



THE ART OF MODERN CHINA

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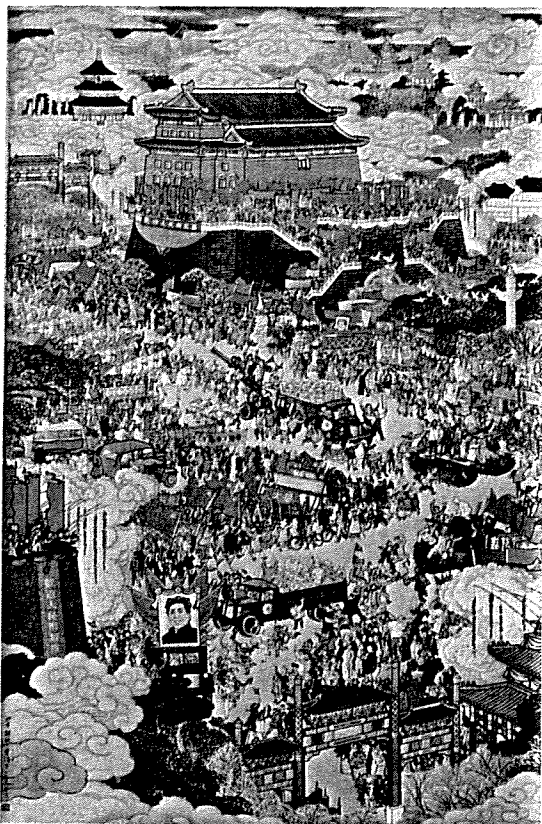
Western-Style Art under Mao

1949–1966

Mao Zedong's military strategy of gradually strangling China's cities by surrounding them with his peasant armies succeeded when Beijing surrendered peacefully to the People's Liberation Army on January 31, 1949 [fig. 7.1]. In the months leading up to this moment, underground party members in the art schools had quietly begun building support for the insurgency. Beiping Art Academy student Hou Yimin (b. 1932), for example, solicited from his professors strikingly designed handbills that praised peace and welcomed the liberating army. Although the Nationalist government was prepared to evacuate university professors to Taiwan, most art professors remained behind.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND ITS NEW ART

As major cities were liberated, Communist cadres well indoctrinated in the principles of Mao Zedong's "Yan'an Talks on Literature and Art" moved in with the army and assumed control of cultural and educational institutions. In March a military group experienced in making propaganda for the Anti-Japanese War effort and for the social projects of the Communist party took control of the National Beiping Arts College. Among its leaders were printmaker Jiang Feng (1910–1982), poet Ai Qing (1910–1996), the art theorist and sculptor Wang Zhaowen (1909–2004), and the composer Li Huanzhi (1910–2000). Based on promises made by the Communist leadership before liberation, Xu Beihong (1895–1953) was retained as director and the academy faculty remained on salary. The school would soon be renamed Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), with a calligraphic logo written by Mao Zedong himself. Academy artists would now be subject to the direction of the Communist party and, like all of China's artists, their lives would begin a dramatic and sometimes painful transformation.



7.1 Ye Qianyu (1907–1995), *The Liberation of Beijing*, 1959, ink and color on paper, 197 × 130 cm, new year's picture, National Museum of China, Beijing

By the time the Communists lowered the Nationalist flag over the presidential palace at Nanjing on April 23, 1949, the Chiang Kai-shek government had already fled to Taiwan, an island province reclaimed by China in 1945 after fifty years of Japanese rule. The People's Liberation Army continued its unrelenting advance, marching into Shanghai on May 27, 1949, and taking Guangzhou on October 14. Even before territorial control was complete, the process of remaking China's economy, government, society, and cultural institutions according to a new Communist framework began. The new political and social roles required for art were announced at the All-China Congress of Literary and Arts Workers held in Beiping (now Beijing) from July 2 to 19, 1949.¹

Political leader Zhou Enlai presented the government plan for arts and culture. First, he stated, literary and art workers from all parts of China and all backgrounds, Communists and non-Communists alike, must work together. Second, following the principles laid out by Mao Zedong in his 1942 Yan'an Talks, artists were to serve the people, especially the workers, peasants, and soldiers. Third, popularization was to take precedence over raising of artistic

standards. Fourth, the contents and forms of old literature and art were to be remolded. Fifth, artists and art leaders must consider the needs of the whole nation in their art, not individual concerns. The specific ideological and stylistic mandates articulated over the duration of a two-week meeting would have great significance for future arts policies.

Veteran printmaker and Communist art leader Jiang Feng (1910–1982) outlined in urgent terms the agenda for the art world: to quickly train many new art cadres, to remold folk artists and *guohua* artists to serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers, and, by means of modern printing technology, to issue large quantities of art for the masses. The ultimate goal was to replace the vast market for unacceptable older types of art with mass distribution of new printed matter made to the Communist party's specifications. Although this absolute rejection of traditional art by China's cultural authorities was later criticized as extremist, it determined the overall direction that Chinese visual culture would take in the post-1949 period.

The policies the Communist party put in place in 1949 accelerated the internationalizing trend already evident in the prewar period but guided it along a narrow path. By its centralizing strategy, which eliminated the possibility of dissent, the party mortally weakened certain forms of traditional art—particularly the classical *guohua* painting so successfully revived by such masters as He Tianjian, Zheng Wuchang, and Wu Hufan in the 1930s and 1940s—and replaced them with new forms, particularly academic and realist oil painting. Although the protests of traditionalists were briefly acknowledged, in actuality Chinese art and art education, like every other aspect of Chinese life, from architecture to automobiles to apparel, would gradually abandon certain premodern aesthetics, traditional techniques, and artistic forms as China sought to become a modern nation.

At the 1949 meeting, Jiang Feng stated what Zhou Enlai did not: that all artists, regardless of previous political affiliation, were required to study the policies of the Communist party. He praised the accomplishments of Communist artists in the War of Liberation as models for all art workers nationwide. A concurrent exhibition of work by about three hundred artists was held in Beijing, and later shown in the prewar art centers of Shanghai and Hangzhou, to demonstrate how Communist artistic policies were put into practice. Outline and flat-color painting, a new style derived in part from northern Chinese folk art, was considered most suitable for the didactic purposes to which art would now be put. Easily readable woodblock prints were also appropriate to this new party-approved manner [see figs. 6.22 and 6.27]. Other genres in which the Communist artists worked

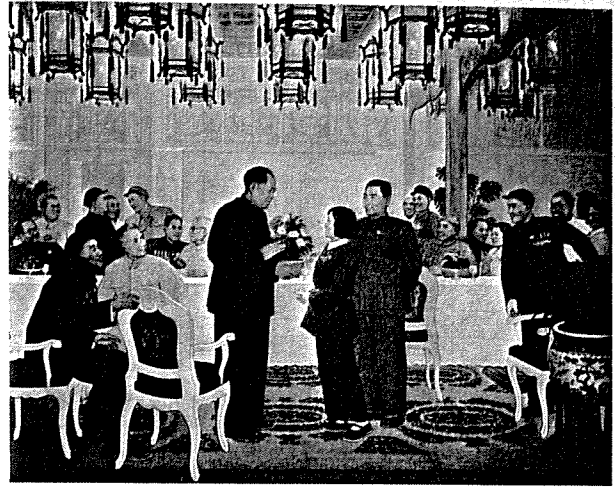
included serial picture stories (*lianhuanhua*), wall paintings, political cartoons, pictorial magazines, and propaganda flyers. Oil painting and sculpture could also, in the postwar era, serve the national reconstruction.

In short, the new arts policy required that artwork should be educational and should take its contents from life. It should serve the people, inspire their political enlightenment, and encourage the people's enthusiasm for labor. Of particular significance was the party's emphasis on mass publication of pictorial images. Developed with the utopian aim of making art available to everyone, the policy complemented the party's suppression of elite forms of art that had dominated the pre-liberation Chinese art market. In practice, fine art was to be replaced by posters, comic books, and pictorial magazines, thus redistributing power, as defined by ownership of art, to the people. Between 1949 and 1952 a systematic reform of old art was attempted, leaving only three categories of art approved by the national art establishment: new year's pictures, woodblock prints, and *lianhuanhua*. New year's pictures, a peasant genre now produced to party standards for the people, was most vigorously promoted.

NEW NIANHUA (NEW YEAR'S POSTERS)

Between 1949 and 1952, therefore, popularization of art was the national goal, and almost all artists were enlisted in the project of designing new-style *nianhua* (new year's pictures), which were reproduced as posters and magazine illustrations. Because the popular custom of buying prints every year made them an easy way to reach most of the people, revolutionary new year's prints, usually woodblocks, had been promoted by the party during the 1940s. After 1949, with strong support from the government, the genre was able to move into a full-color format. Between 1949 and 1952 artists who specialized in all media—including oil painters, woodcut artists, traditional-style painters, cartoonists, and illustrators—were organized to create new-style new year's pictures. In 1950 alone four hundred new year's picture designs were published. In 1952, 570 new pictures were issued in forty million copies. Post-1949 new year's pictures followed the old styles in many ways but incorporated new revolutionary themes. They remained popular with their consumers, who were primarily rural, until the mid-1980s' introduction of large color photocalendars.

Although the new *nianhua* was eclipsed as the sole official style when others were added in the first five-year plan of 1953, the method by which *nianhua* were disseminated, high-speed publication, remained the most essential component of Chinese art world activity until the 1980s. Rejection of the privileged status of the original work of art



7.2 Lin Gang (b. 1924), *Zhao Guilan at the Heroes Reception*, 1952, ink and color on silk, 77 × 105 cm, new year's picture, Art Museum, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing

was almost total: the collectability of art was of little concern, and the mass-produced reproductions of art images became far more significant than any material remnant of the artist's own handiwork.

The prizewinning poster *Zhao Guilan at the Heroes Reception*, by a young instructor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Lin Gang (b. 1924), exemplifies both the new subject matter (praise for the accomplishments of the people) and the new style (outline and bright color) [fig. 7.2]. It was first painted in 1950 in a Western medium commonly used for commercial art, gouache on stiff drawing paper, a version that survives today only as a poster. The 1952 version reproduced here was painted on silk with the assistance of *guohua* painters at the academy. By so vividly bringing model worker Zhao Guilan into the palace-style architecture of China's political center, the Zhongnanhai compound, and placing her side-by-side with Mao Zedong in a frieze-like central figure grouping, Lin Gang's image speaks of the new leadership's respect for the working class, and specifically for female workers. Going beyond the mandated outline and flat-color manner, Lin's use of ornate architectural decoration and vanishing-point perspective have strong links to a local Beijing-Tianjin *nianhua* tradition.

Another cheerful and appealing *nianhua*, *The Liberation of Beijing* [see fig. 7.1], by the technically versatile and conceptually creative Ye Qianyu, seems to push the ideological and historiographic potential of the genre to its limits. Ye Qianyu had been well known as a commercial artist, designer, and cartoonist in Shanghai before the war and easily shifted these versatile skills to new purpose. Although after 1949 Ye Qianyu became a figurative ink painter and chair of the Central Academy of Fine Arts *guohua* depart-

ment, much of his work in the 1950s was of a distinctly non-traditional kind, one that successfully combined folk art, cartoon art, and political propaganda to create appealing new images.

Ye's colorful picture of happy citizens celebrating amid Beijing landmarks, which was widely reproduced as a poster in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the PRC, praises the peaceful liberation of Beijing. Although the vivid cartoon figures animate this image, a stylistic source for the overall composition was the fifteenth-century Buddhist temple site of Fahaisi in the Beijing suburbs, with its mural paintings. Ye's visit to the elaborately colored and limned Ming dynasty paintings impressed him deeply and was largely responsible for the site's designation by the government as a protected cultural monument. Although subsequent research has shown these technically dazzling works to be products of the imperial painting atelier, the 1950s art world believed them to be painted by anonymous ancient folk artists, the kind of work ignored by China's elitist art connoisseurs and thus appropriate stylistic models for a new art of the people. Ye Qianyu repurposed their auspicious pink and green clouds, blue and green color, fine outlines and bright color, originally painted in service to Buddhist doctrine, to create his happy scene of new China. This *nianhua* demonstrates how art-historical references in painting might contribute to construction of the new national art, with correct forms deployed for the correct purposes. Lin Gang's work, also fully in keeping with the goals of the new year's picture movement, takes a step in another direction. His portraitlike depictions of the key figures—the model worker, Mao, and other government officials—suggest the interest in realism that would increasingly dominate Chinese art after 1953.

ACADEMIC REALISM AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW NATIONAL ART

The new year's picture movement, which was based on forms of art associated with China's peasantry, had a specifically Maoist bent. At the same time, Stalinist art theory and criticism were published in Chinese translation to guide Chinese artists.

Already in 1951 and 1952, a campaign against modernist art, condemned in Soviet terms as both bourgeois and formalist, had forced Lin Fengmian and Wu Dayu [see figs. 3.9–3.10] to leave the art academy in Hangzhou and return to Shanghai. Realism was deemed the progressive style. Old European-educated faculty who remained, such as Fang Ganmin [see fig. 3.11], were thoroughly misunderstood by the students and despised as incompetent for their modernist styles. According to standards of the day, the oil portrait

of Mao Zedong installed high on Tiananmen was a suitable purpose for painting.

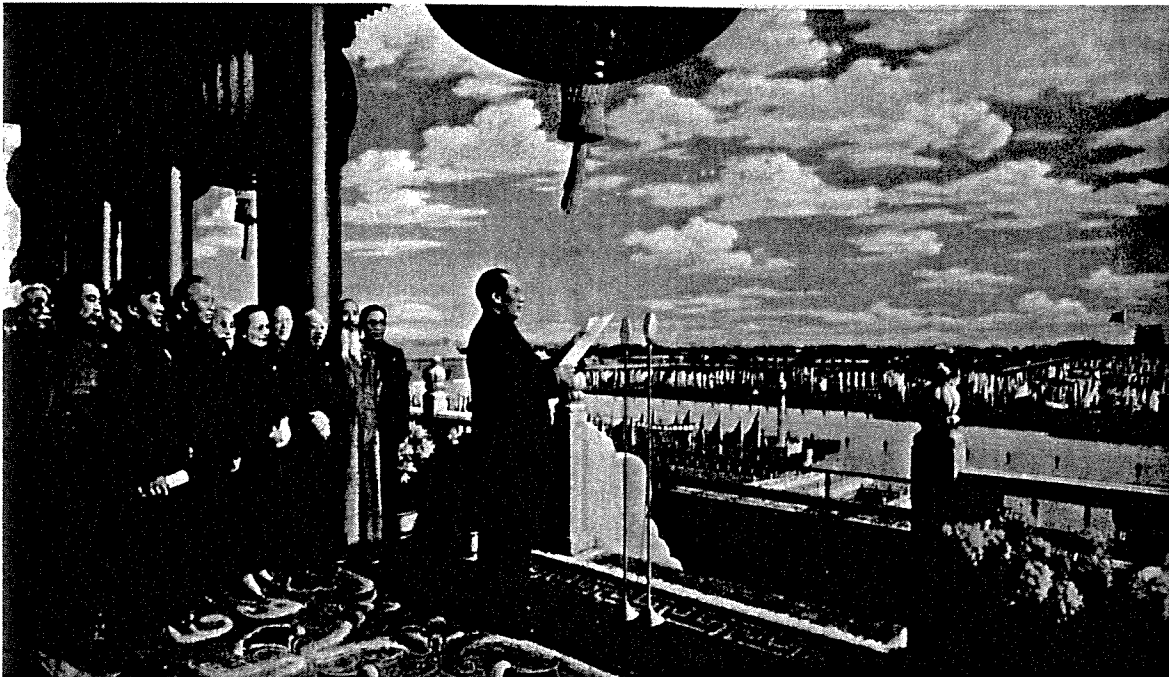
As the Chinese Communist Party constructed its own history, oil painters from all over China were commissioned to create a visual iconography of key moments in its path to victory. In 1951 the Central Museum of Revolutionary History opened in the western part of the former imperial palace compound.² Luo Gongliu (1916–2004), a Hangzhou-educated artist who was a veteran of the Yan'an Communist base, served as one of the leaders of the art project. Artists recruited for the project included many professors from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, both non-Communists like Xu Beihong, Wu Zuoren, and Dong Xiwen, and Communist veterans Wang Shikuo and Hu Yichuan.

Luo himself contributed several works to the museum. His *Mao Zedong Reporting on the Rectification in Yan'an* brought to vivid life a crucial moment of Mao's leadership over the Communist Party in 1942 [fig. 7.3]. With a banner reading "Hold Truth, Revise Error" at his side, Mao is depicted as he instructs his comrades in the party how to establish and uphold ideological discipline within their ranks. Although the painting was presented as though it were a historical document, we might note that a national ideological campaign was under way at just the time Luo Gongliu painted it, in 1951 and 1952, and it may thus be read as validating the painful contemporary process. Cultural figures, particularly those with ties to the Nationalist party and who had not previously undergone the rectification campaign at Yan'an, were now investigated, shamed, and subjected to intensive thought reform. While this painting is rendered in a highly detailed and realistic manner, as encouraged under the new regime, its unvarnished academic style is one that will be characterized by subsequent Chinese artists as naïve and provincial. Using skills developed at the national art academy in the late 1930s, Luo conveys the tension and urgency of the meeting by means of the intense concentration visible on the faces and in the postures of the portraitlike characters who listen to Mao Zedong's speech. The melodrama and painterly panache of Soviet socialist realism are not yet evident.

The question of the proper style for oil painting was a highly charged one in the 1950s. On the one hand, emulation of Soviet examples would become increasingly strong as the decade passed. On the other hand, national pride dictated that China should develop its own form of oil painting. This idea resonated with European-trained artists, who might still maintain the idea that development of an original style was the core of artistic creation but would now substitute the nation for the individual. *Inaugural Ceremony for the New Nation* [fig. 7.4] by Dong Xiwen (1914–1973)



7.3 Luo Gongliu (1916–2004), *Mao Zedong Reporting on the Rectification in Yan'an*, 1951, oil on canvas, 164 × 236 cm, National Museum of China, Beijing



7.4 Dong Xiwen (1914–1973), *Inaugural Ceremony for the New Nation*, 1952–1953, oil on canvas, 230 × 400 cm, poster version of 1954, Collection of Yang Peiming

was painted for the museum display in 1952 and 1953, before Chinese artists were familiar with Soviet methods of brushwork, color, and composition. Rather like Lin Gang's gouache *nianhua* design of the same year, it uses Western pigments to suggest the bright, flat tones of the Chinese folk art aesthetic and further emphasizes motifs of Chinese palace architecture such as lanterns and ornate woodwork. Dong Xiwen, like Luo Gongliu, had attended the Hangzhou National Art Academy. Unlike his older colleague, however, he was not a veteran of the Communist army but had spent most of the wartime period in Sichuan. While Communist Party veteran Luo Gongliu painted an event significant to the party's internal history, Dong Xiwen, who had lived in the Nationalist-controlled areas during the war, created a work of significance to the entire reunified nation.

Inaugural Ceremony for the New Nation depicts Mao Zedong standing atop Tiananmen (The Gate of Heavenly Peace at the south of the old imperial palace) as he announced the formation of the People's Republic of China and its new government on October 1, 1949. Mao is set off from his colleagues in a triangular space created by crossing diagonal lines of vanishing-point recession. From the lower right, following the converging lines of the silken carpet, marble parapet, iron railing, broad boulevard, and crowds of flag-waving citizens, the viewer's eye is led toward a yellow-roofed gate at the eastern end of the square and comes to rest on Mao himself. Scudding clouds in the blue sky travel in the same direction, leaving open only the halo-like blue patch around Mao's head. From the middle left, our eye runs over the faces of the six vice-chairmen of the Central People's Government, across the old palace's marble bridges, toward the high-flying flag of the new People's Republic and the Qianmen Gate to the south. Over the heads of the multitudes assembled on the square circle five doves of peace.

Flanking Mao, the figures in the front row proceed from the uniformed figure of General Zhu De, head of the People's Liberation Army, at left, to Gao Gang, head of the northeastern provinces, at far right. Between them are ranged the imposing image of Liu Shaoqi, in a tidy blue Sun Yat-sen-style uniform; Madame Song Qingling, the widow of Sun Yat-sen, wearing a long *qipao*; the elderly and slightly rumpled Li Jishen, with hat in hands; and the bearded Zhang Lan, wearing a long scholar's robe. Premier and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai, behind Zhu De, is prominent in the second row, and beside him is barely visible the distinctive jaw of Dong Biwu, who headed the Political and Legal Committee of the new government. To the right and behind Madame Song is Guo Moruo, head of the government's Culture and Education Committee. Finally, behind

Zhou Enlai stands Lin Boqu, the secretary general of the new government. The varied appearances and dress of the new leaders emphasize the diverse range of party and non-party centers of power they represent, all envisioned as cooperately serving the new nation.

After receiving a positive appraisal from Mao Zedong and the party leadership in the fall of 1953, Dong Xiwen's *The Inaugural Ceremony for the New Nation* was reproduced as a poster and published in many newspapers and magazines to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. A monumental history painting in the grand European tradition, it became an icon of the new Chinese nation, and for artists, of the nation's new art. Distinctively Chinese motifs, such as red lanterns, silk carpet, porcelain flowerpots, and palatial setting, all rendered in black outlines and bright colors, earned the work nativist praise as an example of "the Sinicization of oil painting." One might say that the painting succeeded on all counts in realizing the aspirations of the new Chinese art as they were understood in 1952.

Most Chinese who had lived through the warlord era, the Japanese occupation, the civil war, and the economic collapse of the late 1940s wished for nothing more urgently than the establishment of a peaceful society and stable government. Many were extremely hopeful about China's prospects under the newly unified government of the People's Republic of China and quite enthusiastically sought to follow the instructions they believed would rebuild the nation. Dong Xiwen was an ardent non-Communist supporter of the new government and typical of many idealists from the cultural world. Even before the Communist victory, he designed a flyer, "The Liberation Army Is the People's Savior," in preparation for the People's Liberation Army entry into Beijing, and he joined the new *nianhua* movement with a picture celebrating the liberation of Beijing. The fate of Dong Xiwen's *Inaugural Ceremony for the New Nation* illustrates the difficulties faced by even the most loyal and dedicated of artists as they sought to serve the nation amid constantly shifting standards and policies.

The relatively inconspicuous dark-haired man appearing immediately to Mao Zedong's left in the painting was Gao Gang, Mao's longtime ally and successful economic administrator. He was appointed chairman of the State Planning Council and moved from the northeast to Beijing in 1953, just as the painting began to receive positive attention. Soon after, Gao Gang met an unhappy and rather mysterious fate, quietly accused of disloyalty in early 1954, then purged from government, and finally dead by suicide. With *Inaugural Ceremony for the New Nation* scheduled for showing at the Second National Art Exhibition of 1955, Dong Xiwen was



7.5 Dong Xiwen (1914–1973), *Inaugural Ceremony for the New Nation*, oil on canvas, 230 × 400 cm, revised ca. 1955 and 1967, National Museum of China, Beijing

asked to correct the painting, to remove the offender from his official position and from history itself. A slightly easier proposition than the Stalinist practice of removing people from photographs, Dong revised the intricately balanced painting by replacing Gao Gang with a potted chrysanthemum, adding two microphones that shifted the center of balance somewhat to the right, and removing a cloud to open up the sky. A new poster was issued of the revised version and the *Inaugural Ceremony for the New Nation* continued to enjoy its iconic status. Dong Xiwen's construction of the visual history of new China's birth had thus been caught up in what would be the first major internal Communist Party purge of the post-1949 era; it would not be the last. Eventually the composition's fate would parallel that of the nation it symbolized, suffering five revisions at the hands of four artists.

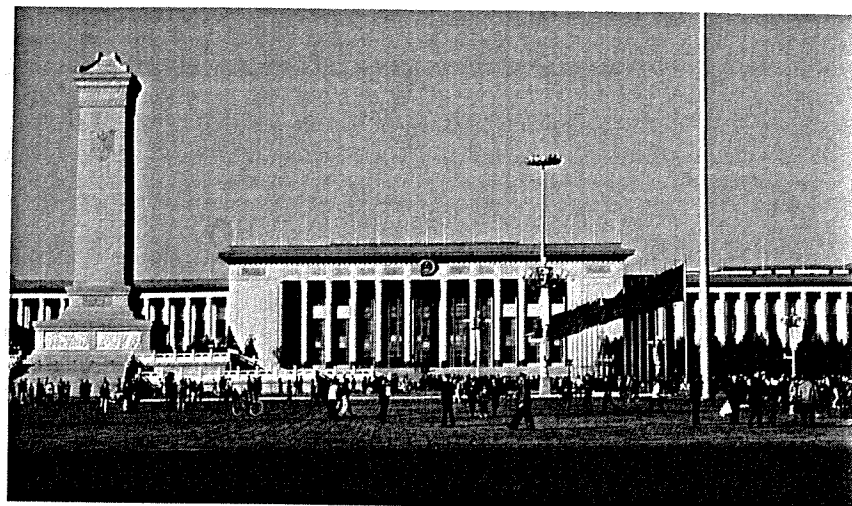
Two versions of the canvas survive today. One, Dong's original, was revised a third time by the artist himself under the immense pressure of the Cultural Revolution [fig. 7.5]. Dong removed the disgraced Liu Shaoqi, moving Dong Biwu to the front row to fill his space. In 1972, while terminally ill with cancer, Dong Xiwen was ordered to rework the painting yet a fourth time, to remove Lin Boqu (1885–1960), the white-haired gentlemen at far left. He declined, and two younger artists from CAFA, Zhao Yu and Jin Shangyi, were enlisted to make an exact copy of the iconic painting with

the required changes. Finally, after the Cultural Revolution, authorities decreed that Dong's original iconography should be hung in the museum with Liu Shaoqi, Gao Gang, and Lin Boqu replaced. The original version no longer existed, so the 1972 copy was revised to add figures it had never previously possessed, thus creating a fifth version. The intervening rise of Soviet socialist realism is evident in the square jaw and rectangular haircut of the new Gao Gang. This copy with its restored iconographic program is the version most often published today under Dong's name, rather than his original version [fig. 7.4], which exists only in poster reproduction.

THE MONUMENT TO THE PEOPLE'S HEROES

These few examples of oil painting illustrate the adaptation of academic European modes of painting to the new ideological needs of the Chinese Communist Party and government in the period before widespread adoption of Soviet models for art and architecture. A similarly significant effort, but in architectural and sculptural form, the Monument to the People's Heroes was erected between 1952 and 1958 to the south of Tiananmen at roughly the spot where the national flag flies in Dong Xiwen's *Inaugural Ceremony for the New Nation*. Constructed of granite with inset marble panels of relief sculpture, it rises on a two-tiered platform to a height of almost 125 feet [fig. 7.6]. As intended, it has become a potent symbol of patriotic martyrdom and at the same time

7.6 Monument to the People's Heroes (at left) in front of the Great Hall of the People, completed in 1958, granite and marble, height ca. 38 m, Tiananmen Square, Beijing



tells a carefully constructed story of the history of modern China.

A resolution to undertake its construction was passed by the People's Consultative Congress (PCC) on September 30, 1949, and ground breaking for the monument occurred that very evening, the night before Mao Zedong ascended Tiananmen to read the proclamation that established the new state. Seventeen different work units, from the PCC to the Peoples Liberation Army, participated in the project. When the construction committee was organized in 1952, Peng Zhen (1902–1997), the mayor of Beijing, was chosen as its chairman, while the learned vice minister of culture, Zheng Zhenduo (1898–1958), and the noted American-trained architect Liang Sicheng (1901–1972) served as vice chairs.

Liang, who was the son of late Qing dynasty political reformer Liang Qichao, brought his profound knowledge of the history of Chinese architecture as well as the beaux arts architectural practices he learned at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1920s to his design for the Monument to the People's Heroes. Combining elements of the imperial architectures of China and Europe, it brings to mind both the traditional stele of Chinese commemorative sculpture and such Western forms as the obelisk of the Washington Monument. If we take aesthetic communication to be a visual language, what the architects of this public work, Liang Sicheng and his talented wife Lin Huiyin (1904–1955), achieved may be described as fully bilingual. In this regard, they and the equally multicultural designer of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, Lü Yanzhi, succeeded in speaking both to China and to the world.

Teams of prominent historians and artists assisted with design of the historical narratives that would surround the

lower section of the monument. The art group, comprised of many sculptors who were educated in Europe, was headed by Liu Kaiqu, a French-trained artist who at that time served as the director of the art academy in Hangzhou. Eight senior sculptors from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, assisted by a team of younger assistants, worked with many of the same painters engaged with the nearby Museum of Revolutionary History to develop and execute the designs. Unlike the more narrowly defined subjects painted for the Museum of Revolutionary History, which focus mainly on the heroism and sacrifice of the Communist Party and its army, the narrative friezes installed on the Monument to the People's Heroes cover a larger sweep of modern history and emphasize the contributions of all patriotic Chinese to the struggle against feudalism and imperialism. The story begins with the Chinese burning of opium at Humen, Guangdong, in 1839—an act of resistance to British imperialism that provoked the Opium War [fig. 7.7].³ The depredations of the Taiping Rebellion appear on the monument as a virtuous rebellion against the feudal Qing government. The south side commemorates the 1911 revolution that overturned the monarchy; the demonstrations on May 4, 1917, against the weak Chinese government's approval of the Treaty of Versailles; and anti-imperialist demonstrations in the foreign concessions of Shanghai on May 30, 1925.

The narrative program for the Monument to the People's Heroes was developed after the outbreak of the Korean War, when China was becoming increasingly isolated internationally. Taken as a whole, it emphasizes China's victimization at the hands of foreign interests and thus sets a pattern for a strain of historiography that remains vital in the PRC even today. Rather than glorifying the exploits of the Red Army, the scenes were selected to emphasize a model



7.7 Zeng Zhushao (b. 1908), *Burning Opium in Humen*, 1958, from *Monument to the People's Heroes*, relief sculpture, marble, 200 × 495 cm

of popular patriotic sacrifice. It was only on the north side, directly opposite the Tiananmen gate itself, that the most important panels reveal the Communist liberation of China as the culmination of the national history. Project leader Liu Kaiqu executed these three panels, which illustrate the support and welcome offered to the Communists by China's people during the civil war years of 1946 to 1949. Finally, the monument was adorned on its north side with a calligraphic inscription by Mao Zedong, "The People's Heroes Never Die," and on its south side by a text transcribed in the hand of Zhou Enlai that summarizes this history.⁴

The new government thus moved fairly quickly to establish a visual vocabulary of national symbols and a new national history. For this it relied heavily on artists and architects who had been trained abroad or in the prewar art academies of China and who understood the conventional visual definitions of the modern nation-state, as popularized in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and America. The six-year period of construction spanned a shift from an academic mode of art imported into China in the first half of the twentieth century to a new socialist realist art learned from the USSR. The narrative relief panels on the *Monument to the People's Heroes*, although constructed to commemorate the Communist liberation of China, are typical of much early art of the PRC in that they largely adopt Western European style and modes of organizing content. Nevertheless, the slightly exaggerated expressions on the faces of the figures in the panels show evidence that the artists—all of whom were educated before 1949—attempted to slightly update the images to reflect the bombastic Soviet style. This trend would accelerate with the arrival of a Russian sculptor, Nikolai N. Klindukhov (b. 1916), to teach for two years at the Central Academy of

Fine Arts in 1956 and the dispatch of sculpture students to Leningrad for advanced education.⁵

SOVIET SOCIALIST REALISM

The second phase in the development of a new art for the People's Republic of China corresponded chronologically with the implementation of the first five-year economic plan in 1953 and brought even greater centralization to the practice and teaching of art. Most important, it saw the wholesale importation of Soviet models in art, just as it did in industry, technology, education, and virtually all other modern fields. By the end of the five-year plan in 1958, European academic modes of painting and sculpture had largely been replaced by or evolved into Soviet socialist realism, a highly idealized and artificial manner required by Stalin in the USSR following the First Congress of Writers in 1934. Chinese writers would come to distinguish between social realism, as in the art of the nineteenth-century French painter Gustave Courbet, which depicts the contemporary reality of working people's lives, and socialist realism, as in the works of Alexander M. Gerasimov (1881–1963) or Vladimir Serov (1910–1968), which render an idealized (and sometimes fictional) vision of the greatness of national leaders and the people's prosperity and happiness under Communism.

Yan Han, a Yan'an veteran assigned to teach at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, visited the USSR as early as 1950 and presumably contributed his new knowledge of Soviet public art in his suggestions and drawings for the *Monument to the People's Heroes*. Jiang Feng and several colleagues, including Cai Ruohong and Wang Shikuo, visited the USSR in the spring of 1954. On October 2 of that year an exhibition of 280 works of Russian and Soviet art

opened at the newly constructed Soviet exhibition hall in Beijing. CAFA oil painting professor Ai Zhongxin praised the diversity of the works exhibited as well as the "thematic" nature (*zhuti xing*) of the Soviet paintings.⁶ In a highly symbolic act of urban planning, in 1954 and 1955 the Shanghai Municipal government also constructed a dramatic Russian-style structure, the Sino-Soviet Friendship Center (now the Shanghai Exhibition Center) on the site of the old Hardoon Garden on Nanjing Road. When the Soviet art exhibition traveled to Shanghai in 1955, the Hangzhou academy (CAFA East China campus) organized field trips, during which students copied the paintings, memorized their themes, compositions, and brushwork, and even examined how the canvases had been prepared and stretched. For most art students of this post-1949 generation, the Soviet exhibition was their first opportunity to see an exhibition of high-quality foreign oil paintings. Russian and Soviet painting was indelibly impressed into their minds, and from this time forward it was possible for them to understand in visual terms how the Soviet theoretical texts, which were read by all Chinese artists, might actually be implemented.

Thus it was training given to the younger generation of artists that had the greatest impact on the development of the new styles.⁷ Between 1953 and 1956 about two dozen carefully selected Chinese art students were sent to the USSR to undertake a six-year course of study at the Repin Art Academy in Saint Petersburg (then called Leningrad). Beyond artistic and academic talent, students chosen to study in the USSR were required to be politically reliable and thus most were party members who claimed a suitable class background (peasant, worker, or soldier). Although the last group of graduates did not return to China until 1962, many elements of the Soviet curriculum were adopted in Chinese art schools and departments much earlier. Indeed, the national emphasis on learning from the Soviet experience led to a generation of students fully steeped in the ideals of Maoism but infatuated with the Russian language and culture.

This shift in arts policy began around 1952 as the predominant interest in popularization of art gave way to a focus on raising technical standards. A national restructuring of higher education had profound effects on art instruction. The curriculum and program of the Central Academy of Fine Arts and its sister school in Hangzhou, now renamed the CAFA East China campus, were modified to more closely resemble that of the Soviet Union's Repin Art Institute. Independent specialities and departments were established, and the curriculum expanded to five years. At the academy in Beijing, Xu Beihong student Ai Zhongxin chaired the oil painting department, former cartoonist and

designer Ye Qianyu chaired the color-and-ink department, while the printmaking department was set up by Yan Han and subsequently headed by Li Hua. In Hangzhou, Zhu Jinlou chaired the color-and-ink department, Li Binghong the oil painting department, and Zhang Xiya the printmaking department. Both campuses maintained sculpture departments, but the applied arts programs were merged in Beijing, and the Hangzhou architecture program was transferred out of the art academy to Tongji University, an engineering school in Shanghai. At the same time, a Soviet system of specialized high schools, in which an elite group of children received advanced technical training at an early age in programs affiliated with the national art academies, was adopted. The ad hoc nature of the wartime art world in Yan'an was completely replaced with the systematic teaching methods of the USSR.

At the same time, the Shanghai network of private art colleges, where various styles of European art had flourished, were eliminated. The Shanghai Art Academy and the Suzhou Art Academy were merged with the art department of Shandong University and relocated to Wuxi. Liu Haisu, director of the Shanghai school, was assigned to administer it. Yan Wenliang, director of the Suzhou Art Academy, was transferred to Hangzhou to teach perspective and color theory. Although many of the Shanghai artists refused to leave the city and found work in other institutions, with the removal of the art colleges from the city, the structure of schools, publishers, and markets that made Shanghai the preliberation art center of China was systematically dismantled.

Between 1952 and 1956, the CAFA East China campus alone published eighty books containing translations, analyses, or surveys of Soviet art and art theory. For the next thirty years most Chinese art students would judge teachers who admired and emulated Soviet art to be far superior to the Europe or Japan-trained elder faculty. One of the most profoundly influential programs in the move toward Soviet standards began in 1955, when the Chinese Ministry of Culture arranged to bring a teacher to China from Moscow to train young artists and art educators in Soviet academic oil painting. The portrait painter Konstantin M. Maksimov (1913–1993) arrived at the Central Academy of Fine Arts to an enthusiastic welcome on February 19, 1955. He began teaching a two-year postgraduate course to a geographically diverse group of students: artists from the six national art academies, normal colleges, the People's Liberation Army, and the Shanghai publishing industry. Graduates would then return to their home cities and institutions to disseminate the new techniques and approaches as widely as possible.



7.8 Zhan Jianjun (b. 1931), *Raising a Home*, 1957, oil on canvas, 140 × 348 cm, Art Museum, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing

Twenty-one students formally participated in the program. The original group consisted of sixteen young men and two young women. When a few of the original students, including one of the girls, were expelled for skipping mandatory classes in politics, their places were filled by older teachers avid to learn the latest methods. The most senior was CAFA oil painting professor Feng Fasi (1914–2009), a 1937 graduate of Xu Beihong's program at National Central University who had worked at the Lu Xun Academy of Literature and Arts in the Yan'an Communist base during the war. Yu Yunjie (1917–1992), a Xu Beihong student who worked at Shanghai People's Art Press, joined the class in 1956. Finally, from Hangzhou came Wang Liuqiu (b. 1919), a Yan'an veteran who taught at the Hangzhou academy. In addition, Maksimov offered instruction to other faculty and professional artists in Beijing.

The oil painting training class of Konstantin Maksimov had a profound effect upon the art and the careers of his students as well as on their future students. In the first year, Maksimov instructed them in the most basic fundamentals, starting with how to most effectively use a palette, to properly wash brushes, and to stretch a canvas. Perhaps most significant, the basic techniques of Western oil painting and a systematic way of teaching it were institutionalized in the Chinese art academy system and thus firmly imbedded into the mainstream of Chinese cultural practice. For students who had previously learned almost entirely by looking at reproductions, Maksimov's instruction in how to use color was particularly influential. The luminous graduation painting *Raising a Home* [fig. 7.8], by Zhan Jianjun (b. 1931), depicting newly arrived settlers in the Great Northern Wilderness, as the northeastern grasslands were

known, exemplifies the rich palette they learned to use. The mastery of composition, perspective, and human likeness that Xu Beihong so fervently advocated, but only imperfectly realized in his own work, was brought to fruition in this generation.

Maksimov's students describe him as a lively, sympathetic teacher who tried to free them from dogmatic preconceptions. All of the graduates became experts at socialist realist painting, but he urged upon his students a personal and sympathetic approach to their choice of subject matter—one that focused on small vignettes of ordinary life rather than grand philosophical themes. In this regard, Maksimov attempted to turn them back, at least in part, to the social realism of such Russian artists as Ilya Repin. Maksimov's own work of the time included lyrical images of Beijing's city wall at dusk and portraits of ordinary Chinese. Indeed, rather than the hard-line Stalinist control that Mao Zedong admired, Maksimov's teachings may have exemplified the brief liberalization of the Khrushchev-era thaw. Although some of the students' graduation pictures were historical in theme, none depicted political leaders, and he required that all subjects be closely tied to the student's own experience.

Underground Communist Hou Yimin depicted his Beijing dorm room in which he and fellow students illicitly printed their broadsheets, announcements, and propaganda against the nationalist government in the late 1940s. Gao Hong, a military artist and veteran of the Korean War, painted Chinese soldiers tending a Korean orphan in their barracks, as he had once done himself. His colleague He Kongde (1925–2003), in *Before the Battle*, depicts somber Chinese soldiers on the snowy Korean front as they emerge from underground tunnels before launching their attack



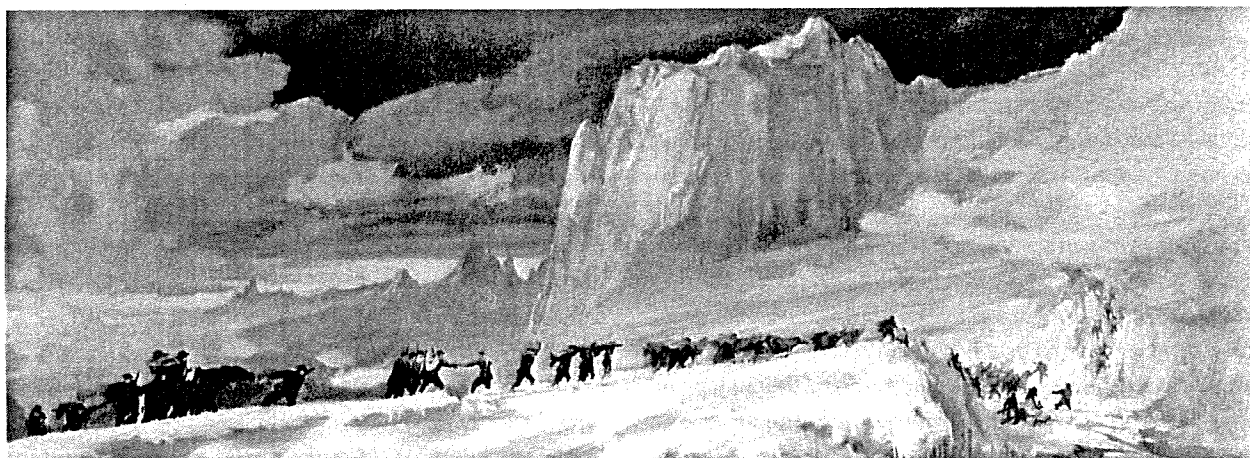
7.9 He Kongde (1925–2003), *Before the Battle*, 1962, oil on canvas, 189 × 140 cm, National Art Museum of China, Beijing

[fig. 7.9]. He Kongde continued to specialize in Korean War subject matter in his subsequent career. Younger artists who had less real-life experience were sent on field trips to see people and places with their own eyes. Zhan Jianjun's summer field trip to the northeastern steppes, an area then being opened to cultivation, led to his imaginative reconstruction of the drama of the hardy Chinese settlers arriving

as immigrants in this desolate place [see fig. 7.8]. One of the youngest students, Chen Beixin, was permitted to paint a landscape series.

Thus in the mid-1950s, as the American art world was swept by abstract expressionism, China moved in exactly the opposite direction. Maksimov's students openly displayed their newly earned facility with oil pigment and brush technique as well as a mastery of both representation and color never before seen in Chinese oil painting. The large, blunt, squared-off brush strokes give the paintings a painterly quality absent from works of the early 1950s. Ai Zhongxin (1915–2003), chair of the CAFA oil painting department and a graduate himself of Xu Beihong's painting program at National Central University, audited some of Maksimov's classes and was now able to turn his talents as a landscapist to new purpose. His dramatic *The Red Army Crosses the Snowy Mountains* [fig. 7.10], of 1957, which is roughly contemporary with the graduation paintings of his young colleagues in the Maksimov class, seems to place less emphasis on the heroic soldiers than on the natural environment against which they fought.

Now inspired by Russian prototypes, Ai Zhongxin depicts the Red Army as it crossed the Jiajing Mountains in the Tibetan area of Sichuan, one of the most perilous parts of the Long March. In contrast to the comparatively static earlier paintings by Luo Gongliu and Dong Xiwen, these works are filled with drama. Their immediacy and emotional power appealed to unsophisticated viewers and thus contributed to an acceptance of oil painting as the mainstream medium for art in China. The unfulfilled hopes of Xu Beihong for a modern Chinese art based on realism, founded in the ideas of Kang Youwei, were finally realized in this Russian-inspired art.



7.10 Ai Zhongxin (1915–2003), *The Red Army Crosses the Snowy Mountains*, 1957, oil on canvas, 100 × 210 cm, Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution

The graduation exhibition of the Maksimov oil painting training class thus marked the completion of a transformation in Chinese art. In 1949 official art was defined as the popularizing style of the new *nianhua*, as seen in Lin Gang's *Zhao Guilan at the Heroes Reception* [see fig. 7.2]. By 1953 an academic realism founded in European practices of previous generations reemerged, yielding immediately readable illustrations of major events, such as Luo Gongliu's *Mao Zedong Reporting on the Rectification in Yan'an* [see fig. 7.3]. However, with the well-publicized graduation exhibition of the Maksimov oil painting class in 1957, an event deemed important enough to warrant General Zhu De's attendance, the new Soviet style was launched nationwide. Works by Maksimov students have been represented in almost every subsequent national exhibition, and most of them returned to influential teaching positions, where they had profound impact on the following generations of artists in their home regions. By the 1980s the directors of all six major art academies were either Soviet trained or Maksimov students.

THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY AND PROPAGANDA POSTERS

After establishment of the PRC government in 1949, art became part of a tremendous effort to consolidate the Communist victory and create a new socialist world. Artists studied Mao's 1942 Yan'an Talks on Literature and Art as the unquestionable law of the art world: "Literature and art [must] become a component part of the whole revolutionary machinery, so they can act as a powerful weapon in uniting and educating the people while attacking and annihilating the enemy, and help the people achieve solidarity in their struggle against the enemy."⁸ Gaining control of the commercial publishing industry, which was based mainly in Shanghai, made it possible for the Communist Party, perhaps for the first time, to print full-color pictures in large runs. The publishing industry thereafter served as an important center of artistic activity and employment for artists. Beginning in 1952, state-run art publishing houses were set up in Shanghai (the center of China's prewar commercial publishing), in Beijing (the nation's political heart), and in regional centers. An important function of the new publishing houses was to print visually compelling posters in support of current political policies.

Although the propagandistic nature of most single-sheet prints produced by the art publishing houses in post-1949 China has led to a descriptive label "propaganda poster" for all such objects, in practice there were several different types of posters designed and issued under different circumstances, on different schedules, and for different functions. We have already mentioned both the new year's picture

(*nianhua*) and oil or ink painting reproductions (*huapian*). A third type of poster produced by the studios of the new publishing companies was officially called a "propaganda picture" (*xuanchuanhua*). *Huapian*, a general term that includes full-color reproductions of oil paintings or ink paintings, were available all year round and were purchased by individual schools and work units for decorative or inspirational purposes. Dong Xiwen's *Inaugural Ceremony for the New Nation* [see figs. 7.4 and 7.5], created for Beijing's newly established Central Museum of Revolutionary History, was widely distributed as a *huapian* in 1953, as would be many subsequent commissions for the same museum. Although most *huapian* from the Maoist years reproduce paintings that are political in subject matter, the circumstances of their creation, marketing, and use are somewhat different from those made specifically as propaganda posters, and they are less ephemeral.

The new year's picture was more time sensitive, traditionally bought at the end of the year by individual families to decorate their homes or paste on exterior doors or gates, and replaced annually. Artists of new year's pictures were thus busy with annual deadlines to assure that a plentiful supply would reach bookstores and other distributors well before the new year. By contrast, propaganda posters responded immediately to virtually every political movement and social program. In the words of an art editor writing in 1960: "This unique form of art, the propaganda poster, enables the policies of the party and government to open the door to the hearts of the people and inspire their utmost efforts."⁹

The designs for *xuanchuanhua* were painted in gouache on paper and combined the bright colors of traditional Chinese new year's pictures with the use of light and shade, perspective, and bold but simple propaganda slogans typical of Soviet propaganda posters. In the early 1950s, before dedicated propaganda poster units were established within the state publishing industry, painting of propaganda posters largely relied on professors at select national art academies, especially those of Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Hangzhou. Although some of these artists had no prior experience in the commercial publishing industry, they were nevertheless enlisted on propaganda painting teams that produced large quantities of such posters. Prominent participants included the director of the newly established Central Academy of Fine Arts, Xu Beihong (1895–1953); oil painting professors Wu Zuoren (1908–1997), Li Binghong (1913–1986), Ai Zhongxin (1915–2003), Dong Xiwen (1914–1973), and Yu Yunjie (1917–1992); revolutionary printmakers Li Hua (1907–1990) and Zhao Yannian (b. 1924); and even ink painters Li Keran (1907–1989) and Li Kuchan

(1898–1983). The posters of this period reflect the enthusiastic atmosphere that prevailed at the time, despite the disruptions caused by the numerous political campaigns organized to consolidate Communist rule.

By 1953 the Chinese government had managed to rebuild much of the war-devastated infrastructure, bring hyperinflation under control, and orient the population to a degree of mutual cooperation not previously known. Intent on building a socialist state, it now entered the period of intensive industrialization as well as organization of agricultural cooperatives. The first Five-Year Plan was set up as a basic structure for the state-planned economy, on the model used in the Soviet Union. Thus the establishment of a formal, professional poster design team, intended as an important means of conveying party ideology, was explicitly listed in the agenda of the party.

The first professional propaganda poster team in China was organized in 1954 at the East China People's Art Publishing House in Shanghai. Its staff was expanded in 1958, as part of the centralization of industry, when it was merged with the new year's picture team from the old Shanghai Art Print (*Shanghai huapian*) Press and reorganized as the New Year's Picture and Propaganda Poster Editorial Department of the new Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House. The team was primarily comprised of two complementary groups of artists—commercial artists who worked in advertising agencies and design studios before 1949 and art school graduates of the late 1940s or early 1950s. They merged the colorful and decorative calendar print (*yuefenpai* or *cabi*, rubbed charcoal and watercolor) techniques of the pre-1949 commercial art world with the highly skilled academic figure painting of the art school graduates. They were prolific: the Shanghai team published more than two thousand different poster designs, issued in more than forty million prints, between 1954 and 1966; Beijing People's Fine Arts Publishing House published more than five hundred poster designs and printed twenty-eight million copies between 1951 and 1959; and Tianjin Fine Arts Publishing House published 267 varieties of posters in 16.8 million copies.

Despite a paper shortage, the peak of propaganda poster production was during the Great Leap Forward period [fig. 7.11]. New designs were shaped in a few hours and sent directly to the printing factory, where the entire process was monitored by editors on press. Posters of particular importance could be produced in about ten hours, starting from conception and design to final printing. The poster thus became an almost instantaneous expression of party policy, reflecting the smallest changes in the thinking of the leadership almost as quickly as did official state-



7.11 Qian Daxin (b. 1922), *Strive for Greater Harvests, Devote Them to Socialism*, 1958, poster, gouache on paper, 110 × 80 cm, Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House

ments. The best known of the Shanghai propaganda poster artists is Ha Qiongwen (b. 1925). His 1959 poster *Long Live Chairman Mao*, prepared to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, may be the most famous poster design in all of China [fig. 7.12]. It was issued in a total printing of more than 2.5 million copies. Ha Qiongwen was born in Beijing and studied oil painting in the National Central University art department, first in Chongqing and after the war in Nanjing. Upon his graduation in 1949, he joined the People's Liberation Army and became an art teacher in the East China Military and Political Academy. When Ha Qiongwen moved to the propaganda poster department of East China People's Art Press, he became the major figure in the studio.

According to the artist's recollection, in conceiving *Long Live Chairman Mao*, he first tried to paint a celebratory scene based on his memory of the happy faces he saw at the 1959 May Day parade at People's Plaza in Shanghai, but was unsatisfied with his drafts. Finally, as Ha Qiongwen gazed out the window of his studio, he found his inspiration. The publishing house, like many new institutions established by the Communists in Shanghai, then occupied an old mansion in the French concession, and the ornamental trees that



7.12 Ha Qiongwen (b. 1925), *Long Live Chairman Mao*, 1959, gouache on paper printed as poster, 110 × 80 cm, Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House

still bloomed in its garden had exactly the upbeat tone he sought. He thereupon painted a young woman surrounded by pink blossoms, holding her young daughter on her shoulder. Ha Qiongwen wanted to emphasize the Chinese character of the woman, so he garbed her in a black velvet *qipao*, or Chinese gown, ornamented with a brooch and pearl earrings. The authorities, eager to disseminate such an optimistic image in the wake of the disastrous failure of the Great Leap Forward, had Ha Qiongwen's *Long Live Chairman Mao* hung in public buildings all over China—in schools, factories, and military bases. It was even reproduced in a large format and hung from the tenth story of the No. 1 Department Store on Nanjing Road in Shanghai. The same image was used five years later by the China Women's League as the cover for the foreign editions of their journal and for that occasion switched the title of the poster to "Long Live Peace."

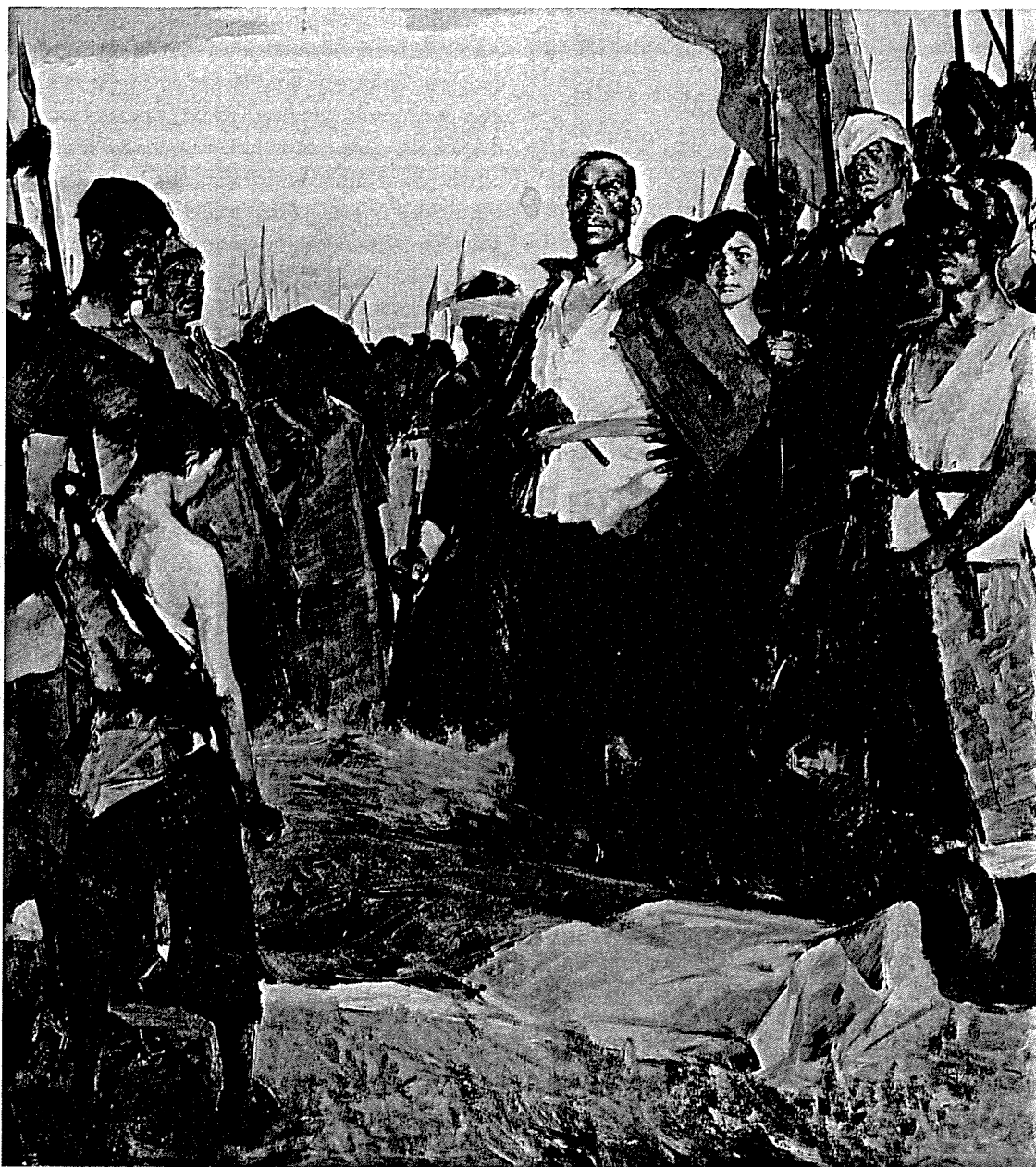
In a telling coincidence, Ha Qiongwen's career as an artist exactly spanned the years when Chinese propaganda posters, as a genre, flourished. He went to work in the propaganda poster studio of East China People's Art Press in 1955, the year after its establishment, and retired in 1992, the year the propaganda poster department was abolished.

More than ten million copies of his posters were released during his thirty-seven-year career as a propaganda poster designer. With institutionalization of the specialties of *nianhua*, propaganda pictures, and serial picture stories within the publishing houses, and the near elimination of products of the pre-1949 mass media, the visual environment that surrounded every Chinese at home, at work, and at leisure was remade in a way that transformed both ideology and aesthetic taste.

SOCIALIST REALISM IN THE MUSEUM OF REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

In preparation for celebration of the tenth anniversary of the People's Republic of China, a massive construction project was undertaken in the capital in 1958 and 1959. What were labeled the "Ten Great Buildings"—the Great Hall of the People [see fig. 7.6], the Museum of Revolutionary History, the National Museum of History, the Chinese People's Revolutionary Military Museum, the National Agricultural Exhibition Hall, the Nationalities Cultural Palace, the Beijing Train Station, the Worker's Stadium, the Nationalities Hotel, and the Overseas Chinese Hotel—were constructed in Beijing in a range of Soviet, European, and "adaptive" styles, many making use of such fireproof materials as stone or reinforced concrete, with exterior columns and plazas in a Western manner but courtyards and upturned tiled roofs of the Chinese tradition.¹⁰ The Great Hall of the People, the Museum of Revolutionary History, and the National Museum of History were erected directly to the east and west of the Monument to the People's Heroes at Tiananmen Square. Other new buildings, including the Chinese National Art Gallery, were constructed soon after.

These monumental structures at the heart of the capital spoke to China's people and to any foreign visitors of China's emergence as a modern state. Didactic content installed within would organize and codify the history of the revolution, and the works of art would encourage patriotism by creating a visual narrative of events. Thus, creating decorations and historical paintings for the Great Hall of the People, the Museum of Revolutionary History, and the Military Museum gave China's post-1949 generation of oil painters, today referred to as the third generation, the opportunity for which they had been trained to serve. China's leading artists were commissioned to create large paintings, decorations, and sculptures for the new buildings in three campaigns conducted between 1958 and 1965. Artists trained by Maksimov or in the USSR painted for the new museums' historical displays in what would become the most prestigious works of the era. The works commissioned for the project also show that socialist realism was dissemi-



7.13 Quan Shanshi (b. 1930), *Unyielding Heroism*, 1961, oil on canvas, 233 × 217 cm, National Museum of China, Beijing

nated beyond those artists who had direct contact with a Soviet teacher.

Maksimov students such as Jin Shangyi, Zhan Jianjun, and He Kongde, along with graduates of the Repin Art Institute, including the Hangzhou oil painter Quan Shanshi (b. 1930), created heroic images that monumentalize their subjects. Typical of the socialist-realist manner are their elevated horizon lines, elaborately posed figures, and new way of painting the human form: powerful and muscular, with strong eyebrows and squared jaws. Quan Shanshi painted

a typical subject in 1961, martyrdom for the Communist cause, in *Unyielding Heroism* [fig. 7.13]. After his study in Leningrad, Quan Shanshi's use of color was much more vivid and powerful than that of most oil painters trained in China. Based on sketching trips he made to Hunan and Jiangxi in preparation for the project, he depicted peasant revolutionaries as they fought to establish Communist Soviets in south-central China in the 1920s. The rising sun behind them and the high horizon line are intended to suggest the eventual victory of the Communist troops,

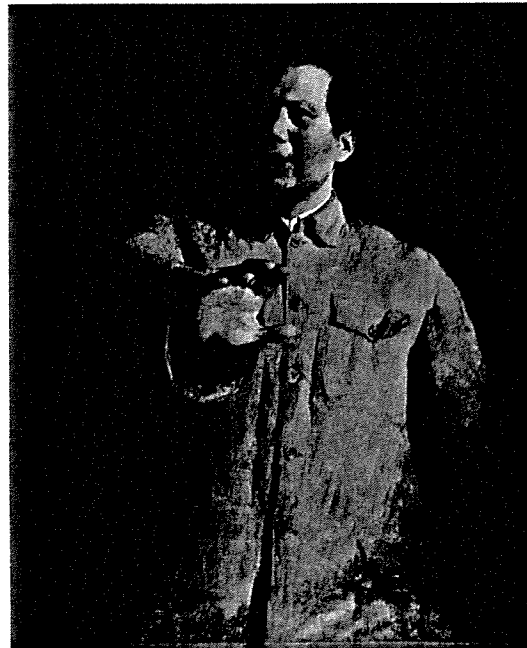


7.14 Cai Liang (1932–1995), *The Torchlight Parade in Yan'an*, 1959, oil on canvas, 164 × 375 cm, National Museum of China, Beijing

despite the Nationalist army's mandate to eradicate every Communist.

CAFA graduate Cai Liang (1932–1995), then working in Xi'an, painted a far more cheerful victory image, *The Torchlight Parade in Yan'an*, in 1959. In his job assignment Cai Liang had the opportunity to study local customs in the former Communist base area in northern Shaanxi, and he creatively reconstructs the costumes and music of a celebration following the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945 [fig. 7.14]. Led by a grinning boy, a procession of soldiers and peasants, side by side, trumpet victory with torches raised high. The artist has rendered the exhilarated men and women, old and young, in a dramatic perspective that diminishes to the distant streaks of torchlight on the Yan'an hills. Silhouetted against the evening sky is the nine-story brick pagoda that became a landmark of the Communist revolution. Cai Liang had studied at CAFA from 1950 to 1955. He had undoubtedly seen the Russian exhibition when it showed in Beijing, but he did not directly study with a Soviet teacher, and his adoption of the new style may represent the dissemination of socialist realism into the broader Chinese art world.

There was no shortage of Mao images when the museum display finally opened on June 29, 1961. Jin Shangyi (b. 1938), the strongest portraitist of the Maksimov class, deploys the elevated perspective and artificial light of socialist realism to represent Mao Zedong as China's courageous revolutionary leader in his 1961 painting *Mao Zedong at the December Meeting* [fig. 7.15]. The work was suitable to the display by virtue of its historical context, a crucial party meeting in 1947 at the height of the civil war between the



7.15 Jin Shangyi (b. 1938), *Mao Zedong at the December Meeting*, 1961, oil on canvas, 158 × 134 cm, National Museum of China, Beijing

Communists and the Nationalists. Yet supplementing this narrative of Mao's military and ideological contributions to formation of the new nation was acknowledgment of the historical role played by Liu Shaoqi, who became new China's second head-of-state in 1959. Following the realist style of the nineteenth-century Russian Wanderers school, Maksimov graduate Hou Yimin (b. 1930) renders an image of Liu Shaoqi as he leads a coal miner's strike at Anyuan in



7.16 Hou Yimin (b. 1930), *Liu Shaoqi and the Anyuan Coal Miners*, 1961, oil on canvas, 162 × 333 cm (1979 version, original destroyed ca. 1968), National Museum of China, Beijing

1922. Hou Yimin's 1961 painting *Liu Shaoqi and the Anyuan Coal Miners* [fig. 7.16] further extended historical definitions of the Chinese revolution beyond the rural and military subject matter so dear to Mao by encompassing the more orthodox Marxist theme of industrial workers.

The economic and technological assistance rendered by the USSR during the second five-year plan obscured a backstage diplomatic drama that developed following Stalin's death in 1953. Particularly after Nikita Khrushchev initiated his de-Stalinization program in 1956, Mao believed the USSR had strayed from the path of orthodox Communism and into revisionism. Against Soviet advice he began implementation of the People's Commune system and the Great Leap Forward to more rapidly achieve Communism in China. Soviet skepticism, Mao's intransigence, and Khrushchev's blunt and arrogant personality led to increasing Sino-Soviet tension. The ideological dispute was brought to a head in the summer of 1960, when the USSR withdrew every Soviet expert in China. Overnight, praise for Soviet models became politically incorrect.

Party theorists emphasized the value of national forms in art. In the oil painting *Mao Zedong in Mount Jinggang*, the director of the history painting project, Luo Gongliu, experimented with replacing Soviet methods and motifs with Chinese ones [fig. 7.17]. Thus, rather than the squared strokes of Russian oil painting, Luo created his vision of Mao at a turning point in the Communist fight by using striations and stippling to suggest the texture strokes and dots of Chinese ink painting technique, implicitly declaring this work to exemplify a "national style." Another attempt

in the same period to Sinicize (*minzuhua*) oil painting was *Chairman Mao Standing with People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America*, by Wu Biduan (b. 1926) and Jin Shangyi. They returned to the "outline and flat color" manner of new *nianhua*, while still deploying the representational skills honed during their instruction by Soviet teachers [fig. 7.18]. Like a draft for a new *nianhua*, one of the several surviving versions of this work was actually painted in gouache on paper. Wu Biduan was a CAFA faculty member who had studied in the USSR from 1956 to 1959. The work was probably inspired in part by frieze-like Soviet compositions such as *Awakening*, an oil painting by A. A. Myl'nikov that was exhibited in Beijing in 1957, which depicts the peoples of Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas marching together with raised fists. First published after the Sino-Soviet split of 1960, however, Wu and Jin's painting is most important for its political theme—claims to China's leadership of the Third World at a time of extreme international isolation.

The period between 1957 and 1961 in China was cataclysmic. In the spring of 1956, Mao Zedong launched the Hundred Flowers campaign, in which all China's citizens were required to voice their opinions for further improvement of their nation. Many people, rather naïvely taking their instructions at face value, made criticisms of specific policies or individual administrators. Mao and the party leadership responded with a vicious campaign to assert greater control over ideological discipline. The following year, the carefully recorded comments of the Hundred Flowers meetings were brought forth as evidence to target party officials who had been criticized, citizens who voiced



7.17 Luo Gongliu (1916–2004), *Mao Zedong at Mount Jinggang*, 1961, oil on canvas, 150 × 220 cm, National Museum of China, Beijing

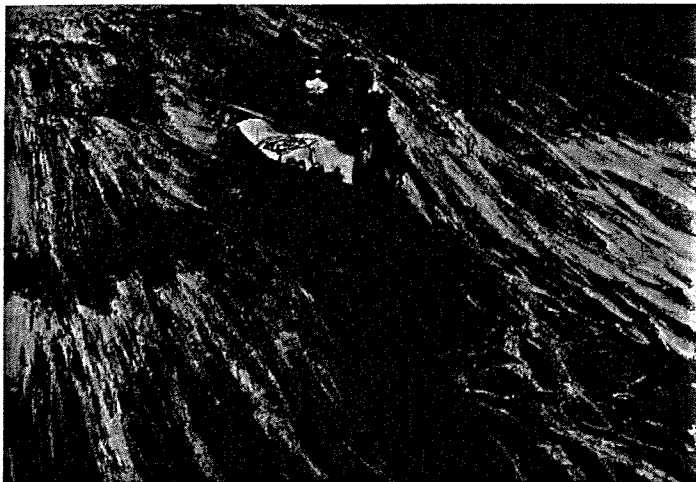
criticism, or in some cases both. Mao suggested that perhaps 5 percent of the population were rightists. Many work units adopted 5 percent as their quota. The campaign rapidly spread to include anyone who defended a person under criticism, anyone with personal or professional enemies, and a number of unlucky souls who simply were in the wrong place at the wrong time. The world of oil painting was hard hit. Jiang Feng, the national administrator who had promoted oil painting's development most fervently, was declared the number one rightist in the art world at the end of July 1957, removed from his positions, expelled from the CCP, and sent to perform hard labor. Yan Han defended Jiang Feng and was soon labeled “number two rightist” in the national art world.

Representatives from the Maksimov class had spoken out to request continued institutional support for the high-level development of oil painting. Their spokesmen—Qin Zheng, He Kongde, Wang Liuqiu, and Yan Han—were labeled rightists. Yu Yunjie from Shanghai was labeled a rightist in absentia by his Shanghai work unit. Their rightist designations were credited to the quotas of their home work units, thus saving others from condemnation. If calculated separately, more than 20 percent of the carefully selected and politically reliable members of the Maksimov class were



7.18 Wu Biduan (b. 1926) and Jin Shangyi (b. 1938), *Chairman Mao Standing with People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America*, 1961, oil on canvas, 143 × 156 cm, National Art Museum of China, Beijing

labeled rightists. Their works were not published in the graduation anthology and they were not invited to participate in the history painting project. He Kongde was somewhat protected by the military, but even the most fortunate of rightists suffered indignities and would experience even



7.19 Du Jian (b. 1933), *Advancing Amid Swift Currents*, 1963, oil on canvas, 220 × 332 cm, destroyed in the Cultural Revolution period

worse harm during the Cultural Revolution. Some rightists were sent for labor reform to remote prison farms, and their spouses and children were denied normal rights to schooling, employment, and housing. It is estimated that about half a million people were declared rightists. All have now been declared innocent, many of them posthumously.

With his opposition either intimidated or out of the way, Mao launched several ill-fated initiatives. On the domestic front he overturned the second five-year plan in favor of his Great Leap Forward. The slogan for all endeavors was “more, faster, better, thriftier.” In industry Mao’s slogan was “Surpass Great Britain’s industrial production within fifteen years.” To fully realize Communism in agriculture, about 99 percent of China’s peasants were communized by 1959. Artists traveled to rural villages to help the peasants paint colorful murals and returned to the cities to design propaganda posters depicting abundant harvests. When bad weather led instead to crop failures, malnutrition, and even starvation, the central government continued for a time to report the glorious success of Great Leap Forward policies. Artists working on the history painting project in Beijing received supplementary food rations in those years of shortage, and indeed the project served partially as a means of mediating the extreme hardship of China’s creative elite.

As a result of the withdrawal of Soviet experts, the second Russian expert’s painting class, scheduled to be conducted by A. A. Myl’nikov, was cancelled, and the students instead were trained by Luo Gongliu [see fig. 7.17]. Despite the sometimes cataclysmic political events that followed the Soviet experts’ departure from China, the styles of Russian and Soviet art, and particularly socialist realism, were already so thoroughly absorbed that they remained the mainstream, even when Soviet sources were no longer

openly acknowledged [fig. 7.19]. Jiang Feng’s internationalist goal of remolding the aesthetic tastes of China’s people was largely accomplished, even if he himself was removed from the scene.

As a result of the failures of the Great Leap Forward, which were a well-known secret within the upper reaches of the government, Mao was unwillingly forced to yield as government leader in the summer of 1959 and was replaced by Liu Shaoqi. Following the Three Year Natural Disaster, as the famines of the period between 1959 and 1961 were called, the hard-line political, economic, and cultural policies of the Great Leap Forward were briefly relaxed. A period of pluralism in the arts ensued, particularly in traditional arts (see chapter 8). Young socialist-realist oil painters began producing optimistic and slightly sweet work that exalted the people rather than glorifying the nation’s leaders and their history. *Four Girls*, painted by Wen Bao (b. 1938) in 1962, depicts happy peasant girls who have put down their farm tools to rest, a lyrical vision of the leisure after farm labor rather than its hardship [fig. 7.20]. This work is rendered with the same painterly brushwork her teachers at the CAFA might use for their history paintings. *In Front of Tiananmen*, by Sun Zixi (b. 1929), adopts a Sinicized style related to the outline and flat-color manner to render a diverse crowd of sightseers posing for their pictures in front of the architectural symbol of the Chinese nation [fig. 7.21]. Painted on the fifteenth anniversary of the PRC, it is political in its setting as well as in the popularizing quality of its multiethnic and occupationally diverse figures. Nevertheless, it too strays far from the “thematic” political paintings of the previous period and instead focuses on a moment of leisure enjoyed by the ordinary working men and women of new China.

An extraordinary broadening of works deemed permissible for exhibition occurred in the early 1960s, after Mao temporarily retired. The exhibition held at the newly constructed Chinese National Art Gallery in Beijing to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of his Yan’an Talks showed art produced between 1942 and 1962, but it included apolitical paintings by non-Communist artists from the pre-1949 era, including Dong Xiwen’s decorative *Kazak Herdsman* [see fig. 6.14] and Chang Shuhong’s *Thunder Throughout the Land* [see fig. 6.5], along with the more overtly political works by Communist veterans. Even more telling, in December 1962 and April 1963 a solo show of the paintings of Lin Fengmian was held in Shanghai and Beijing. This was a remarkable turnabout in light of Lin’s complete marginalization after 1949 and can have had no political justification other than to moderate the extremist cultural policies of the previous period.

This chapter has described the creation under the gov-



7.20 Wen Bao (b. 1938), *Four Girls*, 1962, oil on canvas, 110 × 202 cm, National Art Museum of China, Beijing



7.21 Sun Xizi (b. 1929), *In Front of Tiananmen*, 1964, oil on canvas, 155 × 285 cm, National Art Museum of China, Beijing

ernment of the People's Republic of China between 1949 and 1966 of new forms of official art in the Western mediums of oil painting, sculpture, and architecture. An almost total rejection of modernism was followed by a period in which artists capable of working in the realist modes of pre-1949 European and American art academies developed historical iconographies and symbols for the new state. Following the systematic introduction of Soviet models and educational principles in the mid-1950s, however, Euro-American academic realism was replaced by Soviet-inspired socialist realism as China's official style. From as early as the

Tang (618–907) dynasty, painting was considered a high art form in China. It is not surprising, perhaps, that oil painting emerged as the most prestigious form of official art during the first seventeen years of the People's Republic of China. Indeed, it was the mainstream of Chinese art on the eve of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, launched in 1966. Chapter 8 will discuss the sometimes desperate attempts of ink painters to preserve their right to create art during the same highly charged political era. Such shifting standards also had their impact on printmakers and illustrators.

8



Ink Painting, *Lianhuanhua*, and Woodcuts under Mao

1949–1966

If a Westernizing impulse lay behind the ideological support for oil painting in China between 1949 and 1966, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the new government had a much less straightforward view of the future of China's indigenous form of painting, *guohua*. Communist arts leaders had spent their lives working to overturn the forces of conservatism that they believed prevented China's social, economic, and cultural progress. As artists, nearly all had pursued what they believed to be the most modern, cosmopolitan, and politically progressive forms of art: oil painting and print-making. Administrators from working-class backgrounds, like Jiang Feng, had no love for traditional Chinese painting, which he associated with conservatism and elitism. Furthermore, traditional Chinese calligraphy, because of its elaborate script forms, was considered an impediment to mass literacy. In a series of reforms in the 1950s and 1960s, the Chinese writing system, upon which the art of calligraphy was founded, was systematically simplified. Mainstream arts policy of the period immediately following 1949 thus threatened to eradicate China's highest forms of art.

The official policies between 1949 and 1952 caused great difficulties for *guohua* artists who did not have a salaried teaching job, and even for some who did. As private property was nationalized, the art market almost disappeared. Many wealthy collectors and patrons fled abroad. Many old and middle-aged artists were unwilling or unable to abandon their own painting styles in favor of the formulaic new *nianhua* (new year's posters). Furthermore, some of them had no particular interest in politics, or even worse, had enjoyed the prior patronage of Nationalist officials. By virtue of their traditionalist painting styles and ideological incompatibility with the new regime, there was little such artists could contribute. The wealthiest began liquidating their art col-

lections to cover their living expenses. It may have seemed as though the new government sought to eliminate Chinese painting and other traditional arts.

Yet by 1951 the government had formalized a policy to provide livelihoods and status for leading non-Communist cultural and intellectual figures. A system of Research Institutes for Culture and History (*wenshiguan*) provided stipends and jobs but removed its members from active roles in society, thus creating a living museum of the former cultural elite. Ye Gongchuo, a founding member of the Chinese Painting Society in 1931 and former Republican official, served as administrative vice-director in Beijing. Shanghai established a local branch in 1953, as did most provincial governments. The Shanghai Culture and History Institute, for example, appointed a former publisher and *jinsi* degree holder, Zhang Yuanji, as director. The institute employed 115 men who earned official degrees, from *jinsi* to *xiucai*, under the Qing dynasty educational system, along with many prominent figures from the Republican worlds of journalism, publishing, literature, art, history, and other kinds of scholarship. For *guohua* painters not yet honored by such an appointment, production cooperatives were organized in 1953 at which they decorated fans, lanterns, and window blinds on a piecework basis.

Party leaders with a greater interest in Chinese history recognized, however, that the greatness of China's ancient civilization inspired patriotism at home and respect abroad. After 1949 new museums and archaeological research institutes were established in all parts of the nation to preserve and research art and antiquities, and Marxist histories and art histories analyzing China's past in new ways were published. As cultural nationalism reasserted itself, protection of the national heritage emerged as an explicit cultural policy of the CCP. The uniqueness of China's traditions of painting and calligraphy came to be recognized as a value worth protecting.

Cultural theorists within the party had argued since the 1930s about whether, as they put it, new wine could be put in old bottles. Party ideologist Zhou Yang continued to promote such a strategy in his speech to the Second Congress of Literary and Arts Workers in September 1953. "We request that the *contents* of literary and art works express the people and thoughts of the new age, and the *forms* express the style and vigor of the nation. . . . All writers and artists should diligently study their own national literary and artistic legacy and take continuation and development of the national heritage's excellent tradition as their own mission."¹ Artists like Jiang Feng and Ai Qing, following their mentor Lu Xun, were far more skeptical that old artistic forms might serve contemporary needs. These two radically different

approaches to *guohua* reform were implemented simultaneously, creating conflict within the party arts establishment. This uncertainty created many hardships for *guohua* artists but also some opportunities.

Between 1949 and 1966 the same system of art education that transformed oil painting produced parallel changes in the mainstream practice of Chinese painting. After 1949 the art academies in Beijing and Hangzhou merged oil painting and *guohua* instruction into a single painting department; during their three-year program all students studied drawing, perspective, and anatomy, working both in the studio and "in actual life," taking numerous field trips to work alongside peasants and workers. Academic figure drawing was thus an important part of the curriculum, along with outline-and-color painting, Western watercolor painting, and oil painting. Among the three basic genres of traditional Chinese painting—landscape, bird-and-flower, and figure painting—only the latter was taught and in a modified form. Older masters of these genres, like bird-and-flower painter Pan Tianshou and landscapist Huang Binhong, were removed from the classroom. Most were subjected to thought reform, which included intensive work to change their practice of painting to accommodate the new ideology. All were sent to the countryside to live and to sketch the peasants rather than the subjects in which they excelled.

In 1953, just as the party's emphasis shifted from popularization to specialization, the first generation of ink painters trained after 1949 graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Ideologically well positioned to implement new policies and free of preconceptions about the styles or nature of art, most were hired as art academy teachers. They worked hard to develop fresh forms of Chinese painting that would serve the needs of the new nation just as their classmates and colleagues sought to raise technical standards in oil painting, sculpture, and architecture by studying Soviet models. A concerted effort was made at the same time to remold *guohua*, both to correct its perceived ideological deficiencies and to improve its technical standards. Based on the same synthesis of Soviet and Maoist standards required in all cultural fields, it was decided that the new *guohua* should be figure painting and should be based on drawing from life. The result was novel—a new socialist-realist Chinese ink painting.

Beijing and Hangzhou each set about this project based on the strengths of their own faculty and in the end developed slightly different styles. The Beijing style, relying on the foundations set by Xu Beihong and Jiang Zhaohe [see figs. 6.10 and 6.17], leaned more heavily on modeling three-dimensional volumes and rendering the effects of illumina-

tion. In essence, this method applied Western techniques to Chinese paper and almost ignored those of China's own tradition. The Hangzhou style was somewhat more gestural, relying more heavily on energetic outline strokes and slightly abstract washes, and retained a few techniques that may be associated with the late-nineteenth-century Shanghai school. Most important in creating a feeling of immediacy and realism, however, was the artists' successful integration of Western perspective into their compositions. Both groups brought many of the basic principles of socialist realism into their painting.

The academy in Beijing was perhaps most easily turned in this direction, because the new policies were compatible with the reformist agenda of director Xu Beihong. Himself an admirer of the realism of Ren Yi's portraits, Xu had avoided conservative *guohua* painters in staffing the Beijing National Art Academy in 1946 and instead sought instructors committed to the reform of Chinese painting. One of the faculty members he hired, Jiang Zhaohe (1904–1986), had impressed him with large-scale, dramatically lit, and highly naturalistic ink paintings [see fig. 6.17]. Although Jiang's wartime painting, especially his most famous *Refugees*, was dark and gloomy, his style was easily modified to reflect the optimism of the socialist-realist manner. His cheerful images of happy children, often placed with symbols of peace, were both politically appropriate and recognizably Chinese, and were selected as gifts for China's diplomatic endeavors overseas. Jiang Zhaohe's style served as the basis on which a new *guohua* figural style developed at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, one sometimes called the Beijing school.

One notable socialist realist to emerge from this milieu was Li Qi (1928–2009). Born only a few years after his parents joined the Communist Party, Li was taken by them to Yan'an when he was nine, and he grew up at the center of the revolution. As a young adolescent he attended Mao's 1942 talks on literature and art, and by all indications he was a devout follower of Mao and the party. After liberation, Li was appointed to serve as an assistant to Jiang Feng and the party administrators of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He won a Ministry of Culture prize for one of his new *nianhua*. His slightly later portrait, *Mao Zedong Visiting the Entire Nation*, was inspired by his 1959 experience of witnessing Mao visit the construction site for the Ming tombs reservoir during the Great Leap Forward. The mass adulation displayed as the workers swarmed for a view of Mao suggested the artist's theme, in which Mao's power is humanized with a common touch [fig. 8.1].

In placing the leader's image against a blank background, and outlining it with black ink, Li Qi explicitly follows a tra-



8.1 Li Qi (1928–2009), *Mao Zedong Visiting the Entire Nation*, 1960, ink and color on paper, 197 × 117.5 cm, National Art Museum of China, Beijing

ditional convention. His basic technique, however, does not come from traditional painting but from the conventions of academic drawing, Western watercolors, and Soviet socialist realism. Although influenced by Jiang Zhaohe in technique, Li Qi adopts a heroic Soviet-style perspective, with Mao elevated, as though gazing genially down on the viewer. The artist has artfully chosen to garb Mao in urban dress, giving him an air of authority but softening this impression somewhat by the loose wrinkles of the white shirt, its casually open collar, and the straw farmer's hat Mao holds in his hand—all of which serve to establish a connection with the working people of China. Mao Zedong's ruddy good health and cheerful expression are extremely reassuring, and this 1960 work by a true believer has become an almost sacred image of the founding father of new China.

The young artists in Hangzhou developed a slightly

different style. Unlike the academy in Beijing, where the pre-1949 director, Xu Beihong, already stressed the necessity of academic drawing as the basis for a reformed *guohua*, the academy director who supervised the move back from Sichuan to Hangzhou after the war was Pan Tianshou, a bird-and-flower painter and one of the most committed advocates of traditional brushwork in *guohua*. He was not permitted to teach after 1949; instead, freshly graduated instructors were charged with developing a *guohua* practice suitable to the new era. Between 1953 and 1955 thirty-nine graduates, all well practiced in “drawing from life” and in the ideological underpinnings of the new art, were kept on as instructors. Some of the most talented, including two 1953 graduates—Zhou Changgu (1929–1986) and Fang Zengxian (b. 1931)—were assigned to the newly reestablished *guohua* division, where they set about drawing modern figures from life with Chinese tools. In theme, they sought an ideal translated from Soviet theory as the *dianxing*, or “typical.” In execution, they replaced the outline-and-flat-color manner of the new *nianhua* with ink lines of varying widths and richly applied ink textures. These two young painters were instrumental in developing the “Zhe style,” as the manner developed at Hangzhou (in Zhejiang province) came to be known, and which profoundly affected the subsequent practice of Chinese painting.

Zhou Changgu's *Two Lambs*, of 1954, represents a Tibetan herdgirl in Gannan, in southern Gansu province, leaning pensively on a simple fence [fig. 8.2]. This work is an early example of the Mao period depiction of the national minorities, a general theme that has remained very popular among artists and critics. The reasons for this are complex but are based at least partly in larger historical circumstances. The weakness of the Chinese government in the nineteenth century, and extending through the Republican period, Sino-Japanese War, and Civil Wars, weakened the central government's control over many parts of the Chinese empire, including the border regions that had been brought under Qing dynasty rule during the eighteenth century. From the earliest days of the Republic, reestablishing territorial control over the full extent of the Qing empire was an expected result of China's reunification. In the War of Liberation the People's Liberation Army took as its mandate the task of bringing all of that territory, its people, and its substantial natural resources back under the unified government of the new PRC.

By 1954 the new government considered Buddhist Tibet and predominantly Muslim Xinjiang to have been liberated and began the process of integrating them into the Communist state. The modern nationalism that had led to overthrow of the Manchu regime in 1911 was founded, at



8.2 Zhou Changgu (1929–1986), *Two Lambs*, 1954, ink and color on paper, 79.3 × 39.3 cm, National Art Museum of China, Beijing

least in part, on the ideals of ethnic self-determination for Han Chinese. Yet the great Chinese empires of the past, from Tang to Qing, as well as powerful states of the present, including the Soviet Union, were multiethnic. The twentieth-century governments of China were thus faced with resolving the contradictions between two essentially incompatible ideologies: a Han nationalism based on ethnicity and patriotic pride in a new government capable of reunifying their fractured country. Of the two, the latter was more difficult to achieve, but nurturing it became essential to any regime. Thus, during the Mao years, the party tried to educate the majority Han Chinese that their non-Han brethren, now referred to as the national minorities, were legitimately their fellow-citizens. At the same time, educational policies were introduced to teach the minorities how they might contribute to the nation as citizens of the PRC.

Scenes like *Two Lambs* that suggested the successful pacification of the frontiers were politically welcome. From a purely creative perspective, however, the opportunity to travel to exotic and beautiful locales rather than the usual factories and farms was a welcome adventure to artists. Regardless of the political agenda that may have provided travel funding, it was an exciting creative challenge to paint the Tibetan highlands or the Central Asian deserts, and to study the Tibetans, Uighurs, Mongols, or Kazaks, with their colorful costumes and striking physiognomies. The Tibetan girl at center, in her youth and innocence, embodies the nation's dreams and hopes for the future, a potential reflected by the tiny lambs at her feet that are the explicit theme of the painting. Formally, the ground plane is so sharply tilted that the horizon line behind the figure cannot be seen, but the large flock of sheep extending behind her and beyond the picture plane create an assumed vanishing point, as in Western conventions of perspective. In a typical socialist-realist device, the large figure is elevated on the picture plane, just as are the heroic warriors of Quan Shanshi [see fig. 7.13]. Depicted as anatomically correctly as the artist found possible, the girl's thoughtful concentration as she nibbles on a blade of grass provides the psychological interest in the story. In contrast to earlier Chinese figure paintings, particularly those depicting female figures, the Tibetan girl's hands and bare feet are evident, accentuating the Western perspective and revealing her thoughts almost as expressively as her face. The painting's compositional structure, which is new to Chinese figure painting, is based on a recession that describes the arc of a reversed C-shape in space, culminating with the two foreground lambs.

At the same time, however, many elements of this painting come directly out of recent Chinese tradition and particularly the Shanghai school style as carried on within the pre-1949 academy in Hangzhou. Indeed, Zhou Changgu, Fang Zengxian, and their other young colleagues reluctantly acknowledged the technical facility of Pan Tianshou and the old teachers in the department, even if they looked down on them for their inability to paint anything but plants, birds, and fish. Qualities this work shares with earlier Chinese painting include the vertical format, the blank white background, the moist strokes of ink, and even the romantic sweetness of the exotic scene. Zhou Changgu's fluid rendering of the linear drapery folds in the girl's white garment suggest the painting of Ren Yi [see fig. 1.12], as does the layered wash with which he executed her black skirt [see fig. 1.11]. The slow and powerful lines of the fence create an epigraphic structure to the space, suggestive of the painting of Wu Changshi [see fig. 1.22].² Choice of politically significant subject matter—in this case, the theme of con-

tented national minorities—was a core component of the new official art. While close examination of the painting, particularly when it is compared with those of Ren Bonian or Pan Tianshou, may reveal technical imperfections, *Two Lambs* was truly innovative in its concept and composition. The work was criticized by some party officials for its sensory charm, but it won first prize in the 1955 Moscow International Youth Show, an honor that provided international legitimacy to the new Zhe figure-painting style.

Zhou Changgu's colleague and fellow graduate of the class of 1953, Fang Zengxian (b. 1931), instead rendered more orthodox subjects from the worker-peasant-soldier canon of approved Maoist subjects. *Every Grain Is Hard Work*, which is formally similar to *Two Lambs*, depicts a frugal and hard-working peasant picking up the last grains of rice after the harvest. When exhibited in 1955, this work garnered the artist substantial favorable attention. By 1964, when he painted *Telling a Red Tale*, Fang had developed his compositional, perspectival, and figural skills even further, while continuing to emphasize the Zhe school ink techniques of varied and expressive outlines and deep, rich washes [fig. 8.3]. In the upper part of the composition a group of peasants, old and young, recedes sharply in an inverted U-shaped formation, a virtuoso demonstration of the artist's mastery of Western principles of perspective. These figures comprise the attentive audience for a farm boy, depicted with his back to the viewer, who is the main character. The eye-catching young man, his silhouette emphasized by a strong outline, uses his hoe as a stage prop to narrate and act out his revolutionary story. The overall composition, and particularly the three-dimensional organization of the figures, comes from the Western academic tradition and is completely unlike anything in Chinese art of the past. The artist does not depict the heroic story itself, but instead describes the widespread enthusiasm for tales of revolutionary valor among all members of society, including the least educated. Very much a work of the post-Great Leap Forward period in its focus on the small pleasures of ordinary people and its lack of overt political subject matter, it nevertheless suggests the people's (and the artist's own) loyalty to the regime and its version of history. Compositionally and thematically, this is one of the most original works of the period, while at the same time upholding the principles of socialist realism.

Quite significantly, in the mid-1950s the departments where Zhou Changgu, Fang Zengxian, and Jiang Zhaohe taught were not called *guohua* (national painting) departments, but instead were labeled by the more neutral term, color-and-ink painting (*caimohua*), thus removing the ideologically charged term "national" from its association with ink and Chinese paper. So named, the academic pro-



8.3 Fang Zengxian (b. 1931), *Telling a Red Tale*, 1964, ink and color on paper, 96 × 183 cm, National Art Museum of China, Beijing

gram to remold Chinese painting by replacing its foundational vocabulary of brushstrokes with academic drawing might more easily abandon ties to the conventions of the premodern era, especially those of landscape and bird-and-flower painting, and make explicit its international aspirations. Some elements of earlier ink painting, particularly the hybrid realism of Ren Yi, were echoed in the Zhe style, but most important for all new artists were development of socialist-realist compositions and politically appropriate subject matter. The abstract beauty of brush and ink, which was such an important aspect of pre-twentieth-century Chinese painting, became a secondary concern. Many of its most subtle techniques and skills were not passed down to subsequent generations.

The new figural style initiated at the two campuses of the Central Academy of Fine Arts spread throughout China in the ensuing years and in the hands of its most talented and dedicated practitioners bloomed into an art that was truly unprecedented. The Zhe style was disseminated and further developed by the students of Fang Zengxian and Zhou Changgu. Liu Wenxi (b. 1933), who had, like oil painter Cai Liang, received his high school education at the Yucai School for gifted students in Shanghai, was a student in their first class, from 1953 to 1958. Like Cai Liang, he was assigned to work in Xi'an upon his graduation and became a specialist in depicting the people of the former Communist base area in northern Shaanxi, visiting the area more than sixty times, beginning in 1957.³ His 1962 ink-and-color paint-

ing *Four Generations* shares the monumental, elevated perspective of revolutionary oil paintings of the era [fig. 8.4]. It is similar in general theme—China's working people at leisure—to several other oil paintings of the same period, including those of Sun Zixi and Wen Bao, as well as Fang Zengxian's *Telling a Red Tale*. Yet within the ideological and formal limitations of the era, Liu Wenxi strikes out on his own. Most notably, his dry brushwork, which almost seems to reflect the parched northwestern countryside, adds a powerful roughness to the composition that emphasizes the hardy spirit of perseverance with which he imbues his figures. The wizened face of the old grandfather, the weather-beaten visage of his turbaned farmer son, the ruddy health of his tractor-driving grandson, and the tender sweetness of his little great-granddaughter tell the history of the twentieth century and the peasants' mastery of their own destiny, from their own perspective.

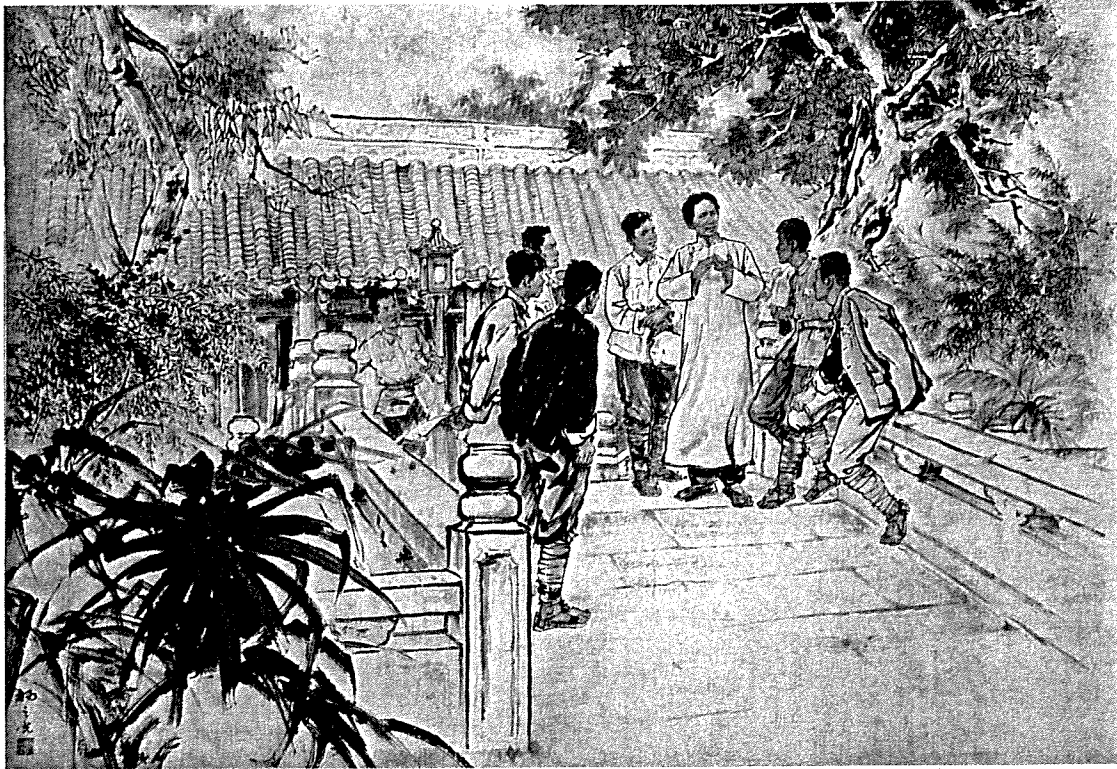
One of the successes of the new socialist-realist ink figure painting was the transformation of *guohua* from an art form for private enjoyment into public art. Indeed, the expectation that *guohua* should serve the same public function as oil painting was an important development of the 1950s. Of 244 paintings commissioned for the 1959 painting campaign for the Museum of Revolutionary History, 136 were *guohua* paintings in a new socialist-realist style. The Manchurian artist Wang Shenglie (1923–2003) was assigned a topic similar to that of Quan Shanshi's oil painting [see fig. 7.13] for the same project. His *Eight Female Martyrs* [fig. 8.5] depicts



8.4 Liu Wenxi (b. 1933), *Four Generations*, 1962, ink and color on paper, 118 × 98 cm, National Art Museum of China, Beijing



8.5 Wang Shenglie (1923–2003), *Eight Female Martyrs*, 1959, ink and color on paper, 144 × 367 cm, National Museum of China, Beijing



8.6 Yang Zhiguang (b. 1930), *Mao Zedong at the Peasant Movement Training School*, 1959, ink and color on paper, 141 × 205 cm, National Museum of China, Beijing

the heroines of the Women's Regiment of the Anti-Japanese Amalgamated Army, who drowned in October 1938 rather than surrender to the Japanese invader. Wang Shenglie grew up in Shinkyō (now Changchun, Jilin province), the capital of Manchukuo under the Japanese colonial occupation (1932–1945). From 1941 to 1944 he studied in Tokyo with the *nihonga* artist Kawabata Ryūshi (1885–1966), at the Tokyo branch of the Shinkyō Art Academy, and then subsequently became an art teacher in Changchun. Upon his return to Manchuria, however, Wang joined the Communist Party and began organizing the resistance movement. He was assigned to the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts in Shenyang in 1949 and later became its vice-director.

Wang Shenglie was trained in a polished style of Japanese art called *nihonga* during the Japanese occupation of his native region. *Nihonga* is a nativist mode of modern Japanese painting initiated in the late Meiji period (1868–1912) as a corrective to what some in the Japanese art world saw as an overreliance on Western forms of art. Although these Tokyo artists returned to the materials and highly refined techniques of early East Asian painting, they were familiar with European drawing, compositional conventions, and perspective, and their art often synthesized the two tradi-

tions. In format, their paintings tend to be large and are sometimes stretched on a screenlike frame so that they may occupy the same wall space as an oil painting. Xu Beihong's advocacy of academic figure drawing and history painting positioned his students to easily adapt themselves to the requirements of Soviet socialist realism, which had its roots in the European academic manner. Wang Shenglie's Japanese academic training, which was also grounded in nineteenth-century realism, enabled him to achieve a similar conceptual and stylistic convergence. In addition to the highly skillful rendering of the desperate soldiers, details such as the carefully modeled and highlit boulders and the crashing waves create a dramatic, or perhaps one should say melodramatic, vision of the girls' last moments.

It is striking that the conventions for painting the sea, with the clawlike foam reaching toward shore and the overlapping linear pattern of the billows, come from the standard vocabulary of Japanese screen painting as pioneered by Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506) in the Muromachi period and followed by ink painters up to the twentieth century. These conventions find their source in Chinese court and temple painting of the Southern Song period and may be seen in religious murals of the Yuan and Ming periods as well.

They were superbly modified by Japanese artists to serve as motifs for large screen paintings. Using Japanese innovations in a painting celebrating resistance against Japan may seem ironic, but the bold and decorative Japanese screen-painting tradition certainly provided Wang Shenglie compositional models for this public commission. Furthermore, Sesshū, who visited Ming dynasty China in 1468, was celebrated in Beijing in 1956 by a symposium marking the 450th year after his death. In this light it may have been acceptable to demonstrate mastery of this old convention. *Eight Female Martyrs* is almost as large as Cai Liang's oil painting, *Torchlight Parade in Yan'an* [see fig. 7.14], and serves as a powerful demonstration that with sufficiently bold composition and brushwork, ink painting could serve the new regime.

The Cantonese artist Yang Zhiguang (b. 1930) contributed a work to the Museum of Revolutionary History that illustrated Mao Zedong speaking to students at his 1926 training program in Guangzhou for rural cadres [fig. 8.6]. Yang Zhiguang began studying with Gao Jianfu in Guangzhou at age eighteen and was formally initiated as Gao's disciple. After 1949 he moved briefly to Shanghai, where he continued learning *guohua* at the Suzhou Art Academy. In 1950, however, he enrolled at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing under Xu Beihong, Ye Qianyu, and Dong Xiwen. Yang Zhiguang graduated in the same 1953 class as Jin Shangyi and Zhan Jianjun, and from that time until his retirement taught at the South-Central Art School in Wuhan and then, after its relocation, at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. His painting for the Museum of Revolutionary History demonstrates complex use of ink, color, wash, texture, and line learned from the Lingnan master. For purposes of the museum exhibition, however, it is less Yang's facility in *guohua* techniques and more his use of Western vanishing-point perspective that gives the work its drama by adding a vivid three dimensionality to the painting's tropical lushness and excitement to its didactic theme.

THE REAPPEARANCE OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING

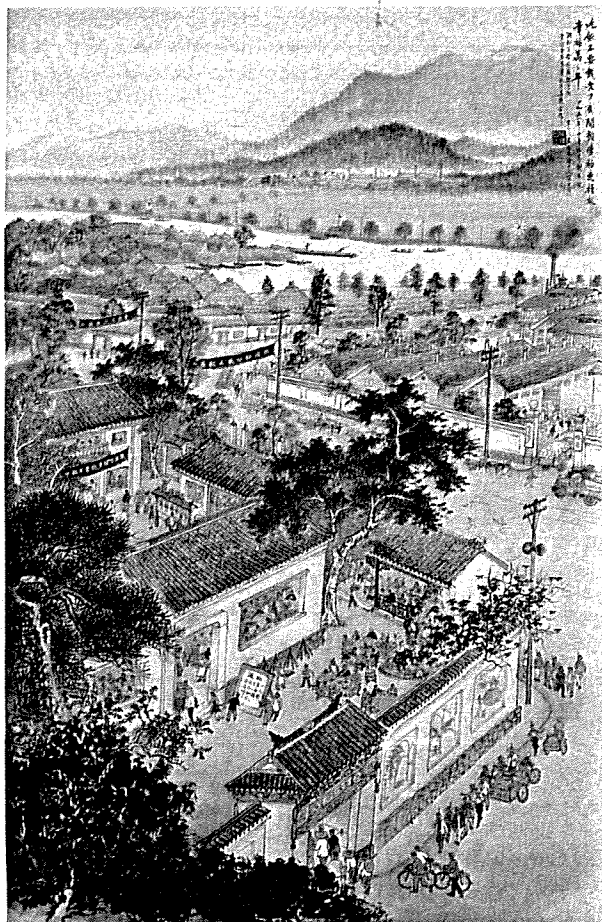
The paintings from the history painting project examined here were painted by post-1949 art academy graduates in the new official style. Although they faced the challenge of accommodating the absorbent and unforgiving paper of Chinese painting to the large compositions that were required, in general their adoption of the conventions of socialist realism and European history painting were relatively unproblematic. Rather than modifying traditional *guohua*, they simply invented a new way of painting with traditional materials. However, the reappearance of the

traditional subject of landscape painting in the late 1950s is both surprising and significant. When the newly established Chinese art bureaucracy was reorganized in the fall of 1953, after the second Congress of the Federation of Literary and Arts Workers, a somewhat more conciliatory approach to Chinese painting was articulated, one that emphasized developing the national heritage. In premodern Chinese painting, the landscape generally had a philosophical meaning or function. In one of the earliest surviving landscape texts, Zong Bing (375–443) describes the spiritual benefits of looking at a landscape painting to “wander[ing] while lying down.”⁴ In Northern Song painting (960–1127), landscapes serve as models of the perfect order of the universe; in Yuan and Ming literati art they also express the mind or heart of the artist. It was partly on the basis of the individualistic and introspective latter practice that landscape painting had been largely rejected as useless to new China.

In nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and American art, however, grand landscape paintings were often read through a nationalistic lens. Particularly in the United States, beginning around 1820, the awe-inspiring beauty of the natural landscape was equated with optimism for the national future and tied to the nation's sense of Manifest Destiny. This tendency, so evident in painting, is echoed in such late-nineteenth-century patriotic songs as “America the Beautiful.” Construction of the ideology and imagery of the People's Republic of China made effective use of similar conventions, and by 1959 we see a notable change in the interpretation of Chinese landscape painting, which came to serve as a symbol of the greatness of the nation.

One of the most important criticisms of Chinese painting by those within the Communist Party who sought to remold or abolish *guohua* was that it was based on copying old art rather than on observation of the real world. To meet this challenge, the cultural authorities funded artists to travel in order to learn to paint the appearance and activities of the new nation. In August of 1953, for example, Fu Baoshi (1904–1965), who had worked briefly in the Nationalist government during the war but had successfully redeemed himself by completing a program of thought reform, participated in a field expedition to Anhui to paint from life at the construction site of the Foziling Dam. This engineering project, aimed at taming the Huai River, was billed as Asia's largest dam and was a symbol of the new government's ambition to conquer nature on behalf of the masses. From this time forth, plein air painting, previously common among practitioners of oil and water color painting, became a standard part of the project of reforming Chinese painting.

As seen in the work of Zhou Changgu, travel to paint



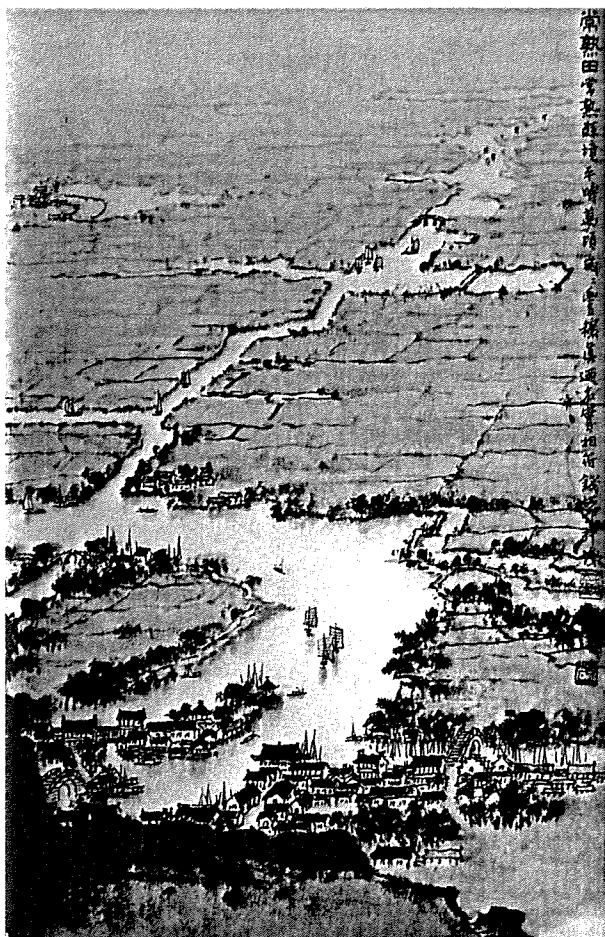
8.7 Jiangsu Institute of Chinese Painting, *People's Commune Dining Hall (Free Food for All)*, 1958, ink and color on paper, 146 × 96 cm, M K Lau Collection, Hong Kong

real places, only widely possible for artists in a time of peace and prosperity, became a major inspiration for new images and styles beginning in the early 1950s. Establishment of regional and local branches of the Chinese Artists Association further encouraged artists in regional centers to remold Chinese painting through close observation of the relationship between nature and human activity. During the Great Leap Forward of 1958, Jiangsu artists working with Fu Baoshi developed a unique regional style. Remarkably, they were also able to achieve a form of communal production. One early example of their collaboration, *People's Commune Dining Hall (Free Food for All)*, combines exquisitely restrained and subtle washes of ink and color with complicated and rather fussy details of observed human activity [fig. 8.7].⁵ The 1958 painting by members of the Jiangsu Institute of Chinese Painting, which depicts a newly collectivized rural village, was particularly praised by party administrators in Beijing.

Using Western principles of vanishing-point perspective,

the artists create an expansive and sharply tilted ground plane in the lower half of the picture that enables the viewer to see details within the courtyard, where free food is served to contented villagers. Such minute details as menus, slogan boards and propaganda banners, murals depicting giant pumpkins and ears of corn on the outside of the compound wall, loudspeakers high atop electric poles, and distant windmills, haystacks, and factories, all contribute to the purpose of the painting, illustrating the iconography of economic progress under the Great Leap Forward. The lyrical distant Jiangnan hills serve as backdrop for the action and give the work an aesthetic appeal that partially overcomes the didactic functionality of the foreground architecture and figures. While traditional Chinese landscape painting often gracefully and logically incorporates multiple viewpoints within a single composition, the movement in this work from the lower half, with its unitary Western vanishing-point perspective, to a completely different and rather disjunctive ground plane in the upper part of the picture, is unexpected. Nevertheless, because of its minute and engaging details of daily life, the painting is oddly compelling. Over the next several years the Jiangsu artists largely resolved such conspicuous contradictions between Western architectural perspective and Chinese modes of rendering distance and space.

The overall composition of this work is believed to have been designed by Qian Songyan (1899–1985), a senior traditionalist landscape painter, but it was jointly executed by a team of ten collaborators, who ranged from younger specialists in figure painting to older literati-style landscapists. Fu Baoshi, the group's director, wrote the inscription. Qian Songyan, an art teacher who had exhibited his ink paintings in the 1929 National Art Exhibition, had launched a new career with his move from Wuxi to Nanjing in 1957. Unlike some of his contemporaries, he threw himself wholeheartedly into the task of remaking his own art and helping his younger colleagues develop their own technical skill. Merging nontraditional elements into the more conventional *guohua* he had practiced up until that point and stimulated by the opportunity to travel, he found it possible to create inspiring scenes of new China that captured the imaginations of his fellow citizens. Unfortunately, the ill-conceived economic policy celebrated in *People's Commune Dining Hall (Free Food for All)* [see fig. 8.7] and *Fields in Changshu* [fig. 8.8] was followed by terrible famines euphemistically labeled the Three Years of Natural Disasters. Although shortages, many exacerbated by fatally flawed distribution policies, were obvious even in major cities, the scale of this largely human-made catastrophe, with its death toll in excess of thirty million souls, was kept secret from



8.8 Qian Songyan (1899–1985), *Fields in Changshu*, 1963, ink and color on paper, 53 × 36 cm, National Art Museum of China, Beijing

China's public.⁶ Artists kept in the dark, and thus deceived, willingly provided the propaganda that hid the government's mistakes.

While Fu Baoshi had a gift for composition, of all his colleagues Qian was considered to have the best eye for choosing a view or site, and the best ear for choosing a title. His 1963 bird's-eye view of the network of canals around Changshu, with green fields stretching from the painting's bottom to top, is an extraordinary transformation of Chinese painting—one intended to depict in an original form the dramatic effects of new agricultural policies [fig. 8.8]. From his vantage point atop Mount Yu in Changshu, he saw the previously fragmented farm land that was now cultivated collectively as a vast geometric grid of irrigation canals and green fields. No traditional texture strokes could render this vision—land that had been so thoroughly leveled and crops that were so lush. Qian thus chose an aerial perspective that would bring out the irregular geometry of the fields, but in rendering the waterways and architectural elements found

opportunity to use brushwork, perspective, and color suitable to more classical tastes. Following a traditional practice for auspicious paintings (but one far less frequently seen in this period) his title, *Fields in Changshu*, may also be heard as a homophonic good wish: “fields always ripe” (*changshu*).⁷ Filled with traditional elements, this work was nonetheless sufficiently new in style and theme to serve as proof that *guohua* could be remolded and could serve the nation.

Beginning around 1953, *guohua* artists who showed some promise of bringing new life into landscape or bird-and-flower painting were organized to sketch from nature in the nearby countryside or in remote scenic areas. The Beijing artists Li Keran and Zhang Ding, the Hangzhou painter Pan Tianshou, and the Xi'an artists Shi Lu and Zhao Wangyun are only a few of the other well-known ink painters who were treated to long sketching trips in the mid-1950s and early 1960s at government expense, and whose subsequent work was powerfully affected by their experiences drawing from nature in far-flung parts of the country. In addition to familiarizing the artists with sights and people of a larger nation, and providing them with excellent opportunities to experiment with empirically based compositions, the artists from one locale met those from another, and successful innovations rapidly spread.

In 1953 as the new year's painting movement was brought to a close, an earnest and unassuming instructor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Li Keran (1907–1989), began advocating the development of a new ink landscape painting based in plein air drawing. Li, who had studied at both the Shanghai Art Academy and the West Lake National Art Academy, had exhibited a modernist oil landscape in the 1937 National Art Exhibition and during the war had dedicated substantial time to designing propaganda for the anti-Japanese resistance effort. In his wartime exile, however, he returned to the practice of ink painting. Hired by Xu Beihong to teach watercolor painting in Beijing after the Japanese surrender, Li began studying with two elder artists then in Beijing, Qi Baishi and Huang Binhong. With Qi he shared a love of rich, wet, textures of *xieyi* brushwork. In the landscape painting of Huang, who was then suffering from severe cataracts, he saw what were, to his healthy eyes, dramatic and intense contrasts of dark and light.

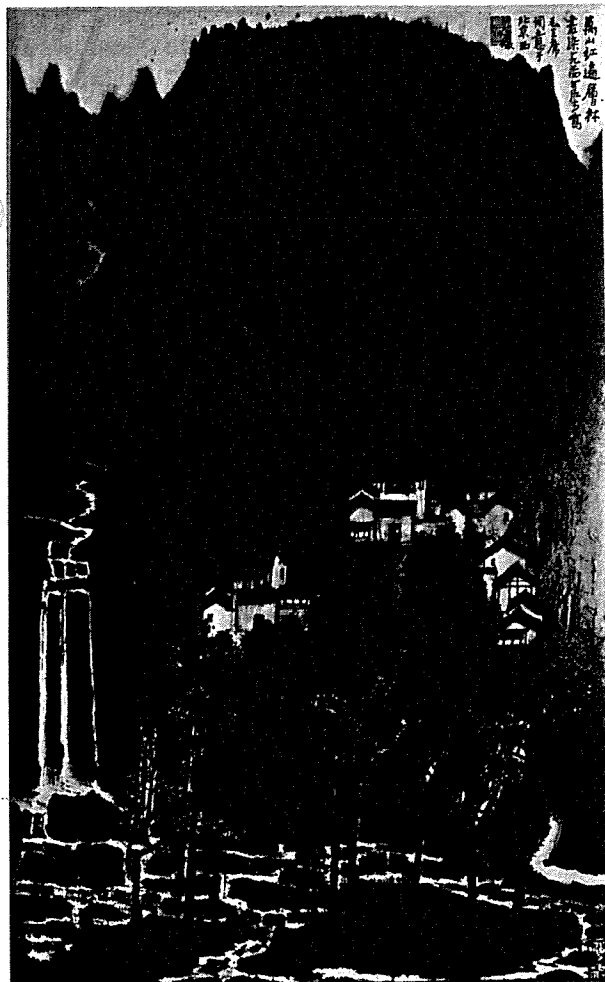
Having earned praise for his 1952 *nianhua*, *Model Workers at Beihai Park*, in 1954 Li Keran set forth, along with two Beijing colleagues, Zhang Ding and Luo Ming, on a five-month sketching and painting trip to the Fuchun River region of Zhejiang, Mount Huang in Anhui, as well as the cities of Hangzhou, Shaoxing, Wuxi, Suzhou, Shanghai, and Shaoxing. Constantly painting and discussing their progress

at remodeling *guohua*, they returned to Beijing with a large body of work and a theoretical position from which to justify their practice. In the preface to their exhibition later in the year, they adopted a moderate position in the debates about realism and Westernization. For them, successfully modifying traditional techniques to reflect current reality was their goal as *guohua* painters. To explain their exhibition, they wrote:

Among [our] most important [problems] were how to use traditional techniques and how to develop them further. If the question was whether we simply reject traditional techniques, thus using Chinese tools and foreign techniques to do ink sketches, or whether we use completely traditional techniques, thus making conventionalized descriptions of modern scenes and things, it would be simple. But it is not so simple if we intend to develop further the excellent parts of [our] tradition, to make them suitable for reflecting recent reality, and to blend modern foreign techniques into traditional styles, so as to enrich their expressive power. The difficulty really is not whether [we] have attained theoretical clarity; it is that we must attain a concrete resolution in practice.⁸

Li Keran's paintings of the "real" Chinese landscape became more and more lyrical over the following decade. His personal breakthrough came after an exhibition of works by Rembrandt in 1956, through which he discovered what would fascinate him thereafter: the potential of light. He began to incorporate intense contrasts of dark ink and white paper into his landscape painting, thus creating works that were compositionally powerful in a Western manner but, with their complex washes and lines, texturally subtle in a Chinese way. His exploration of the optical effects of reflected light provided new ways of organizing space in Chinese painting. Work such as *Spring in Jiangnan*, of 1962, explored aerial landscape views of the region in which he had grown up. By 1964 the artist began applying his dramatic use of illumination to mental images, experimenting in *Ten Thousand Mountains Bathed in Red* [fig. 8.9] with the poetic lyrics of Mao Zedong as pictorial inspiration.⁹ Such themes gave artists an aesthetic license normally impossible within the socialist-realist genre. Here, as in a Song dynasty painting, a massive central peak supports a tumbling waterfall. In Li's painting, however, it is the striking use of subtly placed axes of illumination that give the densely textured painting its power and its modern feeling.

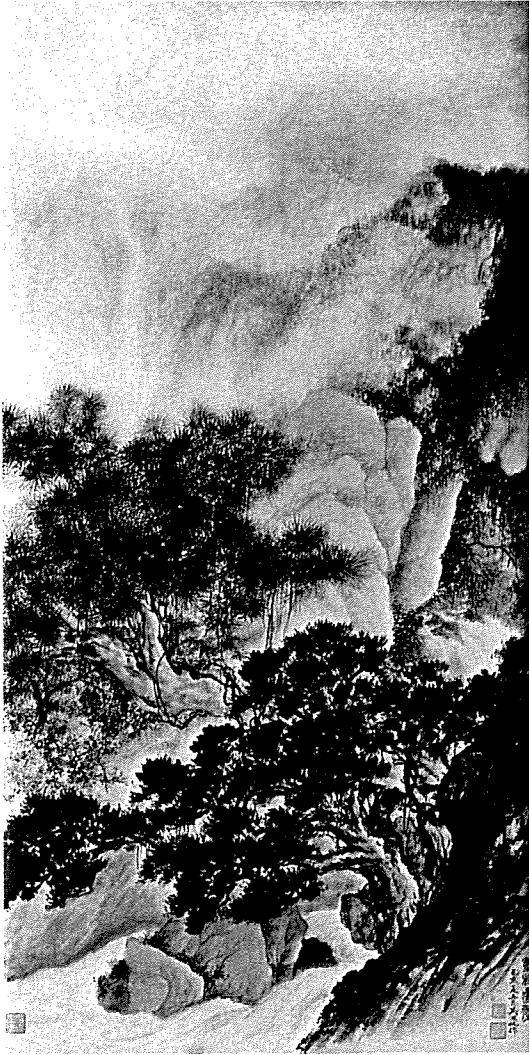
By 1955 more overt official support for revival of traditional Chinese art began to emerge in the context of a growing cultural nationalism, and the works of some traditionalist artists were shown in national exhibitions. In conjunction



8.9 Li Keran (1907–1989), *Ten Thousand Mountains Bathed in Red*, 1964, ink and color on paper, 79.5 × 49 cm, Collection of the Artist's family, Beijing

with the launching of the Hundred Flowers campaign in 1956, Zhou Enlai and other high officials called for a more open-minded attitude toward preserving the national heritage. Zhou approved a proposal initiated by Ye Gongchuo and Beijing bird-and-flower painter Chen Banding to establish institutes of Chinese painting in Beijing and Shanghai.¹⁰ Localities such as Nanjing and Xi'an soon followed. Fu Baoshi would head the Jiangsu Institute of Chinese Painting and Shi Lu the Chinese Painting Research Studio of the Xi'an branch of the Chinese Artists Association.

In Beijing, Qi Baishi was appointed honorary director and Ye Gongchuo director. A great many of the artists appointed to the new Beijing Institute of Chinese Painting had been members of the Lake Society during the Republican period. Preparations for the Institute for Chinese Painting in Shanghai were organized by Communist veteran Lai Shaoqi and extended beyond the city of Shanghai to encompass art-



8.10 Wu Hufan (1894–1968), *Twin Pines and Layered Green*, 1959, ink and color on paper, 160 × 100 cm, Shanghai Institute of Chinese Painting



8.11 Wu Hufan (1894–1968), *Celebrate the Success of Our Atomic Bomb Explosion*, 1965, ink and color on paper, approximately 110 × 60 cm, Shanghai Institute of Chinese Painting

ists in other provinces, particularly Jiangsu and Zhejiang.¹¹ Buddhist artist Feng Zikai was appointed director, and the institute employed many key members of the Republican-era Chinese Painting Society, including Wu Hufan and He Tianjian, founders and prominent members of the Women's Calligraphy and Painting Society, as well as former art school administrators such as Liu Haisu, Lin Fengmian, Pan Tianshou, and Chen Qiucao. Wang Geyi, a disciple of Wu Changshi, along with calligrapher Shen Yinmo added to the rather diverse roster of the institute's first fellows.

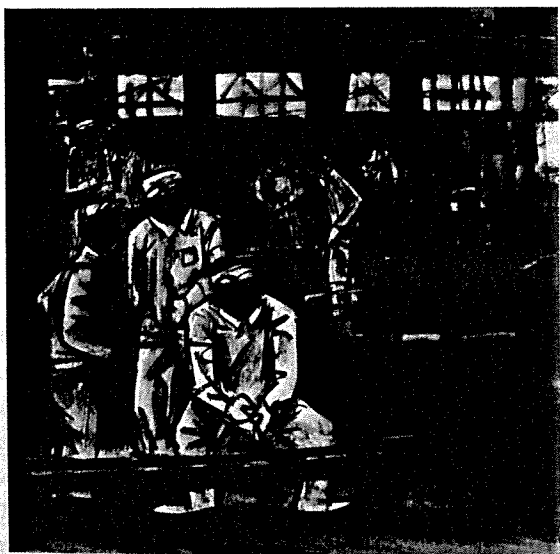
While Li Keran worked to develop a new personal style of painting in the 1950s, experimenting with combining Eastern and Western modes of painting, the traditionalist Wu Hufan (1894–1968) held fast to a visual language he had perfected decades earlier. His delicate brush techniques are

the result of a lifetime of studying the works of ancient masters, particularly those of the Yuan period literati. His exquisite *Twin Pines and Layered Green*, of 1959, seems to show no trace of the historic political changes through which he lived but is subtly textured, tightly structured, and entirely imaginary [fig. 8.10]. In his mature years Wu's combination of soft ink tones and deep blue and green color were particularly compelling. After resisting political pressure for fifteen years, he finally gave in around 1964, on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. *Celebrate the Success of Our Atomic Bomb Explosion* was painted in 1965 [fig. 8.11], probably based on magazine photographs of the mushroom cloud. Despite refusal of the USSR to share nuclear technology with China, the nation's scientists were able to obtain the information they needed to construct the Chinese bomb. It is extraordi-

nary to see Wu Hufan's soft ink and gentle literati-style brush strokes used to depict such an ominous subject. Although artists who knew Wu Hufan well speculated that he would not have painted such a work without substantial pressure, the painting's quality suggests that in the end the artist fully engaged himself with its formal problems.

Among the rather diverse group of ink painters whose artistic careers were partially salvaged by appointments to the Shanghai Institute for Chinese Painting, we may find Lin Fengmian (1900–1991). Lin had long expressed his hope of developing forms of modern art that were distinctively Asian. During World War II, he gave up the practice of oil painting almost entirely and instead painted in an unorthodox mixture of ink, gouache, water color, Chinese painting color, and even, in his late years, acrylic, on square sheets of paper. Often he used a thick paper that was normally used for window panes, rather than painting paper, and applied pigment to both sides, thus creating unusual effects of depth and texture.

Lin Fengmian's surviving works from the Mao years document his participation in field trips to paint peasants and iron workers, but they are more Cubist than realist and were unsuitable from the party's point of view [fig. 8.12]. Following the departure of his wife and daughter from China in 1956, the introverted and somewhat melancholy quality of his landscapes, birds, and figures deepened [fig. 8.13]. Autumnal scenes, his most common landscape theme, were particularly suitable to his dark effects of ink and pigment. His works, although suggestive of a universal realm rather than a specific one, nevertheless seem to have been inspired by the scenery in the Hangzhou and Shanghai areas, where Lin Fengmian lived for most of his life. The



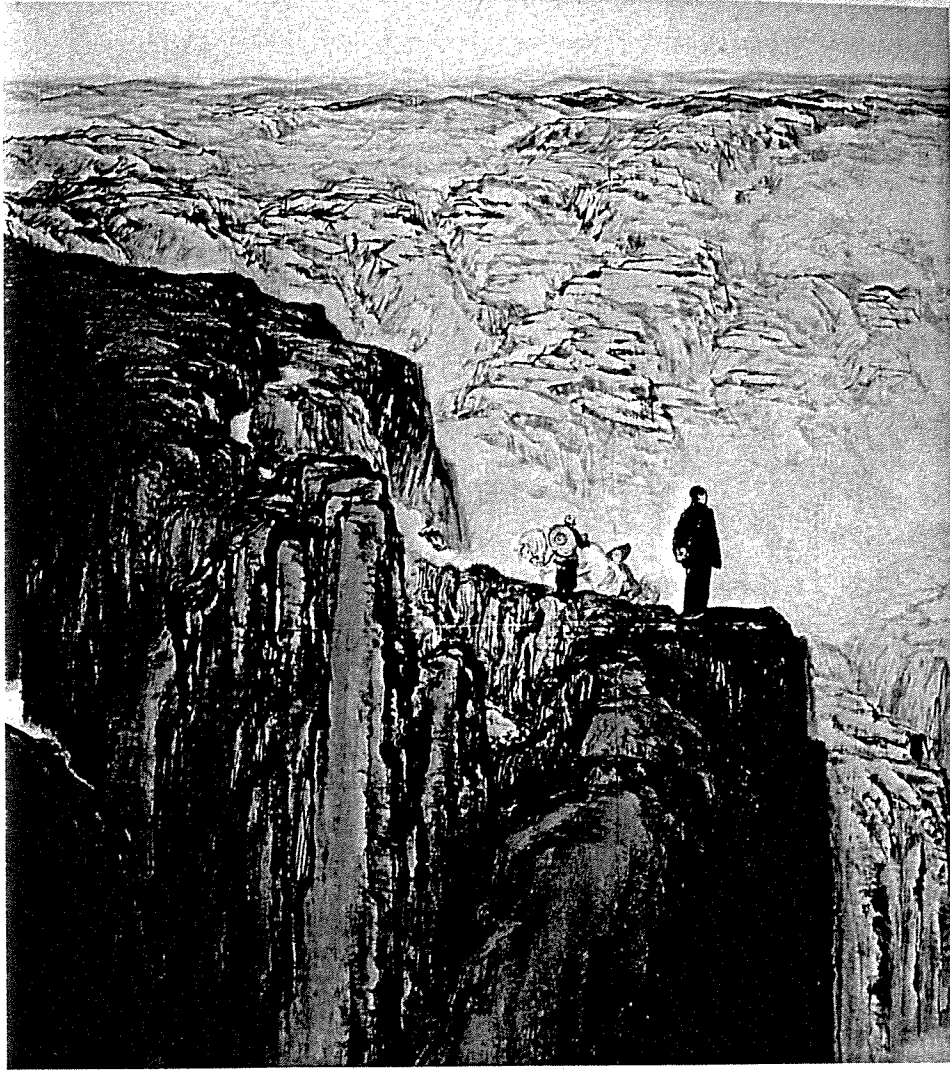
8.12 Lin Fengmian (1900–1991), *Iron Workers*, 1958, ink and color on paper, 45 × 48 cm, Shanghai Art Museum.



8.13 Lin Fengmian (1900–1991), *Autumn Colors*, undated, ink and color on paper, 71 × 71 cm, M. K. Lau Collection, Hong Kong

gentle cultural nationalism to be understood in his idealistic goals for art, his landscape subject matter, and his official position as a painter at the Shanghai Institute of Chinese Painting were sufficient license to exhibit his work in the comparatively liberal atmosphere of late 1962 and early 1963.

It is at the intersection of three policies—reviving the national tradition, remolding *guohua*, and encouraging local cultural developments—that two major revolutionary landscapes in ink were commissioned for the new edifices on Tiananmen Square. The first landscape reproduced here was painted for the Museum of the Chinese Revolution by Shi Lu (1919–1982), a Communist war veteran working in Xi'an [fig. 8.14]. For the Beijing history painting project he was assigned to depict Mao Zedong in 1947, when the military leader devised a plan to rescue the Communist forces from their retreat. From this rather desperate position in northern Shaanxi, Mao initiated a successful strategy of mobile warfare against the Nationalist army. Shi Lu, by choosing to depict the yellow loess plateau of northern Shaanxi, rather than a portraitlike image of Mao, conclusively redefined the meaning and appearance of the landscape in Chinese art as a symbol of the integrity and vigor of the Chinese nation. Indeed, in Shi's painting, Mao, the landscape, and the nation are one. Shi Lu struggled mightily with the composition before reaching this powerful solution. The narrative of his history painting is conveyed by Mao himself, who stands in silhouette at the edge of the precipice, his hands folded behind his back as he contemplates his next move. Below him are his white horse and three fellow soldiers. Originally, the artist emphasized Mao's relaxed self-confidence by a



8.14 Shi Lu (1919–1982),
Fighting in Northern Shaanxi,
1959, ink and color on paper,
238 × 216 cm, National
Museum of China, Beijing

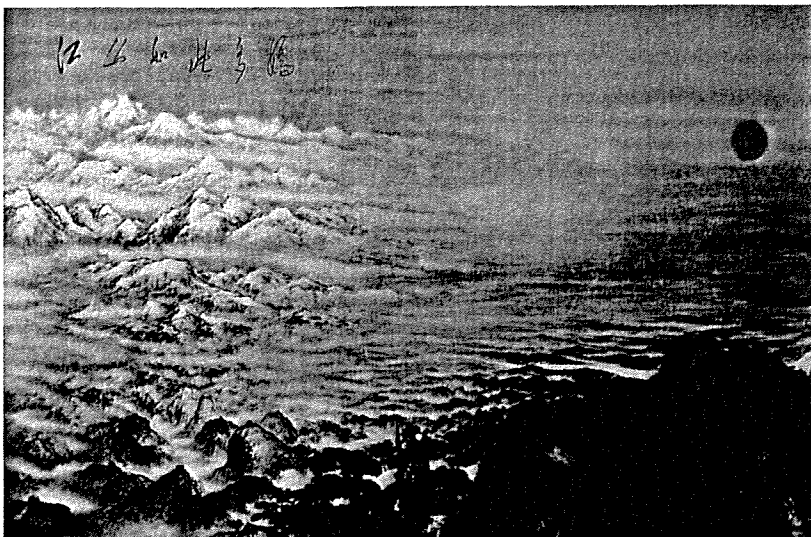
walking stick on which he leaned, but one official thought the line of the knotted stick looked as though Mao were bound in chains, and Shi Lu removed it.¹²

Inspired as a young man by the iconoclastic writings of the seventeenth-century individualist painter Shitao (1642–1707), as well as by the equally sharp observations of the social critic and novelist Lu Xun, he adopted the name Shi Lu when joining the Communist army. When he returned to *guohua* painting in the 1950s, he sought, like his idol Shitao, to develop new brushwork to depict new scenes that would be free of the traces of past masters. In one account of the development of this composition, Shi Lu described an epiphany triggered by gazing at stains on a bathroom wall. The liberation from convention suggested by these accidental dribbles are an appropriate metaphor, as the artist does indeed use bold, irregular outline strokes of his own devis-

ing, covering the surface of the paper and leading our eye back to a distant, heroic horizon. Shi Lu's application of bright color, in contrast to the blacks and grays of his ink, along with his slightly wild landscape brushwork and huge scale, gives the painting a powerful presence when hung in its original position, high on the wall of the large gallery. That an ink landscape such as this might become a suitable subject for a historical display was a significant shift in official policy.

For the grand staircase of the Great Hall of the People, across Tiananmen Square from the Museum of the Chinese Revolution, Fu Baoshi (1904–1964), from Nanjing, and Guan Shanyue (1912–2000), from Guangzhou, were commissioned to illustrate a poem written by Mao Zedong in 1936 [fig. 8.15]. From early times Chinese artists had responded to poetry, both ancient and contemporary, in

8.15 Fu Baoshi (1904–1964) and Guan Shanyue (1912–2000), *This Land So Rich in Beauty*, 1959, ink and color on paper, 550 × 900 cm, Great Hall of the People, Beijing



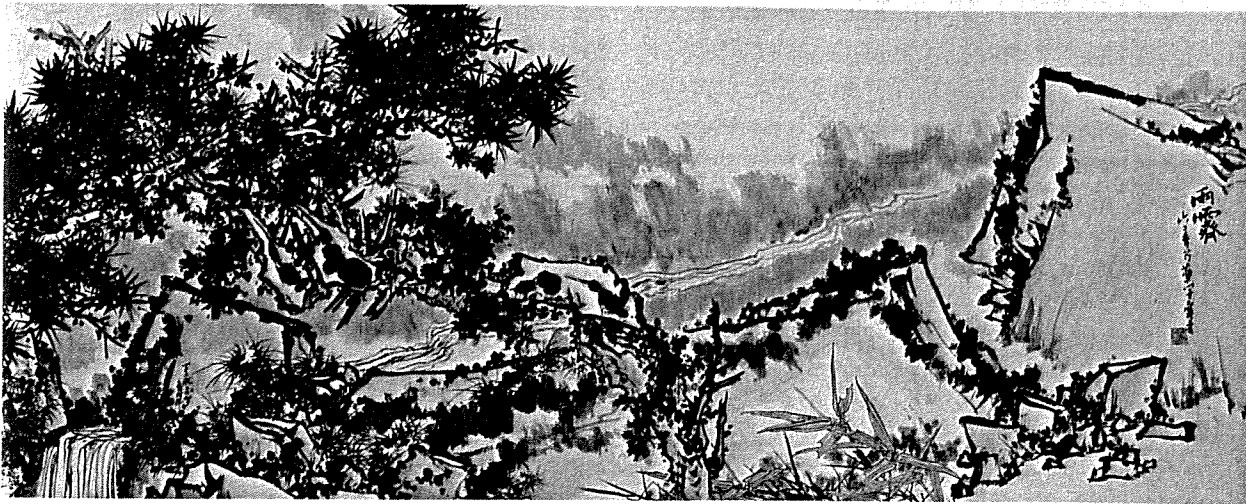
their paintings, just as Chinese poets exchanged lines that echoed one another's rhyme patterns or imagery. A similarly rich dialogue between poetry and painting survived into modern times. Largely a form of private expression, it had briefly been codified in Song dynasty imperial practice, when a poem composed or transcribed by the emperor might serve as a subject for painting by one of his court painters. As an art historian, Fu Baoshi was certainly aware of this imperial practice as well as the far more extensive exchanges among individual artists and writers over the centuries. In the 1940s Fu frequently composed paintings in his distinctive style that were inspired by phrases from such classical Chinese poets of the Tang and Song periods, or by writings or paintings of the seventeenth-century artists he admired. An artist whose style was completely unsuited to socialist realism, Fu undertook a rather daring experiment after 1949.

Probably through his friendship with poet, scholar, and Communist administrator Guo Moruo, who occasionally exchanged poems with Mao Zedong, Fu Baoshi obtained copies of a number of Mao's as-yet-unpublished poems.¹³ In February of 1950 he began to apply the same interpretive strategies that had inspired his earlier work to the poetry of China's new leader, creating paintings inspired by Mao Zedong's poems. One such work was exhibited in the First National *Guohua* Exhibition of 1953.¹⁴

In July of 1959, Fu Baoshi was summoned to Beijing to create art for the new Great Hall in what would prove to be the most politically significant work of his career. Painted collaboratively with a senior disciple of Gao Jianfu, the Cantonese artist Guan Shanyue, the painting *This Land So Rich in Beauty* (Jiangshan ruci duojiao) was based on Mao's

poem "Ode to Snow."¹⁵ Multiple versions of the preliminary draft for this panoramic vision survive, some presumably brushed as the artists received suggestions from the political and cultural leadership. In the end, Guan Shanyue painted the Great Wall and the distant snowy mountains, while Fu Baoshi rendered the panoramic middle distance, including the river view that leads the eye to the right, toward the glorious rising sun. Guan Shanyue's bold mountains cross Fu Baoshi's more restrained valleys to unify the depiction of all of China's majestic features. One of the largest Chinese ink paintings of the era, 5.5 meters by 9 meters, it became a favorite venue for photographs of visiting dignitaries.¹⁶ This monumental, horizontal, framed picture for permanent display in a public building confirms the possibility that *guohua* could serve the national agenda. In general theme and composition one is reminded of the powerful images of Mount Fuji created by pro-military Japanese ink painter Yokoyama Taikan during World War II. Like the building in which it was hung [see fig. 7.6], *This Land So Rich in Beauty* was essentially Western in its nationalistic conception and format, if recognizably Chinese in its content and style, and fulfills much the same function as a monumental European or American oil painting of the nineteenth century.

The gradual expansion of politically acceptable forms of art to encompass not only works painted in traditional *guohua* mediums on historical or socialist-realist themes but also romantic and even poetic landscapes was a response to forces within the art world and in the larger political environment. During the Hundred Flowers campaign many *guohua* painters spoke out in criticism of the hard-line cultural policies of the early PRC period. Although many of them were declared rightists, some of their complaints were



8.16 Pan Tianshou (1898–1971), *Clearing after Rain*, 1962, ink and color on paper, 141 × 365.5 cm, Pan Tianshou Memorial, Hangzhou

addressed. Indeed, a purge was conducted within the party, and a number of Westernizers accused of failing to support *guohua* were condemned as rightists for the crime “nihilism” in the face of the national heritage. Most notably the Yan’an revolutionaries Jiang Feng and Yan Han, who had largely steered the remodeling of art education, were purged and expelled from the party. Their colleague Mo Pu met the same fate in Hangzhou, whereupon the pre-1949 director of the academy, Pan Tianshou (1898–1971), was returned to the directorship. He emerged in this highly nationalistic era as one of the strongest spokesmen for the value of traditional Chinese painting.

Pan Tianshou had not been permitted to teach between 1949 and 1955 but was assigned in the mid-1950s to direct an art history research institute at the academy. Urged to participate in school expeditions to draw from life, he created meticulous botanical studies. If not what hard-line administrators had in mind, this practice enabled him to expand his technical vocabulary beyond the *xieyi* manner that he had learned from Wu Changshi and incorporate into it some new elements rendered with greater three-dimensionality in color and fine lines. In a series of works painted in the 1960s, Pan Tianshou began creating public art, monumentalizing the more intimate bird-and-flower painting genre, and proving to skeptics that even this form of Chinese painting could successfully compete with oil painting in its function of display. In the epigraphic tradition of Wu Changshi, whose early encouragement Pan had enjoyed, his 1962 *Clearing after Rain* [fig. 8.16] emphasizes the force of the brush almost as much as the actual scene that he depicted. *Guohua* were traditionally painted with the paper flat on a table. This huge painting was executed on

the carpet of a hotel reception room, with the artist walking on the paper in his stocking feet. Pan Tianshou’s success at structuring observed details, rich tones of ink, and bold lines into a unified composition is remarkable. The loose *xieyi* manner of painting has rarely been employed on such a scale or with such power.

Throughout this period an odd debate about whether bird-and-flower painting possessed “class characteristics” was played out on the pages of the party art journal, *Meishu*. Sufficient support was garnered for the proposition that everyone, particularly workers, peasants, and soldiers, appreciated bird-and-flower painting that for a time it was considered, like folk art or temple mural painting, to be an art of the people and thus politically acceptable. Pan Tianshou’s paintings of the 1960s are among the most beautiful and formally innovative of the era, but there is nothing political about their themes. They could only have emerged in a period when cultural nationalism could justify any art that glorified China’s tradition.

LIANHUANHUA

The emphasis on national forms in art was not limited to Chinese painting but was implemented in a variety of other mediums. Two forms of art that were at the core of the Maoist artistic agenda in 1949, *lianhuanhua* (serial picture stories) and woodblock prints, underwent radical transformations in response to the sometimes contending trends of socialist realism and cultural nationalism. As early as the 1930s, both genres were strongly promoted by Lu Xun for the power of their expressive language and for the potential their reproducibility provided to disseminate new ways of thinking. Both genres were adopted as revolutionary

arts in Yan'an and were further developed after 1949 under Communist direction. The term *lianhuanhua* encompasses a range of pictorial art forms that narrate a story, from the avant-garde woodcut illustration series of Frans Masereel that were so admired by Lu Xun to such entertainment publications as American comic books. In addition, *lianhuanhua* were produced in Republican Shanghai to illustrate the plots and characters of the latest popular dramas and movies as well as to tell stories of various kinds. As part of the popularization of art and ideology, Jiang Feng strongly promoted *lianhuanhua* between 1949 and 1952. He reported in 1953 that 6,490 separate titles were published in those years. One challenge was to eradicate stories that were "pornographic" and poorly illustrated and replace them with those that inculcated proper values as well as good historical and literary tales. The former were banned, and artists capable of illustrating the latter were able to make a good living after 1949.

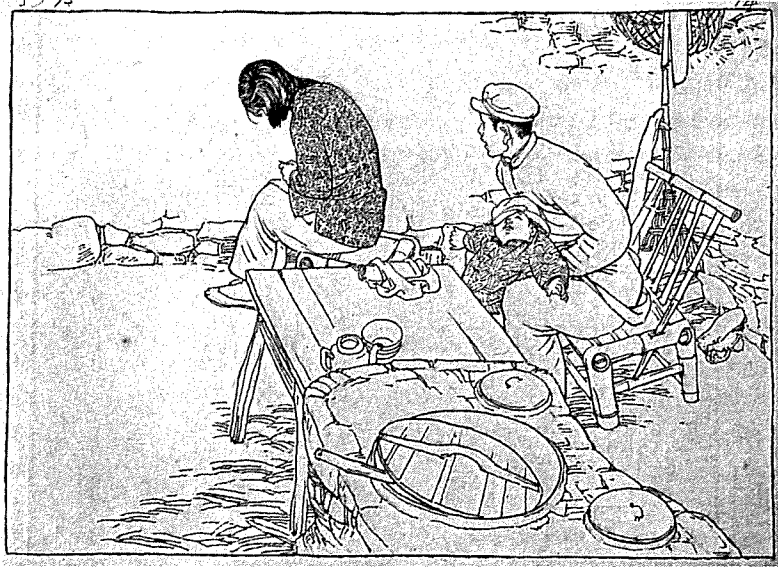
Among the new *lianhuanhua* considered to be a success in the early 1950s was *Xiao Erhei Gets Married*, a rather turgid tale with a didactic purpose: young people should not be forced by their families into arranged marriages but should freely choose their spouses. The text and the story were based on a propaganda play performed for the peasants in the Communist areas of northern China during the war; the awkward style of illustration follows the simplest of Western methods taught in how-to-draw books of the early twentieth century. *Railroad Guerillas*, a more entertaining and much more skillfully drawn *lianhuanhua* about secretly sabotaging Japanese-controlled railway lines in Shandong during World War II, began publication in 1954. The sales of this ten-volume war story exceeded four million copies in the course of more than thirty-five reprintings. The illustrations were rendered in the outline manner so suitable to inexpensive mass market publications worldwide.

In a significant conceptual shift that emerged from the party's increased emphasis on China's native heritage, publishing houses began in about 1954 looking more intensively at premodern forms of illustration as potential sources for modern techniques and styles. Printing had, after all, been invented in China, and practiced for more than a millennium before Western publications were introduced. The beauty of traditional illustration had been remarked by Lu Xun, and enjoyed the appreciation of Zheng Zhenduo (1898–1958), a scholar who served as vice-minister of culture and director of the Cultural Relics Bureau in the 1950s. Figure painting in China has made use of the ink outline since its inception more than two thousand years ago. Thus, with the development of xylography in the Tang and Song dynasties, images of figures and their settings were printed

in outline on a white paper background. In the late nineteenth century the editors of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* made use of the capacities of Western photolithography to reproduce line illustrations and calligraphic text that suited the taste of Chinese readers [see fig. 1.13].

In the *lianhuanhua* workshops of Shanghai, therefore, the outline manner common to comic book and funny paper drawings around the globe was reconsidered in light of the conventions of premodern Chinese books. The new styles developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s utilized Western perspective and anatomy to create vivid and lively narratives but adopted principles of composition and brushwork from the best of seventeenth-century woodblock books, thus achieving an impressive technical finesse. He Youzhi (b. 1922) was one of the most brilliant illustrators to emerge in this period. He Youzhi joined the New Art Press of Shanghai, a forerunner of the state-owned Shanghai People's Art Publishing House, in 1952, where he studied drawing with Yan Wenliang. As he learned to design *lianhuanhua*, he emulated the work of revolutionary elders, including his studio supervisors Gu Bingxin and Zhao Hongben. Gu Bingxin was an avid collector of old books, both *lianhuanhua* and original editions of Ming and Qing illustrated dramas, and encouraged his colleagues and protégées to expand their stylistic and technical repertoires by studying early illustrated books. Those of particular interest to them were the woodcut illustrations of seventeenth-century painter and woodblock print designer Chen Hongshou and the nineteenth-century Ren Xiong. In the Marxist historiographical analysis of the time, both were considered to be artists who served the needs of working-class people by their contributions to popular literature.

The text of *Great Change in a Mountain Village* [fig. 8.17] was based on a 1955 book of the same title by Zhou Libo that describes in rather propagandistic terms the successful communization of a rural village. He Youzhi's art is of greater merit than the uninspiring text. To achieve a more authentic result, He Youzhi was provided funding to undertake several drawing trips to rural Hunan. There he researched local customs and topography to develop convincing characters and settings and to accurately render costume, gesture, and detail. It is evident in the effective contrasts of linear textures and white paper in the final illustration series, however, that the artist had thoroughly absorbed compositional devices from Ming and Qing prints. He adopts, and in some cases exaggerates, the sharply tilted ground plane of seventeenth-century illustrations. Details of foliage and rock, motifs of fabric patterns, and architectural ornaments echo the aesthetics of earlier prints, and are equally striking in their composition, placement, and refined execution. Yet the pic-

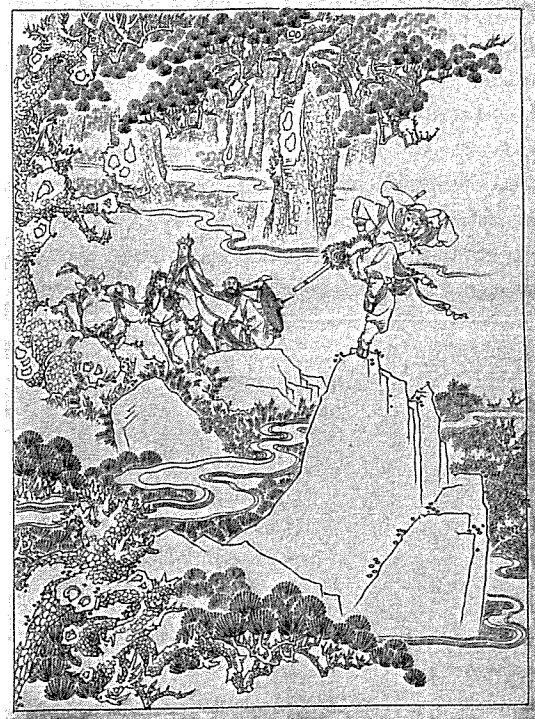


8.17 He Youzhi (b. 1922), illustration for *Great Change in a Mountain Village*, 1962, *lianhuanhua*, ink on paper, 16.7 × 23.7 cm, Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House

tures are completely unlike traditional illustrations in other ways. He Youzhi observes people as an actor or film director might and thus was able to develop a cast of characters who might bring to life the printed word. Individualization of human figures, achieved through mastery of realistic figure drawing, is further accentuated through telling suggestions of the psychological states of the characters. In overall composition the point of view goes beyond standard academic perspective to emulate the diverse angles in cinematography. The five hundred individual pages are strikingly varied in point of view, a brilliant visual strategy that varies the appearance of otherwise repetitive narratives and brings poignancy to the psychological dilemmas of the characters.

The shift in party guidelines for popular art encouraged the revival of “ancient costume” stories, which might just a few years earlier have been considered “feudal” for their lack of overt didactic content. Filled with miracles and martial arts, they enjoyed enormous popular appeal. One such example published at the height of the cultural liberalization of 1962 was *Monkey Beats the White-Boned Demon*, by Zhao Hongben (1915–2000) and Qian Xiaodai (1912–1964) [fig. 8.18]. The story, taken from the Ming dynasty novel *Journey to the West*, was performed nationwide as a Shaoxing-style local opera the year before. The strongly traditional pictorial style in which it is depicted is well suited to the intensifying cultural nationalism of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Whereas He Youzhi incorporated traditional elements into his essentially modern style, Zhao and Qian go the opposite route and bring the “ancient costumes” genre up-to-date.

Although the Tang dynasty subject matter and Ming dynasty text of this tale would place it in a traditional-



8.18 Zhao Hongben (1915–2000) and Qian Xiaodai (1912–1964), illustration for *Monkey Beats the White-Boned Demon*, 1960–62, *lianhuanhua*, ink on paper, 33.4 × 24.4 cm, Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House

ist genre of illustration, the figures are modernized with Western conventions of anatomy and foreshortening so that the characters interact in a particularly dramatic way. As did He Youzhi, the artists of these illustrations employ contrasts of linear texture and blank paper as well as the carefully var-

ied outline strokes of the greatest Ming dynasty illustrations. In the Shanghai *lianhuanhua*, emulation of traditional techniques and compositional conventions gave the illustrations a remarkably high degree of technical finesse. At the same time, Qian and Zhao's understanding of Western perspective, their individualization of character, and well-rendered naturalistic gestures imbue the images with a vivid three-dimensionality rare in classical illustrations.

The text fictionalizes the visit of the seventh-century Buddhist monk Xuanzang, now accompanied by a magic monkey and friendly pig, to the Buddha's homeland in modern India.¹⁷ In this version, Monkey (Sun Wukong) protects Xuanzang on his pilgrimage from the court of the Tang dynasty emperor across the Central Asian deserts and mountains to the sacred realm, where he hopes to acquire precious Buddhist sutras. In the *lianhuanhua*, Monkey vanquishes the man-eating White-Boned Demon, a task made more difficult by the demon's talent at transformation. She tricks the Tang monk three times by her disguises; beguiled by demon magic and unable to tell true from false, he puts himself in mortal danger. Monkey, the story's hero, is particularly brave and discerning, in each case recognizing the demon's ruse and wielding his magic staff to great protective effect. The golden monkey Sun Wukong may have been as popular and ubiquitous in China as Mickey Mouse was at that era in the United States. The tale was even turned by Mao into a political parable—just as the White-Boned Demon could take any form, so might anyone be an enemy of Mao and the party.

The Communist Party placed great importance on the development of *lianhuanhua* as one of the most suitable ways of disseminating new social practices and party policies to the public. The twists and turns of cultural policy in between 1949 and 1966 did not change this priority but did cause constant turmoil in the selection of styles and story lines. Nevertheless, the financial resources and time dedicated to training and travel for the *lianhuanhua* artists, as well as the concentration of talent in the studios, created an environment in which the gemlike works that were produced are far more successful as art than were the government programs they promoted as policy.

WOODBLOCK PRINTS

Woodblock prints enjoyed government favor for many of the same reasons as did *lianhuanhua*. As an art form encouraged by Lu Xun and developed in Yan'an, it enjoyed a venerable revolutionary pedigree. In addition, many of the Communist veterans who had developed the Yan'an style of printmaking had moved into important positions in the administrative bureaucracy and particularly in the realms of

publishing and propaganda. Printmaking programs staffed by such talented artist-educators as Li Hua and Gu Yuan were established at the major art academies as early as 1953. Developments in this art form were thus closely, and usually favorably, observed by the mainstream art establishment. In general, however, the regularization and stability of employment and purpose that so energized the previously struggling *lianhuanhua* artists seems to have drained the woodblock printmakers of the intensity that had made their pre-1949 work so compelling. With the emphasis on peace rather than struggle, a lyrical trend appeared in prints of the late 1950s and early 1960s, particularly those emerging from regional centers. Local support for *guohua* in Jiangsu and Shaanxi yielded new schools of painting, the Nanjing and Xi'an schools, respectively. Similarly, regional arts leaders with fondness for woodblock printmaking achieved similar results in Sichuan and the region of northeastern China known as Beidahuang (the Great Northern Wilderness). Although woodblock printmaking is a venerable old Chinese art form, when artists began to make woodcuts in the twentieth century, they largely turned to European, or in some cases Japanese, models. Thus, as in the case of *lianhuanhua*, the late 1950s and early 1960s saw a process of rediscovering Chinese sources.

A young Communist artist who emerged as a printmaker after moving to Sichuan was the Beijing-born Li Huanmin (b. 1930). Li Huanmin was a class behind Hou Yimin at the Beijing Art College, studying under Xu Beihong, but was expelled in 1948 after performing in a leftist play. He then joined the Communist army, where he worked with Hu Yichuan and Li Qi as the People's Liberation Army took Tianjin. He returned to Beijing with the army after the Nationalist government left the city and continued study in a special class for art cadres at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. After graduation in 1951, he was assigned to work for *New China Daily* in Chongqing, Sichuan. Unlike his colleagues on the east coast, whose fieldwork took them to farms and factories, Li was assigned to work among the Tibetan peoples of the western borderlands. He learned to speak Tibetan, lived in Tibetan regions on more than thirty extended stays, and devoted the half century of his active career to depicting this subject matter.

At the same time his work underwent the same transformations as all art during this period. One of his best known prints, *First Steps on the Golden Road*, from 1963, depicts colorfully dressed Tibetan girls leading yaks loaded with hay in an S-shaped formation [fig. 8.19]. The girl in the front appears to be singing as she waves a long stalk of grain. In its general theme of relaxation after hard work, the print is similar to Wen Bao's depiction of peasant girls, or



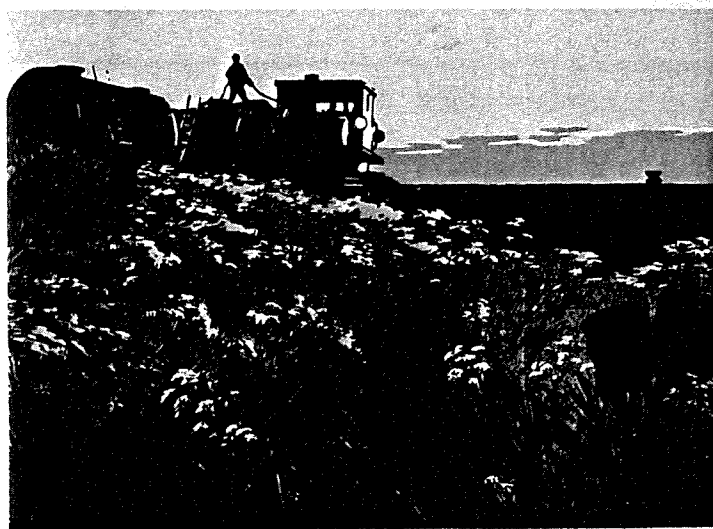
8.19 Li Huanmin (b. 1930), *First Steps on the Golden Road*, 1963, polychromatic woodblock print, 54.3 × 40 cm, Collection of the Artist

Sun Zixi's rendering of tourists at Tiananmen. Like Fang Zengxian's *Telling a Red Tale* [see fig. 8.3], it utilizes a sharply tilted ground plane on which the figures descend to create a heroic composition. As are many other works of the Mao period, it is a "thematic" work—by virtue of its title, it carries a heavy burden of political subject matter. In this case, fourteen years after establishment of the PRC, and after a series of armed conflicts in Tibet, the artist has depicted its citizens as happy and prosperous farmers. The carving techniques, and in particular the artist's decisions about where to carve the block away completely and where to leave thin slices of wood, serve to represent such naturalistic phenomena as strands of flying hair, and aid in creating the sense of dynamic progress that was considered so appealing by his contemporaries. Li Huanmin used opaque oil-based printing pigments, so that the bright golden sheaves of wheat serve as a brilliant backdrop for the figures and animals, who are outlined in black. Technically, this is a very Western print, even if the subject matter is of contemporary Chinese concern.

A somewhat less dominant but still notable trend of the period was the revival of traditional water-based pigments, *shuiyin muke*, to replace the oil-based printing inks used by most modernist and Communist artists. Li Hua's water-based print series of 1935 [see fig. 4.17] was a rare early experiment in this technique. With the greater political emphasis in the era of Sino-Soviet tension on indigenous styles, some examples of *shuiyin muke* were highly praised for return-

ing Chinese printmaking to its roots in the national heritage. The local branch of the Chinese Artists Association in Sichuan, established in 1954 by Communist printmaker Li Shaoyan, strongly supported the art of woodblock printmaking. As a result, an accomplished group of Sichuan-based woodcut artists had emerged by the end of the 1950s.

The final woodcut discussed here from the Mao period is an oil-based woodblock print by Chao Mei (b. 1931), then working in Heilongjiang in far northeastern China. A soldier-artist originally assigned as a farm laborer, rather like those depicted in Zhan Jianjun's painting [see fig. 7.8], he was soon transferred to the *Beidahuang Pictorial* publishing house. There he and his supervisor, Zhang Zuoliang, began producing prints depicting the beauties of the northern wilds and the success of the settlers in bringing it to economic productivity. Extremely lyrical and appealing, many of them nonetheless conveyed important political messages. Chao Mei's *Black Soil Steppe* of 1960, for example, depicts the work of tractor-riding settlers in opening this land near the Soviet border to agriculture [fig. 8.20]. The beauty of the natural environment invites settlers to join them on the frontier, the machines testify to the equipment provided by the state, and the vast expanse of land to future agricultural productivity. Created as it was on the eve of the great famine, it describes a promise of prosperity that would remain unfulfilled.



8.20 Chao Mei (b. 1931), *Black Soil Steppe*, 1960, polychromatic woodblock print, 36.2 × 26.4 cm, Collection of the Artist

Press, 1994), 18–27, 96–105; and in James Flath, *The Cult of Happiness: Nianhua, Art, and History in Rural North China* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 134–49.

26. *China in Black and White: An Album of Woodcuts by Contemporary Chinese Artists*, with commentary by Pearl S. Buck (New York: John Day Co., 1945).

CHAPTER 7

1. For excellent surveys of this period, also see Ellen Johnston Laing, *The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), and Maria Galikowski, *Art and Politics in China, 1949–1984* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1998).

2. A temporary museum first opened at Tuancheng in Beihai Park in 1950, but it soon moved to the more central location.

3. The panels were: East 1. *Burning Opium in Humen* (Cause of the Opium War, 1839) by Zeng Zhushao; East 2. *The Jintian Uprising* (The Taiping Rebellion, 1851) by Wang Bingzhao; South 1. *The Wuchang Uprising* (1911 revolution) by Fu Tianchou; South 2. *The May Fourth Movement* (1917) by Hua Tianyou; South 3. *The May 30th Movement* (1925) by Wang Lingyi; West 1. *The Nanchang Uprising* (1927) by Xiao Chuanjiu; West 2. *Anti-Japanese Guerillas* (1937–1945) by Zhang Songhe; North 1. *Victoriously Crossing the Yangzi River to Liberate All of China* (1949) by Liu Kaiqu; North 2. *Support for the Battle Front* (Civilians support the PLA, 1948–1949) by Liu Kaiqu; and *Welcome [to Beijing of] the People's Liberation Army* (1949) by Liu Kaiqu.

4. Also see these recent accounts of this commission: Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 24–36, and Chang-tai Hung, “Revolutionary History in Stone: The Making of a Chinese National Monument,” *China Quarterly*, no. 166 (June 2001): 457–73.

5. The Russian sculptor began with a class of twenty-three students. Their geographic distribution and number would seem to correspond with the prestige of the national academies from which they came: eight from Beijing, five from Hangzhou, three from Shenyang, two from Sichuan, two from Guangzhou, two from Xi'an, and one from Shanghai. One each from Shanghai, Sichuan, and Hangzhou were condemned as rightists in 1957 and only twenty graduated. Sculpture students who went to the USSR were Qian Shaowu, Dong Zuzhao, Wang Keqing, Cao Chunsheng, and Situ Zhaoguang.

6. Ai Zhongxin, “Sulian de youhua yishu” [Soviet oil painting], *Meishu* no. 11 (1954): 7.

7. For more on Soviet painting instruction, see Julia F. Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 150–53.

8. Bonnie S. McDougall, *Mao Zedong's “Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art”: A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1980), 58.

9. Much of this section and this translation are based on Kuiyi Shen, “Publishing Posters before the Cultural Revolution,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 177, 182–84.

10. For discussion of these construction projects see Wu, *Remaking Beijing*, 108–26; Laing, *Winking Owl*, 90–91; and Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China*, 227–29.

CHAPTER 8

1. From Zhou Yang, “Wei chuangzao gengduo de youxiu de wenxue yishu zuopin er fendou—yijiuwusan nian jiu yue ershi ri zai zhongguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe dierci daibiao dahui shang de baogao” [Struggle to create even more excellent works of literature and art—report on September 24, 1953, at the Second National Congress of Literary and Arts Workers], *Wenyibao*, no. 96 (1953, no. 19): 12.

2. Works such as these were available to him for study in Hangzhou and Shanghai collections.

3. Some have labeled him the founder of the Yellow Earth school, borrowing the name of Chen Kaige's 1984 film set in the same yellow loess plateau region of northwestern China.

4. Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 36–38.

5. Ten years after the land reform movement that aimed to free China's impoverished farmers by redistributing the fields previously owned by wealthy landlords, in the late 1950s the Chinese state took control of agricultural land. As part of the Great Leap Forward's move toward a more perfect Communism, this collectivization of agriculture was accompanied by a system of free dining halls set up across the nation. In many cases, family cooking pots were confiscated and melted down in backyard steel furnaces.

6. Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–1962* (New York: Walker and Co., 2011).

7. The art historian Xiao Ping has suggested further that this phrase comes from a revolutionary slogan criticizing Qing officials Li Hongzhang and Weng Tonghe, as the latter was a Changshu native.

8. Preface by the artists to the exhibition flier, “Li Keran,

Zhang Ding, Luo Ming shuimo xieshenghua zhanlanhui" [Li Keran, Zhang Ding, and Luo Ming ink sketch exhibition], September 1954, translation in Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China*, 170.

9. The artist inscribed in the upper-right corner two lines from Mao Zedong's 1925 poem "Changsha," which have been translated as follows: "I see a thousand hills crimsoned through / By their serried woods deep-dyed." In *Mao Tse-tung Poems* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 3.

10. The party secretary in Nanjing, Ya Ming, who collaborated on *People's Commune Dinning Hall*, was particularly supportive and became a good painter himself. In Xi'an, Shi Lu took over after the founding director, Wang Zhaoyun, was declared a rightist in 1957. Wang remained involved in their activities as a painter, and his technical and stylistic influence remained strong.

11. Among former members of the Lake Society were Chen Banding, Yu Fei'an, Hu Peiheng, Wang Xuetao, and Hui Xiaotong. In Shanghai, those hired who were previously prominent in the Chinese Painting Society included Tang Yun, Xie Zhiliu, Sun Xueni, and Qian Shoutie, and in the Chinese Women's Calligraphy and Painting Society were the artists Li Qiuju, Chen Xiaocui, Wu Qingxia, Zhou Lianxia, Pang Zuoyu, and Lu Xiaoman.

12. In close examination of the painting, a patch may be seen where the stick was cut out.

13. We are grateful to Nanjing artist and art historian Xiao Ping for this suggestion.

14. Anita Chung, ed., *Chinese Art in an Age of Revolution: Fu Baoshi (1904–1965)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

15. The poem, written in 1936, appears in many collections, including the bilingual *Mao Tse-tung Poems* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 46–49.

16. Discussion of the commission appears in Fu Baoshi and Guan Shanyue, "Wanfang gewusheng zhong tantan women chuangzuo 'Jiangshan ruci duo' de diandi tihui" [Discussions, amidst the sounds of song and dance everywhere, of realizations made while creating *This Land So Rich in Beauty*], *Meishu* no. 10 (1959): 14; and Guan Zhendong, "Qingman guanshan—Guan Shanyue zhuan" [Feeling fills the passes and mountains—a biography of Guan Shanyue], *Renmin ribao* [People's daily], overseas edition, August 2 and 3, 1989.

17. For a translation of the seventeenth-century version of the *Journey to the West* (Xiyouji), in one hundred chapters, see Wu Ch'eng-en (1500–ca. 1582), *Journey to the West*, 4 vols., translated by Anthony Yu (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977–1983).

CHAPTER 9

1. Among the excellent recent studies of the Cultural Revolution are Roderick Macfarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Andrew G. Walder, eds., *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006); Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Xiaomei Chen, *Acting the Right Part: Political Theater and Popular Drama in Contemporary China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002); Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, ed., *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999); Richard King, ed., *Art in Turmoil: The Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966–1976* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010); Melissa Chiu and Shengtian Zheng, *Art and China's Revolution* (New York: Asia Society, 2008); as well as numerous books on Chinese posters, including Stefan R. Landsberger, Marien Van der Heijden, and Kuiyi Shen, *Chinese Posters: The IISH-Landsberger Collections* (Munich: Prestel, 2009).

2. Britta Erickson, "The Rent Collection Courtyard, Past and Present," in King, *Art in Turmoil*, 121–35.

3. Shengtian Zheng, "Brushes Are Weapons: An Art School and Its Artists," in King, *Art in Turmoil*, 99.

4. See Geremie Barme, "Beijing's Bloody August," online at http://www.danwei.org/scholarship_and_education/beijings_bloody_august_by_gere.php (accessed April 10, 2010), p. 7.

5. Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: Free Press, 1977), 313–14. This event was commemorated by many Red Guard paintings. One such anonymous *guohua*, executed in a style derived from that of Jiang Zhaohe or Li Qi, was probably painted by an academically trained artist or art student at one of the major art academies. See the front cover of *China Reconstructs*, no. 2 (1968).

6. A Maoist "loyalty dance" was often performed to this ubiquitous tune in public rituals during the Cultural Revolution period.

7. The collaborative creators of the poster are credited as the Workers Revolutionary Rebel Team of the Worker-Peasant-Soldier Printing Factory and the Red Paintbrushes of the Shanghai Drama Academy's "Revolutionary Building."

8. Zheng, "Brushes are Weapons," 100.

9. Kuiyi Shen, "Propaganda Posters and Art during the Cultural Revolution," in Chiu and Zheng, *Art and China's Revolution*, 150.