

have turned out much worse.

A-yuan's family visit lessened our concerns about one another slightly. However, eating three square meals a day without doing any work caused us some anxiety. Following newspaper reports that Lin Biao had "kicked the bucket," the struggle against May Sixteenth elements lost its momentum. But all of the "old, weak, sick, and disabled," who had returned to Peking still did nothing but attend meetings and study sessions.

It has been said that if you hope for something long enough, your hope will someday be realized, but by the time it is, it will have undergone a change. In March, 1972, a second group of "old, weak, sick, and disabled" was sent back to Peking, and this time the list included both Mo-cun's and my names. I hadn't gotten to the point where I didn't want to return to Peking, but I had been hoping to return with all my companions. But then if there was a second group, it stood to reason that there would be a third, and a fourth . . . It looked like everyone in the cadre school would be returning to Peking in dribs and drabs, and I must admit that we were secretly pleased to be among the earlier ones to return. And our companions were so happy for us that they even

hosted some farewell dinners. Since the stove in our dormitory had not yet been taken down, it was used to prepare glutinous-rice dumplings for our farewell dinners, as well as some meat-and-vegetable-filled won-tons the vegetables for which we picked wild. All these people were also away from their homes, but their mood was much more generous than mine had been when seeing off the other group a year earlier. Looking into the faces of the "old, weak, sick, and disabled" whose names had not appeared on the current namelist filled me with a sense of guilt, but neither the guilt nor the gratitude I felt could suppress the selfish joy that filled my heart. I now understood something more clearly than ever: after undergoing more than ten years of reform, plus two years at the cadre school, not only had I not reached the plateau of progressive thinking that everyone sought, I was nearly as selfish now as I had been in the beginning. I was still the same old me.

It has now been eight years since I returned to Peking. So many little incidents are as fresh in my mind as if they had happened only yesterday, and since that period of my life has proved to be an invaluable experience, I have written these six chapters.

A Note on "Kangaroo Courts"

The term 葫蘆案 (hu-lu an, a "bottle-gourd case"), used by Qian Zhongshu in his "Foreword," is a homonym for 糊塗案 (hu-t'u an, a misjudged case, a gross miscarriage of justice, a "bum rap".) The idiom hu-lu, for hu-t'u, was current as early as Sung and Yuan times, often found in contemporary songs and dramas. A famous later use was in The Dream of the Red Chamber, in which the heading of Chapter 4 says: 葫蘆僧亂判葫蘆案 ("The bottle-gourd monk botches up a bottle-gourd case.")

—Editor