

XI - 79 - 3. A Play About China

F. Act I - Designated "Old Copy" - 22 pages

ACT I.

old copy

(A small Chinese village in the mountains on the Central China front in very early spring, 1940. A range of mountains stretch across the distance far in the back and off stage, right, and from them comes the intermittent roar of artillery and the occasional droning of planes. Directly across the back of the stage are a few houses of the village, of mud and stone, with gray tiled roofs. The central building is more substantial; a low, one-storey building with big wooden doors that are swung open. This building in General Wang's field headquarters. An indication of the content of the exposed big room is given, with the end of a crude table and benches or chairs, and a huge military map on the wall. Books and papers on end of table. At the front of the stage, left, is an overhanging evergreen tree and beneath it a long wooden table with crude benches and tables about it. The table is a general work-~~xxxxxxx~~ table for field headquarters, covered with piles of paper-bound books, some half open; piles of papers, an ink slab and brushes in an enamel drinking cup; ~~xxxxxxx~~ other articles. As the scene opens there is a ringing of a telephone inside the building. Two headquarters guards, Lao Tso and Shih-fu, patrol slowly back and forth before the building, going on and off stage right and left. Kuo Hwa, a little boy orderly about 10 years of age, dressed in a small shabby soldier's uniform, ~~xxxxx~~ unbuttoned, is sitting with his back against the tree, studying from a small crude pocket manual, his finger moving up and down the page as he pronounces the words he is learning. As the guard Lao Tso moves across the stage, he is often eating a piece of raw garlic, taking some from his pocket and chewing at it. The two headquarters guards often stop and listen and watch the distant range of mountains from which the roar of artillery comes.)

Kuo Hwa: (reading laboriously) Man!--Human being. I am a human being. You (pointing generally toward Shih-fu) are a human being. He (pointing into the air) is a human being. . .

Lao Tso: (laughing gruffly, to Kuo Hwa) Who's a human being? Him? (pointing to Shih-fu.)

Kuo Hwa: (complacently) You are a human being too.

Lao Tso: (laughing at Shih-fu a little) Shih-fu, didn't I tell you we're progressing? We're all human beings!

Kuo Hwa: They. . . are human beings.

Lao Tso: Who?

Kuo Hwa: It don't say, but it means my father and General Wang . . . and Col. Wu of course.

Shih-fu: But not the old buzzard, General Li, I'll bet.

Kuo Hwa: Not him. But my father. . .

Shih-fu: His father again! (To Kuo Hwa) He ain't your father. You only adopted him.

Kuo Hwa: (shrilly) He adopted me! He did too. . . that time the Japanese devils killed my father and my mother.

~~xxxxxx~~

Shih-fu: Lissen, little devil, if Major-General Chou had really adopted you, you wouldn't be an orderly in this Army. You'd be sent away to some rich ~~xxxxxx~~ boy's school!

Kuo Hwa: (complacently) But I don't want to be sent to a rich boy's school. I want to grow up and ~~get a captured~~ ^{carry} Japanese pistol and join the cavalry and fight the devils. An' I could do it now, too!

Shih-fu: (laughing ironically) That's just what this front needs--a whole Army of ten-year old ~~xxxxxx~~ kids!

Kuo Hwa: You're just jealous! (Turning to his book and studying it, puzzled) Now I forgot what them words means. . . and our political teacher said they develop the mind.

Lao Tso: (halting, watching him) What develops the mind?

Kuo Hwa: (Standing up and going to him; showing him the book) Them words down here at the bottom of the page. You can read--you tell me.

Lao Tso: (taking the book) Why are there distinctions. . . between human beings on the earth? (To Kuo Hwa, paternalistically) All right, now let's see you develop your mind.

Kuo Hwa: You're older'n me, and you've been in the Army a long time. You tell me.

Lao Tso: (chewing garlic) All right, I'll do your thinkin' for just just this once. . . Now, if you ask me, I'd say there are distinctions between human beings because some are rich and some are poor. But-- if the Japs win this war, there won't be no rich or poor. We'd all

Lao Tso: (suddenly interested) Military secret? (putting his hand in his pocket) What about something to eat?

Kuo Hwa: (mysteriously confident) I don't want none of your old garlic!

Lao Tso: (bringing out a handful of peanuts but holding onto them.) It's not garlic. . . it's peanuts! Now, what about your military secret?

Kuo Hwa: (hesitating, watching the peanuts) Well-l-l, I ~~heard~~ heard 'em talking. . . the political director and Col. Wu. . . (He hesitates and Lao Tso holds out his hand temptingly, waiting) An' they said that you and some other men will be sent to the Army Training Camp, and when you come back you'll be on the political staff and teach the soldiers. Next week maybe.

Lao Tso: (dropping the peanuts in Kuo Hwa's outstretched hands, then standing over him) Now look at what you've done. You took a bribe! Suppose I was a Japanese spy!

Kuo Hwa: (complacently eating the peanuts) ~~But I know~~ *Suppose I reported you to Gen. Wang!* You ain't no spy!

(A burst of shouting, followed by strains of the Volunteer Marching Song, breaks out from a distance in the rear, followed by applause. The boys all turn and move toward the right of stage, listening)

Kuo Hwa: Lissen! They're at the mass meetin'. The women doctor's are goin' to speak! I'm goin'.

Shih-fu: (shouting at him) No you don't!

Lao Tso: You're supposed to stay here. Maybe General Wang will want some tea or want you to carry a message or something.

Shih-fu: If you're not here, maybe he'll put you out of the Army!

Kuo Hwa: (coming back) I ain't never heard a foreigner speak!

Lao Tso: Aw, she's going to stay here. You'll hear her talk--you'll see to that!

(A burst of artillery fighting sounds from the mountains, with the dull roar of planes. The boys turn and solemnly listen)

Shih-fu: (watching the mountains) We fight and fight--but ~~the devils~~ the devils always win. I don't see what the ~~war's~~ war's about.

Lao Tso: (amazed) You don't know what it's about--after four years?

Kuo Hwa: (proudly) I know.

Shih-fu: (sarcastically) I suppose your "father" told you!

Kuo Hwa: (shrilly) Yes he did, smarty, but I ain't goin' to tell you.

Lao Tso: (paternalistically patting Kuo Hwa's back) You got to learn to keep your temper in an Army. Suppose you tell me what the war's about.

Kuo Hwa: We're goin' to chase the devils out and then there won't be no rich and no poor, but everybody will be equal. And men that grow rice will have rice to eat. Them that weave cloth will have clothes to wear.

Lao Tso: ~~Atta boy!~~ And there'll be work for everybody and every one can get an education and it won't cost a copper.

Shih-fu: (pessimistically) We'll all be dead by then. (To Lao Tso) You already got a bum leg.

Lao Tso: (patrolling) And what happened to the Jap that gave it to me? . . . He was sent home in a little square box--a box of ashes.

(ruefully) Sure--I can't fight like I used to. But I can do other things, and if the little devil's not lyin', I'll soon be teachin' you not to be backward! (Shih-fu kicks the gravel thoughtfully)

A man ought to be an example to others. . . you don't want to be like General Li's soldiers, do you?

Shih-fu: They fight all right.

Lao Tso: They don't. They just do the best they can. They'd fight better if they knew what the war was about.

(A renewed burst of fighting and the drone of planes come from the mountains, The three boys go to the far ~~right~~ right edge of stage and turn to watch and listen, talking as they listen)

Shih-fu: If we don't get killed, men like us will have to go back and work for some rapin' landlord like General Li.

((General Li and Col. Chen come on stage, front, left, under the tree, unobserved, as Shih-fu speaks, stop and listen.)

Lao Tso: Not me! Everythings goin' to be different after the war. If they ain't, I'll join the guerrillas. I hear the guerrillas have got schools for soldiers--and clubs and ~~xxxxx~~ theatres and everything. The officers and soldiers dress and eat alike, and the officers can't cuss and beat the soldiers like some of 'em do in General Li's Army.

Shih-fu: They say the guerrillas are right over there behind the Jap devils--blowing out bridges and tearin' up the roads.

Lao Tso: Sure they are! Some of 'em come in here today.

Shih-fu repeats scene
~~Shih-fu~~ Shih-fu: I heard some of 'em talking. They had a good story. Have you heard it?

Lao Tso: No, what is it?

Shih-fu: It's about two of General Li's officers. One officer said to the other: "Would you rather be in the infantry or in the cavalry". The other one said: "In the infantry, of course." That surprised the other guy and he asked him why, and the other officer said: "Because, when I start runnin', I don't want no horse interferin' with me!"

(The boys hoop with laughter. General Li stiffens in fury and makes a step forward. The boys hear and ~~xxxx~~ swing around ~~swiftly~~ swiftly and stand petrified as they see General Li.)

The two guards: (together) Salute, General Li!

(Kuo Hwa runs behind Lao Tso, holds onto his jacket and watches fearfully around Lao Tso's side. General Li walks menacingly toward the guards, turning to Shih-fu)

General Li: (barking) Who's teaching you disrespect for officers?

Lao Tso: Nobody, Sir.

General Li: (To Shih-fu, barking) Is the Commander-in-chief here?

Shih-fu: (jumping as if shot) Yes Sir, . . . no sir. . . I'll go see,

Sir! (He turns and flees inside building in back.)

General Li: (walking menacingly toward Lao Tso) And you! You. . .

(As he comes up to Lao Tso, he stops suddenly and steps back, covering his nose with his hand) You've been eating garlic!

You stink!

Lao Tso: (stiffly at attention) Yes, Sir!

Kuo Hwa: (breaking from Lao Tso and running to back right of stage, picking up a stone and hurling it at General Li) Fascist!

(He flees from stage)

Lao Tso: (turning swiftly to Kuo Hwa) You little ~~devil~~ devil! (He runs off stage after Kuo Hwa).

(General Li stands as if petrified from amazed fury, then turns slowly to Col. Chen who has been coldly watching the scene. General Li waves his arms vaguely)

General Li: ~~xxxxxx~~ (with angry irony) My dear Col. Chen! Allow me to introduce you to the field headquarters of the most "advanced" Army on the Central China front! The headquarters of our commander-in-~~xxxxxx~~ chief, General Wang ~~xxxxxx~~ Shih-pu! (In fury) This, my dear Sir, is an Army! It's guards curse and throw stones at their officers--and their officers are at a mass meeting with the soldiers--to hear a bunch of females speak! (Walks dazedly to the table and sits down on a bench)

Col. Chen: And I presume that General Wang is also at the meeting?

General Li: Exactly! The wife of his chief-of-staff has come. The war stops while she and a foreigner delivers speeches to the soldiers!

Col. Chen: (coldly instigating him) While the enemy is throwing reinforcements against one of your divisions on that Yangchow ~~xxx~~ sector over there? (nodding at the mountains)

General Li: Exactly! And while Chou's division loiters somewhere in the rear--holding mass meetings no doubt! (furiously) While my division over there is ordered to hold out another twenty-four hours!

Col. Chen: (instigating him) Does General Wang really believe that three companies can ~~make~~ make any impression on this front?

General Li: The Old Man is senile!

Col. Chen: But this General Chou isn't! Just when will ^{he and} his Division get here?

General Li: (airily) Oh, Chou's already here! At the mass meeting undoubtedly. His division? (waves his arms vaguely) He finds plenty of excuses. . . say his division has not yet been replenished and trained sufficiently after the ~~xxxx~~ enemy finished it off four months ago. It could have moved up here a month ago if it ~~xxxxxx~~ did not have dozens of student radicals who think soldiers are better fighters if they can read and write and are taught "political" knowledge! Now that women doctors are coming, it won't be long before all the armies will be demanding women!

Col. Chen: In the rear, we heard Chou's division consisted of crack storm troops. . . that's why Chou was decorated.

General Li: We who served the State in the rear for years, received no decorations, but at the front, men whose mouths are still wet with their mother's milk are made Major-Generals! Just between us, half the reports General Wang sends in about his ~~xxxx~~ own Army are lies! What else can we expect of a man who worked with the Japs before the war and even after the war began? (nastily) A puppet! Ex-puppet!

Col. Chen: (sharply) Some people think that a man who has been a puppet once would become one again--if he had a chance. (instigating Li) But he now has a big face--and influence--in certain ~~xxxx~~ quarters.

General Li: (as if instructing a child) Sit down, Col. Chen. . . China is big and the Capital is far away. Some men in the rear think the Old Man has lived down his past.~~xxx~~ He's never left the battlefield since the war began, they say. Have you thought why he has never left the battlefield? (significantly) Not from patriotism--but because

of a guilty conscience! (impressively). And why has ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Chou's Division been decimated half a dozen times? Not because it could fight--but because it could not fight. Student "educators" have demoralized ~~xxxxx~~ it! Chou even has a professor on his political staff --to teach him political science!

Col. Chen: (contemptuously) Is he so naive?

Chou: Naive? From what I've seen of him, he sounds like a Communist! . . . Disguised of course. (Chen turns on him suddenly) Who else but a Communist would call his father a traitor?

Col. Chen: His father a traitor!

General Li: I mean Old Man Wang! The Old Man had no sons of his own--impotent, no doubt! (he laughs) Two young men are like the Old Man's sons. One is Chou and the other is his so-called Chief-of-Staff, Wu, --that sickly fellow you met at my headquarters last night. Now it was Chou who called the Old Man a traitor when the war began. The Old idiot never got over it. The sickly Wu smuggled the Old Man ~~xxxxxx~~ through the Japanese lines to Chou's Army, then followed him, and the two ~~xxxxxx~~ young fellows turned everything over to him.

Col. Chen: A touching story--almost filial piety!

General Li: (with disgust) Quite the reverse! It is they who control him. . . . not he them! I've heard that Chou has a tongue like a lash, but ~~xxx~~ the sickly Wu--he has tuberculosis, you know--~~xxxxxx~~ kow-tows to everything the Old Man says and does. You see, its a family affair here--almost like the Holy ~~xxxxxx~~ Trinity of the Christians--the Father, Son and Holy Ghost! (He laughs heartily at his own joke.) But ~~xxx~~ the Son and the Holy Ghost control the old man--even tell him what to think and do!

Col. Chen: Is ~~xxxxx~~ Chief-of-Staff Wu-- also a disguised Communist?

General Li: Who knows? He was once a Professor--and you know what these professional intellectuals are! ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

Around here he's not really the Chief-of-staff, but a kind of A.D.C. and a general handyman for the Old Man. Everything here is all mixed up--just like the country as a whole. Their Army newspaper is a mixture of everything--talks of democracy that ~~it~~ sounds just like Communism!

Col. Chen: There's not much difference--democracy is only the outer defence ~~mix~~ positions of Communism!

General Li: But it's spreading like wild ~~fire~~ fire, everywhere!

Col. Chen: No longer, General Li! We have ways of preventing that!
(takes a round metal badge from his pocket and hands it to Li, who studies it.)

General Li: (impressed, returning it) Ah! Now I understand!

Col. Chen: You will respect my confidence, of course!

General Li: More than that--I am at your service, Col. Chen!

Col. Chen: (returning the badge to his breast pocket, patting it proudly)
That little piece of metal opens all doors. .. can go anywhere, any time. A law unto itself!

General Li: You will be able to make many desirable changes on this front--if you work carefully!

Col. Chen: (boasting) We are changing the whole country! Our system reaches into every school and university, ^{every theatre,} every newspaper and publishing company! Nothing can now appear without our approval! (confidentially) We control ~~foreign~~ dispatches of foreign correspondents. Those that try to evade the censorship will soon be so useless that their papers will have to withdraw them. Oh, we have learned, General Li--we've had an excellently-trained German to teach us their system. You ought to see our dossiers of men trying to smuggle dangerous thoughts into the press! They think ~~it~~ themselves clever--~~some of them recently~~ some of them recently

tried to smuggle dangerous thoughts into the country by translating a book of poems by a foreigner--a fellow named Burns--Robert Burns.

General Li: That is perhaps merely a pen-name for some Communist!

Col. Chen: ~~That~~ Doubtless. Anyway, we censored most of it--and filed the dangerous parts for use against the author when we locate him.

General Li: (enthusiastically) At last! (turning suddenly to the table)

You might begin your work here. (picking up some of the ~~xxxxx~~ book. Chen glances about, then takes a note-book from his pocket and begins to list the titles and publishers of the books on the table.)

Chen: Most of this seems be military. Ah-h-h! History of Democratic Thought! (makes a note, turns to the red cover) It's bound in red! Here is another foreign book. (reading in monosyllables) Doc-tor Arrow-smith, by Sin-clair Lew-is. (to Li) Have you ever heard of such a foreign writer? (he makes note of the title)

General Li: Never! (taking the book) This was perhaps brought here by the Son or the Holy Ghost. There may not even be such a foreign writer.

Col. Chen: (taking up a thin, small booklet, turning pages) This seems to be a diary of some kind!

General Li: (taking the booklet, glancing through it, then returning it to Chen) That's the handwriting of General Wang. . . it's nothing but chicken scratches--he has no real education! (he walks about in jubilation as Chen reads passages, reading absent-mindedly as Chen reads) Col. Chen, have you ever thought ~~xxxxxxx~~ about the reason our native city, Hangchow. . .

Col. Chen: Are you a Hangchow man also?

General Li: (laughing self-consciously) Oh yes! My family has lived in the southwest for only five centuries. Our native home is Hangchow. . . Now, have you ever thought why Hangchow produced the best brains of our country?

Col. Chen: Why?

General Li: (philosophically) Consider its mild climate, the gentle

hills, the placid lake, the great wealthy families and--ah!--the wines! No one had to work for a living. So all ~~the~~ energy could flow to the brain!

Col. Chen: (reading) You are a true scholar, General Li.

General Li: (hypocritically waving the remark aside) A humble one, only.

Now, consider the harsh northern climate. Men had to labor so hard to keep alive that they have had nothing left for the brain.. . Take General Wang--a ~~big~~ giant of a man--with the mind of a child. He says just what he thinks--and he thinks out loud! Why, anyone can outwit him!

Col. Chen: (turning suddenly to him, listening) You think that? That anyone can outwit him?

General Li: Exactly! And his whole Army is the same. Good fighters--but no brains. Takes a century for them to get an idea into their heads--then they never get over it. (laughing at his own thought) Now they've got the idea of fighting the Japs in their skulls, and they'll go right on fighting them for another century!

Col. Chen: These northerners get fixations. (he slips General Wang's diary carefully in his jacket pocket and folds the flap down) This Army would surely not go on fighting ~~them~~ if the Government accepted Japanese peace terms--favorable ones, I mean. After all the Army is half-starved and wants peace.

General Li: It's half starved--but it won't make peace--not for a hundred years!

Col. Chen: Suppose the Government ordered General Wang to lay down his arms--and he ordered his troops to obey?

General Li: He's ask the advice of the Son and the Holy Ghost--and they would refuse.

Col. Chen: But--if they were transferred elsewhere?

General Li: Split up the Holy Trinity? You can't. The Old Man has influence!

Col. Chen: (tapping his breast pocket) So have I!

General Li: (cautiously) You ~~might~~ can get enough evidence here to have them all transferred.

Col. Chen: In that case--you, I believe, would be the next man ~~is~~ most likely to ~~take~~ command this front.

General Li: (protesting, but pleased) I really am quite a small fellow!

Col. Chen: Leave that to others to decide, General Li! (carefully) Considering his own dark past, what does General Wang think of the collaboration of Wang Ching-wei and the Japanese, in Nanking?

General Li: Calls him a traitor --to be beheaded if captured! Which he is!

Col. Chen: Some men are beginning to think differently. I myself reserve judgment. Some men argue that Wang Ching-wei is conscripting troops and inducing the Japanese to arm them. When he is strong enough, he will drive the Japanese out! He already has enough power to raise the national flag over Nanking--but with a slight addition.

General Li: An addition?

Col. Chen: Yes. He has words running across it, --these--"The Chinese People's Anti-Communist Government!"

General Li: Ah! (sharply) But his troops fight us!

Col. Chen: Not really! They fight only the guerrillas--and the guerrillas have Communist commanders. (thoughtfully) You see, the country is becoming so impoverished by the war that it is becoming a seed-bed of revolution.

General Li: (shocked) Is it so bad? What does the Generalissimo think?

Col. Chen: Who knows. He seems stiff-necked about the Japanese. But pressure might be brought against him,--by the armies, for instance. ~~Wang Ching-wei is a traitor and a collaborator. He is a traitor and a collaborator. He is a traitor and a collaborator.~~ If the Government could be certain that the armies would obey, if ordered to lay down their arms, a way might be found to peace. But some armies and some Generals cannot be trusted to obey orders from

their superiors.

General Li: That is a reflection of the general confusion and demoralization of the country--and the spread of foreign thought. People ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ have contempt for our ancient virtues of loyalty and obedience.

Col. Chen: (slowly) But the country is fortunate to have ^{Classical} ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ scholars ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ who are also Generals.. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~--men old enough to have wisdom, young enough to have quick, elastic minds (carefully) like yourself. Such men are loyal to the State, yet have no --fixations!

General Li: ~~xxxxxx~~ The Generalissimo has only to command me. My entire administration in the past was carried on under the banner of "One country, one party, one leader."

Col. Chen: All men of honor know that--your fame has spread everywhere. (The two men turn sharply as the sound of a woman's laugh is heard off stage. Col. Chen turns quickly to table and places books in order. Fells his jacket pocket where General Wang's diary is concealed.)

General Li: The mass meeting has ended. Now we can get on with the war! They talk from morning to night. Men who talk much, know little! (Col. Wu and Dr. Lin come on stage back, right, holding hands and deeply engrossed with each other. Wu glances up and sees the two men and drops his wife's hand hurriedly.)

Col. Wu: Well, General Li! And Col. Chen! We expected you at the meeting to welcome our new medical volunteers! Let me introduce one of them--my wife, Dr. Lin Yung. . . General Li, commander of one of the Armies on this front. . . and Col. Chen, his new Political Director. (The two officers and Dr. Lin bow politely from a distance)

General Li: (politely) Sorry we could not attend the meeting of welcome to brave women. . the war keeps me too busy.

Col. Wu: Have you see the Commander-in-chief?

General Li: I understood he was at the meeting!

Col. Wu: Oh, no. He came back from the front early this morning and has not even found time to sleep for the past forty-eight hours. Things piled up--he's been in conferences all day.

Dr. Lin: The meeting was not just to welcome the American nurse and myself. It was also a farewell for the troops moving up to the front.

Col. Wu: (to General Li) You talked with General Wang, by telephone, about the re-enforcements moving up to your Yangchow sector?

General Wang: Yes. We disagreed--they are too few--but he is the Commander-in-chief. I can only ^{accept} ~~accept~~ the situation.

(Major-General Chou and Frances Stone come on stage from back, right. Chou wears an ammunition belt about his waist but holds a pistol in his hand and is talking with Frances about it).

Chou: (To Frances) Both of you must learn to use weapons if you are going to work at the front.

Col. Wu: (going toward them) So you've come! Miss Stone, this is General Li. . . and this is Colonel Chen. (To the officers) Miss Stone is an American nurse who came up with my wife. (They all bow. Chou replaces the pistol in his holster and goes toward the two officers.) General Li! Col. ~~Huzix~~ Chen, we're glad to have men like you here! (The two men exchange name cards and bow politely)

Col. Chen: I'm glad to be here at last! (Turning to Frances) It's unusual to find a foreigner at the front, Miss Stone. We didn't realize that Americans are that much interested in our war.

Frances: Some are. (She turns away, as if rebuked.)

Chou: (quickly) There are Americans and Americans, just as there are Chinese and Chinese, Col. Chen.

General Li: True. . . but I often doubt the advisability of exposing ladies to the dangers of the front.

Dr. Lin: There is no safe place anywhere, now.

(Chou and Frances step aside, Chou removing the pistol again and giving it to her.)

Chou: (To Frances) Now, try it yourself. (The two of them bend over the weapon)

Col. Wu: (Taking cigarettes from the table and handing one each to Chen and Li and his wife, then lighting them. He does not take one himself.) These cigarettes were captured from the enemy-- they're not bad.

General Li: (To Dr. Lin) Our modern women are very brave, Dr. Lin. But I was just telling Col. Chen that our younger people seem to ~~scorn~~ scorn our ancient virtues, while submitting to foreign ideas.

(Chou looks up and listens, as does Frances.)

Dr. Lin: (politely but very sharp) You could hardly say that ~~ix~~ our young people submitted to the Japanese at any time. It was the older general that ~~xxxx~~ signed the unequal treaties with foreigners, and after 1931 they submitted to the Japanese conquest of Manchuria --and even made secret treaties with them!

Chou: (decisively) Nor was it our younger people who brought in the German Military Advisers--and introduced Fascist ideas and institutions into the country! It is the older generation, primarily, who have accepted the foreign religion, Christianity!

General Li: I am not a Christian, but let us be fair about the Germans. After it, the Germans have not done so badly by their country! They've revived their nation, and the armies of all Europe ~~xxx~~ are tumbling before them!

Chou: True--and the Japanese are trying to subject us in the same way!

Dr. Lin: But we will never submit! Our younger generations will never accept ~~xxxx~~ Fascism--nor the spider-web of our decayed ancient virtues. We will fight only for the liberty and equality of the modern world! (Chou moves to Dr. Lin's side.)

Col. Wu: (trying to prevent a clash) My wife has decided opinions, General Li. Our modern women. . .

General Li: (cooly) I never argue with a woman!

Dr. Lin: (swiftly turning and taking a step toward him.)Why not?

General Li: (stepping back) I am a realist--a military man!

Col. Wu: (going to his wife's side protestingly) Do not lose your temper. . . .

Dr. Lin: (turning on him. He also takes a step backward as she steps toward him angrily) You men all stand together! You expect us women to keep silent and obey!

Col. Wu: (gently laughing) My dear--you have never obeyed me in your life! Nor would I expect it.

Dr. Lin: (losing her anger suddenly, going to his side) I know, Yeh-tze. I'm sorry!

General Li: (cooly polite, but keeping out of Dr. Lin's way) Col. Wu, we came here, not to talk, but to see the Commander-in-chief. He has not yet met Col. Chen.

Col. Wu: He should have time now. I will see. Come. (Wu goes toward building in back, Li and Chen following him. He turns and motions to them to wait) Please wait here. (They remain at the door, light cigarettes, and talk in undertones. Chou has returned to Frances and they bend over the pistol again, laughing a little)

Dr. Lin: (glancing at General Li and Col. Chen resentfully, then going up to Chou and Frances) What are you doing with that pistol, Frances?

Chou: (smiling at her) I'm going to give you both pistols--and teach you how to use them.

Dr. Lin: We're Red Cross workers--we're not supposed to carry weapons.

Chou: (smiling) I'll admit you might get along without them. But if you are thinking of international law, I'm surprised. The Japs don't. Now Frances. . . may I call you that?

Frances: (Hesitatingly) If you wish.

Chou: My name's Tien-ying. Now try it again. Take out the slip first.

(The three of them bend over the pistol) Now Lin Yung, you try.

(Dr. Lin takes the pistol and begins working over it.)

Dr. Lin: It's a very nice pistol!

Chou: Captured from the enemy. We've got all sorts of things here-- even some Japanese captives. . . brought in today. (To Dr. Lin) the Japanese tell their troops that we will torture them to death if they are captured. (laughing) You might do that--by lecturing them about modern women! I would serve them damn well right!

(General Wang appears in the door of the main building, followed by Col. Wu, and behind Wu the guard, Shih-fu, who steps back when he sees General ~~xx~~ Li and Col. Chen. As the officers walk away, Lao Tso appears on stage from right and beckons to Shih-fu, who quickly slips out and joins him. They disappear.)

General Wang: (morose and weary) Sorry to have kept you waiting,

General Li. (To Col. Chen) You're Col. Chen, I understand.

I had heard you had come--you're more than welcome here. (They walk toward the table) Sit down, gentlemen! (They all sit down and an orderly comes from building in back with a stack of rice bowls and a big black kettle of boiling water. He places a bowl before each man, takes a small paper sack of tea from his pocket, drops some in each bowl, then pours water over it, and withdraws.)

Chou: (To Frances and Dr. Lin: Now come and I'll give you your first shooting lesson!

(General Wang turns to them, raises a finger of greeting, which Chou returns, as they ~~xxxxxxx~~ start to go off stage right.)

Dr. Lin: (To Chou) General Wang says we can't go up with your Division tonight.

Chou: (To Frances) Do you also want to come?

Frances: Of course!

Chou: What I don't understand is why you didn't come up here long ago!

(They exit, talking)

General Li: (To General Wang) You look tired, General Wang. The war tells on a man of your age.

General Wang: It's only the lack of sleep. As I told you, the re-enforcements will begin to move up to re-enforce your division when it grows dark.

General Li: The enemy seems to be massing troops against my Division over there.

General Wang: We know. But Chou's Division will take over from it ~~xxxxxx~~ as soon as it comes up--perhaps tomorrow night. We have to manage with what we have. There's not enough of anything on this front. Now the guerrillas have sent men for demolition--and we have none.

Col. Chen: (quickly) Which guerrillas?

General Wang: It's a Storm Guerrilla Detachment over there in the rear of the enemy--they're civilians who captured their weapons from the Japs. They can't take out concrete or steel bridges with their ~~xxx~~ teeth.

Col. Chen: But those guerrillas are illegal. The Government has forbidden them to operate in this War Zone.

~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~

General Wang: (uncomprehending) Illegal? I'm a military man, not a lawyer. How can it be illegal for Chinese to fight Japanese.

Col. Chen: It is my information that they don't fight--they just move about and stir up the people. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

General Wang: ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ You would hardly say that there is such a thing as a peaceful war, would you?

Col. Chen: But some of ~~xxxx~~ their leaders are Communists!

General Wang: What if they are?

Col. Chen: But they are inciting the people to elect their own officials.

Col. Wu: But there have been no officials over there since the Japanese occupation! The Japs formed puppet governments everywhere--until the guerrillas arose and drove them out. The enemy is now driven back to a few big walled towns. The countryside is in the hands of the people, and they have to have some kind of administration.

General Li: But ~~hardly~~ you would hardly contend that ~~illiterate~~ illiterate fishermen and peasants are capable of electing their own officials! That is a foreign idea of "democracy".

Col. Wu: What kind of democracy would you approve of?

General Li: Our own ancient kind--government for the people, but not by them. That has always given our social system stability and security.

Col. Wu: Sounds like feudal absolutism to me! That's bankrupt!

General Li: It's bankrupt only because ~~ignorant~~ ignorant men of low degree have been able to rise to positions of power. (General Wang slowly stands up as Li speaks, and Li and Chen also arise.) It is my conviction that we have had so many puppets in the country because men have not studied the Classics, and have contempt for our own system and virtues.

General Wang: I also used to believe in our ancient system and virtues. I lived by them for half a century. ~~ignorant~~

General Li: Pardon me, but perhaps you did not study deeply enough!

~~Remark~~ Col. Wu: (stepping to General Wang's side) Many of the traitors working with the Japs today are Classical scholars!

General Wang: (interrupting him) I will admit that I am not a man of great leaning. Perhaps it is my ignorance that forces me to believe that our ancient system and thought suited only the times in which it took root. For over a century now, that system has failed to protect our country and people. So I listen when younger men speak. It is they, not I, who must live on after I am dead. They have a right to a civilization which suits their needs--and protects them.

General Li: Our Classics taught eternal truths!

General Wang: (slowly) You are both men of education. Thus you cannot but see that the Japanese are also teaching our Classics to our people in enemy-occupied territory! They have burned modern histories and re-written text-books for our children. They ~~xxxx~~ teach Confucian ethics of filial piety, benevolence, loyalty and obedience to the Government that rules them. Is that because the enemy has suddenly fallen in love with us? (decisively) There are times when obedience can lead to crimes against the country!

Col. Chen: (involuntarily) Ah!

General Wang: (staring at ~~xxxx~~ him, then slowly slumping down in his chair) I can only say that it is within the power of the Government to remove me from command, should it find me lacking either by virtue of my knowledge or my deeds. Until then, it is my conviction that the guerrillas are a military necessity. (To Li) I shall report this to the Government, and suggest you do the same. Our radio is at your disposal, and nothing you wish to report will be omitted.

Col. Wu: (trying to convince Li and Chen) We have a cavalry battalion in the enemy rear, cooperating with the guerrillas. You may read their reports. The guerrillas fight as best they can, though they have only four thousand rifles and ten rounds or less of ammunition each. And they have captured Japanese prisoners--it is not easy to do that!

General Li: (proudly) My troops have also captured prisoners--not Japanese I'll admit. They are Chinese puppet traitors operating with the enemy. . . . northerners I believe. They are being sent here.

General Wang: That is excellent. We may be able to learn more about enemy re-enforcements.

General Li: But--I would not believe that the guerrillas captured Japanese

unless I saw them myself.

General Wang: (rising wearily) So you shall. The guerrillas brought them
in today. (To Col. Wu) Take them to ^{question} ~~take them to~~ the captives--and
interpret for them. (To General Li and Chen) I could get nothing
out of them--perhaps you can. Come back here when you have finished.

Col. Wu: (To Li and Chen) Come this way. . .

(Wu leads the two officers off stage, back, left. General Wang watches them go, then sinks wearily into his chair again, staring after them. Slowly removes his cap and places it on the table, rubs his head and face)

General Wang: Puppet. . . traitor. . . they never forget! (bitterly)
ignorant men of low degree risen to great power. . . ^{they mean that!} ~~take them to~~

(A sudden outburst of fighting comes from the mountain ranges. He turns and half rises, listening, then sinks back again and stares before him, utterly absorbed by his own bitter reflections; rubbing his head)

My head is grey. . . ~~xxxxxx~~ my life--dust and sand.

(From the mountains come the dull drone of bombers growing ever nearer.)
Soon regrets will be too late. I must hurry. . . my aim not yet ^{achieved.}

(The bombers sound nearer. From far off stage sounds the high staccato bugle call sounding an air-raid alarm, followed by the sound of running feet off stage with a confusion of voices. Two or three guards run from building in back, but do not see General Wang. They race off stage, watching the skies as they ~~xxxxx~~ run. General Wang sits, not hearing or seeing)

Puppet! Traitor! (Overcome by his own reflections, his arms sweep papers and books from the table and he bends convulsively forward on the table, his hands gripping the sides. The planes roar nearer. He does not move, as curtain falls)

End of Act I