

“ I found *Bright Skies* very difficult to write. I went to the hospital for my fieldwork, and collected loads of material. However, I had no way to refine it to make a story. I was myself a person who needed to be reformed, and so how could I write a play depicting how other intellectuals managed to transform themselves through “thought reform”? ... I still cannot work out that play.

- Cao Yu,  
interviewed by Tian Benxiang, 1982



## *Bright Skies* (1954)

On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong, standing on the Tian'anmen Rostrum, proclaimed the foundation of the People's Republic of China, launching the whole nation on a process of tremendous and continual change. Cao Yu tried his utmost to adapt to the new ideology.

The three-act play *Bright Skies* is set in a famous medical college in Beijing. It begins on the eve of the Communist takeover and ends in 1951 at the most intense phase of the Korean War. Cao Yu's depiction of people and their lives during these years reveals how the Nationalist community adapted itself to Communist priorities, and how Chinese intellectuals underwent “thought reform” to conform to the new society.



The play's premiere used elaborately-detailed sets, 1954



The staff differ over ideology and science, 1954