

# Songs of the Red Flag



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# *Songs of the Red Flag*

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## COMPILERS' FOREWORD

**T**HIS anthology of folk songs is a product of the Great Leap Forward. During 1958 the working people of our country performed breath-taking miracles on every front with the kind of power that "shifts mountains and drains the sea." It is in the songs of their own creation that this burst of energy on the part of the working people has been most truly and vividly reflected. The new folk songs are a free creation of the working masses, an expression of their real feelings. "Poetry puts our will into words: songs give our words immortality." What these new folk songs convey is the inflexible will and heroic determination of the working people of our country to measure their stature against the gods and wage war on the earth beneath their feet. They have thrown overboard all the old traditions and habits that were impeding their advance. Poetry and song on the one hand and work on the other have once again been reunited on the basis of a new socialist and communist ideology, and in this sense the new folk songs may be said to be the first buds of a mass communist literature. These are the new *Kuo Feng*<sup>1</sup> of a new socialist age. These are songs of joy and courage of the Chinese people who have become the masters of their fate. They

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<sup>1</sup> *Kuo Feng*—The folk songs of fifteen states during the Chou Dynasty collected in the *Shih Ching* (*Book of Songs*).

sing the praises of their motherland, they sing the praises of their own Party and leaders; they sing of their new life, they sing of their heroism in their work and in the struggle, they sing of their desire for an even finer future. These new folk songs possess a new content and a new style that set them poles apart from the folk songs of the old days and even the Three Hundred Songs<sup>1</sup> look drab beside them.

Last year a new campaign for the collection of local folk songs<sup>2</sup> was launched under the leadership of the Party. Provinces and cities throughout the country and many counties and communes, as well as a fair number of factories and military units published anthologies of songs from their own areas and organizations. It was on the basis of these collections that the present anthology was compiled. After careful consideration we finally selected three hundred songs from among the available material. The songs have been classified according to content under four headings: first, *Songs in Praise of the Party*; second, *Songs of the Great Leap Forward in Agriculture*; third, *Songs of the Great Leap Forward in Industry*; fourth, *Songs in Defence of Our Motherland*.

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<sup>1</sup> The Three Hundred Songs — The *Shih Ching* (*Book of Songs*), the first collection of songs in the history of ancient Chinese literature. It contains a total of 305 songs reflecting the complex social life and sharp class struggle of the five hundred years after the 11th century B.C.

<sup>2</sup> The collection of local folk songs — According to tradition folk songs were collected in large quantities in China during the Chou Dynasty (11th century B.C. to 221 B.C.). Later, during the reign of the Emperor Wu Ti of the Han Dynasty (who reigned from 140 to 87 B.C.) a special office was set up to collect folk songs.

The folk songs produced during the great leap forward faced us with an *embarras de richesse* and we worked on the principle of selecting the cream of them. Our criterion for inclusion was that a song must combine originality of ideological content with excellence of artistic form. We found that many of the new folk songs were original in conception, fresh in imagery, vividly worded, melodious in inflection and lively in form; they combined realism with romanticism. It gave us infinite pleasure to include these songs in this collection.

Folk songs of the Han people predominate in this anthology over those of brother nationalities and some of the national minorities are not represented at all. It is a fact that the national minorities are equally rich in songs, but since many of them have not been translated into Chinese (Han) or have not been well translated, it was not possible to include more of them. A second feature is the predominance of songs about agriculture over those about industry. Another point is that we have selected more songs from some provinces than from others. Further, to avoid repetition, we have as far as possible avoided including, or have included sparingly, any works duplicating others in such respects as their choice of subject, wording or analogy. In view of the various points mentioned above it is inevitable that our collection should suffer from the defect of incompleteness.

Time will show that the new folk songs will have an ever greater influence on the development of the new poetry. The history of the development of Chinese literature tells us that every successive high tide of literary creation has had a profound

causal relationship with folk literature. Such a relationship existed between the *Chu Tzu*<sup>1</sup> and the *Kuo Feng*, between the *Chien An* literature<sup>2</sup> and the *Yuehfu*<sup>3</sup> of the two Han Dynasties (206B.C.-220A.D.), between Tang poetry and the songs of the Six Dynasties (3rd-6th century), between Yuan drama and the *tzu* and *chu*<sup>4</sup> since the Five Dynasties (907-960), and between the novels of the Ming (1368-1644) and Ching (1644-1911) Dynasties and *shuochang*<sup>5</sup> since the two Sung Dynasties (960-1279). Today, in the splendid brilliance of the general line for the building of socialism, the towering deter-

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<sup>1</sup> *Chu Tzu* — Local songs and poems of the ancient kingdom of Chu, chiefly represented by the works of Chu Yuan (340 to 278 B.C.) but also including some works of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 220 A.D.).

<sup>2</sup> *Chien An* literature — *Chien An* was the name of one of the reign-periods of the Emperor Hsien Ti of the Han Dynasty (reigned 190 to 220 A.D.). "*Chien An* literature" refers to the literature of the period from 196 to 220, which centred round the works of the then prime minister Tsao Tsao and his sons Tsao Pei and Tsao Chih; most of the other important writers of this period were officials of the Tsao family. They mostly drew inspiration from folk songs to create their own lyrical poetry, which constituted a climax of poetic writing in the history of Chinese literature.

<sup>3</sup> The *Yuehfu* of the two Han Dynasties — *Yuehfu* originally referred to the official bureau set up in the Han Dynasty for the collection of poems and the setting of them to music; later the folk songs and poems collected and set to music by this institution also came to be called *Yuehfu*.

<sup>4</sup> *Tzu* and *chu* — Types of classical Chinese songs and poems. At first they were both set to music but later they were in general only written to fit already established tunes. The patterns were many and varied, with uneven length of line, frequent change of metre and fairly free use of rhyme.

<sup>5</sup> *Shuochang* since the two Sung Dynasties — Spoken and sung folk literature since the 10th century, i.e. the story-tellers' synopses and the colloquial novels which developed from them.



mination of the working people and the high degree of enthusiasm expressed in the leap forward songs will inevitably have its effect on literary creation. It will provide our writers and poets with new inspiration and so long as we remain close by the side of the working people and make a conscientious effort, there is no doubt that we shall be able to produce a continuous flow of works which will do credit to the age in which we live and lead our literature towards new heights.

January 8, 1959

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