



Red Sun

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Foreword

In July 1946 the Kuomintang reactionaries, with the support of U.S. imperialism, launched a large scale civil war, frantically attacking the liberated areas throughout the country. The Chinese people and the Chinese People's Liberation Army had no alternative but to rise and fight back, bathed in blood, for freedom, liberation and a happy life. The result of over three years of bitter fighting was, on the one hand, the destruction of Chiang Kai-shek's reactionary army, over five million strong and armed by U.S. imperialism, and the final collapse of the criminal rule of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism in China, and, on the other hand, the standing up of the Chinese people and the birth of the People's Republic of China led by the Chinese Communist Party.

This war of liberation of the Chinese people represents a most important chapter in the history of the Chinese revolution. All that *Red Sun* reflects is one episode in the fighting in the eastern China theatre in the initial stages of the war — from the tail-end of the Lienshui Campaign to the victorious conclusion of the Mengliangku Campaign. It only represents one small page in this important chapter.

These ten years and more of war were like a mother and teacher to me. They nourished and taught me.

I already had the idea of writing this book during the war.

In the torrid heat of summer we had to climb across high mountains, in the bitter cold of winter we had to cross frozen rivers, and sometimes on pitch-dark stormy nights we had to make long forced marches. The fact that we were constantly on the move meant that I could only record these stories dis-

jointedly in my mind and had no opportunity of putting them down on paper.

After the victorious conclusion of the War of Liberation I at last had time for writing and life was more settled. After a period of thought and preparation I set pen to paper in the spring of 1956 and by the spring of next year I had finally completed the process of writing this book.

When I first set pen to paper I was steeped in memories of the initial stages of the war and it seemed as if there was nothing before my eyes but stormy darkness and blighted wildernesses, but when I got as far as the main attack by our fighters on the summit of Mengliangku it was just as if I was back there, and what appeared before my eyes now was a red sun resplendent with spreading rays.

The campaigns of Lienshui, Laiwu and Mengliangku are all historical facts of the war, but I am not setting out to be a military historian.

My desire and intention has been, while recording what we went through during this period, to portray a group of heroes of the revolution worthy of our respect and affection, such as Shen Chen-hsin, Ting Yuan-shan, Liang Po, Liu Sheng, Chen Chien, Shih Tung-ken, Lo Kuang, Yang Chun, Chang Hua-feng, Chin Shou-pen, Hua Ching, Yao Yueh-chin and so on, and at the same time to depict the brutality and vileness of some of the enemy, such as Li Hsien-chou, Chang Ling-fu, Ho Mang, etc.

There have always been two different kinds of wars. One is the popular, revolutionary war, the other is the anti-popular, counter-revolutionary war. The war we fought was a just war which belonged to the first category. The war waged by the Kuomintang clique and supported by U.S. imperialism was an unjust war which belonged to the latter category. The outcome of all unjust wars waged by the reactionaries will always run counter to their wishes and aims: They will suffer defeats and spell their own doom; while the final outcome of the just wars waged by the revolutionary people will inevitably conform

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to their wishes and aims. The victory will go to the people and their strength will grow.

It is now ten years since the victorious conclusion of the Chinese people's war of liberation. For ten years our motherland has been growing richer and stronger from day to day, and under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao Tse-tung, our peaceful building of socialism is developing at lightning speed and leaping joyfully forward with the same fervent power and invincible heroism that were displayed in the revolutionary war ten years ago.

If readers of *Red Sun* in other countries can learn something from this novel of the Chinese people's war of liberation of ten years ago and can realize from this the reason for the radiant face of People's China today and how difficult it was to achieve, I shall feel extremely happy.

Wu Chiang
Shanghai, February 1959.

Chapter One

I

DARK patches of grey cloud were moving slowly northwards from the south. The chill, watery sunlight gave one a sensation of loneliness and desolation.

Outside the city of Lienshui the umber fields lay silent along the banks of the River Yu.

At first in the sere brown woods the birds had chattered in alarm and had begun flying to and fro in trepidation. Then, the *lienchiaio*¹ that were so abundant hereabouts had suddenly flown from this village, from this wood, to another village, another wood, then on to yet another, and on and on till they were lost in the distance.

The people on foot, the travellers, and the traders' carts and mules and horses that normally passed in a continuous stream along the high road skirting the bank of the River Yu had also disappeared. The old gingko tree that had stood like an immense umbrella outside the south gate of the city for the last two hundred and forty years, rearing its lonely length on the river-bank, sighed and whispered as its dry, almost leafless branches swayed in the chill breeze.

It was the time of year when autumn dwindles into winter. The sorghum, the maize and the soya-beans had all been harvested and now the taro-vines, black and sapless, straggled over the fields like long pigtails. Stacks large and small of sorghum-straw and soya-bean haulms squatted here and there, scattered

¹A bird resembling a starling. It nests in the *lien* tree (*Melia Japonica*), the fruit of which constitutes part of its diet.

across the deserted farmland. There was not a cock to be heard crowing, not a herd of cattle to be seen, nor had the clear, lilting voices of the peasants driving their beasts or threshing or busy at their winter ploughing been heard for quite a number of days now.

For war was approaching this peaceful spot.

The Reorganized 74th Division¹ of Chiang Kai-shek's bandit army, after advancing to the walls of the city of Lienshui and being hurled back a week before, was now beginning a second desperate offensive.

This second offensive was an extremely fierce one, and the enemy had deployed the whole of their forces for it. From dawn till dusk wave after wave of aircraft, ten, twenty, even thirty at a time, had wheeled and roared through the sky above Lienshui and the country round about. Sticks of bombs had straddled the fields, the clusters of houses and the woods, pillar after pillar of smoke boiling up from the ground, swirling dust and earth high into the air. And the shelling was even more ferocious than the bombing. Sometimes the shells poured down like a thunderstorm, and the houses, the trees, the grass and everything else in the countryside quivered.

Yang Chun, section-leader of 4 Section of 8 Company of Su Kuo-ying's regiment, together with the fighters of his section, had for the last two and a half days been waiting in a covered shelter in the trenches without throwing a single grenade; every man had been issued eighty rounds of rifle ammunition but none of them had yet fired a single shot except for the morning before, when the planes had flown really low over them, their wings almost brushing the tops of the poplars, and then Chang Hua-feng, exasperated by what he felt was too much of an insult to swallow, had let fly at the "white sun in a blue sky" wing-markings.

¹The 74th Division was formed by a reorganization of the old 74th Army and was equivalent to an army. It consisted of three brigades (equivalent to the original divisions), each consisting of three regiments.

"What sort of fighting do they call this? Never known anything like it!" grumbled Chin Shou-pen, sprawled back in the shelter.

"Artillery warfare, the latest style!" said Chang Hua-feng, sitting beside him.

"Artillery warfare? Where are our guns, then?" asked Chin Shou-pen, patting the rifle in his hand.

"If they had any guts at all they'd come out and fight instead of shelling from a distance!" muttered the machine-gunner Chin Li-chung to himself indignantly.

"Don't worry, they'll be here sooner or later," the section-leader Yang Chun assured him, polishing his bayonet.

Chin Shou-pen blinked his red eyes and looked at the section-leader for a moment, then sighed.

Feeling that Chin Shou-pen was in low spirits, Yang Chun stabbed at the earth wall of the shelter with the bayonet he was holding and said:

"Don't think that there won't be a need for our bayonets and bullets! One day *we'll* have artillery as well!"

Just as he said this a howitzer shell burst with a roar forty or fifty metres away and earth from the roof of the shelter where they were squatting splashed around them, shaken loose by the vibration. Then five more shells fell in the vicinity. The ammunition-man Chou Feng-shan had his head jolted from the ammunition-box on which it had been resting on to the floor. Chin Shou-pen's ears, though stuffed with cotton-wool, still ached from the jarring of the explosions, and he hurriedly shrank back into a corner of the shelter, his hands clasped tightly over his ears.

"The shells frighten the recruit and the machine-guns frighten the old soldier. You a recruit?" asked Chang Hua-feng, stifling a laugh.

"Well, to tell the truth, machine-guns don't worry me. But these 'old cows'¹ give me the jitters, I must admit!" replied Chin Shou-pen.

¹The fighters' name for field-guns.

There was a sudden bustle of activity in the trenches, and shouts came from the positions occupied by 5 and 6 Sections.

Yang Chun put his head out of the entrance to the shelter and looked outside: two fighters lay at the entrance to 5 Section, one of them dead, his head buried by earth. The other was sprawled back on a heap of dislodged earth, his legs propped across a shattered piece of timber and his head lolling down on the other side of the heap; Yang Chun recognized him as young Hung Tung-tsai. Outside 6 Section's shelter three men were carrying the injured deputy section-leader of 6 Section out along a communication-trench. Yang Chun watched with mixed feelings: he felt he was lucky not to have had his own shelter hit by an enemy shell but at the same time he was conscious of the enemy menace that was creeping up on him, closer and closer. "Are we just going to sit here and take it?" He longed to charge out of the trenches with his section and come to grips with the enemy for once. He went back into the shelter gnawing his lip, but when he saw Chin Shou-pen cowering in the deepest part of the shelter, his body hunched into a ball and his head clasped tightly in his arms, while the enemy shells were showering about them, all thoughts of "charging out" immediately vanished from his mind.

"What's happened?" asked Chang Hua-feng in a low voice.

Yang Chun gave a slight shake of his head.

"What was all the noise about outside 5 Section?"

As Chang Hua-feng asked this second question he struggled to his feet intending to go outside the shelter to have a look. Yang Chun held him back and said:

"Better put some more work in on our earthworks."

When the men realized that the next section's earthworks had been hit they looked up as one man at the roof of their shelter to see if it was holding firm. Chin Shou-pen's earth-stained hands moved down reluctantly from over his head and ears, but at once pressed themselves to his chest. In a flat voice he said:

"I don't mind four or five mortar-bombs. But these howitzer shells! Don't go calling me a coward, but one of them's enough for me!"

While there was a lull in the shelling, and when the aircraft circling overhead had moved off for a while, they added a layer of earth half a metre thick to the roof of the shelter, made the low wall in front of the entrance to the shelter thicker, and also laid a thick tree-trunk across as a screen.

In the course of a day the enemy advanced three kilometres under cover of the aircraft and the guns. This meant that the enemy's leading units were still twelve kilometres away from the first line of defence held by Yang Chun and the others. At this rate, if they continued to stay in their trenches like a simple-minded cat waiting for a dead mouse to come along, it would be four days before they could come to grips with the enemy, before the bayonets of Yang Chun and his comrades would have a chance to be wetted with the blood of the enemy. For a unit which had been used to being on the offensive it was a painful mental trial to have to change over to defensive trench warfare. To have to spend their time in open-eyed sleep without being able to get a glimpse of the enemy or touch a hair of his head was for Yang Chun and his comrades not fighting at all — at least, if you did call it fighting, it was a very irritating kind of fighting.

At long last the pulse-quickenning signal for action came. Their orders were to make their first sortie that night.

As they groped their way along the edge of the River Yu the water whispered past them like a murmur of sorrowful indignation. To be under the blue night sky, crowded with stars, after being cramped up in the sunless gloom of the shelter, was for them at this moment to return to a wide untrammelled world. Chin Shou-pen in particular was in high spirits; with his rifle, with bayonet fixed, in one hand and a grenade in his other hand, he was thinking to himself: "This is the kind of fighting I like, even if it means getting killed." There was no path along beside the river and the tide had just gone out, leaving a soft,

slippery expanse of mud at the water's edge into which their feet and legs sank from time to time.

Chen Lien, the commander of 2 Platoon, was taking 5 and 6 Sections the long way round across open country to the west of the dyke, while Yang Chun's section had been split up into two fighting patrols and sent along the river to attack the enemy's front. They made contact with the enemy by a cook-house tent that stood alone on the dyke; they were just about to rush them when an enemy tommy-gun opened fire, the bullets streaking over their heads to hit the river with a splutter. With a sudden bound Chin Li-chung was on top of the dyke; he planted the legs of his machine-gun on the stump of a felled poplar and it at once began belching crimson flame and a concentrated stream of bullets. Three of the enemy, who were in section strength, were struck down and lay sprawled on the edge of the dyke; a tommy-gun from the hand of one of the dead men lay five paces away from the body, continuing to fire the last few rounds from its magazine. Those of the enemy who were still alive had turned and fled in panic, uttering cries of alarm whose words were unintelligible. As Yang Chun, Chang Hua-feng, Chin Shou-pen and the others came up, Chin Li-chung's fire was fiercely pursuing the enemy's backsides. Almost simultaneously the other half of the section under the deputy leader and the two sections under the platoon commander Chen Lien came round in front of the enemy and cut off their retreat. Some of the enemy died in their tracks and some, frightened out of their wits, leaped into the River Yu and were drowned. Only one of the enemy section was left alive; he had been struck in the chest by two bullets and his khaki uniform was soaked with blood; the badge on his chest inscribed with the word *Ling*¹ was also completely soaked with blood. When they carried him away he became vaguely conscious that he had been taken prisoner; he raised his right hand slightly and shouted at the top of his voice:

¹Unit badge of the 74th Division: the commander's name was Chang Ling-fu.

"Hurry up and kill me! Kill me!"

Before they had gone more than a few steps he was dead.

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TWO days later the enemy finally pushed forward to the approaches to the city of Lienshui. Of Yang Chun's section only five men remained: the other half of the section under the deputy leader had given their lives when their shelter had been hit by a hundred-pound bomb which had buried them beneath a mound of glossy brown earth. Yang Chun's left shoulder had been pierced by a shell-splinter over an inch long. It was just as he discovered that he was wounded that the seventh enemy infantry assault reached the trenches that they were holding. Not having time to bandage up the wound, he charged out with the remaining four fighters of his section. After advancing a short distance he took up a position in a foxhole, turned his rifle on the enemy and began firing despite the pain from his wound. He saw clearly one of his shots pierce the belly of a man running straight towards him; it was a tall man with a bald head, holding a tommy-gun; after being hit he ran on four or five steps before falling, clasp ing his belly. At this moment Yang Chun's brain was much clearer than it had ever been in the shelter, and he was filled with a confidence in the accuracy of his shooting that he had never experienced before. "And another one!" He was flooded with exhilaration at the thought of destroying the enemy utterly. Beside a tree-stump thirty metres away lay one of the enemy: red face, large nose, his head lolling across the stump, blood spurting from his mouth. The enemy's assault formation was a concentrated one, making them look like an angry swarm of bees as they charged forward, heads down and bodies hunched forwards; they seemed to have had very strict training, for throughout the assault they kept formation, those in front remaining in front and those behind remaining behind. What was probably an officer lifted his head from time to time from behind a low wall a hundred and

fifty metres to Yang Chun's front; a machine-pistol sputtered in his hand as he shouted: "Charge! Charge! No turning back!" Urged on by the sound of his shots and his voice, the assault force would run a short distance and then get down, their heads pressed closely against the ground to avoid the fire they were running into, occasionally looking round to see whether those behind were following them up in the assault. The formation and speed of this assault enabled Yang Chun to observe them at his leisure and to select his targets.

The officer's head appeared again from behind the wall; he fired a dozen rounds in succession and shouted to his men now flattened against the ground to get up and continue the assault. Yang Chun did not waste this briefly-presented opportunity but pressed his trigger and sent a shot speeding across; after that the officer's head did not appear again from behind the low wall. Everyone now burst suddenly from the shelter of the trenches like bullets from a gun and, completely oblivious of the hail of bombs from the enemy aircraft roaring overhead, hurled themselves tornado-like against the enemy. The enemy troops got up from the ground in a panic; some turned and ran, some after getting up threw themselves down again, and some, trembling in every limb, began firing wildly at the troops who were counter-attacking. Yang Chun and Chang Hua-feng were in the forefront of the attack and in one rush they reached the low wall.

During his years as a soldier Yang Chun had been on at least thirty sorties like the one the night before last. During the past eight hours the enemy had launched seven assaults, but this vigorous counter-assault in reply to the seventh one was in actual fact the first thing of its kind in Yang Chun's five years of soldiering. He felt happy, and also curious. "Gives you quite a kick, fighting this way" was the reaction in his mind. The joy of victory had made him unconscious of the pain from the wound in his shoulder, and at the wall he killed another of the enemy who came rushing at him.

Then a feeling of utter weakness came over him. After the exertion of running at full speed and the loss of an inordinate

amount of blood from his wound, the strength drained from his limbs and he collapsed at the foot of the wall. He felt the weight of his hot rifle on his body. Although he was still conscious his face was now pale and his breathing had become faint; groaning weakly, his mouth dry and his lips moving continuously, he lay at the foot of the wall with his eyes closed against the fierce glare of the sun. After perhaps a minute or less the tang of saltpetre-smoke caught his nostrils and he opened his heavy eyelids again. An enemy incendiary had fallen on a small farmhouse on the east bank of the River Yu and the buildings and ricks were alight, and thick smoke was being wafted across on the wind. In an effort to rise he drew out a numbed right hand from beneath the small of his back and strained with his hand and his buttocks at the same time against the hard ground; his teeth clenched tightly together, he partly raised his heavy body from the ground; but it was more than he could manage and he fell back again and lay as before at the foot of the wall. After lying there panting for a moment he felt for the water-bottle hanging from his belt, hoping to get a mouthful of water from it. He shook it hard, but it was so light that it was almost weightless and as it struck against the barrel of his rifle it made an empty sound. "No water left," he muttered. He turned his head, which was resting on the ground, to left and right and looked: nothing moved. The guns were silent now, and rifle fire could only occasionally be heard. Almost the only thing he could see was the body of an enemy soldier lying by the river to his right front. He suddenly felt alone and uneasy. "Am I done for?" was the question that formed itself in his mind. After a while, a sudden burst of rifle fire roused him from his mental stupor. The sound of running feet came nearer and nearer and he instinctively pulled himself up; a searing flame spread through him and his entire body felt like a blazing brazier. Before his eyes there appeared the form of the enemy soldier he had seen a quarter of an hour ago. He was certain he was not mistaken: it was the officer whose head had appeared over the wall and who had been felled by him with one shot. The officer was holding a brand-new machine-pistol; the new metal

had not yet lost any of its blueness and it flashed and glinted in the sunlight. The officer's eyes also glinted. Blood had run down over his nose and mouth from under his hair, and down on to his neck. He seemed to realize that the man here in front of him was the same rifleman that had struck him down, and hatred showed in his purple-glinting eyes. Supporting himself with an effort, one hand clasping the low earthen wall and the other holding the gun, his forefinger trembled on the trigger as he took aim at Yang Chun. But the gun refused to fire. With a look of alarm and despair on his face he leaned on the wall considering what other method he could use to deal with his enemy. At the moment when the officer had taken aim at him Yang Chun had quickly dodged to one side but he tripped against a stone and staggered several steps before recovering his balance. The last thing he had expected here at this time was a fight with naked steel. He was fully aware that his antagonist's weakness was either a damaged weapon or an empty magazine. After a few seconds' hesitation he tucked the butt of his rifle under his arm, raised the flashing bayonet, and charged across the low wall, then turned and lunged with all the force at his command at the officer's chest. The violence of the effort made his hands twitch and the bayonet embedded itself in the wall a good two or three inches away from the officer's shoulder. Just as Yang Chun, with large drops of sweat starting from his forehead, was about to withdraw the bayonet from the wall for a second lunge, the officer collapsed in a heap on the ground. With a great effort Yang Chun withdrew the bayonet. His head was swimming even more violently than before and the last ounce of strength seemed to have drained from his body. He slumped panting against the wall in the same attitude as the enemy officer had stood in a few moments before.

While pursuing the enemy Chin Shou-pen had tripped on the edge of a shell-crater and gashed his knee; he now came hobbling back to the low wall with his arm round Chang Hua-feng's shoulders for support, his trouser-leg rolled up to his thigh and his knee bandaged.

They supported Yang Chun between them and started back for their positions, but they had only gone a dozen steps when Yang Chun suddenly stopped and said:

"Bring that officer along. He's still alive."

"I've got his gun," said Chin Shou-pen, brandishing the brand-new machine-pistol.

"Bring him along. He's an officer, and a live one at that!" said Yang Chun firmly.

"If he's not dead yet he soon will be," objected Chin Shou-pen, reluctant to go back.

"I'll go," said Chang Hua-feng. He ran back towards the wall.

3

THE River Yu, the glossy yellow loess of its banks, the tall poplars, the old ginkgo tree, the trenches and the shelters constructed with such care, their home for the last eight days and nights: it was with tears in their eyes that the troops had said goodbye to them!

In the past two days the three riflemen Chang Hua-feng, Chi Li-chung and Chin Shou-pen and the ammunition-man Chou Feng-shan had covered a hundred and twenty *li* northwards by forced marches. The only sleep they had had, had been three hours at noon the day before, when they had got down behind a stack of sorghum-straw in the open fields to avoid being machine-gunned by enemy aircraft.

Chin Shou-pen felt thoroughly exhausted. His rifle and rice-bag hung from Chang Hua-feng's shoulders, yet even so his progress was a constant alternation between marching and resting, and always and everywhere he was wanting to pause for a rest. He had always been a talkative man, but these last two days he had become the most silent and uncommunicative of the four.

Squeaking one-wheeled barrows and three-wheeled ox-carts were transporting rice, uniforms and ammunition, and