

毛泽东

诗词十九首

MAO TSE-TUNG  
NINETEEN POEMS

WITH NOTES AND AN APPRECIATION

# MAO TSE-TUNG

## NINETEEN POEMS

With Notes by Chou Chen-fu

*and*

An Appreciation by Tsang Keh-chia

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS  
PEKING 1958

SECRET DATA  
*PUBLISHER'S NOTE*  
1958-1959

This selection contains nineteen poems by Mao Tse-tung which were published in the first number of the monthly *Poetry* in 1957 and in the January number of 1958, as well as a letter on the writing of poetry sent by Chairman Mao to the editors of this magazine. The poems are printed in chronological order, and explanations of the background of those times and the allusions used are given in the notes. Tsang Keh-chia, himself a poet, has written several essays to express his appreciation of Chairman Mao's poems. We asked him to re-write these articles for this book, to facilitate our readers' understanding and enjoyment of the poems, and we must thank him for this as well as for the preface he has written for us. Our grateful acknowledgement is also due to Mr. Andrew Boyd who has translated the first eighteen poems in this collection. The rest of the book has been translated by Mrs. Gladys Yang.

*Printed in the People's Republic of China*

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## PREFACE

TSANG KEN-CHIA<sup>1</sup>

Great interest was aroused in China and abroad by the publication last year and this spring of nineteen poems by Chairman Mao Tse-tung. Some of these were already widely known. Mao Tse-tung's poems are loved in China because they epitomize his experience during the years in which he has led the Chinese revolution; they record past struggles, reflect our present construction, and point the way forward to a splendid future.

These poems are written in a vivid style. They hold the reader spellbound. Mao Tse-tung is distinguished for his superb imagination, his vast intellectual range and mastery of the means of expression, and he frequently links Chinese mythology with present-day realities in such a way that these poems, rich in fighting spirit, are imbued with revolutionary romanticism.

Himself a lover and a master of classical Chinese poetry, Mao Tse-tung is not restricted by traditional forms, or fettered by old rules. In his hands these rigid patterns become thoroughly flexible—they appear a medium as free and unhampering as water.

Certain of these poems, such as "Snow," I knew by heart before their publication. Others I now came across for the first time, and my enjoyment of these increased with each new reading. I jotted down my personal reactions to each poem, and the result is the article "On Mao Tse-tung's Poems," based on a series

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<sup>1</sup> Editor of the monthly *Poetry*, and author of *The Black Hand of Sin*, *The Brand* and other collections of poetry.

of short essays I wrote to express my personal views, seek guidance from literary critics, and possibly be of assistance to young readers.

The translation of poetry is a most difficult task. This is especially true of classical Chinese poetry with its definite forms, fixed number of characters to each line, and the clearly specified rhyming schemes and patterns of long and short tones. To retain the original meaning, flavour and music of such poems in a translation is well-nigh impossible. The classical allusions and double meanings present foreign readers with additional difficulties. I hope my article and the notes in this edition may be of some help to lovers of Mao Tse-tung's poems in other countries.

As I say, this is merely a personal appreciation, and I cannot claim that all my interpretations are correct. Tastes vary when it comes to literature, and this is particularly so in the case of poetry. When so much is expressed in so few words, readers are bound to differ in their appreciation and understanding. I hope that readers abroad will first study the poems themselves and then turn to my article to compare their views with mine.

*March 23, 1958*

## A LETTER ON THE WRITING OF POETRY

January 12, 1957

Dear Keh-chia and Comrades,

I received your kind letter some time ago and am sorry to be so late in replying. As you wished, I have now copied out on separate sheets all my classical poems that I can remember, and I enclose them. With the eight that you sent to me they make eighteen altogether. Please let me have your comments and criticism.

Up to now I have never wanted to make these things known in any formal way, because they are written in the old style. I was afraid this might encourage a wrong trend and exercise a bad influence on young people. Besides, they are not up to much as poetry, and there is nothing outstanding about them. However, if you feel that they should be published and that at the same time misprints can be corrected in some of the versions already in circulation, then publish them by all means.

It is very good that we are to have the magazine *Poetry*. I hope it will grow and flourish exceedingly. Of course our poetry should be written mainly in the modern form. We may write some verse in classical forms as well, but it would not be advisable to encourage young people to do this, because these forms would restrict their thought and they are difficult to learn. I merely put forward this opinion for your consideration.

Fraternal greetings!

Mao Tse-tung



The foregoing letter was addressed by Mao Tse-tung to the editors of the new monthly Poetry. The Editors' Note in the first number of the magazine said:

In this issue we are publishing eighteen poems in the classical style and a letter on the writing of poetry sent to us by Chairman Mao Tse-tung. This is powerful support indeed for our magazine and tremendous encouragement. Chairman Mao is not only a great revolutionary leader, but a poet of the first order. On behalf of all our readers, we wish to convey our respects and thanks to him. Many of these eighteen poems are recent works or poems which have never previously been published. A few of them have appeared in certain periodicals or been jotted down and widely circulated; but in such cases misprints have crept in. The versions of the poems which we are publishing have been checked by the poet himself. In this first number, with the consent of the author, we are also publishing his letter to our editors. This letter expresses clear views on modern and classical poetry and the relationship between them, and is of great significance for all who read and write poetry.

## CHANGSHA

— to the melody *Shen Yuan Chun*<sup>1</sup>

Alone I stand in the autumn cold  
And watch the river northward flowing  
Past the Orange Island<sup>2</sup> shore,  
And I see a myriad hills all tinged with red,  
Tier upon tier of crimsoned woods.  
On the broad stream, intensely blue,  
A hundred jostling barges float;  
Eagles strike at the lofty air,  
Fish hover among the shallows;  
A million creatures under this freezing sky are striving  
for freedom.

In this immensity, deeply pondering,  
I ask the great earth and the boundless blue  
Who are the masters of all nature?

I have been here in days past with a throng of companions;<sup>3</sup>

During those crowded months and years of endeavour,  
All of us students together and all of us young,<sup>4</sup>  
Our bearing was proud, our bodies strong,  
Our ideals true to a scholar's spirit;  
Just and upright, fearless and frank,  
We pointed the finger at our land,  
We praised and condemned through our writings,<sup>5</sup>  
And those in high positions we counted no more than  
dust.<sup>6</sup>

But don't you remember

How, when we reached mid-stream, we struck the  
waters,

How the waves dashed against the speeding boats?

<sup>1</sup> The name of this melody, which literally means Shen Garden Spring, is taken from the garden of the Princess of Shenshui who lived in the Later Han dynasty. When a poem in the tzu form is said to be set to a certain melody, that simply means that it follows a specified traditional pattern. The name of the melody has no other bearing on the poem.

<sup>2</sup> An island in the River Hsiang west of Changsha.

<sup>3</sup> Between 1913 and 1918, when Mao Tse-tung was studying in the First Normal School of Hunan in Changsha, he and his school friends often rambled on Orange Island or went swimming there.

<sup>4</sup> In 1917 Mao Tse-tung organized the New People Society, which was formally set up on April 18, 1918. The members passed a resolution drafted by Mao Tse-tung to the effect that they should have high ideals and work for the nation. During the May the Fourth Movement the number of members increased to between seventy and eighty.

<sup>5</sup> They commented on the political situation, writing articles to attack abuses and support what was progressive. In September 1915, for example, when Yuan Shih-kai wanted to set himself up as emperor, the warlord then controlling Hunan supported Yuan and banned any opposition to him. But Mao Tse-tung published a pamphlet opposing the restoration of the monarchy, and this had considerable influence. In 1919 he headed the popular movement in Hunan to drive away the warlord Chang Ching-yao. He was the chief organizer and leader of every patriotic movement among the students of the First Normal School in their fight against the warlords.

<sup>6</sup> During his student days, the people of Hunan and the First Normal School knew what it was to suffer under the northern warlords. Three warlords governed the province in turn at that time. They introduced many repressive measures, and Mao Tse-tung and his friends had nothing but contempt for them.

# YELLOW CRANE TOWER<sup>1</sup>

→ to the melody *Pu Sa Man*<sup>2</sup>

Wide, wide through the midst of the land flow the  
nine tributaries,<sup>3</sup>

Deep, deeply scored is the line from north to south.<sup>4</sup>

Blurred in the blue haze of the mist and the rain  
The Snake and Tortoise Hills stand over the water.

The yellow crane has departed, who knows whither?<sup>5</sup>

Only this travellers' resting-place remains.

With wine I drink a pledge to the surging torrent;<sup>6</sup>

The tide of my heart rises high as its waves!

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<sup>1</sup> A tower high on the cliff west of Wuchang in the province of Hupeh. Legend has it that the saint Tzu-an once rode past here on a yellow crane.

<sup>2</sup> During the Tang dynasty a kingdom of Amazons paid tribute to the Chinese court. These women were known as the *Pu Sa Man*, and this melody was composed at this time.

<sup>3</sup> Nine tributaries of the Yangtse in or near the province of Hupeh.

<sup>4</sup> The Peking-Hankow Railway.

<sup>5</sup> Compare the lines by the Tang dynasty poet, Tsui Hao:

The man of old rode away on a yellow crane;  
Here remains nothing but the Yellow Crane Tower;  
The yellow crane has gone, never to return;  
For a thousand years only white clouds drift in the void.

<sup>6</sup> The Sung dynasty poet, Su Tung-po, once wrote of a pledge he drank to the moon's reflection in the river while recalling the heroes of old. A similar idea is implied here.

# CHINGKANG MOUNTAIN<sup>1</sup>

— to the melody *Hsi Chiang Yueh*<sup>2</sup>

Below the hill were our flags and banners,  
To the hilltop sounded our bugles and drums.  
The foe surrounded us thousands strong,  
But we were steadfast and never moved.

Our defence was strong as a wall already,  
Now did our wills unite like a fortress.  
From Huangyangchieh<sup>3</sup> came the thunder of guns,  
And the enemy army had fled in the night!

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<sup>1</sup> A mountain with a circumference of five hundred li between western Kiangsi and eastern Hunan. In September 1927, Mao Tse-tung led the Red Army here and established the first revolutionary base.

<sup>2</sup> The melody's name means "Moon over the western river," and is derived from two lines written by Li Po:

Now there is still the moon over the western river,  
Which shone on the beauty in the palace of the king of Wu.

<sup>3</sup> A district on the road to Chingkang Mountain. Between September 1927 and 1928 Kuomintang troops attacked this base many times. Mao Tse-tung's men blocked all the ways to the revolutionary base except that through Huangyangchieh. Then having lured the Kuomintang army in, they smashed the enemy offensive.

## NEW YEAR'S DAY<sup>1</sup>

— to the melody *Ju Meng Ling*<sup>2</sup>

Ninghua! Chingliu! Kweihua!<sup>3</sup>

The narrow path, the deep woods, the slippery moss!

And where are we bound today?

Straight to the foot of Wuyi Mountain.

At the mountain, the foot of the mountain,

The wind will unfurl like a scroll our scarlet banner.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1929 Mao Tse-tung and Commander Chu Teh led the Red Army eastwards from Chingkang Mountain to open up new revolutionary bases in western Fukien and southern Kiangsi. This poem was written during the march to Fukien.

<sup>2</sup> The name of the melody, "Like a dream," was taken from a poem by Emperor Chuang Tsung, who reigned from 923 to 926, of the Later Tang kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> These are the names of three counties in Fukien.

## HUICHANG<sup>1</sup>

— to the melody *Ching Ping Lo*

Soon the dawn will break in the east,  
But do not say we are marching early;  
Though we've travelled all over these green hills we  
are not old yet,  
And the landscape here is beyond compare.

Straight from the walls of Huichang lofty peaks,  
Range after range extend to the eastern ocean.  
Our soldiers, pointing, gaze south towards Kwangtung,  
So green, so luxuriant in the distance.

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<sup>1</sup>In January 1929, Mao Tse-tung led the Red Army to Huichang, a county of southern Kiangsi bordering on Fukien in the east and near Kwangtung in the south. Here the Red Army set up the south Kiangsi revolutionary base.

## TAPOTT

— to the melody *Pu Sa Man*

Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet;  
Who in the sky is dancing, waving this ribbon of colour?  
After the rain the setting sun has returned,  
And, line after line, the hills and the pass are blue.

Once there raged a desperate battle here;  
Bullet-holes have scored the village walls;  
They are a decoration, and the hills  
Today seem still more fair.

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<sup>1</sup> A district near Juichin in the Kiangsi revolutionary base. This poem was written after four large-scale enemy offensives against this base between the end of 1930 and February 1933 had been defeated.



## LOUSHAN PASS<sup>1</sup>

— to the melody *Yi Chin O*<sup>2</sup>

Cold is the west wind;  
Far in the frosty air the wild geese call in the morning  
moonlight.

In the morning moonlight  
The clatter of horses' hooves rings sharp,  
And the bugle's note is muted.

Do not say that the strong pass is guarded with iron.  
This very day in one step we shall pass its summit,

We shall pass its summit!  
There the hills are blue like the sea,  
And the dying sun like blood.

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<sup>1</sup> A strategic position in the north of Tsunyi County in Kweichow, commanding the immensely difficult road from Kweichow to Szechuan. In January 1935, during the course of the Long March, the Red Army occupied Tsunyi and then crossed Loushan Pass.

<sup>2</sup> The name of this melody, "Remembering the beauty of Chin," is taken from a poem by Li Po.