

- 39 Nguyễn Duy, 'Stop', p. 83, line 4.
 40 Lưu Trọng Lư, 'Pounding Waves at the Bay of Tung', in Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*, p. 272, lines 12–13.
 41 Huy Cận, 'Your Uncle's Child in the South Is Eager to See His Father's Face', in Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*, p. 274.
 42 Nguyễn Anh Dao, quoted in Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*, pp. 275–6.
 43 Nguyễn Khoa Điềm, 'A Day of Celebration' (1975), in Nguyen Ba Chung and Bowen, eds, *6 Vietnamese Poets*, pp. 73–5, lines 12, 28–9.
 44 Nguyễn Khoa Điềm, 'Lullaby for the Minority Children Growing Up on Their Mother's Backs', in Nguyen Ba Chung and Bowen, eds, *6 Vietnamese Poets*, pp. 45–7.
 45 Tố Hữu, *Blood and Flower* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1978), p. 32.
 46 Nguyễn Minh Châu, 'Writing about War', *The Vietnam Review*, 3 (1997), p. 440.
 47 *Ibid.*, p. 440.
 48 *Ibid.*, p. 441. Trần Dân, many years earlier, referred to this type of writing as 'smoke-and-fire literature', literature ostensibly describing soldiers but seeing only guns firing and fire raging.
 49 The principles guiding the renovation of culture are defined in Resolution No. 5 of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party, entitled *Renovating and Enhancing the Leadership and Management of Literature, Arts and Culture to a Higher Step of Development* and issued on 28 November 1987.
 50 Wayne Karlin, quoted in Le Minh Khue, *The Stars, the Earth, the River* (Williamatic: Curbstone Press, 1997), p. xviii.
 51 *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

8 Remembering war and revolution on the Maoist stage

Xiaomei Chen

On 1 October 1949, at the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Mao Zedong proudly declared in Tiananmen Square, 'We, the Chinese people, have now stood up.' This event marked the important moment in the history of the Cold War when socialist China became a strong ally of the Soviet Union against the capitalist West, headed by the United States. In the same year, a new patriotic play entitled *Growing Up in the Battlefield* (*Zhandou li chengzhang*), collectively written by Hu Peng and others, premiered. The play, discussed below, though it centred on the 'hot war' of the 1930s and 1940s, used the discourse of the Cold War era; at the same time it conveyed the classic image of a socialist nation encouraging the newly liberated Chinese people to fight bravely against the capitalist world – so unfairly divided between rich and poor – both in old China and in the rest of the world.

This chapter attempts to demonstrate the internal forces within Chinese society that led to a lasting discourse in which the 'hot war' before 1949 was remembered in order to justify a 'continued revolution' in socialist China. A military backdrop comprising the war of resistance against Japanese invaders and the civil war between the Kuomintang (KMT) Nationalist troops and those of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) played an essential part in the construction of the revolutionary discourse of the PRC. That discourse skilfully exploited Cold War rhetoric on the Chinese stage so that the political agendas of the CCP might be carried out. It is my intention in this chapter to move beyond the bipolar view of the Cold War world, with the United States and the Soviet Union as its exclusive opposing poles. Instead, I focus on Chinese theatre as a dynamic stage on which Chinese constructions of the Cold War became integral to the formation of national identities via stories about home, family, motherhood, femininity, masculinity, collective identity and global revolution.

The ultimate goal of these Chinese stories was to justify and consolidate the political power of the CCP; they were also meant to provide the theoretical grounds for Mao Zedong's campaign to prevent socialist China from reverting to its pre-1949 semi-colonial and semi-feudal state. This is, of course, not to deny that the Chinese communist revolution had long been

inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917 and by its socialist ideology. Yet the Maoist socialist stage saw its function as the use of Cold War ideology to create a particular kind of Maoism by which China could be viewed as an important pillar of the socialist bloc. The Sino-Soviet split after the death of Stalin mandated that the CCP redefine itself as an emerging leader of the socialist bloc with its own unique vision, which consisted of a combination of Marxism, Leninism and 'Mao Zedong Thought'. And that vision was devoted to supporting the Third World independence movements of the 1960s in their rebellion against the domineering power of 'Soviet revisionists' and US imperialists. In a series of public speeches and printed statements from 1963 to 1964, for instance, Mao Zedong declared his unwavering support for the Panamanian people's 'just' and 'patriotic struggle' against US imperialism and its running dogs, for the people of the Congo's struggle against US intervention, and for the South Vietnamese people's resistance to the US-Diem authority, thus positioning himself as the spokesman and defender of the interests of the oppressed Third World.¹ Theatre productions such as *War Drums of the Equator* (*Chidao zhangu*), performed in various parts of the country from 1965 to 1966, dramatized the conflict between leftist Congolese forces under Patrice Lumumba and those supported by the UN and USA.² After a series of violent and murderous events, the emphasis on guerrilla war in the African jungle as the only way to defeat imperialist forces at the end of the play reinforced the global implications of Mao's theory that political power grew out of the barrel of a gun: 'without a people's army the people have nothing'.³ Military stories therefore become indispensable for winning the Chinese revolution in the past and for the triumph of the world revolution in the present.

Contemporary Chinese politics was not the only inspiration for Cold War theatre. In order to celebrate Chinese nationalism, some well-made plays of the 1950s continued the Republican period's (1911–49) tradition of remembering the 'hot wars' imposed by imperialist powers on China and waged by the enemies of the Chinese people. Examples are the well-received plays of Tian Han, such as *The Song of Returning Spring* (*Hui chun zhi qu*), written in 1935.⁴ Against the backdrop of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, Tian Han's play revolves around the story of a patriotic soldier. Having lost his memory as the result of battlefield wounds, the soldier regains it three years later thanks to the care of his fiancée, who has returned from South-East Asia to nurse and marry him even though he fails to remember her. A left-wing dramatist committed by 1930 to a socialist vision of a new China, Tian Han reflected Chinese intellectuals' subscription to Cold War ideology and paved the way for the incorporation by the high-Maoist culture of the 1960s of facets of military history into revolutionary history. The perceived appeal of the Chinese revolutionary war to the oppressed peoples of the world did not reach its peak, however, until the height of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–76), as typically expressed in its model theatre, which is the focus of the second part of this chapter.

The use of the military past to bolster the revolutionary present is best illustrated by *Growing Up in the Battlefield*, the key play of the period. Although little known outside dramatic circles, *Growing Up in the Battlefield* evokes the sufferings of the rural poor before 1949, an important theme in the literature of both the Republican period and the PRC. Set in a remote village in northern China, the play traces the fortunes of a family of three generations of peasants in the traumatic years from 1935 to 1945 and their trajectory from poverty-stricken country folk to class-conscious soldiers fighting to achieve equality, happiness and prosperity for poor peoples.

Act I begins with Zhao Laozhong's protest against an evil landlord, Yang Youde, who has fabricated a deed that allows him to claim ownership of Zhao's land. Zhao had delayed building family dwellings until he finished digging a well to irrigate his land, finally transforming it into fertile soil after many years of hard labour. To be sure, Zhao declares, it will not be easy to retain the land, since the well-connected Yang family can buy off local court officials. Nevertheless, Zhao believes that there must still be incorruptible officials at the provincial level; and in case that hope proves vain, surely they can be found in Beijing.⁵ A dramatic suspense develops, however, with the homecoming of the son, Zhao Tiezhu, who informs all the family except his father of a court verdict in Yang's favour. Unaware of this ruling, Zhao Laozhong persists in his plan to travel to the Taiyuan Prefectural capital the next day to ensure his victory in court, and the more he insists on going, the more difficult it becomes for the son to tell him the truth. In the end, Zhao Tiezhu feels he has no choice but to break the news to his father that not only did the Yangs win the land, but that the Zhaos will have to pay Yang's legal expenses. In total despair, and intending to commit suicide, Zhao Laozhong turns to his innocent and loving grandson, Zhao Shitou, and asks him to fetch him a dose of poison, which the latter does without understanding what is happening. The plot here combines the traditional theatrical scene of *gu rou fen li*, or 'tearful separation between loved ones', with the effective dramatic technique of revealing a secret to the audience while keeping characters on stage in the dark.

Then, before Zhao Laozhong can breathe his last, he receives a visit from Yang Youde, who dares Zhao to sue him again. 'Our two families' feud will never be settled,' Zhao Laozhong vows. 'If we fail to win in this world, we will forever pursue justice in the devil's underworld' (11). Yang Youde declares in turn that he will keep Zhao company if the Zhaos appeal his case in the Supreme Court; if it comes to that, he will even take his case to Chiang Kai-shek, the generalissimo of the KMT, headquartered in Nanjing. Yang's proposed recourse to the KMT to back injustice provokes Zhao Tiezhu into burning down Yang's mansion and escaping from his home village to join the revolutionary army of the CCP. In this play, the personal grievances of one poor family foreshadow the irreconcilable class conflicts between the oppressed, poor peasants and the rich, privileged landlord, represented by the KMT.

Ten years have elapsed when the curtain rises on Act II, which is set in 1945 in a small town next to a major city in the north. Zhao Shitou, Zhao Tiezhu's son, has grown up with the help of the extended families of the poor people around him, and at this point he is almost eighteen years old. To escape persecution from the Yang family, his mother had taken him away from their home town ten years before and they lived under an assumed name. However, Yang Yaozu, Yang Youde's son, recognizes Zhao Shitou's mother and presses her for the whereabouts of her husband, who is still wanted for the arson that destroyed the Yangs' residence. Moreover, Yang Yaozu (whose name literarily means 'glorifying ancestors') not only resolves to avenge his father but is also serving the KMT as a Japanese collaborator. The second generations, it seems, are as determined as the first to carry on their family feud on personal, national and ideological grounds. Seeing no other way open to them, Zhao Shitou's mother sends her son off to join the CCP-led Eight-Route Army so that he may fight against the Japanese and the KMT. Being close to his mother, and having been deprived of his father during his formative years, Zhao Shitou remains determined to look for his father and avenge his grandfather. Once again, the play connects a poor family's grievances with the issues of national salvation and the collective identities of the oppressed Chinese people.

Set in a liberated village in northern China three years later, in 1948, Act III begins with a bustling scene at a military headquarters; it is here that strategies are mapped out for a campaign against the KMT troops in the aftermath of the Japanese surrender in 1945. The words of the army's theme song, sung at the rise of the curtain, testify to the popularity of the 'people's army,' which – 'with guns tightly held' in their hands and with 'class hatred in their hearts' – represents 'the hope of the people'. Since the 'people' are their 'parents,' and 'unity' is their 'strength,' the people's army 'sees no obstacles' to conquering their enemies (27). It is in this 'new revolutionary family' that Zhao Shitou discovers his father, now a military commander. Even without knowing that the man is indeed his father, Shitou feels immediately drawn to this respected, gentle superior. The love and tender care with which a 'father' (or superior) looks after his 'son' (or recruit) is similar to the nurturing way the Communist Party wanted to care for its numerous 'children' in the big proletariat family. Equally oblivious to Shitou's true identity, Zhao Tiezhu educates him, treating him as a new recruit in a 'revolutionary family' composed of 'class' brothers with a shared hatred for the KMT. Now renamed Zhao Gang (which means 'Comrade Steel'), Zhao Tiezhu gently guides his soldiers toward achieving a heightened class consciousness. He convinces the new soldiers, who are eager to fight their way south to liberate their home villages from the KMT's rule, that revolution is not about settling personal grievances against one's own enemies. It is about liberating every single village in China in order to finally liberate humankind; this is the clear, overriding message that the new recruits must understand about what was later

known as 'Cold War ideology', even while they are in the middle of the hot battles between the CCP and the KMT.

When urged by his new soldiers to talk about his own family, Zhao Tiezhu admits that he did have a family but lost contact with them 13 years ago. He does not plan to quit his military career or return home, he says until all class enemies have been wiped off the face of the earth (31). Repeatedly the play juxtaposes Zhao's emphasis on the 'big family,' consisting of all the suffering peoples of the world, with his suppressed longings for his own family. Further questioned by Comrade Zhou, his political instructor and party representative, Zhao confesses that, no matter how hard he tried, he was never able to uncover any leads as to the whereabouts of his family. Still in love with his wife, he has never been tempted to approach any other woman and continues to hope that they will be reunited (33). In one scene, Zhao Tiezhu explains to his new recruits that he too harbours deep hatred for their class enemies and is intent on avenging his father, who was hounded to death by an evil landlord. Zhao Tiezhu's remarks are reinforced by those of his son: the son also seeks revenge against a hated oppressor, one who forced *his* father to flee from home and leave his family fatherless and facing hardships for most of the son's life (39). The audience members, of course, know the characters' true identities and are thus expected to be touched by the family's tragedy and to relate to it as if it were their own.

The plot device of unrecognized identities is taken further in Act III and Act IV. Zhao Tiezhu leads his soldiers to victory in the battle to liberate the village where his son and wife went to live after they had escaped from their home town. While Zhao Tiezhu remains in the dark as to the significance of this battle, his son becomes so impatient to obey orders to liberate his village and rescue his mother that Zhao Tiezhu feels compelled to remind him that liberating one's own family should not be the primary reason for joining the revolution. However, when Zhao Tiezhu and his unidentified son manage to save Zhao's wife, kill Yang Youde and arrest Yang Youde's son, it seems as if the commander has achieved a miracle: earlier on, he had promised his soldiers that the day when other oppressed peoples are liberated will be the day when the family of the soldiers will also be liberated. The logic of the play therefore dictates that the son should now tearfully bid his mother farewell and set out to avenge the wrongs done to his comrades' families just as they have done for him. Speaking from his broadened perspective, the father tells his wife that even though she has waited thirteen years for him, he cannot yet 'put down his gun', not before all class enemies have been wiped out. Had his father possessed a gun, he points out, the evil landlord could not have persecuted his father to death (74). This final scene seamlessly connects the family reunion with the teleological goals of socialist China. The traditional operatic scene of *da tuan yuan*, or 'great family reunion', illustrates the revolutionary theme that one's *xiao jia*, or 'small home,' cannot know happiness without looking out for the needs of *da jia*, or the 'big family', of all oppressed people.

A canonical play of the 1950s, *Growing Up in the Battlefield* served as a model for the subsequent war dramas of PRC theatre, which continued to centre on Cold War themes. This is seen, for example, in *Iron Transportation Troops* (*Gangtie yunshubing*), written by Huang Ti and premiered in Beijing in 1953.⁶ On 14 February 1950, Stalin and Mao Zedong signed the first Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance in Moscow, an event which [signalled] the opening of a second front in the Cold War in Asia' following the Berlin crisis of 1948, when the Soviet Union and the West defied each other for the first time since the Second World War.⁷ As 'the first military confrontation of the Cold War', the Korean War of 1950 to 1953 threw China into direct conflict with the United States and its allies at the point when China sent millions of volunteer soldiers with Soviet equipment to the aid of socialist North Korea.⁸ Set against this historical background, *Iron Transportation Troops* depicts the dangers and difficulties faced by a Chinese transportation unit as it struggles to keep the supply line open for Chinese and North Korean troops under the constant bombing of the US Air Force.

Among the lengthy, reportage-type dramatizations of the battle's twists and turns, one chief story makes the play work. At the beginning of Act I, on the eve of the PRC's October First National Day, the Chinese soldiers, touched by numerous gifts they have received from China and from other socialist countries such as Hungary, decide that the best way to celebrate the national day in Korea would be to win a major battle against the US imperialists. They keep the best gifts – a package of sugar from Hungary and a red scarf from the Chinese Young Pioneers – for their favorite Korean friend, six-year-old Xiao Yingzi, who loves to sing and dance for them. But to their great sorrow, they learn that Xiao Yingzi has been blinded after picking up a toy-like bomb dropped by the US Air Force. Later in the play, Xiao Yingzi's mother, the leader of a Korean road repair team in charge of keeping the bombed roads open for the Chinese transportation unit, challenges a captured US soldier to tell her why his country's soldiers cannot even spare innocent Korean children in their war of aggression. Her separation from her husband (who had left home to join the North Korean Army) and from her mother-in-law and her daughter, and her reunion with her husband following a major battle victory during the war, echoes the story line of *Growing Up in the Battlefield*. The distinction is that this play recounts the story of a Korean family, supported and appreciated by the 'big revolutionary family' of the Chinese transportation unit, which has taken up arms for the homeland of their socialist brothers and sisters. Injured children, separated spouses, sympathetic supporters and an idealistic longing for one's motherland all figure as chapters of the military history of the Cold War, rehearsed on the stage of 1950s China.

Contrasting with the solidarity of the socialist bloc dramatized by *Iron Transportation Troops*, a 1962 play entitled *The Second Spring* (*Di er ge chuntian*), written by Liu Chuan, levelled an indirect attack at the Soviet

Union. One of the very few experimental plays to employ Brecht's 'alienation effects', *The Second Spring* relates the great difficulties faced by Li Zhiyin, a young woman naval engineer who must build the first speedboat for the Chinese navy without recourse to foreign technology. This theme of creating an independent, prosperous China without foreign assistance implicitly criticized Khrushchev's withdrawal of financial, technological and economic support from China. Two foreigners in the play are charged with highlighting this message. One is a businesswoman, apparently from a Western imperialist country, who visits Liu's father. As an overseas student thirty years before, Liu's father had made a scientific discovery that startled his classmates, and today the woman has come hoping to acquire his innovative technology to benefit her company. The second foreigner is the woman's male colleague and subordinate, a socialist exile who cannot return to his homeland in Latin America because it is now occupied by colonialists. He rejects his female boss's demand that he help her obtain Liu's technology, seeing the Lius as his genuine friends as opposed to 'those people in the world who merely talk about friendship and love while at heart always want to eat people alive'. 'They can only create war and hatred,' the exile declares. 'One has to rely on one's own strength by following the example set up by people like you!'⁹ For audiences familiar with the Sino-Soviet ideological debates of the early 1960s, these lines clearly referred to the Soviet Union's attempt to dominate its satellite countries by dictating the rules of their relations. Thus the implicit message of this play suggests a turning point in the depiction of military themes on the socialist stage, which now is heeding the CCP's call to be 'self-reliant' and 'independent,' and to renounce the illusion of Soviet support. These Cold War stories constitute the opening of a new front in China's ideological conflict with the Soviet Union, previously the leader in the Cold War against the capitalist West.

The anti-Soviet theme grew even more dominant in the high Maoist culture during the peak of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Partially provoked by what was then feared as the 'peaceful transformation' in the Soviet Union from a socialist country to a 'revisionist' and 'social imperialist country,' the official press interpreted the initiation of the Cultural Revolution as ensuring that in China the 'red colours' of socialism would never change to the 'black colours' of capitalism. Consequently, the labouring people would never have to 'suffer for the second time'.¹⁰ To combat the remaining feudalist, capitalist and revisionist cultures in the PRC, the official culture promoted 'revolutionary model theatre' devoted to Cold War themes that evoked the memory of revolutionary warfare in order to perpetuate the socialist revolution.¹¹ In the model theatre, not only did military commanders find their prototypes in the likes of Zhao Tiezhu, but female characters were also transformed from suffering, silent subalterns into revolutionary warriors and party leaders. No longer would Zhao's wife patiently wait for her father and son to return home. Indeed, in some plays women warriors took their male counterparts' place as leaders, and fo

traditional roles associated with womanhood, motherhood and the intimacies of family life, they substituted a total dedication to revolutionary history.

Of the eight revolutionary model works officially promoted between the spring and summer of 1967, most were direct representations of the revolutionary war experience, dramatized in the three different artistic genres of Peking opera, ballet and symphonic music. The subject of the Peking opera *Shajiabang* is an armed struggle during the anti-Japanese war in which Guo Jianguang (a political instructor of the New Fourth Army) and seventeen wounded soldiers defeat Guomintang troops who collaborated with Japanese invaders.¹² The revolutionary modern ballet *The Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzijun*) tells the story of Wu Qinghua, a peasant girl who fled enslavement by a local tyrant on Hainan Island to join a women's detachment fighting KMT soldiers.¹³ In the Peking opera *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, Yang Zirong, a People's Liberation Army scout, ventures into enemy headquarters disguised as a bandit to liberate the poor people from the north-east mountain area during the War of Liberation.¹⁴ The Peking opera *Raid on the White Tiger Regiment* deals with the Korean War, during which Yan Weicai, leader of a scout platoon of the Chinese People's Volunteers, overthrows the invincible South Korean White Tiger Regiment that is supported by American military advisors.¹⁵

Following the success of the first eight revolutionary model works, another five were written which reinforced the Maoist blueprint for an ideal society. Almost all of them emphasized war experience and memory. The Peking opera *Azalea Mountain* features Ke Xiang, a female Communist Party secretary who turns a peasant army into a revolutionary unit as it struggles to overcome a local despot and nationalist troops. In this work, Ke Xiang, like Zhao Tiezhu of *Growing Up in the Battlefield*, is the military commander who persuades her soldiers that they must devote themselves to liberating all the poor people of the world before taking revenge on their personal foes. At the same time, Zhao Tiezhu's wife is the prototype for Mother Tu in *Azalea Mountain*, although, after having been captured by the enemy force, this suffering yet courageous woman encourages her godson and grandson to obey Ke Xiang's military orders instead of rushing recklessly into battle to rescue her and thereby putting the revolutionary army at risk.¹⁶

The Peking opera *Song of the Dragon River* (*Longjiang song*)¹⁷ turns out to be the only one among the five pieces that depicts rural life of the 1960s. This was a time when the past sufferings of the local peasants before liberation were constantly invoked to justify their continuing sacrifices to the socialist state. Conveniently tracing the roots of peasants' suffering to the old society allowed the party to demand that the rural community sacrifice local interests to the global ambitions of the nation. The opera depicts the dilemma of peasants from a Dragon River Brigade who must abide by the decision of the county party committee to dam the Dragon River and flood their harvesting land in order to save a drought-ridden area. In rural China,

where land is the peasant's lifeline, it has traditionally been almost impossible to convince peasants to give up their land. *Song of the Dragon River* has to take pains, therefore, to make the party's unusual demand credible; it does so by telling 'a bitterness story'¹⁸ about the ruthless exploitation of the peasants at the hands of rich landowners of the old society, and contrasting this treatment with the caring government of socialist China. To heighten the local communities' sense of connectedness to oppressed peoples everywhere, Jiang Shuiying, the female Party leader, organizes a reading group to study Mao's essay 'In Memory of Norman Bethume', which celebrates the Canadian Communist Party member who supported Chinese soldiers in their war against Japan. This communist spirit that would impel a foreigner to selflessly adopt as his own the cause of the Chinese people's liberation helps the villagers to conceive of a sacrifice for their own compatriots as a natural and desirable impulse. In the war period before 1949, the historical figure of Dr Norman Bethume was respected as a model international communist. On the stage of the Cultural Revolution, however, he reappears to perform the same function as the male socialist exile in *The Second Spring*, who found in the CCP an inspirational guide in the world revolution against Soviet revisionists, the party's new enemies in the global war against capitalism and revisionism. Jiang Shuiying, indeed, explores her own vision of world revolution as she works to persuade a colleague to look beyond the nearby mountains that block his view and to recall the sufferings of the poor 'brothers and sisters' living in unemancipated Third World countries:

In the world today
How many slaves still in chains
How many paupers suffer from starvation
How many brothers take up arms
How many sisters are exploited
Let us strike hard at imperialism, revisionism and reactionaries
All mankind will eventually be emancipated.¹⁹

In this way, *Song of the Dragon River* introduces to the Chinese stage the theme of anti-European colonialism in the Third World, and does so in order to justify the continuation of revolution in the Chinese countryside. Using similar tactics, the Peking opera *On the Docks* (*Haigang*), highlights a global discourse of world revolution as it portrays the working class in cosmopolitan Shanghai. Set in the Shanghai docks, where imperialists used to run their businesses, the opera spotlights Fang Haizhen, a female party secretary who was brutally exploited as a child labourer before the liberation of Shanghai in 1949. Her memory of a bitter past makes her keenly cognizant of the fact that people struggling to be free 'very much want the support of revolutionary people of the world'.²⁰ Fang Haizhen and her co-workers expose the hidden class enemy Qian Shouwei, who was attempting to flee abroad to his imperialist masters after abortive sabotage activities.

Their discovery enables the workers to complete the timely loading of a ship of rice seed destined for African people striving to develop their national economy and prise themselves loose from colonial exploitation (50). The shipment must arrive in time for sowing, and 'every sack will play a part in the African people's struggle' (57) against the imperialists who once predicted that rice could not grow in Africa and that Africans could solve their food problem only by importing grain (61). In the opera, the world powers' principal spheres of influence are symbolized by the opposite destinations of the Chinese oceangoing ships: Qian Shouwei's 'Scandinavian ship' goes to Europe, whereas the ship that Fang Haizhen protects from Qian's sabotage heads for Africa, the 'jungle' in the Third World where socialist China is respected as an inspirational leader. In the most popular lines of this scene, Fang Haizhen describes the port of Shanghai as having been linked 'with every / corner of our land, and support[ing] national / construction and the people the world over' (72). These lines form another instance of the campaign to persuade audiences of the necessity to continue the revolution in socialist China, in order to support the Third World's revolution against imperialism and colonialism.

Abetting model theatre's efforts, the official press in Cultural-Revolutionary China drove home the urgent need to transport 'Mao Zedong Thought' on to other stages around the world. For example, on 31 May 1967, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Mao's *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*, a seminar on Mao's works was held by the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau in Beijing, headquarters of China's great proletarian Cultural Revolution. Attended by more than 80 writers from over 34 countries, this gathering was described as a 'concrete manifestation of the fact that the whole world is entering a completely new era, an era in which Mao Tse-tung's thought is the great banner' and in which 'his revolutionary line and theory on literature and art are becoming a powerful ideological weapon for the revolutionary people of the world in their struggle against imperialism, revisionism and the reactionaries of all countries'.²¹ As indicated by the official report from the Chinese press, the progressive writers of the Third World countries 'gazed with boundless respect at the huge portrait of Chairman Mao [...] and they read aloud the quotations from Chairman Mao's works written up in Chinese, Arabic, English and French'.²² Besides reading poems by Chairman Mao, these writers also recited poems they had written 'in his praise, in praise of Mao Tse-tung's thought and of revolution'.²³

Further proof that the dissemination of 'Mao Zedong Thought' was stimulating political and cultural change in Third World countries was marshalled in the form of frequent, vivid accounts in the Chinese press of theatrical performances by troupes from the Third World. For example, in July and August 1967 the press reported that the visiting Somali Artists' Delegation performed on a stage set in 'golden light [that] radiated from the backdrop showing a portrait of Chairman Mao, the red sun in the heart of the world's people'.²⁴ With surging emotion, the Somali artists, 'holding

copies of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* and standing before Chairman Mao's portrait', sang the Somali song, 'Sing the Praise of Chairman Mao', and the Chinese song, 'The East Is Red', both of which were met by 'stormy applause from the audience'.²⁵ The international Mao cult acquired additional credence when the Chinese press claimed that, in 1967 alone, 33 different kinds of portrait of Mao were distributed all over Asia, Africa and Latin America. As of June 1969, there were more than 1,100 editions of Chairman Mao's works published in 70 different languages in 60 countries and regions, including 52 editions of the *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung* translated and published in 32 languages in 35 countries.²⁶ It seems that the official press's construction of a worldwide Maoist community in real life rendered even more credible model theatre's construction of an imagined international community on stage.

The effects of the global theatre of the Maoist Cultural Revolution, with its promotion of world revolution, penetrated beyond Africa, as demonstrated by the frequent performances of visiting fellow socialist countries, such as Albania and Romania. For example, the Tirana amateur troupe's 'With Pick in One Hand and Rifle in the Other', staged in Beijing in 1967, was taken to be proof of Mao's revolutionary victory as reflected in the literature and art of China, and likewise proof of 'Comrade Enver Hoxha's wise leadership' in the process of further revolutionizing the entire life of Albania.²⁷ When the giant portraits of the two great leaders appeared on stage, with 'the brilliant red flags of our two countries wav[ing] side by side',²⁸ it symbolized the challenge posed by the two self-proclaimed leaders of the Third World countries to the imperialism of the West and to the 'social imperialism' of the Soviet Union. Similarly, the performance in August 1971 by the Doena Art Troupe of the Armed Forces of Romania was acclaimed in the Chinese press for demonstrating the revolutionary friendship and militant unity of the two countries as well as the two parties' socialist construction and their 'common struggle against imperialism and its lackeys'.²⁹

The Chinese stage also attracted Maoist factions of a pro-Moscow Communist Party in the capitalist world. In July 1967, the Japanese Haguruma Theatre, overcoming 'the many obstacles put in their way by the US and Japanese reactionaries and the revisionist clique of the Japanese Communist Party, finally reached Beijing, where Chairman Mao lives and where the world-shaking great Cultural Revolution was born'.³⁰ With 'boundless love for our great leader', they performed, in August, a play entitled *Advancing through the Storm*, an account of the struggle waged by the workers of the Iwaguni Bus Company, under the leadership of the left wing of the Japanese Communist party, against American imperialism, Japanese monopoly capital and the Miyamoto revisionist clique.³¹ To Chinese audiences, this event offered yet another illustration of socialist China's impact on the world, resulting in the great red banner of 'Mao Zedong Thought' being seen 'flying high [even] in the heart of revolutionary people of Japan!'³² In the troupe's other work, the five-act play *Prairie Fire*, the peasant leader,

Mosuke, who leads an uprising in the Chichibu mountain area of Japan in 1884, 'comes to see more clearly the necessity of organizing the people to take up arms and fight for political power' in his struggle against Shokichi, a landowner and capitalist.³³ A Chinese critic pointed out that these Japanese plays demonstrated the universality of Maoist 'truth', since the comrades of the Haguruma Theatre, who hailed from a foreign country, had 'analyzed and portrayed this uprising in the light of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong's thought'.³⁴ As in many Chinese model plays, these Japanese plays evoked the past to certify the 'truth' of the present: 'Through the fight put up by Mosuke and other members of the Party of the Poor, *Prairie Fire* expresses the great concept of the seizure of political power by force.'³⁵

This imagined international Mao cult may sound naive and remote three decades after the heyday of the Cultural Revolution. Yet the Cold War themes it employed in memory of revolutionary war and its constant warnings against peaceful transformation from a socialist China to a capitalist and revisionist China still give pause to those who resent the increasing gap between the rich and the poor in contemporary China. Economic progress and rising living standards aside, the exploitation of the rural migrant workers as cheap labour and the constant loss of agricultural land to urban development make one reconsider whether Mao had a point after all in campaigning for 'continued revolution' in socialist China.

No wonder, therefore, that in April 2000 a play entitled *Che Guevara (Qie Gewala)* was such a great smash, primarily for its call to arms.³⁶ The play depicts Che Guevara as a military hero of the Cuban revolution at the height of the Cold War period when he has sacrificed everything to bring justice and equality to the poor peoples in other countries of the Third World. In contemporary China, where many people are victimized by party corruption and by exploitation from the new rich, *Che Guevara's* call for a new revolution through military war directed at liberating the disadvantaged and poor peoples once again touched a deep chord. In highly poetic language, the cast asks the audience a number of questions. Forty-years ago, Che Guevara gave up his career as a medical doctor to join the Cuban revolution; had he known that the socialist revolution for which he eventually died would '[change] its colors' by the end of the twentieth century, would he have had any regrets? What would Che Guevara say about the increasing gap between rich and poor in contemporary, capitalist China, for instance? Had he known about the eventual collapse of the socialist bloc, would he have sacrificed his personal happiness for the noble cause of the Cold War? The cast on stage answered these questions eloquently and without any hesitation: Che would have had no regrets, since he had always believed in a society that was equal and free from oppression and Western imperialist domination. Had he to do it all over again, he would still have pursued a military career in order to liberate all the poor peoples in the world. Between the play and the pop cultural fetishes, such as the Che-brand merchandise (T-shirts, biographies, souvenirs and the like), Che became a new role model, one with real values

that overlapped the 'old-fashioned' values of a socialist China. Indeed, the Che play embodies a harsh critique of the materialist culture of post-Maoist society – its agendas of globalization and capitalization – and a sharp mockery of the intelligentsia's collaboration with the government in betraying the poor. Paradoxically, however, the Che military play also met the requirements of the status quo: in spite of its attacks on party corruption, it could also be received as supporting the party's own campaign to combat corruption and its much-touted desire to help the majority of poor Chinese to eventually 'get rich', after 'a small number of people got rich first'.

Just as Che declares on stage that, as long as oppression and exploitation persist, he will never put down his gun in the struggle for equality and liberation, so one might conclude that as long as the dream of equality persists, both inside and outside China, military heroes, heroines and plays on the Chinese stage will continue to remind us of that dream. This is likely to be the case despite the fact that the rapid changes in China are making them far scarcer. All in all, it consoles this particular author that, in DVD and VCD form and as gift items, model theatre survives and still sells well in the contemporary Chinese market, serving to recall the idealist dreams of Maoist China, a complex era whose memory of 'hot wars' and history of Cold War have come down to the Chinese people as both a remarkable heritage and a burden.

Notes

- 1 Mao Tsetung, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), pp. 78, 82, 86.
- 2 Li Huang, et al., *War Drums on the Equator*, trans. Gladys Yang, *Chinese Literature*, 7 (1965), pp. 3–72.
- 3 Mao Tsetung, *Quotations*, p. 99.
- 4 Tian Han, *Hui chun zhi qu*, in Tian Han, *Tian Han quan ji* [Collected Works of Tian Han], Vol. 3, eds Dong Jian, et al. (Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi chubanshe, 2000), pp. 109–51.
- 5 Hu Peng, et al., *Zhandou li chengzhang*, in Li Moran, et al., eds, *Zhongguo huaaju wushi nian ju zuo xuan: 1949.10–1999.10* (An Anthology of Chinese Spoken Drama in Fifty Years: 1949.10–1999.10), Vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2000), pp. 6–7. Subsequent page numbers are given in the text.
- 6 The drama script of *Gangtie yunshubing*, written by Huang Ti, was first published in *Juben (Drama Script)*, 10 (1953), pp. 28–75. It was premiered by the China Youth Art Theatre in 1953.
- 7 Jeremy Isaacs and Taylor Downing, *Cold War: For 45 Years the World Held Its Breath* (London: Bantam Press, 1998), p. 86.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- 9 Liu Chuan, *Die er ge chuntian*, in Li Moran, et al., eds, *Zhongguo huaaju wushi nian ju zuo xuan*, Vol. 3, p. 229.
- 10 The phrases in quotation marks are sayings that frequently appeared in the official press and in the unofficial publications of the Red Guard familiar to people who lived through that era.
- 11 For more information on model theatre see Xiaomei Chen, *Acting the Right Part: Political Theater and Popular Drama in Contemporary China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), pp. 73–158.

- 12 The model play version of *Shajiabang*, revised collectively by the Peking Opera Troupe of Beijing, was first published in *Hongqi (Red Flag)*, 6 (1970), pp. 8–39. An English version, from an anonymous translator, was published in *Chinese Literature*, 11 (1970), pp. 3–62.
- 13 The Chinese script of *Hongse niangzizun*, revised collectively by the China Ballet Troupe, was first published in *Hongqi*, 7 (1970), pp. 35–65. An English version, from an anonymous translator, was published in *Chinese Literature*, 1 (1971), pp. 2–80.
- 14 The Chinese script of *Zhiqiu Weibungshan*, collectively revised by the Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy Group of the Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe, can be found in Anon., ed., *Geming yangbanxi juban huibian (The Collection of Revolutionary Model Plays)*, Vol. 1 (Beijing: Remin chubanshe, 1974), pp. 7–73. An English version, from an anonymous translator, was published in *Chinese Literature*, 8 (1967), pp. 129–81.
- 15 The model play version of *Qixi Baihutuan* by the Shandong Provincial Peking Opera Troupe was first published in *Hongqi*, 11 (1972), pp. 26–54. An English version, from an anonymous translator, was published in *Chinese Literature*, 3 (1973), pp. 3–48.
- 16 Wang Shuyuan, et al., *Dujuanshan, Hongqi*, 10 (1973), pp. 46–83. An English version of *Azalea Mountain*, by an anonymous translator, was published in *Chinese Literature*, 1 (1974), pp. 3–69.
- 17 *Song of the Dragon River* was collectively revised by the Song of the Dragon River Group of Shanghai, and an English version, from an anonymous translator, is found in *Chinese Literature*, 7 (1972), pp. 3–52. The Chinese script of *Longjiang song* was first published in *Hongqi*, 3 (1972), pp. 36–62.
- 18 Known as *yi ku si tian*, to tell a 'bitterness story' about one's hardship before 1949 in order to appreciate the sweet, new life after the founding of the PRC was a common practice in the 1960s for validating the political power of the CCP.
- 19 Song of the Dragon River Group of Shanghai, *Longjiang song, Hongqi*, 3 (1972), p. 60. The translation is mine. The fourth and fifth lines were repeated once as a singing effect, but I have deleted this from my translation.
- 20 On the Docks Group of the Peking Opera Troupe of Shanghai, *On the Docks*, trans. anon., *Chinese Literature*, 5 (1972), p. 70. Subsequent page numbers are given in the text. For the original Chinese script see *Haiqiang, Hongqi*, 2 (1972), pp. 22–48.
- 21 Anon., 'Seminar Sponsored by the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau to Commemorate the 25th Anniversary of Chairman Mao's "Talks"', *Chinese Literature*, 9 (1967), p. 49.
- 22 Ibid., p. 49.
- 23 Ibid., p. 49.
- 24 Anon., 'Performance by Somali Artists' Delegation', *Chinese Literature*, 11 (1967), p. 137.
- 25 Ibid., p. 137.
- 26 Anon., 'The World's Revolutionary People Enthusiastically Translate and Publish Chairman Mao's Works', *Chinese Literature*, 11–12 (1969), p. 154.
- 27 Anon., 'Revolutionary Songs and Dances, Militant Friendship', *Chinese Literature*, 12 (1967), p. 103.
- 28 Hu Wen, 'Militant Songs and Dances from Romania', *Chinese Literature*, 1 (1972), p. 92.
- 29 Ibid., p. 92.
- 30 Hsiang-tung Chou, 'Let the Flames of Revolution Burn More Fiercely!', *Chinese Literature*, 12 (1967), p. 107.
- 31 Ibid., p. 107.
- 32 Ibid., p. 111.
- 33 Ibid., p. 111.
- 34 Ibid., p. 108.
- 35 Ibid., p. 109.
- 36 Huang Jisu, et al., *Qie Gewala*, in Liu Zhifeng, ed., *Qie Gewala: fanying yu zhengming (Che Guevara: Reception and Debate)* (Beijing: Zhanguo shehui kexu chubanshe, 2001), pp. 13–69.