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刘红梅 主编 吴思博 翻译 玛格丽特·凯里 润色

责任编辑: 张 维  
责任印制: 韦 舰  
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**Liu Jiang and Cao Jinxiu**

Love in Huaqiangbei ..124

**Zhang Hanshui** A Fast-moving Time ..146

**Dong Wei** Reaching the Top ..160

**Zhu Dayi** Conversing with the Heavens ..180

**Xiong Yuan** Flying over the Oceans and Mountains in My Heart  
and in My Dreams ..200

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** ..225

In the 1930s, the first Chinese writer Lin Yutang who introduced China to the world in English compared the nation to autumn. Today, I see my motherland in the best time of spring and summer, confident and radiant, with a long journey ahead of her. Just as the wishes in Liang Qichao's book: How beautiful you are, our young China—your years shall be measured by Heaven; How powerful you are, our young Chinese—you shall live a long life like your country.







# THE BEST TIMES

—Stories of the Youths in China  
from 1949 to 2009

Editor-in-Chief: Liu Hongmei

Translated by : Wu Sibao

Polished by : Margaret A. Carey

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# PREFACE

It was mid-summer by the end of the writing of this book. It so happened that I received reunion invitations from both my high school and university classmates—the former for a reunion after we had graduated for twenty years, while the latter was for twenty years of knowing each other. Twenty years, what a long journey in one's lifetime! What brings people who were all separated along the way from the east to the west back to where they started, despite all the traveling it took?

Twenty years ago, there was a popular song in China called *Let the Young Friends Get Together*. The last part of the lyrics goes, “In another twenty years, let us get together again. How beautiful will our great motherland be!...Who will create these miracles? It will be me, it will be you, it will be us, the new generation of the 1980s!...Glory to the new generation in the 1980s!”

I spent my high school days in the border city Dandong, in northeast China in late 1980s. Under the education system where everything revolves around the national college entrance examination, I was fortunate enough to meet a brilliant Chinese teacher named Ding Baolin. He encouraged students to write freely, not for the sake of a test, but simply to fully express oneself and

enjoy the Chinese language. The topics we chose turned out to be either about youth, or about our motherland. One of my classmates wrote: “From the ancient times walked my motherland, sometimes with difficulties like an old lady, and sometimes vibrantly as a young man.” These lines impressed me because the intertwining timeline reminded me of that well-quoted essay in our textbooks: “Is our nation China old indeed?... in my heart, there stands China as a young person!... A country will be strong if its young people are strong; will be independent if its young people are independent; will be free if its young people are free; will make progress if its young people are making progress...” This is the *Ode to Young China* written by the intellectual Liang Qichao in the late Qing Dynasty (1900).

Liang Qichao was twenty-seven years old when he wrote *Ode to Young China*. His whole youth was caught up in the darkest era in the history of China. In late 19th century, the Qing Empire was defeated miserably by the constant invasions from foreign colonial powers. Liang Qichao, as one of proposers, endeavored to save the country with the government through the Reform Movement of 1898, which only lasted for one hundred and three days. Liang Qichao



was forced to go into exile. *Ode to Young China* was a cry-out of the heart in a time such as this. The passionate words were a calling for Chinese young people to make every effort to challenge the fate of the “old empire”.

Liang’s dream was only to be realized half a century after *Ode to Young China* was written. On the ancient Oriental land, the New China stood up after all the wars and the bloodshed.

Season after season, another sixty years have passed. In the traditional Chinese calendar, sixty years happen to be a time unit called “*Jia Zi*”. In the eyes of modern historians, sixty years is a short social vicissitude. Within these sixty years, China has experienced changes beyond the previous hundreds or even thousands of years. Not until I walked through my youth along with my peers, did I realize how fortunate I was to be born in the New China which is like “a young man”, and how hard it is for this country to be called “young China”: throughout her birth, growth, hardships and revivals, generations of Chinese have fought for it till their hair turned from black to grey—we ourselves are among these people.

The people recorded in this book are young men or women from different times since the People's Republic of China was founded. No matter how history has steered its way, and how their experiences vary from each other, they are all children of this land, and owners of this land. All their hopes and frustrations, pains and happiness are closely linked with it. Thousands of such Chinese young people, who are walking in different stages now, have devoted their youth and passion to the same land through tears and pain.

In the 1930s, the first Chinese writer Lin Yutang who introduced China to the world in English compared the nation to autumn. Today, I see my motherland in the best time of spring and summer, confident and radiant, with a long journey ahead of her. Just as the wishes in Liang Qichao's book:

How beautiful you are, our young China—your years shall be measured by Heaven;

How powerful you are, our young Chinese—you shall live a long life like your country.

*Liu Hongmei*

Aug 31st, 2009  
Dandong, China

# ZHU FENGYI

## Cast the First National Emblem

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**Zhu Fengyi** was born in 1932. He entered the First Machine Works of Shenyang (today's Machine Tool Plant of Shenyang) in 1950. After retiring in 1993, he has been devoted to education in the basic technology and has been a part-time teacher in Shenyang Machine Tool and Power School and the Northeast Engineering College.

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In 1950, I entered the First Machine Works of Shenyang, which is today's Machine Tool Plant of Shenyang. Before the liberation of the Chinese people in 1949, the factory was birthed by the Japanese, the predecessor

of the First Machine Works of Shenyang, to carefully produce machine tools and some machine equipment, aiming to enhance their domination and plunder of northeast China (formerly known as Manchuria). At that time, having just turned 18 years old, I was zealous and vigorous. Recommended by a relative, I, together with other young men, was assigned to work in the trough mould shop in the First Machine Works of Shenyang.

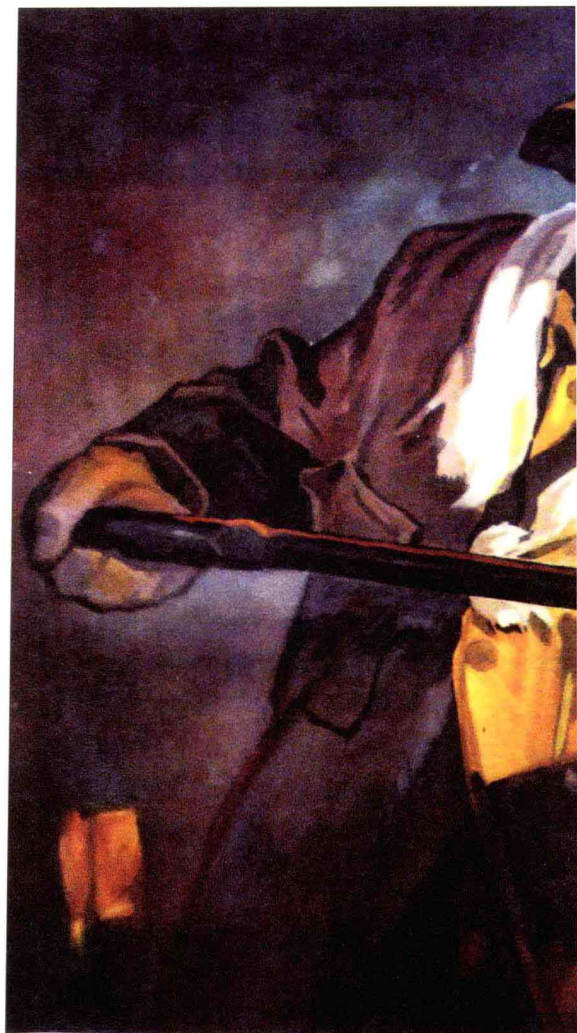
The New China had just been established, and there were plenty of factories in Tiexi, most of which were legacies from the period of the (Japan's) "Manchukuo" puppet state and some of which were already old and shabby. Our factory was located on the common boundary between Xing-



An old factory district of heavy industry.

hua Street and North Tiexi Second Road in Shenyang. At that time, the workshop was almost in ruins and was piled high with shabby machine tools everywhere. In the north side of the workshop, there was so much useless iron that we even used an iron barrel to carry drinking water. Furthermore, most of the machine tools in the shop were lacking parts, in other words, they were mostly incomplete.

I was still very proud of being a worker in the New China. Wearing my new work clothes and looking at the big factory before my eyes as well as all those machines I had never seen before, I felt an excitement bubbling from the bottom of my heart and considered it an honor to work there. The older workers often told stories about how they simply did not have personal freedom, and were treated like a beast of burden in the period of the “Manchukuo” puppet state. I was also told that workers were no more than slaves and led a life of total darkness. The Japanese army



提高生產 保



# 登質量 是熱愛祖國的表現

Poster: *To Show Your Love for the Motherland, Increase the Production and Guarantee the Quality!*

by Yu Yunjie

Zhaohua Fine Arts Publishing House