

**KIM IL SUNG**

**WORKS**

**WORKING PEOPLE OF THE WHOLE WORLD, UNITE!**

# KIM IL SUNG

## WORKS

### 50

Reminiscences

*With the Century 4*

*(February 1935–May 1936)*

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민족의 운명이 생사기론에  
놓여있던 암담한시기 항일의  
용사들이 조국땅에서 울린  
충소리는 명들었던 겨레의  
넋을 되 살리고 항일 혁명의  
앞길에 승리의 서광이  
비끼게 하였다.

김일성

*Translation from the preceding page:*

The gunshots sounded by the heroic anti-Japanese fighters in the homeland in the dark years when the country's destiny was at stake stirred up the suppressed nation's spirit and heralded the victory of the revolution against Japanese imperialism.

Kim Il Sung

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## **CHAPTER 16. CROSSING AND RECROSSING THE RIVER AMNOK**

*(March–May 1937)*

### **1. Expedition to Fusong**

After delivering a crushing blow at the enemy, who had been rampaging on large-scale winter “punitive” expeditions in Taoquanli and Limingshui, I made the decision to march north again across the Changbai mountains in command of the main force.

My entire unit was surprised when I announced my plan for an expedition to Fusong: Why this sudden march northward at a time when everyone was eagerly waiting for orders to advance into the homeland to destroy the enemy? Why should they move north, leaving behind West Jiandao and Mt. Paektu, which they had secured at such great effort? I read these questions in their faces. They could see no reason for an expedition to Fusong when everything was going so well. And in fact it was not unreasonable for them to think so.

At that time the spirits of both our soldiers and our people were soaring, for we were defeating the enemy in one battle after another. Despite the enemy’s frantic “punitive” attacks and their political, economic and military blockades, the ranks of our guerrilla army were swelling daily with fresh volunteers, and the army’s combat power was increasing considerably as it armed itself with better weapons and equipment.

The area around Mt. Paektu and on the River Amnok was completely under our influence, and the initiative of the war was

securely in our hands. Our underground organizations were stretching a ramified network throughout West Jiandao. The objective we had initially set for ourselves at the time of our departure from Nanhutou had been successfully attained.

The final objective of our operations was to advance to the homeland. In order to give a strong impetus to the anti-Japanese national united front movement there and to speed up the struggle to found a new type of party, it was imperative to extend the fighting to our native land. Our most cherished dream was to whip the enemy on our own soil, and this was also the burning desire of every one of our compatriots.

Just how eager the people back home were for our advance can be seen in the following episode.

In Diyangxi there was a village called Nande or Nahade. Ryu Ho, headman of the village and a special member of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland, was an enthusiastic supporter of the guerrilla army. Once he and his villagers brought aid supplies to our secret camp. His company included three peasants from Kapsan.

These peasants arrived at our secret camp with full loads of foxtail millet, scorched-oat flour and hempen shoes on their backs. They had crossed the Amnok, slipping through a tight police cordon. We were surprised at the large amount of supplies they had carried on their backs. We were even more amazed at the fact that they had not touched a single morsel of the food they had brought us, even though they had been roaming about with empty stomachs for some days, as they had lost their way in the primeval forest of Mt. Paektu.

We were also no less moved by the effort they had put into making the hempen shoes for us: there were at least 200 pairs. The footwear was made with the utmost care and looked neat and durable: the soles were woven from a combination of hemp and strips of elm bark, reinforced with a side webbing of twisted hemp fibre.

As Kim San Ho thanked the three peasants for their efforts, they were embarrassed. The eldest, a man with a long beard like a Taoist in an old tale, took Kim San Ho by the hand and said:

“Please forgive us poor people who cannot afford to offer anything but these hempen shoes to you, our great soldiers of Mt. Paektu. Your thanks for our insignificant efforts make us feel rather awkward. If you wear these humble shoes as you destroy the marauders from the island country and sweep them off our land of Kapsan, we shall be able to die in peace. We are waiting for the arrival of the revolutionary army with each passing day.”

The peasants from Kapsan were not the only people who were impatiently anticipating the advance of the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army into the homeland. Old Ri Pyong Won, from Kyongsang Province, who once brought aid supplies to our secret camp, asked me, “General, when will these Japanese be driven out of Korea? Do you think I’ll see the day in my lifetime?”

Day by day, minute by minute, we could feel their craving for our arrival and their admiration for us. Having received a pair of hempen shoes, every one of our comrades had a strong impulse to march into the homeland then and there. I myself felt the same way.

Nevertheless, I ordered my men to march north, in the opposite direction from the homeland. To comrades who were in doubt about my order, I explained, “Don’t think we are retreating northward. By marching north, we are, in effect, heading south, towards home. We have to go in this direction. This brief march to Fusong is a preparation for eventual advance to the homeland—you must understand that.”

Our major objective when planning the expedition to Fusong was to throw the enemy into confusion by using elusive hit-and-run tactics—attacking suddenly, then disappearing into nowhere. We intended to scatter the “punitive” forces as far as possible from Changbai, where they were being massed, divert the enemy’s attention elsewhere, and thus create a safe environment for building the network of underground organizations, which were thriving in that area, and also create favourable conditions for large-force operations to advance into the homeland.

In spite of the failure of their large-scale “punitive” operations in the winter of 1936, the enemy did not abandon their attempt to isolate

and stifle the revolutionary army. They continued to concentrate large forces in our theatre of operations, such as their occupation army in Korea, their frontier guards and their puppet Manchukuo army and police forces. In order to hold firmly on to our initiative and advance the revolution vigorously according to plan, we had to move to another area for a while. This was essential to putting the enemy on the defensive and creating favourable conditions for the development of the revolutionary movement in West Jiandao and the border area.

Scattering the enemy's "punitive" forces massed in Changbai and protecting the revolutionary organizations in the Amnok area would also benefit our advance on the homeland. If the Korean People's Revolutionary Army was to operate on a large scale in the homeland, it was necessary to prevent the enemy from concentrating their forces in West Jiandao, our home front and the base of our advance.

As had been indicated at the "Tumen conference," the enemy was massing its forces in West Jiandao mainly to prevent our advance on to our home soil at any cost, although it also intended to stifle the People's Revolutionary Army by driving it into a dead end in the Changbai valley.

The enemy knew that it was only a matter of time before large forces of the KPRA would be advancing on Korean soil. More than anything else, the Japanese imperialists were afraid of this advance. The military and political operations of these large forces in Korea would have as great an impact as an attack on Japan itself.

The enemy was well aware of the misfortune a few rifle shots on our own territory would bring upon them. In the winter of the year in which the KPRA main force had established its base in the Paektu mountains, the enemy dragged out the people to break the ice on the Amnok noisily every night to prevent individuals or groups of soldiers from the People's Revolutionary Army from infiltrating their homeland. How the enemy must have dreaded our attack to have devised such a childish defensive measure! I mentioned in my previous volume that the Japanese emperor dispatched his aide-de-camp on a three-week inspection tour along the border between Korea and

Manchuria. Indeed, the political and military hierarchies of Japan could not, even for a moment, turn their eyes away from the northern border of our country. At that time the aide-de-camp's order to the border guards from the emperor was that they should turn the border into a veritable iron wall. He also dispatched some royal gifts to them. My men gloated over the presentation ceremony: the Japanese emperor was obviously greatly worried about an advance of the People's Revolutionary Army into Korea, they chuckled.

The planned advance into the homeland required a number of breakthroughs in the enemy's border defence, claimed to be an impenetrable "copper and iron wall." Preliminary to making these breakthroughs, it was imperative to scatter as much as possible the enemy's "punitive" forces, which were swarming about in the fields and mountains of Changbai. To accomplish this, we ourselves had first to pretend to leave the Changbai area. If we moved away from there, the enemy would follow us, which meant that their border defence would be weakened.

On our expedition to Fusong we intended to meet Choe Hyon's unit and the comrades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps operating in the area adjoining Fusong, Linjiang and Mengjiang Counties. We needed to plan cooperation for a successful advance into the homeland.

Another objective of the expedition was to give the recruits adequate political, military and moral training to meet the requirements of the prevailing situation and in keeping with the mission of the KPRA.

Since the establishment of a new type of base in Mt. Paektu, we had recruited hundreds of volunteers. Encouraged by the active military and political campaigns of the KPRA and its successes, young people in West Jiandao vied with one another in joining the army. Also young patriots from the homeland came to us almost every day to participate in the armed struggle.

The numerical growth of my unit made it necessary to improve its quality as a combat unit.

Bettering the qualifications of the men and commanding officers

was essential to increasing the unit's combat efficiency. Improving their ideological level and military know-how was crucial if the unit was to be made unconquerable. Our hundreds of recruits had neither combat experience nor any knowledge of guerrilla tactics, although they were all highly class-conscious and full of enthusiasm for the revolution. Their political and cultural levels were also low. They were simple mountain people who had led a hand-to-mouth existence, doing slash-and-burn farming or toiling as day labourers until they joined the service. They knew little about military affairs, although they were very good at hoeing, digging and cutting hay. Some did not even know the Korean alphabet, let alone the rudiments of social progress.

Hardened though they were through labour and hardship, they were still barely able to endure the tough life of the guerrilla army. Some of them vacillated, or complained about the lack of sleep and gruelling marches. Some even delegated the burden of mending their shoes and clothing to their veteran comrades instead of doing these things themselves. It would be impossible to undertake the advance on the homeland with these recruits before they had been given necessary training. These were green men with no knowledge of drill movements, night marches or direction-finding, helpless onlookers who would ask the veterans to fix their broken-down weapons and remain useless.

The veterans had been told to devote all their spare time to training their new comrades by passing on scraps of common knowledge to them, but this alone was not enough to prepare such a large number of recruits to meet the requirements of guerrilla warfare. The best way was to give them intensive military and political training over a period of time in a dense forest which the enemy was least likely to penetrate. Without full-scale training it would be impossible to turn them into crack troops. Unfortunately, there was no suitable training ground in Changbai. Both the flat lands and deep mountains of this region were being "combed" by the enemy. That was why we chose the Fusong area, with its numerous secret outposts, as our recruit training ground.

The expedition to Fusong was, in short, an offensive, a way for us to

maintain the initiative even when large enemy forces were tenaciously attacking us. It was an adroit tactical measure to strengthen the revolutionary army and create favourable conditions for its advance to the homeland. The expedition was to follow up our successes in the six months since our appearance in the Paektu mountains.

We launched the expedition one day in March 1937. The expedition consisted of not only the main combat force, but also the supporting forces, such as the sewing unit, the kitchen staff and members of the weapons repair shop.

Wei Zheng-min, Jon Kwang and Cao Ya-fan also came with our unit.

On the first day of the trek, we were to cross the Duogu Pass. We marched all day, but we were unable to climb over the pass, for the snow was very deep and the weather severely cold. We had to bivouac overnight halfway up the pass.

That winter there had been an unusually heavy snowfall on the Changbai mountains, and in some valleys the snowbanks were as deep as the height of several men. In such places we had to forge ahead by ploughing our way through the snow, inch by inch.

Younger people who wish to get a real picture of the heavy snow on the Changbai mountains, should listen to the experiences of the veterans of the expedition. On our way back to Mt. Paektu from the expedition after the thaw had set in, I saw a hempen shoe hanging at the very top of a larch tree: the shoe belonged to a recruit who had joined the army in Changbai and who had lost it in the snow as he marched to Fusong.

By early March the snow disappears from the plains of Korea, but in the Paektu mountains the winter cold still prevails.

It was impossible to pitch a tent in a howling snowstorm. Even if one did manage to put it up, the tent would collapse in the gale. Whenever we were in this kind of a situation, we dug holes in the snow large enough for a squad to sit on deer skins or on tree bark and sleep while leaning against their packs. We covered the openings to the holes with sheets to keep the wind out. During this expedition we came to

understand how Eskimos manage to survive the Arctic cold in igloos.

At that time we wore wadded Korean socks reaching our knees and the hempen shoes sent to us from the Kapsan people. Without such clothing it would have been impossible to travel in the Paektu mountains in winter. When bivouacking, we used to lie around the campfire, still wearing these shoes.

On the second day of our expedition we climbed over the Duogu Pass. This was by no means an ordinary march. When thinking of arduous treks, our people are usually reminded of the 100-day march from Nanpaizi to Beidadingzi in the winter of 1938, but the expedition to Fusong was no less difficult than that particular journey. The distance of the expedition was scarcely a hundred kilometres, yet the march took us approximately 25 days and was certainly arduous enough.

We suffered from cold, hunger, lack of sleep and many other hardships. Fighting numerous battles, we spilt a great deal of blood and lost many comrades. It was an unusually harsh trial which even the seasoned soldiers were able to endure only with clenched teeth, so I hardly need to describe what it must have been like for those who had joined the army only a few months before.

I saw to it that every veteran helped one fresh recruit. I also took care of three or four weaklings. All the veterans became kind brothers to their new comrades. While on the march, they carried rifles or packs for their charges. During breaks they built fires for the younger ones, and when camping they prepared sleeping places for them and mended their clothes, shoes and caps.

Once a soldier, fresh from Zhujiadong, slumped down by the camp-fire and began to snore as soon as the order was given to take a break. He did not think of mending his shoes, which had been worn down to such an extent that his big red toes poked out through the holes. While veterans were still wearing the hempen shoes they had put on at Changbai before departure, he had already worn out the rubber-soled canvas shoes he had kept in reserve.

I replaced his worn-out shoes with my own reserve shoes and

mended them with a thick needle. I kept them in my pack and later gave the pair to another recruit. I used to mend such shoes in secret, lest the owners feel embarrassed. Once I was caught red-handed by their owner. In tears, he snatched the thread, needle and shoes from me.

That day I said to the new recruits:

“At home you don’t need to do needlework because you wear straw shoes made by your fathers and clothes made or mended by your mothers. Now that you are guerrillas, however, you should learn how to mend your own clothes and shoes, learn how to manage your own affairs. Today, I’m going to teach you how to mend shoes.”

I could see that they were sorry to have caused such unnecessary trouble for their commander.

Because shoes and clothing wore down most quickly when one marched on ice-crusted snow, I taught them how to walk on this kind of terrain.

The expedition was plagued by hunger. Many a difficulty stood in our way, but the worst was the food shortage. Since the march had turned out to be much slower than we had expected, the scanty rations we had brought with us from Changbai ran out soon after we crossed the Duogu Pass.

How could we obtain food in the snow, which denied us even frozen grass roots? The best way would have been to capture enemy supplies, but we had no idea where the enemy was at that time.

The starving experience on the march was so distressing that years later I was to describe the event to one of my comrades as “a virtual hunger expedition.” Sometimes we had to plod for miles and miles all day without eating even as much as a grain of maize, merely licking snow and gulping water to suppress the clamour of our empty stomachs. How could I ever forget the bitter suffering?

Once, while passing through a forest near Donggang when the expedition was almost over, we found a Chinese house. For two days we had not taken in anything but water, so the sight of the house awakened in our minds a ray of hope, for people growing opium in remote mountains used to keep some food in reserve.

I explained to the master of the house that my unit had had nothing to eat for days, and asked him to sell us some grain if he had any. But he flatly declined, saying that all his grain had been carried away by mountain rebels. A heap of maize bran below the millstones suggested that he had a large stock of husked maize or maize flour, but he was deaf to my entreaties. Though humiliated, I decided to soothe our empty stomachs with the bran.

Unlike foxtail millet bran or barnyard millet bran, maize bran is difficult to swallow, even when scorched. Even ground with millstones and gulped with water, it left us hungry soon.

After much thought, I called my orderly, Paek Hak Rim, and gave him instructions:

“Go over several passes from here and you will find Wu Yi-cheng’s unit. The commander is not there now, but some of his men are still fighting there. Tell them I am here and ask for some grain. If they have any, they will give us some for the sake of our old friendship.”

The orderly went off, but returned with empty hands. Their commanding officer himself came with a sackful of maize bran and apologized to me:

“Commander Kim, how could I refuse to comply with your unusual request? I wish I could help you, but I came with this because our food ran out and we are also going hungry. So please don’t think ill of me.”

Looking around the Chinese house that day, my men had found a coffin filled with husked maize in the front yard. Manchurian people had a custom of getting their coffins ready during their lifetime and keeping them in front of their houses. These coffins were considered inviolable. The custom gave rise to many anecdotes during the years of the revolution in Manchuria against the Japanese.

I understood why the maize was hidden in the coffin. But the trick had enraged my comrades. The recruits were the angriest of all. A volunteer from Zhujiadong came running to me and said:

“General, the people living in that house are evil. Offering food even to stray animals is human nature and hospitality, but these people are too cruel. Let’s teach them a lesson and confiscate the grain.”

“No, we can’t do that. We must not touch their food. Better we should go hungry,” I answered.

The man withdrew, clicking his tongue in frustration.

We gave no sign that we had seen the maize in the coffin, but did our best to allay our hunger with the bran, hoping patiently to educate the inhabitants of the house.

They did not admit that they had any maize even when we were saying good-bye to them.

The man who had suggested confiscation came to me and said, “You see? Education has no effect on such people.”

“It does, you know,” I told him. “They’ve begun to understand that we are good soldiers, even though they did not give us any food.”

This incident taught new comrades that there were different types of people among the masses, and that stereotyped education, therefore, did not work. Moving people’s hearts was the key to success, and the army, even in the most difficult situations, should not touch people’s property, and it should never try to obtain sympathy or assistance by force.

Had we been unable to repress our anger and treated them severely, or had we taken away the maize as punishment for lying, the recruits might have violated the motto, “The revolutionary army cannot live divorced from the people.” They might have degenerated into bandits, or people like the bureaucrats who shout at people for no reason and expect special favours from them.

Following the River Man, we noticed two labourers following our marching column, while keeping their distance. They were lumbermen from the Duantoushan lumbermill. Their appearance and behaviour were so suspicious that we stopped and asked them why they were shadowing us. They confessed that they had been told by the enemy to find out where we were going. They had been promised a reward according to the value of the information they collected about our whereabouts, and if they returned with no information, they would be labelled traitors “in secret contact with bandits” and severely punished.

From these men I learned that there was a large number of labourers

and forest policemen at the Duantoushan lumbermill. I decided to attack the mill to obtain food, even if we had to fight a hard battle.

I committed the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Regiments to the battle. They assaulted the lumbermill and searched the storehouse, but in vain; there was not even one sack of grain there. The owner of the lumbermill kept no food supplies in the storehouse for fear of raids by the guerrilla army, and brought in daily rations from elsewhere. Seven hundred to 800 enemy troops unexpectedly came from the lumbermen's village in counterattack. They were "punitive" troops who, informed of the movement of our main force towards Fusong, had come as reinforcements.

The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Regiments captured about 20 head of cattle at the mill and withdrew to the main body.

The containment party under the command of O Jung Hup contained the enemy. O Jung Hup formed a do-or-die party by selecting men from each platoon and fought more than 10 close combats to keep back the pursuing enemy. At daybreak they found the enemy only 50 metres away.

While the containment party held on, I ordered the main body to occupy the two hills in the east and sent my orderly to tell O Jung Hup to lure the enemy into a trap by withdrawing his containment party into a field between two hills. Most of the enemy who entered the field in pursuit of our men were wiped out and only a few survivors managed to run away.

Before the main body started fighting, several men had butchered the cattle behind an elevation. As soon as the animals were killed, the meat was roasted, and the smell of roasting beef was so tantalizing, we could barely endure it. We put the remaining cuts of beef in our packs. We resumed our march, eating some of the meat raw, but in a few days the remaining beef had run out.

As the enemy's pursuit grew fiercer, Jon Kwang left for the secret camp at Dongmanjiang, where he gave my men only a few *mal* of wheat to send to us.

My men denounced him angrily, saying, "Is this all the heart he has,

a man in charge of political affairs? He is not worth his own weight.”

Some of the other men criticized him as well, declaring that he had neither courage nor human sympathy. They were still suspicious of Jon Kwang, wondering why he had confused the operation as a whole by abandoning the raid on Wanlianghe, a mission which was to be carried out as a secondary effort in the battle of Fusong. Since he had always shirked his duty in difficult and dangerous situations, while at the same time putting on airs of importance, the men and officers of my unit did not think much of him. Their feelings proved to be correct: Jon Kwang later became a turncoat and did serious harm to the revolution.

We continued our march towards Fusong down along the River Man. The wheat Jon Kwang had sent us soon ran out. Again we had to suffer hunger.

Later we succeeded in throwing the pursuing enemy off our trail and camped for some time at a place called Toudaoling. It was impossible to continue our march unless we obtained food. At this very moment Kang Thae Ok and some other recruits from Manjiang volunteered to go in search of food. They had joined the army, prompted by the exciting dramas, *The Sea of Blood* and *The Fate of a Self-Defence Corps Man* staged at Manjiang the previous year.

When they heard that we were near Manjiang, they came to see me with Kim Thae Hwan and said:

“General, we’ll go and get some food. Should the guerrilla army starve at a mere hailing distance of Manjiang? We don’t have too much cereal, but there are plenty of potatoes, which were collected to help the guerrilla army before. We know where they are.”

Hearing this, I felt greatly relieved.

Thus about 10 men were sent to Manjiang to procure food. But the results fell short of our expectations. They said that the potatoes, which had been stored for the army, had been ravaged by wild boars. They returned with what remained of the potatoes. Nonetheless, it was still a great help to us, who had nothing to eat at all.

As bad luck would have it, we ran into deep trouble because of an

accidental blunder. On their way back the foraging party, unable to endure their hunger, built a fire and baked some potatoes not far away from the camp of the main body. This proved to be a grave mistake.

By building the fire at dawn near the camp, they exposed not only their own position but also the location of the whole unit to the enemy. When discovered by the enemy, they ran straight to the main body, not even giving a signal to the guard post. So the unit, which had been sleeping, was caught unprepared.

Lack of discipline sometimes resulted in such blunders.

I had always emphasized to the recruits: “Indiscipline is taboo for a guerrilla army. Keeping discipline may be hard and difficult, but you must never see it as a burden, because discipline is the lifeblood of the army. Don’t sleep with your shoes off when camping. Don’t leave behind traces of yourself wherever you go. Don’t build a fire at a place which has not been designated as safe by your superiors. When you are being pursued, lure the enemy away from the secret camp or from your own camping site. Do not eat any kind of grass if you are not sure it is harmless. ...”

Because of the mistake made by the foraging party, however, we lost priceless comrades-in-arms in the engagement that followed.

I did not criticize them for their mistake, for criticism would not bring our dead comrades back to life. Their death itself was more than enough to replace my criticism. Loss of their comrades was a much more bitter thing to the recruits than mere criticism or punishment.

My orderly, Choe Kum San, was one of the fallen in that battle. The enemy who had discovered the fire and followed the foraging party by stealth surrounded our camp and opened fire. Choe Kum San lost his life by becoming my shield as he fought the enemy, who was closing in on Headquarters. Seeing that I was bringing up the rear of the withdrawing force, he and Ri Pong Rok came running to me, sending fierce fire in the direction of the enemy while shielding me with their bodies. Had they not protected me in this manner, I might well have been killed.

Although fatally wounded, Choe Kum San did not cease firing until

the last round of his ammunition was gone. His uniform was drenched with blood.

Ri Pong Rok raised him in his arms from the snow and carried him on his back. Bringing up the rear, I protected Ri Pong Rok with my Mauser. Whenever Ri became exhausted I carried Choe on my back.

Choe had stopped breathing when I lifted him down from Ri's back after breaking through the encirclement.

Choe was not particularly handsome, nor was he a boy of impressive character, but he was loved by all of Headquarters as a younger brother.

He was full of dreams and fancies. To travel far and wide by train was one of his wishes. He used to say that he would become a locomotive engineer when the country was independent.

"To have died so young! He wasn't even twenty!" somebody exclaimed behind me, looking at the boy lying by the campfire. The whole unit was in tears.

Before burying the boy, I opened his pack and found a pair of the hempen shoes he had received from the Kapsan people and an envelope of scorched rice flour.

The cherished desire of this boy, born into the family of vagrants in a foreign land and growing up drinking foreign water, was to walk on the soil of his native land someday. On the march from Nanhutou in northern Manchuria to Mt. Paektu, the boy, my orderly, had asked me almost every day how far it was to the homeland. He wanted to know if he could eat Korean apples when he got to West Jiandao, if I had been to the East Sea, which was said to be really splendid, how long it would take to attack the enemy in Pyongyang, Seoul and Pusan, and all kinds of other things. He had kept the hempen shoes intact, thinking he would wear them on the day he marched into his homeland.

Choe Kum San had served as an orderly at Headquarters for a long time, sleeping with me under the same blanket. He was one of my favourites, my young comrade-in-arms. Probably that was why I mourned more bitterly over his death than over the loss of other comrades.

The earth's crust at Toudaoling was frozen so hard that it even defied an axe and a bayonet. We had to bury Choe Kum San in the snow. We marked off the spot in order to bury him properly later.

On our way back to Mt. Paektu in the thawing season after our expedition to Fusong, I, in command of my unit, visited the place where the orderly lay buried.

I changed him into a new uniform, which I had brought with me from the secret camp at Donggang, and then gave him his final burial in a sunny spot. I had several shrubs of azalea planted in front of his grave. I wanted him, even in his grave, to be able to smell the fragrance of his native land in their blossoms. Though the shrubs had grown in foreign soil, their scent would be no different. He had liked azaleas best.

“Good-bye, Kum San! We are going to Mt. Paektu again. In the coming summer, we will advance into the homeland, come what may, as you wished. There we will avenge your death upon the enemy, a hundred, even a thousand times.” I said all this to him in my mind and then left him. Whenever I recollect the event, I still feel my heart ache. If he were alive today, he would be the same age as Paek Hak Rim.

During the expedition to Fusong in the spring of 1937, we lost many stalwart comrades.

As the song expresses it, “Bright traces of blood on the crags of Jangbaek still gleam.” We spilt a great deal of blood wherever we went in those days. Every inch of our advance was made at the cost of our own blood.

I am sorry I am unable to make a more vivid description of the brilliant exploits and devoted efforts made by my comrades-in-arms. However, I am putting all my heart into this writing to make up for my dull brush. I write this memoir as an epitaph to my beloved comrades-in-arms, who fell in battle on the rugged hills and in the deep valleys of Fusong. Their wish was that we should fight to the last moment to win back Korea. They breathed their last with a smile, wishing me good health and success in the war.

## 2. Hundreds of Miles from Xiaotanghe at One Go

After a great deal of heavy fighting near Manjiang, we led the unit to the secret camp at Yangmudingzi without leaving any trace of our passing.

Yangmudingzi was located half way up a hillside on the route from Xinancha to Laoling. The place is said to have been so named because it is full of willow trees. On both sides of the trail to Laoling there were secret camps, called East and West Yangmudingzi secret camps. We arrived at the west camp, where Staff Officer Yu was quartered with his unit. On the other side of a hill to the south, not far from the east camp, was the Gaolibuzi Secret Camp. These three camps, located in the shape of a triangle, with Laoling in the centre, made up the Yangmudingzi Secret Camp as a whole.

In 1940, after many years of use, Yangmudingzi was abandoned as a result of an assault made upon it by a large “punitive” force, led by Rim Su San in March of that year. In this final battle, many people were killed and the camp was burnt down.

I shall never forget Yangmudingzi. Here, Ri Tong Baek, my comrade-in-arms and reliable advisor, was killed, as was Ri Tal Gyong, commander of the Guard Company, who had been seriously wounded and carried to the camp on a stretcher. It was here we published *The Tasks of Korean Communists* in the newspaper *Sogwang*, and here that I so often met Wei Zheng-min and other cadres from the corps to discuss matters relating to our joint operations.

At Yangmudingzi I worked out the operational plans for the advance into the homeland in the summer of 1937 and set in motion the preparations for it.

Of crucial importance in these preparations was to obtain supplies.

I formed a small unit, led by O Jung Hup, and sent them to

Changbai, where Kim Ju Hyon was waiting for them. The small unit included women soldiers from the sewing unit, comrades suffering from frostbite and other infirm people. I thought it would be easier for them to obtain supplies in Changbai than to march along snow-covered trails, barely able to get as much as a daily ration of a bowl of maize gruel.

In addition to this small unit, I also sent out political operatives to work both in West Jiandao and in the homeland.

The rest of us in the expeditionary force left Yangmudingzi for the secret camp of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division in the forest of Xiaotanghe. Our purpose was to lure away the enemy and scatter them so as to get food. At the secret camp in the forest there were barrels of alcoholic spirits and boxes of oranges and apples. The comrades of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division told us proudly that this was the booty they had captured by attacking the Jingan army. The booty also contained three machine guns.

The comrades of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division gave us enough maize for two days' rations. When leaving the camp, some of my men coaxed the youngest man, Pi, to give them a barrel of liquor.

Seeing the barrel they were carrying, I ordered them not to touch the liquor. I did not like soldiers drinking or smoking, for these habits were often dangerous to military action. At one time during a march, I don't remember exactly in which year, I had found two men missing when checking my men at a rest period. The entire unit began to search for the missing comrades. It was found later that the two men had slipped away from the marching column to drink liquor at an inn. Needless to say, they were severely criticized.

Some cunning men could not tear their eyes from the liquor barrel and began to coax the company commander, Ri Tong Hak, to let them have a little, saying that warming up with a cup of liquor would be fine in such cold weather.

Ri Tong Hak could not silence the obstinate fellows who were begging and hanging around him. He drew some liquor from the barrel and offered a cup to each of the men.

"Let's have just one sip without the knowledge of the Comrade

Commander. One sip won't matter," they said.

Every one of the Guard Company drank. Other companies drank as well. This reckless act of distributing alcohol equally among the soldiers led directly to the danger we were forced to face in the battle of Xiaotanghe.

I think this day's blunder was the costliest one Ri Tong Hak ever made in his life. The glow of the brandy quickly dulled the wits of the utterly exhausted men. Even the guard acted carelessly that day, going against regulations. A man from the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment was standing guard at the edge of the camp that morning as hundreds of puppet Manchukuo troops were closing in on the camp to surround it. Hearing the rustle of movement, the guard challenged, "Who goes there?"

The challenged enemy soldier was sly enough to answer, "We are the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. Aren't you Commander Kim's unit?" The fooled guard made a hasty judgement and affirmed that he belonged to Commander Kim's unit. He even asked, "Where are you coming from?" Meanwhile, the "punitive" force was encircling the camp like a slowly-tightening noose.

The enemy soldier asked the guard to send one of our men as a representative to his (the enemy's) unit to confirm that this was truly Commander Kim's unit. According to the regulations a guard of the KPRA was not allowed to send any representative to meet anyone from a neighbouring unit. But the guard took the enemy soldier for a KPRA soldier and arbitrarily sent the representative. Having occupied the ridge, the enemy arrested the representative, disarmed him and then began attacking. In consequence, we were in an unfavourable position for some time.

In this situation it was very difficult to change the tide of battle. The enemy was already climbing the back slope of the ridge where Headquarters was located. I ordered the whole unit to occupy the height.

It was at this moment that the brandy Ri Tong Hak had offered to the men began to take its toll: I found many of the men lingering at the foot of the slope, unable to climb quickly, even after the orders were

given. These were the ones who had drunk thoughtlessly, even though they were not used to drinking. Among them was Kang Wi Ryong, a machine-gunner of the Guard Company. I barked at him repeatedly to occupy the height quickly, but it had no effect. Later he confessed that he had been unable to walk because his legs were wobbly and he was feeling dizzy because of the brandy. As the machine-gunner was in such a state, it was a bad situation indeed.

The enemy had come so near that a close combat took place on the height. Ri Tong Hak's pack was torn to shreds by enemy bullets, and one man lost an ear in the fiery exchange. On top of that, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment under the command of Kim Thaek Hwan was still surrounded by the enemy.

Nevertheless, even in this confusion the machine-gunners of the Guard Company fought efficiently that day. Changing their positions now and then, they poured heavy fire upon the enemy. Meanwhile the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment broke through the enemy's encirclement. Kim Thaek Hwan's company, too, got out of the confusion, although it lost one squad.

The battle lasted from morning to evening. We killed or wounded hundreds of enemy soldiers and captured a lot of booty. But even though we won the battle, we all felt bitter, for we, too, had suffered no small losses.

Kim San Ho got multiple wounds while running about in all directions to save his men. At his last moment he had ordered Kim Hak Ryul, an expert in the bayonet charge, to lead the charge. Kim Hak Ryul had joined the army with Han Thae Ryong at Xinchangdong. In addition to his great physical strength, he was upright and courageous. Whenever attacking a walled town, he led the charge, and after the battle he was always the first to haul out heavy loads of supplies on his shoulders from the enemy's storehouse. Once he had carried away two ricesacks at one time, each weighing 100 kg, to the astonishment of his comrades. He had also led the advance by ploughing a path through the snow.

Receiving his orders, Kim Hak Ryul plunged into the enemy ranks

and launched hand-to-hand combat. He finished off a dozen enemy soldiers with his bayonet, getting eight wounds in the process. He was, indeed, indestructible. When he became unable to wield his bayonet, he destroyed the enemy with hand grenades. With his last grenade he plunged into a group of the enemy. As the roar of the explosion shook the height, his comrades-in-arms clenched their teeth in bitter grief.

The greatest loss we suffered in the battle was the death of Kim San Ho, the political commissar of the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment. He had shared good and bad times with me for many years since our days in Wujiazi. He became our shining example of the rapid advance a man could make through the revolution. “From a hired farmhand to a regimental political commissar” became a catchword for the strong impetus the revolution could give to the development of an ordinary man, and for the rapid progress simple young workers and peasants could make in the whirlwind of revolution in terms of political consciousness, military techniques and cultural and moral refinement.

In mourning over Kim San Ho’s death, I abstained from that day’s evening meal.

The men made a campfire and invited me, but I refused. As I thought of Kim San Ho who was lying frozen in the snow, the mere sight of a fire made me feel guilty.

Qian Yong-lin, the 8<sup>th</sup> Regimental commander, also went without the evening meal. Kim San Ho was a Korean and Qian was a Chinese, but the difference in their nationality had never interfered with their revolutionary comradeship. Qian had always respected Kim’s opinions, and Kim had always been a devoted assistant to Qian.

Seeing the regimental commander mourning so bitterly over Kim’s death, all his men renounced food. The men who had been rescued from encirclement with the help of Kim San Ho and Kim Hak Ryul were unable to eat, being too grieved over the death of those who had saved them and the loss of other fallen comrades.

In the meantime, the enemy showed no sign of withdrawing, even though the battle was over. Obviously they were determined to surround us completely and drive us into the valley of Xiaotanghe so as

to destroy us totally. One little slip might catch us in the enemy trap and cause our total destruction. In such a situation guerrilla tactics required that we maintain the initiative and put the enemy on the defensive.

We feigned a withdrawal through the forest, then returned to the same battlefield by stealth and camped there for the night. We meant to confuse the enemy with this tactic.

But the enemy continued to bring in reinforcements in preparation for a decisive battle. Probably that spring they were determined to make up for the defeats they had suffered in the large winter “punitive” operations at any cost. More and more enemy troops were swarming into Xiaotanghe. It looked as if all the Japanese forces in Manchuria were being massed into the valley. After dark I looked down from an elevation and found us encircled by a sea of campfires that spread across a dozen miles of Xiaotanghe. It looked like a night scene in a large city. I told one of my men to count the campfires so I could make an estimate of total enemy strength on the basis of the number of enemy soldiers surrounding each fire. It came out to an alarming number of many thousands.

At the sight of the sea of fire, my men stiffened with apprehension and seemed to make a grim resolve to meet their end on the heights of Xiaotanghe.

“Comrade Commander, it seems there is no escape. What about preparing to fight the enemy to the death?” said Sun Zhang-xiang, the commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment, in a sombre tone. The faces of the other commanding officers revealed the same unflinching determination.

To my ears, Sun Zhang-xiang’s words sounded meaningless. Frankly, pitching a small force of scarcely 500 men against an enemy force of thousands showed a rashness that was little short of madness.

Of course we should not hesitate to lay down our lives in battle if it contributed to the immediate victory of the revolution. But because it was we who had initiated the revolution, we should make sure we survived to carry it through to victory.

“Comrades, surviving is more difficult than dying,” I told them. “We must live and carry on with the revolution. We are faced with the great task of advancing to the homeland. This is a sacred and honourable task which has been entrusted to us by history. How can we choose death when we are anticipating this great event? We must all survive and make our way back to our native land, where the arrival of the People’s Revolutionary Army is longed for by our compatriots. Let us use our heads to work our way out of this crisis.”

“Comrade Commander, it’s too hopeless racking our brains. How can we escape from this trap?” said Sun Zhang-xiang, who was still pessimistic about the situation.

The whole unit watched me, waiting for my orders. Never before had I felt so keenly the importance and difficulty of a commander’s position as I did at that moment.

Looking down across the valley, which was ablaze with campfires, I thought of various tactics for breaking through the encirclement. The question was, how to do it without attracting the enemy’s attention, and in which direction to move so as to get far enough away from the enemy. Since the “punitive” troops concentrated in the Xiaotanghe valley were an estimated several thousand in number, the enemy’s rear would now be empty. They might consider that if we succeeded in breaking their encirclement, we would move deeper into the mountains. So it would be best to slip away near the highroad, where the enemy force was probably relatively weak. Once we got to the highroad we could move quickly. I decided upon this idea and gave my orders at once:

“Comrades, your determination to fight to the death is commendable, but none of you should die. We have a way to survive. We must leave the forest of Xiaotanghe, move to the inhabited area, and from there proceed towards Donggang along the highroad. This is my decision.”

At the mention of the highroad, the commanding officers lifted questioning eyebrows. Secrecy in movement was an iron rule of guerrilla warfare, and they were surprised at my orders to move to a

populated area, to march along the highroad at a time when a large enemy force was all around us.

Sun Zhang-xiang approached me and uneasily asked me if it was not risky to do this. His uneasiness was not unfounded. My decision seemed to involve a somewhat rash adventure, for the enemy might possibly be guarding the highroad, or keeping some of his forces towards the rear.

From the early years of the armed struggle against the Japanese I had been opposed to military adventurism. We had always fought only when we had the chance of winning. We had avoided any engagement we considered unlikely to be successful. We had risked ourselves only when it was unavoidable. But the risks we had taken were, without exception, those which envisaged success and made the maximum use of our force.

A risk can be taken with success only by a man who has courage, an iron will and the confidence that there is a way out even if the sky falls down.

The decision I made on the heights of Xiaotanghe to break through the encirclement, move to the inhabited area and march along the highroad was a risk, but one I was certain would succeed. I was confident of success because the risk was accompanied by our unbreakable offensive spirit, which was quite capable of changing adversity into a victory by switching from defensive to offensive. I also had faith in our ability to calculate scientifically just when to take full advantage of the enemy's weakness.

A battle is, after all, a duel between two opposing forms of wisdom, confidence, will and courage.

The enemy had massed thousands of troops in the area of Xiaotanghe with an aim to surround us and destroy us by simple numerical superiority. The employment of massive manpower was a stereotypical tactic the enemy had used before against the revolutionary army, an outmoded device that had been exposed to the public more than hundreds of times. The enemy was depending on numbers, and that was all. It was precisely through this method that the

enemy rendered itself vulnerable.

By spreading its sea of campfires over a dozen miles of Xiaotanghe, the enemy had exposed his strength and the tactics he was employing to destroy the People's Revolutionary Army—a mistake as great as if he had allowed his plan of operation to be stolen by us. The enemy had already lost the initiative.

I was convinced that we would have no trouble slipping away to a safety zone. I put my hand on Sun Zhang-xiang's shoulder with a smile, and then addressed the commanding officers:

“The enemy has massed thousands of troops here. This means that he has scraped together all his military and police forces, even the Self-Defence Corps, from not only the area surrounding Xiaotanghe but from Fusong and its vicinity as well. This implies that the villages and highways in this area are now all devoid of enemy forces. He is concentrating so hard on this forest, he won't even imagine that we might escape along the highway. The highway is the gap in the enemy's ranks. We must move quickly to the Donggang Secret Camp through this gap.” I spoke with perfect calm and confidence.

The commanding officers looked relieved and ordered departure with assurance. The 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment led the procession down to the valley, followed by the Guard Company and the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment. The marching column glided noiselessly towards the highway, avoiding the enemy's campfires. I was struck by the realization of the serious effect of a commander's attitude, speech and actions on his men, especially in a complex situation or a crisis. They could well affect the life and death of the army. If the commander is calm, so will his men be; if the commander is confused, his men will be even more so.

As I had predicted, the highway was completely deserted. On the edges of villages we passed there were heaps of cinders left over from campfires. We moved as swiftly as an express train through the villages towards Donggang.

We passed through the enemy area in complete safety, with no need to shoot except once: when I found that the column of the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment was marching in two separate groups, with more than 500 metres of

space between them. The men had begun to relax, many of them walking, half asleep. I told the commanding officer at the rear of the column to fire a shot. At the sound of the gunshot the marching speed doubled. Now there were no more sleepwalkers.

We used this tactic of the highway march again later in the homeland, when we were passing Pegae Hill to the Musan area. We called it the tactic of marching hundreds of miles at one go.

Later, while reading the magazine *Tiexin*, I discovered the enemy had brought in a company of reporters from Japan, Manchukuo and Germany to witness and report on the battle of Xiaotanghe. It is a usual practice for correspondents to visit battlefields in a war, but the presence of a Nazi war correspondent at a battlefield in Manchuria thousands of miles away from Germany showed that Japan's "punitive" specialists were attaching great importance to the operations in the Fusong area. They had also obviously taken it for granted that they would win.

According to the article "Punitive Actions against Bandits in Dongbiandao," carried in *Tiexin*, the journalist corps consisted of newsmen from Japan's major newspapers *Tokyo Nichinichi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Hochi Shimbun*, reporters from Radio Xinjing, and Johann Nebel, a correspondent from the State News Agency of Nazi Germany. There were also a number of diplomats from Manchukuo. It was, indeed, a pompous company of observers. The enemy obviously saw the "punitive" operations in the Fusong area as a chance for worldwide publicity, a chance to boast in front of allies about the "brilliant battle results" they had been dreaming about throughout the operation.

The Japanese observers present at the scene were Washizaki, an important man in the investigation department of the military administration within the Manchukuo government; Nagashima, secretary of the department; and Tanaka, chief of the Andong Special Agency. They had no doubt been indulging in the fantasy that the Japanese army would annihilate the People's Revolutionary Army in the steep mountains and valleys of Fusong that spring and root out the

“cancer in Oriental peace” once and for all. Washizaki was well-informed of the communist movement in Manchuria, a formidable strategist who had masterminded the campaign to stamp out communism. He was a major contributor to a secret book, *A Study of Communist Bandits in Manchuria*.

To show off the fighting on the small hilltop “T” during the Fatherland Liberation War (1950-53), Syngman Rhee invited a large number of foreign reporters. The report of this battle reminded me of the expedition to Fusong. Syngman Rhee’s rash act and the bragging of Japan’s high-ranking “punitive” officers had something in common.

Hitler, Tojo, Mussolini and Syngman Rhee had the same habit of underestimating others and overestimating themselves.

The “punitive” commander told the company of reporters that his units encountered Kim Il Sung’s communist army in the mountains, that Kim Il Sung was on this side of thirty, trained at Moscow Communist University (Japanese newspapers in those days all blared loudly that I had finished Moscow Communist University) and that his army of 500 men and women was the strongest force in Dongbiandao. He bragged, however, that they were now caught like “rats in a trap.” He spoke German fluently and talked to the Nazi reporter without the help of an interpreter. Hearing that we were like “rats in a trap,” the reporters gave a cheer.

But discovering that we had slipped out of the enemy’s encirclement, the “punitive” commander changed his tune somewhat and told the reporters that the communist army had only 300 troops and had escaped. Awkwardly, he produced a “prisoner of war” and told them to gather their news from him. According to their news coverage, the soldier, who was alleged to be a “POW,” had recently “come over” to the revolutionary army after serving in the Manchukuo army in Tonghua. In fact the grinning “POW” declared he knew nothing about communism. And as for us, we had never been to Tonghua. What a farce! One would easily imagine how disappointed the reporters were.

The sea of campfires spread by the enemy in the wide forest of Xiaotanghe not only gave us a chance to hit upon the idea of the

highway-march tactic, it also convinced us that the objective of the expedition had been achieved, that is, the objective of luring the enemy forces assembled in the border area towards Fusong.

The enemy was filled with consternation when informed that the People's Revolutionary Army had broken through the circle of thousands of enemy troops and had vanished into thin air. They were at a loss as to how to go about finding us again. Rumours flew about among them—that even the devil was puzzled about the guerrillas' tactics, that in the Korean guerrilla army there was a Taoist much wiser than Zhu-ge Liang, and that the KPRA would attack Seoul and Tokyo in a few years. Rumours spread also among the people and became topics of conversation among old men visiting with one another in farm villages. The expedition created new folk tales and legends about our guerrilla army.

Our march from Toudaoling to Donggang was yet another indescribable hunger march.

On arrival in a forest near Donggang after marching hundreds of miles at one go, we began a search to obtain food supplies with an intention to stay there for about a month. It was no simple job to prepare one month's victuals for hundreds of men.

Fortunately, we found a much better solution to the food problem than we had expected. The men who had been on long-distance surveillance duty at night happened to find a maize field near the sentry post. The maize, planted the previous year, had remained unharvested throughout the winter. There used to be such maize fields around Mt. Paektu.

The men, who had gone without food for days except for bran and water, returned from the sentry duty with a few packs full of maize ears for their comrades in the camp. They had picked it without getting permission from the owner of the field. The owner was nowhere to be seen, they said, nor did they know where the owner was living, nor did they have time to inquire about his whereabouts because they had been relieved immediately from sentry duty.

I gave them a stern rebuke and sent them off to find the owner. They

returned in a few hours with a grey-haired old Chinese peasant.

On behalf of the army I apologized and offered him 30 *yuan*.

The old man said in surprise, "Commander, please don't apologize to this insignificant old man for taking a few packs of maize. We begrudge it to the local bandits, but not to you, the revolutionary army. It's ridiculous for me to take money from you for such a trifle. What would the villagers say if they knew I accepted your money? I will not take it, nor will I take back the maize."

I told the old man that he should take the maize because it had been picked from his field, and that he should also accept the money in compensation for his loss.

He finally yielded and went back with the money and maize. I got my men to escort him to his home. On the way he asked them who their commander was.

The men said, frankly, that he was General Kim Il Sung.

Then, the old man said that he felt as if he had committed a criminal act, taking our money, and that he would never forgive himself. For the rest of the way he was lost in deep thought. When he got home, he gathered all his family and relatives together, harvested the crop, and then brought it to me on a sleigh.

"Commander Kim, today I was deeply moved by your generous gesture. I am overwhelmed by the fact that you should show respect towards a man like me. Please do accept the sleighful of maize as a token of my gratitude for your kindness."

This time I was obliged to accept the old man's offer. The maize helped us to overcome the food crisis.

He even told us where we could obtain more food. About five miles down the River Man, he said, there were *insam* (ginseng) fields, and we should approach the owners. He explained that the owners had planted beans and maize in the fields instead of *insam*, and that they would not be reaping the crops, but would sell them as they stood. He added that if we wanted, he would go and bargain for us.

I sent the old man to the place, together with my orderly. The orderly returned to the unit with the answer that a deal could be struck.

We selected several sturdy men from the Guard Company and the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment and sent them to the fields.

While the foraging party was away, we ate maize. A few days later, the foraging party came back with defatted bean cakes on their backs. This had been kept by the owners of the *insam* fields. We ate them raw or steamed or baked.

According to the foraging party, the owners had expressed deep sympathy for the fact that the revolutionary army was suffering food shortages. They added that the *insam* fields had been planted with beans and maize and that the crops had not been reaped. The amount, they calculated, would be more than enough for one month's food for us. But when our men asked them to sell the crops, the owners said, "Why should we take money for helping General Kim Il Sung's army? We can manage without these crops, so please harvest them all and take them away."

In the end the foraging party from the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment managed to persuade the owners to sell the crops.

After supper all my men hurried to the fields and picked the maize and beans. The maize ears were stored whole, and the beans were threshed. They did the threshing with sticks, or by trampling, since we had no flail. Both the maize and beans amounted to dozens of *som*.

I met the owners and thanked them.

The kind-hearted owners also brought us salt, more than enough for one month, and urged us to fight well.

With the food problem resolved, I led the unit to the Donggang Secret Camp. This was the site we had intended to use for military and political training at our departure from Changbai.

The previous spring or summer I had heard from old man Ho Rak Yo that in the forest of Donggang there were the remains of a village, formerly called Gaolibuzi, in which one could still see the cornerstones of a fort where our ancestors had gone through military training. The old man told me that when his family was settling down in the village of Hualazi (he was a teenager at the time), there were many purely Korean villages around Gaolibuzi, and the fertile

slash-and-burn fields yielded good crops.

But as the waves of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars reached the foothills of the Paektu mountains, Japanese soldiers appeared even at Gaolibuzi to plunder the villagers. The enraged young villagers fought back with bows and arrows, spears and slingshots. When Gaolibuzi became a training ground for the army of Hong Pom Do most of the young villagers joined up and took part in the training.

A massive “punitive” attack in the year of Kyongsin (1920) devastated the place. The village was burnt down, the fort was demolished, and the majority of the inhabitants were killed. The small number of people who had narrowly escaped death lived in hiding in the forest for a while, then scattered away to different places a few years ago. This was why Gaolibuzi was now completely deserted.

Drawing on this piece of information, I searched for and found Gaolibuzi on the map.

Within a range of 25 miles from Mt. Paektu there were actually quite a number of places named Gaolibuzi. There was one in Linjiang, for instance, and another in Changbai. In Antu County there was Gaoliweizi, a name that signified the existence of a fort with Koryo people. In the areas east and south of the Paektu mountains there were places with such names as Yowabo, Pochonbo, Rananbo, Sinmusong, Changphyong, Changdong, Hyesanjin, Singalphajin and so on, which meant that in the old days there had been forts, walls, munitions depots or ferries guarded by sentries in these areas. This proves that our ancestors in the times of Ancient Korea, to say nothing of the Koguryo and Koryo eras, had built walls and forts in many places around Mt. Paektu to strengthen national defence.

Listening to old man Ho’s account, I had memorized the location of the old fort built by our ancestors in the forest of Donggang that had been marked with traces of their hardships.

On arrival at the site of Gaolibuzi, we found two empty huts that had been built and abandoned by *insam* growers. In the Fusong area there were many people who grew *insam* in forests. Some of them

spent the winter in their villages near urban communities, and worked in mountains only in the summer season.

The huts were located at the foot of two mountains, both called Mt. Guosong (Pine-nut). The twin mountains, which stood face to face in a friendly manner, one in the east and the other in the west, were thick with pine forests and created a friendly ambiance in the magnificent alpine scenery.

We repaired the vacant huts and then proceeded to give political and military education to the men. The training ground was prepared on a clearing in the forest of the east Guosong mountain.

Realizing that we had settled in the secret camp with food supplies for at least one month, many of the men looked forward to a long period of rest. This was a natural reaction, for they had been exhausted to the limit by the long forced march and heavy fighting.

Unfortunately, we could not afford to relax.

Even before the men had settled down, we convened a meeting of company political instructors and higher officers and reviewed the expedition to Fusong. At the meeting, many officers spoke highly of the laudable deeds by the men in defence of their commanders, and of the officers' loving care of their men during the expedition. They emphasized the need to further encourage such deeds in the future.

This meeting was followed by the Xigang meeting, which was to become a historic turning point in the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle.

The Xigang meeting was held at West Yangmudingzi Secret Camp and lasted three days. It was attended by cadres from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions and other corps-class cadres such as Wei Zheng-min and Jon Kwang. The discussion at this meeting centred on the policy of advance on the homeland. After I had spoken about the policy it was unanimously approved by the meeting. We then came to a decision on the mission, direction of activity and area of operations for each unit.

The meeting was followed by military and political training at the Donggang Secret Camp, the entire course of which was directed

towards political and military preparations for the advance into the homeland.

Our political training programme concentrated mainly on the line taken by the Korean revolution, its strategy and tactics, and the situation at home and abroad. The lecture on the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF greatly promoted the understanding of our own independent line of the Korean revolution. Through this lecture the recruits were able to deepen the knowledge they had gained at the Paektusan Secret Camp.

At that time, too, we rejected the dogmatic method of studying, encouraging instead debates and study through questions and answers, combined with practice.

I myself lectured to the Headquarters personnel, military and political cadres, and the Guard Company. My lectures dealt with the line of our revolution, the rudiments of social progress, world-famous revolutionaries, heroes, great men, and typical fascists. Lectures on the international situation were focussed on the war between Ethiopia and Italy, the battle results of the Spanish popular-front army, and the fascistization of Germany, Italy and Japan.

A contemporary magazine carried a photograph of Hitler inspecting a local army unit. Showing the photograph to the men, I warned them of the dangers that Hitler represented.

Our lecture also dealt with martyr Fang Zhi-min, an outstanding figure of the Chinese peasant movement. The story of his heroic career made a strong impression on the audience.

Of the men evaluated as exemplary in the training at Donggang, I still remember Ma Tong Hui. He was both enthusiastic and very good at debating. Thanks to the training he received at Donggang, he grew into an excellent political worker.

At Gaolibuzi, once an old fort belonging to our ancestors, our youngsters, who only yesterday had been slash-and-burn peasants and day labourers, developed into reliable fighters capable of forming the front for the main attack that was to liberate their homeland.

In later years a story was to spread among the people that we had

trained a large number of soldiers in one of the deep Paektu mountains. In some places the story was exaggerated to mythical proportions, stating that we had trained tens of thousands of flying giants in a deep cave in Mt. Paektu. The Gaolibuzi training ground in Donggang was the origin of the legend.

Early in May 1937, when the training at Donggang was just about finished, we published *Sogwang*, the organ of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army. The title of the newspaper was a powerful symbol for the burning desire of our people to witness the new dawn of a liberated country, and the determination of the Korean communists to hasten the arrival of that dawn.

As soon as the inaugural number of the newspaper had been published, we left the Donggang Secret Camp and headed for our homeland.

### 3. Guardsmen

A large part of my life was spent on battlefields. Fifteen years of anti-Japanese war and three years of great war against the United States make up nearly 20 years of struggle in a hail of bullets and gunfire.

By some miracle, or by good fortune, I have never had an accident. During the war of resistance against the Japanese, the guerrilla army greatly emphasized that commanders should set personal examples. Commanding officers always bore the brunt of all work, and they took pride in doing so. They led attacking formations and brought up the rear in retreat, protecting their comrades-in-arms. That was the militant spirit and moral trait of commanders and political workers of the People's Revolutionary Army. I also did my best to live up to these standards. Sometimes I plunged into the barrage of enemy fire to rescue my men from danger, and sometimes I ventured to risk my life without hesitation, in spite of my comrades' attempts to dissuade me. More than once I seized a machine gun on the firing line and got involved in a fierce engagement with the enemy. Strangely, however, nothing ever happened to me.

In the course of the struggle against ultra-democracy in the army, the guerrilla army Headquarters established the principle that company commanders and higher-grade officers should refrain from leading a charge. It is true that they refrained from risking their lives since then in normal battle situations, but could they renounce their communist readiness to risk their own lives in the midst of crises?

During the Korean war, the Americans wasted great quantities of explosives in their attempts to kill me. For instance, when spies like Pak Hon Yong and Ri Sung Yop, who were in the leadership of our Party, sent a radio message to their boss that I was going somewhere at

some hour at a certain date, the Americans never failed to send their fighters and bombers to carry out saturation bombing upon me. While at times bombs dropped close to the Supreme Headquarters, they failed to touch me.

When I was engaged in underground work, travelling in civilian clothes around Jilin, Changchun, Harbin and Kalun, I was protected by the DIU members, men of the Korean Revolutionary Army, members of the Young Communist League, the Anti-Imperialist Youth League and the Children's Expeditionary Corps, who were armed with pistols or clubs.

Everywhere I went I found protectors, people who helped me and looked after me as they would their own sons or brothers. Everywhere there were innumerable women, like "Aunt of Jiaohe" who saved me from the enemy policemen shadowing.

Shang Yue, Zhang Wei-hua, Chen Han-zhang, and other Chinese people and communists also paid careful attention to my personal security. Whenever Chinese policemen appeared in my school, Mentor Shang Yue helped me to slip away over the wall, and when I was being pursued by Chinese warlords Chen Han-zhang provided me with bed, board and a hiding place. I have already spoken highly of Zhang Wei-hua as an exemplary internationalist for having sacrificed himself by drinking Adurol to save me. Whenever he met commanding officers of my unit, Zhou Bao-zhong exhorted them to take good care of me.

After the death of Wang De-tai, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps commander, and of Cao Guo-an, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, the matter of personal security of commanding officers also began to be seriously discussed in the anti-Japanese armed units in eastern Manchuria.

To our regret, Wang De-tai fell while leading a charge with his Mauser in hand.

Wang was a Chinese who had grown up in a Korean village in Yanji County and once worked in Korea. He joined the guerrilla army in a Korean village. Probably for this reason, in the records of the Japanese authorities he was said to be a Korean. In the early days of his military career he belonged to the same squad as Choe Hyon. From the

rank and file he fought his way up to a corps commander, an officer who came from the working class and remained a simple, straightforward man, popular among the masses.

The death of Wang De-tai, Cao Guo-an and other military and political cadres had a strong impact on the men and officers of the Anti-Japanese Allied Army, and triggered off a heated debate on the matter of security. In many units specialized guards were organized.

In this context, my comrades held a great many discussions on forming a unit exclusively for the protection of Headquarters. At first they talked about the matter among themselves, and having come to an agreement, they approached me with a proposal to form a guard unit.

I turned it down, for thus far our men and officers had managed to protect Headquarters quite reliably without a specialized guard unit.

In the spring of 1937, however, I was unable to object to the idea any longer. Since the establishment of our secret camp in the Paektu mountains, the enemy had planted many spies and subversive elements among and around us. These spies were armed with axes or daggers or poison, and even carried obscene pictures with them.

The enemy was in the habit of sending assassins to our secret camp and to our unit when the latter was out on an expedition or in the secret camp. Some of them wormed their way into underground organizations, won confidence by feigned enthusiasm and were even recommended to join the guerrilla army. They were constantly on the lookout for a chance to undermine Headquarters.

Japan's secret service offered thousands of *yuan* for the capture of Wei Zheng-min, Jon Kwang, Chen Han-zhang, and different amounts of money for Choe Hyon, An Kil, Han In Hwa and other renowned commanders. According to available information, an even greater sum was offered for me.

As the enemy was resorting to every conceivable means to destroy our Headquarters, we had to take countermeasures.

Officers of my unit again insisted on taking positive step to safeguard Headquarters. Even Wei Zheng-min joined in to say:

“Commander Kim, you don't look out for your own safety. That's

where you are wrong. You must remember that the enemy is concentrating his attack on you. It's with reason that he is offering more money for you than for any other comrade. We must hurry and organize a guard unit."

I was obliged to accept his advice. Objecting to the idea that had been agreed upon by everyone would have amounted to narrow obstinacy.

In the spring of 1937 a Guard Unit was formally organized, reporting directly to Headquarters. The event was masterminded by Kim Phyoung, the head of the organizational department of Headquarters. As I approved the formation of a company-size guard unit, he got down to the scheme with great enthusiasm. Overnight, he selected the personnel and made a list of the weapons needed for the unit.

I did not approve of the draft organization: the list of the guards included the elite men and women of every company—Kim Thaeik Hwan who had distinguished himself in the battle of Xinancha, O Paek Ryong and Kang Hung Sok, renowned machine-gunners, Giant Kang Wi Ryong, and Kim Hwak Sil, famous as a woman general. Had they all been appointed to the Guard Company, the leadership in other companies would have crumbled.

Moreover, the weapons and equipment allotted to the Guard Company were exorbitant. The head of the organizational department had assigned several machine guns to the Guard Company. In those days if those machine guns were transferred to the Guard Company, the combat regiments would not have even one.

I expressed my disapproval:

"You haven't selected personnel properly, nor have you calculated the weapons and equipment reasonably. What's the use of a Guard Company if it is to weaken the combat power of other companies? If these basic combat units are neglected, the regiments will be weakened, and if the regiments are weak, Headquarters itself will be like a flame flickering in the wind."

"Comrade Commander, this is not my own personal opinion, but

the consensus of the military and political cadres, the masses. Please don't turn it down."

Kim Phyon tried to win my approval by stressing the word *masses*.

But I disapproved of his draft organization and dictated my own list to him, because that was the only way to prevent the officers from continuing to pester me. My list of the personnel for the Guard Company included mainly recruits, and even some boys from the Children's Corps at Maanshan<sup>8</sup> who had had not much experience in shooting.

As soon as it was announced, my list met with strong objections from the commanding officers. They delegated Ri Tong Baek to speak to me on their behalf, figuring that I would not ignore the old man's advice. I was well aware that they used him as their representative whenever I refused to accept their proposals. "Tobacco Pipe" had always acquitted himself well. As usual he approached me and came straight to the point.

"General, please don't be too austere. Do you really mean to leave the security of Headquarters to the care of these greenhorns? You'll be lucky if they don't end up being a burden on you. Headquarters could get into a lot of trouble acting as parents to these children. You had better give up this idea right away."

"You have nothing to fear from a Guard Company made up of fresh soldiers," I replied. "They will get used to fighting in no time. Remember how well they fought against the enemy's 'punitive' attack last winter? How fast they got used to their new life in the guerrilla army? By the time the expedition is over, they all will be as strong as their veteran comrades. I am forming the Guard Company mainly with fresh men because I want to keep them close by my side and train them into crack soldiers. It will be great to see them all grow up into first-class fighters and become a reliable reserve force for Headquarters! No matter how inexperienced they might be in the life of the guerrilla army, they will become tough combat troops if we give them good training. Without able fighters, a victorious revolution would be inconceivable."

“Tobacco Pipe” left me without saying anything further. He explained my ideas to the commanding officers, and seeing that the old man supported me, the officers made no further objection.

The Guard Company, the first of its kind in the history of the revolutionary armed forces in our country, was born of this polemic at the Shupichangzi Secret Camp.

The company had three platoons and a machine-gun section. Headquarters’ orderlies and cooks were also a part of the organizational life in the Guard Company. Ri Tong Hak was appointed the first commander. His reappointment as company commander after his demotion to rank and file for his mistake raised his morale to the sky. He had been demoted for the inefficient education of his men, who violated the rules of work among the people. The mistake had been committed by his men, but he had been held responsible as their commander.

He addressed the newly organized Guard Company with the rapidity of machine-gun fire:

“What is the basic mission of our company? To protect Headquarters. Our veteran revolutionary comrades have protected the General in good faith since the days in the guerrilla zone. Today they have turned over this duty to us. What are our circumstances? We are all fresh recruits, some of us barely more than boys. I am afraid that Headquarters might have to protect us, instead of being protected by us. I appeal to you: we must truly learn to protect Headquarters so as not to be protected by Headquarters ourselves!”

While his speech had made a strong impression on some of the guardsmen, others were not happy because they felt that they were being looked down upon.

Nevertheless, the company commander had not gone too far in his speech. His apprehension was not unfounded. It would be right to say that for some time in its early days we had to protect the Guard Company. The company had double duties, to protect Headquarters and to fight as a combat unit. The guardsmen grew more mature with each passing day.

The boys in company behaved like men in doing everything in order not to cause us any trouble. They hated it more than anything else to be treated as youngsters.

At one formal occasion the company commander happened to call the boys from the Children's Corps "chicks." The boys were crushed by the word. Kim Jong Dok, who looked and behaved more like a man than any of the boys from Maanshan, was too gloomy to eat his evening meal.

Seeing that he was sitting mutely without eating supper, I asked, "Why are you sitting like that, not eating? Have you had any quarrel?"

"No, sir. Our comrade company commander called us 'chicks'. ..." he mumbled, flushing.

I burst out laughing at his innocent reply.

"Was his 'chicks' really so bad? He meant that you were cute."

"That was not all he meant. Anyway, we are chicks, so how can we protect Headquarters? I'm really puzzled about my duty."

The boy was glum, worrying over a possible failure to carry out the heavy duty to protect Headquarters.

It seemed to me he had, in fact, grown up. He was seventeen years old after all, and should not have been regarded as a child.

The mention of chicks reminds me of the sleeping hour, when the Guard Company youngsters used to nestle close to me like chicks, each trying to win a comfortable place under my wing. They were happiest when they could sleep by my side. In those days I had only one blanket. When they were all pressed close to my sides, I was very uncomfortable. But I saw it not as a burden, but as the greatest pleasure comparable to nothing.

When the sleeping hour came, I used to open my arms and call out to the young guardsmen: "Boys, come here!" They used to cheer and crowd around me, competing for the place next to me.

The closest places were usually occupied by the boys like Ri O Song, who was a little over 10 years old. Although I granted the privilege to the youngest boys, I changed the order now and then so that everyone might sleep by my side once in a while. When I confused

the order by mistake and failed to treat them equally, they protested.

Once Kim Phyong happened to come to see me on some business at midnight and found the guardsmen wrangling over sleeping places.

“Comrade Commander, look at them,” he said irritably. “How could you expect kids like these to perform guard duty? Judging from their unruly behaviour in your presence, they will be good for nothing, let alone guardsmen. We need to give them a good tongue-lashing to straighten them out.”

He looked sharply at the boys as he spoke. Having been dead against the appointment of the boys from the Children’s Corps to the Guard Company in the first place, Kim Phyong was now overly critical of them.

I thought he was right, but I said in defence of the boys, “What’s the use of scolding them? They are just vying for the best place to sleep, craving for the warmth and affection of their parents and brothers.”

A mass of people sleeping under one blanket was called a *ttabari* (a round-shaped head pad for a woman carrying a heavy load on her head). A dozen of us used to sleep in a circle, with our feet in the centre under the blanket. Sleeping in *ttabari*-shape, invented by the boys themselves, was very practical for guerrillas, who were always short of blankets or had to sleep in the open.

At one point immediately after liberation, Ri O Song, who was working in the Hyesan area, came to me to report on his work. In those days we were living at the foot of Haebang Hill, where the Party Foundation Museum is now located. At these quarters my comrades and I shared bed and board for some time, as we had done in the mountain. The comrades working out in the provinces used to come to the quarters when they were back in Pyongyang, and Ri O Song was one of them.

At the sleeping hour, the veterans began to spread quilts. Seeing this, Ri O Song pushed aside the quilts, saying, “When we sleep with the General, we must sleep like a *ttabari*.” The comrades from northern Manchuria did not know what Ri O Song meant.

Ri O Song pulled me by the arm and asked, “General, won’t you

sleep like a *ttabari* tonight, as we used to do on Mt. Paektu?”

I did not readily agree. If we were to sleep as he proposed, I would have to draw all the veterans into a *ttabari*, and I did not think they would like such fun.

Seeing that I was hesitating, Ri O Song pulled me to the quilt all of a sudden and said, “Please lie down here, bending your legs a little. Comrade Kim Chaek, please lie down on the General’s right side, and Comrade Choe Hyon next to him. The General’s left side is my place.”

Even Kim Chaek was compelled into the *ttabari* by these preposterous orders.

Although I loved the Guard Company boys very much, I was not indulgent with them. When they made a mistake, I criticized them severely, and gave them many difficult tasks to harden them. Even in the dead of winter, when the temperature was -40°C, I would post them on guard duty in the howling snowstorm. Sometimes they were sent with their veteran comrades into heavy fighting. When they violated discipline, they were made to criticize themselves before different companies, or reflect on their own behaviour for hours, standing in a round space no more than a square metre in size. While meting out such punishments, I felt my own heart aching more than once.

It was fortunate that none of them thought ill of me or blamed me, no matter how severely I criticized them or how hard I trained them. Once Ri O Song lost his way on an errand, which delayed the errand. He did not follow the route I had assigned to him, but changed it as he pleased. I knew that he was wrong, but I did not criticize him. My unusual forgiveness made him very sad.

“Am I not worthy of the Comrade Commander’s criticism? Does he still consider me to be a snivelling child?” He was tormented by this thought, and finally came to me and asked why I did not punish him as I had punished other comrades when they made mistakes. He begged me to punish him.

Where there is true affection and trust, punishment can be regarded as a sign of confidence. The guardsmen accepted criticism and punishment without grumble. That was reward for the genuine love

and confidence we bestowed upon them.

We made a special effort to help them with their studies so as to ensure their development. Both in everyday life and during intensive political and military training sessions at secret camps, I was their teacher. At Headquarters in those days there were *Dong-A Ilbo*, *Manson Ilbo*, *Joson Ilbo* and other Korean and foreign newspapers, *Problems of Leninism*, *Outline of Socialism*, *State and Revolution* and other publications helpful to the men in widening their mental horizons. The guardsmen were granted the privilege of reading all these materials. In return they were obliged to submit written or oral impressions of their readings. In the meantime, the Guard Company became a model in studying that the rest of the People's Revolutionary Army was to follow. Love is reciprocated, and our loving care of the guardsmen was rewarded.

The guardsmen developed quickly both in ideology and in military practice. They did an excellent job of performing their duty to protect Headquarters. To be honest, they helped me out of many dangers.

Once we were surrounded by the enemy's "special force," led by Rim Su San, in a secret camp in Antu County. Rim Su San had been chief of staff of our main force. He had turned traitor and had become the commander of a "special force" specializing in "punitive" operations against the guerrilla army. He prowled around West Jiandao, destroying the secret camps of our supporting units.

On that morning we had eaten breakfast very early in order to leave the secret camp. Everyone had to eat breakfast quickly and hurry up for our departure, so there was no one to relieve the sentry. Ri Ul Sol was standing guard. I myself relieved him. While he was eating, I was on the alert. It was a foggy morning and I felt a bad omen.

In fact, I had the suspicion of a human presence near the guard post, having caught the snap of a dead twig. Judging it to be the enemy instantly, I threw myself down behind a fallen tree, shooting my Mauser at the sound. Almost simultaneously an enemy machine-gun opened fire from a distance of little more than 10 metres.

It was an instant that I dove behind the fallen tree and shot after

detecting the enemy presence that morning. Almost at the same time Kang Wi Ryong and Ri Ul Sol, who had been eating, rushed out to the sentry post, fearing for my safety. Kang Wi Ryong pulled me from behind the fallen tree with all his strength. Meanwhile, Ri Ul Sol opened light machine-gun fire at the enemy. Frankly speaking, I wondered if that wasn't our last moment. As Kang, whose nickname was Bear, was struggling to pull me back from the fallen tree I was grimly resolved to share death with my men.

But my loyal men saved me from death by exposing themselves to the barrage of enemy fire. As the enemy closed in to surround us, Ri Ul Sol stood up with his grenade in his hand and shouted at them, "Come on then, let's die together!"

He looked so overwhelming, so threatening, that the enemy hesitated. Kang Wi Ryong lost no time in rescuing me completely from the barrage of enemy fire.

After our withdrawal from the secret camp, Rim Su San plundered the camp, taking everything. We lost precious documents, photographs, pamphlets and drugs.

When the "special force" was gone, I went back to the secret camp and looked round the sentry post. The top half of an entire thicket of bush clover had been slashed off, as if sliced with a razor. The enemy's machine-gun fire had been very heavy. Seeing that, I said to the boys who had saved me, "Had it not been for you comrades, I would have gone to the next world."

The news of the guardsmen's performance in protecting me reached the Chinese commanding officers of the neighbouring units. They had always been envious of our clever orderlies and guardsmen. When they met me they used to ask me by way of a joke to make them a present of a good orderly or to give them any of my guardsmen who spoke a little Chinese. Yang Jing-yu, Wei Zheng-min, Zhou Bao-zhong and Cao Ya-fan were all covetous of the guardsmen or orderlies of our main force.

After the expedition to Fusong, Cao Ya-fan asked me to select a Korean orderly for him. I sent to him Kim ThaeK Man, the best of my

orderlies, telling him to take good care of Cao. During the struggle against the “Minsaengdan,” Cao had wronged the Koreans extremely and interfered with my activity, but I did not reject him or refuse to comply with his request, which was made after much consideration. When the new division was organized, he was supposed to come to our main force as political commissar, but I did not agree with his appointment, because I could not guarantee security to his person. Many people in my unit had been wronged by Cao Ya-fan during the anti-“Minsaengdan” struggle, and they all hated him. Because of this, I myself became the political commissar of my unit.

True to my instructions, Kim ThaeK Man took excellent care of Cao Ya-fan. Cao thanked me on many occasions for sending such a fine orderly to him, praising him as a clever, loyal young man.

Yang Jing-yu also repeatedly requested that I give him a good man. When he came to Nanpaizi to attend the meeting of military and political cadres from the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps, I turned over several of my orderlies to him. I also detached hundreds of men and commanding officers from my unit and formed an independent brigade for him.

Wei Zheng-min, too, wished to have men we had trained. He was so keen on having Korean guardsmen that I sent Hwang Jong Hae and Paek Hak Rim to him. Kim Chol Ho, Jon Mun Uk, Im Un Ha, Kim Tuk Su and some others were also with him for some time. They all helped him and protected him loyally. At one time Zhou Bao-zhong appointed Pak Rak Kwon, a Korean, as the commander of his guards. Chen Han-zhang, commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Directional Army, had Son Myong Jik from the Children’s Corps at Maanshan as his chief orderly.

Whenever I heard that the comrades I had sent to the Chinese commanders were fighting in a self-sacrificing way in different units of the Anti-Japanese Allied Army for fulfilling internationalist duty, I felt highly satisfied.

The men of the Guard Company were all my “guardian angels.” Beside the men I mentioned above, there were innumerable other comrades-in-arms who protected me—for instance, Kim Un Sin, Choe Won Il, Kim Hak Song, Han Ik Su, Jon Mun Sop, Kim Hong Su, Choe

In Dok, Choe Kum San, Jo Myong Son, Ji Pong Son, Kim Pong Sok, Ri Hak Song, Ri Tu Ik, O Jae Won. . . . As their names flash through my mind, thousands and tens of thousands of complex events from the past loom up in my memory.

Ri Tong Hak, the first Guard Company commander, was promoted to a regimental commander. He died heroically in a battle towards the end of 1938.

Ri Tal Gyong, who had become the Guard Company commander when Ri Tong Hak was promoted, had been a machine-gunner for the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. He was a crack shot, an excellent marksman whose name was known to everyone. He had been the political instructor of the Guard Company for some time, and succeeded to Ri Tong Hak when the latter moved up to the position of regimental commander. Sadly, he fell in battle less than a month after his appointment as the Guard Company commander.

Pak Su Man, who took over the post of Guard Company commander after Ri Tal Gyong, was a really courageous man. In order to divert enemy fire, which had been concentrated on me at the battle of Shuangshanzi, he and his machine-gunner fought by moving from place to place, but Pak Su Man was fatally wounded.

The successive Guard Company commanders, ranging from the first commander Ri Tong Hak to the fourth commander O Paek Ryong, did not hesitate to undertake whatever arduous task I asked them to perform. They would have gone through fire and water to carry out my orders.

Among the comrades who laid down their own lives to protect me was a teenager named Ri Kwon Haeng. He followed me and respected me as he would have followed and respected his own brother.

One winter we were on a forced march, pursued by the enemy. It was unusually cold, but I did not feel my feet to be cold, although we were walking in the snow. I thought it strange, so I took off my shoes to find that soft pads of *Carex meyeriana Kunth* had been laid into them like insoles. An orderly whispered to me that it was the work of Ri Kwon Haeng.

Chinese regard *insam*, young deer antlers and marten as the three

treasures of Kwantung (Northeast China), and also considered *Carex meyeriana Kunth* to be one of the three treasures, for it kept our feet from being frostbitten in the coldest weather. I knew the plant grew only in wet land, so how did it come to be spread in my shoes? Probably the boy had picked it little by little whenever he found it and saved it up in his pack for me.

Had he not shielded me with his body in the battle of Shiwudaogou, Changbai County, I would not have survived. On that day the enemy was concentrating fire upon the C. P. Ri Kwon Haeng insisted on moving the C. P. to a safe place, but I declined, for it was a vantage point which commanded a good view of both our own and enemy forces.

The enemy's fire was suddenly directed at me. At this critical moment, the boy stretched his arms open and covered me with his body. An enemy bullet crushed his leg bone. How could I describe my grief as I held the bleeding boy in my arms and saw the wound? "You won't die! You won't die!" I encouraged him as I followed his stretcher.

"Comrade Commander, I won't die. Don't worry about me... . Please take care of yourself until we see again." He was consoling me instead. Perhaps I looked very sad to him. Those were the last words he spoke to me. I heard that he had written to me from the hospital in the rear, but the letter did not reach me. All that I heard of him was that he had been captured by the enemy while he was receiving treatment in the hospital, and that he had refused to reveal the secret of the location of Headquarters. He would not stain his revolutionary honour even though he was brutally tortured to death at the Changbai County police station.

In the Guard Company was a comrade called "Rucksack," so nicknamed because he always carried a rucksack on his back. Nobody knew why he toted around such a bulky object on his back.

The secret of the rucksack was revealed at a battle in Linjiang. The battle was a fierce one. On that particular day comrade "Rucksack" stuck close to me all day. Whenever bullets thudded into the parapet, I pulled him low and would not allow him to raise his head lest he be wounded. He would slip away from my grip and cling to my right side whenever the enemy was attacking from the right side, and close in on

my left side whenever the enemy was attacking from the left side.

When the battle was over, a thick smell of burning wool hovered over the trench. I looked around and, to my surprise, saw a coil of smoke rising from two bullet holes in the pack of comrade "Rucksack." Unaware of it, the boy was shouting at his comrades that somebody's clothes were on fire. Some other men snatched his pack from him and opened it. From thick folds of silk wool, two hot bullets rolled out. It was only now that I realized why he had hung around me with the rucksack on his back. And after all, his silk wool had saved me from danger.

I asked the boy how he had hit upon the bright idea. He replied that Comrade Kim Jong Suk, while making my winter clothes lined with silk wool, had said that silk wool was bullet-proof. Hearing that, he had made up his mind to make a bullet-proof pack for me.

It would be difficult to describe in this short account all the distinguished services rendered by the guardsmen in the war against the Japanese imperialists. I must emphasize that the exploits they performed to protect the lifeline of the Korean revolution are worthy of the praise and respect of generations to come. Their noble, comradely and steadfast devotion to the revolutionary Headquarters is the source of the single-hearted loyalty and integrity that is now flowering in our society.

Drawing on my experiences in the years of the revolution against the Japanese, I formed a bodyguard company of teenage children, of revolutionary martyrs, the company to guard the security of Supreme Headquarters, during the Fatherland Liberation War.

Men of the Bodyguard Company went through many difficulties and dangers to protect me. One winter's day, on my way back from a visit to a Chinese People's Volunteers unit in Songchon for joint operations with them, I was caught in an air-raid. At that time the guardsmen compelled me to throw myself down into a furrow in a field. They then shielded me by covering me in a human shield of double, triple and quadruple layers. Similar actions took place on many occasions after that.

It was the peerlessly courageous Bodyguard Company that

remained with me in Pyongyang until the last hour to protect Supreme Headquarters throughout the arduous days of the temporary strategic retreat in the autumn of 1950.

A sudden change in the tide of war, which had gone from a sweeping advance to the south into the sudden retreat, dispirited the people in the capital city. They all turned to Supreme Headquarters for the Supreme Commander's speech about the prospects of the war.

In my radio address I said that the retreat was temporary and appealed to the people to launch guerrilla actions in all parts of the country. I assured them that we would emerge victorious. I also told the Bodyguard Company to march, singing songs, through the streets of the city. The Bodyguards were dumbfounded at the unexpected orders. Their looks seemed to say, "Why a peaceful singing parade when the enemy's guns are rumbling across the River Taedong?" The next moment, however, my orders to march had convinced them of victory, and they marched through the streets, singing *The Song of National Defence*.

As the voices of the Bodyguard Company rang suddenly and loudly across the streets of the capital, which had been depressed by the prospects of retreat, thousands of civilians ran out to the streets to exclaim, "That's the Bodyguard Company! Bodyguard Company!" "The Bodyguard Company is by our side. So the Supreme Commander will be near us."

Only when all the institutions in Pyongyang had started their retreat did the Bodyguard Company leave the capital with me.

The guardsmen in the days of the anti-Japanese war are now well over 60 years old.

The third and fourth generations of the revolutionaries have now taken their place as guardsmen of the Party Central Committee and the Supreme Headquarters. Generations have been replaced by generations, but new guard companies and new bodyguards have been growing up continuously. Does one need to count their number? All the army and all the people are guardsmen and bodyguards who protect the Party and the revolution.

## 4. Across the Whole of Korea

The movement to build up the organizations for the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland, which started at the foot of Mt. Paektu, went into full swing throughout Manchuria and Korea.

Each clause of the *Ten-Point Programme of the ARF*, the text of which was woven out of an ardent love for the country and its people, breathed fresh life into the soul of the nation and inspired the whole country with a burning desire for independence. All the patriotic compatriots—communists, nationalists, workers, peasants, intellectuals, students, craftsmen, religious believers and non-comprador capitalists—joined in a single front for liberation.

The brisk campaign to build the ARF organizations was first launched in Changbai and other parts of West Jiandao and Manchuria.

The ARF was able to build its organizations quickly in Manchuria because in this region the anti-Japanese movement had been under way for many years, and the masses were in favour of the revolution. Each of the nearly 900 000 Koreans living in Manchuria was a “high explosive,” so to speak, which could explode any moment.

The great task of rallying the anti-Japanese patriotic forces was not new to the people living in Manchuria. As is widely known, the meeting held in Kalun had seriously discussed the anti-Japanese national united front, and after the meeting the Korean revolutionaries had done some fine work to form the national united front from amongst the anti-Japanese forces in all sections of the population. The people of Manchuria had had a chequered history and experience of the united front movement. It was only natural that the seed of the *Ten-Point Programme of the ARF* quickly germinated and grew up on this soil.

While building up the ARF, we also pursued the policy of creating

models, and with them as parent bodies spreading out a network of organizations in all directions. Locations for such model units were chosen carefully: they were first organized in places with good foundations for building organizations—places that already had experience in social movements, a favourable ideological climate and a strong revolutionary spirit among the masses, and forces capable of giving leadership to the underground front.

A membership of more than three formed a branch; more than three branches a chapter; and three or more chapters a district committee, several of which formed a county committee of the ARF.

We even infiltrated the army, police and government establishments of the enemy with subordinate organizations of the ARF. Those engaged in underground revolutionary work while serving in enemy establishments were called in those days special members of the ARF. Such special members operated even in the Jingan army units, which were under the strict surveillance of Japanese instructors.

Meanwhile, we strove to build the ARF in the KPRA areas of operation, and using them as stepping stones, to expand the organizational network into the neighbouring areas and deep into the homeland.

Immediately after the founding of the ARF we convened a meeting of the officers and men within the main force of the KPRA at the secret camp. At the meeting we took measures to admit all the men and officers of the KPRA into the ARF in response to their unanimous request that we do so. They said that as their Commander had been elected Chairman of the ARF, they should also become its members and make contributions to the united front movement. So we admitted all of them into the ARF and encouraged them to become information workers and organizers for rallying the people behind the anti-Japanese national united front.

Filled with a sense of their historic mission, every one of them became a standard-bearer for the united front movement, working to rally people of all political parties and walks of life around the ARF.

Thanks to these standard-bearers we were able to form our ARF

organizations in nearly every village in West Jiandao in a short time.

The main part in the construction of the ARF organizations in those days was played by the political operatives selected from the KPRA units. They included certain people who had worked on the preparatory committee for the founding of the ARF. These people served as the kindling for the united front movement that was to engulf Manchuria. In the autumn of 1936 the ARF struck root in Wangqing, Helong, Hunchun, Yanji and other counties in eastern Manchuria. The Binglanggou district committee of the ARF was formed, with members of the peasant association as the core in Binglanggou, situated in Hunchun County and the seat of the former Dahuanggou guerrilla zone. The inaugural number of *Samil Wolgan* carried news that a political operative dispatched to North Jiandao had finished the preparations for setting up branches of the ARF and an armed unit in the four major villages under the enthusiastic approval and unanimous agreement of the revolutionaries in Helong. From this fact alone, one may easily imagine how ardently the people there supported our line of united front.

Those who had participated in the Donggang meeting went on to take charge of the building of the ARF organizations in southern Manchuria. They admitted the men and officers of Korean nationality in the Anti-Japanese Allied Army first, equipping them with our united-front line. Then from amongst these they selected those with a high political consciousness and motivational ability, and dispatched them to the Korean settlements. The dispatched men made contact with local revolutionaries and formed ARF organizations in many towns and rural areas in southern Manchuria, among them Panshi, Huadian, Tonghua, Jian, Mengjiang, Huanren, Kuandian and Huinan.

The ARF network struck root in northern Manchuria as well. Soon after the founding of the ARF in Donggang, I sent the Inaugural Declaration and Ten-Point Programme of the ARF to Kim Kyong Sok, who was engaged in party work at a unit of the Anti-Japanese Allied Army in northern Manchuria. In his days in eastern Manchuria he had also done party work in the area of Sandaowan, Yanji County. I had

met him for the first time when I paid a visit to the Secretariat of the East Manchuria Special District Party Committee, situated in Sandaowan. At that time he had been in low spirits, having been suspected of being a “Minsaengdan” member. I heard that he had shed tears of emotion at the news of the Dahuangwai meeting. I had sent him to a unit in northern Manchuria at the request of Zhou Bao-zhong. Kim Kyong Sok disseminated the Inaugural Declaration and Ten-Point Programme of the ARF among the Korean officers and men in the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, and formed an ARF chapter from a selection of hardcore elements. At our request, Zhou Bao-zhong gave active support to the formation of the chapter in the capacity of its corps commander.

This was followed by successive formations of ARF organizations in Fangzheng, Tonghe, Boli, Tangyuan, Raohe, Ningan, Mishan and several other counties in northern Manchuria. As a part of this rising tide of enthusiasm, the Anti-Japanese Union of Emu County was reformed into an ARF organization.

It was Choe Chun Guk, who was operating in the Kuandi area in command of the Independent Brigade with Fang Zhen-sheng, that had initially propagated among the union members the Inaugural Declaration and Ten-Point Programme of the ARF and had led them to reform the union into an ARF organization.

As I describe the building of the ARF organizations in northern Manchuria, I feel obliged to mention the painstaking efforts made by Kim Chaek. As soon as he received a copy of the *Ten-Point Programme of the ARF*, he carved each letter of the programme on a wood block and printed hundreds of copies. The pamphlets were distributed widely amongst the Anti-Japanese Allied Army and revolutionary organizations in every county of northern Manchuria. At several meetings he took positive measures to expand the ARF network, and to train the organizations in practical struggle.

The Korean communists in Sanyitun, Raohe County, issued a declaration expressing support for the ARF movement. The declaration read as follows: “Compatriots! Do not forget your motherland. Let all of you who are against Japan unite and promote the

anti-Japanese common front, be you men or women, young or old, free from party affiliations and regional and personal prejudices. Make your contribution to the anti-Japanese front for national independence, those of you with money donating money, those with weapons offering weapons, and those with labour contributing labour.” This declaration could well have been made in our own voice: the comrades in southern Manchuria expressed our views exactly.

In this way the Korean people living in Manchuria accepted our united front for what it was: a fair and patriotic line that would realize national unity at the earliest date possible.

The major target in the campaign to build the ARF organizations was, to all intents and purposes, the homeland and our 20 million compatriots. This was in line with the spirit of the Nanhutou meeting, which had laid a special stress on building both the party and the ARF organizations, and on developing an armed struggle in which the homeland was the main theatre and its people were the main force.

The political operatives from the KPRA played a decisive role in expanding the network of the ARF deep into our native land. Great contributions were also made by the hardcore revolutionaries in West Jiandao, whom the KPRA had trained with so much care, and by the pioneers in the northern border areas, who had thrown themselves into the united front movement as a result of our direct influence.

The building of the ARF organizations in the homeland had to be conducted under very arduous and complicated circumstances, owing to the merciless oppression by the Japanese aggressors and the mistaken line put forward by the factionalists.

The Japanese imperialists feared the expansion of the ARF organizations in the homeland more than anything else, and they made desperate efforts to check the tide of the united front movement rushing deep into Korea. Their first attack was directed at the patriots in the border areas. They blacklisted as most dangerous and put down most brutally those organizations and individuals they considered to be within reach of our political campaign, together with the patriots and campaigners who sympathized with our line and sought national

resurrection through our armed struggle. Even as the sound of gunshots and bugles reverberated, and flames lit up the sky above the walled towns and villages in West Jiandao, the people in the homeland south of the River Amnok were forbidden to listen or look: the enemy cordoned off the river banks on the days when the People's Revolutionary Army was attacking walled towns and villages on the opposite side of the river. They were very afraid that the people might witness their defeat and spread news of it further afield. You can imagine what a nervous eye they kept on possible infiltration by political operatives of the revolutionary army into the homeland!

Nevertheless, the people in the border area, curious about the activities of the People's Revolutionary Army, found countless excuses to cross the River Amnok and visit the battle sites by stealth. According to people in Samsu, Kapsan and Huchang, the number of those who crossed the river through the customs office to West Jiandao went up considerably each time the People's Revolutionary Army swooped in to annihilate the enemy, then swooped out again in withdrawal. This is a perfect example of how greatly the people in the homeland were encouraged by our armed struggle.

The factionalists placed great obstacles in the way of developing the anti-Japanese national united front movement. Engrossed in expanding the area of their own influence, they divided the anti-Japanese patriotic forces. While asserting dogmatically conventional theories inapplicable to the situation prevailing in our country, they gave a wide berth to the patriotic intellectuals and conscientious non-comprador capitalists, and regarded them with hostility. They contended that a revolution could be carried out only by a small number of special people with sound class backgrounds.

Our only way to enlist patriotic forces from all strata in the mass movement that was being confused by the Leftists, and to show a ray of light to communists groping in the dark, was to increase our influence on the revolution back home and expand the ARF organizations across the entire country.

To build the ARF organizations in the homeland, we started first in

the northern border areas on the River Amnok, where political guidance by the KPRA could be provided most easily, and then spread them further south deep into the homeland. Kapsan, Samsu and Phungsan were selected as the main areas for this undertaking, for they were close to us geographically. It was also a region in which campaigners and forerunners of all kinds had gathered together from all parts of the country, and the people who lived there had relatives, friends and acquaintances in West Jiandao.

I myself directed the building of the ARF organizations in Kapsan and Phungsan, using Kwon Yong Byok, Ri Je Sun, Pak Tal and Pak In Jin as intermediaries. I have already mentioned that Pak Tal, after meeting me, reformed with his comrades the Kapsan Working Committee into the Korean National Liberation Union, an ARF organization in the homeland, and built up scores of its subordinate organizations.

The Changbai County Committee of the ARF and its subordinate organizations also did their bit in building the ARF organizations in the Kapsan area.

The Zhujiadong chapter of the ARF in Shibadaogou, Changbai County, played a great role in organizing a chapter of the ARF in Kanggu-ri, Kapsan County. Kanggu-ri was situated opposite to Zhujiadong. The chapter won over a peasant lad who crossed the river every day from Kanggu-ri with a lunch-box at his waist to till the land in Zhujingdong. Back in Kanggu-ri, the peasant organized an ARF chapter with like-minded young people.

The Paegam-ri chapter in Unhung Sub-county, Kapsan County, was also organized by the initiative of an ARF organization active in Changbai County.

The Korean National Liberation Union and other organizations subordinate to the ARF in Kapsan County managed to rally a great number of forestry labourers, slash-and-burn peasants and religious believers to the cause.

The Changbai County Committee of the ARF was also deeply involved in building the ARF organizations in the Samsu area, across

from Xiagangqu. The ARF chapter in Kwangsaeng-ri was formed under the guidance of Choe Kyong Hwa, head of the youth department of the Wangjiadong chapter in Shiqidaogou, Changbai County. He was later a commanding officer of the KPRA.

The ARF had its greatest growth in Phungsan, which had long been well known for its strong anti-Japanese spirit. In this area there were many slash-and-burn peasants from North and South Kyongsang provinces, who had been deprived of their farmland by the Japanese imperialist occupation of Korea and who had wandered northwards to make a living, and contract labourers at the construction site of the Hochongang Power Station. The Japanese imperialists had brought in the newly-emerging Noguchi financial group to build the Hochongang Power Station, which was to have hundreds of thousands of kilowatts of generating capacity. The station was to be one link in the chain of their effort to mobilize the economic potential in Japan, Korea and Manchuria for the expansion of their aggressive war. The thousands of labourers engaged in the project were a great force, easily rallied around the united front.

Hundreds of patriotic Chondoists and Christians were also living in the Phungsan area.

Our strategic view of Phungsan was that once the area was covered with the ARF network, we could expand the Paektusan Base to the area of Kaema Plateau. This would provide us with a stepping stone for building ARF organizations in the region to the east of Huchi Pass. Once the area of Kaema Plateau had been transformed in a revolutionary way, it could serve us as a foothold for placing the east-coast area in South Hamgyong Province under the revolutionary influence and for expanding the anti-Japanese national united front movement deep into the homeland.

After the KPRA's advance into the area around Mt. Paektu, a number of our supporters in Phungsan frequented the Changbai area to make contacts with us. These supporters included people who hoped to join the revolutionary army.

Pak In Jin, Ri Chang Son, Ri Kyong Un and other men related of

the Chondoist faith, who spread the seeds of the ARF in the soil of Phungsan, were patriots hailing from Phungsan; they lived in Changbai and yearned for political leadership from the KPRA. Ri Chang Son succeeded first in joining the army, and thanks to his introduction and good offices, Pak In Jin met me and discussed the matter of the united front; Ri Kyong Un joined our unit and was dispatched to the Kaema Plateau area as a political operative.

In Phungsan, Ri Kyong Un mixed with the labourers working on the power station project and introduced them to both our united front line, and the *Ten-Point Programme of the ARF*; in this way he rallied comrades together and organized the Phungsan chapter of the ARF in spring 1937. With Pak In Jin he later organized a paramilitary corps of hard-core Chondoist Youth Party members. The chapter absorbed hundreds of Chondoists in a short period of time. In Chonnam Sub-county an Anti-Japanese Workers' Association of the Honggun area was brought in as a subordinate organization of the ARF. A member of the ARF, Kim Yu Jin, whom Kim Jong Suk dispatched to the Phungsan area in the summer of 1937, when she was working in the Taoquanli-Sinpha area, organized with Ri Chang Son the Paesanggaedok chapter of the ARF. The latter brought in the hard-core workers of the Hwangsuwon dam project.

The building of the ARF organizations in the Kaema Plateau area was the most successful in Phungsan, largely because of the attentions paid to it by the political leadership of the KPRA. Many small units and teams from the KPRA went to Phungsan to help the revolutionary organizations there. On my way back from a meeting with homeland revolutionaries in the Sinhung area, I also dropped in at the Phungsan secret base and worked with the Chondoists.

The ARF also struck root in the Sinhung area, where the coal-miners' revolt in 1930 had aroused the sympathy and support of people across the country. ARF member Ri Hyo Jun, who had been dispatched from Taoquanli, Changbai County, to the homeland, was the first to develop ARF work in the Sinhung area.

The creation of ARF organizations, begun along the River Amnok

and in the Kaema Plateau area, gradually spread out to the urban and rural areas on the east coast. The political operatives of the KPRA displayed unexcelled organizing ability and drive in developing ARF work in this area. From the summer of 1937 on, they came to Rangnim, Pujon, Sinhung, Hongwon, Pukchong, Riwon, Tanchon and Hochon on many occasions, setting up ARF organizations in close cooperation with Ri Ju Yon, Ri Yong, Ju Tong Hwan and other revolutionaries in the homeland.

Ju Tong Hwan had been back and forth to West Jiandao to establish contact with us and had been absorbed in Kwon Yong Byok's line of work in West Jiandao through the good offices of the village head of Wangjiadong. Kwon and Ju had been classmates in the days of Taesong Middle School in Longjing. Knowing that Ju had been engaged in anti-Japanese information activities in Changbai and Yanji, and had been imprisoned for more than two years in Sodaemun prison for his involvement in the revolutionary movement in his native land, Kwon entrusted him with the formation of ARF organizations in the Pukchong-Tanchon area.

In the homeland Ju Tong Hwan and Jo Jong Chol won over Kim Kyong Sik and others to organize a district committee of the ARF. Ten branches were formed under the committee in a short period of time. Later Ju returned to his native town and set up with his colleagues the Tanchon chapter of the ARF with branches in various places, including Tanchon county town. They organized friendship societies like the Northern Friendship Society and Southern Friendship Society, and recruited many people there.

After the eruption of the Sino-Japanese War, the Xiagangqu committee of the ARF in Changbai County dispatched a large number of operatives into the homeland. At that time Wi In Chan, along with many of his comrades, was sent to the Hungnam area. The secret operatives from Xiagangqu succeeded in forming the Hungnam district committee of the ARF in Hungnam, an industrial centre, in which many munitions factories were concentrated.

Around that time the political operatives who had infiltrated into

Wonsan rallied around the ARF the members of the Koryo Society, a progressive anti-Japanese youth organization. While raising the consciousness of the masses, the society organized the strike for expelling the evil Japanese headmaster of a school, and against the Japanese imperialist policy of “transforming the Koreans into imperial subjects.”

The underground operatives from the ARF chapter in Taoquanli also formed an organization subordinate to the ARF in the Hongwon area. The name of that organization was the Hongwon Peasant Union. It had several chapters under its authority.

The ARF also struck root in other places—for example, Riwon, Pujon and Hamhung—and was built on a large scale in industrial centres, rural areas and fishermen’s villages in northern area on the east coast.

Of the provinces in the northern border area, this region was swept up most strongly by the “Jilin wind” earlier. When we were carrying out our armed struggle from our guerrilla bases in eastern Manchuria, we made a great revolutionary impact on the people in the province.

Under the direct influence and encouragement of the anti-Japanese armed struggle, the people there took an active part in the early anti-Japanese struggle for national salvation. The peasant union movement in this region attracted our attention for its persistence and stubbornness. In all respects the province was advantageous for raising the awareness of the masses and for organizing them in a relatively short space of time.

In order to spread out ARF organizations in this region we dispatched a great number of able political operatives into the area. We even sent small units to the northern towns and counties on the border. The small KPRA units and teams built secret bases and centres for their activities in many places in North Hamgyong Province from which they provided guidance in building up ARF organizations and in the creation of mass movements.

Meanwhile, we brought to our bases the anti-Japanese campaigners and the leaders of the mass organizations in the province and gave

them several days of education before sending them back to their native areas to act as guides for the united front movement. Local people from such places as the town of Chongjin and Musan County were highly advantageous to our movement in that they could provide guidance best suited to the local situation. Training local people was also a very good way to replenish the required number of operatives, in increasing demand as the anti-Japanese revolution grew in intensity.

Thanks to patriotic fighters and the political operatives from the People's Revolutionary Army, the flame of the ARF flared up in North Hamgyong Province—first in Musan, Chongjin, Odaejin and Yonsa, all great working class areas, as well as in southern cities and counties along the Kilju-Hyesan railway line, where the peasant unions were strong. In the summer of 1937 subordinate organizations of the ARF were formed in these areas, the number of which further increased to the point where in the first half of the 1940s they could be numbered by tens.

The campaign for building ARF organizations in the province was conducted both most extensively and intensively in Yonsa and Musan. That was because we were engaging in political and military activities on the River Wukou, across from Yonsa and Musan, after leaving West Jiandao in the latter half of the 1930s. We frequently dispatched small units and teams to that area at the time to breathe life into the revolutionary movement on the border area. Choe Il Hyon had been to Yonsa at the head of a small unit, and O Il Nam, too, had been there with a team of seven to eight men. Regimental commander O Jung Hup went to the area with his 4<sup>th</sup> Company of 50 men and began operations there. Each time our small units and teams were in the area, another chapter or branch of the ARF was organized.

Choe Won Bong and Yun Kyong Hwan were underground operatives who greatly contributed to the building of ARF organizations in the Yonsa area. Choe Won Bong was in charge of the ARF organization in Yonsa, while Yun Kyong Hwan looked after party organization in the area. Both of them had been trained by us in Changbai.

Among the anti-Japanese revolutionary veterans buried in the Taesongsan Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery is a man named Choe Won Il: his elder brother was Choe Won Bong.

Choe Won Bong was man of principle and deep thought, a strong revolutionary spirit. Kim Ju Hyon recognized these merits in the man before anybody else had done so, and valued them highly. When he came to Changbai from Donggang with his advance party. Kim introduced Choe Won Bong to Kwon Yong Byok and Ri Je Sun.

Yinghuadong, in Shibadaogou, Changbai County, was renowned for its generous aid to the guerrillas and for producing many anti-Japanese revolutionary fighters. Choe Won Bong worked there as head of the chapter of the ARF and of the party sub-group. Kim Ju Hyon and Kim Se Ok oversaw his activities. With their support and guidance, Choe formed an organization of the ARF and the party sub-group, and founded a paramilitary corps. Whenever he came to Shibadaogou, Kim Ju Hyon stayed in the back room of Choe's or Kim's house and helped the work of the underground revolutionary organizations.

Choe Won Bong persuaded all of the guerrillas' families to join the ARF organization.

After the battle in the vicinity of Sanzhongdian in autumn 1936 I met Choe Won Bong at a secret camp. He was visiting us in the company of some other people who were bringing in aid goods. From the first moment I saw him, I realized that he was very intelligent and had a high sense of responsibility. He was not very big or tall, yet he was able to command people with a word, and they gathered and dispersed at his order. He sent us military information on several occasions.

Around May 1937 we dispatched him to the Yonsa area to promote the building of the ARF organizations in the northern area, including Musan County. There he and other operatives set up several branches of the ARF with memberships from the raft builders and raftsmen from upstream on the River Yonmyonsu.

Yun Kyong Hwan, a faithful assistant to Choe Won Bong, worked

at an ARF organization in Jiazaishui, in Badaogou, Changbai County, when Kim Il was also operating there. He was closely connected with Kim Il, and was on very friendly terms with Kim Song Guk. Like Choe Won Bong, he came to our secret camp several times, carrying provisions. As we withdrew to our camp after attacking Jiazaishui, Yun followed us, helping to carry our booty.

The enemy tried their best to hunt down, to the last man, those who carried goods for the guerrillas so as to find out the line of our organization from them. Aware that he might be arrested at any time, Yun moved with his family to eastern Manchuria and settled at a village called Xinkaicun, in Yushidong, on the River Wukou.

Later we dispatched him to the Yonsa area and nominated him head of its party organization. I was told that once he had come carrying aid goods with the members of his organization to our unit, which was stationing in Zhidong, and discussed the matter of organizing a district committee capable of providing unified guidance to the ARF branches in the Yonsa area.

I had already given appropriate advice to the comrades in Yonsa on this matter at the meeting held on Kuksa Peak. I had told them that a well-regulated system of giving unified guidance to the scattered organizations was needed to further develop the building of the ARF, and they all had received my advice positively.

As far as I remember Yun Kyong Hwan visited my unit, carrying goods, before the arrest of Ri Tong Gol (alias Kim Jun). Ri Tong Gol had been punished for a mistake he had made in the secret camp in Qingfeng, and had been sent to do political work in the Yonsa and Musan areas. He directed the revolutionary movement in Yonsa in close touch with Choe Won Bong.

As a successor to Ri Tong Gol we sent to Yonsa Kim Jong Suk, who had the experience of working in the homeland.

An armed group accompanied her on the way to Yonsa. She convened a meeting of the revolutionaries in the Yonsa area and organized the Yonsa district committee of the ARF. I still remember that having got back to Headquarters from the meeting, she produced a

sewing-machine, declaring it was a present from the Yonsa organization.

Choe Won Bong and other patriots of the ARF organization in Yonsa rendered much help to us at the battle in the Musan area.

Since the death of Ri Tong Gol, Choe Won Bong and Yun Kyong Hwan, the inside story of the organization activities in the Yonsa area remained a secret until the early 1970s, when the work of collecting materials related to the revolutionary history of our Party was conducted on a mass scale.

Our effort to build the ARF organizations came to fruition in western, central and southern Korea. We had paid due attention to building up the ARF in the western, central and southern regions of Korea, as well as in the north.

North and South Phyongan provinces, along with Hwanghae Province, were areas in which the nationalist force was strong, while Chondoist and Christian forces prevailed in western Korea. These religious forces did not confine themselves only to religion; they were highly patriotic as well. It is known to the world that at the time of the March First Popular Uprising the three religious forces of Korea—Chondoism, Christianity and Buddhism—took an active part in the uprising.

The region produced Kim Hyok, Cha Kwang Su, Kang Pyong Son and many other communists of the new generation. From early days on we had exerted our influence there through Kong Yong and Kang Pyong Son. Our operatives also went to the Ryongchon area—widely known across the country for the tenant dispute at Fuji Farm—and raised the consciousness of the masses there. The tenant dispute demonstrated the fighting spirit and patriotic enthusiasm of the people in this area in their struggle against Japan.

Sinuiju occupied an important place in the construction of ARF organizations in northwest Korea.

In early July 1937 the Sinuiju chapter of the ARF was formed in this city. In August the Risan Anti-Japanese Association was formed in Wiwon, consisting of poor peasants and raftsmen. The secret

operatives formed one subordinate organization of the ARF after another in several places along the mid-stream of the River Amnok. Kang Pyong Son's family and relatives were Chondoist believers, and he drew upon the religion to form several organizations.

ARF organizations took root in Huchang and Cholsan counties as well, and we also dispatched small units and political operatives to build the ARF organizations in Yangdok, Tokchon, Pyongyang, Haeju and Pyoksong.

Ri Ju Yon, Hyon Jun Hyok and Choe Kyong Min performed great exploits in the formation of the ARF organizations in Pyongyang and South Phyongan Province.

Ri Ju Yon came to Pyongyang from Tanchon with the aim of conducting the anti-Japanese movement on a larger scale in a new place. The Workers' Anti-Japanese Association in Jongchang Rubber Factory in Pyongyang, the Labourers' Anti-Japanese Association of Pyongyang Cornstarch Factory and the Anti-Japanese Association in Nampho, were all subordinate organizations of the ARF formed by Ri Ju Yon.

Hyon Jun Hyok, moving to Pyongyang after being released from a prison in Taegu, accepted our line on the united front and participated in forming a chapter of the ARF among the workers of the Sunghori Cement Factory.

The Fatherland Liberation Corps, to which my cousin Kim Won Ju belonged, and the Ilsim Association for Liberation, formed in Kangso, were subordinate organizations of the ARF.

Choe Kyong Min, who had once sincerely helped my father in his revolutionary work in Fusong, and who had come to the homeland, conducted brisk activities for the united front in the Yangdok area. He even mixed with believers of Confucianism, educated them in order to awaken them and admitted them to the ARF.

A subordinate organization of the ARF was also formed in Onchon, South Phyongan Province.

The building of the ARF in Hwanghae Province was performed mainly by Min Tok Won, who had been won over by our operatives.

Hwanghae Province had many temporary secret bases built by our political operatives. Thanks to Min and other patriots in Hwanghae Province, a string of organizations subordinate to the ARF came into being across the province.

The centre for the ARF organizations in the central part on the east coast was formed by Chonnae, Yangyang, Kosong and Munchon, where many workers lived. The Anti-Japanese Labour Association of the Chonnaeri Cement Factory was well-known, both for its scope and for its efficient practical struggle. The Sokcho National Salvation Association in Yangyang and the Jangjon Anti-Japanese Association in Kosong were organizations affiliated to the ARF.

Materials related to the building of the ARF organizations in southern Korea have not yet been fully brought to light because of the division of the country, but their number recorded in Japanese police documents is great.

Recently a great deal of information has been discovered on the building and activities of the ARF organizations in Japan. I was told that ARF organizations existed in Okayama, Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and Hokkaido. These might well be the tip of the iceberg.

The ARF, which pressed on for an all-people resistance with its more than 200 000 members, is a monument put up by the Korean communists during the struggle for the liberation of the Korean nation. Its organizations rendered truly great contributions in rallying and enlisting the broad sections of the patriotic population to the cause of national liberation under the banner of the restoration of the country.

Their first and foremost contribution is that they increased the revolutionary consciousness of the masses. Through the united front movement our people had become firmly equipped with the ideas that the liberation of Korea could be achieved only by the united efforts of the Korean people, that an armed enemy must always be countered with arms, and that in order for the Korean people to win national independence, they must unite as one. Moreover, this unity had to transcend differences in class, sex, age, party affiliation and religious belief, and form an allied front in cooperation with the oppressed

masses throughout the world. The rapid development of the ideological consciousness of the masses was a factor that gave a strong impetus to the national liberation struggle in the latter half of the 1930s.

In the transformation of the people's ideological consciousness, it is worthy of special mention that they regarded the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, which was fighting bloody battles against Japanese imperialism as the main force for liberating the country. They also realized that by casting their lot with us, they supported our leadership more faithfully. From the latter half of the 1930s on, the national liberation struggle and communist movement in Korea was conducted with Mt. Paektu, the central base of the activities of the KPRA, as an axis.

The masses of Korea accepted the slogans put forward on Mt. Paektu as an absolute truth and carried them out unflinchingly, no matter how great or small they were and regardless of their importance. They even risked their lives to help those fighting on Mt. Paektu.

The masses' loyalty to the leadership of the Korean revolution was expressed by their material and moral support for the KPRA. People across the country enlisted their talent, money, labour and mental powers in our support.

The ARF organizations unfolded a vigorous all-people campaign to assist the guerrillas. From the latter half of the 1930s the Kapsan chapter of the ARF sent in an organized way to the KPRA the rice which the Chondoist believers had formerly donated to the Chondoist centre. When the people of West Jiandao heard that the KPRA soldiers were suffering food shortages, they sent us the grain they had stored for wedding ceremonies and 60<sup>th</sup> and other birthday parties without the slightest hesitation.

The members of the Sinuiju chapter of the ARF shipped aid goods by boat to the area of our unit's activities until 1938, when the dam of the Suphung Power Station on the River Amnok was constructed. The goods included cloth, shoes, salt, gunpowder, detonation caps, detonating fuses, and various other items. After the dam had been

commissioned and the shipping routes were blocked, they set up special aid-goods stores in the third and sixth streets of Dandong, China, and sent goods by rail or lorries to the large and small units of the KPRA active in Kuandian, Xingjing and Tonghua. A member of the branch in Majondong bought a sailing vessel of 0.5-ton capacity; he hired it out as a goods-transport vessel during the day, and by night carried goods collected by his organization members to KPRA units.

The ARF members in Seoul, more than 250 miles from Mt. Paektu, sent goods needed for the activities of the revolutionary army.

Jon Jo Hyop, a member of the Pukchong organization of the ARF, had been imprisoned for being involved in the “pioneer incident” in Sokhu, Pukchong County; from 1937 on he was entrusted by his organization to carry out underground activities in Seoul.

While working to expand organizations, he also worked as a water-carrier, hauling a large metal container of water on his back and selling it to raise fund for the guerrillas. Originally the people of Pukchong had been well known for carrying around water to earn school fees for children who studied in Seoul. Jon had no son of school age, but he carried water for the sake of the revolution. With the money he earned in this way, he bought cloth, shoes, white paper, medicines, copying ink and other goods for the guerrillas. He sent them to Pukchong, and the organization there forwarded them to us.

Early one morning, while climbing up a hill with his water, he found a lady’s gold watch. It was the kind of high-quality watch that even a high-class person rarely possessed. Determined to find out the owner, he visited the houses along the road on the hill, finally discovering that it belonged to a shopkeeper’s daughter who had got it as an engagement gift. The shopkeeper rewarded him with an amount of money that was even greater than the price of the watch itself. He bought a large quantity of aid goods for the guerrillas with the money.

After this event he got on intimate terms with the shopkeeper’s family. Under his influence, they began to sympathize with the anti-Japanese guerrillas and spared no effort to help them. They would procure by themselves the goods required by Jon Jo Hyop and send

them to Pukchong. Thus the family of a simple petty-bourgeois family in Seoul participated in the campaign to support the guerrillas, thanks to the guidance of a member of the ARF.

The ARF organized and guided an unremitting countrywide mass struggle by the use of various methods—slowdowns, walk-outs, demonstrations, revolt and tenant disputes—against the plundering banditry of the Japanese imperialists, against their policy of “transforming Koreans into imperial subjects,” against their continental aggression and the execution of their policy of war.

Another achievement made by the Korean revolutionaries in building the ARF organizations was to further consolidate the organizational and ideological basis for building the party organizations. With the hard core trained in our ARF organizations, we formed party circles in every part of the country. These circles in the long run provided guidance for both the ARF organizations themselves and for the mass struggle. The party organizations, born out of the struggle and trained ceaselessly by it, became the cornerstone on which a powerful political party of the working masses could be built after liberation.

In addition, the building of the ARF organizations gave the Korean revolutionaries a chance to gain a rich experience in building mass organizations. Had it not been for this experience, they could not have built in such a short period of time after liberation such mass organizations as the Democratic Youth League, the Trade Unions, the Women’s Union and the Children’s Union.

In the struggle to build the ARF organizations, the Korean communists created for the first time in the long history of our nation a truly united front, one that was unfailingly patriotic, revolutionary and powerful. The anti-Japanese national united front, with Mt. Paektu as its axis, started the tradition of the national united front movement in our country and demonstrated the undaunted spirit of our people.

The entire process of building the ARF organizations confirmed that our people preferred unification and harmony to division and confrontation, and that they had the willpower to fight by uniting under

a single banner, regardless of the differences in party affiliation or religious belief.

Our people, living in the era of the Workers' Party, have long achieved the single-hearted unity of society as a whole, the highest form of unity. What remains is the reunification of the country which has been divided into north and south. The reunification of our country is the one inflexible belief running through my life. It is our stand on the national reunification that our nation, which boasts 5 000 years of history, can, and must, live as one unified country. What guarantee do we have when we say that the reunification of north and south is feasible? We have a powerful weapon, the great national unity, and the rich experience of a national united front, gained through the building of the ARF organizations.

There is no reason why our nation, which admirably realized the cause of the united front already half a century ago, cannot achieve the great national unity.

We must achieve the united front at any cost wherever we live, in the north, in the south or overseas. Only the united front is the way for the survival of our nation in this world, where the law of the jungle prevails, the eternal way for us to live and prosper and survive as one. This is what I want to tell our compatriots at home and abroad.

## 5. Kwon Yong Byok

Kwon Yong Byok was a reticent man. An information worker is assumed to be an orator, but this man spoke little even when he was the head of the information section of his division. He always made his point succinctly; he never used superfluous words or reiterated what he had said. One could hardly judge his thoughts and feelings by his looks.

He hated lies and bombastic speeches more than anything else, and he kept his word under any circumstance. He suited his actions to his words, and this was his excellence and his personal charm.

It was this charm that won him our confidence and the heavy responsibility of leading the Changbai County Party Committee at the time we were fighting on Mt. Paektu and around West Jiandao, the major theatre of our operations.

The job of the man in charge of the Changbai County Party Committee was highly important for several reasons. The Changbai County Party Committee was one of the pivotal party organizations. It was the first to be informed of and to implement any line or any pressing task laid down at meetings of the Party Committee of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army in the Paektusan Secret Camp. Our tasks and decisions were conveyed to West and North Jiandao, and to the homeland, mostly by the Changbai County Party Committee, the Homeland Party Working Committee and the East Manchuria Party Working Committee, and the results of their implementation were also reported to the KPRA Party Committee mainly through these channels.

The important position and role of the Changbai County Party Committee is explained by the fact that, staying in the secret camp on Mt. Paektu, we had to use West Jiandao as a stepping stone to develop the revolution in the homeland and Manchuria; also by the fact that the

KPRA Party Committee had to guide Party-building and the anti-Japanese revolution as a whole through the HPWC, the EMPWC and the CCPC, since a party of a new type had not yet been founded after the dissolution of the Korean Communist Party.

Just as Xiaowangqing was the centre of the anti-Japanese revolution in the first half of the 1930s, when we fought by relying on the guerrilla base in eastern Manchuria, so the Paektusan Base, which included West Jiandao, served as the centre of the anti-Japanese revolution in the latter half of the decade. The Paektusan Secret Camp was the core, surrounded as it was by a wide area of the homeland adjoining Mt. Paektu and by the Changbai area. In Changbai there were many of our secret camps. In order to protect and maintain these camps, it was necessary to bring Changbai under our control and train its inhabitants as revolutionaries.

A sharp confrontation with the enemy was inevitable in our effort to develop the ARF organization in Changbai. The Manchukuo authorities were crude in their statecraft, but Japan's intelligence services and the "punitive" forces, consisting of Japanese and Manchurian armies and police, were formidable. Just as we had to pass through Changbai to advance to the homeland, so the enemy had to come by way of Changbai to attack us, hence this area was of great strategic importance for both friend and foe.

That was why we set a high standard for the selection of the man to lead the Changbai County Party Committee. In order to be equal to the heavy responsibility, he needed guts, magnanimity, organizing ability, untiring energy and the ability to motivate for the revolutionary cause. Leadership of an underground front also called for accurate judgement, a meticulous work method, flexible tactics, and a wide mental horizon in particular.

In choosing a man with these qualifications, I immediately thought of Kwon Yong Byok. Kim Phyoung also recommended him.

Kwon was neither my schoolmate nor my fellow townsman, nor had we shared bed and board, good and bad days in our struggle in the guerrilla zone. In the first half of the 1930s, when the guerrilla zones

were thriving, I was in Wangqing, whereas Kwon was in Yanji. He had been on the expedition to Jiaohe, and only in October 1936 did he come to the Paektusan Secret Camp to join the main force.

He had participated in the anti-Japanese movement early in his middle-school days. After he was blacklisted as a rebellious student and expelled from school, he fully committed himself to the revolution, as I had done. While I was in eastern Manchuria in 1930, I heard an anecdote about Kwon, either from O Jung Hwa or from Pak Yong Sun. The anecdote was about his tragic experience at his father's funeral and his extraordinary power of self-control.

Hearing the news of his father's death one day, he left the place of his work and hurried home at dusk. He had scarcely positioned himself in his mourning robe before his father's coffin, when the mounted gendarmes came for him, having guessed he would return. They dragged him and his family out of the house and asked him whether he was Kwon Chang Uk, his childhood name. Instantly seeing that none of the gendarmes knew his face, he answered politely that his younger brother Chang Uk had left home long before and that he had not even sent a death notice to him because there was no knowing where he was. His elder brother Kwon Sang Uk was away at the undertaker's shop at the time, so he assumed his role.

The gendarmes, furious at their failure to capture Kwon Yong Byok, set fire to the house in which the coffin lay. They kept a watch on the house until it burnt down to the ground before they left.

Watching his father's dead body burning, Kwon bit his tongue and lips, swallowing his grief and wrath. On returning to his workplace, he was unable to drink the liquor his comrades offered to him. His lips and tongue were so badly hurt, he was unable to eat even porridge for days.

Kwon was known among the communists in eastern Manchuria as a young fighter with an unusual power of self-control. They said that to defeat the enemy and achieve a great cause, a revolutionary needed Kwon's self-restraint of overcoming any impulse or mental agony.

However, not all the people who heard of the atrocity at the funeral praised Kwon. Some people said they did not understand why Kwon

had not resisted the enemy. “How could a son behave like that?” they demanded. “He should have prevented the insult to his father’s remains by whatever means.”

Those in favour of Kwon brushed aside the protest. “If an ordinary man resists the gendarmes, it is understandable, but Kwon could not expose his identity to the enemy. If he had resisted, he would have been shot then and there, or at best he would have been imprisoned. Then he would have been unable to fight for the revolution.”

I heard that when leaving home to take up the revolutionary cause, he had said to his wife:

“I am not a man to return home alive. Or even if I did, I can’t tell how long it will be until the revolution emerges victorious, perhaps ten or twenty years from now. So please don’t wait for me. Earn your own living. I won’t blame you if you cross my name from the list of living people in this world and marry another man. The only thing I ask of you is to bring up the boy properly and tell him to follow in my footsteps when he is grown up.”

His farewell greeting to his wife became yet another cause for disputes. Some people said it was too cold-hearted, others protested that it was an insult to women in general. “Why didn’t he tell her to wait for him until his triumphant return home? If he really loved his wife he should have said so. Does he think that Korean women haven’t enough sense of honour and loyalty to wait for their husbands who were devoting themselves to the revolution until the country wins independence? It is shameless of him to look down upon women.”

If his words of farewell were interpreted straightforward, he might have been criticized more severely.

In my opinion, however, only a man determined to dedicate himself to the revolution without hesitation could say such things, and only a man who truly loved his wife could ask such a thing. None but a man ready to fight to the death to carry out the revolution is capable of such a grim and honest self-expression. I found true humanity in his words.

Many years after, that is, in the spring of 1935, I met Kwon Yong Byok for the first time at Yaoyinggou. At that time a short military and

political cadre training course was under way for selected comrades from the guerrilla units and revolutionary organizations in eastern Manchuria. Kwon was among the trainees.

Making his acquaintance at a time when many young patriots had been killed in the foreign land during the violent anti-“Minsaengdan” orgy, I felt as overjoyed as if I had met an old friend. We introduced ourselves to each other. I remember we had a very intimate talk, for a first interview.

He mentioned his farewell to his wife.

“You should have bid a fonder farewell to her to spare her distress,” I said.

“Her distress was inevitable, so why should I have tried to put it off?” Kwon said, shaking his head.

“Do you still think then that you won’t return to her alive?”

“I want to see my country independent and I also want to return home alive, but I don’t think I shall be so fortunate. I have no desire to stay in the background in the final battle with the enemy. I must always stand in the front ranks just to take my father’s revenge. How can a man, determined to fight to the death in the front ranks, think of survival? I don’t hope for such good luck.”

He spoke the truth.

As subsequent events proved, he was always in the thick of the most dangerous fighting, both in the underground and on the bloody battlefield. When the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment was on an expedition to Jiaohe, Kwon Yong Byok was the secretary of the party branch of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company. More than once the regiment found itself in danger of total annihilation from enemy encirclement, but each time Kwon, along with O Jung Hup and other comrades, saved the day.

Kwon Yong Byok was also the first man to cross the Amnok, breaking through the tight line of border guards to deliver my message to Pak Tal.

Another reason for placing him in charge of the Changbai County Party Committee was that he had had some experience of underground work in Jiandao in the early 1930s.

The greatest of his merits was his ability to work among the people. He was good at rallying people and gave them efficient leadership.

Hwang Nam Sun (Hwang Jong Ryol) still clearly remembers how skilful Kwon was in dealing with an elder of the village of Wengshenglazi. The elder was a man of furious temper. Operatives had often visited the village in an effort to establish a foothold in it, but they had failed, having been confronted by the old man and expelled. They had tried to infuse political ideas into the minds of villagers before becoming familiar with the people. Worse still, they had failed to behave properly towards the village elder. They had simply given him a wide berth and said he was feudalistic, instead of trying to win him over. The old man was obviously a diehard, like old man Pyon “Trotsky” in the village of Wujiazi.

Kwon Yong Byok approached the old man quite differently. Knowing that the village elder refused to deal with ill-mannered people, Kwon greeted him politely on his first visit. He knelt down on the floor and bowed according to the Korean custom, then introduced himself, saying, “Venerable elder, I am a poor migrant labourer. I came here because I have heard that the people of this village are kind-hearted. I hope you will look after me and lead me.”

Pleased with the well-mannered, good-looking young man, the old man said, “You are a decorous young man. I don’t know whose offspring you are, but I can see from your manners that you are well-bred. The villagers are kind people, so let us live in harmony here.” The old man even treated him to lunch. To win over the old man of Wengshenglazi was considered as difficult as occupying a height on a battlefield. Kwon occupied the height without difficulty by bowing to him once in the Korean manner. He was now able to give revolutionary education to the village with ease.

Pending his appointment as the head of the Changbai County Party Committee, we let him inspect the county to give him an opportunity to study the situation there.

After a month of field inspection, he came back to the secret camp.

In February 1937 we had a meeting with him and other

underground workers at the Hengshan Secret Camp, where we organized the Changbai County Party Committee. At the meeting Kwon Yong Byok was officially appointed head of the county party committee. Ri Je Sun became his deputy. At the meeting it was also decided to expand subordinate district party committees and party sub-groups.

That day I pointed out to Kwon Yong Byok that he must widen the area of his work, extending the tasks of party building and the formation of ARF organizations deep into the homeland. I set out various other tasks, such as recommending volunteers to the revolutionary army, winning over people in the service of enemy establishments and admitting them to revolutionary organizations, collecting military information, and so on. I also specified the duties of the Changbai County Party Committee.

After the meeting I immediately sent Kwon off to the enemy area along with his assistant Hwang Nam Sun. For the sake of their work, they were disguised as man and wife. This was necessary also for their own personal security.

Hwang Nam Sun had some experience in underground activities, having worked underground at the village of Chicanggu, Shirengou, when she was fifteen.

One day, while she was helping a peasant at his house in the village, she was surprised to see that the cooking pot in the kitchen was the same one that she had used at her house in the village of Fuyancun guerrilla zone.

“How come my cooking pot is in the kitchen of this house?” she wondered. “Did the peasant get it from the ‘punitive’ troops? Is he working with them?” This thought kept her awake for several nights.

Learning of her suspicion, the members of the underground organization at the village concluded that he must be the enemy’s running dog and suggested that the family be expelled from the village. But Hwang Nam Sun said she would try to find out the truth by being patient. She finally learned that cooking pot had been stolen, then thrown away by “punitive” troops who had attacked her village in the

Fuyancun guerrilla zone. They had destroyed the villagers' household goods and set fire to every house. Her cooking pot had been picked up at a burnt-down house and carried away by the suspected man, who had been forced to carry the enemy's supplies as a carter. The peasant, cleared of suspicion, was now admitted into the Anti-Japanese Association. His wife was allowed to join the Women's Association.

By contrast, Rim Su San, sent to the same village of Chicanggu for underground work, failed dismally. Though a man of theoretical knowledge and sleek in appearance, he did not know how to mix with the people. He was given the cold shoulder and treated as a parasite. Cooped up in the house of a member of the Anti-Japanese Association and eating three meals a day at the expense of his host, he ordered the people about. Even when he came out of the house once in a long while, he used to walk around pompously, hands clasped behind his back, firing unpleasant questions at the people he met, as if interrogating them. Even passers-by were irritated by him. Failing to establish a foothold among the villagers, he was compelled to return to the guerrilla zone.

A man who sees himself as a special being reigning over the heads of the people is doomed to be rejected by the masses. He who floats like a drop of grease on the surface of water instead of mixing with the people will never win their sympathy or trust.

At the time Kwon Yong Byok and Hwang Nam Sun were being prepared for their work in Changbai, many underground workers from Changbai County were at our secret camp. They all received their missions for the underground from me that day. Kwon accepted his assignments gladly, but I did not feel light-hearted, for I thought I had overburdened him. Changbai was a wide area covering Qidaogou through Ershiwudaogou, so extensive that even a legal party worker would find it difficult to deal with. In addition to guiding party work in the county, he had to involve himself deeply in the homeland movement.

What I remember most vividly about the underground workers' leave-taking at the time of their departure for Changbai is the farewell

party at which they ate pieces of potato candy, a gift from the Diyangxi peasants on the occasion of the lunar New Year's Day. As we were short of food, we were unable to treat them to a sumptuous feast, but the candy party made a strong impression on me, somehow.

Seeing off Kwon Yong Byok, I spoke to him as follows:

"I entrust Changbai to you. You must bring Changbai and the whole area of West Jiandao under our influence. This will give us the support of the people and build up our manpower reserves. If we fail to win over West Jiandao, we shall be unable to carry out large-unit operations in the homeland across the Amnok. We must advance to the homeland this spring or this summer, come what may. From now onwards, you must work well among the people behind the enemy line. Your mission is to build party organizations and at the same time rally the people behind the ARF. It is a difficult job to win over the people, and success in this work depends on you. I trust you. ..."

On the morning of Kwon's departure we had fought a battle, so he left us in an unsettled atmosphere.

Going by way of the *dashifu's* house at Shiqidaogou and Ri Je Sun's house at Ershidaogou, Kwon arrived in safety at Tuqidianli, Shiqidaogou, his base, as designated by Headquarters. Shiqidaogou was located in the heart of Changbai County. The village was also called Wangjiagou because a Chinese landlord surnamed Wang had thrown his weight about in the village. From there it was also easier to infiltrate deep into the homeland via Hoin and Hyesan across the Amnok. Wangjiadong is one of the villages in Wangjiagou.

Kwon took up his residence in Tuqidianli in the guise of So Ung Jin's maternal nephew, a nephew who had lost his job after working as a day labourer at the railway construction site between Kilju and Hyesan. So Ung Jin was an experienced underground worker who had been engaged in revolutionary work as a member of an anti-Japanese organization in Yanji after finishing middle school. He had moved to West Jiandao when his identity had been discovered. So Ung Jin, Choe Kyong Hwa and other members of the revolutionary organization in Shiqidaogou helped Kwon to settle in Wangjiadong without being

suspected. They obtained a house and a small area of farmland for him, as well as a residence permit from the police station by bribing the head of the police station with opium.

From then, Kwon Yong Byok and Hwang Nam Sun began a “conjugal” life in the cottage provided by organization members under assumed names, Kwon as Kwon Su Nam and Hwang as Hwang Jong Ryol. Later Kwon confessed that he had addressed Hwang as *Comrade* Hwang more than once, to their embarrassment.

Kim Ju Hyon, who had been to Shiqidaogou at the head of a procurement party for military supplies, told me that the “newly-married couple” had been greatly praised by the villagers because they had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into both the pleasant and unpleasant work of the village as soon as they moved in.

Whenever he found anything in any family that needed a man’s hand while going from house to house for his underground work, he helped the family, by chopping firewood, cutting fodder and sweeping the yard. At homes where a wedding or funeral ceremony was in preparation, he helped by making cakes or butchering pigs. People who saw him skinning, dismembering and gutting a pig said unanimously that he would humble a butcher’s pride. The villagers invited him whenever they had an ox or a pig to butcher.

The two operatives won people’s hearts with their manner and work enthusiasm. They declined other people’s offers of assistance, but they considered it natural to help others. Kwon believed that to be a burden to his neighbours meant a failure in his work as an underground operative. He therefore did his own farm work with the enthusiasm of a real farmer.

In the early days of Kwon’s activity in Wangjiadong, members of the ARF in that village gathered firewood for him to help him in his busy underground work. But he declined even this assistance.

“I am grateful to you, but you must not do that,” he told them. “If you bring firewood to an ordinary peasant, the enemy may begin to suspect us. So you must stop helping me even though you want to do so. Only in this way can you really help me.”

The ARF members devised an alternative. They did not bring the firewood straight to Kwon's house, but left it by stealth on the edge of Kwon's barley field on their way back from the mountain. Again he dissuaded them. He got his own firewood and carried manure to the fields by himself.

He went to bed late and got up early all through his work in Wangjiadong. He was said to sleep no more than three to four hours each night in other places of work as well.

Frequently one saw him travelling around with a shabby bundle slung on his shoulder. People who did not know the secret of his work concluded that he was in the habit of sleeping outside because he was not happy with his wife. He had to make the rounds of the area under his charge every month, walking a hundred miles from Qidaogou, Xiagangqu, to Ershiwudaogou, Shanggangqu. There were many villages in Changbai County, and he visited nearly all of them. That was why he had to sleep fewer hours than ordinary people.

Once when he came to the secret camp to report on his work, I noticed his bloodshot eyes. I advised him to take care of his health so as to be able to work many more years for the revolution. He answered that it was extremely interesting work to build up organizations.

Kwon Yong Byok and his comrades' energetic activities resulted in the formation of underground party organizations in nearly all the major villages of Changbai County by the early spring of 1937. A large number of party teams, ARF chapters and branches came into existence under his care and grew up and expanded quickly. The paramilitary corps also worked briskly under the protection and guidance of party organizations. During the night hours our people, led by Kwon Yong Byok, not by Manchukuo officials, worked freely to build up public support for the revolutionary cause.

Kwon was now under heavier pressure of work than ever before. Many reliable operatives he had trained went to the homeland. The underground revolutionary organizations in Shiqidaogou became a veritable breeding ground for underground operatives.

Kwon also trained young people through the paramilitary corps. Its

members did farm work during the day and acted as guards for underground revolutionary organizations at night, making preparations for participating in the armed struggle when necessary.

In consultation with the village heads, who belonged to his organization, Kwon ensured that the night patrols of the Self-Defence Corps were formed with the members of the paramilitary corps. The members of the paramilitary corps, in the guise of lawful night patrols, protected the underground revolutionary organizations instead of serving the enemy.

Under Kwon's direct guidance many paramilitary corps members were trained to become fighters. Also under his direction Choe Kyong Hwa developed, then became the head of the youth department and the head of the special members in the Wangjiadong chapter of the ARF, and took charge of the organizational affairs of the party branch in Wangjiadong. His son also grew into a fighter in the Children's Corps. Knowing Choe's cherished desire to fight in the army, Kwon recommended him to me.

Although he was always upright, conscientious and honest with his friends, Kwon Yong Byok was extremely skilful at deceiving the enemy. He did this by means of disguise and dissimulation at every critical moment, protecting himself, his comrades and his organizations against discovery. Planting hardcore members of his organizations in important posts within enemy establishments was one such form of disguise.

In order to provide safe working conditions for the village headmen belonging to the underground party organization and the ARF, as well as conditions for supporting the guerrilla army without losing the confidence of the enemy, Kwon sent letters signed by the KPRA supply officer to the village heads, which the heads then handed in to the police station. The letters demanded that they, the village heads, should prepare certain aid goods and bring them to certain places by certain dates. The letters also warned that if any of them told about the message to the police, they would not be safe.

The police took the village heads to be loyal and praised them for

bringing in the letters. But the headman of Wangjiadong kept the letter to himself in accordance with one of Kwon's schemes. This exception attracted the enemy's attention. One day the chief of the Banjiegou police station summoned him and roared in a furious temper, "You are in secret communication with the 'communist bandits.' We have evidence. Confess!"

The village headman replied with composure, "Produce evidence if you have any. I am serving as a village head for you in spite of the danger of being shot by the revolutionary army. I am disappointed to hear you say that I am in secret communication with the 'communist bandits.'"

"You are dishonest. If you were honest, you would have brought this kind of thing to me. Other village headmen have all brought them. Why do you feign ignorance?" The police chief took out letters signed by the supply officer from his desk drawer.

Only now did the village head produce a letter from his pocket. He said, "I have also received this letter of warning. Why should the revolutionary army make an exception with me in their demand for supplies? This is the letter. I did not hand it in for your own sake. When you are given a letter such as this, you have to take certain measures. What measures can you take? Even hundreds of well-trained 'punitive' troops have been defeated and have retreated. Can this small police station take any sort of effective action? This letter will only embarrass you. The best way to deal with the revolutionary army is to let well enough alone. We will deal with the matter ourselves, so I suggest that you feign ignorance."

The police chief accepted his advice and from then on placed special confidence in him. Kwon's scheme worked without a hitch.

From my own days in the underground, I knew what a struggle it was to disguise oneself, one's comrades and organization in an enemy-held area. It was a task that demanded enormous intelligence and creativeness.

Kwon Yong Byok carried out this heavy task reliably.

In anticipation of our advance to the homeland, we organized a

reconnaissance of the town of Pochonbo in the spring of 1937 through cooperation between the army and the people. The Changbai County Party organization was assigned to carry out the same reconnaissance.

Fully aware of the importance of the operations for advance to the homeland, Kwon made up his mind to undertake the assignment himself, and plunged into preparations for departure.

He had to find some excuse for leaving home. In order to carry out the reconnaissance mission, he had to stay away for many days, and if he were to make a long journey without a plausible excuse, he might be suspected or even shadowed by the enemy. For a peasant to be absent from farm work in the busy season would be considered abnormal. Kwon hit upon a bright idea.

He dispatched a member of the organization to the post office in Changbai to send a telegram to him with the message that his father died. The telegram was delivered to Kwon on the same day. The postman had revealed the message at Wangjiadong, so that all the villagers and even the enemy learned of the “news.”

Old men came to Kwon with condolences and asked him sympathetically why he was not going to his father’s funeral. Kwon replied that he, a sharecropper, was apprehensive of leaving his crops unattended for many days in the busy season. The neighbours urged him to go, saying that nothing was more important than a father’s funeral, and that they would take care of his crops for him.

He left Wangjiadong, carried out the reconnaissance mission and reported the results to me. Nobody suspected him. He pleaded so earnestly with me to take him along to the battle of Pochonbo that I permitted his participation.

By the time he got back to Shiqidaogou from the battle, members of his organization had made all the arrangements for him to play the part of a mourner. Like a son who had just buried his father, he wore his mourning robes and met sympathizers from the village. One can imagine his feelings at having to tell a lie to the good-natured, innocent village elders.

Kwon Yong Byok carried on his underground work carefully and

skilfully, toeing the basic line laid down by Headquarters, sending reports of the matters that needed reporting to his superiors, and dealing at his discretion with those problems which were within his jurisdiction. In those days, when modern means of communication, such as telephones and radio transmitters, were unavailable and when inconvenient means, such as notes, had to be used for communication with Headquarters, operatives often had to deal with problems by making their own decisions in the field rather than reporting to superiors for instructions. Kwon Yong Byok reported to Headquarters only on important problems relating to the political line, which needed our decisions. He settled most of the problems in the field through consultation with the members of his organization, then reported only the process and results to us. Because of the great distance between his workplace and our secret camp, and because of our occasional absences from the secret camp, it was impossible to report all problems to Headquarters or deal with them in accordance with its decisions.

As he knew the situation better than anyone else, Kwon never raised problems or did anything that might be a burden to Headquarters.

Only once did he ask for my advice on the measures to be taken in connection with the construction of internment villages. The enemy pressed on by force with the construction of internment villages in West Jiandao for the purpose of “separating the people from the bandits” just as it had done in eastern Manchuria. The people in Changbai hated to be forced into these villages. Kwon felt the same way. In internment villages the peasants would suffer greater hardships, and underground work and the movement to support the revolutionary army would be much more difficult to carry out. Nevertheless, it was impossible to oppose the construction of such villages without considering the consequences. The enemy set fire to the houses of the people who refused to enter the internment villages and evacuated the people by force. Those who resisted were shot. What was to be done? The county party committee held a meeting and discussed the matter, but was unable to reach a decision.

I told Kwon that opposing the scheme of internment villages was a reckless act and advised him to persuade the people to enter the villages. In a way, the misfortune might be a blessing. Obviously in internment villages our activity would be greatly hampered, but I told him not to worry, for the enemy would not be able to stem the current of sympathy between the army and the people, nor would it be able to check the torrent of support for the guerrilla army, just as it was impossible to dam up a river with a barbed wire fence or to stop a gale with merely a wall.

Back at his workplace, Kwon led the people in the construction of an internment village in Guandao. Even the most obstinate people followed his example and built the houses and the wall surrounding them with enthusiasm. Under Kwon's direction the members of the underground organization feigned obedience to the enemy's scheme. Ironically, the Guandao internment village was finally evaluated as the No. 1 "peaceful people's village" by the county police authorities.

The members of the underground organization in Shiqidaogou occupied all the important offices in the Guandao internment village. So Ung Jin became the commander of the Self-Defence Corps, Song Thae Sun his deputy, Jon Nam Sun the village headman, and Kwon Yong Byok headmaster of the village school. It was the same situation in other such villages.

Kwon's underground front extended beyond the bounds of Changbai deep into the homeland, including North and South Hamgyong provinces and North Phyongan Province. Kwon distinguished himself not only in military action but also in the strained underground struggle to inculcate the idea of revolution in the masses.

In the summer of 1937 he sent a letter to me through a correspondent. The letter reads in part:

"Comrade Commander: To be candid, I was annoyed at having to leave the unit, for I thought I was being relegated from the first to the second line. How could I express my sadness at that time? Although I had heard until my ears burnt that rallying the people behind the ARF was the way to hasten the victory of the revolution against Japan, it was

still impossible to take leave of you, Comrade Commander, with a light heart when you offered me a farewell handshake. But I soon lost my prejudice while working here, and I now no longer feel that the underground front is only a second line. In fact, I would now say it is the first line. I realize the value of this life as I see the daily expanding organizations and the growth of people. I am grateful to you, Comrade Commander, for sending me to work on this fertile land.”

When he said he felt the value of life while organizing people and inspiring them with the revolutionary idea, he spoke the truth. I can say that organizing and mobilizing people is an ongoing task the revolutionaries must not overlook even for a moment. Giving people constant ideological education and organizing them is the lifeline of our revolution, the key to its victory and its imperishability.

If a revolutionary shuns this work or slights it, he will go stale politically and cease to be a revolutionary.

Being well aware of this principle, Kwon put all his heart into the work of organizing people, and was arrested by the enemy while fighting heroically along that path. His greatest regret in prison was that the organizations, which he and his comrades had developed in the face of such hardship, were being destroyed en masse. He thought that the best thing he could do was to save every single man possible and safeguard the organization.

Kwon Yong Byok tried to save the bleeding revolutionary organizations as much as possible, even at the cost of his own life. He sent to Ri Je Sun a secret note written with his fingernail. The note said, “Shift all the responsibility on to me!”

Knowing Kwon’s intention and decision, Ri Je Sun sent a reply note without delay, which said, “We are one in mind and body!”

Kwon knew well what the note like a telegram message meant.

The two comrades were locked up in different prison cells, and no more slips were exchanged. But their hearts throbbed as one, and with single-minded determination to fight to the death, they started the operation to save the organization.

When the prisoners were being examined at the Hyesan police

station, Kwon Yong Byok said in secret to Tojong Pak In Jin:

“Your visit to Mt. Paektu is known to nobody except the General, you and me, so if only you keep silent about it no one will incriminate you.”

Ri Je Sun whispered to Ri Ju Ik about a similar case.

Thanks to their self-sacrificing rescue operations, Pak In Jin, Ri Ju Ik and many other prisoners were released without being dragged on trial, or were sentenced to much lighter punishment than expected. They were able to outlive their prison terms and greet the liberation of their country. Such secrets as the vertical chain of leadership by which Kwon was in contact with organizations in Changbai and in the homeland, together with the content of his work with them, remained a mystery that the turncoats were never able to discover. Therefore these organizations and their members survived intact and continued to work in secret. In order to save the organizations and his comrades, however, Kwon Yong Byok resolutely chose death, along with Ri Je Sun, Ri Tong Gol, Ji Thae Hwan, Ma Tong Hui and other fighters.

While he was being transferred from the Hyesan police station to Hamhung, on the train, Kwon continued to show his solicitude for his comrades. At that time he had seven *won*. Resolved to spend his last money on his comrades, he said to a police escort:

“Officer, buy me fruit and biscuits with this money. You have handcuffed us, so you have to do it for us on behalf of the Japanese authorities, even though you may be reluctant.”

The other comrades also produced thirty-odd *won* to add to his sum.

Strangely enough, the policeman complied with the request without any fuss.

Kwon distributed the fruit and biscuits equally among the comrades. The hundred-odd fighters ate them, exchanging silent glances and smiles. That was a spiritual closeness only communists could enjoy.

The police escorts were surprised at the family atmosphere.

“Communists are strange people. Are you continuing to share close friendship even while on your way to punishment? Is that communism?”

“Yes, we communists are like that. When Japanese imperialism is defeated, we will build a country where all the people are brothers.”

“But Mr. Kwon, the authorities will not give you the freedom to build such a country. You will have to mount the gallows some day.”

“I myself shall die, but my comrades-in-arms will carry on to build an ideal country.”

Kwon repeated this with emphasis in his statement at his public trial:

“I am not a criminal. We are Korean patriots and legitimate masters of this country. We have launched a great war against the Japanese to drive out the piratic Japanese imperialists from our country and bring a free and happy life to our nation. Who dares to put whom on trial? You are the real criminals, those who must be tried. You are criminals who have committed acts of robbery and murder, who have occupied our country, slaughtered our people and plundered our country of its wealth. The day will come when history, making a fair judgement, absolves us as defenders of our nation and buries you.”

Kwon Yong Byok died, shouting “Long live the revolution!” on the gallows of Sodaemun prison, Seoul, even as the Soviet armed forces advanced westward, liberating lesser nations in East Europe, as Tokyo was submerged in a sea of fire under American bombing, and as the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army at Mt. Paektu and in the Maritime Province of Siberia prepared for an all-out offensive against Japan to liberate the country. His only son, who was 15 or 16 years old, was then driving a manure cart in the streets of Chongjin.

In the summer of 1950, when the Fatherland Liberation War broke out, I stayed in Seoul for some time, directing the work of the liberated area. On my first visit to the city, I wanted to see many places. The first thing I did, however, was to visit Sodaemun prison. Many of my friends and comrades had had bloody experience of the prison. As soon as they marched into the city, the heroic soldiers of the People’s Army smashed the prison gates with their rumbling tanks and freed the prisoners.

Sodaemun prison was the shameful site of crimes and atrocities

perpetrated by the Japanese imperialists in this land. It was in this notorious prison that Kwon Yong Byok, Ri Je Sun, Ri Tong Gol, Ji Thae Hwan and other fine sons and daughters of the Korean nation, who had courageously resisted the Japanese imperialists, lost their precious lives. My uncle Hyong Gwon died in Mapho prison. When I was fighting in the mountains, I thought of paying a visit to their graves in Seoul when the country was liberated. I was not able to realize my wish until five years after the liberation because the country was divided along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. It was impossible to find out their nameless graves, but the sight of the roofs and walls of the prison seemed to calm my aching heart. To relieve my long-pent-up sorrow, I burst into tears as I stood there, haunted by the souls of comrades who for five long years after the liberation of the country had had no opportunity to be mourned over by their comrades-in-arms.

“I leave behind me my only son. If I have a wish, it is that my son take up the cause where I left off.”

This was Kwon’s last will and testament, made to his comrades-in-arms in Sodaemun prison.

As I came out into the street after the inspection of the prison, his words echoed in my mind. Noble words such as these could be uttered only by revolutionaries like Kwon Yong Byok, who lived an exemplary life. Even now I still recollect these words now and then.

## **6. Events to Which I Could Not Remain Indifferent**

Towards the end of May 1937, on our return to Changbai from the expedition to Fusong, we began making preparations near Xinxingcun for the advance into the homeland. One day, in company with my orderly, I left for Jichengcun, a village not far from Xinxingcun. We had established contact with the village upon our arrival in the Mt. Paektu area in the previous winter.

In Changbai, we had done a great deal of work among the masses: we met the people who brought aid goods to the secret camp, called people to liaison points or rendezvous as the situation required, and even visited inhabited areas to mix with the people. In the course of this, we were able to study the mood of the public and discover enemy movements. We were also able to enlighten the masses.

I visited many villages in Changbai then. On my first trip to Jichengcun, I stayed there for three days. It was a small community of about 10 peasant households, and I became familiar with all the villagers. Here we conducted political work among the people and met our operatives from the homeland.

A Japanese spy, Tanaka, who had wormed his way into the village disguised as a hunter, was tracked down and executed at that time. The spy had been trained by special secret services before he was sent to Changbai. He was sly and foxy. Born and grown up in Korea, he spoke our language as fluently as a Korean. He was very familiar with our custom and manners, so that the people of Shijiudaogou and Ershidaogou had no reason to think of him as a Japanese, even though they saw him travelling around Changbai with a hunting gun on his shoulder for months. It was the underground organization in Jichengcun that revealed his identity.

While at the village, I stayed at the house of an old man surnamed Jang. The old man's house had spacious rooms and the family was better off than the other people. During my stay in the house, old men of the village came to visit with me almost every day. Arriving with long tobacco pipes tucked in the back of their waists, they sat and talked about the old days and about current events, commenting on Governor-General Minami and on Manchukuo. Though not very informed, they were pretty good at analysing current events. It seemed to me that the people, who had been robbed of their national sovereignty, were developing their political consciousness more quickly than any other things.

One evening a young peasant of about 30 with closely-cropped hair came with the old-timers to the house of old man Jang. In contrast to his sturdy build, which reminded me of a wrestler, the young man was very simple and nice.

Usually people of his age boast of their knowledge of the world. In a crowded room such as this the voice of a lively thirty-year-old is normally the loudest. They look down upon the opinions of youngsters in their teens and twenties, saying that they smell of the suckling pig. They denounce instructions given by elders in their fifties or sixties as smelling of feudalism.

But this young man stayed huddled up behind the old men, listening to me and saying nothing. While the old men were answering my questions about the village situation, the young man did not utter a word. The old men asked me various questions: "How many soldiers are fighting under your command, General Kim? Is it true that the guerrillas have machine guns? How long do you think it will take to defeat Japan? What is your father doing, General?" But the young man only smiled, and if my glance happened to meet his, he flinched behind someone else or ducked his head.

I noticed that now and then he looked as if he were going to ask something, but held back, looking embarrassed. I wondered if he was perhaps a mute. His awkward manner was somehow infectious and I felt myself becoming awkward as well.

While asking the old men about their living conditions, I directed a few questions to the young man as well, but he still said nothing.

The old men in the room kept looking at him disapprovingly.

“General, he is a hired farmhand,” an old man said on his behalf, “a lonely bachelor. His name is Kim Wol Yong and he comes from a southern province, but the poor fellow does not know where he was born or who his parents are. He says he is about thirty, but he does not know his own exact age.”

The young man, never having known independence, apparently lost his freedom of self-expression as well. What inhuman treatment he must have suffered in the past to have become such a poor wretch, unable even to answer a simple question! I went up to him and took his hand in mine: it was as stiff as a metal hook. What a life of hard toil he must have had to have ended up with a hand in this state! His back was bent like a bow, and his clothes were unspeakable. He had probably hidden himself behind the old men because he was in such rags. Nevertheless, he had come to visit the commander of the guerrilla army, and although shy of answering questions, I thought he must have his own view of things and his own way of dealing with them, a frame of mind which should not be totally ignored. I was thankful for it.

To my question as to when he had started working as a hired farmhand, he simply answered, “From childhood.” He spoke like a man from Jolla Province. There were many people from Jolla Province in West Jiandao and other parts of Northeast China. The Japanese imperialists had forced tens of thousands of Korean peasants to emigrate to Northeast China as “group pioneers” in accordance with their notorious policy of moving Korean peasants to Manchuria, a policy aimed at plundering Manchuria of its land en masse.

When the visitors were gone, I asked my host why the young man was not yet married.

“Since he has worked for hire from childhood, moving from place to place, he is still a lonely bachelor, although he is over thirty. He is a true man, but he has no life partner. Nobody wants to give him his daughter. It is a great pity to see him living a life of hardship all alone.

Even the boy over there is married and treated as a man. ...”

I looked out through the window at the boy the old man was pointing at. Through a pane as small as the page of a notebook, a pane pasted with paper strips in the centre of the door, I saw a 10- or 11-year-old boy playing shuttlecock with his feet. I was surprised to hear that the boy, who was as short as a pencil stub, was already married. I could not help clicking my tongue in disapproval, even though it was an age of early marriages, forced marriages and paid marriages.

To cite later instances, even in my own unit there were a few “little bridegrooms” who had been married when they were not much older than that boy.

Kim Hong Su, a guerrilla from Changbai, became a “little bridegroom” at the age of about 10. He was a very short fellow, as his nickname indicated.

I felt indignation and sorrow at the extraordinary contrast between the 30-year-old bachelor and the 10-year-old “little bridegroom.”

Their lot was similar in that both of them were the victims of the times, but I felt more sympathetic with the bachelor who was unable to make a home at the age of 30. Though a victim of early marriage, the “little bridegroom” did have a wife and was leading a normal, conjugal life.

Thinking of Kim Wol Yong, I could not sleep that night. A man’s lifetime had been wasted in misery. This thought would not leave my mind, and it irritated me. His existence was somehow symbolic of the sufferings of my country, which also was treading a thorny path. His precarious life corresponded to the sad history of a ruined Korea.

That night I was gripped with the desire to find a spouse for him. If I were unable to help a man to build his home, how could I win back my lost country? This was the thought that ran through my mind.

Of course, there were many other bachelors in my unit who had gone beyond the marriageable age, but that was because they had taken up arms for a long, drawn-out struggle for which the day of victory could not be foretold. Guerrilla warfare is the most arduous and

self-sacrificing of all forms of struggle. It is an extremely mobile form of warfare covering a wide area of action under extremely unfavourable living conditions. For an ordinary man to build up a home while fighting such a war is pretty well impossible to imagine or put into practice. Women who took up arms left their children in the care of their parents-in-law or gave them away as foster-children. While some husbands and wives did fight together in the guerrilla army, their marriages were in name only. We were living an abnormal life imposed by foreign forces.

The Japanese imperialists pushed the Koreans (except for a handful of pro-Japanese elements and traitors to the nation) off the track of normal life. The loss of national sovereignty crushed the life of the nation, and such fundamentals as freedom, the right to a decent life, basic living conditions and traditional customs were all obliterated. The Japanese imperialists quite simply did not want Koreans to eat well, live well or live like human beings. They wanted to make them into dogs, pigs, horses or cattle; they were making the people “stupid.” They did not care a damn what happened to the Koreans—whether children went to school or not, whether the streets swarmed with beggars and vagrants, whether young people were unable to marry because of poverty, or whether husbands and wives suffered hardships in mountains, unable to make a home.

All these miseries, however, were matters of the greatest concern for us. While circumstances did not permit us guerrillas to make a home, there was no reason for bachelors like Kim Wol Yong not to marry. Should the ruin of our country also ruin their chances for a married life? In my teens when I was involved in the youth and student movements and working underground, I helped some young people with their marriage affairs.

I have mentioned one such instance in the second volume of this memoir—the case of Son Jin Sil, the eldest daughter of the Rev. Son Jong Do.

I had a hand in her marriage by sheer accident, but the incident was the subject of gossip for some time in the community of Korean

compatriots in Jilin. When I went home during my school holiday, my mother repeated the old saying, as my schoolmates in Jilin had done: “A matchmaker deserves three cups of wine when successful, and three slaps across his face when not.”

I bore my mother’s warning in mind.

Up to then, some of my comrades had looked upon love affairs and marriages as somewhat commonplace, the result of petit bourgeois sentimentalism. They had banished from their minds all thoughts they considered to be irrelevant to the revolution, to study and to labour. Their attitude was: What is a love affair to a ruined nation? How can love make anyone happy when the country has no sovereignty over its own affairs? Of course, people with such an attitude went too far to some extent, but the attitude was firmly entrenched in the minds of my schoolmates, for they had seen certain nationalists and communists of the previous generation getting into trouble or dropping away from the revolutionary ranks because of love affairs and family problems. The fact that quite a few of their schoolmates neglected schoolwork or became too engrossed in family affairs added to this conviction.

For all this, however, love could not be left to die because the country had perished. Even within the bounds of a conquered country life has to go on and love has to blossom. A young man and woman get married, love each other, make a home, have children, and go on living, complaining that childless couples are lucky. ... That’s life.

I often witnessed love affairs tormenting or delighting DIU members, either dividing them or knitting them together in bonds of alliance. Kim Hyok fell in love with Sung So Ok in the course of the revolutionary struggle; Ryu Pong Hwa loved Ri Je U so ardently that she joined him in committing herself to the revolutionary cause. While engaged in the work of the Young Communist League, Sin Yong Gun married An Sin Yong, a member of the Anti-Imperialist Youth League. Choe Hyo Il and his wife stole a dozen weapons from a Japanese weapons dealer and came to us in Guyushu to help us in the preparations for the armed struggle. Cha Kwang Su dreamed of having a girlfriend like Jemma, a character in *Gadfly*.

Love did not interfere with the revolution; it encouraged the revolution and gave it an impetus. In my recollections on expedition to southern Manchuria, I mentioned Choe Chang Gol as a man with a family. He always thought of the family he had left behind in Liuhe and derived strength from the thought. Sung So Ok's youthful charm was the source of poetry and music for Kim Hyok, a man of ardour. Jon Kyong Suk left home, went to Dalian and stayed there for nine years to look after Kim Ri Gap, who was serving a prison term there. She became a weaver in the Dalian Textile Mill solely for the purpose of taking care of him. Love changed the daughter of a devout Christian and turned her into an exemplary woman who is widely known now.

Through these events my comrades gradually changed their views on love, marriage and family. They realized that a man with a family was perfectly able to work for the revolution, that a family and the revolution were not separate but closely related to each other, and that one's family was the original source of one's patriotism and revolutionary spirit. That became their view on family.

When I was in Wujiazi I helped Pyon Tal Hwan to arrange his marriage. In those days he was very busy working as the head of the Peasant Union of Wujiazi. Because he had to work on his farm and deal with the affairs of the organization at the same time, he was always under the pressure of work. Both he and his father were widowers, so they were leading a lonely life.

He belonged to the generation of Ri Kwan Rin in terms of age. Whenever I saw this man of my father's generation washing rice, picking out small stones from the rice with a hand as large as the lid of a cooking pot, squatting like a tree stump, or moving in and out of the kitchen carrying a water jug, I felt sorry for him. Nowadays, a lot of youngsters are happy-go-lucky, not caring a straw about marriage until the age of thirty or so. Even when their neighbours commiserate with them and advise them to find a wife, they usually shrug it off as not a very pressing matter. By contrast, girls in those days regarded a 30-year-old bachelor as middle-aged and refused to regard him as a possible match.

Pyon Tal Hwan was uncommonly handsome and good-natured. If he had wished to marry he could have married any girl he wanted. The trouble was, he never even dreamed of remarrying. In these circumstances, his father should at least have prodded his son to find a wife, but he was totally helpless, so I volunteered to find a kind-hearted woman for him, and did so. I ventured to involve myself in this important affair of another man purely out of sympathy for him.

His second marriage encouraged Pyon Tal Hwan to put greater enthusiasm into his work for the peasant union. His father Pyon Tae U and other public-spirited persons of Wujiazi were full of praise for us, saying that the young men from Jilin were not only good revolutionaries but also kind-hearted people. By helping Pyon Tal Hwan to find a solution to his home problem, we benefitted in many ways. Marriage was not something that had nothing to do with the revolution.

That was why I was never indifferent to other people's love affairs or friendships.

One day when we were fighting in the Wangqing guerrilla zone, I left Xiaowangqing in command of O Paek Ryong's company on a march towards Gayahe. As we were climbing a pass, a girl came walking in our direction, her head lowered. Seeing us, she stopped, a faint smile on her face. As the marching column approached her, she trotted by, eyes downcast. For a country girl she was pretty and neat in appearance.

The company marched on. But the rearmost man looked back for a moment, and then marched again, head bowed in deep thought. Approximately 100 metres further down the road, the man again glanced back towards where the girl had disappeared. His eyes were clouded with faint gloom and longing.

I called him out from the ranks and asked in a whisper what he was thinking about so deeply. Was he related to the girl in some way?

His face brightened suddenly and a smile formed at the corners of his mouth. He was a simple and straightforward man.

"She is my fiancée. I have not seen her since I joined the army. I can't bear seeing her disappearing like the wind, even without raising

her head. Had she raised her head at least, she could have seen me in uniform.”

The man again looked back. I thought I must help him.

“Go back and see her quickly. Show her how you look in uniform and chat with her for a while. Then she will be very happy. I will give you enough time to talk to your heart’s content. We will take a break down at the village until you come back.”

The man’s eyes grew moist. He thanked me and darted away after the girl. As I promised, I ordered the company to break at the next village. The man returned in about 30 minutes and began to report what he had done. I told him that he need not report such a thing, but he would not listen to me.

“Seeing me in uniform, she said that I was a different man. She said she would work hard to be worthy of the fiancée of a guerrilla. So I said, ‘As you see, I am dedicated to the revolution until Korea wins independence. You are going to be the wife of a revolutionary soldier. If you want to live like the wife of a revolutionary soldier, you must enter the organization and work for the revolution.’”

Since that moment the man distinguished himself in many battles, and the girl worked hard as a member of a local revolutionary organization. Certainly, love is one of the mainsprings of enthusiasm, the driving force of creative work, and an element in making life beautiful.

Before leaving the village of Jichengcun, I said to old man Jang:

“Old man, I have something difficult to ask of you. The thought of Kim Wol Yong kept me awake last night. What about you village elders helping him to find a good wife and making arrangements for his wedding?”

Old man Jang was much embarrassed at my request.

“General, I am sorry to have worried you over such a thing. We will do our best to help him find a wife and get him married. So please don’t worry.”

The old men of the village kept their promise.

The ARF organization informed me that Kim Wol Yong had

married a good woman and made a home. Old man Kim of Sigu, Shibadaogou, had married his daughter to him.

Apparently the news of my concern over the marriage of the bachelor at the village of Jichengcun had spread beyond the bounds of Ershidaogou to Shibadaogou. Hearing the news, old man Kim said he would give his daughter to the man who was held dear by me, and came to Jichengcun and discussed the matter with old man Jang. Thus the wedding was arranged more smoothly than had been expected. Old man Kim was unusually broad-minded.

Although he was only a poor peasant tilling mountain fields for his livelihood, old man Kim suggested that he make all the arrangements for the wedding ceremony for both sides. But the guardians of the bridegroom objected to the idea doggedly, so that it was agreed upon to hold the ceremony at old man Jang's house in Jichengcun.

I told Kim Hae San, the logistics officer, to choose the best fabrics and foodstuffs from the captured goods and send them on to Jichengcun.

Kim Hae San seemed to accept my instructions reluctantly. He said yes, but kept standing around in my room instead of dismissing himself.

"General, must we send the goods for the wedding ceremony?" He asked beyond all my expectation.

"Yes. Why? Don't you like the idea?"

"A bowlful of rice has been all that we could afford for the wedding parties of our comrades-in-arms. It's this thought that holds me back from sending the goods. Think of how many of our fallen comrades had to be satisfied with merely a bowlful of rice at their wedding party, the most jubilant moment of their life!"

I understood his feelings. It was natural for him to feel unhappy about sending a wedding present to a total stranger when we had offered so little to our own comrades.

"The thought of it pains me, too. But Comrade Hae San, there is no reason why the people should follow our footsteps in getting satisfied with a bowl of rice as a makeshift for a wedding party, is there? For

that matter, I have been told that many people do, in fact, have to celebrate in this meagre way. Don't you feel indignant at this state of affairs? True, it would be impossible to deliver all the Koreans from their poverty with our secret store of booty, but why should we not arrange a splendid wedding party for one man, Kim Wol Yong—we, Korea's young men who have taken up arms to revitalize our nation?"

Kim Hae San made a bundle of the wedding presents and, in the company of one of his men, went to the village with it. When he left the secret camp with the gifts—a quilt cover, rice and tinned goods—I gave him all the money from my purse. From his beaming face on his return from the village, I could see that he had been well treated by the villagers and that the wedding ceremony had been a great success. He told me that on receiving the wedding present, the bridegroom had cried himself blind, and that the villagers were very warm-hearted. He did not report anything else; instead, he said significantly:

“General, let us prepare wedding presents for all the young people in West Jiandao.”

Later, the man who had accompanied him told me that Kim Hae San burst into tears when clinking cups with the bridegroom. I did not ask why. No doubt it was a burst of national sorrow, often felt by Koreans everywhere on such occasions.

Hearing Kim Hae San's account of the event, I wanted to take time and pay a visit to the newly wed couple. I was eager to see how they were living and wish them happiness. That was why I intended to visit them with my orderlies, leaving the unit in the secret camp, and taking time out from the pressure of making preparations for the advance into the homeland.

Man's heart is strange, indeed. I met Kim Wol Yong only once and exchanged only a few words with him. I never understood myself why a man, who was too shy to express himself freely and extremely simple-mannered should attract my interest.

He had no particular charm, either, except perhaps a kind of unstained innocence. Nevertheless, I felt an irresistible impulse to see him again.

Old man Jang showed me to Kim Wol Yong's house that day. The house was a restructured shed, which had belonged to somebody else. To my regret, Kim had gone to the mountain to gather firewood. His newly married wife, a daughter of old man Kim of Sigu, met me with hospitality. She was not a beauty, but looked good-natured, like the eldest daughter-in-law of a large family. She was a lively woman, and I thought she would no doubt soon assimilate her husband to herself.

"We are grateful to you for your decision to be Wol Yong's life companion. I hope you will convey my greetings to your father," I said. The woman made a deep bow to me.

"It is we who should thank you. ... I will help my husband and build up a good home."

"My best wishes to you. I hope you become the mother of many children and live long."

While I was talking to the woman, my comrades chopped a heap of firewood in front of the house.

Having met Kim Wol Yong's wife, I felt much relieved. I left the village, convinced that the couple would live in perfect harmony all their lives. The day's visit had a lingering effect on me, being still with me even as we climbed the ridge of Konjang Hill to attack Pochonbo.

The news of the hired farmhand's success in marriage through our agency and the wedding present we had made spread far and wide in West Jiandao. Since then, the people placed much greater confidence in the People's Revolutionary Army. The quantity and variety of aid goods sent to our secret camp increased with every passing day.

An old man who was living outside the wall gate of Shisandaogou sent to us the barnyard millet which he had stored for his son's wedding party. To my surprise, the prospective bridegroom and his elder brother brought the millet to us, and no matter how flatly we declined to accept the gift, the young men would not listen to us. They insisted, saying that if they returned home with the millet, they would be thrown out by their father. We could not decline any further.

There is no knowing how the young man, Kim Kwang Un by name, arranged the wedding party. I think he must have had a lot of trouble

obtaining the necessary cereal for the celebrations. Even now I still regret that I could give him nothing as we parted from him at the Fuhoushui plateau.

I have never met Kim Wol Yong again since I left West Jiandao.

I have never met Son Jin Sil either since I left Jilin. I got wind that she had gone to the United States to study, but I have no idea what her family life after marriage was like. I wished her happiness in my mind.

I have never forgotten Son Jin Sil, Pyon Tal Hwan and Kim Wol Yong. Perhaps a man is destined to retain as much affection for his relatives, friends, comrades and pupils as he loved them in the past.

Son Jin Sil died in the United States. Having received her death notice, I sent a telegram of condolence to Mr. Son Won Thae. How much it would have been better if I had met her in her lifetime and talked to her and inquired after her.

Kim Wol Yong was a healthy man, so he must have enjoyed a long life.

## 7. The Mother of the Guerrilla Army

Among the comrades-in-arms who shared their life with me on Mt. Paektu for many years was a woman guerrilla who used to be addressed as “Mother.” Her real name was Jang Chol Gu, a cook for Headquarters. There were dozens of women soldiers and several cooks in my unit, but only Jang Chol Gu was addressed as “Mother.”

She was a little more than 10 years older than I, so I could safely have addressed her as “sister” or “comrade.” Usually, however, I called her “Mother Chol Gu” rather than “comrade.” Even old man Tobacco Pipe, who was much older than she, used to call her “Mother Chol Gu, Mother Chol Gu,” and this provoked laughter among us.

Jang Chol Gu became a cook for Headquarters after we had destroyed the files of the “Minsaengdan” suspects at Maanshan in the spring of 1936.

While going through bunches of these files, which had been produced by Kim Hong Bom, I got to know her name of Jang Chol Gu. For some reason, her file was the only one to be written in red ink.

The information collected on her stated that her husband, a party worker in Yanji County, had been proved guilty of involvement in the “Minsaengdan” and had been executed two years before, and that among the “crimes” committed by Jang Chol Gu herself were those of starving guerrillas by burying army provisions deliberately while she was working as the head of the Women’s Association in Wangyugou, Yanji County.

The red ink in which the document was written and the manly name of the middle-aged woman were enough to arrest my attention.

Her appearance was also very conspicuous. She was the shortest of all the women soldiers and had very sparse eyebrows, so sparse that she looked as if she had had none at all.

Love for her husband brought her into working for the revolution. She had so keen an affection for her husband that she even relished what her husband was doing. At his request she put up leaflets, conveyed secret notes, provided hideouts for revolutionaries, learned how to read and write, and attended secret meetings. In the course of this she herself became a revolutionary.

Unfortunately, however, her husband, whom she had believed in and followed with all her heart, was executed on a false charge of involvement in the “Minsaengdan.” She was also arrested and imprisoned, accused of a “Minsaengdan” member, while working in Wangyugou. “Comrade Wang,” who had once eaten a delicious dish of hot barnyard millet and leaf-mustard *kimchi* with her husband at her home, beat her with a stick and yanked her about by the hair. But both the guerrillas and the revolutionary masses were against her execution at her public trial. Thus she escaped death, but could not get rid of the label as a “Minsaengdan” suspect.

Crossing out the label of “Minsaengdan” suspect which had been imposed upon her by hangmen who defiled the sacred revolution and massacred innocent people, I appointed Jang Chol Gu as a cook for our Headquarters.

Since she began to cook for us, our dishes increased greatly in their variety. She had a knack for brewing bean mash and *kimchi* quickly.

People nowadays would not believe it if I said soy sauce or bean mash had been brewed in only a day or two. If moderately roasted beans are soaked in hot water, the water turns red. By salting and boiling it down, you can get soy sauce. If boiled beans are put into a pot and kept in a hot place, they ferment. Salt them and boil them, and you can get *ssokjang* (a kind of bean mash). It tastes like bean mash soup spiced with pollack.

We treasured her bean mash and anise *kimchi* as if they were festive food.

She also used to press oil from roasted maize germ.

Once my orderly Paek Hak Rim was seriously ill and bedridden. Usually he had such an appetite, he could chew and swallow up bark,

but now he did not even touch well-boiled maize porridge, saying he was sick of it. Jang Chol Gu gathered dry leaves of wild vegetables in the snow, retted them, rinsed them, boiled them, and then fried them in oil she had pressed from the maize germ. Thanks to the dish, Paek Hak Rim recovered his health and appetite.

Jang Chol Gu really was a “Mother” to the guerrillas. She used to scrape the scorched crust of cereals from the bottom of her cooking pot and slip it into the trouser pockets of young guerrillas when the unit was going to fight.

Even veterans like O Jung Hup and Ri Tong Hak, not to mention Choe Kum San, Paek Hak Rim and other young orderlies, used to confess without reserve to her that they were hungry.

Ri O Song, the youngest boy in my unit, was Jang Chol Gu’s pet, the “most favoured with pot scrapings.”

If the boy hung around at a considerable distance, she brought the scrapings to him in the folds of her skirts and slipped it into his pocket. The boy shared it equally with his mates.

Whenever I saw the scene, I pondered why women were always on more familiar and intimate terms with their children than men were. Probably, I thought, mothers usually feed their children, clothe them and take care of them. That is their duty, so to speak. The word “mother” therefore means the benevolent guardian of her children, one who feeds them and clothes them.

Jang Chol Gu, who performed the duty of the guardian in good faith, became a most intimate “Mother” to us all.

Till late at night, while the rest of us slept, she prepared the next day’s meals, sorting and trimming wild vegetables, milling grain, and winnowing it. If she had to pound grain in a mortar at midnight, she did it in the open, in the howling snowstorm.

She had to work over the fire most of her time, and her clothes wore out twice as fast as other people’s.

Once at a party held in the secret camp, she was asked to sing. All her comrades wanted to hear her and clapped their hands in anticipation, wondering how well the excellent cook could sing. To

everyone's surprise, she leaped on her feet and ran off into the bush.

Her behaviour puzzled all her comrades.

"Don't blame her for not singing," I said in her defence. "She was probably embarrassed to appear before a large audience because of her clothing. As you see, she wears patched-up clothes. Just imagine how she must have felt, knowing how she would look as she stood before you."

All the gathering agreed with me. Later, she herself confessed that she had run away because she was ashamed of her ragged appearance.

Later, on my way back from battle in command of a small unit, I obtained a piece of good cloth for her. I had sent one of my men to buy it, telling him to choose the best one without minding the price. He had bought grey cotton serge suited for middle-aged women. To my relief, women comrades who had an eye for cloth felt it and said that it was good material.

I had not bought a set of clothes for my own mother when she was alive. Even the one *mal* of foxtail millet I gave her as I took leave of her on my expedition to southern Manchuria—she was ill, lying in a ramshackle, straw-thatched house in a field of reeds in Xiaoshahe—had been obtained by my comrades. About the only thing I had ever given her was a pair of rubber shoes, which I had bought when we were living in Badaogou. However, the money for these shoes was not my own earning, but money she had given me to buy sports shoes. She had never received a gift from me during her lifetime. She was buried in a solitary grave on the River Xiaoshahe without receiving a handful of dirt or a drop of tears from her mourning son even after death.

As I was carrying the cloth for Mother Jang Chol Gu, I had mixed feelings of relief for Jang and remorse of having done nothing for my own mother, either during her lifetime or after her death.

On my arrival at the secret camp from the battle, however, I found that Jang Chol Gu had been suddenly transferred to a hospital in the rear by Kim Ju Hyon's orders. Nobody knew why she had been ordered to the out-of-the-way supporting camp from the cooking unit of Headquarters. The news of her departure saddened us all.

In those days, all the supporting units such as the cooking and sewing units, hospitals, and arsenals were supervised by the logistics officer. So it was natural and not much surprising that Kim Ju Hyon, a man in charge of logistics, had decided to order one of the persons under his supervision elsewhere.

The point in question was why the woman cook, who had been respected and loved by everyone and had been loyal in her duty, was reappointed to a hospital in the rear.

I asked Kim Jong Suk, who had been staying with her at the secret camp, why Jang Chol Gu had been removed. She did not know either.

“Perhaps the hospital wanted her, or there was some other unavoidable reason. She wept as she left here. She was so sad that I felt embarrassed for her.”

Explaining how Jang left for the hospital, Kim Jong Suk wiped her own tears in spite of herself, eloquent proof that Jang’s leave-taking was no doubt a painful shock to the other members of the cooking unit as well.

My own heart ached, as if I had seen the woman leaving only moments before. I thought bitterly that if she had to be sent to the hospital, she should at least have been sent after my return. Then I could have dressed her in new clothes.

I was really angered when I heard from Kim Ju Hyon why she had been sent away:

“Since the incident of the hatchet I thought that there should be only people with clean records by your side, Comrade Commander.”

That was Kim Ju Hyon’s own explanation. Admittedly, he had been shocked by the hatchet incident and decided to take better care of Headquarters, for he was exemplary in the care of security for Headquarters. That was why I held him in special confidence and great affection.

In the autumn of 1936, when the whole of West Jiandao was bubbling over with enthusiasm for joining the guerrilla army, I had organized a few replacement companies with young volunteers and appointed instructors for a short period of training for them at the

secret camp in Heixiazigou. Among the trainees of a replacement company there was an assassin who had wormed his way into our ranks, armed with a hatchet and some poison, to make an attempt on my life. He was a young, simple-minded peasant. Judging from his class origin, there was no reason for him to become an enemy agent; probably he had been deceived by enemy tricks. One day a gang of enemy agents, disguised as soldiers of the People's Revolutionary Army, had broken into the young man's house and behaved like bandits. They had robbed him of the money he had earned by selling firewood to buy medicine for his ailing mother, and plundered his food grain, chickens and everything else they could lay their hands on. In the wake of the gang, an enemy agent had come to him and pretended to console him for his loss, flinging mud at the communists and intimidating him until he agreed to do what the agent asked him to do. That was how the young man had become a minion for the counterrevolution in spite of himself and infiltrated our ranks.

None of us were aware that the young man was a hired enemy spy.

As he had hidden the hatchet he had smuggled in the waistband of his trousers in the bushes near Headquarters, none of us had noticed anything suspicious.

One day, on my visit to the secret camp in Heixiazigou, I learned that the recruits of the replacement companies had been eating only dried vegetable porridge for several days on end.

Although they had joined the guerrilla army with a determination to endure hardships, the recruits had not yet become accustomed to difficult conditions in the few months since their enlistment. They might become weak-minded or waver unless they were given good education beforehand. So I gathered them together that night and said:

“Shivering as you are from the cold away from the comfortable homes of your parents, wives and children and allaying your hunger with dry vegetables, your resolution may waver. But you young men who have come out to win back the country must know how to endure these hardships in order to achieve the great cause. Although we are now going through hardships, we shall feel the pride of having fought

when the country is liberated. We are going to build a people's country that is good to live in on our beautiful land after the liberation, a people's paradise where there are neither exploiters nor exploited people, where everyone has equal rights and leads an equitably happy life. We are going to build a country where the people are seen as number one, where factories and land belong to the people, and where the State provides the people with food and clothing, education and medical care. At that time visitors to our country will envy us."

Among the recruits was the young man who had been given an espionage mission by the enemy. Listening to my words, he realized he had been deceived by the enemy into making an attempt on a good man's life. He resolved to confess and live honestly, even though he might be punished severely.

The young man brought the hatchet and the poison before me and confessed. Because he had made an honest confession, I forgave him.

The incident awakened our commanding officers to sharp vigilance. They each learned a lesson in his own way. Some of them thought that they should safeguard Headquarters with greater care, others felt that security checks on new recruits should be carried out more effectively so as to deny undesirable people the chance to infiltrate the revolutionary ranks. Others still believed that a mass campaign should be launched throughout West Jiandao to wipe out the enemy's stooges and reactionaries and to prevent even a single enemy spy or agent from approaching the secret camp.

Kim Ju Hyon thought of an even more elaborate scheme.

"I thought that in order to safeguard Headquarters we must watch both inside and outside. We cannot say with assurance that the enemy will always stay only outside our ranks, or that the external enemy will not get in touch with disguised reactionaries or waverers within our ranks, can we? This is why I thought that anyone with a chequered record should be removed from Headquarters."

According to him, a person like Jang Chol Gu, a "Minsaengdan" suspect, was not entitled to work as a cook for Headquarters.

I could not repress a surge of indignation. How could he be so cruel

to a simple and good-natured woman who had been working hard for the revolution with heartfelt loyalty? At the thought that Kim Ju Hyon, who was broad-minded and careful in dealing with most things, had made such an absurd mistake, I grew even angrier. I dressed him down, saying:

“I am grateful for your constant watch over our security, but I have to make a bitter reproach at you today. You yourself praised Mother Jang Chol Gu as an honest, diligent and kind-hearted woman. What banished your trust in her so easily? She has been a mother and sister to all of us. Who cooked three hot meals and three hot soups for us each day? It was Mother Chol Gu. If she were a bad woman, we would no longer be in this world. She has had a host of chances to harm us, but we are hale and hearty even though we have eaten hundreds of meals she has cooked. This fully testifies that she is a good woman beyond all suspicion, and that the charge laid against her in the past as a ‘Minsaengdan’ suspect was totally unfounded.”

Later he confessed that he had never sweated so hard under my reproach as he did that day.

In fact, I had never thought that Kim Ju Hyon would make such a blunder. He was a seasoned military and political worker with a long revolutionary record. We had always shared bed and board and discussed our work around the same table as one in mind and purpose. I could not understand why he who was aware of my policy and intention better than anyone else had dealt so cruelly with her fate, contrary to communist obligation and morality.

I criticized him further:

“It is already half a year since we destroyed the files of ‘Minsaengdan’ suspects. The wounds in the minds of these people have almost healed up. Why did you prod them open again? If she left the mountains Jang Chol Gu could marry again and live comfortably by her fireside, eating hot meals. But she is living a life of hardships with us in the mountains because she is determined to carry out the revolution and because she trusts us. For all this, you have dismissed her from Headquarters and, by so doing, you have made a mockery of

our trust in her. Are we so stupid as to feign confidence in people in fair weather and kick them out without hesitation when we are in danger? Sham can have no place in our confidence.”

Kim Ju Hyon went to the hospital and brought Jang Chol Gu back with him that same day. The next day he got the sewing unit to make new clothes for her.

Jang Chol Gu kept herself aloof from Kim Ju Hyon, although she carried out his orders in a responsible manner every time. When she met him alone occasionally in the camp lane or in a mess hall, she simply saluted, refraining from talking to him. When she needed a decision from him, she used to send another cook to him.

The few days she had spent in the hospital might be an instant in the endless flow of time, but the gloom that the short span of her stay had lodged in her mind was not dispelled for a long time.

The destructive effect that distrust has on human relations is enormous indeed. A faint distrust can cause lifelong grievances to people or destroy 10 years of friendship in an instant.

Jang’s return to the cooking unit at Headquarters animated the atmosphere of the secret camp again. The food acquired a new flavour. To tell the truth, she was not a talented cook, but even the uncrushed maize porridge tasted much better because she was cooking it with all her heart.

She worked harder than ever. No distance deterred her from going to get things to improve our appetite. One day, passing through Shijiudaogou, I ate *Miricacalia firma* at Ri Hun’s. The rice ball wrapped in the leaves of this herb, which I ate for the first time in my life, tasted better than lettuce wrappings. During my leisure talk back at the camp, I mentioned the herb-leaf wrappings. Hearing this, Jang went many miles to Shijiudaogou and returned with a large bundle of the herb on her head. Later we found the habitat of the herb around the Paektusan Secret Camp.

Jang Chol Gu used to sleep huddled up on twigs and dry leaves on the moist ground near the kitchen. In the course of this her right arm gradually became paralysed. On top of it, she soon caught a fever. We

sent her to Wudaoyangcha, Antu County, for treatment. Pak Jong Suk and Paek Hak Rim kept her company as her “nurses.” Later, Kim Jong Suk nursed her. They went through a lot of trouble to look after her. In company with my chief orderly Ji Pong Son, I also paid a visit to her grass hut at Wudaoyangcha.

Jang Chol Gu recovered from her fever in a few dozen days, but not from the paralysis of her right arm. Because of this handicap she was unable to do kitchen work properly and handle her rifle as she should. She was tormented by the thought that she had become a burden to the unit, and came to a conclusion that she had to leave the unit so as not to be a handicap to her comrades. In the early 1940s, when disabled soldiers and old and infirm people were being evacuated to the Soviet Union, she joined the evacuees of her own accord.

At her leave-taking she gave her favourite silver ring to Kim Jong Suk, promising that they would meet again when Korea became independent. But the promise remains unfulfilled, for she heard in a far-off foreign land the news of the death of Kim Jong Suk. The silver ring she had given to Kim Jong Suk is now on exhibit in the Korean Revolution Museum.

Among Jang Chol Gu’s fellow cooks for our Headquarters was a Chinese comrade named Lian He-dong. He was an expert in Chinese cuisine. While Jang Chol Gu was a devoted cook, he was a first-rate one. He came to us in the winter of 1936.

For some time in the early days of his service in my unit he learned the cooking methods of the guerrilla army from Jang Chol Gu. Jang learned Chinese cuisine from him. In the course of this they became great friends.

He was very sad when Jang was evacuated to the Soviet Union. He prepared a large bundle of Chinese food and slipped it into her pack.

Jang was also very sorry to take leave of him.

The story of how Lian He-dong came to join us is dramatic. The hero of the drama was Ma Jin-dou, a Muslim, who relished liquor and pork, both Islamic taboos, in Jilin. Ma was my classmate in Jilin Yuwen Middle School and my schoolmate in Badaogou Primary School.

I had many impressive acquaintances in my days at Badaogou. Li Xian-zhang, a son of the head of the Badaogou police station, was on very good terms with me. He was also one of my schoolmates at Badaogou. His father used to get medical treatment from my father as one of the “regular customers.” He used to pay visits to my home on festive occasions and make my father presents by way of payment.

When I was operating in command of my unit in West Jiandao, I got in touch with the head of the Badaogou police station through the agency of Li Xian-zhang. In those days his father was no longer the head of the police station. His father’s successor was also an honest man. He promised not to fight against us. Since then he did not touch the aid goods the people were sending to the revolutionary army. That was why we did not touch his police station, although we attacked other places in Changbai County.

Ma was a man of special character, and his private life was also unusual. He was already married in middle school—to two women at the same time. His wives were sisters.

At first he fell in love with the elder sister and they were engaged. Her younger sister, who used to go on errands for her, fell for him and even became lovesick. Seeing this, the girls’ parents left their two daughters to his care. Thus Ma, who had plenty of money, became rich in wives as well.

After I left Jilin, released from prison, I had no idea where Ma was living or what he was doing.

However, fate played a monstrous trick on us: we found ourselves hostile to each other, fighting on opposite sides with guns levelled at each other.

In the first winter since our advance to Mt. Paektu, Ma was in command of the “punitive” force of the puppet Manchukuo police, entrenched in Erdaogang, the enemy’s “punitive” operation base nearest to our secret camp in Heixiazigou. In addition to the puppet Manchukuo “punitive” force, hundreds of Japanese “punitive” troops from the 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment in Hamhung were also stationed in the base.

At first I did not know that Ma was the commander of the puppet

Manchukuo “punitive” police force. During our second or third raids on Erdaogang in the autumn, my men searched the house of the escaped commander of the “punitive” police force and capture the commander’s wife who was hiding with a pistol in her hand and his cook. To my surprise, the captured woman was the younger sister who had been married to Ma.

I had been invited to Ma’s wedding ceremony in Jilin, so I recognized her at a glance. She, too, recognized me. It was a dramatic reunion.

According to the woman, Ma was already the father of four children. The woman had given birth to two sons, and her elder sister to two daughters. She said that her husband used to talk about Mr. Kim Song Ju, and asked me why I had been inveigled into joining “Kim Il Sung’s gang of communist bandits.” She was unaware that yesterday’s Kim Song Ju was none other than Kim Il Sung. I said:

“I am the man, Kim Il Sung, whom you refer to as the ringleader of the communist bandits. We are not communist bandits but a revolutionary army fighting against Japanese imperialists, the common enemy of the Korean and Chinese peoples. Remember me to your husband when he comes home. Out of our old friendship and as a classmate of his I want you to tell him that he should keep away from us, instead of fighting battles which he has no chance of winning. If it is impossible to avoid fighting, he should merely pretend to be doing it when forced to take part in ‘punitive’ operations. We strike stubbornly resisting puppet Manchukuo forces but deal leniently with the puppet forces who do not resist. I do not wish to see Ma acting as a shield for the Japanese, nor do I wish him to be killed by the revolutionary army. He is a man to be our friend, not our enemy.”

The woman said that her husband knew well that “Kim Il Sung’s gang of communist bandits” did not shoot at the puppet Manchukuo army indiscriminately. The night raiding party of the People’s Revolutionary Army had not touched the tents of the puppet Manchukuo army while attacking the bivouacking enemy during the battle at the edge of Heixiazigou; they had shot at the tents of the

Japanese army only. Knowing this, the commanders of the Japanese “punitive” troops shot all the officers of the puppet Manchukuo army involved in the battle, giving vent to their anger. Her husband had avoided the tragic event because he had not participated in the “punitive” action under the excuse that he had caught a bad cold. Probably this incident had awakened her husband somewhat to the truth of our policy towards the enemy.

The woman said: “I now clearly understand why your army is lenient to the Manchukuo army. I know well that in your school days you always emphasized Korea-China friendship and were on good terms with your Chinese schoolmates. My husband also often talked about this point. I am only grateful to you for your kindness to Chinese people and for your lenient policy towards the Manchukuo army. I will persuade my husband not to level guns at the revolutionary army again. When he learns that Commander Kim Il Sung is yesterday’s Kim Song Ju, he will act prudently.”

I reiterated my advice that she dissuade her husband from leaving a stain on his name as a traitor, then released her and her cook and withdrew from Erdaogang.

The cook refused to return with her and asked to be admitted into our revolutionary army. The cook was none other than Lian He-dong. He said he was tired of being torn between the two sisters quarrelling for one husband.

“I have heard a lot about Mr. Kim Song Ju from Commander Ma. Now that I know that Mr. Kim Song Ju is General Kim Il Sung, I don’t wish to leave you, General. Please let me fight in your unit,” he said.

I granted his request. Around that time Wei Zheng-min was receiving medical treatment at the Hengshan Secret Camp. I was glad that a cook who was capable of making Chinese food had come to us. Kim Ju Hyon and I had been embarrassed because we had had no cook to prepare palatable food for the Chinese patient.

I sent the cook to work for Wei Zheng-min for some time. Wei was delighted with him, saying that he was very talented, a cook worthy of a fashionable restaurant.

Since then, Lian He-dong worked by our side as a member of the cooking unit until we returned to the homeland in September 1945 after the defeat of imperialist Japan. He was capable of making a variety of dishes out of the same materials. He always carried a cauldron with him, saying that meals cooked in a cauldron were tastier.

In the first half of the 1940s we were at a training base in the Soviet-Manchuria border area. We occasionally formed an allied force with both Chinese and Soviet comrades and had joint exercises. On these occasions Lian He-dong's cooking skill became so renowned that even Soviet commanders, to say nothing of Chinese commanders, frequented the field mess hall of my unit.

One day after eating the Chinese food prepared by the cook, Zhou Bao-zhong asked us jokingly to give him our cook. Comrade An Kil, also joking, agreed.

The joke went from mouth to mouth until it reached the cook's ears as truth. The cook came to me with a tear-stained face and asked me if it was true that he was going to be transferred to a Chinese unit.

"I don't know to which unit you might have to go. I am in a difficult position because too many people want you. The Soviet comrades also want you. If they are really insistent on having you, you may have to go to the Soviet side," I said.

He leaped up at these words, refusing to go anywhere, neither a Chinese unit nor a Soviet unit. He glowered at me stubbornly.

I realized after Japan's defeat that he had meant what he said. Pending our triumphal return to the liberated homeland, I summoned him, praised him and thanked him for nearly 10 years of his devoted service, and then conveyed to him the decision of the party organization to transfer him to Zhou Bao-zhong's unit. Zhou Bao-zhong had promised that he would promote him to a regimental commander.

Lian He-dong entreated me to take him to Korea.

"I cannot live away from you, General," he said. "There is no reason why I should live in China just because I am a Chinese. I don't want to be a regimental commander or anything else. Please let me stay

by your side. There is no need to break our friendship deliberately, a friendship that even Japanese guns and swords and Manchurian gales failed to break.”

I was moved by what he said. His words contained the essence of his view of life, an outlook that could be conceived by only people who have shed tears, spilt blood and gone through hardships for their comrades on the path of revolution. As he said, people live by the bonds of friendship rather than within the boundaries of a country. It was friendship and love that united the anti-Japanese fighters into a large family throughout the forests of Mt. Paektu and in the wilderness of Manchuria. If a human community is devoid of friendship and love, mountains and rivers will be dark as well.

Lian He-dong’s insistence on going with us was also an expression of his noble spirit of internationalism.

I on my part was also reluctant to part with him, so I said, “If you really wish to come with us, do so. I have no wish to bid farewell to you. I am not particular about one’s nationality. I am only giving some prudent thought to the matter because I’m afraid the situation might be awkward for you. As you know, China is on the eve of a civil war. We have promised with Zhou Bao-zhong that we will send Kang Kon and many other Korean military and political cadres and soldiers to assist the Chinese revolution. In this context, if you, a Chinese, shut eyes to the Chinese revolution and go to Korea, everyone will think it strange. You, too, might regret it.”

He decided to remain in China. He even asked me jokingly to choose one of the Pyongyang beauties for his wife when he came to Korea after the triumph of the Chinese revolution. But I was unable to comply with his request, for he died fighting heroically as a regimental commander against Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang army. At the sad news I regretted that I had not taken him to Korea. However, he will live for ever in the memory of the Chinese people as a man who laid down his noble life in the revolutionary war to found a new China.

Instead of Lian He-dong, Jang Chol Gu came back to us after the Korean war from a far-off corner in Central Asia. Soon after her arrival

her comrades-in-arms in the days of Mt. Paektu got together. She told me on the telephone:

“General, the comrades from Mt. Paektu have all gathered here. Could you take off time to come here? I wish to offer you, General, a bowl of my porridge after an interval of twenty years. As I came from a foreign land thousands of miles away, I have nothing to offer you except uncrushed maize porridge.”

I wanted to go very much, but circumstances would not allow it.

“Thank you, but I am about to leave for the provinces. I have to keep the appointment with the people, so let’s make it at a later date.”

Her old comrades-in-arms were all said to have enjoyed the porridge cooked with firewood, just as they had done on Mt. Paektu.

Whenever I pined for the days on Mt. Paektu after that, I asked her to cook uncrushed maize porridge for me.

She lived in a house perched on the hill across from the gate to my house. She often came to see me, and I, too, visited her in my leisure hours.

Back in the homeland, she spent most of her time telling the younger people the story of her old comrades-in-arms who had fought on Mt. Paektu.

She passed away in 1982.

Her death gave me a great shock. I grieved over her death as I had mourned over my own mother’s death. She had taken care of me as if I had been her brother, and she had loved me as my own mother loved me.

We accorded her a grand State funeral just as we had done for the death of the veterans who had rendered distinguished services in the building of the revolutionary armed forces.

Her bust was set up in the Taesongsan Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery and a film, *Rhododendron*, was produced with her as the heroine. We wanted her to be remembered down through the generations.

All our people were delighted at the renaming of the Pyongyang University of Commerce after Jang Chol Gu. They were deeply moved

by the fact that a university could be named after the ordinary member of a cooking unit. Such a title of honour, they said, could only be given under our socialist system, which does not discriminate between jobs, but holds in high esteem service workers as unassuming heroes who work hard to provide their fellow people with a comfortable life, good food, good clothing and good housing.

When renaming the Pyongyang University of Commerce as Jang Chol Gu University, we hoped that the younger generation would be workers as loyal to their revolutionary duty as Jang Chol Gu had been.

## **CHAPTER 17. KOREA IS ALIVE**

*(May–June 1937)*

### **1. Flames of Pochonbo (1)**

Many people have already discussed and made full studies of the Battle of Pochonbo from the point of view of history. As one who organized and commanded this battle, I clearly recall my mental processes at the time, together with the events that took place. Scenes of battle from half a century ago still unfold clearly before my eyes.

The Battle of Pochonbo can be compared to the reunion of a mother and her children who have been separated by force. The gunshot at Pochonbo precipitated the reunion between my motherland and her loyal sons and daughters who had loved her most. In other words, this battle marked a decisive turning point in the liberation of my conquered nation.

Whenever I was asked on my return to the liberated homeland to recount some of the battles we had fought in our armed struggle against the Japanese, I used to describe the Battle of Pochonbo. In terms of results, we had fought innumerable battles much larger than this one. As a matter of fact the number of enemy soldiers and policemen we killed here was not very large. Nevertheless, I always give the first place to Pochonbo when discussing the major encounters in the anti-Japanese war, because I attach special importance to it.

This battle was of great interest to many people. Enemy losses were not worth mentioning, since they had been covered by newspapers immediately after the battle, but everyone was curious about the

motive for this operation. For instance, what made us fight this battle, and why did we choose Pochonbo for our attack when there were dozens of towns and villages of the same size in the border area? In a broad sense, our attack on Pochonbo was designed to bring about the revival of the nation; in a narrow sense, it was to open up a decisive stage and make a leap forward in the revolutionary struggle against the Japanese.

The history of the Korean nation had been streaked with blood and tears, brought about by the Japanese imperialists. It was in reaction to this that our nation started its resistance. Armed struggle not only expressed the will of the sons of Korea to fight against Japan but it was a means to an end as well. Under the banner of anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic revolution, we waged the armed struggle; at the same time we promoted the building of the party and launched a united front movement and an anti-imperialist common front movement, thus pushing forward the revolution against the Japanese.

This road was fraught with difficulties. Some people went so far as to want us to obey only their party interests and strategy, incriminating the Korean people who were fighting under the slogan of the Korean revolution.

From the first days of our revolutionary struggle we focussed on the Korean revolution as the starting point of all our thinking. Physically we may have been in a foreign land, but spiritually we had never left our homeland and our fellow countrymen. Everything we did from the second half of the 1920s on was for our homeland and for its liberation. To fight under the banner of the Korean revolution was the legitimate right and duty of every Korean communist: we strongly asserted this.

The Nanhutou meeting dealt mainly with the task of extending the armed struggle into the homeland.

The meeting expressed the aspirations of the Korean communists to make the loud sound of gunfire in Korea, that is, to extend our activities into the homeland so as to push forward the Korean revolution. During the first half of the 1930s, Manchuria was our main theatre of operations. Both before and after the founding of the

anti-Japanese guerrilla army, we had made forays into the occupied territories of our homeland on several occasions, but these activities had been limited in scope.

Our preparations in the first half of the 1930s could be viewed as the stage of gathering our strength. In this period the armed force of the Korean communists grew to the extent of forming several divisions, and we felt that if we advanced into the homeland now we would find almost nothing impossible to deal with. Should we establish our base on Mt. Paektu and from there launch armed units to other areas—for instance, one division to Mt. Rangnim, a second to Kwanmo Peak, a third to Mt. Thaebaek and a fourth to Mt. Jiri—to set up bases and strike the enemy one after another, then the whole of the Korean peninsula would be brought to the boil and 23 million Korean people would feel encouraged to turn out in an all-people resistance. This would pave the way for achieving national liberation by our own efforts, an event required by our national history and the high point in the development of our anti-Japanese revolution. An event also that had been the topic of repeated discussions at a number of meetings held in Nanhutou, Donggang and Xigang.

At Xigang in the spring of 1937 we summed up the years of our armed struggle, set the immediate task of advancing into the homeland by large force, and took some practical measures to carry it out. We drew up detailed military operations for the revolutionary armed force to move in three directions. According to the plan of operations, Choe Hyon's unit was to move from Fusong to the northern border area across the River Tuman, via Antu and Helong; another unit was to advance to the Linjiang and Changbai areas; and the main force, led by me, was to march to Hyesan and harass the enemy from the rear while the two other units were diverting the enemy attack. The main point of the operation was to attack the enemy on our own home ground. The activities of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, which was to advance towards Linjiang and Changbai, were, in effect, aimed at providing rear support for the actions of the two units moving into the homeland. In those days no small number of our people had a misapprehension about the strength

of the Japanese army. Surprised at the fact that the Japanese had swallowed up Manchuria at a gulp, they believed that no force in the world could match it. Some of them even contended that fighting a war of independence against powerful Japan was a reckless attempt akin to striking a rock with an egg.

There were clear indications that the Japanese imperialists would spread their aggressive war over to the mainland of China, and that a Sino-Japanese War might break out at any time. The flames of war spread by the ferocious Japanese army would add to defeatist illusions about the “invincible imperial army.” Fears about the might of the enemy were a hallucinogen that would dull revolutionary consciousness. In order to neutralize the poison of the drug it was necessary to shatter the myth of the Japanese forces. We had to show clearly that Japanese, though strong, could be both defeated and destroyed.

Approximately five years of armed struggle in North and West Jiandao between our forces and those of the Japanese had smashed the myth of the enemy’s might. However, owing to strict news blackouts and misleading propaganda, the outcome of the battles for our army was never shown to the public deep in the homeland in their true light.

We had precisely one strategic intention in pushing for an advance into the homeland:

If we launched an attack with a large force into our own home territory, the whole country would be caught up in excitement and admiration for the feat. The people would be delighted at the arrival of an army of their own countrymen capable of destroying the Japanese imperialists and liberating Korea. The pride they took in such an army would inspire the 23 million people with strength and will to join courageously the front of national liberation.

In those days my mental efforts were directed at two goals: one was to shock the entire country by making an armed attack on major strategic points in the homeland; the other was to form a ramified network of underground organizations that would prepare the people for anti-Japanese resistance. Consequently, when the decisive moment

for national liberation came, we would destroy the Japanese imperialists and achieve independence by combining the armed struggle with an all-people uprising. These were difficult tactics requiring much blood and sweat, but there was no other alternative. All our activities in the areas of Mt. Paektu and West Jiandao were thoroughly geared to the implementation of this strategy.

My greatest concern on the eve of our advance was to find out the homeland situation in detail. Publications could not provide me with all the information I needed, so I talked with many operatives who had been to the homeland. Occasionally I called members of underground organizations in the homeland to learn the situation from them. Newspaper reports of new statistics and shocking events were not the only data I needed. Scenes in the marketplace and women's complaints from inns and public houses were additional useful sources of important information ignored by Japanese-controlled news media.

The most valuable information we obtained was public opinion. Our major concern was about the people's sufferings and their thinking.

A member of an armed detachment, while making his work report to me in April or May of 1937 on his return from the Manpho area, gave me an account of what he had witnessed in a mountain:

"I saw boys about ten years old, whose legs were as thin as chopsticks, gathering dead twigs in a pine grove. They said they had been beaten and were picking up firewood to pay the penalty for carelessly speaking Korean at school. They were all second-year boys from a primary school."

The children said that the Japanese teacher had beaten their legs and backs with a wooden sword until they were covered with welts and then had made them sit on the playground for hours their heads covered with buckets. On top of all this, they had been fined. In that particular class, a pupil who spoke Korean once was fined five *jon*; twice, ten *jon*; and if he spoke three times or more, he was expelled. Other schools or classes did not yet follow such regulations, only the class under the charge of the Japanese teacher. He was the only one to enforce the use of the Japanese language.

The penalty the Japanese imposed upon the Korean pupils who spoke their mother tongue was in itself not very surprising. What would they not do, the Japanese imperialists who had robbed the Koreans of their whole country? I had heard that the Government-General in Korea was bent on forcing the Koreans to speak Japanese. In a primary school in North Kyongsang Province the use of the Korean language had already been forbidden since late 1931. In the spring of 1937, the Government-General ordered all the government and public offices in Korea to begin writing official papers in Japanese.

All this was an inevitable development under Japanese rule. It was nothing new. Nevertheless, I could not repress a surge of indignation at the thought of it.

If a man is robbed of his language, he becomes a fool, and if a nation is deprived of its language, it ceases to be a nation. It is recognized worldwide that the most important characteristics of a nation are a common language and ties of blood.

A common language is the soul of a nation. Therefore, depriving the nation of its language by obliterating it is a brutal act which is as good as cutting away the tongues of all its members and depriving them of their souls. Its language and its soul are all that remains to the nation that has been deprived of its territory and state power.

Hence, the Japanese imperialists were attempting to turn the entire Korean nation into a living corpse. Their attempt to make the Korean people “imperial subjects” did not consist of feeding them rice or rating them “first-class citizens,” similar to the Japanese, but of making them slaves who were forced to bow in the direction of the Japanese imperial palace, visit a Japanese shrine and chant the pledge of an “imperial subject” each morning.

Taking away the Korean language was not a matter that concerned the suffering or death of only a few people. It concerned the destiny of a whole nation, for it was nothing short of genocide in that it resembled the act of lining up 23 million Korean compatriots and cutting off their heads at a single stroke.

It is common knowledge that the primary features of colonialists are barbarity, greed and shamelessness. Those who rob another nation of its sovereignty are savage, cunning and brazen, irrespective of their nationality or colour of skin. Nevertheless, I had never before encountered colonialists as barbarous and shameless as those who were depriving our nation of its spoken and written language and forcing our people to bow to their shrines.

Where was the destiny of the Korean nation headed? The facts I learned from the member of the armed detachment made my blood boil.

I said to myself: Let us advance on the homeland as soon as possible to teach the Japanese a lesson. Let us show them that the Korean people are alive, that they will not abandon their spoken and written language, that they do not recognize the idea that “Korea and Japan are one” and that “Japanese and Koreans are of the same descent.” Let them see and understand that the Koreans refuse to be “imperial subjects” and that the Korean nation will carry on an armed resistance till the fall of Japan. The sooner this advance is made, the better.

Early in May 1937 I received more surprising news from the homeland: a detailed account of the arrest of Ri Jae Yu, an important figure in the Korean communist movement, carried in a special edition of *Maeil Sinbo*. It was a full four-page edition and it explained in excessive detail how the man who had been arrested six times and escaped each time had been arrested for the seventh time. The newspaper vociferated that Ri Jae Yu had been in the “last ditch of the destroyed Korean communist movement,” that he had been the “last bigwig in the 20-year-long communist movement,” and that his arrest had put an end to the Korean communist movement for good.

Bourgeois politics in general are characterized by intellectual trickery, and as an official mouthpiece on the pay-roll of the bourgeoisie, the press makes it a rule to hide the real intent of the ruling class behind the printed words of the newspaper. The special edition of the *Maeil Sinbo* was no exception. A cursory glance revealed that it

was an evil masquerade masterminded by conniving anti-communist schemers huddled behind the backdrop of the Government-General.

Ri Jae Yu was a renowned communist from Samsu. He had crossed to Japan, where he worked his way through school and participated in the labour movement. After his return to Korea, he committed himself to the communist movement in Seoul. Mainly in charge of the organizations under the Pacific Labour Union, he guided the labour union movement and the peasant union movement in various provinces, travelling as far as the Hamhung area.

Rumour had it that he had escaped each time he was arrested, thanks to his courage, quick wits and talent for disguise. The newspaper claimed that since it was now impossible for him to escape any longer, the final curtain had come down on the Korean communist movement.

The Japanese imperialists' misleading propaganda and persistent repression of the communist movement were actually confusing a large number of people. In this respect the enemy had considerable success. As the communist party had been disorganized, due to large-scale roundups, and as it was reported that Ri Jae Yu's arrest meant an end to the activities of a few remaining individual communists, the people's disappointment and frustration were beyond expression. Even among those who had been studying the communist movement as a branch of knowledge, not a few felt somewhat lost and dispirited.

The enemy had chosen the right target, which was to disarm the Korean nation spiritually. They spared nothing to achieve this objective, alternating violence with words of honey.

The Japanese imperialists threatened the Koreans, levelling guns at them and demanding, "Will you obey or die?" At the same time they tried to appease them with honeyed words, such as: "Well, the Japanese and Koreans are of the same descent, and Korea and Japan are one, so let us bow to the shrine together." "Manchuria flourishes as a paradise of righteous government and a concord of five nations, and in Japan a blessed land full of cherry blossoms is awaiting you. You

should therefore go to either Manchuria or Japan to get rich.” “Plant cotton in the south, raise sheep in the north, and lord it over the whole of Asia as subjects of imperial Japan.”

The most dreadful part of the tragic situation the Korean nation found itself in was the crumbling of the national spirit. Everything, from the Japanese imperialists’ dictatorial machinery to records of pop songs, was concentrated on destroying Korea and uprooting its very soul. Korea turned into a living hell. Endless darkness, like a pitch-black night, reigned over Korea, and the night did not give way to daybreak despite the passage of days, weeks and months.

Unless we put an end to this tedious night of slavery and humiliation, how could we call ourselves men of Korea? We had to advance into the homeland as soon as possible and revitalize the soul of the nation suffering from the long, drawn-out nightmare.

This was the thought that pressed our commanders and men on during the preparations for advance. Passing through Tianshangshui and Xiaodeshui to the tableland of Diyangxi in the middle of May, we reinforced the unit and conducted information activities to encourage the advance to the homeland. Meanwhile, I summoned Pak Tal and met him in order to learn in depth what the situation was in our native land.

Pak Tal gave me a surprising piece of information. He said that a large force of the enemy’s border guards from the direction of Hyesan and Kapsan had been moving northward towards the Musan area, to which Choe Hyon’s unit had been marching. If the information was correct, Choe Hyon could not avoid being encircled. Of course, we had anticipated such situation, but it was a surprise that the enemy had reacted so quickly to the movement of the revolutionary army. Choe Hyon, in command of his unit, had left for his area of operations in April 1937 after the Xigang meeting. As he was leaving, I had told him that he should guard against Ri To Son’s unit in Antu, for this was the most stubborn of the “punitive” forces in Manchuria.

To begin with, Ri To Son had served a large landowner of Xiaoshahe, Shuang Bing-jun, acting as the commander of his private

army. I had often heard that he suppressed the tenant farmers at the point of bayonets while living a dissolute life. Attacked by the guerrilla army several times, Ri To Son would often make surprise raids on villages, setting fire to them or beheading the villagers because, he said, the poor were all on the side of the communists. The inhabitants harboured a hatred for him that grew greater with each passing day.

Fully aware of the bestial temperament of Ri To Son as a top-level vassal, the Japanese imperialists had appointed him commander of the Antu “punitive” force under the Jiandao Garrison Headquarters. His unit was composed of scoundrels from the propertied class who hated the revolution. Ri To Son’s special feature was that he never took prisoners—never sent back alive those who had been caught in his web. He was a top marksman, recognized as such by both friend and foe.

Choe Hyon moved northward along steep mountain ranges, fighting battle after battle and luring the enemy deep into Fusong. Here he suddenly changed direction to march into the Antu area. But in Jincang his unit was faced with a difficulty. The river the unit needed to cross was flooded, and while some of his men were improvising a bridge, the rest took a break. No sooner had the exhausted soldiers fallen asleep than Ri To Son’s unit swooped down on them and opened fire. Heavy fighting went on between the two sides, both taking cover behind slag heaps dumped from a local goldmine.

In this battle Ju Su Dong fell. At first the enemy took the initiative and appeared to be winning. However, Choe Hyon, who took the command in Ju Su Dong’s place, immediately reversed the unfavourable situation and dealt a heavy blow at the enemy with a powerful counterattack. While the two sides were fighting, the goldminers shouted that Ri To Son was getting away. They probably knew him well. The guerrillas chased after him and shot him dead with a barrage of machine-gun fire. Choe Hyon’s unit pursued the fleeing enemy for four miles and annihilated them.

The battle of Jincang became famous, for it took vengeance upon the people’s enemy. The news of Choe Hyon killing Ri To Son and wiping out the “punitive” force was given wide publicity by the

newspapers of that time. Choe Hyon was a renowned soldier, but the advance of his unit to the Musan area was at the expense of a painful loss: they lost Ri Kyong Hui, known as the “Flower of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division.”

The news of her death brought everyone to tears.

Ri Kyong Hui’s family were all ardent patriots who laid down their lives fighting for the revolution. When she was a child, she lost her brothers, uncles and grandmother. Her father was a guerrilla. Ri Kyong Hui, too, joined the army in order to avenge the death of her relatives. At first the commanders were reluctant to admit her into the army: she was too young for one thing, and for another, if she took up arms as well, there would be no one to carry on the name of her family. They could not dissuade her, however, and finally accepted her into the army.

The soldiers were as devoted to her as they would have been to their own daughter or sister, calling her the “Flower of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division” because she was not only pretty and charming but also hardworking and kind-hearted. Her dancing and singing—her special skills—were the pride of the unit. When she joined the guerrilla army the commanders had given her a pistol, thinking that a rifle was not suited to this weak girl of small stature. But she was not satisfied with the pistol in battle and carried a carbine with her. It is said that whenever she danced with the carbine on her shoulder, her comrades-in-arms clapped and cheered and requested her that she do an encore.

Ri Kyong Hui had an extraordinary ability to cheer up the unit. If a soldier was angry or dispirited she would joke with him and buck him up. When she danced or sang a song, soldiers who had broken down from exhaustion would get back on their feet. She was adept in needlework and embroidery, and the tobacco pouches she made were everyone’s pride and joy. Even coarse herbs were said to become a delicious dish when cooked by her.

In battles with the “punitive” forces, Ri Kyong Hui usually took her place at a small distance from her comrades-in-arms and picked off the enemy by taking careful aim and counting the number of troops she killed. In one battle she shot six enemy soldiers. As she was reloading

her rifle, two or three more of them escaped. Exasperated at missing them, she shed tears and bit her lips.

When the three units that had been operating from three different directions held a joint celebration of guerrillas and people at Diyangxi after the Battle of Pochonbo, Choe Hyon told me about the death of Ri Kyong Hui. As he spoke, he wiped his eyes with his handkerchief. Seeing the tears falling silently from the eyes of this tiger-like man, I was aware of how painful the loss of Ri Kyong Hui was to all of us.

As Choe Hyon held the mortally wounded Ri Kyong Hui in his arms, her blood flowed in a stream through his fingers.

“This is the homeland, isn’t it? I am lucky to have trodden our native soil at last. All of you, please fight well. Fight for me.”

These were Ri Kyong Hui’s last words as she died in Choe Hyon’s arms.

Later on her father was killed by the enemy as well, when he came to the Hoeryong area on a mission to the homeland. Thus, father and daughter were both buried in their native soil. After the liberation of the country, Ri Kyong Hui’s comrades-in-arms went to the Musan area at my request and made every effort to find her remains, but failed. They could not recall the exact place of her death, for she had been buried level with the ground in the midst of battle, and so it was impossible to discover her whereabouts.

Thus we advanced into the land of our birth, treading the stepping-stones laid so tragically at the cost of the lives of our comrades-in-arms.

Choe Hyon’s unit advanced into the Pulgunbawi area in Musan, where it hit the enemy, then disappeared over the Manchurian border for some time. It resurfaced to attack lumber yard No. 7, at Sanghunggyongsuri, of the Japanese lumber business, southeast of Mt. Paektu, and moved swiftly in the direction of Pegae Hill. The enemy’s special guard forces and military and police forces in Hyesan, Hoin and Sinpha proceeded in quick response towards Pegae Hill along the road on the border. Choe Hyon sent a messenger to us with a brief report of the situation but did not request support. He got in touch with

us just to inform us of the enemy's movements, for our reference in the operations. Choe Hyon was not a man to admit difficulties or ask for help.

There was not a shadow of doubt that Choe Hyon, a veteran soldier, would extricate himself from the difficult situation. However, we could not afford to be optimistic about the changing battle situation. This unexpected situation had a serious effect on our operations. We had to work out flexible tactics that would save Choe Hyon's unit from the danger of complete encirclement and simultaneously push ahead with the advance into the homeland.

I summoned the commanding officers and put a series of questions to them: The 4<sup>th</sup> Division has been surrounded by the enemy, I told them. Choe Hyon says that he can break through by himself. Should we do nothing to help him, believing his decision to be a correct one? Or should we put off our advance into the homeland to save his unit first? Another possibility is to advance into the homeland first, then take action to save his unit. If none of these solutions is desirable, should we divide our main force and undertake the operations in two directions at once? Which area in the homeland will be ideal for us to attack in order to save Choe Hyon's unit from encirclement?

Everyone focussed his attention on me. With things being so serious and pressing, the argument that followed was heated from the start. The officers were mainly of two opinions.

One was that we should first save Choe Hyon's unit by striking from behind the northward-surgng enemy and then push into the homeland when developments permitted it. Many other comrades rebuffed this opinion, however. They said that while there was no doubt the main force would succeed in the rescue operations, the shooting would attract the attention of the enemy forces in the border area and West Jiandao, which would then dash along the shortest roads available and surround the main force.

The other opinion was that since Choe Hyon's unit was strong enough to break through the encirclement by itself at any cost, we should keep to the original plan and attack Hyesan on the enemy's first

line of defence along the border as soon as possible. This action would throw the enemy into confusion and force it to lift the encirclement in order to turn back to where the battle was raging.

However, this idea was also rejected as being too risky. Strong as Choe Hyon's division was, it might have become exhausted in the course of repeated battles and long marches and might have been unable to break through the encirclement. In addition, it was not certain that the enemy forces, which were moving northward far away in the Musan area, would lift their encirclement if the main force attacked Hyesan.

I proposed a plan combining the two operations into one:

“We have to advance into the homeland at any cost, hence we cannot change or cancel this plan of operation. At the same time, we must save Choe Hyon's unit quickly. It is inconceivable that we abandon our revolutionary comrades in the jaws of death because the advance into the homeland is important. There is only one way out. We must strike at one specific point in the homeland, the point that will enable us to attain both goals at once.”

The officers could not hide their curiosity about the “one specific point.” Ri Tong Hak asked me on behalf of everyone which place I had in mind.

I continued my explanation over the map.

“In choosing our point of attack, we must take into account the following aspects: The place must be close to Pegae Hill, on which the enemy forces are concentrated. Only by attacking here can our advance into the homeland have an effect on the two objectives. The key point closest to Pegae Hill is Pochonbo, situated midway between the hill and Hyesan. If we attack Pochonbo, the enemy concentrated on the Pegae Hill area will find itself in a danger of being surrounded by both our main forces and Choe Hyon's unit. They will then be forced to abandon their plan of encirclement and pursuit and will withdraw from the line they have reached. Moreover, an attack on Pochonbo will have as strong an impact on the homeland as an attack on Hyesan. Therefore, our aim of advancing into the homeland will also be achieved. The key to solving the problem is an attack on Pochonbo.”

The commanding officers nodded approvingly.

I then put the following questions to them.

“In order to attack Pochonbo we have to take several things into consideration. First, can our force of several hundred break through the enemy’s tight borderline surveillance in such a way that we hit them like lightning, then withdraw at the same lightning speed? Second, this battle is not a mere firefight. Our main task in this battle is to inspire the people back home with confidence in our victory; this means that we must combine the firefight with strong, swift political information work. Can we undertake a quick information campaign such as this? Third, on this occasion we intend to create a model of joint operation between our revolutionary armed force and our underground organizations to strike at the same target. Is that possible?”

The commanding officers were once again enveloped in an atmosphere of tense concentration: the three challenges were not simple. Kwon Yong Byok broke the silence in a voice that carried weight.

“Comrade Commander, we can do it. Just give us the orders!”

“Can you say that with absolute certainty?”

“Of course. Pochonbo is a part of the homeland, isn’t it?”

I felt elated, as if I had shouted the answer myself rather than heard it from someone else. What a coincidence that he should be thinking just as I was. The other comrades no doubt would have answered the same way, for it was a reply that was in everyone’s heart.

There was no reason why we should not win the battle in our beloved homeland, the land that had given us our lives and our souls—we, the communists of Korea, who had been victorious in every battle, fought in the rains and snowstorms of a foreign land.

Our meeting was brief but full of discussion. The exact details of what was said have slipped my mind with the passage of time, but I still remember clearly Kwon Yong Byok’s confident voice declaring, “Pochonbo is a part of the homeland, isn’t it?” Even as we set out on our historical advance into the homeland, our hearts were heavy with resentment and anger at the thought of our ruined nation, the land of our forefathers, deprived of its great entity.

## 2. Flames of Pochonbo (2)

At Diyangxi, Shijiudaogou, Changbai County, we grouped our forces for the advance into the homeland, and dressed all the soldiers in summer uniforms. Our unit, attired in their new uniforms, left Diyangxi in a long procession. Frankly speaking, I do not believe we had ever been so finely arrayed as we were on that march.

The march was not simply an operational movement, but something for which the Korean communists had prepared for many years after spilling much blood. Our intent was to stir up the homeland with the roar of our gunshots—we the communists who, mourning over the loss of our national sovereignty, had made every effort in the foreign land to win back our lost country. That was why, feeling as if we were about to visit our beloved families after a long separation, we had dressed and equipped ourselves in our best: we intended to show our compatriots in the homeland the gallant appearance of the revolutionary army.

Previously some of us had been dressed in makeshift clothes, for the clothing of the revolutionary army was usually made by its sewing unit. But when the unit was short-handed, the housewives in nearby villages rendered assistance, and some of the clothes were, therefore, not as neat as the uniform. Sometimes men in civilian clothes could be seen among our ranks.

After devising the plan of operations of advancing into the homeland, I decided to have new military uniforms made, as designed by Headquarters, for all the army units. Red-star badges were sewn on caps and insignia on the tunics. Men soldiers wore riding breeches somewhat restyled to suit guerrilla activities, while the women soldiers wore both pleated skirts and trousers. Both sexes wore tunics, as they had done previously.

At Yangmudingzi we had sent the members of the supply

department, including the sewing unit, to Changbai after deciding to make 600 uniforms. The situation being what it was in those days, we had had to march toward Fusong despite hardship and danger and could hardly afford to pay attention to clothing. Where our next meal was coming from was a more pressing issue at the time. Nevertheless, we went ahead and arranged the work of getting the clothing ready for hundreds of our men and women soldiers in preparation for the planned advance into the homeland.

O Jung Hup and Kim Ju Hyon had worked their way through untold problems to carry out the assignment of making 600 uniforms.

The hardships suffered by the supply-service detachment, led by O Jung Hup, on their journey from Xigang to Changbai have been recounted by certain veterans of the war against the Japanese, but the full picture has not yet been given. When we left northward for Fusong we had taken along some food obtained after the battle of Limingshui. However, O Jung Hup's detachment heading for Changbai did not have even a bowlful of cereal, and his men were too famished and exhausted to move on. One can get along for a few days with no food, but not for too many days. Unable to endure their hunger any longer, they turned their steps towards Duantoushan. Apparently they calculated that they would be able to find the heads of the oxen they had buried after the battle at Duantoushan.

However, when they reached the burial place, they found only bones, for the meat had been gnawed away by wild animals. Still, the detachment boiled the bones and drank the water to regain their energy to some extent.

Hunger soon threatened them again, and they were faced with the threat of death from both starvation and cold. All of them were nearly frozen to death, their clothes torn to pieces by the sharp ice-crust that covered the deep snow drifts and their bare flesh exposed to the cold.

If it had not been for their great ambition to be a part of the impending advance into the homeland—an ardent desire they did not forget for even a moment—the members of the supply-service detachment might never have been able to make it over the mountains

and might have remained buried in the snow on a ridge in Fusong or Changbai.

Kim Ju Hyon said that he had nearly burst into tears when O Jung Hup's detachment arrived at Xiaodeshui, for their appearance was so appalling, they looked to be near death. The villagers of Xiaodeshui met them, took them to their houses and cut their rags off with scissors. Their bodies were covered with blood and ice. Their wounds had to be sterilized with salt water, and their chilblain had to be treated before they could be dressed in new clothes. Everyone, including O Jung Hup, was thoroughly frostbitten.

Astonishingly, as soon as they came to themselves again, they sat down before their sewing machines. Hearing the news, the members of the ARF and the inhabitants of Xiaodeshui did their best to help them recuperate. The guerrillas and the people got some cloth and the 600 uniforms were made by joint effort.

At one point Pak Yong Sun told me that when he recounted the hardships suffered by the army and people in Chechangzi during the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle, he used to omit the most tragic parts because the younger people might not believe him. I think I understand why he did that. Those who had no experience of the hardships during the revolution against the Japanese will find it difficult to imagine how hard the struggle was.

Once I read a military magazine published in the Soviet Union that defined Soviet patriotism as the essence of Soviet military thought. I thought this viewpoint was right. The essence of the military thought that underlay the character and actions of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army was also love for the country and fellow Koreans. We always taught the soldiers of the anti-Japanese guerrilla army to act as genuine liberators and devoted protectors of their country and their people, at all times and in all places. Being ready to die for the country was the essence of patriotism which governed the life of the anti-Japanese guerrilla army.

In late May O Jung Hup arrived in Diyangxi with 600 new suits of clothing for the soldiers.

The marching force, dressed in the new uniform that had been created at the cost of so much blood and hardship, left Shijiudaogou in early June 1937, and marching by way of Ershidaogou, Ershiyidaogou and Ershierdaogou reached a place within a hailing distance of Mt. Kouyushui. Our guide at that time was Chon Pong Sun from Shijiudaogou. He said that the vista before us was the Yanchaofeng tableland and opposite it, across the River Amnok, was Konjang Hill, a part of the homeland.

Our unit stayed at a village near Mt. Kouyushui for a while, then ascended the slope of the tableland at dawn on June 3. The rolling ridges of the homeland seemed to be greeting us.

That day the unit took a rest on the tableland. Kim Un Sin and other members of the advance party went to the Kouyushui Barrage to build a raft bridge. We crossed the Amnok on the night of June 3.

A strange tension gripped my entire body, not leaving me till the last member of the unit was safely across. The border was said to have been tightly guarded by the enemies with four cordons, for the original three had been found to be unsatisfactory. There were as many as 300 police stations and substations in the northern border area, manned by repressive, highly mobile forces several thousand strong. The Hyesan police station had a special border-guard force to check the advance of the KPRA into the homeland. Okawa Shuichi, the then commander of this force, confessed in later days that it had been the best of the units, whose main mission had been to take “punitive” action against the guerrilla army.

The enemy had dug out trenches and built artificial barriers, such as earthen walls, barbed wire and wooden fences, around the buildings of police substations and agencies in the border areas, and in some vital places they had either set up observation posts or dug out communication trenches. The police guard forces of North Phyongan Province were equipped with air planes and two motorboats equipped with machine guns and searchlights. It seemed as if they were determined to detect the stirring of even rats and birds, to say nothing of human movements. It was further reported that the guard force in

North Hamgyong Province also had a motorboat ready. We had information that the police institutions by the river had been getting supplies of machine guns, searchlights, telescopes and helmets. Under such circumstances it seemed almost impossible that one could make an advance into the homeland, especially a large unit.

The strict watch along the border, however, could not hold us back.

The Kouyushui Barrage covered the sound of our crossing with its roaring torrent of water. The turbulent current of the history of modern Korea seemed to be condensed into the rumbling, each thread of sound whispering the details.

We climbed up Konjang Hill, which was a flat hill covered with a thick forest. The unit posted a sentry there and bivouacked overnight.

On the morning of the next day we got ourselves ready for battle in the forest of Konjang Hill. We prepared proclamation handbills and appeals, held a meeting of commanding officers and assigned scouting duties. An important matter was to confirm in the field the information we had previously obtained on situation of the enemy. I sent Ma Tong Hui and Kim Hwak Sil into the streets of Pochonbo on a scouting mission. They were disguised as a good-natured, somewhat simple-minded peasant couple. They wandered into various institutions on plausible excuses, talking nonsense while at the same time collecting information. Their scouting was so detailed as to even bring us the news that there was to be a farewell party for the head of a forest conservation office about to be transferred.

We had already obtained enough information of Pochonbo through different channels, such as those from Kwon Yong Byok, Ri Je Sun and Pak Tal, so as to build up details on the enemy situation, in three dimensions.

After dark we descended Konjang Hill. Entering Pochonbo, the unit dispersed in several groups and occupied designated positions.

I took up my command post under a poplar tree that stood at the edge of town. The distance from there to the police substation, one of our major targets, was no more than 100 metres. It is a tenet of street fighting that the command post is seldom located near the street, as

mine was at the time. Yet this can be said to be one of important features of the Battle of Pochonbo. My commanding officers had advised me to locate the command post a little farther from the town, but I had declined, for it was my earnest desire to be where I could see every move of the fight at all times and be able to throw myself into the battle if it was necessary.

Still vivid in my memory of the scene just before battle is a group of people playing chess in the front yard of a farmhouse near the command post. Had I been working underground then, I would have spoken to them and helped the players with moves.

At 10 p.m. sharp, I raised my pistol high and pulled the trigger.

Everything I had ever wanted to say to my fellow countrymen back in the homeland for over 10 years was packed into that one shot reverberating through the street that night. The gunshot, as our poets described, was both a greeting to our motherland and a challenge to the Japanese imperialist robbers whom we were about to punish.

My signal started a barrage of fire destined to destroy the enemy's establishments in the city. The main attack was directed at the police substation, the lair for the policemen of this region and the citadel of all sorts of repression and atrocities. O Paek Ryong's machine gun poured out a merciless barrage of shots at its windows. As we knew that the enemy also gathered at the forest conservation office, we struck it hard as well. The town turned upside down in an instant. Orderlies came running to the poplar tree one after another to report to me of the developments of the fighting. To each of them I stressed that no civilians were to be hurt.

Soon fires began to flare up here and there. The subcounty office, post office, forest conservation office, fire hall and various other enemy's administrative centres were engulfed in flames, and the streets were floodlit like a theatre on a gala night.

While searching the post office some of my men found a lot of Japanese coins in a tin box. As we withdrew from Pochonbo, they tossed them around everywhere in the street. O Paek Ryong broke into the police substation and came out with a machine gun inscribed,

“Presented by the Patriotic Women’s Association.” He looked delighted at the find.

I walked down the middle of the streets, with Kim Ju Hyon just ahead.

People began to gather on the street from every corner. When they first heard the gunshots, they kept indoors, but later, when our publicity workers began shouting slogans, they came pouring out in a throng. Poet Jo Ki Chon described the scene by saying, “the masses swayed like a nocturnal sea.” The line was quite apt.

As the people bubbled over around us, Kwon Yong Byok whispered that I should address a greeting to the compatriots.

Looking round the crowd, I found their eyes, as bright as stars, all focussed on me.

Taking off my cap and waving my uplifted arm, I made a speech stressing the idea of sure victory and resistance against Japan. I concluded with the words:

“Brothers and sisters, let us meet again on the day of national liberation!”

When I left the square in front of the subcounty office, which was a mass of flames, my heart felt heavy and full of pain, as if pierced with a knife. We were all leaving a part of ourselves behind in the small border town as we marched away, and the hearts of those left behind wailed silently as they watched us go.

On climbing up Konjang Hill, the entire unit did something unexpected: The marchers broke up suddenly without my orders and started picking up handfuls of their native soil to put in their packs. Even the commanding officers did it.

A handful of earth was little compared to the 220 000 square kilometres that made up Korea. Nevertheless it stood for Korea and our 23 million compatriots. It was as dear to us as the whole of our motherland.

As we recrossed the River Amnok, we made the following pledge to ourselves:

“Today we are leaving after striking one town, but tomorrow we

will attack hundreds of towns, thousands of towns. Today we are leaving with only a handful of earth, but tomorrow we will liberate the whole country and shout out cheers of independence!”

The Battle of Pochonbo was a small battle that involved no large guns, aircraft or tanks. It was an ordinary raid, which combined the use of small arms and a speech designed to stir up public feeling. It produced few casualties and none of us was killed in the battle.

The raid was so one-sided that it seemed to have fallen short of the expectations of some of my men. Nonetheless, the battle met the requirements of guerrilla warfare at the highest level. The selection of the objective, the timing and method to attack, especially surprise attack, the combination of brisk information and powerful motivation activities through incendiary action—all the processes of the operations were perfectly coordinated.

The significance of a war or battle is determined not only by its military importance but also its political importance. I believe that those who know that war is the continuation of politics pursued by different means can easily understand why. From this point of view, it can be said we fought a very great battle.

The battle was a triumphant event in that it dealt a telling blow at the Japanese imperialists who had been strutting around Korea and Manchuria as if they were the lords of Asia. The People’s Revolutionary Army struck terror into the Japanese imperialists by suddenly striking one of their bases in the homeland, where the Government-General had vaunted over their security, and destroying one of their local ruling machines at a stroke. To the Japanese, this blow was a bolt from the blue, proved by the confessions made by the then army and police officers, who said such things as, “We feel as if we had been struck hard on the back of the head,” and “We feel the shame of watching the haystack we had been carefully building for a thousand days go up in flames in an instant.”

There was no doubt whatsoever that the outcome of this battle would make a great impact on the world: Korea, a lesser nation that had once exposed the crimes committed by Japan and begged for

independence at an International Peace Conference, suddenly revealed itself to possess a revolutionary fighting force capable of dealing merciless blows at the army of Japan (which boasted of being one of the five world powers), a force that swiftly broke through the “iron wall” built by the Japanese imperialists and dealt a crushing blow of punishment to the aggressors.

The Battle of Pochonbo showed that imperialist Japan could be smashed and burnt up, like rubbish. The flames over the night sky of Pochonbo in the homeland heralded the dawn of the liberation of Korea, which had been buried in darkness.

*Dong-A Ilbo*, *Joson Ilbo*, *Kyongsong Ilbo* and other major newspapers in the homeland all reported the news of the battle under banner headlines.

The battle was also headlined by the Japanese mass media, such as *Domei News*, *Tokyo Nichinichi Shimbun*, and *Osaka Asahi Shimbun*, and Chinese newspapers, including *Manchurian Daily*, *Manchurian News* and *Taiwan Daily*. *Pravda* and *Krasnoye Znamya*, not to mention *TASS*, of the Soviet Union also gave liberal space to this battle. One shot fired on the frontier of a small colonized nation in the East amazed the whole world. Around this time *Pacific*, a magazine published in the Soviet Union, carried an article under the headline, “Guerrilla Movement in the Northern Area of Korea” which dealt in detail with our struggle against Japanese imperialism. I think it was from then on that the Soviet publications began to give wide publicity to our names and struggle.

An article on the Battle of Pochonbo was also carried by *Oriente Kuriero*, a magazine in Esperanto.

The aim of *Oriente Kuriero* was to lay bare the brutality and plunder of Japanese imperialism and to give publicity to the anti-Japanese war and Oriental culture. All the articles carried in the magazine could be translated into the readers’ languages and reprinted. Thanks to these characteristics of the magazine, the news of the Battle of Pochonbo spread widely in the countries where the magazine was distributed.

The Battle of Pochonbo demonstrated to the public at home and abroad the revolutionary will and fighting spirit that drove our people to end Japanese imperialist colonial rule and win back national independence and sovereignty. Through this battle the Korean communists were able to demonstrate the staunch anti-imperialist stand and the policy of independence to which they had consistently adhered throughout their entire course of action. They showed their effective combat power and the thoroughgoing way in which they practised what they preached.

The battle also proved that it was the communists, spearheading the anti-Japanese armed struggle, who were the true, most ardent patriots and the most devoted and responsible fighters capable of emerging victorious in the fight for national liberation. Pochonbo provided the needed impetus for the compatriots in the homeland to rise up nationwide against Japanese imperialism, with armed struggle as the main axis. It also created the necessary atmosphere for pushing ahead with the building of party and the ARF organizations in the homeland.

But the greatest significance of the Battle of Pochonbo is that it not only convinced our people, who had thought Korea was dead, that this country was still very much alive but also armed them with the faith that they were fully capable of fighting and achieving national independence and liberation.

Not surprisingly then, this battle had an enormous impact on the people of Korea. Hearing of the news that the KPRA had attacked Pochonbo, Ryo Un Hyong was said to have hurried to the battle site, greatly excited by the news.

On meeting me in Pyongyang after liberation, he made following remarks:

“When I heard of the news that the guerrilla army had attacked Pochonbo, I felt my distress as a citizen of a ruined nation, humiliated for over 20 years under Japanese rule, disappear into thin air in an instant. Walking around Pochonbo after the battle, I slapped my knee and shouted, ‘What a relief! Tangun’s Korea is alive.’ This thought moved me to tears.”

According to An U Saeng, Kim Ku, too, was exhilarated by the news of the Battle of Pochonbo. He had long served the Provisional Government in Shanghai, working as a secretary for Kim Ku.

One day Kim Ku, who had been leafing through newspapers, came across news of the battle and was so inflamed. He opened the windows and shouted over and over again that the Paedal nation was alive.

Kim Ku then went on to say to An U Saeng: “The situation is very frustrating: with the Sino-Japanese War so imminent, the so-called campaigners have all disappeared. How perfectly timed on Kim Il Sung’s part to have led his army into Korea and struck the Japanese in this situation! From now our Provisional Government must support General Kim. I must send a messenger to Mt. Paektu in a few days.”

This anecdote shows how Kim Ku and other well-known people in Korea and overseas held in high esteem the communists, who were taking part in the war against Japan, after the Battle of Pochonbo. This political climate created favourable conditions for us to rally patriots from all walks of life around the anti-Japanese national united front. The battle left a good image of us in the minds of many nationalists, an impression that continued after liberation and helped greatly with our cooperation in building a new Korea. The Battle of Pochonbo was of great benefit to us.

I heard that Kim Jong Hang, a close friend of mine during my days in Badaogou, read the news of the battle in *Asahi Shimbun* in Tokyo, where he had been studying while working as a newsboy.

Early one morning when he turned up at a branch office of *Asahi Shimbun*, he was told by his employer to deliver 100 extra copies. He wondered why and opened the newspaper to find the incredible news that Kim Il Sung’s army had attacked Pochonbo.

Kim Jong Hang said that at the time he had no idea that Kim Il Sung, who had assaulted Pochonbo, was Kim Song Ju from the old days in Badaogou.

Kim Jong Hang felt suffering as an intellectual when he had read about the battle: “When young patriots are fighting the Japanese, what

the hell am I doing here in Japan? Is it right to be here, studying in university just to earn a living in the future?" he thought.

His self-examination finally resulted in a firm determination to go off and join the guerrilla army to take up arms. He left Japan immediately and returned home, where he tried his best to find the anti-Japanese guerrilla army. It was not until then that he realized that Kim Il Sung, who had attacked Pochonbo, was none other than Kim Song Ju of his childhood. The knowledge of this, he said, redoubled his determination to go to Mt. Paektu. However, his attempt to join our army failed. We met each other only after the liberation of the country.

As the case of Kim Jong Hang shows, the Battle of Pochonbo brought about a great change in the lives of the conscientious intellectuals of Korea. The conflagration that illuminated the night sky over Pochonbo lighted the path for all conscientious people and patriots of Korea in search of a more genuine life.

### **3. Joint Celebration of Army and People at Diyangxi**

When we arrived at Kouyushuigou on our way back from the attack on Pochonbo, the rank and file suggested to me through their commanding officers that we take a day's rest. As far as I remember, the rank and file had never asked Headquarters for a rest in the whole period of the anti-Japanese war. How tired they must have been to make the suggestion! To be candid, my men and officers had not had a day's rest in those days. The men and officers had spent a day on Konjang Hill, and they were too excited to sleep or to feel tired. Once a round of battle was over, however, the strain that had gripped the unit suddenly gave way, and everyone yearned for rest and relaxation. I myself felt exhausted from the lack of sleep.

Moreover, the peasants in the village in Kouyushuigou begged us commanders to stop and relax. They had prepared rice-cakes and slain hogs, they told us, hoping that we would accept their hospitality. The soldiers, who were hungry, were all the more eager at the mention of rice-cakes and pork. Even the political commissars of regiments fell in with the men's suggestion and advised me to accept their hospitality.

Nevertheless, I did not give the order for a break. Commander must be all the more vigilant at such a moment: we may have left the battle ground across the border, but we could still suffer disaster unless we were on the alert. The enemy's border guards must have got flurried under issued emergency mobilization orders, and they might attack us any minute. From past experience, it was pretty obvious that the enemy would chase us.

When would the enemy appear? A quick estimate showed that we had no more than half an hour to stay at Kouyushuigou. It was a small village with little space to accommodate hundreds of soldiers and

civilians carrying booty, even if they ate quickly.

After ensuring that part of the booty was divided among the villagers, I ordered my men to put rice-balls in their packs. At the same time I sent back home some of the people who had followed us from Pochonbo to act as our carriers. Then, together with the few remaining people carrying our goods, we climbed Mt. Kouyushui. I had a hunch that a battle would have to be fought on that mountain. It was a rocky, steep mountain with a gradient of 60 degrees; climbing it with a heavy load was no easy job. If the man in front loosened a stone by mistake, it might cause a chain reaction resulting in a disastrous rockslide. Several times I passed the message to my men through my orderly, Paek Hak Rim, to be careful not to dislodge any rocks; every man climbed the slope with care, helping the man in front by pushing him up.

As the unit reached the summit, I prepared the men for a possible combat even before they had cooled off their sweat. With a view to combine an exchange of fire and a rockslide to suit the terrain, the unit built several rock piles and settled down to wait. Then we had a light breakfast of rice-balls.

I looked down and found a horde of enemy troops climbing in our wake. It was a special border guard force under the command of Okawa Shuichi. The enemy was approaching in fairly high spirits. When they came within 30 metres of us, I gave the order to fire. The rifles and machine guns went into action. I also took up a rifle and started shooting.

The enemy crawled up the mountain doggedly, taking cover behind rocks. In that terrain rifle fire was not effective. I ordered a rockslide, and my men began to roll down the stones they had gathered. We had employed the rockslide tactic on Mt. Ppyojok to defend Xiaowangqing and now again on Mt. Kouyushui. It was a powerful ploy.

This battle was another demonstration of the fighting efficiency of our men. As we had not given the enemy time to offer resistance during the Battle of Pochonbo, the battle ended too easily in our one-sided attack. But on Mt. Kouyushui the enemy's attack was so tenacious that it was worth fighting.

When the bugle sounded, O Paek Ryong charged down the slope and killed the enemy machine-gunner, waving the machine gun he had captured at me. Kim Un Sin fought hand-to-hand with a bulky enemy soldier until he managed to wrest a grenade launcher from him.

Our counterattack was so violent that one puppet Manchukuo army unit, which came later from the west of Mt. Kouyushui, flinched from attacking. They shot a few rounds without really aiming from afar, then looked on as the battle raged. I ordered my machine-gunners to fire a few shots at random in that direction. Firing random shots when the puppet Manchukuo forces lingered about us was a practice we had acquired in our days in Jiandao. The puppet Manchukuo army soldiers wanted it this way. When we complied with their request, they refrained from provoking a real fight with the revolutionary army and went back after firing a few random shots of their own.

That day our blocking party repulsed the attack of the Hyesan garrison led by Captain Kurita.

The civilians who had followed us from Pochonbo carrying booty witnessed the entire battle and were greatly impressed by the fighting power of the People's Revolutionary Army. They saw clearly how the enemy were vanquished. And what they saw that day became silent material for their education: they reaffirmed the combat efficiency of the People's Revolutionary Army, and they discovered that, although the Japanese army boasted of being "invincible," it was not they who were invincible, but the KPRA. Takagi Takeo himself spoke highly of the fighting efficiency of our army at the battles of Pochonbo and Mt. Kouyushui.

Later Pak Tal told me that enemy personnel who survived the battle on Mt. Kouyushui were so terrified that they did not go to battle again anywhere for some time. He added that the survivors included a policeman of Korean nationality whom he knew well. Apparently he was a clever man. While climbing Mt. Kouyushui, the policeman saw the footprints of the guerrillas and perceived that the guerrillas might be lying in ambush. He pretended to be rearranging his puttees and dropped behind. When the Japanese policemen had nearly reached the

summit, the sound of machine guns, exploding grenades and screams reached him, and he fled down the mountain, hiding himself by the river until the battle was over. He told Pak Tal proudly that he had remained alive because of his quick wits.

Okawa Shuichi, chief of the special border guard force, who miraculously survived the battle of Mt. Kouyushui, apparently lived in Japan as an ordinary citizen until just a few years ago. In his last years he wrote a reminiscence of the Japanese defeat in that battle. Reading the article, I learned that he had been seriously wounded: one of our bullets went through his tongue, which to my mind is one of the nastiest of all wounds. He was in hospital for a long time, but remained almost uncured.

I saw a picture of him and his wound. The wound had never really healed. Like many of the soldiers and policemen of old Japan, Okawa was one of the victims of the notorious “imperial spirit.”

The victory we achieved in the battle of Mt. Kouyushui, along with the later success of the battle of Jiansanfeng, consolidated our victory at the Battle of Pochonbo and demonstrated once again the combat power and invincibility of the KPRA. The enemy on the border shook with fear of us. The statement in their documented records that they annihilated “a large number of the enemy” in the battle of Mt. Kouyushui is sheer fabrication. Not one of us was killed.

The enemy enlisted the people living near Mt. Kouyushui by force, plundering their sleeping quilts and the doors to their houses to carry off the dead bodies. All in all, we wiped out the enemy on Mt. Kouyushui, the enemy we had planned to annihilate in Hyesan. In other words, the objective of our attack on Hyesan was attained at Mt. Kouyushui.

After the battle we had an emotional reunion with Choe Hyon’s unit, which had returned safely by breaking through an encirclement. Choe Hyon’s shoes and clothes were tattered beyond description. He warmly congratulated us on our victories at Pochonbo and on Mt. Kouyushui. Then, he said abruptly, “We were encircled by the enemy near Pegae Hill, but all of a sudden they lifted the encirclement and ran

away. What does that mean, General?"

I briefly explained how we attacked Pochonbo to rescue his 4<sup>th</sup> Division.

He laughed loudly and said, "Seeing them running off like that, I wondered if it wasn't the hand of God, but after all we owe it to you, General. It is really wonderful."

He used the pronoun "they" whenever he spoke, in contempt of the Japanese soldiers and policemen.

When I asked him to take me to his division, as I wanted to see the soldiers, he pulled a face, saying that they were not presentable.

When I asked him what he meant, he answered that they were too ragged.

I called Kim Hae San and ordered him to issue uniforms to the soldiers of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. They had been kept for Choe Hyon's unit from the 600 uniforms made before the advance to the homeland. As Choe Hyon said, the appearance of the soldiers in his division was indescribable. Their beggarly clothes and their heavily sunburnt faces told the true story of the arduous road they had traversed. Only after shaving and changing into a new uniform did he come to see me and give an official report about his past activities. Their battle results were great.

In Diyangxi we met the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps. That division, too, had fulfilled its mission satisfactorily. I thanked the soldiers of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisions for their flank and rear support and cooperation with the main force thrusting into the homeland. In this way the revolutionary army units, which had launched themselves in three directions in accordance with the resolution adopted at the Xigang meeting, assembled on the tableland at Diyangxi, fixed earlier as the place for reunion, and shared their friendship. The green plateau was full of holiday atmosphere as those present talked about their experiences in battle.

The extraordinary results achieved by the revolutionary army in the course of carrying out the policy put forward at the Xigang meeting brought great happiness to the people around Mt. Paektu who had

witnessed them. According to information obtained through Pak Tal's organizations, the people in Kapsan, Phungsan and Samsu, men and women, young and old, were bubbling over with excitement, declaring that the day when the revolutionary army would liberate them was near at hand.

What was notable in Choe Hyon's report was the story about a Japanese, named Kawashima, they had captured when raiding lumber yard No. 7 in Sanghunggyongsuri. The yard was merely a branch of the head office in Hyesan, and Kawashima was its chief. The 4<sup>th</sup> Division soldiers told me that they had taken him to Diyangxi because, first, he was an interesting man, as he spoke Korean well and his wife was Korean and, second, they wanted to take him hostage for ransom.

Choe Hyon said that he had had a quarrel over the man's fate with Jon Kwang and Pak Tuk Bom, who had put pressure on him to execute the man. He asked my advice.

I curtly replied that executing him was out of the question, and said, "It is untenable that Kawashima should be executed because he is a Japanese. Although he is chief of the lumber yard, he should not be killed if he is not guilty of any crime as a reserve soldier against our people. Such people must be dealt with prudently."

Choe Hyon said he agreed with me.

That day I saw Kawashima in person. I said a few words to him and found that he spoke Korean better than I had expected. I asked him if he was not afraid of the revolutionary army, and he answered that he had been at first, but now he was not. He continued, "The Japanese authorities call the guerrillas 'bandits.' But while following the revolutionary army these days, I realized that this was a lie. Bandits plunder others of their property, but I have not seen them doing such a thing. The guerrillas are fighting solely for the liberation of Korea. Even though they go hungry for days, they do not enter a grain field without the master's permission. If they happened to get something to eat, they put it in the mouths of their comrades. How can such soldiers be bandits?"

I advised Choe Hyon, Jon Kwang and Pak Tuk Bom to return him

in safety after giving him education, as he was not guilty of any serious crime and was a clever man.

According to information from our organization later, Kawashima on his return to the lumber yard said to his fellows that “The Korean guerrilla army is not a banditti but a well-disciplined revolutionary army and they are not so weak as to be conquered by the Japanese army.” Even after he was taken off to the police station he said the same thing, insisting that this was what he had witnessed.

The police authorities sent him back to Japan, labelling him a Red. But the gist of what Kawashima said about the People’s Revolutionary Army was carried at that time in a newspaper published in the homeland.

Reading the article, Choe Hyon said to me with a laugh, “Kawashima is paying back what he owes to the guerrillas. I can now see why you advised us to release him.”

My experience with Kawashima reconfirmed my view that not all the Japanese people were bad and that they should be dealt with discreetly, according to their acts and ideological inclination.

The day we arrived at Diyangxi, Ri Hun, head of Shijiudaogou, called on us. He said that his villagers had prepared some food, though frugal, and wanted to invite the guerrillas for a meal to celebrate the victories in Pochonbo and on Mt. Kouyushui. From the way Ri Hun spoke I sensed that the whole village was going to serve us a treat rather than a light meal, as before. Serving even a simple bowl of rice to each of the hundreds of guerrillas would be a great burden to the people of Shijiudaogou. We could not impose such a burden on them. So I advised him not to prepare the food.

However, Ri Hun, who had always been obedient to me, now stubbornly insisted that the people’s offer of hospitality not be turned down.

He said, “This is not my personal wish, General. It is the unanimous desire of the people of Shijiudaogou. Please don’t decline our request. If I return with your refusal, even the women there will call me good-for-nothing and throw stones at me. I can endure that, but what

can I do if the entire village sheds tears?”

I found it difficult to decline their invitation. If we said no to the people's hospitality and left Diyangxi all of a sudden, how disappointed both the people and the guerrillas would be.

I said to Ri Hun:

“Since things have come to this pass, it would be better for the guerrillas and the people to get together and enjoy the day to their hearts' content. The day of *Tano* festival is just around the corner and it would be a good idea to hold a grand celebration in broad daylight out on the Diyangxi plateau as a joint celebration between the army and the people. Let them encourage each other and share their friendship. Let's have some entertainment and an athletic meet so that they can enjoy the festival and feel free from worldly worries.”

The commanding officers of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> divisions supported the idea. Having succeeded, Ri Hun was all smiles. That was the first time we tried an army-people joint celebration after the evacuation of the guerrilla bases.

Defudong, chosen as the place for the celebration, was a village that had been given revolutionary education by Ri Je Sun, Kim Un Sin, Ma Tong Hui, Kim Ju Hyon, Ji Thae Hwan and Kim Il. As it was situated on a tableland dozens of miles away from the county town, neither policemen nor the district head frequented it. The enemy administrative organs were relatively far away. The nearest police station to Defudong was situated in Yuledong, far away along a mountain path. When selecting the place for the celebration we took all of this into account. The place produced many guerrillas in later days.

I stayed with 50 officers and rank-and-file guerrillas in the house of An Tok Hun, chief of an ARF chapter. Ri Je Sun had joined hands with Ri Hun and An Tok Hun before anybody else in Shijiudaogou. We dropped in at his house before and after the Battle of Pochonbo and received much help from him. His family aided the guerrillas well. His younger brother, An Tok Su, was also a fine man who zealously helped us in our work.

In Defudong there lived a rich man, surnamed Song. He was a

landlord with a strong pro-Japanese disposition. He did not care at all what happened to the country so long as he was well-off; that was his view on life. One day our operatives, having found out that the man had much money, called Song and Ri Hun to An Tok Hun's house and made an appeal to them to help the guerrillas. In summoning Ri Hun, a member of the secret organization, to that place, the operatives had a plan: if Ri Hun said that he would donate a certain amount of money, Song could not refuse. Also, by shouting at Ri, they could further conceal his identity as a member of the secret organization. Things turned out as they had expected. When Ri said he would contribute his share of money on behalf of his village, Song, unable to refuse, answered reluctantly that he would contribute 150 *yuan* for fear of future troubles.

Unhappy with this forced contribution, Song, in reprisal, gave a hint to his wife's brother, who was working at a police substation, that operatives from the guerrillas frequented An Tok Hun's house. Informed of this, Ri Hun discussed the matter with the operatives. As a result, he sent An Tok Hun to the guerrilla army and An's family to Korea. But for this emergency measure, his family might well have been exterminated, for in summer or autumn of 1937 the enemy burned Defudong down completely, calling it a "Red village."

At An Tok Hun's house I drew up the programme for the joint celebration in consultation with the influential figures in Shijiudaogou and the commanding officers of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> divisions. The young people in the village prepared about 50 noodle-presses at the same time. In each house the guerrillas and the people got together and spent a night, singing and talking.

Chon Pong Sun's story of scouting out Pochonbo provoked a burst of laughter each time he told it.

At the end of May 1937, Chon Pong Sun got our order, through Kim Un Sin, a guerrilla from Yuledong, to find out the number of enemy weapons and equipment and the disposition of their forces. He learned from his relative living in Pochonbo that there were seven policemen in the police substation with one light machine gun, five

Japanese in the foresters' station (the station head would soon be transferred to another locality), and about 200 households in the town. But he wanted to confirm all this himself.

One day he went to Pochonbo and drank a cup of wine at a pub; then he walked reeling to a general store in front of the police substation. Pretending to be drunk, he searched his pockets with trembling hands, muttering to himself that there must be 1 *won* in there. Then taking out a 5-*won* note, he said, "Ah, here is 1 *won*," and demanded a packet of *Mako* cigarette. In those days a packet of that type of cigarette cost 5 *jon*. The change should have been 4 *won* 95 *jon*. The wicked woman shopkeeper, however, gave him only 95 *jon*, thinking that he was too drunk to distinguish a 5-*won* note from a 1-*won* note. From then on, everything went as he had planned it. He demanded the storekeeper 4 *won* in addition to the 95 *jon* as a change, as he had given her 5 *won*. The storekeeper retorted, "What an impostor this guy is! You gave me 1 *won*, and you insist that you gave me 5 *won*, ha! No more nonsense, be off with you."

Thus they began a squabble. The storekeeper threatened that she would take him to the police, and he responded that they should, indeed, put this quarrel before the policemen. The storekeeper readily agreed, confident that the police would side with her.

In the station the two continued to argue, swearing at each other. As both of them insisted that the other was wrong, the policemen were at a loss as to how to judge. While all this was going on, Chon found out the number of policemen, machine gun and rifles. After ascertaining what he had to, Chon said, "Then what about going to the shop with us, sirs? The 5-*won* note I gave her has a patch of paper in the centre. If we find it, then I am right, and if not, she is right." They went off to the shop with the duty sergeant.

True to his words, they found a 5-*won* note with a patch of paper in its centre. But the storekeeper insisted that she had got it from a customer that morning. At long last, the storekeeper won the suit. Chon left the store, saying, "Madame, live in clover, cheating many more innocent people." She was a dishonest woman, yet he felt thankful to

her; but for her, he could not have found an excuse for going into the police substation.

The members of the underground organization in Defudong were encouraged by Chon's story of scouting. It heightened their dignity. It was a source of great pride to them that a member of the secret organization in their village had contributed to the People's Revolutionary Army's advance into the homeland.

While the whole village was astir with preparation for the joint celebration, we received some disturbing information: the commander of a composite brigade of the puppet Manchukuo army had left Changbai for Hanjiagou for a "punitive" expedition against the People's Revolutionary Army.

My unit, along with Choe Hyon's, met the enemy and annihilated them with one swift stroke. The remnants of the brigade were so frightened out of their wits at our attack that they called the lane along the battlefield on which their colleagues had been killed en masse "the path of wolf's fangs."

This battle raised the prestige of the revolutionary army even higher. The booty we captured included a large amount of food that would be of help in preparations for the joint celebration.

On the fifth day of the fifth month by the lunar calendar the joint celebration was held on the Diyangxi plateau. The three units of the army filled the wide vista of the tableland. Hundreds of members of the ARF had gathered there, and the Korean National Liberation Union had sent its representative. The village heads had dispatched the enemy's agents to other places in advance for the sake of keeping secrecy, and the celebration proceeded in a free atmosphere from beginning to end. That day the guerrillas and the people mixed freely. The presence of many old people made the occasion all the more pleasant. They all sat round food dishes and enjoyed the festivities to their hearts' content. Of all the foods the people prepared that day, rice-cakes made with mugwort and marsh plant leaves were most highly appreciated.

Along with Choe Hyon, I greeted every elderly man and woman,

with the introductions being done by Ri Hun and An Tok Hun. We then passed on to the young and middle-aged men and women, whom I greeted in general. They all deserved many thanks for their sincere help to the People's Revolutionary Army in its advance into the homeland.

Some women guerrillas appeared at the celebration in Korean costumes. As they took off the military uniform, which they had worn day and night, and returned to the way they looked in their homes, they seemed as beautiful as fairies. They sat in pairs on the swings with the village girls. Songs were heard from forest and a dance was held. Some women beat the tune on dippers that had been overturned in large brass vessels filled with water.

“How could these strangers mingle with one another so warmly, like a family reunited after a long separation?” I thought, enjoying the sight of the plain, where guerrillas and people milled about, forming a living, moving garden of flowers. The enemy called us isolated beings, yet here we were, on a sea of people whose devoted love supported us. The joint celebration on the Diyangxi plateau was a pinnacle in the anti-Japanese revolution, which had managed to traverse the thorny path of history precisely because the guerrillas were loved by the people and the people were protected by the guerrillas.

I made a speech on behalf of the People's Revolutionary Army. It was a short impromptu speech to the effect that the revolutionary army would exist and be victorious in every battle, since the army and the people had achieved unbreakable unity in mind and purpose. As far as I can remember, in this speech I gave an outline of the advance into the homeland.

A representative of the organizations in the homeland also made a speech.

After speakers from various circles had taken the floor, an old man from Yuledong handed over a congratulatory banner to us on behalf of the ARF organizations in Changbai County. Ma Tong Hui, who had performed the scouting mission so superbly at the Battle of Pochonbo, was authorized to receive the banner. The small banner of red damask

silk with letters embroidered in yellow silk thread, had been made in a potato cellar by the members of the Women's Association in Xinxingcun and Pak Rok Kum. They said that it had been embroidered stitch by stitch with a sentry posted outside the cellar, as enemy agents or policemen might come any minute. It was really a wonder that a tough woman operative such as Pak Rok Kum could be so skilful at embroidery.

The joint celebration ended with a grand parade, considerably larger than any of the parades we had held since the start of the anti-Japanese war. During the military parades held in 1948 and after the victorious Korean war, I recalled with emotion the parade we held on the Diyangxi plateau.

The joint celebration of the army and the people held in Diyangxi showed the whole world that a great political unity existed between the army and the people.

Later, in the first half of the 1940s, the people who participated in this celebration refused to believe the Japanese imperialist propaganda that the revolutionary army had all been destroyed—a testimony of the deep impression the celebration had made on the people. The anti-Japanese guerrillas, too, were confident that the people would never lose their love for and trust in them. They turned to the people each time they faced difficulties.

To our regret, Kim Chol Ho and some other soldiers of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division were late that day, being slowed down by hunger and weakness from the shortage of food, and missed the grand celebration. I was very sorry to miss them on this occasion, and on the *Tano* festival day in the liberated motherland several years later, I, with Kim Jong Suk, invited them all to my house.

## 4. Photographs and Memory

It was probably on the Diyangxi plateau, Changbai County, that we posed for a photo for the first time during the anti-Japanese armed struggle. Towards the end of our joint celebration of the army and the people, many soldiers suggested having their photographs taken in memory of the reunion of the three units. Luckily, the 4<sup>th</sup> Division had a camera. We collected the machine guns from all units, placed them in front of us for display and sat for a photograph. Everyone was happy, as if he had won commendation.

Nevertheless, the younger guerrillas were not satisfied with having only one picture taken. They wanted to have individual and group photos of squads; they also wanted to pose with friends in other units, whom they had met after a long separation. Some guardsmen were keen on having a picture taken with me alone as well.

But the unwilling photographer packed the camera and walked away, probably quite embarrassed: there were too many applicants and too few dry-plates to meet all their demands. The younger men went back, sulking. I thought of calling back the photographer, but I had no time to spare for it.

I understood the feelings of younger men who were disappointed not to have their photographs taken. At their age everyone wants to have his picture taken. I was no exception.

I did not have many pictures from my childhood. I could hardly afford to eat my fill of coarse gruel, how could I think of having my photo taken? In those days there was no photo studio in or around Mangyongdae, one had to walk nearly eight miles to Pyongyang or to Ppaengtae Street if one wanted to pose for a photo. Once in a while photographers came from the city to the outskirts with tripod cameras to earn money, but even then they came only as far as Chilgol, not

taking the trouble to come to Mangyongdae, an out-of-the-way village.

Once when I was a little boy, my grandfather gave me 5 *jon*. As it was the first money I had ever received, I walked many miles to Pyongyang city. I was fascinated by the flourishing city. The shops and bazaars on both sides of the street were filled with fancy goods. I was almost deafened by hawkers shouting, "Buy my goods!" But I ignored them and made for a photo studio with the intent of having my picture taken.

However, it was naive of me to think I could pose for a photo for only 5 *jon*. When I saw ladies and gentlemen in modern suits counting what seemed like wads of bank notes in front of the cashier, I realized that I had come to the wrong place. I hurried out, aware that it was a pipe-dream think one could have a taste of civilization with 5 *jon*. On walking away from the studio, I had a mental vision of the whole world sinking under the weight of money. I felt crushed by the vision, and since then I avoided photo studios whenever I went to the city.

In my days in Jilin, too, I tried to keep away from photo studios. Sometimes I went to cinemas, but I avoided photographers. The Jilin Yuwen Middle School was full of rich people's children. They spent money like water in the town's more entertaining quarters, and in restaurants and amusement parks. Their way of throwing around money for gourmandism and merrymaking astonished me. I barely managed to pay my school fees with the money my mother sent me, which she had earned penny by penny. My most awkward moment was always when they suggested going to a restaurant or to a photo studio. I invariably turned down their suggestion on some pretext or other.

Once I received a letter from my mother with a notice of remittance.

"I'm sending you some money," she wrote, "so that you could have your picture taken on your birthday and send it to me. That way, whenever I miss you, I can see you in the picture."

I could not but comply with her request. My younger brother, Chol Ju, had told me that she would bury her face in my worn-out underclothes and shed tears whenever she missed me. Proof of how much she was missing me lay in this extra expense for me, paid in

addition to the school fee! So I had my picture taken and sent it to Fusong, the only solo photograph I posed for in my days at the Jilin Yuwen Middle School still extant. It was later kept for decades by Chae Ju Son, one of my close acquaintances in Fusong and a member of the Women's Association. She finally gave it to a group of our visitors to the old revolutionary battle sites in northeast China. She had taken a great risk in keeping it for so long under the enemy's surveillance.

In later days I had my picture taken on various occasions, but most of them were lost. The photograph I posed for in *dabushanzi* with Ko Jae Ryong was discovered a few years ago and made public in my memoirs.

And yet the photograph I had had taken in my days in the Jilin Yuwen Middle School fell into the hands of the enemy through a channel I did not know. The enemy police used it in their search for me. Once an enemy spy came as far as Kalun, carrying my photo, and asked the members of the Children's Expeditionary Corps, who were standing guard, whether they had not seen the man in the photo. The children told me about this in time for me to stay out of harm's way. The spy was killed by men of the Korean Revolutionary Army. After that, I refrained from sitting for a photo for some time.

This did not mean that I entirely gave up being photographed. When I had an unexpected reunion with comrades, or at moments of separation or joy, I wanted to imprint those moments so as to remember them. There were many dramatic instances worthy of photographing in my underground and guerrilla activities and there were many impressive events during my life at the guerrilla base.

However, not a single one of these events remains in the form of a photograph. It could not be helped: In those days none of us could afford to leave a memento or a symbolic piece of evidence for the future. As our struggle was arduous and pressing, more important and immediate tasks occupied us, we had no time for more extravagant thoughts.

As the saying goes, life exists even on a deserted island, and there

was no reason for the guerrillas to live an austere life at all times.

When I saw the young guerrillas so eager to have their pictures taken, I felt dismay. The fact that my unit had no camera, while the 4<sup>th</sup> Division had one, made me reflect upon myself. It was a great surprise to me, who had been camera-shy for so long, that the guerrillas, who lived on the mountains and knew nothing but the revolution, were as eager to sit for a picture as were other people. Their interest was quite unusual.

That day when I returned to my quarters I mentioned to some of the commanding officers that our young guerrillas had been following the photographer of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division around, trying to win his favour. I added that we should have a camera of our own: I merely mentioned it in passing, but my words had an exceptional result.

One day in the summer of 1937, when we were away from Changbai, staying at the secret camp in Liudaogou, Linjiang County, Ji Thae Hwan, who was working underground in Changbai, came to see me. While making his work-report to me, he said all of a sudden that he had obtained a camera and had brought it along. I was beside myself with joy.

It was a cabinet camera on a tripod, just like the one the 4<sup>th</sup> Division had. He brought a middle-aged photographer with him. Evidently Ji had kept my passing remark in mind.

Ji had been picked, trained and sent to my unit by Kim Il, and like Kim Il, he was reticent and practical. Whenever he was entrusted with a task, he carried it out in silence, like a steadfast peasant. Kim Il and Ji Thae Hwan were very much alike in their character, in their work attitude and behaviour.

Ji told me how he had gone about capturing the camera. It was a veritable adventure story:

At first Ji, together with a guerrilla named Kim Hak Chol, called on Ri Hun, head of Shijiudaogou, and seriously discussed the matter of the camera. The village head also worked out the way to get one with the local members of the ARF. One day Ri Hun informed Ji that the police had brought a camera to their branch station in Ershidaogou in

order to take photos of the residents for their resident cards and registration. He added that it would be like killing two birds with one stone if they got hold of the camera, for not only would it be useful to the guerrillas, but also removing it would delay the fuss of resident-registration for a long time.

In West Jiandao the Japanese imperialists attempted to enforce the system of internment villages and the medieval “collective culpability system” on hundreds of households, a system they had introduced in eastern Manchuria. It was for this purpose that they began the registration of households and photo-taking for ID cards. On top of this, they tried to issue passes and licenses for purchasing goods so as to bind the people hand and foot even further.

People between the ages of 15 and 65 could neither become residents nor move away without a resident card or a pass, nor could they buy grain, cloth or shoes without a license for purchasing goods. If a person was revealed to have bought goods without the license, he or she was arrested for “having contacts with the bandits.”

The point was how to get the camera, which was standing in the yard of the strictly guarded police branch station. Ji Thae Hwan and Ri Hun discussed the matter for a long time.

The next day Ri Hun appeared in the office of branch station chief, wearing a long face, and grumbled, “I’m so angry. I can no longer work as the village head. I told the peasants time and again they can have their pictures taken if they go to the branch station, but they are too ignorant to believe me. They trembled even at the sight of me, as if I were a police officer. How can I work under these conditions?”

The chief of the branch station said nothing, only licked his chops.

Ri Hun continued, “Even the influential villagers are grumbling that it’ll take until the end of autumn for the hundreds of households on the 25-mile stretch of Shijudaogou to go to Ershidaogou to have their pictures taken. They say they have to give up harvesting and eat photographs. I don’t know what to do.”

Then he plumped down on a chair. The chief was annoyed:

“How tactless you are! What do you expect from me to do? Think

up your own method of dealing with the problem!”

This was what Ri Hun had hoped the chief would say. After pretending to be racking his brains for a few minutes, he said, “It is true that the people are afraid of this branch station; it’s also true that it is far away from Shijiudaogou. What about doing it at Ri Jong Sul’s house in Shijiudaogou? The yard of his house is large enough for taking pictures.”

Ri Jong Sul was the enemy’s running dog. As he used to treat the policemen and other officials to a drinking bout whenever they visited his house, they were willing to go there on any excuse. The branch station chief leaped at Ri’s suggestion, calling it a bright idea. In this way the camera was moved from the strictly guarded police branch station in Ershidaogou to Ri Jong Sul’s yard, and the villagers of Shijiudaogou gathered in the yard.

The police chief went to Ri Jong Sul’s house in the company of his men. Needless to say, Ri Jong Sul prepared a drinking bout. The chief posted a policeman in the yard and sat down at the table. A few minutes later the policeman standing guard joined the others.

When they were roaring drunk, a member of the underground organization in the village abruptly opened the door and shouted that the “bandits” were taking away the camera. He made a great fuss, saying that they were all over the surrounding mountains. The station chief went pale, drew a pistol and assumed a posture of charging forward, obviously under the influence of alcohol.

Ri Hun restrained him, saying, “The ‘bandits’ are not just a few. How can you match them by yourself alone? Save your own skin. They say that a dead lord is no better than a living dog.”

He led him to the backyard, pushed him into a pigsty and covered him with straw. Other policemen hid themselves as best as they could.

Meanwhile, the guerrillas came to the yard and made a stirring speech in front of the people who had come to pose for their photos, and then went quietly away with the camera.

When we heard the story from the soldier who had been there in person, I laughed till I cried.

The Japanese imperialist secret documents entitled *Case of the Situation of the Bandits across the River* and *Judgement of the Hyesan Incident* read in part:

“Around 1:30 p.m. when the photographer was taking photos of 100 people in Xiaoputaogou, men armed with pistols, believed to be Kim Il Sung’s unit, appeared and said, ‘What are you taking their photos for? You are living off photography, so we will let you go if you give us the camera.’ Then they left with the camera and a dozen dry-plates.”

The dry-plate is something like film for today’s camera. The cameras of the old days used glass plates instead of film.

All in all, Ji Thae Hwan, along with Kim Hak Chol and Ri Hun, had made my wish come true.

Ji took the photographer with him from the enemy-ruled area, a man by the name of Han Kye Sam. The guerrillas called him Ri In Hwan. He was nearly 40 years old. Tall and strong, he was fit for a guerrilla.

I resolved to learn photography from this man so as to take the pictures of my men when necessary. I was sincere in my wish to learn the art, but he could not understand why I took time out for this trivial thing.

He taught me how to capture a good image when taking a picture and how to expose the plate. He was very kind and meticulous.

After he had found out who I was, he unlocked his heart to me. What still remains most clearly in my mind of what he told me is “strings of mushrooms.” He said that as soon as he had arrived at my unit, he had looked for “strings of mushrooms.” I asked him what he meant by this strange expression, and he answered that it meant strings of dried ears. According to him, the enemy was spreading propaganda that the revolutionary army cut the ears off the people they captured and dried them in strings, as one would do with mushrooms. He said that the Japanese imperialists had strategic bodies they called “pacification squads,” which had a variety of sections under them and advertised that the guerrillas were savages with red faces and horns on

their heads. He said he had believed it to be true until a few days before.

“When the guerrillas appeared in the yard of Ri Jong Sul’s house, I was scared stiff and shook like a leaf, even with the dark cloth over my head. This is the end, I thought and clasped my hands to my ears. But I found your men to be kind-hearted people.”

Learning that he had several children, I advised him to return home. But he would not listen to me and begged that he should be allowed to stay with us, for his wife could easily take care of the children. He was so sincere and adamant, I admitted him into the guerrilla army. He was so overjoyed at his new military uniform, and that pleased me.

After the battles of Liukesong and Jiaxinzi we admitted a large number of workers into the army and organized several squads with the recruits. Ri In Hwan was leader of one of those squads.

He took many photos of our fighters. He carried some developing solution with him and developed the negatives soon after he had taken a photo. He fought bravely, so everyone respected him, valued him and liked him.

Once he fell ill from influenza. We put all we had into nursing him. As he slept, many of our men put their overcoats over him. I, too, covered his head with my blanket and stayed up all night beside him, reading a book.

When awake, he squeezed my hands and said in tears, “Why all this care when I am a nobody? How can I repay your kindness?”

He said that while staying with us, he had been treated as a man and now realized the true meaning of life for the first time in his life. He had decided that he preferred living like a man, even if it meant eating grass roots in the guerrilla army, to leading the life of a servant to the Japanese, even though that meant eating rice.

One day the photographer set up his camera in front of me and adjusted my pose, saying, “Please allow me to realize my wish today. I’m going to take your photo, General.”

He wanted to take this photo of me to the homeland in person to show it to the compatriots.

“Thank you for your sincerity, but, making one’s photo open to the public is against the discipline of the army. When the revolution emerges victorious, we can take as many photos as we want. When the country is liberated, please take my photo first,” I said.

He smiled amidst tears. It was the first time I had seen such a delicate smile. It is still vivid in my memory.

As we were switching over from our large-unit activities to activities by smaller units after the meeting at Xiaohaerbaling, I again advised him to go back home, but he insisted on remaining. To the great regret of the entire unit, he was killed soon after.

When I sit for a photo now, I often have a vision of Ri In Hwan approaching me with his camera of the old type and adjusting the focus. ...

Although he was killed, some of the photos he took remain as a miraculous history of the guerrillas. The photo taken in the secret camp in Wudaogou, Linjiang, and that of the women guerrillas, taken on the River Hongqi, were done by him.

The group picture was taken in the secret camp in Wudaogou in commemoration of the return of Kim Ju Hyon’s small unit after operations in the homeland. That day I had tried to take their photo, but the guardsmen insisted on posing with me and Ri In Hwan pushed me forward, telling me to sit with them, as he would press the shutter. I sat with them, wearing the black-rimmed spectacles I wore when disguising myself.

To my regret, most of the photos Ri In Hwan and I had taken were either burned or lost. Whenever they got hold of our photos, the enemy used them for their scheme to track us down. The photos my guardsmen and I had kept were lost when Rim Su San raided the secret camp in Huanggouling at the head of the enemy’s “punitive” force.

Decades after, we learned that Kato Toyotaka, a former high-ranking Japanese policeman in puppet Manchukuo, had some of the photos. According to him, he had kept three of our photos, but now had only two of them, one having been lost. He made public the two photos.

In an article entitled *Important Photos of the Police of Manchukuo, Collection of Documents*, he wrote under the subtitle, *Mysterious Anti-Japanese Hero Kim Il Sung*,

“...the photos of Kim Il Sung and the cadres of the Communist Party of China, used for tracking them down, are extremely important and rare.”

On the back of one photo were the words, “All the members of the Headquarters of Kim Il Sung’s unit,” written by a member of the “punitive” force.

Thanks to the photo, a historical fact was made public in a picture. The photos show the true appearance of the revolutionary army, whose officers wore the same uniforms as the rank and file, not the nasty “bandits,” “devils” or “savages” the enemy had made them out to be.

Many of our officers and men were killed in battle without leaving photos of themselves behind. Things nowadays are different. When a soldier is killed in action, we give him a commendation according to his military service, send the death notice to his hometown and arouse the concern of society over the death. But, in the days of the anti-Japanese war we could not send the notice of the death of a guerrilla to his family, nor could we set up a tombstone over his grave. As the enemy were always at our heels, we heaped up snow or stones on his grave, and when we had no time to do that we covered his body with pine boughs before leaving in haste.

When burying fallen comrades, we felt bitter at the thought of burying their hot youth in a desolate land, and felt a handful of earth to be as heavy as a large rock. How many martyrs passed away like that without leaving a photo? Bidding farewell to fallen comrades was heartrending, and taking leave of living comrades was also painful. How good it would have been if we had been able to sit for a photo together in exchange for those moments! Seeing women guerrillas dying without leaving their pretty faces in photos was beyond endurance. When they fell, we felt as if our hearts were torn to shreds.

They left only their packs behind in this world. In the packs there used to be small pieces of embroidery of the rose of Sharon on the map

of Korea. Could a giant build mounds over their bodies covered with this embroidery, without his hands trembling? Time wears too many things away and buries them in oblivion. They say that all memories, both happy and sad, fade away with the lapse of time.

However, this seems not to be the case with me. I can never forget any of my fallen comrades-in-arms, probably because the farewells between the dead and alive were such bitter events. Their images are vivid in my memory as if on hundreds and thousands of clear prints. It is natural that photographs should get discoloured and memories grow dim with the passage of time; somehow, however, for me their images grow fresher with each passing minute and wring my heart and soul.

When building the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery on Mt. Taesong, some people suggested erecting a grand monument and engraving the martyrs' names on it. On my part, I wanted to show their images. I wanted to have the individual images of the anti-Japanese heroes reproduced so that they could meet the coming generations. But most of them were killed without leaving any photographs behind. I finally described their appearances in detail to the sculptors, so that they could reproduce their images.

Reading the document of the "Hyesan incident" the Japanese imperialists had dealt with, I saw the photos of many fighters in it.

Gorky said that the photo of a poor man is carried in a newspaper only when he breaks the law; our fighters left the first and yet last photos of themselves pictured in shackles.

Thanks to Ji Thae Hwan who had obtained a camera, we have a small number of photos of us in the days of the anti-Japanese revolution. But Ji Thae Hwan did not sit for a photo even once. An indefatigable and skilled underground political worker, he was arrested at the time of the "Hyesan incident" and left his photo only in the enemy's document.

He was photographed, bound with a rope; he turned his indignant face aside and his sharp eyes were downcast. As he was a man of unusual self-respect, how furiously his blood must have boiled! Although he was sentenced to death, he remained calm. He guffawed,

saying, “I made the Japanese imperialists pay by the blood I shed. I’ve nothing to regret even if I die now.”

I have many sleepless nights, not only when I have many things to do, but also when the images of the martyrs, who left no keepsakes or photos behind, pass through my mind.

Probably for this reason I do not slight photography as I grow old. When I visit a factory or a rural village, I pose for a photo with working people and women. When I call on an army unit, I have a picture taken with the People’s Army soldiers. One year, when I dropped in at Yonphung Senior Middle School, I took photos of the students for some time.

As the present system is excellent, there is no difference in men and jobs; when a man renders good service, he enjoys distinction and is praised by everybody. One can enjoy a varied and abundant cultural life everywhere. The songs and dances created in labour are staged on squares on holidays and during the festivities; at nights the happy people walk endlessly through the brightly-lit streets and parks.

Half a century ago, this was a Utopian dream. Most of the anti-Japanese fighters passed away before seeing the life of today. If it were not for the historical path they paved with blood by laying down their lives, could there be a today or a tomorrow for our generation?

## 5. The Battle of Jiansanfeng

After the joint celebration of the army and the people, we decided to attack an internment village of Bapandao in cooperation with Choe Hyon's unit before going off on separate operations. In the internment village, near Jiansanfeng, were stationed approximately 300 "punitive" troops of the puppet Manchukuo army.

As a result of the success in the operations for advancing into the homeland and the grand joint celebration of the three large units and inhabitants, the morale of our officers and men was sky-high. Some of them even formally proposed that we make further advances into the homeland, or attack areas such as the Changbai county town, to demonstrate once more the stamina of the People's Revolutionary Army, taking advantage of the large forces we had assembled.

From the tactical point of view, however, it would be disadvantageous to repeat the advance into the homeland immediately after the attack of Pochonbo. An attack on the Changbai county town also required prudent consideration, since the atmosphere in the Hyesan area was alarming. High spirits and desires alone would not ensure victory in a battle. So I chose Bapandao for the next target of attack.

Comrades from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division had provided us with information about Bapandao, giving us detailed account of the situation there when they visited our secret camp. Later we had formed an underground organization in Bapandao. Among the members of the underground organization was a former soldier of the puppet Manchukuo army who had the surname of Liu. He had a strong sense of self-respect and had been given the cold shoulder by his commanding officers. Because his superiors had applied undue pressure upon him, he had come over to our side and served as a squad leader. He had also told us of the

conditions in the battalion of the puppet Manchukuo army.

Generally speaking, after attacking a massed enemy force at its stronghold, the guerrilla army usually got away by applying the tactic of the swift march. But we did not do so after attacking Pochonbo, because the enemy by then knew guerrilla tactics well and could take measures to counter it. In fact, the Kwantung army deployed a large, dense force on the approach to Fusong, anticipating that we would escape in the direction of Fusong. We foresaw this and applied the manoeuvre of remaining under the nose of the enemy instead of the long-distance march.

Another reason for remaining near the border was that we intended to get detailed information on the situation in the homeland, while helping the ARF organizations there. We also wanted to help promote the revolution in the homeland, which was on the upsurge. Slowly moving toward Bapandao, we met with political workers on the way in order to acquaint ourselves with the progress of underground work and give them new assignments. At the same time, we met with those in charge of local organizations to teach them how to carry out their work.

Around this time Ri Hun, who had been in Hyesan on a fact-finding mission, sent us information through old man Han Pyong Ul from Taoquanli that the 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment in Hamhung had suddenly arrived in Hyesan aboard dozens of lorries, had then moved in the direction of Sinpha and had begun to cross the River Amnok. The commander of the “punitive” force was a rabid Korean officer, Kim Sok Won.

According to information from a different source, the commander of the Japanese 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment was Kim In Uk, also a Korean. But other information sources—underground organizations at home and in Changbai—reported unanimously that the commander of the enemy’s “punitive” force was Kim Sok Won.

Later we learned that for the sake of publicity the Japanese imperialists had held a grand-style send-off gathering at Hamhung Station, where Kim Sok Won had pledged loyalty to the Japanese emperor. He was holding a blood-written banner, “Success in War,”

and vociferated that he would annihilate Kim Il Sung's army.

He reportedly babbled that he was leaving for "punitive" operation on assignment by his superiors because he knew the tactics of the communist army well, that the 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment would prove its worth before long and that the communist troops would meet a sad fate, like dead leaves falling in the autumn wind, before the mighty imperial army.

Send-off ceremonies were also held for Kim Sok Won's 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment on leaving Hyesan and Sinpha. Stooges of the Japanese imperialists forced people to attend them, making a house-to-house visit. Policemen, influential Japanese people, government officials and reservists made a great noise on the street, singing songs and waving the national flag of Japan. The strength of the "punitive" troops was so large that a wooden ferryboat with a seating capacity for 30-40 was said to have ferried them back and forth from Sinpha the entire day.

It was wonderful that Ri Hun, who was not even a trained secret agent obtained the amount of detailed information. Ri Hun, who received the assignment to scout the enemy's movements in Hyesan for us, decided to penetrate its destination in the guise of a timber dealer. He assigned the branch chiefs of the ARF in Shijiudaogou to fell several hundred trees in a few days, and made a raft of them. He obtained an ID card as a timber dealer.

Ri Hun had worked as a raftsman in lumber yards for eight years. Together with an organization member he made a raft and left for Hyesan. By good luck, on the shore he met an old man, a relative of the police inspector Choe. Choe was a wicked policeman who had arrested many patriots during the "Hyesan incident." It was Choe who apprehended Pak Tal.

Seeing Ri Hun, who had brought several hundred pieces of lumber with him, the old man asked him to sell him a couple. Ri Hun gave him two for nothing, saying, "How can I sell them to the uncle of police inspector Choe for money?" Very pleased, the old man introduced him to a timber dealer in the town. The old man said that the son-in-law of the timber dealer, like his nephew, was serving at the Hyesan Police Station.

After making his acquaintance with the timber dealer, Ri Hun asked him to help him, saying, "It is dangerous to live in Changbai because there are many bandits there. After making money by selling timber, I intend to move to Hyesan." He sold timber to the timber dealer at half the price and got acquainted with his son-in-law, a policeman by the name of Kim, staying in his house for several days. Ri Hun even arranged a party for him.

Ri Hun invited policeman Kim and the timber dealer to a restaurant. That day, the policeman, in his cups, let out the secret that Kim Sok Won's regiment was to arrive in Hyesan at a certain hour on a certain date.

Policeman Kim said, "The prestige of the empire has plummeted to the ground because of the Pochonbo incident. It seems that Kim Sok Won has come to enhance the prestige of the military authorities. He is said to be an able soldier. He is also said to have assured that he would defeat Kim Il Sung's army and conquer West Jiandao, but we must wait and see the result. Anyway, when the communist army engages with the Kim Sok Won's troops, it will be a tough fight."

On the day the 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment entered Hyesan, Ri Hun, clad in a high-quality Western suit and spring overcoat like a gentleman, came out to the street and stealthily wormed his way into the midst of senders-off to observe what the strength of the "punitive" force was and how many guns and machine guns it had. No sooner had the send-off ceremony ended than he crossed the River Amnok and sent us a messenger. Simultaneously with the arrival of this messenger at Headquarters, another messenger, sent by Jang Hae U and Kim Jong Suk, arrived to give us more detailed information. He said that the enemy troops, which had crossed the River Amnok, had disappeared at Shisandaogou, and that organization members were looking for them. The information sent by Ri Hun coincided with that sent by the organizations in Taoquanli and Sinpha. Judging by messages sent by local organizations, the strength of the enemy called out on "punitive" operations was estimated at about 2 000 troops.

Judging from the fact that the 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Hamhung, the crack

unit of the Japanese army stationed in Korea, had been called out on “punitive” operations, the Governor-General of Korea had to be in a furious and hysterical state. Hit at Pochonbo and in the border area, the enemy was thrown into utter confusion. As the aggressive war against China proper was impending, the Japanese imperialists became very nervous about the safety of their rear. At a time such as this the Korea-Manchuria border area, vaunted to be an “iron wall,” had been thrown into disorder, so it was quite natural that the Governor-General was angry.

The prevailing situation showed that we had been wise to agree, while drawing up our operations plan in Xigang, that the troops advancing in three directions should get together after the advance into the homeland.

The 2 000-strong enemy was superior to us by far in size. In such situation it was usual practice to avoid an engagement. But we decided on a frontal confrontation with this large Japanese force, which had come from Korea. It was general tactics of guerrilla warfare to disperse rapidly and manoeuvre when a large enemy force came in for an attack, but contrary to the established practice, I decided to counter the enemy’s large force with our own large force.

We halted our march toward Bapandao and decided to choose a battlefield. Climbing up a mountain west of Laomajia, we reconnoitred the terrain. This was Jiansanfeng, with an open field of view all around. Jiansanfeng consisted of three peaks in the north of Xigang plateau, which stretched over 25 miles from Shisandaogou to Badaogou. In the north of Jiansanfeng there was a boundless primeval forest and beyond it soared the Sidengfang mountains. The area was called Sidengfang.

In the south of it a sea of forests extends over 25 miles in the eastwest direction. This was Xigang plateau, which was dotted with villages like Bapandao and Laojusuo. The three peaks of Jiansanfeng rose over the vast primeval forest like three islands. From our point of view, Jiansanfeng was most suitable for a battlefield because the enemy had to turn the bend leading to Xigang from Shisandaogou and

cross several awkward mountain ridges on their way there.

In the evening our commanding officers got together and discussed the combat plan. I stressed the need to apply guerrilla tactics instead of being caught in the enemy's regular tactics.

For this purpose we had to occupy the mountain ridges by way of forestalling the enemy and compel him to descend into the valley. We should avoid the stereotypical troop disposition as well, seeing to it that a large force was placed in the spots to which the enemy might expect us to pay little attention and making sure that in the course of fighting the troops used flexible tactics suited to the circumstances—rapidly moving to the right and to the left, for example, and taking advantage of the forest cover.

After working out the combat plan with the commanding officers of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> divisions, I discussed the work orientation and duties of the revolutionary organizations with Kwon Yong Byok, Kim Jae Su, Jong Tong Chol and other political workers of the homeland and Changbai area who had come to Jiansanfung in answer to our call. By this time it was dawn.

That morning the enemy attacked Jiansanfung. From dawn on it drizzled and a mist arose. The first signal shot rang out from the sentry post on the mountain ridge occupied by Choe Hyon's unit. I immediately went to the command post on the mountain ridge. Choe Hyon went to the forward edge with one company, fearing that the outpost might be surrounded by the enemy. The enemy soon encircled Choe Hyon's company.

The situation had to be straightened out immediately, because morale depended on how the battle started. I told Ri Tong Hak to take the Guard Company with him and rescue Choe Hyon's company as soon as possible. The Japanese attacked hard with the puppet Manchukuo troops placed in front of them as a shield, but Choe Hyon's and Ri Tong Hak's companies hit hard at the enemy in cooperation from within and without, and the siege crumbled. The company was rescued after bitter hand-to-hand fighting.

After reversing the situation, we hit hard at the enemy all day long,

driving them into the valley time and again.

However, the Japanese ran wild like beasts of prey, attacking tenaciously. They came at us in continuous waves, raising battle cries and treading on the dead bodies of their companions. During the defence of Xiaowangqing we had resisted the attack of the Jiandao detachment of the Japanese army, which had come over from Korea, and we thought them very tenacious. But the attack of the 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment from Hamhung was even fiercer than that. With 10 machine guns we set up a barrage of fire in front, but the enemy continued to swarm up.

They continued attack all day long, so we had to fight a really tough fight. In some places the enemy broke into our positions and we had to engage in close combat. To make matters worse, it kept raining. The battlefield presented an appalling sight.

We wondered how militarism could make people so tenaciously and senselessly barbaric. The “Yamato spirit,” loudly touted everywhere by the Japanese militarists, produced a multitude of idiots who mistook injustice for justice and evil for good, blind followers who died a dog’s death by throwing themselves before the muzzles of rifles like butterflies, yet boasted that this was the samurai spirit. These were barbarians who drank a toast and had souvenir photos taken with a stack of dead bodies from some other nation in the background, lunatics who thought that when they died, the Amaterasu Omikami (celestial sun goddess) would take care of them, the emperor would pray for their souls and the Japanese nation would remember them for ever. The Japanese warlords and ministers praised this as the spirit of the Japanese army, likening the men and officers who died in such manner to cherry blossoms, which bloom for a short time and wither.

The Japanese soldiers believed that their death was a rich fertilizer for the prosperity of the Japanese empire, but this was nothing but a preposterous daydream. The “Royal spirit” led Japan to national ruin, not to prosperity.

Our men and officers, who saw the Japanese troops in this light, looked down on them with the pride of revolutionaries and victors who

would repulse them no matter how tenaciously they attacked.

Taking advantage of the situation, we struck the enemy hard till dusk fell. While fighting, the women guerrillas sang the song *Arirang*, which resounded across the fighting ranks. Only the strong can sing a song in the field of heavy battle. *Arirang* sung in the battlefield of Jiansanfeng showed the psychological strength of the revolutionary army and its optimism. It is not difficult to imagine what feelings the singing of *Arirang* aroused in the enemy.

Later prisoners of war confessed that on hearing the song they were nonplussed at first, seized with fear next, and at last felt the futility of life. Some of the wounded wept, bemoaning their fate, and there were even a number of deserters.

The enemy did not suspend attack in the heavy rain until the evening, although they suffered many casualties. We sent messengers to Pak Song Chol's small unit, which was on its way back from reconnaissance in the Bapandao area, and to a food-procurement team, telling them to strike the enemy from behind. Kim Sok Won was threatened with attack from both front and rear; in addition, dusk was falling, so he fled from the battlefield, taking with him about 200 men, all that remained of his regiment.

The battle of Jiansanfeng produced many interesting anecdotes. Kim Ja Rin, Choe Hyon's bugler, was in such a hot hurry that he shot a grenade launcher by setting it on his thigh, getting his thighbone dislocated by the recoil.

Choe Hyon hurled abuse at Kim Ja Rin while annihilating the enemy that swarmed about their gun position by shooting off a grenade launcher once or twice. He then put Kim's dislocated thighbone right, pulling Kim Ja Rin's leg with both hands. We heard that Kim Sok Won was wounded by one of our grenades that day but I do not know whether it was true or not.

The "punitive" expedition of the 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment from Hamhung ended in a fiasco.

Some of the enemy soldiers who survived in Jiansanfeng fled to other cities instead of returning to Hamhung. According to data, an

enemy soldier, Sakai, did not follow Kim Sok Won but fled to Chongjin, where he ran a public house till the defeat of Japan. Thinking it a blessing that he survived at Jiansanfeng, he told his story to the customers whenever he found time.

According to him, although he was Japanese he spoke Korean, and this saved his life.

The Japanese officers had apparently driven their men into the attack, telling them to climb up the mountain ridge at the risk of their lives. Sakai went half-way up the mountain, trembling. When the Japanese had nearly reached the ridge, the revolutionary army suddenly fired a volley. This caused dozens of casualties in the ranks of the Japanese.

Sakai ran back down to the foot of mountain despite himself. Then a shout “Koreans, lie prostrate!” was heard from the direction of the ridge. Hearing the shout, Sakai who knew Korean prostrated himself beside the dead bodies of his companions in bewilderment, throwing away his weapon.

In the evening the guerrillas searched the battlefield to gather rifles and cartridge belts. They went away leaving Sakai alone, taking him for dead. Seized with terror and utter war-weariness, he crept down the mountain under cover of darkness and reached an internment village on all fours.

“Luckily I knew a bit of Korean. This saved my life. So I am now studying it hard.” This is what Sakai used to say to people over a cup of wine.

Anecdotes about Jiansanfeng and rumours about us spread widely in Chongjin and its surroundings because of Sakai’s story. The confession of a soldier in the aggressor army, who deserted the service and became a petit bourgeois, did much to raise the morale of our people.

Our comrades who visited the villages near the battlefield some time after the battle of Jiansanfeng returned with a detailed account of the enemy’s defeat.

The day after the battle the enemy carried away the dead bodies of

their soldiers, requisitioning stretchers, carts and lorries from Hyesan, Sinpha and villages near Jiansanfeng. According to the peasants there, Jiansanfeng and villages near it were littered with corpses of Japanese troops. The enemy covered the dead bodies with white cotton cloth and did not allow inhabitants to come near. They feared that their defeat would be exposed to the world. When they published news about the battle at Jiansanfeng in the newspapers, they conveyed the false information that there were few casualties.

I was told that it took Kim Sok Won all day to cross the River Amnok from Sinpha to attack us, but only half an hour to return.

There were so many casualties that heads were cut off from the dead bodies, packed in sacks and wooden boxes and carried on carts to the place where lorries were waiting. They were loaded into the lorries, which crossed the River Amnok. Peasants in the Jiansanfeng area were to have been nearly smothered for several days by the smoke and smell of burning corpses.

A peasant, feigning ignorance, asked a Japanese soldier disposing of corpses, “Sir, what do you carry on the cart?” The Japanese soldier replied cunningly, “It is *kabocha*.” *Kabocha* means pumpkin.

The peasant ridiculed him with a grin, “You have a bumper crop of pumpkins. It will serve for good soup stock. You will have a plenty of it.” From then on the expression “pumpkin head” spread among the people. Whenever they saw dead bodies of Japanese soldiers, they joked, calling them “pumpkin heads.”

Kim Sok Won and his runaway troops returned cautiously to Hamhung, via Sinpha and Phungsan, instead of passing through the busy streets of Hyesan. Hamhung Station, which had been so alive with its noisy send-off on their departure, was as desolate as a house of mourning on their arrival. Only the soldiers who had remained in their barracks came to the station to meet them. They passed down the street, hiding the wounded soldiers in the midst of their ranks. Perhaps they did such a seedy thing to hoodwink the citizens and cover up their defeat.

Mudokjong in Hamhung was known as a fencing ground for

Japanese soldiers. After the Jiansanfeng battle they did not do fencing there for some time. After Jiansanfeng, in fact, even the sound of the night watch making his rounds was said to have disappeared from the streets of Sinpha.

Defeat at the battle of Jiansanfeng brought irretrievable disgrace to the samurai of Japan, and the name of Kim Sok Won stood for disgrace.

The battles at Pochonbo and Jiansanfeng completely foiled the so-called “radical strategy” that Minami, Governor-General of Korea, and Ueda, commander of the Kwantung army, had worked out while holding their “Tumen conference” with a view to annihilate the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army.

This successfully concluded the operation for advance into the homeland by large forces, which we had planned in early 1937.

Jiansanfeng marked a milestone in the history of our anti-Japanese armed struggle. This battle, together with the battle at Kouyushuishan, consolidated the success of the Battle of Pochonbo. Kouyushuishan and Jiansanfeng added lustre to the victory gained at Pochonbo. They can be said to be the echoes of Pochonbo.

Through these battles we shattered the myth of the “invincible imperial army” and demonstrated once again the might of the KPRA to the world. Jiansanfeng was an important battle that played a conspicuous part in bringing the anti-Japanese revolution to its zenith after the KPRA’s advance into the area around Mt. Paektu.

By the irony of fate, our sworn enemy Kim Sok Won again confronted Choe Hyon on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel after liberation. Choe Hyon was in command of a Guard Brigade there. Syngman Rhee supposedly sent Kim Sok Won to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel to give him an opportunity to recover his ignominious defeat at the battle of Jiansanfeng.

According to soldiers of the “ROK army” who defected to the north, Kim Sok Won basely slandered communists while guarding the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Choe Hyon was on the lookout for an opportunity to give him a hard time in an encounter.

On the eve of the Korean war, Kim Sok Won made a large-scale

surprise raid across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Thus a battle took place on Mt. Songak. He seemed to have intended to give Choe Hyon a hard time, or dispose of him. Enraged, Choe Hyon annihilated the troops of the “ROK army” and pursued the runaway troops to Kaesong. He wanted to capture Kim Sok Won, chasing him to Seoul.

I gave Choe Hyon a rigid order to withdraw immediately. I said to him, “In the past he fought as the faithful dog of the Japanese imperialists, but now he is subject to the United States. If not enough care is taken, it may become a fratricidal, all-out war. Kim Sok Won, too, is a Korean. Some day he will repent of his misdeed.”

Choe Hyon and Kim Sok Won are dead and gone. Now new generations in the north and the south, which did not experience the sorrow of a ruined nation, continue to keep guard along the Military Demarcation Line, levelling guns at each other. My hope is that the new generations in the north and the south will act as one and pull down the artificial barrier that cuts the nation in half as soon as possible. I hope to see them lead a harmonious life in an independent, reunified country. I suppose that Kim Sok Won, too, had this same desire in his last years.

## 6. The Boys Who Took Up Arms

One noteworthy effect the advance of the People's Revolutionary Army to the Mt. Paektu area had on the younger people was their fiery enthusiasm for enlisting in the guerrilla army. Each time the forests and valleys along the River Amnok echoed to the sound of gunshots, young people flocked to our secret camp in an endless stream hoping to join us.

As the volunteers increased, many interesting events took place.

Once we were visited by a dark-complexioned boy with bushy hair wearing wet trousers. He earnestly pleaded to be allowed to enlist in the guerrilla army, saying that he wanted revenge for his brother's death. The boy came from the village of Shangfengde. He said that his eldest brother, who was teaching at a night school for youths and children in his village, had been killed by the police, since it had been disclosed that he supplied the guerrillas with food, and that his second brother had joined my unit just before the battle at Pochonbo was fought. That was why he wished to join the revolutionary army. The name of the boy with bushy hair was Jon Mun Sop.

Joking, I said to him that the young people who came in dry clothes were too numerous to enlist all at one time, so how could a playful fellow like him, who came in wet trousers, expect to be admitted. At this, he explained, saying his mother was to blame for it.

Jon Mun Sop had told his mother that he would leave with the guerrilla army unit, which had stopped over at Shangfengde village. His mother cut him short, declaring he was too young to be a guerrilla. When her son went off to sleep, she put his trousers into the washtub, thinking that if he had nothing to wear because his only trousers were in the tub, it would be impossible for him to follow the guerrilla army.

He was annoyed by this. His joining the revolutionary army had

already won the approval of the Children's Association.

He had been prepared to run naked to Mt. Paektu if it meant he could become a soldier of the revolutionary army. Early in the morning he took his trousers out of the tub, hastily squeezed out the water and put them on. Seeing his determination, his mother finally consented to his joining the guerrilla army.

This shows what a fever to volunteer had swept the northern border areas of Korea around the area on the River Amnok and the vast regions of West Jiandao. As the case of Jon Mun Sop shows, not only young people in the twenties or thirties were eager to join, but also teenagers.

At first the commanding officers in charge of recruitment would send these boys back home immediately, not even asking my opinion. Until then, none of the men and officers had ever thought that boys of fourteen or fifteen could fight, arms in hand.

Even Kim Phyong, who was fond of children, would shake his head whenever these boys came to us.

One summer's day in 1937, when our unit was bivouacking on the highland of Diyangxi, he came and asked me for advice, saying that about 20 kids, each shorter than a rifle, were plaguing him with requests to join and he did not know what to do with them.

"I told them to come back when they were a little bigger, but they would not listen to me. In the end they started pressing me to let them see you, General. ... They say they won't leave until they've seen you, General. They are as obstinate as mules."

I went to the boys and had a chat with them. I told them to sit down on a fallen log, then asked them, in turn, what their names were, how old they were, what their fathers did and where they came from. Each time I asked a question, the kid I was addressing would spring to his feet like a bouncing ball to answer the question. What was common in their behaviour was that they all tried to look as grown-up as possible. They had all lost parents, brothers or sisters, witnessing horrible scenes of their family members being killed in the enemy's "punitive" operations, and this was why they had resolved to take up arms: to

avenge their deaths. Having this heart-to-heart talk with them, I felt that in their thinking they could match several wise men.

As the saying goes, children mature early in troubled times. All these boys saw was misfortune and their life was full of hardship. The children of Korea were all too familiar with the world, though young. Revolution moves and awakens people with great force and at great speed. There is profound truth to the words of the sage who likened revolution to a school that teaches the new.

The 20-odd boys who flocked to our bivouac hoping to become guerrillas were all miserable victims in one page of our nation's history, a page beset by vicissitudes. I was greatly moved by these little boys, who so passionately volunteered to shoulder the heavy duty of social transformation and take part in an armed struggle that was trying even for adults.

If I remember correctly, Ri Ul Sol and Kim Ik Hyon, Kim Chol Man and Jo Myong Son were among the boys I met that day. Though today they hold the positions of Vice-Marshal, General or Lieutenant General in the Korean People's Army, at that time they were little cubs who had to stand the test of whether or not they were capable of holding a rifle.

"What has to be done with these children?" I thought.

I was at a loss as to what I should say to send them back home, these young hawks so ready to go through fire and water. Life in the revolutionary army was one that even robust young men at times found hard to take, becoming stragglers if they could not keep up the tireless training and constant self-discipline.

I tried to persuade the boys with the following words:

"I think it highly praiseworthy that you should be so determined to take up arms to avenge the enemy for the murder of your families. This is a manifestation of the love you have for your country. But it is very difficult for us to accept you as soldiers of the revolutionary army, because you are still so young. You have no idea what incredible hardships your brothers and sisters of the guerrilla army have to undergo. In the height of winter, the revolutionary army has to sleep on

a carpet of snow in the mountains. Sometimes they have to march in the rain for days on end. When provisions run out, they have to ease their hunger with grass roots or tree bark steeped in water, or with just plain water. This is the life of the revolutionary army. It seems to me you could not stand such a tough life. What do you say you return home now and wait to grow a bit older before you become a soldier?"

Nevertheless, I was talking to deaf ears. The boys carried on as before, asking to join the guerrilla army and insisting that they were prepared to go through whatever hardships were necessary, that they would sleep in the snow, fight as the adults did and so on.

Never before had I felt the need for a military school so keenly. How good it would be if we could afford to train all these eager boys and harden their bodies at a military school. Previously even the Independence Army had had cadet schools all over Manchuria. But this was before Manchuria was occupied by the Japanese imperialists. Manchuria in the late 1930s was trampled under the jackboots of the large Japanese imperialist armed force. Therefore, it was impossible for us to run military schools, as the Independence Army had done. I wondered whether something like a training centre could be opened in the secret camp, but that was not feasible. All "barometers" across the world were forecasting that the Japanese scoundrels would unleash another September 18 incident in the territory of China. To cope with this, we were preparing grand mobile operations. Enrolling the teenagers in our armed ranks at such a moment was as good as shouldering an extra pack just before an arduous march.

However, it was impossible to tell them to return home merely because of unfavourable conditions. Frankly speaking, I was attached to every one of these boys.

They had no less class consciousness than the adult folk. On that day they made a particularly deep impression on me when they said they would go hungry, just as their elders did.

In contrast to the so-called patriots—who harped continuously on their love for the country, but only in words—to the renegades of the revolution, and to the degenerates who lived to no purpose and talked

idly of the ephemeral nature of human life, what noble and passionate patriots these boys were, refusing to go back home and stubbornly demanding admittance into the guerrilla army. The fact that they wanted to become guerrillas at such a tender age was an act worthy of a bouquet before a decision was reached as to whether or not they should be admitted.

I wanted to train these highly combative boys into fighters. It seemed to me that although it was impossible to send them to stand on the first line right now, they might become the reliable reserves within one or two years if I found the right way to train them. What a wonderful harvest we would have if all of them grew to be combatants equal to our veteran soldiers in the next year or two.

If the veteran guerrillas made a stout-hearted effort to train them, even if it meant they had to sleep or eat less, I was convinced the boys would become agile soldiers in a short span of time. I planned to form a company with the boys on the principle that when circumstances permitted we would train them at the secret camp, and when the unit was out on manoeuvres we would take them with us, teaching and training them in action. In other words, I intended to form a special company that performed the role of military school and military and political cadres' training course simultaneously, in combination with education through direct action. Determined to enlist the boys in our unit, I told them to write a pledge. If you really want to join the guerrilla army, I said, you must put down your pledge on the paper tonight. Why do you want to take up arms in the revolutionary army? How will you live and fight after you have become a guerrilla? Jot all this down, and after reading your pledges, we will make a decision.

My words left Kim Phyon and most of the other commanding officers feeling uneasy. The many children we had brought with us from Maanshan were already a burden to us, they said; if these boys were added to them as well, the load would be just too heavy.

The following day I read the written pledges from the boys and found that their resolve was excellent. Some of the children who did not know how to write dictated their pledges to their friends, but I did

not mind this. It was not their fault if they were incapable of scribbles because of a lack of schooling. I told them their written pledges were all excellent. At this, they all let out a cheer, dancing with joy.

I called together the officers above the level of company political instructor at Headquarters and officially announced that as of now we were forming a Children's Company with Children's Corps members from Maanshan and those who had come to us in West Jiandao. I appointed O Il Nam as commander, and a woman guerrilla, Jon Hui, as sergeant-major of the Children's Company.

Formerly O Il Nam had been the leader of the machine-gun platoon directly under Headquarters. He was a good marksman and well experienced in the management of the ranks, a man of remarkable endurance and fighting spirit. Here is an anecdote about the battle on Kouyushuishan that illustrates his strong endurance. He was shot in that battle, but nobody knew it since he showed no sign of being wounded. Later, when the unit reached Diyangxi, the others saw that his tunic was soaked with blood and made a fuss over his heavy wound. We stripped him of his coat and found a bullet lodged in the flesh, its tip almost visible. He himself just kept on smiling.

We had no surgeon, so the strong-armed Kang Wi Ryong held his body tight and I tried to extract it with pincer. It did not go as I intended, and we were in an awful sweat indeed. The so-called operation was conducted without anaesthetics, but O Il Nam did not make a sound. After picking out the bullet, I smeared the wound with vaseline, which we used as a lubricant for rifles, and ordered him to be sent to the rear. But he would not leave, saying: "Why make such a fuss about a trifling wound? The enemy will soon be coming in pursuit, so how can I as a machine-gun platoon leader leave my position?" I was sure, now that I thought back on this incident, that fighting stamina such as O Il Nam's would have a good influence on our "kid" soldiers.

Sergeant-major Jon Hui was also unusual in her fighting spirit. She was the same age as the members of the Children's Company, but mentally she was as mature and hard as an autumn bean. Kim Chol Ho, who knew her family background well, said that she was such an

audacious girl, she had smashed her grandfather's case of acupuncture needles when she was 10 years old.

Her mother died when she was 10, and her grandfather had some knowledge of acupuncture, so he cured diseases of the villagers. But he was unable to cure his daughter-in-law, and little Jon Hui thought her mother had died because grandfather's box of acupuncture needles had failed to save her. She smashed the box to smithereens with a stone. When grandfather scolded her in fury, she retorted, "What's the use of your acupuncture needles when they could not even cure Mother of her illness?" and cried bitterly. At this, her grandfather also burst into tears and hugged her in his arms.

The following year she lost her brother as well. Her brother was a guerrilla, who was arrested with two comrades while working in the enemy-held area. The enemy killed them on the hill behind Juzijie. The three fighters, covered with blood, their bones broken from cruel tortures, died a heroic death, denouncing the enemy for their crimes and shouting, "Long live the revolution!"

Young Jon Hui saw the terrible scene, together with the village people. Her brother's heroic death impressed her deeply. The enemy shouted at the people, "Look at them! Those who oppose Japan will die just like them. Will you still make a revolution after this?" The masses were silent. But then a resounding voice rang out, "Long live the revolution!" It was little Jon Hui. The surprised enemy pommelled her to a pulp. When she had recovered, she entered the guerrilla zone. When asked, "Why did you shout 'Long live the revolution!' at such a time?" she replied, "I wanted to die like my brother. I wanted to shout, 'Long live the revolution!' when I died."

Underlying her simple words was a daring that saw the revolution as dearer than her own life.

The fearless and bold character of Jon Hui, who was not afraid of death, would serve as an excellent example to the members of the Children's Company.

I believed that like O II Nam, Jon Hui was a person well-qualified to look after the Children's Company members in a responsible manner.

Even after the official announcement of the formation of the Children's Company, quite a few commanding officers continued to feel anxious about this step taken by Headquarters. They were apprehensive that these children might become a stumbling block to our activities, that we would be at a disadvantage because of them, and that these little kids could not face the trials even the grown-ups found it difficult to endure.

I formed the Children's Company by virtue of my authority as the Commander partly because I wished to gratify the children's desire as quickly as possible.

First, I was touched by the children's ardent desire to take part in the revolution and the burning hatred that drove them to want to avenge the murder of their parents, brothers and sisters. My meeting with them awakened me to the need for training reserves for the guerrilla army. I came to think that the formation of a special military organization of children might be an answer to this need.

Looking back on the path traversed by successive orderlies, such as Jo Wal Nam, Ri Song Rim, Choe Kum San, Kim ThaeK Man and Paek Hak Rim, who joined the guerrilla army at a similar age to the kids in the Children's Company, I was assured that the children of 14 to 17 were capable of pulling their own weight.

Soon after forming the Children's Company, I made sure that its members were dressed in military uniform and presented with weapons, mostly Model 38 carbines. I still get a feeling of satisfaction when I recall the boys in the company, who were beside themselves with joy at the new uniforms and weapons.

We gave O Il Nam and Jon Hui the assignment to train the boys in the highlands of Diyangxi for a period, then give them concentrated training at the Fuhoushui Secret Camp in Qidaogou. I handed O Il Nam the teaching programme for a short, intensive course, which I had worked out myself, with a view to cramming elementary knowledge and knowledge about the basic movements in the life of the guerrilla army into a one or two months' training period. After reading the programme, O Il Nam expressed some anxiety about whether the

children would be able to digest the whole thing, since the plan was too demanding. He said, however, that he would try it out.

The company set about training the next day in the highlands of Diyangxi. I was having a strenuous time at that period, drawing up plans for coping with the Sino-Japanese War, but I managed to find time quite frequently to guide their training. I demonstrated various moves and actions and told them that they should drill the full-step march over and over again so as to get accustomed to army manoeuvres. I also instructed them to aim for the enemy's breast during target practice.

After the company had undergone training for about two weeks in Diyangxi, we left for the secret camp in Sobaeksu for a meeting. Before departure, I ordered O Il Nam to take the children to the secret camp in Fuhoushui so as to continue training there.

When I saw the youngsters lined up in columns, my heart misgave me. The march at that time was arduous indeed, and it was difficult to be optimistic about the hardships they would have to go through.

The Fuhoushui Secret Camp was a comparatively safe one in the rear, an ideal place for the training centre. There were enough provisions at the camp for the members of the Children's Company to stay for two or three months. I had previously given Kim Phyoung the task of building a secret camp in Fuhoushui and keeping grain in reserve there. The Children's Company greatly enjoyed the benefit of the camp.

While I was commanding the campaign of striking the enemy from the rear at the Liudaogou Secret Camp near Fuhoushui, the Children's Company was undergoing intensive training in Fuhoushui. After meetings at Chushuitan and Sobaeksu, I paid a visit to the camp and watched them train; I soon realized that they had developed beyond recognition from the kids who had started out at Diyangxi. Their progress was a graphic demonstration that the formation of the Children's Company had been a correct move.

I felt invigorated by the speed of their development.

One day Jon Hui appeared at Headquarters and whispered in a

worried voice, “General, there is a problem. What shall I do?” She said that the smallest kid in the Children’s Company shed tears every night from homesickness.

The mention of tears worried me. The guerrillas, being family men, would understand that the Children’s Company members got homesick. But if one was weeping, pining for home, the matter was serious.

According to Jon Hui, the boy had begun to look gloomy when the unit passed Badaogouhe. She asked him what the matter was, and he said that he felt sad because his home was falling farther and farther behind him. When joining the guerrilla army, he had thought the unit would operate in the neighbourhood of his home. But the farther we marched, the sadder he felt.

I told her to be a little severe with him, reminding her of the old saying, “Spare the rod and spoil the child.” She called him and reproached him harshly. But her reproof had an adverse effect, for the boy became more recalcitrant and demanded that he be allowed to return home.

I summoned him to Headquarters and asked him if he really wanted to return home. Silently, he gazed up at my face.

I told him:

“If you want to go home so badly, you may. But it is a long way, dozens of miles from here to Shijiudaogou. Do you think you can make it?”

“Yes, I can if I follow the path we used to come here.”

His answer hinted that his demand was not just simple grumbling and that he had already counted on going back.

I told Jon Hui to fetch the pack containing several emergency rations for the Children’s Company, and handing it to him, said:

“Go ahead and return home if you really want to. You will need food on the way. You had better take this with you.”

The boy, who knew that this was the emergency ration for the company, said, saucer-eyed:

“No, I can’t. What will the company eat if I take it away? Being

alone, I can manage without it. I'll be alright if I pick and eat one or two ears of maize from the fields."

"That's stealing. I don't want you to behave like a thief and that is why I tell you to take this with you. You have eaten the bread of the guerrilla army for sometime, you must know that at least. So take this pack with you."

"I cannot eat all this alone, leaving my friends to starve."

The boy was stubborn and took off the pack I had put on his back.

"If you know that much, then you should know it is a disgrace for you to return home, leaving your comrades fighting and shedding their blood in the mountains. I believed you were all clever children, but in fact you are not."

At this, the boy burst into tears.

Actually they were all at the age to be still under the care of their parents. I felt I was witnessing a national tragedy forced upon us by the Japanese imperialists.

Yet what would happen if he returned home? It would lead to wavering among the other members of the Children's Company.

Reminding the boy of the pledge he had written when he joined the army, I exhorted him:

"There is a saying, 'A word of honour is as good as a bond.' But you are just about to kick away your pledge like a pebble on the roadside. What will become of you if you make light of your promise like this? Once you have taken up arms, you must return home only after you have fought to the end and won final victory. Only then will your parents be happier to see you back."

The boy swore that he would no longer think of going home.

Because of this initial involvement with him, I presume, I felt particular concern for him afterwards. What I saw as a virtue in him was his love for his comrade. Even if he were famished, he would not touch the emergency ration of the company—wasn't this the kind of comradeship that could be described as being as pure as snow and as beautiful as lily? I consider comradeship to be the touchstone of whether one was a real revolutionary or not. This is the nucleus, the

moral basis of communists, the personality trait that makes them the best people in the world and distinguishes them from other people. If one is devoid of comradeship, the structure of one's life crumbles like an edifice built with no foundation. The man who is strong in comradeship is capable of amending his mistakes. This was what I discovered from the boy from Shijiudaogou.

The whole unit helped and looked after the Children's Company as they did their own brothers. Each veteran soldier took care of one boy so that every member of the Children's Company had a reliable guide and friend.

The most sincere and active helper was O Il Nam, who was in charge of the company. He was always careful not to let any of the children fall behind the others in any way. One day I was both amused and impressed at the sight of him wrapping the foot bindings of Kim Hong Su, the "little bridegroom," who came from Shangfengde. I heard O Il Nam say to Kim Hong Su, "Hong Su, you're my senior in that you have a wife, but junior when it comes to wrapping your foot bindings. You need not to be ashamed of this but learn humbly. But things will be different when I take a wife. Then you will have to become my teacher, you know." The "little bridegroom" was carelessly holding on to one of his feet while attentively following the hands of his company commander. O Il Nam looked after Kim Hong Su with great concern, I guess, because he did not want the others to poke fun at him for being a married man.

The women guerrillas, too, showed great affection for and made efforts on behalf of the kids in the Children's Company, taking charge of two or three of them each. The women taught them everything they needed to know about the everyday life of a guerrilla—how to cook rice, make a bonfire, sew and mend clothing and cure blisters on the soles of their feet—starting with the best method of arranging things in their packs.

The most active helper next to the company commander was Kim Un Sin. He had been given an assignment by the party organization to take charge of Ri Ul Sol. Whenever he was free, he would take Ri Ul

Sol with him and give him target practice. In this he was a good example to the other veteran guerrillas. Thanks to his guidance, Ri Ul Sol became a crack marksman. Later Kim Un Sin sponsored Ri's admission into the Communist Party.

While on the march, the veteran guerrillas always led the way. On night marches, one had to follow the person in front closely and be constantly aware of what was occurring around him, instantly reporting to the leader if he noticed anything abnormal. On resuming the march after a break, they had to make sure not a scrap of paper had been left in the place where they had stopped. This was the kind of common sense instilled into them by the veteran soldiers while marching.

I also did all I could for the Children's Company.

On crossing a rapid stream for example, I carried the boys on my back. Once the "little bridegroom" also crossed the river on my back. His fellow soldiers made fun of him, saying what a shame it was for a married man to be hanging on another's back like a child, but the naive "little bridegroom" did not mind it at all. When marching together with the Children's Company, I began to point out every minor detail in the same manner: "There is a tree, be careful of it," "A puddle here, jump over it," "Be careful, crossing the river," and so forth.

The Children's Company members were always hungry. The meals in the guerrilla army could scarcely be better than those they had at home. When we were moving from Changbai to Linjiang with them, we often ate watery gruel because that was all there was to eat. On the days they ate gruel they were dying with hunger. The cook always brought my meal separately, but I used to go to the table of the children-soldiers, my gruel bowl in hand, to share my portion with them.

Our sharp-tempered sergeant-major, Jon Hui, visited me one day and implored me not to share my portion with them. If this continued, she complained, it would spoil the health of the Comrade Commander. I persuaded her as follows:

"Comrade Jon Hui, don't worry too much. A little hunger will

never harm me. But things are different with the boys in the Children's Company. They are not yet hardened enough, so they find hunger very difficult to endure. At their age they can digest even sand. They are eating gruel all the time, so imagine how hungry they must be! Who else will look after them, in these circumstances if we don't?"

My greatest concern was given to developing the ideological education of the Children's Company. Whenever I had time to spare, I was their teacher. I began by teaching the illiterate among them to read and write. The boys were greatly interested in the biographies of renowned men, so I talked a lot about the lives of famous men. I also lectured on the history of Korea's downfall. Many of the Children's Company dreamed of carrying pistols and hand grenades with them, as An Jung Gun, Yun Pong Gil and Ri Pong Chang had done, to kill the emperor of Japan or the governor-general of Korea. I explained to them that independence was best achieved through nationwide resistance centred on armed struggle, not by individual acts of terrorism. Tireless efforts were needed to infuse these children with our revolutionary line.

On the march from Changbai to Linjiang we had dozens of engagements with the enemy, but not once did I let the Children's Company take part in the action. I had them watch from afar to see how the veteran soldiers fought the enemy. Once one of them was wounded by a stray bullet. Every time the wound ached, he cried for his dad. Looking at him, I thought that if his parents could see his bullet wound, how bitterly they would grieve. I told O Il Nam to take loving care of his "men," for they were the treasured successors of the revolution. We pampered them, but we did not dote on them all the time. When they made a mistake we criticized them sharply, or toughened them by mixing them with the veteran soldiers.

One night, while making my rounds of the encampment, I found the Children's Company sleeping with their shoes off. This was contrary to discipline. When drafting our rules for bivouacking, we had put down an article forbidding the soldiers to take off their shoes when sleeping. The guerrilla army had to be constantly on its guard against

surprise attacks by the enemy, so for anyone to sleep without shoes or clothes on because he was unable to endure the momentary inconvenience was tantamount to suicide. Our officers and men therefore always slept with their uniforms and shoes on and their rifles in their arms in order to be ready to leap into action at a time of emergency. They slept with their packs under their head like pillows.

That night I severely criticized Jon Hui.

“With such tenderness you cannot train the children to be fighters. Suppose the enemy were to attack us at this moment, what would happen to the children? They might get their feet injured or frost-bitten. Their parents gave them into our care, so we must look after them with the same feeling as their parents, brothers and sisters. Our hearts may ache for them right now, but for the sake of the future we have to train them in a principled manner.”

My criticism made such a strong impression on her that decades later she reminded Jo Myong Son, a deputy chief of the General Staff of the People’s Army, of this experience:

“Do you remember that I was criticized because of your feet?”

Jo Myong Son instantly understood his former sergeant-major’s reference. He replied, overwhelmed with emotion:

“Of course, I do. Comrade Jon Hui, you were criticized because I slept with my shoes off in the encampment. ... This was when I belonged to the Children’s Company, when we were learning the ABCs of the revolution. Tough as they were, I still yearn for those years.”

One does remember all one’s life the hardships and loving care one experienced in one’s childhood. The memory of this experience still lights our life warmly, like light of an undying fire. More than half a century has passed since then, and the boys of 14 or 15 at the time are over seventy, yet they have not forgotten the comrades who cared for and loved them like their own blood brothers.

Under the kind assistance and concern of the veteran guerrillas, our Children’s Company rapidly grew up. They began to clamour for participation in battle, side by side with the veteran guerrillas. It was

the battle of Xinfangzi that baptized the Children's Company. From this battle on they went through innumerable engagements with the enemy, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the veterans. Many things happened in the course of these battles.

In spite of the hundreds of precautions we had given them, these little guerrillas did unexpected things—things that went beyond the imagination of the grown-ups once a battle had started, things that left us breathless or made us double over with laughter. The boys, cool and collected at ordinary times, were gripped by feverish excitement as soon as the battle started, sometimes doing crazy things in their flurry. One boy was yanked down by the collar by a veteran soldier and fell on his buttocks: he had started blasting away with his gun while keeping his upper body exposed because he thought it was just too much of a nuisance to take cover.

Another boy had gone without a cap for some time because his brand-new cap had burned up in the campfire. From then on he concentrated so intently on the thought of a cap, that in an encounter with an enemy soldier his first move was an attempt to grab the man's cap before shooting him down. Because of this he very nearly lost his life. Another boy, who saw a roe deer while on sentry duty, was seized with an irresistible impulse to shoot it, which resulted in an emergency call for the entire unit.

Throughout the years of arduous war, the Children's Company members distinguished themselves in many battles. The unusual circumstances of life in the guerrilla army prompted them to display the kind of sharp intelligence and courage that was rare in ordinary life.

One day Jon Mun Sop, Ri Tu Ik and Kim Ik Hyon, out on a liaison mission, came across a small unit of the Manchukuo army. Both sides discovered each other simultaneously. The situation was such that unless they made the first move, they would be surrounded or captured. At this crucial moment the boy guerrillas fell flat on the ground in the bush and one of them, feigning a man's voice, shouted, "First Company to the left, 2<sup>nd</sup> Company to the right!" They then went on the attack, firing well-aimed shots at them. The enemy took flight without

offering a resistance. They returned to the unit after carrying out their liaison mission successfully.

It is worthy of note that they regarded this feat as nothing special when they got back, not even bothering to tell the rest of the unit about it at once. I learned of their commendable act only when I was told of it by their company commander. The Children's Company members matured beyond recognition in ideology and will and in morality as well. They tried to do everything by themselves, endeavouring in every way not to be a burden on the veteran guerrillas.

In the autumn of the year in which the Children's Company was formed, Kim Ik Hyon got a bad burn on his leg while sleeping beside a campfire. Worse still, he had a sore eye, so he was going through a lot of trouble just then. Because of his poor sight, the veterans walked side by side with him on the march. Kim Ik Hyon was feeling acute pain in his calf all this time, but did not betray the fact because he was reluctant to cause a trouble to me and the veterans. Sensing his discomfort from the burn on his leg, I gave him some medicine. Looking at the mark of the burn, I could not help but admire his strong will and endurance.

During the entire period of the anti-Japanese war the young men from Children's Company fought as courageously as the veterans, despite their tender age and physical shortcomings, making heroic contributions to the armed struggle. The Japanese army and police had a standard warning for their men: Don't talk to guerrillas trained in the Children's Company. In other words, better avoid fighting with them.

Let me give Kim Song Guk as an example. He became a boy guerrilla with the help of Kim Il.

Kim Il worked underground in a village near Jiansanfeng for a long time. He did a great deal of work aided by Kim Sang Hyon, a member of the ARF, who hid him at his farm hut for three months and sincerely assisted him in his work. The peasant was a widower. After his wife died, he sent out his three sons as hired-hands to others because he was unable to support them himself. Kim Song Guk was the eldest of these sons.

Kim Il was at a loss as to how to help this miserable family, and finally made up his mind to recommend Kim Song Guk to the guerrilla army. One day he went to him as he was weeding a field, and giving him a note of introduction addressed to me, told him to go and see me. The boy, Kim Song Guk, threw away the hoe and came to me in hempen clothes to join the guerrilla army.

As he had faced many unusual hardships from childhood on, Kim Song Guk was quick to learn. In addition, because he was bold and aggressive, he mastered marksmanship and learned the guerrilla code of conduct quickly. In a few months, he was picked out as assistant to machine-gunner O Paek Ryong. Kim Il always looked upon him with profound affection.

During one very cold winter, while we were operating near the River Songhua, Kim Song Guk was out on a blocking mission for some time. One day he was warming his foot over the campfire and, as he felt the sole to be too hot, he pulled off his shoes.

Unfortunately, just at that moment the blocking party was attacked by the enemy. To make matters worse, the machine-gunner O Paek Ryong was not there. Ordered by the commanding officer, Kim Song Guk hastily set up the machine gun on the ice of the Songhua and opened fire at the enemy. He was completely oblivious of the fact that he was fighting barefoot.

While he was engrossed in shooting, he felt somebody pulling his foot back.

He looked behind him angrily, to see Kim Il wrapping his foot in a torn piece of underwear. Only then did he realize that he had rushed into the battlefield with no shoes on. After the enemy was beaten back, Kim Il reproached him, saying: "Don't make such a spectacle of yourself! Do you want to have your foot amputated?"

After finishing the battle, Kim Il came and told me that he had seen Kim Song Guk running over the ice of the River Songhua, the machine gun on his shoulder. Each time he lifted his bare foot from the ice there came the sound of tearing skin. Of course, Kim Song Guk was no ordinary fellow, machine-gunning barefoot on the ice in the biting cold

as he did. Nevertheless, Kim Il, too, was an uncommon person in that he followed the little machine-gunner through the hail of bullets and swathed his foot with pieces of cloth torn from his underwear. If Kim Il had not done that, Kim Song Guk would have ended up with seriously frostbitten feet and become a wingless bird.

Later, Kim Il and I stood surety for him when he was admitted to the Communist Party.

How loyal he was to the revolution is well illustrated by many anecdotes from the years of small-unit activity.

The first half of the 1940s was a period of trial that tested the revolutionary spirit of every guerrilla soldier. In these grim days Kim Song Guk fought well without the slightest vacillation. He frequently went back to the homeland to do underground work. One day in Rajin he was stopped by the police because of a trivial slip on his part: he was suddenly caught in the rain, so he bought a parasol, not an umbrella. Having spent his childhood in the remote mountain area of Jiazaishui, he had no idea of the difference between an umbrella and a parasol. As soon as he walked out of the shop under the woman's parasol he attracted people's attention. This incurred the suspicion of a passing policeman, who stopped him and asked him where he had stolen it, pointing to the parasol. Kim Song Guk replied honestly that he had bought it in a shop. The policeman asked why he had purchased a woman's parasol. He replied that he had been asked to do so by the woman next door, who needed one.

But the policeman marched him to the police station and questioned him doggedly. He thought of running away after hitting the policeman over the head with a chair, but abandoned the idea. If he did so he would be unable to continue his underground activity in the city, and another operative would have to come here in his place at the risk of his life.

When the policeman who had brought him to the station went out on patrol, another policeman took up the interrogation. At one point the policeman opened the drawer of the table and saw the hundreds of *won* his colleague had seized from Kim Song Guk. Greedy for the money, he released Kim.

He had an even closer call on his way back from a small-unit operation in the homeland in the summer of the following year. As he was returning to the base after the fulfillment of his mission behind enemy lines, he got into a gun fight with the enemy and ended up with multiple wounds. He climbed down into the valley and hid himself in the bush, so the enemy failed to discover him. I dispatched a detail, led by Im Chol, to search for him. The detail found him lying unconscious in the valley. It was a miracle he was still alive, with the number of wounds he had received. He said he had eaten grass until the moment he lost consciousness.

After Kim Song Guk had returned to the training base, we got in contact with the organ concerned and sent him to a field hospital in the Soviet Union. He recovered his health after one year of treatments in the hospital. The medical workers and the other patients took great care of him, particularly the young nurse in charge of him, who gave a blood transfusion to him and attended on him with great devotion day and night, calling him “an immortal bird of the Korean guerrilla army.”

The nurse was a young German woman whose father, an anti-fascist fighter, had been shot to death by the Hitlerites. She and her mother had come to live in the Soviet Union as exiles. The girl respected Kim Song Guk as a fighter for the weaker nations of the East and did everything she could to help him recover. She spared no pains, setting him on the toilet, washing his face and feeding him at mealtime. When he was recuperating she served him fine chicken dishes she herself had prepared at home to whet his appetite.

On the day he was leaving the hospital, the girl’s mother visited him and invited him to her house. It was customary, she said, for a patient to go to sanatorium after hospital treatment. She asked him to stay at her home for several days to recuperate before his departure. Kim Song Guk willingly accepted her invitation.

The girl’s mother was a teacher at the town art school. Even in the inclement climate of Siberia, she raised scores of chickens and grew perennial pepper plants. Every day they prepared new chicken dishes for Kim Song Guk. In their leisure time they loved to listen to his tales

about the struggle of the Korean guerrillas. What impressed the girl and her mother most were tales of teenagers who had plunged into the tempest of revolution. It seemed incredible to them that young children were taking part in the guerrilla struggle. The girl's mother often drew Kim's portrait, saying that she would introduce the fighter-hero of Korea to Europe.

As Kim Song Guk recuperated, the girl learned about Korea, its history, revolutionaries and people from him. As a result of her acquaintance with him, she began to feel an attachment to Korea.

"Your stories of the Children's Company have convinced me of one thing: your country will emerge victorious in the fight against Japan. I am sure you will defeat Japan and emerge victorious."

She repeated this often. When Kim Song Guk was about to return to our unit the girl and her mother, together with his Soviet doctors, accompanied him to bid farewell to him.

The girl and her mother wished to give him their savings passbook, in which was entered a large sum of money, as a memento of their parting. But he declined their kind offer.

Saying good-bye to him, her mother said:

"You still need to rest, but we will not keep you here any longer. No matter how much I might try to persuade you to stay longer, you will not. Revolution will surely triumph in Korea with fighters like you!"

Hearing Kim Song Guk's account of this experience when he was back, I was greatly moved by the internationalist sympathy shown by the German girl and her mother. We sent him back with money and pork to express our thanks to them on behalf of the KPRA.

Kim Chol Man was another fine example of what an excellent furnace of ideological training and useful military and political academy the Children's Company was.

Kim Chol Man followed old man Tobacco Pipe, who had been to the area around Diyangxi on a small-unit mission, to come to us. He finally joined the Children's Company, but the first time he presented himself in front of me, I reproached Tobacco Pipe, saying, "What are we going to do with him? You have brought a shortie to us. Look at

him, he's smaller than a rifle!"

While I was venting my frustration, Ri Tong Baek sprang up and said in his defence, "Shortie? He is all of 17. He may be young physically, but his mind is fully mature."

At first I thought that Kim Chol Man had lied about his age to Tobacco Pipe. I took him to be 12 or 13. I tried to persuade him to return home, saying that he should not be gazing up a tree he was incapable of climbing.

But, Kim Chol Man said, grinning, "Don't belittle me because I am short, General. I'm an old hand at all sorts of farm work despite my youth."

Then he showed me his forearm, which looked stronger and more muscular than other boys'.

After joining the Children's Company he was in the vanguard of every undertaking. When the company was disbanded, he became the orderly of O Jung Hup, commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment and performed his duty in a responsible way. When O Jung Hup was killed in action, he shed tears more than the others.

He took special care for the personal safety of O Paek Ryong who succeeded O Jung Hup as regimental commander.

On small-unit operations he was always a part of the detail led by O Paek Ryong. He frequently crossed the Soviet-Manchurian border and the River Tuman on political missions to rally the anti-Japanese resistance forces and to scout the enemy's military strategic points. The bravery and talent of Kim Chol Man as a military commander, seasoned in the flames of the anti-Japanese war, came into their own in the great anti-US war. He fought efficiently during the first advance to the south; and he fought all the more bravely behind the enemy lines. The regiment he was commanding attacked the enemy from the rear continually, operating over a 250-mile-wide region in Yanggu, Chunchon, Kaphyong, Thongchon, Pohang, Chongsong and Kunwi in Kangwon Province, and in the areas of North Kyongsang Province.

The tug-of-war between the enemy and the regiment was so fierce that the people in Yanggu were in a state of anxiety because they had

not been able to harvest their grain. As Yanggu was liberated, Kim Chol Man called together the officials of the county and with great composure organized the grain harvest. The county people got together with his regiment and brought in the field crops in just a few days.

I am told that Kim Chol Man never misses an opportunity to say that it has been thanks to the Leader that he grew up to be a military and political official trusted and loved by Supreme Commander Kim Jong Il, and that had the Leader not admitted him to the Children's Company, brought him up and taken care of him, he would have spent the rest of his life as an unknown woodcutter or peasant.

I think these are his innermost thoughts.

The young guerrillas who took up arms at a tender age without belonging to the Children's Company, also made an important contribution to our victory in the anti-Japanese war.

Kim Pyong Sik was working at a tunnel construction site as a boy of 15. He was so bold, he came to join the guerrilla army all by himself. In the army he served as orderly to Mun Pung Sang and Choe Chun Guk for a while. The commanding officers praised him and approved of him as an agile soldier.

He was dispatched frequently for activities behind enemy lines and distinguished himself. Whistling casually, he came and went as he pleased across the tightly cordoned River Tuman, frequenting northern border towns of Korea, such as Unggi (Sonbong), Rajin and Hoeryong, as if visiting a neighbouring village. The information he collected at the risk of his life about enemy movements in the homeland was greatly helpful to us when we were preparing our offensive for the liberation of Korea. Unfortunately he was arrested by the enemy on the very eve of national liberation. The Japanese executioners sentenced him to death, since collectively his activities added up to the equivalent of a time bomb beneath the foundations of the Japanese empire. Later the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. The enemy seemed to have taken into account the fact that he was a minor.

Kim Pyong Sik was the youngest "convict" in the Sodaemun prison. Each time he drew fatigue duty, he skilfully performed the part

of messenger for Kwon Yong Byok, Ri Je Sun, Ri Tong Gol, Ji Thae Hwan, Pak Tal and So Ung Jin, who were serving their terms in different cells of the prison. To make him turn traitor, the enemy by turns tortured, threatened and coaxed him, but in vain. He was a very honourable fighter.

Among the anti-Japanese revolutionary veterans, Ri Jong San and Ri O Song were the youngest to join. Ri Jong San joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps of the Anti-Japanese Allied Army at the age of 11 and became a guerrilla.

When Ri Jong San came to join up in the revolutionary army, Feng Zhong-yun, political commissar of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps, examined him for admission. At first, Feng advised him to go home, for he could not admit the boy as it was against common sense to allow a child of 11 to become a soldier. Worse still, he was short in stature. Although he could lie about his age, he could not do anything with his stature. But he clung to Feng like a leech and won approval at long last.

Once in the army, he led a proper soldier's life, true to others' expectations. The men and officers in his unit unanimously treasured and loved him as if he were their own brother, for he was quick-eyed, prompt in action and willing to work more than others. He was mostly an orderly in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps. Once he served for Kim Chaek and Pak Kil Song as their orderly.

As far as I remember it was in 1943 when Kim Chaek introduced him to me, saying that he was an excellent aide-de-camp. From that time on, he worked close to me. I still remember what Kim Chaek told me in a moment of digression about his birth. Ri's family had lived in Phaltonggyo, Pyongyang, but around the time when I was attending Changdok School, they emigrated to Manchuria. His mother gave birth to him on the train bound for Shenyang. She had neither quilt nor diapers. Her fellow travellers on the train collected money, penny by penny, and gave it to her to buy clothes for the baby.

After liberation he worked as my aide-de-camp for several years, along with Son Jong Jun and others. On his appointment as my aide-de-camp, he stopped smoking in consideration of my health. It is

not an easy thing to get rid of one's 10-year habit.

The military and political cadres we had dispatched to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps in Qinggouzi included O Jung Son (O Se Yong), O Jung Hup's brother, who had been a squad leader of the Wangqing guerrillas. A battalion political commissar in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps, he had lost his right index finger to an enemy bullet in battle. When he wanted to smoke, Ri Jong San would roll a cigarette for him, rush to some other guerrilla and light it from the other's cigarette. He had to puff at it once or twice while doing this, and thus became a habitual smoker before he realized it.

Even though I offered him a cigarette now and then, he did not take it. I had to admire his dutiful self-restraint.

One of the young guerrillas who trekked many steep mountains shoulder to shoulder with us in the anti-Japanese revolution, was Thae Pyong Ryol, who came to the Mihunzhen Secret Camp in the spring of 1936 at the head of a women's platoon. He told me that he had joined the KPRA and taken up arms at the age of 15 or 16.

He was nicknamed "Chili." It meant that though short and of small size, he was mature in his heart. He fought audaciously and lived a well-regulated life. After joining the anti-Japanese guerrillas he took part in the battles at Miaoling, Jincang, Jiansanfeng, Mujihe, Dapuchaihe, Dashaha-Dajianggang, Emu county town and in other battles, and performed as well as any veteran. He became a perfect marksman in the course of performing these military services. The tale of Thae Pyong Ryol, along with regimental commander, Ri Ryong Un, going to an internment village in Dunhua County and mowing down 30 puppet Manchukuo army soldiers in an instant is still told with relish among anti-Japanese war veterans. As he was an efficient combatant, even proud veterans dared not to slight him because of his youth.

Throughout most of the anti-Japanese war, he was an orderly to An Kil, Jon Tong Gyu, Ri Ryong Un and other military and political cadres, many of whom wanted to take him with them, for he was quick-eyed, a workaholic and equipped with a strong sense of responsibility.

As an orderly, he showed special concern for the personal safety of his officers.

When they attempted to plunge themselves into critical situations, he would check them from doing it, sometimes bodily. He would retort sharply that it was the General's demand that they not run a risk and they should not go against this demand. Regimental commander, Jon Tong Gyu, was killed during the Dashahe-Dajianggang battle because he did not give heed to Thae's words, but exposed himself in a rain of bullets.

An Kil said that he would have been killed like Jon Tong Gyu if he had not been obedient to Thae, who had begged him not to run a risk while clinging tenaciously to the collar of his tunic.

While participating in the activities of small units after the meeting at Xiaohaerbaling, Thae ran into a large unit of the enemy in a deep forest in Wangqing County, and fought a fierce battle. He was seriously wounded in the thigh by a bullet that got stuck between the bones and could not be dislodged. He bled so badly that he kept passing out, and the wound was ghastly as it turned maggoty. If it was not treated in time, the infection would spread into the intestines or bladder. But the young soldier Wang, who was left in the forest to nurse him, had no medical knowledge, nor the skill to perform an operation.

Thae sharpened his pocket knife on a stone and performed his own operation on the wound. As he plunged the knife into the wound and twisted it with great force, the bullet between bones came loose, falling out with deep-yellow pus and putrefied flesh. This prompt action saved his life.

The following year, when his comrades met me at one of our places of operation in Wangqing, they said, "That chap is a man of fierce character." They meant that he was a man of strong willpower, an estimation I thought quite apt. It is not everyone that can operate on himself. This is an adventure that requires someone with extraordinary guts and courage.

Over a long span of time, living with him, I formed the opinion that

he is really a strong-hearted and plucky man, a man of loyalty, determination and principle, who fights like an angry tiger for the revolution. Whatever he did anywhere, he stuck fast to principle and never compromised with what he saw to be unjust. His greatest hatred was for the factionalists and warlordists. Being a man of principle and of strong Party spirit, even such a warlordist as Kim Chang Bong did not dare dictate on him.

Thae Pyong Ryol not only fought bravely during the anti-Japanese war but also performed great exploits during the Fatherland Liberation War. After the war, he faithfully assisted me as my aide. As the saying goes, a youth full of care means a plentiful old age; Thae Pyong Ryol had been able to become the kind of revolutionary who surmounted all the twists and turns of fate because he had taken up arms in his youth. A man becomes a distinguished revolutionary and an iron-willed man afraid of nothing only if he has engaged in armed struggle in his early years.

In half a year all the boys in the Children's Company grew into soldiers indistinguishable from the veterans. They made truly marvellous progress, toward the close of 1937, when they had all become full-fledged soldiers, we disbanded the Children's Company and spread its members out to other companies. This way they were transferred from the reserves to active army units.

Not a single renegade or laggard appeared among the guerrillas who had been trained in the Children's Company. This proves how loyal they were to the Party and the revolution, the country and the people. Even in the trying days before national liberation, when fascism was going through its struggle to the death in the East and the West, they all faithfully carried out the small-unit activities under my command. In the years of building a new Korea it was they who, as division commanders or regimental commanders, built the armed forces of the country hand in hand with the revolutionary elders and crushed the US generals and tanks in the "punch-bowl."

Kang Kon, the first Chief of General Staff of the Korean People's Army, joined the revolutionary army at the age of 16. He was 30 when

he was appointed Chief of General Staff. At the end of 1948 he paid a visit to the Soviet Union. The high-ranking military cadres of the host country, mostly generals and marshals, who were present at the airport to meet him were really surprised to see that the Chief of General Staff of the Korean People's Army was such a young man.

When Kang Kon told me of this after his return home, I remarked with a smile:

“If I had been there I would have told them that you were already a renowned soldier in your childhood.”

Since the days of the Children's Company I have come to think that a man's physical age does not coincide with his mental age. Of the two age categories I place more emphasis on the latter. One's mental age in youth or in childhood may leap forward by two, three or even five years in one year.

The education of young people is one truly essential factor in the shaping of a country's future. As shown by the experiences of the Children's Company, the earlier, the more carefully the successors of a revolution, the reserves, are prepared, the better it is for the future of the country.

## **7. My Thought about Revolutionary Obligation**

Every precious fruit of the anti-Japanese revolution reaped in West Jiandao and in the area of Mt. Paektu was won through a bloody struggle. As the revolution developed in depth, the offensive of the enemy to destroy it became violent as never before. Although the Japanese imperialists were writhing under the heavy burden of the Sino-Japanese War they themselves had unleashed, they were scheming to crush our revolution by mobilizing all the latest products of modern military science and by using the fascist repressive means practised through decades of tyranny and territorial expansion. However, no stratagem or machination could stop our advance.

Whenever the enemy tried to crush the revolution by force, we subdued them with our superb tactics and ingenious plans, our comradely unity and revolutionary obligation. Moreover, the more they ran amok to repress us, the more we strengthened our ties with the people; the more they tried to disintegrate us ideologically, the more we consolidated the unity of our ranks in ideology and will and our solidarity in morality and obligation.

Obligation is a moral concept inherent in man. In old society, too, honest people attached great importance to obligation and regarded it as the basic criterion of man.

The former moral standards of the old society preached inequality under which one side was to put restraint upon the other and the latter was to unconditionally obey the former. They restricted man's independence and creativity. The moral standards of the old society were unable to put forward progressive demands such as loving the people and working in the interests of the people.

In the course of our revolutionary struggle we did away with various kinds of feudal human relationships and moral standards left

over from the old society, and created new, communist ones, which we passed on to our posterity as a treasure.

It was communist obligation based on love and trust that governed the relations between the superiors and inferiors and between comrades in the anti-Japanese guerrilla army as well as the relations between the army and the people.

There are tens of thousands of laws in this world. However, one is mistaken if one thinks that laws alone can control and manipulate the multifarious activities of man. A law is not an almighty weapon which moves this world. Laws cannot govern all the thoughts and actions of man. How can laws govern love or friendship? If a judicial organ proclaims a law that tries to force people to love such and such people from now on, or make friends with such and such people, or take such and such women as wives, how will society accept it? Laws alone cannot govern everything in the world. Obligation and morality do what cannot be done by laws.

We started the revolution by winning comrades, and we constantly developed it in depth by strengthening comradely obligation and unity, becoming closely associated with the people and forming unbreakable ties with them. As it is at present, so in the past, too, comradeship was an important lifeline decisive to the issue of our revolution. The decades of the Korean communists' glorious struggle can be said to be the history of the development of comradeship and comradely obligation.

We were not a rabble who had gathered for the acquisition of wealth or for speculation, but a collective of revolutionaries who were united with the same desire and aim: the freedom and independence of the country. Our common idea made us share life and death from the start. There was therefore no room in our ranks for those who slept in the same bed as us but had different dreams from ours, or those who engaged in duplicity.

Taking a serious view of comradeship and comradely obligation was the mode of existence for our ranks. We regarded collectivism as our life and soul; it was our intrinsic need. The anti-Japanese guerrillas

pooled their efforts and wisdom to obtain a single rifle, a single sack of rice and a single pair of shoes. In this course they came to have the revolutionary faith of "Defeat the enemy, no matter how often we may have to die!" and to create the noble communist moral principle of "Let's share life and death!" They also understood the truth that in unity lies victory.

The anti-Japanese revolution was unprecedented in that it was fiercer and far more arduous than any preceding revolution. The protracted and fluctuating course we followed involved hardships seldom experienced even by many generations in succession.

The more difficulties and trials they faced, the higher the anti-Japanese guerrillas raised the slogan of comradely unity, struggling through all their tribulations by dint of comradeship. We countered the enemy's strategy of isolating and crushing us with a strategy of revolutionary obligation and unity.

Of the obligation formed in the days of the anti-Japanese revolution, obligation between the leader and the masses occupied a conspicuous place. Since the time the centre of unity was formed in the Korean revolution, we have invariably shown particular concern to strengthening the relations between the leader and the masses; we have also done our best to form a harmonious whole of leader and masses, uniting them in morality and obligation.

The relations between the leader and the masses that we speak of are different from the obligation of ancient people, which required that justice and righteousness should mark the relations between sovereign and subject. For the Korean communists the mutual relations between the leader and the masses can be expressed as one body and one mind. The communist obligation of our own style is one in which the leader serves the masses and the masses are unfailingly loyal to the leader.

The Korean communists of the younger generation placed me at the centre of their unity and created a new history of the leader and his men striving to shape the destiny of the nation bonded as one. It can be said that most important in the obligation cherished by the communists of the younger generation and the anti-Japanese revolutionary fighters

was their loyalty to their leader, their Commander.

Factional strife and scramble for hegemony were alien to the communists of the younger generation. Once they had placed me at the centre of leadership, they did not look at anyone else. And they entirely entrusted their destiny to their leader. Herein lies the purity of their communist obligation.

The communists of the younger generation such as Kim Hyok and Cha Kwang Su and many other anti-Japanese guerrillas who were with me on the battlefield during the hard-fought anti-Japanese revolutionary war all possessed pure obligation and created a noble and beautiful morality. Whenever we talk about the obligation of the anti-Japanese revolutionary fighters, I first recall Kim Il. Kim Il spent nearly 50 years of his life in revolutionary turmoil. Together with me, he waged the anti-Japanese war, built a new country, fought against the US imperialists and built socialism.

From the days of the anti-Japanese revolution Kim Il was widely known to us as a veteran political worker with rich experience. He conducted underground party work and was engaged to a large extent in work with the Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist units in the area of Jiandao around Antu and Helong. In this course he trained many revolutionaries.

Kim Il achieved great success in his work with the Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist units under the command of such bosses as Du Yi-shun, Sun Chang-xian and Quan Yong-lin in the Paektu days. He was so skilful in his work with them that Quan Yong-lin from Antu was even resolved to take his unit and fight with us by being enrolled into the People's Revolutionary Army.

Kim Il took Quan Yong-lin's unit to Fusong, having heard that our unit had advanced there, but unfortunately we had left Manjiang and were in Changbai when he and the unit appeared in the Fusong area. The men in the unit began to waver, claiming that Kim Il had deceived them. On top of that, they were suffering from a shortage of food, and so Kim Il was put into an extremely miserable situation.

As the unit, including the commander, continued their march,

having had no proper food for three days, some of the soldiers found an *insam* field in a mountain. The men, who were on the brink of starvation, rushed into the field in a chaotic way, ignoring their commander, and began to dig and eat *insam*. This was really unimaginable to Kim Il, a commander of the People's Revolutionary Army. He told them that digging *insam* without the owner's permission was unjust, an infringement on the people's interests, and tried to stop them.

The men of the Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist unit, who had lost their reason, went to see their boss Quan Yong-lin and said: Pak Tok San (Kim Il's real name—Tr.) is a mysterious character. He said that Kim Il Sung's unit was in Fusong, but it wasn't. Is there any need for us to keep following him, since he told such a lie? Now he says that the unit of General Kim Il Sung has gone to Changbai. We cannot believe this. Pak Tok San is even stopping us from digging *insam*. What else can this be but an attempt to starve us to death? If we continue following Pak, we may end up in real trouble, so, let's finish him off and go back to Antu.

Although Kim Il knew that the soldiers of the Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist unit might actually try to kill him, he had no fear. On the contrary, he talked to them with composure: "Well, kill me if you want. But I have one request. Wait for me until I come back. I'll go to the owner of the *insam* field and apologize to him for having eaten some of his *insam*. Don't touch any more of it because we have no money to pay for it."

Moved by Kim Il's speech and behaviour, commander Quan Yong-lin vouched for him without hesitation. He warned his men that he would shoot to death anyone who dared touch any more *insam* and sent Kim Il to see the owner of the field.

Some time later Kim Il returned to the unit bringing the owner with him. He undid his knapsack and took out dumplings prepared by the owner and passed them on to the men of the unit. Then he produced a piece of opium and told the field owner that the opium was the only thing he had and asked him to accept it as payment for the dumplings

and *insam* that had been consumed by the men. Wang De-tai had given the opium to Kim Il for emergency use. Despite the repeated refusal of the owner of the *insam* field to accept the opium, Kim Il never accepted the refusal.

Moved by this, the owner of the field offered all his winter provisions in the mountain, and guided Quan Yong-lin's unit to Manjiang. When they reached Manjiang, the men of the Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist unit came to see Kim Il and apologized to him for their error.

I finally met Kim Il in the secret camp of Hongtoushan in the area of Mt. Paektu and enrolled the Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist unit into our main force.

Kim Il was a man of annoyingly few words. When I asked him on the first day at the secret camp when he had joined the revolution and what he had done in the struggle, he answered shortly that he had been a part of the revolution since the early 1930s and had done nothing in particular. He made the same answer when I repeated my question. Though it was our first interview, he seemed to be too reticent and unsociable. This was his merit as well as his shortcoming.

The excellent points of his character were that he was unpretentious, without guile, and worked faithfully in the same unchanging manner no matter how adverse the situation. He never once blamed conditions, worked with consistency and rarely uttered a word.

Kim Il was an out-and-out revolutionary who saw the act of following my orders and instructions as the obligation of a soldier to his leader, not as the duty of an inferior to his superior. He experienced no particular setbacks in performing his tasks, for he performed all of them with obligation.

Still vivid in my memory is the time when I appointed him political instructor of the 1<sup>st</sup> Company, 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment, at the secret camp in Matanggou. The duties of the political instructor of the company were not easy. The regimental commander, Quan Yong-lin, had been killed during the battle of Huinan county town and the post of political

commissar of the regiment was left vacant for lack of a suitable man; in this situation the political instructor of the 1<sup>st</sup> Company had to discharge the duty of the regimental political commissar for the time being. The company commander was a faithful man, but he fell short of qualifications.

After frankly talking to him about the situation, I asked him if he knew the importance of his post. He thought deeply before answering in short, "I understand." Then he shut his mouth. The attitude with which he viewed a task was always the same: he accepted it with the one short phrase, "I understand."

When I went to the 1<sup>st</sup> Company the next day to help him in his work, he was not there. The company commander was there alone; he told me that as soon as he had come to the new post, Kim Il had left for Beigangtun, Fusong County, where the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was stationed. When appointing him political instructor of the company the previous day, I had said in passing that there was no news from the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon in Fusong. He had listened attentively and apparently made up his mind to go to Beigangtun and acquaint himself with the platoon's situation.

He returned to the company with a large amount of grain and many weapons at dawn the next day. When I heard of his return, I could not believe it. Beigangtun is more than 25 miles away from Matanggou. If it was true that he had returned, then he might have gone on a forced march of more than 50 miles to get there and back in a day.

Without taking off his knapsack, Kim Il called on me and made a brief report—the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was safe and working as it should, the contact with the platoon was severed because the soldier who had left to bring the message had got lost on his way, the grain and weapons he had taken with him from Beigangtun had been captured by the platoon after attacking the enemy and been donated by the people, and he had brought along some young people in that region without the consent of Headquarters because they had so earnestly wanted to join the army.

After sending him to his barracks, I talked to the volunteers he had brought with him. In the course of the talk, I got to know that Kim Il had led the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon in a raid on the enemy's police station and a

wicked landowner's house in Jinlongtun, and captured great amounts of grain and many weapons.

Kim Il had had two aims in raiding the den of the enemy: one was to take revenge on behalf of the people by liquidating the landlord and policemen, and the other was to obtain the grain over which I had been so worried. In those days we were experiencing many difficulties for lack of grain. Hundreds of men carried on military and political study in one camp for months, and the grain obtained by the members of the supply department was not sufficient. It was a time when it was impossible to obtain a sack of grain without fighting a battle. And Kim Il had secured a large amount of rice unexpectedly for the benefit of the whole unit. I was very grateful to him.

Later the people in Jinlongtun brought support goods on four or five occasions to the secret camp in Matanggou to show their gratitude to the revolutionary army.

When the unit ran short of grain, Kim Il would volunteer before anybody else and leave with his men to obtain it. Each time he returned from the enemy-held areas, he brought with him sacks of rice. Even though he himself went hungry or ate uncrushed maize, he tried his best to ensure that I always had cooked rice. His knapsack was twice as big and heavy as others' because he always carried reserve grain around in it.

Kim Il did not think of himself first but of his comrades, his neighbours, and the interests of the Party and the revolution. He worked in a high post of the Party and the state for a long time, but he did not expect any privileges, special favours or better treatment for himself. If his subordinates tried to treat him in a special way, he forbade them to do it.

After liberation he helped me and supported me faithfully as in the days of the anti-Japanese revolution. He did not discriminate against any tasks, if they were what I wanted him to do. He was not particular about his post or sector, be it Party work, building the army, or economic guidance, and involved himself in complicated state affairs without complaint.

One year he made a request at a session of the Political Committee of the Party Central Committee to dispatch him to the construction site of the Chongchongang Thermal-Power Plant as a delegate vested with full authority. At that time the construction of the plant was a capital project, in which state investment and attention were concentrated. Therefore, I was choosing in my mind a man who would be fit to command the project.

Nevertheless, I had to give deep thought to his request, for he was in extremely poor health. There was no knowing what might happen if he worked without caring about his health, as he had always done. Kim Il repeated his request so persistently that I had to comply with it, but on condition that at the construction site he work only to the extent of giving instructions in his capacity as an adviser and never overtax himself.

On arriving at the construction site, he set up his office in a makeshift building and promoted the project in a daring way, going up and down stairs as high as a seven or eight-storey building dozens of times a day. He worked day and night at the construction site till New Year's Eve and returned to Pyongyang after seeing to the lighting of the boiler No. 1; only then did he make a report to me about his work.

Kim Il was a man of this calibre. It is a well-known story that he continued to work in his office and review his Party life in his own Party cell till three days before his death, and that he called on a senior official in the Party Central Committee and requested that he attend well upon Comrade Kim Jong Il.

Just as he followed me and supported me with loyalty all his life, I valued him and took care of him as if he were my own kin.

In spite of his bulky body, he often suffered from diseases, apparently the legacy of the many hardships he had undergone during the guerrilla warfare in the mountains. Once doctors made the dreadful diagnosis that he had a cancer of the stomach. The day I received the report, I was so heartsick that I went on an unscheduled field guidance to Onchon, South Phyongan Province. I did not feel like working or eating in Pyongyang, nor could I calm myself down. If Kim Il should

pass away, there would be few people like him who could keep me company.

I felt quite depressed as several doctors, not just one or two, concluded that he had the fatal disease. Only one man insisted that it was not cancer. Accustomed as I was to a decision by majority, I did not know why, but I wanted that day to believe that doctor's diagnosis.

On my way I stopped my car and phoned to the Foreign Minister, and gave instructions to invite skilled cancer specialists from the Soviet Union. Receiving the telegraph from our Foreign Minister, the Soviet authorities immediately sent the doctors we had invited.

After examining Kim Il, the Soviet doctors' diagnosis was that it did not look like cancer. Taking him with them to the Soviet Union, they had him examined by another famous doctor, who also diagnosed that it was not cancer. If we had removed his stomach by believing the original diagnosis at that time, he might not have lived long.

Whenever I heard that he was suffering from a disease, I called on him and said, "You are indispensable to me. Now only a few anti-Japanese war veterans who fought with me remain alive; if you are not by my side, I will not be able to stand the gap in my life. You must take care of yourself. Don't overdo things."

However, even when he had to walk with the help of a cane because of a serious disease, he did not leave his office or production sites; he exerted all his energy to do one more bit for the Party and the revolution. Finally he got an incurable disease.

One day he told me for some reason that when he got out of his sickbed he would ride a roller coaster in Mangyongdae on April 15, my birthday. His words somehow startled me. I had an inkling that he sensed that his days were numbered, since for a man of few words to tell such an innermost thought was highly unusual.

Not surprisingly, he was not there to enjoy the children's performance on New Year's Eve that year. I visited his house that night.

"I have enjoyed the children's New Year performance with you every year; but as you were not present this evening, I felt tears well up

and blur my vision. So I came to see you.”

I said this to Kim Il, who was bedridden, as I rose to my feet. Following me out of the door to the entrance hall, he said repeatedly, “I beg you, don’t work too hard.”

That night I did not toast a Happy New Year with him for fear of his health. This still weighs on my mind. I was told that Kim Il, too, regretted after my departure that he had failed to drink a toast with me. Exchanging toasts would not cure his illness, nor make me feel better. But this failure touches a sore point in my heart whenever I think of Kim Il.

Kim Il treated Comrade Kim Jong Il as he would treat me, being faithful to him as he would be to me. I was struck with admiration on more than one occasion by his great reverence for Comrade Kim Jong Il. The day that Comrade Kim Jong Il returned home after a visit to China, Kim Il went to the railway station with the help of a cane to meet him. At that time I marvelled at his sincere attitude to his leader.

Comrade Kim Jong Il showed special respect and concern for Kim Il as his revolutionary senior. He said that Comrade Vice-President Kim Il was a typical communist revolutionary who had fought most staunchly for the development of our Party and the victory of the revolution from the days of the anti-Japanese armed struggle. Comrade Kim Jong Il always gave prominence to him and took warm care of him.

Just as I called him my right-hand man, Comrade Kim Jong Il also regarded him as my right-hand man. This was probably why Comrade Kim Jong Il grieved most when he passed away.

The anti-Japanese revolutionary fighters reached the highest stage not only in remaining faithful to their leader but also in staying loyal to their revolutionary comrades. Repaying love with love, trust with trust, and affection with affection—this was the obligation between the anti-Japanese guerrillas.

The friendship between Hwang Sun Hui and Kim Chol Ho can be called the archetype of comradeship and communist obligation

expressed among the anti-Japanese guerrillas.

Whenever I meet Hwang Sun Hui, I wonder at how such a small, fragile woman could have fought for a decade in the snowstorms of Mt. Paektu.

When I told people in the homeland on our return to Pyongyang after liberation that she had been a part of the guerrilla struggle for a decade, some people refused to believe it.

There were few women guerrillas as small as her in the KPRA units, but she was sturdy and audacious in the revolution.

It is not only men of bulky build that fight efficiently for the revolution or remain faithful. Rim Su San was a man of bulky build twice as big as Hwang Sun Hui, but unable to endure hardship, he turned traitor and forsook his obligation to his comrades. In contrast, Hwang Sun Hui continued in the revolution until the day of national liberation. Once they developed obligation and a strong will, even housewives fought for the revolution and little girls like Kim Kum Sun mounted the scaffold in defence of their principles. Hwang Sun Hui was able to fight for the revolution to the end with such a small body because she had strong faith and obligation.

I first saw her in military uniform in the secret camp in Mihunzhen. The women guerrillas' quarters had formerly been used by the mountain rebels. The *kang* (large, heated bed in Chinese houses) of the quarters of the Chinese rebels was very high. I looked down from the *kang* and saw a small, strange girl standing there, looking up at me and hesitating to say something. It was Hwang Sun Hui, who had obtained permission to join the guerrillas after badgering us for a week and had followed the unit as far as Mihunzhen. I took her to be a Children's Corps member that day.

What surprised me was that she herself insisted on being a guerrilla. I asked:

“How come you joined the guerrillas when you are so small?”

She replied that she had joined to avenge her father, who had been murdered by the Japanese imperialists, and her elder sister, who had fallen in a battle. Her elder brother, Hwang Thae Un, had been a

company commander in Choe Hyon's unit before being killed in battle in Hancoggou.

In her early days she was a burden to the others, but she soon became a flower of the revolutionary army, favoured by all. Persistent in all undertakings, she was a girl of fair judgement and principle, as well as a warm-hearted person with a sense of obligation.

In her lifetime Kim Chol Ho often recalled an event that took place in the spring of 1940, when she had been snatched from the jaw of death by Hwang Sun Hui's self-sacrificing action.

One day Hwang Sun Hui was assigned by regimental commander Choe Hyon to go to a secret camp in the rear with the wounded and infirm guerrillas to take care of them for a time. She left with the party, the majority of whom were the wounded, in the direction of Fuerhe. The greatest headache was that Kim Chol Ho, who was pregnant, had her baby on the way. Kim was not prepared for this new life; she had no blanket with which to cover it, let alone diapers. Hwang took off her padded coat and covered the baby with it.

After the delivery of the baby, the enemy "punitive" troops suddenly pounced upon them in a barrage of gunfire. Kim Chol Ho looked up at her comrades-in-arms, not knowing what to do. She told Hwang she would abandon her baby for it was too weak. With the baby at her bosom, she was unable to struggle to her feet.

Hwang snatched the baby from her, saying, "Are you out of your mind? What are we suffering these hardships for? Isn't it for the new generation? What is the meaning of our life if we abandon the baby to save our own lives?"

She rushed up a mountain ridge and hid the baby under a young pine tree. Kim Chol Ho took a rifle and followed her.

A few minutes later Hwang Sun Hui went back down the ridge to collect her knapsack. When she climbed up the mountain again, Kim Chol Ho was looking at the sky with tears in her eyes. Hwang could not see the baby anywhere. When she approached Kim Chol Ho to ask what had happened to it, shots were heard again not far away. The two women guerrillas left with the party, marching for two days with the

enemy on their heels and firing back at them.

When they were finally out of enemy pursuit, Kim Chol Ho suddenly fainted and fell to the ground. Hwang Sun Hui boiled water in a large enamelled bowl and tried to spoon it into Kim Chol Ho's mouth, unclenching Kim's teeth with a spoon and forcing the boiled water into her mouth. That boiled water saved her life.

Only then was Hwang reminded of the baby, and she asked Kim Chol Ho what she had done with it. Kim Chol Ho said that she had put it under a bush. Hwang walked back to the mountain on which they had exchanged gunfire with the "punitive" force. Unfortunately, the baby had already died.

When Kim saw that Hwang had walked all the way back in an unlined coat to see whether the baby was alive, Kim Chol Ho apologized to her, saying, "Although I knew that the baby could not live longer than one or two hours, I could not take the padded coat off it."

Though shivering from hunger and cold, Hwang Sun Hui consoled her.

"We adults can do without padded coats, can't we, sister? The baby, who died without knowing its own name, shouldn't be cold."

Kim Chol Ho remembered all her life the friendship Hwang Sun Hui had displayed at that time.

A few days before her death, when Hwang Sun Hui called on her on her sickbed, Kim Chol Ho said to her abruptly:

"My life is coming to an end, Sun Hui. I've lived under the personal care of the leader all of my life since I was saved by you in Fuerhe. I want to sleep with you under one quilt as we did in the guerrilla days."

As in their days in Mihunzhen, the two comrades-in-arms lay under one quilt and recalled their days in the guerrilla army throughout the night.

During the Arduous March a recruit from Changbai got his tunic burned while sleeping near a campfire at night. It was burned so badly there was not enough left to cover even half of his upper body. He followed the marching column, shivering. All showed sympathy with

and concern about him, but there was no way to help him, as they were all wearing the only clothes they had, their uniforms.

In an excess of concern about him, Ri Ul Sol, who had a strong sense of comradeship, went to the man one day with his only tunic.

Dumbfounded, the recruit looked at him.

“Then what will you wear?”

“I’m accustomed to the guerrilla life, I can bear some awful cold.”

“No, thank you. The uniform burned through my own mistake, so how can I put on your tunic?”

The recruit would not accept his colleague’s kindness.

Judging that he could not easily get past his stubbornness with words, Ri Ul Sol took off the burnt tunic from his body by force and put his own tunic on him. He showed this kindness to him because he saw it as the obligation of a veteran to help a recruit.

His comrades-in-arms thought that Ri Ul Sol would not get through the winter, as he was young and rather weak.

People who have lived one or two years in Manchuria know well how biting cold it is there. In cold days frost forms constantly on the hair. The ice-covered hair breaks easily at a touch. It is almost impossible to march several days in this cold in a summer tunic full of holes and loosely patched.

However, Ri Ul Sol did not utter a word about feeling cold. On the march he opened up a path for the others through the snow. When camping, he always collected firewood and pitched tents before anyone else. He would dry his shoes only after he had finished his work in the machine-gun team, while his comrades sat around the campfires.

His toughness and comradesly obligation was not an inborn trait. Through experiencing the hardships and agony of the nation in his own life, he had sympathy for those who were exploited and oppressed and learned how to love his comrades and neighbours.

After the Nanpaizi meeting he was assigned to the machine-gun team of the Guard Company as an assistant machine-gunner. Since that time he has dedicated his all to defend Headquarters. He has protected me, gun in hand, all his life with great obligation, no matter

how adverse the situation.

When reviewing the Arduous March at the meeting in Beidadingzi, I stressed that Ri Ul Sol was an example in comradeship, and praised his nobility and comradesly obligation. The editorial board of *Cholhyol* carried in its inaugural number an article praising him.

Why was the Korean People's Revolutionary Army so strong? When I am asked this question, I answer that it was because the army was a great mass, kept together through obligation. Had our unity not been based on morality and obligation, but only on the pure community of ideology and will, we could not have been so strong. In the protracted revolutionary war against formidable Japanese imperialism, with no assistance from the regular army or state support, we could still emerge victorious. This was not because we had a large number of troops or superior weapons; our armed force was quite small in its number, compared to the enemy with its millions of regular troops. Our weapons did not bear comparison with the enemy's. We could defeat the powerful enemy only because we were united ideologically by the ties of loyalty and obligation.

I think that our cadres and Party members should learn from Rim Chun Chu's loyalty and obligation to the revolution. He was a fighter faithful to the Party and his leader.

In a previous volume I wrote that in the autumn of 1930 I first met Rim Chun Chu in Chaoyangchuan; at that time he was a liaison for the secretariats of the Jiandao party and YCL committees while working under the disguise of physician at the Pongchun Dispensary. Since then he had devoted himself to the revolution for nearly 60 years. The famous phrase, "eternal companions, faithful assistants, good advisers," is a title Comrade Kim Jong Il conferred on intellectuals; it is highly appropriate to such a man as Rim Chun Chu.

Rim Chun Chu rendered a great contribution to the Korean revolution with his great fund of knowledge. He participated in Party building, worked as an army surgeon and wrote books using his knowledge. He occupied himself with this kind of work through his entire life.

The greatest of his talents was the medical skill he had taught himself. Probably some people will not believe it when I say that he was engaged in “business” from the age of 18 as a licensed doctor, but it is a fact. Under the signboard of doctor, he enlightened the masses, transmitted secret messages and trained revolutionaries. When staying in the village of Longshuiping near Badaogou, he sent many people to the guerrilla army; I think anybody can guess the nature of his medical skill.

When Rim Chun Chu came to the guerrilla zone, the revolutionary organization appointed him army surgeon. He treated many wounded guerrillas and other sick people. He had acquired medical skill through self-teaching from about the age of 14 or 15, while doing farmwork, and his clinical results were excellent. Everyone who has been indebted to this medical skill has called him an excellent doctor.

It is Choe Chun Guk who gave much publicity to him as a doctor. When Choe was heavily wounded, Rim Chun Chu performed an operation on him. In an unexpected encounter with a puppet Manchukuo army unit, Choe’s thighbone had been broken by an enemy bullet; the men who saw the wound were unanimous in their opinion that the leg should be amputated if the wounded man was to be saved.

But Rim Chun Chu saw it differently. He knew too well that if the leg was amputated it meant an end to Choe’s role as an officer of the guerrilla army. He would also become disabled for the rest of his life. He gave primary attention to the fact that Choe was an efficient military commander who could not be exchanged for 10 000 enemy soldiers and a brave officer of the revolutionary army whom I valued highly.

Rim made a cut in his thigh and picked out with forceps the broken pieces of thighbone. Choe Chun Guk began to walk on his own feet after a year. The wounded leg became shorter and he limped a little, but in that condition he marched and commanded battles. Rim’s daring operation had proved effective.

When I went to the secretariat of the east Manchurian party

committee in Nengzhiying, Sandaowan, after our first expedition to northern Manchuria, I was given great care by him. He looked after me with all sincerity, visiting me every day and bringing effective herbal medicines and nutritious food. Choe Hyon, O Jin U, Cao Ya-fan and Jo To On were also treated by him when they were wounded.

For a full year, from the autumn of 1937 to the autumn of 1938, Rim Chun Chu made a round of the secret camps scattered across the vast forest region of Jinchuan and Linjiang counties and Longquanzhen, Mengjiang County, treating wounded soldiers. He had to cover several miles to visit every patient. Nowadays doctors visit patients' houses or go for disseminating hygienic knowledge by means of ambulances, cars or other modern means of transportation, but the army surgeons in the days of the anti-Japanese war could not enjoy such luxury. It was a mercy if they were not killed by the enemy "punitive" troops on making their rounds.

Rim Chun Chu once narrowly escaped death by enemy troops. He was climbing a hill with a padded coat and trousers wrapped on the back of his knapsack; the coat and trousers had been captured at the battle of Huanggouling and Choe Hyon had given them to him. He got a volley from a machine gun. After the "punitive" troops withdrew, he was astonished to open his knapsack and find seven bullets in it. But for the padded coat and trousers, he would undoubtedly have been killed.

In the days of the anti-Japanese war he worked with the people as a party worker and engaged in organizational affairs and in writing books, thus contributing greatly to the education of the people and soldiers.

Through several meetings with him, I realized that he had the qualifications of a political official. In fact, he had been experienced in educating and guiding the masses as an official in a mass organization in Yanji before joining the guerrillas. So we assigned him to party work at the same time as appointing him army surgeon. He held the posts of member of the KPRA Party Committee and party secretary of the Guard Regiment and performed the work of the East Manchurian

Party Working Committee.

This committee had not lived up to our expectations after its establishment, which was why after the Nanpaizi meeting we appointed Rim Chun Chu to one of its responsible posts. The task of the committee was to consolidate the foundation for armed struggle by rallying the masses into organizations through expanding the party and mass organizations in the Jiandao region. At the same time, the committee was to lay a firm foundation for party building. It performed tasks similar to those of the Changbai County Party Committee and the Homeland Party Working Committee.

The main areas for committee activity were Jiandao and North Hamgyong Province. After the guerrilla bases had been dissolved, the party organizations in Jiandao became affiliated with this committee.

While keeping in touch with me, he dispatched many political workers to the Musan and Yonsa areas and to areas in eastern Manchuria. The workers were to expand party and mass organizations.

When operating in small units in Wangqing, Yanji, Dunhua, Hunchun, Antu and Helong after the Xiaohaerbaling meeting, we got much help from the revolutionary organizations built by the East Manchurian Party Working Committee. These organizations were a major source of help to us.

By drawing on his experience in party work in the days of the anti-Japanese revolution, he performed a great exploit in Party building after liberation. In the early days after liberation he worked as second secretary of the South Phyongan Provincial Party Committee and later as chairman of the Kangwon Provincial Party Committee. When he was chairman of the Kangwon Provincial Party Committee, the work in the areas along the demarcation line was proceeding quite smoothly.

We did not appoint the anti-Japanese revolutionary veterans to high posts immediately after liberation. Most of the high posts were assigned to the people who had been engaged in the revolutionary movement in the homeland and abroad. It was not because qualified and capable people were lacking among those who had taken part in

the arduous armed struggle at my side. This measure was needed in order to carry out united-front politics involving people from all strata. But at the time, when only five provincial Party committees existed in the northern half of Korea, we appointed Rim Chun Chu to be chairman of the Kangwon Provincial Party Committee, as we attached great importance to his experience in Party work.

What I recall with particular emotion is his authorship: he wrote many books for the younger generation. Many of his books, including *Reminiscences of the Days of the Anti-Japanese Armed Struggle*, are national treasures.

He started full-scale literary activities after he became an honorary journalist for *Samil Wolgan*. Many articles he had written were carried in the mouthpiece of the KPRA. His article entitled “The Japanese Economy in Distress” carried in *Samil Wolgan*, was an excellent one.

Though busy with battles, marching and treating patients, he saved up every minute and recorded our activities daily in his spare moments. If he ran out of paper, he would record the struggle of the KPRA on birch bark. Rim Chun Chu recalled on several occasions that this record was the basic data for *Reminiscences of the Days of the Anti-Japanese Armed Struggle*.

I heard that Wei Zheng-min had advised him several times to write the history of the KPRA. He said, “It is of course excellent to work as a party official, army surgeon and honorary journalist. But it is even more important that you, Rim, write the history of the Korean guerrilla army. You must bear this in mind. Even though others may be killed in a do-or-die battle, you must remain alive and perform this mission to hand down the exploits of your Commander and the history of your army to posterity.”

While working as party secretary of the Guard Regiment, he stayed with Wei Zheng-min for a long time; he helped him in his work and treated his illness. Wei Zheng-min liked to have him there and asked him to stay close at all times. He played a very important role in ensuring good relations between Wei Zheng-min and myself, in consolidating the friendship between the Korean and Chinese people,

and in strengthening the allied front of the armed forces of the two countries.

It was in the late 1950s that I read Rim Chun Chu's *Reminiscences of the Days of the Anti-Japanese Armed Struggle* for the first time. In those days there were still vestiges of flunkeyism in the minds of our people. Worse still, education in revolutionary traditions was not being conducted properly, with the result that the history of our armed struggle was being poorly disseminated among the people, youth and children. Some cadres glibly recited from memory the *Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, and what *Iskra* and Bukharin had been. But when they were asked what had been discussed at the Nanhutou meeting, they could not answer properly. *Reminiscences of the Days of the Anti-Japanese Armed Struggle* was published just at that moment, bringing for the first time the outline of the anti-Japanese revolution to the people. Since then, the book has become source material indispensable for studying the history of the anti-Japanese revolution.

By writing this book he showed his obligation and performed his duty to all communists and patriots who had taken part in the anti-Japanese revolution. He wrote it, not to introduce himself or to give publicity to his exploits, but with the noble aim that the rising generation would carry forward more reliably the revolutionary traditions, the eternal assets of our people, and consummate them.

He wrote many books and educational materials on our Party's revolutionary traditions, including reminiscences on the activities of Kim Jong Suk and Kim Chol Ju. He verified many materials and organized them systematically, performing a brilliant service to the history of our Party. He even wrote the multi-volume *Young Vanguard*s, a novel portraying young communists.

Our Party recognizes him as the authoritative witness and attester to the brilliant history of the anti-Japanese revolution, which we started and led to victory. I think it is correct and fair recognition. Frankly speaking, he could have earned his bread without much difficulty by means of his medical skill even if he had not engaged himself in the

arduous anti-Japanese revolution. However, faced with manifold crises, he never flinched on the road of revolution, nor did he abandon his obligation to his leader and comrades.

When he was imprisoned in Longjing, he believed that even if he were to die the revolution would emerge victorious; he withstood brutal torture with the thought that he should protect the revolutionary organization and his comrades, even though this protection could cost him his life. Those who betrayed the revolution felt that the revolution was of no significance if they were killed and they yielded to torture, convinced that they should remain alive, even at the cost of their organizations and comrades.

This is the difference between genuine and sham revolutionaries.

Various events after liberation made me realize more keenly what a true sense of obligation he had. When he was dispatched to northeast China as our chief delegate for the preparations of setting up the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region, I requested him to look for the children of the anti-Japanese revolutionary martyrs in eastern Manchuria and send them back to their native land. With the Chinese people fighting a civil war, he had to organize assistance to the front, set up power organs, lay foundations for education and work with people from all walks of life; busy as he was, he still managed to find many children of the anti-Japanese revolutionary martyrs and send them to the homeland. He even advertised in newspapers to find the brother and sister of Kim Jong Suk, his friend and revolutionary comrade-in-arms in his days in Fuyandong.

At each consultative meeting of cadres he informed them that a school for the bereaved children of revolutionaries would be built in Korea, and made rounds of the scattered villages in Jiandao in search of orphans until his shoes wore out.

Whenever children in threadbare clothes came to him on reading the advertisements in newspapers, he would take them to his bosom and press his cheek against theirs, saying, “You are so-and-so’s son and so-and-so’s daughter? Do you know how hard General Kim Il Sung is looking for you?” When he had found a total of scores

of children this way, he was so elated, he sent me a telegram saying, "Returning home immediately with the children found so far." Reading the short message, I felt the excitement and emotion he must be feeling at having fulfilled his obligation to his revolutionary comrades-in-arms.

He found out many children and families of revolutionary martyrs and sent them back to the homeland. The children who went to the school at that time have now become members of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee, chief secretaries of provincial Party committees and generals in the Korean People's Army.

During the Fatherland Liberation War he worked in a province for some time. Each time he made a business trip to Pyongyang to attend a meeting convened by the Ministry of Public Health, he would climb Moran Hill and spread a white sheet on the lawn near the graves of the anti-Japanese war veterans, so as to sleep on it. He never thought of staying at inns in the town. In those days the graves of Kim Chaek, An Kil, Choe Chun Guk, Kim Jong Suk and others were on Moran Hill. As he tried to rest in the open on a hill, surrounded by his comrades' graves, sleep failed to come to him. Nevertheless, whenever he came to Pyongyang, he went up the hill and made his bed in the same place. He later told me that he talked endlessly to his comrades in the graves, saying, "My dear comrades, why are you sleeping here when you are so essential to our homeland? Do you know how hard the General has to work without your help in shouldering the destiny of Korea?"

As it was the time when the destiny of the country and people was at stake, there were not many people among the citizens who remembered the fact that the souls of anti-Japanese fighters were resting in peace in the dense forests on Moran Hill, and no one knew that now and then a tall man came down the hill quietly at daybreak after sleeping with those souls.

On hearing about that, I thought that he was a true man and fighter with obligation.

This is the obligation of the anti-Japanese guerrilla type I intend to write about. There are many beautiful stories about the obligation and

affection of man in the world. However, I do not know an obligation more ennobling, sincere and beautiful than that displayed by our anti-Japanese revolutionary fighters.

Calling himself an old disciple of Comrade Kim Jong Il he always tried to follow his guidance.

Comrade Kim Jong Il also cared for him and respected him with sincerity, saying that even if Comrade Rim Chun Chu did nothing but remain alive, he was an invaluable treasure to our Party and our state. His unique concern and solicitude for Rim Chun Chu reflects the leader's ennobling obligation to the veteran revolutionaries. It is an obligation of the anti-Japanese guerrilla type created on Mt. Paektu.

However, we do not mean that all of the people remained true to the revolutionary obligation and honour. Though partially, there were turncoats and renegades among our ranks.

When they heard that those shouting for the revolution whenever they had an opportunity had turned and betrayed their principles, our men were sick at heart. How can I describe in full the agony and frustration of the officers and rank and file, when those who yesterday sang the *Internationale* and shouted for the victory of the revolution changed their minds and became enemy stooges?

Nevertheless, one or two turncoats cannot nullify the accomplishments of a decade. We countered the enemy's white terrorism by consolidating the unity of our ranks, a unity based on ideology and will as well as on morality and obligation. This was the only way for us to emerge victorious.

## **CHAPTER 18. IN THE FLAMES OF THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR**

*(July–November 1937)*

### **1. To Meet a New Situation**

Around mid-July 1937, shortly after our victorious Jiansanfung battle, we heard the shocking news of the incident at Lugou Bridge. We had long foreseen that the September 18 incident would lead to another “September 18,” and that the Japanese occupation of Manchuria would eventually escalate to a full-scale invasion of all of China, a land of millions of square kilometres. Nevertheless, we were stirred by the news of the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, triggered by the Lugou Bridge incident. The officers and men of the People’s Revolutionary Army held hot debates on future developments.

Needless to say, the point of the arguments was the question of what influence this war would have on both the international situation and the development of the Korean revolution, and how we should use the new situation to further our revolution.

Up until the Sino-Japanese War broke out, few of us even knew of the existence of Lugou Bridge.

Nobody could ever have imagined that the gunshot at midnight on this bridge was to become a prelude to a disaster which would drown China in a sea of blood for 3 000 days and plunge the world into the vortex of a world war. It is the common view that fascist Germany’s attack on Poland in September 1939 was the start of World War II, but some people regard the Lugou Bridge incident, provoked by the

Japanese imperialists two years before, as the ignition point of the great war.

The Sino-Japanese War, like the September 18 incident, was the product of Japan's imperialist policy towards Asia, a policy tenaciously pursued to this culmination. When imperialist Japan swallowed up Manchuria, world opinion had already predicted that she would soon attack the rest of China. The Japanese imperialists had, in fact, concentrated all their efforts on preparing their invasion of China proper after the occupation of the three provinces in Northeast China.

The seizure of Shanhaiguan in January 1933, the inroads upon the northern part of China, the occupation of the provincial capital Chengde by Operation Rehe, the landing on Qinhuang Island, the advance towards the eastern part of Hebei Province—all these military operations took place in the years following Japan's military occupation of Manchuria as a part of the preparations for the invasion of China itself in the near future.

The Kuomintang government of Chiang Kai-shek concluded the treacherous "Tanggu Treaty" despite the desperate people's opposition, instead of organizing resistance against the Japanese inroads upon North China. The treaty actually left the vast area north of the Great Wall under Japanese occupation and placed North China under the surveillance and control of Japan. In the long run, Chiang's appeasement policy encouraged the aggressive ambition and war mania on the part of the Japanese imperialists.

Through the manipulation of the Japanese imperialists, the pro-Japanese forces in North China launched a "movement for the autonomy of five provinces in North China." As a result of this treacherous movement demanding "independence," the pro-Japanese "Jidong anti-communist autonomous government" was fabricated.

The Japanese imperialists, who had placed Manchuria and North China under their control step by step, formulated in early 1936 the "diplomatic policy towards China." The main points of this policy were strict controls over the anti-Japanese movement, and economic cooperation and joint anti-communist action on the part of China,

Manchuria and Japan. On this basis they openly prepared the invasion of China proper. The signing of the Japan-Germany “anti-communist pact” was an external factor that encouraged the preparation for another war.

The subservience of Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang government to Japan and its treacherous policy allowed the Japanese imperialists to attack China without restraint. While the destiny of the country hung in the balance because of the accelerated Japanese invasion of China proper, Chiang Kai-shek encircled and attacked the Red Army. At the same time, he suppressed the people’s anti-Japanese national-salvation movement internally, and externally maintained the line of compromise with Japan, pursuing the submissive policy of “security at home and concession to foreign forces.” Chiang Kai-shek’s policy of submissive cooperation with Japan was, in fact, a form of passive consent to her invasion of China, leading her to provoke the reckless incident of Lugou Bridge.

The Japanese imperialists’ full-scale invasion of China was also an inevitable consequence of the conflicts between imperialist powers rivalling for the control of China.

After the economic crisis that had started in the United States in 1937 had begun to spread across the world, the imperialist powers went mad in a battle to obtain new markets, a scramble that sharpened the contradictions between them. The most typical of these contradictions was the discord and antagonism between the American and British imperialists and the Japanese imperialists in their struggle for concessions in China. The Japanese considered an all-out war against China to be the best way to gain advantage over the powers that opposed them in Europe and America. Japan calculated that it was only through this war that she could gain a monopoly in China, drive out the US and British forces from the region and become the number one power in Asia.

The American and British policy towards Japan was one of double-dealing. They tried to restrain the reckless, aggressive moves of the Japanese imperialists on the one hand, while on the other hand they

egged Japan on to aggressive acts of sacrificing the interests of China. In addition, they manipulated Japan against the Soviet Union. In this way the United States and Britain tried to maintain their interests in China.

After the invasion of North China, the Japanese imperialists confirmed it as their basic national policy to advance towards the South Seas while continuing to pursue their policy of military build-up and war preparation and expanding their influence in East Asia. This was their strategy aimed at advancing to Southeast Asia in due course, while continuing with their policy of war against China and the Soviet Union.

Taking advantage of the “noninterference policy” of the United States, Britain, France and other imperialist countries, as well as of the lack of a firm anti-Japanese national united front in China, the Konoe Cabinet at last ignited an all-out war against China.

On July 7, 1937 the Japanese army demanded a search of Wanping county town on the excuse of looking for one of their soldiers who had gone missing during war exercises. This resulted in an armed clash. When the 29<sup>th</sup> Corps, led by Song Zhe-yuan, resisted their attack, the Japanese troops occupied Lugou Bridge and surrounded Beijing.

As it was a small accidental clash, the Lugou Bridge incident could have been settled through negotiations in the field. However, under the pressure of the military, which was bent on finding an excuse to ignite war, the Konoe Cabinet met in council on July 11 and adopted a decision to dispatch divisions from Japan to China. It claimed to be checking the expansion of armed conflict, but in fact it used the trifling incident as an excuse for expanding the Sino-Japanese War. On August 13, the Japanese army attacked Shanghai. The gunshot on Lugou Bridge had finally accomplished its purpose in provoking the great Sino-Japanese War.

The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War presented the Korean communists with many new tasks. We had to formulate an active strategy and appropriate tactics to meet the sudden change in our own situation.

On hearing the news that war had broken out between China and Japan, I meditated for several days on how this conflict would develop, how it would influence our revolution and what attitude and methods we should adopt to cope with it.

It was not a local war that would end with the occupation of North China by the Japanese imperialists, nor would it be a lightning war to take a few months, as the Manchurian incident had been. This war had every reason to drag out and could possibly develop, first into a regional war, then into a global war.

Most certainly conflicts between Japan and the Soviet Union would be inevitable. Historically, Korea and Manchuria had been a major area of contention between Russia and Japan. It was mainly for this reason that the Russo-Japanese War had broken out early in this century. Even after the birth of the Soviet Union, relations between the Soviet Union and Japan remained tense owing to Japan's ambitions on the continent. On the eve of the Sino-Japanese War, the Soviet Union and Japan had been in a hair-trigger confrontation over the possession of two islands on the River Amur. Although the dispute had been settled through direct diplomatic negotiations in Moscow, in subsequent years Japan continued to confront the Soviet Union with a hard-line policy on the pretext of a Japan-Manchuria joint defence.

It was not surprising that most world opinion predicted a big war as a result of this dispute between the Soviet Union and Japan.

It was no secret that the Japanese imperialists were determined to invade China proper, Mongolia and the far eastern regions of the Soviet Union after occupying Manchuria, but apparently Japan considered that the time was not ripe for an all-out war against the Soviet Union. Japan was secretly afraid of the ever-strengthening national power and defence capabilities of the Soviet Union. Nothing would be more dangerous and foolish for Japan than to start a war against the Soviet Union while fighting with China, since she was incapable of fighting two major powers simultaneously.

Many of my men and officers were of the opinion that the escalation of the war would affect our revolution badly.

I felt it imperative to lay down a strategic policy to cope with the Sino-Japanese War, and to fight with a distinct objective. A meeting of the commanding officers of the main force of the KPRA, held in the Paektusan Secret Camp in mid-July 1937, and another meeting of military and political cadres, held at Chushuitan, Changbai County, in early August that year laid down such a policy. At these meetings we set forth the strategic policies on strengthening the anti-Japanese armed struggle to deal with our own rapidly changing situation and on effecting a fresh upsurge in the Korean revolution as a whole. Also present at the meeting, held in the Paektusan Secret Camp, were Ma Tong Hui, Ri Je Sun and other political operatives and heads of underground organizations who had been active in the Mt. Paektu area and the homeland.

At the meeting we discussed, in essence, the task of consolidating our own revolutionary forces, harassing the enemy more intensively from behind and speeding up the preparations for an all-people resistance to cope with the Sino-Japanese War. As one of the major ways to carry out this task, we proposed and discussed in earnest forming more underground organizations in the southwestern area of Mt. Paektu and in the homeland and sending political workers' groups of the KPRA to Ranganim mountains to build revolutionary bases and organize paramilitary corps and workers' shock troops in various parts of the homeland. We also took stock of the work of building up party and ARF subordinate organizations, conducting political campaigns among the people and enlisting support for the guerrilla army in Sinpha and Xiagangqu, Changbai County, and discussed measures to popularize the experience in this work.

In those days, Japan considered herself one of the five world powers and one of the three naval powers. Major powers, too, saw Japan in the same light. However, we thought that Japan would most likely fall into a dangerous trap.

We firmly believed that the Japanese imperialists would be destroyed ultimately, despite the fact that they were gaining temporary superiority by taking advantage of the lack of concerted action on the

part of resistance forces in China. An unjust war always involves internal strife. The contradictions between forces for and against war on their home front, as well as the contradictions between imperialist powers in their interests were tangible factors which put a brake on their war efforts.

The Japanese imperialists were isolated in the international arena. They had such allies as Germany and Italy in Europe, but they were not in a position to receive substantial help from them. If they escalated the Sino-Japanese War and “advanced southwards,” it would inevitably intensify the contradictions and confrontation between the imperialist powers.

The Japanese imperialists in their mad pursuit of wealth and expansion swallowed up Manchuria, and before giving themselves time to digest it, attacked the rest of China, blind in their greed. But they were like a cat trying to chew and swallow an entire ox-head: there was no guarantee they would not end up with serious indigestion.

As soon as they had ignited the Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese imperialists tightened their colonial rule in Korea to its tautest. All sorts of fascist laws were enacted to shackle the people both spiritually and physically. The “Military Secrets Act,” which had been enforced in 1913, was amended for the worse to meet wartime needs. The enemy made everything subservient to war, fussing about “the special mission of Korea as a base for war supplies” and “the task of Korea in carrying out the continental policy.”

The Japanese imperialists’ plunder of Korea was not limited to the economic sphere; they plundered Korea of her manpower, too. They conscripted young men and threw them into the battlefields and mobilized a huge work force, compelling it to build munitions factories and military facilities. Their fascist repression and economic plunder, which with the start of the Sino-Japanese War grew more oppressive and ferocious than ever before, stifled the Korean people beyond endurance.

Nonetheless, even in such unfavourable conditions we believed that we could transform misfortune into a blessing by turning the

complicated situation to good account.

At the meeting of military and political cadres held in Chushuitan I viewed the situation from this angle and emphasized the need to deal with it from this point of view. The meeting on Mt. Paektu dealt with the task of strengthening the driving force of the Korean revolution from the point of view of building organization, whereas the Chushuitan meeting approached the task of harassing the enemy from the rear from the military angle, centring on cooperation with other units of the Anti-Japanese Allied Army.

At this meeting, I also emphasized the need to strike the enemy harder from behind in the vast area along the rivers Tuman and Amnok, and the need to dispatch more small units and political operatives to the homeland to continuously expand and strengthen the anti-Japanese national united front movement.

We decided to harass the enemy from the rear in two main ways. One was to build secret camps in the Rangnim mountains, lay the military foundation for the all-people resistance by organizing paramilitary corps and workers' shock troops in all parts of Korea, and strike the Japanese imperialists from behind through various forms of mass struggle in the homeland. The other was to check the movement of the Japanese aggressors into China proper and frustrate their operations by guerrilla warfare.

According to this new strategic policy, the Chushuitan meeting partially reorganized the KPRA units and allotted the fields of action to the units in a realistic way. We also discussed the small armed and political groups we would be sending to the homeland.

After provoking the Sino-Japanese War, the enemy kept a watchful eye on our every move. The top brass of the Japanese army and police somehow got wind of our decision and said that we had set forth a new policy of action, regrouped our forces, and allotted our areas of action. They also said that we had decided to attack major cities in Manchuria on August 29, the day of the national humiliation, and make an all-out push into the homeland. They made a great noise of working out countermeasures. Later, we found that all this was recorded in detail in

secret documents of the enemy.

Before going again to Changbai and Linjiang counties after the Chushuitan meeting, I met Wei Zheng-min to discuss joint operations with the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Army in harassing the enemy from the rear. At that time he was recuperating in the Dongmanjiang Secret Camp on the River Huapi along upper reaches of the River Man.

That day, Ju Jae Il, the political instructor of a company, guided my party to the Dongmanjiang Secret Camp. He was familiar with the geography of the east Manjiang area. He was born in Kangwon Province, but had lived in Helong since his childhood and joined the guerrilla army in Yulangcun. When the guerrilla zones were evacuated, six families moved to Chushuitan from Helong, one of them being Ju's. He worked in a Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist unit before coming to our Headquarters in March 1937 with his wife. At that time we appointed him the political instructor of a company in which there were many Chinese soldiers from the Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist forces, because he spoke Chinese fluently and knew Chinese customs well. Afterwards he worked as the political instructor of the Guard Company and was promoted to the rank of the regimental political commissar. He took us safely to our destination.

In Wei Zheng-min's opinion, it was most important, while the Sino-Japanese War was spreading, that cooperation between the communists and people of Korea and China be improved as much as possible.

"We expect a great deal from our cooperation with our Korean comrades and people," he said earnestly. "You have helped the Chinese revolution sincerely and selflessly. Whenever I hear the words proletarian internationalism, I think of Korean comrades first. Our days together in the same trenches will be remembered for ever not only in the history of our two countries but also in the history of the international communist movement. Commander Kim, the Chinese nation is now facing the same trials as the Korean nation has experienced. I firmly believe that in this difficult time the Korean people will stand firmly on our side."

Wei Zheng-min, political commissar of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps and secretary of the South Manchuria Party Committee, was an open-hearted man.

As the struggle to correct the ultra-Leftist errors of the anti-“Minsaengdan” campaign showed, Wei had made sincere efforts to sympathize more than anyone else with the Korean communists in their afflictions and agony. I had respected him for his sympathy with the Korean people and his help in the struggle of the Korean communists. He, too, approached me with unusual affection and friendship.

Wei Zheng-min always held in high esteem the role of the Korean communists and the KPRA in the anti-Japanese armed struggle in Northeast China.

That day Wei Zheng-min informed me in detail of the internal and external situation of China after the start of the Sino-Japanese War and the policy of the Chinese Communist Party on the war against Japan. Most interesting in his information was the move by the Chinese communists and progressive patriots to form a new Kuomintang-Communist Cooperation, as well as an anti-Japanese national united front.

The day after the Lugou Bridge incident, which was also called the July 7 incident, the Chinese Communist Party appealed to the entire nation to “resist the Japanese aggression by building a strong wall in the form of the national united front.” They pointed out that an anti-Japanese war involving the entire Chinese nation was the only way to save the country. On July 15, they sent the “Declaration of the Chinese Communist Party on the Promulgation of Kuomintang-Communist Cooperation” to the Kuomintang leadership.

That was not the first time the CCP had appealed to the Kuomintang to stop the civil war and form a Kuomintang-Communist cooperation front.

Although the Japanese imperialists were directing the spearhead of their aggression on China proper following the occupation of Manchuria, Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang was too busy making frantic efforts to destroy the communist party and “suppress” the

Worker-Peasant Red Army, instead of taking positive action for resistance against Japan.

Chiang Kai-shek mobilized a large armed force to destroy the Central Soviet in Ruijin and conducted five large-scale “punitive” operations. The Kuomintang was more hostile to the communist party than to the foreign enemy.

Until then, the CCP was unable to concentrate its efforts on the anti-Japanese struggle; its main effort was directed toward the land revolution and the fight against the Kuomintang.

When a foreign enemy attacks a country, which is in a civil war, the country must stop internal conflicts and pool its national efforts and offer resistance. Until the mid-1930s, however, China did not end its internal problems of the war, which was known as the Second Revolutionary Civil War.

Afterwards the CCP adopted a new strategy of fighting the Japanese first, in keeping with the general trend. The Chinese communists carried out the Long March covering 10 000 kilometres under the slogan “advance north to resist Japan” and established new bases in Shanxi, Gansu and Ningxia. This was followed by their direct confrontation with the Japanese imperialists, based on the policy of “expedition to the east against Japan.”

Following this, the CCP changed its slogan from “resisting Japan while opposing Chiang” to “resisting Japan in alliance with Chiang,” and made patient efforts to put into effect Kuomintang-Communist Cooperation. Such efforts by the Chinese communists were redoubled after the Xian incident and at last produced good results in the talks between Chiang Kai-shek and Zhou En-lai held in Lushan after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War.

When Wei Zheng-min told me that in the Lushan talks, Zhou En-lai negotiated with Chiang Kai-shek on the need to activate the anti-Japanese struggle of the communists in Manchuria, North China and Korea, I was greatly pleased. It meant that the CCP leadership rightly evaluated the position held by the Korean communists in carrying out the anti-Japanese war, and eagerly desired positive

support from, and cooperation with, the armed struggle led by the Korean communists.

Mao Ze-dong, in a letter he wrote early in 1937 to members of the National-Salvation Association of China, carried in *The Pacific*, an international political and theoretical magazine of the Soviet Union, took the anti-Japanese guerrilla warfare in Northeast China as a living example of the possibility of active resistance to Japanese imperialism. He wrote that the anti-Japanese guerrilla army in Northeast China destroyed over 100 000 enemy troops and inflicted a loss of hundreds of millions of *yuan*, thereby checking and delaying the Japanese invasion of China. This evaluation of the guerrilla army in Northeast China included the appreciation of the struggle made by the Korean communists.

Wei Zheng-min and I were of the same opinion that the anti-Japanese guerrilla units in eastern and southern Manchuria should take a heavier burden than those in northern Manchuria in harassing the enemy from behind, because the Japanese imperialists were trying to conquer all of China before attacking Siberia.

During the talks Wei Zheng-min said that a man from Kong Xian-yong had come via the Soviet Union to see the leaders of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army in the capacity of a secret messenger from the Nanjing government. He asked me whether I wanted to see him. The arrival of the messenger in Manchuria showed that the Kuomintang government was trying in every way to realize cooperation with the anti-Japanese forces in Northeast China.

Kong Xian-yong had been on intimate terms with us when he was a deputy commander of Wang De-lin's national salvation army. Later he had also helped us raise the People's Revolutionary Army. At an invitation from the Headquarters of the Far East Army of the Soviet Union he had visited the Soviet Union with some of his men and then entered China. His activity there was noteworthy. Together with Li Du and Wang De-lin, he was deeply concerned about the anti-Japanese struggle in Manchuria while keeping contacts with the Nanjing government and Zhang Xue-liang's former northeast army. After his

appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Northeast Volunteers Army he kept in touch with the Nanjing government and occasionally organized outside support for the anti-Japanese movement in Northeast China. The fact that he sent his messenger to us on behalf of the Nanjing government showed that he was still keen on the anti-Japanese armed struggle in Manchuria.

The messenger, like Kong Xian-yong, had also once taken part in the anti-Japanese struggle in eastern Manchuria. After emphasizing the need to link the struggle in the northeast region with the struggle in China proper, the messenger explained the desirability of including the armed forces of the northeast region in the general operations plan of the Nanjing government, since as a result of the Kuomintang-Communist Cooperation the Worker-Peasant Red Army, led by the CCP, would be reorganized as a part of the National Revolutionary Army under Chiang Kai-shek's unified control.

I expressed doubt about his proposal, giving details of the differences in the situation in China proper and in Northeast China and explaining the relatively independent character of the anti-Japanese armed struggle in the northeast region.

The messenger admitted that our view was correct and withdrew his proposal. Nevertheless, he laid stress on our need to support and cooperate closely with each other, not forgetting inseparable ties between the northeast region and the rest of China.

We promised to strike the Japanese imperialists hard in the three provinces of Northeast China and Korea to help the struggle in China proper. The messenger said that when he was passing through the Soviet Union, he had consulted concerned people there on the treatment of those wounded in the Sino-Japanese War and that they had promised to help. He added that we, too, could send the wounded through the designated route, if necessary. I accepted his favour and promised to use their route in future, though we had our own route and had already sent some old and infirm persons to the Soviet Union.

My talk with Wei Zheng-min confirmed that we and the CCP had basically the same view on the strategy in relation to the Sino-Japanese

War. I was convinced that we would be greatly successful in harassment operations behind enemy lines against the Japanese imperialists.

After taking leave of Wei Zheng-min, we convened the meeting of the commanders and men of the KPRA on a hill located on the boundary between Changbai and Linjiang counties.

I still remember that there was a deep vertical pit resembling a well not far from the meeting place. When a mischief-maker dropped a stone into the pit, there was a plop after a good while. It was mysterious that such a pit should have formed between the rocks on a high mountain ridge.

At this meeting we discussed the strategic task of the KPRA to cope with the Sino-Japanese War. The men and officers declared their determination to carry out the task. It might have been called a “meeting to express resolves,” as we call it nowadays. You may say that this was a meeting to express our determination to implement the decision made at the meetings in the Paektusan Secret Camp and Chushuitan.

I shall not dwell on the meeting, because specialists in revolutionary history and writers have already published many articles on it and the revolutionary veterans themselves have given their recollections of it on many occasions.

The Paektusan meeting, the Chushuitan meeting and the meeting of men and officers were significant in that they laid down our political and military plans to cope with the Sino-Japanese War.

From the start of this war, we conducted daring operations to harass the enemy from behind, while consolidating the victory of our advance to the homeland.

Immediately after the Lugou Bridge incident, the main force of the KPRA fought many battles. These included the battle near Mashungou in Shijiudaogou, Changbai; the raid on Xigang town in Shisandaogou, Changbai County; and the battle in the vicinity of Liujiadong, Longquanli.

At that time it was written in *Jondo*, the mouthpiece of the National

Revolutionary Party, that our operations behind enemy lines were certainly the initiative of the great allied front of the Korean and Chinese nations.

Having left Changbai to harass the enemy in the rear, Choe Hyon's unit achieved successive battle results, moving through Linjiang, Tonghua, Liuhe and Mengjiang. An Kil and Pak Jang Chun destroyed the enemy mercilessly in cooperation with Kang Kon's unit. The expedition to Hailun, led by Kim Chaek and Ho Hyong Sik and south Manchurian guerrilla units, which advanced as far as the Shenyang railway, dealt a heavy blow to the enemy rear. Our small armed units and political operatives' groups infiltrated deep into the homeland and tied the enemy's hands wherever they went. The political and military operations launched by the Korean and Chinese communists in Korea and Manchuria, and their harassment behind enemy lines gave great encouragement to the anti-Japanese camp in China.

The Japanese imperialists' wild ambition to swallow up China at a gulp was totally frustrated by the Chinese people's struggle in North China and the Shanghai area, as well as by the active operations of the KPRA and the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Army to harass the enemy from behind.

While Japan was switching over to a protracted war from her initial attempt to gain "victory at a blow" and to "finish the war in a short time"—their blatant claims—our operations behind their lines entered a new stage.

With the prolongation of the Sino-Japanese War, we held a review at the Xintaizi Secret Camp, Linjiang County, of the operations we had carried out in the enemy rear. We discussed how to harass the enemy in Korea and frustrate their war transport system, the transport of weapons and ammunition in particular. Our attack on Huinan county town was a typical battle in those days.

The attack on Huinan was very unfavourable for us, as Huinan was a well-developed traffic junction and a walled town on a flat plain. The Jilin-Hailun railway line was not far. There were also many enemy "punitive" troops based near Huinan, and we were in danger of being

chased by reinforced units of the enemy if we failed to withdraw quickly, even though we might have successfully attacked the county town. We were aware of all these disadvantages to launching an attack on Huinan. We nevertheless committed to this battle the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the main force of the KPRA, the newly-organized Guard Regiment, led by Ri Tong Hak and Choe Chun Guk, and part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. Despite the risks involved, the county town was a suitable target for our harassment actions behind enemy lines: Huinan was an important base of “punitive” troops, as well as a supply base for the Manchukuo army units stationed in many adjoining counties. There were two large supply depots.

The Anti-Japanese Allied Army units and the Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist units took part in this attack. Our forces made a surprise attack on the town and captured a good supply of fabrics, raw cotton and food, before withdrawing on our own initiative. Following the attack on the town, our forces dealt another blow to the reinforcements of the Japanese troops and the puppet Manchukuo army coming from Hailong, Panshi, Mengjiang and other areas. The ambush laid by our main force at a place between Fusong and Xigang was of great significance to the harassment operations.

During the harassment campaign we unfortunately lost several valuable comrades-in-arms such as Ri Tal Gyong, Kim Yong Hwan and Jon Chol San.

Kim Yong Hwan had joined the guerrilla army after working in the Young Communist League in Wangqing. In the days of the guerrilla zone, we had appointed him as a company political instructor for the Yanji guerrilla army. In December 1937, he fell heroically in battle in Yanji.

Jon Chol San came from the Hunchun guerrilla army. I had met him first when we fought the battle at Laoheishan. Later he was promoted to the position of political instructor for the 4<sup>th</sup> Company of the Wangqing guerrilla army. O Jin U knew him well. He fell in action in Emu in September 1937.

In those days we also lost Ri Tong Gwang, an able political worker

and a courageous commander of the guerrilla army, who had been working as the representative of the ARF in southern Manchuria.

Yang Jing-yu told me the following anecdote about Ri:

On receiving the report that the Tonghua Central County Party Committee had been broken by the enemy's "punitive" operation in southern Manchuria, Ri Tong Gwang went to Liuhe via Gushanzi, where the headquarters of the enemy's "punitive" force was situated. Disguised as a medicine-peddler he and his two bodyguards entered Gushanzi Street, which was swarming with enemy soldiers, in broad daylight. There was a public notice in every lane demanding the arrest of Ri Tong Gwang.

"Ri Tong Gwang, the boss of the communist bandits from the South Manchuria Special Party Committee, 30 years old. A tall man with wavy hair and uncommonly big eyes. Those who inform against him or arrest him will be liberally rewarded. Whoever hides him will be put to death."

Ri Tong Gwang stood in front of the public notice about his arrest with calm composure and read it through, then left the street without haste.

The lives of Ri Tong Gwang, Ri Tal Gyong, Kim ThaeK Hwan, Kim Yong Hwan and Jon Chol San were a brilliant example of boundless love and devotion for their country and people and in this glorious path they enriched the history of the armed struggle with their blood. They typify the will and soul of those Korean communists who took initiative in striking at the enemy from behind.

I can say that the general direction I have followed through life has been not defence, but attack. Since I set out on the road of revolution I have continued to use the strategy and tactic of offence, always counterattacking the enemy. When faced with difficulties in my advance, I have never flinched back or vacillated, nor have I gone round them or tried to escape them. The harder the times, the stronger has been my faith. I have overcome obstacles by displaying an indomitable will and making a strenuous effort.

The offensive strategies we used at many stages of our revolution

were not attributable to my personal taste or character; they were necessities of our complex and arduous revolution.

Had we been on the defensive, or had we retreated or used detours in the vortex of complicated, world-shaking events after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, we would never have been able to break through the many grave situations we faced.

I still believe that the revolutionary strategy we established at that time—the strategy of meeting adversity face to face and turning a bad situation into one that was favourable to us—was absolutely the correct one.

## 2. Kim Ju Hyon

Kim Ju Hyon was widely known to our people as the most typical of supply officers. This did not mean, however, that he was efficient only in supply work, for he was also an excellent military commander and skilful political worker. Before joining the guerrilla army, he had engaged mainly in underground work.

I had known him since the days before we organized the anti-Japanese guerrilla army. In 1931, when we were making preparations for the armed struggle in Xinglongcun, Kim Ju Hyon was working underground in charge of the peasants' association and the Anti-Japanese Union organizations in the village of Gaodengchang, Dashahe. Kim Jong Ryong, the head of the Xiaoshahe district party organization, had introduced him to me. In my talks with him I had found that he was a straightforward, candid man.

One day I called on him after hearing from Kim Jong Ryong that he had been planning to expel all those who had belonged to the Independence Army from the Anti-Japanese Union. Having heard only bad things about the Independence Army from prejudiced people, Kim Ju Hyon had taken the men from this army to be the target of the struggle. I took time to explain to him the importance of the united front in the revolution and the need to correct his prejudice against the men from the Independence Army, who loved the country and hated the Japanese imperialists.

Next day, Kim Ju Hyon called on upper echelons of the Independence Army, whom he had attempted to drive out, and apologized to them. They pronounced him a reliable man. Since then, he came to consult me whenever he had a difficult problem in his work. I, too, visited him occasionally. Although he was eight years older than I, we became good friends. In 1931 when I made his acquaintance I

was not the commander of the anti-Japanese guerrilla army, but he still humbly accepted my advice.

I was charmed by his modesty. He was also very fond of me and gave unqualified support to everything I did and said.

Yet his family members insisted that he was an extremely obstinate man whom nobody could control. When I heard about the way in which he got married and made a home, I understood why they criticized him.

Kim Ju Hyon's family had originally lived in Myongchon, North Hamgyong Province, and compelled by poverty, moved to Helong. He always longed for his native place, having left it in his childhood. After finishing the village school he had gone to Odaejin and worked as a fisherman toughening his small frame in the process. His elder brother had brought him to Dashahe against his will, forcing him to stay at home, because he was old enough for marriage. His family had forced him to get engaged to a girl in the neighbouring village, whom they had singled out. Since the marriage had been arranged by the parents of both families without considering the will of the betrothed, Kim Ju Hyon had never seen his fiancée.

Frequently visiting a teacher of Kusan school who had been to the Maritime Province of the Soviet Union, he learned about the Russian revolution. He was totally indifferent to the engagement ceremony being arranged by the parents of both families. When he saw his family busy preparing the wedding ceremony, he declared to his father that he would not marry a sheer stranger. His father laughed it off, but the bridegroom suddenly disappeared a few days before the wedding ceremony.

His parents were extremely worried. The girl's family, too, made a fuss. His elder brother searched the whole of Jiandao, putting aside household affairs all winter, until he learned from the teacher of the Kusan school that Kim Ju Hyon was in Russia. After a lot of trouble his brother went to Russia and brought him back home. This time Kim Ju Hyon could not escape the wedding. The moment he returned, the wedding ceremony was held.

However, he stayed away from home, even after the marriage, instead of working diligently on the family farm. After much thought, his father built a house for him, judging that his son would stay at home and at least work to support his wife and children once he had his own home. But the arrangement only boosted his revolutionary enthusiasm. In his own house, free from the control of his parents, he had everything his own way, expanding the organization and enlightening the people. He dug a tunnel from his house and enlisted even his newly-married wife in the revolution. His father found himself helpless, and exclaimed deplorably:

“His obstinacy really beats me!”

From this anecdote I knew that Kim was a man of guts. I liked the stubbornness with which he went his own way, acting according to his own will and determination, no matter what others were saying.

With this same tenacity and enterprise, Kim Ju Hyon had organized a guerrilla unit in Helong and was commanding it shortly after I founded the anti-Japanese guerrilla army in Antu.

It was when the new division was formed in Maanshan that we got together in the same unit after a few years' separation.

Kim Ju Hyon's small unit was the first to come to me in Maanshan at the news of a new main-force unit of the KPRA being formed. I was delighted at the reunion, because the lack of cadres had been a serious problem for me.

In those days we did not even have a man to take care of supply services for the unit, so the regimental political commissar Kim San Ho had to deal with them. I appointed Kim Ju Hyon as logistics officer of Headquarters, and he gave a strong impetus to this work. Without hurrying about or pressing supply workers, he managed to procure food and clothing without difficulty and improved material conditions for the army.

His ability as a competent logistics officer was displayed to the full when our unit was operating in the Mt. Paektu area.

Whenever he was out on a procurement mission, people with aid goods on their backs arrived in rapid succession at the secret camp. He

obtained anything he was determined to get.

New Year's Day of 1937 was the most successful of all the festivals we had during the anti-Japanese armed struggle. We owed the success to Kim Ju Hyon, who had made a special effort, saying that the first New Year's Day after our advance to Mt. Paektu should not be celebrated as an ordinary festival.

In preparation for the Battle of Pochonbo, uniforms, caps, leggings, cartridge belts, packs and tents for six hundred soldiers, as well as the shoes of the same number, and a great quantity of grain were obtained, thanks to his laudable efforts and O Jung Hup's assistance. Although his father had been afraid that he would be unable to support even his wife, and though he was empty-handed on Mt. Paektu, he was entrusted to provide hundreds of soldiers with food, clothing and housing, and did an excellent job.

Whenever I praised him for his success in his work, he said that the success should be attributed to the good people of West Jiandao.

Seeing him travelling around with blistered lips and bloodshot eyes to obtain supplies for the army, and moved by his unremitting efforts, the people gave him their active support in his work.

Kim Ju Hyon was a good mixer, understanding people's mental sufferings and helping them solve their problems, just as a member of their own family would do. Back at the camp, he was a thoughtful and tender-hearted brother to the soldiers. The people in West Jiandao called him "our logistics officer."

Kim Ju Hyon had extraordinary abilities and a personal magnetism with which he was able to open even the most tightly closed heart. Apparently the people were attracted by his personal charm, recognizing in him a genuine man who always spoke the truth, who approached them with sincerity, worked conscientiously and behaved in a simple and humble manner.

No doubt this charm was the cause of every one of his successes, not only in the service of logistics but also in political work.

The special merit I found in his work was his political method of finding a solution to every problem. If I gave him the task of making

uniforms, for example, he sincerely explained to his men the pressing need and the ways to carry it out, instead of mechanically relaying the instructions of Headquarters to them.

Because I valued his political ability, I would send for him whenever a difficult and complex political task arose. When I was sending an advance party to establish the Paektusan Base, I appointed him as its leader because the detachment was to carry out a political task in addition to its military mission. The advance party was to select the sites for the secret camps on Mt. Paektu, open the routes to be followed by our units and collect information on the enemy situation and the public sentiments in the border area. It was also to find out political mass foundations on which to build underground anti-Japanese revolutionary organizations and make them ready for the struggle.

Kim Ju Hyon carried out his political task with credit. The distinguished service he rendered in the Mt. Paektu area as the leader of the advance party was worthy of written commendation. The sites for the secret camps in the valleys of Sobaeksu, Mt. Kom, Saja Hill, Mt. Sono, Heixiazigou, Diyangxi, Deshuigou and others were all selected by his advance party. Travelling about in the farm villages of West Jiandao, such as Diyangxi, Xiaodeshui, Xinchangdong, Guandaojuli, Jongriwon village, Pinggangde, Shangfengde, Taoquanli, Sanshuigou and others, he acquainted himself with people who could contribute to party building and the united front movement and built up a fairly large source of recruits for the revolutionary army. His advance party also played a great role in disseminating our revolutionary line, reflected in the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF, and its Inaugural Declaration both in Korea and the vast area of West Jiandao. The success his party gained became a springboard for raising the anti-Japanese armed struggle onto a higher stage.

This was the position of Kim Ju Hyon in our unit, the man whom we called first whenever a difficult task arose. He was a treasure of the unit whom everyone valued and loved. His strong sense of duty to the revolution, high political qualifications, great organizing ability and

seasoned work method, all these merits deserve to be a model for all commanding officers. In a nutshell, Kim Ju Hyon was a man of both great political and military accomplishments.

As I had always held his success and ability in high esteem, I appointed him the leader of a small unit to be dispatched to the homeland in mid-August 1937, shortly after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. As I mentioned in the previous section, following the outbreak of this war we planned to launch political and military activities on a larger scale in the homeland, conduct an intensive harassment campaign behind enemy lines and encourage a fresh upsurge in the anti-Japanese revolution in keeping with the prevailing situation. To this end, we had to build a small unit of able people, who were well prepared politically and militarily, and dispatch them as an advance party to the necessary areas of the homeland to pave the way to our plan. This was important.

The revolutionary organizations in the homeland informed us through different channels that many people had gathered in the mountains in the southern part of North Hamgyong Province—for example, in Songjin, Kilju, Myongchon and Tanchon as well as the northern coastal areas of South Hamgyong Province—and were making painstaking efforts to establish links with the Korean People's Revolutionary Army.

The basic task of the small unit was to find out these young patriots, organize guerrilla units and give them military training. It was also to give short courses to the people who were not physically fit for the armed struggle, so as to prepare them to become members of underground organizations. In addition, it was to launch political work among the masses and find able people to join and expand underground organizations and armed ranks. The small unit was also given an assignment to search out sites for secret camps, the future base of armed struggle, on the Paektu mountains, and on the Machonryong and Pujonryong mountains.

In view of the importance of this small unit and the work it was to perform, we selected its members from our elite—people such as

prominent political workers Pak Su Man, Jong Il Gwon (alias Shorty), Ma Tong Hui and Kim Hyok Chol. As the unit was built of men of rich experience, led by a skilful commander, our trust in it was deep and we expected much from it. The unit members were spirited men with a firm resolve, and there was not a shadow of a doubt that they would carry out the task with credit.

“I will wait for good news,” I said to Kim Ju Hyon as they left.

I did not explain things at length, for he always understood my intention thoroughly without lengthy explanations from me. If I said one word, he would catch 10 of my meanings. This was just his special merit. I held Kim Ju Hyon in unqualified trust.

All of us expected that the small unit would come back to us with good results after four or five months at the earliest and five or six months at the latest.

However, to my surprise, the small unit suddenly returned a little more than one month after its departure. This was a serious event none of us had expected. I saw at a glance that their work in the homeland had ended in failure. Kim Ju Hyon’s report left me dumfounded: The unit had come back after moving around in the Kapsan area without even reaching the Songjin area where the young patriots were waiting.

After entering Korea by the route of Xinxingcun used by Ri Je Sun, the small unit advanced to Hyesan following the organizational line under Pak Tal’s leadership. On the way they heard from a local organization that the Japanese gold mine owners plundered and stocked gold nuggets in the Jungphyong Mine to ship them to Japan.

Kim Ju Hyon decided to raid the mine and capture the gold. The professional instinct of a logistics worker prompted him to do this in spite of himself. Even a few gold nuggets would be a windfall for his supply services. The small unit raided the mine and captured some gold. But they had to pay for it dearly. Alarmed at the sound of gunshots from the Jungphyong Mine, the enemy converged on the small unit in large groups.

The small unit withdrew from the mine and climbed up the mountain behind Toksan-dong village, but they were surrounded by

the enemy on all sides. Kim Ju Hyon wrote a note and set it afloat in the wind to reach the enemy.

“You fools, haven’t you learned about the elusive revolutionary army yet? We are crossing the River Amnok.”

Reading the notice, the enemy hurried off to the river. Kim Ju Hyon took this opportunity to escape and led his men from the enemy’s encirclement. The small unit broke through the encirclement, but could not penetrate further into the homeland. The enemy covered all the mountain areas of North and South Hamgyong Provinces and watched every lane where they thought the guerrilla operatives might pass. Kim Ju Hyon returned to Headquarters, putting off the performance of his mission in the homeland to a later date. Because of the absurd adventure and terrible indiscipline of his unit, we had to postpone our plan to raise the resistance force in the homeland. We had planned to expand the armed struggle to the east coast, taking advantage of our people’s desire for independence and our young men’s eagerness to join army, which had risen to fever pitch after the Battle of Pochonbo. The patriotic youth in the homeland who had waited for our small unit after arranging the rendezvous in Machonryong mountains scattered, disappointed at the failure to meet the mission from the revolutionary army.

The news that the small unit had come back without even reaching its destination clouded the guerrillas’ minds. They were depressed, saying that the homeland must be in unusually bad shape, judging from the fact that such an experienced political worker as Kim Ju Hyon had failed to reach his destination and turned back at the very border. They suspected that the expansion of the armed struggle to Korea might be impossible for the time being. The consequence of Kim Ju Hyon’s mistake was irretrievable.

I could hardly believe his mistake. His thwarting of the small unit operations, diverted by a few pieces of gold, turned our plan into a fiasco. His indisciplined action left a big hole in the KPRA’s harassment operations behind enemy lines, not to mention the thrust into the homeland. I still recall the incident now and then with a feeling

of regret: if Kim Ju Hyon had advanced to the east coast area and met our patriotic young people, as we planned, our armed struggle might have had a more fruitful history. My disappointment and my sense of frustration were great at that time and I was very angry but, strangely enough, I could not say a word of reproach or call him to account as he stood before me, head bowed, waiting for his punishment. It seemed that when my anger or disappointment was at its height, I could not utter a word. I looked at him in silence.

The Party Committee of Headquarters held a meeting and deliberated his case. All the comrades severely criticized him for his grave mistake. Some of them banged the floor with their fists in fury. Apparently he was facing such criticism for the first time in his life. He sat dejected as if he gave up everything.

Many people correctly analysed his mistake at the meeting of the Headquarters Party Committee. His extremely indisciplined action had been due mainly to his short-sighted judgement resulting from self-conceit and unjustified confidence in his small brains. He had not interpreted the task of the small unit from the strategic point of view. He lost his reason when he heard about gold, and in raiding the mine he never thought about its consequences. As he confessed, he intended to kill two birds with one stone. In other words, he was going to obtain gold by attacking the mine; and he was also going to meet the young people to organize armed units.

Of course, I thought that his confession was sincere. All he said was true. We knew well how frank and upright he was. However, it was natural that everyone should become indignant at his conduct, because no matter what their intentions had been, the small unit had returned in failure, without even reaching the place where they were to work.

I wanted to forgive him, but I could not speak a word on his behalf. A commander should not be swayed by friendship or deal with the case contrary to principle. Conniving at his error because of personal feeling would be harmful in all respects. The only thing I could do to help Kim Ju Hyon was to provide an opportunity for him to correct his mistake.

The Headquarters Party Committee decided to dismiss him from the post of logistics officer. I, too, voted for the decision. Seeing him leave the Headquarters in low spirits after being punished, I blamed myself for not having helped him in advance to avoid making the mistake.

If I had warned him that he should go directly to the comrades in the homeland, no matter what happened on his way, things would not have come to this pass. To be honest, I had never imagined an extraordinary situation in which something like a few lumps of gold would tempt the logistics officer to change his course of action.

After his dismissal, Kim Ju Hyon put all his heart into his own ideological training. Nowadays, this kind of training is called revolutionary transformation.

From the first day of his reappointment to the cooking unit, he always carried a cauldron on his back whenever the unit moved. Though it must have cost him a great deal, he carried the cauldron on his back even in the presence of his former subordinates. Someone in such a situation usually asks to be transferred elsewhere; Kim Ju Hyon neither complained, nor was he ashamed of his job as a cook. Instead, he worked so conscientiously that his fellow soldiers were sorry for him. He always looked bright and cheerful.

One day I visited the mess hall of the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment to see how Kim Ju Hyon was doing. He was sweating profusely, serving the men at table.

At that moment, one of the men ate up his soup in an instant and called out to Kim Ju Hyon, rapping an enamelware bowl with his spoon.

“Hey, cook, one more bowl of soup!”

He sounded impolite, obviously looking down upon Kim.

“Yes, with pleasure,” Kim Ju Hyon replied politely. He filled a bowl with soup and walked quickly over to the man.

That night I sent for the man and admonished him. I said that he should not order a man about or look down on him simply because he was dismissed for a mistake, and that he should treat him with more

warmth and give him sincere help instead of treating him with contempt or giving a wide berth to him. He accepted my advice and apologized for his mistake.

One's social position is not immutable—one may gain or lose it. Therefore, people must respect man's personality, not his social position, if they are to maintain a true comradely relationship.

If their neighbours experience mishap, people must help them warmly and sincerely. When comrades were dismissed from their posts for mistakes, the anti-Japanese revolutionary fighters never treated them coldly or shunned them, but helped them in every way to correct their mistakes.

One day, about one week after Kim Ju Hyon had started working in the cooking unit, I approached him on the march and asked him to take off his pack. I felt sorry for him, as he was walking laboriously carrying a rifle, a knapsack and a cooking pot.

He declined, saying that it was not heavy. When I held the strap of his pack to take it off, he pushed my hand aside obstinately and walked on.

That saddened me. I wondered whether he wasn't mortified at the decision of the party meeting to dismiss him. When I glanced quickly at his face, I saw him shedding tears. The tears weighed on my mind: What made a man of strong heart shed tears?

Kim Ju Hyon had experienced indescribable sorrow and misfortune as a man. His wife was killed in one of the enemy's "punitive" operations when she was doing political work in a local area, and his daughter died of a disease. When he joined the guerrilla army he gave his only son to another family. Afterwards, he lived only for the revolution.

That day, after all the men fell asleep, I made for the camp of the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment to see Kim Ju Hyon. At the cooking place I witnessed an unexpected sight. I thought that he would be eating his heart out in bed, but he was polishing a cauldron with a scrubber on the brook.

I told him to work in the arsenal, starting the next day. I said that he would be easy in mind if he could work there, because its surroundings

were quiet and nobody would hurt his pride there. With tears in his eyes he replied that he would be easy in mind only if he could remain at my side even while he was being punished.

“I saw you shedding tears in secret and interpreted it in my own way. I thought you were crying because of your job as a cook, so I thought I should transfer you to the arsenal.”

When I said this, he grasped my hands with a smile.

“No. I cried because I was grateful to you for feeling sympathy even while you were punishing me and because I had a guilty conscience about forgetting your great concern. Do you know what I feared most when the Headquarters Party Committee was deliberating my case? I was afraid of being dismissed from the ranks and driven out. When I die, I want to die here. Away from the revolutionary ranks, life is not worth living. I thank you for allowing me to work even in the cooking unit.”

Listening to him, I now understood what was going through his mind as he was scrubbing the cauldron on the brook. Nothing mattered to him as long as he could only stay with us, regardless of his own interest. He did not care whether he was a commander or a cook, whether he was criticized or punished, as long as he was not removed from the revolutionary ranks. This was a true personality of Kim Ju Hyon.

A man of such character accepts criticism or punishment by his comrades, seeing these as a part of their trust and love. The moment he was being criticized by his comrades, he was thinking only of the great loss the revolution had suffered because of his mistake.

“I thought I was a perfect revolutionary, but I was naive. If it weren't for the Comrade Commander's trust, I would be merely a green revolutionary. My comrades criticized me correctly. I will take this opportunity to train myself ideologically so as to become a top guerrilla fighter.”

With such determination he went on to make strenuous efforts to transform himself.

He studied very hard while working in the cooking unit. In

November of the year he was punished, the Secretariat of Headquarters published my thesis *The Tasks of Korean Communists* in pamphlet form. Kim Ju Hyon was the first to obtain and read it. The cooking unit soldiers were afraid that the logistics officer, whom they respected and followed, would break down from exhaustion, because he studied so hard without caring for his health. They slipped the pamphlet out of his pack and hid it between some rocks behind the tent.

Kim Ju Hyon searched for it for several days. He got all the worse and even lost his appetite. This rather upset the soldiers, so when he was absent, they took the pamphlet out from its hiding place and put it back into the pack. One of them said, “Comrade Ju Hyon, please root around more carefully through your pack. A thing cannot disappear by itself.” When he found the lost pamphlet in the pack, he was as delighted as a child and said, “That’s strange—I feel as if I were haunted.”

He transformed himself. He was truly worthy of a veteran revolutionary from the working class. His efforts to train himself were so strenuous that one could not look upon him without emotion. This is why I still insist that if cadres are to revolutionize themselves, they should follow the example of Kim Ju Hyon.

Six months after he was dismissed from the post of logistics officer, we appointed him commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment. We did this rather than reinstating him in his former post because he always longed to be on the battlefield in the midst of roaring gunfire.

He fought well after he became a regimental commander, displaying his ability to the full as an adroit and daring military commander in the spring offensive launched by the KPRA main force in 1938. This offensive included battles in Jiazaishui and Shierdaogou, Changbai County, Liudaogou in Linjiang County, Shuangshanzi, Wujiaying, Jiajiaying and Xintaizi, and Kim did an exceptional job of leading his regiment in all these battles, as well as in many other big and small battles subsequent to the offensive. In summer that year he led his unit from Xintaizi to Mengjiang, Liuhe and Jinchuan, striking the enemy from behind and demonstrating his excellent

commandership. His 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment also distinguished itself in political work among the people. Whenever the regiment went to a village, the commander involved himself actively in the work with the villagers.

Kim Ju Hyon fell in action, surprised by the enemy's "punitive" troops in October 1938. He was gathering honey with Kim ThaeK Hwan and Kim Yong Guk at the time in the forest of Nanpaizi, Mengjiang County, for the patients in the field hospital. After becoming a regimental commander, he did not forget to continue providing his comrades-in-arms with food, clothing and housing as he had done when he was a logistics officer.

After he was killed in battle, his comrades opened his pack to find almost nothing in it, not even the spare shoes carried by every soldier. His orderly said that he had given his spare shoes to a man whose shoes had worn out.

I burst into tears as I held his empty pack. If all the grain, fabrics for military uniforms and shoes that he had obtained for our revolutionary army since he became our logistics officer had been piled up, it would have been as high as a mountain. Just the shoes he had obtained numbered thousands of pairs. Yet he had given his only spare shoes to his comrade.

His empty pack made me meditate on the property of a revolutionary and his outlook on life. It is man's nature to want a happy life, and many people in the world value only gold. From the viewpoint of such people, Kim Ju Hyon belonged to the have-nots. But to my mind he was really a man of great wealth, because all his life he had cherished a noble ideal and because he had a soul that could not have been bartered, even for a colossal sum of gold.

### **3. Getting the Peasantry Prepared**

The new situation prevailing after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War made it imperative to prepare for an all-people resistance. We evolved a plan of achieving national liberation by strengthening our forces in advance and, when the time came, combining the military operations of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army with a nationwide resistance.

Resistance involving all the people would be inconceivable without the participation of the peasantry, which made up the overwhelming majority of the population in our country. Some people contended that the peasantry could not constitute the main force of the revolution because, unlike the industrial working class, they lacked the sense of organization and consciousness. But we had a different opinion. If provided with correct leadership and knitted together through organization, the peasant masses could be a great revolutionary force. I had already experienced it during the harvest struggle in 1931. Through our practical experience we were convinced that they could become a mighty resistance force if they were trained along a revolutionary line.

Our ancestors left us with a legacy of backward and poor agriculture. When others were ploughing fields, sowing seeds and harvesting by machine, the peasants in our country tilled the land and grew crops by primitive manual labour. Shackled by feudal fetters, they were harshly exploited by the landlord class and feudal rulers for generations and subjected to maltreatment and contempt.

Their living conditions grew even worse with the occupation of our country by the Japanese imperialists. Owing to the "Land Survey Act," the "Plan for Increased Rice Production," the "policy of exiling Korean peasants to Manchuria," and other thieving, predatory policies on the

part of the Japanese imperialists, the rural communities and agriculture of Korea were devastated and the impoverishment of the peasants was further accelerated.

In the early days of their occupation of Korea the Japanese imperialists plundered our peasants of hundreds of thousands of hectares of land under the “Land Survey Act” and distributed it among the Government-General, Oriental Development Company, Fuji Industrial Stock Co. and other colonial development companies, as well as among Japanese people immigrating from Japan itself.

Later Japan announced the “Plan for Increased Rice Production,” then followed it tenaciously. This was done to tide over the food crisis threatening Japan and to make huge profits by exporting a large amount of capital to Korean rural communities.

The “Korean Civil Law,” made public by the Japanese imperialists, reads in part, “...even though he has suffered a loss in his farming due to force majeure, a sharecropper cannot claim exemption or reduction in his farm rent.” This was none other than a proclamation to prevent by law the struggle of the Korean peasants to improve their conditions. It meant that even on the brink of starvation the tenants were to remain quiet and uncomplaining. In this way, the Government-General in Korea from the outset institutionalized the exploitation of peasants by the Japanese farm owners and landlord class. Considering the actual situation of the Korean rural communities, where tenants accounted for a majority of the farming population, it is not difficult to imagine the living conditions of our peasants, who were shackled by this “Civil Law.” The cruel practice of exploitation by the insatiable Japanese imperialists and the landlords, who were bent on squeezing a maximum amount of rice from their tenants, was so outrageous that it might have put even a beast to shame. The Oriental Development Company stationed its resident official or caretaker in every province and farm and under him a farm superintendent, so as to strictly guard and control its tenants. If a tenant failed to pay his rent in time, or showed any sign of being “remiss” in farming, or opposed the owner of the farm, they cancelled the contract for sharecropping right away and

took back the tenanted land.

The Japanese farm owners had their own private prisons where they detained any tenant who complained to the farm authorities or even demanded the simple right to existence. When in my Changdok School days I read a newspaper article that at the Nakahara Farm Japanese armed with rifles tailed after the Korean peasants as they worked in the fields, threatening to shoot and kill anyone they considered sluggish, I felt so furious I could not sleep.

Every year the Japanese imperialists shipped to Japan 7-10 million *sok* of rice (one *sok* is equivalent to 20 pecks), rice produced by the sweat and blood of the Korean peasants. Instead they brought in millet and defatted-bean-cakes from Manchuria as food for the Korean people. How indignant the Korean people were, having to eat rotten millet because they had been plundered of their rich rice by the Japanese!

Even the Korean landlords, under the aegis of the Government-General, harshly exploited the peasants as if in a competition. Their agents and usurers also joined them.

The reactionary agricultural policy pursued by the Japanese imperialists accelerated class differentiation in the rural communities in Korea. A massive exodus from rural communities and the formation of a new social stratum, called slash-and-burn peasants, were the pitiable result of colonial class differentiation. The peasants who could no longer live in their native villages went deep into the mountains or to no-man's-land to eke out a living through farming on land felled of trees. But even this way of farming was not secure, as the Government-General launched a "campaign to expel slash-and-burn peasants" on excuse of "forest conservancy" and "prevention of forest fires." While operating in West Jiandao, I met many peasants who had been expelled from slash-and-burn farming. A massive emigration of Korean peasants was inevitable.

In their places the Japanese imperialists shipped in a great number of immigrants from Japan, which was experiencing difficulties from a sudden population increase and lack of grain. They schemed to bring 4

million Japanese peasants to Korea in the first 15-year period of the “Plan for Increased Rice Production.” Tanaka Kiichi had originally had the Constitutional Institute of Japan publish in September 1925 the “plan for the emigration of 10 million Japanese to Korea.” After becoming Prime Minister, he established the Department of Overseas Affairs and buckled down to the execution of the emigration plan. What would happen to Korea if the surplus 10 million people were shipped into Korea? Our nation would stifle under the avalanche of the Japanese.

The reactionary agricultural policy of the Japanese imperialists ruined the livelihood of the peasants in the rural areas of Korea and sharpened national, social and class contradictions.

As a result the peasant masses rose up for their right to existence.

Peasant organizations such as the Tenants’ Cooperative, the Mutual Aid Society of Tenants, the Association of Fellow Peasants, and the Tenants’ Union emerged in our country after the March First Popular Uprising. A typical early organization that represented the rights and interests of the peasants was the Tenants’ Cooperative.

Tenant disputes were the main trend of the peasant movement in our country under Japanese imperialist rule. The disputes in the 1920s raised in general such economic slogans as “obtaining tenant rights and reducing farm rents” under the leadership of the tenants’ cooperatives. The peasant union was the leading form of organization in the peasant movement in our country before liberation. This type of organization put forward slogans reflecting political demands as well as economic slogans for survival, in keeping with the developing situation.

The first mass organization that involved the whole country was the Workers’ Mutual-Aid Society of Korea. The society had a peasant department, or a tenant department, embracing a large number of tenants, and rendered a considerable contribution to the development of the peasant movement.

The early peasant movement experienced many twists and turns.

As the tenant disputes grew intensive, the Japanese imperialists mobilized police to suppress them with the force of arms and arrested

at random the standard-bearers of the peasant movement. At the same time, they resorted to nefarious schemes to appease the peasants and divide the peasant force by using kept unions under the control of the “Peasant Association of Korea.”

The tortuous experience of the early peasant movement was also due largely to the harmful influence of the non-revolutionary national reformists and the early communists. The majority of the leaders who organized and guided the peasant movement in those days were not true peasants. They included a considerable number of petit-bourgeois intellectuals and national reformists, and this was unavoidable in view of the then social and historical conditions.

The national reformists, who had wormed their way into the leadership of the peasant movement, inculcated the “theory of non-violence” in the unsophisticated peasants. They preached that tenants should not argue to no avail with the landowners, but instead understand them and live in harmony with them, and that this would settle the disputes between the tenants and landowners as naturally as snow melting in the spring breeze.

Quite a few early communists numbered in the leadership of the peasant movement. As the tide of the peasant movement began to rise, they heated up the factional strife in order to bring the peasant organizations under the influence of their own factions. But their factional strife for the expansion of their own cliques in disregard of the interests of the peasants did serious harm to the peasant movement. Bitter feuds and hostilities broke out between the peasant organizations and within the organizations themselves, crippling many of them. Nevertheless, the peasants continued their struggle despite such difficulties.

They answered the enemy’s counterrevolutionary violence with revolutionary violence. The revolt of the peasant masses in the Fuji Farm in Ryongchon and the large-scale uprising of the peasants in the Tanchon and Yonghung (Kumya) areas in the late 1920s are typical examples. The tenant dispute at the Fuji Farm was a violent mass struggle, waged together with the young communists of the new

generation from the Down-with-Imperialism Union, who were operating in the Ryongchon area.

The Red International of Labour Unions and its subordinate organization, the secretariat of the Pan-Pacific Labour Unions, proposed on several occasions between the end of the 1920s and the early 1930s to the Pacific countries to organize Red labour and peasant unions. In response to the proposal, concrete measures were taken in Korea to form such organizations.

As a result, new Red peasant unions began to spring up from the early 1930s in our country, and existing peasant unions were also reorganized into Red peasant unions. “Red” and “Left” were the terms used to distinguish revolutionary organizations from non-revolutionary reformism. In those days the term “Red” was used widely in the circle of the communist movement.

The overwhelming majority of the Red peasant unions were concentrated in northern Korea.

In the 1920s most of the peasant organizations were in the southern part of the country, and tenant disputes arose more frequently in the south than in the north, because a greater number of peasant households existed in the southern region, with its heavily populated Honam Plain.

By the early 1930s things had begun to change. The main front of the peasant movement shifted from the south to the north. The number of revolutionary peasant organizations had grown and the fierce peasant struggle was greater in the north than in the south. The main reason for the south-north movement was that Mt. Paektu was the strategic centre of the Korean revolution and the northern region was geographically close to Jiandao and the Soviet Union.

The Red peasant unions on the other hand were organized not only in the northern region of Korea but also in the southern provinces.

The anti-Japanese armed struggle of the Korean communists in Northeast China and in the northern border area of Korea provided favourable soil on which the Red peasant unions were to thrive. To be candid, all the peasant organizations that emerged in northern Korea

after the start of the anti-Japanese armed struggle were organized by the people in the homeland in the course of the anti-Japanese struggle, waged in cooperation with us. They were not a spontaneous growth. The decision in the case of a peasant union in Myongchon recorded in the court proceeding and kept by the Hamhung district court, contained the following paragraph:

“As a result of that struggle, the offices of the Yanji County administration and the branch office of the Japanese consulate were destroyed by fire and there was an engagement with the Japanese troops, who later made a retreat. The union embarked on the road of revolutionary struggle under the general command of Kim Il Sung.”

This is a typical example of the activities the peasant unions in northern Korea conducted at the time as a result of the anti-Japanese armed struggle.

However, the peasant movement led by the Red peasant unions revealed shortcomings that could not be overlooked, owing to the harmful manoeuvres of the Left opportunists and national reformists.

After putting a Red cap on the peasant unions, the Left opportunists fenced them in and pursued a closed-door policy. They defined all the people working on the land, except tenants, poor peasants and hired farmhands, as hostile class or wavering stratum, and kept them off the fence of peasant unions.

Patriotic middle peasants and landowners with a strong anti-Japanese spirit dared not join the Red peasant unions. I heard that in a certain village there were wells exclusively for the Red peasant union members and those for people other than union members; one can easily imagine the extent of the closed-door policy at the time.

The closed-door policy pursued by the Red peasant unions damped the patriotic enthusiasm of the nonmembers and compelled them to approach all the undertakings of the unions with hostility. It also alienated the children of union members from those of nonmembers.

Another defect in the activities of the Red peasant unions was their “knockout” way of working. Their members regarded going to extremes as an expression of their revolutionary spirit. For instance,

when the leadership of the union called on its members to do away with superstition, the members went near churches and threw stones at the windows or pulled down the crosses from their roofs. They destroyed mountain shrines and trampled on the offerings there. Worse still, they snatched bibles from religious believers in public and tore them up. When told to get rid of the practice of early marriage, they waylaid bridegrooms who had gone to bring brides on horseback and seized their horses or simply detained the bridegrooms in order to scuttle the marriage ceremony. In such cases, the young bridegrooms often ran home, scared out of their senses, or wept in panic.

Although they performed many laudable undertakings for national and class liberation in conformity with the situation, the peasant union organizations sometimes behaved in an uncouth manner. In consequence, some people disagreed with everything they did.

We considered the weakest point in the activities of the Red peasant unions to be the fact that they had not adopted clear strategic and tactical measures for protecting themselves. As a consequence, they had no guard against either enemy suppression or the harmful schemes of the factionalists and national reformists.

Many of the unions exposed themselves unnecessarily. For example, they should have seen that different wells for their own members and for nonmembers would expose every member of their organization; however, their leaders ignored such common sense. The enemy's spies could instantly see through the windows of their own houses who was fetching water from the well for the union members.

Some of the union organizations kept lists of members and a register of the payment of their dues, just as the peripheral organizations of government parties do nowadays. This was another cause for the exposure of the organizations. Whenever police raided their secret workplaces, they would seize these lists and ferret out the members to the last man, arresting 200 or 300 of them at a time.

These few examples show that the peasant unions ignored the need to keep strict secrecy and security and confronted the enemy in a naked state, exposing themselves recklessly. This habit gave the enemy the

opportunity to destroy the peasant union organizations totally.

They had no system of ensuring solidarity and concerted action among themselves.

All these shortcomings were due to the weakness and immaturity of those who headed the peasant movement in our country, which lacked a correct communist leadership. Those who guided the movement had neither scientific methods nor correct strategy or tactics for developing the movement.

In spite of these weaknesses and limitations, however, the Red peasant unions rendered a significant contribution to the development of our peasant movement. The steadfast leaders of the peasant unions and the organized peasant masses waged an unremitting struggle against Japanese imperialism and landlords to realize their political and economic demands, not yielding to repeated roundups by the Japanese imperialists.

We attached great importance to the courage, mass character and indefatigability of the peasants, all of which had been demonstrated in the peasant union movement. It was absolutely correct that we regarded the peasantry, along with the working class, as a component in the main force of an all-people resistance.

The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War gave us a possibility to speed up the preparations for national resistance. A very important matter in these preparations was how to awaken the peasant masses, who accounted for more than 80 per cent of the country's population, to a revolutionary consciousness and how to organize them. Training the peasantry in the homeland, along with the working class, to take a revolutionary course was a lifeline we had to adhere to in the anti-Japanese revolution.

I believed that one of the most effective methods of preparing the peasants into a force in the all-people resistance was to restructure the peasant organizations in the homeland to be subordinate to the ARF.

Nevertheless, many of our military and political cadres regarded the organizations in the homeland in a negative way, branding them as either Leftist or Rightist. They held the view that we had to form new

peasant organizations, totally ignoring the organizations of the past.

To consider the former peasant organizations and movements to be negligible or unworthy of revitalizing and restructuring was nihilism. Such a nihilistic view was contrary to the requirements of the communist movement itself and to the purport of the Inaugural Declaration of the ARF; worse still, as it was tantamount to abandoning the foundation and success achieved by the peasant movement in the previous years, it was utterly destructive in rallying the peasants.

My plan was to rally under the banner of the anti-Japanese national united front all the existing organizations in disregard of their names and the greatness of the success they had achieved as long as they were determined to fight against the Japanese aggressors, imperialism and feudalism. The point in question was how to restructure the tottering peasant unions in accordance with the meaning of the Ten-Point Programme and the Inaugural Declaration of the ARF.

At a meeting of commanding officers to discuss the preparation of an all-people resistance we adopted the policy of restructuring all the labour and peasant unions in the homeland as ARF subordinate organizations, or at least putting them under its influence. This policy meant extending our direct leadership over the revolutionary movement in the homeland. In line with this policy we selected political operatives to be dispatched to the homeland.

In our revolutionary ranks in those days were many comrades who had been engaged in the peasant union movement back home, among them Kim Yong Guk and An Tok Hun. In West Jiandao, the nearest area of our operations, there were many people who had been involved in the Korean independence movement and the peasant union movement.

We guided the peasant movement in the homeland through various channels.

The pivotal role in this effort was played by the political operatives selected from among the comrades of our main force and by the members of the ARF organizations trained in West Jiandao. In order to

understand the exploits they performed in transforming the peasant movement in Korea, it will be sufficient to examine the activities of the political operatives in the southern part of North Hamgyong Province.

After the founding of the ARF we sent to this area Jo Jong Chol, Ryu Kyong Su, Choe Kyong Hwa, Jo Myong Sik, and other tested political operatives. In the homeland they were acquainted with the hardcore members of peasant unions; they selected clever people from among them and sent them to us and to the peasant union organizations in other areas.

Ho Song Jin, a leader of the peasant union in Songjin, got in touch with us through the good offices of Ri Pyong Son, a political operative and former member of a peasant union. Ho came as far as West Jiandao at my call. Owing to the aftereffects of the raid on the Jungphyong Mine, he could not see me, but he succeeded in getting our line on the revolutionary movement in the homeland through Pak Tal in Kapsan. On returning to his native village, he conveyed the policy to a meeting of exiles from three southern counties of North Hamgyong Province, held in September 1937. After the meeting our revolutionary line, including the strategy of a united front, was propagated widely in North Hamgyong Province.

Political operatives went among the revolutionaries and activists of peasant unions deep in the homeland and made untiring efforts to convert them to our ideas of an all-people resistance and an anti-Japanese national united front. They also tried to build up organizations by restructuring the peasant union organizations as ARF subordinate organizations, or by putting them under its influence.

Thanks to this joint effort of the political operatives from the KPRA and the steadfast peasant union leaders, significant changes took place in the peasant movement in the homeland.

Most noteworthy of the peasant unions in the homeland was their ardent yearning for the anti-Japanese guerrilla army.

The report on the internal and international situations delivered at the fellowship conference of women in Myongchon in autumn 1936 reads in part, "A worker-peasant soviet was established in

Shijiudaogou. Kim Il Sung has organized information squads and crossed over to Korea to engage in information and publicity activities. ... Comrades, it is certain that Kim Il Sung will march on to Korea hereafter.” Around that time a resolution drawn up by a peasant union in that area reads this way: “Changbai County! In order to set up a soviet, a battle was fought in Shijiudaogou. As a result, 3 000 tons of timber, a forestry office and Japanese consulate were burnt down, and eight enemy stooges were abducted. The Japanese troops withdrew after the engagement. This revolutionary fight was fought under the general command of Kim Il Sung.” In its special edition on the October Revolution the newspaper of the peasant union in Kilju, *Pulgun Chumo*, carried a slogan, “Let us strongly support Kim Il Sung’s unit.” All these show clearly the vehement political character and rapid development of the peasant movement in the days of the Red peasant unions, as compared to the peasant movement in the previous years, when it had stuck mainly to economic issues.

The revolutionary organizations in the homeland, including the Red peasant unions, followed the activities of the People’s Revolutionary Army with wonder. This constituted a favourable condition for effecting our leadership over the revolutionary movement in the homeland.

Under our leadership an epoch-making change took place in the line of the peasant movement in Korea.

First of all, the Red peasant unions in Korea dropped their bias for class struggle and directed the spearhead of their struggle towards Japanese imperialism. In one peasant union document there is the following paragraph: “The task facing the peasant union is to direct the masses’ complaints and discontent with Japan towards revolutionary action.” This is a reflection of the trend.

The steadfast leaders of the peasant movement in the homeland rallied greater numbers of people than ever to the peasant unions. A record of a meeting of forerunners in a certain area shows that the peasant movement leaders at the time adopted the idea of admitting to the grassroots organizations of the peasant unions not only poor

peasants, but activists from all strata, including middle peasants and rich farmers. The generally accepted qualifications for membership of a peasant union, irrespective of social class, namely the habit of observing discipline, the ability to keep secrets and a strong fighting spirit, accorded with the purport of the Inaugural Declaration and the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF. One Red peasant union established subcommittees of petit bourgeoisie and pupils and recruited shop keepers, shop assistants, restaurant managers, middlemen, commercial capitalists, day labourers and even pupils from primary schools.

Some of those organizations took positive measures to enlist conscientious landowners in the anti-Japanese struggle, admitting landowners to information squads when guiding the struggle against the laying of roads. They planted their members in the Self-Defence Corps and other lower ruling organs of Japanese imperialism and organizations on its pay-roll and gradually “made them Red,” thereby efficiently combining both a lawful struggle and illegal one. A pamphlet they had published pointed out that the theory of “denying legal possibilities” was Leftist opportunism. It further advised that all legal possibilities be utilized skilfully.

Several of them kept closely in touch with each other while keeping up independent activities, taking joint action with one another, from exchange of information on their actual situations to the choice of the method of struggle and the setting of their fighting goal.

These changes taking place in the Red peasant union movement under our influence provided a favourable condition for transforming the existing peasant organizations in a revolutionary fashion.

Hand in hand with the comrades in the homeland, our political operatives got down to a revolutionary restructuring of the peasant organizations. Thus, in many parts of North and South Hamgyong provinces there sprang up a great number of ARF organizations based on the former peasant unions. Many ARF organizations, including the Sinuiju chapter, expanded their influence over the peasants living around the middle reaches of the Amnok. In addition, our men and women set up revolutionary organizations under various names and

based on ARF organizations among the peasants in central and southern Korea, notably in Pyongyang, Nampho, Cholwon, Seoul, Inchon, Taegu, Pusan, Jonju and Kwangju.

While organizing the peasant masses back home, our operatives and the comrades in the homeland concentrated on awakening them to revolutionary consciousness in order to instil the idea of independence in them—that the country should be liberated by the effort of the Korean people themselves. For this purpose, the publications of the peasant organizations in those days frequently carried the explanation of the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF.

Such education heightened their sense of historical mission. The peasant organizations imbued the peasants with the idea of fighting against the colonial rule of the Japanese imperialists and gave wide publicity to the internal and international situations, the lawful development of society, the future of the Korean revolution and news of the titanic struggle of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, in order to convince the peasants to cherish the idea of victory.

The operatives we had dispatched to the Pyoksong and Mt. Kuwol areas reorganized, through Min Tok Won, who was working in the homeland, the peasant union in the Pyoksong area into a revolutionary one. Then Min went to the Inchon area by boat with the hardcore people in Pyoksong and worked hard to awaken the members of labour and peasant unions there to revolutionary consciousness.

Kim Jong Suk went via Phungsan to Tanchon and Riwon in mid-July 1937. She met Ri In Mo in Phabal-ri, Phungsan County, and discussed in depth with him the idea of expanding the ARF organizations, with members of the Red reading circle as the hard core. Ri In Mo is an eyewitness to the incident in which a Korean Revolutionary Army's operational group in the homeland raided the Naejung police substation in Phabal-ri and killed an evil police sergeant nicknamed *Opasi* (stinging bee). Under the influence of this, the forerunners in Phungsan organized a Red reading circle and started the anti-Japanese struggle. Ri In Mo belonged to that circle. He had been imprisoned on two occasions, in 1932 and 1933, and served about

one year of penal servitude.

When I met him recently and asked him about his activities in those days, Ri said that he had been on two occasions to Erdaogang, an important area of operations for the KPRA, to establish contact with us. He was so eager to join the army that he even went to Tonghungjin when a detail from the unit in southern Manchuria attacked the town. In spite of these efforts, he failed to see me and went back when he realized he could not make contact with our organization. This was truly regrettable. Had he succeeded in meeting us at that time, his career might have been completely different.

Although he had been imprisoned twice he did not stop fighting. A member of the revolutionary committee of the Phungsan area, he worked energetically in such organizations as the Phabal branch, the labourers' shock brigade in the Hwangsuwon dam project and the paramilitary corps at Huchi Pass in Ansan.

Around late September in 1938 Kim Jong Suk again met Ri in Phungsan, and his colleagues of the revolutionary committee of the Phungsan area, and discussed the measures for expanding and consolidating the organizations and working in the enemy-held area.

After seeing her, Ri In Mo strove to expand the organizations subordinate to the ARF. One of the objects of his work included the Communist Group in Seoul, an organization we had considered indispensable in giving leadership to the communist movement in the homeland. This was the most remarkable aspect of Ri's activities. With Ju Pyong Pho, he conveyed our line on the restoration of the homeland to the Communist Group in Seoul and thus extended our influence on the circle in this city.

Ju Pyong Pho, Ri In Mo's senior in their days in the Red reading circle in Phungsan, who conveyed our line in person to Kim Sam Ryong, had taken part in the anti-Japanese struggle of students since his days in Tonghung School in Longjing. Enrolled in a school in Seoul in 1937, he often went to Phungsan and kept close ties with the communists who were under our influence. In the course of this, he made contact with Kim Jong Suk, who was working in the Phungsan

area, and learned in a precise way our line, strategy and tactics on the revolution in the homeland. Kim Jong Suk discussed with him the matter of rallying the communists in central Korea, with Seoul as the centre around our anti-Japanese national united front movement.

Ri In Mo recalled that Kim Sam Ryong had been delighted to be informed of our line on the united front.

In Seoul Ju Pyong Pho and Ri In Mo mixed with workers in the metallurgical, textile, fibre, printing, dyeing, garment and other industries, built up labour union organizations by recruiting progressive elements from among the working class, and laid the groundwork for making preparations for an all-people resistance. Meanwhile they made tireless efforts to ensure our leadership of the revolutionary organizations in the homeland.

Ri In Mo not only worked for the revolutionary movement in the homeland, but also performed considerable exploits in expanding the ARF organizations in Japan. On Ju Pyong Pho's instructions Ri went to Tokyo in the summer of 1940, carrying with him the *Ten-Point Programme of the ARF*, and transformed the friendship society of the self-supporting students from Phungsan in Tokyo in a revolutionary fashion.

As mentioned above, Ri In Mo is not a man who fell out of the blue. He was trained to be an incarnation of faith and will by the ARF and the fighters from Mt. Paektu, who went through all sorts of hardships and difficulties to sow the seeds of the organization in every part of the country.

After completing her programme of work in Phungsan, Kim Jong Suk proceeded to the Tanchon area on the east coast. The man whom we had singled out from among the progressive people in Tanchon was Ri Ju Yon, a leader of the peasant union in Tanchon. He had been involved in the Singan Association and also had had a hand in the Tanchon peasant revolt in 1930.

Thanks to the good offices of a member of the ARF in that area, Kim Jong Suk met Ri Ju Yon, who was under treatment in a temple in the mountain at the time after serving seven years' penal servitude in

connection with the peasant revolt.

After expressing her heartfelt sympathy with him for his ill health, a consequence of his hardships in prison, she conveyed to him our line on the anti-Japanese national united front and our policy of an all-people resistance. She also told him to awaken the peasant masses to revolutionary consciousness and organize them so as to expedite the preparations of the forces for the all-people resistance. He told her that in the past he had run about day and night trying to organize a movement, but had felt futile, as if sailing with no destination on heavy seas in an old boat with a broken compass. Now feeling as if he were on a new boat, he made an oath to be loyal to the revolution.

Finishing her work with Ri Ju Yon, Kim Jong Suk met Ri Yong on the seashore in Chaho, Riwon. Ri Yong was the son of Ri Jun, a patriotic martyr and hero of the incident of the emissaries to The Hague. Ri Yong had been imprisoned for his connections with the Pukchong peasant union, and after being released, he organized and led an anti-Japanese association. After his father had disembowelled himself in The Hague, Ri Yong devoted himself to the Independence Army movement for some time at the behest of his father, who had told him, "You must devote your whole being to the country." However, he had lost interest in the movement, for he had realized that in spite of its ostentatious signboard, it could not attain its goal without correct leadership.

He had been involved in the communist movement for some time. But he shook his head on seeing the factions separating themselves from the masses, like oil on water, and idling away their time with feuds conducted for their own self-interests. The peasant union movement in which he had been deeply involved was caught up in serious wrangling. The stylish campaigners of the top hierarchy, wearing their hair in a bouffant style modelled after Karl Marx, were ordering the peasants about in a grand manner.

Unable to bear it any more, Ri one day denounced one of the long-haired men at the top. The man retorted, "Why are you so insolent? Because you are the son of Ri Jun? Did anyone make us a present of independence because your father appealed by

disembowelling himself far away from his country?”

Ri Yong shouted and beat his chest in anger. He could bear an affront to himself, but he felt bitter and resentful to think of the patriotic soul of his late father being insulted in this way. The pain was not alleviated for many years.

The conclusion Ri Yong reached after being in the Independence Army and taking part in the communist and peasant union movements, was that the masses, no matter how powerful they might be, cannot demonstrate their might unless guided by a competent leader.

He organized like-minded people and tried hard to find a channel to Mt. Paektu.

Kim Jong Suk transmitted to Ri Yong our plan of preparing forces for an all-people resistance by rallying the peasant masses in the region south of the Huchi Pass.

Ri Yong made a firm commitment to devote himself to the sacred cause of national liberation by upholding our policy. Taking leave of Kim Jong Suk, he said that Korea was alive because of me; he called me “the one and only leader” of Korea.

I once read *Kumranjigyejon*, an educational tract used by the revolutionary organizations in the northern region of Korea and edited by Pukchong people. There is a pine grove in Chonghung-ri, Pukchong County. As it was a scenic, quiet place, the influential people had from olden days regarded it as a pleasure ground and gathered there from time to time for competitions in composing poetry.

The advanced elements of the Pukchong people, being highly anti-Japanese, formed a Kumran Association, with the influential people at the fore to hoodwink the police. The name of the association, “Kumran,” means that a united mind is as sharp as an iron edge and as fragrant as an orchid. In other words, it indicates deep feelings between friends. It is construed as an association of close friends.

Most of the hardcore elements in Pukchong were the association members. They frequently met in the pine grove with the influential people in the area and cultivated themselves morally while pretending to be composing poems. In the course of this, the oldest member of the

association, respected by many as a scholar for his wide knowledge, composed the *Kumranjigyejon*, which contained the expression “the one and only leader.”

In September of that year, Ri Yong formed the party circle of the Pukchong district and became its head. The early members of the circle were the hard core of the Chaho Anti-Japanese Association. He motivated the party circle to rally the Chaho Anti-Japanese Association and the labour and peasant unions around the ARF, building up the forces for an all-people resistance, with the east-coast region south of Huchi Pass as the centre.

After he had made contact with Mt. Paektu, a great change took place in Ri Ju Yon’s life.

On getting his new fighting task from us, he left, not for his home, but for the road of struggle, on the very day he had promised his wife he would return home. As he left, bidding farewell to his loyal wife, who had supported him for seven years while he was behind bars, he felt seized with a great pity for her. However, when she came to the temple, he suppressed his personal feelings and took leave of her with determination.

For eight years, from the day he left the temple till the day of liberation, he was constantly on the move, forgoing a comfortable home life and with his comrades devoting his wisdom and passion to inculcate the spirit of the anti-Japanese struggle in the minds of the workers and peasants.

After liberation Ri Ju Yon and Ri Yong upheld their principles and worked hard, just as they had fought when looking up to Mt. Paektu.

Among the leaders of the peasant unions in the homeland, who made strenuous efforts on behalf of the united front movement and the preparations for an all-people resistance under the banner of the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF, was a man named Ri Won Sop. He was head of an anti-Japanese secret organization in the Kilju area, having reformed a peasant union into an organization subordinate to the ARF. The organization members he guided would have gone through fire and water for the revolutionary army. He obtained white

paper from the Kilju Pulp Mill and regularly sent it to Mt. Paektu. In those days the peasant organizations on the east coast used to send a variety of essential goods in lorries to Sinpha and Hyesan in broad daylight, to be forwarded to the revolutionary army.

The peasant union activists conducted brisk information and publicity campaigns, appealing to the peasant masses to turn out for an all-people resistance in response to the armed struggle we were waging.

Members of the peasant union in Jongphyong were imprisoned; even in prison they gave wide and frequent publicity to our struggle. Activists of the peasant union in Myongchon also gave wide publicity to us and appealed for the anti-Japanese struggle.

The patriotic martyrs who risked their lives by fighting in the homeland in response to our line in the days when we were making preparations for the all-people resistance cannot be counted only in the tens of thousands. These known and unknown revolutionaries rallied, shoulder to shoulder with the operatives we had dispatched, millions of the peasants in every part of the country around the ARF.

After the peasant union organizations were restructured on a revolutionary line, the peasant movement in our country was linked closely to the anti-Japanese armed struggle. This provided favourable conditions for promoting the development of the peasant movement. In struggling to carry out the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF, the peasant organizations all over the country rendered a great contribution to the consolidation of the anti-Japanese national united front and to the preparations for an all-people resistance. In this struggle the revolution in the homeland lost a great number of peasant union activists and patriotic members of peasant unions.

The peasant movement occupies, along with the labour movement, an indisputable place in the history of the anti-Japanese national liberation struggle of Korea, centred on the anti-Japanese armed struggle. We must not forget the revolutionaries, many of whom sacrificed their lives, who fought to win back national sovereignty and achieve the class emancipation of peasants from the sabre-rattling fascist tyranny of Japanese imperialists.

#### **4. Choe Chun Guk in His Days in the Independent Brigade**

In the summer of 1937, when the Sino-Japanese War broke out, the main force of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army was operating in the Changbai and Linjiang areas. It was waiting for the Independent Brigade, a unit which had shared life and death with us since the first days of the guerrilla army, and which had left northern Manchuria.

I have already mentioned that in accordance with the decision adopted at the Yaoyinggou meeting in the spring of 1935, units of the People's Revolutionary Army in eastern Manchuria had launched into the vast areas of northern and southern Manchuria to conduct brisk joint operations with the Chinese units there. We had also begun joint operations with the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps in northern Manchuria, in the course of which I dispatched some individuals from the Wangqing Regiment and Hunchun Regiment to the Sanjiang area, where Kim Chaek and Choe Yong Gon were active.

On the long way to meet the comrades-in-arms in northern Manchuria, their force had been reinforced and had grown into a large unit. In the spring of 1937 the Independent Brigade was to come to West Jiandao. Choe Chun Guk was secretary of the party committee for the brigade and political commissar of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment. The Koreans in the brigade sincerely helped the Chinese armed units and the people of northern Manchuria. While fighting in Wangqing, Choe Chun Guk received extraordinary love and respect from both the Chinese people and the Chinese nationalist armed units for his efficient work with them.

After the meeting in Xigang I called the soldiers of the unit I had left behind in northern Manchuria to West Jiandao.

But the brigade I awaited so anxiously did not arrive in the Linjiang

area until long after the Battle of Pochonbo and the July 7 incident.

We were all surprised at their appearance. Their torn uniforms were fluttering rags, their feet wrapped in pieces of cloth tied with string or straw cords, for their shoes were completely worn out.

Touching the threadbare back of his tunic, I said to Choe Chun Guk in sympathy, "From the days in Wangqing till now you have always put yourself to great trouble to carry out difficult tasks."

Choe replied in tears, "I am very sorry to be late. Worse still, I've lost such stalwart comrades-in-arms as the company commander Choe In Jun and platoon leader Pak Ryong San."

They had left northern Manchuria in early May, so the march had taken several months. From Yilan, where they had started, to the shore of the Amnok it was a 2 500-mile journey. On the long, arduous journey they had experienced all kinds of hardships.

Rim Chun Chu regretted having lost a box of acupuncture needles he had kept and valued from the days when he was 17 years old. He said that the box had contained two expensive gold needles which had become thin in the course of treating many people.

"It was indeed an arduous march. To see tents pitched here in an orderly manner, I feel as if I were in a different world," said he, adding that the day when he had slept in a tent was dim in his memory.

I soon sent for the logistics officer and ordered him to supply them with tents and new uniforms. Choe Chun Guk and other commanding officers visited me again soon after supper. I had told them to go to sleep to relieve their fatigue, but they said that they could not, as they had to see the Commander. They asked me about the news of the Sino-Japanese War. Unaware of the outbreak of the war on their several-month-long, bloody march, they got the news of it much later.

I explained the situation to them.

"The September 18 incident ended with Japan's occupation of Manchuria, but the July 7 incident will be different," I told them. "The Chinese people are now offering a nationwide resistance to the Japanese aggressor army. Chiang Kai-shek can no longer avoid an anti-Japanese struggle, and so the Chinese Communist Party has taken

the initiative in forming the anti-Japanese national united front with the Kuomintang. Accordingly, the main force of the Chinese Red Army in the northwestern region has been renamed the 8<sup>th</sup> Route Army of the National Revolutionary Army, with Zhu De as its Commander-in-Chief. If the Red Army and the Kuomintang army cooperate to wage a protracted war, Japan, with limited national strength and troops, will find it difficult to hold out.

“The Japanese army is advancing, sweeping everything in its path, but its flag of the Rising Sun is already clouded by a bad omen.

“To cope with the war, we held several meetings and made some relevant decisions. According to the policy we put forward at the meetings, our task is to make preparations for an all-people resistance while harassing the enemy in the rear and expanding and strengthening the revolutionary forces in the homeland. Our main strategic area for harassing the enemy in their rear is along the Amnok and in southern Manchuria. As the main front of the Sino-Japanese War is North China, the Japanese army’s war supplies will have to pass through the area on the Amnok and southern Manchuria. That is why we are operating on the Amnok. You will operate in those areas as well.”

They were very regretful not to have participated in the battles of Pochonbo and Jiansanfeng.

Choe Chun Guk told me that he had met many Koreans in the Anti-Japanese Allied Army units when he was in northern Manchuria and that they had so earnestly longed to be at Mt. Paektu. Saying that he had met Choe Yong Gon in the battle of Yilan county town, he described the meeting in detail.

Choe Yong Gon had hugged him closely and said in tears, “I heard that you have come from Comrade Kim Il Sung’s unit. I’m glad to see you. I feel as if I were seeing Commander Kim himself. I heard he had been all the way to northern Manchuria to see Kim Chaek and me and, failing, had returned to Mt. Paektu. I’m so sorry about that.”

After liberation Choe Yong Gon recalled frequently his meeting with Choe Chun Guk at the battle of Yilan county town. The battle was a joint operation by Choe Yong Gon’s and other units in northern

Manchuria and the units from eastern Manchuria. The units operating in northern Manchuria came on horseback 50 or 75 miles, attacked the enemy at night and withdrew like lightning before daybreak. Afraid of the night, the enemy were keeping brightly-lit lamps around their barracks and various places on the earthen wall. The combatants of Choe Chun Guk's unit shattered all the lamps, each with a single shot; the enemy were so scared at the shots and flashes of gunfire that they did not dare to fire back.

Later the newly-formed Independent Brigade received our order to come to West Jiandao. Apparently they were full of excitement at the order. The soldiers of the brigade who were to go to West Jiandao were so happy they did not eat anything the whole day, while Kang Kon, Pak Kil Song and others who were to remain in northern Manchuria were so disappointed, they did not eat either.

The southward march of the brigade was tortuous.

The day when he received my order, Choe Chun Guk sent messengers to various units dispersed in different areas. He then clothed his men in puppet Manchukuo police uniforms and led them daringly out on the plain to march along the highroad. He estimated that the area of the plain would be empty of enemy troops, since they were combing mountains to "mop up" the guerrillas after being defeated in many battles. Because Choe and his men marched along the highroad, they reached the vicinity of Dongjingcheng in a week without fighting a single battle.

The beginning of the march was smooth enough, but as several units were merged, the brigade commander Fang commanded the marching column. This caused a great deal of friction.

According to Rim Chun Chu, Ji Pyong Hak, Kim Hong Pha, Kim Ryong Gun and other participants of the march, the problem was the fundamental difference in tactics between Fang, the brigade commander, and Choe Chun Guk, who was secretary of brigade party committee.

Since the marching column encountered large units of the enemy frequently after passing Dongjingcheng, Choe Chun Guk insisted that

the brigade should be regrouped into smaller units and march separately in order to avoid engagements and loss of life. This was a correct proposal that agreed with the requirements of guerrilla warfare. However, Fang held that once dispersed, it would be difficult to command his brigade, hence the combat power of the brigade would be reduced. He was of the opinion that a dispersed brigade was no longer a brigade. He ignored Choe's proposal and stuck to marching as a large unit.

As a consequence, they engaged with the enemy now and then, suffering many losses; this restricted the speed of the brigade as well. In spite of such crushing difficulties, all the soldiers eagerly yearned for the day when they would launch the action into their native land. A young soldier who had been fatally wounded left his will, breathing his last with his head in Choe Chun Guk's lap. The will was a request that he bury him in the soil of Korea—a will that could never be carried out in view of the circumstances at that time.

Choe cremated his body, wrapped a handful of ashes in a piece of paper and gave it to the sergeant major to keep. He intended to bury the handful of ashes in Korea.

In order to bring down the loss of life, Choe proposed to take by stealth the 100 horses grazing on the grassland and continue the march on horseback. He said, "We've already been exposed. We could have covered our traces if we had marched separately, but you didn't permit it, so we could not escape misfortune and lost many comrades-in-arms. If we march on as we do now, we may sustain a greater loss. We must slip out rapidly before the enemy encircles us, so that they don't chase us but are dragged in our wake. If we move on horseback, we can take the initiative and drag them at our will and defeat them. If we continue to flounder, standing on the defensive, the whole unit will be annihilated."

Fang turned down this suggestion too. According to him, a mounted march was suicide. No persuasion could change his mind. At long last, Choe's proposal was submitted to the party committee of the brigade.

All the members of the committee supported Choe's tactical

scheme. With the wounded and weak soldiers on the 100 captured horses, the brigade continued the march southward. Those not on horseback put their loads on the horses and walked unburdened. This accelerated the speed of the march.

The enemy on their tail were far away, following them as Choe had anticipated. The brigade wiped out the enemy on the chase in the vicinity of Guandi. Then, they slew the horses for food.

Thanks to the march on horseback, the brigade could have a breathing spell; but, in the area along the Dunhua-Haerbaling railway line they were faced with another obstacle, for the area was full of enemy troops.

The brigade commander suggested retreat, saying there was no other way.

Choe Chun Guk opposed it, saying, "We must advance, even if it's only one step forward towards the Amnok. How can we pull back? It will be more dangerous if we encounter the enemy on our retreat. They obviously have sent reinforcements to chase us."

This made the brigade commander angry. He retorted, "How can we advance in this situation?"

While they were arguing, a unit of the puppet Manchukuo army happened to be marching along the road nearby. Choe said that the best way was to follow this marching column. His eyes wide with astonishment, the brigade commander asked what he meant by saying they should follow the enemy.

Choe Chun Guk explained, "The puppet Manchukuo soldiers have no time to look back since they are pulling heavy guns. Even if they happen to see us, they will take us for friends, never imagining that the guerrillas would follow them daringly in broad daylight. So let's follow them, and after passing through the area along the railway, slip away into the mountains."

The brigade commander did not object to this proposal.

Thanks to Choe's proposal, the brigade passed the area along the railway without accident. Later, however, there were many encounters and engagements with the enemy's "punitive" forces, large and small.

In the vicinity of Piaohe they encountered 500 enemy troops, fighting a bloody battle for two days. Many guerrillas lost their packs during the battle, and the sergeant major's pack, where Choe kept the ashes of the young guerrilla, was also lost.

Choe Chun Guk continued to insist vehemently that the only way to rescue the brigade from the enemy cordon, tightening with each passing minute, was a dispersed march in small units. But the brigade commander said, "Then one or two companies may survive, but the brigade will be routed. Are you proposing that we should escape separately to save our skins? We must live or die together."

The brigade party committee discussed the two men's ideas once again.

Furious with the brigade commander's indecisive attitude, Choe struck his chest with his fist and remarked fiercely:

"Which of us here wants to save his own skin? None of us is afraid of death. But we cannot die for nothing before reaching our destination. If we lose all the men on the way, the men who so eagerly wish to go home, how can we, the commanding officers, atone for the crime? If we get our men and ourselves killed just because of the stupid conduct of a few commanders, who will wage the anti-Japanese war and the revolution? If we are to preserve the force of the brigade and reach West Jiandao, we must switch over to dispersed action."

Nearly all the officers at the meeting criticized the brigade commander, who had stuck to a march by a large unit, and accused him of being an adventurist. Some of them even labelled him a coward in the guise of comradeship. In view of the fact that Fang surrendered to the enemy in later days, it is not surprising that they labelled him a coward, I think. As a matter of fact, he did not surrender on his own accord; being arrested, he yielded to the enemy's intimidation and appeasement. Whatever process it was that made a turncoat of him, the seed of his surrender and betrayal had germinated, I believe, long before from his lack of faith and willpower and from the cowardice revealed now and then in his everyday life. What Fang feared was obvious: if the units, with their strong combat power and efficient

commanders, left to go off separately, his personal safety would be threatened.

After the brigade party committee meeting at Piaohe, the Independent Brigade switched over to the method of marching in dispersion and broke through the enemy blockade.

Nevertheless, Fang did not digest the criticism given by his comrades. He continued to be unpleasant towards Choe Chun Guk.

After receiving a regular military education, Fang became an officer of the former Chinese northeast army, so he had the authority and rank to command the brigade. By contrast, Choe hailed from the lowest rung of society without having even received primary schooling. He had learned reading, writing and military art only after joining the guerrillas, and had then become a commanding officer. However, Fang seemed to be unaware that academic attainments did not determine who was talented or superior. It was only during the battle for crossing the River Songhua some days later that Fang repented. At that time the brigade, which had been marching in dispersion, regrouped itself into a large unit. It arrived at the River Songhua near Naerhong at sunset. The river, rising with the seasonal rain, had become wide and rough. They had to cross quickly before the enemy appeared, but only a small boat big enough to carry only five or six people was available. As they crossed and recrossed the river by boat, many men had still not made it to the other side by dawn. Everyone, both those who had crossed and who had not, looked at the slowly moving boat and the brightening sky with apprehension.

At that moment the enemy arrived. Making for them with 10 agile men, Choe Chun Guk told the brigade to hurry across the river and hide in the forest near Liushuhezi, as he would lure away the enemy. Thanks to him, the men remaining at the ferry crossed the river safely. The brigade waited for Choe's death-defying corps for a few days in the vicinity of Liushuhezi. Choe appeared with his men on the fourth day, each carrying a load of grain they had obtained along the way.

Only then did Fang take Choe by the shoulders and apologize.

What pleased me most on hearing the activities of the brigade in

northern Manchuria and on its southward march was that all the men in it had performed their tasks with credit. They had lived up to my expectations and become more seasoned than when they had taken leave of me.

The typical example was Choe Chun Guk. When he was around me, he had been a military commander skilful in guerrilla tactics and an ideal political worker. In the course of the brigade's activities in northern Manchuria and its march southwards, his military talent and commanding efficiency had reached a perfect stage.

In childhood Choe Chun Guk had been another man's houseboy and grew up at a railway construction site. In the army he learned marksmanship and drill movements with great speed, being quick-eyed. His character and abilities made a good impression on me, so I nominated him for political instructor of a company. At that time he said to me, pulling a long face, "How can I be a political instructor and teach others when I am still ill-prepared in every way? What I am sure I can do is to kill the Japs and their stooges, so let me remain a rank-and-file soldier."

I told him that he should inculcate his men with his own love for the country and hatred for the Japanese imperialists, and that this alone would mean his successful execution of the duty of a political instructor. Then I gave him a pocketbook and wrote on its first page, "You must study, even by writing on the earth."

From that time on he showed extraordinary zeal in study and training. While learning Korean letters, he also studied Chinese characters by himself.

There is a good story of how he came to learn Chinese characters. One day he came to see me, asking for the meaning of the Chinese word "*Yi Zheng Hua Ling*." I pronounced it for him and interpreted it into Korean. He mumbled, "I see! The Chinese characters are very strange. It's a pity I wasn't able to attend a village school."

He then started to carry a dictionary of Chinese characters in his pack.

I have mentioned in a previous volume that the defensive battle of

Xiaowangqing was fought for 90-odd days and that it was a hard-fought one. But all through those 90 days, Choe never stopped studying the Chinese characters.

Once I visited Sancidao, where Choe's company was stationed; I told him that a company political instructor should know how to dance and sing so as to imbue his company with a lively and optimistic spirit. After that he went outside every night and practised dancing, out of sight of the others. He was so absorbed in the practice that Ko Hyon Suk, the company cook, who happened to see him one night, ran to the company commander and told him in a shocked whisper that the company political instructor seemed to have gone out of his mind. The commander held his sides with laughter at her warning. This became a famous anecdote of Sancidao in later days.

He was so faithful and diligent that in our battles in the guerrilla zones of eastern Manchuria I could always entrust his company with the most challenging tasks.

In the Macun operations, when we fought 5 000 enemy troops for 90 days, his 2<sup>nd</sup> Company was a pillar. When I left the guerrilla base to attack the enemy from behind, I would always entrust him with the task of defending the base, which he carried out with credit and without fail.

Because of this trust, I could leave him to take my place when I and my men had to move elsewhere, or send him to important places where I could not go myself. This became a regular practice, the reason Choe and I, despite our close relationship, always lived far apart.

Looking at the tough and seasoned appearance of Choe now, I pictured in my mind the images of many of my comrades-in-arms who were also demonstrating extraordinary military talent in the great anti-Japanese war. Choe Hyon, An Kil, Kim Chaek, Choe Yong Gon, Ri Hak Man, Ho Hyong Sik and Kang Kon—among all these renowned generals of the anti-Japanese war, for whose death or capture the enemy was offering great sums of bounty money, no one except Choe Yong Gon, who had been a teacher at the Huangpu Military Academy, had received any kind of regular military education. They had not even

thought of becoming a soldier until only a few years before. Yet what skillful military commanders and efficient political workers they had become!

Looking with trustful eyes at Choe Chun Guk, who reeked of gunpowder, I thought, “We already have enough reliable men to take charge of each strategic area. When the time comes, I can assign units to them and give them operational missions to liberate the country, telling them to advance to North Hamgyong Province, Rangnim Mountains and Thaebaek Mountains, and so on. If the paramilitary corps and the people rise up across the country in support of these units once we have advanced to the homeland, Japanese imperialism will be defeated and we will achieve ultimate victory.”

The night of his arrival, Choe Chun Guk and I shared a tent, as we had done when I was with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company in Sancidao in our days in Wangqing. It evoked vivid memories. We talked until daybreak.

Choe said, “We might have given up halfway if we had not kept it in mind that we were going to Mt. Paektu. The thought that we must remain alive by all means to tread the soil of our country forced us to find our way out of dead ends and keep going even in the midst of total exhaustion. Except for a few visits to my home town of Onsong in the days when we were fighting in Wangqing, I haven’t been back home for years. I want to inhale the fragrance of the soil of our land.”

His words went home to my heart. I gripped his hands tightly and told him with regret that I could not promise him the chance to step on the soil of home soon, even though he so missed it. Thus, I could not help but tell him that night what I had intended to tell him in a few days.

In those days the Anti-Japanese Allied Army units active in eastern and southern Manchuria were experiencing difficulties for lack of military and political cadres. The loss the southern Manchurian unit had suffered from the enemy’s “punitive” operations was destructive. The 1<sup>st</sup> Corps was undergoing such hardships in its guerrilla activities, the enemy was boasting that “the communist bandits in southern Manchuria were wiped out to the last man and public peace was

ensured.” In order to expand and intensify the guerrilla actions in southern Manchuria, an area that had become more important with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, we had to first reinforce it with skilful military and political personnel. Moreover, taking special measures for guarding the commanding personnel had presented itself as a problem in the southern Manchurian unit after the death of division commander Cao Guo-an. It was a common view of the commanding officers that the guard units, which had to become the main defenders and elite units of a corps or a division, should include the most efficient military and political cadres and experienced combatants. Because of this situation, Wei Zheng-min had since the spring of that year requested me to hand the whole of Choe’s brigade over to him as soon as they arrived.

Since I was well aware of the difficult situation in which the southern Manchurian unit found itself, as well as of the strategic importance of the guerrilla struggle in southern Manchuria and the painful position and feelings of Wei, I could not turn down his earnest request.

When I told Choe how sorry I was that I could not realize his wish, he consoled me, saying, “If it is the demand of the revolution, then I must leave you again. But, please don’t feel sad. There will be days when I will be with you and step on the soil of our native land.”

“It is very kind of you to say so. Frankly speaking, I want to take with me at least the men who have been with me since the days in Wangqing, but Wei is in need of them.”

Hearing the news of the Independent Brigade’s arrival, Wei visited me the next day and said meaningfully:

“I was greatly shocked by the story the brigade’s soldiers told me. The fate of a unit is dependent after all on its commander. If the commander is not steadfast, his unit will be ruined. Fang isn’t fit to be a brigade commander. I had planned to put the Guard Regiment under his command, but I have to cancel the plan. The Soviet Union is said to have benefited much from the former officers of Tsarist army during the Civil War, but we don’t have this advantage. I feel so frustrated that

I can't find suitable military and political cadres to lead the Guard Regiment.”

His complaint reflected his innermost wish that I give him men fit for the positions of regiment commander and regiment political commissar from among the Koreans.

The meeting held that day to review the march of the Independent Brigade had high praise for Choe Chun Guk for his efficient command of the brigade on the march, and commended the men who had been model soldiers on the march. After this, Fang and the commanders who had servilely followed him were duly criticized. Concluding the meeting, I emphasized how crucial it was to put guerrilla tactics into practical use in our fight with the enemy, who were invariably superior in number:

“For us to engage in regular warfare instead of guerrilla warfare is as absurd as a swallow hopping clumsily about on the ground to look for worms, instead of soaring freely in the sky to prey on insects. The ancient war manuals tell us that a man who knows when to fight and when not to fight will emerge victorious, and that a man who immobilizes the enemy's chances to win and who always looks for a chance to defeat the enemy is a good fighter. When we encounter the enemy, no matter where, we can be confident of victory only by applying the elusive guerrilla tactics.”

As the meeting was attended by Wei Zheng-min and other Chinese commanders and rank and file, I made the speech both in Korean and Chinese.

After the meeting we organized a new Guard Regiment. Ri Tong Hak, the Guard Company commander of my unit, was appointed its commander, and Choe Chun Guk its political commissar. Rim Chun Chu was also to go to Wei to treat his illness. The other men in the Independent Brigade were all sent to him. As he had wished, Wei now had a Guard Regiment consisting of the most skilful and stalwart among the Korean military and political cadres and combatants.

Wei did not hide his pleasure at this, but many of the men of the regiment were sorry that they could not remain with me. Even Rim

Chun Chu requested to be dispatched to a political operation group in the homeland.

A few days later the regiment left with Wei for the Huinan area in southern Manchuria. On the eve of departure Choe Chun Guk called on me to say good-bye. It was a moonlit night a few days after Harvest Moon. Sitting on the grass just beside the tent of Headquarters, we bid each other a touching farewell.

“You have to leave for southern Manchuria before having had the chance to relieve the fatigue accumulated in northern Manchuria. I’m sorry I always send you off somewhere without giving you a respite.”

“Well, that’s all right. Since you obviously trust me, I feel encouraged.”

“Huinan is said to be strictly guarded by the enemy; you must take care of yourself. Please refrain from any adventure or hasty action, as you did while raiding the police substation at the ferry in Onsong.”

The raid was a battle which Choe Chun Guk and his company fought at Jangdok ferry after crossing the River Tuman in early 1935. It was to be a model battle for our thrust into the homeland, which we had been planning for a long while. The main duty of the police at the ferry was to control the people crossing the Tuman. The policemen there were so vile that the secret organization members carrying goods from Onsong for the guerrillas via the ferry frequently had their goods confiscated. The secret revolutionary organization in Onsong requested us to teach the policemen of the branch station a good lesson. So I told Choe Chun Guk’s company to raid the station.

Having crossed the frozen river by stealth just before dawn with the combatants, Choe Chun Guk placed his men near the station and went in alone. As only one policeman was on duty, they could raid it without firing a shot. But while Choe was in there, the policeman kicked a servant boy viciously for failing to build a fire in the stove in time; Choe, in a fit of fury, shot him to death. Consequently he and his men had to withdraw in haste without properly delivering a political speech to the people who had been in the yard of the station to register for crossing the river.

It was a very small battle indeed, killing just one enemy policeman, but it made a strong impact on the public. Many believed that since such a small number of guerrillas had raided a border post in front of many people, greater events might take place in the future. The battle was a signal for the brisk operations we were to conduct subsequently to destroy the enemy on the Rivers Amnok and Tuman.

Choe Chun Guk was still remorseful that he had failed to perform proper political work at that time. He said to me now.

“I was still immature in those days. If I had not lost my temper but acted more prudently, I would have made a speech to touch the heartstrings of the people. But I missed the main target because of my rash act.”

“Daring is praiseworthy, but a commander should always be discreet in all his undertakings. As you are now in charge of the security of a corps headquarters as well as that of a regiment, you must be careful in everything. Bear in mind that unnecessary adventure is taboo. You must return to me alive for the great cause of national liberation. I’ll send for you without fail once the operation for liberating the country is unfolded, to atone for my failure to take you to the Battle of Pochonbo.”

Because of this promise, Choe took leave of me in a much happier mood than on the day he had left me for northern Manchuria. In southern Manchuria he carried out his revolutionary tasks with great credit and kept in close touch with us. When sending him to southern Manchuria, I gave him the task of winning over the Independence Army units operating on the River Amnok centred on Huanren, Jian and Tonghua. His efforts produced good results in performing this task as well. Wei Zheng-min’s messages to me were full of pride at the activities of the Guard Regiment. What I still remember most clearly among the messages is the one which said that by means of a letter Choe Chun Guk had kept hundreds of the puppet Manchukuo army soldiers under his thumb.

While passing by an enemy’s strategic base, Choe, who was in command of the Guard Regiment, was informed through his scouts

that hundreds of soldiers of the puppet Manchukuo army and policemen were stationed there. He wrote to the commander of the Manchukuo troops, to this effect:

“We don’t regard the Chinese people as our enemy, nor do we want to make them so. We have no desire to fight against you, so don’t provoke us. We now need some time to relax. We are going to drop in at Fuerhe and take a rest in your walled town. I warn you not to stop us.”

He wrote the letter in full consideration of the mental state of the puppet Manchukuo army, who wanted to fight against the guerrillas as little as possible.

The Manchukuo army unit sent a messenger to him with a letter promising that they would comply with his request if the revolutionary army waited for 30 minutes. During the 30 minutes the Manchukuo army unit evacuated the town and escaped to the mountain at the back of the town for they would get in trouble with the Japanese at a later date if they allowed the guerrillas into town while they themselves were still there.

The regiment went into the walled town, relaxed and conducted political work among the people.

At dusk the puppet Manchukuo army soldiers on the mountain grew anxious and started a continuous whistling. This was a signal that they were uneasy because the Japanese troops might appear any time. Also, they were not brave enough to actually demand that the guerrillas leave.

Choe ordered his unit to resume the march and left a short letter of thanks to the commander of the puppet Manchukuo army unit.

“Thank you for allowing us to take a good rest. I wish you to regard us as your friends and help us in future too. Japanese imperialism, the common enemy of the Korean and Chinese peoples, will be defeated without fail and the Koreans and Chinese will surely emerge victorious.”

By using this method, Choe had held a great number of puppet Manchukuo soldiers under his thumb and had turned many against the Japanese. What is surprising is that most of the letters in the Chinese

language he sent to the commanders of the puppet Manchukuo army were written by himself.

Throughout the latter half of the 1930s he rendered a positive help to the activities of the Chinese guerrilla units in the Anti-Japanese Allied Army, operating continually in the vast areas of northern and southern Manchuria. This earned him the title of internationalist fighter from the Chinese people and from his revolutionary comrades. Chinese friends everywhere praised him with deep affection and respect for the exploits he had performed for the sake of proletarian internationalism and friendship between Korea and China.

What exactly made Choe Chun Guk a renowned anti-Japanese general at that particular time throughout southern and northern Manchuria?

Every second the anti-Japanese revolution transformed the people beyond recognition in the same way that a day, a month or even a decade at ordinary times would do. As pig iron is heated and turned into steel in a furnace, those who had been ignorant, ill-clad and wretched grew up into fighters, heroes and standard-bearers in the great whirlwind of revolution, transforming society and ushering in a new era.

Choe Chun Guk devoted his soul and body to the revolution and trained himself without interruption in the struggle.

Here is an interesting anecdote that shows his human traits.

Shortly after Choe Chun Guk started married life after liberation, Rim Chun Chu visited his house. He asked Choe's wife, as a joke, whether she liked her husband. Smiling bashfully, she inquired of him whether her husband had really been a guerrilla. Then she told him of an episode of a few days before at an athletic meet for Choe's unit.

That day the families of the servicemen were invited to watch the athletic meet. Choe's wife, too, went to enjoy it in holiday attire. Returning home in the evening, Choe asked her in apparent ill humour:

“Don't you have any better clothes? You were wearing hempen clothes in front of the whole unit.”

At the words “hempen clothes” she burst out laughing, for he had

mistaken ramie cloth for hemp.

“They are made of ramie cloth, not hemp. There is no better summerwear than this cloth.”

“There isn’t?”

Bewildered, he flushed and apologized to her.

Relating it to Rim Chun Chu, she said she wondered with what sort of courage Choe, gentle as he was, had fought against the Japanese.

Hearing her story, Rim laughed for a good while, then became serious and said.

“Madam, you have seen him right. Comrade Choe Chun Guk is a good-natured, weak-minded man. After raiding an enemy police branch at a ferry in Onsong, he came back to the base without wiping away the blood that was oozing from the nose of a young servant who had been kicked by a policeman. He felt painful remorse for many years for this failure. And yet, he is a very strong man. If you look at his left leg carefully, you will find a scar. The leg bone was broken by a bullet; I performed an operation without any anesthetic and stitched up the wound. He endured the excruciating pain without as much as a groan. As gentle-hearted as a lamb towards the people and comrades, as fierce as a tiger with the enemy, and as hard as steel in the face of difficulties—this is your husband. Living with him long will teach you what a strong man he is.”

But contrary to his words, their promising married life did not last long. On July 30, 1950, shortly after the eruption of the great Fatherland Liberation War, Choe Chun Guk, commander of the 12<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in the battle to liberate Andong, was fatally wounded. When Ji Pyong Hak, chief of staff of the division, rushed to him, Choe was lying in a jeep parked by the roadside. He was already breathing his last. Opening his eyes with much effort as Ji repeatedly called his name, Choe requested the army surgeon to prolong his life for five more minutes. In those last five minutes, he struggled against his pain to explain in detail his tactical plan for encircling and annihilating the enemy in Andong.

“I ask you to carry out the orders of the Supreme Commander in my

stead.” These were Choe’s last words to Ji as he gripped Ji’s hands.

When I got the news of his death, I could hardly believe that he was really dead. His image, limping slightly in the left leg, was too vivid in my mind’s eye. The left leg had become a little shorter, for the bone had been broken in a battle during the anti-Japanese war. Nevertheless, he had walked thousands of miles on those uncomfortable legs. Entrusted with the heavy duty of a branch director of the Security Officers Training Centre immediately after liberation, he devoted himself to the strengthening of the country’s military power, crossing rivers with his cadets when they were having river-crossing training, and scaling steep cliffs with them when they were being taught mountain-climbing.

On a street of Onsong, his home town on the River Tuman, which he had often frequented in his youth to strike terror into the hearts of the enemy, stands a bronze statue of him in the military uniform worn in the days of the anti-Japanese revolution.

The sculptors visited his wife to get an idea of his correct image and personality.

The first thing they asked her was, “What is your most impressive memory of Comrade Choe Chun Guk?”

“There is nothing specially impressive. If there is, can I say that he was very reticent? During a few years of our married life, he said less than 100 words in all. If he had been rough and slapped me across the face, it would have remained in my memory.”

She was quite regretful that there were no particulars worthy of remembering in their married life. Then, she said significantly, “Please meet my second son. He is the perfect image of his father, very gentle. To resemble his father more, there should be something steadfast in his character, but I am not sure yet. But I’ll bring him up to be strong-willed without fail.”

Unlike the first days of her married life, she was now well aware of what an excellent man her husband had been.

A gentle, yet strong-willed man—this was the courageous general of the anti-Japanese war, Choe Chun Guk.

## 5. The September Appeal

In September 1937 we issued an appeal to compatriots throughout Korea to cope with the changing situation in the Sino-Japanese War, and dispatched a large number of political operatives to the homeland. I also made up my mind to infiltrate the homeland at places where there were large working class forces in order to make a breakthrough in the preparations for an all-people resistance. My first destination was the Sinhung area in South Hamgyong Province, and the second was the Phungsan area. A dozen men were to keep company with me.

In those days it was not a simple job to go into the depth of the homeland, a dangerous area under enemy rule, accompanied by only a small number of bodyguards.

The military and political cadres asked me several times not to go. When I presented myself in a Western suit, old man Tobacco Pipe tried to dissuade me, saying, “You mean to say you are going all the way to Hamhung looking like that? I heard the enemy there is very vigilant.”

Nevertheless, I did not change my mind. At that time I was racking my brains as to how to stage a recovery after the failure of Kim Ju Hyon’s small unit in its attempt to penetrate the homeland.

I accepted the September Appeal from the bottom of my heart as an appeal to myself.

Kim Ju Hyon and his small unit members were most embarrassed when I announced my intention to visit the homeland. Kim Ju Hyon was under the impression that the Commander himself was taking the risk of working in the homeland because his small unit had made a mess of the great undertaking. For that matter, I was still not altogether free from anger on that score.

In the appeal, which was called September Appeal because it was published in September, we attached importance to two major issues.

One was giving our people a correct understanding of the correlations between the Sino-Japanese War and the Korean revolution in order to enable them to intensify, without losing confidence, their anti-Japanese struggle.

Among the regular readers of newspapers in those days were quite a few pessimists who, on reading about the development of the Sino-Japanese War and the increasing battle results of the Japanese army, considered the independence of Korea to be impossible. From early August of that year on, Choe Nam Son, Yun Chi Ho, Choe Rin and other “renowned figures” published a series of articles in the home and foreign papers preaching compromise with Japanese imperialism.

I, too, read these articles.

Choe Nam Son, defining the existence of Japan and her development as the strength of Asia and a beam of light in the Orient, wrote that the Oriental nations should all unite for the same cause under Japan’s leadership. A draftsman of the *March First Independence Declaration*, he had declared earlier, “Mt. Paektu is the heart of everything in the Orient, the nucleus of Oriental culture, the deepest root of the Oriental spirit, ancestral home of the Oriental people and the main axis of their activities. The very air of the Orient originates on Mt. Paektu, and sweeping our foreheads at all times and in all places is the wind that blows from Mt. Paektu. We quench our thirst with the spring water of Mt. Paektu, and plough, plant, harvest, and till the earth of Mt. Paektu.” When this man so abruptly changed his attitude and called the existence of Japan “the strength of Asia and a beam of light in the Orient,” I could not but be astonished.

Choe Rin preached that “national devotion” should be demonstrated by Korea’s being one with Japan. This was too treacherous and traitorous to be believed as a statement made by one of the 33 persons who had masterminded the March First Independence Movement.

Yun Chi Ho asserted that the Koreans and Japanese were in the same boat sharing the same destiny. The people who are well versed in the modern history of Korea know him well, a high-ranking official in

the last days of the Ri dynasty. In spite of his government post, he had been staunchly opposed to the “annexation of Korea by Japan.” For this he had been put behind bars. At the time of the July 7 incident, he was on the wrong side of 70. It is hardly imaginable that the old man would abruptly have begun to flatter Japanese imperialism in the hope of winning glory or of saving his skin. It is said that he committed suicide at the age of 80 or more after liberation because he could not face living on. No doubt he was a man of conscience and tried to atone for his crime by means of suicide. In my view he surrendered to the Japanese imperialists because he overestimated Japan and misjudged the development of the situation.

Jang Hae U, who guided us from the neighbourhood of Samsu when we were on our way to the Sinhung area, was very anxious about the future of the Sino-Japanese War. I told him, “If you take a shortsighted view of the war, you will be driven to despair. The war will force the greedy Japanese militarists to scatter their troops over a vast area on their own accord, bringing disastrous consequences on themselves by suffering from a lack of troops, materials, war supplies and raw materials. That is why the war is opening a bright future for our independence war, not despair. In other words, it is offering us a golden opportunity for attaining our goal. This is why we must speed up the preparations for a nationwide all-people resistance and a do-or-die battle with Japanese imperialism.”

The other issue to which we attached great importance in the September Appeal was the matter of clarifying the strategic ways to make preparations for an all-people resistance. We pointed out the following facts in the appeal:

The war between China and Japan is becoming more and more strained.

There is no doubt that China will ultimately emerge victorious. As there can be no better chance than this one for us, we must act in the most determined manner in the event of emergency.

It is especially imperative to form paramilitary corps and workers' shock brigades as vanguard executive organizations for armed revolt

and subversive actions behind enemy lines. The paramilitary corps and workers' shock brigades must enlist their members in armed revolt, organize subversive actions, set fire on and destroy munitions factories and other important enterprises in the rear... and in the time of the all-people resistance join forces with the KPRA in its military operations, so as to defeat the Japanese army. Only in this way can we carry out our task, the independence of Korea.

We set out the strategic policy of expanding the preparations for an all-people resistance, centring on the workers' shock brigades and paramilitary corps.

We chose the Sinhung area as the first destination for our launch into the homeland after making public the September Appeal, because the area included Hamhung, Hungnam and other big industrial cities where most of the working class of our country was concentrated.

Thanks to our political operatives, several secret camps had already been set up in the dense forest at the southern foot of the Pujonryong Mountains, which were used by small units as bases for their activities. The political operatives and core members of the labour and peasant unions active in various places on the east coast such as Hungnam were to gather in one of those secret camps.

The Phungsan area was selected as our second destination because a large number of labourers at a hydroelectric power station project lived there, as did the many believers in the Chondoist faith affiliated with the ARF.

As we had to go to Phungsan via Sinhung, it was more than 200 miles in a straight line on the map.

We mimeographed the September Appeal and kept the copies in Kim Pong Sok's pack when setting out on the journey. I gave one first to Jang Hae U. While we were having a rest halfway up Mt. Chongsan near Samsu, Jang read the appeal several times; he was especially pleased by our attaching importance to the organization of paramilitary corps and of workers' shock brigades. He said that the general strike in Wonsan had fully demonstrated the esprit de corps of the working class.

It was true that in the general strike of 1929 what was most noteworthy was the unity, fighting power and the spirit of cooperation of the working class.

The general strike was followed next year by a revolt of miners in the Sinhung Coalmine. Subsequently, workers' strikes continued in various parts of Korea every year.

Nevertheless, most of the mass strikes were frustrated without realizing their demands.

When writing our appeal we tried not to repeat the bitter failures of the strikes. Instead, we assimilated the good points and cast aside the bad points of the former labour movement in order to pave a new road for the movement.

Modern industrial labour emerged in our country as a result of the open-door policy around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which brought in an influx of foreign capital. Some people look back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century for the origin of our industrial labour, but it can be said that it was still germinating at that time. After the feudal government opened the door, foreign capital flooded in without a hitch; in this context, ports were built, railways laid, factories set up and mines opened, resulting in the rapid expansion of the ranks of such industrial workers as dockers, miners, railwaymen and civil engineers.

The emergence and development of industrial labour led to the formation of labour organizations. Already at the end of the 1890s a man named Ri Kyu Sun had formed a dockers' union, which some people call the origin of labour unions.

The early labour organizations took the form of sworn brotherhoods and mutual-aid associations, which gradually developed into workers' associations and unions. After the "Ulsa Treaty" was rigged up, modern labour unions similar to those in Jinnampho, Sinchang-ri in Pyongyang and Kunsan were formed in many parts of Korea.

Needless to say, the unions in those days were formed spontaneously with factories as a unit, but undoubtedly the mass struggle of the workers for the class interests started after the formation of these labour organizations. Entering the 1910s, labour disputes

arose in various parts of the country. In the 1920s such nationwide legal labour organizations as the Workers' Mutual-Aid Society, Labour Congress and Labour League Congress were formed, and these developed the workers' struggle from a simple dispute for the improvement of labour conditions to a patriotic, political movement opposing the aggression of Japanese imperialism. The Japanese imperialists, proclaiming the "Public Peace Maintenance Act," began to suppress the mass labour organizations.

They arrested the workers involved in labour disputes, disbanded labour organizations and banned assemblies. This was a telling blow to the labour movement in our country.

In this situation, the executive bureau of the Red International of Labour Unions adopted the resolution, *Theses on the Tasks of the Revolutionary Labour Union Movement in Korea*, also known as the September Theses, in September 1930. The resolution emphasized that labour unions should be formed by industries and keep factory committees or labour consultation rooms there in order for a union to have a solid infrastructure. And in October 1931 the secretariat of the Pan-Pacific Labour Union made an analysis of the actual situation of the labour movement in Korea and set immediate tasks for forming underground Red labour unions.

Supported by the international communist labour union movement, a brisk campaign was unfolded in our country from 1931 on to form Red labour unions in such industrial cities as Pyongyang, Hungnam, Wonsan, Chongjin, Seoul, Pusan and Sinuiju. The unions played a considerable role in propagating Marxism among the working masses and awakening them to class consciousness, but they were destined to end their existence without really coming into their own because of the schemes of factionalists and harsh suppression by the enemy. At the time we were going to the Sinhung area with our September Appeal, most of the labour union leaders were behind bars, or turned traitor, or took shelter in a life of seclusion. In actual fact, the labour unions existed in name only.

We had learned a serious lesson from the history of the labour

movement in our country, a movement full of twists and turns because of the incorrect leadership of the revolutionary masses.

Analysing the history of the previous labour movement critically, we came to the conclusion that the preparations for the all-people resistance could only be promoted in a proper way if we mixed with the working class, restructured the labour unions as soon as possible and relied entirely on the strength and wisdom of the working masses.

In this sense, the publication of the September Appeal served as an occasion to revitalize the labour and peasant union movements, which had been extremely dull. Its publication would also bring about a turn in our line to cope with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War.

While climbing Mt. Chongsan, I talked with Jang Hae U about the labour unions.

As he had travelled around Korea, China and the Maritime Province of the Soviet Union on behalf of the independence movement, Jang was well-informed on the people in Hamhung and Hungnam, who had been connected with the Pacific Labour Union in the past. He told me that the chief of the Korean branch of the Pacific Labour Union in Vladivostok, a subordinate to the Red International of Labour Unions, had been a Korean named Kim Ho Ban, and that under his guidance a Hamhung committee was formed in February 1931, bringing the Hamhung Workers' League for the first time under Red influence.

Through Jang I came to know the names of quite a few cadres of the Red labour unions in Hamhung, including a Japanese worker named Baba Masao. According to Jang, Kim Ho Ban operated with his wife in Hamhung, Pyongyang and Seoul, carrying with him 1 200 *won* sent by the Vladivostok branch of the Pacific Labour Union as union funds. In the summer of 1931 he was arrested by the police. Even the Japanese members of the labour unions in Hamhung affiliated with the Pacific Labour Union were arrested in 1932 or in 1933.

In order to fill the vacuum created in the labour movement at Hamhung and Hungnam, and to breathe new life into it, we had already seen to it that Kwon Yong Byok dispatched to this area Pak Kum Jun,

Kim Sok Yon and other political operatives experienced in underground work. Nevertheless, they also were unable to escape the dragnet of the Japanese imperialists who were determined to root out the labour movement in this area. Several labour union leaders, including Pak Kum Jun, had been arrested or detained, leaving a lot of things undone.

In view of this situation, we had dispatched since spring 1937 several political operatives trained in West Jiandao to the Hungnam area.

When we reached the summit of Mt. Chongsan, Han Cho Nam, head of the small unit operating in the secret base of the Sinhung area, came to us unexpectedly.

When I asked him why he had come when I had told him to wait for us in the secret camp, he said that he could not feel easy, for there was a Noguchi's villa in Pujon, and the enemy surveillance in the region was stricter than ever before. As he arrived, I sent Jang Hae U back to Sinpha. From there Han guided us.

Soon a wide, blue lake appeared before us. Han explained that this was dam No. 2 of Pujon Lake. Walking along the left shore of the lake, we could see the dam No. 1. There was a police station near the dam, and Noguchi's villa was one mile up from there, Han said.

In order to build up a munitions industry in Korea and monopolize the power and chemical industries in the country, Noguchi, head of a newly-emergent financial combine, had built hydropower stations, a Korean Nitrogenous Fertilizer Co., Ltd and a munitions plant in Hungnam. Then he had a villa built in a place convenient for supervising the construction of the hydropower stations at Pujon and Hochon.

If one traces the tragic history of Pujon Lake, one can see how cruelly Noguchi exploited Koreans.

After inspecting the Pujon Plateau in 1925, Noguchi wrote to Governor-General Saito that the area was rich in water and forest resources and that labour was cheap. He added that he would like to build power stations there. Saito replied that he was free to start the

projects with the cheap labour since the Constitution of the Empire of Japan guaranteed his right to do it.

The Pujon dam project started in the mid-1920s and during the construction of the watercourse, 3 000 Korean workers lost their lives in various accidents because no safety measures had been taken. When the dam project was finished, they closed the sluice gates without bothering to move the peasant households on the lake because they were in a hurry to fill the dam. As a result some 600 peasant households were left homeless in this man-made flood disaster. They then claimed that the dam would be protected by the god of water if a girl was offered as a sacrifice and committed the atrocity of throwing a young girl into the water on the opening day of the waterway.

Noguchi always babbled about his conviction that Korean workers should be regarded as simple draught animals. He behaved so cruelly during the project that even the Japanese people were disgusted, saying, “Not a grass grows on the places trodden by Noguchi.”

As the surveillance in the vicinity of Noguchi’s villa was strict, we skirted around it and arrived at the Tongogol Secret Camp in Sinhung, our main destination, after some days.

On our way we met nearly 20 young men who were living in mountains to escape the Japanese imperialists. Their reasons for taking shelter on the mountains were different.

One had run away after killing a vicious foreman with a stone at the construction site of the Pujongang Hydropower Station; some had escaped when discovered stealing dynamite at the site; and others had run away after being caught by police while carrying around leaflets reading “Down with Japanese imperialism!” and “Noguchi manufactures fertilizer out of our blood.” These leaflets they had picked up on their way from Hamhung to Hungnam.

A tall young man nicknamed Choe Myonjang, hailing from Kowon, called himself an “officially-approved communist.” “Myonjang” is a nickname his fellows had given him, not because he held an official post, but because his face was long, like a radish. (In Korean, *Myonjang* has two meanings—one, subcounty chief and the

other, long face.) “Communist” was a nickname he had given himself. Leaving middle school in Seoul in mid-course, as his family could not afford the school fee, he had returned to Kowon and wandered about the streets for some time with no particular job. Around that time a Red labour-union incident had broken out in a factory nearby. The enemy had detained not only the people involved in it but also those under suspicion, “Choe Myonjang” being one of them. During interrogation he had told them he knew nothing. They had put him under torture for allegedly telling a lie, even pouring water mixed with ground pepper into his nostrils.

Unable to bear any more, he had falsely confessed that he had engaged in the labour union movement. Ironically, it was a detective from the special political division that at this point turned him into a communist by inadvertently teaching him things of which he had been unaware.

The detective said, “How come you believe in communism? I want to know your reasons. You will say you don’t know. All the communists say that they will wipe out exploitation and oppression in this world and build worker-peasant power. So, didn’t you engage in the communist movement for that purpose? Tell me.” He had answered, “Yes, I did.” During a three-month-long preliminary examination of this kind, he acquired an elementary knowledge of communism, and by the time he had served his one-year prison term, he had become a full-fledged “communist.” The Japanese police continued to shadow him. “Communist Choe Myonjang,” brought into existence by the detective of the Kowon police station, had set off northward, scaling mountains in search of the true communist movement. On his way he had come across other young men and had been living with them in the mountains.

He said that all the young men present there were determined to fight the Japanese and fight for communism.

Kim Phyong laughed most at his story. Saying that even Marx and Engels would burst into laughter at his tale, Kim Phyong told us, “I learned that Marx said the bourgeoisie was producing not only

commodities profitable to them but also the proletariat who would entomb them. Now the Japanese imperialist police have manufactured a communist who will entomb them.”

I told my men, “You see? Had we not come to the homeland, would we have come to know this reality? The young people here are wandering in the mountains, searching for us, determined to fight Japanese imperialism.”

I gave the young people a copy of the September Appeal and told them to get in touch with the secret base on Mt. Okryon.

On my journey through the Pujonryong Mountains I inspected some secret camps and studied the terrain. I found the area most suited for the armed struggle for the future all-people resistance. The range was linked to the Paektu Mountains.

Arriving at the secret camp in Tongogol in a dense pine forest, we found about 30 political operatives, heads of revolutionary organizations, core members of labour and peasant unions from the east coast area along the Pujonryong Mountains.

Wi In Chan, who had built up secret organizations in the Hungnam area under the guidance of Kim Jae Su and Kim Jong Suk, appeared in the camp, guided by Kim Hyok Chol. They reeked of fish. When I asked them what the matter was, they said that they had each brought a pack of mackerel in order to disguise themselves as fish peddlers to hoodwink the enemy. The two of them were bosom friends who had grown up together in Taoquanli from childhood. In their boyhood they had longed for the Soviet Union so much that they had gone on an adventurous journey to her Maritime Province, together with Kim Kong Su, without the knowledge of their parents. The parents and relatives of the three men were very sound in their ideology.

On assignment from the ARF organization in Taoquanli, Wi In Chan infiltrated the Hungnam area in the summer of 1937. He was soon reinforced with Kim Kong Su and other operatives. At that time Ho Sok Son was dispatched to Wonsan, Ri Hyo Jun to the Sinhung Coalmine and Kang Pyong Son to Changsong. Pak U Hyon in Chongjin began to work with the ARF organization there.

The Hungnam district committee of the ARF had been formed in August of that year, I was told. The committee had already embraced quite a number of workers and was running in a lively manner. Wi In Chan, head of the committee, had his mother keep a snack bar for workers and used it as a liaison place; then he reported his work to Kim Jong Suk and Kim Jae Su from time to time. The story about how they formed the first organization in Hungnam was very instructive.

The operatives from Taoquanli set foot first in the construction site of a chemical factory in Pongung. There was a 14-year-old boy among the workers whose job it was to bring heated rivets and throw them up to a riveter working in a high place. One day a tragic accident resulted in the death of the boy. A heated rivet he had thrown up hit an iron rod that was falling down; the rivet fell straight into a carbide drum, exploding the drum. The boy was burned all over and by the time the other workers had rushed over to him, he was already dead.

A Japanese foreman made haste to take the dead body to a hospital. If he made it seem as if the boy had died after receiving medical treatment, he could appease the workers, who were bound to complain about the lack of safety apparatus. He could also avoid having to compensate the boy's family for his death. When our operatives exposed the foreman's calculations to the indignant workers, they raised a hue and cry. Frightened, the foremen did nothing with the corpse. The workers held a funeral for the boy and put pressure on the factory authorities to compensate his family.

After this incident our operatives in Hungnam won the confidence of the workers and formed the first organization among the workers. They ran it as a legal organization under the name of "Aid Association." One day an unusual event took place. A middle-aged man appeared abruptly in front of the association and introduced himself, saying, "I'm from Profintern." Profintern was an abbreviation for the Red International of Labour Unions. Apparently he had been active in the Pacific Labour Union at one time. Introducing himself pompously in this way, he went on to advise them: "I warn you, be prudent. The Japanese have gone wild these days with the start of the

Sino-Japanese War. Don't offend them. I advise you not to make yourselves unnecessarily conspicuous just to get something like compensation. You might ruin me, as I'm on their blacklist."

He then disappeared in haste.

From then on the operatives in Hungnam began to guard against those who had been related with the labour unions, saying they changed themselves from ultra-Left to ultra-Right.

Kim Sok Yon, who had been dispatched on a mission to expand party organizations in the labour unions in Soho, grumbled that many of those who had been involved in labour unions in the past became frightened by the Japanese imperialist suppression and were following the road of compromise, just like the "White labour unions" in Japan and the trade unionists in Europe.

According to Jang Hae U, the Red labour unions in the Hungnam area had fought efficiently against Japan in their early days. In 1930 the labour union there had built a cellar near the factory to keep secret documents and had conducted their activities briskly. The union members printed appeals in the cellar and at night put up anti-Japanese leaflets in the streets. Where had the brave Red labour union gone?

I pointed out that it had been wrong for them to neglect the people involved in the Pacific Labour Union and that these people would not take the road of trade unionism if they were given some good revolutionary guidance. I also indicated the way they should follow in their future struggle.

"First of all, we must form more organizations subordinate to the ARF in towns, rural communities, fishermen's villages, and mines on the east coast. We must discover all the people who were formerly involved in labour and peasant unions and are hiding now, so as to prepare the resistance force of tens of thousands in Sinhung, Hungnam, Hamhung and Wonsan in at least a few years. Secret guerrilla bases should be built centring on the Pujonryong Mountains and in the immediate future a number of armed units, each with hundreds of men, should be formed. Shock brigades should be organized among the workers, and paramilitary corps among the

peasants. These must all be invisible secret organizations.

“We must ensure that the September Appeal penetrate into the masses as silently as an underground current.

“In the early days of the anti-Japanese revolution our men outnumbered our weapons, but now we have more rifles than men. We must arm all the young people in the homeland with our surplus rifles so that they can rise up in an all-people resistance at a decisive moment.” This is the gist of what I said at that time.

The next day, after the talk, I proceeded to the Sinhung Coalmine, where enemy surveillance was less severe. Ri Hyo Jun, representative of the mine at the meeting, guided me.

The unfortunate miners’ families, numbering 300, were leading a suffocating life in decayed, ramshackle barracks. At the mine scores of people died every year from labour accidents and various diseases. I gathered the organization members and core elements of the labour union in a secret place on Mt Sambat and explained the September Appeal to them and gave them immediate tasks.

During my visit to the mine an organization member called on me and told me that his cousin had been a cadre of a Red labour union and was now living under an assumed name. I found that his cousin had come to Sinhung when there was a crackdown of labour union members. As the union had misguided a strike, many had been arrested and others had become stooges of the Japanese imperialists, giving away the organization’s secrets. As the police were arresting the labour union leaders, the man had narrowly escaped to the mine. He was not appearing in public because he was ashamed to see his colleagues of the labour union.

Before leaving the mine I met him and asked him to wage the revolution with us. He said that he would come out from his hiding place, put the damaged union back in order and meet the demands of the September Appeal at any cost. He had the list of the union members and knew most of the people who had been engaged in the labour unions in the Hungnam area.

Having established a link between him and the members of our

organizations in Hungnam, I left for Phungsan with a light heart. I slept a night at the secret base on Pulgaemi Hill and proceeded directly to the building site of the Hwangsuwon dam. The pitiable existence of the labourers there, who were building a dam despite the rain and wind in the rough land of Ryongbuk, was no different from that of the coalminers in Sinhung who suffered from backbreaking labour and diseases.

Kimppai, a former believer in the Chondoist faith and a political operative we had dispatched to the area, guided us in Phungsan, wearing a Western suit and wielding a walking stick.

Then we passed by the county town of Phungsan and met Pak In Jin in a secluded hunter's house in a slash-and-burn farming village. I still remember the night in that village, where we shared our anxiety over the destiny of the country while eating roasted potatoes freshly harvested that year.

That night Pak In Jin denounced Choe Rin as the worst quisling in the country. He hated most Choe Rin, Choe Nam Son and Ri Kwang Su, the so-called "three patriots." The reason he loathed them especially, he said, was that they despised blindly the Korean nation as uncivilized.

"I've never yet seen any man who regards his nation as inferior follow the right path," he said.

He was right. A man wages revolution with faith, and faith puts confidence and pride in his compatriots above confidence in a political ideal. If a man has no confidence or pride in his fellow countrymen, how can he have patriotism?

Walking in the dark night after saying good-bye to Pak, I thought about it all the way. I quoted his words when I explained the idea of the September Appeal to the political operatives in Phungsan. I emphasized that the only way for us to follow was to prepare for an all-people resistance with confidence in our people, in our working class.

The secret visit we paid to the homeland with our great programme for the liberation of the country, at a time when the mountains and

fields were rich with autumnal tints, was not futile.

After we had made our rounds in the Sinhung and Phungsan areas, the forces for nationwide resistance increased rapidly in various parts of the country—Pujon, Hamhung, Hungnam, Wonsan, Tanchon, Phungsan and Sinhung.

One after another, news arrived of the formation of Huchiryong paramilitary corps following the creation of workers' shock brigade at the construction site of the Hwangsuwon dam. Strikes were continually being staged in factories and contract labourers deserted their workplaces en masse.

Workers' shock brigades were formed in many factories and coalmines in the Hamhung-Sinhung area. They organized slow-downs and sabotage through faulty construction and a succession of explosive accidents.

It was around that time that an information poster on the September Appeal was found plastered on the railing of the Manse Bridge and at the Kuchon Pavilion on Mt. Tonghung in Hamhung. A rumour also spread that Kim Il Sung had had his hair cut at a barber's in downtown Hamhung, while another rumour had it that Kim Il Sung had even been admitted to a Japanese army hospital.

Our operatives in Hamhung and Hungnam took a new turn in their work with labour unions after receiving the September Appeal. They discovered nearly 100 people who had been involved in labour unions and were in hiding, and embraced them all in the ARF. The labour union in Hungnam became a reservoir for workers' shock brigades.

Had it not been for the "Hyesan incident," the members of the organizations in the Hungnam area would have carried out even greater amounts of work. Owing to the aftermath of this incident, Wi In Chan, Kim Kong Su and Kim Ung Jong were arrested and confined in Hamhung prison.

The activities of our organizations in Wonsan, Munchon and Chonnaeri were also brisk. The members of the organization in the Chonnaeri Cement Factory organized a strike involving 1 000 workers in the autumn of the year when the September Appeal was published,

throwing the enemy into confusion.

Jong Il Ryong, who was once Vice-Premier, had worked at the Munchon Smeltery. He was proud of the fact that there were many organization members in his smeltery before liberation. He said that he fought against the Japanese foremen on many occasions under their influence, but at that time he was not aware that it was the members of secret organizations who were pulling the strings. The very day when I made a speech in Pyongyang at a triumphal return ceremony after liberation, the smeltery started turning out its first molten ore. This was also a patriotic deed, initiated by the members of the ARF who had been engaged in underground activities.

Our political operatives and organization members continued their struggle even in prison, giving publicity to the September Appeal.

Our September Appeal exerted a truly great influence and played a decisive role in linking the revolutionary movement in the homeland to us on Mt. Paektu.

Minister of Construction Choe Jae Ha, who had been a worker at the Suphung Hydropower Station, said, while he was still alive, that from the end of the 1930s on nearly all the workers in big factories and construction sites in northern Korea apparently acted under the influence of the organizations connected with Mt. Paektu, and that he had participated in strikes and slow-downs on several occasions.

It was true. The ARF took root in all industrial regions of the country at the time and the working class waged a dynamic struggle under its influence. This was an answer to the Japanese imperialists who had ignited the Sino-Japanese War and were hell-bent on suppression and exploitation of the Korean people.

No matter how zealously those men who had abandoned their original aim of anti-Japanese national salvation and surrendered to Japanese imperialism conducted anti-communist, pro-Japanese propaganda, our working class fought and remained loyal to their principle of patriotism.

One day five or six years after the issuance of the September Appeal, newspapers carried Jo Man Sik's article advising the Korean

students to volunteer for the Japanese army. There is no knowing whether it was written by Jo Man Sik himself or invented by the Japanese imperialists, but anyhow the article startled the public. It seems that the people at that time thought, “As even Jo Man Sik turned traitor, which of the leaders of the national movement will be converting next?”

Nevertheless, the working class did not waver; they sped up the preparations for an all-people resistance in response to our policy. In a secret munitions factory in Hungnam, where special weapons were being developed, a tremendous explosion took place. According to the enemy’s investigation, it was a deliberate explosion, not an accidental one. The members of our revolutionary organizations infiltrated into such strictly guarded factories and organized silent activities, dealing blow after blow to the enemy. Our working class actively carried out the September Appeal.

The September Appeal served as a powerful weapon for communists engaged in the anti-Japanese armed struggle. When the situation changed at the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, we went deep among the ranks of the working people and used this weapon to awaken them to revolutionary consciousness and to rally them around the great cause of national liberation.

## 6. My Experience of the “Hyesan Incident”

The year 1937 was a landmark year in the anti-Japanese revolution. With the entry of our main-force unit into the area of Mt. Paektu, both the struggle for national liberation and the communist movement of Korea were experiencing an upsurge of unprecedented breadth and depth.

But just as everything was progressing smoothly according to our plans, the Korean revolution was suddenly faced with one of its most serious challenges to date. In the days when we were operating in the region of Fusong and Mengjiang counties, after leaving the area of Mt. Paektu, the enemy fabricated the so-called “Hyesan incident,” following it with a whirlwind of large-scale repression of our revolutionary forces. They destroyed at random the secret organizations we had built up in the year following our advance into the area of Mt. Paektu, arresting en masse and executing revolutionaries faithful to our leadership and line.

In several roundups, the enemy arrested thousands of patriotic people. Many were tortured to death in prison.

This incident dealt a serious blow to the Korean revolution. The building of party and ARF organizations, which had been progressing at full speed, thanks to the positive activities of the Homeland Party Working Committee, suffered enormous losses.

I heard the news of the “Hyesan incident” in detail for the first time in the secret camp in Dajialazi, Mengjiang County, through Kim Phyong and Kim Jae Su. I don’t know how to describe the burning fury I felt at that moment, fury combined with a feeling of great loss similar to the emotion I experienced after the “Minsaengdan” fuss in which a great number of our people were killed.

In the wake of this incident I thought deeply about the faith and will

of a revolutionary. The incident can be called a great trial in which every man's loyalty to the revolution, the intensity of his faith and the strength of his will were tested. In other words, it was a severe test that separated real revolutionaries from sham revolutionaries. Those with strong faith and will stuck to their revolutionary principles and emerged victorious in the showdown with the enemy; those with weak faith and will abandoned their revolutionary dignity and chose the road of betrayal and submission.

The betrayers who yielded to torture and divulged our secrets to the enemy in the first days of the incident included the underground operatives who had been working at the construction sites of the railway between Kilju and Hyesan and between Paegam and Musan. We had intended to build revolutionary organizations through them among the working class at the construction sites, but after they had been hauled off to the police station and flogged they quickly surrendered to the enemy. They lacked the iron-willed determination and unbending fighting spirit to keep the secrets of the organization and defend the interests of the revolution, even if it meant a threat to their own lives. Had those few people not yielded up the secrets, the revolutionary organizations in the Changbai area might well have remained untouched. We had suffered a terrible setback in the enemy's first roundup in that Kwon Yong Byok, Ri Je Sun, Pak In Jin, So Ung Jin, Pak Rok Kum and other core leaders and members of revolutionary organizations were arrested.

Faith and will are the basic qualities of a revolutionary. A man without these qualities cannot be called a revolutionary.

When we speak of the qualities of a "true man," we are primarily talking about his thought and faith, for the more tenaciously he sticks to his thought and faith, the clearer will be the aim of his life and the more sincere his efforts to attain it.

This is why we devote so much energy and effort to imbuing the people with faith in communism when undertaking to train them into revolutionaries. This is because the building of socialism and communism, conducted under the banner of national liberation, class

emancipation and man's liberation, is the most arduous and protracted of all revolutionary transformation movements undertaken by mankind. Without steel-like faith and will, one cannot attain final victory for this movement to realize and defend man's independence in the face of all restraints and challenges of both nature and society.

Will is the strong companion and defender of faith.

However, faith and will are not immutable. They can become either firmer or weaker and degenerate, depending on the circumstances. When a revolutionary's faith and will degenerate, the revolution has to pay dearly for it. This is why we consider education in faith to be the most essential process in training men of the communist type.

Faith and will are cultivated only through the life in the revolutionary organization and practical activities; they can be made firm and secure only through unremitting education and self-cultivation. Faith and will that are not tempered by these processes are castles built on sand. An example of this can be seen in the people who did not defend their revolutionary faith in the interrogation room at the Hyesan police station. They had not trained their bodies and minds sufficiently in the life in the revolutionary organization and in practice. They all had joined the guerrillas in the heyday of the anti-Japanese revolution and fought only victorious battles. Hence their ideology had not been tempered in the tempest. When a revolution is on the rise, chance elements who are not steadfast ideologically slip into the revolutionary ranks, simply following the current.

Soon after receiving the report on the "Hyesan incident," we held an emergency meeting of the Party Committee of the KPRA and discussed the measures for preserving the revolutionary organizations in the immediate crisis and for building the party and the ARF organizations in a more resolute manner.

After their first roundup of the core leaders in the Changbai area, the enemy went on to extend the scope of their investigation, spreading their evil grasp over the whole region of West Jiandao and the Kapsan area across the Amnok. Although they were wildly elated, boasting of

their exploits and claiming to have cut off the lifeline of the Korean revolution, they had not managed to destroy all the underground organizations we had built up with so much effort. Many people in the areas of Changbai and Kapsan had escaped the enemy's dragnet either by running to other areas or taking refuge in the depth of the mountains. Owing to the arrest of Kwon Yong Byok, Ri Je Sun, So Ung Jin and Pak In Jin, the leadership of the Changbai County Party Committee and the ARF organizations in Changbai County was on the verge of disintegration, but the leadership of the Korean National Liberation Union centring on Pak Tal, Kim Chol Ok and Ri Ryong Sul remained active.

As our first measure, we dispatched Jang Jung Ryol and Ma Tong Hui to the homeland to find the leaders of the KNLU who had taken refuge, find out from them the extent of the damage done to the organizations, and take measures to reconstruct the destroyed organizations. Our general goal was to prevent the loss incurred by the enemy's suppression as much as possible and turn the misfortune into an advantage.

While travelling through the mountain villages in Kapsan County in search of the members of the KNLU, Ma Tong Hui and Jang Jung Ryol were themselves arrested in Namhung-dong. This happened as the result of betrayal by Kim Thae Son, clerk of the highland agriculture guidance section there.

Kim Thae Son and Ma Tong Hui came from the same village and had been friends for a long time. Even after moving to Kapsan, they spent their youth in an extraordinary friendship. When Kim Thae Son had to discontinue his studies in Changbai for lack of money, Ma Tong Hui supported him with an advance of 5 *won* from the safe of the village school so that Kim could continue to study. Later he continued this support by earning money through weeding fields for others, selling firewood and writing letters for the illiterate. When Kim Thae Son accepted the job of clerk to the highland agriculture guidance section after finishing his course, Kim Thae Son called on Jang Kil Bu, Ma Tong Hui's mother, and said, "It is thanks to Tong Hui's sincere

help that I have become literate and am able to earn my daily bread. I won't forget his friendship as long as I live.”

Having come to Kapsan on a mission to make contact with the leadership of the KNLU, Ma Tong Hui and his comrade-in-arms took shelter in Kim Thae Son's house in Namhung-dong because Ma trusted the friendship. But Kim Thae Son had in the meantime changed into a faithful servant of the enemy. He provided both of them with warm food and beds; then he reported to the enemy that two of Kim Il Sung's men were staying in his house. He was this kind of a snake.

From the time they were arrested, Ma Tong Hui and Jang Jung Ryol followed different roads in life.

The story of how Ma Tong Hui endured torture and how he kept his secrets has been recounted both by reminiscences of anti-Japanese war veterans and in works of art and literature. When asked what kind of man Ma was, even primary school pupils know that he was a man who bit out his tongue to keep the secrets of the organization. Not everyone has the guts to bite out his own tongue. Determination such as this belongs only to the true man who chooses to die for his faith rather than continue living a traitor's life. Once a man has determined to die, he can do anything.

Ma Tong Hui's courage and self-sacrificing spirit derived from his unshakeable faith. The courage was an expression of his iron will which no torture or intimidation could bend. He knew that if he kept his secrets, our organizations would continue to live. He knew the revolution would emerge victorious, even if he himself died.

It was revolutionary practice that had trained him into a man of strong faith. While living in Paegam, he organized an Anti-Japanese Association and inculcated patriotism in the children of the slash-and-burn farmers as a teacher. After joining the People's Revolutionary Army, he participated in the arduous expedition to Fusong with the veterans, and as a lecturer to the Guard Company tried to enlighten the guerrillas by improving their political and cultural erudition. He accepted it as a truth that a man of a ruined nation was no

better than a dog in a house of mourning, that the means for survival for the nation was struggle, that the only way out was the revolution, and that without the revolution the nation would live in slavery for generations, leading an existence that was worse than that of draught animals. He made the truth his unshakeable faith.

From his childhood on he had the traits with which to acquire this faith. He never compromised with what he saw as unjust, shameless or unconscionable. Once he deemed a man to be tainted, he broke off with him without hesitation, even if the man happened to be his teacher. Ma's tutor in his days at primary school was a philistine named Jo, a man without an iota of conscience as an educator. He kept the pupils' school records in a thoroughly dishonest way, basing the records on his relationship with a pupil rather than according to the pupil's real abilities. He gave good marks to all those whose families had offered him tidy sums by way of a bribe and who hailed from rich and influential families, irrespective of their abilities. He did not hesitate to resort to lowering the marks of excellent pupils in order to favour those to whom he was partial. Even when Ma was studying in the graduating class, Jo continued to practise the habit. In order to give first place to the son of an influential man who had bribed him heavily, he intentionally scored Ma Tong Hui as second instead of first in his history examination. Furious with the teacher's conduct, Ma, who was an excellent pupil in all subjects, did not hesitate to call on him and demand to see his examination paper. Instead of showing him the paper, Jo slapped him across the face, saying that he was an ill-mannered ruffian. Jo's behaviour enraged Ma. Declaring that he would leave school in mid-course, he tore his academic record book to pieces in front of Jo and went back home.

His father, Ma Ho Ryong, was reluctant to see his only son leave school and plunge into the struggle to earn a living at such a tender age. Showing his son the school cap he had bought him at the market that day, he said, "I was so sorry to see you going to school bareheaded that I bought this cap for you. Yet now you say you will leave school to work on the land. What's this nonsense? It is an everyday occurrence

that a teacher favours a child from a well-to-do family and builds up the minds of high-ranking, influential men. What is the point of your challenging your teacher on that? Go back immediately and apologize to him.”

But Ma refused to compromise, even preventing his father from going to see the teacher himself.

Later on the teacher and he followed opposite roads in life. While Ma Tong Hui devoted himself to the patriotic front as a man of resistance, born of the times, Jo took the traitorous road of betrayal after abandoning teaching. As a policeman, and later a detective, he was obsessed with ferreting out patriots. Ma Tong Hui was one man he watched with a sharp eye. He followed Ma's every footstep, trying to lead him to the scaffold even if it meant fabricating some incident out of thin air.

Jo started to shadow Ma in real earnest when the latter came under the influence of the People's Revolutionary Army while frequenting the Changbai area. One day Ma went to Changbai and met Kim Ju Hyon, representative of the guerrilla army; on his way back, having got permission to join the guerrillas, he met the detective Jo, who had been waiting at the bridge across the Amnok. Jo was goggling at him with bulging eyes. Although Ma perceived in an instant the tense atmosphere at the bridge, he went calmly back home and made preparations for leaving for Mt. Paektu.

That day his mother cooked farewell meal for her son, which he was unable to take: Jo suddenly appeared in the yard of his house with a gaggle of policemen to arrest him. He escaped through the back door and crossed the Amnok to safety.

The scurrilous act of a teacher willing to arrest his pupil was a tragedy created by the anti-human trend imposed by the Japanese imperialists. Whenever she met me after liberation, Mrs. Jang Kil Bu would tell me this story of her son as if it were a legend.

After the battle on Mt. Kouyushui, Ma met Jo near the battlefield. Jo had narrowly escaped in one of the enemy's botched "punitive" operations against our unit and was running away. As soon as he saw

Ma, he started firing wildly at him. Ma Tong Hui shot him to death on the spot. It was a fitting end to a brazen, pro-Japanese reactionary who took no thought of his native land, his nation or the pupils under his care.

This anecdote clearly illustrates the qualities of Ma Tong Hui as a man and on what he based his faith.

He was with me for about one and half years. He was a faithful guerrilla loved by all, but he did not leave many anecdotes or affairs special enough to be engraved in the memory of the people during his life in the guerrilla army.

And yet, I cannot forget one episode related to him. This happened when we were obtaining grain for a military and political study session in the secret camp in Donggang after the expedition to Fusong. At that time the 3<sup>rd</sup> Company, 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment Ma Tong Hui belonged to was assigned to obtain grain each day. One night his company commander, before leaving to search for grain, assigned to frostbitten Ma Tong Hui and other recruits the task of remaining in camp and grinding maize with a millstone for breakfast the next day. As ordered by the company commander, he began to grind the maize with millstone. He felt unbearable fatigue after a day-long arduous march in the snow, followed by the languor of eating a meal. But he shook off his sleepiness by rubbing his face with snow. The recruits in the meantime said that they would forgo the meal and lay themselves down, as they were tired. While Ma was milling the maize alone, they remained flat on their backs without doing a thing. As he finished the work, they worried about how to repay him for his painstaking work. They were typical young recruits, too half-witted to know any better, but Ma was so fed up, he criticized them severely.

When I arrived at the camp, Ma complained about it before anything else. How we could wage the revolution, he lamented, with men such as these, who were devoid of comradeship and knew nothing? I told him that although they lacked training in the organization at the moment, they would become excellent soldiers once they had been given the proper education. And in fact the recruits

did later become truly courageous soldiers who worked with great devotion and fought bravely.

Ma grew up to be an excellent combatant in a very short period of time after joining the guerrillas. He performed the mission of scouting around the streets of Pochonbo in a highly responsible way. As a commendation for the devotion and initiative he had displayed in this task, I gave him the honour of accepting, on behalf of the soldiers of the KPRA, a congratulatory banner from the people's delegation at the joint celebration of army and people after the victory in the Battle of Pochonbo.

As his life in later days proved, he was an outstanding revolutionary fighter fully qualified to represent the soldiers of the KPRA, a man to be recommended as a model communist.

He knew the exact whereabouts of Headquarters, but he did not yield up the secret. Because of this, we were safe.

The day after he died, his father, Ma Ho Ryong, went to Hyesan with a coffin. While passing the police station carrying his son's corpse on a cart, he came across the inspector, Choe.

On seeing him, Choe asked, "Hey, how do you feel, carrying your dead son?"

Ma Ho Ryong, who had since long regarded Choe, butcher of the nation, with hatred, resolutely wiped away his tears and answered: "My son Tong Hui died while fighting for the liberation of Korea. So did my daughter and daughter-in-law. They never died for stealing goods from the Japanese. I feel proud to be their father."

For these words he was arrested later. To his last moments in Hamhung prison he fought with dignity against the hangmen without losing his principles as a patriot and father of a revolutionary fighter.

In contrast to Ma Tong Hui, Jang Jung Ryol exposed the secret camps and secret organizations familiar to him soon after he was lashed a few times. While Ma Tong Hui stuck to the revolution, even to the point of biting out his tongue, Jang Jung Ryol forsook the pledge he had made for the revolution as easily as casting off his worn-out shoes and chose the damnable road of betrayal. Why?

Jang was in no way inferior to Ma in his academic career, the level of his theoretical attainments and his working ability. Considering his duration of service in the guerrilla army, he could be called Ma's senior. Clever and sociable, Jang was rumoured among the rank and file soon after joining the army as a "man fit for a cadre." Our Headquarters also saw him in the same light. He jumped at one bound to the post of head of the youth department of a division without going through the gradual course mandatory for most of the recruits. This meant that he was trusted as much as Kim Phyong and Kwon Yong Byok were.

When the Changbai County Party Committee was organized, we elected him to be a member, a fact that eloquently proves how we trusted him. In short, we gave him all we could.

He went hungry, had his hands and feet frostbitten and burned the midnight candle with us. He did not feel particularly pessimistic, nor did he lose confidence when faced with the same difficulties we all faced; he endured all hardships with us without complaint. And yet as soon as he was put behind bars, how easily he yielded. Although he had endured all possible hardships, he could not withstand the torture-chamber and quickly renounced the honour and principle of a revolutionary, as if they were bits of waste paper.

Hearing the report about the course of Jang's betrayal, I got a keen understanding of how a man's outlook on life could change when he was behind bars. Whereas Jang's outlook on the world outside prison had been communistic, his outlook on the world in the prison was that of Judas. He simply became a businessman who had traded off the interests of the revolution for his own life.

He told the enemy many secrets: he disclosed all the organizations he had had a hand in, listed all the leading members of the revolutionary organizations who were in contact with him in Shanggangqu and Zhonggangqu, Changbai County, and the whereabouts of Headquarters and secret camps to the extent that he knew them. Then he led the police to a secret rendezvous in Shijudaogou, helping them arrest Ji Thae Hwan and Jo Kae Gu.

Jo Kae Gu also became a turncoat, the same as Jang Jung Ryol. He guided the police to the secret camp in Ganbahezi, where our sewing unit was stationed. They killed all the members of the unit, the women guerrillas, among whom was Kim Yong Gum, Ma Tong Hui's wife.

How could Jang Jung Ryol degenerate into such a foul, detestable person? Had the faith he had cherished in communism been merely a facade? Needless to say, he had talked much about faith, but his faith, being cheap, had not been based on a solid foundation. In front of the dreadful sight of the torture-chamber and the malicious faces of the policemen, he was overwhelmed by the commanding presence of the Japanese Empire and succumbed to the sceptical outlook that defeating the Empire through the anti-Japanese revolution was an impossible, futile daydream.

What, then, is a faith that is based on solid foundations? It is absolute confidence in the ideal a man cherishes, the ideal for which he is determined to die from cold or hunger or from a beating. In other words, it is a conviction in the justness of his cause and in the might of his class and fellow people; it is also a determination to carry out the revolution by overcoming all difficulties through his own efforts. A man must be prepared to die from a beating to defend the interests of the revolution. But Jang Jung Ryol was not prepared to die such a death; he thought that no matter what happened to the revolution, everything was alright as long as he remained alive.

Although he preserved his physical existence at the cost of the revolution, he lost his political integrity, a far greater thing than life. This is why Ma Tong Hui remains in people's memory, while Jang Jung Ryol is forgotten.

Whenever I recall Ma Tong Hui and Jang Jung Ryol, I also think of Kim Hyok and Jang So Bong. They started the revolution at the same time, at the same place and on the same track, but the terminus at which they each arrived was totally different. Again, the difference in their final destinations can be traced to the difference in their faith and will.

While Kim Hyok was sincere in the life in his organization and in revolutionary practice, Jang So Bong was proficient in theory and

clear-headed, but self-opinionated and weak in practice. Having tasted both the sweet and the bitter in life, Kim Hyok did not flinch from hardship. Jang So Bong, on the other hand, did not plunge himself into the back-breaking labour of the revolution. One was a man of passion ready to go through thick and thin, while the other was a cool-headed, calculating man who, being caught in a shower, would roll up the trouser legs and pick his way along a muddy path in a manner designed not to get mud on his shoes.

When we were frequenting Kalun and Guyushu, my friends admitted that Kim Hyok was a man of talent; but they did not think that he would play a great role in the revolution. They had the prejudiced view that the scholar who composed poems and songs could not be efficient in a revolution.

It was no wonder that those who did not really know him saw him in that light. At that time a man walking the streets with a guitar on his shoulder was considered to be a street musician.

In contrast, they all pinned a far greater hope on Jang So Bong. Although he was to betray us later, he was a famous man. He wrote many articles and published them under a pseudonym. He was the most enthusiastic contributor to the magazine *Bolshevik*, a proficient theoretician and a publicity worker no less experienced than Cha Kwang Su. The level of his theoretical attainment was so high that even Kim Chan, chief of the Tuesday group, always found himself cornered in an argument with him. During the Kalun meeting I stayed in his house.

My colleagues and I never dreamed that he would write a letter of conversion in prison a few years later, and as a faithful dog of Japanese imperialism attempt to persuade us to surrender to the enemy.

The maturity of one's political integrity—the other life a man has in addition to the physical one—is decided by whether he has a faith, and by how strong that faith is. The stronger his faith and will, the longer he maintains his political integrity. The political integrity of those who forsake their faith early ends before its time.

Rim Su San, who had been chief of staff of our main-force unit

before defecting to the enemy, resorted to acts of betrayal more despicable than those of Ri Jong Rak or Jang So Bong. He became commander of the enemy's "punitive" force and went on a rampage to do as much harm as he could to his former comrades-in-arms, who had fought shoulder to shoulder with him in the same trench in bygone days. Having become useless to the enemy as their agent, he was abandoned by them. From that time on, he pushed a cart around, peddling wine. From chief of staff of a division to a wine-peddler—this was the sad consequence of his forsaking of his faith.

Immediately after liberation he was on his way from Antu to Hyesan via Samjiyon, carrying wine drums on a cart. On his way he met a small unit led by Ryu Kyong Su. That day Ryu Kyong Su and his men were headed out on my orders to wipe out the remnants of the defeated Japanese army, who were making an appearance in the neighbourhood of Mt. Paektu.

Feeling awkward about meeting men who had been under his command in past days, he said, "I see you've come down from the mountains. Is General Kim Il Sung still up there? Why did you come down alone without him?"

At that time Ryu Kyong Su, Ri Tu Ik and other anti-Japanese war veterans, enlisted to wipe out Japanese army remnants, were all in Japanese military uniform. Rim Su San thought from their appearance that they all had followed his wake and submitted to the Japanese. He was so ignorant of developments that he did not even know that Japan had been defeated. A man who does not preserve his faith and stick to his principles comes to such a pass.

Needless to say, the overwhelming majority of the people who traversed the arduous road of the anti-Japanese revolution with me, arms in hand, were indomitable fighters with strong faith and will. They did not abandon their revolutionary principles, nor did they disgrace their faith in the liberation of their country, even in the face of the worst adversity. Dying in the barren fields of an alien land, my comrades-in-arms and fighters had requested: "Love the future!" and shouted, "Communism is youth!" Only men with unshakeable faith

can embellish the last moment of their life in this way. But for this faith, our anti-Japanese guerrillas could not have withstood the biting cold and hunger of Manchuria.

When talking about the faith and will of a revolutionary, I always mention Ryu Kyong Su as a prime example for people to follow. He took the ideas of his leader as his own faith and lived his life in defence of this faith.

I first met him in September 1933 just after the battle of Dongning county town. When my men were resting on our return to Xiaowangqing after the battle, Choe Hyon and his men from the Yanji guerrilla unit came to visit me. Among them was a young guerrilla that followed Choe Hyon like a shadow: this was Ryu Kyong Su.

Ryu felt immense regret that the Yanji guerrilla unit had missed the battle of Dongning county town through a mistake of the messenger. He took out his frustration at missing the battle and being a “latecomer” on Choe Hyon.

“How can we go back without doing a thing except live off others, Comrade Company Commander? We have come as far as Xiaowangqing, let’s fight a battle side by side with Commander Kim before we go back.”

In an instant I could see that this fellow was a man of guts. He was 18 years old at the time. He had joined the anti-Japanese armed forces at the age of 16.

“Sam Son is a gallant fighter in spite of his youth, Commander Kim. He is also very adamant,” said Choe Hyon.

Sam Son was the original name of Ryu Kyong Su. This was Choe Hyon’s general estimation of Ryu Kyong Su, one that told me he was very fond of Ryu Kyong Su.

Mirrored in the short life of the 18-year-old young guerrilla was the sad history of our ruined nation. Ryu had been a servant in another’s house since his younger age and had participated in the spring uprising in his teens. He was arrested by the warlord authorities and thrown into Longjing prison, where he was tortured. There were a great many revolutionaries in Jiandao, but few had suffered the water or

chili-powder tortures in Longjing prison at the younger age. Unlike Jang Jung Ryol and Ri Jong Rak, he endured these trials manfully. I inadvertently took his hands and found them so callused that his palms felt like iron.

I felt even greater sympathy for him when I heard that he had educated himself through “gleaning.” Learning through “gleaning” is the method of acquiring knowledge in an unofficial way by learning by means of one’s own eyes and ears beside someone else who is studying. On his way back from the market after selling firewood, he would squat on his haunches under the window of a private school and copy what the teacher had written on the blackboard. He did this by writing on the bare earth with a stick. In this way he thoroughly assimilated the Korean alphabet and the multiplication table.

Soon the whole school had heard about his learning through “gleaning” and sympathized with him. Moved by his zeal for learning, Kwak Chan Yong (alias Kwak Ji San) enrolled him in the school and bore the boy’s fees himself. The firewood collector who studied through “gleaning” was an unusual boy, and the teacher who enrolled this strange boy in the school and paid his school fees was also an extraordinary educator.

Nevertheless, Ryu Kyong Su was not able to finish the school owing to family problems. He left the school in mid-course and went to work for a landlord as a farmhand. When Ryu left school, Kwak Chan Yong was greatly disappointed. He left his job as a teacher and went to work on the revolutionary enlightenment of workers and peasants instead. Later he joined the anti-Japanese guerrilla army, where he became an officer.

While serving the landlord as his farmhand, Ryu Kyong Su continued to get guidance from Kwak. Kwak’s love and concern for his old pupil was really exceptional. He was caught in the anti-“Minsaengdan” fuss and put on a trial on a false charge. The left-wing chauvinists demoted him from the post of company commander for no reason. Every move he made had been watched by guards.

The day Kwak was led to the people's court, Ryu Kyong Su spoke for him at the risk of his own life. His speaking for his old tutor at the trial was a courageous deed that deserves praise from all. In those days he himself was on the list of suspected members of "Minsaengdan." For a suspected member of "Minsaengdan" to speak in defence of "the accused," or express sympathy with him, was as suicidal as rushing directly at the muzzle of an enemy rifle. Nevertheless, Ryu Kyong Su proved the innocence of his old tutor at the risk of his life. For this "crime," he himself was dragged into the prison for "Minsaengdan" members.

His daring deed was the most noble kind of loyalty a disciple could show for his mentor. He strove to perform his duty as a disciple to repay the affection his tutor had shown for him.

It was because his faith was strong that he could be so loyal to his mentor. By nature, a man with strong faith is ethical and faithful. It was his creed that a revolutionary should defend justice, hate injustice and speak only the truth, and that he should be determined to sacrifice his life to remain faithful to his comrades and fellow countrymen.

He said firmly that most of the people labelled as "Minsaengdan" members by the left-wing chauvinists and factionalists were innocent, and that it was a crime to stigmatize people who were loyal to the revolution as being "Minsaengdan" and to execute them. He was convinced that although the anti-"Minsaengdan" struggle was being conducted in an ultra-Leftist manner now, creating a chaos in the revolutionary ranks, things would be put to rights some day. With this conviction, he staunchly defended the steadfast revolutionaries and patriotic people who were falsely charged with being involved in the "Minsaengdan."

The story of Ryu's determined rescue of his former teacher at the trial stirred the revolutionaries and people in eastern Manchuria. When I heard the story in Dahuangwai, my thoughts went back with deep emotion to my meeting with him in Xiaowangqing.

Seeing off the comrades-in-arms from the Yanji guerrilla unit in Macun, I had said to Choe Hyon, jokingly.

“Sam Son is such a good, all-round fighter. I feel like taking him with me. Won’t you hand him over to me in memory of our meeting?”

Choe Hyon answered, half joking, half serious:

“Not this time. He fights very bravely, but mentally he is not yet completely ripe. I’ll train him for three more years, then bring him to you. How’s that?”

It was after the meeting at Xiaohaerbaling that Ryu Kyong Su fought as company commander in the same unit as me. For nearly 10 years after our first meeting at Xiaowangqing, he fought in Choe Hyon’s unit as a machine-gunner, which meant that I did not get many chances to meet him or give him the care I would have wished. The only thing I did for him was to give him the title of “young revolutionary.”

Ryu Kyong Su, on his part, accepted the title as a commendation. He regarded me as the support of his life and made up his mind to devote his whole life to the revolution.

I still remember the time when we were launching an offensive into the Tianbaoshan area after our successful thrust into the Musan area.

Suspecting the course of our march, the enemy concentrated their “punitive” forces in Tianbaoshan and in its surroundings, unfolding a large-scale clean-up operation against the People’s Revolutionary Army. In order to weaken the enemy forces who were rushing upon us, Choe Hyon’s unit attacked the town of Tianbaoshan. The battle was so fierce that the enemy even mobilized women, forcing them to throw grenades. Most of the enemy in the town were annihilated.

However, Choe Hyon was not satisfied with this. Determined to lure the enemy into a trap in order to destroy even more of the “punitive” forces, he organized a combat corps of 50 men from his unit, concealing the other men in ambush in a forest eight kilometres away from the town of Tianbaoshan. The combat corps included Ryu Kyong Su.

The corps raided one camping site of the “punitive” forces after another to draw them out. One night they made two raids on one camp; another night they captured the map of their “punitive” operations

before returning; this infuriated the enemy into chasing the People's Revolutionary Army. For three days in a row Ryu Kyong Su fought in all the most dangerous and important battles, not even stopping to take a drink of water. After liberation Choe Hyon frequently recalled Ryu Kyong Su's exploits in that campaign.

Choe Hyon's unit mowed down the enemy in battles that raged across seven mountains. In one marsh the enemy suffered hundreds of casualties.

Thanks to Choe's unit, we were able to move into the Tianbaoshan area safely with very little resistance from the enemy. We met Choe Chun Guk's unit there, instead of Choe Hyon's unit, with which we had originally planned to meet. While we were greeting the men and officers of Choe Chun Guk's unit, Choe Hyon and his men were making preparations for another battle of allurement at a place miles away from Tianbaoshan.

Choe Hyon told me later that all the guerrillas of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division had been very disappointed in failing to see me at that time.

Ryu Kyong Su's obligation to me was truly gratifying. Just how ennobling and sincere that obligation was I felt more keenly in the days when we engaged in small-unit combat.

His traits as a revolutionary showed up most clearly in that he carried out his Commander's orders and instructions absolutely to the letter. He did not make any flowery pledges and promises, but once he did make a pledge or a promise, he carried it out without fail. This was a highly laudable trait in him.

"We have no one to trust other than Comrade Commander. It is only when we uphold and support him with all our hearts that we can liberate our native land and carve out our destiny as a nation. We will win only by doing as our Comrade Commander intends."

This was the faith Ryu Kyong Su cherished, and it was with this faith that he carried out my orders in every adversity.

In the early spring of 1941 I left the training base in the far eastern region of the Soviet Union and went to the area of Mt. Paektu with Ryu Kyong Su's company to provide guidance to the small units operating

in various parts of Manchuria and the homeland. In these days Ryu Kyong Su and his men were a great help to me.

After locating Headquarters in Hancongou, I often dispatched small groups to various places. Ryu Kyong Su transmitted messages for me on many occasions. Whenever he left Headquarters, he would give the grain allotted to his group to the guardsmen as an addition to my rations. And for the sake of my security he frequently attacked the enemy, enticing them into following him, thus drawing their attention elsewhere.

When Headquarters was located in Hancongou, I gave him the order to go to a liaison place in Laojinchang, Huadian County, to meet Wei Zheng-min. It was a difficult task that could be performed only by breaking through scores of enemy outposts and districts under their siege, so Headquarters assigned 10 men to him. But he left for Laojinchang with only two men, fearing for the safety of Headquarters. Without my knowledge he gave the sack of rice I had allotted for three of them to Jon Mun Sop and took only about five kilogrammes with him.

They returned from the mission to discover that Hancongou had been transformed into a sea of campfires belonging to enemy “punitive” troops. Several campfires were burning on the very spot where our Headquarters’ tent had been pitched. They had little time left to the hour I had ordered them to return. The two young men shed tears of worry over my safety. Indeed, no one would have thought our Headquarters to be safe, seeing all the campfires in Hancongou that night.

But Ryu Kyong Su did not hesitate in the least, saying calmly, “Only 30 minutes are left. If we fail to go to our appointed rendezvous spot surrounded by campfires in these 30 minutes, we will have disobeyed Comrade Commander’s order. One way or another, he will be waiting for the three of us in that dangerous place.”

Leaving them on a mountain peak, he crawled down to the place where the Headquarters’ tent had been pitched—to be met by a man I had left behind. My confidence that Ryu on his return from the mission

would go without fail to the place where Headquarters had been perfectly agreed with his decision that whatever the circumstances, his Commander would wait for the men returning from their mission at the exact spot from whence they had been dispatched.

His exactitude in keeping to the day, time and place I had fixed was rooted in his unshakeable faith that his Commander would not abandon his men under any circumstance and in his sincere obligation that he should be prepared for any sacrifice and suffering to live up to the Commander's trust and affection.

With this same faith and obligation he made great contributions to organizing a railway guard corps and a tank unit after liberation, and to executing the plans of operation of Supreme Headquarters at each stage of the Korean war.

This is why, whenever I meet the leading officers of the Ministry of the People's Armed Forces, I tell them to train their soldiers to become strong-willed fighters, loyal men who stick to their faith no matter what the situation or how great the adversity.

History shows us that when a revolution gains victory after victory and the situation is favourable no one vacillates or becomes a turncoat. However, when the situation at home and abroad becomes complicated and tremendous obstacles are placed in the way of the revolution, ideological confusion arises. Suddenly, vacillation will appear in the ranks, as will stragglers and those willing to surrender, doing great harm to the revolution.

One such great international event was the Japanese imperialists' occupation of Manchuria and their aggression in China proper. This was a shock that awakened political awareness and gave rise to a great ideological confusion, both among those engaged in the national liberation struggle and within the communist movement of our country.

While the more steadfast communists looked upon the days after the September 18 incident as the right historical period for launching a full-scale anti-Japanese armed struggle and leading the Korean revolution to a fresh upswing, a number of nationalist and communist fighters who lacked strong revolutionary convictions came to the

conclusion that one could no longer fight the Japanese imperialists, who were so strong that they had even occupied Manchuria. They therefore gave up the fight.

The same thing happened when the Japanese imperialists invaded China proper.

At that time we judged that the large-scale invasion of China by the Japanese imperialists would inevitably bring about the dispersion and consumption of their forces and create in Northeast China a situation favourable to the development of the anti-Japanese armed struggle. At the same time we were fully aware of the fact that the Sino-Japanese War would create fresh political and military obstacles. We paid careful attention to the favourable aspects in the rapidly-changing difficult situation created by the war and made active efforts to turn the unfavourable phase into one that was favourable to us. This kind of indomitable fighting spirit and faith is crucial to a revolutionary in a time of crisis.

Nevertheless, there arose in this period of history, too, a hopeless confusion in the ideology of the chance elements and fellow travellers who had found their way into the ranks of the anti-Japanese movement. Judging the general trend of history at this point to be a downward one because of the invasion of China proper and the occupation of Wuhan, by the Japanese imperialists, they thought that no force on earth could check the trend. This process of ideological degeneration gave rise to defeatism, sinking a large number of stragglers of the revolution, philistines and renegades into a morass of pessimism.

To make matters worse, the Japanese imperialists launched successive large-scale “punitive” offensives to root out the anti-Japanese movement in Manchuria. At the same time they made preparations for the Pacific War after occupying the greater part of Chinese territory. As a consequence, most of the Chinese nationalist anti-Japanese units, which had been so active in many parts of northern and southern Manchuria, were wiped out. Yang Jing-yu’s unit in southern Manchuria suffered heavy losses in the whirlwind of the expedition to Rehe.

At that time, when many units of the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Army were faced with hardship owing to the failure in the expedition to Rehe, some Chinese surrendered or deserted their units.

In the summer of 1938 the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps under the command of Yang Jing-yu fell under siege by a large force of enemy troops the moment they started another expedition to Rehe. As a result they faced indescribable adversity. At this time the enemy combined their military offensive with a campaign to persuade the anti-Japanese guerrillas to defect. The so-called “magnanimous measure” of the Emperor of Manchukuo—the promise that those who surrendered would not be punished but would be treated merely as defectors—was made public, tempting the cowardly, the feeble-minded and those who had degenerated in the revolution. While conducting the evil “punitive” operations against the anti-Japanese armed units, the enemy intensified their scheme of “severing the people from the bandits,” thus the revolutionary army could not expect any assistance from the people. Having started on their hopeless expedition in the direction of Rehe, leaving their familiar guerrilla bases, the Anti-Japanese Allied Army units went through all kinds of tribulations because of the enemy’s repeated “punitive” attacks without getting any support from the people in the unfamiliar land.

At this time Cheng Bin, commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps, who had been called Yang Jing-yu’s right-hand man and who was famous as a gallant anti-Japanese general in southern Manchuria, shot to death a political officer who was against surrendering in Benxi, Liaoning Province. He then went on to commit an act of betrayal: leading his unit, he defected to the enemy. This put serious obstacles in the way of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps; in fact, it was almost a fatal blow to the corps, as Cheng Bin knew the careers of all the commanding personnel in the corps, the number of the units in the corps and the whereabouts of secret camps. Cheng Bin’s defection threw the corps’ planned expedition to the west into utter confusion.

As an agent of Kishitani, chief of the police in Tonghua Province, Cheng Bin later took the lead in the operation to track down and kill

Yang Jing-yu. To our sorrow, the valiant anti-Japanese general in southern Manchuria, Yang Jing-yu, was killed in a fierce battle with the “punitive” troops led by Cheng. When Kishitani was transferred to the post of vice-governor of Rehe Province, Cheng followed him and organized a police “punitive” force called “Rehe Ilim Corps” with himself as commander.

As can be seen from the examples of Cheng Bin and Jon Kwang, the higher the defectors’ ranks, the more wicked the aspects of their betrayal and the graver the consequences.

When we heard about Cheng Bin’s defection, we did not find it easy to believe, for he had had no special reason to defect to the enemy camp. He had not been discontented with his post. What was the reason for his defection then? In my judgement, his betrayal was caused by his losing of faith in the victory of the revolution. He had been intimidated by the high spirit of the Japanese army, which was improving its battle results almost on a daily basis after the July 7 incident, and as a result he saw the prospects of the revolution as being very gloomy. It would be better, he decided, to live in luxury than to suffer for the sake of a hopeless revolution, even if it meant that he was labelled a traitor. This appears to have been his ideological motive for defecting.

Cheng Bin was an efficient fighter, but he had not sufficiently cultivated his ideology. By ideological cultivation, I mean education in faith and optimism. When a man does not cultivate his ideology properly, he easily yields in the face of difficulties. This is why I still insist on the theory of cultivating one’s ideology first.

After the Japanese defeat in the war, Cheng Bin’s master, Kishitani, committed suicide along with his family members. But, Cheng Bin himself killed many Japanese POWs to save his own wretched life, disguised his real identity and joined the 8<sup>th</sup> Route Army; he then won a commander’s position.

Nevertheless, such luck could not last for long. Although he had disguised himself as a patriot, he could not hide his true identity for ever. One year after liberation, as he was walking up a street in Shenyang under an umbrella on a rainy day, a man stepped under his

umbrella. The man was another traitor, also living under an assumed identity. He knew well what Cheng Bin had been. For one reason or another, both men reported to the authorities respectively that the other was a traitor. In due course it was found that Cheng Bin had been a defector. The people's court passed judgement upon the despicable man who had abandoned his faith, defected to the enemy's camp and inflicted tremendous damage on the revolution.

Cheng Bin's fate is a graphic example of the end that awaits those who forsake their faith and betray their comrades.

After Yang Jing-yu's unit was vanquished, the spearhead of the enemy's "punitive" attack was directed to us. Claiming that the annihilation of Kim Il Sung's unit would mean the end of the anti-Japanese movement in Manchuria and Korea, the enemy encircled us from all directions and launched a desperate series of attacks. The road ahead of us was beset with steep ups and downs. This being the situation, cowards and surrenderers began to appear even among the men who had been waging the revolution since the days of the Down-with-Imperialism Union. In these days Fang Zhen-sheng and Pak Tuk Bom who had been commanders of the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Army, surrendered to the enemy.

At the time the neutrality pact was being signed between the Soviet Union and Japan, there again appeared deserters in our ranks. Quite a number of our soldiers had entertained the idea of relying on the Soviet Union (flunkeyism in present-day terminology). As some leaders paid little attention to educating their men in the spirit of national independence, emphasizing only the importance of the Soviet Union, the need to defend the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union-first idea, there appeared an ideological deviation in the ranks of the men, who believed that everything would be resolved if they believed in the Soviet Union and depended upon her. In other words, they thought the liberation of Korea was impossible without support and help from the Soviet Union.

Never before had I felt more keenly than at that time the truth that the consciousness of national independence is a decisive factor

determining the faith of a revolutionary. There were no deserters or renegades among those who held strong views on liberation through self-reliance, the idea that the revolution should be carried out independently through the effort of the nation's own people. The stragglers and defeatists appeared among those individuals who slighted their own power and that of their people, and attempted to carve out the destiny of their country by relying on the help of a large country.

A man who does not believe in the strength of his own people falls prey without exception to defeatism when he finds himself in a difficult situation. He immediately loses faith in victory in the revolution and gives up the struggle halfway. Men of this category think that the revolution in their own country is as good as finished when the revolution of a big country experiences setbacks. It is a good thing that the communists, who aim for the unity of the international anti-imperialist forces, express sympathy with failures experienced by communists of other countries, or regard their sorrow as their own, since revolution has an international character. Failure in a big country might also affect the revolution in their own country to some extent. But if those in a small country abandon their struggle, thinking that their revolution will fail because the revolution in a large country has suffered a setback, they are making a big mistake.

Revolution assumes a national character before it takes on an international character. Since revolution is waged with a national state as a unit, the communists in each country must struggle with unshakeable determination and faith, relying on the strength of their own people and completing the revolution through their own efforts. Only through self-dependence can they perform difficult tasks with success. This is my firm belief.

My experience shows that when the situations at home and abroad become complicated and the revolution is faced with trials, those who take the road of the traitor are without exception the people who joined the fighters' ranks with the thought that the revolution was an easy job. They are people of uncertain faith and weak will, defeatists fettered by

factionalism who slight or ostracize other people.

After Rim Su San and a number of others betrayed us, I often talked to my comrades-in-arms in the following manner:

“Even though the situation is bad and the struggle getting more and more arduous, we are unanimous in our belief that our revolutionary cause will triumph and our country will be liberated; it’s just that no one knows exactly when that day will come. Therefore those who are not confident enough to follow us to the last may go home, free from anxiety. Desertion is dastardly, but going home after informing us of your decision is not a misdeed. After all why should we part without so much as saying good-bye when we have fought for the revolution for more than 10 years? If any of you want to go home, we will see you off, and we won’t take issue with your giving up the struggle halfway. What can we do if you leave the ranks for lack of strength or firm faith? Those who want to go home, feel free to go.”

Talking to them open-heartedly in this way, I educated my men to have an unwavering faith in the victory of the revolution. In spite of my announcement, nobody went home. Without ever losing faith, no matter how complicated the situation, and in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles, the true communists of Korea went on with the resistance, finally defeating Japanese imperialism and brilliantly achieving the great cause of national liberation.

Although we received a heavy blow from the “Hyesan incident,” we took measures in time to save the situation and retrieve our losses. Thanks to the Korean communists’ strenuous efforts, the building of party organizations and the expansion of the ARF organizations went on with no letup.

Following in the footsteps of the heroes and heroines from the era of the anti-Japanese war, many men of strong will, indomitable in adversity, have made their appearance today in difficult posts. The dynamic revolutionary struggle in the age of Kim Jong Il provides the soil for the growth of men of sturdy faith and powerful determination. The example of Ri In Mo, whom Comrade Kim Jong Il calls the incarnation of faith and will and on whom he bestows great praise,

teaches us many things. The Party members and other working people across the country are endeavouring to follow the example of Ri In Mo, as Comrade Kim Jong Il has advised. I think this is quite a good thing.

The 1990s is a decade in which faith and will are more valuable than gold. The times in which we are living demand that not only the people but also the Party and state put their iron faith in socialism and communism, defending our beliefs and our system from the tenacious policy of siege and reactionary ideological offensive pursued by the allied imperialist forces, and that with our diamond-hard will, we break through the difficulties that prevail.

In several countries where the faith, won at the cost of the blood of the revolutionary forerunners, has been forsaken and where socialism, a creation of that faith, has been abandoned, the people's livelihood is now in dire distress and all forms of social evils, immorality and depravity are rampant. History always receives due payment from those who have abandoned their faith.

Our country has become a powerful one that does not sway with every storm and stress. This is due to the strong faith of our Party and our people. A party of vigorous faith does not become degenerate; a state with a steady faith does not fall; and a people with unshakeable faith does not disintegrate.

We have so far had a hard climb; we might be forced to make an even steeper climb in future.

Nevertheless, our people are completely unafraid. Only a nation that advances steadily, firm in its beliefs, can successfully scale the peak to the age of independence.

