled world what more can you say? This is truly a fatal calamity! Some people enjoy seeing the world in turmoil so they made it a point to stir up such a conflict as this. Ohhhh!"

Yi-mo politely smiled, then attempted to bring up his objections. "However, with others invading us, if we do not resist..."

"Hah! Resist!" He curved the corners of his mouth down. "Could we win resisting them? Could we win fighting them? We only bring trouble upon ourselves in vain!"

"Then you mean to say that we should allow them to come and take over China?"

"No, I do not mean to 'allow'... ah, in a word—to sum it up—ah, if you fight someone and cannot win, why bring trouble on yourself? As soon as you fight, the sacrifice becomes even greater..."

"No wonder Old P'an said he was a verbal traitor!" Yi-mo thought.

In one corner of the old man's mouth bubbles of white froth had collected and he used the long nail of his little finger to flick them off, indignantly saying, "For example, take the places where they have come; at first things are pretty good. But later the guerrillas come and then you have anti-Japanese elements. All right, as soon as this happens, the Japanese naturally go search and seize, kill people, and make it so that the common people cannot pursue their peaceful occupations... Of what use are the guerrillas? They fight but are no match for the other side, only making a raid

¹⁶One of the most esteemed Buddhist sutras in China. Mt. T'ai is the easternmost of ancient China's five sacred peaks, located in Shantung.

¹⁷A modern scholar (1880-1937) from Hunan, who served as curator of the Old Palace Museum in Peking before the war.

here, a raid there. They wait until a large contingent of the other side arrives and just take off. The Japanese then make their searches, and the blameless, law-abiding populace of the place suffers the indiscriminate destruction of innocent and guilty alike . . ."

"But, according to many reports, the common people, on the contrary, welcome the guerrillas." Yi-mo still smiled. He felt that this discussion was very ludicrous, felt that he was wasting his breath, but could not repress a few more words. "The guerrillas in many places are simply a self-defense force of the common people; they are not willing to put their hands in their sleeves and watch their own homes laid waste."

"Huh! Self-defense! Huh! Do you have artillery? Are your weapons better than those of the other side? Self-defense! Self-defense! It only turns a place into disorder and confusion!"

"According to this sort of talk then, our people ought to be good citizens under the enemy's rule, ought to be traitors!" But Yi-mo did not come out and say this. At that moment his thoughts suddenly ran over an article in the school's weekly entitled "On a Certain Kind of Traitor"; it had definitely pointed an accusing finger directly at this old man. It was not until now, having heard with his own ears the sentiments on the other side of the question, that he felt the pungency of that article. What was more, he felt exceedingly pleased.

Yi-mo hastily lit a cigarette and as quickly sat down in a chair. He felt that his fingers trembled from anger and that his cheeks were flushed. If only in the name of humanity alone he ought to provide this man named Chang with some opposition. He thought of expressing a point or two of common sense and some true facts to this advocate of the other view; he considered explaining how our guerrillas gave the enemy such thrashings, how they changed the enemy's rear into front lines, explaining the uselessness of the enemy's having captured several of our large cities. He felt that to couch his phrases a little discourteously would not matter, and even went so far as to feel that it would do no harm to thus give a tongue-lashing to the old, worthless fellow: You ought to

know that this is a time of hardship, and if each Chinese, if each person who was worthy of being called a human being and not an animal, could but set himself firmly to make strenuous efforts . . .

But he never opened his mouth. He was not accustomed to arguing with another on this sort of topic. Moreover, such talk did not arise from opinions which he had independently conceived, and to let others hear it would bring on sarcastic grins: "Huh! Yi-mo only knows how to plagiarize!"

He associated this idea with a sentence from Voltaire: "The first man who compares a woman to a flower is a genius; the second who does so is a fool." And this theory of Yi-mo's—it was exactly that which the article entitled "On a Certain Kind of Traitor" had elaborated; furthermore, the article expounded such ideas skillfully and in detail.

"The weekly . . . have you read it?" he asked.

"I cannot understand things written in the colloquial language!"

After this, the two discontinued the conversation. Yi-mo thought of leaving, but felt that it would not appear very polite. From time to time he glanced at the doorway, hoping a third person would walk in to break up this stalemate here. He discovered that the other was closely watching the cigarette in his hand and this brought him back to reality; he took out the pack and offered him a cigarette.

The old gentleman lit it, took a puff, then held it far from his eyes so that he could read the brand name on it; the taut, tightly-drawn red face gradually relaxed and only the sallow fingers remained tense, pinching the cigarette as though they were apprehensive of it running off somewhere. Accompanying each inhalation, there was a loud noise of air being sucked in.

Seemingly because he was enjoying the use of something belonging to someone else and therefore could not but politely chat, old Mr. Chang asked him how many cigarettes he smoked a day, then went on to bring up the subject of wine.

"I hear you like to bend your elbow on occasion . . .?"

"Yes," Yi-mo quickly replied. "It's just

that I can't find a drinking buddy." He stared at the other with a hopeful cast in his eye.

"Ah! Mr. Li, some day I will invite you to my place for a few drinks."

Yi-mo suggested that, under the circumstances, that evening might be suitable for going to a restaurant, but old Mr. Chang very straightforwardly said, "Today I am a little short. . . . Actually, it ought to be me playing the host, but my home is not up to it at present."

However, the old gentleman was invited to a Tientsin-style restaurant; Mr. Li had some money on him. With a drinking companion you really were under no constraint to stand on ceremony.

They became "drinking buddies". They often went to small shops to eat and drink. Old Mr. Chang was always "a little short". Moreover, he had never invited others to his home. The first time Yi-mo went to his drinking companion's home was to return *The Stone Drum Inscriptions*. They talked from five in the afternoon until seven-thirty in the evening. The females of the household were behind a partition nervously muttering and sometimes peeped through cracks in the window and door. At last the visitor asked the host out, but, as they reached the door of the restaurant, old Mr. Chang suddenly wanted to turn back because he had forgotten to bring his wallet.

"Oh, how ridiculous!" The old man was then prevailed upon and limply walked into the restaurant, blaming himself the while. "Really, it ought to be my turn to do the honors. . . ."

The old gentleman's capacity for liquor was great indeed, for he could drink cup after cup without batting an eye. At the same time he ceaselessly helped himself to cigarettes from the pack Yi-mo placed on the table until it was empty, then immediately called to the waiter to go out to buy more. Not only did he speak as coherently as usual, but the more he drank the slower his enunciation became; a purple nose was the only visible effect of the liquor. Sometimes he used his long fingernail to pick his teeth, then flicked the result of his labors off to the side and wiped the nail on the edge of the table.

Yi-mo's having hooked up with such a friend caused Old P'an some alarm. "How could you and old Mr. Chang find anything in common to talk about?"

"That's neither here nor there," he said. He looked at that long face of his old friend and felt that the other seemed to be using his position as principal to interfere with his personal life; he was a little cross with him. With a very confident expression he explained his attitude. "If a friend's opinions aren't identical with one's own, that's of no consequence. When people are different from each other, life is richer. If you had many, many friends, and their opinions were approximately the same, that would be monotonous, wouldn't it? As for old Mr. Chang and myself—with the exception of current events, we have a great deal to talk about: poetry, bronze and stone inscriptions, calligraphy and painting. . . ."

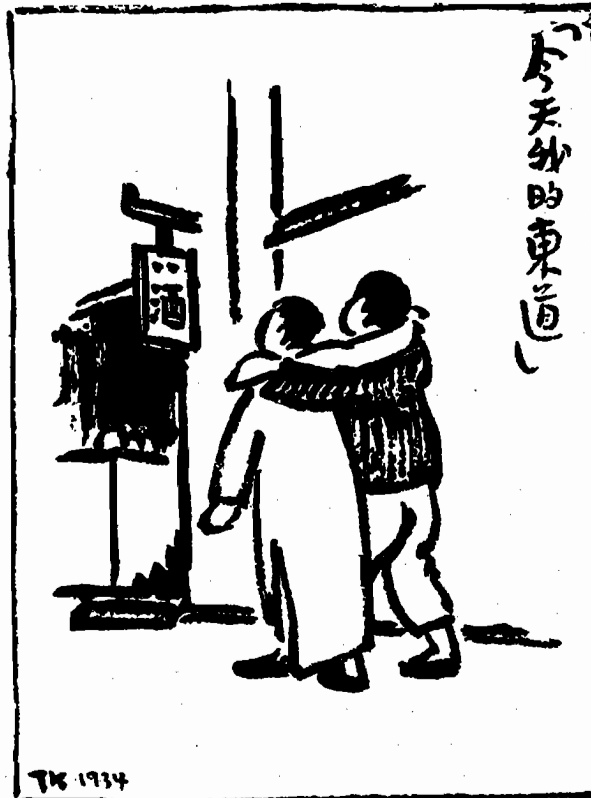
But these days Yi-mo himself felt that enthusiasm in the conversations between him and his "drinking buddy" was already beginning to wane. Old Mr. Chang was always boasting of the things in his house that he had collected: a seal cut and presented to him by Wu Ch'ang-shih, a landscape by Ni Yun-lin with an inscription by Chang T'ing-chi on it.¹⁸ These things over and over again.

"That's a lot of bull!" Yi-mo thought. "How could I have gone to his house several times and yet not have seen any of that stuff?"

He did not say anything, just buried his face in his cup and took a swig of wine. He suddenly remembered that childish daughter of his and emitted a long, melancholy sigh.

That old Mr. Chang—As though because Yi-mo always asked him out, he, by way of repayment and to fulfill his duty of being a "drinking buddy", could not but think up something to say to cheer things up. This meant nothing more than dredging up school gossip. Wearing a confidential, "this-is-just-between-you-and-me" expression, he told Yi-mo many

¹⁸ Wu Ch'ang-shih (吳昌碩 1844-1927), was a Ch'ing dynasty-Republican era scholar, poet, painter and seal engraver. Ni Yun-lin is the style of Ni Tsan (倪瓚 1301-1374), a famous artist, poet, and recluse of the Yuan dynasty. Chang T'ing-chi (張廷濟 1768-1848) was a Ch'ing dynasty scholar and poet.



"Today let me play host."

school "secrets".

It seemed that the dean of students had homosexual tendencies. And that physical education teacher and the wife of a school custodian were having an affair. No one else knew of these matters; but then you could not deceive yours truly Old Chang. Those in the accounting department really knew how to get a little rakeoff! When they pay our salaries, they deduct the income tax, then use stamps in giving us our small change;¹⁹ after that they're certainly sitting pretty.

"Mr. Li, I will tell you," he said, putting his face close to Yi-mo's and allowing the other to get a whiff of the foul odor of his mouth. "In

¹⁹The amount of money due a teacher after the income tax deduction would usually be an odd figure, say \$45.63. The accountant would then pay out \$45 in currency and, instead of coin, the equivalent of 63 cents in postage stamps. These stamps were originally purchased for office use with school funds. After the teacher had gone, therefore, the accountant could take 63 cents from the till for his trouble.

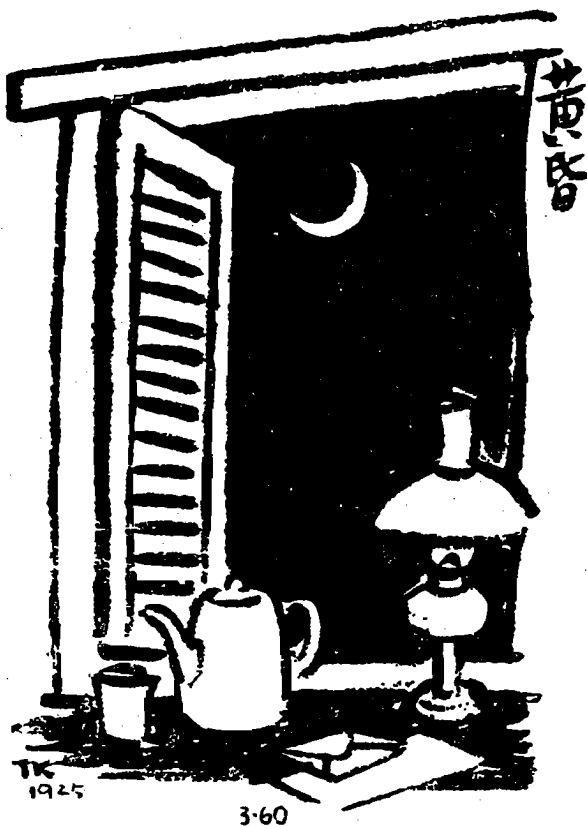
collecting your salary, it is best to first hand over the amount of the income tax to them; in this way you can get the whole sum of money due you. I use this method. I do not want their stamps."

The speaker stayed that mouth and reflected a moment, bringing his face even closer, crowding Yi-mo so that he leaned backward, yielding a bit.

"Principal P'an really trusts me. But recently . . . he has been surrounded by a group of petty sycophants. Mr. Ch'en is one. Are you acquainted with that Mr. Ch'en? Mr. Li, I tell you, you must be more careful. He is a reactionary, that Mr. Ch'en is." He tightly pursed his lips, nodded his head, then repeated the epithet: "Re-ac-tion-ary!"

These "secrets"—Yi-mo realized that they were bound up with unsavory aspects of others' private lives. So he did not mention them to anyone else.

"Ah! Monotony!" So he grumbled. Why were his friends so few? Why did he have to

*Early evening.*

go seek out that old gentleman as he had formerly sought out Old P'an, thus continually partaking of the same old dish?

His regular drinking, his wasting time with his "drinking buddy"—now they just seemed to be kinds of obligations for which there were no alternatives, kinds of obligations that he had to carry out for himself.

What was more, these "obligations" added to his financial liabilities. Time after time he picked up the check. When he left home he had taken along only some four hundred dollars; now he had already spent more than one hundred. Only by eating and drinking with Old P'an could he even things up; Old P'an always paid.

"Let me, let me," Old P'an frequently said. "You are not very well off just now."

THEN CAME this Saturday night—he did not seek out anyone; he went alone to the restaurant and drank a catty and a half of wine. When he returned he withdrew to his own room and

barred the door.

The blue-bulbed electric light sent forth feeble rays and they mixed with the lemon yellow of the painted walls to present a sad, green tint. Somewhere out there someone was beating the night watch, boom, boom, as though knocking at his heart. He even seemed to have heard the sound of that watchman's steps; from a deep, dark alley came the lonely reverberations.

Yi-mo, as usual, lay down on the bed and smoked a cigarette. But recently, every time following a bout of drinking, he was very emotional and very confused; he was no longer possessed of that gossamer happiness that he had formerly felt at home after drinking. His heart sometimes seemed to contain something that was lightly pricking it, and that something pricked straight to the tip of his nose. He wished that he could jump up and roll on the ground like a mule, or could just hold onto anything at all and weep his heart out.

In the past he had been friends with only a few like-minded people. He had never helped anyone, nor had he ever sought help from anyone. The pain of loneliness, which had not previously existed even in his imagination, now caused him much suffering.

"Aside from Old P'an, an honest man, still willing to care for me, I just don't have a single friend," he muttered very uncomfortably. "I don't relate to people well."

He recalled the air of self-conceit which he had when he was a "pure" artist. There was a little regret that welled up within him. But . . . ah, in the past how could one have figured on a war like this coming about? Now even the relations between the family of his close relative—his father-in-law—and his own had become strained.

He got up, unlocked one of the valises, and took out the first-class letter from his wife that had arrived that morning. Always the same words, always the same complaints. She even went so far as to warn him that living on with her family in this way would surely be the death of her.

Her husband bit his lower lip and stared out of the window with red eyes. He crumpled the letter into a ball and forcibly flung it onto the floor.

"She sends such grumbling to me, but what can I do? Hah! It's as though I've conspired against her!"

The cigarette in his hand dropped onto the floor; when he bent down to pick it up he even, because it was handy, picked up the ball of paper as well. He thought of how his family was not getting along with relatives and friends—for the most part he blamed his wife for being a stingy person. He recalled that fierce spirit of his wife's when she personally went to collect rents each year. He also remembered that once there was an old classmate who was so hard up that he asked for a loan of ten-dollars but it was vetoed by his wife; although at the time she had full reason to . . .

"Helping friends really is something one ought to do," she said. "But if we kept on helping after the first time, it would seem to become an obligation for us. Then, if we didn't help him one time, he would be furious at us.

Therefore, it would be better not to have money going back and forth between us. Anyway, we can make ends meet and don't have to go and ask people for loans."

Yi-mo had formerly been very grateful for such a clever wife as his was; sometimes he also had helped by making suggestions about things. Now he thought that all the blame fell upon his wife—all of the responsibility for bringing him to his present situation could be attributed to his wife.

So he sat down and wrote a letter of reply. He used that small, fine brush of rabbit hair that Old P'an had given him and wrote in the Li Pei-hai²⁰ cursive style. He wrote as slowly and as carefully as if he were composing a short essay, chain-smoking the while. He told his wife that his own life was very hard. But in this period of resistance everyone had to be patient.

"I've already said it a dozen times—you must be patient, you must be patient."

He sighed and took a drag at his cigarette; the smoke enwreathed his head and caused him to knit his eyebrows just perceptibly as he resumed his writing. He said that his in-laws were a bunch of vulgar chiselers, who cared only for their own interests. Because he was afraid that his father-in-law or brothers-in-law might open the letter, he wrote on the top of the envelope in large characters: "Private! Only a scoundrel would open this letter", and below that an exclamation point; but afterwards he felt that it was too openly belligerent and so erased the exclamation point.

That night he slept extremely badly. He repeatedly thought of this problem: "How much longer before this war is over? What can be done to hurry it on to victory?"

He turned over in bed. The old woven-rope webbing beneath him poked him into great discomfort and he turned again. His hands inside the quilt were too warm, but when he left them out they were too cold. His head was a bit hot and his nerves were on edge. He felt that he ought to have been able to neatly solve this problem, that his thoughts then could

²⁰ Li Yung (李邕 678-747), a T'ang scholar famous for his cursive writing.

follow a line of reasoning and so progress—now this line of reasoning seemed to be obstructed by a lot of confusion.

Suddenly he remembered a work by Washington Irving: it seems that someone fell asleep in some mountain cave and the world outside passed through several decades before he awoke. Oh, if only he, Yi-mo, were able to sleep in this way . . . just a few minutes . . . wake up, then go out of the cave and take a look—a happy China, a China that had fought bitterly for fifty years . . .

But then he berated himself: "This sort of thinking is too negative!"

Right; he ought to gather his strength, he ought to get out and participate in this bitter struggle to enable China to gain emancipation more quickly. Then he thought of Aladdin's lamp—as soon as it is rubbed, out comes an omnipotent genie that will execute one's commands. . . . He also brought to mind those beautiful fables wherein a fairy grants one three wishes. He thus set his thoughts in order and planned to bring up concretely three wishes of his own, three wishes of a positive nature. . . .

THE FOLLOWING morning when he awoke it was already ten o'clock. His mouth had a slightly bitter taste. He remembered the delusions of the previous evening which had excited him and so kept him awake for a long time; he now felt they were very silly. He lazily stretched, then walked over to tear down the leaf on the calendar. "It's Sunday again! Damn!"

That short fellow, Mr. Ch'en, had gone out early, leaving a note for the school servant to give to him; it said that the members of the weekly publication were going to have a conference and they hoped he could be present at one o'clock that afternoon.

"Huh!" He threw the slip of paper onto the desk. "Business again! Again!"

The sunlight filtered in through the window facing south; shadows danced there, and the sparrows in the schoolyard chirped busily, as though they wanted to compete with the shouting and the raucous songs of the students. Yi-mo really couldn't understand

how they could be so happy!

He first read the paper alone in his room and drank from that pot of terrible-tasting Ch'i-men tea of his. He seemed, because of something, to be furious with somebody; he absolutely did not want to see anyone.

"The common people in the enemy-occupied territory—how on earth do they live?" he asked himself.

Perhaps some, as before, carried on business; others, also as before, tilled the fields. If he had not left home, perhaps he, as before, would still be able to collect rents, to paint and to cut his seals; such things had nothing to do with war or politics. As long as he did not oppose the Japanese in essays, he probably would not suffer any of the consequences of the occupation.

But he disappointedly heaved a sigh. He had remembered those indisputable facts of violence connected with the enemy.

However, there was Peiping. It seemed that things were not this way there, he thought. Peiping and Tientsin were places that had peacefully fallen into the hands of the enemy and so had been able to settle down peacefully to the occupation. Wasn't it so that some scholars, unable to accustom themselves to living in the interior, had returned to Peiping?

Yi-mo sipped his tea and knitted his brows. He took out the letter he had written the night before and looked it over, then locked it in the valise; he had decided not to send it.

"Why scold her again? She's so pitiful!"

His buttocks began to ache sitting on the wooden chair, so he lay down on the bed. The watch by the side of his pillow tick-ticked the moments away. His head trembled in fits and jerks, causing him to think that perhaps the noise of the watch was actually the throbbing of his own temples. Often, when he was away from his wife, he would especially think of her good qualities; now he recalled her ability, her attentiveness to him. If she could see his wretched life now . . . oh!

"The so-called enemy atrocities are probably all isolated incidents," he told himself.

But he was very confused: he did not know what he had meant by this sentence. He imagined that if his wife and daughter had

remained at home . . . he shivered from head to toe at the thought of what could have happened.

He hoped that the devastation of those occupied territories was not as severe as the grapevine had it. But he once more corrected himself; he knew that if the enemy were very disciplined, perhaps the common people would not be so determined to rise up in self-defense.

"And around our home town . . . the guerrillas have fought very staunchly." He often said this to Old P'an.

He lit another cigarette and summoned the servant to brew another pot of tea. Then he very carefully organized his train of thought so as not to allow anything else to lead it astray. Suddenly it was as though lightning flashed in his mind. He rapidly entertained a strange thought: "I'll go home and take a look. . . ."

It was said that the places that the enemy occupied were very peaceful at first. But because there were guerrillas and because they had to search out the guerrillas, there were atrocities. . . . At that moment he could not remember who had said this. It seemed very well-founded . . .

After he remembered that it was old Mr. Chang's theory, he felt as if his insides had suddenly been gouged out by someone—all at once he experienced a kind of emptiness, a kind of despair. Inexplicably, a surge of anger welled up within him, much like a man who, having been duped, has lost his temper; then he uttered, with the air of one trying to explain things away:

"Traitor! Traitor!" He bent the hand that held his cigarette with a powerful motion, as though he wanted to make a fist but was restrained by something. "These treasonous ideas must be stamped out! At the meeting this afternoon, I will definitely bring this up and propose that all of them write articles attacking him!"

He put out the cigarette butt in a very fastidious manner and then folded Mr. Ch'en's note several times into a tiny square and creasing it between his fingers.

He did not notice when they came, but the sky was cluttered with puffs of white cloud,

as though they had been afraid someone would see them and so had sneaked over. The shadows in the room caused by the sunlight now faded, now appeared. Yi-mo's face also by turns grew somber and then brightened.

He rubbed his hands together as he thought of writing a short piece strongly attacking the type of thinking espoused by old Mr. Chang. However, he neither picked up the brush nor began to puzzle over the precise wording. He did not know what it was, but he subconsciously felt that for him to write such an article was not suitable, perhaps because it had been so long since he had written anything that he was out of practice or perhaps because he was not in the mood. But perhaps it was really because he was afraid that, having written it, people would discover a little something about him, would discover that the thing he attacked was precisely that with which he was unconsciously tainted.

At this point he drew the handkerchief from his sleeve and wiped his mouth with a melancholy sigh. "Truly, an over-dispassionate man, a man who analyses things too well, is often one who is sad."

It's true, his self-analysis probably had been carried a bit too far. So he tried his best to persuade himself: the reason he had not begun to write that article was none other than that he had not been in the mood.

"Yah! I'm certainly in a bad mood!" He repeated the sentence as though it confirmed his belief. "I want to return home only if I return to fight as a guerrilla, but this . . . I am incapable of it. An artist is useless; there's nothing he can do."

He sighed and relaxed. Since there was no way he could dispel his frustration, he simply walked over to the principal's office. He had to think of a way to spend, to effectively use up, the day. He could not allow his own moods to continually be so foul.

But Old P'an was just then with a guest. They were sitting very formally, apparently not well acquainted. What was more, they were, without a doubt, attending to official business. They appeared to be in the midst of discussing some problems of wartime education.

Yi-mo had assumed a light-hearted manner

and had casually stepped inside the room; but the serious atmosphere there clung to him as if his entire body had congealed and then petrified. Right away, he felt a keen disappointment.

"What did I come for?" he thought, blaming himself. "People are in the process of discussing very important business and you rush in for what?—Don't tell me that you were thinking of getting Old P'an to go drinking with you?"

He made a cryptic gesture at Old P'an, turned, and went out the door. He walked quickly, but did not even know where he was going. His footsteps resounded with a hasty slap, slap, slap on the gravel walkway; his shadow on the ground shivered slightly as though it meant to pursue him headlong but found it difficult.

Yes. What was the sense of getting Old P'an to go drinking? He wouldn't even touch a drop of the stuff and was always afraid that Yi-mo would drink too much, as though fearful that it would cost him too much.

Yi-mo walked out of the school gate. When he recalled the previous evening when he had been drinking alone in such boredom, he sucked in a mouthful of cold air between his

teeth. He just let his feet carry him eastward of their own volition, let them drag him on toward his old drinking buddy's house.

There were some students straggling along toward him, probably returning to school for lunch. Yi-mo bowed his head and pretended he did not see them. He was a bit discomfited. He felt that there was something delaying him, detaining him: that afternoon he had a meeting.

Behind him he heard some whispering followed by the sound of laughter; he was alarmed and turned his head to look—those two students had already gone in through the school gate.

"Hah! Even Sundays they won't let me free!" he said with a spitefulness deep down in his belly. "I am determined not to attend the meeting! Why should I obey Ch'en's orders? I'm not afraid of people talking behind my back: frankly, someone like myself should not be made to handle business affairs. Each person has his own life style! That's the way it is! Do you mean to say that looking up old Mr. Chang to go have a drink could be considered a crime? Hah!" Then he quickened his pace.



Chang T'ien-yi.

Born in Nanking in 1907, Chang T'ien-yi travelled widely with his family in his childhood. At the age of eighteen he moved to Peking, where he took up odd jobs such as government clerk, minor officer in the army, newspaper reporter and school teacher. He also began to study Marxism and prepared himself for a literary career. His first published story, "A Dream of Three and a Half Days", appeared in Lu Hsun's magazine *Pen Liu* (奔流) in 1928. In the ten years that followed he published a great number of short stories. After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, Chang helped the war effort with patriotic and propaganda work in Chungking. While there, he contracted tuberculosis and stopped producing for a number of years.

In the fifties he resumed writing, mostly tales and one-act plays for juvenile readers.

The story "A New Life" was first published in a periodical in 1938 and later collected, along with two other stories, in *Three Sketches* (速寫三篇). In a critique of this story which he has translated, Carl Durley wrote: "The war is not the moral issue at stake here. The battleground has become the mind of Li Yi-mo and the opposing forces are patriotism and the natural inclinations of a sensitive nature. . . . (The author) allows the reader to participate in Li's indecision, presenting the workings of his mind in such a way that his reasoning can be understood and sympathized with at the same time it is obviously either illogical or part of sheer fantasy."