

*Comrade,
You've Taken the Wrong Path!*

A Four-Act Play

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Preface

In July 1937, the Japanese imperialists launched a war of aggression against China. The external contradiction between China and Japan became the primary one while the class contradiction within the country temporarily became one of secondary importance. The people of the whole country loudly demanded national unity and resistance to Japan. Crystallizing this desire of all the people, the Chinese Communist Party put forward the timely proposal for all parties and groups to co-operate and fight Japan. Because of the pressure of the people, the Kuomintang which was in power at that time was forced to co-operate with the Communist Party and resist Japanese aggression. The die-hards in the Kuomintang, however, had their own axe to grind. They wanted the Communist troops to go far into the enemy's rear to fight the invaders there under extremely difficult conditions, while the Kuomintang army beat a hasty retreat before putting up any battle. They chose to stand aloof and watch the fight from the distance. They even secretly collaborated with the Japanese invaders in an attempt to wipe out the anti-Japanese forces led by the Communist Party, an action heading for national suicide. The Communist Party, however, rallied all the patriotic forces in the land and, with great heroism, took upon themselves the task of national salvation. They carried out persistent guerrilla warfare in the enemy's rear, wresting every possible inch of ground from him. They established permanent bases of resistance against the Japanese invaders and developed the anti-Japanese forces, thus standing in sharp contrast to the traitorous Kuomintang.

But within the Communist Party itself a struggle developed over two lines concerning the problem of the national united front against Japan. One, advocated by Mao Tse-tung, was

the correct line. It was one of combining struggle with alliance. This meant allying with the Kuomintang to push it onto the path of resistance against Japan. To do this, it was also necessary to struggle with the Kuomintang and oppose its treacherous actions of compromise and surrender to Japan. The other was the Right opportunist line which was erroneous. According to those who advocated this line everything had to be subordinated to and done through the united front. There was no limit to the concessions they were prepared to make to the Kuomintang. They did not dare to struggle against its traitorous policy and plots to compromise with the Japanese invaders, surrender to them and even collaborate with them in suppressing the patriotic forces. In a Communist-led guerrilla unit in the enemy's rear, a violent struggle was carried out over these two different lines of thought.

The play *Comrade, You've Taken the Wrong Path!* takes this struggle as its theme. As the story unfolds, the Kuomintang die-hards try by every possible means to destroy the anti-Japanese forces. But the Right opportunist in the unit is unable to see through their reactionary tricks. He turns a deaf ear to good counsel and insists on going his own way. As a result he is trapped; nearly losing his own life and the revolutionary force suffers serious losses. Fortunately, at this critical moment, those who have persisted in the correct line come to his rescue, and an exceedingly dangerous situation is saved. Finally the Right opportunist sees the harm of his erroneous line and realizes that his class capitulationism would eventually lead to national capitulationism. He begins to understand deeply the great thought of Mao Tse-tung that the Communist Party must maintain its independence within the national anti-Japanese united front; only by acting according to this correct line can victory be gained in the War of Resistance Against Japan and the danger of national destruction be avoided.

Characters

Wu Chih-keh, *a little over 30, chief of the liaison department of a certain detachment of the Communist-led Eighth Route Army.*

Li Tung-ping, *31, a veteran cadre of the Red Army, commander of the detachment.*

Pan Hui, *35, a veteran cadre of the Red Army, director of the Political Department of the detachment.*

Hu Sheng, *25, a veteran cadre of the Red Army, commander of the Guards Company of the detachment.*

Ho Jui-kuang, *27, a staff officer of the detachment.*

Yang Chun, *a girl, 19, propaganda team leader of the detachment.*

Chia Ching-hsiang, *34, commander of the Third Regiment of the Eighth Route Army detachment and formerly a regimental commander in the Kuomintang army.*

Leader of the Self-Defence Corps, *a little over 30, a peasant of Shanbochen.*

Three Orderlies.

Soldiers and Cadres of the Eighth Route Army.

Men and Women of Various Ages.

Chao Yu-chen, *45, commander of a certain Kuomintang commando column.*

Chen Chih-teh, *40, chief of staff of the Kuomintang commando column.*

Wang Chung-hua, *30, brigade commander of the Kuomintang commando column.*

Liu Chueh-min, *head of the Political Training Department of the Kuomintang commando column.*

The One-eyed Dragon, *leader of the Pistol Platoon.*

Two Bodyguards.

A Company Commander and a Platoon Leader of Chao's Forces.

Soldiers of Chao's Forces, *over ten in number.*

A Provost Sergeant.

ACT I

Time: *One summer during the first stage of the War of Resistance Against Japan.*¹

Place: *A certain area in the enemy's rear. A courtyard in front of the Eighth Route Army detachment headquarters on the slope of a mountain near Shanbochen. There are tables and benches in the courtyard. Shanbochen is partly visible in the distance. A river runs by the foot of the mountain.*

The curtain rises: *Dawn. From the distance an army bugler can be heard blowing reveille. A cock crows. Someone can be heard calling the time for morning exercises. After a while, the stage grows gradually brighter. HO JUI-KUANG comes on stage. He goes into a room and blows out the lamp. As he is coming out he meets ORDERLY "B."*

ORDERLY "B": Staff Officer Ho!

HO JUI-KUANG: Shh! Department Chief Wu didn't sleep again last night?

ORDERLY "B": No. He was up the whole night writing up stuff for the joint military conference!

HO JUI-KUANG: All right, I'll come back again after a while to see him. *(Exits.)*

(ORDERLY "B" goes into the room. He comes out again, carrying some of WU CHIH-KEH'S laundry. At that moment two peasant women pass by. They are taking eggs to the hospital.)

PEASANT WOMAN "A": Comrade Liu!

ORDERLY "B": Shh! Department Chief Wu's asleep!

¹ 1937-45.

PEASANT WOMAN "A" (*softly*): Comrade Liu, Commander Li and the others aren't back yet from fighting the Japs?

ORDERLY "B": They'll be back soon. Where're you two off to?

PEASANT WOMEN "A" and "B": We're taking some eggs over to the wounded.

(PEASANT WOMAN "A" starts to leave. PEASANT WOMAN "B" notices the laundry ORDERLY "B" is carrying. She calls PEASANT WOMAN "A" back and whispers to her, intimating that they should do the laundry.)

PEASANT WOMAN "A" (*calling ORDERLY "B" over, thus enabling PEASANT WOMAN "B" to snatch away the clothes*): Come over here, Comrade Liu. Now, don't you think the eggs today are bigger than last time, eh? . . .

(ORDERLY "B" discovers that the laundry has been taken away by PEASANT WOMAN "B". He chases after her.)

PEASANT WOMAN "B": We'll do it for you, Comrade Liu. Have it all washed in a couple o' ticks!

PEASANT WOMAN "A": You don't have to stand on ceremony with us, you know!

ORDERLY "B": Nothing doing! Last time you did some laundry for us my chief gave me an awful dressing down.

PEASANT WOMAN "A": Then this time I'll go and have a talk with your chief. How about that?

ORDERLY "B": Can't be done. Can't be done.

PEASANT WOMEN "A" and "B": And why can't it be done, eh?

ORDERLY "B": Shh! My chief's asleep! (*Catching them unawares, he snatches the laundry and runs off.*)

(PEASANT WOMEN "A" and "B" chase after him.)

YANG CHUN enters. She is carrying two posters, on which are written the slogans "Shoulder to Shoulder Resist Japan! Everything Through the United Front!" and "Unite to Save the Nation! Strive to Avoid Domestic Friction!")

YANG CHUN: Hsiu-chen! Yu-lan!

PEASANT WOMEN "A" and "B": What are you up to there, Comrade Yang?

YANG CHUN: I've been writing up some slogans.

PEASANT WOMAN "A": Well, let's have a look. (*They read the posters.*)

(*An old woman passes by. Seeing YANG CHUN, she stops.*)

PEASANT WOMAN "A": Well, Comrade Yang, you really have everything it takes. A capable worker, with literary talent too!

OLD WOMAN: That's right! She's sure to find a good husband.

PEASANT WOMAN "A": Oh-ho! You're blushing! You're blushing!

YANG CHUN: You little rogue!

PEASANT WOMEN "A" and "B": All right, Comrade Yang, we'll have to be off now.

(*PEASANT WOMEN "A" and "B" and the OLD WOMAN exit. HO JUI-KUANG enters.*)

HO JUI-KUANG: Good morning, Propaganda Team Leader!

YANG CHUN: Staff Officer Ho, is Department Chief Wu in?

HO JUI-KUANG: It seems he is, and yet he isn't.

YANG CHUN: Stop joking. I must see him about something. I want to ask him to look over these slogans I've written. (*She goes towards the room.*)

HO JUI-KUANG: Leave 'em here for now. You might find him, but he won't be able to look over your slogans.

YANG CHUN: Why? — Oh, he's asleep?

HO JUI-KUANG: You've guessed right. He didn't sleep a wink the whole night, finishing the outline for his speech at the joint military conference.

YANG CHUN: He often forgets to sleep for the sake of his work.

HO JUI-KUANG: I also came just now to see him about the joint military conference. But, seeing that he'd just gone to sleep, I didn't disturb him.

YANG CHUN: Staff Officer Ho, when the joint military conference convenes the day after tomorrow, I think Chao Yu-chen will probably be in an embarrassing position if he still doesn't take the resistance against Japan seriously.

HO JUI-KUANG: It isn't a question of being embarrassed or not. From July 1937 till now, when the War of Resistance has been going on for a year, every time he sees the Japanese devils he takes to his heels and runs faster than a rabbit. It's hard to depend on a man like him. We can only do our utmost to push him forward, that's all.

YANG CHUN: That's strange! Department Chief Wu was your teacher when you attended the cadre training course, and you always held him in high esteem, but your point of view in this matter is entirely different from his. True, a year has passed already since the war broke out and Chao Yu-chen's attitude to resisting Japan is still one of wait-and-see. But it's precisely because of this that what Department Chief Wu says has an even more profound bearing. What we're aiming at, through the medium of the joint military conference, is to win Chao Yu-chen over, so that he'll start resisting Japan. Further, Department Chief Wu has cited numerous Marxist-Leninist principles to explain that this conference may certainly realize our hopes. Really, what he says is so absolutely sound. It's terribly interesting!

(PAN HUI enters. He meets a peasant outside the bamboo fence.)

THE PEASANT: Director Pan, I'm off to the fields now. If you want to use any of the carts for the meeting, you can pick the animals up at my place. *(Exits.)*

PAN HUI: Right-o! Fine!

HO JUI-KUANG: Director Pan.

YANG CHUN: Good morning, Director Pan.

PAN HUI: Morning, Yang Chun.

HO JUI-KUANG: Director Pan, here's the training plan for the Self-Defence Corps. It's finished now.

PAN HUI: Staff Officer Ho, will you make out a table for me giving the posts, designations, numerical strength and

equipment of the friendly armies who'll be attending the joint military conference? If you can note down something about their internal situation too, so much the better.

HO JUI-KUANG: Very good! I'll go and draw it up right away. (*Exits.*)

YANG CHUN: Director Pan, there's something I'd like to tell you. The villagers have heard that Chao Yu-chen will be coming here for this conference, and there's been a lot of talk going on, none of it very pleasant.

PAN HUI: Ho! You know, Chao Yu-chen attacked Shanhochon on three separate occasions, but the people here put up such fierce resistance that he was never able to enter the place. He raged and fumed, announcing that he was going to split Shanhochon wide open and kill everyone, not even sparing the chickens and dogs. Do you think the people would welcome him here?

YANG CHUN: You can't blame them.

PAN HUI: Nevertheless, we'll still have to do some propaganda work to explain things to the people. Our aim in letting Chao Yu-chen come to attend the conference is to push him into the War of Resistance. This is still significant.

YANG CHUN: Yes, and if this meeting goes off all right, our work for the united front will again be pushed forward a big step. I'm very excited about it.

WU CHIH-KEH (*from inside the room*): Ah, it's you two?

YANG CHUN: Department Chief Wu, will you look over these slogans and see if they're all right?

WU CHIH-KEH: Just a minute, I'll be right out. (*He comes out and looks at the posters.*) Did you write these, Little Yang? Not bad. The joint military conference will definitely be convened the day after tomorrow, so the conference hall will have to be fixed up nicely, eh!

YANG CHUN: All right. Our propaganda team has been in a real flurry of activity these last few days. We're eager to win the commendation of the friendly armies. Our section chief rushed off with Commander Li last night to fight

the Japanese, and he didn't even have time to tell me what slogans still had to be made out for the conference.

WU CHIH-KEH: Never mind. All the draft slogans are in my hands. (*He takes a piece of paper from his notebook.*) Here, take this! Go and write these up now.

PAN HUI: Yang Chun, take this training plan along and give it to the leader of the Self-Defence Corps. If there are any parts he can't understand, just read it to him.

YANG CHUN: Very good! (*Salutes, and sings as she leaves.*) *Bold are the guerrillas resisting Japan, Like the newly rising sun...*

WU CHIH-KEH (*to PAN HUI*): Brimming with the vigour of youth, that girl is. Capable at her job, too. You remember the mass meeting that time? Her speech was so well put, and her manner so unpretentious. I think she could be promoted to chief of the propaganda section. What d'you think, Lao¹ Pan? Of course, again you'll say "No!"...

PAN HUI: The fact is that she's not very well steered. And politically she's still immature. In considering her for promotion, we shouldn't see only her good points. However, she's an ingenuous type, active and enthusiastic in her work. She has a bright future before her. (*He starts to write something.*)

WU CHIH-KEH: What's that you're busy with now, Lao Pan?

PAN HUI: I'm revising the draft of my speech to the joint military conference.

WU CHIH-KEH: Ill as you are, and still hard at it from morning to night! You've got to have adequate rest.

PAN HUI: If something remains unfinished, it's harder for me to rest than to put up with any illness.

WU CHIH-KEH: If a man doesn't know how to rest, then he doesn't know how to work. (*He snatches the paper from PAN HUI.*)

PAN HUI: Hey! Can you force rest on a man!

¹ "Lao" in Chinese is a term of endearment, used between intimate friends.

WU CHIH-KEH: Cadres are the Party's precious assets. And good health is one's capital. In this way I'm being responsible to the Party.

(At this moment the melodious chirping of birds is heard from nearby trees. ORDERLY "B" enters.)

ORDERLY "B": Department Chief, what are you doing up already?

WU CHIH-KEH: The sun's overhead by now. Would it be proper for me to be still in bed? Those birds sing so beautifully. Ah, Lao Pan, the scenery here in Shanhochien is truly poetic!

PAN HUI: It's a fine place indeed. The topography's especially favourable—High mountains right and left. With a mere platoon of men posted on the mountain tops at either side, Shanhochien could stand in the middle as though flanked by walls of steel and bronze. It isn't surprising that Chao Yu-chen's three attacks against this place were all staved off by the people here. His aim in taking this town was, I think, besides robbing everything he could from the people, to use this important strategic position against us.

WU CHIH-KEH: Certainly, anyone would be pleased to find a valuable place like this here in the valley. This joint military conference we're convening here the day after tomorrow is of great significance. When the meeting's over, Lao Pan, all the armies resisting Japan can assist one another and join hands to fight the resistance war together. I believe the political situation in this area will be changed entirely.

PAN HUI *(lightly)*: It's extremely necessary to hold this meeting, but it won't do to place absolute faith in it. This area has only been opened up recently. We can't afford to disregard the work of mobilizing the masses, increasing our military strength, transforming and establishing the local government to build up a base of our own. Unless we can stand firmly on our own feet I'm afraid not much will be accomplished by merely putting all our hopes in a united front.

WU CHIH-KEH: The united front is the key link through which everything else must pass. In other words, one cannot enter the second door without first passing through the main one. From now on we've got to concentrate all our efforts to break through this obstacle. That's the correct thing to do. Lao Pan, you're competent in most respects. It's only on this matter that you fail to win my admiration.

ORDERLY "B": Department Chief, here's your washing water.

WU CHIH-KEH: Ask Regimental Commander Chia to please come here.

ORDERLY "B": Very good! (*Exits.*)

(*WU CHIH-KEH returns to his room. ORDERLY "C" enters.*)

ORDERLY "C": Director Pan, Brigade Commander Wang of Chao's forces is here to see you.

PAN HUI: Oh, that's right, he wants to go back today. Go and find out from Staff Officer Ho whether the horses have been got ready or not.

ORDERLY "C": Very good! Shall I ask him to come in?

PAN HUI: Yes, ask him to come in.

(*ORDERLY "C" exits. WANG CHUNG-HUA enters, walking on crutches.*)

PAN HUI: Brigade Commander Wang.

WANG CHUNG-HUA: Director Pan. (*Excitedly.*) I've come to bid you farewell!

PAN HUI: But your wound hasn't properly healed yet. Why the hurry?

WANG CHUNG-HUA: It's all right for me to go back.

PAN HUI: Orderly, fetch a glass of water.

ORDERLY "C": Very good!

PAN HUI: The equipment in our hospital is very simple and we're short of medicines, but if you don't mind that, you can stay here a little longer. We'd make you very welcome.

WANG CHUNG-HUA: I'd be very willing to stay a few days longer, that I might benefit more from your valuable

counsel. My several talks with you, and what I have seen here, have resulted in my acquiring a new understanding of you men of the Eighth Route Army. Not only have I increased my knowledge, but, what is more important, I have seen what lies ahead in the cause of the War of Resistance. I'll miss this place very much, but it is my desire to return immediately. Director Pan! (*Determinedly.*) It's all because I was so muddle-headed in the past!

PAN HUI: Don't bring up things of the past, Brigade Commander Wang.

WANG CHUNG-HUA: At the beginning, I was determined to do my bit in saving the country, even at the cost of my own life. But under the pretext of unification Chao Yu-chen changed the designation of my forces, using the method of the big fish eating the smaller ones, and thus compelling me to be under his command. What reason had I to join that riff-raff to fight the Communists, to fight the Eighth Route Army? But I was to blame too, for having too many misgivings.

PAN HUI: Don't get too excited, please. And be careful of your health after you get back. Naturally, we can't agree with some of the methods you employed in the past; but you were in a difficult position, and we realize that. All the same, you're a soldier with a sense of righteousness.

WANG CHUNG-HUA: It was on the day I was wounded, when you came with the troops to rescue us, that I started to reproach myself. You've had frequent contacts with us, and you have at all times given us advice to help improve our relations with the people. When we were without food, you people came to our assistance. This was the sort of generosity you showed us, but how did we act towards you? Ah, it makes me feel ashamed.

PAN HUI: Our policy towards friendly units has always been one of mutual help. I hope that from now on we can unite together and concentrate our strength to fight the Japanese devils side by side.

WANG CHUNG-HUA: The mistakes I committed in the past were all carried out on orders from above, but I now realize that such orders should never have been executed at all. Upon my return, I will definitely explain to them the great significance the united front has in saving the country.

PAN HUI: I believe that you will certainly try hard to strengthen our unity after you get back. If we again fail to join hands in future, it'll only make the Japs happy.

(WU CHIH-KEH enters.)

WU CHIH-KEH: Brigade Commander Wang!

WANG CHUNG-HUA (*rising*): Department Chief Wu! I've come to say good-bye.

WU CHIH-KEH: Sit down, please! Is it imperative that you go back today?

WANG CHUNG-HUA: Afraid so. I'd like to ask you to give me the benefit of your advice in future.

WU CHIH-KEH: Ho, you flatter me! Please sit down. I hope you'll raise some opinions to us on the shortcomings you've noticed here.

WANG CHUNG-HUA: Afraid I can't. I've spent about six weeks here in your army hospital, and during that time I've seen the people bringing brown sugar, noodles and eggs to the bedsides of the wounded men. To their very mouths! Every man gets genuine care from the doctors and nurses, and the solicitude of his higher officers. Why, I've seen them lying in bed, forgetting all about their pain as they told stories about their battles against the Japs. Every single fact there made it clear to me that in your army the officers and men are brothers, and that the army and the people are one family. Department Chief Wu, without you people the cause of national revival is unthinkable.

WU CHIH-KEH: If you people exert your utmost efforts from now on, you will also be able to accomplish this much.

WANG CHUNG-HUA: Every fact here has told me this: the speciality of those scoundrels is to spread false rumours about the Communist Party and the Eighth Route Army.

(CHIA CHING-HSIANG enters.)

CHIA CHING-HSIANG: Ah, Brigade Commander Wang!

WANG CHUNG-HUA: Right, I must be going now. Please pass on my respects to Commander Li.

PAN HUI: We'll be convening the joint military conference the day after tomorrow. Why don't you stay for a few more days, so that you could attend the conference with us?

WANG CHUNG-HUA: But haven't I gone over that already, Director Pan? Our Commander Chao will be present at the conference, so what room would there be for me to say anything! No, I'll leave right away.

WU CHIH-KEH: It's a great pity that you'll be unable to attend.

PAN HUI: When you go back, Brigade Commander Wang, please explain to Commander Chao the significance of this conference. We hope he'll be able to come the day after tomorrow.

WANG CHUNG-HUA: Right, I'll certainly deliver your message. Good-bye!

WU CHIH-KEH: Orderly, send someone to accompany Brigade Commander Wang down the mountain. And tell the one who goes with him to be particularly careful on the way.

ORDERLY "B": Very good!

WANG CHUNG-HUA: Good-bye then!

WU CHIH-KEH: Good-bye! Excuse me, I won't be going to see you off.

(PAN HUI, WANG CHUNG-HUA and ORDERLY "B" exit together.)

CHIA CHING-HSIANG (*in the manner of a Kuomintang officer*): Department Chief Wu, what orders do you have for me?

WU CHIH-KEH: Please take a seat. You served for many years in the Kuomintang army and you're familiar with their manners and customs. Try to make as much contact as possible with them when the joint military conference opens the day after tomorrow.

CHIA CHING-HSIANG (*loudly*): Very good! The Department Chief's orders will be obeyed. I will definitely do my utmost!

WU CHIH-KEH: With us here, if it isn't worker and peasant cadres getting in touch with the friendly units, it's young intellectuals. Either they have no experience or they just don't fit in. I'm certain that you'll know the right way to handle things.

CHIA CHING-HSIANG: You flatter me, Department Chief. It's just that I have mixed in their circles for several years and have become well acquainted with their temperament. (*PAN HUI enters. The telephone in the inside room rings and he goes to answer it. The sound of talking and laughing is heard from the room.*)

CHIA CHING-HSIANG (*turning to WU CHIH-KEH after listening attentively to the telephone conversation in the inside room*): If I make any mistakes the day after tomorrow, I ask that you do not hesitate to step in, Department Chief. I'll then correct them at once.

PAN HUI (*coming out of the room*): Commander Li will be back right away. That was the Staff Officers' Department on the phone just now.

WU CHIH-KEH: How did the attack go?

PAN HUI: They drove the Japs back.

CHIA CHING-HSIANG: Our Eighth Route Army's reputation for fighting is really well deserved. This will be an eye-opener for the friendly armies who are coming to attend the conference. (*To WU CHIH-KEH.*) Department Chief Wu, this battle was fought at precisely the right moment.

WU CHIH-KEH: It's certain to make some impression on them. This is a gift to the joint military conference, and also an example for the friendly armies. Excellent!

CHIA CHING-HSIANG: It's wonderful! If you have no further orders for me, Department Chief, I'll go back now.

WU CHIH-KEH: All right.