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WRITTEN IN DEEP NIGHT

BY Lu Hsun

I. introducing kaethe kollwitz to china

one may pass by a heap of paper ashes on the wild earth, or many carvings in a ruined wall, and never see them. yet each is eloquent with love, mourning, or with wrath stronger than the human voice can express. A few people do see such emotions reflected in them.

In 1931--I forget the month--the first number of the magazine The Dipper made its appearance. It was banned soon after its birth. Its first number published the wood-cut of a mother with eyes closed in grief, holding her baby in her outstretched arms. This wood-cut, "sacrifice", was the first of a series of wood-cuts entitled "war". Professor kaethe kollwitz was the artist and this was the first of her works to be introduced to china.

I contributed this wood-cut to The Dipper in memory of Jou Shih who had been my student and friend and who had cooperated with me in introducing foreign literature to china. He had a pronounced liking for wood-cuts, and once compiled three volumes of American and European works of this nature--though the printing was poor. For some unknown reason he was arrested shortly afterwards and shot to death, together with five other young writers at Lungwa. perhaps from fear, or because it was forbidden, no newspaper reported this killing. Because of many other cases similar to this, many knew that Jou Shih was no longer among the living. I believe his old blind mother was the only person

Lu Hsun has just published a volume of the selected works of Kaethe Kollwitz, the famous German artist, in Shanghai. It is the latest of many volumes of the works of foreign graphic artists which Lu Hsun has published as a guide to Chinese youth, particularly young artists.

who continued to think of her beloved son as still working as a translator and proof-reader in Shanghai. At the time I accidentally came across the wood-cut "sacrifice" in the ~~xxxxx~~ catalogue of a German book store. I clipped it out and contributed it to The Dipper and in this way I silently commemorated the sacrifice of Jou shih. Later I learned that many people recognized its implied meaning. They thought my intention had been to commemorate the death of all the young victims.

At that time a volume of Kaethe Kollwitz's graphics was in the mail on the way from Europe to China. By the time it reached Shanghai, the man most interested in introducing it to this country was lying in the earth, though none of us knew just where. Well, I turned the pages of the volume alone. In it I found poverty, sickness, hunger death. . . . also, of course, struggle and bloodshed, though of the latter there was comparatively little. As in the expression of the self-portrait of the artist, so in this book there was more of love and pity than hatred and wrath. To me, this self-portrait seemed representative of the mothers of all who are ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ insulted and injured. The same type of mother is to be found in the rural regions of China where polished finger nails are never seen. I think this mother loves her strong and useful son also. But since he is able and strong, she devotes herself to her 'insulted and injured' child.

~~In~~ the twenty-one graphics ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ of Kaethe Kollwitz now published in China and of inestimable value to young Chinese art students, teach very much.

1. Despite their frequent suppression, wood-cuts have become very popular in China within the past five years. Among other graphics, the works of Anders Zorn have been used wholesale. In the Kaethe Kollwitz volume just published, the etchings and lithographs show a technique and content very different from anything Zorn has

done. By their study one finds a different kind of graphic art and recognizes their universal advantage over oils.

2. Chinese who have not had an opportunity to travel abroad often have the idea that all white people are either preachers of the ideas of Jesus, or well-dressed, well-fed managers of business firms given to the habit of kicking people about when out of humor. But the works of Kaethe Kollwitz show that the "injured and insulted"--our natural friends--exist in very many other places on the earth and have among them artists who mourn, protest, and struggle on their behalf.

3. The Chinese press today is always publishing the picture of Hitler. These are all alike; all show Hitler at the moment he is bellowing. One becomes weary of the repetition. But in the works of the German artist Kollwitz, one sees a different kind of people: approachable, ready to accept and to give sympathy, and devoid of cheap heroics. The longer you look at them, the more beauty you find in them and the <sup>more</sup> ~~greater~~ their power attracts you.

4. This is the fifth year after Jou Shih was murdered and the works of Kaethe Kollwitz were introduced to China by him. According to the Chinese way of counting, this woman artist is now seventy years of age. This is an occasion deserving our celebration. This great artist has been forced into silence today, but more and more her works have penetrated the Far East. No force can separate human beings from art.

## II. On Secret death.

Only recently I learned the brutality of secret death.

In China, before the Revolution, a prisoner condemned to death was usually led through the busy thoroughfares where he was permitted to shout "yuen wang" (to protest his innocence), abuse the

judge, relate his own brave deeds, and show that he had no fear of death. At the moment of execution, by-standers would applaud, and the news of his courage would spread. In my boyhood I was frequently told such stories. I thought the conditions very barbarous and the practice very cruel.

An entirely different opinion was expressed by Mr. Chu ~~Tang~~ Tang in a recent article in yu Chou Feng, of which Dr. Lin Yu-tang is editor. Mr. Chu Tang thinks the applause for a condemned man expresses praise for the defeated hero and sympathy for the weak. "It is a high ideal," he says. "However, it is not good for human society, because sympathy for the weak ~~xxxxxxx~~ as against the strong means non-recognition of the strong; and praise for the defeated hero means non-recognition of the successful hero." So, he says, "usually victorious Kings and Emperors killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people that their power might be maintained a few hundred years."

It is a pity that "victorious Kings and Emperors" could maintain power only at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives. They had no better methods. This does not mean that I have any interest in devising a plan for them! But it leads me to think that "victorious Kings and Emperors" were benevolent when they allowed a prisoner condemned to death to say what he wanted to say before the public, and that these rulers were courageous and confident of their power when they permitted him to become intoxicated with pride and to make his fate known to the public before execution. The practice contained some kindness. Today, when I am told of the death of a friend or a student, but learn that no one knows the details of ~~xxxx~~ how he died, I find that I grieve more deeply and feel more shocked than when I learn of all the details of the killing. I can imagine the awful loneliness which overtakes one who is killed secretly by butchers in a dark room.

"victorious Kings and Emperors" do not kill people secretly. The only thing they keep secret is their private lives with their wives and concubines. Until doom confronts them, they have no second secret. Then they try to keep secret the extent of their treasures and the vaults in which they keep them. After this, the third secret thing arises: the secret killing of people. As was stated by Mr. Chu Tang, they realize that, regardless of success or failure, the people can distinguish between good and evil.

Regardless of whether there exists a brain trust or not, secret killing is adopted when rulers cannot ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ hold power without it. Probably it has been practised in many places. "Civilized order" then rules in the cities and people become quiet! But just imagine the mental anguish of a man killed secretly as compared with those publicly executed. When I first read Dante's "Inferno", I was amazed at the imagined cruelty in the "Divine Comedy". But now, with more experience, I see how moderate that cruelty was. Dante's imagination failed to reach the depths of the present-day inferno with its secret cruelty.

### III. A Fairy Tale.

This is a fairy tale after the fashion of "A Fairy Tale" by Willi Bredel, written to commemorate the eightieth year of Heine's death, and published in the February 17th issue of DZZ.

Once upon a time there was a state whose authorities oppressed the people because it knew the people were its most powerful enemy. To it, the Latinization of the alphabet was like machine-guns, and wood-cuts were like tanks. Authorities who claimed control of a territory still did not dare leave or board a train at regular stations. They did not travel by land at all, but by air. ~~They~~ They were so physically frail and so sensitive to the least change in the weather that they caught cold easily, especially when important problems arose.

All their followers caught the cold from them. They also became sick.

Many big dictionaries were published. For practical purposes they were useless. To understand the real meaning or definition of words, people had to refer to the unprinted dictionary in which are many fancy explanations of different terms:

"Liberation" meant "to ~~kill~~ be shot to death".

"Tolstolism" meant "desertion".

"Officials" meant "relatives, friends, or henchmen of the big boss."

"City" meant "a walled town whose walls were there to prevent the free passage of students."

"Morality" meant "prohibiting women to expose their arms."

"Revolution" was explained as "an act whereby the country is allowed to be flooded, or whereby bombs are dropped upon 'bandits' from the air."

Big volumes of Laws were published by students returned from foreign countries. These students extracted all valuable sections of existing foreign laws and compiled them into a set of laws which bore no resemblance to laws of any foreign land. Between the lines of the compiled laws, one well-versed in the use of the unprinted dictionary could read:

1. To be applied with leniency;
2. Or, to be applied rigidly;
3. To be applied not at all, or only under certain conditions

Of course there was a court. Offenders who could read between the lines of the laws usually did not protest or ~~argue~~ argue before this court; for that was the practice of evil men only and was liable to call down a sentence "to be applied rigidly". There was also a High Court. But offenders who knew the unprinted dictionary never

appealed to it either, for that also was the practice of evil men only and was also liable to call down a punishment "to be applied rigidly".

One early morning, many policemen raided an art school. Several <sup>men</sup> ~~xxxxxx~~, some in gowns and some in foreign suits, rushed here and there looking for something, while policemen armed with pistols followed them. In a few minutes a man in a foreign suit lay hold of the shoulder of a young student ~~xx~~ eighteen years of age who was in the dormitory.

"In the name of the government, we have come here to make a search. Please. . . ." he announced to the student.

"All right, search!" the young man answered, and pulled a willow basket from beneath his bed.

Years of experience had taught young people to keep nothing in their possession. This young student, however, had kept a few letters in which his mother's miserable death was mentioned. He was only eighteen years old! It might be that he valued these letters so much that he took a chance and did not destroy them.

The man dressed in a foreign suit read the letters carefully, word for word. When he came to the words ". . . the whole ~~xxxxxx~~ world is a cannibal feast! Your mother fell victim to it and countless other mothers will fall victim also! . . ." he frowned, took a pencil from his pocket and underlined the words.

"What does ~~h~~his mean?" he asked the young man.

. . . . .

"Who was responsible that your mother fell victim to cannibalism? Is there real cannibalism in the world? Do you mean that we are cannibals and made a victim of your mother?" His eyes bulged; they bulged out so much that it seemed he would shoot them out like cannon balls.

"Oh! . . . No! . . . Oh! . . ." the youth seemed horrified.

But the raider did not actually shoot his eyeballs out. He folded up the letters and thrust them in his pockets. Then he went on to pile up ~~xxx~~ wood-blocks, wood-cut knives, wood-cut prints, newspaper clippings, a copy of "The Iron Stream" and "All Quiet Flows the Dan," all of which belonged to the student. He motioned to a policeman:

"Take them!"

"What are you taking away?" the young man realized what might happen.

The man in the foreign suit replied to him with a glance and, motioning to another policeman, ordered:

"I give him to you!"

Like a tiger the policeman sprang upon the young man. Clutching him by the back of the coat, he pushed him out of the dormitory where two other students about his own age were also being held in the clutches of two policemen, while a group of students and teachers looked on.

#### IV. Another Fairy Tale.

On the twenty-first day following that morning, a trial was held in a detention jail. Two Lao ye (officials) sat in a small, dimly-lighted room, one facing east and the other west. The one facing west wore a long gown with a little black jacket, and the one facing east wore a foreign suit. The one in the foreign suit was an optimist and did not think there was cannibalism in the world; he acted as recorder. Cursing policemen brought in a student about eighteen years of age, pale and dirty. After the usual questions about his name, age, and nationality, the Lao ye in the little black jacket asked:

"Are you a member of the Wood-cut Research Society?"

"yes."

"Who is the president?"

"Ch. . . president, and H. . . vice-president."

"Where are they now?"

"They were expelled from the school and I do not know."

"Why did you stir up trouble in the school?"

"Ch! . . . ." the young man was startled.

"Heng!" the man in the little jacket pointed to a wood-cut print.

"Is that your work?"

"Yes."

"Whose picture is that?"

"A writer."

"What is his name?"

"His name is Lunacharsky."

"Is he a writer? . . . What country does he come from?"

"I do not know." The young student told a lie for he thought it a matter of life and death.

"You do not know! Don't try to fool me! Is he not a Russian? Isn't he an officer of the Russian Red Army? I saw his picture in a Russian Revolutionary History! Do you mean to deny your responsibility?"

"No!" the young man cried out in despair as if he had been given a blow on the head with an iron hammer.

"So! . . . you make portraits of Red Army officers because you are a proletarian artist!"

"How! . . . No, it is not at all like that!"

"Don't argue! You deny your crime! We know you are suffering from bad treatment in the detention jail. Just tell us all now so we can send you more quickly to court for conviction. Life in in prison is much better than in here."

The young man was silent. He knew that it made no difference whether

he spoke or not.

"Just tell us," the man in the jacket said with a sardonic grin, "whether you are a member of the C.P. or of the C.Y."

"Neither. I do not understand what they mean."

"You know how to carve pictures of Red Army officers, but you do not know what the C.P. or C.Y. are! Despite your youth, you are cunning. Get out!" He waved his hand and a smart and watchful policeman followed the young man out.

This does not read exactly like a fairy tale. I am sorry. But if that is not a good title for it, what shall I call it? I wish to mention particularly that this story happened in 1932.

#### IV. An Authentic Letter.

Dear Teacher:

since you want to know what happened to me after I left the detention jail, allow me to give you a brief report:

On the last day of the last month of that year, we three were transferred from the XXX Provincial Government to the High Court. As soon as we reached there, we were brought ~~xxxxxx~~ up for the first hearing. It was very strange because the prosecutor asked only three questions:

ix "What is your name?" was the first question.

"How old are you?" the second.

"Where is your native town?" the third.

These questions constituted the entire hearing. We were then sent to the military prison.

Anyone who wishes to experience the art of ruling of the ruling class may find it in this military prison. They are displeased if their extreme brutality does not end in the death of their victims and the murder of people. Whenever the political situation grows tense, the so-called important political prisoners are shot in one batch after another, and this

regardless of their terms of imprisonment. For instance, when Nanchang was once in danger, twenty-two men were shot to death within a quarter of an hour. At the time the Fukien Peoples Government was inaugurated, many others were also stood before the firing squad. The vegetable garden, about five mau in size, inside the prison wall, is the execution ground. Naked corpses of the prisoners are buried in the soil to help fertilize the garden.

After two and a half months in this prison, we were told the charge against us. Again the Judge asked us just three questions. What was the charge? Except for the legal paragraphs I can still remember a large part of the charge:

" . . . . The Wood-cut Research society organized by Ch-- and H-- is directed by communists and a body to study proletarian art. The accused are all members of this Society . . . . As discovered, all works produced by them are either portraits of Red Army officers or pictures depicting the misery of hungry workers. These are used to create class struggle and to express the idea that one day the proletariat will be victorious. . . . ."

Not long afterwards, we were brought ~~to~~ to trial. In the courtroom were five Lao ye sitting in a row. very dignified! I was no longer so nervous. The picture of Henri Daumier's "Judge" flashed across my mind. I could only admire!

On the eighth day after the trial, we were taken to hear the sentence. Apart from the charges already made in the previous statement, the latter read:

"For these deeds, the prisoners are hereby sentenced to five years imprisonment each, in accordance with Article X of the Laws Relating to the Urgent suppression of Crime against the Republic, and Provision 30 of Article 20 of the Criminal Code. . . . . The accused, however, are ignorant young men and it is rather pitiful that they were .

led astray. Therefore, in accordance with Provision X of Article XXX, their sentence is commuted to two and a half years imprisonment. An appeal to the High Court is acceptable within ten days from delivery of this sentence. . . .'

Did I have to appeal to the High Court? This was "Just!" After all, these were their laws!

In short, from the day of my arrest to the day of my release, I visited three slaughter-houses in which people were killed. I ought to be grateful to them because they were kind enough to refrain from chopping off my head, and still more grateful for the abundant knowledge which I received. To speak of torture alone, I have now learned that there are in China:

1. The whip;
2. The ~~diver chair~~ *Tiger Bench*;
3. The Lever;

These are comparatively mild. Under the lever treatment, the prisoner is forced to his knees. An iron bar is thrust in between the joints between the upper and lower leg. Then two to eight strong men stand on the ends of the iron bar and try to force the prisoner to confess.

4. To kneel on red-hot iron chains.

The prisoner is forced to kneel on red-hot chains placed on the ground.

5. "Something to eat".

This is peppered water, petroleum, vinegar, or alcohol, forced into the body through the nostrils of the victim.

6. . . . . I cannot find a proper name for this form of torture. The victim is bound with his arms behind him. Then, by means of a cord tied to his thumbs or wrists he is hung up and whipped.

What I thought to be the most cruel torture of all was that inflicted on a young peasant who was with me in the detention jail. The Lao Ye said he was a Red Army commander. He refused to admit this. Oh, then there was torture for him! They drove needles beneath his finger-nails with an iron hammer. First one needle was driven in; he refused to speak! Then the second needle; no confession! Then the third; the fourth. . . . till all his ten fingers were finished. Even now the picture of that young man with his pale face, hollow eyes and bleeding fingers flashes before my eyes. I can never forget him! Pain overcomes me when I think of him! . . .

It was not until my release that I learned of the reason for my arrest. We students were dissatisfied with the school, particularly with the chief of the Physical Training department, who was also the political intelligence officer for the Provincial Headquarters of the Kuomintang. He was the man who lay at the bottom of our arrest. In order to stifle the dissatisfaction of the whole student-body, he used us three-- the only members of the Wood-cut Research Society left in the school--as the victims by which he could demonstrate his terrorism. The Lao Ye who appointed Lunacharsky a Red Army officer is his brother-in-law. How convenient for him!

So much for <sup>this</sup> ~~xxx~~ brief story. Now, when I lift my head to look at the pale moonlight outside my window, something cold grips my heart. I think I am not such a weakling, yet cold grips my heart. . . . .

Hoping you enjoy good health,

Yours, Jen Pan

Written after midnight.  
April 4th.