

An illustration of three young women, the 'Iron Girls', working on a rocky cliff. The woman in the foreground is wearing a red jacket with yellow trim and a woven hat, swinging a large hammer. In the background, two other women are also working on the cliff face. The scene is set against a backdrop of steep, reddish-brown cliffs.

Iron Girls Conquer

Red Cliff Island

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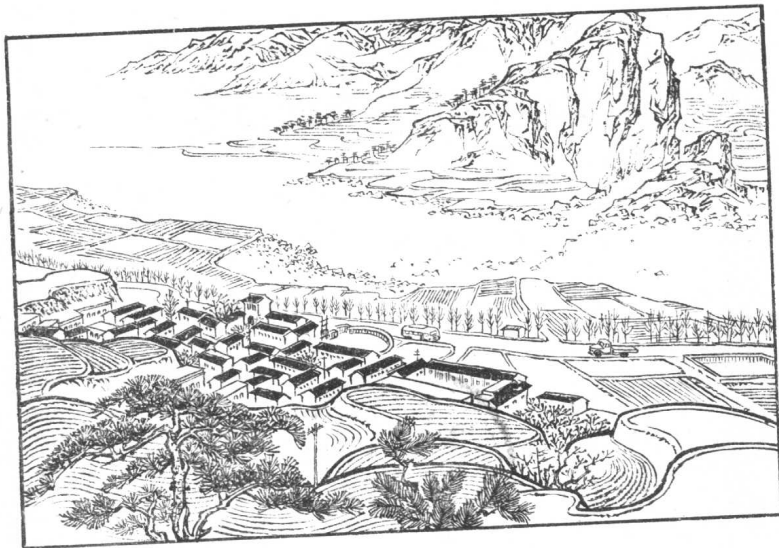
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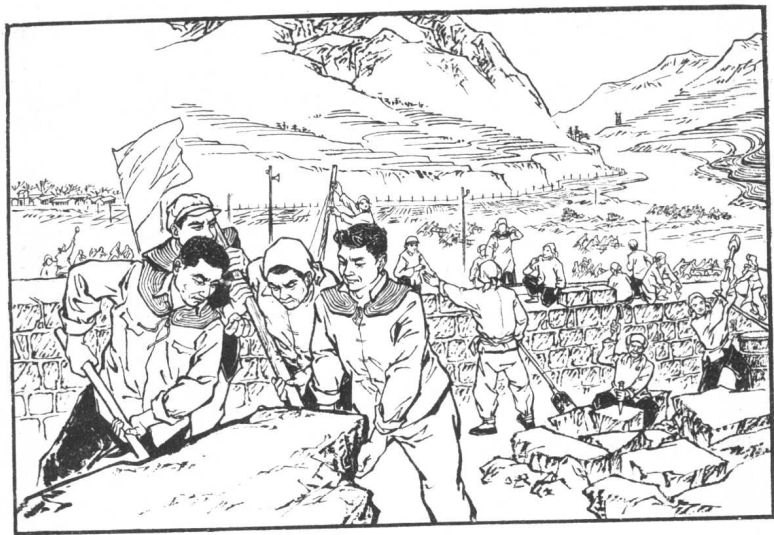
人民教育出版社

E. 10/11



1. The Red Rock Beach Brigade¹ is in the Pishi River Valley² east of the Taihang Mountains³.

In the past, during the rainy months in summer, the river was wide and rough⁴. But in winter and spring, it dried up, leaving a stony riverbed over a *li* wide⁵.



2. In the winter of 1974, during the movement to learn from Tachai, the commune members, led by the brigade Party branch, started an exciting project¹. It was to build a three-thousand-metre-long dyke² along the river north of the village. By narrowing the river, 200 *mu* of land could be reclaimed.³



3. Work went ahead smoothly.¹ Soon the project was half completed. "Attention, comrades, ..." the loudspeaker at the worksite came to life.² It was an announcement that the Fourth National People's Congress³ had just been held. You can imagine⁴ the joy of the commune members when they heard this! Ma Chijung, the leader of the Iron Girls' Team, was especially excited.



4. Li Shih-ying, the tomboy¹ of the team, came up and said, "Chi-jung, you know what I've been thinking since I listened to the Congress reports? Our project is too conservative²! Why not make the river even narrower?"



5. This was exactly what Ma Chi-jung had been thinking herself.¹ Red Cliff Island lay in the middle of the river right opposite the brigade, forcing the river to go around it.² "If we split³ the island and let the water through, we can reclaim still more land. Wouldn't that be wonderful?" Chi-jung asked.



6. The two girls were thrilled¹. They decided to put forward² the idea for discussion that evening when the team studied the Congress reports. If everyone agreed, they would put their proposal³ to the Party branch.



7. At the political night school¹ that evening, Chi-jung put forward the idea of splitting open the island. A lively² discussion followed, and the iron girls were thrilled by this daring³ idea. "That's the spirit⁴," they said. "Nothing could show our revolutionary determination⁵ more."

