

**KIM IL SUNG**

**WORKS**

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

# KIM IL SUNG

## WORKS

### 49

Reminiscences

*With the Century 5*

*(May 1936–March 1937)*

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김 로 성

*Translation from the preceding page:*

A historical lesson of the arduous revolutionary struggle against the Japanese imperialists is that the destiny of the country can only be shaped by the united efforts of the whole nation.

Kim Il Sung

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## **CHAPTER 13. TOWARDS MT. PAEKTU**

*(May–August 1936)*

### **1. We Struck Commander Wang and Won Over Wan Shun**

Spring 1936 was an unusual season for us. We had planned to do a lot of things that spring. The creation of a new division, formation of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland, preparations for the building of the Paektusan Base ... as well as the outbreak of important events at Maanshan and other places in the Fusong area, led to the surfacing of many new tasks we had not anticipated.

To deal with these pressing tasks, we needed time to concentrate on them.

Developments in the area around us in those days, however, did not give us breathing space. Two forces, which had been operating in the Fusong area, were interfering with us and placing obstacles in our way. One was Commander Wang's "punitive" force of the puppet Manchukuo police, the other was Wan Shun's mountain rebels (an anti-Japanese unit).

Wang's title "Commander" carried the connotation that he was the king of the "punitive" forces.

Since the days of his service in the army of warlord Zhang Zuo-lin, Wang had been an expert in "mopping up bandits." He had operated for some time against the Japanese in the self-defence army organized by Tang Ju-wu after the September 18 incident. Consequently we had maintained fairly good terms with him during our expedition to

southern Manchuria. However, he surrendered to the Japanese army and became the commander of the police force of puppet Manchukuo, soon after the break-up of the self-defence army, following Tang Ju-wu's retreat to China proper. As a faithful running dog of the Japanese imperialists he had fully displayed his ability in "punitive" operations.

He had never returned empty-handed from his "punitive" operations. He had always destroyed his enemy, cut off the heads or ears of victims and submitted them to his masters. The Japanese used to praise him highly and give him bonuses. He had been especially enthusiastic about the pursuit of Wan Shun's unit, and harassed him in every possible way. Soldiers of the Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist forces operating in the Fusong area, trembled even at the glimpse of Wang's shadow. These soldiers called him "Ri To Son of Fusong."

Ri To Son, in neighbouring Antu County, was a notorious human butcher, whose tenacity, wickedness and brutality was famous throughout Jiandao. Commander Wang was a running dog, who was no less loyal to the Japanese than Ri To Son.

This man, Commander Wang, became our major enemy, a major obstacle in our way, that spring.

Wan Shun of the national salvation army also hindered our activities nearly as much as Commander Wang. When we came to Fusong, we intended to make his unit our major ally. However, his men treated us as their enemy. On the way back from the procurement of clothing supplies for the Children's Corps members at Maanshan, Kim San Ho had been robbed of supplies by mountain rebels. My men had become so indignant, that they had retaliated too severely against the mountain rebels, who had turned into bandits, although they should have refrained from punishing them. This caused us a bit of trouble and constituted an unexpected headache.

"The 'Koryo Red Army' is too innocent to forgive anyone, who touches poor people's property. They think nothing of our hardships. They are a different tribe and cannot understand us." This rumour spread among the mountain rebels. They even tried to provoke or harm

individual soldiers of my unit, whenever they met them. This was the attitude of Wan Shun's unit we needed to form a common front with. It was a big headache.

We found ourselves in an analogous situation to the one we had been in, when we had founded the guerrilla army in Jiandao (April 25, 1932). However, our circumstances differed from those in our incipient days in that we were now much stronger, and our military authority had been recognized by the public, so that we were feared by both Commander Wang, who belonged to the enemy camp and Commander Wan Shun, who should have been our ally.

What could be done to remove the obstacles they had set and win a period of quiet time? After much thought I decided to try and maintain peace with Commander Wang, refrain from attacking him, and adopt other measures to form a common front with Commander Wan Shun.

I wrote to Commander Wang in the following vein:

... We are not strangers to each other. You know me well, and I know you well. So let me state frankly: The Japanese are our major enemy. We do not plan to fight the Manchukuo army and police, as long as they do not harm us. If you agree to our terms, I assure you that we will not attack the police force under your command and the police substations under their jurisdiction, and I propose peace. ...

The first paragraph of my letter was followed by the terms we proposed, i.e., that he cease "punitive" operations against the mountain rebels, allow free access to the walled town and villages and staying there for the political operatives of the People's Revolutionary Army, stop repressing patriots who supported and assisted the People's Revolutionary Army, and release imprisoned patriots at once. I said I would guarantee that no disturbance of "public peace" would occur as far as possible in Fusong County, as long as Commander Wang accepted these terms.

A few days later I received a reply from him, where he said that he fully agreed to our proposal and would accept all the terms we had advanced.

Thus a secret peace agreement was reached between both sides.

The agreement was implemented faithfully for some time, and no conflicts arose.

Commander Wang refrained from “mopping up” the mountain rebels, connived at ensuring free access for our operatives or liaison men to the walled towns and concentration villages under his control, and mitigated the repression and arrest of Korean patriots.

We ceased attacking units under his command and refrained from disturbing peace in the garrison area.

When sending out my men to obtain weapons, after burning the bundles of “Minsaengdan” files (April, 1936), I ordered them to fight and capture weapons in the area outside the walled town of Fusong and refrain from disturbing peace in that county.

Wang was not stupid; he was too clever and sensitive. He was well aware of our activities in Jiandao and northern Manchuria, and knew full well how strong we were. This may be the reason why he did not provoke us from the outset.

I learned that, after receiving the information of our appearance in Fusong, he had warned his men, saying: “Avoid engagement with the ‘Koryo Red Army.’ If you are careless enough to provoke them, you won’t save your skins. Don’t attack them at random, as they are a small force. The best thing to do is avoid offending them. Don’t provoke a fight you have no chance of winning.” Whenever he saw my men in khaki, Commander Wang used to sneak away, pretending not to have seen them. Whenever he saw mountain rebels in dark uniform, he always attacked them. The unit under my personal command was not a large force, compared to Wan Shun’s unit, which was more than a thousand strong. Wan Shun’s mountain rebels rather than my unit suffered casualties from attacks by Commander Wang.

The protective clause I had included in the peace terms for the security of Wan Shun’s unit was intended to preserve and strengthen the anti-Japanese forces.

In the latter half of the 1930s, the activities of the Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist units were on the wane.

The units of Wang De-lin, Tang Ju-wu, Li Du, Su Bing-wen and

others, which were the main force of the national salvation army, had already retreated to China proper via Shanhaiguan or via the Soviet Union. The stalwart anti-Japanese forces, such as Wang Dian-yang and Dian Chen units, had been destroyed by the enemy while fighting repeated bloody battles to the last man to save the country.

The units commanded by Ding Chao, Wang Yu-zhen and some other units had surrendered to the enemy.

More and more soldiers of the many small units, commanded by Wan Shun and their sister units, operating on the border of Fusong and Linjiang Counties, also surrendered. In autumn 1935, the enemy even held a ceremony at Chushuitan to welcome 90 men, who had surrendered from Ma Xing-shan unit.

The rest of the national salvation army dispersed into small groups, offering passive resistance in deep mountains. Some of them became bandits.

In these circumstances, some communists began to slight the united front with the anti-Japanese units and even regard it as unnecessary. If this state of affairs had continued, our allied front against the Japanese would have lacked consistency.

After the peace agreement with Commander Wang, we began approaching Wan Shun to seek a common front with his unit.

My unit included an elderly man from a unit of mountain rebels.

I sent him to Wan Shun with my letter, which ran as follows:

... Your name is widely known to our revolutionary army. We planned to meet you on our arrival in Fusong and discuss with you measures for the joint struggle against the puppet Manchukuo army and the Japanese. However, we could not achieve this goal, because an undesirable clash occurred between us, even before we had exchanged greetings. We regret this fact.

Our political commissar interrogated the mountain rebels, who had been wounded while robbing the revolutionary army of its supplies. The interrogation proved that these rebels had defected from your unit a few months ago and degenerated into bandits.

Nevertheless, rumour has it that my men harmed your men on

active duty. This is the sinister work of the enemy, which disapproves of friendly relations between us.

I eagerly hope that both armies will dispel all misunderstanding and distrust, discard ill feelings and enmity, and become comrades-in-arms and brothers and fight on a common front against the Japanese.

Wan Shun ignored our proposal; he did not reply. His silence obviously meant that he felt he could manage without us. The developments in the Fusong area had encouraged him to take such an attitude. Commander Wang had, in accordance with the peace agreement, relaxed his attack on Wan Shun's unit and all other anti-Japanese forces. Wang pretended to continue his "punitive" operations, but in fact refrained from hostile action. Wan Shun's small units of mountain rebels were now able to get along without any backing. This situation encouraged their sporadic obstructive moves. However, they gradually ceased to harm us as we provided warnings on more than one occasion.

Although we failed to achieve a common front, we gained stability. Neither Wang's unit nor Wan Shun's unit disturbed us any longer. We were now able to concentrate on our own affairs.

While at Manjiang and Daying, we held peace negotiations with the local military and police forces of the puppet Manchukuo and succeeded in obtaining their promise of non-interference.

We arrived at Manjiang towards the end of April 1936.

Approximately 30 policemen were stationed there. It would have been easy to destroy such a small force. But we did not resort to armed action; we sent our representative and held negotiations with the police force.

We said: We will not touch you; will you allow us to stay in the village? Surely you can leave us alone, as if you had not seen us, and answer, if you were accused by your superiors, that you could not resist, because the guerrilla army was too strong.

The police force readily complied with our request. They were even grateful that the guerrillas had come to negotiate rather than attack them.

Ri Tong Hak placed a machine-gun near a house, not far from the defence corps and posted the machine-gunners in civilian clothes to stand guard round the clock.

Meanwhile, at Manjiang I prepared most of the documents to be submitted to the meeting at Tongjiang, related to the foundation of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland. As there was no danger of attack from the enemy, I was able to continue my work smoothly and quickly.

We were generous and lenient towards the enemy, which was reluctant to fight us. This was our policy towards the enemy, a policy we kept as an iron rule ever since we started the armed struggle against the Japanese. This code of military action was maintained by the Korean People's Revolutionary Army throughout the whole anti-Japanese armed struggle.

We did not take up arms to kill others, but rather to save ourselves. The rescue of our motherland and fellow countrymen: this was the aim and mission of our struggle. Our weapons were only used when it proved necessary to punish the enemy, who were stifling our nation and harming our people's lives and property during their occupation of our country.

The sword of justice in the hands of our army provided benevolent protection to those who deserved to be kept alive, whereas it meted out determined and merciless punishment to those who did not deserve to live, who were wicked and resistant.

Commander Wang, who remained quiet during the spring, resumed for some reason his "punitive" operations against the Chinese anti-Japanese units at the beginning of the summer. He had probably been pressured by the Japanese garrison force and military police stationed in the Fusong county town. The cut heads of soldiers of Chinese anti-Japanese units began to be hung again on telegraph posts in the streets of Fusong, and soldiers of many units under Wan Shun's command began to desert again. The revived expression of the real nature of mountain rebels as selfish, short-sighted and lukewarm towards the idea of anti-Japanese national salvation, irritated us, as we

were working hard to rally anti-Japanese forces. If we had failed to check Wang's "punitive" operations, Wan Shun's unit would have been unable to avoid collapsing.

I wrote to Commander Wang for a second time. I said: ... We have received unpleasant information to the effect that the police force under your command have resumed "punitive" operations against the mountain rebels. If this is true, then you have broken our agreement.

I advise you to give the matter prudent thought, lest you stain your honour because of the broken promise.

Bear in mind that our generosity will not apply to an enemy, who is obstinately provocative and resistant. ...

I received no reply from Commander Wang to the letter of warning though one week passed. The "punitive" attacks on Wan Shun's unit continued. He seemed to be saying: I will not be intimidated by your warnings. I am not a coward. I am ready to accept your challenge.

Reinforcements of hundreds of "punitive" troops from Kwantung Army came to vantage points in Fusong County. Wang became more arrogant than ever.

Early in July I warned Wang again for the last time.

Four or five days after the last letter, I received the news that Wang's unit had surprised a camp of Wan Shun's troops near Dajianchang instead of replying to my letter. At that time we were in a forest in the border area between Fusong and Linjiang counties.

Wang's action angered me and my comrades-in-arms. It was impossible to expect a commander of the puppet Manchukuo police force, which was under the control of its Japanese masters, to keep his promise with the communists faithfully to the last minute.

However, we did not deny that they were also Chinese and that they had reasons of their own. Trust in that reason underlay our psychological warfare on the puppet Manchukuo army. Our success in persuading Wang and concluding a non-interference agreement resulted from that trust.

Most of the middle- and low-ranking officers of the hostile force we had shown our trust in remained loyal to their promise. Such officers

included the regimental commander of the puppet Manchukuo army, whom I came to know by chance in Emu, and the battalion commander of the same army, who supplied us regularly with copies of the magazine, *Tiejun*, from Dapuchaihe.

But Wang, an old acquaintance of mine, discarded his promise, as he would do a pair of worn-out shoes. A man without faith in his cause will end in perfidy. I believe that Wang was not confident about the victory of the Korean and Chinese peoples over the Japanese.

We could not forgive Wang for his treachery. We were enraged at his shooting, in reply to our patience and goodwill.

I summoned Kim San Ho and told him to select approximately 30 elite soldiers and then join the 10<sup>th</sup> regiment in an action to punish Commander Wang.

Meanwhile we secretly moved the main force to Zuizishan near Xinancha.

Xinancha, although not a large concentration village, was an important base of the enemy's "punitive" operations. Here a police substation and force of the Self-Defence Corps were also located.

During the battle of Xinancha we planned to teach Commander Wang a lesson for breaking the agreement and contain the enemy militarily. We also aimed to capture the weapons needed for our new division.

The new division had been involved in major battles near the River Toudao-Songhua and at Laoling. If the battle of Laoling had been successful, we could have obtained a lot of weapons. The battle had been planned down to the last detail, but an accident occurred, and our plan failed. An enemy scout had happened to sneak in the area of our ambush to relieve himself. Finding the ambush, he had got carried away and opened fire. My man did the same in bewilderment. We killed or wounded dozens of enemy troops and captured some weapons, but the battle was not fought as neatly as we had planned.

We would make up at Xinancha for the failure to destroy all the enemy at Laoling.

At that time we had a Chinese man in our unit who, disgruntled with

the chief of the police substation for his wrongdoings, had deserted the police force of puppet Manchukuo at Xinancha. He said that the substation chief was a scoundrel hated by the local people. He was a tyrant to the people in the concentration village and the policemen. The Chinese man said angrily that he had joined the guerrilla army to kill Yang, the substation chief, before fighting to liberate China. He knew the village situation well. This knowledge contributed to our decision to fight at Xinancha after Laoling.

The attack on Xinancha would be launched during daylight. Between noon and one o'clock in the afternoon, the policemen were supposed to have their lunch and clean their rifles. By attacking the village when the rifles of the policemen were disassembled for cleaning, we would be able to overwhelm the enemy without facing strong resistance.

The guerrillas, disguised in peasant straw hats and clothes and carrying farm implements with them, approached the mud wall and quickly passed through the gate, and then broke into the police barracks like a thunderbolt. The policemen and substation chief were taken prisoner without much resistance. The Self-Defence Corps members were also all captured. When the battle was over, we improvised an open-air stage in front of the police substation building and provided a theatrical performance, before setting fire to the police building and withdrawing towards Xigang.

We gave the captured policemen political education and travelling money and told them to return to their hometowns. One of the prisoners asked quietly how we guerrillas had broken through the gate. My man said in jest that we had flown in. The captive said that even the devil would be dumbfounded at our methods. He wondered what the guards were doing.

The raid on the police substation caused Wang a strong psychological shock which we had intended. Wang had to conduct "punitive" operations more aggressively in order to save face.

Kim San Ho disguised the selected 30 men in mountain rebel uniform, and then appeared with them near Fusong county town, in a

bid to lure Wang. Kim San Ho himself was, of course, wearing the uniform of mountain rebel platoon leader. We knew well that black was the best decoy for Wang.

Kim San Ho's small unit appeared in a village near the county town at night, dragged out articles from the peasants' houses in imitation of the behaviour of mountain rebels, and then proceeded to the village of Huangnihezi, where they disturbed the villagers in the same way, before withdrawing quietly through the valley to the hill behind the village.

On receiving the reports of the appearance of "mountain rebels" in the village and their subsequent disappearance, Wang hurried his unit in fury towards Huangnihezi early next morning.

"Don't worry," he said confidently to the villagers. "Prepare a good lunch and wait for me. I'll be back after destroying the bandits. I'll arrive with their heads cut off by that time. Lawless bandits!" Wang took his unit to pursue the decoy and began climbing the hill, following the traces of its passage.

Half way along the slope of the hill the soldiers of the 10<sup>th</sup> regiment lay in ambush. By dawn Kim San Ho's small unit had joined the regiment.

Dummies had been set up by our men there to deceive Wang. The men hiding between the dummies opened fire first.

Wang and his men dashed fiercely at the dark dummies in the forest, calling on to surrender. The tenacious resistance of the "mountain rebels" who refused to surrender, run away or fall down, added fuel to Wang's anger. Wang shot with a pistol in each of his hands, but was killed by our men.

We did not know what lessons Wang learned at the last moment of his life. It would be fortunate if he realized, albeit belatedly, what lay in store for him for betraying cause of justice. Even if he had realized, it would have been too late.

At the news of the death of Commander Wang, commanders of the Chinese anti-Japanese units came to see Kim San Ho from many places and asked him to sell Wang's head to them. They said they would hang

Wang's head high on the gate of the wall of Fusong so that the whole world could see it and thereby take vengeance upon him for his brutal beheading of many officers and men of the anti-Japanese units, and hanging of their heads on telegraph posts.

I told Kim San Ho to make sure that Wang's body was brought to the police in Fusong County, without touching even a thread of his hair.

Later we heard that Commander Wang's funeral ceremony was held in a grand manner. The funeral also helped spread news of our army. The news spread widely among the enemy soldiers, who said that they would gain nothing but death by fighting our revolutionary army.

The battle of Xinancha and the battle of Huangnihezi, where Wang was punished, are described in detail in the novel, *History*, by Han Sol Ya.

After eliminating Wang, we planned to overwhelm the Japanese troops and thereby keep Fusong County completely under our control. We sent out reconnaissance scouts and collected information from all directions, learning that approximately 60 Japanese troops would move by boat from Fusong towards Linjiang, as luck would have it. I immediately arranged an ambush. This battle also gave us great satisfaction. Most of the enemy soldiers were drowned, and only a dozen narrowly escaped by damaged boat.

During repeated battles of this kind, the Fusong area came under our sway.

During the summer we spent some time at Daying. We pitched a tent by the hot spring, and did various work—setting up subordinate organizations of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland, arranging a printing shop, tailor's shop, weapons repair shop, hospital and building other secret camps in the forests of Fusong and Linjiang.

An enemy post was located beyond a small hill from our camp. On our arrival at Daying, we notified the enemy in writing that we were staying at the hot spring for some time and that they should therefore refrain from appearing before us or running off anywhere, but should

stay where they were, sending the supplies we needed, adding that if they did so, we would guarantee them security.

Although they were within hailing distance, the enemy dared not provoke us or run away. They obeyed our demand for supplies. When we demanded canvas shoes, they brought canvas shoes; when we demanded flour, they brought flour by carts.

Around this time Wan Shun sent a messenger to us with greetings and congratulations on the destruction of Commander Wang. Later, the old man himself came to the hot spring to pay us a visit. He came of his own accord, although he had not even replied to our proposal to form a common front, a proposal we had made by letter and by sending a messenger. The old man's visit came as a surprise. Previously, we had paid visits to Commander Yu and Wu Yi-cheng to form a common front. After removing Commander Wang, famous Wan Shun came to visit us in person.

I found at a glance that Wan Shun was much older than fifty. His eyes were dim, probably because of the poisonous effect of opium.

At our meeting, he said: "All the soldiers of my anti-Japanese unit regard you, Commander Kim, as the greatest benefactor, who has done away with Wang. I have come to thank you, Commander Kim, and tell you that I wish to seal brotherhood with you. Please forget the displeasure caused by my foolish conduct of dotage in the past, and form *jiajiali* with me, keeping a generous understanding of me, as I have come a long way to see you." Wan Shun's request embarrassed me for a while. When I proposed the same terms I had offered Commanders Yu and Wu Yi-cheng, when realizing the common front, I said I would consider the matter of *jiajiali*, if he accepted these terms. According to these terms, his anti-Japanese unit should establish friendly relations with us and remain a friendly force, should on no account surrender to the Japanese imperialists or rob the people of their property, and should protect our operatives and liaison men and exchange information regularly with us.

To my surprise, Wan Shun agreed to all these conditions with pleasure. As I explained each of the terms, he nodded, exclaiming,

“Excellent opinion!” or “Excellent interpretation!” Consequently we formed a common front within a few hours and the two armies became friendly.

Since then Wan Shun never betrayed the agreement. Our campaign to strike Commander Wang and win over Wan Shun marked a significant step in the struggle of the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army after the Nanhutou meeting. The event was significant, as we demonstrated the might of the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army, by displaying military supremacy over the enemy, and as our tireless efforts in the Fusong area laid solid stepping stones used to advance to Mt. Paektu area. These efforts left an indelible impression on the road to realizing a common front between the peoples and patriotic forces of Korea and China.

## 2. In the Dear Walled Town

Wan Shun pinned great hopes on *jiajiali* or sworn brotherhood. He made this proposal in order to establish good-neighbourly relations with the People's Revolutionary Army and thereby maintain military supremacy over the enemy. Wu Yi-cheng, too, had once proposed the establishment of *jiajiali* with us. It was a common trend among Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist units to enter into alliances with the People's Revolutionary Army by *jiajiali* and keep the communists bound in the alliance.

But establishing *jiajiali* or sworn brotherhood did not imply the automatic formation of a common front against the Japanese or its development into a durable alliance.

Solid comradeship can only develop through battle, and its real worth can only be proved by repeated trials. In the new situation governing our advance to Mt. Paektu, a joint military operation to contain the enemy could constitute the best opportunity to make anti-Japanese units loyal allies of the People's Revolutionary Army and establish a durable alliance with them.

The battle of Fusong county town in August 1936 was typical, with special significance in establishing a solid common front with anti-Japanese units.

"Now that we have established a common front, what about attacking a big walled town?" I suggested.

"Let's go ahead," he agreed without giving second thoughts to the matter. "With your unit, Commander Kim, I can attack any enemy, can't I? I now feel as if I command the whole world. Let's attack a big walled town." The mountain rebel commander's answer was surprisingly confident, for he had the habit of turning tail even without attempting to fight, when encountering the Japanese. He might have

been bragging in the excitement caused by the effect of opiate smoking.

Wan Shun constantly puffed opiate even in our presence. This expressed his special confidence in us. Usually Chinese opium addicts never smoked opiate in the presence of strangers. Wan Shun's unceremonious attitude was a good sign. He had never smoked opiate, before commanding the anti-Japanese unit. When still young he had been an excellent fighter. He had distinguished himself in every battle and had soon taken command of a large unit.

Once his unit was threatened by total destruction, surrounded by the Japanese. Breaking through the encirclement, it suffered heavy casualties. Wan Shun himself narrowly escaped. This crisis made him a pessimist. The Japanese, who used to fall upon his unit, yelling like wolves hunting in packs, were too strong an enemy for the indisciplined, poorly-equipped soldiers of the anti-Japanese unit. To make matters worse, Commander Wang had been pursuing them and sapping their strength.

Wan Shun had withdrawn into a deep mountain, entrenched his unit in a mud wall and only maintained the existence of his unit by robbing the people of their property, instead of fighting the enemy.

Living at the expense of the people, he had become more and more of bandit. The old "bandit commander," who had retired into a mountain, had taken to opiate smoking in grief and anger.

Many of his men, tired of such a life in the rebel army, had discarded their guns and returned to their hometowns. Some of them had become bandits, while some of them under a white flag had gone to the barracks of the puppet Manchukuo army. Commanding officers had spent their time on gambling, not even caring how the times were changing. The despotic habit of officers, who beat and swore at their men at the slightest offence, had reduced their relationship to deplorable levels.

Wan Shun's unit was on the brink of total collapse.

They could only be saved from ruin, via an alliance, which would inspire them with confidence in victory through practical joint

operations against the enemy. Consequently I proposed an attack on a big walled town, after success in alignment with Wan Shun's unit. Things went smoothly, as he gladly agreed to my proposal.

"All my officers and men are filled with admiration at the way you, Commander Kim, destroyed Commander Wang. The attack on a town, in cooperation with your unit, will be very welcome to them. Please plan the operation immediately," Wan Shun said.

He was very envious of our success in the battles of Laoling, Xinancha, Xigang, Daying and other places. He found our tactics in these battles very mysterious.

He said that famous Chinese generals in the ancient warring age defeated their enemies by resourceful strategy, and that the Japanese fought bravely. He asked me what tactics I used to achieve victory in every battle.

I replied with a smile that the art of war was important, but that the soldiers' mental state was even more vital.

He said he could see with one glance that my men were all courageous and strong. He heaved a deep sigh, complaining that his men were all so stupid that he could hardly trust them.

"Don't worry, Commander," I said. "If we jointly fight the Japanese successfully, they will also become courageous without any shadow of a doubt. Please, choose the town we should attack." Wan Shun waved his hand, asking me to select the target.

We exchanged views about the objective of the attack, but did not reach agreement that day. He seemed to want to attack Fusong county town, but did not insist upon it. That was fortunate for me. Fusong like Jilin was dear and familiar to me and would never be forgotten in my life.

Fusong was an ordinary county town, which could be found in many parts of Manchuria. When I was a primary schoolboy there, the town had no two-storey or higher building or electric lighting.

Most of the hundreds of houses in the town were straw-thatched houses or cottages. There were brick buildings, tile-roofed houses and square wooden houses, but there were so few of them that they could

be counted on fingers.

These poverty-stricken thatched houses and cottages were nevertheless as dear to me as part of myself, and Xiaonanmen and the River Toudao-Songhua I had frequented remained dear to my memory wherever I went and were as dear to me as the memory of the scenery of my home village.

This was the town where I had received my father's will, which served as my compass throughout my life. Ten years had already passed since I, bearing his will in mind, had plodded behind his coffin to the graveyard at Yangdicun. One saying has it that rivers and mountains change over ten years. I wondered if the scenery surrounding the graveyard had changed.

Containment of the enemy in Fusong was extremely significant from various angles in the implementation of our strategic plan to advance to Mt. Paektu. I knew this better than anyone else, but could not easily bring myself to decide to attack Fusong.

After Wan Shun's departure, we began a wide range of reconnaissance work in real earnest to determine a suitable objective of attack while at the same time guiding subordinate organizations of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland.

While we were busy making preparations for the joint operation with Wan Shun's unit, Li Hong-bin, the commander of the first detachment of Wu Yi-cheng's unit, came to me with his detachment without prior notice. His face was puffy from sweat and his clothes were blotched with crusts of salt and dust, after a long forced march in the sweltering mid-summer heat.

His detachment was the strongest of Wu Yi-cheng's unit. He himself was Wu Yi-cheng's right hand. Able and loyal to his commander, he was held in great affection by him. He was on joking terms with us.

We had met Wu Yi-cheng's unit for a short time at Qinggouzi in northern Manchuria. How come this detachment had travelled as far as Fusong in the wake of the People's Revolutionary Army which was advancing southwards?

“Commander Wu has sent me to you, Commander Kim.” The detachment commander enthusiastically conveyed Wu’s best regards for me, despite the fatigue of the long march. “The old man told me to fight in cooperation with your unit, as he knew it would be marching southward towards Mt. Paektu. I was really at a loss what to do, when I was told to find your unit. When I asked how on earth I would find your unit on this vast land of Manchuria, which appears from nowhere and disappears into nowhere, he roared, ‘You fool! Why do you worry so much? You may crawl like a crab or on all fours, but don’t miss the place where the gunshot is the loudest. There you’ll find Commander Kim.’ He was right. In Fusong gun crackings were the loudest in the whole of Manchuria.”

“Certainly. Our unit makes gunshots almost every day. We soon plan to attack a large town in cooperation with Wan Shun’s unit. If you don’t mind, I would like your detachment to take part in this operation. What do you say?”

“Why should I mind such a good offer, when Commander Wu sent me over here for cooperation? The old man said that he would also come to join us immediately after dealing with some unsettled affairs.”

His arrival at the time of our successful alliance with Wan Shun’s unit was a double blessing.

I was thrilled to the heart. Had he come thousands of miles really to help the People’s Revolutionary Army? When we met at Qinggouzi, Wu Yi-cheng had been extremely depressed, because Zhou Bao-zhong had not recognized him as forward commander of the anti-Japanese forces, an event which troubled him.

At that time Wu Yi-cheng had not talked a lot about cooperation with us.

The very fact that the man, who had been speaking of grievances against Zhou Bao-zhong, sent Li Hong-bin to us, saying that he would fight on the united front with Kim Il Sung’s Communist Party till the last moment of his life, reflected his invariable support and trust in us. He hesitated for some time after Wang De-lin’s retreat to China proper via the Soviet Union, but always sought cooperation with us, without

betraying the cause of the united front. This was, indeed, worthy of our respect.

Fortunately, Wan Shun was visiting us at that time; consequently Li Hong-bin joined in the discussion of the joint operation even without taking time off to untie his shoestrings.

We discussed the objective of our attack again.

I suggested Mengjiang as the target of our attack. I had stayed at Mengjiang for about a month, recruiting reinforcements and rehabilitating an underground organization, in summer 1932 on my return from my visit to Ryang Se Bong's unit at Tonghua. We were familiar with the place and had a foothold there. Consequently I was convinced that I could achieve our objective without difficulty if we fought there.

Wan Shun was not keen on the town, insisting that it was too far away. He insisted that, even if the attack was successful, we might fall into the enemy's encirclement on our way back. He had in mind Fusong county town.

"Commander Kim, let's attack Fusong," Li Hong-bin echoed with clenched fists in excitement. He had ample reason to speak in favour of Fusong. When leaving Emu, he had sent a company commander of his detachment, Mou Zhen-xing by name, on a reconnaissance mission to learn my whereabouts. However, the company commander had been captured by the gendarmerie in Fusong during his mission. The enemy had pressed him to explain the aim of his entry into the town and the man he planned to meet. He had maintained his silence. The gendarmes had tortured him, pouring boiling water into his mouth. His mouth had been scalded and lips blistered. But the strong-willed company commander had resisted in silence, refusing to stain his honour.

The enemy had dragged out the man to the northern outskirts of the town, along with patriotic peasants in the Fusong area, who had been detained on the charge of being "in contact with bandits," and shot him and the peasants. But he was only wounded, and had pretended to be dead. A kind-hearted man had carried him away and treated him,

before sending him back to his unit. This undying company commander had brought to light the atrocities of the Japanese gendarmerie in Fusong.

Li Hong-bin gave me a brief recount of the atrocities witnessed by the company commander.

After the death of Commander Wang, the Japanese army and police blocked the wall gates and issued permits to the inhabitants, who were supposed to pass through the gates, in order to “arrest all people in touch with bandits.” People who went through the gates without a pass or holding an outdated pass were all tortured; any one who resisted was murdered in secret. The brutality of their murder was unprecedented throughout history.

The enemy took the people arrested at the gates, to a hotel near Ximen bridge, locked them up in the hotel, before dragging them at dawn to the brink of the marsh on River Toudao-Songhua and beheaded them. The Japanese soldiers were encouraged to cut off the victims’ heads with their swords and see the gushing blood to train their mettle. It was a fiendish act which even the devil would shudder at.

The beheaded bodies were thrown into the marsh. Naturally in later days the people of Fusong called the marsh the harbour for the murdered. The enemy sought out immediately people, who let out the beheading secret and killed them in the same brutal manner. Their bodies were also thrown into the harbour for the murdered.

The blood in my heart boiled with rage. My mind was gripped with the pang of remorse, as I realized that the thoughts of refraining from upsetting my precious memory of Fusong with a gunshot or clouding it with powder fumes, constituted naive feelings of compassion.

Of the many walled towns around Mt. Paektu, Fusong was one of the strategic points, including Linjiang and Changbai, which the enemy attached special importance to. Regarding Fusong as one of the central bases for “suppressing the disturbance of public peace in the eastern frontier region,” the Japanese imperialists stationed in that town large forces from Kwantung Army, puppet Manchukuo army and the police.

Takahashi's crack unit known to have been toughened in battle, was entrenched in the town. It was therefore very important to put Fusong under our military control and thereby occupy the area round Mt. Paektu.

“Destroy the fiendish enemy entrenched in Fusong county town to wreak the people's vengeance upon him!” and “Save innocent prisoners, who are being beheaded in the walled town like hell!” These continual, hot-blooded outcries seemed to stir me up in my imagination. I must attack Fusong first. In that town, which fills me with tears, guiltless people are murdered at the mercy of the sword of Japanese samurais every day. Why should I go to Mengjiang, knowing that such a tragedy is taking place within a hailing distance? If I attack Fusong, I shall thereby gain revenge upon the people's enemy, strengthen the united front with the Chinese anti-Japanese units, and occupy Mt. Paektu area without difficulty. Consequently I must fight there without a moment's delay.

I thought that an attack on the town of Fusong would constitute the most sympathetic greetings to the townsfolk, as well as an expression of the warmest and truest love I could ever offer them.

Therefore I decided to attack Fusong and open up a decisive phase in occupying the northwestern area of Mt. Paektu.

After agreeing upon the target of attack, we sent out scouts to reconnoitre the town again.

Studying the reconnaissance report, I had the premonition that we had to fight against heavy odds. The town's defences were far stronger than we had predicted. Like all other walled towns in Manchuria, Fusong was surrounded by a solid mud wall reinforced with gun emplacements.

The only thing in our favour was that a company of the puppet Manchukuo army on guard duty at the wall gates was under our influence and I knew the town's streets well. The company included an organization of the Anti-Japanese Association, which had been formed by political operatives from our unit. The deputy company commander Wang, head of the organization, promised that he would post reliable

members of his organization as guards at the wall gates at the attack hour and let them open all the gates at the same time.

We held a briefing, which specified the combat mission of each unit. My unit would occupy the battery on the eastern hill and then destroy the enemy in the town by attacking in the direction of Dananmen and Xiaonanmen. The Chinese anti-Japanese units would attack in the direction of Dongmen and Beimen. We also planned the People's Revolutionary Army's small-unit attacks on Songshuzhen and Wanlianghe (Wanliangxiang) the day before the main attack, in order to divert the attention of the enemy, which was intent on defending the town.

I could add that our battle preparations were satisfactory. We were confident that the battle would end in our victory.

Contrary to our expectations, however, we faced serious difficulties at the outset. This difficulty was caused by the anti-Japanese units, which failed to keep the time of assembly or acted arbitrarily.

From excessive enthusiasm, Li Hong-bin's detachment advanced directly to Dongmen, instead of coming to the designated spot of the assembly area at Jianchanggou, while Wan Shun's unit did not arrive at the appointed hour of assembly. All this irritated me almost beyond endurance. I sent out my orderly to discover what had happened to them and waited for more than an hour, but Wan Shun's men failed to show up at Jianchanggou.

The date and hour of the attack was not an arbitrary decision. The attack had been timed after a full discussion with Wan Shun and all the other anti-Japanese unit commanders about good and bad omens.

The commanders of the anti-Japanese units had been restrained in timing by superstitious considerations. The detachment commander was preoccupied with numbers representing the date and hour of attack.

He insisted that, according to the theory of *Yin* and *Yang*, an even number stood for *Yin* and odd number for *Yang* and that therefore, to be lucky, important events should be so timed for odd numbers such as 1, 3, 5, 7 and so on to make up the date and hour of attack.

We had not taken the theory of *Yin* and *Yang* into consideration, when we decided to attack the town at one o'clock on the 17<sup>th</sup>, which coincided with the 1<sup>st</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup> month by the lunar calendar to Li Hong-bin's satisfaction.

Wan Shun, who had arrived at Jianchanggou earlier with some of his unit, was greatly embarrassed and in the end, made all his men face the eastern sky and chant something like a spell with hands clasped. He must have been wishing for divine help. The other unit commanders reproached the old man for his unit's treachery. Wan Shun was sweating heavily.

I felt pity for the old commander, who was at a loss about what to do, attracting the critical eyes of his colleagues. Strange to say, I wished I could speak in his defence rather than call him to account. Nobody was more enthusiastic about the arrangement of the joint operation than him. Nobody had offered more creative opinions than he had. He had reiterated to his men the importance of keeping the time of operations and observing operational discipline. This provided strong support and encouragement to us, as we attached such great importance to a common front with the anti-Japanese units.

The awkward discrepancy, which obliged me to feel sympathetic with him, lay between his unstinted efforts to effect an alliance with the People's Revolutionary Army and his practical inefficiency, which obstructed the development of the operation.

Nevertheless, I was in no position to sympathize with or pity anybody. As time passed, my heart contracted, for I was in command of the whole operation. I had fought hundreds of battles, but had never been so irritated and embarrassed as I was.

I regretted that I had not given stronger emphasis at the briefing to the need to keep time. I had laid special emphasis on refraining from harming people's lives and property and damaging our relations with the people. I had not wished to see the recurrence in Fusong of the misconduct, committed by the men of the anti-Japanese units in the battle of Dongning county town and would not tolerate it.

I had not been particularly concerned about the potential delay in

the arrival of Wan Shun's unit. The neglected matter caused me the greater shock.

The shocking accident which might reverse the tide of the battle, drove us into a critical situation, which placed us between two alternatives—adopt flexible measures or abandon the battle itself. It was impossible to discard the operation, which had been prepared with such great effort. Any cancellation of the attempted attack would dampen the morale of the soldiers of the anti-Japanese units and the People's Revolutionary Army, a morale which had soared in anticipation of the joint operation.

Lack of opiate for Wan Shun's officers and men had caused their delayed move. Many of them were opium addicts. Without smoking opium, they could not march at the required speed.

To make the joint operation succeed, we had to send opium to Wan Shun's unit, which was on the march.

If we had not taken such emergency measures, the unit would have spent the whole day on their way.

After the battle of Emu county town, Wang Run-cheng had told me that the anti-Japanese units had acquitted themselves comparatively well in the joint operation, thanks to opium. At that time I had accepted his words as a mere joke. Learning that the delay of Wan Shun's unit was caused by a lack of opium, I understood that Wang had told me the truth.

Wan Shun's unit arrived much later than the fixed time. The regimental commander of the main force was the last person to arrive, gasping for breath, and report to his commander of the arrival.

Wan Shun drew his Mauser from his holster and threatened to shoot the regimental commander.

I had never felt the harm of opiate more keenly than at that moment. This painful experience led us to enforce later on awful regulations on shooting opium addicts in the guerrilla army.

Allegedly opium heralded the downfall of the Qing dynasty, which was several hundred years old. Qing fought two Opium Wars against Britain which had smuggled opium into Qing. The opium grown in

India flowed into Qing and turned millions of people into opium addicts. In return a tremendous amount of silver flowed out from Qing. Britain made fabulous profits from opium dealing.

Lin Ze-xu and other progressives of Qing roused the people to resist opium smuggling, against the British aggressors. The resistance was fierce, but Qing had to yield Hong Kong, a part of her territory, to Britain, owing to the treachery of her ruling class.

After all, we can truly say that opium swallowed up China. Opium was the cause of the greatest disgrace and pain the Qing dynasty left to the Chinese nation in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Even in the 1930s secret opium dealing was widespread in Manchuria. Many of the people who led hand-to-mouth existence, to say nothing of the rich and government officials, smoked opium. Whenever I saw opium addicts looking vacantly at the world with dim eyes and snivelling noses, I could not help recollecting the long bleeding history of our neighbour and feeling pity for her people.

All the assembled units marched at gasping speed, but in vain. The members of the Anti-Japanese Association from the company of the puppet Manchukuo army, who had been standing sentry at the wall gates, waiting for the promised signal, poured sand into the breeches of their machine-guns at the hour of relief and withdrew from their guard posts. Our plan of passing through the gates by stealth to destroy at a stroke the enemy in the walled town failed to work from the very start.

Frankly speaking, at the time I thought we should give up fighting. In that situation it might be wiser to put off the battle to a later date.

However, our hatred for the enemy was too strong, and our expectations from that battle in our plan to occupy Mt. Paektu area were too great for us to abstain from attacking Fusong, which was drenched in blood and close in our sights.

If our 1 800-strong force retreated even without attempting to attack, what would become of us? The public would despise us as a rabble. The great cause of the common front against the Japanese would fizzle out. The gunshots we planned to sound on Mt. Paektu might have no effect.

I called upon the commanding officers of the People's Revolutionary Army to stand in the van in difficult situations and lead the battle, which had been prepared with such great efforts, to victory at the risk of their lives.

The battle began after all that complexity.

On my attack order, the men of the People's Revolutionary Army seized the battery on the eastern hill in one go and charged in the direction of Xiaonanmen. The soldiers of the anti-Japanese units also advanced towards Beimen and Dongmen. A hand-to-hand fight occurred in the street in front of Xiaonanmen. An enemy machine-gun spat fire at our men, who were closing in at the gate. At my command post near Xiaonanmen, I was almost deafened by the cracking of a machine-gun.

The units of the People's Revolutionary Army broke through the gate into the town with fire support from their machine-gun company.

The breakthrough was made by the self-sacrificing efforts of my men. I received a report that Wan Shun's unit, which had been attacking Beimen, was retreating, frightened off by the roar of enemy gunfire. I ordered company commander Ri Tong Hak to take his company to Beimen at once to help Wan Shun's unit.

A little later, Li Hong-bin's men, who had been attacking Dongmen, began retreating, frustrated by the enemy's counterattack, so that the enemy force, which had come out of Dongmen, was swarming towards Xiaonanmen.

To make matters worse, the report that Jon Kwang's small unit had returned without raiding Wanlianghe distressed me. The River Toudao-Songhua had been flooded, and therefore it was impossible to cross. The fear of roaring enemy gunfire was not the only reason for the retreat of Wan Shun's unit from Beimen. They mistook the small unit returning from its raiding mission for an enemy reinforcement and were afraid that they might be attacked from front and behind.

Wan Shun's disarrayed attacking formation badly affected Li Hong-bin's unit on his flank, and the latter broke up. Jon Kwang's belated report of his failure to perform the raiding mission had such a

destructive effect on combat as a whole.

The confused battle situation had not calmed down, when the day was already breaking. The situation was becoming more and more unfavourable as the minutes passed. Li Hong-bin came running to me.

“General,” he said, “it seems hopeless. If we waste any more time, we will be totally destroyed.”

He implied an immediate general retreat.

“Ah, it’s all over for me!” he cried, looking up helplessly at the grey of the morning sky.

I gripped him by the shoulder and shouted at him, “Detachment commander, don’t be discouraged too much. We must brace up in a situation like this and turn the misfortune into a blessing. Do you recall the saying that woe lurks in good luck, and blessing lurks in misfortune?”

I did not say this because I had any bright idea to turn the misfortune into a blessing. I was merely reaffirming my decision to take the battle initiative by employing luring tactics as the anti-Japanese units had begun retreating.

Luring the enemy out of a walled town into a valley in an unfavourable situation to encircle it and thereby destroy it constituted a tactical principle of guerrilla warfare. I had this alternative in mind when planning the battle. However, this kind of tactics could only be effective when applied at night.

We were poised between two choices: withdraw from the engagement before daylight or launch a frontal charge, unafraid of death.

Even after deciding to employ luring tactics, I hesitated about ordering a retreat for fear of possible casualties, when a miracle happened. A thick fog suddenly covered the town and the surrounding area and made it impossible to see an inch ahead.

I ordered all the unit commanders to gather the scattered soldiers and withdraw onto the eastern hill and the ridge of Xiaomalugou.

The enemy pursued in haste our retreating forces.

When we started climbing the eastern hill, I heard a gunshot from

the col under the hill. I halted with apprehension, for I remembered I had left seven or eight women soldiers in the col to let them prepare the morning meal after the battle. The enemy believed our main force had retreated to that hill and seemed to be attempting to forestall us, by occupying the col and then striking my C.P. and the main force from both sides.

The rifle crackings at the col grew louder. Evidently the women soldiers were exchanging heavy fire with a large enemy force.

I sent out my orderly to ascertain what was happening at the col. The orderly returned with the answer that Comrades Kim Hwak Sil and Kim Jong Suk were determined to hold out at any cost to ensure the security of Headquarters. I should say that my C.P. was saved by the heroic efforts of the women soldiers, who checked the enemy at the col that day. If they had failed to contain the enemy, we would have been unable to climb the hill to forestall the enemy. The women and fourth company of the 7<sup>th</sup> regiment defended the eastern hill, braving death.

While fierce fighting took place for the col, the main force of the 7<sup>th</sup> regiment occupied the heights, south of the eastern hill and lay waiting in ambush in a long line. The anti-Japanese units also secured the opposite ridge with the valley in between. Only then did the company, which had been covering the retreat of the main force, withdraw through the foggy valley, luring the enemy. The company also reached the shoulder of the hill and lay in ambush.

Takahashi's unit which had been notorious for beheading fell into a trap, which provided no escape. The outcome of the battle was now as good as decided.

The crackings of fire engagement between our soldiers on the hill and the enemy down in the valley reverberated for some time. Takahashi's men bravely attacked in waves as Wan Shun had said, but each of the attacking waves was repulsed, causing many deaths. Realizing that their charges had no effect, the enemy ceased fire and lay flat at the foot of the hill awaiting the arrival of reinforcements.

I ordered a counterattack.

At the melodious bugle signal, my men dashed at the enemy,

mowing them down. Kim Myong Ju, a squad leader of the 7<sup>th</sup> regiment, who was nicknamed “Yanji Prison,” led the men in hand-to-hand combat.

Kim Myong Ju had been arrested in the May 30 revolt and imprisoned in Yanji prison. He had tried to escape with other members of the underground organization in the prison on six occasions in five years. He had killed the chief warder with an ax and succeeded in the last attempt. He earned this nickname from his comrades-in-arms in honour of the success.

He had another nickname: *Chilsongja*, which meant a pistol loaded with seven cartridges at a time. He had distinguished himself in seven big battles before he was wounded. His comrades coined the nickname to remember the events. He was a lion of our unit, who did not fear death.

Ryo Yong Jun, a company commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> regiment, who had given Kim Myong Ju self-sacrificing assistance in the struggle to escape from Yanji prison, fought no less courageously than *Chilsongja*. They became bosom friends in the struggle.

Kim Hwak Sil, nicknamed “Woman General” of the guerrilla army, shot her machine-gun with both eyes wide open all the time. When asked why she did not close one eye, she answered that she wanted to look squarely at the ugly faces of the Japanese. She mowed down the screaming enemy with her machine-gun. She also joined in the bayonet charge that day.

The battle of Fusong county town also produced an anecdote about Kim Jong Suk who, with a Mauser in each of her hands, killed more than a dozen enemy soldiers by firing shots as if shooting a machine-gun.

Wan Shun’s regimental commander, who had been threatened with a Mauser because of opium, stood on a rock, commanding his unit in the rain of enemy fire. All the anti-Japanese units fully displayed their real strength that day.

Takahashi’s “crack unit” was totally destroyed in the valley. The tragic event was reported to the Kwantung Army headquarters on the

morning of the same day. As I learned later from reading the *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Joson Ilbo*, enemy bombers with full loads of ammunition took off from the airfield in Xinjing on a mission to support the troops in Fusong, and enemy reinforcements left Tonghua, Huanren and Sipingjie in great haste. The garrison force in Junggangjin was also sent to Fusong on an emergency mission.

Takahashi had probably sent a very exaggerated report to Kwantung Army headquarters, just as battalion commander Wen at Luozigou had done. Otherwise, why would they have sent such large reinforcements to Fusong and make such a great commotion? Enemy forces also surged from Linjiang, Changbai, Mengjiang and other neighbouring counties towards Fusong to rescue Takahashi. But even these frantic efforts made at great speed were unable to rescue Takahashi from the trap. When some of these reinforcements arrived at Fusong on the afternoon of August 17<sup>th</sup>, the outcome of the battle had already been decided.

As we withdrew deep into the forest after the search of the battlefield, the enemy bombers from Xinjing blindly dropped bombs over the gun emplacement on the eastern hill, which had been destroyed at our hands, and over the people's houses around the town.

"Commander Kim, weren't these aircraft caught by your hypnotism?" Wan Shun said, looking up gloatingly at the madly diving bombers.

That single comment was enough to convince me that the aim of the battle had been achieved to my satisfaction.

In front of Wan Shun all the hundreds of his men, with full loads of booty on their backs, marched triumphantly, led by the regimental commander. Who would believe that these light-gaited, bright-faced men had once failed to keep the assembly hour and had thrown the operation into chaos for lack of opium? Sounds of laughter rose continually from their marching column.

"If we continue fighting in this manner, these men may give up smoking opiate," I said to Wan Shun confidently, pointing at the men. "Won't you forgive the regimental commander, please?"

At these words Wan Shun's eyes became moist.

"Thank you, Commander Kim. That was what I should have asked you. Your advice has forgiven us all, I believe. Now I think my men can do their bit. I will remain loyal to the united front with you, Commander Kim, like Wu Yi-cheng until the last moment of my life."

The battle of Fusong county town, as in Dongning county town and Luozigou was doubtlessly a momentous event, which paved the way to transforming the ideology of the officers and men of the anti-Japanese units. They realized the taste of a united front in this battle. Practice will always give people more tangible and stronger belief than a theory. The validity of our idea and theory of a united front with the anti-Japanese units was proved again in the battle of Fusong county town.

This battle taught us many serious tactical lessons. I had fought many battles, but had never experienced such a changeable situation. A battle situation usually changes with the movement of the enemy. However, in the battle of Fusong county town an abnormal situation occurred because of our own carelessness, and resulted in temporary confusion.

When an unexpected change occurs in a battle and an obstacle results, owing to the change, the commander must cope with the situation by adopting flexible measures with an iron will, audacity and sober judgement and break through the difficulty with composure. I think this is an inevitable requirement for the battle against the enemy, to safeguard state interests and in the efforts to harness nature and transform society. To meet the changing situation skilfully and make a prompt decision in accordance with the occasion are the major qualities, which all commanding officers must possess.

I consider the results of the battle of Fusong county town to be very satisfactory. To be frank, we attached greater importance to the political impact of the victory than to the military and technical significance.

It was politically significant because we strengthened the common front with the anti-Japanese units and brought the northwestern area of Mt. Paektu definitely under our control. The number of destroyed enemy troops and the amount of booty are dim in my memory. But I do not regret it in the least.

### 3. Premiere of *The Sea of Blood*

Considerable studies have been devoted to the literature and arts created during the revolution against the Japanese. Most of the original pieces have been discovered and work on adapting them to modern aesthetic tastes has on the whole been finished. The literature and arts, which were created in the flames of war against the Japanese, now constitute our Party's tradition of literature and arts. These treasures hold a special place in the history of our literature and arts.

I do not plan to deal with the theory of anti-Japanese revolutionary literature and arts as professionals do. I merely want to talk about the performance of our unit at Manjiang in order to help people understand the whole picture of literature and arts during the anti-Japanese revolution.

I was fully aware that creating a complete piece of art required no less difficult and complex mental efforts than an attack on a walled town. But we spared no time and efforts on artistic activities and did not hesitate to do anything, if it helped these activities.

If our guerrilla army had contained a writer or artist, it would have been unnecessary for me to rack my own brains for literary creation and production. Unfortunately, however, none of our unit had been a professional writer or artist.

Naturally, some men of literature, encouraged by the battle results of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army and our high reputation, attempted to join the army.

If they had succeeded in joining the army, the Korean People's Revolutionary Army could have had a staff of historians to keep records of its activities, as well as a staff of talented editors, writers and artists to publish army publications and produce works of art for effective information and motivation.

However, there was not even a trained historian. Consequently historical records were kept by non-professionals. Ri Tong Baek and Rim Chun Chu did most of this work. They tried to compile as much material as possible, but most of them were lost or buried by overlapping events of history.

Our scholars set about studying the history of the anti-Japanese revolution after liberation, virtually without any written materials. Most historical materials were compiled on the basis of reminiscences by veterans of the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle. Reference was made to available enemy documents, but some of them were distorted, exaggerated or understated. This caused no small difficulty in the compilation of a systematic and authentic description of the history. To make matters worse, the counterrevolutionary factionalists, who occupied important posts of the information sector, hindered this work or were indifferent so that a full-scale collection of historical materials about the anti-Japanese revolution only started towards the end of the 1950s.

These particular circumstances should be considered responsible for minor discrepancies in the dates and places of events in different books dealing with the history of the anti-Japanese revolution.

The veterans of the anti-Japanese revolution fought to make history, rather than leave their names in history. When we fought in the mountains, we broke through all difficulties, without caring if we were remembered or not by coming generations. If we had taken up arms to leave our names in history, we would have been unable to achieve a great historical success, now known as the history of the anti-Japanese revolution by the present generation.

As we had to fight guerrilla warfare, moving constantly from place to place to counter the encircling and pursuing enemy, we were in no position to keep safely even a single sheet of secret papers. We used to destroy even a slip of information from the enemy-held area for the sake of security, as soon as we read it. Documents and photographs considered to be of historical value were packed and sent to the Comintern.

In 1939, for instance, we sent several knapsacks of documents to the Comintern. However, they did not reach the addressee. Much of the information lost at that time appeared in police documents of the Japanese imperialists and publications. This is no doubt why the messengers were killed by the enemy on their way. If we ever brought anything with us when we returned home in triumph, it was not a historical record or a document about the organizations, but rather a pocketbook, which contained revolutionary songs or a memo of our comrades' names and other personal data.

The absence of materials was the greatest difficulty for our scholars in their studies of the history of the anti-Japanese revolution.

Lackeys of imperialism, hack writers and scholars on the bourgeois pay-roll, ignorant of the special circumstances and complexities of our revolution, try in every possible way, by garbling some figures and facts from a few sheets of papers, to belittle the history of the anti-Japanese revolution, a history made at the cost of the lives and blood by the sons and daughters of Korea, who were unflinchingly loyal to their motherland and the revolutionary cause.

It is not surprising or novel that people who reject our ideas and social system hurl all sorts of abuse to belittle the revolutionary history of our Party. History cannot be tarred with a brush, burnt up or slashed away with a sword. Whatever they say, our history will remain as it is.

I think it was immediately after the meeting at Donggang that we conceived the idea of *The Sea of Blood* and began working on the script. Our motive for creating this drama came, I should say, mainly from the *Song of "Punitive" Operation in Jiandao*.

I learnt the song in my childhood from my father. My father used to tell me and my friends about the "punitive" actions in Jiandao. When I went to eastern Manchuria in command of the guerrilla army organized in Antu, I discovered that the local people suffered an indescribable tragedy, owing to the "punitive" operations of the Japanese army and police. Jiandao was literally a sea of blood; dozens and even hundreds of people were massacred a day by the swords and bayonets of the "punitive" troops.

Whenever I saw a sea of blood I was reminded of the *Song of "Punitive" Operation in Jiandao*, and whenever I remembered the song, I was enraged at the sufferings of our nation.

To my surprise, however, the overwhelming majority of the Koreans living in Jiandao continued their courageous resistance, armed with rifles and clubs, rather than yielding to their tragic fate. This all-out resistance even involved the women, who had been bound by three bonds and five moral rules and three principles of obedience preached by Confucianism, and their children, who used to grumble over their food on their mothers' laps. I was deeply moved by them.

The women's ability to leave the bounds of their homes and plunge into a movement for a social change represented a revolution. I felt boundless respect and affection for the heroes and heroines of the revolution. As I provided support to them and sympathized with them, the images of a woman and her children, who followed in the footsteps of their fallen revolutionary husband and father formed and developed in my mind.

I sincerely wanted to produce a work dealing with the principal character of such a woman.

During our stay in Fusong for many days, we staged artistic performances at many places to educate the people. After each battle we gave a performance there and then or, if the situation did not permit it, made a speech to stir up the people before the unit's withdrawal. The audience warmly applauded the simple sketches performed by the men of the revolutionary army. Once my comrades sang the *Song of "Punitive" Operation in Jiandao* at an entertainment after the battle. All the audience, men and women, young and old, cursed the Japanese imperialists and resolved in tears to fight the Japanese. Seeing how all people were moved to tears by the song at the entertainment, something I had not expected, I could not repress an impulse to stage a real dramatic performance to enlighten the people more zealously. But the pressure of time did not permit my dream to come true.

When the meeting at Donggang was over, however, Ri Tong Baek unexpectedly kindled my dormant desire. He obtained a newly

published literary magazine at a village and showed it to me. The magazine carried a story dealing with the wife of a champion of a social movement serving a prison term, a woman who was married to another man, leaving her child in the care of others after the imprisonment of her former husband.

I asked Ri Tong Baek how he liked the story.

“It makes me sad,” he answered with a sad smile on his lips. “To think that life can be like that. But can I help it?”

“Then, do you mean to say that the story is true?”

“It contains some of the truth. I am sorry to say, but the wife of my old acquaintance, a champion of a social movement, fell in love with a loafer and deserted her husband and child.”

“How can we say that such a rare accident represents the truth? Most of the women I have seen in Korea and Manchuria were loyal to their husbands and children and to their neighbours and country. When their husbands were gaoled, they themselves took up the cause of their husbands and devoted all their energies to the revolution, carrying bombs and bundles of leaflets with them! When their husbands fell in revolutionary battle, they dressed themselves in army uniform and took up arms to destroy the enemy by standing in the ranks, where their husbands had stood! When their children went hungry, they experienced all manner of hardships to feed their kids, even if they had to beg! That is what Korean women are.

“What if one overlooks this true character of theirs and profanes the wife of a revolutionary, just as Ri Kwang Su did? One may become the target of a barrage of women’s washing clubs, just as Ri Kwang Su was showered with beer bottles in the streets of Seoul, when he published a ‘theory of national reform.’ Our mothers’ or sisters’ washing clubs are not only used when they seize weapons from the enemy. This is the truth. What do you think, Mr. Ri?”

Ri Tong Baek cast a significant glance at me, abruptly changed his attitude and agreed, saying, “You are right. That is the truth.”

I knew that the basic aim of literature was to describe the truth. Only when it represents the truth can literature lead the reader to a

beautiful and noble world. The genuine mission of art and literature is to reflect the truth and guide the masses to a beautiful and noble world.

That day we talked for a long time about fine women fighters, women workers, whom we knew and could put forward as exemplary in terms of morality and chastity.

“General, could you produce a drama dealing with the fate of a woman revolutionary?” he asked me abruptly at the close of the talk.

“How did the idea of dramatic production come to you? Aren’t you looking back upon the dramatic activities, you conducted at a school in Jiandao where you taught?”

“I thought we should teach a lesson to the people, who write a cheap novel like this,” he said, fingering the magazine.

“The idea of describing a woman revolutionary is good,” I agreed. “But you need a subject matter for the drama, don’t you? Tell me if you have one in mind.”

“It is about the genuine woman of Korea. I mean that we should show the true character of Korean women. The sufferings of the Korean nation inevitably involved even women in the revolutionary struggle, as struggle is the only means of survival. This is what I have in mind. What do you think, General?”

I was surprised by his words. The subject was similar to what I had been seeking in Jiandao, when designing a play about a woman.

“Since you have the subject, why don’t you write it yourself?” I said.

“I am a critic, not a creative man,” he remarked in surprise. “You will write it, General. If you do, I will direct its staging.”

I did not provide a definite reply. However, the image of a simple woman I had conceived, a woman who recovers from her grief over the loss of her husband and child in a sea of blood to take up the path of struggle, had grown clearer and clearer in my mind, since I received Ri’s request. The fascinating image of the heroine excited me. I began writing. By the time my unit had arrived at Manjiang, just over half my work on the script had been done.

Dramatic creation was not a totally new experience to me. We had

performed plays in Fusong and particularly in Jilin and Wujiazi. However, since I started the armed struggle, we had not staged many plays. During the first half of the 1930s, some of us were enthusiastic about dramatic activity in the guerrilla base, but we were not as active as we had been in our days in Jilin. Plays required so much time and effort that even those keen on art in the guerrilla zone were unable to devote much effort to this venture.

Why did we undertake the task of dramatic creation and make such painstaking efforts on the difficult march down to Mt. Paektu?

We were greatly encouraged by the extremely attractive power and effectiveness of dramatic art to inspire the masses with a revolutionary consciousness. In those days hardly any artistic genre could grip the hearts of the masses as strongly as a drama did. Until silent motion picture became talkies, and the latter was popularized throughout the world, no form of art was drama's equal in educative influence.

I had been one of the many drama fans of my classmates in my Changdok School days. Whenever a renowned travelling dramatic company came to play in Pyongyang, I went to the town with Kang Yun Bom to see the performance.

Drama is a popular art suited to the masses. Anyone in the audience can comment, "Good!" "Bad!" or "Acceptable!" on the spot.

The 1920s and 1930s were a period of dramatic efflorescence, a dramatic heyday. By the time I had entered Changdok School, the decadent drama had given way to a new dramatic school, which won the audience's admiration.

Progressive writers and artists devoted their energies to the dramatic movement of the proletariat. They formed drama troupes and gave performances for workers and peasants, by travelling from place to place, such troupes frequented Pyongyang.

Hwang Chol, Sim Yong and their colleagues, renowned in the dramatic circle of our country after liberation, had committed themselves to the dramatic movement since the 1920s and 1930s.

In those days drama was fashionable. Even a rural school, with an enrollment of about 50 pupils, would advertise dramatic performances

of its own production. Stimulated by the trend of the times, we were also involved in the dramatic movement in the initial period of our revolutionary activities.

Writing the script of *The Sea of Blood* was a process of collective wisdom. My comrades gave me valuable advice on the composition of the play and also single details and a few words of dialogue.

After the joint meeting at Donggang with commanding officers of the anti-Japanese units to review the victorious battle of Fusong county town, I moved to Manjiang west of Mt. Paektu in command of the main force.

Manjiang is a village on a wide plateau immediately below Mt. Paektu. It is located on the southern tip of Fusong County. Changbai is located to the south across Duogu Pass, and Linjiang is located to the southwest beyond Lao Pass.

In 1936 Manjiang was a small sprawling village of about 80 houses. This slash-and-burners' village was one of the few Korean settlements in the Fusong area, such as Nandianzi, Yangdicun, Wanlihe, Dujidong, etc. Unlike Antu, not many Koreans lived in Fusong.

Manjiang was an out-of-the-way mountain village far from the county town. Sparsely populated and unfrequented by travellers, the place seemed secluded from the other part of the human world. When there were some travellers, they were peddlers selling combs, dye or salt. Even social figures in Fusong seldom visited Manjiang. I suppose the area controller Choe Jin Yong had been to the place a few times, and Yon Pyong Jun, his successor, five or six times.

Incidentally I would like to say a few words about Yon Pyong Jun. He was a unit commander in Hong Pom Do's Independence Army. After the Independence Army moved to Maritime Province, he came to Fusong for some unknown reason and assumed the office of area controller, a local administrative officer of the Jongui-bu, and worked for some time, enjoying a high reputation among the people.

He subsequently retired from the office and practised acupuncture at Dapuchaihe, a village located on a highland between Antu and Dunhua. Once Kim San Ho, who had been to the village, spoke very

highly of his medical skills and advised me to be treated by him. I went to the doctor and he felt my pulse, before saying that I was clearly exhausted. He asked if I could obtain an antler or wild *insam* (ginseng). He said that he would write a prescription for me, if I could get them. I took medicine according to his prescription and managed to recover. One year, long after my return to the homeland after liberation, an official suffered from infirmity. Recollecting the prescription I advised the official to apply the remedy. A few months later, he told me that the remedy was surprisingly effective. I reminded him that the prescription was not my own, but one obtained from a doctor, Yon Pyong Jun, in Manchuria many decades earlier.

The doctor was familiar with Manjiang for some reason I didn't know.

Manjiang was noted for potatoes, a special product of the place. Some of the potatoes were as large as a baby's pillow like those produced from Naitoushan. The River Manjiang teemed with *yolmugo* (*Brachymystax lenok*).

Villagers of Manjiang used containers and tableware, made by gouging out wood or warping birch bark. Even their spoons and jars for keeping bean paste and *kimchi* were made of wood.

When our marching column arrived at the spot, where two birch trees stood at the outskirts to the village, as if they were a natural gate, the village head Ho Rak Yo and other villagers, who had somehow known that we were coming, were waiting for us, with wooden jars and wooden vessels, filled with cool home-made alcoholic drinks. The village head said that news of the battle of Fusong county town had been brought by a peasant, who had been to the town to buy salt, and that since then he had begun to watch the enemy's movement. On the occasions when he had seen Japanese aircraft flying over Manjiang, he had believed that the revolutionary army was coming to his village.

"I am afraid you will be punished for welcoming us openly like this," I said to the village head, after gulping down a wooden cup of undistilled home-made liquor.

"Don't worry. Since the revolutionary army was over here in

spring, the policemen in Manjiang even grovel before us. Moreover, on hearing of Commander Wang's death and the defeat of the Japanese in county town, they tremble with fear."

"Soldiers of the revolutionary army, will you dance this time, too?" A peasant asked in a loud voice from the bridge over the River Manjiang at that moment.

During an art performance at Manjiang in the spring, several guerrillas from the Hunchun unit had mounted the stage and danced a Russian dance. The guerrillas from Hunchun, a town in the area bordering the Soviet Union, were very good at imitating Russian songs and dances. Seeing the dance, the villagers had become wide-eyed and exclaimed, "What a novel dance! To dance stamping their feet like that! We knew that a dance could be performed by waving arms and heaving shoulders. But that dance was spectacular."

"Yes, yes, not only a dance, but a far more splendid show," Ri Tong Baek replied. He meant a dramatic performance.

My Headquarters was billeted on the village head. His house had been closely associated with my father. When saved by Kong Yong from the hands of mounted bandits ten years earlier, my father had stayed first in that house, and had then been escorted to Fusong by Kong Yong and the village head.

In this house I resumed my work on the script of *The Sea of Blood*. As Jon Kuk Jin was dead and Kim Yong Guk, who edited the People's Revolutionary Army paper *Sogwang* and contributed a few stories of his own composition to it in later days, had not yet joined the army, I also had to work on the script on my own at Manjiang.

To help me out, Ri Tong Baek collected various kinds of newspapers, magazines and pamphlets, which had been published in the homeland.

These publications provided me with detailed information on political events, social and economic situations and developments in the literary and art circles in the homeland.

The general trend of progressive literature and art movement in its form and content in those days was patriotic in the sense that it tried to

protect what was national from the Japanese imperialist policy of obliterating national culture, and develop it.

The progressive literature of our country during Japanese imperialist rule played a leading role in instilling patriotic spirit and the idea of independence in the people, and indicating the direction of the development of drama, cinema, music, fine arts, dance and all other forms of art, as well as their contents.

The literature movement of progressive writers, known as literature of a new trend, gave birth to the KAPF (Korea Artista Proleta Federacio) in 1925. Since the birth of the KAPF, the progressive literature of Korea had contributed to the development of proletarian art and literature, which represented and championed the interests of the working class, peasantry and other working people. By the efforts of Ri Ki Yong, Han Sol Ya, Song Yong, Pak Se Yong, Jo Myong Hui and other celebrated writers of the KAPF, *My Home Town*, *Twilight*, *Refuse Any Interview!*, *A Mountain Swallow*, *The River Raktong* and many other excellent works were produced and became popular among the people.

Some writers produced excellent works, which served the people as their mental pabulum and guide, even if they were forced to eke out their livelihood by selling red-bean porridge in Jongno Street, Seoul. Each of the works resembled an explosive, which threatened the vicious colonial rule of the Japanese imperialists.

The voice of KAPF writers was always shadowed by the Japanese army and police, as well as their detectives, who were bent on thought repression. The louder their voices grew, the more repressive the enemy became. Two round-ups put a tragic end to the existence of the KAPF in 1935, which marked the tenth anniversary of its foundation.

Even when faced by two alternatives—to accept “national literature” or converted literature forced upon them by the Japanese imperialists or break their pens and give up writing—most of KAPF writers preserved their conscience as progressive men of letters. Ri Ki Yong went to the deep mountain of Inner Kumgang and took up slash-and-burn farming, remaining an honest intellectual and ardently

patriotic writer. Han Sol Ya and Song Yong also upheld their honour, although they had to lead a hand-to-mouth existence.

The Japanese imperialists managed to disband the KAPF, but failed to break the unflagging spirit of resistance of Korean literature and its lifeblood, which germinated and thrived on the soil of patriotism.

As KAPF writers were dragged into prison or fled into mountains, the intellectuals in the ranks of the anti-Japanese revolution, writers in the northern border area and Korean writers in exile in the Red area of China proper and the socialist Soviet Union created a new militant revolutionary literature, which made an active contribution to the Korean communist movement and the cause of national liberation.

These writers held in high repute the anti-Japanese revolutionaries, who were fighting ceaseless bloody battles on the rugged Paektu mountains and in the wilderness of Manchuria for many years as the heroes of the nation, praised and loved them and continually sympathized with them.

Kang Kyong Ae, a woman novelist, who gained renown later for her authorship of the *Human Question*, wrote a novel, *Salt*, in Longjing. In this work she described the Jiandao people assisting the revolutionary army.

The poets, Ri Chan and Kim Ram In, carried on their creative activities in the border area: and their efforts attracted our attention. When we were in west Jiandao, Ri Chan worked in Samsu and Hyesanjin on the other side of the River Amnok. In those days he wrote the *Fort at a Snowing Night*, an excellent lyric expressing his boundless adoration for the Korean People's Revolutionary Army.

In November of the year when we founded the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland at Donggang, Kim Ram In, who was working in Junggangjin on the opposite riverside of Linjiang, founded *Development of Poetry*, a literary coterie magazine, whose front cover was inscribed with a red flag. He composed and published many revolutionary poems, which praised the anti-Japanese armed struggle and advocated Korea's independence. He secretly printed 2 000 copies of the Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of

the Fatherland in his printing shop and sent them to us.

Some writers, encouraged by the battle results of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, attempted to join the army. Novelist Kim Sa Ryang, determined to join the army, travelled about the wilderness of Manchuria, but failed to find our unit. He went to Yanan, where he wrote a long travelogue, *A Jade Covers Thousands of Miles*.

It is not surprising that *Mt. Paektu, Thunder, Korea Fights, Steel-like Youth Unit* and other successful works were produced in our literary circles during the construction of a new country and the great war against the United States by writers, who had been affiliated with revolutionary organizations or desired to join the army before liberation.

We owe our ability to quickly develop a new culture, which catered to the tastes of the Korean people in a short period after liberation, to those writers who, although not directly in the armed ranks, wielded their pens in the spirit of armed soldiers, and thereby made an active contribution to the enlightenment of the nation.

Patriotic artists and progressive figures in our country also pioneered the domain of film art, despite all hardships, determined to serve the people through film production, resolved not to lag behind Japan and other developed countries, and also aimed to demonstrate to the world our ability to stand on our own feet in the cinema as well. Ra Un Gyu and other conscientious artists produced *Arirang* and other films rich in national tastes and demonstrated their real fibre.

The 1920s and 1930s witnessed a determined struggle in the field of literature and arts to preserve the national spirit and develop national products, in defiance of the murky stream of Japanese ways and fashion.

During this period Choe Sung Hui succeeded in her attempts to modernize the Korean dance. She conducted a close study of the folk dance, Buddhist dance, sorceress dance, court dance, *kisaeng* dance and so on, and selected gracious dance movements of strong national mood. In this way she helped lay the foundations for the development of modern Korean dance.

Previously, our national dance had failed to reach the level of stage

presentation. Music pieces, vocal, instrumental and narrative works, but not dances, had enjoyed their place on stage. The refinement of dance movements by Choe Sung Hui and resultant choreographic productions, which catered to modern tastes, altered the situation. Dances claimed a legitimate place in stage presentation, along with their sister arts.

Choe Sung Hui's dances were warmly acclaimed at home and also in France, Germany and other civilized countries.

During our advance on west Jiandao, the news of a shocking event, referred to as obliteration of the flag of the Rising Sun, reached the foot-hills of Mt. Paektu from the homeland.

The incident was triggered off, when *Dong-A Ilbo* erased the Japanese national flag from the breast of Son Ki Jong, when carrying an article and photograph of the marathon first prize winner in the Summer Olympic Games in Berlin in August 1936.

The infuriated government-general authorities outlawed the newspaper and arrested the persons involved in the incident. On hearing the news, we gave a public lecture about Son Ki Jong's success in the Olympic Games and the incident of the Japanese flag obliteration. All the men of our unit, who heard the lecture, expressed warm support and solidarity with the newspaper's editorial staff, which had adopted a patriotic stand and taken courageous action.

When I finished the script of *The Sea of Blood*, I showed it to old man "Tobacco Pipe." He read it through and said that it was acceptable, and then went out, waving the manuscript.

Some episodic reminiscences about the dramatic performances at Manjiang and similar accounts of people on an expedition to the place have already been published. Some inaccuracies were revealed due to memory lapses while other facts were totally forgotten. It is especially regrettable that nothing has been mentioned about Ri Tong Back's efforts.

The old man, who had volunteered to act as stage director, first encountered difficulties in casting. Nobody wanted to play the part of the "commander of the punitive force." After repeated discussions, the

part was imposed on the open-hearted company commander Ri Tong Hak. The role of Ul Nam's mother was assigned to Jang Chol Gu and then transferred to Kim Hwak Sil. Kap Sun's part was given to Kim Hye Sun. The selection of the part of Ul Nam, Kap Sun's brother, troubled the old man no less than the choice of the "punitive force commander." Nobody in our unit was suitable for the part of the boy aged ten. So we used a boy from the village of Manjiang for the part.

The old man also had a lot of trouble directing. He worried most of all about directing the boy, who was to play Ul Nam's part. However, the mountain boy was the quickest to understand the director's intentions.

Instead, the director was annoyed by the adults' poor acting. Nearly all the actors and actresses looked awkward, as they did not know how to pose on stage.

Once on stage, even Kim Hye Sun, who was very sensible and responsive, became stiff about her eyes and spoke strangely. In one scene where she was meant to weep, she simply shut her mouth. The director did everything he could to make her cry by coaxing her, encouraging her, even flying off the handle, but all in vain.

No one knew why she acted so crudely despite all the training by the director. Born into a poor family she had enjoyed no access to schooling. She had learned to write and sing by hearing and watching others beyond the school fences.

I reminded her of her experiences in the homeland and Jiandao and told her that the play was about the lives of people like her. I said, "Just imagine that Ul Nam, who was shot by the Japanese, is your brother. The brother, who was calling you 'sister, sister' a short while ago, is now lying dead. Why shouldn't his sister moan over his tragic death?"

Her acting suddenly improved.

I gave Ri Tong Hak a good dressing down, as he had declared to the director that he would rather go and take a few "punitive force commanders" prisoner than foul his mouth by imitating such scoundrels. I instructed him that skilful acting was his combat mission, and insisted that he had no right to complain about the part again.

The villagers were surprised to see that we guerrillas, who had arrived with nothing other than rifles and knapsacks on our shoulders, had improvised a stage to give a dramatic performance, which provided them with a new experience.

As their life experience unfolded on stage, the audience was drawn, with bated breath, into the world of drama and finally wept with Kap Sun and cried with the mother. An old man forgot that he was watching a play and jumped onto the stage, striking the forehead of Ri Tong Hak with his long smoking pipe, who was playing the part of the Japanese “punitive force commander,” who had shot dead Ui Nam.

The villagers, who saw the premiere of *The Sea of Blood*, could not sleep all night. The simple people of a mountain village sat up by their oil lamps, talking about their impressions of the play. Loud voices and the laughter of many people from some houses could be heard.

I took a long walk in night dew up and down the village. The murmur, laughter and breathing of the village, which was rejoicing over the experience of the show, kept me from going to bed.

I marvelled at the great effect of art. From today’s point of view, the play at Manjiang was too simple to be worthy of the name. To my surprise, however, the audience cried, laughed, tore at their breasts, clapped and stamped their feet.

Walking along the lane of Manjiang, I wondered what the people would be doing now if we had not given the performance. As the village head said, they would have lulled themselves to sleep or would have been dreaming in darkness, after putting out their lights since early evening. However, their lights were still burning. We brought light to the village so to speak. Could we create such great excitement in their minds, if we brought them a hundred sacks of rice?

The play we performed at Manjiang enlightened the ignorant mountain people, young and old, educated them to become active participants in the anti-Japanese revolution and its supporters. Many young villagers mounted the stage and volunteered to join the army. Manjiang became a large source of our recruits, as well as a reliable supply base.

The strong impression left by the play on the villagers can be judged by the mere fact that they recalled the event by naming the venue of the performance and the characters, vividly relating the details of the story and even some dialogues to the members of an expedition to the old revolutionary battlefield, who were visiting the village more than 20 years after the event.

The ideas and emotions of the revolutionary army flowed, like the stream of the Manjiang, into the brains, hearts and lungs of the people through the performance of *The Sea of Blood*.

I can say, in short, that the art of the period of the anti-Japanese revolution acted as a light, which dispelled darkness as well as drum beats, rousing people to fight. We called our art activity a “drum gun,” the name is justifiable from any angle.

I believe that modern arts have exactly the same mission. The basic mission of today’s arts is to accord people true thoughts, true morality and the true culture needed for their independent, worthwhile lives.

Our men were talented. I should say, in the final analysis, that art is ennobling, but is on no account a mysterious undertaking. The people not only enjoy art, they also create it in the true sense of the word.

The performance of *The Sea of Blood* made a great contribution, by giving the guerrillas better ideological, cultural and emotional training.

Recollecting art activity at Manjiang in detail, I said to the writers, who were on a visit to my home immediately after liberation, “When we fought in the mountain, we were very sorry we had no professional writers and artists by our side. We ourselves had to compose music, write scripts, and direct plays. But now you are the masters. I hope you will produce good works and encourage the people, who have turned out to build a new Korea.”

Through the literature and arts of the period of the anti-Japanese revolution we realized that an excellent poem, play or story could stir up thousands of hearts and that a revolutionary song could pierce the enemy’s heart which was beyond the reach of a bayonet.

I can say that awakening the people to revolutionary awareness is a process, where you win their sympathy for revolutionary ideas and

move them. The literature and arts are one of the most effective means of moving them.

I once said to Odaka Yoshiko (Li Xiang-lan), a renowned Japanese vocalist and ex-member of the House of Councillors, that there were songs and dances in life. There should be life where there are people, and there should be arts where there is life. How can a world without art be called a human world, and how can life without art be called human life?

Consequently I always tell people that they should love literature and arts, and that all the nation should know how to enjoy them and create them.

We have built a world-famous kingdom of art, where everyone dances and sings. This constituted the earnest desire and dream we cherished when we performed *The Sea of Blood* on an improvised stage in the light of burning pine-knots and kerosene lamps at Manjiang.

We have now built theatres, cinemas and houses of culture capable of accommodating thousands of people in all parts of the country. You can find an art university in each province. I hope that our younger generation will sing all the songs their previous generation could not sing and that they will continue to create arts, fragrant with the spirit of Mt. Paektu.

We now call the play *Phibada* in our mother tongue; the original name was *Hyoalhae*. Apparently some of the audience and people who took part in the performance continued to stage the play in different places under the title “Hyoalhaega” or “Hyoalhaejichang.” During this time, the plot and names of the characters underwent a slight change, and in some places episodes were replaced by others, which were more familiar to the local people.

The performance of *The Sea of Blood* was followed by the staging of *The Fate of a Self-Defence Corps Man*, where guerrillas other than those who had taken part in *The Sea of Blood* vied with one another to participate.

After liberation our writers and artists discovered all the works,

which had been performed at Manjiang.

Comrade Kim Jong Il defined the works we created during the anti-Japanese revolution as parent works, as the genesis of our revolutionary drama and revolutionary opera and provided energetic guidance to their adaptation into films, novels, operas and dramas. During this time, revolutionary films, revolutionary novels, the *Sea of Blood*-style revolutionary operas and *Shrine*-style dramas were evolved on the basis of the originals, and an anti-Japanese guerrilla mode of art activity was established.

The premiere of the film version of *The Sea of Blood* reminded me of the kerosene lamps, which hung on the improvised stage and the audience laughing and crying in excitement, sitting on straw mats at Manjiang.

I wish I could see again the unforgettable faces of the people, who warmly acclaimed our success in the performance. During a lapse of more than half a century, the people who were old then must have passed away, but some other people my age and younger individuals may still live at Manjiang. The boy who played Ul Nam's part will now be an old man in his sixties if he is still alive.

## 4. The Women's Company

Koreans once called Ri Kwan Rin, the only woman soldier of the Independence Army, a “red flower in luxuriant green.” But the thriving ranks of the revolutionary force, with the anti-Japanese guerrilla army at its core, included hundreds and even thousands of beautiful red flowers of our nation.

The mothers and daughters of this land, enthused with intense love for their country, dedicated their youth, homes and lives to the sacred war to drive out the Japanese invaders from this land, without yielding to adversity on the path of revolution, despite untold physical stress and mental strain, overtaxing even the strength of the male sex.

Whenever I remember the laudable women fighters, I recollect a women's company, which was formed in spring 1936, around the time when the main division of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army was organized.

The formation of the separate women's company, as well as the division, on our way to Mt. Paektu after the meeting at Nanhutou, was a momentous event, which heralded rapid expansion of the guerrilla force and a fresh upsurge in the anti-Japanese armed struggle as a whole.

The birth of the women's company signified that Korean women, locked up in feudal fetters in back parlours for ages, now stood on the first line of revolutionary battle.

When we talk about female social position nowadays, we say figuratively that women are “one wheel of the revolution.” However, many people rejected this idea during the revolution against the Japanese. It is no exaggeration to say that scarcely anyone believed that women could engage in manual combat a long time shoulder to shoulder with men.

To be quite frank, at first I also considered a female presence on the field as unnatural. The thought of their tender physical constitutions, which in my prejudiced opinion, would be unable to withstand all the hardships of guerrilla warfare, stood uppermost in my mind.

Of course, we were aware that in history some women had amazed the world by the battle exploits they had performed, when destroying aggressors or had given rise to fascinating anecdotes. The exploits of Kye Wol Hyang, a renowned Pyongyang *kisaeng*, who participated in the beheading of Konishi, a commander of Japanese invaders, and of the woman patriot Ron Kae in Jinju were well-known.

The readers of *Imjinrok* will be able to imagine how fierce the battle of Haengju mountain fort was, and the gallant role played by Korean women in that battle. As General Kwon Ryul fought with his back to the wall on the mountain fort in Koyang County, Kyonggi Province, against 30 000 Japanese samurais, who had surrounded the fort, the women of Haengju were busy carrying stones in their skirts to supply them to Korean soldiers, who were slinging stone missiles. The short skirts worn by the women patriots in the battle served as the origin for the apron worn by all Korean housewives, when doing kitchen work or used as a decoration. The apron was named Haengju apron after the fort.

Sol Juk Hwa was also renowned for her accomplishments, dressed in male clothing, when she destroyed the marauders from Kitan during the Koryo dynasty.

There were historical accounts of the distinguished military services rendered by such individual heroines, but hardly any instance of a hand-to-hand combat fought by a purely women's unit.

However, in the guerrilla war we were fighting, women would not only play an auxiliary role as nurses, sewing-unit members or cooks. They would also be combatants. Once they joined the army, they would have to obey the implacable logic of war. The rigours of war would not make any exception for women. The battle situation would require them to do the same as men, to make at times a forced march, fully equipped and heavily loaded, for several days on end, fight, prone

on frozen ground, under heavy artillery fire or plunge into a bayonet charge. They would have to be sent to an enemy-held area for political work or the acquisition of food, or would have to build earthwork in the severe cold. There was no knowing how long they would have to fight, for a few years or decades, eating and sleeping rough in severe winter cold.

Could women endure all these hardships? Would it be right to bring them to such a battlefield, where the threat of death would loom over them at all times? This was a question I felt unable to decide.

Many women comrades, who had been working for the revolution since our days in Jilin, requested that I admit them to the army. Han Yong Ae, for instance, beseeched me to let her fight among the guerrillas. But I left her behind in northern Manchuria when I moved to eastern Manchuria. Some girl members of the Children's Association in Jilin followed me as far as Dunhua, expressing a desire to join the guerrilla army. Some women comrades in central Manchuria wrote to me, asking to be recruited. Although I knew that they were intensely patriotic, I declined their requests.

In those days I thought: It would be unacceptable for women to participate in the armed struggle, which was for men. A woman's place was elsewhere. It would be alright to bring them from their back parlours and let them work for the revolution, but how could I allow them to fight under arms?

As guerrilla units began to be formed in many places, after full preparations were made, women grew more vocal about participation in the armed struggle. Many women comrades, who had been working in underground organizations, came to the guerrilla army without permission and refused to leave for all the advice given by their comrades.

These circumstances obliged us to raise the issue of women's armed service for earnest debate.

Some married men flatly rejected the very idea of recruiting them. They said: "According to our ancestral customs, women have their place at home, and men outside the home. Admittedly, Ri Kwan Rin

was once a soldier of the Independence Army, who swaggered about, wearing a pistol. But she was one out of a thousand. How can ordinary women trek rugged mountains and endure the hardships of guerrilla warfare, which can even be difficult for a man to withstand? It would be foolhardy to take women on the battlefield.” Some comrades even argued against the need to debate the matter.

By contrast, Cha Kwang Su and some other comrades brushed aside these arguments. Cha said, “Surely you accept that a matriarchal system existed for a long time in history, and that according to this system men lived under women’s protection?”

“If a child is caught in a fire, the mother is the first to rush in to rescue her child. What is more, when the country is bleeding, why should women remain onlookers? We should be aware that our sisters themselves want to join the army and that the times call for them to fight in the army.”

The discussion was repeated over and over again, but no decision was reached. We decided to organize the guerrilla army with young men first and then observe further developments, before discussing the matter again.

The deferred argument on women’s participation in the army was resolved, when the news of the women’s struggle to capture enemy weapons in Jiandao reached us. Two peerlessly daring women in Helong County had struck a Japanese policeman with washing clubs and snatched his rifle. The report silenced all those, who had opposed women’s military action. The whole of Jiandao had turned out to obtain weapons.

Kim Su Bok, an eighteen-year-old girl, who had realized the importance of weapons with the help of her organization, racked her brains on how to obtain a weapon. She went with a friend with a laundry basket on her head to the site of a single-log bridge over a stream. Heavy rain had washed off the bridge a few days before. Only piers remained. The two girls pretended to be washing, waiting for a good chance all day. Towards sunset a Japanese policeman appeared and ordered them to carry him on their backs across the stream. Kim Su

Bok walked into the stream with the man on her back, and her friend followed, pretending to help. When they reached mid-stream, she hurled the man into the water, as he was complaining of his feet being wet, and then clubbed him to a pulp. The two girls thus avenged the murder of their parents and joined the anti-Japanese guerrilla army in summer 1933. For this venture Kim Su Bok was nicknamed “washing club.”

Pak Su Hwan also captured a weapon from the enemy by knocking him out with a washing club. She later became the sewing-unit leader of our army’s main force. In one instance a group of women lured policemen to drink wine and seized many weapons.

No certificate provided better proof of the new mental ability and strong will of our women than the weapons they captured. In the northern border of Korea and many parts of Manchuria women joined the army with the weapons they had captured.

What did the radical advance of these women and their profound change signify? What impelled these women to take up heroic armed resistance, who used to tend their kitchen gardens, lamenting over their lot in feudal fetters, which had bound them hundreds of years? This was the terrible plight suffered by the Korean women, where there was no way out other than manual combat.

The women had no other heritage than the chain of bondage and grievances. This was the worst crime committed by Korean feudal society; it had kept all women in the bondage of male supremacy, a state of inhumane existence. Women had been considered no better than house servants, who were destined to produce offspring, cook and serve food, weed crop fields and weave cloth, until their fingers were worn out. Even young widows were compelled to remain widows all their lives. Women were sold off to pay debts.

The Japanese imperialists, who occupied Korea, made the women even more miserable by turning them into instruments and commodities and labelled them as the women of a ruined nation.

The anti-Japanese revolution acted as a tempest, which would sweep off all these misfortunes and irrationalities, a historic event to

lead the women of this country along a revolutionary path. The Korean women began to write their new history on the ground with their blood rather than a pen.

As the number of women soldiers increased, we thought that we should take better care of them. Although under arms, women were women. Even under the difficult circumstances of guerrilla warfare, we had to make sure that they lived like women.

After the appearance of women soldiers in the guerrilla army, we always took special care of them, as we would look after our own sisters. We equipped them with the best rifles, provided them with the snuggest shelters we could afford, and gave them the best choice of booty.

During this time, I felt a need to upgrade their special treatment and form a separate unit for women soldiers in order to establish a single organization for their daily routine and military action. I believed that a separate women's company would inspire them with greater revolutionary pride and enthusiasm, encourage them to display their self-consciousness and combat power to the maximum, and relieve them from life's discomforts. They burned with a unanimous desire to take up arms and take revenge on the enemy by killing at least a few of them, as this enemy had murdered their parents and brothers. At the sewing unit, at the hospital and cooking unit I heard them voice this earnest desire unanimously.

When we were forming a new division in Fusong I came to a firm decision to organize a separate women's company directly under Headquarters.

The hundred plus "Minsaengdan" suspects, who became the backbone of the new division, included Jang Chol Gu, Kim Hwak Sil and many other women soldiers.

On learning that the files of the "Minsaengdan" suspects had been burnt and that all suspects had been absolved, the other suspects hiding in different places came to us. They included many women, such as Ri Kye Sun, Kim Son, Jong Man Gum, etc. Many others came to us individually, like Pak Rok Kum, who brought her beddings on her

head. Many women came in groups, together with small units, which had been operating independently at Dajianchang and Wudaoyangcha and were admitted to the new division.

When we went to the secret camp at Mihunzhen, Kim Chol Ho and Ho Song Suk, members of the sewing unit there, entreated me to transfer them to a combat unit. However much I tried to dissuade them, they would not listen to me. The whole of the sewing unit insisted on following us to fight. I asked them who would make clothes for the soldiers if they were all gone; they replied that there was any number of infirm women who could take their place. As I was to discover, there were so many women comrades at Mihunzhen, that they were more than enough for the work of the sewing unit, hospital and cooking unit. The surplus women had to be assigned to a combat company or more effective measures had to be taken.

I thought of forming a separate women's company on an experimental basis. But a company needed more than the surplus women at Mihunzhen. I confided in Choe Hyon that if the women continued to insist on fighting on the first line, he should try and form a women's platoon.

One day I hinted to Pak Rok Kum, "What about forming a purely women's combat company?"

She welcomed the idea with cheers.

But Kim San Ho and Ri Tong Hak inclined their heads dubiously.

"Can women fight alone?" Kim San Ho remarked. "It seems impossible for them to fight successfully alone hordes of ferocious Japanese, although things might be different, if the company and its platoons were commanded by men. ..."

"If they are commanded by men, how can they be called a women's company or a women's platoon? If they are women's units, they must fight under female command," I said in disagreement.

"I wonder if it is possible."

"Did you become commanding officers by going to a military academy or military university?"

Kim San Ho was speechless; he still seemed dubious. Ri Tong Hak

also shook his head, exclaiming, “A women’s company! A women’s company!...”

Kim Ju Hyon was astonished at our mention of the women’s company. He said that the women’s company would ruin a battle, and asked what would become of the reputation of the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army.

Around April 1936, when we were busy in Manjiang preparing for the formation of a women’s company, a composite unit of men and women came to us. Although a composite unit, it contained only four or five men, with the remainder made up of women, including Kim Chol Ho, Ho Song Suk, Choe Jang Suk and Hwang Sun Hui.

I asked Kim Chol Ho why she had come, abandoning Comrade Choe Hyon, who was ill. She said that Choe Hyon had sent her to me. Choe Hyon, who had recovered by then, had formed a small unit of women by selecting healthy women, as they tenaciously asked him to send them to a combat unit. He had told them to come to me and added that on arrival they would find out why they were being sent. Obviously, he wanted to be relieved of any annoyance caused by the insistent women and leave even their fate at my disposal.

The leader of Kim Chol Ho’s small unit was a young boy surnamed Jo. Feeling it strange to see a young recruit like a newly-hatched chicken leading the small unit, I asked why. Ho Song Suk complained, “Comrade Choe Hyon takes no account of soldiers in skirts. He only wants us to provide kitchen duty, rather than make one of us leader.”

The assistant leader of the small unit was also a young recruit named Thae Pyong Ryol.

The role of the real leader was played by Choe Jang Suk, a tall woman of sturdy build. As well as her rifle and knapsack, she carried a cauldron, containing a sackful of grain, kitchen utensils, axe and saw on her back; the load was larger than the individual. Ho Song Suk also carried a load, which was not much smaller than Choe’s. Truth to tell, I had never seen during my guerrilla activity any of my men or women carrying a load larger than theirs. I helped Choe Jang Suk unload and found it too heavy for me to hold.

“You are a titan!” I exclaimed.

“She swallowed a hundred dumplings for dinner,” Thae Pyong Ryol said with a grin. “She gulped down sixty and then forty again, after being relieved from her guard duty. She digested them all, and nothing was wrong with her stomach. She really is a female titan!” We all burst into boisterous laughter.

Choe Jang Suk said, glaring at the boy, that he was telling a sheer lie.

“No, it isn’t a lie. How can you carry such a tremendous load if you don’t eat a hundred dumplings at a meal?” More laughter burst out as I supported the boy.

That day I tactfully arranged a strength contest for men and women.

I called a soldier first, who was known to be as strong as a bear, and told him to try lifting the knapsack which Ho Song Suk had brought. His young bones were said to have grown hard, as he worked with a hoe, and he had gained renown as a first-rate wrestling champion in the area of Wangqing. He was also known as a glutton, who had eaten at one meal thirty-five glutinous-rice cakes by dipping them in cold water.

He stood up easily with the load on his back. I slung two *taotongs* on his shoulders and asked him how long he could walk with all the load on his back without taking a rest. He replied that he could go about four kilometres without a break.

Then, I told him to try Choe Jang Suk’s load. With the load on his back he stood up with great difficulty. I slung the two *taotongs* on his shoulders again and asked how long he could march. He answered that he could go about two kilometers.

When I asked Choe Jang Suk how much distance she had covered with the load, she was too shy to answer. Kim Chol Ho answered that Choe had marched all the way from Dapuchaihe without a rest after the battle there. Everyone became wide-eyed. It was nearly 25 miles from Dapuchaihe.

Choe Jang Suk was the winner in the contest. I told Ho Song Suk to provide an account of the experience of the women’s small unit in the

battle of Dapuchaihe.

She was a robust woman of darkish complexion. She was kind-hearted and taciturn. But she was upright and never failed to say what she ought to say.

The women's small unit, with Choe Jang Suk as the "vanguard leader," had run out of food supplies on its way to us. After suffering many hardships, they met a Chinese anti-Japanese unit in a mountain and jointly raided with them a concentration village near Dapuchaihe. In that battle the women fought as courageously as men.

The Chinese soldiers were armed with modern rifles, but when they were counterattacked by the Manchukuo police force who had at first retreated, they ran away in all directions. The women, however, fought the enemy bravely, although they were equipped with outmoded *taotongs*. They destroyed the enemy force, which had been attacking in the direction of the line held by the Chinese.

The woman who stood watch that day fought self-sacrificingly. Although bleeding from a wound on her side, she stubbornly contained the enemy. One enemy soldier after another fell from her shots. Some of the enemy began to retreat dragging dead bodies away. The women charged at the fleeing enemy shouting war cries. The commander of the Chinese shouted at his men, "You sons of a bitch! You're running away, while the Korean women fight courageously even with *taotongs*." The men of the anti-Japanese unit now joined in pursuit. The battle ended in our victory.

Hearing the battle story, we were all moved deeply by the courage, audacity and fortitude of the women soldiers.

The birth of the women's company was formally announced in a forest near Manjiang in April 1936. We kept the company under the direct control of the Headquarters, forming its platoons and squads. Pak Rok Kum was appointed company commander.

The women's company was the first of its kind in the development of the armed forces in our country.

The birth of the company broke the convention of male supremacy, a social evil, which had been considered incurable for thousands of

years, and put women's mental and social positions on a par with those of men.

Ever since ancient times male supremacy had been practised in the military field more strictly than in politics. Certainly, the women's franchise had been almost totally neglected in the political field. In many instances, the women's influence, which had worked invisibly like a magical power on the opposite sex, affected politics and politicians and resulted even in the rise and fall of states.

Nevertheless, the fair sex, which was said to be more powerful at times than an emperor or army commander, was powerless in the military field. Military affairs were the monopoly of the male sex. By realizing women's equality in the military field, we emancipated women, albeit in the limited scope of our revolutionary army.

The emergence of the women's company was also significant in that it emphasized the national scale and popular character of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army.

The existence of a women's company in the revolutionary army and its combat efficiency, which was no inferior to male units, soon became known to the whole nation and amazed the world as a whole.

In the latter half of the 1930s, a newspaper in the homeland carried a report entitled, *More Than a Dozen Women Soldiers in Kim Il Sung's Unit*. The brief title had a tremendous effect on the minds of our people.

The fact that women were engaging in manual combat against the Japanese as courageously as men inspired all Korean women and other people with great strength. The news encouraged a large number of people at home and abroad to volunteer to fight for the People's Revolutionary Army.

After the formation of the women's company, we helped it carefully stand on its own feet and toughened it through battle. At every opportunity available, we told the women soldiers moving stories to enhance their political enthusiasm and awareness.

I recall how at Xiaotanghe we told them the story of Kim Stankevich.

Kim Stankevich was born and grew up in Russia. She was a renowned Korean woman fighter, who dedicated her all life to the cause of communism. Her parent came from Kyongwon County, North Hamgyong Province.

She graduated from a normal college and taught at a primary school. As more and more Korean compatriots and exiles came to Russia, she gave up teaching and moved to Vladivostok, where she devoted herself to championing the rights and interests of the Korean workers living in various parts of Russia.

After the Tsar was overthrown, she joined the Bolshevik Party and left her husband and children at home, becoming a professional revolutionary, in order to protect the gains of the October Revolution. While in charge of external affairs at the Far-Eastern Department of the Bolshevik Party in Khabarovsk, she encouraged Ri Tong Hwi, Kim Rip and other Korean independence fighters to organize the Korean Socialist Party.

Her remarkable activity was admired by all Koreans in the Maritime Province and other parts of Russia, and won their active response.

When the Far-Eastern Department of the Bolshevik Party withdrew from Khabarovsk, as the situation in this part of Russia turned in favour of counterrevolution, she remained there to wind up unsettled affairs and then left there by steamer, but was unfortunately captured by the White Party on the River Amur and shot to death.

At the last moment of her life she shouted at the enemy, "I am not afraid of death. You, rascals, your days are numbered. You resemble a pack of dogs in a mourning house and will never overthrow communism. Your goal is a pipedream."

She died at the age of thirty-four.

As well as Kim Stankevich, Sol Juk Hwa, Kye Wol Hyang, Ryu Kwan Sun, Ri Kwan Rin and other heroines became close spiritual friends of our women soldiers.

Immediately after its appearance, the women's company attracted public attention. Wherever they went, the women soldiers were loved

and respected by the people. Whenever women soldiers wearing caps with five-pointed star emblems and carbines on their shoulders appeared at a distance, people used to shout, running around the whole village, “Women soldiers are coming!”

The women soldiers won exceptional love from the people, because they behaved themselves properly in all situations, sincerely helping and respecting the people and displaying noble and beautiful moral characters. Whenever in billets, we could see women soldiers sweeping the yards of the houses, they were staying in, fetching water, washing up the dinner things or weeding kitchen gardens to help the mistresses.

The women soldiers danced and sang songs for the people, made speeches before them and taught them how to read and write. The women’s company was the pride and rare flower of the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army.

To tell the truth, the company in its incipient days was not properly equipped. Most of its weapons were *taotongs*. Some of the women did not even have such weapons. We intended to arm them with light and attractive carbines and fought a few battles, but had no chance of capturing carbines.

Meanwhile, we received information that the garrison troops of the puppet Manchukuo army in the vicinity of Xinancha were moving on horseback. Through reconnaissance I discovered they were building barracks. I decided to raid the construction site and gave the combat mission to the women’s company. I accompanied them close to the construction site to encourage them. The battle was very impressive.

A downpour was looming. The enemy stopped working and even the sentry was off his guard. At the signal shot given by the company commander Pak Rok Kum, the women, lying in ambush near the construction site, rushed at the enemy like angry tigers and pointed their gun muzzles at the enemy’s breasts, shouting, “Hands up!” “Hands up!” here and there. An enemy soldier picked up a rifle from the rack and attempted to resist. Jang Jong Suk swiftly knocked him out with her rifle butt. The battle ended within ten minutes. Several

enemy soldiers were killed, with the rest taken prisoner. Dozens of small arms were captured in battle. To my regret, there was no carbine among the booty. A prisoner said that the carbines had been carried by the soldiers out on mounted patrol. The prisoners were surprised to know that they had been raided and captured by women guerrillas.

The women's company distinguished itself in many subsequent battles. The battles at Daying and Donggang proved its excellent combat efficiency.

These women soldiers gave an unforgettable performance of their exploits in every battle they fought. At the battle of Daying, Jang Jong Suk, sparing her ammunition, knocked out an enemy sentry with her fist to open the way to a charge. In the battle of Donggang, Kim Hwak Sil and two other women delivered one shot each in the dim moonlight and cut off the telephone line of the enemy. The event became legendary. Historians say that the police department of South Hamgyong Province under the Korean Government-General left many records of the actions of the women's company. The records contained information that Pak Rok Kum and forty other women soldiers of Kim Il Sung's unit attacked the puppet Manchukuo garrison force at Xinancha, Fusong County, early in the fifth month by the lunar calendar in the eleventh year of Showa (1936). Around the same time they raided Daying and captured about a dozen rifles and uniforms. There was also a record about the action of the women's company in the battle of Donggang, Fusong County.

Whenever I recall the anti-Japanese revolutionary martyrs, who dedicated their bloom of youth to the country, I see in my mind's eye the women's company and its peerless heroines.

Pak Rok Kum, the first commander of the women's company, was good at commanding her company. Many of her comrades-in-arms characterized her by a single word "heroine."

People will be surprised to know that she wore a pair of rubber-soled canvas shoes which were as large as a size 41 today. There were many pairs of canvas shoes among the booty, but such large sizes were rare. So Pak Rok Kum had to wear straw sandals most of time.

While in Wangqing, Pak Rok Kum had worked as the head of the Women's Association of the district. As such she was a woman social worker. She was so poor that she did not have her own beddings, when she married and wore rags at her wedding. Her husband's family was no less wretched. Consequently they had not prepared beddings for the newly wed. The wife and husband joined the army at the same time and were assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Company in Wangqing.

One day the political instructor of the 1<sup>st</sup> Company came to me and said that Pak Rok Kum had just given birth to a baby. Upset, he said that there was not a piece of cloth to make a quilt for the baby at her father's home, where she had had the baby. I hurried to her place and found no quilt worth mentioning. Her father, bereft of his wife, was too hard pressed to take proper care of his married daughter. He said that the war had played havoc with his home ceaselessly and he had forgotten what a quilt looked like. The baby was wrapped in rags.

I immediately sent out a small unit to obtain materials for their beddings. The sewing unit made comfortable beddings and baby's clothing with the materials all through the night and sent them to her.

She and her husband dressed the baby properly now and covered it with a quilt, but they wrapped their own quilt carefully and kept it on a box, without even thinking of using it. Even in the piercing cold they did not touch the quilt.

When her husband Kang Jung Ryong was appointed leader of a platoon of the 7<sup>th</sup> Company and left for the Independent Regiment in Antu, she remained with the Wangqing unit and stayed there all the time. On hearing that her husband's unit had come under my command, she resolved to come to us. When she left her father's home, she offered the quilt to her father.

But her father declined, saying that the quilt had been prepared for her and her husband by Commander Kim.

The bundle of quilt, which she carried on her head, became her nickname. Her comrades-in-arms addressed her by the nickname, *Ibulbottari* (quilt bundle).

She looked blunt, but was a considerate and kind-hearted woman.

She was sociable and suited to underground work.

So we sent her to carry out political work to Xinxingcun, Changbai County, early in 1937, on a mission to help Kwon Yong Byok and Ri Je Sun rally the women in Shanggangqu, Changbai County, to join the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland. She worked hard to carry out her mission in a responsible manner, but was unfortunately arrested and imprisoned.

Pak Rok Kum, like Ri Je Sun, helped release many revolutionaries by stating that she was responsible for the charges laid against them. When her inmates, who were bleeding from torture, lay limp in the prison cell, she sang revolutionary songs to encourage them.

She was moved from Hyesan police station, where she had been in custody, to Hamhung prison, where she was dumped into a cell, as the inmate of a TB patient, to die of consumption. The patient, a woman surnamed Kim, had been involved in the Jongphyong peasant union incident before her arrest. Pak Rok Kum did not care at all about her own health, but nursed the seriously ill woman, as if she were her own sister.

Some time later on, the patient, on the brink of death, was released on bail, but Pak Rok Kum was infected and lay down. The family of the released prisoner came with a silk jacket and cakes to repay her indebtedness, but the prison authorities did not permit them to see Pak Rok Kum. The kind-hearted heroine of the guerrilla army, who had displayed warm love for other people throughout her life, died in prison after much suffering without even receiving the tearful thanks, sent to her by the woman on the verge of death.

Our women soldiers included Ma Kuk Hwa, Ma Tong Hui's sister. When we were operating in west Jiandao, she joined the guerrilla army at Pinggange, Shiqidaogou, under the influence of Kim Se Ok, a political operative from my unit. Kim Se Ok was her teacher and lover. They planned to marry after the country's liberation and worked devotedly for the revolution, postponing everything for the future.

One day she was on kitchen duty. As she was dividing up maize porridge among the comrades, the food ran short when two of them

had no shares. She thought she could bring herself to skip a meal, but who else could go without a meal? After some hesitation, she decided to tell Kim Se Ok about her embarrassing situation. She called him from the barracks and explained the circumstances.

“Comrade Se Ok,” she said, “Please understand that you’ll have to go without supper this evening, as the food will not go round to all of us. I am very sorry.”

“Never mind. Then I ought to go hungry, but I would like to say I will eat double shares for every meal when the country is liberated,” he said jokingly, and turned away with a bright smile on his face.

Ma Kuk Hwa could not sleep that night, thinking of her lover, who drank a cup of water for the supper. She never regretted her own hunger.

They both fell in battle without seeing the liberated country. After her death, her women comrades found in her knapsack a sheet of quilt cloth embroidered with a brace of cranes. It had been prepared by Ma Kuk Hwa in the arduous circumstances, looking forward to her marriage.

Is there in the world a dowry more valuable and sadder than that? The woman fighter fell in the wilderness. Her dream remained unrealized in a foreign land. What would be done? Her comrades wrapped her dead body in the quilt cloth.

The women’s company existed only half a year, but performed imperishable exploits which will be remembered by the motherland forever, and emulated by the people through the generations.

The women soldiers, who fought on the bloody battle front of the revolution against their formidable enemy, the Japanese imperialists, are paragons of modern Korean women, as well as heroines who can be held in high esteem as typical of the struggle for the emancipation of humanity. They were the first women to achieve female social and human equality and paved with blood the path to women’s emancipation in our country.

The age of our Workers’ Party has produced innumerable heroines, socially active women and women labour innovators, who have

inherited the revolutionary spirit of Paektu and the traditions of struggle, displayed by the women's company during the anti-Japanese revolution. The spirit of Paektu dominated the thinking and action of An Yong Ae, Jo Ok Hui, Ri Su Dok, Ri Sin Ja, Jong Chun Sil and many other heroines of our times. Millions of our women are still building up an impregnable bulwark of socialism in that spirit on this land.

Today, our People's Army has many women's units, which have inherited the anti-Japanese revolutionary traditions. The women's units of the People's Army as well as an innumerable number of women members of the Worker-Peasant Red Guards and the Young Red Guards are armed to defend the country. In our country where all the people are armed, the ten million women, who account for half the population, are all prepared to fight, arms in hand, to defend every inch of the country in case of emergency.

The women's company, under the direct command of the Headquarters of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, is the prototype of the ten million armed ranks of women.

## 5. The Secret Camp on Mt. Paektu

Towards the end of August, when the late crop of potatoes was in full bloom, we left the village of Manjiang. The barley in slash-and-burn fields, which had been awaiting the harvest season, had just begun to be reaped.

We marched southward in silence. All my comrades, ranging from the regimental political commissar Kim San Ho to the boyish orderlies Choe Kum San and Paek Hak Rim, were fully aware of the importance of our advance to Paektu mountain area.

Mt. Paektu was an impregnable natural fortress, so to speak, for its terrain features were so favourable to defence, that even one single man could repel 1 000 attackers. No base was more suited to the expansion of guerrilla warfare than the mountain. Yun Kwan of Koryo and Kim Jong So of the Ri dynasty had fulfilled their heavy duty of national defence and pioneering of the frontier, by basing themselves on that mountain area. On that mountain General Nam I also conceived the high aim of pacifying the country, inscribing his idea in a poetic form on a pumice rock.

Mt. Paektu also provided an ideal fortress for the Korean People's Revolutionary Army. The establishment of a new base in this mountain by the revolutionary army to step up its advance to the homeland did not mean that we were abandoning the Manchurian theatre of operation, which had been pioneered with great difficulty. We planned to fight, moving freely around Korea and China from the base in this mountain.

We attached special importance to the mountain as a natural fortress for military action and also as our moral background.

Mt. Paektu, soaring majestically as if the ancestor of this land, is the symbol of Korea and cradle of the 5 000-year-long history of her nation.

The spiritual effect of this mountain on Koreans can be illustrated by the inscription, “Monument to the Dragon God of Heavenly Lake, Guarding Mt. Paektu,” on a rock at the foot of the Janggun Peak, on the shore of Lake Chon. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the people were feeling apprehensive about the survival of the nation, the monument was erected by the religionists, connected with *Taejong* faith and *Chonbul* faith. As the inscription indicates, the people who erected the monument prayed to the Dragon God for the lasting security of the nation.

Their veneration of Mt. Paektu implied veneration of Korea and love for their motherland.

Ever since childhood we loved and venerated Mt. Paektu especially as an ancestral mountain. This was the natural sentiment of the Korean nation. Listening to the stories of Pu Pun No and Ul Tu Ji at the time of Koguryo’s territorial expansion, chanting General Nam I’s magnificent poem, and listening to the accounts of Yun Kwan’s and Kim Jong So’s defence efforts and their pioneering of the frontier, we were deeply moved and fascinated by the forerunners’ patriotic spirit, enshrined in Mt. Paektu.

The mountain, which soared higher and higher in our minds as we grew up, became the symbol of our struggle for national liberation as well as that of Korea.

Our belief that we could only muster all the forces of the nation for resistance and ensure an ultimate victory of the struggle by entrenching ourselves in Mt. Paektu, was derived from our experience of the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle during the first half of the 1930s as a natural conclusion drawn from the summary of the struggle.

To reach Mt. Paektu from Manjiang, we had to cross Duogu Pass. The pass was a primeval forest, where even an experienced mountain hunter used to lose his way.

Kim Ju Hyon, who had been to Changbai as the leader of an advance party three months before, guided us on our way. His advance party had reconnoitered the enemy situation, the ground in the Mt. Paektu area and the climate of public opinion, choosing the sites of

secret camps, and pioneering the path for the advance of the main force.

We followed the River Manjiang deep into the valley, until we entered the dense forest of the Duogu Pass. It was still summer, but the alpine broadleaves had begun to turn red and yellow, and the cool weather had set in.

During our march across the pass we marked the 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the day of national disgrace.

Our southward march through the rugged terrain almost coincided with the arrival in Seoul of General Minami of the Japanese army, appointed the seventh Governor-General of Korea. On the eve of the battle of Fusong county town, we learned through a newspaper of his appointment as successor to Ugaki and estimated that he would arrive in Korea at about the same time we would.

The coincidence between his appearance in Seoul and the advance of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army to Paektu mountain area had a subtle psychological effect on me.

Japan's occupation of Korea is known to the whole world as rank piracy, although they tried to justify it from the outset. Robbers have their own way of thinking. They rob another man of his property and argue that the owner who tries to take it back is a robber.

The Japanese imperialists, who adopted the robbers' way of thinking, called the Korean People's Revolutionary Army a "horde of bandits," "mounted bandits" or "communist bandits."

In the world of robbers everything turns topsy-turvy.

The uninvited guest, Minami, strode into Seoul in broad daylight like a master, whereas we, the masters, had to steal our way to the homeland through an untrodden forest. What a deplorable situation!

After climbing the Duogu Pass, I changed the march plan and decided to take a route round about the area on the River Amnok to see our compatriots in the border area and let them hear our gunshots.

The first village we visited was Deshuigou. My unit included a recruit from Dadeshui, who had worked for many years among the young people of an underground organization in Changbai, which had

once been guided by Ri Je U and my uncle Hyong Gwon. The name of the recruit was Kang Hyon Min. He had joined the revolutionary army, when we were operating in the Fusong area. He frequented Fusong, dealing in opiate and cattle. During this time he met our operatives and on their recommendation met me and joined the guerrilla army.

Kang Hyon Min and Kim Ju Hyon's advance party provided detailed information about the political climate among the inhabitants of Deshuigou.

The villagers were more revolutionary-minded than any other peasants in Changbai. This place maintained the tradition of anti-Japanese patriotic struggle, developed by independence fighters after the March First Popular Uprising(1919), as well as a reliable force of the masses, which had been trained through the struggle.

Desuigou was the home base of the Independence Army led by Kang Jin Gon. The Independence Army founded a four-year primary school course in that village and enlightened the younger people and peasants as well.

In his days at Badaogou my father had also been to the village on many occasions.

When the Independence Army movement was on the decline, owing to the dissolution of the army, Ri Je U and his armed group brought the programme of the Down-with-Imperialism Union to the village and launched military and political activities.

After Ri Je U's arrest, my uncle Hyong Gwon, together with Choe Hyo Il and Pak Cha Sok, had established their base in Deshuigou and roused the masses in the village and surrounding area to revolutionary awareness and organized them. Thanks to their efforts, a subordinate organization of the Paeksan Youth League was formed in Changbai.

The league established a politico-military training centre and produced many political operatives and reserves for the guerrilla army.

Even after the departure of the armed group of the Korean Revolutionary Army for the homeland and imprisonment of many of the league's cadres, its members continued their underground struggle.

We pinned our hopes on the force of the masses, which had been

educated and given revolutionary training by many patriots and communists.

When my unit arrived in the village, Kim Ju Hyon guided me to the house of an old man, Ryom In Hwan, whom he had marked off as reliable, while performing the mission of the advance party.

The country doctor's house itself was steeped in poverty. A renowned acupuncturist, he was apparently called on by the people of Deshuigou, as well as Changbai, Linjiang, and even by the people on the far side of the River Amnok, who came to take him by sleigh or cart. It was impossible for him, however, to cover the cost of drugs, so that his wife had to beg with her empty gourd hidden in the folds of her skirt. The family experienced much the same strained circumstances, as we did at Badaogou and at Fusong, where my father practised medicine.

The old man took my pulse and said that I was weak both mentally and physically owing to overwork and poor nourishment. He offered me a root of wild *insam*. Jang Chol Gu and Paek Hak Rim had told me that they had been given a few roots of wild *insam* to improve my health by old man Ho Rak Yo at our departure from Manjiang.

"Rumour has it that hundreds of Japanese and Manchukuo troops were destroyed at Fusong by the allied anti-Japanese force under your command, General Kim," old man Ryom said to me. "Is that true?"

The news of the battle of Fusong county town seemed to have already reached the village.

When I said this was true, the old man slapped his knee, exclaiming, "Bravo! Korea has now come to life again!"

The old man was subsequently dragged to the Erdaogang police station and murdered for the kindness he had accorded us in providing us with a night's shelter and a meal of potato and barley. The thought of his tragic death still boils my blood. As I was passing by the village in command of a small unit one day, I took time off my schedule and paid a visit to his grave, poured a cup of wine and bowed to him.

The next day we left for Dadeshui in the morning dew. Sitting on the shoulder of a mountain which commanded a view of the village at a

close distance, we ate a few potatoes each for our morning meal. I instructed the company commander, Ri Tong Hak, to prepare a flagstaff and fly our flag at the head of our column and sound the bugle, when we climbed down to the village. I wanted to show the depressed people the gallant-looking Korean People's Revolutionary Army.

The villagers of Dadeshui greeted us with immeasurable delight and surprise. They said that ever since their settlement in the place they had never seen in broad daylight hundreds of Korean soldiers, equipped with modern rifles and even machine-guns, marching and blowing a resounding bugle, with a flag flying at the head.

I set up an impromptu stage to give the villagers a dramatic performance, as we had done at Manjiang. But the performance we planned to give after lunch was aborted. When we were about to take lunch, the enemy surprised us. A battle was held in a yellow-ripening barley field between the opposing forces.

I still remember I was afraid of damaging the ripe crop.

The enemy was closing in upon us, along the furrows of the barley field. I waited until the enemy had almost cleared the field, and then gave my signal for firing.

My men fought triumphantly. The enemy suffered dozens of casualties and retreated towards Erdaogang. This was the first engagement we had with the enemy in Changbai. The gunshot at Dadeshui announced the arrival of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army on Mt. Paektu to the people in the homeland and the enemy.

The village became animated and festive. Even the people from neighbouring villages came to congratulate us upon our victory. The people prepared potato cakes and starch noodles and welcomed us, and we danced and sang songs in return. I made a stirring speech.

The audience responded positively to the speech.

An old man with a slanting moustache said:

"General, please say loudly on Mt. Paektu: 'All those who want to fight for Korea's independence, come here!' Then, crowds of people will throng here from all parts of Korea. Bent as I am from old age, I can still do my bit."

Later on I learned the old man was from Xiaodeshui and nicknamed “Old Hunchback.”

The Hunchback was an old acquaintance of “Tobacco Pipe.” When old man “Tobacco Pipe” was in charge of the South Hamgyong Provincial Bureau of Communications of the War Fund-Raising Association, the Hunchback was a company commander of the same organization.

Tobacco Pipe proudly introduced to me his old comrade-in-arms, whom he met in excitement after an interval of more than a decade. Hunchback’s real name was Kim Tuk Hyon, alias Kim Se Hyon during the years of his service in the Independence Army and ever since. He was not a born hunchback. His back was unusually bent like a hunchback. While still young he had been erect, square-shouldered and well balanced. The story behind the hunchback roused in me a feeling of deep respect. He was born in Hamgyong Province. In the dreary year immediately after the “annexation” of Korea by Japan, he moved to Deshuigou in search of livelihood. The settlement had been pioneered by drifting people, who were haunted by nostalgia for their hometowns and homeland. When the War Fund-Raising Association made its appearance in Deshuigou, which preached how to win back their country and return to their homes, Kim Tuk Hyon joined the organization without hesitation. To raise money for the association he did not hesitate to send his 13-year-old daughter into another man’s family as his future daughter-in-law. To obtain weapons, he ventured into the battlefield in Russia, which was in a state of civil war.

However, more than ten years of devoted efforts ended in a longer prison term for himself than any fellow members of the association. The convicts were forced to work on handlooms for fourteen to fifteen hours every day. Whenever he tried to straighten up his back a little he was lashed and flogged on the back mercilessly. Seven or eight years of slavery made him an incurable hunchback.

The Hunchback looked like an invalid but his patriotic spirit and fighting will were as strong as ever. Not surprisingly, he was the first to join Ri Je U’s armed group. He said he had been waiting impatiently

for our advance to Mt. Paektu, ever since he had met Kim Ju Hyon. Kim Ju Hyon had made friends with him, while in Changbai in charge of the advance party.

After a brief art show and my speech, I ordered the unit to withdraw. The villagers begged us to stay at least one night, asking why on earth we should go away, when they had only just grown attached to us. I explained that if we stayed the village would suffer, as the enemy would bring his reinforcements and fall upon us any minute. The Hunchback guided us on our way.

I gave the old man a pamphlet, which contained a mimeographed copy of the Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland and its Inaugural Declaration. He was the first man to receive the pamphlet from me since our advance to the area on the River Amnok. Soon subordinate organizations of the association appeared in Deshuigou area.

The old man became a member of the Shiliudaogou branch of the association. This branch constituted the hard core of the many grassroots organizations in that area. If we had introduced a title such as a model branch as Chongryon, the Shiliudaogou branch would have been the first to be awarded the title. Old man Kim Tuk Hyon raised several dogs. These ferocious, clever dogs, with a keen sense of smell, kept enemy agents and policemen off his house.

These animals were clever at identifying different people. They did not bark at our men, even if these men were strangers to them. Kim Ju Hyon, Kim Hwak Sil, Kim Jong Suk and other members of our small units, who were working separately in that area, as well as our messengers sent there, were greatly indebted to the old man.

Kim Jong Suk once worked on a separate mission to Zhonggangqu, Changbai County, in the early winter of the year, when we advanced to Mt. Paektu. The comrades on a separate mission in those days carried cooked rations such as rice balls or potatoes, instead of raw rice. Individual messengers in the guerrilla bases in Jiandao did the same. A group of people working together could post a watch and then cook their meals, but it was impossible for an individual, working

single-handed, to make fire and cook, because he would be suspected as a “mountain man.” Jong Suk, also left Yaofangzi with a bundle of boiled potatoes and met on her way an old woman and a child chewing frozen leaves of dry vegetable. She shed tears of sympathy about the wretched sight. She gave her potatoes to the vagrant orphan and old woman, and then plodded shakily on her way up the mountain. As she recollected in later years, she did not know how she could manage to get to Hunchback’s house. When she came to herself, she found the old man and his wife holding a bowl of gruel and a spoon and weeping over her.

They nursed her with all their hearts, serving her gruel, green-bean pancakes and stewed chicken, which they had been keeping for breeding. In the years after liberation Jong Suk reiterated this experience, saying that without their nursing she would have been unable to return alive to the secret camp on Mt. Paektu.

Old man Hunchback paid many visits to our secret camp. He used to carry aid goods on his deformed back to the camp and grab chances of seeing me without the knowledge of others.

In the battle of Banjiegou he served as our guide. He represented the peasants at the May Day celebrations held in the forest of Xiaodeshui in 1939, which pleased us.

Early in 1942 I heard the sad news of his death from illness.

I recollected him occasionally in my days on Mt. Paektu and later years.

One day in November 1947, on hearing that uniforms for the children of the Mangyongdae Revolutionary School had been prepared, I sent for some of the schoolchildren, as I wanted to see them in uniform. The children who came to my house at that time included the old man’s son, named Kim Pyong Sun.

On her visit to the school later, Kim Jong Suk met the boy separately and gave him a fountain-pen, which had been her favourite since her days in the guerrilla army, encouraging him to be a good schoolboy.

One day in August 1949, Kim Pyong Sun, wearing an officer’s

uniform with the shoulderstraps of platoon leader, appeared before Kim Jong Suk and me. He had been appointed leader of the guard platoon for Headquarters. It was, indeed, a strange convergence of events.

From that day on he never left our side. He shared with me the sorrow of losing Jong Suk, accompanied me to the front headquarters at Suanbo, North Chungchong Province, and stayed with me at the Supreme Headquarters in Kosanjin, Jagang Province. He worked by my side for many more years.

Whenever I felt his father's image hovering around me, I recollected the words of the old man in the village of Dadeshui and the moonlit night scene on the Xiaodeshui tableland.

We camped overnight on this tableland and the next day I moved my unit into the forest of Madengchang and ordered my men to take a rest. I also lay down on the grass and, while reading, fell fast asleep. Sudden gunshots woke me up. Enemy forces from the directions of Shiwudaogou and Erdaogang swooped upon us almost simultaneously from north and south. The dense forest made it difficult to identify friend from foe. If we slipped away, it would create an ideal opportunity to make the enemy forces fight and kill each other in an attempt to catch us.

We withdrew from the forest by stealth and climbed up the high ground along the valley of Shiwudaogou, where we watched the enemy fighting among themselves. The event is known as the battle of Xiaodeshui or the remote observation battle of Madengchang.

The enemy forces fought each other for three to four hours, so long that onlookers even felt tedious. In the end, the enemy from the direction of Erdaogang was pressed too hard to hold on and sounded the bugle for retreat. On hearing the bugle sound, the enemy from Shiwudaogou realized that they were fighting among themselves and ceased fire.

Where did the hundreds of guerrillas vanish? Surely this was a mystery, which even the devil wondered at.

The enemy seemed to have found an answer to the mystery; they

called it the occult art of transformation. In my opinion, since the battle of Xiaodeshui, rumour had it in the border area that we were rising into the sky and dipping into the ground or appearing from where and disappearing into where, God only knows.

The enemy was so short of stretchers that they tore the doors off every house in the village of Xinchangdong to carry their dead bodies away. The villagers had to keep the doorless openings screened with straw sacks for some time.

The gunshots raised by the People's Revolutionary Army at Dadeshui and Xiaodeshui evoked a great response from the people in Changbai and the homeland across the river.

When we said some words of sympathy for the battle-ravaged potato fields, a peasant of Xinchangdong said:

“Although our potato fields have been devastated, we find it more pleasant to see the Japanese being destroyed than have a rich potato crop.”

Many young people from Deshuigou and the neighbouring villages volunteered to join the army. Their enlistment marked the beginning of a widespread movement for armed service, which contributed to a rapid expansion of the revolutionary army in the Changbai area.

The enemy was terribly alarmed by the advance of the People's Revolutionary Army and its formidable strength. It became a trend among policemen in Changbai to apply to resign in groups and shirk their official duties. The enemy's ruling machinery was thrown into great confusion. The passage in and out of the concentration village of Erdaogang was permitted only through the back-gate, rather than the front one.

In Changbai we conducted organizational and political work to educate and organize the masses, in addition to military actions. Our political operatives formed subordinate organizations of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland in Deshuigou, Diyangxigou and in neighbouring villages.

Organizations also began to be formed in the homeland.

The organizations, established in various places surrounding Mt.

Paektu, became reliable political footholds for the new base to be established.

The battle of Xiaodeshui was followed by many actions we took in Shiwudaogou-Donggang, Shisandaogou-Longchuanli, Ershidaogou-Erzhongdian in Changbai County and many other places, while moving about various villages on River Amnok. The riverine area resembled a stirred hornets' nest.

The objective we had set ourselves in taking a roundabout route was achieved. It was now time to entrench ourselves in Paektu Mountain and establish our home base. Guided by Kim Ju Hyon and Ri Tong Hak, I proceeded to the site selected for the establishment of our secret camp on Mt. Paektu. I was accompanied by senior officers, the guards and some combat companies. The other soldiers were instructed to continue harassing the enemy in Changbai area.

The Sobaeksu valley, reconnoitred by Kim Ju Hyon, Ri Tong Hak, Kim Un Sin and others, was the first site of the secret camp on Mt. Paektu in the homeland. Mt. Paektu soared approximately ten miles northwest of the valley. About five miles northwest one could see Mt. Sono. Four miles northeast of the valley Mt. Kanbaek rose above a dense forest. The long elevation behind the valley was called the Peak of Saja.

Our arrival in Sobaeksu valley was a jubilant homecoming after many years of absence. In the historical context of the anti-Japanese revolution, it implied the shifting of our operation centre from eastern Manchuria to Mt. Paektu.

A man's homecoming is a matter of joy for his neighbours as well. But there was no neighbour of ours in the valley lying in the depths of Paektu mountains, from which even "A bird flew away unable to endure the loneliness of the forest," as one poet put it. We were greeted by the sighing forest and murmuring stream. The people in the homeland were still not aware of our arrival in Sobaeksu valley.

Twenty-five miles south of the place, there were the homeland people who would welcome us warmly, but there were also uninvited guests from the island country, who were aiming their guns at us. If

this obstacle had not existed we would have gone to our beloved people and met them in excitement. Fighting the enemy was the only way to meet our compatriots. To fight the enemy, we advanced to Paektu mountain area and began to establish our base in the Sobaeksu valley.

The comrades with me in the valley at that time never imagined that the place would be a famous historical site, which would attract visitors from the rest of the world.

Without leaving any trace of our movement, we walked up along the water edges of the stream, which was flowing with floating leaves.

Travellers to this place nowadays will never imagine that it was part of a primeval forest half a century ago. The quiet and serenity of the old days have given way to the well-surfaced road, where tourist buses and visitors pass without cease, to the houses for the travellers and travellers' village, as well furnished as fashionable hotels, and to the endless flow of pedestrians and their songs ringing out in all seasons. But in those days we could hardly find a footprint of wild beast in that primeval forest. We were attracted by the exquisite scenery of the valley, which preserved its beauty at the time of genesis and its terrain features, which provided us with a natural fortress.

The valley of Lishugou with the C.P. of the guerrilla army in my days in Macun, Xiaowangqing, had been excellent. The valley was deep and ragged and denied easy access for the enemy. If the enemy could ever manage to approach, they had been successfully repulsed. The terrain of the Sobaeksu valley at the fork of the streams down the Peak of Saja, from which we made our way to the site of the secret camp on Mt. Paektu, was quite similar to the features of Lishugou valley.

There was a slight difference between the two; Sobaeksu valley was a little more spacious, deeper and beautiful. The farther we climbed, the greater we found the difference. The valley, located in one of the great folds of thousands of peaks and ridges of the majestic Paektu Mountain Range, was profound against its mammoth background.

Before dark we pitched tents by the stream and at the foot of a peak

on the opposite side of the Peak of Jangsu and slept through the night. I usually sleep no more than three to four hours a day. When fighting on the mountains, I had the habit of waking up around two o'clock in the morning to read. But that night I was so tired that I did not read in the early morning, when I discovered that it had frosted during the night.

The alpine area had a longer winter and experienced much more snowfall than elsewhere. The snow in the area did not melt easily. In late June and early July one could see the snow of the previous winter, and in late September and early October one could find new snow on mountain tops. The accumulated snow was often deeper than a man's stature and made it necessary to dig a tunnel to open a passage through. Snow shoes were needed to travel outside the secret camp. Without them one might sink into the snow and suffer an accident.

The rigorous climate of the alpine region, which was frequently threatened with gales and heavy snowfalls, made distinctions between different seasons and brought us different seasonal benefits.

I had eaten saussurea for the first time during the battle of Laoheishan and found it delicious. Boiled rice wrapped in saussurea tasted better than in lettuce. I had tasted cacalia at Ri Hun's house in Shijiudaogou, Changbai County. It was also very delicious. There were many types of wild vegetables in Paektu mountain area, saussurea in Taehongdan, cacalia in the area surrounding Lake Samji, and *musuhae* in Pegae Hill. These wild greens, picked by the cooking unit members, enriched our summer dishes.

As we settled down in the secret camp on Mt. Paektu, the cooking unit formed a kitchen garden at an edge of a grassland and grew various kinds of vegetables. Cabbage and radish did not thrive, but lettuce and crown daisy grew well.

Char, caught from the Sobaeksu, was also served occasionally. In those days there were not many of them in the stream, but nowadays a lot of them have been bred.

On the day after our arrival I inspected together with other commanding officers, the site of the secret camp, and the sites for barracks chosen by the advance party. I convened an officers' meeting

and reviewed our expedition from Nanhutou to Mt. Paektu, debated our task, and then gave assignments to the officers. We aimed to establish the Paektusan Base as soon as possible. It comprised two aspects: the construction of secret camps and establishment of underground revolutionary organizations in the villages around Mt. Paektu.

There were considerable differences in content and form between the guerrilla zone, established in eastern Manchuria in the first half of the 1930s and the new Paektusan Base created in the latter half of the decade. The former was a fixed, visible open base of guerrilla warfare, whereas the latter was an invisible revolutionary base, which consisted of secret camps and underground revolutionary organizations, serving as the base of military actions and political activity.

The people in the base in the first half of the decade lived in line with the policy of the people's revolutionary government; the people affiliated with underground organizations in the latter half were under enemy rule in appearance, but in effect acted on our instructions and lines.

Great efforts had to be devoted to the defence of the guerrilla zones in the first half, whereas there was no need to do so in the latter half.

This enabled us to launch guerrilla activity over a wider area. In other words, the change in the form of the guerrilla base meant we could assume an offensive. Therefore, the wider the guerrilla base was expanded, the broader the area of our activity.

We intended to expand the guerrilla base, centring on the secret camp on Mt. Paektu, to the wide area of Changbai, and then deep into the homeland along Paekmu, Kaema plateaus and Rangnim Mountains, and then spread the flames of armed struggle from the northern region to the middle and southern regions of Korea, while at the same time expanding and developing the Party organizations, as well as the united front movement and pushing ahead with preparations for nationwide resistance.

As the creation of the network of secret camps and laying of the network of underground organizations were burning issues, which our

destiny and the victory of the anti-Japanese revolution depended on, we had to direct our attention to the solution of these issues before all else. In the first place, we assigned each unit the task of building secret camps. Kim Ju Hyon was instructed to provide for food and clothing. The two aspects of construction and operation of the secret camps were, in plain terms, our problems of food, clothing and housing.

The recruitment of able assistants for the establishment of the underground network and combat actions to encourage the people to turn out in the sacred cause of national liberation were also important tasks. These tasks were given to Ri Tong Hak's company.

The commanding officers immediately began to carry out their assignments to build the Paektusan Base. Kim Ju Hyon, Ri Tong Hak and his company left us. Many other comrades were also sent away on individual missions to different places. Accompanied by the guards and some members of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment, I made for Heixiazigou, where we would meet the main body we had parted with at the village of Huanggongdong. Our experiences on our way from Sobaeksu valley to Heixiazigou were very impressive.

At that time I saw Mt. Sono and the Samdan Falls. The scenery was exquisite. We lost our way and spent a great deal of time in the forest. I still remember our experience at Daze Hot Spring. After roaming the forest for more than two hours, unable to find our way, I sent scouts off in many directions. One of them returned with an old man. The old man said that he was living alone on a foot hill of Mt. Paektu and that, on his way back from Manjiang, where he had been to obtain salt and foxtail millet, he met the reconnaissance party. The old man took us to his grass-thatched hut at Daze. The hut was located by a good hot spring. The water was so hot that the crayfish we had placed there turned red. We took a bath, washed our clothes and cooked crayfish in the hot spring. The Icelanders I watched taking an open-air bath in the depth of winter on television one day reminded me of my own experience at the hot spring.

At that time I talked a lot with the old man. I asked him why he was living in the deep mountain. He said he had been a lowlander, but on

seeing the waning stars, had moved to the ancestral mountain.

“If I died a shameful death of an enslaved nation, it would make no difference where I should die. But I wanted to live and die at the foot of Mt. Paektu. My teacher at the village school, who taught me A Thousand Chinese Characters, used to say that the Koreans should live with Mt. Paektu in their embrace and die with it as their pillow. His words were, indeed, a maxim, which should be inscribed on a monument,” the old man said.

Following endlessly his narrowed eyes, which were gazing at Mt. Paektu, I solemnly felt as if every phase of his wretched existence were unfolding before my eyes. His words, that he wanted to live at the foot of Mt. Paektu and die with his head, resting on the mountain, moved me.

“Well, how do you like Mt. Paektu?”

“Wonderful. Hard as it is to live by growing potatoes and hunting roe, I feel hale and hearty, because I don’t have to see the Japanese.”

My talk with the old man reaffirmed my belief that Mt. Paektu offered strong moral support for our people. I keenly felt that I was absolutely right to make Mt. Paektu into the strategic centre of the revolution. The old man, who was living alone stoutly in the mountain in his late years, was really patriotic. I regret that I did not ask for his name.

Like the old man Ma in the highlands of Luozigou, he had many books. When we were leaving for Heixiazigou, after taking a bath at the Daze Hot Spring, he gave me several story books. Later we built a recuperation centre at the hot spring for the wounded and infirm.

One day after our arrival at Heixiazigou, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, which had been operating in Jiaohe, came to us. Kwon Yong Byok, O Jung Hup, Kang Wi Ryong and some others came with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment and shared their innermost feelings with me.

They had endured many hardships on their way. Without wearing proper clothes and half-starving in the winter cold on their way to Mt. Paektu, they attacked a lumber station and captured cattle. They brought two of them to us alive. It was painful to see them, skin and bones in rags. They also shed tears, hugging me. I supplied them with

new clothes, both outerwear and underwear, as well as leggings and rubber-soled canvas shoes. I provided them with whole sets of toilet articles, tobacco and matches.

On the orders of Headquarters, Kang Wi Ryong, who had returned from Jiaohe, and Pak Yong Sun, built secret camps in Heixiazigou, Hengshan, Mt. Hongtou and many other places. Pak Yong Sun and Kang Wi Ryong were excellent carpenters. They used to build a log house large enough for a regiment in two to three days, using only axes. They did more work for the construction of secret camps in the Changbai area than any other comrades. When Cao Guo-an's unit came to Heixiazigou, they admired the men of my unit for building their barracks in only one day, attributable to the two carpenters.

By the time I returned to Sobaeksu valley, after staying some time at Heixiazigou, log houses were built in many sites of the secret camp. The barracks for Headquarters, subordinate units, a printing shop, garment shop, guard house, and checkpoints, had sprung up in the forest.

The doorhandles of the log houses in the secret camp were made of roe-hoofs.

The trifle roe-hoof handle was engraved on my memory, as if a landmark of a historical period. Since the appearance of the roe-hoof handles on the doors of our "living quarters" on Mt. Paektu and the establishment of our home base in the Sobaeksu valley, in other words, the secret camp on Mt. Paektu served as the strategic base of the Korean revolution, as the base for its central leadership.

The secret camp on Mt. Paektu was not only a strategic centre and heart of the Korean revolution; it was also an important operational base, a base of activity, and logistic base.

Many secret bases soon fanned out from this very secret camp to different places in the northern and middle regions of Korea.

From the secret camps, Kwon Yong Byok, Kim Ju Hyon, Kim Phyong, Kim Jong Suk, Pak Rok Kum, Ma Tong Hui, Ji Thae Hwan and many other political operatives, carried the seeds of the revolution to every nook and corner of the homeland. From there, Ri Je Sun, Pak Tal, Pak In Jin and many other representatives of the people, who had

come to see us in Mt. Paektu, went with the kindling of the revolution back to the people. From there our units took the field to destroy the enemy. All moves, both big and small, directly related to the destiny of the revolution, were planned at the secret camp on Mt. Paektu.

Satellite secret camps in Korea and China were part of the network of the secret camp on Mt. Paektu.

The Korean side included the Sajabong Secret Camp, Komsan Secret Camp, Sonosan Secret Camp, Kanbaeksan Secret Camp, Mudubong Secret Camp, Soyonjibong Secret Camp and others. The west Jiandao area on the Chinese side included the Heixiazigou Secret Camp, Diyangxi Secret Camp, Erdaogang Secret Camp, Hengshan Secret Camp, Limingshui Secret Camp, Fuhoushui Secret Camp, Qingfeng Secret Camp, and other secret camps in Fusong. We made use of all these secret camps whenever necessary.

The secret camps in Mt. Paektu area performed various missions and duties. As well as purely secret camps, here clothes were sewn, weapons repaired and the wounded and ill were taken care of; some of them also served as liaison points and shelters for the operatives.

The secret camp in the Sobaeksu valley was the heart of the network of the secret camps on Mt. Paektu. So we called the camp in Sobaeksu valley Paektusan Secret Camp No. 1 in those days. Nowadays it is called the Paektusan Secret Camp or Paektu Secret Camp.

This camp was home to Headquarters and departments directly under it, and the guards and some key units, and passage in and out of it was strictly controlled for maximum security and secrecy. When subordinate units or individuals, not in constant contact with us, came to Headquarters, we met them at Secret Camp No. 2 (the Sajabong Secret Camp), not at the secret camp in Sobaeksu valley. At Secret Camp No. 2, units or individual persons on a visit to Headquarters were met, provided with rest or sent away and sometimes given short courses or training. Secret Camp No. 2 was the reception centre for visitors to Headquarters. There the visitors waited for instructions, had interviews, slept or received short courses or training. In those days, it was a rule for messengers coming to Headquarters to make their way from the

direction of Rimyongsu and follow the stream of the Sobaeksu from the entrance to the valley, to avoid leaving any trace of passage to Headquarters. The locations of secret camps were not known to everybody. If they had been known, they would not have been secret.

The details of Paektusan Secret Camp and other secret camps in the surrounding area were known to only several people, like Kim Ju Hyon, Kim Hae San, Kim Un Sin and Ma Tong Hui, who performed all liaison missions, and to a small number of commanding officers.

Fortunately these secret camps and their “inhabitants” were able to keep their existence secret, until the anti-Japanese revolution emerged victorious.

Mt. Paektu was my “home” during my prime of youth. That “home” contained a large number of my messmates, an incomparably larger number than my family at my childhood home. They stayed with me in that “home,” worked in the rain and snow of Mt. Paektu, and dreamed of today’s homeland.

Not many of the people, who shared weal and woe with me on Mt. Paektu, are still alive. For this reason we could not fulfil early enough the mission of an elder generation to tell the younger generation the revolutionary history of our Party and the results of our forerunners’ struggle, which were imprinted on every fold of Paektu Mountains.

I, too, failed to make the Paektusan Secret Camp known earlier to the younger generation. The many responsibilities on my shoulders, responsibilities to build the Party, State and Army, burdens of war and postwar reconstruction, did not permit me in my younger days to take time to pay a visit to my home base in Mt. Paektu.

On a number of occasions I told Pak Yong Sun and others to discover during their lives the site of the Paektusan Secret Camp for the younger generation, but even the formerly nimble carpenter and his company failed to find it, although he discovered the sites of the secret camps at Heixiazigou, Diyangxi and Hengshan, which he himself had built, and the camping sites on Chongbong, Pegae Hill and Mupho. But I did not blame them. They had never been to the secret camp in Sobaeksu valley.

After all, I myself identified the site of the Paektusan Secret Camp, only in my late years. I found some leisure only then and went to the Mt. Paektu area, as I wanted to see the newly-built secret camps in that area. On my way back, I found the terrain round the bridge over the Sobaeksu familiar to me. So I sent some members of the expedition party to Sobaeksu valley. I told them to climb up the valley until they found a very small piece of grassland at the foot of a crag as high as a hundred fathoms. I emphasized that the valley would not look distinct when seen from outside, because the mountain sides were very close to each other. The forest in that area was so dense and steep until those days, that my senior secretary and my aide-de-camp, who had been sent to inspect the area to build the Amnok riverine road for the visitors, lost their way and had a hard time. They were only rescued by the guard company, which had been sent to search for them. It was indeed no less labyrinthian than Mihunzhen. The members of the expedition party and visitors' group found some trees, where slogans had been inscribed, and then the sites of log houses and camping sites. In this way the Paektusan Secret Camp came to be shown to the younger revolutionary generation in its original look.

Mt. Paektu is now a school where the second, third, and fourth generations of our revolution learn from the revolutionary spirit of Paektu, cherished by the first generation. A great open-air revolutionary museum has been created on the vast land of Paektu.

With the progress of history the symbolic meaning of Mt. Paektu has grown richer. The mountain began to acquire a new meaning in the latter half of the 1930s on top of its original symbolic meaning.

The "lava" of the revolution to liberate the country, which erupted from the extinct volcano on Mt. Paektu, attracted the attention of 20 million Korean compatriots. Song Yong, a writer who had inspected the places swept by the flames of the anti-Japanese revolution, entitled his travelogue, "Mt. Paektu Is Visible from Anywhere." As the title indicates, Mt. Paektu has become an active volcano of national liberation, a sacred mountain of revolution, visible from anywhere, since the time when we entrenched ourselves in that mountain.

## **6. Patriotic Landowner Kim Jong Bu**

When communists emerged on the international political scene, the proletariat of all countries raised the slogan, “Down with landlords and capitalists!” Shouting this slogan, the working masses of Korea also waged a long, grim and fierce class struggle to overthrow the reactionary exploiting classes, which were allied with the foreign forces of imperialism.

Even the left-wingers of the Korean Revolutionary Party, the political party under Kukmin-bu, declared their objective of overthrowing landlords and capitalists and raised a whirlwind in their desire to knock them down.

We do not hide our idea of opposing landlords and capitalists or conceal our objective of fighting against them. Opposing exploiters who live on others’ sweat and blood; this is our life-long principle. I was and still am opposed to exploiters. I think that I will continue to hate those, who live in clover squandering the wealth, which has been produced at the expense of the sweat and blood of hundreds of millions of working masses, while these people suffer from starvation.

Progressive people throughout the world affirm the idea of humanism, which advocates an equitable distribution of material wealth and social equality. We oppose political dictatorship and economic monopoly by a minority of the propertied class and their spokesmen, as well as moral corruption, and regard it as our noble duty to put an end to all these evils.

In practice, of course, the potential overthrow of the exploiting class and issue of dealing with individuals of this class or propertied individuals must strictly be distinguished from each other. Consequently, during the anti-Japanese revolution, we struggled against the Japanese imperialists and wicked rich men, who were

lackeys of the enemy.

In the past, however, some communists only emphasized the class struggle, so that they committed a Leftist error in dealing with landlords and national capitalists, who were patriotic and opposed to imperialism. Their pursuit of a stereotyped policy of indiscriminate liquidation, expropriation and persecution of propertied people in political, economic and social aspects disregarding reality, led to a misunderstanding of communism in a number of countries.

This brought grist to the anti-communist propaganda mill of those, who opposed communism.

In our Republic there is no landlord or capitalist.

Class education is now provided on a high level and in great depth; therefore all officials can combine the class line and mass line. It can be said that the prejudice that all rich are bad, the narrow-minded view that the people of landlord and capitalist origin should be ruled with the same stick, regardless of their service records and merits, has now disappeared.

The people nowadays rejoice at the news that somebody, who was gloomy owing to his chequered family connections, has been admitted to the Party or promoted to the right post and is living optimistically. They regard it as their own happiness. This is a valuable result of the all-embracing politics, practised by the Workers' Party of Korea.

We have been pursuing all-embracing politics for half a century. Since the years of the anti-Japanese revolution, the true communists of Korea have worked hard under the banner of great national unity, to rally into a single force the various sections of the population, who have different family backgrounds, religion and property status.

I believe that an account of our experience with the landowner, Kim Jong Bu, will promote an understanding of our specific view on landlords and capitalists and the historical roots of our all-embracing politics.

We first met Kim Jong Bu late in August 1936. A small unit, which had been to Diyangxi on a fund-raising mission, brought deep in the night several persons, who were said to be pro-Japanese landlords,

including an old man apparently on the wrong side of seventy. At that time we worked among the masses at a lumbermen's settlement of Majiazi near Erdaogang.

I was surprised to find Kim Jong Bu's name in the list of the detained, as he had been classified as a "pro-Japanese landlord." Some of us reminisced that Ri Tong Hak was in charge of the small unit at the time. However, as far as I recall, it was Kim Ju Hyon who took Kim Jong Bu with him.

I summoned Kim Ju Hyon and asked him sternly, "What brought you to decide to knock down Kim Jong Bu?"

"That old man owns as many as 150 hectares of land. I have never heard of a man, who owns so much land as he does."

"Who made the law to knock down a man, owning 150 hectares of land?"

"Comrade Commander, don't ask me about the law, please. According to a saying, a rich man beggars three villages. A man as rich as that landlord will ruin more than ten villages."

I asked Kim Ju Hyon for his next piece of evidence. He gave me a lengthy explanation that Kim Jong Bu was on intimate terms with an councillor of a branch of the Japanese consulate, that the councillor had brought a Japanese capitalist, named Ito, from Yongchon or somewhere round North Kyongsang Province and let him give a loan of 6 000 *yen* to Kim Jong Bu to help him open a lumber yard, that the landlord had bought a truck and performed a large transaction with the backing of Japanese imperialists.

"Any other evidence?"

"Yes, a lot. As head of the forest conservation association and that of the rural union, he is said to frequent the office of Manchukuo. His son, Kim Man Du, also served as headman of the village of Erdaogang for some years under his wing."

When I asked if Kim Jong Bu had any good qualities, Kim Ju Hyon was somewhat embarrassed. He seemed to have given no thought to hearing the public opinion of his merits or had never imagined that I would be interested in such things.

“Good qualities? How can one expect good qualities from such a pro-Japanese element?”

The small unit leader’s report was completely negative. His thoroughly prejudiced report made me heartsick. Not yet completely free from the past tendency of asserting the class struggle and class spirit, and lacking a full grasp of Kim Jong Bu, he captured the landlord and even his son, labelling him a “pro-Japanese landlord” and “reactionary,” the man we had considered possible to enlist in the work of the united front, when we were coming to Changbai. His act contravened our policy of the united front, the Inaugural Declaration and the Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland.

He even used the telephone at Kim Jong Bu’s home as proof of his pro-Japanese elements. He contended that his telephone must have been required for spying, rather than as a means of luxury, and that he could only talk on the telephone to the consulate, police or the office of Manchukuo, and that such a telephone conversation would merely provide them with information against revolutionaries. In fact, in those days no ordinary person dreamed of such a telephone at his home.

Nevertheless, wouldn’t it be preposterous to see a telephone at a man’s home as a sign of pro-Japanese tendency and as a means of benefiting the enemy? If every one of us were to judge people in such a way, our united front policy would come across grave difficulties in practice, which was not a problem relating to Kim Jong Bu alone.

Before rebuking the small unit, I criticized myself in my mind for failing to teach my subordinates properly. When dealing with Zhang Wei-hua in Fusong, some of us were apprehensive from their prejudice. It was not until many sleigh loads of aid goods and a large sum of money had been sent to us by Zhang Wei-hua, that they admitted that there were good people among the propertied class.

But when they saw in Changbai a landlord possessing 150 hectares, they became suspicious of him.

How could people who admitted Zhang Wei-hua as our ally, fail to realize that Kim Jong Bu was a man to be embraced in the united front?

This meant that there had been a shortcoming in our education about the united front policy.

The masses of strata, we were talking about, included people in all walks of life, people with different backgrounds and living conditions. There could be no panacea for dealing with all these people. But some principle should serve as a reference in all cases.

What principle served as our standard for judging people in those days? Whether a man was pro-Japanese or anti-Japanese or loved his country or not. We maintained that a person who loved his country, his nation and his fellow people and hated the Japanese imperialists could be our ally, and that a person who was pro-Japanese for his own pleasure and comfort, caring nothing about his country, nation and compatriots, should be the target of our struggle.

We saw Kim Jong Bu in this light and defined him as a man we could work together with for the united front. We planned to write to him on our arrival in Changbai, asking for his cooperation or invite him to the secret camp for an interview.

“I think your judgement of Kim Jong Bu is ready-made and unscientific. You must not see people in such a superficial way. The man you judge as a pro-Japanese landlord is, in fact, a patriotic landlord. I know his past well. You say that Kim Jong Bu is such and such and Corporal Kim is such and such, judging them from the comments you have heard from one person or two in Diyangxi. You have only seen them superficially and have not looked into their minds. If Kim Jong Bu were such a bad man, why should the people of Diyangxi have erected a monument in his honour in their village? Do you know that there is a monument in Diyangxi?”

The small unit members replied in the negative.

I told them that if they had known Kim Jong Bu's past, they would not have looked down upon him as a pro-Japanese landlord, and that I could guarantee there and then that he was a man to be welcomed, rather than knocked down, that he was a patriotic landlord, rather than a reactionary landlord.

“Comrade Commander, we have wronged him, without knowing

your intention clearly,” Kim Ju Hyon said, full of remorse. “I will apologize to him on behalf of the small unit and return him to Diyangxi.”

I did not agree with him.

“Don’t return him. I wanted to see him. Since things have come to this pass, take him to the secret camp. I think I should take time off and talk to him. I will apologize to him on your behalf.”

That day I explained to the small unit all the reasons why I felt we should cooperate with him for the united front. Consequently the past of the landlord was known to the whole unit within that day.

I guess Kim Jong Bu was born in the early 1860s. When we were in Changbai, he was already in his seventies. His hometown was Chongsudong, Uiju County, North Phyongan Province. When I was at school in Jilin, Jang Chol Ho from Uiju used to tell me about Kim Jong Bu with a feeling of attachment and how he had committed himself to the Independence Army movement, although he was a very rich man. Kim Man Du, his son, had been a childhood playmate of Jang Chol Ho and O Tong Jin in their days at Chongsudong.

When the Independence Army fought in high spirits in Changbai, Kim Jong Bu was the head of the Southern Department of the War Fund-Raising Association. He provided the Independence Army with clothing, food and other supplies at the expense of his own family property. When the army was strong, he produced potato starch in Diyangxi and cleaned rice at a water mill for the association.

The independence fighters, operating in Jilin, Fusong, Linjiang, Badaogou, Huadian and other places used to stay at Kim Jong Bu’s house, when they came to Changbai, and also had meetings there. Judging from this fact alone, I thought I should treat him prudently.

Kim Jong Bu also made a considerable contribution to the education of the younger generation. Under his sponsorship a village school for conventional education was established in Diyangxi around 1920. As seeking to give the children of his tenants better education, he transformed the village school into a four-year course modern primary school, and then innovated it into a six-year course private school, with

an enrollment of more than 150 pupils. He made sure that children from neighbouring villages were admitted to his school. The expenses for the management of the Jongsan Private School and the payment for its teachers were provided by the rents received from his tenants. The school provided national education to inculcate in the pupils the idea of independence and sovereignty, as well as love for the country and nation.

His tenants paid their rents on a voluntary basis. Rent was decided by the tenants themselves, say, one sack or ten sacks, according to the crop situation, as Kim Jong Bu as their landlord had not fixed the amounts of rents, according to the sizes and qualities of the rented land. There was not even a contract between the landlord and his tenants, a contract for the sharecropping of the annual harvest.

Ri Chi Ho, an anti-Japanese revolutionary fighter, who had once been Kim Jong Bu's tenant in Diyangxi, said, "I have never heard of a landlord, who was as good-natured and magnanimous as Kim Jong Bu. We tilled his land, not even knowing how much rent we should pay. We borrowed food from him occasionally, but never returned it with interest. But he did not take issue; he left it up to us. Not surprisingly, the villagers put up a monument in his honour in front of his house. He had many hectares in the upland of Diyangxi, but all his land was worth no more than 15 hectares of fertile lowland fields."

The people of Diyangxi unanimously praised Kim Jong Bu, calling him, "Our uncle," "Our head of department," "Our school founder." This was unusual.

The landlords in neighbouring villages feared of his benevolence. They were afraid that their tenants might be envious of their counterparts in Diyangxi.

They said to Kim Jong Bu, "Isn't it too much to be as generous as you are, allowing your tenants to pay their rents as much as they please, without making contracts with you? If you continue like this, your property will be depleted in less than three or four years."

However, Kim Jong Bu did not listen to the people, who occasionally advised him to refrain from benevolence. He said,

“Should my family of three starve, because no contract has been signed for the rents? When my tenants eat their fill, I will also eat my fill; when they are hungry, I also have to go hungry. With this principle in mind, we can share each other’s kind hearts. That’s all there is.”

As Kim Jong Bu was such a benevolent man, the Manchukuo authorities and Japanese consulate dared not approach him as a mere nobody.

The landlords, taken by the small unit, included a man called Corporal Kim. He was also a patriotic landlord. He was addressed by the title, because he had served as a noncommissioned officer in the modernized army of old Korea. His full name was Kim Jong Chil.

Corporal Kim volunteered military service in his teens. Once he served in the first modernized army of our country, an army called “Pyolgigun.” He ardently sympathized with the reformist party, when it made a coup in the year of Kapsin.

He was simple and upright like a country woodcutter, but possessed a strong political conviction. During the Kabo reform (a bourgeois reform in 1894), he performed his duty in the Royal Guard Regiment and was then transferred to a garrison force. After the loss of national sovereignty, he joined the Righteous Volunteers Army. Following the decline of this army, he was lost in the pursuit of livelihood.

He was loyal to his military duty during the existence of the modernized army in the closing years of old Korea. He witnessed the collapse of the army of the Ri dynasty (disbanded by the Japanese imperialists on August, 1907) and experienced all the tortuous events and crises of modern Korea. According to Kim Jong Bu, he had not been promoted to a higher rank despite many years of devoted service, as he was from Kapsan in the northern region, a place of exiles despised by the rulers of the Ri dynasty. The feudal court professed military reform and abolition of the caste, but apparently had not discarded the old practice of discrimination against the northern and western people in the promotion of officials.

Corporal Kim owned ten hectares of land and many draught cattle, but was a progressive-minded, enterprising patriot.

In those days many people stood aghast at the motion of Kim Jong Bu or Corporal Kim as a man to be enlisted in the united front. They felt we were preaching “class collaboration.”

Only half a century ago, when Marxist or Leninist propositions were accepted as the only guide to action in the world of communists, some people disputed our effort to join hands with this or that landowner as a departure from Marxism. They trembled at our scheme to make some capitalists our ally, saying that it was heretic of Leninism. Such a tendency resulted from a dogmatic approach to Marxism-Leninism, an approach which, divorced from the specific character of our country and the actual revolutionary situation, regarded Marxism-Leninism as absolute.

The statistics of the class differentiation and change in land ownership in the Korean rural community before liberation indicate that, when the number of large Japanese landowners increased, large Korean landowners quickly decreased or were reduced to middle or small owners.

The Japanese imperialists laid the groundwork for Government-General, by preserving feudal land ownership. During this process some indigenous landowners amassed land and money with the backing of the Government-General and invested in industry and commerce to create large landed estates or become comprador capitalists. However, the overwhelming majority of the native landowners were reduced to middle or small holders.

Naturally some of these middle or small landowners adopted a patriotic stand, albeit moderate, against the Japanese imperialist occupation and their colonial rule, which had degraded them.

In fact, some Korean landowners and capitalists provided active support to the anti-Japanese revolution; some of them handed over the ownership of their land and factories to the state, as soon as the country was liberated, and became ordinary working people, devoted to the construction of a new country. These conscientious men of property, who placed their motherland and national prosperity above their own wealth, had no political reason to oppose the communist policy or any

emotional or psychological basis to obstruct their revolutionary movement.

Admittedly, in my childhood I also thought that landlords and capitalists were all parasites.

In my Changdok School days, however, I learned that Paek Son Haeng had contributed a large area of land to the school. Since then I believed that some propertied people did not lack a conscience, and that distinctions should be made between patriotic and reactionary ones.

My connection with Zhang Wei-hua occasioned me to criticize and deny theoretically the view that the propertied class in general should be overthrown. My acquaintance with Chen Han-zhang also helped me confirm my view of the rich.

What would happen, if we were to strike such rich patriots or give a wide berth to them? That would mean rejecting the people, who support the revolution and result in the loss of propertied patriots and even the major share of the masses. The masses would oppose such a cold-hearted revolution. Only the enemy would gloat over such developments. A slight error or deviation in the class struggle would mean playing into the hands of the enemy's stratagem and benefit them.

I found myself in an embarrassing situation, as I had to apologize to Kim Jong Bu and his company as the Commander of the guerrilla army.

On my orders, the unit leader brought them to my room.

I sincerely apologized to them for my men's insolent actions of walking them off at night for no justifiable reason.

Kim Jong Bu said nothing in reply; he merely cast a hostile and apprehensive glance at me. The other people looked the same. Apparently they were anxious about what lay in store for them. I wished to talk more amiably, but we could not share each other's feelings. In such a cold atmosphere it was hardly possible to continue our conversation.

"I don't know which army you are, but if you are the Independence Army, tell me how much you need for your military funds, and if you

are bandits tell me the size of the ransom you want.” Kim Jong Bu’s prickly words broke the icy silence.

His words added to the tension in the room. Apparently Kim Jong Bu and his company thought that we were the Independence Army or bandits.

Bandits and the Chinese nationalist anti-Japanese units often used hostage tactics, and Kim Jong Bu himself had been taken hostage a few times and greatly suffered.

The company of landlords watched me with bated breath. They seemed to fear that I would claim a preposterous ransom.

At that moment, the unit leader appeared before me with ten packets of cigarettes. He explained that he did not pay for the cigarettes, as the shopkeeper in Diyangxi would not accept the price, however hard he tried to pay.

I asked the landlords what kind of a man the shopkeeper was.

“He is a kind-hearted man, named Kim Se Il,” Kim Man Du replied for his company. “He is a cripple, and his wife does mill work for hire, in order to eke out a living. They were so pitiful, that I gave them some money telling them to try and open a general shop. So they are keeping a small shop.”

Hearing this, I rebuked the unit leader. “I suppose you haven’t behaved properly towards the poor man. Did you really not pay him, because he declined to accept?”

This conversation melted away the icy atmosphere in an instant, to my surprise.

The landlords exchanged significant glances with one another, apparently shocked by something. They even whispered among themselves. They seemed to be saying that I was too hard on my subordinate. This provided a good chance to resume the talk.

“I am awfully sorry to have made you, old men, walk in the dreary night. We make this kind of mistake, although not often, while travelling around places, which are not familiar to us. I believe that you are magnanimous enough to forgive my comrades for their possible rudeness.”

When I apologized again in this manner, they seemed to feel relieved.

“Well, which army is this? You don’t look like bandits or the erstwhile Independence Army in appearance. ...” Kim Jong Bu watched me closely with curiosity.

“We are the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army, fighting for Korea’s independence.” In this way we introduced ourselves to the influential people in Changbai.

“The People’s Revolutionary Army! Do you mean General Kim Il Sung’s army, which routed the Japanese in Fusong?”

“Yes.”

“Is General Kim Il Sung still in Fusong?”

“Forgive me for not greeting you, sir. I am Kim Il Sung.”

Kim Jong Bu stared dubiously at me, and then mumbled bitterly.

“Don’t look down upon me, because I am over seventy. Can it be that General Kim Il Sung, who is said to use the art of compressing space, is so young? He is not an ordinary man. Rumour has it that he even has double lines of teeth.”

At that moment, Kim Ju Hyon interrupted our conversation and explained that the man in front of him was Commander Kim Il Sung.

Only now Kim Jong Bu identified me. He apologized for failing to recognize me sooner.

“For that matter, a young General is better than an old General,” he said to Corporal Kim.

Corporal Kim replied that a healthy and sturdy young General was more reliable, because the fight to regain the country would not be over in a year or two.

We talked on in an amicable atmosphere. The landlords asked me many questions. Kim Man Du embarrassed me by asking me if I could divine what would happen in three days, as the rumour had it.

Although a silly question, I felt awkward as I answered.

“It is a mere rumour that I can foresee events three days ahead. We are good at estimating the situation, not because I can foretell the future, but because the People’s Revolutionary Army maintains close

touch with the people and thereby obtains timely and valuable information. I believe the people are as wise as Zhu-ge Liang. Without the people's support and assistance we cannot make one step forward."

"General, as you extol the people to the skies, I feel awkward. I feel we should help you in your great cause, so please tell us what we should do for you."

"To tell you the truth, we wished to see you when we are out in Changbai to discuss the matter with you. For several years now we have been fighting, arms in hand, to destroy the Japanese imperialist aggressors in the wilderness of Manchuria. We started the war empty-handed, but the People's Revolutionary Army is now destroying the enemy in many places. As I mentioned earlier, it would have been impossible for the People's Revolutionary Army to grow stronger as it is today, without the people's support and assistance. To defeat the Japanese, who are armed to the teeth, and liberate our country, the whole nation must unite in mind and body. All the people, including landlords and capitalists, who love their country, must come out in support of the People's Revolutionary Army."

Apparently, the landlords were greatly encouraged by my words.

"Whoever loves his country and his compatriots is duty bound to support the revolution and has the right to do so. Sir, you have reclaimed hundreds of thousands of *phyong* of slash-and-burn fields in the upland of Diyangxi in order to contribute money and rice to the independence movement, haven't you? Consequently your tenants and the independence fighters have agreed to erect a monument in your honour."

"Excuse me, but how do you know the past of such an insignificant man, General?"

"I heard your name from my late father and also from O Tong Jin, Jang Chol Ho, and Kang Jin Gon and kept it in my memory."

"What was your father's name?"

"Kim Hyong Jik, sir. When he was in Badaogou and Fusong, he talked a lot about you."

"Oh, my! ..." Kim Jong Bu gazed at me, eyes blinking. "Not to

know that you, General, are Kim Hyong Jik's son! ... While living in the country, this old man has become ignorant of developments in the world. Anyhow I was on intimate terms with your father. ... I can't find an apt word to express all my excitement at seeing you in command of your army to the land, which was trodden by your late father."

"I am also very glad to meet a patriot like you. While ignorant of you, my comrades have taken you here. So I explained to them that you are a patriotic landlord, rather than a pro-Japanese or reactionary landlord. Although we have been unable to erect a monument in your honour as the people of Diyangxi did, we will not commit such a foolish mistake, as to take a patriot for a pro-Japanese landlord. You should be proud of the devoted service you have rendered to the independence movement."

Kim Jong Bu, with tears in his eyes, thanked me. "Since you say that I am a patriotic landlord, I would have nothing to regret, even if I died now."

Kim Man Du also expressed his gratitude to me with a low bow. Other landlords glanced at the father and son with a mixed feeling of envy and apprehension.

Sensing their feeling, Kim Jong Bu went on, "To tell you the truth, General, they are not reactionary landlords. I swear on my honour, General. If you trust me, please don't consider them as traitors."

"Why should I not trust them, if you supply references? If you do so in person, I won't see them in a bad light."

On hearing this, the landlords bowed in thanks.

Our first interview ended there. My impression of the talk remains vivid in my memory. If it had been an interrogation of pro-Japanese elements or an indignation meeting to accuse them of crimes, I would have been unable to recollect so light-heartedly, as I do the conversation I had with influential persons from Diyangxi, until midnight in a drizzling night at the lumbermen's hostel in Majiazhi where I met Kim Jong Bu and his company.

At that time I did not ask if they had exploited their tenants or about the level of support they provided to the Japanese imperialists in the

pursuit of their colonial policy or the wrong they had done to their motherland and people. Instead, I took it for granted that those landlords, were not pro-Japanese and immediately displayed my confidence in them. This confidence helped them change that night their views of communists.

The day's talk, however, was merely our mutual introduction and the beginning of our relationship. The principal matters I wanted to discuss with them still remained for the future. I aimed to lead the landlords of Diyangxi ideologically, in the spirit of the "Inaugural Declaration of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland," to encourage them to provide the maximum material support for the Korean People's Revolutionary Army and, through them, transform the influential persons in Changbai, who were merely looking on the revolution or obstructing it, into sympathizers, supporters and cooperators for the revolution. I had to hold many more talks with them.

But I intended to return Kim Jong Bu and his son to Diyangxi immediately.

The next day when I told him to return home, Kim Jong Bu said in surprise, "General, I thought about many things last night. This time I met you by providence. I have tried to work for the country and the nation in various ways, but all without much success. I am now old and weak, but I realize that good conduct alone is not enough to save the nation. As I was so anxious to find a way to contribute to national liberation in my late years, I had the good luck to meet you, General.

"If I stay here, my son, when he is back home to Diyangxi, can send aid goods over here on the grounds of saving me. My son will say to the authorities that he has to send goods to the guerrilla army in order to bring his father back home. If he tells them not to be nervous about his dispatch of food, clothes and footwear to the mountain, they will connive at it."

I was deeply moved by his words. The cry of his conscience touched my heart.

But it was too much. So I said, "I fully understand what you mean.

Your noble suggestion inspires me with great strength. But this is not the suitable place for you, as we have no decent accommodation or food. The weather will grow much colder, and the Japanese imperialists will be more violent in their attempts to ‘mop us up.’ So you must return home.”

But the old man persistently refused. He begged me not to deprive him of his best opportunity to help the independence of the country, although he might not be able to fight as a soldier. I allowed him to stay in the secret camp for some time and let his son return home.

We arranged special quarters in the secret camp for the people from Diyangxi and looked after them as best as we could.

In the depths of mountain, with no ready source of supplies, we ourselves had to eat gruel now and then, but provided them with rice meals from our emergency rations. My men smoked leaf tobacco, but we supplied cigarettes to them. Kim Jong Bu spent his birthday and lunar New Year’s Day in 1937 in the secret camp.

I remember that his birthday fell on one day of the twelfth month by the lunar calendar. He did not want to return home even then; he insisted that he would not go home before the aid goods from his son at Diyangxi arrived.

I felt that I was doing wrong to the old man and his family. Could there be anything more heartless than keeping an old man in his seventies in the mountain on his birthday?

I ordered my men working behind the enemy lines to bring rice, meat, and liquor and visited his quarters on his birthday in the company of my orderly, who carried the supplies on his back. Although not nectar and ambrosia, the birthday meal we prepared for the old man was almost unprecedented in the history of the People’s Revolutionary Army. Even for the wedding ceremonies for our comrades-in-arms, we never laid on such a sumptuous table. In those days a bowl of rice and soup for each were all we could afford on such occasions.

Kim Jong Bu became wide-eyed at the sight of his birthday dinner table.

“What does this feast mean, when lunar New Year’s Day is still far off?” he asked.

“Today is your birthday, sir. I congratulate you on behalf of the People’s Revolutionary Army.”

I filled a cup of wine to the brim and offered it to him, saying, “Mr. Kim, I am sorry to have kept you in the mountain in this winter cold on your birthday. Please accept this humble birthday dinner as a token of our best wishes.”

Tears trickled down from Kim Jong Bu’s eyes, as he said, holding the cup in his hand:

“I am so sorry to see you guerrillas endure all these hardships eating maize porridge, in order to win back the lost country, that I can hardly eat three hot meals every day. To give a birthday party in honour of an old man like me in the depths of mountain! General, I will never forget your kindness even in my grave.”

“I wish you a long life until the country wins independence.”

“It doesn’t matter whether I live long or not. But I wish you good health, General, so that you can save the nation from sufferings.”

That day I talked a lot with Kim Jong Bu.

A severe cold set in and there was heavy snowfall in the mountain. So I dissuaded him from going home. Afraid of a possible accident on his way home in the deep snow, I made sure that he stayed in the secret camp through the winter.

He frankly told me about his impressions of the four months he spent in the secret camp. It was a summary of his impressions of the People’s Revolutionary Army as well as a brief statement of his views on the Korean communists whom he had observed for a long time.

“To be candid, I did not look upon the communists with a gracious eye. But, General, your communism is quite different. You discriminate between pro-Japanese and anti-Japanese landlords and attack only pro-Japanese. Who could dislike such communism? The Japanese call the guerrillas ‘communist bandits,’ but that is a nonsense. ... I have thought many things, eating the food of guerrillas over the past months. Of course, I have made a fresh resolve. I don’t think I can

live many more years, but I will dedicate my remaining years to the worthwhile cause. I am determined to back up the People's Revolutionary Army, even if I die. Believe me, I am your man, alive or dead."

During his stay in the secret camp, he became our active supporter.

The landlords we had brought to the secret camp to educate and obtain material aid, included some, who were treated with scorn by the peasants. But Kim Jong Bu stood surety for them and held them under his control. He gave them good influence, so that they all took the patriotic path against the Japanese.

Kim Jong Bu offered more than 3 000 *yuan* in support of the People's Revolutionary Army and supplied it with food, cloth and various other goods. We made wadded coats and uniforms for all my unit with the cloth he had supplied.

On his return to Diyangxi, his son supported the guerrillas in a big way, true to the resolve he had made before us. On his arrival in his village, he raised a large sum of money by selling ten heads of cattle from the ones he had received from the authorities. In those days the county authorities loaned him dozens of heads of cattle to reclaim wasteland, allegedly to provide secure livelihood to the peasants of Diyangxi. Afterwards, he again loaned twenty heads of good cattle from the county authorities and on his way back home handed them over to us. He even sent his sewing machine to the guerrillas as aid goods.

Since the advance of the People's Revolutionary Army to Mt. Paektu area, the enemy tightened up control of the people in Changbai and stepped up their repression. Kim Jong Bu and his family were blacklisted.

One day Kim Man Du was summoned to Changbai police station for interrogation.

"According to information we have obtained, you maintain contacts with Kim Il Sung's army, sending a large amount of supplies there. Tell us frankly what kinds of goods and how much you have sent."

Kim Man Du flatly denied and made a plausible excuse.

“You speak as if I maintain secret communication with Kim Il Sung’s army; this is a misunderstanding. Such communication does not and cannot exist. Do you think that a communist army uses a large landowner like me as its agent? You know full well that my father is detained in a secret camp of the communist army. What does it matter if a son sent them some goods to save his father? I am anxious to save my father even if it costs all my family property. If you were in my place, wouldn’t you do so?”

The police authorities accepted his excuse as reasonable and questioned him no more, releasing him.

Kim Jong Bu and his son sold a large portion of his land and work animals in order to support the revolutionary army in this manner.

Kim Jong Bu had reclaimed wasteland in order to supply food and funds to the Independence Army and become a landowner. He spent all the remainder of his property and money on the support of the People’s Revolutionary Army. It is not as simple as it sounds for a landowner or capitalist to give up the idea of amassing wealth, which is vital to them, and offer up the source of wealth to the country.

This is the depth of Kim Jong Bu’s patriotism and the height of the service he rendered to the anti-Japanese revolution. During the whole period of the anti-Japanese revolution I seldom saw a landlord who supported us in such a big way and with such ardent patriotic loyalty as Kim Jong Bu did.

Some of Kim Jong Bu’s feelings and experiences in the secret camp were carried in *Samcholli*, a magazine, in later days in the form of interview with me.

Part of the interview is given below.

“... Kim Il Sung is well-known in the border area, and everyone who reads a newspaper will remember.

“The man, addressed as commander-in-chief, conducts raiding actions in command of ... Manchurian and Korean subordinates, directs his bases in the mountain in stubborn resistance to the army, rallies his comrades in secret, dreaming one thing or another! Who is this man?”

“Old man Kim Jong Bu had an interview with this enigmatic man.

“A man of slender build, with a roaring voice, and a manner of speech, which suggests that he is from Phyongan Province. A virile young man in his twenties, much younger than he is generally imagined to be. He has a good command of Manchurian, with no affectation of being a commander, shares bed and board with his men, wearing the same clothes as those of his men, and sharing weal and woe with them, with apparent influence and magnanimity.

“ ‘Old man, how do you find this cold weather?’ he greeted me cordially, and then. ...

“ ‘... Which of us young men would dislike a warm place and a comfortable life? Although we have to skip two or three meals of barley porridge, we endure all these hardships for such and such. I am also a man, who sheds tears, blood and has a soul. But we move about in this manner in the cold winter.’

“He spoke in a calm voice and was good-mannered, unlike a ringleader of bandits, which was beyond my imagination.

“He consoled old man Kim in various ways, saying that in the rigours of winter and deep snow it would be impossible to walk another step and that he need not worry, for he would go back home next spring, and then ordered his men to take special care of him. ...”

This article was written by Ryang Il Chon, Pak In Jin’s disciple in Hyesan. Kim Jong Bu seems to have spoken his mind comparatively frankly and daringly to the mass media, which was under the surveillance and control of the Japanese authorities. Surprisingly the magazine *Samcholli* carried this kind of article at a time when there was a strict news blackout about the movements of the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army.

Kim Jong Bu moved to Wangqing-Hamatang, as I had advised him to, and is said to have died there, without seeing the liberation of the country.

I met Kim Jong Bu in my twenties and now am past eighty, or about ten years older than Kim Jong Bu was at that time. On the wrong side of eighty I can feel more tangibly how much he suffered in the secret

camp of the guerrillas, as if it were my own suffering. I tried my best to take care of him, but I may not have been meticulous enough. I still regret that I was unable to take better care of him and provide him with sumptuous food.

I have been unable to move his grave, and have not erected a monument in his honour.

In its early days in Mt. Paektu, my unit was in extremely difficult circumstances. We had no money, rice, cloth, practically nothing. But Kim Jong Bu solved many problems for us. This was the best gift he could make to the true sons and daughters of Korea as a senior independence fighter. I cannot forget my indebtedness to him.

The gallant act of conscience and patriotism displayed by a propertied man, the owner of a large estate, like Kim Jong Bu, made a tangible contribution to the preparation for nationwide anti-Japanese resistance, and provided powerful support to our cause. In the 1930s, when armed resistance was the main trend of the anti-Japanese national liberation struggle, unlike in the 1920s, landowners or capitalists, who wished to give us material, financial or moral support, had to risk their own lives. However, Kim Jong Bu did so.

Consequently we regard him as a patriot and still remember him even after several decades.

In half our country there are still landlords and capitalists. Apparently some of them are billionaires. There will be reactionaries and no small number of patriots.

What will be the attitude of the Korean communists towards landlords and capitalists in a reunified federal state? The story of patriotic landlord Kim Jong Bu suffices to answer this question.

## **CHAPTER 14. THE PEOPLE IN CHANGBAI**

*(September–December 1936)*

### **1. West Jiandao**

Ever since the several counties north of the Tuman River, which flows eastward from Mt. Paektu, have been called Jiandao or north Jiandao, the area north of the Amnok River, which flows westward from Mt. Paektu, has been called west Jiandao.

West Jiandao is a historic area directly associated with the activities of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army in the latter half of the 1930s. The Paektusan Base covers the wide area of west Jiandao and the homeland around Mt. Paektu. The vast area of west Jiandao, along with the Paektusan Secret Camp established by the KPRA in the homeland, holds an important place in the Paektusan Base. In this context, whenever the Paektusan Base implies only the area on the Chinese frontier, it may be termed the West Jiandao Base.

Some people used to refer to it as the Changbai Base. However, I feel this is wrong, as one gains the false impression that the Paektusan Base covers only the area of west Jiandao including Changbai, whereas in actual fact the base was not limited to the Changbai area; it was very big, covering several counties in west Jiandao on the upper reaches of the Songhua and north of the Amnok and a vast area of homeland, around Mt. Paektu.

The latter half of the 1930s marked a heyday for the KPRA's military and political activities. This period should be embossed with gold letters. After building dozens of secret camps near Mt. Paektu, we started to carry out new strategic tasks, determined at the Nanhutou meeting, operating in west Jiandao. Now the area became a battlefield,

where fighting was most frequent and gunshots were the loudest.

I often said that west Jiandao was a good place. Although the scenery is beautiful, I meant that its inhabitants are good. No matter how beautiful, a place cannot be considered good, if its inhabitants are ill-disposed. On the contrary, a barren land, where trees do not thrive, is called a good place when its inhabitants are kind-hearted.

In those days many Koreans lived in west Jiandao. Poor Korean immigrants grew potatoes in slash-and-burn patches, in insufficient quantities for their wretched existence. They built villages on barren plateaus and valleys in west Jiandao, calling them Phungсандок, Kapsандок, Kiljudок and Myongchondок after their native villages in the homeland, and toiled away in a laborious life, recounting the tale of Tangun, the Founder of Korea, and *The Tale of Ondal* under the pine-knot light.

Most landlords were Chinese. Although there were Korean landlords in some places, they were few and far between. Owing to the size of land they owned, they were petty landlords, acting no better than rich farmers.

Most Koreans living in west Jiandao had drifted there from their motherland to seek livelihood or were patriots, who had embarked on the road of the anti-Japanese independence movement to remove the disgrace of a ruined nation, after Japan's annexation of Korea.

We met in all the villages of slash-and-burn peasants in west Jiandao we visited, people who had devoted themselves to the movement of the Independence Army in the bygone days, as well as people who had assisted the army. As I already mentioned in preceding chapters, Kang Jin Gon, a veteran of the Independence Army, had also lived in Changbai County, while Hong Pom Do, O Tong Jin and Ri Kuk Ro had frequented there via Kuandian, Fusong and Antu. My uncle on my mother's side, Kang Jin Sok, had formed the Paeksan Armed Group in Linjiang and conducted his activities.

In west Jiandao quite a few people, who had failed in attempts to launch peasant union movements in various places in the homeland, brought their families there to settle. They opened night schools at

almost every village in Changbai and worked to enlighten the masses. Most renowned revolutionaries in Changbai area, including Ri Je Sun, Choe Kyong Hwa, Jong Tong Chol, Kang Ton and Kim Se Ok, taught at night schools. Many private schools for Korean children were established in the area by exiles and patriotic, public-minded people, who had emigrated from the homeland.

These private schools devoted considerable time to patriotic education. Mass enlightenment through night schools, as well as the school education of children and youth, produced many Korean patriots in west Jiandao.

The strong national spirit of the people in this area and their bitter hatred for the Japanese emanated naturally from their miserable living conditions, as well as from the consistent enlightenment movement, conducted by patriotic thinkers and their precursors. They had such intensified national and anti-Japanese feelings that our operatives could easily recruit hardcore elements and use them to organize many people.

By the early 1930s we had already sent operatives of the Korean Revolutionary Army to west Jiandao and blown “Jilin wind” there. Thanks to their efforts, a considerable number of revolutionary organizations sprang up in the area. After debating the establishment of a new type of base in Nanhutou and Donggang, we dispatched a small unit, headed by Kim Ju Hyon, to the area. The small unit roved many villages around Mt. Paektu, focussing on Changbai County, learning about the state of the revolutionary movement in that area, recruiting hardcore elements, educating the masses, and thereby laying the foundations for the political and military activities, due to be launched by the main force in the future. Their efforts spawned solid foundations, facilitating assistance to the activities of the main force of the KPRA and promoting the mass development of the anti-Japanese national united front movement.

This was the prime factor, which enabled us to rapidly transform west Jiandao area into a revolutionary area, without experiencing any hitches.

We learned another valuable lesson during our activities in west Jiandao; qualified operatives could organize the masses and transform them into revolutionaries very quickly, by instilling revolutionary ideas, relying on favourable mass foundations.

We also discovered that the rule of Manchukuo had had virtually no effect on west Jiandao. Most inhabitants were poor peasants, who subsisted on the potatoes they cultivated. Very few people could afford to pay taxes. Only a few government officials, apart from the county headman, ruled over the people in Changbai County.

After some months in Fusong, I discovered that only a small number of people in the government office of the county could conduct land surveying and registration properly. This led to such a pass, that the officials deplored the fact that many people were tilling unclaimed land without obtaining a permission.

Police operations in Fusong area were crippled by the ties of kinship and hometown links. Moreover, many of the policemen had been hunters in former days. As they had been picked out on the merit of their marksmanship, the policemen were all ignorant and unable to control the people properly. This led to ineffective administration.

I discovered the situation was very similar in Changbai. These factors facilitated the awakening of the masses to revolutionary consciousness and their organization.

In west Jiandao no people persecuted the Korean communists, stigmatizing them as “Minsaengdan” members, no one censured Koreans for fighting to liberate their country under the banner of the Korean revolution or put brakes on their efforts. In other words, nobody held us contemptuous for living in a foreign country and discriminated against us. This was another favourable factor, enabling us to conduct free political and military activities in the areas along the Amnok and deep in the homeland round Mt. Paektu, unaffected by any restraint and restriction, acting in accordance with our own conviction and determination to bring about an upsurge in the anti-Japanese revolution.

We did not feel any restraint in forming our own party

organizations; we could launch the drive to form independent party organizations in a big way, in accordance with our plan for both west Jiandao and Korea.

In a word, no particular people in that area put a spoke in our wheel. We could attack walled towns, form party organizations and advance into the homeland in large units, as we deemed necessary.

By contrast, things were different during our struggle in the guerrilla bases in north Jiandao. In those days, our short visits to the people in the homeland across the Tuman had been criticized as a practice of nationalism. When we had proposed the creation of a people's revolutionary government, the East Manchuria Special District Party Committee and the county Party committees had objected and tried to force us to build a soviet government, saying that this was the line of the central authorities.

Another favourable factor enabled us to expedite the rapid transformation of the people in west Jiandao into revolutionaries and encouraged them to render active support to our independent line of struggle; the people did not worship Russia. They yearned for socialism, but were virtually unaffected by Russia.

However, north Jiandao, bordering the far eastern region of Russia by land, had been considerably influenced by Russia. The people there used many words borrowed from Russian in their everyday language. Just as the elderly in North Hamgyong Province today call match *pjikkae*, the people in north Jiandao in those days called it the same way in Russian. The people in Wangqing, Hunchun, Yanji and Helong more frequently said the Russian words “*pioner*,” “*kolkhoz*” and “*yacheika*” than “children's corps,” “collective farm” and “cell.” Some used Russian words on purpose to show off their knowledge, but most people used Russian words to express their craving for socialism and intimacy with the Soviet people, who had emerged victorious in a socialist revolution for the first time in the world. In a sense, their use of Russian words could be regarded as a simple expression of their sympathy with the communist ideal.

All the people in north Jiandao, men and women, young and old,

could sing a few Russian songs. They danced Russian dances skilfully. The dance of sitting and standing while slapping his leg with one hand as well as dances, which are staged today at the April Spring Friendship Art Festivals, were staged in the guerrilla zones.

In such places as Hunchun and Wangqing we frequently came across self-styled communists, clad in the *rubashka* (shirts–Tr.) worn by Russians, who shouted for victory in the world revolution and the proletarian dictatorship.

While living in Russian dress, using words borrowed from Russian, singing Russian songs and dancing Russian dances, and feeling sympathy with Russia, the first socialist country in the world, worship of Russia and a belief that she was the best country in the world and that her people were the best in the world, wormed its way into the minds of the people in north Jiandao before they even realized.

They also worshipped China to some extent. Quite a few of them thought that the Korean revolution could only succeed in the wake of victory in the Chinese revolution and that the Korean revolution could only be completed only with aid from the Chinese people. They used words borrowed from Russian and also Chinese. The people there called spade *guangqiao*.

However, the people in west Jiandao never pronounced Chinese or Russian. They used the untainted dialects of Hamgyong and Phyongan provinces, as they had done in their motherland. The Koreans there preserved their own national character in their lifestyle, manners, diet, language and all other aspects.

After advancing to the Mt. Paektu area, we toured west Jiandao and became acquainted with the physical geography and tendencies of the masses; we realized that the area offered favourable conditions in every aspect for guerrilla activities. Our determination to build up a revolutionary stronghold near Mt. Paektu and launch a vigorous armed struggle grew firmer and unchangeable, during contacts with the people there and acclimatization there.

The movement of the main force of the KPRA to west Jiandao constituted a momentous event, ushering in a great new era, termed by

our historians and people as the heyday of the anti-Japanese revolution. It was a historic event, casting a beam of light on a ruined motherland in a pitch-dark night. The sons and daughters of Korea, faithful to the ideal of patriotism, not only grieved over the destiny of the nation, which was at stake. They advanced to Mt. Paektu in stately strides, in order to relieve their compatriots from distress. They were determined to seal their fate with the advent of time.

In retrospect, we had prepared for the advance to Mt. Paektu for 10 long years, since the formation of the Down-with-Imperialism Union. We had been forced to experience many ups and downs, before transforming the determination into practice; this was the determined desire we had proclaimed at Huadian to raise an armed struggle on Mt. Paektu, when the time came and launch a sacred struggle for independence. The thousands of miles we traversed had not been straight; they had been steep.

If we had taken a direct route from Huadian to west Jiandao, after organizing the DIU, we would have reached Mt. Paektu in five or six days at the latest. But we had not chosen the direct route; we had laid foundations by building up revolutionary ranks in Jilin and its surrounding areas. After moving the theatre of our activities to eastern Manchuria, we had continued this work. Why? To train the soldiers we would take to Mt. Paektu, and rally the masses, who would render hearty assistance to the soldiers.

When the guerrilla army had been organized in Antu, I could not repress an urge to lead the unit to Mt. Paektu. The mountain was within hailing distance from Antu. However, this was a mountain nobody could climb, even if he wanted to. Our ranks had been so delicate and small in size, compared to the grandeur of Paektu. We had resembled a new-born eagle. A bright blue sky spread over our head, but we still lacked the wings to fly across the sky. To base ourselves on Paektu, we had had to expand our ranks and cultivate our strength.

Paektu was not a mountain we could climb, whenever we wanted to. Our inability to climb as we pleased was the true meaning of Paektu; the more restrained we were from going there, the more we felt

that its ascent represented the true bewitching power of Paektu.

Mt. Paektu awaited the steel-strong units and fighters of the revolutionary army, capable of defeating the crack divisions and corps of the Japanese army.

During the establishment of the guerrilla zones and their defence, a steel-strong army, with each man the match for a hundred, had been prepared. The indomitable, steel-strong soldiers had been brought up via hundreds of engagements with the enemy. During the dynamic advance along the lines, set forth at the meetings held at Kalun, Mingyuegou, Dahuangwai, Yaoyinggou, Nanhutou and Donggang, the Korean revolution had accumulated sufficient strength to launch into Paektu. We advanced to west Jiandao, drawing on this strength.

In retrospect, the history of our anti-Japanese revolution involved the transmission of a banner to our fellow countrymen, who had been scattered with a shame of national ruin and arming them to lead them to Mt. Paektu, and defeating Japanese imperialism on Paektu.

The meetings in the forests of Nanhutou and Donggang marked a decisive turning-point in that process. After those two meetings Paektu was the main theme of our topic: The motherland is calling us; Mt. Paektu is awaiting us; let us climb the mountain as soon as possible, to expedite preparations for the founding of the party and expand on a mass scale the network of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland and thereby vanquish the Japanese imperialist aggressors through do-or-die all-people resistance!

We should ring the bell of national resurrection on Paektu, the ancestral mountain, to inspire the whole Korean nation with love for their country and dedication to national salvation; we should instil courage in people, who had lost faith and been dispirited, so that they rise up; we should stand in the vanguard and launch the advance into the homeland, by checking the separation of the nation and rallying them—this was the will and faith we had when advancing to Paektu.

We did not believe that Mt. Paektu was a gateway to the sky, as our forefathers had done. Instead, we regarded it as a gateway to the homeland, a bridgehead to meet our compatriots there. Mt. Paektu was

an important strategic vantage point, where the boundaries among west Jiandao, the homeland and north Jiandao, converged.

By basing ourselves on Paektu, we aimed to draw together the people in the homeland, patriots in west Jiandao and communists in north Jiandao and ensure our unified leadership to the revolutionary movement in the homeland, the independence movement in west Jiandao and the communist movement in north Jiandao. On this mountain we could also establish, with the homeland as a stepping-stone, relations with Japan, form a link with the anti-Japanese movement, conducted in China proper beyond Shanhaiguan, and realize, via north Jiandao, cooperation with the communists and anti-Japanese independence champions in northern Manchuria and Maritime Province of the Soviet Union.

Aware of the many lessons gained from building and defending guerrilla zones in eastern Manchuria, we did not try to transform west Jiandao into a full-scale guerrilla zone as we did in north Jiandao; we turned it into a semi-guerrilla zone, which was the enemy's ground by day and our ground by night, as I previously mentioned. Almost all the posts of ten-household head, district head and sub-county chief were all occupied by people under our influence. They pretended to work for the Japanese army and police and Manchukuo authorities by day, but at night were busy holding meetings, teaching at night schools, and collecting goods and cleaning rice to be sent to the revolutionary army.

Ri Je Sun, Ri Ju Ik, Ri Hun, Jong Tong Chol, Ri Yong Sul, and Ryom In Hwan constituted the typical embodiment of the situation in semi-guerrilla zones.

Previously the leaders of party organizations in eastern Manchuria established guerrilla zones in the form of a liberated area and cold-shouldered the people living outside the zones. Worse still, they had shown enmity towards the people in enemy-ruled areas, calling them "White people," they had given wide berth to the people in the intermediate zones, calling them "double-faced." It had been a serious error to divide the masses into "White" and "Red." It had only helped the enemy blockade the guerrilla zone. Consequently, it had hindered

our attempts to create a united front, aimed at rallying the revolutionary forces more firmly.

This painful experience led us to turn the whole area of west Jiandao into a semi-guerrilla zone and put all the masses there under our influence, without defining them as either “Red” or “White.”

Many Self-Defence Corps men guarding the concentration villages came under our influence.

On one occasion we went to the concentration village of Badaojiang to obtain food grain. The Self-Defence Corps of that village included an operative we had dispatched. On receiving information from him, our small unit raided the village, singing revolutionary songs and firing blank shots. But we did not disarm the Self-Defence Corps men; we only returned with the grain prepared by the operative beforehand.

After the guerrilla unit had withdrawn, the operative went to the Japanese police and said that the guerrillas had raided the village and plundered grain, but had failed to occupy the fortress and that the Self-Defence Corps could survive owing to the fortress. In this way, he managed to deceive the enemy.

As the people in west Jiandao were friendly towards the guerrillas and disloyal to the Japanese army, police and Manchukuo government, we could achieve all our goals to our satisfaction.

West Jiandao was the main theatre of our activities, developed by the KPRA on its own initiative and controlled for 3-4 years from the day we advanced to the Mt. Paektu area to the day, when we switched to large-unit circling operations. In the days after the arduous march (December, 1938–March, 1939), eastern Manchuria once again became the main theatre of our operations. After the meeting at Xiaohaerbaling (August 10–11, 1940), we had another base in the Soviet Union, as well as the one in Mt. Paektu and made preparations for the great event of national liberation.

As a whole, the centres of the KPRA’s actions during the anti-Japanese revolution were first, north Jiandao, second, west Jiandao and third, the area of Mt. Zhanggu along the Tuman; they were important

bases, which ensured our victory in the anti-Japanese revolution.

As we had experienced during our activities in eastern Manchuria, we keenly felt once again in west Jiandao that the more intensified and outrageous the enemy's offensive, the better the semi-guerrilla zone was in every aspect. The transformation of west Jiandao into a semi-guerrilla zone and our world of influence was a factor behind the successes and victory we gained in several fields after our advance to the Mt. Paektu area.

After developing the area into a semi-guerrilla zone, we conducted brisk, military activities. Armed units of 20 or so men attacked the enemy almost everyday, moving freely in the west Jiandao area. We frequently dispatched small units to the homeland.

We dispersed our forces and operated in small armed units instead of a large unit to refrain from imposing any burden on the people, who were leading tough lives on scanty meals of potato and oats. It was extremely hard to obtain food for a unit of 200 guerrillas, to say nothing of a larger unit of more than 500-600.

The enemy finished building concentration villages in eastern and southern Manchuria by 1938 or so. Since then it had become harder for the revolutionary army to obtain food. We had to fight big battles to get food, which meant, in the long run, exchanging food for the blood of our comrades. So we conducted small-unit activities in many cases and solved the problem of food in this way. I thought that we should not spill comrades' blood, even if it meant going hungry for some days.

Under the direct influence of the anti-Japanese armed struggle, the people's spirit to fight the Japanese rose and our revolutionary advance was stepped up in west Jiandao.

During an interview with elderly people in the area, I discovered that the people in Changbai had heard a great deal about us since 1932-1933.

In the early 1936 Ri Je Sun and Ri Ju Ik met Kwon Yong Byok and Kim Jong Phil, political workers from the guerrilla army, who had gone to west Jiandao disguised as opium traffickers and acquired information about the KPRA's activities from them. On learning that

the restructuring of the guerrilla army was under way, they realized that the main force of the KPRA might advance to the Changbai area. The news soon spread throughout Changbai County and as far as Kapsan Working Committee in the homeland.

I was told that Ri Yong Sul, who had been a ten-household headman in Tianshangshui, had been spreading information about us among his friends since 1932. He had said that General Kim Il Sung was engaged in guerrilla activities in north Jiandao and would lead his unit to Mt. Paektu at any moment to liberate the motherland; he had called on them to continue anti-Japanese patriotic activities without changing their mind.

Encouraged by news of the activities of the KPRA, the young people in the Changbai area had for a long time tried hard to join our guerrilla army. Kang Hyon Min, who had been working with the youth in Dadeshui, had told his friends, "I can no longer wait for General Kim with arms folded. I am going to his unit to join up; please take good care of my family when I am gone." Then, he came to the direction of Fusong and joined our guerrilla army.

After our advance to Changbai, the whole west Jiandao was afire with passion to join the guerrilla army. After meeting us, many young people called on Headquarters and asked to join the army. We only admitted some of them, as we had to leave a great number of young people in the enemy-ruled area to intensify underground activities.

However, after the concentration villages had been built, we recruited all the volunteers. If they had been left in the earthen walls, the young people would have to be drafted for forced labour, organized by the enemy, doing nothing for the revolution.

Since the first gun report at Dadeshui after our advance to Changbai, the anti-Japanese spirit of the people in west Jiandao soared.

Witnessing the ignominious defeat of the Japanese army in Dadeshui and Xiaodeshui, the old men at Shiliudaogou could not hide their rapture, saying, "Every devil from the old days, who molested the people, has gone ruined, and the Japanese swines are no exception." The young people released a shout of joy, saying, "Hurrah! We thought

Korea had been destroyed forever but she is not totally collapsed. We can feel our hearts beating fast.”

Following the brisk armed struggle of the KPRA in west Jiandao, the people on both sides of the Amnok produced legend after legend about us. Spreading the news of the might of the guerrilla army, some of the elderly people believing in Chondoism said that Commander Kim Il Sung was employing the “art of shortening distance” to defeat the Japanese imperialists, appearing in the east and west. They even concocted such stories that, whenever a policeman made a phone call, the guerrillas appeared, when they fired a shot, his ear was cut and, when he tried to take flight, they fired another shot and his legs would break.

Such stories produced by the people in west Jiandao spread deep into the homeland across the Amnok. When one person shouted, “The revolutionary army raided Banjegou last night!” on the Changbai bank of the Amnok, the people in Samsu across the river could hear it all.

When operating in west Jiandao, we received considerable assistance from the people. The many written recollections kept in the archives of our Party patently indicate how passionately the people in west Jiandao supported the People’s Revolutionary Army.

They backed the revolutionary army with all sincerity. They regarded sincere assistance to the army as a token of their conscience. They labelled any rejection of the revolutionary army to pursue one’s own interest and luxury as little-minded.

After our establishment in west Jiandao, the Japanese imperialists made desperate efforts to cut off the relations between the revolutionary army and the people and prevent support of the people from reaching the revolutionary army. They even kept watchful eyes on Koreans, who shook hands in greeting, claiming that they were tainted by communism.

In west Jiandao the commoners had to obtain permission from the village head to pay a visit to the neighbouring village. They had to keep a spoon for each family member. The enemy carried out searches at all hours and took away all surplus spoons, claiming that even one surplus

spoon would help the revolutionary army.

The enemy issued a proclamation, announcing a 50 *yuan* reward for anyone, who beheaded a revolutionary army soldier and a greater reward for anyone, who captured a soldier alive. Several documents proved that a larger sum of money had been offered for my head. Sometimes they would force people to scatter leaflets, inciting us to surrender, and send poisoned salt to the revolutionary army as “aid goods.”

These were all tricks to disconnect the blood-sealed ties between the revolutionary army and the people. The people of west Jiandao were not taken in by this trickery. The more frenzied efforts the enemy made, the more they strengthened their relations with the KPRA and the more rapidly they offered support en masse. When the enemy organized a night guard corps in every village to check the activities of the guerrilla army, the corps men would help the underground operatives and guerrillas infiltrate the concentration village by standing guard for them, while pretending to be on patrol.

The enemy burned mercilessly any village, which revealed the slightest sign of support for the guerrillas, and killed all others, young or old, involved in the supporting scheme. Diyangxi, Dadeshui and Xinchangdong were totally burned in this whirlwind. A teacher in Dadeshui was shot to death for sending a fountain-pen to the guerrillas. The west Jiandao people did not yield, however; they assisted the guerrillas as one at the cost of their blood.

The enemy constantly sustained heavy casualties from the military offensive of the KPRA, but acted in front of the people as if it were winning victory after victory. When we had an engagement with the enemy in Xiaodeshui, the people thought that the revolutionary army had lost the battle, as the enemy had displayed its troops after the battle, blowing bugles, as if it had won the battle. They soon realized the truth, after seeing dozens of dead bodies of Japanese soldiers scattered on the battlefield.

When carrying off the dead bodies of its soldiers, the enemy said that it was carrying the corpses of communist soldiers.

After our withdrawal following the attack on Shierdaogou, the rumour about our guerrilla army spread widely in Shierdaogou and its vicinity. The enemy felt awkward: So it hung the head of a Japanese army officer on the entrance of the north gate, which the revolutionary army had just stormed through before withdrawing; it propagandized that the men had killed a leader of the communist army. It was soon revealed as a fake, when the officer's wife later saw the head on a pole in front of the gate and wailed, saying, "Oh, my! How could this happen to you?"

Such a tragicomedy was staged regularly. A similar farce was staged in Fusong and Linjiang.

To win the reward from their Japanese bosses, the Jingan army soldiers one year hung the head of an unidentified man and a Mauser rifle inscribed "Kim Il Sung" respectively in the downtowns of Fusong and Linjiang and spread the false rumour that our unit had been vanquished. However, when my primary schoolmates and friends in Fusong and Linjiang went to the site and revealed that the Jingan army's propaganda was false, this dirty deceptive farce also collapsed. Indeed it had the opposite effect, giving the impression that the KPRA and its commander were sturdy and offering continued resistance.

The enemy could not deflate the anti-Japanese spirit of the people of west Jiandao or suppress their sympathy and support for the People's Revolutionary Army. Support for the guerrillas was not stamped out; the more intensified the suppression, the more support increased.

I will describe the support-the-guerrillas movement, conducted by the west Jiandao people in subsequent sections and will therefore introduce a few bits about information and the people here.

Whenever we passed through a village in west Jiandao, the villagers would come out with dark toffee made from potato and place it in the pockets of the soldiers.

After the establishment of concentration villages, they sincerely helped the guerrilla army. Given that the Japanese imperialists confined all the people in those villages and exercised strict control over grain, inquiring into the size of the field and crops harvested, they

assisted us by employing clever methods. They would only clear away creepers during the season for harvesting potatoes; they did not dig potatoes, so that the guerrillas could lift them and take them away to eat. They kept the unshucked corn in reserves built in the forests and informed the guerrillas to take it away. If corn is stored unshucked, it does not rot. They did not harvest the beans and informed the revolutionary army, so that they could bring them away. One year we spent the winter on boiled ground bean.

West Jiandao was the first place, where the guerrilla army received food grain from the people in such a way; the grain was left on the field so that the soldiers could take it away.

The chief of the police department of South Hamgyong Province made his well-known remarks in Hyesan: During my current inspection of this area, I discovered a problem with west Jiandao. First, the people there clearly maintain a secret communication with the guerrilla army. The size of the guerrilla army runs into at least tens of thousands, whereas apparently only three *mal* (a *mal* approximates to two pecks–Tr.) of rice was sent to them. Suppose 300 guerrillas came; they would consume several *mal* of rice a day, but they reported that they had given only three *mal*. This proves that they are secretly communicating with the guerrilla army. Second, they have become Reds. When we ask if they have seen people from the mountains or bandits, even children say they haven't; but when we ask if they have seen the revolutionary army, they say yes. This testifies that the west Jiandao people regard the guerrilla army as their army and that they have become Reds. Third, west Jiandao has become a permanent base of the guerrilla army's activities. Previously the Independence Army units and bandits would stay there in summer or autumn and move to other places in winter. However, Kim Il Sung's unit operate here even in winter. So we must build concentration villages in this area.

This is impressive evidence, which indicates the strength of the ties between the revolutionary army and the people and provides vivid material, revealing how daringly the latter championed and supported the former.

Maintenance of peace in west Jiandao was causing such problems that the enemy cried in distress that both communism and the three principles for the people had become a beacon-light, illuminating the road ahead for the people, saying, "To win the masses from the communist bandits and the anti-Manchukuo, anti-Japanese bandits and defeat these bandits, we must set up an objective more dazzling than their political objective, indicate a clear-cut road to that objective and run a more popular government. In other words, we must advance the ideal of building Manchukuo more clearly, by enlisting the masses more easily and peacefully than the communist bandits and create a policy capable of meeting the requirements to lead them to that ideal. Only treatment of the bandits as a special sector of the political, economic, ideological and social, national movement, guided by this policy, will enable us to effectively disintegrate the foundations of the political and ideological banditry and overcome them."

The words "communist bandits" constitute a derogatory term for the People's Revolutionary Army, and "anti-Manchukuo, anti-Japanese bandits," for all armed forces opposed to the puppet Manchukuo and Japanese imperialism.

The enemy resorted to every possible means to vanquish the People's Revolutionary Army and disconnect ties between the revolutionary army and people, but to no avail.

After their village had been totally burned, owing to "punitive" operations of the Japanese imperialists, the peasants in Diyangxi felt a tremendous difficulty for lack of draught animals. They had to till the land and carry timber from the mountain for pay before long, but had no single draught ox. After discussions, they decided to solve the problem through negotiations with the county administration, and sent a Ri as a delegate for the negotiations and some young people as his escorts. Apparently, he was the most sociable and eloquent person in the village.

As he arrived at the county office, Ri complained in this way: The people in our village have never maintained secret contacts with the communist army; however, the Japanese army turned the village into a

heap of ashes in a night, without waiting for clear evidence; where on earth can you find such an unfair incident?; what the hell was the county administration doing?; you mentioned that you would create “a village of good citizens” at every opportunity, but you did not check the advance of the “punitive” forces, even though you saw them coming; the construction of “a village of good citizens” has now fizzled out, as we have no ox to till the land with, and can’t take meals, as we can’t farm.

That complaint touched the heartstrings of the county officials so greatly that they lent about 20 oxen to the peasants in Diyangxi.

As the negotiations proceeded as he had intended, Ri changed his mind. He was overcome by thoughts that the guerrillas were going through hardships on the mountains, without eating a piece of meat. He thought: We should send these oxen to the revolutionary army for their meals, even though this means that we cannot plough the land and carry timber for pay with them. He transmitted his thought via the underground organization in the county. He noted that, as he and his friends were returning to their village with the oxen, we could “raid” them from an ambush and take the oxen to our secret camp.

On receiving this information from an underground organization, we dispatched an ambush party to a key position on the road between the county town and Diyangxi. The party played the drama very skilfully. At that time the county administration provided Ri with armed escorts from the puppet Manchukuo army so that he could take the oxen in safety. Needless to say, the escorts were caught by the guerrilla raid.

After disarming the escorts, the guerrillas intentionally bound Ri and other young people from Diyangxi within their sight and took them all to the secret camp, threatening that they would shoot them to death, as they were vicious traitors, fawning upon Japan and Manchukuo. The young people, who came to the camp, all joined the guerrilla army. We killed two birds with one stone.

This is only one piece of episode, which shows the relationship between the army and the people in our days in west Jiandao.

The movement to assist the KPRA materially and morally, initiated since the first day of our advance to the Changbai area, not only involved the basic class of workers and peasants; it also attracted the strata, some communists stained with dogmatism, considered as objects of our struggle and regarded with hostility.

There was a big Chinese landowner, named Cao De-yi, in Shijiudaogou, Changbai County. Inheriting a fortune from his deceased uncle, he had suddenly become a man of great wealth in his 30s, with 80 or so hectares of land. Half the crop land there was owned by him. He kept six concubines and had sworn brotherhood with policemen. In the dogmatists' view he had to be liquidated. His strong national consciousness could be called something noteworthy.

When the People's Revolutionary Army defeated the Japanese and puppet Manchukuo soldiers and policemen at Dadeshui and Xiaodeshui, Cao was scared out of his senses and fled with his concubines to Changbai county town. He left his house and land in the care of his agent.

Ri Hun, a district head, placed that landlord under our influence. The way in which he won over Cao was dramatic.

After the establishment of secret camps in the area around Mt. Paektu, I ordered the logistical personnel to make preparations for the lunar New Year's Day of 1937. I attached great importance to that day, as this was the first lunar New Year's Day for us on Mt. Paektu. That year my men also looked forward eagerly to lunar New Year's Day. Kim Ju Hyon, the supply officer of the unit, was busy travelling around villages in west Jiandao in order to obtain supplies.

The basin of the Amnok at Shijiudaogou was the only area, where rice was cultivated. Even though rice was cultivated, every grain of rice was carried off to the stores of the landlords.

The message that Cao De-yi had a great store of food grain, meat and sugar for the feast on lunar New Year's Day was delivered to Kim Ju Hyon from Ji Thae Hwan, a political operative. On receiving the message, Kim Ju Hyon, in collaboration with Ri Je Sun, wrote a notice there and then addressed Cao in the name of the People's

Revolutionary Army, which read: We believe that you have not abandoned your national conscience as a Chinaman; consequently, on the principle of protecting the properties of all people, except that of the pro-Japanese lackeys, we have not damaged your property; you should repay our just measure in deeds; you should help the revolutionary army, by living up to our expectations; please reply immediately, explaining when and how you will assist us.

On receiving this note, Cao broke with the world and, bed-bound, was plunged into mental agony. He was too afraid of the Japanese to help the People's Revolutionary Army as required by the note; he was too afraid of possible punishment by the revolutionary army to ignore the note. Even though his concubines played coquetry by his bed, he did not respond; he only heaved sighs. His concubines made a great fuss of the fact that a misfortune had befallen. Around this time Ri Hun, as directed by Ri Je Sun, came to the county town to sound out the landlord Cao's thoughts. In the town he came across one of Cao's concubines, who told him that Cao had not been taking meals and sleeping for several days and asked him to console him while having lunch with him. Believing that everything was going as planned, Ri Hun visited the landlord's house with an air of reluctance.

Cao welcomed Ri Hun warmly, as if he were his saviour. After drinking some cups of wine, he showed Ri the note from the revolutionary army and asked, "What should I do, my dear younger brother?"

Ri Hun gave a cursory look at the note and, gripping his hands, said: Don't worry too much; they will not kill you; I was once captured by them a few months ago and taken to their camp, but they differed from the bandits; the revolutionary army, which does not harm the people's lives at random, will be deeply impressed, if you offer them a treat and they will protect you.

Cao replied that he did not stint his property, but hesitated out of fear of the Japanese, afraid that his act might be divulged. He went on that he would do whatever Ri would suggest.

Ri said, "If you do not feel so sorry for your property, why don't

you send it to them? What's all this worry? Please behave yourself in front of the revolutionary army; otherwise I will not remain district head in Shijiudaogou and the peasants there will not live in peace.”

Hearing him out, Cao requested that he take care of sending materials to the revolutionary army, making sure that he avoided causing trouble.

On learning that Cao had decided to send supplies to us, I soon dispatched about 20 soldiers to Shijiudaogou. They returned safely to the secret camp with 600 *mal* of rice, several pigs and a considerable amount of sugar on scores of ox-sleighs. Cao subsequently sent us considerable supplies on several occasions.

Members of the Japanese police force and taskmasters at construction sites participated in the grand movement to support the guerrillas, a movement which whetted the ardour of revolution in west Jiandao.

A policeman at a substation in Samsu County, who had reviewed seriously his own life under the influence of the might of the KPRA and resolved to follow the road of resurrection, killed the head of his substation and his deputy, took their weapons to us and joined the guerrillas. Some of the taskmasters at the construction sites of the logging railway and felling stations would, when our unit went there, open the doors of warehouses as if under pressure and willingly give us supplies. A taskmaster at the felling station in Ershidaogou propagated in public the song *Lamentation of a Pro-Japanese Soldier*, which incited war-weariness and draft-dodging among the workers and peasants, who were working in the station and among the mountain rebels nearby.

I always recall the intellectuals in west Jiandao, who actively supported the guerrillas. Most intellectuals in west Jiandao in those days were teachers. Kang Yong Gu, who taught at Jongsan private school, remains vivid in my memory.

When he first met me, he said that he could not face seeing me, as he was a henchman, who had been executing the educational policy of the Japanese imperialists.

I consoled him, saying, “One must not regard as bad all the people,

who execute Japanese educational policy. How can one call it a crime to teach the children of our country, who are growing up in darkness in an alien land? Even though they serve the Japanese imperialism under pressure, they can contribute to the independence struggle, if they have a national conscience.”

He was still strained and looked at me carefully with a sullen face. When I said that he no doubt often found it hard to teach children, he said with a bitter smile that he did not go to the length of troubling himself over Japanese education.

As we withdrew from the village, I told him, “I would like to make only one request. Do not forget that you are a Korean. To teach the younger generation to maintain the spirit of Korea, the teachers themselves must preserve the spirit of Korea.”

Kang respected my request. Soon after our departure from the village, he joined the ARF and conducted brisk activities. He helped us in real earnest, while engaged in education; he sent us a mimeograph, cloth and provisions whenever we asked and often visited the secret camp carrying supplies in person. He even tapped the telephone wire with a telephone we had sent to him and frequently informed us of the enemy’s movements.

He devoted himself to education, and taught the younger generation even after returning to the motherland when the country was liberated. But one day—as far as I remember, it was in the late 1950s—I received a report that Kang, who was the principal of a higher middle school in Pyongyang, was indulging the students too much, hesitating to train them in productive labour and at construction sites. I called him and asked whether this was true. He said yes, his head hanging low.

I said, “I can hardly believe that such a deviation has occurred in the school where you work as principal. Have you already forgotten the days in west Jiandao?”

He replied that, although our parents had worked their fingers to the bone in the past under the rule of the Japanese imperialists, it had been his lifelong wish to let our children study in comfort in bright classrooms.

Needless to say, his mind was understandable. But I said sternly: If we are too indulgent with the children, without putting them to work and giving them scoldings, what will become of them in the future? We must toughen them through hardships; they must undergo the experience of carrying goods on their backs or yokes and know how to use hoes; only then will they get to know the value of sweat, respect workers and peasants and build socialism; to build socialism, we must hand down the revolutionary spirit of Paektu and the fighting spirit of the west Jiandao people to the coming generation.

On the unforgettable land where the gunfire of fierce battles rumbled, the west Jiandao people laid, together with us, the cornerstone of revolutionary relations between the army and the people, providing the foundations of a united front, involving the broad masses of the people, including believers in Chondoism, patriotic men of property, young people, students and intellectuals, and opened a route for establishing contacts with the people and revolutionaries in the homeland. West Jiandao produced a considerable number of outstanding patriots and heroic people, who would proudly adorn the pages of history of the anti-Japanese national liberation struggle of our country. The revolutionary spirit of Paektu, the fighting spirit the west Jiandao people displayed, still vibrates in the hearts of the people across the country.

## 2. The Sound of the Watermill

When I entered farming villages in west Jiandao, to be found in each range of Paektu, I would see foaming, meandering streams and hear the sound of watermills pounding grain with the stream as its power. What tingling nostalgia the sound of watermills falling on our ears from afar at moonlit nights stirred in our minds! With our advance to Mt. Paektu, the watermills in Changbai, which had been pounding grain amid the tears of Korean immigrants, came to be used for different purposes and acquired another meaning.

Ever since autumn 1936, the Changbai people pounded an immeasurable amount of grain with those watermills to support us. Nearly all the dozens of watermills, both big and small, installed in Changbai, were related to the support-the-guerrillas work. The watermills are inscribed in my memory as a symbol of the all-people, support-the-guerrillas campaign. Thanks to the active support and encouragement of the Changbai people, we could wage a protracted anti-Japanese war, with Mt. Paektu as a stronghold.

The people in Deshuigou, Shiliudaogou, were the first in the Changbai area to assist the People's Revolutionary Army.

We first went to Xinchangdong on our advance to Changbai. The villages in the valley of Shiliudaogou, including Xinchangdong, were called, as a whole, Deshuigou.

The upper Xinchangdong was a remote village of 40-odd households situated on the confluence of two streams. There was also a watermill.

The villagers hulled buckwheat with the watermill that day and treated the People's Revolutionary Army to refreshing noodles.

The support-the-guerrillas campaign, started by the Deshuigou people in Shiliudaogou, later affected the whole region of west Jiandao

such as Wangjiadong, Yaoshuidong and Diyangxidong.

Large teams frequently came to our secret camps along secret routes in the forests, carrying grain and cloth on their heads and backs.

In a fit of consternation, the enemy reinforced its troops in the Changbai area and molested the people. It burned down villages, arrested or killed people at random at the slightest unusual sign.

“Anyone supplying the communist bandits with provisions and articles and making contacts with them will be regarded as helpers of the bandits and executed on the spot”—this threatening warning was posted in all parts of Changbai County in those days.

The people living in the border areas around Mt. Paektu were not even allowed to take with them a pair of workman’s shoes and a box of matches. Nevertheless, supply goods sent by the people regularly came to our secret camps.

The assistance of the Changbai people to the People’s Revolutionary Army was a voluntary campaign initiated on the basis of their vital needs. Helping the revolutionary army was the only way to resurrect Korea—this was their belief. Consequently they were not afraid of death and did not flinch from the scorching sun in mid-summer and the blinding snow in mid-winter, when it came to support for the army.

Whenever I recall the images of the Changbai people, who were out to assist the army, the upright and simple image of Ri Ul Sol’s father, Ri Pyong Hon, who, as a member of our organization, was working as a village head in Yinghuadong, appears in my mind’s eye. He and his two brothers were standard-bearers of the campaign for supporting the army in the Changbai area.

At the end of 1936, when we were staying in the secret camp in Heixiazigou, Ri Pyong Hon and his party visited Headquarters, carrying supplies prepared by the revolutionary organization in Yinghuadong. I still recall vividly the Korean traditional socks, they brought, padded with more cotton and twice as long as usual pairs. I picked a pair of the socks from the package and tried them on; they came up to my knees.

I admired the women in Yinghuadong for their assiduous workmanship and sincerity.

“They are excellent, indeed!”

He blushed at my praise.

“The snow is deep in Changbai, General. If you do not care for your feet in winter, the suffering is immeasurable.”

This was my first encounter with him, but I could see in an instant that he was very faithful and modest. He never sang his own praises. Although he led the other people, carrying goods to the secret camp, he did not give the slightest air that he was their leader; he stood behind his colleagues and only looked at me thoughtfully.

While I looked carefully at the socks in my hands, someone unpacking a knapsack of grain exclaimed, “Look here, General! Even the Japanese Emperor may never have seen such barley.”

At that moment I could not believe my eyes. Fine barley as white as snow! Is this barley, not rice? They must have pounded it with great sincerity to make it so clean and tempting!

“You have taken so much trouble, sir. I see such barley for the first time. How did you hull it to make it as white as this?”

“We hulled it four times.”

“Why? Barley can be boiled for eating after hulling only twice. Your sincerity is really beyond imagination.”

“The women in our village are so persistent.”

This time, too, Ri ascribed the meritorious deed to the village women. He said, “It was not men, but women who took the trouble to hull this barley. Grain can be hulled ten times, not four times, if one invests all one’s efforts. It is never a trouble, as it is all for the benefit of the revolutionary army. Unfortunately secret agents make rounds of the village to detect which houses hull grain for what purpose and where they are taking the hulled rice to. The Women’s Association members rack their brains to dodge surveillance. They go to the market in Hyesan and buy cloth for the revolutionary army; then they tie it round their waist or fold it and put it on their babies, just like diapers. For this reason, they carry babies on their backs intentionally when

going to markets. The elderly, who are unaware of this fact, rebuke them for going to all this trouble; however, the women always carry their babies, because only then do they have somewhere to hide cloth.”

Ri did not mention a word about the trouble the men took; he only referred to the pains the women took.

His words moved me. I took a handful of barley from the knapsack and smelled it. Then I said to those around me, “Even though the Japanese Emperor is exalted, he is just like a tree without a root, while we are a sprout from a firm root, even though we are not visible. So, how can he ever see such fine grain as we have received?”

We came to know every detail of the support-the-guerrillas campaign, conducted by the people in Yinghuadong through Ri Ul Sol next year, who joined our unit that year. He was not inclined to sing the praise of himself, just like his father. Moreover, he hardly uttered a single word about the pains his father and mother took. However, he told an anecdote, apparently by a slip of the tongue, in which his mother picked wild berries to obtain money for the cloth used to make knapsacks.

In Yinghuadong many households suffered from a dearth of food grain; one of them was Ri Ul Sol’s. Although they had scanty meals of grass gruel, his family tried not to lag behind the others in supporting the revolutionary army. So they picked wild berries in summer and wild grapes and rocambole in autumn to sell them at the market in Hyesan. Whenever the mother returned with wild fruits and assorted them, his younger brothers would sit round her with watery mouths. Even though she read their minds well, she did not readily give them even a single wild berry, for she considered this to mean less sincerity to the revolutionary army.

On returning from the secret camp, Ri Pyong Hon boasted to his children that he had seen me. Ri Ul Sol replied that he would go to the guerrillas right away and fight under my wings, but his father stopped him.

Ri Pyong Hon rejected his suggestion there and then, saying, “The soldiers under the wings of the General are all stalwart and good at

shooting. How can you venture to become a soldier of the revolutionary army, when you only know the hoe in the field and hemp trousers? Train yourself a little more before you go.”

He made his son join a branch of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland for training. Next summer he sent his son and nephew to the guerrilla army. Sending beloved children to the army constituted the highest expression of the spirit of support for the army.

Ri Pyong Hon invariably supported the revolutionary army, even after sending his son to the guerrilla army.

I met him again at Tianshangshui in late spring 1937. The dyestuffs brought at that time greatly helped in the dyeing of flowers and flags to festoon the joint celebration of the guerrillas and people to commemorate the victory in the battle of Pochonbo.

The support goods sent by the Changbai people were always permeated with moving sincerity.

In those days a slash-and-burn peasant family, with four able-bodied persons, could harvest 20 or 30 *tan* (a *tan* equals 40 pecks–Tr.) of potato at most in a year. They had to grind a dozen *mal* of potato to get one *mal* of starch. One *mal* of starch cost 60 *fen* or so at that time. A *mal* of starch was not enough to buy a pair of workman’s shoes. So they made toffee or wine and sold them for money. In those days it was difficult to buy goods even if you had money. Therefore the people had to rack their brains and make tireless efforts to purchase every supply sent to the guerrillas.

Even under such adverse conditions the people in Changbai County obtained various kinds of goods and sent them to the mountains.

Every Korean living in Changbai County helped the guerrillas. Even the elderly, who could only walk with the help of canes, climbed mountains and barked basswood trees; they burned the midnight candle to make us shoes with the bark. The women ran the watermills, standing guard in turn, refraining from lighting fires in cold winter nights, in order to avoid the lackeys’ surveillance.

In most cases the village heads organized the transport of support goods. As most of the village heads in Changbai County chaired

branches and chapters of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland, it was convenient for them to take charge of that task. The supply workers in our revolutionary army would in those days send the village heads threatening notices on purpose, demanding delivery of goods, to enable the latter to offer excuses to the enemy for organizing aid to the revolutionary army. On receiving a notice, they secretly organized the work, allegedly under pressure.

The people vied with one another to take the goods on days, when the conveying teams left the villages.

Our soldiers dropped in at the houses in Changbai County, as if they were their own homes.

We frequented most often in those days Ryom Po Bae's house.

Ryom In Hwan told me that Kang Jin Gon was the first to develop Deshuigou. Kang could not live any longer in his native village, crossed the Amnok with some of his family and relatives and built a village in a valley in Shiliudaogou. Ryom Po Bae is the wife of Kang's cousin. Ryom In Hwan said that Mrs. Ryom and her husband were intensely anti-Japanese and upright, as they had come under the great influence of Kang.

Therefore I went to see them both, when we were staying in Dadeshui. I still vividly recall the face of Mrs. Ryom, who was so shy at that time, as she treated me with boiled oats and barley mixed with potato. She would always dip oats and barley in water in a large vessel, so that she could boil them in an instant, even if we dropped in at her house at midnight. The barley mixed with oats she boiled was well-cooked and aromatic, stimulating our appetite.

Her husband Kang In Hung set the chimney low and covered it with wheat straw to make the smoke issue downward, lest the smoke ascending through the chimney at night should arouse the suspicion of the lackeys. Both of them were tender-hearted.

The people in Deshuigou were literally as poor as church mice, but regarded it as a great honour to serve the revolutionary army.

It was not surprising that the enemy turned the village of Dadeshui into a sea of flames in a day. This atrocity reminded people of the "sea

of blood” in north Jiandao. When the villagers swept away ashes on the floors and set up straw-thatched cottages, the enemy would attack them again and set the cottages on fire.

Ryom Po Bae’s family had to move to Zhangmozi, Xinchangdong.

When we went there to see her on hearing the news, we could again hear the sound of a watermill there. I felt it was a good omen, for where a watermill made a sound, I could feel the spirit of Korea, which did not burn in fire or drown in a storm and a struggle; the people took the greatest pleasure to support the army. The sound of the watermill resembled the giant strides of the people, who continued their resistance to the Japanese imperialists, by aiding the army.

I first went with my orderly to the watermill and met Mrs. Ryom there.

On seeing me, she bent her knees and cried bitterly. Her tears contained so great sorrow after leaving Dadeshui.

I consoled her with great difficulty, saying, “Please calm yourself, mother. What can be done? You have to endure it...”

I later learned that her family had set up the mill after moving there. Her house, a small log-cabin, was situated near the mill.

That day she got a hen from a neighbouring village and served us starch noodles in meat stock, with chicken garnish. However, she was sorry that it was such a poor meal.

The starch noodles I ate frequently in the villages in Changbai County were so unforgettable that even when I give a banquet to distinguished guests, I still serve them frozen-potato noodles or starch noodles as a rare dish.

That night she was very concerned that the sound of the watermill might disturb my sleep. However, this was unnecessary, as that sound only induced sound sleep and deep meditation.

Her family did not set up a new watermill after moving to Zhangmozi for their convenience. It was aimed at supporting the guerrillas.

That remote village was not, however, a place, where one could live in peace. The enemy also stretched out his tentacles to this heart of the

mountain. The policemen from Erdaogang pounced upon the village without notice, destroyed the watermill and took all the villagers to the police station. Her family members underwent atrocious tortures for three days and were released as good as dead. They returned on an oxcart. Old man Kang, who had been beaten most, was in a critical state.

On hearing this, I sent them some bear galls, which are effective for welts. Apparently they got out of bed after taking the galls. Even Mr. Kang, who had been most seriously injured, rose from the bed and again devoted himself to supporting the guerrillas. He was good at carpentry; he felled a birch on the mountain and repaired the mill's long board, which had been broken. His children tried to dissuade him, saying that he should start working after achieving a full recovery. But their words fell on deaf ears. He only said, "What are you talking about? Even the elderly in their 80s are busy making straw sandals and socks to help those on the mountain. I am too strong to have a nap."

The watermill at Zhangmozi once again started to hull grain for the guerrillas.

On Mr. Kang's request, we admitted his son Kang Jong Gun to the revolutionary army. We always took good care of him, taking him with us. However, he was killed in action later to our regret.

Kim Se Un, who lived in Pinggangde, Shiqidaogou, also came from a praiseworthy family, which helped the revolutionary army with all its sincerity.

Kim Se Un persuaded his two younger brother and sister and four children and relatives to engage in the revolutionary struggle and rendered active support to their work; he was a faithful revolutionary. Kim Se Ok, the fiance of Ma Kuk Hwa, is his younger brother and Kim Ik Hyon, an anti-Japanese revolutionary veteran, is his youngest son. His eldest son, too, joined the Korean People's Revolutionary Army and fought bravely. Soon after joining the army, he took part in the battle at Jiansanfeng and later conducted political work in the homeland, before his arrest by the enemy. I learned that he had been sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment and served his term in the

Sodaemun prison with Kwon Yong Byok and Ri Je Sun, and that he was executed in spring 1945.

The small units and political operatives from the guerrilla army frequented his house, situated in hinterlands in the mountains, not far from a secret camp of the revolutionary army. Usually, revolutionaries calling on the secret camp from the homeland, would put up at his house for a night. His house was an “inn,” where the soldiers of the KPRA and political operatives took up lodgings free of charge. He cultivated the land, leased from a Chinese landlord, and devoted all his harvest to supporting the revolutionaries.

Kwon Yong Byok provided guidance in party work in Changbai County, while staying in this house.

My comrades nicknamed Kim Se Un “Dashifu,” a Chinese word meaning a cook. True to his nickname, he entertained a great number of guests. The cooking pot in his house was five times as big as ordinary pots. They boiled grain in that pot and scooped it with a big scoop to serve the guests. When there were many guests, Kim Se Un would personally go to the kitchen with folded sleeves and helped the women in their work, sweating profusely. He was disabled; he could not walk properly, as the heels wore down, owing to severe frostbite, but carried straw sacks full of grain to the watermill several times a day.

He often joked with his guests in this way, “If it weren’t for my heels, I would have become a quartermaster in the guerrilla army, despite my age.”

As a tenant farmer, he supported the political workers by boiling a potful of grain for them every day, how much grain would be left in that house! He no doubt skipped meals on many occasions.

The sincerity displayed by the Changbai people in their support for the revolution was indeed unique. They enthusiastically aided the revolutionary army, even selling their properties and laying down their lives when circumstances demanded.

In May 1937 a surprising incident happened; the dead bodies of a baby and a woman were discovered on the road to Erdaogang. She was

a common rural woman, who had secretly nursed a wounded guerrilla in her house, before her arrest. A military police officer of the Japanese army pounced upon her and the wounded man under medical treatment and escorted them to his headquarters. She was a tough woman; she stealthily hid a dagger in her bosom, when leaving the house and on the road cut the officer's face with the dagger, then took out the pistol from his waist. Thanks to her efforts, the guerrilla escaped. She kept the watch of the officer with the pistol in her hand for nearly half an hour, until the guerrilla had run out of sight. Regaining his consciousness, the officer pounced upon the woman, snatched the pistol from her and stabbed her and her baby mercilessly to death.

Some time later this incident became known to the public. One night their dead bodies vanished. The military police made a great fuss, as if an awful accident had happened. God only knew it, as their secret agents had kept watch on them round the clock. Apparently a revolutionary organization in Erdaogang or in its vicinity had dealt with them like a flash, when the opportunity had appeared.

In Changbai County there is a village called Zhujiadong; it produced many renowned revolutionaries. Kim Ryong Sok, known as "dagger oldster," also fought in this village. Like the aforementioned unknown woman, he cut with a dagger the rope binding him and stabbed the Japanese army officer escorting him. When he was working as a quartermaster, after joining the guerrilla army, his comrades-in-arms nicknamed him "dagger oldster." Since then the nickname had become synonymous with him. Even the children living in the apartment house in Pyongyang, where he was spending his last years, called him "dagger oldster."

To our deep regret, the "dagger woman" did not leave her name behind. Apparently the wounded man, who escaped with her help, failed to return to his unit.

One day I left two of my men under the care of old man Ji Pong Phal, a member of the underground organization in Zhujiadong; one was Kim Ryong Yon, who was suffering from an intestinal disorder, while the other wounded individual was a recruit, whose name escapes

my memory. The old man took tender care of them for two months and was then killed during an enemy's "punitive" operation.

When the enemy attacked his village, he made sure that the soldiers of the revolutionary army took shelter on the mountain; he then stayed on his own in his house aware that if he also escaped leaving his house empty, the enemy would comb the mountain in search of the soldiers of the revolutionary army.

The enemy tortured him to expose the whereabouts of the revolutionary soldiers, but he curtly replied that he did not know. The enemy beat his face ruthlessly with a leather belt. Blood gushed from his face instantly. However, the more they beat him and swore, the firmer his closed mouth became.

They stood him in a grave, saying that they would bury him alive. They threatened at gunpoint that they would give him a cash reward, if he told them where the wounded had taken shelter or else they would bury him.

However he remained silent.

In despair they shot him standing in the grave. Before breathing his last, the old man left this simple request with his fellow village people, "Please help our army wholeheartedly. Only then will a new society emerge."

His last moment was subsequently called the "Zhujiadong incident." On hearing a report from Kim Ryong Yon in later days, I came to know of his death.

How could a gentle peasant, who led all his life in a simple and untainted way tilling land, be so calm just before his death in the grave, where he would be buried, and add lustre to his last moment standing firmly like a titan?

His last words to the effect that sincere help to our army would expedite the advent of a new world remind all of us forcibly of how important faith is for a man and the great power, a man with faith can generate.

Although the people in Changbai County aided our revolutionary army at great risk, even sacrificing their lives, they never expected

rewards for their efforts. After the liberation of the country, no one made his or her existence known.

Following the country's liberation, Mrs. Ryom Po Bae moved to Hyesan with her children. But she did not inform us for more than ten years where she was living.

It was only in 1958, when I was providing field guidance to Ryang-gang Province, that I came to know that she was living in Hyesan.

I met her at the railway station. Her hair had turned grey.

"Mother, your son Jong Gun and husband have already passed away... To see you today when your hair has turned grey. ..."

I was too choked to go on. Beaten at a police station for helping the revolutionary army, her husband Kang In Hung had coughed out blood and died.

She embraced me, tears streaming down her face.

Feeling her rough hands I said with disappointment:

"I frequented your house in the bygone days, mother, as if it were my own. But it is too much. More than ten years have passed since liberation; why didn't you call on me? Couldn't you write to me even once?"

"How could you believe that I was not eager to go to Pyongyang to see you, General? But I might not be the only person wishing to see you. If we all call on you, when you are always busy, how can you run the government properly?"

The passionate people of Changbai, who rushed out of the village entrance in the past without noticing how their shoes fell off as they saw us, returned to the liberated country and led a quiet life without making themselves known to the world.

Soon afterwards I brought Mrs. Ryom to Pyongyang and chose a house on the scenic River Taedong for her.

The Changbai people, who helped us at the cost of their blood in the days of the anti-Japanese revolution, were all people of such calibre.

Kim Se Un, as I mentioned briefly above, went to the homeland in autumn 1937 and, roaming about Unhung, Pochon, Musan and Songjin (Kim Chaek City), formed underground organizations and ensured

support for the guerrillas.

He later went over to Tumen and engaged in underground work under the disguise of an oxcart driver, until the day of liberation. Surprisingly, although his feet were disabled, he conducted underground activities travelling about the wide area as freely as able-bodied men. He did not talk about his performance. His activities in the homeland became known to us many years later and drew the attention of historians.

How could Kim Se Un be the only one to be so unassuming!

Most west Jiandao people were in those days members of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland; in today's terms, they would be called unassuming heroes and meritorious individuals.

The enemy built concentration villages to cut the ties between the People's Revolutionary Army and the people and attempted to remove the links of support for the guerrillas by forts, earthen walls and barbed wire; however, it failed to shut the minds of the west Jiandao people, inclined as they were to Mt. Paektu. As most of the heads of the self-defence corps, village heads and gatekeepers of the concentration villages fell under our influence, the enemy's fuss about the concentration villages was merely a derisive farce.

The Paektusan Base was located farther away from the populated areas than the base in eastern Manchuria. However, it can be said that the ties between the army and people were stronger and that the feelings between them were warmer in the former than the latter. The expectations we held for the people, when we transformed Mt. Paektu into a new strategic base of the Korean revolution with confidence in them, were confirmed. The people in Paektusan Base, endowed with unstained patriotic fidelity and a pure mind for the revolutionary army, threw the enemy into a panic through a support-the-guerrillas campaign, exceeding our expectations and imagination.

They were heroic people, who set an example for the revolutionary traditions of supporting the army and enriched these traditions. The campaign developed into a pan-national campaign, involving the people of all strata, young and old, men and women, every village and

household. Supported by their campaign, we always emerged victorious in hard battles against the enemy.

The campaign to support the army, sweeping the vast area of west Jiandao, convinced me once again of the great power produced by the organized people. Even a village on a plateau or in a valley with only three peasant households, had an organization. If we sent a messenger there with a short notice, the villagers would get out of bed and busied themselves cooking food, saying that the revolutionary army four kilometres away from there would have a meal in their village and that they should make haste to serve them warm food.

We were able to enlist organizations via a short message to call west Jiandao people to climb Mt. Paektu all at once and shout for the independence of Korea on the top of the mountain. They acted on our orders, because these people became organized from autumn 1936 in such a way.

According to a Korean proverb, beads become a treasure only when threaded in a string. All men and women in west Jiandao were as precious as beads. The organizations of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland turned west Jiandao into our world of influence and made these beads a treasure.

What would have happened to them, if we had not rallied them behind our organizations? Those individual beads would have been broken one by one at the hands of the enemy or eclipsed in the mud. However ardent a man's patriotism may be, what could he perform on his own?

Consequently I always say that the greatest asset for a revolutionary is organization. The significance of an organization can be said to be imperishable for the revolutionaries and people in all countries, who aspire for independence. The role of an organization does not dwindle with a change of times, nor should the rallying of the masses around the organization be neglected, following the victorious advance of the revolution. It is imperative to hold the masses together in an organization, when winning power, and also when building a state after gaining power, and continuing the revolution, after the

establishment of a communist society, by drawing on successes gained in building this society. As revolution knows no bounds, the unification of the masses behind an organization has no end. This is the physiology of social development and a law, which all people aspiring to build a developed society should attach great importance to.

We are now exerting ourselves to rally the masses behind the organization, and will continue to do so, even after building a communist society. Furthermore, we will build an eternally prosperous and independent society on this land and make our motherland and system an impregnable fortress, by drawing on the efforts of the organized masses.

When the Japanese imperialists, deceiving the world through the so-called “policy of good-neighbourliness between Japan and the Soviet Union” of the early 1940s, clamoured that the Korean communists were “fighting alone” to subdue our struggle, and when Hitlerite Germany talked about the “tragic termination” of communists, as they swept away everything on their way toward Moscow, I gained strength and confidence from the memory of the watermills in Wangqing and Changbai.

In the grim days of the war against the US imperialists, who boasted that they were the “strongest” in the world, and the armies of their satellite states, I kept faith in the victorious tomorrow, while recalling the watermills in Changbai. Some people might think it strange that I felt certain of victory, as I remembered the sound of watermills, but this was indeed the case.

When frequenting the villages in Changbai, I could clearly detect through the watermills the unqualified love of the people for us, their impregnable support for us and unchanging faith, even in the face of death.

During a temporary retreat, I once walked with Mr. Ri Kuk Ro along Tongno River (Jangja River) and told him about the watermills in Changbai. I stressed several times that, during the fighting on Mt. Paektu, we had fought without going hungry, as the Changbai people had hulled grain by watermills and sent it to us, that the sound of

watermills had not died out, despite the fact that the enemy had burned down the villages and destroyed the watermills, and that we could repulse any strong enemy, when we relied on the people and enlisted their efforts. I continued that it was too wasteful to let this wide river flow unharnessed, whereas the Koreans in Changbai in those days had even installed watermills on small streams and made effective use of them and that we should build a big hydropower station by damming the river after the war was over.

The traditions of support for the army and the unity of the army and the people established during the anti-Japanese armed struggle became more indestructible and was consolidated even more in the great Fatherland Liberation War. The victory of our young Republic in the fight against the “strongest power” on the globe should be attributed to the fact that we enlisted all the people and relied on the unity of the army and the people, whereas the enemy imposed mostly pure military force.

These grand traditions are being advanced honourably today under the guidance of our Party.

Today, the campaign of “our village—our post” and “our post—our village,” whereby the people help the soldiers and vice versa, is conducted briskly at every corner of our country. This campaign has been popularized at a rapid rate in factories, enterprises, agricultural farms, residential quarters and schools across the country, in particular ever since Comrade Kim Jong Il was acclaimed the Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army.

Such a relationship between the army and the people is a source of great pride for Korea, which cannot be found in the history of the building of the armed forces of any country. Buttressed by such power, based on the integrity of the army and the people, we do not flinch before blackmail and threat of an enemy.

I regard single-hearted unity and unity between the army and the people as the greatest success achieved in the Korean revolution.

My ears still ring with the sound of the watermills I heard during the great anti-Japanese war. With that sound, the faces of a great number

of Changbai people appear in my mind's eye. How many of them died on the gallows and behind bars! How many of them froze to death or laid down their lives on the snow-capped Mt. Paektu, on their way to aid the guerrillas!

I take off my hat to them and my heart swells with gratitude when I remember their boon and virtue.

### 3. Ri Je Sun

Soon after arrival in the Mt. Paektu area, we intensified the construction of secret camps and developed a wide-ranging campaign to set up organizations of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland in Korean settlements.

The Changbai area around Mt. Paektu and the Kapsan area in the homeland were selected as the first places, where the network of the ARF was to be formed. To facilitate the careful execution of the challenging task of establishing organizations, we had to pick out reliable individuals, who would help us at the risk of their lives.

As soon as we reached west Jiandao I sent off a small unit. I emphasized over and over again to the company commander Ri Tong Hak, “Your main task is to discover talent. Discover reliable assistants, even if it means combing the Changbai area. Attacking the enemy is of secondary importance. Exert your main efforts to discovering talent, and attack the enemy, when the odds are in your favour or else avoid it.”

Ri Tong Hak carried out this task admirably. He returned to the secret camp with Ri Je Sun. Ri Tong Hak looked very frivolous, but was in fact very meticulous. He was a peculiar man. He talked so fast that whoever listened to him for the first time ended up feeling dizzy. He always kept his men moving by his fast speech. Consequently his colleagues nicknamed him *Pottaji*, apparently after the word *Poktakjil* (pestering–Tr.).

During a round of Changbai area with his company, he met a young village head, who was guiding the morning exercise of young people and children on the plateau of Ershidaogou. The village head was Ri Je Sun and the village was Xinxingcun. Ri Je Sun was village head and concurrently teacher of the night school. The Xinxingcun people, both

old and young, or women, called their village head “our teacher” with special affection.

To test his personality, Ri Tong Hak asked him to provide two or three days’ rations for the company. The village head gathered in an instant provisions in too great quantities for the whole company to carry, and volunteered to bring them to the secret camp in person. His working skill was so admirable and he was so broad-minded that Tong Hak was immediately won over by this strange village head. He wanted to introduce him directly to Headquarters, even though he might be criticized later for rashness. So when he volunteered to carry the provisions, he readily complied with the request.

As complications could have arisen, if the enemy learned that the village head voluntarily led his villagers as they carried provisions, Tong Hak’s men bound him with a rope and pretended to be escorting a dangerous criminal.

Three days later the company carrying food from Xinxingcun arrived at the secret camp. When Tong Hak tried to send all the people back about 10 kilometres from the camp, Je Sun begged him to take him to the camp.

Tong Hak tried to check him out by making a perplexed face intentionally and saying, “It’s difficult. How can we be bold enough to take you into the secret base?”

Je Sun hit upon a bright idea, grabbed him by the arm and suggested:

“What about giving me a test? For example, you can set me a task, which even demands the sacrifice of my life.”

Tong Hak accepted his offer; he instructed him to make five pairs of knee-high Korean socks and five pairs of leggings in three days and come back. He promised that he would take him to the camp if he returned on time with those socks and leggings and that if he failed to appear on time or came empty-handed, he would be rejected.

Je Sun returned to Xinxingcun, saying that it was an easy job and he would pass the test without difficulty. He got his wife and her mother to tear the only quilt his wife had brought with her, when she had

married him, and make five pairs of socks and five pairs of leggings in one night before appearing at the meeting place.

Only then Tong Hak embraced Je Sun and introduced himself by saying that his nickname was *Pottaji*, kindly talking about his birthplace, before adding, "After all, I made you tear your quilt to pieces."

Je Sun passed the test, so to speak.

On my return after a round of the area around Mt. Paektu, Tong Hak told me that he had discovered an excellent young man in the village of Xinxingcun and brought him to the camp, as he wanted to introduce him to me. He then extolled him to the skies. He said that Je Sun had read the guerrilla publications without a moment's rest during some days of his stay in the camp. He was very persistent and steady; he had learned from the guerrillas how to assemble and disassemble weapons and even how to determine one's orientation in the field. Tong Hak said:

"He is clever and upright; moreover, he seems to be a man of passion, with a high zeal for the revolution. He is so sociable that he made friends with all our men within a few days. He is a man of public character."

If his opinion was not exaggerated, the general judgement of the Xinxingcun village head was favourable.

Ri Je Sun was as pretty as a woman. His smiling eyes were impressive. He looked very gentle and fragile, but was in fact an iron-willed, intelligent man with steel-strong principles, rock-solid faith and cool head.

Born to a poor peasant family, he had undergone many hardships since his childhood. He had been granted no access to education; he had weeded others' fields for hire with his mother and had since the age of ten worked as a servant for a landlord in a neighbouring village. One evening when he was 11, his mother had come unexpectedly to see him as he was making straw sandals in his room. Although he longed to see her, he did not raise his head, when his mother came in and sat on the mat. When she asked what the matter was, he merely

continued making straw sandals without bothering to answer. The pitiable mother left the room without hearing a word from her beloved son. Only then Je Sun stopped his work and followed his mother. He said in tears, "Mother, please don't come any more. If you come here, the landlord's family despise you, as if you were here to get something from them."

Knowing her son's mind, she hugged him and sank to the road, weeping sorrowfully. She promised that she would not come again, even though she wanted to see him.

He did not receive a regular education, but he acquired a knowledge of secondary education through his own efforts; he was such an earnest worker. After working as a servant until the age of 14, he attended a night school for some years and learned Korean letters from his elder brother; on getting married, he took with him the dictionary of Chinese characters to learn them by himself. Regarding it as a lifelong grudge to have failed to receive a school education, he opened, on moving to Xinxingcun, a night school for the children of slash-and-burn peasants and committed himself to enlightening others.

In his native village he had led an organizational life for some years in the Children's Association and youth league. After his elder brother's imprisonment, the Japanese police kept watch on him. Feeling personal danger, owing to the incessant persecution and oppression, he moved in early 1932 to Kapsan where his wife's family lived. Around that time such progressive people as Pak Tal had been involved actively in patriotic enlightenment in this area. Ri Je Sun organized with them a secret reading circle in Ophungdong and buckled down to studying a new trend of thought.

The circle members had been fully prepared to lay down their lives without hesitation in the righteous struggle for rescuing the country and the nation, but had been fretful, as they did not know how to fight. They had tried to establish contacts with people in every corner in search of an impeccable path of struggle and a renowned leader. They had met people, who had been affiliated with labour unions and peasant unions and some ideologists roaming about mountains, but

they lacked a clear-cut line and tactics of struggle.

Ri Je Sun began following the activities of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army. Since around 1934, it had been rumoured in the homeland that this army unit was advancing to the Changbai area. He had given up his original idea of moving to Hunchun and come to Qiangede in Ershidaogou in Changbai County. The immigrants, who developed Qiangede, later renamed it Xinxingcun.

Pochonbo was not far away from Xinxingcun in a straight line. In Xinxingcun one could see Mt. Paektu, along with Pegae Hill, Mt. Sobaek and Konjang Hill. The fact that he lived in a place, where he could see Mt. Paektu, gave Ri Je Sun mysterious comfort, a man, who had been overwhelmed by nostalgia in an unfamiliar, alien land.

However, administrative oppression and poverty shadowed the immigrants. Overburdened by farm rent, compulsory labour and miscellaneous taxes, the miserable slash-and-burn peasants did not enjoy a moment of respite to stretch out and gaze up at the sky. The landlords forced the tenants to offer them bribes on holidays and collect firewood for them. To make matters worse, the policemen in Karim-ri and Chonsu-ri in Korea across the river ordered the Korean immigrants in the Changbai area to bring firewood for them. When inspecting villages, the policemen would search hen coops of peasant houses, take out the eggs and eat them. The peasants were only allowed to eat boiled barley or unhulled-millet porridge.

Not a single family in Xinxingcun, which had 60 households, had an ox. How hard they had to toil! They all pulled the ploughs to till the land. One day a young couple was ploughing in spring. They ploughed the field all day without an ox. At first the wife took the handle, while the man drew the plough instead of an ox. Then she drew the plough, but the plough stuck in the land and did not move an inch. The man shouted "Gee up!", as he had done when ploughing the land with an ox in his native village. Thinking that the man was treating her as a draught animal, the wife threw herself on the field and cried sadly, out of indignation. The man let go of the handle and plumped down beside her, saying lamentably, "Excuse me for the slip of tongue. When will

this miserable life come to an end?"

These circumstances in Xinxingcun served as the basis, which facilitated the peasants' ability to attain national and class consciousness.

Most of the villagers were impoverished peasants, who had emigrated from North and South Hamgyong provinces, and exiles who had chosen to leave their hometowns and motherland in search of a new theatre of activities, after involvement in the anti-Japanese movement in various mass organizations, like peasant unions and youth leagues. Kim Pyong Chol, who later worked at the Xinxingcun chapter of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland and special Party branch, had also sought refuge there after working in the homeland.

In his days in the homeland Kim Pyong Chol had always told his comrades that a route, which would enable them to receive the guidance of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, should be opened, so that the peasant union could achieve success in its struggle and that the struggle in the homeland could not be victorious without guidance from the revolutionary army. It goes without saying that his opinion was supported by many of his comrades. But some of them slighted his opinion, saying that it was impossible to establish contact with the revolutionary army. Determined that he would find guerrillas on his own, he had moved without hesitation to Xinxingcun, where his friends had been active. He was a standard-bearer and fighter, who had realized before any of the other fighters in the homeland, the indivisibility of the armed struggle conducted overseas and political struggle in the homeland and the need for their integration, and had materialized it in a positive way, free of empty talk and had, after establishing a relationship with the revolutionary army, laid down his life, as he carried out our line.

Such Korean patriots as Ri Ju Gwan and Ri Ju Ik formed in Changbai area the Red Peasant Union of Koreans in Manchuria in the early 1930s and used it to conduct mass struggle. The peasant union, which started its activities with enlightenment, including the drive

against superstition, gambling, early marriage, marriage for pay and illiteracy, gradually developed through economic struggle such as tenancy dispute and resistance against forced draft labour to anti-Japanese political struggle, refusing to lay military roads and opposing or sabotaging the construction of military establishments.

I was told that prior to our establishment of the organizations of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland in the Changbai area, the Red peasant union had provided leadership for the mass struggle conducted in Xinxingcun and its vicinity.

In a word, Ri Je Sun could be said to be as white as snow. His career was relatively simple. This provided striking evidence that he had not been tainted by the erroneous views and fighting methods of the self-styled campaigners and factionalists. We treasured the simplicity of his career. An idea or a theory implanted in an unstained brain will not become muddled.

According to Ri Je Sun, quite a few interesting points in the philosophy of life had been learned during the anti-Japanese patriotic struggle. He said that the hardest job for a man was the role of pioneer or leader. In other words, it was the toughest job, as you had to perform two or three tasks, while others were doing one and take two or three steps, while others were taking one.

In fact, his words contained a profound truth, reflecting the painful position of a revolutionary, who treads a thorny path of leading social transformation.

“It must be overtaxing you to farm and perform the duties of a village head, while working for the revolution,” I said.

Ri replied, smiling, “Yes, indeed. But it gives me pleasure. What would be the pleasure of living in these grim days, if we didn’t take the trouble of working for the revolution?”

He said that he found it extremely interesting to work among the masses and that he took the greatest pleasure in gaining comrades. When I asked which section of the masses was the hardest to win over, he answered that it was the old people. He went on to say that if he had a large playground or public hall, it would not be a great problem to

enlighten a village and even transform a sub-county in revolutionary fashion. I expressed my full agreement with his view on the masses and work with the masses.

One interesting experience in his enlightening of the masses involved the running of a “family night school.” Such a night school is run with a family as a unit. He opened such a school in his family and involved all his family members. All the family attended the school every night and Ri Je Sun took to educating his wife and younger brothers. Thanks to that school, every one of his family became literate.

While talking about his work among the masses, I asked him about the other ten-household heads, who had come to the camp with provisions.

He told me that all of them were good people and that the stepson of landlord Chon was problematic. The young man had mistaken the revolutionary army as “bandits” and therefore been uneasy since his first day in the camp, afraid that the guerrillas might kill him, he told me.

I asked him in a casual manner, “Let’s say that the company commander Ri Tong Hak brought him to raise funds. How do you think we should deal with him?”

Ri Je Sun, as if he had been expecting such a question, expressed his innermost thought without hesitation, “I believe that the guerrillas will not harm him. He is a landlord’s stepson in name only, and is actually a pitiable young man, who is no more than a servant. He is not guilty of any particular crime.”

I could not suppress my admiration for his generosity and way of thinking, as he viewed the matter in a magnanimous way, from the standpoint of a united front.

In fact his view on the stepson coincided with our view. Ri Tong Hak educated the young man in various ways and corrected his understanding of us. In the long run, the young man volunteered to join the guerrillas. We admitted him to the revolutionary army, as he had wanted. During the battle of Ershidaogou he acted as a guide. The man

Ri Je Sun had shown great confidence in was killed in action in a battle, to our deep regret.

All things considered, Ri Je Sun was a man of distinctive character, who was charming to all about him. He was the very man to transform the Changbai area in a revolutionary way. Once taught the necessary knowledge and methods, he could become a skilful underground worker in the future. I decided to entrust him with the task of setting up organizations of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland in the Changbai area.

But he was eager to join the guerrillas.

Saying that he had made some preparations to join the army while I had been away for fighting, he begged me to put him through the admission test.

I could not help laughing at the word “admission test.”

“There’s no need. As *Pottaji* took you here after a test, you are as good as qualified for joining the army. We will admit you any time, if you so wish. But I believe that you will render a greater contribution to our revolution by doing another job.”

“You say another job? What can that be?” He was puzzled.

“Rather than taking part in battle as a rifleman, you can form a big organization and help the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army defeat the Japanese army. What do you think?”

“You mean that I should form an organization?” His curiosity was evident.

“Sure. Organizations of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland in every place on the Amnok, including Xinxingcun.”

I stressed the importance and urgency of organizing the masses from all strata into the anti-Japanese national united front.

An intelligent man, Ri Je Sun said that he was keen to work in the underground organization, but felt he was incompetent and doubted that he was equal to such a difficult job.

“There’s no need to worry. You can learn. There’s no born revolutionary. Anyone can become a revolutionary, if he is determined to engage himself in the revolution, learn gradually in the practical

struggle and accumulate experience. We will teach you how.”

We gave him a short course. The subject of the short course was the line, character, strategy and tactics of the Korean revolution; here I gave the lectures. The lectures on the Ten-Point Programme, Inaugural Declaration, and Rules of the ARF and the history of the International were given by Ri Tong Baek. As far as I remember, this was the first and last time during the entire anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle that several competent lecturers had taught the one and only student by turns in such a substantial manner.

On leaving the secret camp after the short course, Ri Je Sun said earnestly, “I came here with one *mal* of grain and now return with several *mal* of revolutionary pabulum. I will not forget your favour for my life. Now please give me an assignment. If you entrust me with a district, I will form the organization of the ARF in every village of the Koreans in that district.”

We decided to entrust him with Shangganqu area, Changbai County.

Before leaving, he asked me to write a letter of credence for him. He said that he would be able to rally a great number of masses around the ARF and further perform his work with considerable ease, if he had a letter of credence sealed by my stamp.

I wrote credentials and sealed my stamp under my signature.

Taking the credentials, Ri Je Sun promised that he would put the area entrusted to him under our influence within half a year. The fact that he was not making empty promises was testified by his results in later days.

That day he said, “I have a request to make, General, but I am afraid to do so. I will be happy in my whole life, if I try on a guerrilla uniform before leaving the camp.”

“That will not be difficult. Please try it on.”

I readily complied with his request. I thought about the sheer earnestness of his wish to join the army, given such a request. He cherished a wish to join the army, while displaying determination to devote his all to independence on the underground front. The desire to

wear a military uniform and participate in the great anti-Japanese war could be judged in effect as the highest expression of patriotism when Japan, having occupied Manchuria, was heading madly for a new world war with ambitions of swallowing up the whole of China, as well as all Asia.

I ordered Ri Tong Hak to bring a uniform from the warehouse, so that Je Sun could try it on. Ri Je Sun looked perfect in the uniform. The uniform was brought, after guessing his size; it fitted him well.

“You seem to be born to wear a military uniform, Comrade Je Sun. You look smart in the uniform. As you have tried on the uniform, let’s say you have been admitted to the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army. From now on you are a political operative of the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army. Congratulations on your enlistment!”

I approached him and squeezed his hands. Ri Tong Hak congratulated him most warmly. He lifted on his back the village head, who was beside himself in the uniform, and circled round me.

In this way Ri Je Sun, who had come to our camp carrying provisions, joined our army.

When sending him back to his home, we fought a small battle for his safe return. This task was carried out by a small unit led by Ri Tong Hak.

The operation for his return, which made a fool of the enemy, was interesting. As we had instructed, he went straight to the police sub-station in Ershidaogou on his way back from the mountain. There he grumbled to the police without any preliminaries, “I can’t work as a village head any longer. You merely know how to make village heads work, but you don’t know how to protect them. You might have known that I was captured, and yet you didn’t take any measures to rescue me. I am so scared that I will have to cross back to Korea to live there. Let the other people serve you to get killed.”

The policemen were at a loss. They implored him to stop saying such things and said that they were never at ease because of him and that they could not do anything, because they had not been aware of his whereabouts. They asked him to calm down and tell them where he

had been detained and how he had escaped.

Ri Je Sun said that the guerrillas always took him with his eyes bandaged, and that he only knew of the place he had escaped from at dawn, but not the place he had been detained at. He explained that he had taken flight, while his guard was dozing off during a break.

The police asked how many guerrillas there were and where he had escaped and requested that he guide them to the place.

Our plan worked. The police's "punitive" force came to the valley Ri Je Sun indicated, only to end up as a mouse in a trap. The enemy inevitably trusted him. Making effective use of that trust, he, along with Kim Pyong Chol, Ri Ju Gwan and Ri Sam Dok, formed that autumn Xinxingcun chapter of the ARF. This was the first organization formed at the southwestern foot of Mt. Paektu.

He handed over the post of village head to Ri Sam Dok and, from then on set about expanding the organizational network, in cooperation with Kwon Yong Byok, concentrating on Shanggangqu area in Changbai County. For the convenience of our activity, we divided Changbai County largely into three areas—namely Shanggangqu area, Zhonggangqu area and Xiagangqu area—and subdivided Shanggangqu area into Shangfangmian, Zhongfangmian, and Xiafangmian. Following the forming of a chapter in Xinxingcun, Ri Je Sun set up ARF chapters in Zhujingdong, Yaoshuidong, Dashidong and Pinggangde. He also formed many branches under the chapters and such peripheral organizations as the Anti-Japanese Youth League, Women's Association and Children's Corps, thereby rallying broad masses of the people.

Within less than half a year, he had covered the whole of Shanggangqu with a close network of underground organizations. The organizations of the ARF were set up in nearly all the villages surrounding Paektusan Secret Camp. These organizations gained the support of progressive youth, students, intellectuals and religious men and struck roots further in the government organs of Manchukuo, police organs and in Jingan army units.

The ARF was surrounded by mass organizations, involving people

from all strata. The peripheral organizations of the ARF embraced tens of thousands of people. Every chapter of the ARF maintained a paramilitary corps, a powerful force capable of fighting in cooperation with the People's Revolutionary Army, when necessary.

The ARF organizations in the Changbai area expanded so rapidly, that by early 1937 when we set up the Changbai County Committee of the ARF and appointed Ri Je Sun its chairman, the whole area of Changbai County became our ground.

Almost all the villages in Changbai became "our villages" and nearly all the people there, "our people." Nearly all the district and village heads in Changbai were "our people." They ran for the enemy in name only; they worked for us in actual deed.

Sub-county head, Ri Ju Ik, was one of them. When we sent an advance party to Changbai prior to our launching into Paektu area, Ri Ju Ik came under the influence of Kim Ju Hyon and became a special member of the ARF.

He opened a chemist's shop at Yuledong and practised medicine, while working as sub-county head. Making tactful use of his posts, he provided substantial support for our work.

Ri Je Sun had already kept watchful eyes on the man, since he was arrested for involvement in the struggle against an irrigation association in the homeland. Ri Ju Ik loyally followed the guidance of Ri Je Sun and carried out his instructions and requests wholeheartedly.

In those days, if our political operatives went to the homeland or settled in the villages on the Chinese shore of the Amnok to work in safety, they needed a certificate to cross the river or a resident's card. Without a resident's card, they could not settle down in dispatched places or freely cross the Amnok, which was guarded by customs police, without the certificate.

The card and certificate were issued by the police under the endorsement of sub-county heads. The police stations only issued them to people registered on the census records submitted by the sub-county heads.

To ensure the safe and free activities of our political operatives, Je

Sun and Ju Ik decided to make many “bogus residents” in Ershisidaogou, the last valley on the way to Mt. Paektu. The valley was so remote and steep that even the policemen were reluctant to visit it.

Ri Ju Ik registered on the census list the assumed names of our political operatives, active in the Changbai area and the homeland; then, he visited the police station carrying with him the census list and fussed, “The rustic poor are all ignorant; they don’t know anything other than their own. As they don’t go outside of that valley round the year, they are not aware of the world situation and even don’t know that they can only continue their existence, when they have a resident’s card. What can we do other than bring them the cards? I might be dog tired but it’s no use complaining. It’s not easy to be a sub-county head.”

The police echoed his words, saying that it was a serious problem, that the people were ignoramuses. They issued many resident’s cards to the sub-county and village heads, in accordance with the census of “bogus residents.” Ri Je Sun always had plenty of spare cards obtained by Ju Ik. Our political operatives got them at any time and based themselves easily in strange places or crossed the border without difficulty.

Following the rapid expansion of the ARF network and the widening of the sphere of their work, we dispatched 30 political operatives at one time to expand the revolutionary movement deep into the homeland, by consolidating the newly-formed organizations, using them as a stepping-stone.

Pak Rok Kum (Pak Yong Hui), the first commander of the women’s company of the guerrilla army, and two boy operatives were dispatched to Xinxingcun. Instructed by Ri Je Sun to perform the necessary formalities for their residence, Ri Ju Ik registered them on the census list under assumed names.

Ri Hun, who was a district head in Diyangxi, Shijiudaogou, joined the ARF under the influence of Ri Je Sun. On returning from the secret camp after seeing me, Je Sun soon went to see Ri Hun; he explained the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF and instructed him to influence

reliable young people and make preparations for admitting them to organizations, as this was the wish of General Kim.

The first man Ri Hun introduced to Ri Je Sun on receiving the assignment was An Tok Hun, who had moved to Desancun, Shijiudaogou, after participating in the peasant union movement in Yonghung (Kumya), South Hamgyong Province. In spring 1937 Ri Je Sun formed a chapter of the ARF in Shijiudaogou, headed by An Tok Hun. Its branches were set up in all its hamlets by the summer of that year. In most cases, the village heads concurrently held the post of head of the sections. The activities of the organizations were so brisk that the boys and girls in these areas sang revolutionary songs in public.

When operating on Mt. Paektu, I met Ri Hun on a few occasions. He said a great deal about Ri Je Sun. He told me that I was blessed with good men.

“You picked the right man, General. They say that Changbai is wide, but I have yet to see a man as clever and loyal as Je Sun. To see him busy with revolutionary work away from home, oblivious of happy newly-wedded life, I take off my hat to him despite myself. Thanks to him I have become your man.”

When our Headquarters were situated on the mountain overlooking Diyangxi, Shijiudaogou, Changbai County, Ri Hun, with his wife, rendered us effective assistance. The mountain was advantageous, as we could go to Heixiazigou through its forests. At that time his wife would go to Changbai county town and, pretending to sell cigarettes and bean-curd, watch the movements of the enemy; when there was any strange movement by the enemy, she would make a fire with fallen leaves in the yard of her house and the sentries of the People's Revolutionary Army would inform Headquarters of the enemy movement, with the help of that signal. If a large enemy force moved, Ri Hun himself would come to us and provide detailed information.

Such patriotic sub-county, district and village heads could be found everywhere in Changbai.

The fact that Changbai became our world and its inhabitants our

people constituted a tremendous success, achieved by the Korean communists in carrying out the strategic tasks of building bases in Mt. Paektu.

Thanks to faithful, daring and enthusiastic revolutionaries like Ri Je Sun, we managed to turn Changbai and the areas surrounding it completely into our own world in less than half a year, since basing ourselves on Mt. Paektu.

Ri Je Sun was a true son and faithful servant of the people, born in the flames of the anti-Japanese revolution and admirable patriot and communist of Korea, who pioneered with his life the road of revolution for the liberation of the masses.

He was an experienced and seasoned revolutionary, fully equipped with the traits and qualifications befitting an underground worker.

Just like O Jung Hwa, Ri Je Sun was exemplary in transforming his family into a revolutionary one. One should equip before anybody else one's own kinsmen and kinswomen with anti-Japanese patriotic ideas; only then can one transform one's village and furthermore the whole country in a revolutionary fashion—this was his faith and the mode of revolutionary activities. Consequently he involved his younger brothers and sisters in revolution from the days in his native village. His younger sisters helped his revolutionary work well.

After moving to Xinxingcun he also involved his wife and her mother in revolutionary work.

Under his meticulous assistance and love, his wife Choe Chae Ryon grew to become chairwoman of Xinxingcun Women's Association affiliated with the ARF. His influence rapidly awakened her ideological consciousness. She was full of emotional feelings and also had a keen political sense. These merits enabled her to acquire the method of revolution instantly and adhere to revolutionary principles.

Ri Je Sun was very affectionate towards his wife, but was strict with her. Tender-hearted as he was, cracking jokes and humorous remarks in usual days, he would make a clear distinction between public and private matters in underground work and did not let out any of secrets.

Once the wife of a policeman surnamed Ri rushed to Choe Chae

Ryon and said, “Oh, my dear! What do you do after taking three meals a day? Do you know what’s happening in the village inn?”

Choe Chae Ryon looked at her doubtfully and said.

“I don’t know. How can I know about anything happening in the inn?”

“Oh, how blind you are! Your man is having a good time with other women there every night and you. ...”

She stopped here and slipped away.

That night Choe went to the inn. She opened the door and stole a look, only to find that the inn was full of strange women and men as Ri’s wife had said. In the middle she could see her husband and the policeman Ri. But it seemed there was none of the “good times” Ri’s wife had mentioned. She realized that a certain secret meeting was taking place, chaired by her husband, in this spacious inn, which attracted less attention of the police. Apparently the policeman Ri was a member of the secret organization.

“Then why on earth did she say they are having a good time? She probably misunderstood the secret meetings as a ‘good time’ only out of jealousy,” she thought and closed the door of the inn in haste, with a feeling of relief.

But she could not dodge her husband’s sharp eye. He gave her a hard time the whole night. Under the barrage of rebukes she realized keenly that she had made a great blunder on the instigation of another woman, that unfounded mistrust and jealousy would impair the harmony of the family and worse still destroy the family itself, and that trust was the basic foundation for the consolidation of conjugal relationship.

Although he resorted to all sorts of hard words against his wife that night, Ri Je Sun did not say a word about what he and others had been doing in the inn to prove his innocence. He had such a thoroughgoing concept of secrets. We had not established a written code of conduct for the revolutionaries in general and, in particular, for the underground operatives and activists of underground organizations; however, Ri Je Sun had in mind a law he had stipulated and observed on his own.

When fighting in the Changbai area, I visited his house on one or two occasions. At one time I ate noodle made of frozen potato and slept there. Whenever I went to his house, he would hang a blind between the room and kitchen, which had not been partitioned, lest his wife should see me. So she did not realize that I was Kim Il Sung, even though she brought a table laden with dishes to me at mealtime.

On learning later through Pak Rok Kum who I was, she protested to her husband in tears.

“You always say that one should trust others and you didn’t tell me he is General Kim Il Sung. What sort of propriety is that?”

“I could not tell the secret to any one. I did this for the sake of his personal security. Though regretful, please be broad in understanding.”

This was just Ri Je Sun’s type of law.

The tough character and thoroughgoing principle he demonstrated exerted a good influence on the development of her personality and the formation of her outlook on the world. On returning after meeting me at the Paektusan Secret Camp, he made this request to her.

“Many guests may visit my house from now on. Please prepare a great deal of potatoes, starch, barley, bean paste and firewood. You will have to take a lot of trouble in the future.”

Choe Chae Ryon took great trouble indeed to attend to the guerrillas and underground operatives. She hulled grain everyday. She hulled so much grain that the mortar of the mill Ri Je Sun had made personally might have been worn down.

While transforming his family in a revolutionary manner, he also made his village into a revolutionary one. With Kwon Yong Byok, he formed a special Party branch in Xinxingcun. Following its formation, a large number of ARF members in the Changbai area joined the Party’s ranks. Xinxingcun could be called a leading village in rallying the people to organizations and supporting the guerrillas.

When they were informed of the approach of the guerrillas, the villagers of Xinxingcun baked above all perilla used to press cooking oil. They stringently economized on provisions to prepare provisions for the guerrillas. Potato, the staple product in this village, was

unhandy to carry and was of little value in use. So they processed it into starch before sending it to our secret camps.

The women in Xinxingcun did not send us bean paste raw; first of all they processed it. They mixed wheat flour with bean paste, kneaded them into cakes and roasted them; these cakes were very convenient for carrying and use.

The people in Xinxingcun brought us tens of thousands of items of aid goods. They carried these supplies on their backs as far as our secret camps or bivouacs.

The Xinxingcun people were blessed with an excellent leader. Not only Ri Je Sun was a competent man; Kwon Yong Byok, Pak Rok Kum and Hwang Kum Ok gave him effective assistance.

On a visit to the village prior to the battle of Pochonbo, I was deeply moved by the villagers' warm welcome to the revolutionary army and their powerful unity. As soon as we arrived, they set up four noodle-presses and prepared noodles for hundreds of men in a short time. The speed was really amazing. That day my comrades said that the village was attractive. All of the villagers were really attractive. I later learned that whenever we went to the village, Ri Je Sun would hold an extraordinary meeting beforehand and discuss how to welcome us.

His high organizational ability and flexibility can be illustrated by the following anecdote.

In spring 1937 the Changbai County Committee of the ARF organized a demonstration to celebrate May Day in Xinxingcun. To hold a lawful demonstration at broad daylight, attracting public attention, they needed a justifiable scheme, lest the enemy find fault with him. On the plea of hunting foxes, Ri Je Sun gathered the youth and children in every village in the designated place. The demonstrators, holding a red flag, formed a line and marched, shouting "Long live the independence of Korea!" to the village of Nanyu, Ershidaogou, along the ridge overlooking the Amnok River. They shouted other slogans in between to put the enemy in confusion.

That day the pedestrians on both shores of the Amnok halted and

watched with delight the rare demonstration. Thinking that the revolutionary army was making an assault, the policemen and troops in the police station of Karimchon and the border garrison on the Korean side of the river did not dare enquire into the disturbance taking place on the ridge. Only after the demonstration was over and the demonstrators had been identified to be civilians did the enemy cross the river to Changbai and ask why crowds of people had flocked.

The demonstrators answered that they had been hunting foxes.

The police queried, "Why did you fly a red flag when hunting foxes?"

"The foxes are most afraid of red. So we flew a red flag."

They deceived the police tactfully. Admittedly a red flag was needed for fox-hunting and the demonstration.

It was amazing that a crowd of hundreds of people shouted for independence flying a red flag in daylight in 1937, when the suppression of the Japanese imperialists was at its zenith. It was all the more surprising that the army and police of both Japan and Manchukuo were not aware that the demonstration was directed against them. This was a bold adventure, which could only be conceived by men of outstanding resourcefulness and daring spirit.

After the attack on Pochonbo, Ri Je Sun dispatched members of the Women's Association in Xinxingcun to that place to confirm the results of the battle and survey public opinion; he then informed us of the findings. We had not requested that he conduct such a survey of public opinion. He decided and organized this undertaking on his own, displaying his creative spirit.

From these two facts, we can see that he was a talented worker and indefatigable thinker with a methodology of his own for the revolution. He was second to none in racking his brains for the revolution and the duty entrusted to him by the times. If he had not continued such brain-racking without interruption, he would not have managed to achieve such a miracle and turn Changbai thoroughly into our world in such a short period of time.

Everybody knows that people who do not meditate, have no

creative spirit and that there will be no creation and innovation without creativity. When considered in a strict way, one can claim that meditation made man the dominator of the world and a powerful being, who can do anything as long as he is determined. Man, a social being with consciousness, has transformed nature, society and himself and reigned over the world with dignity through uninterrupted meditation and accumulation of that meditation.

It is because we attach absolute importance to the role of meditation in transforming nature, society and man that our Party appeals to the cadres, Party members and other working people to become zealous thinkers.

Ri Je Sun was a creative man, who fully linked meditation and practice. He did not stop meditating even in court and behind bars. His meditation in court was concentrated on how he could end his life as a communist.

The only thing I can do in court is to rescue comrades by pleading guilty for them—this was the determination he made when detained in the Hyesan police station. In fact, he managed to rescue many people by sacrificing himself. When Ri Ju Ik, the sub-county head, was arrested, he told him, “Only General Kim, you and I know our undertakings. The General is on the mountain and I will not utter anything, so there will be no trouble for you, if you stick it out.”

True to his word, Ri Ju Ik was released after a few days of suffering. As Ri Je Sun pleaded guilty of all “crimes,” Kim Pyong Chol, head of the Party organization in Xinxingcun, and Ri Ju Gwan managed to escape a death sentence. His self-sacrifice reflects the ennobling virtue of Ri Je Sun, a communist.

On learning from Kwon Yong Byok in prison that Jang Jung Ryol had betrayed the cause, he grew anxious that his betrayal might bring about the further sacrifice of stalwart comrades. He wanted to inform his comrades of Jang’s betrayal at the earliest possible date, but he did not even have a pencil-butt. At his wit’s end, he bit his lower lip with his teeth and, wetting a fingertip with every drop of blood flowing from his lip, wrote on a piece of cloth, “Jang Jung Ryol betrayed us.”

When he was led to the torture chamber, he dropped it in another cell. Consequently, many of his comrades could realize Jang's true nature and fought more effectively in prison.

I regret that I cannot recount here all the moving anecdotes of his struggle for seven years behind bars.

When Choe Chae Ryon visited him, she found that his face was no longer the handsome, elastic one she had known in the past, when he had been running about to form ARF organizations. His original image was gone and he was all skin and bone. Nevertheless, he was smiling calmly as he saw her through the bars. When parting, he requested her in a happy-go-lucky way to bring a world map instead of food. Choe Chae Ryon spoke later of how she had been perplexed by this uncommon order.

In my opinion, his request for a world map reflected his wish to try to imagine on the map in his own way a new world structure after the Second World War and a new, liberated motherland, which would be born out of the war and shed bright light all over the world. This is patent proof that he did not abandon himself to despair and despondency, even after being sentenced to death, that he was picturing endlessly in his mind the radiant future of his country and the bright future of the world. He lived in the future, though his body was in the present, and imagined, even at the point of death, a new, happy life to be born in the liberated motherland. Consequently he declared with dignity that "communism is an eternal youth" to the judges, who had advised him to turn coat.

In early 1945 Choe Chae Ryon took her youngest daughter to Sodaemun prison in Seoul. The youngest daughter, who had been suffering from a lack of breast milk, as she had been incarcerated with her mother two months after her birth, was now an 8-year-old girl. She shot a dubious look at the bearded man on the other side of the bars.

"That's your daddy," her mother said to her, pointing to the man.

The father and his daughter looked at each other with bars between them, but she failed to say, "Daddy!"

How can one expect her to call him "Daddy!" with no hesitation,

when she had lived for eight years without seeing her father! She had seen many fathers of her neighbours caressing their children. But she found her father extraordinary, as he was only smiling on the other side of the bars, instead of embracing her.

Only when his hands in cuffs fondled her head, making a clinking noise, did she utter, “Daddy!” Feeling a lump in his throat, Ri Je Sun made the impossible promise that he “would come home soon.” It is not difficult to imagine how painful it must have been for him to make such an infeasible promise to his daughter, who was seeing her daddy for the first time in her life. Needless to say, he could not keep that promise.

On March 10, 1945, the enemy called him into the interrogation room and tried to persuade him to convert his faith, saying that they would repeal his sentence in that case, as it was the day of the Imperial Army of Japan. Nevertheless, Ri Je Sun did not give way to any appeasement and torture.

Ri Je Sun, who had taught at night school and worked as the head of a remote mountain village in Changbai, was an ardent patriot and indefatigable revolutionary fighter, as he laid down the prime of his life to the anti-Japanese revolution.

A man is not born a revolutionary; he grows into a revolutionary and a fighter in life and struggle. It is the truth of the revolution and lesson of history that, although the process of growing into a revolutionary may differ from man to man, every one with a sound ideology and burning patriotism can become a revolutionary if he is under correct leadership. This is the reason why we attach primary importance to the ideological in the three revolutions—ideological, technical and cultural. This ideological revolution is a cradle, which trains people into ardent patriots and iron-willed revolutionary fighters by awakening their consciousness and organizing them, as well as the motive power, which propels the cause of independence of the masses and revolutionary struggle.

When he came to our secret camp—it was his third or fourth visit—I highly praised him for his efforts to build ARF organizations. He only

waved his hand with an awkward face.

“Don’t mention it. It owes nothing to my skill or trouble. The credentials you gave me transformed such a man as sub-county head Ri Ju Ik, into a member of the ARF. Seeing the credentials, Ri said that he would become a member of the association, chaired by you, General Kim. And the Changbai people are highly patriotic. I’ve done nothing special.”

Ri Je Sun was such a modest man.

His small bust can be found at the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery on Mt. Taesong, still looking at the rising generation in a modest way. Standing alongside him you will see the busts of Kwon Yong Byok, Ri Tong Gol and Ji Thae Hwan, who ended their days on the gallows with him.

## **4. With the Comrades-in-Arms in Southern Manchuria**

I recall with pleasure the political and military activities on the Amnok River after building up many secret camps around Mt. Paektu, especially the days when I consolidated militant friendship and solidarity with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 1<sup>st</sup> Corps of the Anti-Japanese Allied Army through joint life and joint operations, when they called on my unit.

The cooperation between the Korean People's Revolutionary Army and the Chinese communist armed units had already been deliberated at the meeting held in Yaoyinggou in March 1935. On the decision adopted at the meeting, our unit later made a second expedition to northern Manchuria and the other unit left for southern Manchuria across Xinkai Hill. The typical Chinese armed units on our flank were Zhou Bao-zhong's unit active in the Ningan area, Li Yan-lu's unit in the Mishan area, Yang Jing-yu's unit in southern Manchuria and Zhao Shang-zhi's unit in the Zhuhe area. In those days, these units conducted a brisk joint struggle with their neighbours on their own initiative.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Independent Division, which had moved to southern Manchuria from eastern Manchuria, held an emotional meeting with comrades-in-arms of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps at Naerhong, Mengjing County in August and September 1935. This occurred, when we were conducting joint operations with Zhou Bao-zhong's unit, after crossing Laoyeling Mountains again.

The unit dispatched to southern Manchuria included O Jung Hup and Kim Phyoung, commanders from Wangqing.

O Jung Hup recalled with emotion in later days that the comrades in southern Manchuria had accorded the guerrillas from eastern

Manchuria an enthusiastic reception, by erecting a gate of pine decorations, flying flags, preparing a rostrum and making a welcoming speech. Apparently the ceremony had been spectacular. That day Yang Jing-yu made a welcoming speech on behalf of the unit in southern Manchuria and Li Xue-zhong made a reply address on behalf of the unit from eastern Manchuria; their speeches were interrupted several times by the applause of hundreds of people. As far as I remember, the scene of that day was described concisely in a special issue of the *People's Revolution*.

When Cao Guo-an came to Heixiazigou Secret Camp, leading the main force of his division, we were not around, as we had gone out to fight battles. A messenger sent by Kim Ju Hyon informed us on the battle field of the arrival of the unit from southern Manchuria. Apparently Kim Ju Hyon, in charge of our unit's food, clothing and housing, was taking considerable trouble to give the guests a generous reception. To see comrades from southern Manchuria as soon as possible, we left for the secret camp immediately after battles.

It was a great pleasure for us to meet the comrades-in-arms from our adjacent area. We yearned for people—this was a valuable and intense feeling, which was deeply rooted in the minds of all of us. How come we missed only one or two things, when we lived on the mountains far away from inhabited areas? We missed our home villages, kinsfolk, schoolmates, beloved ones, civilization in all its hues and shades and everything else. But the strongest of all these yearnings was the yearning for our comrades and the yearning for people. For this very reason, the days we stayed in residential quarters were holidays for us all. In an outburst of this feeling, my comrades-in-arms and I raised a shout of joy and embraced the messenger, when we heard that the men of Cao Guo-an's unit had come to our secret camp.

As we arrived at the camp, 70-80 men from southern Manchuria rushed out of the quarters and surrounded us. We were bewildered by incessant embraces and handshakes. If a stranger had seen that scene, he might have got the wrong idea that we were receiving a welcome at

the secret camp of the south Manchurian men.

Thanks to this meeting, I got acquainted for the first time with division commander Cao Guo-an. Cao Guo-an looked like a strong-willed, rigorous instructor at a military academy; this was my first impression. But after a few days of living under the same roof, my opinion changed. He was very tender-hearted and sociable. He was a self-possessed man, a dozen years older than me.

The fact that he had been born in Yongji County, Jilin Province, and graduated from Jilin Normal School, instilled in me an intimate feeling that we were from the same native town. After graduating from this school, he once taught at the Jilin Middle School No.1. Later he attended the military and political academy in Shandong and also studied in Beijing. He said that he had become absorbed in studying Marxism-Leninism from the days in these two institutions. Taking part in the anti-Japanese armed struggle, he worked as political commissar of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Division, 1<sup>st</sup> Corps and had, since the autumn of 1934, been working as commander and political commissar of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 1<sup>st</sup> Corps.

Pointing at his men surrounding us, Cao Guo-an said with an awkward smile, "Please, Commander Kim, don't feel reproachful that the people you are going to cooperate with are so indecent. This is the result of my inefficient command of my unit, so please understand."

The guests from southern Manchuria, both officers, rank and file, all wore shabby summer clothes. Their threadbare military uniforms, revealing even their underwear, graphically told us of the arduous and long road his division had traversed.

"Commander Kim, although we are ashamed of it, we have not yet provided our men with winter clothes," said Cao Guo-an, casting an envious glance at my men, who were wearing soft, cotton-padded coats. He maintained a sad smile on his face.

"Oh, don't. How many battles you might have fought and how much hardship you might have undergone for your clothes to have become so shabby! We looked no better than you when we returned from the expedition to northern Manchuria. We have some winter

clothes in reserve, but I am afraid I don't know how much. If you don't disagree, we will give them to you to begin with and we will make new ones for the rest."

Cao Guo-an was very pleased. He said, "Then I can sleep soundly."

The division commander Cao and I exchanged our opinions on joint struggle for about 20 days, sharing board and food in the camp; during this time, I grew closer to him. We exchanged our views on the cooperation of our two units, to begin with, the management of units, education of soldiers, ways of reinforcing troops and working among the masses, guerrilla tactics, the future of the revolution in Korea and China, and also talked about our personal backgrounds.

What I thought charming about his personality was his simplicity and frankness. He was exceedingly frank and modest. The ten-year age gap did not matter in the interview with him. He did not mind the differences in age and position of his counterpart; if the counterpart was to his liking, he would even speak his inmost thoughts. He did not hesitate to tell me the ups and downs his division had suffered and its casualties.

The parent body of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, led by Cao Guo-an was the anti-Japanese people's guerrilla unit, formed by the Koreans in Panshi, and it comprised the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Division, which had been organized with the defectors from the puppet Manchukuo army and mountain rebels. The main area of the division's operations had been Panshi County and the areas around it.

After being restructured into a division, the unit, in accordance with the operational plan of the corps headquarters, would go on an expedition to the north of River Huifa every summer and return in winter to compensate for the loss it had sustained during the expedition and replenish its troops, before embarking on an expedition to that area next summer. It had been a regular mobile operation, conducted once every year without fail, on the plea of expanding the area of guerrilla activities. However, these systematic operations had attracted the enemy's attention and the unit's unchangeable course of activities had entered the enemy's operations map. The enemy had launched surprise attacks at vantage

points, and the unit had suffered great losses on each expedition.

In summer 1936, the division lost a large number of combatants during the expedition. In cooperation with the 1<sup>st</sup> Division from eastern Manchuria, Cao Guo-an had led some of his division as far as Shansong, Emu County. On his return from the expedition, he had gathered his division in the area of Huiquanzhan in Huadian County and came directly to us via Fusong County. He added that the unit had consequently failed to drop in at the supply base of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, situated in Naerhong, Mengjiang County and, therefore, replace their summer clothes with winter clothes.

While groping in agony for a way to surmount the difficulties, facing his division, he had one day been informed of the battle at Fusong county town, we had fought from Song Mu Son's small unit, which had been to Sandaolazihe, Fusong County, to obtain provisions.

Cao Guo-an told me that he had been deeply moved by their story. He had thought: While the others win victory after victory even with a newly-organized division, why should my unit fight a hard battle each time? Why should we leave for the north of Huifa every summer in a mechanical way, although we suffer a considerable loss of our force at each expedition? We might be able to draw a lesson here.

He had held a consultative meeting of the leading officers, where they had discussed several measures for ensuring a decisive turn in the military activities of the unit, including the implementation, as early as possible, of joint operations with my unit. The common view had been expressed at the meeting that joint operations would enable them to develop their strategy and tactics and accumulate useful experiences. The main proponent of this proposal was Song Mu Son and the most active supporter was division commander Cao Guo-an.

The division had left Dadonggou, Huadian County immediately in the direction of my unit.

Presumably, they had fought battles not worth fighting, even though they had undergone severe difficulties. On hearing the trials and sufferings they had endured, I felt they were not their own trials and sufferings.

In actual fact, the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps of the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Army, also called the south Manchurian guerrilla unit, was a major neighbour of the main force of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army along with the guerrilla unit in northern Manchuria. Since the first days of the anti-Japanese war, we had displayed great concern in the development of the guerrilla unit in southern Manchuria and exerted tireless efforts to effect a joint struggle with them. We had also dispatched many excellent Korean cadres there, who had been seasoned and trained in guerrilla warfare in eastern Manchuria. In one effort in this direction, on our expedition to southern Manchuria in summer 1932, we tried to join hands with Ri Hong Gwang and Ri Tong Gwang, by sending our representative to them. However, to our deep regret, we could not realize joint operations with them.

In the days, prior to the meeting in Nanhutou, we attached considerable importance to the cooperation with the guerrilla unit in northern Manchuria. This was why we had made expeditions on two occasions into northern Manchuria. We had conducted joint operations with the communists there and allied operations with the Chinese anti-Japanese units. Although it had caused heart-rending losses and sacrifices, cooperation with them demonstrated its validity.

Admittedly northern Manchuria was geographically nearer to us than southern Manchuria, when we fought by relying on the guerrilla base in Jiandao; northern Manchuria was located over a mountain.

In the latter half of the 1930s, when we began to fight with west Jiandao as a new theatre of our activities, southern Manchuria became nearer to us in geographical concept than northern Manchuria. The gun reports we raised everyday in the southwestern area of Mt. Paektu whetted the desire of guerrilla units in southern Manchuria to achieve cooperation with the People's Revolutionary Army as early as possible. The formation of an alliance with these units was an urgent and long-standing issue, which brooked no further delay. Cao Guo-an's division can be called the first one we carried out joint operations with on a division level, after our advance to the Mt. Paektu area.

As in eastern and northern Manchuria, the guerrilla struggle in southern Manchuria had been pioneered and led by the communists and revolutionaries of Korea. In the national composition of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> divisions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps of the Anti-Japanese Allied Army active in southern Manchuria, the Koreans occupied the majority. Most of military and political cadres, excluding Yang Jing-yu, Wei Zheng-min and Cao Guo-an, were Koreans.

In a rally held in Jilin in December 1945, Zhou Bao-zhong made the following speech: The stalwart east Manchurian guerrilla army, set up in 1932 and the Panshi, Zhuhe, Mishan, and Tangyuan guerrilla armies, formed in 1933, were all organized by Korean comrades and the revolutionary Korean masses; later they developed into several corps of the Anti-Japanese Allied Army. There were many excellent Korean comrades in the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps; the military and political cadres at all levels of the allied army, from corps commanders and political commissars to platoon leaders and instructors in each corps, included many Korean comrades. The Panshi guerrilla army he mentioned is the south Manchurian guerrilla army, the predecessor of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps of the allied army.

As reflected in the conventional name, the Panshi guerrilla army, the cradle of the guerrilla struggle in southern Manchuria was the Panshi area.

Apparently, when the Party Committee of Panshi County was formed, it registered 40 Communist Party members, who were all Koreans. Ri Hong Gwang organized the first armed unit with less than ten Koreans; this unit was the parent body of the south Manchurian guerrilla army. The first members of the south Manchurian guerrilla army, formed with 30 men, were all Koreans as well. Most of the heads of the Anti-Japanese Association, Women's Association, Children's Vanguards and Peasants' Committees, formed in Panshi guerrilla base, were also Koreans. Koreans played the role of pioneer, hard core and helmsman in pioneering and developing the guerrilla movement in southern Manchuria.

Cao Guo-an's division also included a great number of Koreans.

The majority of the commanders, including Song Mu Son and Pak Sun Il and many from the rank and file were Koreans. This basis was to facilitate their joint operations and struggle with us.

The Korean communists in southern Manchuria dealt heavy military and political blows against the Japanese imperialists via direct relations with us or through their independent judgement, decision and action. At times they would cross the Amnok and raid the enemy on the Korean shore of the river.

The first half of the 1930s was a period, when we were making frequent inroads into the homeland from eastern Manchuria. The small units of the People's Revolutionary Army raided Onsong County alone on four occasions in one month in January 1935. When the units entered Namsan-ri, Wolpha-dong, Seson-dong and Misan-dong in Onsong County and had engagements with the enemy troops and police, the newspapers published in Seoul reported that a great force of guerrillas had raided Onsong, Hunyung and other areas in North Hamgyong Province.

In May 1935 a unit of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, after conducting political work among the masses in the area of Nongsa-dong, Samjang Sub-county, Musan County, fought a gunfight with the Japanese police on their heels, in the vicinity of Damalugou, Antu County in China, dealing them a telling blow.

Ri Hong Gwang, who had been compensating for his nostalgia, by fighting on the shore of the Amnok, availing himself of our inroads into the homeland, which had been becoming more and more frequent with each passing year, led his unit across the river and attacked Tonghungjin, Huchang County. On the night of February 15, 1935, three small units of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, led by him, encircled Tonghungjin and raided a police station and financial cooperative with two light machine-guns at the head of the units; this took the enemy aback.

Embarrassed by repeated inroads into the homeland by the People's Revolutionary Army, the enemy shouted that these were unprecedented events in the history of defending border areas.

How could the units in southern Manchuria, which had distinguished themselves at home and abroad with their raid on Tonghungjin, suffer such setbacks as those experienced by the division commander Cao Guo-an? I did not know why, but I felt upset when I saw his haggard face.

Heaving a heavy sigh, resembling a man who had given up everything, and rubbing his face with both hands, he said:

“I recently came to the conclusion that the development of joint struggle with my neighbours constitutes the only way for us to exist. I learned this lesson too late. Frankly speaking, I regret slighting the relationship with your unit in the past, Commander Kim.”

“Comrade Cao, please take a good rest for some days in our unit and recover your strength. As the saying goes, there is always a way out. We are only human beings, not God; we are apt to make mistakes. There is no need to fear temporary setbacks.”

I told him about the trials we had undergone on the Heights of Luozigou when the whole of my unit had been in a critical situation, confronted by potential annihilation owing to hunger, biting cold and the enemy’s encirclement, as well as the first expedition to northern Manchuria, when we had been rescued from another unfathomable crisis caused by the cold I had caught, the heavy snow and enemy’s dogged pursuit, with the help of benefactors.

The first problem, raised by the sudden, unexpected influx of many guests concerned their board. I ordered the commanding personnel of my unit to vacate the log-cabins, our men had been living in, for the sake of our guests, and make preparations for them to sleep in tents around campfires. No sooner had I issued the order than our men vacated their log-cabins, built campfires and set up tents; their uncommon, swift workmanship aroused the admiration of the guests.

My men included masterly builders of campfires. They had invented an exquisite method for building fires with logs and propagated it throughout the unit. The method was quite simple and yet queer. They piled up the logs, cut appropriately in equal length in the form of a pyramid, 5-6 logs on the first layer, 4-5 logs on the second

layer, and 3-4 logs on the third layer, and put dry twigs, as kindling on the last layer of 2-3 logs; then they lit the twigs. When the campfire was lit in this way, it lasted for a long time and the wet logs burned well like dry ones without any crackling. It produced great heat to everyone's delight.

The soldiers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division wondered at first, if the logs could catch fire, as they were set afire in that way. But when they saw how the logs piled up in the form of a pyramid soon became blaze, they only exclaimed in wonder.

Like his men, Cao Guo-an could not hide his admiration.

"Some time ago I met Wei Zheng-min in Manjiang. Do you know what he said to me?" he asked, with a meaningful smile on his face, keeping his eyes on the fire.

"What did he say?"

"That I should learn before anything else how to build a campfire, when I go to your unit, Commander Kim. The way you build it is quite extraordinary."

The most conspicuous impression he had got in my unit was from campfire and log-cabins. He confessed frankly, that he had become aware for the first time in our secret camp that his unit could live on without difficulty, even deep in a mountain or in the wilderness, if they had campfire and log-cabins.

Next day I instructed some carpenters, skilful in building log-cabins, as well as the 4<sup>th</sup> Company, 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment to build in one day quarters for exclusive use by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division during their stay in our secret camp, so that they would not feel awkward. The master hands at building houses in our unit felled trees and erected a big and neat log-cabin in one day. The men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division helped their work with animation.

On learning that such secret camps had been set up in various places of the woods on Mt. Paektu, Cao Guo-an again became envious. He recounted that they had so far put up only at dwelling quarters, as they had thought that they could not stay in such no-man's land as Mt. Paektu and that they had hardly lived in a secret camp on the mountain.

He continued that they had lodged separately in dwelling houses on their last expedition to the area on the north of the River Huifa.

As they had their “own house” in our secret camp, I ordered Kim Ju Hyon in charge of supply work, and Kim Hae San, to provide them with adequate provisions and kitchen utensils for their life and dozens of suits of uniform kept in the warehouse of our unit. The distribution of uniforms was not finished to the satisfaction of all, owing to the lack of some outfits, but as the sewing unit led by Pak Su Hwan had worked in a crash drive, burning the midnight candle, the remaining soldiers could throw their shabby summer clothes into the fire on the next day. Although not a boisterous well-doing, we showed our decorum as a host.

We organized bathing and hair-cutting for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. In those days we used a large pot for boiling water to take a bath in the secret camp in Heixiazigou. O Jung Hup and his men had brought that pot after raiding a felling station in Hengshan; it had been used in the station for boiling cattle fodder. This pot was used very effectively. After improving their appearances, we gave them each a set of toiletries and a few packets of cigarettes.

Cao Guo-an called on our Headquarters and expressed heartfelt thanks on behalf of his unit. He said that he felt very guilty to receive only kindness in every particular, when they had come empty-handed and that they were at a loss as how to repay that kindness.

I replied, “It is never a debt of gratitude, for we are neighbours fighting for a common objective and ideal. If we had gone to your unit as guests, you might have accorded us such treatment. Don’t think that you are receiving kindness from the other unit. You may presume that you are staying at your relative’s. If you are so eager to repay our kindness, please tell me during your stay in our camp about your interesting life experiences.”

He was afraid that, as a novice from the ivory tower, he had no life experience great enough to arouse my interest. There was only uncommon thing worth mentioning, he said: It concerned the knowledge he had acquired in his days in Shandong military and

political academy and he would tell it to me, if it would be of any help to me.

Later on he gave lectures on several occasions to the commanders of my unit, on the tactics of regular warfare. The lectures were very profound. His lectures served as a considerable asset for understanding in depth the regular warfare tactics, employed by the enemy and completing the guerrilla tactics of our own style to cope with them.

In exchange, we told the commanders of his unit, the commanders and political instructors of the company and higher levels, about the guerrilla warfare experiences we had accumulated. As our story was woven with experiences of actual fighting, the guests from southern Manchuria heard it with relish.

I stressed to them the need to pay particular attention to loving people: We must bear in mind that the people are our strength, wisdom, and life and soul; we therefore must trust them, learn from them, rely on them and fight by drawing on their efforts; to be placed under their obligation, we must be loved by them and for this purpose we must love them in the first place; if a soldier does not hesitate to impose burdens on them, on the plea that they are living in a place he would leave behind after a night's sleep, they will regard him as a nuisance; when he lays his hand on their property and does them harm, the consequences will be irredeemable; if he loves them as his own flesh and blood, they will follow him on their own, and such a soldier will surely always be victorious.

During their stay in the secret camp in Heixiazigou the men from southern Manchuria inspected on several occasions study sessions, meetings, military drills and other daily programmes of our unit. Their reaction was very favourable; they unanimously exclaimed that it was right when others called it a student unit.

Cao Guo-an said sincerely that, accustomed as he was to roaming to areas north and south of the River Huifa like duckweed, he had not thought of building secret camps and realizing self-reliance, by basing himself on the camps and had not intended to set up a network of underground organizations in the area of his guerrilla activities, with

the secret camps at the centre, to expand and develop the struggle, by relying on the base comprising the secret camps and the network of underground organizations.

One evening, as he walked with me in the forest, after enjoying our unit's recreation party, he said, "Commander Kim, your unit is an army in all aspects. I can now understand why your unit wins victory after victory."

Our comrades-in-arms from southern Manchuria made persistent efforts to acquaint themselves with the daily routine of our unit. They adopted our daily routine and studied and performed exercises as we did. During their stay in our secret camp, they reinforced their unit and acquired a more rigid discipline, renovating their appearance.

"It seems that the time has come for us to fight big battles through the cooperation between our two units. Let us smite in a united effort the enemy, running amuck for 'great winter punitive operations.' Taoquanli and other areas in Changbai and Linjiang counties have a sound mass foundation. You can obtain active assistance and support from the underground revolutionary organizations we have set up there, and thereby replenish your ranks quickly with excellent young men. When our two units conduct a war of attrition, displaying firm unity on both sides, we will be able to achieve a great result in battles, I think."

Cao Guo-an readily accepted my proposal. We decided to carry out joint operations whenever they seemed necessary.

The comrades-in-arms from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division were very regretful to leave our camp. The commanders and men of my unit were also so sorry that tears welled up in their eyes.

Before parting, Cao Guo-an requested, "Commander Kim, will you give me one of your men as my orderly?"

I found myself in the same position as I had been in northern Manchuria when Zhou Bao-zhong had requested me to send him Korean officers and men. On his request a large number of Korean officers and men, including Pak Rak Kwon, Jon Chang Chol, An Jong Suk and Pak Kil Song, had been dispatched from eastern Manchuria to

the unit in northern Manchuria.

“I am grateful that you trust my comrades so much. Do you maintain any special relations with Koreans?”

Cao Guo-an replied, “Nothing special, but I have become attracted to Korean comrades, since my acquaintance with Ri Hong Gwang and Ri Tong Gwang. The people in Jiandao might not know fully, how we were filled with admiration when Ri Hong Gwang annihilated Shao Ben-liang and his ilk.”

Shao Ben-liang was an evil, high-ranking officer of the puppet Manchukuo army, who had been killing people at random and plundering them in Liuhe County, like Ri To Son in Antu and Commander Wang in Fusong.

Ri Hong Gwang had smashed this unit in the areas of Sanyuanpu, Gushanzi and Liangshuihezi in Liuhe County. After annihilating Shao Ben-liang, Ri Hong Gwang had rescued Yang Jing-yu, by displaying audacity and quick wits, when the headquarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps had been surrounded by the enemy’s large force near Liangshuihezi. Since then Yang Jing-yu and other cadres of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps had loved him very much, regarding him as their saviour and a symbol of bravery. Cao Guo-an told me that he could not find words to describe how the corps commander Yang and all the other officers and men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps had grieved for his death in battle.

I decided to comply with his request.

“There is a machine-gunner I have favoured since my days in Wangqing, but I do not know if he will be acceptable to you. Kang Jung Ryong is his name. A platoon leader and machine-gunner, he is a very strong man.”

I discovered that Kang was an old acquaintance of the division commander and Song Mu Son, organizational section chief of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. So we agreed to assign him to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

On knowing this measure Kang insisted that he would not leave me; but on becoming a soldier of Cao Guo-an, I learned that he fought bravely as leader of the machine-gun platoon guarding the headquarters of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

Later Cao Guo-an's unit conducted brisk military and political activities in the areas of Changbai and Linjiang counties. Immediately after leaving our camp they went straight to Taoquanli and, after spending about a week there, replenished their ranks and searched for a suitable location for a secret camp with the help of the underground organization. At that time I issued a written order to Kim Jae Su to activate the lower organizations of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland to render them proper assistance. Subordinate organizations of the ARF had been formed in many villages in Xiagangqu including Taoquanli and had given the guerrillas active assistance. These organizations were brought into action and rendered sincere help to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

Thanks to their support, the unit from southern Manchuria succeeded in the battle against the Jingan army unit which had swarmed into Taoquanli.

On receiving from the local people information about the enemy's movement one mid-November day, 1936, the headquarters of the division decided to attack the enemy by ambush at night and laid an ambush before dusk along the road in Taoquanli, where a fort stood. Their ambush position was only ten metres away from the last house standing at the end of the village.

Entering the village, the large enemy troops dragged the people out of the houses and forced them to reveal the whereabouts of the guerrillas. Although they knew that the guerrillas were lying in ambush within a stone's throw, the villagers feigned ignorance. They deserved gratitude. Had the secret been revealed through a moment's mistake, the whole village would have been avenged mercilessly; in this critical situation they did not divulge the whereabouts of the guerrillas at the risk of their lives.

Thanks to their self-sacrifice, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division scored a great result in the ambush that day. Next day, on the information gained from the people, they opened concentration fire at the enemy, who were coming in a convoy of 20 trucks to collect the bodies of those killed the day before, making them shudder with terror.

After reinforcing his unit and achieving a great battle result in Taoquanli, Cao Guo-an sent me a letter, stating that he had already begun to feel the worth of his stay in the secret camp in Heixiazigou, that he could not forget my favour and would send me only happy news in the future, as well.

Unfortunately, he never realized his dream. During their advance towards Linjiang, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division came across the enemy near the timber mill in Qidaogou, Changbai County; at this battle the division commander Cao received a fatal wound. He entrusted Song Mu Son with command of the unit for the time being and, at a safe place with his bodyguards, had his wound treated. However, a renegade reported his whereabouts to the enemy. To capture him alive, the enemy encircled his place on all sides. His bodyguards fought a life-and-death battle to rescue the division commander. Despite their desperate efforts, Cao Guo-an was killed, after receiving many bullets in his body.

When I received news of his death, I was reminded of his words.

“When decisive operations for liberating Korea begin in the future, Commander Kim, please call me. Then I will come to your side, leading my unit.”

This is what he had said when parting from me. However, he could not keep that promise. He was killed in action, to our profound regret, without seeing the liberation of China, his beloved motherland, not to mention the liberation of Korea. I regretted this.

It was early in 1937 when Pak Sun Il, head of the munitions section of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, visited our camp bringing with him a letter, reporting the death of the division commander.

Writing without any reserve on his sadness about the loss of the division commander and his puzzled, impatient mind on how to command the unit in the future, Song Mu Son asked my advice on the direction of their activities.

Expressing my sympathy with their sadness for losing their commander, I wrote a fairly long letter. I stressed in particular that they should surmount in unity the crisis facing the division and that

collective wisdom should be given full play in the administration of the unit. I advised Song Mu Son to build a secret camp in the mountainous area in Limingshui, as it was virtually inaccessible to the enemy; it had snowed heavily there. I also told him to focus his efforts on political and ideological work with the recruits and on their military training. Then I expressed my intention of visiting his unit after the New Year's Day on the lunar calendar.

Visiting them as an ordinary condoler and tendering my condolence was a duty and obligation I had to fulfil as a comrade-in-arms who had maintained extraordinary relations with the deceased during his lifetime. My visit, when they had been bereaved of their division commander, could prove a comfort and support for them.

As promised, I went to them after the battle at Hongtoushan. On our way, we fought a battle at Taoquanli and, staying a night at the village of Simenkaiting, dispatched reconnaissance parties to the upper reaches of Limingshui and Badaogou.

Immediately after receiving news about our arrival at Simenkaiting, the comrades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division rushed to the village at night, skipping their supper. I was reported of their arrival in the small hours. I called for Kim Ju Hyon and ordered him to prepare rice-cake soup for the guests; then I went outside with my orderly to greet them.

As I greeted them from a distance, the commanders rushed to me and encircled me ring upon ring. Their skins were so frozen, that I felt as if a large piece of ice had touched my cheeks whenever I hugged them.

Song Mu Son, the acting division commander, did not let my hand go, until we reached our quarters.

“Thank you, Comrade Commander. We are grateful for the encouragement you have given us when our unit is faced with a grave crisis.”

“I scarcely deserve such a praise, Comrade Song. Am I not too late?”

As in the past, he expressed extraordinary intimacy towards me that day. As I had treated Cao Guo-an, he treated me as a man, hailing from his hometown.

He had been engaged in the youth movement in a rural village called Wulihezi near Jilin, before joining the anti-Japanese armed struggle. Ri Tong Gwang had once directed the youth movement in Wulihezi. Under his guidance, Song Mu Son and other young people there had organized Hyoksin Youth Association, and rallied young people behind this organization. In those days youth organizations, with such names as the Sinhung Youth Association and Jonjin Youth Association, had been active in Yongji County area. Song Mu Son had been a member of the organizational committee of the Hyoksin Youth Association. In spring 1928 the association had been reformed into the Anti-Imperialist Youth League by Ri Tong Gwang and later into the Young Communist League.

When we conducted the struggle against the railway project between Jilin and Hoeryong and against Japanese goods, the youth organization in Wulihezi had gone on a sympathy strike.

The period when Ri Tong Gwang led the youth movement in Wulihezi coincides with the period when I guided the youth and student movement in Jilin.

Song Mu Son criticized some of the cadres of Jongui-bu, whenever he recollected his days in Jilin. When I reprimanded him that one had no right to accuse our forerunners, who had been making considerable efforts for independence, he replied burning with rage that he would feel improper if he did not go further. I asked him what made him think ill of the cadres of Jongui-bu. By way of an answer, he recounted a Jilin area meeting held early in 1928 at the initiative of Jongui-bu.

Apparently Song Mu Son had taken part in the meeting as a representative of Wulihezi. The meeting had also been attended by representatives of Shuanghezhen, Jiangdong and Xinantun. The item of the agenda was the collection of compulsory money.

That day Ko I Ho had made a violent speech on behalf of Jongui-bu. He had threatened that they would even collect the money by mobilizing soldiers, as the people under their jurisdiction were not willing to pay. His speech had engendered a squabble between the sponsors and representatives. Song had made a rebuttal speech on

behalf of Wulihezi. Owing to this speech he had been beaten after the meeting by the terrorists, dispatched by Ko I Ho, and fallen unconscious.

Song Mu Son was well aware of the terrorism Kukmin-bu had perpetrated in Wangqingmen. I exchanged with him my opinions of O Tong Jin, Hyon Muk Gwan and Ko Won Am. Every minutest detail of our life in Jilin had been reminisced. During his stay in the secret camp in Heixiazigou we talked a great deal about our days in Jilin.

But here in a farmer's house in Simenkaiting we did not talk about those days. We only recalled Cao Guo-an, the division commander, and discussed the destiny and future of the division.

We treated the men from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division to rice-cake soup. A Chinese officer known as a glutton, ate three bowls of the soup, saying that he only celebrated New Year's Day that day. I was told that they had missed lunch, as they had been chased by the enemy on their way back from the raid on the timber mill in Gaolibuzi.

At dawn the commanding personnel of our unit and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division held a meeting on joint operations in the battle on Limingshui.

I had guessed from my many years of experience that the enemy would pounce upon us around noon that day. To attract the enemy's attention, I had ensured that traces leading to Limingshui had been left behind. The enemy from Erdaogang would inevitably enter the valley on Limingshui. Furthermore, the enemy from Badaogou would probably swarm there, as the comrades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division had come to Limingshui, after an engagement with the enemy at Gaolibuzi.

The confluence of Beishuigou and Limingshui was the most suitable place for ambushing the enemy, pouncing upon us from both sides. I had already chosen that place, when we entered the valley of Limingshui.

I informed those present at the meeting about my view of the enemy's planned intentions on that day and stressed the need for both units to jointly lead the ambush, in order to smash the enemy's large troops. I emphasized that, as the victory of an ambush largely depended on stealth, we should have breakfast before daybreak to

advance to the ambush place, and that, after the units had occupied their positions, nobody should produce smoke, talk, cough, desert his position or fire without any order. I also explained in detail what and how to shout, to agitate the enemy during the battle and also how to deal with the prisoners of war.

This was followed by the assignment of combat tasks to each unit. The information from our reconnaissance revealed no particular change in the enemy's movements. On my proposal the two units, ready to start, gathered in one place and held memorial services for the division commander Cao Guo-an. Song Mu Son and I made speeches in his memory.

Limingshui is a river, which flows to the west from the watershed on Sidengfang Mountains in Changbai County and joins Badaogou River. Simenkaiting was a village situated on the upper reaches of this river. About six kilometres down the river there was a village of about 15 slash-and-burn Korean peasant households. This was Limingshui village.

The units occupied their positions before daybreak and dug out trenches. The steep slopes around them were covered with deep snow and the Limingshui was iced over. It was bitterly cold, but the spirits of the combatants soared. Having heard that battles commanded by me always ended in victory, the comrades from southern Manchuria predicted from the moment they had received the combat order that the battle would be a great victory.

I deployed the main force on a mountain ridge near a confluence of the river. The ridge with dry fields reclaimed from wasteland was convenient for firing down on the valley. I located the command post at the centre of the ridge and deployed in ambush the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment and the guard company of my unit in front of the command post, the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment on the left and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division on the right. I made sure that a shock force of 60 to 70 valiant fighters lay in ambush on a low ridge across the valley. The high mountain standing opposite those two mountains was steep and covered with thick woods, which the enemy could not escape through. The ground opposite the position, where we

were lying in ambush, was flat and about 100 metres wide; it was a suitable place to mow down the enemy through concentration fire.

To keep watch on and contain the enemy from Erdaogang and Badaogou, I dispatched an interception party of one squad to each direction. The relay post, used to receive flag signaling from the interception parties, was placed on the mountain at the back of the command post. The combatants, lying in the trenches, waited for the enemy; however, it did not turn up until lunch time.

“They aren’t coming?” Paek Hak Rim, bored, asked me in whisper, his teeth chattering.

“Don’t be so impatient. They will come for sure.”

Frankly speaking, I, too, was shivering with cold and my teeth chattered.

The combatants took out frozen corn cakes and ate them lying on the snow. For lunch I ate a frozen corn cake Paek Hak Rim took out of his knapsack. It was so cold that our hands would stick to the frozen iron when we touched it. The enemy did not appear until after 2 p.m. It is not easy to lie on the snow in the biting cold of February for 8-9 hours, not just 1 hour. But we had to endure hardships worse than this to gain victory. If they suffered mortal defeat in that place, the enemy would not dare provoke us any more.

It was around 5 p.m. when a signal of the enemy’s appearance was transmitted from the interception party on the southeastern hill in the direction of Badaogou. I saw through binoculars that an advance party led by a puppet Manchukuo army officer was marching ahead followed slowly by the main column commanded by a Japanese instructor.

I sent my orderly to each unit again with the message that I would allow the advance party to pass through and only give the firing order, when the tail of the main column entered our ambush range and that no one should fire at will.

On the appearance of the enemy, the weather became inclement. The sky became dark with inky clouds. But for the snow, the desolate land might have been plunged in dead darkness. The cold north wind

from the river blew against us. The enemy could not open their eyes fully owing to the snowstorm.

As soon as the main column of the enemy entered our ambush range, I fired a signal shot. At last 400 rifles and several machine guns let loose our indignation. Then I told Han Ik Su to blow a bugle ordering our men to charge. The enemy were, figuratively speaking, like a rat in a trap.

The battle results were excellent; we killed or wounded over 100 enemy troops, made two companies surrender and captured 150-odd rifles, including three light machine-guns, and a large amount of ammunitions. Only the scouts in the front of the column could save their lives.

While we were mowing down the enemy from Badaogou, the enemy from Erdaogang, scared at the uproarious gunshots ringing from the valley, stopped marching in front of the mountain ridge, where our interception party was deployed. The interception party hailed fire at the crowded enemy, who were hesitating about what to do. The enemy fled, leaving behind their killed and wounded colleagues.

I made sure that the wounded enemy soldiers were carried into the households in Simenkaiting, given medical treatment and meals before being returned to their homes with unhurt POWs. As far as I remember, at this time the well-known anecdote occurred, the anecdote about a POW from the puppet Manchukuo army, who said that he should be treated as a meritorious man for helping the guerrillas, as he had offered six rifles to us, having been captured by us six times.

Owing to the battle on Limingshui, the enemy in Badaogou lost their main force for the “great winter punitive operations.” Their much-vaunted spirit of annihilating the guerrillas flagged and all their talk about “great winter punitive operations” ended in nothing. In the long run, we put an end to the enemy’s “great punitive operations,” through the victory in the battle on Limingshui. This battle awakens exceptional memories. The men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division fully recovered

their spirit. I stayed with them to provide necessary advice on the future activities of the division and discuss with them the best ways of protecting themselves with the help of the ARF organizations in Taoquanli and Tianshangshui.

As I had instructed, they set up a secret camp deep in a valley in Taoquanli and spent quiet days, until the advent of warmer days, while conducting political studies and military drills. I was told that the underground organization in Taoquanli provided them with large quantities of supply goods, such as cotton cloth, hemp-cord sandals and long padded socks.

Around mid-May, when new grass was coming up, I held a reunion with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division on a hill a little way to the west of the village of Limingshui. Having spent their time in comfort in a secret camp, they all looked healthy and sound.

Nevertheless, I was embarrassed by the fact that the Korean comrades in the division would not leave me. They called on me and beseeched me to allow them to join my unit.

I only managed to persuade them, when my throat had become hoarse: When we formed an allied army with the Chinese comrades, we considered that it would be more advantageous to win the support and assistance of the Chinese people, than fight with an army of pure Koreans; although your unit belongs to the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, please regard it as a detachment of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, as more than half of its force are Koreans; if all of you join my unit, who will fight with the enemy on all sides?; we can successfully fight against the enemy in Mt. Paektu area, only when the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, including you, fight with the enemy in southern Manchuria, the 4<sup>th</sup> Division with the enemy in eastern Manchuria and our comrades in northern Manchuria with the enemy there; unless you detain them in every corner, they will all attack the main unit to wipe it out; that is why we are sending excellent military and political cadres we have trained with so much care to the guerrilla units in northern and southern Manchuria and yet you insist on going with us; how embarrassing it is!; we have left even our parents, beloved ones and children to win back the country, so let's put

personal feelings to one side and concentrate on victory in the great anti-Japanese war; after winning back the deprived country, let's live together, looking back on these days with pride.

To be frank, I sent reinforcements to the comrades in southern Manchuria to help them whenever they requested; I did this on more than one occasion.

The people we had sent to southern Manchuria were, without exception, stalwart, brave men. Ri Tong Gwang and Ri Min Hwan had also been selected in eastern Manchuria and dispatched to southern Manchuria. As Cao Ya-fan, who was entrusted with the heavy duty of division commander in March 1937 succeeding Cao Guo-an, was so envious of Kim ThaeK Man, my orderly, that I sent ThaeK Man to him.

Son Yong Ho, who was chief of the general affairs section of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, had been, since his days in Jilin Normal School, my friend and a member of the Ryuji Association of the Korean Students I had organized. He had a special aptitude for music and sports. He was well-built and looked handsome; so he had commanded great popularity among the girls in Jilin. He had been a member of the normal school team in high jump and a violinist. Later he had been associated with the Young Communist League, before being arrested by the police; he had experienced hard times in Sinuiju prison for some time. After his release, he had striven to transform Wulihezi, Yongji County, in a revolutionary way and had the following year gone to Panshi County in southern Manchuria to work as editor-in-chief of the *Anti-Japanese Youth Daily*, the organ of the county Party committee. Since the winter of 1937 he had worked as head of the general affairs section of the headquarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps. I saw him again at Nanpaizi in winter 1938. At that time he was very glad to see me and said that he wanted to be beside me. But to my regret, I received a sad report three or four months later that he died a heroic death during a battle near Fuerhe.

I displayed the most concern to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, in southern Manchuria, which was active in an adjacent area. They visited us at the time of joint celebrations of the guerrillas and people

to commemorate victory in the battle at Pochonbo (June 4, 1937) and shared the joy with us. The battle on Jiansanfeng (June 30, 1937) was fought through cooperation between the 4<sup>th</sup> Division and the main unit led by me, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, as well as my unit, conducted a joint struggle for some years in the southwestern area of Mt. Paektu. One can sometimes find enemy police documents and newspapers in the latter half of the 1930s carrying my name and Cao Guo-an's side by side; this should be understood as a reflection of the history where the revolutionaries of Korea and China launched, shoulder to shoulder, the thorny path of joint struggle and joint operations.

Whenever I look back on the days, when our revolutionary struggle was winning one victory after another, I am reminded of the comrades-in-arms in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps; the intimate faces of Cao Guo-an, Song Mu Son and Pak Sun Il. The mere mention of their names stirs up my deep emotions, as they appear before my mind's eye through the snowstorm.

## 5. *Samil Wolgan*

Throughout the passage of time man has always acknowledged the impact publications have on human life. Some people even assert that the whole world, apart from some uncivilized countries, was dominated in the past by a few volumes of books. History has already proved the great role played by publications in transforming and developing society. I think it is no exaggeration to say that, as long as man moves the world, he will be motivated by publications by conscientious intellectuals, who speak in the name of justice and truth, as well as by the pioneers of the times.

We refer to such a publication as an educator, informant and organizer of the masses.

A revolutionary publication can also be called an excellent means, linking the leader, party and masses by a single tie.

When publishing the newspaper *Iskra*, Lenin gave its first issue a banner headline, *A spark will flare up*. This aphorism aroused the sympathy of the whole world. The spark mentioned in the banner headline later flared into the flames of the October Revolution and spread throughout Russia.

I can truly say that publications exerted a great influence on me along the road of revolution.

There is another world-famous proverb, which says, "The pen is mightier than the sword." When we published *Saenal*, *Bolshevik* and *Nong-u*, we realized the real worth of publications and pinned as much hope on those publications as on the rifle or sword.

A publication is a powerful weapon in the revolutionary struggle. The range of this weapon is infinite.

When we made an appeal from Mt. Paektu through such publications as *Samil Wolgan* and *Sogwang*, not to forget the

motherland and compatriots in the homeland, it was heard by the guerrillas and people in northern and southern Manchuria. There is probably no other form of information and motivation in the world more powerful than publications in their ability to quickly disseminate among millions of the masses the same ideology and fight slogans at the same time, rally them and give them organizational and ideological training.

During the anti-Japanese armed struggle, our men used to call oral information “mouth gun,” information through art performance “drum gun” and information through publications “brush gun” or “letter gun” in a plain language.

Oral and artistic media have a relatively quick effect and strong appeal, compared to the message of a book. However, the latter has a lasting effect and is free of geographical limitations.

As the enemy was gagging the press and resorting to bayonets and truncheons to suppress, without exception, any words and actions they considered “seditious,” the organizational and information activities, aimed at providing unified leadership to revolutionary organizations, had to be conducted in a secret, illicit manner. This situation compelled us to seek the form of information and motivation most suitable for guerrilla warfare, and pay due attention to firing the “brush gun,” which we thought the best means. Consequently, after the establishment of the Paektusan Secret Camp, we set up a printing shop there and started publishing *Samil Wolgan*, the organ of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland.

At the time of founding the ARF in Donggang, we also discussed the launching of its organ. To unite the masses from all walks of life in the anti-Japanese national united front and develop the great anti-Japanese war by nationwide efforts, we had to make effective use of the “brush gun” in particular, along with the “mouth gun” and “drum gun.”

Our political activities for the national united front in the first half of the 1930s had assumed by and large regional characteristics. Our effort for the united front had not gone beyond the bounds of

Manchuria and the northern area of Korea in most cases. However, the ARF had planned to fly the flag of the anti-Japanese national united front in the whole of Korea, China proper, Japan, the Soviet Union, the United States and all other places overseas, where our compatriots were living.

For this purpose, we frequently dispatched our operatives to various places, albeit in limited numbers to our regret. As we left in northern Manchuria quite a few military and political cadres experienced in the united front movement in eastern Manchuria in the early days of the guerrilla struggle, we experienced a dearth of workers.

Publications provided an important way of compensating for the shortage. I was sure that if a paper loved by the masses was published skilfully and distributed here and there, each issue could take the place of an operative.

But we were unable to start publishing the paper in time for inevitable reasons. We had fought many battles and moved frequently in those days. We had always been surrounded by the enemy and had been forced to march dozens of miles a day carrying loads on our backs. The enemy had not permitted us any time to launch a publication.

Only when the Paektusan Secret Camp was built and a printing shop was set up there could we start the *Samil Wolgan*, the magazine of the ARF. The *Samil Wolgan* was a popular political and theoretical magazine, aimed at contributing to the ideals of the ARF to win national independence, by mobilizing the 20 million compatriots.

After racking our brains to choose a title appropriate to the mission of the ARF, we chose *Samil Wolgan*.

*Samil* (March 1) referred to the anti-Japanese March First Popular Uprising. The uprising was a momentous independence movement of the Korean people, who offered nationwide resistance against the Japanese aggressors.

Therefore, the title, *Samil Wolgan*, incorporated the will of the nation. It represented our strategic intention to adhere to the Juche line of the Korean revolution and, based on Mt. Paektu, expand and

develop the armed struggle throughout Korea, and also signified the launch of an all-out resistance through the general mobilization of the whole nation.

Although *Samil Wolgan* was launched as the publication of the ARF, it also assumed the function of the mouthpiece of the Party Committee of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army and at the same time assumed and fulfilled the mission of a popular political magazine, serving the whole country. Therefore, it had to be a pan-national magazine read and loved by the soldiers of the KPRA and the communist revolutionaries, as well as the national bourgeoisie, religious believers and the soldiers of the Independence Army.

We organized the editorial staff of the *Samil Wolgan* mainly with members of the Secretariat and appointed Ri Tong Baek, owing to his journalistic experience, as editor-in-chief.

Under the charge of Ri Tong Baek, the editorial staff began preparing the first issue. They debated in detail the direction of editing and practical matters for publishing the magazine. They studied the publications from the homeland in depth to explore the ideal journalistic style.

In those days bans or suspensions of newspapers and magazines were widespread in the press world in the homeland. Magazines, imbued with the slightest patriotic elements, were all suppressed and banned and there were few magazines to refer to.

The editorial staff studied some magazines from the homeland for reference purposes only, with no intention of copying or making them their standard. They always explored everything in a fresh and creative way.

We decided to make the *Samil Wolgan* a popular political and theoretical magazine, imbuing its content with the idea of patriotism and great national unity, and featuring an editorial in each issue. We also decided to establish regular columns for news of the independence movement of our nation, victories from various parts of the anti-Japanese national revolutionary front, questions and answers, major national and international events, literature and art.

The manuscripts would be obtained mainly from the writing staff in the KPRA unit the Secretariat belonged to, and also through other units of the KPRA active in various places and ARF organizations. To collect manuscripts, we appointed special correspondents of the magazine in important places in eastern, southern and northern Manchuria and encouraged contributions from a wide range of subscribers.

Ri Tong Baek thought about ways of making the editing of the *Samil Wolgan* a concern of the readers themselves, enabling the people from all strata to write for the magazine regularly and offer advice to help enrich its content and steadily improve its editorial style. After an earnest discussion he worked out rules governing contribution.

I read the rules and found them very interesting. Everyone would on reading them feel like taking a pen and writing something at a stretch, even if he had little literary talent. The rules said, at the heading, that contributions would be welcome, to obtain sound arguments and excellent views from patriots from all strata, and then defined the number of words according to the manuscript content, the method of contribution, preferential treatment for enthusiastic contributors and other details.

We sent down the rules through organizations and introduced them in the first issue under the caption, *Contributions are welcome!*

Soon after the rules had been sent down, a great amount of writings were contributed from various places. I can still see clearly the old man "Tobacco Pipe," who was beside himself with those contributions. I, too, read nearly all the manuscripts with delight.

In a congratulatory message, the chief of staff of Ryang Se Bong's Independence Army expressed its hearty welcome for the founding of the ARF. The news of the meeting between Ri Tong Gwang, representative of the ARF in southern Manchuria, and Pak, representative of the compatriots residing in Shanghai, was also quite impressive. The representative from Shanghai, who had worked for independence for some years in Beijing, Tianjin and other places in China, came to southern Manchuria, on hearing of the founding of the

ARF and proposed the formation of a united front at home and abroad on the axis of the ARF, the article read. This provided an excellent occasion to expand the organizations of the ARF in the vast area of China proper. Soon after receiving the manuscript, we dispatched a skilful political operative to Ri Tong Gwang.

In this way the editorial staff of the *Samil Wolgan*, in its preparations for the magazine, played the role of communications section, rendering a direct contribution to expanding and developing the network of the ARF.

A letter sent by a district committee of the ARF, while making a congratulatory banner to encourage the KPRA, also included a moving story. It read, "Out of heartfelt sympathy, we patriotic compatriots each contributed one or two *jon* or one *won* from our humble purses. The total sum gathered so far in this way is 8 *won* 71 *jon*, which is too small to buy other military supplies. Therefore, we decided, with the unanimous opinion of all patriotic compatriots, to make a congratulatory banner and send it to you. ..."

I ensured that all letters, overflowing with sincerity, were carried in the inaugural number.

As the manuscripts he had been fretted about, during preparations for the publication of the magazine, had appeared in plenty, "Tobacco Pipe" worked with great animation. One day he came to Headquarters, beaming with satisfaction, and produced a dozen sheets of blank paper in front of me, saying, "Manuscripts are ready except the inaugural message and the editorial, which are most important and must be prepared before we start compilation. I am afraid that you will have to write them as the Chairman of the ARF. Here is the paper."

"Then what will the editor-in-chief do? You mean that I must take your place when you, a renowned writer, are still alive? No, I can't do that. The editor-in-chief must write the inaugural message."

Partly, as I was under the pressure of work, and more importantly because I wanted to give that faithful literary man, who had gone through so many ordeals, an opportunity to give vent to his pent-up sorrow of national ruin and shout to his heart's content the passionate

words he had been wanting to say to his 20 million compatriots, I entrusted the inaugural message to him.

However, I volunteered to write an editorial under the title *Recollections of the March First Movement*. As I was faced with a great deal of pressing business, I could not finish the manuscript quickly enough. When I happened to find time to write it, I received a report that an enemy spy had been captured or that an enemy “punitive” force was swarming into our secret camp; I had to go out onto the battlefield.

I missed most of all in those days Kim Hyok and Choe Il Chon. Kim Hyok, the editor-in-chief of the *Bolshevik*, and Choe Il Chon, the editor-in-chief of the *Nong-u*, who had been my bosom friends in my days in Kalun and Wujiazi, had been talented writers, forming two pillars.

The writings of Kim Hyok, a poet, had been vigorous and passionate, like an overflowing, great river, whereas those of Choe Il Chon had been highly intellectual and keenly analytical, as well as rich in national tone. Kim Hyok had occasionally edited in the *Bolshevik* revolutionary songs he had personally written and composed. I still recall, of his works in the *Bolshevik*, *Curse to the Capitalist Society* and *Anti-Factionalism*. The former was a song, which criticized scathingly the exploiters, expressing hatred for the capitalist society, while the latter was a satirical song, which sharply exposed the true colour of factional flunkeyists, who attempted to found a party with the help of others, carrying seals engraved in potatoes.

Had Kim Hyok and Choe Il Chon been alive, they would have been extremely helpful to “Tobacco Pipe.”

As I had done with the scripts of *The Sea of Blood* and *The Fate of a Self-Defence Corps Man*, I had to write the inaugural documents of the ARF and the editorial on the March First Movement during any spare time between fierce engagements with the enemy.

The most difficult problem remained even after the last stage of the preparation for the publication of the first issue of *Samil Wolgan*: the acquisition of printing equipment. At that time we had only one old

mimeograph. We also lacked ink, roller, stencil and paper. The workers of the printing shop solved the shortages by themselves. When ink was running short, they burned birch bark under a hood made of tin-plate and scraped the soot gathered on the plate. They left the soot immersed in oil and mixed it with ink manufactured in factories, before using it. When the roller was worn out, they boiled a mixture of glue and resin and poured it into a mould to make a roller; when the stencil pen became dull, they made it with a matting needle.

Their strenuous dedication to the *Samil Wolgan* deserves prominent mention as a prototype of self-reliance and fortitude.

Their efforts bore fruit at long last. The inaugural number of the *Samil Wolgan* was published on December 1, 1936.

That day “Tobacco Pipe” brought me the first copy of the inaugural issue and said, “If there is anything worthwhile I have done in my fruitless life, it is the publication of the *Samil Wolgan*. Although you are busy, General, please listen to the first cry of the *Samil Wolgan*.”

He passionately read out loud the first part of the inaugural message: “Ever since our Korea has been occupied by the brigandish Japanese, and the ruined 23 million white-clad nation became the slaves of Japanese imperialism, our life and human rights have become worse than those of dogs or hogs.”

The *Samil Wolgan* evoked a splendid response soon after publication. The response of the guerrillas and people to the inaugural issue was great. ARF organizations in various places sent us messages, congratulating the publication of the *Samil Wolgan* and written requests for increased circulation. Some people subscribed for the next issue on behalf of their organizations.

When we were trying to find ways of obtaining the equipment, needed for publishing the *Samil Wolgan*, after making a list of the necessary items, Pak Tal obtained two new, highly-efficient mimeographs from a man studying in Japan. I was told that they had brought them on a cart as far as Kapsan by concealing each of them in potato sacks from the railway station in Tanchon, where the mimeographs had arrived, and had taken them to Ophung-dong, the

seat of the printing section of the national liberation union, late at night, after lying in hiding for a whole day on a mountain, owing to strict police surveillance.

Pak Tal had intended to send both of them to our secret camp. But I instructed that we only receive one of them and that the other be left at Kapsan for the printing of the mouthpiece of the Korean National Liberation Union. The union was publishing its mouthpiece under the title of *Hwajonmin* (slash-and-burn peasants-Tr.).

The mimeograph was very efficient. As it was several times as efficient as the old one, we could publish hundreds of copies for succeeding issues.

The popularity of the *Samil Wolgan* exceeded our wildest hopes. In my opinion, the readers were keen on the magazine, because the style of its edition was fresh, but mainly because its content was permeated with the idea of a national united front. In other words, the magazine reflected most keenly and impeccably the historic task facing the nation. It was up to the Korean revolutionaries, first and foremost, to counter the fascist offensive of the Japanese militarists by rallying the people from all walks of life solidly behind the anti-Japanese national united front in preparation for a popular resistance.

The publishing of *Samil Wolgan* occasioned rapid expansion of the ARF network. The number of volunteers for the People's Revolutionary Army and supporters and sympathizers for our cause quickly increased. Even the gunners of the "brush gun" were amazed at its effectiveness.

Pak In Jin once said to Kwon Yong Byok that the *Samil Wolgan* had been extremely helpful in embracing all the Chondoist believers in the area north of the Machon Range in the network of the ARF within a short period of time.

The man, who rendered the most distinguished service to publishing the magazine was, needless to say, Ri Tong Baek. He had taken much trouble when the ARF had been formed; however, his work here was incomparable to his efforts to start and publish the magazine. He literally lived his remaining days with *Samil Wolgan*.

In my life of 80 years I have never seen a man, who economizes on paper like Ri Tong Baek. He kept even a piece of paper as small as a tree leaf and put it to effective use, by writing fine characters on it when needs be. When he saw a man rolling tobacco on a blank paper where letters could be written, he would scathingly criticize him for wasting paper. He always smoked with a pipe. Apparently he began pipe smoking to avoid wasting paper. Whatever the motive, his pipe did indeed enable him to save much paper. Otherwise, he might have wasted thousands of pieces of paper in his lifetime.

Ri Tong Baek, editor-in-chief of *Samil Wolgan*, wrote a diary; he never missed a day, collected with assiduity documents within his reach and kept them carefully in his knapsacks, saying that he should write the history of our anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle, when the country was liberated. He was killed in the secret camp in Yangmudingzi in a surprise raid by an enemy “punitive” force. The enemy shot “Tobacco Pipe”, along with the weak and old, who had failed to escape, and set the secret camp on fire. A great number of documents, photographs and diaries he treasured were all burned away with his body.

The thought of the historical documents, which he regarded as the most precious present he could make to the liberated motherland, reduced to ashes in an instant, still rankles in my mind. If only his diaries could be found in his big knapsacks, how glad our younger generation would be!

When I went to the secret camp in Yangmudingzi later, I recovered his remains at the site of the burnt straw-thatched cottage and buried them in person. But I failed to find the pipe he had loved so much in his lifetime. As everything burned to ashes, nothing remained as his memento in this world. Only one thing remained uncharred of the outstanding, old revolutionary intellectual: his unfading image enshrined in the memory of anti-Japanese revolutionary veterans. A few years ago the trees, bearing slogans he had written, were found when the Paektusan Secret Camp was explored. I felt as if I were seeing once again the editor-in-chief of the *Samil Wolgan* and

therefore stood in front of them for a long time.

Ri Tong Baek was one of the most conscientious, revolutionary and well-informed intellectuals I met in the days of the anti-Japanese revolution.

The progressive representatives of intellectuals in all nations and ages have played no small role in social revolution and transformation. The role played by Korean intellectuals in the development of the revolutionary movement in modern days is very great. Despite their various limitations, they rendered contributions to the national liberation movement and communist movement in our country through different channels and methods.

Ri Tong Baek was one of them. He was a representative of the revolutionary intellectuals who, after treading the most general and universal path, which could be traversed by intellectuals in our country in the 1920s, joined the ranks of the armed struggle against the Japanese imperialists. He had been an irresolute, wavering intellectual and became a true revolutionary intellectual serving the most active armed resistance.

Kim Yong Guk was another literary man in the publishing circle in the KPRA in the days on Mt. Paektu. He joined our unit through the good offices of Pak Tal and Ri Je Sun, after working in a Red peasant union in the homeland.

As a soldier, he was not ranked A category; however, he was a talented individual with an unsurpassed writing ability. Seeing his stencil writing, everyone would exclaim that it looked like typescript. He used to write a dozen stencils in one night and yet his writing was regular as if it had been typed; this always earned him praise from "Tobacco Pipe."

Liberalistic tendency and forgetfulness could be called his fault. He was so forgetful that on one march he left his rifle at a spot where we had a break, and went on another eight kilometres, before remembering it and going back to pick it up, saying, "How forgetful I am! My rifle!" He was severely criticized and punished.

When the punishment was removed, I asked him, "Your rifle is as

dear as your own life and you have left your life behind. How can you write with such an absent mind?"

Kim Yong Guk replied brazenly, scraping the scruff of his neck, "Almost all the world-renowned literary giants were so forgetful."

"Tobacco Pipe" and I burst into laughter at his reply.

A passionate writer, Kim Yong Guk would write a poem or a story, whenever he had a spare moment. Several of his works were carried in *Sogwang*, the newspaper we launched in 1937 as the organ of the KPRA. I still have a dim memory of the words of a song comprising four or five stanzas, carried in the first issue of *Sogwang*, which read in part, *Other woman's man went to the revolutionary army and my man went to the Self-Defence Corps*. Publishing the text of the song, he stated that it should be sung to the tune of *Arirang*. The second, third and fourth issues of *Sogwang* carried in a series a short story he had written. He was editor-in-chief of *Sogwang*. The young and talented writer was shot by a sharpshooter of an enemy "punitive" force in autumn 1938 when he went with Kim Ju Hyon to collect honey for the weak and wounded, and departed our company so early to our regret.

*Sogwang*, a weekly political paper, carried on many occasions materials for political and military study of the guerrillas. *The Tasks of the Korean Communists* I had written was also carried in the weekly.

Another conspicuous man among the zealous writers for *Sogwang* was Rim Chun Chu. Rim actively helped Kim Yong Guk edit and publish the weekly.

*Jongsori* (The Bell Tolls-Tr.) was a weekly paper of the KPRA, launched at the beginning of political and military studies in the secret camp at Matangou. It mainly carried materials, which would help political and military studies and moral education.

Choe Kyong Hwa was editor-in-chief of *Jongsori*. Although he had not received higher education, he managed the publication of the weekly in a skilful way, although this was a difficult job. I think he was successful, because he had always studied hard to acquire a multilateral education. In the days at his hometown he had studied a guide to university education on his own.

No one found his stories tedious, even if he had heard him telling them the whole day. Even a dime novel which readers would use to read themselves to sleep, became a masterpiece once recited through his mouth. The art of speaking was his greatest talent and fortune. Consequently we persuaded him to make speeches for motivation on many occasions. The audience would hang on his lips.

Choe had been deeply engaged in a student and youth movement in his hometown, before taking refuge in Changbai from the pursuit of the enemy. In Changbai he had been absorbed in mass enlightenment as teacher at a village school. Needless to say, he soon had joined the ARF. After establishing contact with the organization, guided by Kwon Yong Byok, he had worked as chief of the organizational section of the party branch in Shiqidaogou and as political worker in charge of the Songjin (Kim Chaek City) area; as he could not continue underground work owing to a momentary blunder, he had joined the guerrillas.

When he joined, the women guerrillas all whispered that a handsome man had joined the unit. But I was charmed by his talent and personality more than by his appearance. He was unusually talented, with distinct literary and drawing ability. Most of the illustrations carried in *Jongsori* were drawn by him. He was a lecturer at political study sessions and a fighter in the vanguard of battle. During the battle of Jingantun in early 1938 he volunteered for the charging party and achieved a breakthrough in the enemy's defence. At that time he was fatally wounded and breathed his last.

I grieved over the loss of such an excellent comrade-in-arms as Choe Kyong Hwa the whole night, writing the memorial address in tears. We held a solemn ceremony in his memory in the bitter cold.

*Cholhyol* (Iron Blood-Tr.), the mouthpiece of the Anti-Japanese Youth League, was a weekly paper in the form of a field bulletin. It was launched in anticipation of large-unit circling operations at the end of 1939. As such talented writers as Ri Tong Baek, Kim Yong Guk and Choe Kyong Hwa had already passed away, we had to assign its editing and publishing to beginners.

With a view to training him on the job, I entrusted Kang Wi Ryong with the task of publishing *Cholhyol*. Kang was in charge of the party branch and youth league in Headquarters. At first he declined, asking me to give the assignment to another person as he could not handle this task. However, he was compelled to receive the assignment and did the work pretty well with the help of his comrades.

Like *Samil Wolgan* and *Sogwang*, *Cholhyol* was dedicated to editing positive materials. Typical materials introduced Ri Ul Sol and the battle story of a recruit, who had captured a Czech-made machine-gun of a new model by killing the gunner with a bayonet; they were carried in the first number of *Cholhyol*.

Towards the end of political and military training in the secret camp at Baishitan, we instituted a system of conferring a red sash of honour to young guerrillas, who distinguished themselves in battle, in order to encourage bravery and boost morale among the young guerrillas. Soldiers, who were conferred the sash, would wear it on holidays or on an auspicious day of special importance for our unit.

The special issue of *Cholhyol*, published on the occasion of the review of the study, carried articles on the review and news of the institution of a new system of commendation, inciting the interest of its readers.

In this way our revolutionary publications were not only an excellent source for propagation and educator of the reader masses; they also inspired the soldiers to heroic exploits, helped them in the struggle and acted as an intimate companion in their daily routine.

*Samil Wolgan* and other publications we put out during the anti-Japanese revolution featured the most important characteristic; they were not published under the auspices of a few talented people, but were instead written, edited and printed with the active participation of a broader readership.

As in all other undertakings, we regarded it as an iron rule to enlist the masses and rely on them to launch publications.

As far as I recall, this happened when we were staying in Nanpaizi.

One day, while taking a stroll in the secret camp, I found a woman

soldier sitting alone in the forest and writing something on a book with all her heart. She was so absorbed in her work that she did not notice my presence; she was writing the letters with much difficulty, wetting the lead with the tip of her tongue. When I asked what she was writing, she answered that it was information material for some rural villages.

I was much surprised to read what she had written. It was quite a liberal and polished style for a drop-out of a primary school. The material titled *Appeal to the Korean Youth in Manchuria* was logical and its argument was convincing. So I touched it up a little and made sure that it was carried in *Samil Wolgan*. Apparently the magazine had a considerable impact on the readers.

In this way even an ordinary cooking-unit soldier, who had not attended primary school properly, became a contributor to our publications. Thanks to the active participation of the masses and their support, we were able to publish such publications as *Samil Wolgan*, *Sogwang*, *Jongsori* and *Cholhyol*, in difficult conditions, where we had no source of regular supplies, and we laid a solid foundation for the traditions of revolutionary publications.

Our country today has instituted a system of conferring the Samil Wolgan Prize as the highest award on officials in the mass media, who have rendered distinguished service. Had Ri Tong Baek been alive, the No. 1 prize would have been conferred on him.

I want to ask mass media staff not to forget the first generation of the revolutionary publishing circle, who passed away without even being conferred a medal.

## **CHAPTER 15. EXPANSION OF THE UNDERGROUND FRONT**

*(December 1936–March 1937)*

### **1. Indomitable Fighter, Pak Tal**

Pak Tal never wore military uniform and never fought together with me in the same unit. I met him only a few times in Mt. Paektu area. He came to see me several times, but missed me on a few occasions, as I was absent.

It is not easy to understand a total stranger inside out after only a few interviews. However, as the saying goes, even a great wall can be built in one night; my first meeting with him considerably deepened our mutual understanding.

Pak Tal, like Ri Je Sun, was a man of integrity; he was not infected with any unsound trend despite the rough and tumble of life. He never belonged to any faction and was never haughty, adopting the air of an ideologist. Pak Tal did not resemble Kim Chan and An Kwang Chon, the demagogues I had met in Jilin.

He was simple and good-natured like mountain folk, but was also good-mannered and well-informed. At the very first interview I could easily see that he was a man of weight. He had his own critical view of the various movements of the past and also displayed concern on how to shape the nation's future. He had been to Hungnam, Tanchon and Jiandao in search of a leader who would break the outdated methods of the movement.

While Pak Tal was groping for his leader, we were taking every

effort to find capable revolutionaries in the homeland.

We set ourselves the following major strategic tasks to carry out the Juche-orientated line of the Korean revolution: To build in the homeland a reliable secret base, which would serve as strategic guidance for the armed struggle and the political struggle as a whole and prepare a strong political and military force for the earliest possible mass resistance to liberate the homeland by our own efforts.

The creation of a strong political force in the homeland meant expansion of the ARF network and unity of the broad patriotic masses from all strata of society under the banner of the anti-Japanese national united front and, at the same time, the establishment of a strong network of party organizations in the homeland and the preparation of an elite force, capable of leading the anti-Japanese revolution to a great upsurge, centred round the armed struggle. This was, in effect, the key to our success in all political and military activities on Mt. Paektu.

Our struggle to expand and develop the revolutionary movement in the homeland did not start from scratch. In the homeland certain organizational foundations existed, which could serve as our foothold for developing the revolution, as did political forces hardened by Japanese military and police repression. Labour unions, peasant unions and other mass organizations of different classes, which had sprouted throughout the country like bamboo shoots after rain, the tested fighters who would lead these organizations in the anti-Japanese struggle, the masses of the people who had been trained, seasoned and grown stronger in repeated failures, twists and turns, the lessons of struggle, which were recorded with heart-rending sorrow and tears of blood, whenever they experienced frustration and loss—all these served as reliable assets for further developing the revolutionary movement in the homeland, based on the new strategy and tactics.

Respecting the successes and experiences gained in the revolutionary movement in the homeland, reorganization of previous movements and their development as required by new circumstances—such was our attitude and policy towards the revolutionary movement in the homeland.

Since the late 1920s and early 1930s we had dispatched excellent political workers, who were trained in the DIU and the Korean Revolutionary Army, to the northern border area and deep into the homeland, to ensure that they made some advance preparations for laying political and military foundations.

Any promotion of the revolutionary movement in the homeland onto a higher stage required a full-blooded political and military advance into Korea of the KPRA, which emerged as the leading force of the national liberation movement and communist movement of Korea, as well as its positive support for the struggle in the homeland.

In actual fact, the revolutionary movement in the homeland, which had experienced repeated failures and frustrations, was awaiting a new line and leadership. The top echelons of the movement were confused, owing to factional strife. However, the progressive elements, rank and file were ready to risk their lives in support of a new line and leadership. The fighters, who had been enthusiastic about rebuilding the party, were groping for a solution, reflecting in prison and the underground on their failures.

We had to take practical measures, which would meet such requirements. The foremost measure involved unification of the anti-Japanese armed struggle and the revolutionary movement in the homeland. In other words, it meant realizing our leadership to the revolutionary movement in the homeland. To this end, we had to find stalwart revolutionaries like Ri Je Sun, and quickly expand through joint efforts with them the ARF network and rouse the whole nation to the sacred anti-Japanese struggle.

Pak Tal was the right man on the list for the task.

Ri Je Sun had recommended Pak Tal to me.

“Pak Tal is a man who can stand even on the edge of a sword, if he believes he is acting for the right cause. He is also an excellent theoretician. In an argument with a pompous thinker from Tanchon with bouffant hair, he humbled that man. If we want to control North and South Hamgyong provinces, we must see him.”

I was very pleased to hear this. But I could hardly believe all he said

before I met Pak Tal. How often we were disappointed with famous men, whom we had met, after hearing about their high reputation!

Many famous people, whom I had met regardless of their ideas and principles, had no definite views of their own and lacked originality both in thinking and practice.

Pak Tal was not a first-rate figure, unlike An Chang Ho, Kim Jwa Jin, Ri Chong Chon, O Tong Jin, Son Jong Do, Sim Ryong Jun, Hyon Muk Gwan, Hyon Ha Juk, Ko Won Am, Kim Chan, An Kwang Chon, Sin Il Yong or So Jung Sok whom I had met in Jilin. He attracted only the attention of the local police or secret service at best.

However, such a simple man as a woodcutter became a great man, who rendered distinguished service to our revolution, as well as my intimate friend and comrade, whom I still recall. Ri Je Sun said that his real name was Pak Mun Sang. His neighbours used to call him Pak Tal, (birch tree-Tr.) because he was as hard as a birch tree, so Pak Tal became his nickname and later on his formal name.

Pak Tal was born in Toksan Sub-county, Kilju County, North Hamgyong Province. Apparently his family was not poor, judging from the fact that his father owned a sardine factory in Myongchon, but he was merely a primary school leaver. He married at the age of eleven and at sixteen got a job with his father's factory as a salaried accountant. No doubt his father wanted him to be a self-made man at a tender age.

He was so ashamed of his early marriage that he could not tell his friends about it. If he found his wife alone at home, when he came home for lunch, he just walked up and down the room, without daring to ask her to serve him a meal.

His father was manly and kind-hearted, but he liked wine and women and kept a concubine. Apparently Pak Tal's mother was left out in the cold by his father and he sympathized with his mother very much.

"I hate most of all a man with a concubine," said Pak Tal one day. "I experienced the bitterness of polygamy, perceiving the agony my mother was suffering under the roof of my father who had a concubine."

He said that it was a laudable event that we abolished the polygamy system after liberation.

The misfortunes his mother had suffered owing to the polygamy system constituted the cause of his life-long bitterness. Learning a lesson from the life of his mother, who had hardly enjoyed the love of her husband and led a lonely life, Pak Tal was unfailingly loyal to his wife, who was five years older than him, avoiding drinking and any relations with other women.

Next came stingy fellows: Pak Tal hated all stingy fellows regardless of their sex, job and position.

“Whenever I see a miser, I lose my appetite for the whole day.”

When I met him at Juul (Kyongsong) in 1957, he had recovered his health to such an extent that we could chat like this. Listening to him, I perceived that he disgusted individualism and egoism more than anything else.

He was a man of great benevolence. In plain words, he was overflowing with kindness. In every potato harvest season, he invited passersby to his house. He stimulated their appetite by saying that this year potatoes were as delicious as honey. And he told them to come and taste them tugging at their sleeves. He used to tell his wife to make potato-cakes and send them to his neighbours, who had not cultivated potatoes.

I think that if a kind-hearted person like Pak Tal had been rich, he would have become a great philanthropist. He was poor, but he spared nothing for his neighbours.

After primary schooling, Pak Tal taught himself classics and lecture courses for secondary school. His diligence in studies is fully attributable to the fact that he read *Tonguibogam* while serving a prison term as a crippled man in Sodaemun prison.

The policemen were surprised during a search of his house, following the “Hyesan incident.” They discovered a heap of socialist books such as *Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland*, *Inaugural Declaration of the ARF*, *The Fundamentals of Socialism*, *The Theory of Social Evolution*, *The Basic*

*Knowledge of the Colonial Issue, Proletarian Women's Movement, Declaration on the Struggle against Unemployment, A Dictionary of Socialism, Wang Ming's Speech at the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Comintern, The 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, Theses on the Korean Issue and The Basic Knowledge of a Party Member.*

His house was full of nothing but books.

When I met him first, Pak Tal said that he had learned nothing particular and was extremely ignorant. He asked me to teach him all the basics, as if he were illiterate, but this was merely an expression of his modesty; in fact, he was considerably well-informed about the revolutionary theory of Marxism in general. However, he did not flaunt his knowledge and did not try to out rival others with knowledge. Moreover, he had no ambitions to assume "leadership." He was a frugal man lacking all worldly and social ambitions. I think this reflected the inherent nature of Pak Tal as a true man, real patriot and genuine revolutionary.

He always considered himself a student and consequently expected someone to lead him forward. While organizing the Kapsan Working Committee, he limited its range to a local area of Kapsan and clarified its tentative character through the name of the working committee. The committee started its work on the premise that, if the Korean Communist Party was founded, it would obey the party and change its name as it deemed appropriate. Pak Tal organized the Kapsan Working Committee with the intention of launching a movement within the local area by his own efforts, pending the emergence of a leader, who would direct the anti-Japanese struggle.

His efforts to organize the Kapsan Working Committee did not go smoothly. In those days, some people engaged in the social movement in that area capitulated, afraid of military and police repression. They justified themselves by trying to attribute their acts to the absence of a central body of the party.

"We should not," they claimed, "stimulate or encourage the anti-imperialist struggle, which is occurring spontaneously in Kapsan

County. We must wait until the Korean Communist Party is organized and advances a new line and leads the struggle in Kapsan, based on that line. Such actions indicate loyalty to Marxism and Leninism and respect of centralism.”

Pak Tal criticized such attitude as an escape from the revolution. He said that they should transform the spontaneous grouping in Kapsan into an organized movement and try to make it a nationwide movement and that when the Korean Communist Party is founded, this would provide a favourable condition for the party leadership to direct the struggle in that area. The Kapsan Working Committee was organized through an uncompromising struggle against those who were sitting idle, merely waiting for a favourable opportunity or trying to escape from police surveillance to other areas to save their own skins.

To protect the Kapsan Working Committee from possible enemy suppression, Pak Tal named its subordinate organizations differently, for instance, Political Fellowship Association, Advance Association and Anti-Japanese Association. To enlighten the masses, he did not hesitate to exploit such government-approved organizations as the Promotion Association and Self-Defence Corps. When night school, athletic meetings, morning exercises and the like were organized in the name of these organizations, the policemen, who did not know the truth, were satisfied, thinking that the country folk in Kapsan were becoming loyal imperial subjects.

Every time he convened a meeting of the heads of the subordinate organizations of the working committee, held once a month, he organized a football match. They gathered people and started the game, and then did all they had to do behind the scenes, holding meetings and giving assignments to their members. Ancestral sacrifices, marriage ceremonies, birthday parties and sixtieth birthday parties were also used as opportunities to hold a secret meeting of members and heads of the organizations. The use of legal events provided favourable conditions for camouflaging the organization and making its activities more vigorous.

Working committee members worked skilfully with Japanese

policemen and their stooges to exploit to the full the possibilities of lawful activities. On the instructions of the working committee, most of its members entered Japanese-patronized organizations and the lowest administration bodies, working there as “activists.”

This constituted a very daring new approach, compared to the ways of the Singan Association, the general federation of labour unions, the youth union, the Red labour union and Red peasant union, which had adopted an openly hostile attitude of unconditional confrontation with the Japanese army, police and their stooges.

Such camouflage tactics, which were gentle in appearance but sturdy in spirit, introduced by Pak Tal for the first time among the fighters of the homeland, yielded great results.

Pretending to obey the enemy meekly, while serving in their police stations and Self-Defence Corps or working as village head, district head and other important posts of government and public offices, the Rural Promotion Association, fire-fighting team, school cooperation and forestry cooperation were good in many aspects—in disarming the enemy ideologically, collecting information about the enemy, breaking up the forces behind the enemy and drawing them to our side and preventing the enemy from irritating the people. Pak Tal was an excellent revolutionary, who was chairman of the Kapsan Working Committee and in charge of political and dispute departments of this committee. He also openly held important posts in enemy-controlled public bodies. He was vice-chairman of the Rural Promotion Association in the First District, Sinhung-ri, Pochon Sub-county, head of Ilsin Village School Association of the First District, vice-commander of the Self-Defence Corps and fireman of the fire-fighting team, Taeosichon-ri, Unhung Sub-county.

The very fact that 63 people of the first batch of those to be imprisoned on charge of involvement in the “Hyesan incident” were Self-Defence Corps members, indicates how flexibly they used Japanese-patronized offices and organizations. These people included individuals, who held different posts such as head of the general affairs section of the Promotion Association, head of five families of the

Self-Defence Corps, a councillor of the forestry cooperation, a member of the highland agriculture guidance section, general representative of the slash-and-burn field surveying, trainee of a short course for elite youth, a member of the educational affairs section for village schools and councillor of an intensive-course school.

Deftly combining such legal methods with illegal struggle, the Kapsan Working Committee advanced the slogans to suit the reality of rural communities, that is, a reduction in farm rents, the free reclamation of slash-and-burn fields, and the rejection of labour draft, usury and compulsory cultivation of flax and wheat, and launched dynamic struggles to materialize these slogans.

They seemed to be engaged exclusively in economic struggle; however, the rejection of the compulsory cultivation of flax or wheat was a serious political slogan. The peasants of Kapsan area opposed the cultivation of flax, because this crop was used as a raw material for the production of munitions. They frustrated flax cultivation by boiling their flax seeds before planting or spoiling the crop, planting them sparsely, so that they shoot out many stalks and branches.

Ri Je Sun's recommendation was enough to convince me of the need to join hands with Pak Tal.

We discussed how to meet him and appointed Ri Je Sun as the liaison man responsible for contacts with the homeland.

Ri Je Sun carried out his assignment promptly. A messenger conveyed Ri's report that Pak Tal asked us to send a KPRA representative directly to him. For some reason, he did not come straight to the secret camp to see me, although he welcomed our interview.

On the basis of this fact, I believed him to be a prudent revolutionary. His caution and carefulness fanned our confidence and curiosity in him.

We needed a sincere, self-possessed and prudent revolutionary, rather than a frivolous thinker, who cools down as quickly as water boiled in a small pan or is swayed by every wind.

In accordance with his request, we dispatched Kwon Yong Byok,

an experienced party worker, to Kapsan. At that time I sent the following letter to Pak Tal through Kwon.

To my comrade patriots in the homeland who  
are fighting Japanese imperialism

Comrades who are fighting in the homeland the Japanese imperialists, our villainous enemy!

We are fighting, arms in hand, the Japanese and Manchukuo armies and police in the wilderness of Manchuria, in order to liberate our country.

We sincerely want to join hands with you and pool all our strength in the struggle against Japanese imperialism to liberate the motherland.

I send our representative directly to you, hoping that you will have a frank discussion with him.

Yours sincerely  
Kim Il Sung

When Kwon Yong Byok was going to Kapsan, Ri Je Sun accompanied him. As I recall, they met Pak Tal in December 1936. Through Kwon, Pak Tal learned that the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland had been founded. Kwon also explained to him the major activities of the KPRA.

Apparently Kwon had a great impact on Pak Tal, who had ardently hoped to have relations with us. On return Kwon said that Pak had the nickname of “blank look,” because he did not show his feelings easily, but he had nearly wept for joy on reading my letter.

“He suggested an immediate interview with you, General. He said that if you would allow him, he would come any time.”

His report whetted my desire to see him. I decided to meet him in our secret camp and instructed Kwon Yong Byok to take the necessary measures for the interview.

Pak Tal, on his part, made preparations to visit me. This meant arrangements to cross the River Amnok safely. The bloody atmosphere

in those days made it almost impossible to cross the river illegally. He mulled over ways of crossing the river, and then called on policeman Kim at the police sub-station in the village of Khunungdengi, under the jurisdiction of Hyesan Police Station.

“Mr. Kim, have you heard any news about Changbai?” Pak Tal asked, as if something awful had happened. Kim and the other policemen looked, wide-eyed, at him.

“What news?”

“As the bandits frequent the Changbai area, many people are moving to other places, selling their cereals at low prices, I was told. I must buy a few cartloads of beans to earn some money. Please issue a pass for me to cross the river, if you also want to benefit from the deal.”

The policemen, listening to him with relish, agreed, asking him to bring some beans for them in exchange for the pass. He got the pass more easily than he had expected. In this way, he crossed the River Amnok safely and came to Ri Je Sun’s house.

It was nearly dawn when Ri arrived with Pak Tal at Headquarters.

As Ri had said, Pak looked ill-balanced for the small head on his broad shoulders. He did not stand out and resembled a rural woodcutter. I thought that Ri had described him correctly. However, I felt his eyes had a rare quality, when he was looking at me.

“I have been anxious to see you, General.”

These were his first words of greeting; although simple, I could feel his true heart.

I don’t know why, but I was moved by his blunt words.

Ever since imprisonment in Kilju, he had dreamed of a meeting with us, he said. He appeared in Kilju to expand the organization, while avoiding enemy surveillance. As he was working in the construction site of a paper mill, he was arrested by the police and imprisoned. One day he found in a bundle of waste paper a newspaper, which carried an article about our unit’s defeat of the enemy, after advancing to the Changbai area. Since then, he had always thought of us. After release from prison, he came to Kapsan. To get in touch with us, he went on a peddling tour, visiting most of

the villages on the River Amnok.

“Indeed, it is a great fortune for me to meet you General.”

Overjoyed, he grasped my hands again and shook them enthusiastically.

“I am also glad to meet you, Comrade Pak Tal. You are the first representative from the homeland to visit us, since the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army’s advance on Mt. Paektu.”

“I don’t think I am worthy of a representative. I am only a country bumpkin. ... Champions of some causes in big towns like Kilju, Songjin and Hamhung didn’t even glance at me when I was there.”

He seemed to be trying to behave like a “Kapsan country bumpkin.” But I found great character in his modesty.

“There is no reason why only big towns should produce a great man. I have heard from Ri Je Sun that the Kapsan Working Committee did a lot of work in the anti-Japanese patriotic cause. The presence of people in their right minds in the homeland provides great encouragement to us.”

I offered a cup of hot water, telling him to warm himself, but he only sipped a little, hastening to report the situation in the homeland. He was an admirable man, full of ardour.

My talks with Pak Tal started in real earnest in the following morning. This time we conversed a lot. Our talk began from Pak’s explanation of the situation in the homeland in those days and the movement in Kapsan area. The gist of his explanation of the homeland situation went as follows:

Things in the homeland are on the decline. Apparently, the movement for the rebuilding of the party has lost vigour and the peasant union movement is on the wane. The fighters took refuge in different mountains, unable to endure enemy suppression. Can they rise up again? No, they can’t. Even if they muster courage and stand up again, they have no line. They cannot fight blindly and consequently use their brains only to sustain their lives. Some people continue their struggle with courage, but fail to shake off factional habits. The Shanghai and Russian groups still exist and there are also the South

Hamgyong Provincial group and North Hamgyong Provincial group; what is worse, in the same South Hamgyong Provincial group the Hamhung, Hongwon and Tanchon groups appeared; they are exhausting their energy, always blinkering, arguing back and forth and holding empty talks, only to confuse the masses.

“The greatest difficulty in the revolutionary movement in the homeland concerns the absence of correct leadership. In other words, there is no line capable of convincing everyone, nor is there a man who can formulate such a line. Consequently, when the peasants’ uprising broke out in Tanchon, they sent a man to the Comintern for advice and guidance, but received nothing. So whom should we turn to?”

What he meant, in short, was that the most pressing matter in the revolutionary movement in the homeland was to resolve the problem of line and leadership.

Another important issue of debate was the mission and character of the KPRA.

Pak Tal assumed a serious look, begging me not to mind him asking a presumptuous question.

“Among the revolutionaries in the homeland now, rumour has it that General Kim Il Sung is a Korean, but is fighting for the Chinese revolution and that his is an army of Koreans, but belongs to the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Army. How should I understand this? I want to hear your own explanation.” As Ri Je Sun said, Pak Tal was a straightforward man.

I had to explain at length.

“It is only natural that the revolutionaries at home have such doubts, as the press calls the army under my command the 6<sup>th</sup> Division of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Corps of the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Army. However, if they consider my unit as thoroughly a Chinese army unit, this is absolutely wrong and contrary to facts. The NAJAA means, as the name shows, an allied army of various anti-Japanese guerrilla units, fighting in the northeast area of China. It comprises the Chinese guerrilla units under the leadership of the Communist Party, the Chinese anti-Japanese units of the National Salvation Army and the

Korean anti-Japanese guerrilla units, led by Korean communists. It is an international allied army united for cooperation in the anti-Japanese war. The common enemy is Japan, the common purpose is to liberate their countries, their common fighting theatre is northeast China, the friendly feelings between Korean and Chinese peoples, formed historically and the commonness of their fates—all these factors have brought the armed forces of the communists and other patriots of the two countries into an alliance. As the allied army system is, in essence, the product of voluntary participation, the independence and originality of each national army are respected. Our KPRA assumes fully the character of the national army, which seeks national liberation and is fighting independently, concentrating its efforts on the Korean revolution, while helping the Chinese revolution under the name of the allied army. All our compatriots in Manchuria know that our army is the national army of Korea, seeking to liberate their country and free their nation since the early days of its founding. We call our army the anti-Japanese allied army, where the majority of the inhabitants are Chinese and the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, where many Koreans live.

“Referring to the principle of one party in one country, some people once disputed the Korean revolution, which the Korean revolutionaries were fighting for, and even tried to violate and trample upon the independent character and rights of our national army. Afterwards, the Comintern advised us to break away from the NAJAA and fight independently, pointing out that the Koreans' fight for the Korean revolution does not contradict the principle of one party in one country. However, we decided to remain in the NAJAA. If we separated, it would weaken the Chinese people's support for us and cause inconvenience to our activities. The Chinese also did not want to divide the allied army by nations. We can say proudly that the allied army system we maintain now is a good example of anti-imperialist joint action, as the product of inseparable relations between the comrades-in-arms of two countries, which are fighting a common enemy. As long as our right to independence is not violated and the

Chinese do not refuse, we will maintain this system in future. If possible, we want to establish an anti-Japanese allied army with the Mongolian national army or the Soviet army and fight in cooperation with them.”

After hearing my explanation, Pak Tal smiled broadly, brightening the room.

“That means my disappointment has been unfounded. If your guerrillas belonged to the Chinese army, we wouldn’t expect anything, would we? But now I feel that my courage has been redoubled!”

“Then, I am also happy. For that matter, you can trust the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army. The Japanese army is strong, but never invincible. We are going to expand the liberation war into the homeland, based on Mt. Paektu. The liberation of the country is only a matter of time. We are building up our strength to liberate the country. You must remember that the Kapsan Working Committee, led by you, is a part of this strength.”

Another important topic of our talks concerned our united front policy and the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland.

Pak Tal admitted the need for the anti-Japanese national united front, and expressed his full support for all the measures, which had been taken to expand and strengthen it, as well as the aims of the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF. He said that in terms of the universality and greatness of its aim and its colossal force, the ARF was fundamentally different from the Singan Association or Kunu Association, former nationalist organizations, the fruit of cooperation of the left and right wings.

However, this does not mean that he supported all our measures and policies. He held a different view about the name of the ARF and some provisions of its programme.

“I firmly believe that as communists we are fighting for national liberation and that our ultimate goal is to build a communist society. However, the name of the ARF and its ten-point programme seem to have regressed to a nationalist level, departing far from such a communist programme. In other words, I might say that only the

immediate objective is exposed and the ultimate goal is abandoned.”

Apparently he was afraid that we might be censured for abandoning the ultimate objective of our struggle and had regressed to the point of adopting opportunism or compromising with a reformist movement, rather than sticking to a form of positive struggle. Apparently he was not free of a dogmatic way of thinking, as old man “Tobacco Pipe” had been in his early years.

So I explained to him: A few communists alone cannot carry out the revolution. Only when the broad masses make an all-out effort can the revolution emerge victorious. As you know, under Japanese imperialist colonial rule, not only workers, peasants and communists, but also the nation as a whole are groaning under tyranny. In this situation, we must rally all the forces interested in the independence of Korea, behind the anti-Japanese national united front. You disagree with the name of the ARF, but in fact it is a proper name, acceptable to any strata of society. Some people now think that the name of an organization must include the word “revolution” or “Red,” but this is an expression of left-wing deviation. We included the word “fatherland” in the name of the nationwide united front to demonstrate clearly that it is not an organization for any one class or strata, but rather for the whole nation.

Pak Tal said that he had frequently met the people of Songjin, Haksong, Kilju, Tanchon and Pukchong to swap experiences with them and that they were apparently doing underground work in a crude and rough manner. When the peasant union members gathered in a wrestling ground in *Tano* festival in Songjin, for instance, they made themselves conspicuous by wearing red bands around their heads and sitting in a circle, he said. In this way they displayed their difference from non-organization members. When the wrestling match proceeded unfavourably for their side, they made one player after another challenge the other side, whether or not they were likely to succeed, in order to overwhelm their opponents by numerical superiority. When they were not a match for the other side, they caused trouble on purpose, in an attempt to demonstrate the power of the Red peasant

union. Plain-clothes policemen on the platform took such opportunities to mark off the hardcore members of the union and this supplied a clue for arresting its active members or detecting underground organizations.

In those days, left-wing deviations were revealed in some local areas in relation to *Hyanggyo*. *Hyanggyo* was an organization of influential people in those areas, which made sacrifices to Confucius, the father of Confucianism, and it smacked of feudalism. It granted its members the title of *Jangui* or *Kyogam*. They addressed each other *Jangui* or *Kyogam* to show their respect. Needless to say, it was not worthy of encouragement, because it boosted feudalistic Confucian morality, but there was no need to oppose it openly or try to abolish it in a day. However, some young men, who had been poisoned by leftism, acted blindly on the pretext of opposing feudalism, burning or tearing the *Jangui* hats of their grandfathers, and were therefore shamefully hit on the head with tobacco pipes by old men. Old men denounced that communists were a band of villains, who knew nothing of the three fundamental principles and five moral disciplines in human relations and ignored their elders.

Only the Japanese imperialists fished in troubled waters. When *Hyanggyo* made a sacrifice to Confucius, they let the county headman take part in the ceremony and bow before the spirit. They wanted to show that communists opposed their ancestors, but the Japanese government respected them. The enemy used *Hyanggyo* organizations slyly in this way to oppose the communist force.

“Let me remind you once again. Use of pompous words such as ‘Red’ or ‘revolution’ in naming an organization does not ensure success in whatever the organization does and does not guarantee its revolutionary character. ARF organizations may be formed under different names to suit the situation in every local area and the level of consciousness of the masses. Organizations should be built to suit reality, in such a way that workers form a labour union, peasants create a peasant union and young people set up an Anti-Imperialist Youth League or Young Communist League. We were informed that the

Promotion Association, a government-controlled organization, was formed in different places in the homeland comprising many people. If we are to win over the people from all strata of society, we should infiltrate such an organization. If we revolutionize its members working there, we can gradually change its character, in conformity with the Inaugural Declaration of the ARF, I think. What is important is not external appearance, but rather content. If an organization is favourable for our revolution, we should not be particular about its name.”

On hearing this, Pak Tal showed his repentance.

“From what you said it appears that there is a problem in the mode of our movement.”

Through my talk with him I discovered a blind spot and limitation in the way of thinking of fighters in the homeland. The most serious mistake they had committed in thinking and practice concerned, in a nutshell, their dogmatic view of nationalist and communist movements. Their rejection of the nationalist movement in general was a left-wing deviation, inherent in the pompous communists and dogmatic Marxists, who gulped down Marxism-Leninism, instead of chewing and digesting it.

I emphasized once again that there was no greater cause than national liberation for the Korean communists and said that the communist movement could not exist apart from the nation and that such a communist movement was not necessary.

“Our concept of the nation includes workers and peasants, as well as the people from all walks of life, who love the country and nation, creative labour and the future of the liberated homeland. This is precisely the standard for the general mobilization of the nation and criterion for membership of the ARF. By this standard we must mobilize as many people as possible for the freedom and independence of Korea. The general mobilization of the nation, based on the thought that we must and can achieve the independence of the country on our nation’s efforts, rather than by outside forces, is the only way of saving the destiny of Korea.”

Pak Tal was a man who had committed many faults in thinking and practice, but he recognized his dogmatic views liberally and accepted our principles with modesty.

I suggested that he reorganize the Kapsan Working Committee into a subordinate organization of the ARF and change its name to the Korean National Liberation Union. Pak Tal readily agreed to my proposal.

We had a long discussion about the task of the KNLU in the expansion of the ARF network in the homeland and detailed ways of implementing it. We also talked, warming ourselves by the campfire built outside. During his stay in the secret camp we debated the expansion of party organizations in the homeland, support for the KPRA, infiltration in enemy organs, protection of revolutionaries in the homeland, liaison methods and place, the secret code and selection of liaison men and many other problems, and reached complete agreement in all matters.

I gained the deep impression from my interview that he was straightforward, informal and sincere in his attitude towards the revolution. He was the type of man, who unhesitatingly says that he likes what he really likes and dislikes what he dislikes. Some people often pretend to like what they hate and say that something is good, which they really think is bad, reading another's face and acting according to the circumstances. Most people should say that a thing, which is black, is black and that a thing, which is white, is white, displaying determination and courage to say only the truth, even if they may somewhat hurt other people's feelings. However, such people are few and far between. A man, who says that something black is white and vice-versa reading his superior's face or flatters him, speaking differently according to the situation, is a treacherous man and not a faithful man. Truth cannot thrive on the tongue of a treacherous man.

By contrast, Pak Tal did not hesitate to say that he disliked what he really hated. Frankly speaking, I was charmed by his attitude. I think personal charm never comes from what is complicated, gorgeous, talkative and vociferous. Simplicity, plainness, artlessness and

frankness are the essence of personal charm.

Jong Jun Thae, first Chairman of the State Planning Commission of the Government of the Republic, was an intellectual of petty bourgeois origin and cadre, who had undergone serious political persecution by factional elements, but always said only the truth before me. In terms of economic policy he only said what was possible and never made out that what was impossible was possible. When he was afraid that I would gain the wrong conception on production figures owing to a distorted report, he waited in my office for four or five hours to inform me of the actual situation. With his help I was able to gain a correct understanding of the whole aspect of the national economy and give a proper guidance to economic work.

In the old days, the first criterion for the selection of an official was noble birth, the second criterion handsome looks and third criterion gentle manner of speech, I was told. Consequently, people of obscure birth, small build and crude manner of speech found it difficult to pass state examinations with honour, no matter how qualified they were.

My maternal grandfather said:

“People must be promoted according to their ability and personality, not by family connections, property, appearance or manner of speech.”

Pak Tal reminded me of this saying. He was quite simple in appearance, but was upright, candid and artless, free of ostentation. To borrow the expression of people today, he was a man enshrined in my heart.

“Please trust me. I will fight for the liberation of the motherland following your ideas, General, even if my body is torn into a hundred pieces. Don’t worry about the Homeland Party Working Committee and the Korean National Liberation Union.”

He said this as he left. As promised, he returned home with a cart of soya beans he bought in the Ri Je Sun’s village and distributed them to the policemen.

In January 1937, the leadership members of the Kapsan Working Committee convened a meeting under the chairmanship of Pak Tal to

reorganize the KWC into the KNLU and adopted the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF as the KNLU programme. At the meeting, they also debated measures to implement the line of the anti-Japanese national united front.

Serious discussions were held on immediate practical matters—the expansion of the range of the organization from the Kapsan area into the province and all the country, strict precautions against the infiltration of factional elements, strict secrecy, education of its members, publication of the union organ, etc.

The reorganization of the KWC into the KNLU was an epoch-making event, which was extremely significant in the history of the ARF movement. The KNLU became a springboard for expanding the ARF organizations into the homeland.

Since the reorganization of the KWC into the KNLU, a change occurred in way of thinking and working by communists of the Kapsan area.

On the KNLU organ *Hwajonmin*, they carried articles, which explained our line and distributed them to its subordinate organizations. In Kapsan and other areas of South and North Hamgyong provinces, our lines and policies were disseminated quickly and the ARF subordinate organizations grew rapidly. Flames of the anti-Japanese struggle rose higher than ever before.

In May 1937, I met Pak Tal again. Owing to the advance of Choe Hyon's unit into the Musan area, the situation in and around Kapsan became grave. The border area was rigorously guarded.

This time, too, Pak Tal coaxed police to allow his journey and thereby left home lawfully to visit us.

We talked long about the situation in the homeland and their work.

His report on the movement in the homeland satisfied us all. The work to expand the ARF network was making headway at a high speed, thanks to the tireless efforts of the vanguard fighters of the KNLU. The ARF network already stretched into the Kapsan area and other areas of present Ryanggang Province and far-off Songjin, Kilju, Tanchon, Hongwon and other important east coast areas. Their

methods of struggle were improved considerably.

We showed Pak Tal two light machine-guns we had captured in battle. I still recall him vividly as he touched them with joy.

During my interview with comrades from the homeland, I felt that they were narrow-minded; when they raised questions they considered only the internal aspect of the movement, lacking an ability to consider the matter in an international scope. Therefore I had to spend many hours to expand their views, so that they could approach the Korean revolution in relation to the international situation, ranging from our relationship with the Comintern, the Chinese and Japanese Communist parties to international events. This was essential to invigorate their work in the homeland.

The international situation in those days was very fluid. While the Spanish Civil War raged in Europe, the occupation of Ethiopia by Italy kept Africa astir. Italy's occupation of Ethiopia was, in a sense, a greater point of issue than the Spanish Civil War. Admittedly, the Spanish war had assumed an international character, but it was merely a civil war. However, the occupation of Ethiopia by Italy constituted a big power's aggression against a weak nation. What mattered here was that the so-called big powers, such as Britain and France, encouraged the invasion and, worse still, the League of Nations took no effective step, leaving Ethiopia to fall victim to invasion.

The invasion of Manchuria by Japan and the appearance of the Nazi regime in Germany served as the international background of Italy's brazen act of aggression. As soon as he took power, Hitler started building a great German Reich. Capitalist powers such as the United States, Britain and France entertained apprehensions about the appearance of the Hitler regime, but sympathized with his anti-communist policy and compromised with him liberally to use the German armed forces, as a bulwark against the communist forces. Encouraged by this, Hitlerite Germany annexed Saarland in January 1935 and, in March of the same year, annulled the military provisions of the Peace Treaty of Versailles. The treaty had imposed colossal amount of reparations on Germany and restricted its army to 100 000

soldiers, and no ship of 1 000 tons and over was allowed, to say nothing of tanks and military aircraft. However, fascist Germany unilaterally repealed these provisions and announced the “law of the organization of the national army” to effect conscription, in order to create a regular army of 36 divisions or 550 000 soldiers. Göring openly declared organization of the Luftwaffe. All these moves of Nazi Germany became a major factor in encouraging Italy’s invasion.

To find a pretext for the invasion, Italy provoked armed clashes against Ethiopia.

In the strained situation, where Italy was making full preparations for a large-scale military invasion, Ethiopia brought the case to the League of Nations as its member state. However, the League of Nations neglected it. Britain and France, which had played a leading role in the league, did not want to offend Italy on the question of a colony, unless it conflicted with their interests. Ethiopia asked repeatedly for arbitration. Rumour has it that the Ethiopian Emperor appealed for help for his country, shedding tears at a session of the League of Nations in Geneva. Ethiopia even sent a note to the United States, which was not a member state of the league, requesting that it exercise its influence, but the United States, which was pursuing isolationism by enacting a Neutrality Act, was dumb to that matter.

In October 1935, Italy attacked Ethiopia without declaring war. Despite the active resistance of the army and people, Ethiopia was defeated.

The League of Nations applied no effective sanctions against Italy and connived at the supply by Britain and France of weapons to Italy behind the formally declared economic sanctions. As the saying goes, birds of a feather flock together.

The prestige of the League of Nations had disappeared.

Anyhow, it came as no surprise that the League of Nations, which had always served the imperialist big powers as their tool of aggression, should take sides with the stronger. Already in its initial stage, the league had openly supported the redivision of colonies in the form of the “distribution of mandated territories” and openly pursued

an anti-Soviet policy. Men of conscience of the world still vividly remember how shamelessly the league backed the Japanese imperialists' invasion of Manchuria. The League of Nations failed to check fascist Germany's occupation of Saarland or the armed intervention of Germany and Italy in Spain. It did not even issue a statement denouncing their aggression. The League of Nations, which had emerged as an international organization with a mission to maintain world peace, subsequently tolerated Germany's invasion of Austria and Czechoslovakia; in fact, it helped and encouraged the invasion.

The rapid development of the international situation, where the arbitrariness of the fascist and militarist forces was growing rampant, and the impotence of the League of Nations, clearly taught the communists that they should launch the struggle for national liberation independently, based on their own forces.

In the days when I met Pak Tal again, the Japanese imperialists' invasion of China proper was a matter of time.

The "Huabei incident" made northern China virtually the subject of Japanese imperialism.

Following the "Huabei incident," Japanese imperialism further stepped up the expansion of armament and war preparations. In August 1936, the Hiroda Cabinet defined basic national policy as strengthening Japan's position in east Asia and at the same time, extending its influence to the South Sea. It had an all-out plan to launch a full-scale invasion of China and push northward against the Soviet Union, while biding her time to advance southward.

Pak Tal and other communists from the homeland considered very seriously our appraisal of the international situation.

On the premise that the Japanese imperialists would start a war against China in the near future, I instructed the revolutionaries in the homeland that they should unite their forces firmly to cope with this event and exploit the prevailing situation skilfully in order to launch an active anti-Japanese struggle.

"Japan's move is alarming. Sooner or later it will ignite a greater

war against China. This will create favourable conditions for our struggle. They may well plunder and strangle our people, as never before to fight a war. But many gaps may be revealed in their home front. The further Japan expands its front, the more freely we can fight in the vast area. So Comrade Pak Tal, you must make full preparations to cope with the new situation on your initiative.

“You must lead the KNLU properly to enlarge the anti-Japanese forces and get them ready even for revolt.”

Before he left the secret camp I gave him a special assignment to draw a sketch-map of Pochonbo and reconnoitre the frontier guard of the Japanese in detail. Pak Tal carried out this assignment with credit. The sketch-map of the town he drafted and his information gave us great help in the battle of Pochonbo.

Six days after the Pochonbo battle we sent a liaison man for Pak Tal, but I could not meet him, because I left for Mt. Jiansan in a hurry in command of my unit. After the crushing defeat in Pochonbo, the Government-General of Korea convened an emergency meeting and decided to concentrate the Hamhung 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment, the Japanese army unit stationed in Changbai County and the police forces from the homeland, as a preparation for a large-scale “punitive” operation against us.

In July that year, I again sent for Pak Tal. But, that time, too, our meeting did not take place, because he had been arrested by the enemy. Ri Pyong Son alone called on me and reported his arrest and the revolutionary movement in the homeland.

I requested that Ri establish contact with the communists, working in Myongchon and Songjin, so that we could meet them. I assigned him to another task of organizing paramilitary guerrilla units in the homeland.

These tasks were conveyed to Pak Tal on his release from prison.

In June 1938, when the enemy’s suppression of the organizations in the homeland was intensified, Pak Tal searched the forest around Changbai for over a month to meet us for our advice to save the grave situation.

At that time I was working around Linjiang and Mengjiang, so I heard of his news much later.

The Japanese police made a frantic search for Pak Tal and other hardcore members of the KNLU to arrest them.

The Korean police officer Choe Ryong of Hyesan police station mobilized even plainclothes policemen, Self-Defence Corps men and firemen to track down Pak Tal.

Pak Tal and Kim Chol Ok were arrested by the enemy in September and October 1938, owing to the betrayal of Kim Chang Yong, Kim Chol Ok's cousin. Ri Ryong Sul (Ri Kyong Bong) was also arrested later.

The brutal enemy subjected him to inconceivable torture. They wanted to know our whereabouts and the list of the KNLU members. However, no cruel torture could reduce a man of iron will to submission. The enemy first condemned him to death and then sentenced to life imprisonment owing to a lack of sufficient evidence. The human killers destroyed his body beyond recovery. His backbone was broken and leg bone was crushed. However, he maintained his spirit, never vacillating. As a crippled man he miraculously endured the hardships of seven or eight years of prison life, which our posterity can hardly imagine.

One day immediately after liberation I received a report that Pak Tal had come out of Sodaemun prison. After he left prison on a stretcher, he stayed in Seoul for a while under the care of his wife. Doctors diagnosed his case as myelitis. Later, Choe Ung Sok, a doctor of medicine, examined the patient and diagnosed the case again as spinal tuberculosis. He received treatment in Seoul University Hospital.

I sent the head of the Secretariat of the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea to Seoul to bring Pak Tal to Pyongyang.

In former days, Pak Tal was a virile man as hard and strong as a birch tree, who could cover scores of miles overnight. However, when he appeared before me on another's back that day, he was a crippled man of a miserable figure, who retained no trace of his younger days;

the torture had caused paralysis in the lower half of his body and reduced him to mere skeleton. As he had lost all his flesh, I felt as if I could lift his small body in one hand.

However, Pak Tal hugged me tightly and shed a shower of tears. He said that he had nothing to regret as he had seen me while still alive. The doctors, who examined him, pronounced the diagnosis like a death sentence. No doctor said that there was any possibility to save him. When he came out of prison, he was already shadowed by death.

I provided him with a residence next door to mine and made detailed efforts to revive him. I made sure that all famous medicines were obtained for him and that famous doctors were exclusively engaged in curing him. When I was going to and coming from the office, I frequently inquired after the patient. One day I heard that there was a milch cow in Usanjang, Nampho and instructed an official to fetch it to provide Pak Tal with milk. After a war of three years, I had a building in Juul recreation centre named “Pak Tal house” exclusively for his medical care. While he recuperated in Juul, his favourite vegetables were sent by air from Pyongyang.

“I must recover as soon as possible to help the General. ...”

He always made such comments, worrying about me. He made strenuous efforts to recover from his bad state, but his condition went from bad to worse, despite all the devoted care of the medical workers.

But I marvelled that he always thought about how to help the Party and the revolution, although he was in such a bad condition that he could not move his body.

I remember in 1949, when he was recuperating in Usanjang recreation centre, how he found that the apples in orchards in the surrounding country had been damaged by harmful insects, because they were not enveloped. Pak Tal motivated the workers of the recreation centre and the deputies to the Supreme People’s Assembly from south Korea staying there to make apple envelopes. He himself made them in bed, with a piece of plank on his chest.

Another thing happened, when he was receiving medical treatment in Juul after war.

Pak Tal visited a nearby village on his wheelchair, which I had made specially for him, and found many dead ears of rice in the field; the field was not planted with the variety of rice recommended by the Party. He put some of the dead ears of rice in an envelope and sent it to us, reporting that the Party's agricultural policy was not being carried out precisely.

At a meeting I criticized local officials, asking why they were ignorant of reality, when Pak Tal, even a bedridden cripple, was torn at their failure to carry out Party policy properly and reported the fact to the Party Central Committee. Afterwards, the chairman of the North Hamgyong Provincial Party Committee called on him to criticize himself, I was told.

Aware that he would never recover and would not live long, he began to write in his bed for the education of the younger generation.

As soon as I learned of his determination I called on him and beseeched him not to overdo things.

Pak Tal said, grasping my hands tightly:

"I have lived so long, thanks to you, General. Only when I help the revolution, even a little, can I live long with an easy mind. I was arrested by the Japanese police, without carrying out my duty as a member of the Homeland Party Working Committee and the head of the KNLU, so, as a useless man, I am living at the state's expense. But I want to do something, out of a desire to fulfil the revolutionary duty you assigned me in bygone days. Please, don't dissuade me."

And he continued:

"Ostrovsky went blind, but wrote a novel for the revolution. Why should I not write at least, when I have my bright eyes. Naturally, I cannot produce a masterpiece because I am not good at writing."

With the help of his faithful wife, Hyon Kum Son, who served as his hands and feet and his nurse through her life, and the medical workers, Pak Tal began to write reminiscences *The Homeland Is More Valuable Than My Life* and the autobiographical novel *The Dawn*, which describes the struggle of the communists in the Kapsan area, during the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle. His writings, whose

every word was smeared with blood, touched the people's hearts, as it reflected his ardent loyalty to the revolution, as indicated in his books.

He received written impressions on his books and letters of thanks from a lot of readers. Encouraged by the letters from readers that his books became their companion in life, Pak Tal wrote one article after another.

One day he measured his bed, examining it from various angles, and showed his wife a piece of paper, where figures were written.

He said that if a small desk was made for him, he would put it across the bed and use it to write.

A few days later a carpenter made it with all his care and sent it to him.

Feeling the legs of the desk, Pak Tal said to his wife.

"It's a nice desk. Darling, take good care of it. I will write using it after some relaxation."

However, Pak Tal never used it. The heart of the man, which was throbbing with his unfailingly loyalty to the Party and revolution, the motherland and people, ceased beating. Hearing of his death, the whole country mourned.

We held a meeting of the Presidium of the Party Central Committee in Pak Tal's house, an unprecedented event, and decided to accord him a state funeral.

As the hearse left his home, I was among the funeral procession. I wanted to see him off even at this moment, because I had always regretted that I could not accompany him far, seeing him off, when he left me on Mt. Paektu. I shed tears so much that my handkerchief was wet through. I lost my appetite, as I had done when Kim Chaek died. If I had seen him even once walking on his own feet in the liberated homeland, I would not have felt so grief-stricken.

Afterwards, we made sure that the house in Unhung-ri, Pochon County, where Pak Tal lived before liberation, was restored to its original state and that his bust was erected in front of the house. I think that this was the first bronze statue to be erected in our country in honour of a revolutionary.

Pak Tal was a fighter, who had fought indomitably for the revolution to the last moment of his life although he had lost his wings in the fight against the enemy.

Pak Tal was an honourable representative of the revolutionaries in the homeland, who was the first to link the revolution in the homeland with the anti-Japanese armed struggle, after the KPRA advanced to Mt, Paektu; he was our plenipotentiary in the homeland, who did more work than anyone else and experienced many hardships for us.

Thanks to the efforts of such fighters as Pak Tal, we were able to found the Party and build a prosperous sovereign state within a short span of time in such a complicated situation after liberation.

## **2. Homeland Party Working Committee**

The creation of our own communist party was the unanimous desire of the Korean revolutionaries and one of the most important strategic tasks, which the young communists had set themselves, when they had started the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle.

Throughout the armed struggle against Japanese imperialism, we carried out an independent line of founding a party by expanding and consolidating its basic organizations with the fine vanguards, who had been trained in the practical revolutionary struggle.

The Korean People's Revolutionary Army, the main force of the anti-Japanese revolution, became the leading force in founding the party, charged with its organizational and ideological preparations. The work of founding the party had been organized and carried out on a full scale, with the KPRA Party Committee gaining momentum in its leadership function and role; it became a powerful motive force, which offered strong political backing to the armed struggle and, at the same time, strengthened party leadership over it and its mass foundation and effected a great upswing in the overall Korean revolution, centred on the armed struggle.

In the second half of the 1930s, the building of party organizations, promoted by the communist vanguards, who were directly engaged in the anti-Japanese armed struggle, formed the main stream of the communist movement in our country and represented its fully orthodox nature.

Our founding of the party progressed with difficulty, owing to complicated processes from its outset, due to the peculiar situation of our revolution and the various attendant problems.

The Korean communists had to undergo great pains and undertake long roundabout course, a direct way for others, paying extremely

dearly on their way to founding their own party. Owing to our peculiar situation of living in an alien country, we were forced to undergo trials and agony, which were not experienced by the communists of other countries, in addition to the hardships common to the resistance fighters of colonies in the course of founding parties.

As mentioned before, the Comintern had withdrawn its recognition of the Korean Communist Party in 1928, authorized that it should be reorganized and called on the Korean communists active in Manchuria and Japan to join the party of the country of their residence on the principle of one party for one country.

Some of them had regarded it as an inevitable fate that the Korean communists could only accept and adopted the passive attitude of joining a foreign party, obedient to the trend of the times, looking forward to a favourable phase. Others, displeased with the subjective conduct of the Comintern, had continued their activities as before for some time against this decision, without transferring their party membership to the party of the country of their residence; as they had been engaged in sporadic activities out of their habit, they could not, however, keep up their existence for long and had all given up.

It is probable that communists join a foreign party for a short time, if need be. As the communist movement is a national movement, as well as an international movement presupposing class solidarity, it is not strange for communists, the performers of the movement, to join a foreign party organization for a time and transcend their nationality.

When the headquarters of the Comintern were situated in Moscow, quite a few leading figures of communist parties and political exiles from other countries, who had been staying there, registered themselves temporarily at organizations of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and led their party life there, while maintaining membership of their own parties.

The point at issue was that the Comintern had deprived the Korean communists of their parent organization and thereby forced them into the disgraceful state of having to live in a rented room.

For this reason we had regarded the conduct of the Comintern as

unreasonable from the start. However, we had not made any desperate attempts, straining our every nerve, such as acting against it or abandoning the movement itself. We had accepted the measure of the Comintern as a temporary step and steadily worked to found a new type of party by our own positive efforts.

Above all, we had sought ceaselessly for ways suited to the specific reality of our revolution within the framework permitted by the principles put forward by the Comintern, while stepping up preparations to found an independent party. The founding of the Society for Rallying Comrades, which consisted of vanguard fighters of the DIU, can be regarded as a starting-point in this undertaking.

Until the first half of the 1930s, when the main force of the KPRA was active in eastern and northern Manchuria, our efforts to found a party had hardly reached the depth of the homeland.

Admittedly, during those years we had already formed several basic party organizations in various places of the homeland, such as Onsong and Jongsong along the River Tuman. But the main theatre of activities of new-generation communists to form party organizations, had still been eastern Manchuria. We had expanded our party organizations in close relations with the party organizations of all counties in Jiandao, concentrating our efforts on consolidating the Party Committee of the KPRA, and trained hardcore elements, who would be needed to form party organizations in the homeland on an extensive scale in future.

It was at the Donggang meeting held in May 1936 that we deliberated the policy on the party's founding in all particulars and debated measures for its realization, guided by the spirit of the Nanhutou meeting. The meeting raised for debate the task of laying down, on a full scale, the organizational and ideological groundwork for founding a party in the homeland and consulted, as a measure to this end, the matter of organizing the Homeland Party Working Committee and expanding vanguard party organizations, comprising the hard core of the revolutionary struggle. The meeting emphasized on the whole that the building of party organizations should not be confined to the guerrilla army or be conducted only in the areas of

northeast China, and that the organizational and ideological foundation for founding a party should be laid down even in the depths of the homeland. Noting that up until then basic party organizations had only been formed in some border areas along River Tuman, the meeting also stressed that from now on party organizations should be built in wide areas of the homeland and that in order to provide unified guidance to preparations in the homeland for founding a party, the Homeland Party Working Committee should be established.

In order to intensify party guidance over the anti-Japanese national united front movement, which was expected to develop throughout the country, a Homeland Party Working Committee urgently needed to be established.

To make sure that this committee, entrusted with such an important mission, met with reality, we had to ensure an open-minded exchange of opinions with communists active in the homeland, who were familiar with the situation of Korea.

Pak Tal's visit to our secret camp offered us a good chance to exchange our opinions on this issue. The building of party organizations constituted one of the main topics of our conversation.

After deliberations on the matter of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland, I held a serious discussion with Pak Tal for several hours on the formation of party organizations in the homeland.

When I expressed my intention to set up organizations of the ARF and also communist party organizations in the homeland, Pak Tal asked me with great surprise what kind of communist party organizations I had in mind. I took his question as a matter of course. It appeared to have sounded rather strange to Pak Tal, when I had told him of my intention to build communist party organizations in the country, where no communist party existed, where all attempts to rebuild a party had come to naught and the pathetic efforts and passion of the fighters consumed to that end had remained only as sad memories behind bars, and where the freedom of association had been banned by law long ago.

When I replied that I meant organizations of our communist party, the communist party of Korea, he asked once more.

“What is the opinion of the Comintern about your intention to form communist party organizations in Korea? I mean, has the Comintern approved this move?”

“It is our own business. Why do we need the Comintern’s approval in this matter? We do not need to obtain the approval of the Comintern, with regards to the formation of our party organizations in the homeland, do we?”

Pak Tal tilted his head dubiously.

“The communist party of each country, as a branch of the Comintern, is duty bound to be guided and regulated by it; consequently, how can we dare form our party organizations without the Comintern’s approval? Do you think that the Comintern will permit our own way of handling this matter?”

Pak Tal was certainly impeded by a dogmatic way of thinking.

“Revolution is naturally an undertaking, to be done of one’s own free will, not at anyone’s dictate or someone else’s approval. Tell me, Comrade Pak Tal, did you start the revolution at the request of somebody else? And did you form the organization in the name of Kapsan Working Committee, with someone’s approval?”

“No.”

“Did Marx ask for anyone’s approval when he organized the League of Communists? What about Lenin when he organized the Bolshevik Party?”

Dumbfounded, Pak Tal made no reply.

“Marx and Lenin founded parties without anyone’s approval; it does not stand to reason that we cannot do so. The Comintern already set a task for the Korean communists to rebuild their party in its theses, adopted in December 1928. We are going to form our party organizations in the homeland as stated in the theses; who will dare dispute this fact? The Comintern cannot criticize it, either. In this matter, approval or ratification is out of the question. The matter is related to the sovereignty of the Korean communists. We can deal with

our own affairs among ourselves; there is no need to ask outsiders how we should handle our own affairs, is there? Surely we are the masters of the Korean revolution?”

Only then did Pak Tal agree that his thought had been quite superficial, and expressed his full support for our stand and suggestion.

“I’ve been the victim of really foolish notions. I haven’t thought that we ourselves are the masters of the Korean revolution and considered that the Comintern decides on the revolution in each country. By the way, General, if party organizations are formed in the homeland, who will they belong to? Where should they expect guidance from?”

“The party organizations in the homeland will be affiliated to and guided by the Party Committee of the KPRA. Under the present peculiar situation, where there is no communist party in Korea, the Party Committee plays the role of General Staff, assuming leadership over the whole Korean revolution. Its activities are firmly protected by armed force. The barbarous rule of the Japanese imperialists, via their gendarmerie and police, has removed all possibilities to rebuild the party in Korea. Most fighters, who had been on the run for rebuilding the party, have been incarcerated now. Only the Party Committee of the KPRA, secured by force of arms, is staying clear of the enemy’s claw. This is the reason, why it acts as leader over the Korean revolution as a whole.

“The role of the Party Committee of the KPRA as General Staff of the Korean revolution is the natural outcome of the development of the communist movement in our country. History required us to take up this mission. The Homeland Party Working Committee to be organized in future will be protected by arms by the KPRA.”

“I have nothing more to ask now.”

Pak Tal beamed with a smile.

We immediately turned to discuss practical matters, related to the formation of the Homeland Party Working Committee.

This discussion also began with questions from Pak Tal. He seemed to put questions first, before thrusting himself into an argument.

“The homeland is now abuzz with controversy about the matter as to which of the two should be organized first, a party or mass organizations. The Hamhung group insists that the construction of a party should be given priority, while the Tanchon group and Hongwon group stick to the opinion that mass organizations should be formed first and that a party can be founded next only through practical struggle.”

“What do you think, Comrade Pak Tal?”

“Unfortunately I don’t have my own opinion. By common knowledge, a party seems to be the first to be founded. But I am not sure.”

Pak Tal was thinking that the source of this controversy was the December Theses of the Comintern. The original title of the theses was *Theses on the Tasks of the Korean Peasants and Workers*. In this document, the Comintern urged the Korean communists to engage in positive work among worker and peasant organizations, make every effort to acquire fighters within the new and old national liberation organizations, including Singan Association, concentrate every concern on making much account of the ideological unity of the party and try every possible way to rebuild the Korean Communist Party at the earliest date, strengthen and develop it. Some communists, however, were confused, as they thought of the theses as suggesting simultaneously the construction of a party and mass organizations.

“In my opinion,” I said, “this question cannot stir up a controversy. Priority should be decided by specific conditions and situation. The December Theses matter little to this question. It will be all right to form either a party organization or a mass organization first, depending on regional conditions. Even if only three people are qualified for party membership, they can organize a communist party circle. But if no one is eligible for party membership, a mass organization may be formed first, where communists can be trained to form a party organization later. As a matter of course, since both party and mass organizations are related to each other, you must not artificially separate one from the other. You must not forget, however, that no matter which one is given

priority, the communists must direct all their energies to training the reserve force of the party among the masses. As long as there are vanguard fighters, who are qualified for party membership, a party organization can be formed at any time.”

Pak Tal asked me what would be the function of the Homeland Party Working Committee I planned to organize.

I explained to him in detail:

The Homeland Party Working Committee is a regional leadership organ, which will offer unified guidance over the revolutionary struggle in the homeland and deal with the formation of party organizations there. As there is no General Staff, performing the function of giving unified leadership to the movement in the homeland, it has not yet overcome two major vulnerable points—dispersed character and spontaneity. To rally the patriots and communists, active in dispersion in the homeland, into a single force, and help them establish direct relations among themselves, there should be a leadership organ capable of this work. Such an organ is provided by the Homeland Party Working Committee. When this committee is formed, we plan to include you, Comrade Pak Tal. You will represent this committee in the homeland. I want to meet face to face all of the fighters, scattered over all parts of the homeland, but time does not allow. I want you, Comrade Pak Tal, to meet on your return home the campaigners active in North and South Hamgyong provinces and other regions first and step up preparations for rallying them into homeland party organizations.

On hearing such words, Pak Tal betrayed a serious expression on his face.

“I hardly deserve such trust. I am afraid I am not equal to it. I am still poor in many respects.”

Pak Tal’s frank confession consolidated my trust in him.

At that time we convened a meeting of the KPRA Party Committee, where we organized the Homeland Party Working Committee; I was chairman, and Kim Phyong and Pak Tal were members. Pak Tal was appointed field executor of this committee, entrusted with the task of

forming party organizations in various areas of the homeland including Kapsan.

He supported our methodology for forming basic party organizations first in the homeland before organizing a party central organ later on their basis and declaring the founding of the party.

After the meeting Pak Tal requested that I tell him of all the points, which I wanted to mention with regard to the work method of campaigners in the homeland, which he could refer to in his work.

I expressed my opinion that first and foremost the exile's method of work should be eliminated.

“Comrades, working in the homeland, are now acting in an exile's way. This method is utterly destructive. They are hiding in mountains during the daytime and stealthily moving to meet people in the dark. Consequently, the members of organizations are loath to meet them, owing to their fear of the enemy's surveillance. You cannot expand organizations in an exile's way.

“In future people engaged in underground activities in the enemy's area, should gain the maximum possibility of legal action, while working on production sites. They must get rid of the working method of exiles immediately.”

Pak Tal heard me out and blushed.

“To tell you the truth, I also worked in that way. We only thought of frontal confrontation, unaware that a roundabout method should also be applied.”

We chatted for some time, foregoing our formal talk. I asked him to tell me why someone like himself, who was disgusted at the old customs, was having his hair tonsured at a time, when it was trendy for everyone to look stylish and civilized, wearing kid shoes, dressing one's hair in foreign style and holding a cane in hand.

He replied that he had once been engaged in a labour union movement. Whenever he had been brought to a police station, the policemen there used to seize him by the hair and hit his head against the wall. He had been so annoyed that he had had his hair “cut to its root.” I felt this “haircut” an expression of his wit. He said that he

would change his tonsured head into modern style or get a crew cut, if I asked him.

“There is no need. You did it for your own needs. Consequently, I don’t think you should have to return to the original state just now.”

“If you, General, do not object, I will keep it as it is. How can I be sure that I will not be called by the police station again?”

In fact, he subsequently experienced many ordeals at police stations and prisons.

I asked him if he was ready to sit a police exam, if it was beneficial to the revolution. He looked at me in perplexity, his eyes wide open.

“You don’t plan to make me a policeman, do you?”

“If the revolution so requires, you should become a policeman. But I don’t intend to make you, Comrade Pak Tal, a policeman. I don’t mind if you wear a police cap or not. It is important that you improve your reputation among those in the police sub-station by doing such a job.”

Pak Tal beamed with satisfaction.

“I have been on somewhat friendly terms with policemen, but I never thought of sitting a police exam. On my return home, I will try.”

True to his words, Pak Tal took the exam next spring. Before taking the exam, he first called on the chief of the police sub-station and made a ridiculous remark.

“Sir, I want to become a career policeman. What do you think? Am I cut out for it?”

Unable to control his excitement at hearing this, the chief stood up abruptly.

“Are you serious?”

“Oh, yes! I am so eager to become a policeman that I’ve called on you, haven’t I?”

“Yes, indeed. If you work well, you can even become chief of this sub-station.”

“How dare I take your post? That would be impudent?”

“No. If Pak Tal wants to be reformed into a faithful Japanese subject, I am ready to offer my chiefship to you for the sake of the

Empire of Japan, although I may not be able to hold it any longer. I highly appreciate your ambition. Please take the police exam.”

Pak Tal openly took the exam, letting people know that he would become a policeman, but wrote poor answers to the exam. Consequently, he took the exam, but failed. He played skilfully as we had asked him to. Even the Japanese, in an account of his personal record, added to a secret document another clause, “Voluntary application for police exam at Kapsan police sub-station, South Hamgyong Province, in March of Showa 12 (1937), and failed.”

Thanks to the police exam, Pak Tal gained the confidence of the Japanese. A policeman Kim working at that sub-station went so far as to vouch for Pak Tal on several occasions, saying that he had even sat for a police exam. In this way, thanks to the backing of the policemen, Pak Tal did all he wanted, pretending to be loyal to them.

The formation of the Homeland Party Working Committee was extraordinarily significant, in maintaining our independent policy for party founding and pushing ahead with the building of party organizations in the homeland.

It did not mark a mere continuation or repetition of the movement to rebuild the party, which had been conducted in several ways after the dissolution of the Korean Communist Party. The formation of party organizations, promoted in the homeland under the guidance of the Homeland Party Working Committee, was an out-and-out independent movement and struggle to rebuild the party and form party organizations, which essentially differed from the party-rebuilding movement directly sponsored by the Comintern and the movement to rebuild the party, which the Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern) attempted to achieve through the Red labour union movement.

In the 1930s, the Comintern had begun to show its attention to some extent to the national liberation struggle in Korea, particularly the party-rebuilding movement. This was because Japanese militarism was gaining ground in the Far East with the passage of time, a force no less dangerous than fascism in Europe.

Within the Comintern Kuusinen and some other people advanced their self-opinionated ideas on the problem of reconstructing the communist party in Korea. Typically, they proposed the organization of a national revolutionary party of Korea, which was discussed following the Comintern's Seventh Congress. As far as I remember, the Comintern's intention with regard to the organization in Korea of the national revolutionary party, aimed at anti-Japanese struggle, was pointed out in detail in Yang Song's article on the anti-imperialist united front in Manchuria, which he had contributed to *Communist International*.

He wrote in his article that the standing phase of Jiandao required the Chinese Communist Party to admit more Chinese and Korean revolutionary workers and peasants as members to expand its organizations and also establishment of the national revolutionary party of Korea, that this party's most important task should involve the struggle against Japan and for Korea's national independence and that this new party must be founded by none other than the communists. He went on to say that this party must be an anti-Japanese united front party in nature. It can be said that this claim represented the opinions of the Comintern and Chinese party officials who had been working in the Comintern.

However, we settled the problems of forming party organizations and a united front in Korea on our independent judgement and decision.

We dealt with both of them simultaneously, but did not mix them with each other, as a party could never represent a united front, and a united front organization was not precisely a party.

In those days, some independence campaigners tried to form a political organization similar to the Kuomintang in China, encompassing all political forces on both sides, right and left, under the name of the one and only party of the nation.

We organized the Homeland Party Working Committee and pushed ahead with the formation of party organizations. At the same time, we formed the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland as an

anti-Japanese national united front organization, and achieved in this way great unity for the whole nation.

Naturally, the Comintern attempted in various ways, even before then, to rebuild the party in Korea.

*Theses on the Tasks of the Movement of the Revolutionary Labour Unions in Korea* (the so-called “September Theses”) published in September 1930 by the executive bureau of the Red International of Labour Unions under the leadership of the Comintern, set the formation of revolutionary labour unions as a major prerequisite for the rebuilding of the communist party. Relying on the September Theses, the Korean communists had attempted to organize revolutionary labour unions (Red labour unions) and, used them as a mass base to promote the rebuilding of the communist party.

In October of the following year, the secretariat of the Pan-Pacific Labour Union, situated in Shanghai as a subordinate organization of the Red International of Labour Unions also advocated in its *Urgent Appeal to the Korean Supporters of the Secretariat of the Pan-Pacific Labour Union*, known as the “October Letter from the Pan-Pacific Labour Union,” the organization of revolutionary labour unions and the rebuilding of the communist party with them serving as its mass base.

These documents of organizations, affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions, along with the *Statement of Opinion on the Korean Communist Movement* of the executive committee of the Comintern, known as Kuusinen’s statement of opinion, published in May 1931, directly dealt, in content, with the rebuilding of the communist party in Korea.

In June 1934, the *Action Programme of the Korean Communist Party* was made public in Moscow in the name of the initiators’ group of the Korean Communist Party, which should also be viewed as a part of efforts to rebuild the communist party in Korea.

Despite Japanese imperialism’s continued atrocious colonial rule over the Korean people and its suppression of the revolutionary movement, which became extreme as time passed by, the communists

active in the homeland carried on the party rebuilding movement unremittingly in various forms. The communist party incident in North and South Hamgyong provinces, the formation of the Korean communists' union, the meeting to hear the report to the Comintern on the rebuilding of the Korean Communist Party, the preparatory committee for the rebuilding of the Korean Communist Party, and the like, which had taken place in various regions of the homeland during this period, represented some examples of the party rebuilding movement.

There was also a party rebuilding movement, which had taken place with China as its base.

The M-L group and Seoul-Shanghai group organized the preparatory committee for the rebuilding of the party, the central cadres' committee for party rebuilding, the party rebuilding union and the adjustment committee for party rebuilding, and conducted the party rebuilding movement with the Jilin area of China as the centre of their activities.

In Japan, too, such a movement took place with Tokyo serving as its base.

It could be claimed that the movements of the Red labour unions and Red peasant unions, which swept the whole country from the end of the 1920s to mid-1930s, constituted parts of the movement to rebuild the party. The main goal of the struggle by these unions, which had been lawful in their early stage and subsequently assumed the illegal form of an underground movement, concerned the rebuilding of the communist party.

The movement to rebuild the party, launched in the homeland and abroad, was mainly confined to the upper class, which had not been free of the old form of former movements, flunkeyistic tendencies and factional conceptions. Despite these limitations, we strove, drawing on the successes, which had been scored by former movements to rebuild the party, to build party organizations of a new type in the homeland. In other words, we made painstaking efforts to get in touch with the networks of the Red labour unions and Red peasant unions of the

bygone days and organize our party cells there.

Late in May 1937, we held at the Paektusan Base the second session of the Homeland Party Working Committee, where we adopted measures to enhance the HPWC's function and role and intensify its leadership to the work of building party organizations and the revolutionary movement in the homeland. The meeting reviewed the result of the building of party organizations, following the formation of the HPWC and debated in a serious atmosphere tasks and ways to build party organizations in the homeland.

At the meeting I stressed opposing the worship of great powers and dogmatism in the building of party organizations and in party life, and pointed out some ways to admit communists scattered in the homeland into party and other various revolutionary organizations and establish a proper party organizational leadership system to suit realities, where party organizations were increasing in number.

The deliberations and decisions of the meeting marked a clear milestone in stepping up the advance of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army into the interior of Korea and developing the creation of party organizations and the revolutionary struggle in the homeland.

We subsequently dispatched a political workers' group, entrusted with the mission of helping the work of party organizations in the homeland. In summer and autumn 1937, the political workers' group, consisting of Kim Phyon, a member of the HPWC, Kwon Yong Byok, Jong Il Gwon, Kim Ju Hyon, Ma Tong Hui, Kim Jong Suk, Paek Yong Chol, Ri Tong Hak, Choe Kyong Hwa, Kim Un Sin, Ri Chang Son, Ri Kyong Un and Ri Pyong Son, was dispatched to various areas of northern Korea; it conducted the work of building party organizations and work with the population there. This group was called the Pukson political workers' group. It directly helped build party organizations in the homeland, by making the areas of northern Korea revolutionary.

We assigned the members of this group districts for their political work. In those days we called such areas political districts. We divided

them into political districts No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4 and No. 5. Kim Phyoung had discussed the size of political districts with me and set it. Political districts ranged from the east to the west coast and their numbers were given accordingly.

The members of this group could conduct organizational and political work either directly in the area under their charge or indirectly, by dispatching excellent workers they had trained.

One detachment of this group, headed by Ri Tong Hak and guided by Ri Je Sun, went to Unhng Sub-county, Kapsan County, in early 1937, to create favourable conditions for laying the groundwork for building party organizations in the homeland; they scattered hundreds of declarations and appeals, inculcating anti-Japanese patriotic ideas and advocating Korea's independence in rural villages there and conducted information work among the population, before quickly returning to their unit.

The detachment headed by Ma Tong Hui, and another led by Ji Thae Hwan, both in charge of Samsu County area, also advanced into the homeland one after the other and conducted political work in a superb and prudent manner, stirring up public sentiment in the area north of Machon Range (Ryongbuk).

We dispatched a young orderly to Pak Tal for his convenience in work. His name was Son Jang Bok.

I instructed Son Jang Bok that he should, on entering the homeland, enrol in the family register at the Japanese government office and behave like a man born and bred in Korea.

Pak Tal took Son Jang Bok to the police sub-station and slyly told the police chief:

“Mr. Chief. Congratulate me, please.”

The police chief looked at both of them in turn, agape. The chief had been fairly kind to Pak Tal since the latter had sat the police exam.

“What makes you so happy?”

“Well, I've earned a younger brother for nothing.”

Pak Tal proudly pulled forward Son Jang Bok who stood back hesitantly, and talked uproariously in the sub-station.

“Until now I regretted that I had no younger brother. And my father gratified my desire.”

“Do you mean, then, that this boy is your sworn brother, your father has approved for you?”

“What do you mean by sworn brother? He is my half-brother my father begot out of wedlock, when he was living in Kilju. After his mother died, this boy wandered about as an orphan. Hearing of his half-brother living in Kapsan, he called on me here. So, I have decided to take care of this boy.”

“Oh! You mean your father earned such a son for nothing? Your father seems to have a knack of making profits.”

At the chief’s remark, the policemen burst into laughter. Feeling pleased, the police chief had all the procedures done smoothly without cavilling at anything.

Pak Tal had Son Jang Bok entered in the family register in the name of Pak Yong Dok. Ever since then Son Jang Bok started his underground activities.

Some days later, however, an unexpected incident happened, damaging the activities of the underground organizations in Kapsan. There was a burglary at a farmhouse in Taejung-ri, Unhung Sub-county, Kapsan County. The burglar got away with 20 *won*, pretending to be a man from the mountain, in an attempt to conceal his crime. In those days the guerrillas were called the “mountain people” and political workers from the guerrilla army were called “men from the mountain.” The burglary coincided with the moment, when Pak Tal had been to Taejung-ri to guide the work of a subordinate organization of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland. Owing to this coincidence, Pak Tal was taken into custody by the police on the suspicion of being the “man from the mountain.” At that time, the police, aware as they were that Ri Pyong Son from Kilju had been frequenting Pak Tal’s, attempted to arrest him as well, but failed because the suspect went missing.

Ri Pyong Son had been involved in the case of the Red peasant union in Kilju and had come to Kapsan the previous year, together with

Kim Yong Guk. After Kim Yong Guk had joined the guerrilla army, Ri Pyong Son worked at a lumber station in Pochon Sub-county, while guiding the organizations of the national liberation union in that area. On that day the Japanese police raided Pak Tal's house, mistaking Son Jang Bok for Ri Pyong Son. Once they had confirmed that Son was not Ri Pyong Son at this age, the police returned.

In those days we dispatched many political workers into Changbai and the homeland, but could not meet the demands for political workers with only the soldiers of the KPRA. To meet the demand for all political workers needed, we required one regiment of political workers. But the guerrilla army could not conduct only political activities, away from military actions. We selected members of the underground organizations in the area of Changbai, boasting rich experience in political work, and others who were prepared and experienced in work with the masses in the past, when they had been affiliated to revolutionary organizations in eastern Manchuria, and sent them to the homeland. At the same time, a number of political workers from the organizations of the ARF in Changbai County, too, were dispatched by Ri Je Sun to the homeland.

The work of dispatching political workers was mainly dealt with by Kim Phyong, a member of the HPWC.

Kim Phyong was then political commissar of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment. A talented political worker and military officer in charge at the Headquarters of the KPRA of the activities behind enemy lines, he had rich experience in underground activities. In both the first and second half of the 1930s, he helped me a lot in my work. Kim Phyong was a political-military officer I loved and trusted most during the anti-Japanese revolution.

As a matter of fact, he was later arrested by the enemy due to a turncoat's betrayal, went through trials and left some blots in his political life; but he remained faithful to me. As he was fully involved in the affairs of the Headquarters and the Party Committee of the KPRA and was in direct charge of these affairs, when we were strengthening our ties with the revolutionaries in the homeland,

extending the armed struggle into the homeland and accelerating preparations for popular resistance, he knew more than anybody else what had happened then. In addition to military affairs, the facts related to secret political activities included quite a few details, which had been open only to him. His recollections of all the details, events and chronology were mostly exact. I think his records rendered a great contribution to enriching the revolutionary history of our Party. It would have been better for Kim Phyong, if he had fought to the last in the guerrilla unit and greeted the day of national liberation. I still remember Kim Phyong, who helped my work as faithfully as he could at the time of our struggle on Mt. Paektu.

The political workers, dispatched to the homeland, engaged in labour unions, peasant unions and other existing organizations, as well as individual communist circles, making tireless efforts to promote the building of party organizations and expand the network of ARF organizations.

Thanks to their remarkable activities, the “wind of Mt. Paektu” seized the people in the homeland inexorably: their influence ensured that they had a correct understanding of the KPRA. Many people came to Mt. Paektu to join the KPRA.

As another measure for building party organizations in the homeland, we organized a homeland party team, comprising hardcore elements trained in the KNLU. Historians call this team, headed by Pak Tal, a “troika.” It aimed to act as the basic party organization and, at the same time, as parent body for building party organizations in the homeland.

What I found peculiar about Pak Tal’s methods of work to expand party organizations and increase the ranks of party members was his formation of nameless party organizations. These organizations lacked any official title, but in actual fact they were organizations of party members, who were working in a secret way. Such organizations were also formed inside the ARF.

Building nameless underground revolutionary organizations is a peculiar way of building organizations, when the enemy’s

suppression reaches its extremes.

According to this method, no title was given to an organization and no meetings of members were held; instead members were seen individually to be educated, learn the ways of struggle and be assigned duties, so that even if one of them was arrested, the others could be free of harm.

After leaving us and returning to Kapsan, Pak Tal devoted his whole heart and soul to the work of building party organizations in the homeland. Guided by our policy, he turned the areas of Kapsan and Samsu into a seedbed for building party organizations in the homeland, and used it as a stepping-stone to gradually extend his activities to other counties and provinces.

We chose this region as the most suitable seedbed for building party organizations in the homeland, because we had taken into account the special socio-economic conditions of the region.

Samsu and Kapsan had been known before anything else as regions for exiles. The Korean proverb “Although I may be sent to Samsu and Kapsan” was derived from the fact that this region had been notorious for exiles. The descendants of noblemen, who had been ruined and exiled to this region, owing to the persecution of the feudal governments during the Ri dynasty, turned to be either slash-and-burn farmers or mine workers, living on the last rungs of the social ladder. The vagrants, who had thronged into the Kaema Plateau, in search of a living after the “annexation of Korea by Japan,” also settled in this region, all doing difficult slash-and-burn farming, chopping off stumps with pickaxes and setting fields on fire. The composition of the population in this region can be analyzed to have been based on good backgrounds, in the light of class origin.

The mysterious nature of the highlands convenient for guerrilla activities had been transformed, from the 1910s, into the battlefields for Righteous Volunteers and Independence Army soldiers, fighting with matchlocks in hand with the ideal of defending the country with their lives, into the safest of shelters in Korea, embracing the social movement campaigners. The social movement campaigners, who had

been deprived of their right to legal activities, had gathered here from nearly all parts of northern Korea to take refuge. Men of great ambition had flocked to this region from the interior of the homeland and also from faraway regions, such as north and west Jiandao and Siberia.

According to Pak Tal, in the mid-1920s, four anti-Japanese movement campaigners, who had been guiding the student strike at the Pyongyang Sungsil Middle School, moved to Samsu and Kapsan and organized a circle studying socialism, comprising slash-and-burn farmers, thereby launching the socialist movement in the area.

Later, all those who had been engaged in the movements of labour unions and peasant unions in various regions along the east coast before taking refuge there, joined their hands with the four campaigners in organizing a youth union, peasant union and vanguard union.

For these reasons alone, Samsu and Kapsan were fully equipped with the requisite conditions to serve as the seedbed for building party organizations in the homeland.

The Kapsan Working Committee was initially formed as an organization without any particular name. Starting its work from May 1934, the organization admitted Ri Kyong Bong first, and then Kim Chol Ok, Sim Chang Sik and others and fought against the coercive cultivation of flax, superstition and early marriage. About two years later, when the members discovered each other's identity, they named their organization Kapsan Working Committee.

On the basis of such experiences we gained in building party organizations in the homeland, I later formalized this method in my article on how to manage the work of party branch organizations, and in the first half of the 1940s instructed comrades, who were to be dispatched to the homeland, to conduct their work by applying this method.

After liberation, one member of such an organization recollected as follows:

“I joined a certain organization, but I didn't know its name and the contents of its work, because they were kept secret from me.”

A revolutionary, hailing from Kapsan, said that Pak Tal had given him a secret book, telling him to read it with precaution; therefore he had read it and had only run errands for Pak Tal. However, for this very reason, the Japanese judicial organ sentenced him to a heavy penalty and imprisoned him until the day of national liberation. These people were probably members of organizations lacking any particular name.

After turning Samsu and Kapsan into the seedbed for the formation of party organizations in the homeland, Pak Tal selected hardcore elements trained in these organizations and began to dispatch them to adjoining counties and provinces. Pak Tal had authorized them to lay down the foundations for forming party organizations in the areas of their activities.

True to our policy, Pak Tal organized the work thoroughly, so that the delegates took appropriate jobs. When the delegates received certain jobs in designated working places, their identity in the society could be legalized and they could carry out their assignments with credit. In this way they could get rid of the work method of exiles and establish a strong foothold among the masses.

Pak Tal sent five or six operatives to Musan County alone.

Chae Ung Ho, chairman of the Anti-Japanese Association of Sondok-dong, Pochon Sub-county, a subordinate organization of the KNLU, was dispatched to Musan County; keeping in close touch with the political workers, he conducted the fund-raising activities to acquire supplies for the guerrilla army and the work of rallying the masses around organizations, and also stepped up the preparations for organizing a paramilitary corps. Even after the "Hyesan incident," he took refuge in the areas of Yanji and Helong and went in and out of Musan area, perseveringly rallying the forestry workers into revolutionary organizations.

Pak Tal sent Ri Ryong Sul, the chief of the youth department of the KNLU, and Ri Pyong Son to the southern counties of North Hamgyong Province. Through them our policy on the revolutionary movement and the building of party organizations in the homeland was transmitted to Ho Song Jin, one of the leaders of the Red peasant union

movement in Songjin. I was told that Ho Song Jin, who had vowed to fight to the last to uphold our lines, had been as far as Kapsan to meet us but returned in vain. At that time we were in the areas of Linjiang and Mengjiang in a bid to remove the aftermath of the “expedition to Rehe.”

While promoting the building of party organizations and extending the organizational network of the ARF, Pak Tal also went to making great efforts to strengthen the military force of our revolution.

We instructed Pak Tal, through Ri Pyong Son, who had called on our secret camp, to organize a paramilitary corps with the members of homeland party organizations and hardcore young members of the ARF.

Pak Tal used the Self-Defence Corps as the first step in preparations for organizing the paramilitary corps. In those days the Japanese imperialists were expanding the Self-Defence Corps on a large scale under the pretext of “defending the home village.” They even supplied them with weapons and trained the corps men. Pak Tal believed that the paramilitary corps men, if all of them were admitted to the Self-Defence Corps, could master weapons and win the favour of the enemy and turn their guns on the Japs, by rising up all together at the time of contingency. Consequently, Pak Tal, exploiting his position as deputy chief of the Kolchigi Self-Defence Corps, admitted to the corps almost all the paramilitary corps men, whose age coincided with the admission age set by the enemy and helped them occupy key positions there.

He also made painstaking efforts to implement our policy on the formation of the Anti-Japanese People’s Guerrilla Army of Northern Korea (AJPGANK).

Proceeding from the need to rapidly extend and develop the armed struggle in the area of northern Korea, we proposed the organization of the AJPGANK with members of the homeland party organizations as its core. The wide plateau, north of Machon Range, spreading from Musan and Kapsan to Pujon Range, was an ideal region suitable for guerrilla warfare.

In those days I instructed the comrades active in the homeland as follows: You must organize the AJPGANK; I will select, with special care, excellent guerrilla army soldiers, who can be the leading force of your unit and send them to you; using them as your core, you should expand your unit and train the soldiers.

I appointed Choe Il Hyon of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment as commander of the AJPGANK and Pak Tal, as its political commissar.

If the unexpected event had not occurred, where Pak Tal and most of the other leading cadres of the KNLU were arrested and imprisoned, the formation of the AJPGANK would have been completed smoothly as planned.

The members of the homeland party organizations gave every assistance to the detached corps, headed by Kim Ju Hyon in its activities, when it was dispatched to the homeland.

Despite the threatening atmosphere, where the Japanese hangmen were making wholesale arrests of members of homeland party organizations and of the KNLU, Pak Tal did not abandon the struggle. He made every possible effort to maintain underground the basic party organizations and organizational network of the ARF, which had already been formed.

Kim Phyoung informed me in detail of the trials suffered by members of the homeland party organizations and of the KNLU owing to the “Hyesan incident.”

No sooner had I got the information than I sent Ma Tong Hui and Jang Jung Ryol to the homeland. This rescue measure, however, came a cropper, as both Ma Tong Hui and Jang Jung Ryol, who had been wandering here and there to look for Pak Tal, were caught by the enemy.

Next time I dispatched Kim Jong Suk, imbued with rich experience in the activities inside the homeland, to Taejinphyong. Pak Tal who had been working in Tanchon, Pukchong, Hongwon, Sinpho and other regions on the east coast to expand organizations, returned to Taejinphyong and was reviving the organizations there, which had been in a fix. Kim Jong Suk had encountered many difficulties and

hardships before meeting Pak Tal, and reported to me the results of the meeting.

On receiving the report, I sent a liaison team, headed by Paek Yong Chol, to the Kapsan area. Paek Yong Chol had been engaged many times in activities in the homeland, while fighting in the guerrilla army. He had built a secret camp in Yuledong area and had been working in various regions to obtain provisions. However, later on he had been recalled to the unit, after the arrest of Ma Tong Hui and Jang Jung Ryol.

Ever since the first day when Paek Yong Chol's team entered the homeland, it was chased by the police. Indescribable hardships accompanied the team, before it contacted the party of Pak Tal, Kim Chol Ok and Ri Ryong Sul. I gave Pak Tal and his men, who had followed the liaison team to Mt. Paektu, the task of reviving the revolutionary organizations, which had been destroyed and ensuring a fresh upswing in the revolution in the homeland, and sent them back to Kapsan. On return to the homeland with Pak Tal and his men, Paek Yong Chol worked in Soksin region; during his work he was confronted by the Japanese police. Shot in his belly, he held his slipping bowels to keep on fighting the enemy until he was caught. The Japanese police made him sit on his knees inside a hollow and forced passersby to throw stones at him to bury him alive, telling them that he was a "communist bandit." The struggle to rescue Pak Tal and the homeland party organizations entailed a lot of effort and sacrifice.

To arrest Pak Tal, the enemy set off informants and turncoats everywhere and combed every hill and mountain, causing a stir.

Pak Tal, as a member of the HPWC, contributed greatly to the building of party organizations and expansion of the anti-Japanese national united front movement in the homeland, thereby helping us a lot. He was virtually the kingpin in building party organizations in the homeland.

Kim Phyong, Kwon Yong Byok, Kim Jong Suk and other political workers also played a large role in stepping up the building of party organizations in the homeland. They formed party organizations and

firmly rallied the communists in various areas of northern Korea, such as Sinpha, Phungsan, Rangnim, Pujon, Hungnam, Sinhung, Riwon, Tanchon and Hochon, and Changbai, surmounting manifold difficulties and trials.

Thanks to energetic activities of the vanguard fighters of our party, party organizations grew rapidly in wide areas of the homeland. Revolutionary organizations were formed one after another in many coal and ore mines, factories, rural areas, fishermen's settlements and towns in South and North Hamgyong provinces such as Kapsan, Sinpha and Phungsan, in western Korea such as Pyongyang and Pyoksong, and in Yangdok area. In quiet areas, which had been astir with the movements of Red labour unions and peasant unions, they launched again the movements of revolutionary labour unions and peasant unions. The reorganization and reform of former labour unions and peasant unions coincided immediately with the formation of party organizations. The network of party organizations and the ARF stretched over even to the area of central Korea, including Seoul and to the boundaries of Kyongsang and Jolla provinces, far beyond the area of northern Korea, and expanded as far as Jeju Island and Japan, across the Korea Straits.

The creation of party organizations in the homeland was promoted via close links with similar projects in the areas of Changbai and Linjiang. Party organizations even gained root in the Korean settlements in Changbai, Fusong and Linjiang. They were also expanded in the areas of eastern and southern Manchuria. During the building of party organizations, which gained momentum throughout the whole country and on a nationwide scale, the communists, who had been active in dispersion, were rallied organizationally and the party leadership further intensified over the Korean revolution as a whole.

A strict party organizational system was established throughout the country, whereby all party organizations worked under the unified guidance of the Party Committee of the KPRA. Following the establishment of a well-organized party organizational leadership system, ranging from the Party Committee of the KPRA, the highest

leadership organ, to the cell, the basic organization, an epochal change was effected in laying down the organizational and ideological foundations of a party.

This marked another great achievement in the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle, and a political victory of no less significance than the victory we had won in military operations launched on the Amnok and Tuman, after basing ourselves on Mt. Paektu. Our bloody struggle to build party organizations became a powerful impetus, hastening the day of national liberation and also provided solid foundations, for accomplishing the founding of an independent party.

The Korean communist movement, slighted and scorned, owing to factional strife and lack of theory and practical ability, began to blaze its trail dynamically amidst the flames of the anti-Japanese armed struggle.

### **3. Fighting at the Foot of Mt. Paektu**

Our advance to Mt. Paektu transformed the eastern frontier region (Dongbiandao), particularly the northern part of the region where Changbai was situated, into the most “unruly zone,” causing a great headache for both the Kwantung Army and the puppet Manchukuo public security authorities.

The Japanese and the puppet Manchukuo army and police focussed all their efforts on the eastern frontier region. Newspapers constantly reported on the boisterous developments in Changbai. The area around the foot of Mt. Paektu, previously regarded as a peaceful zone, was thrown into utter confusion.

Since the early days of their occupation of Manchuria, the Japanese aggressors had accorded considerable attention to public security in this area, in order to turn Manchuria and Korea into a strategic base for their domination of Asia.

The eastern frontier region constituted an administration area, emerging after the division by the Beiyang government of northeast China into the three provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang, including ten regions. It is a vast area covering some parts of today’s Jilin and Liaoning provinces. Bordering Korea with the Amnok River in between, it was one of the major areas to attract the special attention of the political and business circles, as well as that of Japan’s military and puppet Manchukuo in the light of the ideal of the “integration of Korea and Manchuria” and economically owing to its inexhaustible mineral and forest resources.

However, the enemy was inevitably alarmed, as we had taken complete control of the northern part of this area and continued military and political activities along the Amnok River.

Surprised, the Kwantung Army drew up a “general programme for

ensuring public peace in Manchukuo,” on the pretext of taking measures to instigate a lasting public peace in the Manchurian area, including the eastern frontier region. On this basis, the puppet Manchukuo government put forward the “outline of a three-year plan for ensuring public peace,” which defined the northern part of the eastern frontier region (Changbai, Linjiang, Fusong, Donggang, Huinan, Jinchuan, Liuhe, Tonghua and Jian counties) as the most important place for special operations. It set up an “eastern frontier region rehabilitation committee” as a central organ, an “administrative office for the rehabilitation of the eastern frontier region” and a “special association for the maintenance of public peace in the eastern frontier region” in Tonghua. It also established “Tonghua punitive command” headed by Sasaki, the highest advisor to the military authorities of Manchukuo and launched “large-scale winter punitive operations” aimed at securing public peace in the northern part of the eastern frontier region.

Japan’s military nerves were most irritated by gunshots raised everyday in west Jiandao by the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army units, the network of secret camps set up in various places on Mt. Paektu under the cover of the army’s operations and the revolutionary base of a new type, centring on the underground liberation front.

Tokyo had already ordered Army General Minami, the Governor-General of Korea and the supreme ruler of the colonial Korea, and Army General Ueda, the commander of the Kwantung Army and de facto supreme ruler of Manchuria, to discuss emergency measures for annihilating the anti-Japanese armed forces and promoting public peace. As a result, a notorious meeting, called “Tumen conference,” was held in a secret room of the detached building of the Japanese consulate in Tumen, a small customs town on the border of Korea and Manchuria. We can see from this fact how Minami, former commander of the Kwantung Army and ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Manchukuo, racked his brains in panic, together with Ueda, to work out measures to “mop up” the Korean guerrillas soon after his appointment as the Governor-General of Korea.

The secret talks between Minami and Ueda were followed by a meeting between their seconds—Tojo, the provost marshal of the Kwantung Army, and Mitsubashi, police department head of the Government-General of Korea.

The talks adopted the so-called “three-point policy” aimed at stifling the anti-Japanese armed forces; intensifying security over the border area, launching large-scale joint “punitive” operations and establishing concentration villages in west Jiandao.

Detailed measures were discussed between Tojo and Mitsubashi for intensifying their joint action.

The essence of the “three-point policy” was the “large-scale winter punitive operations” in 1936; its main target was Mt. Paektu, where our Headquarters were situated. The “large-scale winter punitive operations” differed from former operations, in that they represented joint operations of the Japanese troops sent to Manchuria from Korea and the Kwantung Army in Manchuria. Their tactics involved new methods of combining encirclement by large forces with searches of the mountain valleys and ridges, as if combing them with a fine-tooth comb. They sought in this way to wipe out the anti-Japanese armed units within the winter of that year.

Acting on the basis of this sinister objective, the Government-General of Korea set the “maintenance of public peace and the tightening of the guard over the border” as its primary task, reinforced the border garrison, consolidated defence installations and ensured that considerable additional funds were supplied from the state budget of the Empire of Japan. Japanese army units stationing in Korea, special border garrisons and the police units on the frontier were ordered to the front en masse.

The Kwantung Army, too, prepared for the “punitive” operations with the utmost interest in the eastern frontier region.

Various “punitive” troops were committed en masse to the border area along the Amnok and Tuman rivers around Mt. Paektu: the police units in the southern part of Korea moved to the mountainous areas in the north; the Kwantung Army units in Qiqihaer also started moving

southwards to Mt. Paektu; the units under the 19<sup>th</sup> Division of the Japanese army in Korea also crossed the Amnok; the Japanese and Manchukuo police units and the puppet Manchukuo “punitive” troops thronged around us. The police sub-stations were increased in great numbers along the Amnok. Checkpoints were posted at various places and telephone lines were laid across the river. From this time onwards the enemy forced the wives of policemen to take shooting practice. The wheels of cannons and carts carrying military supplies rolled along the lanes in the backwoods of Mt. Paektu, which ox-carts, sleighs and horse-carts travelled on with difficulty, and disorderly footprints of warhorses were marked in various places in forests.

From the early winter of that year “punitive” troops spread all over the forest of Mt. Paektu. The enemy searched thoroughly the forests of Mt. Paektu, saying that “these ‘punitive’ operations constituted the final actions to establish public peace.” A fresh decisive campaign between the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army and the Japanese aggressor army was near at hand at the foot of Mt. Paektu.

The odds were against us. First of all the enemy was incomparably superior in strength. Worse still, its main force comprised crack troops supported by the air force. The enemy was mobilizing administrative, economic, police and all other efforts, while we had nothing to enlist in our support, apart from secret aid from the people.

In the light of military common sense and experience, an attack was inconceivable in such a situation. However, we put the enemy on the defensive by deploying a new strategy of our own, based on attacks far beyond the established practice and common sense. In November 1936 we convened a meeting of military and political cadres of the KPRA in the Heixiazigou Secret Camp to review the KPRA’s military and political activities after the Nanhutou meeting and discuss ways of frustrating the enemy’s “large-scale winter punitive operations” and consolidating the Paektusan Base.

Our basic strategy revolved around the following: To defeat the enemy’s numerical and technical superiority by means of our ideological and tactical superiority.

Exploiting the highly elevated ideological preparedness of the soldiers, we applied positive and active tactics of allurement and ambush, surprise attack, impregnable defence, cutting off the enemy's retreat to crush its forces piecemeal, and appropriately combining large unit and small unit operations. In this way we won every battle.

Confronted by our adroit military operations, the enemy suffered heavily from the very first stage of the "punitive" operations. In the early days, when units of the KPRA launched into areas on the Amnok River, the enemy estimated that we would be unable to pass the winter there, as the other Chinese anti-Manchukuo forces had failed to do so. But this was a pure miscalculation. The more they intensified "punitive" operations, the deeper we went into the forests without flinching, and the brisker the military and political activities we conducted around Mt. Paektu and the border area on the Amnok, by deploying elusive tactics. We thereby put the enemy on the defensive and consolidated the newly-built Paektusan Base.

The battles at the edge of Heixiazigou, Hongtoushan, Taoquanli and Limingshui are perfect examples of the numerous battles we fought that winter, when we gave the enemy a terrible blow.

At the entrance to Heixiazigou we fought a defensive battle forestalling the enemy's raid on our secret camp.

After tasting the bitterness of failure at the outset of its "large-scale winter punitive operations," the enemy stepped up military operations and also sent a large number of spies to track down our Headquarters.

When the enemy's "winter punitive operations" began, I could be found mostly in the Heixiazigou Secret Camp in command of the main force.

One day O Jung Hup, who had been on guard duty at an outpost with a few of his men, returned to the camp with suspicious characters in peasant clothing. We examined them and discovered that they were enemy spies. They had been approaching our secret camp, stealing their way through the woods, only to be captured by our men who had been watching their movements. Assuming an air of innocence, they had claimed they were coming to the revolutionary army, unable to

endure Japanese repression and had asked to see me. Their appearance was so suspicious that we conducted body searches, only to discover a sharp-edged, small axe in one of the men's trousers. The axe was a lethal weapon made by the enemy's secret service. The investigation revealed that one of them was a confirmed spy, who had served the enemy for some years under the guise of a peddler while the other was an innocent peasant who had acted as a guide under pressure. They had set out to ascertain our exact location and give a signal to the "punitive" forces, following in their wake, combing the forest. The spy confessed that the enemy had organized a combined "punitive" force of Japanese and Manchukuo troops, with one body approaching Heixiazigou from Erdaogang and the other advancing towards the guerrilla camp via the northwestern part of Majiazi, Shiliudagou, and that they planned to launch an attack immediately, when they were given a sound signal. He also said that their attack would receive air support from Hoeryong. His confession confirmed information collected by our reconnaissance party. However, the enemy had not yet completely encircled us. Ascertaining the location of Headquarters through its spy, the enemy planned to send the Japanese "punitive" force from the Ranam 19<sup>th</sup> Division and the puppet Manchukuo army "punitive" force from Erdaogang to Heixiazigou to surprise our Headquarters and main force and eradicate the "source of its anxiety."

The situation was very critical and not in our favour. As the enemy was closing in and simultaneously carrying out searches, we decided to strike the enemy at a vantage point near the camp, slip away and strike again on its way back, under cover of night at Sanpudong.

There was a deep valley in the south of Heixiazigou, with a bottleneck at the approach of the enemy's main force. Both sides of the valley were so steep that even wild animals skilled in climbing cliffs could not get a grip. It was an ideal trap to catch the enemy and destroy it.

I instructed the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> companies to lie in ambush on the heights in the northwest and northeast and arrange a decoy in the dead end of the valley. I placed several men there and ordered them to build fires

and make noises feigning the main force. Then, I dispatched a decoy party to harass the enemy in its position the whole night and then withdraw at daybreak leaving the traces of a large force.

As dusk fell, the decoy party infiltrated the enemy's position. It was biting cold that night. But I ordered the ambushes not to create a fire lest their presence revealed.

To lure the enemy into the position of our main force, the decoy party climbed towards the decoy position, leaving disorderly footprints along the valley, as if a large unit had passed. A few minutes later, smokes from several campfires coiled up from the decoy position and boisterous singing resounded. This was all a prearranged feint.

The attention of the enemy, which entered the valley in pursuit of the decoy party, was attracted to the noise and fires in the decoy position. The advance party was a mounted patrol. The patrol halted for some time and murmured over something looking at the decoy position, and then, one of them on a black horse raced out down the valley. Two other horses followed suit.

About half an hour later the mounted patrol entered the valley again followed by long infantry columns. Each column was led by a mounted officer, wearing a long glittering sabre on his waist. They were from the Ranam 19<sup>th</sup> Division. The officers of the Jingan army walked with the rank and file. Pack-horses carrying disassembled mortars on their backs brought up the rear of the last column. The enemy was approaching from another valley. They intended to form an encirclement. The enemy's strength was at least five times as great as our force of 100 men.

One key to victory in this battle concerned the need to gain time. We had to strike the first heavy blow before the enemy completed its encirclement and slip away to another position. We decided to deliver a preemptive attack, with the signal of the gunshot of executing the spy. With the signal shot, the enemy was instantly thrown into utter confusion. Most fell before the attack signal was given. Guns charged with shells were lying, scattered over the battlefield. The valley at the entrance to Heixiazigou turned into the enemy's graveyard.

After searching the battlefield we slipped away under the cover of darkness. The reconnaissance party informed Headquarters of the movement of the enemy's reinforcements which had been in pursuit, guided by the remnants. They were making preparations for camping at one place as dusk fell, just as we had anticipated. I ordered O Jung Hup to raid the enemy's camp at night. He organized a raiding party of one platoon. The night raid did not require many men.

As he approached by stealth the enemy's camp with the raiding party, he captured a sentry who was dozing under a tree and interrogated him briefly, as they might harm peasants who were carrying loads under the enemy's coercion, if they raided them hastily without full knowledge of enemy disposition in its camp. The prisoner had a loose tongue. He confessed that the Japanese troops occupied the centre of the camp and the puppet Manchukuo army soldiers were sleeping around them, with the peasants located at the outermost circle, as they had been regarded as shields. He added that only puppet Manchukuo army soldiers stood guard and that the Japanese soldiers from Korea were fast asleep, with their wet shoes drying beside campfires.

O Jung Hup divided his party into three-man groups and disguised them as patrolmen. They went deep into the middle of the camp passing the guards in safety, giving the countersign. Each group abruptly opened fire on the tents of the Japanese soldiers.

The enemy in the tents, awakened by the gunshots, ran helter-skelter; they had no time to put on their shoes. Many officers and men fell, screaming at the bullets they shot blindly. The camp resembled a stirred hornet nest. The raiding party slipped out of the battlefield, exploiting the confusion of the enemy. The enemy exchanged fire among themselves throughout the night, causing wholesale death. Nearly all those who narrowly escaped froze to death. They could not endure the bitter cold of Mt. Paektu, running off without shoes or fur coats.

The survivors cut the heads of the dead soldiers and took to flight, carrying them in sacks on horse-carts, as they could not carry hundreds

of corpses scattered over the camp site.

After the battle at Heixiazigou we fought successful battles in several places near Amnok. On November 20 we raided the town of Shisidaogou in Changbai County, a base of the enemy's "punitive" forces and destroyed a few days later the enemy stationed in the upper village in Taoquanli, Shisandaogou. Some small units conducted political and military activities around Shiwudaogou and Shijiudaogou.

The enemy was so frightened at the battle near Heixiazigou and subsequent battles that it did not venture to approach our camp on Mt. Paektu for two or three months. However, this did not mean that it had abandoned its efforts to effect "punitive" operations. It schemed to renew "punitive" operations by gaining time. We remained vigilant. The whole unit was put on the alert to prevent any infiltration by enemy spies. We also adopted new tactical measures to foil enemy moves. The situation at the foot of Mt. Paektu remained quiet for some time.

Around this time I called Ri Hun, district head of Shijiudaogou, to the camp and taught him the directions and methods of underground work; around this time I also had a talk with the people from Shiqidaogou, who brought supplies to the secret camp. Interviews with Pak Tal and Pak In Jin, the publication of the tentative regulations of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, rapid expansion of the ARF organizations—all these events are still associated in my memory with the winter of late 1936—early 1937 in the Mt. Paektu area.

I recall fondly An Tok Hun, a peasant in Shijiudaogou, Changbai County. I met him around the time when mythological legends about me were widespread in the area of Changbai County. Everyone believed that if Kim Il Sung touched a pinecone, it would turn into a bullet.

An Tok Hun, displaying an unusual curiosity about such strange stories, showered us with perplexing questions as soon as we entered his house. Fortunately, he talked only to Kim Phyoung who was sitting at the fireside as he had mistaken him for the unit commander.

Therefore I had no need to involve myself in their conversation. Their conversation was extremely amusing.

“Is it true that the General can anticipate future events, much farther than three days ahead?” This was the first question An Tok Hun asked Kim Phyoung.

“Yes, of course,” answered Kim Phyoung with a blank face. An Tok Hun nodded his head in satisfaction. Then he asked again, “The old men in the upper village say that he keeps his eyes open when he has something to do and shuts them when there is nothing to do. May I believe it?”

“Yes, you may. The General closes his eyes when there is nothing to do, but whenever he opens his eyes, a great event happens.”

“And is it true that he employs the art of compressing the distance?”

“Yes, it is. The General acts with supernatural swiftness and flies freely everywhere, appearing now in the east and then in the west.”

“Rumour has it that General Kim is Protean and outshines legendary Hong Kil Tong, and that is true.”

Each question was absurd and the answer was no less absurd, but as the host and guest were so serious about their exchange I merely listened to their question-and-answer session without even thinking of stopping them. To my surprise, Kim Phyoung, who was usually so candid and simple, did not feel ashamed or awkward about giving such absurd answers.

An Tok Hun asked him how many times he had met General Kim and whether the General was staying in the village at that time.

He again answered immediately that he saw him frequently and that the General was staying there at that very moment.

When the host left for a few minutes, I reproached Kim Phyoung mildly for speaking such nonsense.

Kim Phyoung said with a smile, “If the people believe in a legend, we must say that the legend is true. The people claim that there is a mysterious General sent from Heaven to our Korea, owing to their desire to see a General who will win back their country. If they believe that such a General exists, they will be confident that the deprived

country will be won back and will turn out more courageously in the holy anti-Japanese war.

“Our compatriots have begun to think that our nation has a General, well-versed in the Divine art, no matter how the Japanese swagger about now, that they should not be scared by the Japanese brigands, and that they can surely liberate Korea if they fight, following General Kim. This does not imply worship of you alone, Comrade Commander. This reflects absolute trust in and expectation from our Korean People’s Revolutionary Army. The people want this to be true, so why should we deny these facts and thereby discourage them?”

Hearing Kim Phyon, I made up my mind to live up to the people’s expectations and trust by conducting more audacious and adroit military operations.

True to his words, the people gained great strength from the legendary stories about us. Deriving their confidence from the words that there was a General in Korea who put the Japanese into tight corners, a large number of sturdy young people vied with one another to join the People’s Revolutionary Army. To be candid, we benefited greatly from those popular legends.

Later An Tok Hun also joined the People’s Revolutionary Army. He fought as bravely as any other soldiers, but fell in battle in Mengjiang. Ri Chi Ho never forgot the heart-rending experience of burying him with fallen leaves and snow.

In 1937 the enemy began to attack our secret camps again.

As the enemy’s attempts to stamp out the anti-Japanese armed forces, which were making frequent appearances in Manchuria and the northern frontier of Korea proved abortive, the Japanese Emperor, in compliance with the requests of the military, dispatched Shidei, his aide-de-camp, as special envoy to inspect for a month the border areas on the Amnok River, where their “peace maintenance” efforts had been ruffled by the brisk guerrilla activities of the revolutionary army and, also discuss with Minami, Governor-General of Korea, Ueda, commander of the Kwantung Army, and Koiso, commander of the Japanese army in Korea, the measures to intensify the “punitive”

offensive against the People's Revolutionary Army. By imperial order, the aide-de-camp flew from Tokyo to the region over the Amnok River. His trip led to an intensification of the enemy's "punitive" operations.

The enemy's surprise "punitive" operation against the Hongtoushan Secret Camp synchronized with Shidei's inspection of the frontier region. The supply personnel of the revolutionary army were busy preparing for celebrations of the New Year's Day of 1937 by the lunar calendar. Our main combat force was out in the Diyangxi and Heixiazigou secret camps, advance operational bases, and I was in the Hongtoushan Secret Camp with my guards. I left the camp two days before New Year's Day for serious reasons.

First of all I dropped in at the Duoguling Secret Camp, situated in a valley between Hongtoushan and Hengshan, to console Kim Jong Bu, and proceeded to the rearmost secret camp on Mt. Paektu, where my interview with Kim Jong Bu took place, the interview reported by the magazine *Samcholl'i*.

The Hengshan Secret Camp, which was also called the rearmost camp on Mt. Paektu, included a log-hut, where sick and weak Children's Corps members recuperated, a hospital with Ri Kye Sun, Pak Sun Il and other infirm and wounded people, under medical care, Pak Yong Sun's weapons repair shop, and Pak Su Hwan's sewing unit. Wei Zheng-min, who was suffering from a heart disease, was recuperating there. Around that time the personnel of the Secretariat, including "Tobacco Pipe," were also working in that most distant site.

After acquainting myself with the work and living conditions of the people in the secret camp and taking appropriate measures, I held a meeting of the Party Committee of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, involving some military and political cadres including Kim Phyong and Kwon Yong Byok.

The meeting reviewed the military and political activities of the KPRA's main force after the meeting of the military and political cadres at Heixiazigou and discussed the immediate tasks for defeating outright the enemy's "large winter punitive operations." The meeting

elaborated particularly on the matters of the combat units' tactical and strategic moves to the areas of Taoquanli, Limingshui and Fusong and the timing of operations to launch into the homeland. The matters were debated in greater detail at a meeting held in Xigang at a later date. The meeting went on to discuss the establishment of the organizational system under the Party Committee of the KPRA and organized the Changbai County Party Committee with Kwon Yong Byok as its chairman and Ri Je Sun as its vice-chairman, and the ARF's Changbai County Committee headed by Ri Je Sun.

The meeting was tremendously significant in thwarting the enemy's "large winter punitive operations," defending the Paektusan Base and the history of party building in our country.

The meeting was also attended by Wei Zheng-min. The lunar New Year's Day, celebrated on Hengshan, was very impressive. On that day Pak Yong Sun made noodle-press with cans and made starch noodles for the festival. The sewing unit made dumplings and the people in the hospital prepared hand-cut noodles. The people in Hengshan prepared a variety of rare dishes and treated us to a sumptuous feast.

Later Wei Zheng-min often recalled the New Year's Day of 1937, when he ate starch noodles with relish at Hengshan Secret Camp, and praised Pak Yong Sun's skill whenever he had the opportunity.

The lunar New Year's Day of 1937 reminds me of Qiao Bang-xin, a guardsman of Chinese nationality. On that day Qiao ate two bowls of noodles, on top of 15 dumplings. The five brothers of Qiao had joined the guerrillas on the same day in Diyangxi. He was the youngest. Therefore we always called him "Xiaowuzi" (the fifth). "Xiaowuzi" had once been wounded in his hand. At that time I had conducted a surgical operation on his hand with a razor. Although it may have been painful for him, as it was conducted without any special anesthetics, he endured it wonderfully. As the wound did not heal easily, he could not tighten his belt with his hands after paying a call of nature. Therefore I had had to help him each time. When his shoes got wet, I helped him take them off and dried them by the fire. Once I had been to Wudaoyangcha, Antu County, with guardsmen to attend a meeting and

we had been encircled by the enemy owing to a betrayer. At that time Qiao fought bravely; one of his brothers had been killed during the battle to our sorrow.

After enjoying New Year's Day at Hengshan, we returned to the Hongtoushan Secret Camp the next day. Not long after our return, gunshot was raised by our long-range observation post. The situation was very pressing and the odds were against us. Some of Ri Tu Su's company and a machine-gun unit on guard duty for me were all we had. The enemy numbered at least 500. Worse still, the sentries at the observation post detected the enemy, when they had almost climbed up the height where the post was situated, at a height where they could overpower us.

I ordered my men to occupy the southern ridge quickly. Then I ordered Ri Tu Su, company commander, to remove the sentries from the post to open the way for the enemy, ensuring that they withdraw along the knife ridge within sight of the enemy. The ridge was a narrow lane; slipping here meant falling down to the bottom of the valley and into the deep snow. If we lured the enemy along the lane, one of our men could defeat 100 or 1 000 enemy soldiers without difficulty. The southern ridge of Hongtoushan was a strategic stronghold; on the ridge we could attack the enemy, enjoying a full view of them closing in along the knife ridge, and annihilate them when they took to flight, by driving them into the valley under the ridge.

On my orders, the sentries lured the enemy along the knife ridge. The valley between the southern ridge and knife ridge became literally a "trap." Another factor contributed to our victory; Ri Tu Su had, on my orders, made the slope of the southern ridge icy. Owing to the layer of ice, not an enemy soldier could climb up the ridge occupied by us.

The battle of Hongtoushan went against a common military knowledge. Despite heavy odds, we virtually annihilated the enemy. On our side only Ri Tu Su was wounded by a bullet and sent to hospital in the rear.

After the battle I sent a night raid party to the enemy's camp and also took measures to slip off towards Fusong, as the enemy, although

it had withdrawn, would return with reinforcements at any time. It would not be advantageous to continue fighting there, as our force was too small. The best thing to be done in such a situation was to slip away. While discussing ways of pulling out, a bugle note of our guerrilla unit for a charge rang out down the valley, followed by loud rifle crackings. The unit led by O Jung Hup was attacking the enemy.

On hearing from the people that the enemy's "punitive" forces had moved towards Hongtoushan, he ran hurry-scurry to us, fearing for the safety of Headquarters. Along with the night raid party we had sent, he showered heavy fire upon the enemy's camp and annihilated to the last man the remnants of the enemy.

After wiping out the enemy, O Jung Hup sent Han Ik Su to me to ask whether he should lead his unit into Hongtoushan. I ordered him to move as planned, now that the enemy's raid had been completely frustrated. Even after receiving my orders, he confirmed the safety of Headquarters before returning to Heixiazigou. O Jung Hup was truly faithful to me.

A peasant in Erdaogang, who had carried goods for the Japanese troops at the time of the Hongtoushan battle and disposed of their dead bodies, said the following to a group of Korean visitors:

"In those days the Japanese soldiers drafted one man by force from each household. Most of us, who had been forced to do the dirty work, had frost-bitten toes and in the worst cases lost all their toes. When I was drafted for the first time, I was scared. Lying on the battlefield, I sweated all over. However, all the battles ended in the victory of the guerrillas. I was so glad that I forgot all my fatigue. When the enemy took flight, they told us to bring along those dirty corpses, a really disgusting job. At the time of Hongtoushan battle there were so many corpses that we could not carry them all on stretchers; so we unwrapped the puttees from the dead, tied their necks and dragged them."

One day I received a Japanese press delegation visiting our country, which included a tall newspaperman. During the interview he silently took notes. However, during a luncheon he unlocked his heart. He said:

“I thought you, President Kim, would be a ferocious man, as you had been known as the ‘tiger of Mt. Paektu,’ but today I realize that you are a benevolent man. To tell the truth, I was second lieutenant of the Japanese army, who narrowly escaped from destruction at the Hongtoushan battle. I survived your raid, because I was sent out to inspect the sentries at that time. My survival cost me a beating by the military police. I had a hard time of it. This incident induced me to abandon my military career and I subsequently became a journalist.”

The enemy involved in the Hongtoushan battle was a composite “punitive” force made up of Japanese and puppet Manchukuo troops. On the whole Japanese soldiers were killed; few Manchukuo troops died.

The Japanese officers beat and kicked the Manchukuo officers, saying, “How can you return alive when all the Imperial Army soldiers were killed in the battle? Have the guerrillas’ bullets been magnetized to trace only Japanese soldiers? There is no such bullet. Your survival is proof positive that you doubtlessly maintain secret relations with the guerrillas.”

What is the main reason behind our victory in the battle of Hongtoushan, fought against overwhelming numerical strength? It can be attributed to the strong mental power of our men.

The conviction of sure victory, an unbreakable fighting spirit, the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance and fortitude, devotion and self-sacrificing spirit—these qualities are now called in our country the “revolutionary spirit of Paektu.”

We emerged victorious in every battle with the enemy at all times and in all places, because we were full of confidence in victory, and maintained an indefatigable fighting and self-sacrificing spirit without losing our composure and hope, even in confrontation with an enemy force, which was dozens of times stronger in number.

Many examples prove our anti-Japanese guerrillas’ unflinching confidence in victory and their indomitable fighting spirit.

Ri Tu Su spent hard days with a few sick and wounded guerrillas, including Ri Kye Sun and Pak Sun Il, in a hospital located in a cave,

under the treatment of doctor Song. It was a hospital in name only; it had no proper medicines, syringes and scalpels. However, this ill-equipped hospital brimmed over with the “revolutionary spirit of Paektu.”

Pak Sun Il, head of the munitions section of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, fell seriously ill; gangrene set in his foot as he had not received treatment in time.

Immediately after the battle of Pochonbo I sent to those in hospital medicines, canned food, summer uniforms, shoes and other goods captured at the battle and provisions with a letter wishing them a speedy recovery, so that they could join us on the battlefield.

On receiving the letter, Pak Sun Il produced a saw he had made personally with an empty can and declared that he would amputate his gangrened foot with his own hands.

All his comrades, including doctor Song, dissuaded him, advising him to seek out another path.

Nevertheless, Pak Sun Il remained determined; he reproached his comrades for being passive in their sympathy for him. He said, “I’ve already decided to amputate my foot with my hands. I need only a little help from you to put my determination into effect. Please hold my foot. I want to recover as soon as possible and return to my revolutionary post.”

I heard that he amputated his gangrened foot on his own with a pliant tin saw, singing revolutionary songs for six whole days and falling unconscious only after the operation. Fortunately the wound healed up without causing further trouble.

In the early winter of that year they moved deeper into the mountain, built a grass hut and lived there. However, as bad luck would have it, the hut was detected by the enemy’s “punitive” forces.

Spotting the enemy before anybody else, Pak Sun Il grabbed an enemy soldier who was flying at him to capture him alive, and tumbled down a cliff with him with only one aim in mind: to save his comrades. He shouted, “The punitive forces!” Although he had preserved his life by amputating his foot for the revolution, he laid down his life without

hesitation for his comrades. Such people lived on Mt. Paektu and fought there.

Thanks to his cries, Ri Tu Su who had been away from the hut to collect firewood, could easily escape. However, Ri Kye Sun and a few others were captured. The rest were all killed.

Left alone on the mountain without his comrades, provisions and hut, Ri Tu Su suffered severely. He went hungry without seeing a grain of cereals for six whole days. Then he found two bowlfuls of beans Ri Kye Sun had saved grain by grain when preparing meals. After eating the beans, he subsisted on grass, which wild boars are said to graze. He had to live in the open like a primitive man with a piece of threadbare sack on his body in the bitter cold of Mt. Paektu, as his clothes had been worn out. How can I describe all his sufferings in those days? Crows flew in every day and perched on the tree branches around him, croaking noisily. At times they would fly low by turns and flap his face with their wings.

Ri Tu Su himself thought that he would be better off dead, as even the embers he had been keeping with so much care in the ashes had died out.

But, just when he had decided to give up his life, he was reminded of my wish to meet again on the battlefield after full recovery and the last moments of Pak Sun Il, who had tumbled down a cliff to save his comrades.

“I have no right to die. Death would be treachery to the comrades who saved me at the cost of their lives. The Commander ordered me to survive and come to the battlefield again. I have no right to disobey such an order.”

He made desperate efforts to survive. Living alone for three months and 20 days on the mountain, which was no better than an isolated island, without any food and clothes, he miraculously preserved his life. Like him, Pak Sun Il, Ri Kye Sun and all the other comrades-in-arms were undying men, who had cherished spirits as high as the peaks of Paektu, even when sacrificing their lives.

After the battle of Hongtoushan, we fought at Taoquanli and

Limingshui successively.

Soon after the battle of Hongtoushan I led the main force to the Xiagangqu area in Changbai County. As the enemy concentrated again large forces in the area surrounding Mt. Paektu and conducted an extensive search, it was necessary to attract their attention to another place, in order to unfold a fresh military operation. Our main unit's move to that area constituted a tactical move to crush the enemy's "winter punitive operations" once and for all, after dispersing their forces and throwing them into confusion. We had originally planned to meet the comrades from southern Manchuria after the lunar New Year's Day.

When the unit arrived at a village near Yaofangzi, I ordered it to billet there and sent out a scout party to Taoquanli. On their way to the village the scouts came across a member of the underground organization in Taoquanli who was coming to our small unit with information of the enemy's movements. He reported that a Jingan army unit, which had gone here and there to no avail all winter, tricked by our tactics of combining large and small units' activities, was roaming in search of our Headquarters to fight to the finish.

To reach Taoquanli or Choeryonggam valley from Yaofangzi, we had to pass through a long lane between birch trees, brambles, reeds taller than a man, and entanglements of purple eulalia. We went to the upper village in Taoquanli along that lane; at that time Choe Kum San, my orderly, stepped in the shrubbery and had his eye pricked by a thorn, raising a fuss.

If we drew the enemy in that 12-kilometre-long lane, they would have to march in one line and our main force could lie in ambush at important points behind fallen trees to vanquish them piecemeal without great difficulty.

Deciding to make the enemy dog-tired via enticement by a small unit, and annihilate them to the last man via the ambush of a large force, I called O Jung Hup to Headquarters. I instructed him to lure the enemy into the lane of the plateau and beat them piecemeal. When the enemy's marching column appeared, the decoy party opened surprise

fire at the head of column and then quickly ran away to the plateau, full of thornbush where our men were lying in ambush. The duped enemy chased them rashly.

The decoy party entered the lane tangled with thornbush. The thornbush resembled a barrier, just like a wire entanglement, to an enemy who had not been accustomed to mountain life. Owing to the thornbush, the enemy force was naturally cut into pieces. The men in ambush unleashed a shower of bullets here and there on the enemy's column. The enemy ran pell-mell up and down the valley and then fell bleeding on the snow. Hundreds of the enemy were smashed by our tactics of piecemeal annihilation. When dusk began to set, the enemy fled to Taoquanli, leaving a large number of those killed and wounded in the battlefield.

The underground organization in Taoquanli informed us that the enemy seemed to return to their base that night. Apparently they were making haste out of fear of a night raid.

More than two hours were needed for our unit to go from our assembly place to the road in front of Taoquanli. We needed to delay the time of the enemy's departure in order to gain time for our advance along the road. So I gave the underground organization the directive to delay the preparations of their supper.

The organization delayed the preparation of supper deliberately to enable our unit to climb down the plateau and occupy the ambush position. The enemy, in a fever of fretfulness, urged that supper be served quickly, but Jong Tong Chol, the village head and a member of the underground organization, dragged on the preparations of the meal by killing chickens and hulling rice as if giving a feast, saying that he could not slight the treat of the Jingan army soldiers, who had come all the way to his village. Consequently, the enemy left the village almost at midnight. By that time we had already prepared the ambush on both sides of the road and had been awaiting them for almost half an hour.

In this ambush we completely annihilated the Jingan army unit. The corpses of the enemy were spread over the plateau covered with purple eulalia. The guerrillas disarmed the corpses and evacuated quietly. I

was told that 24 oxen had been needed to carry those corpses to Shisandaogou, each sleigh carrying nine corpses. From that day the people felt delighted at the enemy's defeat, saying, "What does a sleighful load of 9 corpses by 24 make?"

After the battle at Taoquanli our unit moved to the valley of Fuhoushui. There we met comrades from southern Manchuria and, in joint operations with them, fought another victorious battle. It was the conclusive battle, putting an end to the enemy's "large winter punitive operations."

Thanks to the defeat of the "punitive" operations which the enemy had planned to the best of their ability and the successive victories of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, the Changbai area had completely become our world. The Japanese imperialists desperately schemed to check the revolutionary army's advance into the homeland by overpowering the KPRA with military strength, but only suffered defeat at every battle. They resorted to every means, calling me "boss of the bandits" and "ringleader of the communist bandits," in order to ruin me politically and entomb me morally, but to no avail. So they trembled with fear, describing our guerrilla tactics as protean and elusive.

The Japanese and Manchukuo army and police were driven into a tight corner by our ever-changing tactics. The enemy most feared "net tactics." They repeatedly emphasized through their publications and internal directives that one should not be trapped in the net tactics in mountainous areas. They all feared that once caught in the net, they would be unable to escape. "Net tactics" is a name they gave to the ambush, the most typical guerrilla tactics of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army. Net here means encirclement or pit with no way out.

After defeat in the "punitive" operations from late 1936 to early 1937, the enemy spoke in great detail about their experiences in those operations, the hard times they had faced, trapped in our "net tactics."

The May 1937 issue of *Tiexin*, the magazine of the puppet Manchukuo police, carried the writings of Ishizawa, the Japanese

military instructor of the Composite Brigade, entitled *On the Raid of Kim Il Sung's Guerrillas and Impressions of the Recent Punitive Operations* and later his article in the form of an interview, entitled, *My Experience of the Punitive Operations*. In these writings he acknowledged the tactical perfectness of the "net tactics," adding, "Throughout the period of recent 'punitive' operations we can see that the guerrillas mainly employ 'net tactics.' They resort to such stereotyped tactics not only when their force is smaller than ours but also when it is bigger. In February this year all our soldiers fought bravely in an encounter with Kim Il Sung's guerrillas near Dajiapigou southwest of the Fusong county town but died honourable deaths in their defeat, failing mainly because they were trapped in the 'net tactics' of the guerrillas." Confessing that there were many such examples, he once again warned of the need to be wary of the nets.

Apparently Comintern schools paid attention to our guerrilla tactics. Pak Kwang Son, an anti-Japanese revolutionary veteran, recalled whenever he had the occasion, that the school teachers had frequently mentioned the guerrilla tactics of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army. The Comintern ran schools in the Soviet Union; the communists in Manchuria in those days called them Comintern schools or Comintern universities. These schools gave political and military education to the students and communists, who had come there on the recommendations of revolutionary organizations in various countries in the world. Pak Kwang Son studied in one of them for some years.

The gun reports, raised by the KPRA in the Changbai area, struck terror into the hearts of the top hierarchies of the Government-General of Korea, the Japanese army and police in Korea, and the politicians, warlords and capitalists in Japan. Whereas the aggressors and reactionaries were struck silent by the gun reports, our people were delighted.

The daring military operations we carried on with credit in Changbai opened up the way to enable the KPRA to advance into the homeland. These operations made the status of our revolutionary army

the indisputable main force of the Korean revolution.

I do not think that the battles we fought in Changbai are world-breaking, great battles. In the world history of war, there are a great number of well-publicized campaigns and decisive battles, which led to thousands, tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands of casualties. Our operations involved only hundreds of our troops, while the enemy's casualties numbered only hundreds or thousands.

However, we look back on these battles with great pride. We treasure the spirit of the revolutionary army displayed in the arduous struggle. The willpower of the People's Revolutionary Army overpowered the enemy. It is a law that victory is inevitably won when a man overpowers the enemy mentally.

Consequently we treasure the traces of the bloody battles we fought in Changbai.

#### 4. Tojong Pak In Jin

The inaugural issue of *Samil Wolgan*, mouthpiece of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland, carried a short article headlined, *Mr. X, a Local Leader of the Chondoist Religion, Personally Visits Representative of Our ARF*. It noted that an anonymous person on the Chondoist committee, which had a strong mass following at home and abroad, inspired by intense patriotism, had called on me, representative of the ARF, and expressed his support for the programme and all the policies of our ARF and readiness to call one million members of the Young Chondoist Party to the battle front for Korea's independence, promising to strengthen ties with the association.

The person mentioned in the article was Tojong (a title of a local leader of Chondoist religion) Pak In Jin. The few lines of this article, which had to keep his name anonymous for secrecy's sake, hides untold stories, which are too numerous to be published in a single volume. To convey the circumstances inducing him to visit us in the Paektusan Secret Camp, we have to refer to another article in the same issue, dealing with the courageous patriotic young people, who joined en masse the Korean People's Revolutionary Army. It read as follows:

“Courageous young patriots from northwestern Korea are crossing the Rivers Amnok and Tuman in groups of seven or eight every day ... to join Commander Kim's unit. ... As they are familiar with the terrain, roads as well as the local situation in Korea, they have volunteered to be in the vanguard of the armed detachments moving to and from the country.”

This happened when we stopped off at Xinchangdong village, for the second or third time I guess, after moving to the border area. Several young people from the village requested that we accept them

as soldiers. I proposed that as they were volunteers from the border area they should all be recruited, unless they had any physical handicaps. Ri Tong Hak said that it seemed to him that the other young men were all eligible, except for the “Chondoist enthusiast” from Phungsan, who ought to be reconsidered. There were limits to the united front; how on earth could an adherent of Chondoist faith be allowed into the revolutionary army without discrimination, he asked, shaking his head.

I told Ri Tong Hak to fetch the young man, called a “Chondoist enthusiast,” from the villagers, to Headquarters. Although poorly dressed, a good-looking young man appeared before me with a steady gait, following Ri Tong Hak. I was impressed by his double-eyelid eyes and gold tooth, revealed during his smile.

He was Ri Chang Son who lived in the same village in Sul-ri, Chonnam Sub-county, Phungsan County with Pak In Jin, in charge of the Chondoists in the Ryongbuk area, who had educated him, and joined the Young Chondoist Party under his influence. As he was the top disciple and favourite of Pak In Jin, he was constantly watched and shadowed by the police. Tojong Pak, his master, was blacklisted; he had been in jail for years, charged with playing a leading role in the March First Movement in Phungsan. The Japanese police hung a small box under the eaves of his house for surveillance purposes and patrolled his home once a week at regular intervals to follow his movements; the police chief himself patrolled there once a month. This unpleasant regular patrol and incessant watch extended even to Ri Chang Son. Not a single policeman who had been to Tojong’s house, went past without peering into his home. Therefore, he said, he had moved with the consent of his master to the Changbai area, where he might be a bit freer from the molestation of the Japanese police.

When I unreservedly approved the enlistment of Ri Chang Son, Ri Tong Hak grumbled as though he had been wrongly overruled.

“Comrade Commander, what kind of splendid guerrilla will a religionist make? Working youths are as plentiful as blackberries. Why recruit a Chondoist enthusiast of all people, leaving a dark blot on the

organizational composition of our ranks?”

I reproached him, half in jest, half in earnest.

“I’m disappointed at your short-sightedness. You recognized at a glance that Ri Je Sun was a man of ability, but failed to realize that he’s a gem. You’re not squint-eyed, but sometimes your view is surprisingly incorrect.”

“Marx, too, defined religion as opium, didn’t he? What kind of a treasure do you think a Chondoist believer of that sort would become? I hope he’ll never become a trouble-maker.”

Clearly he was too prejudiced against religion.

I had to prevail on him in real earnest:

“Marx’s definition of religion as opium must not be construed radically and unilaterally. He was warning against the temptation of a religious mirage and was not opposing believers in general. We must welcome and join hands with any patriotic religionist, no matter what he or she is. You must realize that our guerrilla army is a patriotic armed force, whose primary mission is national salvation against Japan and the people’s army which fights for the sake of the workers and peasants and also the Korean nation as a whole. Admittedly, the central role in this army is played by us communists. But that does not imply the exclusion of other circles or forces. Even a religionist must be enrolled in our ranks without hesitation, if he so desires. However, you are unable to see the unexpected windfall we have in our hands. With his help we can sow the seeds of the ARF among the Chondoists in the Kapsan, Phungsan and Samsu areas and bring the vast area of Ryongbuk under our influence. Time will only prove the worth of that young man, so you had better treat him well and take good care of him.”

I cannot say how much Ri Tong Hak accepted my words.

The nickname “Chondoist enthusiast,” given by Xinchangdong’s villagers, stayed with Ri Chang Son, even after he had become a guerrilla. It bore little of comradely love, and reeked more of unfriendly derision and scorn. Every time he heard the nickname he grimaced and openly showed his disgust.

Once an entertainment party was held at the secret camp in honour of the recruits. Veterans and recruits performed alternately; every act was very interesting. That day the veterans exhibited their repertoires in full for the recruits, and the latter, in high hilarity, vied with each other. Regrettably, however, the meaningful party fell flat, due to a slip of the tongue by the compère. It was the turn of Ri Chang Son, when the serious blunder was made by the compère, who said, "Now we will hear a song by a Comrade 'Chondoist enthusiast,' a raw recruit from Xinchangdong." Upset by the announcement, Ri Chang Son walked off without singing.

This occasioned heated controversy in our unit. The compère of the party became the focus of criticism. "What an improper remark to call a newcomer, not a veteran, as a 'Chondoist enthusiast'! Although one may slight and mock others, one should know where to draw the line."

Some people blamed Ri Chang Son's narrow-mindedness. Their criticism went as follows: "What does it matter if he was nicknamed? As he disappeared without singing, what has become of the party? If he can't suppress this sort of anger, does he deserve to be called a man, who left home for the revolutionary army? He can hardly make a good fighter. He is effeminate."

The different views about the compère of the party and Ri Chang Son eventually boiled down to the issue of the view and attitude we should take towards religious people in general and adherents of Chondoist faith, in particular. I was obliged to make a clear explanation of our concept and approach towards Chondoism to all the commanding officers and men of our unit:

"Chondoism is our country's unique national religion. Choe Je U named Chondoism Tonghak (Eastern Learning) to distinguish it clearly from Sohak (Western Learning—Roman Catholicism). This alone suffices to prove its national character.

"Chondoism is a patriotic and progressive religion in its basic tenets and ideals. Its mottos, 'Poguk anmin' (defending the country and providing welfare for the people) and 'Kwangje changsaeng' (deliverance of the people), provide a graphic demonstration.

“The adherents of Chondoist faith exerted themselves under these slogans for decades to achieve the country’s independence and build an ideal society, where all people enjoy happy lives. Should we unconditionally oppose such national religion and abuse its adherent as a ‘Chondoist enthusiast’ for no other reason than that it is a religion?”

Once my explanations on the ideal of Chondoism, that is, love of one’s country and people, and the patriotic struggle of the Chondoists and on the principled stand one should abide by in relation to the Chondoists and the united front policy, had been clearly expounded to all, Ri Chang Son’s nickname “Chondoist enthusiast” was obliterated. He was instead accorded a new nickname, “Kimppai.” This means a man with a gold tooth. When “Kimppai” was treated as his real name in the guerrilla army, he exploited this fact and changed his surname to “Kim” and “Kap Pu” as the given name, calling himself “Kim Kap Pu.” When he later toured on political work he went by this name.

Despite his rural origins, he was very intelligent and clever with relatively high levels of cultural knowledge. He particularly had a forte for song and dance, and comic chat; consequently, he almost ran the show at an entertainment party. As he was so affable he quickly made friends with strangers. He was exceedingly open-hearted. But he had a self-conceited disposition.

One or two months after his enrollment in the army the following thing happened. One day Kim Phyong, head of the organizational section at the political department of the unit, came to me and said that “Kimppai” had asked him if it was not high time for his promotion to at least the position of company political instructor. At the time the political instructor of the company “Kimppai” belonged to was not very competent in his political, theoretical and working ability. Learned “Kimppai,” who had once worked as a cadre in the Young Chondoist Party, found it intolerable to receive guidance from a superior, who he considered inferior to him.

I summoned Ri Chang Son and told him about the company political instructor’s merits and exploits which he had not heard of before, and gave him some essential advice:

“In future you may work in more important posts than political instructor of a company. But just as a hundred-mile journey begins with one step and as a student passes through a primary school course, one needs to pass an elementary probation and training stage to become an able military and political worker. You have just passed probation for a soldier of the KPRA. In the next stage you must train yourself to be an able political operative. When I received you into our unit, I intended to let you do political work among Chondoists in the future. You will become a political operative, who will lead hundreds, thousands or tens of thousands of Chondoists into the ranks of the ARF, far greater than the numerical strength of a company, and grow up to be a greater political worker. I will assign the organizational section head Kim Phyong and the information section head Kwon Yong Byok of Headquarters to you as your tutors. Try to acquire political theories and master methods of work among the masses and learn from the experiences of work underground. You must, above all, acquire popular traits. Bear in mind that modesty is the most laudable virtue and remain a student throughout your life, regarding revolutionary veterans, your contemporaries and juniors as your teachers. Then everyone will respect and follow you.”

Sometime later, we transferred him from the combat company to the political department of Headquarters. Thereafter “Kimppai” was a secretary in charge of information work of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment within the unit and externally a political operative for Chondoist religion. Later on he handed over the secretary’s assignment to another man and became a professional political worker.

Ri Chang Son rendered distinguished services in winning Pak In Jin and a large number of other Chondoists in the northern Korean region into the organizational network under the influence of the ARF.

Through his assistance we obtained knowledge of Pak In Jin, as well as the internal situation of the Chondoist faith beforehand and opened up contacts with the Chondoists.

Pak In Jin was a man of considerable eminence in the Chondoist hierarchy.

Pak In Jin, with the religious name of Munam, joined the Chondoist faith in 1909 and became the Tojong of Jiwon-*pho* in 1932 following consecutive services on different levels of the Chondoist hierarchy.

At the time Chondoism had 29 *pho* all over the country; the Jiwon-*pho*, which included Phungsan, Samsu, Kapsan and Changbai areas, was said to be one of the biggest *pho* organizations. Pak In Jin was also called the Ryongbuk Tojong.

His father belonged to the Tonghak Party, which fought gallantly in the southern force of rebellion commanded by Jon Pong Jun in the Kabo Peasant War. Defeat in the peasant war was followed by the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people, involved in the war so that he left his native parts and fled from the far end of Jolla Province to the land of Ryongbuk.

Pak In Jin's life journey was steered by the spirit of resistance, which he had acquired from the lives of Chondoist leaders and his father, who used to tell him about these leaders.

The March First Popular Uprising was the greatest trial, which tried his willpower and faith. He led the people of Phungsan on demonstrations, shouting hurrah and attacked the government office at the head of more than one thousand demonstrators, when he was seriously wounded under enemy fire.

He suffered hardships in Hamhung and Sodaemun prisons for three years. The harsh torture in prison, however, could not break the religious belief and spirit of resistance deeply engraved in his mind. On his release from prison, in contact with the Independence Army units, he actively engaged in aiding and assisting them for three or four years, travelling to many parts of the country. However, the Independence Army was driven out to alien land without proper resistance and he bade them a mournful and tearful farewell. At the end of his quest for a place far from Japanese clutches, he moved his family to the deep mountain village of Chonnam Sub-county, Phungsan County. There he opened a preaching room, as well as a night school. He propagated the doctrine of Chondoism to Ri Chang Son and other villagers and infused a patriotic spirit into them. However, the mountain village did

not offer a complete refuge. The punctual visits of unbidden guests to his home at the end of every week and month compelled him to leave the Phungsan area. Pak In Jin moved to a new town in Changbai.

Ri Chang Son told me an interesting anecdote, which helped me understand what Pak In Jin was like.

This event happened when he went to a neighbouring village to meet his prospective bride at the age of 29. As soon as the man and girl in question were presented, the old woman, the matchmaker, asked what his intentions were. Pak In Jin replied that he had no objection to the marriage. But the old man, future father-in-law, said nothing, only puffing at his pipe.

“Is it true that you are twenty-four years old?”

This blunt question was spat out by the old man after a long silence; he obviously had a chip on his shoulder.

Guileless Pak In Jin, who was never known to have told a lie in his life, responded truthfully that he was twenty-nine, unaware that the matchmaker had told the girl’s father in advance that he was twenty-four, or five years younger than he really was. A moan escaped the lips of the matchmaker.

In those days people married when young, so single young men over 20 were considered as impotent or good-for-nothing. The old man, his future father-in-law, had good reason to frown. Pak In Jin’s family was so poor that he had enjoyed no chance of marriage.

The girl’s father made the stunning declaration to Pak In Jin that he would not agree to give his daughter to an aged man, who was almost 30.

Pak In Jin was shocked; however, he gathered up his courage and asked the old man in rage, whether he was lacking a nose or eye, and pressed him to explain the faults he found in him.

Quite embarrassed, the old man explained that there was nothing special to speak of and everything was satisfactory, apart from the fact that he was too old. He was 11 years older than his daughter. If he agreed to the engagement and disregarded this fact, a scandal would spread that he had mated his beloved daughter to an aged widower. He

said that he feared such developments.

This answer did not daunt Pak In Jin. If there were no other reason, he said, he would marry the daughter of this house under any circumstances. Although aged, he had never touched a woman's hand. Why should he be treated as a widower? He would not leave before he had received the promise of marriage. If the old man was stubbornly opposed, he would take his daughter away in a sack, he warned, and persistently demanded a quick, affirmative answer.

The girl's brother chimed in, smiling that he had to pay 1 000 *won* if he wanted to marry his sister. This was a huge sum, enough to buy more than 20 cows. This was a fantastic sum, which was inconceivable to Pak In Jin, who did not have even a calf. But he said that he would readily pay the money, if the old man promised to give him his daughter. The host, who was gazing at his face like a physiognomist, finally consented to the engagement.

In this way he became the son-in-law of the house, putting an end to his life as an old bachelor. It goes without saying that the thousand *won* was no longer important. The question of money had merely been raised to test the prospective bridegroom's guts. Apparently Tojong Pak In Jin was a bold and headstrong man with a strong sense of self-respect and an uncommon fighting spirit. We shaped his image in the course of our talk with "Kimppai": it contained something, which pulled at people's heartstrings.

Preparations were finished to dispatch Ri Chang Son as political operative to work in the line of Chondoism. Prior to his departure to see Pak In Jin, I said to him with particular emphasis that we and Chondoist believers were both Koreans, who loved their country and nation, and friends of the poor and humble populace, whose first and foremost goal was to "defeat the Japanese" and "defend the country and provide welfare for the people," we should therefore join hands and pool our strength in the struggle against Japanese imperialism and that we desired that the representatives of both sides meet at one place for serious negotiations in the near future. "Kimppai" returned to the secret camp three days later.

Pak In Jin supported our proposal on waging the anti-Japanese war with our united forces and requested the dispatch of our representative to him for the parley.

I prepared myself for the parley with Tojong Pak. However, some unavoidable circumstances prevented me from leaving the secret camp. This occurred immediately after the holding of the “Tumen conference” between Minami and Ueda. The People’s Revolutionary Army had faced serious challenges at the start of the enemy’s “large winter punitive operation.” In parallel with the “punitive” offensive, many spies ran amuck to do us harm.

My comrades-in-arms resolutely objected to my departure, saying that the Commander should not attend the negotiations in person for the safety of newly-established secret camps and my own security. Everybody’s nerves were high strung, because it occurred right after the incident when a spy had stolen up close to our Headquarters.

Consequently I had no alternative and sent in my place Kim Phyoung and Ri Chang Son to negotiate with Pak In Jin.

Kim Phyoung had tried his hand at all trades since childhood; he was a man of great working ability, who could implement any task without difficulty. He was well-versed in Chinese characters. He owed this to his five- to six-year-long study of Chinese characters as a child at a village school, I presume. As a grown-up, he received regular education at school, and in the revolutionary army was given military and political training at the school, which trained the commanding officers of the guerrilla army. He once taught at school. The nomination of Kim Phyoung as representative to the parley with the Chondoist followers, together with Ri Chang Son, was attributed on the whole to the deep consideration of his knowledge of the religion of Chondoism and rich experience of political activity.

The meeting between Pak In Jin and our representatives took place in the living room of Ri Jon Hwa, head of Changbai County chapter of Chondoism in Wanggedong, Shiqidaogou, Changbai County.

At first Kim Phyoung submitted the credentials bearing my signature, conveyed the Ten-Point Programme and the Inaugural

Declaration of the ARF to Pak In Jin and then entered into serious discussion on the alliance with the religious force of Chondoism.

Pak In Jin displayed a keen interest in the type of government we planned to establish, after the Japanese imperialists had been driven out. He opposed either return to the monarchy, the government of old Korea, or the establishment of the soviet power of Russian style, or the conversion of the provisional government of the Republic of Korea, known as the “government in exile,” into the legitimate government.

Referring to the first provision of the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF, Kim Phyong explained that the people’s power would be based on a parliamentary system of people’s representatives, elected democratically in accordance with the general will of all the Korean people. Pak In Jin remarked that he would unconditionally approve, if the popular government was formed as stipulated in the ten-point programme, but frankly expressed his apprehension and doubt that a Soviet-style communist power might appear against our commitments when the time came to establish people’s power, following the restoration of the country.

In those days the purge of the anti-party and hostile elements in the Soviet Union was under way; this factor was adversely affecting the peoples of neighbouring countries.

Kim Phyong emphatically assured him that, even if the communists who had waged the armed struggle, came to power, they would not build a Soviet-style communist power and that, as clearly defined in the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF, the government we would build in our independent country would constitute a power, which fully embodies democracy, the power of the masses to administer state affairs as the master, people’s power which would defend and represent the interests of the workers and peasants, and also the broad patriotic forces of all strata. To corroborate the truth of his assertion, he talked about our reorganization of the “soviet” (government council) into the people’s revolutionary government in the guerrilla zones in Jiandao.

Pak In Jin said that he had no other comments to make about the

Ten-Point Programme and the Inaugural Declaration of the ARF. If the programme and the declaration were not merely for publicity, but rather the reflection of our sincere intentions and unswerving determination to implement it, Chondoist believers would be willing to join the anti-Japanese national united front. But their participation was an important matter, which could not be determined and dealt with by himself alone. He promised to answer, after debating the matter with the brethren and Choe Rin, head of the centre of Chondoist faith. He then humbly inquired if he could realize his wish and call directly at the secret camp and talk to me before paying a visit to Choe Rin. Kim Phyong promised to do his utmost to realize his wish.

Pak In Jin was too cautious to say whether he would cooperate or not. He gave only noncommittal answers, making some pretexts. It was clear that he wanted to decide only after meeting me. Nevertheless, the talks were very constructive.

The following day Pak In Jin rallied more than 50 men and women believers under the Changbai County chapter and gave a grand banquet in honour of the representatives of the KPRA. A hog was butchered and rice-cake pounded to treat our representatives warmly. An entertainment party was held amidst the Young Chondoist Party members on sentry duty. The song and dance performances inspired as one the love for the country and the fighting spirit, so that Kim Phyong said he was moved afresh by the patriotic passion of Chondoist followers. Ri Jon Hwa, the master of the house, sang the song “Met, Met, I’ve Met the Enemies,” sung by U Tok Sun, who accompanied An Jung Gun when the latter left for Harbin in order to assassinate Ito Hirobumi; his song was so touching that everyone shed tears.

Early in winter 1936 Pak In Jin paid us a visit at the secret camp. Ri Jon Hwa still lives on in my memory among his entourage.

They were all in dark *turumagi* (Korean overcoat–Tr.). Their *turumagi* had two button hooks, instead of one, as a substitute for coat strings. The adherents of the Chondoist faith had their own style of dress and wore *turumagi*, conspicuous with button hooks, to distinguish themselves from other people.

On meeting me, Pak In Jin expressed his heartfelt gratitude for inviting him to the secret camp.

“I had not expected that my wish to meet you, General, would come true so easily. I am deeply ashamed that I have not contributed a rifle or a penny to the anti-Japanese war for independence.”

His words revealed his modesty, politeness and conscientiousness. I told him sincerely:

“We hold a man’s heart dearer than money or goods. We think it more important how ardently he loves his country than his contribution of a small sum of money or batch of rifles. I’m happy to have heard that you are still constant in your love for the country. For us your noble mind is an encouragement several hundred times strong. It is a great inspiration and pleasure that we have people like you, who are true to your patriotic principles in this present murky world.”

Pak In Jin responded: “Your praise is too much for me. I’m not worthy of your compliments.” He apologized from the bottom of his heart for the fact that he had for a brief moment been fooled by the propaganda of the Japanese under the false impression that the People’s Revolutionary Army, devoted to the sacred cause of independence, was a “gang of bandits.”

I replied: “A lack of mutual understanding can bring about perversion or animosity. We do not blame you. The important thing is the future. Let bygones be bygones. We should now think with one mind about the days, which lie ahead. As you have learned from our representatives, we inaugurated the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland this spring in order to rally the people of all strata, who love the country and nation and hate the Japanese enemy, into a nationwide war against the Japanese. I hope that the conscientious Chondoists will join in this great anti-Japanese war, as long as they do not object to its programme. We can emerge victorious, only when we’re united in the struggle, but we cannot achieve the independence of the country and will be vulnerable in all actions, if we are disunited and torn apart by factions. This is a bitter lesson history has taught us. Suppose that in the heyday of the Kabo Peasant War Choe Si Hyong,

high commander of the northern force of rebellion of the Hosu area (North and South Chungchong provinces–Tr.) readily accepted the proposal for cooperation, made by Jon Pong Jun, who commanded the southern force of rebels of the Honam area (North and South Jolla provinces–Tr.) and did not bar their advance to Seoul, history might have been written somewhat differently. The unsuccessful insurrection of Tonghak Party is attributable to the fact that all the anti-Japanese patriotic forces from all regions and social strata were at sixes and sevens and fought separately, instead of uniting as one in their struggle. To win victory in the sacred war against the Japanese and achieve independence, the whole nation must be of one mind and fight in a united force. National unity is a very wise policy for channelling the entire strength of the nation against Japan; this is the road to the great victory of our nation. The Chondoists cannot ‘defeat the Japanese’ on their own and ‘defend the country and provide welfare for the people.’ Nor can the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army win Korea’s independence single-handed. Fortune will only smile on us, when all other anti-Japanese patriotic forces pull together. So we must unite behind the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland, just like the ribbons, intertwining round the May Pole for great national unity.”

Pak In Jin said that, as he considered the Inaugural Declaration and the Programme of the ARF as perfect, leaving no room for improvement, and believed my views to be absolutely right, he would certainly persuade Choe Rin, leader of the Chondoist faith to ensure the participation in the ARF of the three million adherents across the country. It seemed that in the Chondoist order, based on a strict principle of democratic centralism, its centre was vested with the absolute right to judgement. However, there was a very slim chance of success, as the upper crust of the Chondoist centre was becoming corrupt and degenerated.

I expressed my thoughts to him frankly:

“It would be fine if things go as you say. However, in my opinion you should not expect too much from Choe Rin. His latest activities and writings tell me that he is following quite different course from the

one taken by successive Chondoist leaders. He has betrayed the ideal of Tonghak and the nation and become a lapdog of the enemy's power.”

Pak In Jin asked me: “How do you know so much about Choe Rin?” He confessed; “Frankly speaking, quite a few people of our Chondoist circle are displeased with his suspicious changes. I also suspect him.”

Choe Rin was involved in the drafting of the March First Independence Declaration. He did much toward launching the March First Movement. Consequently he suffered a bitter prison life. On release, he was promoted to the position of religious head on the recommendation of Son Pyong Hui, 3<sup>rd</sup> leader of Chondoism. Thereafter, signs of “reorientation” began to appear in his life.

He asserted that in order to build an “earthly paradise” by “a posteriori creation,” the ultimate goal of Chondoism, one should make a tour of all countries to become familiar with the political situation of the east and west and hammer out practical, rational ideas for reform. He spent one full year on a round-the-world trip. After his return home, he preached that in the given circumstances Korea had no hope of independence from the Japanese colonial yoke, that Japan was daily extending its power in the world arena; therefore, it was advisable for the Chondoists to renounce harmful clashes with Japan and confine themselves to the “autonomy movement.”

Choe Rin insisted on participation in the government with the aim of protecting Chondoism from Japanese imperialist oppression.

“Although attending the Governor-General like his waiting man, Choe Rin asserted that everything was intended for the good of Chondoism and the brethren of Chondoist faith. Therefore, the vast majority of believers failed to see that his contention was hypocritical. I also trusted and revered him. Chapter head Ri Jon Hwa had been to Seoul to see him last summer and told me on his return that he had changed much, judging from the way he had refurbished his house so luxuriously and the manner in which he spoke and behaved. However, I cannot label him a renegade, before I see things for myself. I will have an opportunity to visit Seoul and would like to meet him. The

central meeting of Chondoist faith is due to open in Seoul before long and I will be there at that time. If it is true that he has become depraved, we must break with him. We will act at our own discretion.”

Pak In Jin clarified his stand as if cutting radish with one bold stroke.

At the meeting we exchanged views on various issues such as domestic and foreign affairs, the current state of the nationalist movement, the progress of the anti-Japanese armed struggle and the nation building to be undertaken in the wake of national independence.

The talks continued, day and night. At intervals, the guests were shown round to acquaint themselves with life in our unit.

Pak In Jin expressed admiration and wonder that the weapons of our People’s Revolutionary Army were more modern than he had imagined, the guerrilla soldiers looked very steady and vivacious, the barracks were kept spick-and-span and surroundings were clean and tidy, the daily routine was organized without a hitch and every soldier was well disciplined and accurate in action, giving the impression of serving in regular army. He marvelled at the mysterious layout of the mountain, where our secret camp was located. To borrow his expression, the mountains and rivers around the secret camp of the guerrilla army gave him the illusion of his being in the valley of Mt. Chonsong in Ryangsan of Kyongsang Province, which Choe Je U, the founder of Chondoism, visited twice to cultivate his religious faith. The Naewon Temple in Mt. Chonsong is associated with an old tale, which Saint Won Hyo, father of Sol Chong, who is famous as author of the *Hwawanggye*, taught the *Hwaomgyong*. It eulogized the ten thousand virtues of Buddha to more than 1 000 monks from Tang and turned them all into saints. Allegedly the founder of Tonghak evolved his faith and originated Tonghak in this place of old associations.

Pak In Jin remarked that he had felt a surge of fresh strength, when he saw that, in the green forests of Mt. Paektu, we were developing our minds and gathering strength for the sake of national liberation and training a large number of young people as soldiers, in line with the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF, the great blueprint for national

restoration, which was more vital than *Hwaomgyong* or *Tonggyongtaejon*.

He was most impressed during his stay in our secret camp by the moment when I had given him the opportunity to do divine service for the offering of clean water.

Chondoism has five commandments—*Jumun* (a 21-word formula), *Chongsu* (offering of clean water), *Siil* (church worship on Sundays), *Songmi* (rice donation) and *Kido* (prayers)—which are binding on its adherents. *Chongsu* means the provision of brass bowl of clean water, which is a commandment never to be violated even for a day in the world of Chondoism. Clean water symbolizes the foundation of heaven and earth and represents the pledge of believers to never forget the benevolence of the universe. During his religious cultivation, Choe Je U used to resign himself to deep meditation, while offering clean water three times a day. The offer of clean water was also made during the last moment before his beheading. Consequently, the Chondoist followers set as a traditional rule and convention the provision of clean water, symbol of the sacred blood of its founder. During my Hwasong Uisuk School days, I often realized that Choe Tong O, Kang Je Ha and other Chondoists offered clean water at nine o'clock in the evening at the family prayers.

During an evening conversation with Tojong Pak I noticed it was close to nine o'clock. It suddenly occurred to me that it was the time for him to offer clean water. I told the orderly to fetch a bowl of fresh water. The bowl of water was reverentially placed in the middle of the log table and I told him that it was time for the offering of clean water.

“Forgive me for bringing holy water in an enamel bowl instead of a brass bowl. Tojong, please offer clean water, as long as you don't mind that it isn't in a brass bowl.”

After my words, Pak In Jin glanced at me, greatly surprised.

“General, how can I offer clean water at your military camp, knowing that you do not believe in Chondoism?”

“At the time of the Tonghak rebellion, its adherents were said to have chanted their prayers before a bowl of clean water every day even

on the battlefield. Respected Tojong, are you going to violate this rule which you have observed for decades, on account of your visit to our camp? Please feel free and relaxed in your prayers.”

As a guest, Pak In Jin humbly declined my request. Pointing out that respect of human equality and freedom of religion was clearly laid down in the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF, I said that if Tojong, who was uncommonly pious, neglected the daily divine routine even once out of deference to an unbeliever, we would regret this act. In this way I repeatedly beseeched him to offer clean water.

Consequently he recited the 21-word formula before the bowl of clean water. He repeated it three times and had a drink of water. Then, touched with reverence, he said:

“The clean water in the valley of the Paektu Mountains tastes wonderful, indeed. I made the offering with the water drunk by the ancestors of our country. I will never forget this evening. General, I hardly imagined that a man of arms like you would respect the tenets of our religion. I am deeply moved.”

Clearly Pak In Jin, like other believers, misguided by anti-communist demagogy, had believed that communists negate, oppose and hate religion and all manner of religious regulations.

One year the Rev. Kim Song Rak, a Korean resident in the United States, paid a visit to the homeland. During a luncheon with him, I advised him to pray before taking meals. At the time the Rev. Kim Song Rak was extremely surprised at my advice. He was puzzled that the President of a communist state was so kind as to show concern about the prayers of a Christian.

I had not intended to make a good impression or planned to seek a publicity effect and make out that we do not take a negative attitude towards religion and its believers, when I advised the Rev. Kim Song Rak to say prayers before the meal that day. I was motivated by the hospitality of a typical host, eager to entertain his guest with honour and by the pure humanitarian desire to help him, a faithful Christian, in his life, freely adhere to Christian rules during his stay in the homeland.

The provision on religious freedom stipulated in the Constitution of our country is not an empty phrase or promise.

We have never trampled upon freedom of faith or oppressed its believers. If there were men of religion, who were punished or suffered political trials under the Government of the Republic, they were criminals or traitors to the nation, who had sold out the interests of our country and people.

Of course there were cases, which caused social commotion owing to factionalist deviation of discriminating religious people and antagonizing religion itself in some local areas after liberation. But this was not a universal phenomenon, which happened everywhere, much less an abuse caused by the organizational intention or directions of the centre.

There were a large number of churches and temples in our country before the outbreak of the Fatherland Liberation War against the US imperialists. When I visited Chilgol after the country's liberation, there was a church I had known of in my Changdok School days. There were two grand churches on Namsan Hill of Pyongyang, where the Grand People's Study House now stands. These buildings were destroyed by the planes of Americans, who profess themselves to be the apostles of "God." The temples and hermitages with Buddhist images were also bombed. The crucifixes, icons and bibles were all reduced to ashes or buried under the ruins. The believers were killed and passed on to the world beyond.

In this way the Americans destroyed our churches and killed religious people. "God" could not rescue them from disaster. This led to a decline in churchgoers among our people during the war. Our religionists felt no more need to pray to "God" for their access to "Heaven." Believers, who became conscious of the fact that religion was powerless in shaping the destiny of human beings, renounced their faith of their own accord and became advocates of the Juche idea—that man is the master of everything and decides everything, is the creator and dominator of the world. After the war, they did not hurry to rebuild the churches by gathering donations. Instead, first dwelling houses,

factories and schools were built.

As for our younger generation, no young man or child believes that they will be blessed and have access to Paradise, only when they worship “God,” “Heaven” or Buddha. Consequently they do not embrace religion or join religious bodies.

At present, as in the past, we do not consider religion as bad or persecute its followers. On the contrary, the state builds churches free of charge for them and provides them with living quarters. A few years ago a religious department was newly instituted in the faculty of history of Kim Il Sung University to produce religious specialists. In our country the activities of all religious organizations and men of religion enjoy solid legal protection as in other countries.

It is said that there are a large number of religious people in south Korea. They include quite a few patriots and fighters, active on the three fronts of democracy, reunification and peace.

The increase in the number of patriots seeking an alliance with communism among the religionists in south Korea and abroad does not necessarily mean that they are adherents of *The Communist Manifesto*. The bond of union between us and them is provided by the idea and sentiments, based on love for the country and nation.

Such ties also existed in the 1930s. It was the principle of the united front, elucidated in the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF, that we could join hands with any social circle, which loved the country and nation. This principle united us with Tojong Pak In Jin.

Some people distort our idea on the freedom of faith as a conciliatory trick aimed at inveigling religious people into the “web” of the united front. Such a lie will never pass, however plausible it may sound. The warm relations I had with O Tong Jin, Son Jong Do, Choe Tong O, Kang Je Ha and other believers were based on pure feelings of love for the country and nation and had nothing to do with any stratagem. I had no intention to transform them into followers of Marx or supporters of the Communist Party. I only respected their faith, personality and human rights.

It was not accidental that Tojong Pak In Jin frankly acknowledged

that his opinion of us had changed after the offering of clean water. That day, after the offering of clean water was over, he asked me point-blank:

“I would like to ask you one thing. General, do you worship anything, like we believe in the ‘Heaven’? If you have, what is it?”

I accepted his question as a manifestation of his trust in us and answered in all sincerity:

“Of course there is something I believe in like God: the people. I have been worshipping the people as Heaven, and respecting them as if they were God. My God is none other than the people. Only the masses are omniscient and omnipotent and almighty on earth. Therefore, my lifetime motto is ‘The people are my God.’ ”

After hearing me through, he remarked significantly that his visit to Mt. Paektu had been rewarded and, that he had learned, albeit belatedly, what and where was the true “Heaven.” Extremely satisfied, he added that the idea of Choe Je U, the founder of Chondoism, “Man and God are one” had something to do with our way of thinking.

During the three days of their stay, Tojong Pak In Jin and his party called at the printing shop and the sewing unit’s work place, then inspected the live firing practice and saw the art performance staged by the guerrillas.

“I have learned and seen for the first time here what I failed to learn and see in my fifty years. A real miracle, I should say. To be frank, I am completely fascinated by your secret camp. I have now come to realize what I must do and I have made up my mind as well. I will meet Choe Rin and undertake the great event to enlist all Chondoists in the ARF. If I fail, I assure you of the enrollment of all the Chondoists affiliated with the eight chapters in Ryongbuk under my influence. And I will try by all means to persuade the virile one million members of the Young Chondoist Party throughout the country to take up arms and come under your command, General. I assure you of this fact,” Pak In Jin said on departing the secret camp.

On his return home, Pak In Jin worked hard to rally the believers of Chondoism to the ARF organizations. He mobilized the Chondoists of

the Changbai area in the national liberation front. In August 1937 he himself paid a visit to the Samsu County chapter and discussed with Jo Wan Hyop, its head, and Ri Jon Hwa, head of Changbai County chapter, a positive promotion of the united front.

“Kimppai” was his active assistant. Pak In Jin sent seven or eight young men to us, requesting that they be trained as future workers capable of assistance as Chang Son was in his activity. Around that time Ri Kyong Un, Phungsan County representative of the Young Chondoist Party, and others joined the main unit of the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army.

As he told us, Pak In Jin attended the meeting, convened by the centre of Chondoist faith in Seoul in December that year.

If Choe Rin informed on him or resorted to violent means against him, inauspicious things possibly could happen to Pak In Jin. To back him in the parley and protect him from danger, I sent Kim Pong Sok, my orderly, with Ri Chang Son for Tojong Pak’s safe journey to Seoul.

As soon as he arrived in Seoul, Pak In Jin heard the surprising news that Choe Rin had refashioned his western-style house in Myongryun Street still more luxuriously and had donated huge funds of Chondoist order to the Government-General as a “contribution to the national defence funds,” alleging that reconciliation with Japan was a prerequisite for the “autonomy for independence.” However, Pak In Jin restrained his wrath and began patiently to persuade him.

But he was too haughty to lend an ear to other people’s advice.

In a fury Pak In Jin then censured him, pointing out that his so-called contribution to defence funds constituted an act of treachery to the country and nation, an act opposed to the sacred cause of independence and that it would bring people nothing good but help increase Japan’s strength and prolong Korea’s subjugation. He thrust the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF at him, declaring emphatically: The true way to win Korea’s independence is not money donations; it is clearly indicated in this programme; this is the only path we should take; the Chondoist believers should join the ARF formed by General

Kim Il Sung and wage a great war against the Japanese in alliance with the KPRA.

After a long perusal of the ten-point programme, Choe Rin exhorted: “Don’t get so excited. The destination of Kim Il Sung is the ocean and my destination is the same. There are many roads open to the ocean, broad avenues and small lanes. Now is not the time to push ourselves through the highway and make a loud noise. There is a time for everything. Now you wash the bowl as you can fill it with water any time you like.” After a furious argument, Pak In Jin strode out of his house.

After breaking with Choe Rin, Pak formed the Phungsan chapter of the ARF, embracing the Chondoists of Phungsan County. This was followed by the appearance of the ARF chapters formed with hardcore members of Chondoist faith in Kapsan, Samsu, Hyesan and Changbai areas. These chapters rallied a large number of Chondoist believers and peasants around them. The ARF organizations, under the influence of Pak In Jin, supplied our secret camp with provisions in large quantities. Pak In Jin himself frequented Hyesan and Phungsan to obtain the supplies to be sent to us. At one time he sent us ten or more sheets of furs, which he himself had acquired, to be used by the soldiers of our guerrilla army as pads when they had to bivouac outdoors. Looking at them, my comrades-in-arms lavished praises on Pak In Jin.

His disciples in Diyangxi included people, who rented out hectares of land from Kim Jong Bu and exerted themselves to covertly produce grain to be supplied to the revolutionary army. No one except Tojong Pak knew that the grain from these fields was channelled to our secret camp.

His wife and daughters worked with enthusiasm to carry the supplies to the KPRA.

Unfortunately Pak In Jin, who had been working day and night for the freedom and liberation of our people, was arrested by the Japanese police in October 1937 in the aftermath of the “Hyesan incident.”

The enemy, who had a vague idea of his struggles and relations with us, pressed him to own up. They said: “We know well that you’ve

long maintained contact with Kim Il Sung's guerrilla army. We know that you have also rallied riotous elements in both areas along the border into secret organizations in a bid to reform the state system. Tell us what directions you've received from General Kim Il Sung and where your organizations are."

However, Pak In Jin remained silent.

When they failed to break his principle and willpower, the enemy tried to find fault with Chondoism, "Chondoism preaches that no man exists above and below man and that man is at once 'Heaven.' Then surely it is heresy to Chondoism and blasphemy against morality to drive out people, whom you respect like the Heaven, to the battlefields allegedly to win independence from Japan and let them shed blood for nothing?"

Pak In Jin gave a shattering blow to the enemy's fallacy:

"We are not the ones, who profane humanity—you do. You are the very same criminals, who trample upon the tenets of our Chondoism. Aren't you dragging thousands of 'Heavens' of Korea to slaughter every day, as if they were cows and swine? You know that, wherever the sabres and rifles of your army and police glitter, the blood of our white-clad people flows, forming a river, and that even the people's livers are torn to shreds owing to their rancor. Now you tell me, who is the criminal and who has to sit in the dock? We'll never forgive the robbers, who massacred countless people in violation of the sacred Chondoism of Korea. And we do not recognize the so-called state system they illegally fabricated. Consequently we three million Chondoists have risen, hand in hand with the 20 million Korean people, to fight courageously in the bloody war of resistance. If the blood of my body changes into a spark of fire, which will burn down your empire, I would be happy even if I am reduced to ashes."

The enemy shuddered at his fiery denunciation. Enraged, the enemy tortured the old Tojong cruelly until he became an invalid. He was at death's door, assailed by a serious disease.

The enemy sensed that his life was hanging by a thread and paroled him on sick bail.

The spring of 1939 met him in his sick bed. During his last moments he spoke with great difficulty to his wife, who had been devoted to her husband all her life:

“I feel happy at this moment of my death. Because I have lived worthily in the evening of my life as the posterity of the Most Venerable Suun. Pak In Jin was born into a man of Korea and departs from life as a man of Korea. When the country is liberated, you and our children must follow General Kim Il Sung.”

On hearing that he was at death’s door, one of his favourite pupils went to his bedside. Recognizing him, Tojong asked him to sing the folksong, *Tondollari*, his favourite. It is said that *Tondollari* is the abbreviation of “Tongthulnali Orira” meaning that day will dawn. It reflected the belief that the day would certainly come, when they would resume a peaceful life after driving out the Japanese imperialist aggressors.

In the Phungsan area, located close to Pukchong across the Huchi Pass, the song and dance of *Tondollari* were widespread early in the 1930s. After the ARF organizations became active in assisting the guerrilla army under the guidance of Pak In Jin, the underground organizations of the Phungsan district used the song and dance of *Tondollari* as a screen to be drawn over the enemy’s eyes at the time of joint labour to prepare supplies for the guerrillas.

The loyal disciple began singing the *Tondollari* as his master had asked, but could not continue; he was choked by tears.

His disciple was sobbing his heart out, calling him “Master!” and “Master!” Taking his hand in his own, Pak In Jin said quietly:

“As long as General Kim is in good health and the revolutionary army is going strong in Mt. Paektu, our white-clad Koreans will meet the dawn without fail. You will live in a country, governed by the ‘Heaven,’ where one hundred flowers are in full bloom. I have a clear vision of that day.”

Tojong Pak In Jin, who had achieved great exploits on the road of national salvation in alliance with communism, is one of the patriots produced by the anti-Japanese revolution.

Ever since the liberation of the country, I would call on the widow and posterity of Pak In Jin every time my thoughts turned to him. At an interview with bereaved families of anti-Japanese revolutionary fighters in summer 1992, I was told that his wife was in good health, although she was past 90. Therefore I said that she should be present, even if she found it difficult to walk and had to be carried on someone's back. However, as soon as she alighted from the car, Tojong's old widow walked up to me without anyone's help.

She addressed me as "Heaven," rather than "General" or "Leader," as other bereaved families did.

I told her not to address me like that, but she would not listen.

She continued: "I saw you, 'Heaven,' in my dreams."

The vocative, which only the wife of Pak In Jin could pronounce, and her frank talks revived old memories of my days with Tojong. I felt my eyes growing moist.

Ri Chang Son, who assisted Pak In Jin in many ways as a member of the Young Chondoist Party and political operative of the KPRA, died of frostbite in the rigors of winter in Mt. Paektu. It was probably in winter 1938 that he froze to death. Recently the officials concerned discovered an amazing photograph in the photo album of his wife's male cousin. It was a photograph of Ri Chang Son and his sworn brothers, taken when he worked as a Young Chondoist Party member. One of them turned out to be Ri In Mo, incarnation of faith and will.

Apparently Ri was one of a great number of pupils of Tojong Pak. In other words Pak In Jin was also a revered teacher, who had trained many peerless patriots.

## 5. On Chondoism, a National Religion

My view on Chondoism considerably helped me find a revolutionary companion in a renowned religionist like Pak In Jin. If I had not known what kind of religion the Chondoist faith was or had a biased and hostile view of the faith, I would not have tried to negotiate with Pak In Jin, or boldly planned to rally millions of believers in Chondoism across the country under the banner of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland.

Here, in this section of my memoirs I shall dwell on my view of Chondoism. I have a great deal to say about the Tonghak doctrine and its history.

I think that people come to understand “isms” and doctrines through different channels and methods.

My initiation to Marxism-Leninism came through books, while the church introduced me to Christianity. I mentioned earlier that I often went to church with my mother during my childhood. I first saw religious rites in the church and heard the pastor’s sermon on the Christian doctrine. My father, who had been educated at Sungsil Middle School, and my maternal grandfather, a teacher and elder in Chilgol Church, knew much about Jesus Christ. When I attended Changdok School, there were many believers in Christianity in Chilgol. Mr. Kang Ryang Uk was also a Christian.

Many friends of my father’s, including Son Jong Do, O Tong Jin, Jang Chol Ho, Kim Sa Hon and Kim Si U, were Christians. It could be said that I was surrounded by Christians during my childhood. Many of my classmates in primary school were also Christians. In those days many books were devoted to Christianity. This environment benefited my understanding of Christianity.

It was via a different channel that I learned about Islam. It was

related to a funny story. I first learned about Islam from Ma Jin-dou, my classmate in Jilin Yuwen Middle School. He was a believer in Islam. Having a good appetite, he used to go to a restaurant and order wine and pork, disregarding the Moslem taboo. He always took a seat in an obscure corner and ate, looking round uneasily, because if others had known that he took wine and pork, he would have been discredited as a Moslem and severely censured by his mullah.

While eating several times with Ma Jin-dou at a restaurant, I learned that wine drinking and eating of pork were taboo among Moslems. My general knowledge about Islam in my middle school days came from what I saw and heard when I was on intimate terms with Ma Jin-dou.

I began to take an interest in Chondoism when I learned about Jon Pong Jun, General Green Bean of the Kabo Peasant War. When my father told me about our forerunners, his name was mentioned alongside the names of Hong Kyong Rae, Ri Jun, An Jung Gun, Hong Pom Do and others. But my knowledge of Jon Pong Jun in those days was limited to the fact that he led the Kabo Peasant War and was a peerlessly courageous, fine man, who remained faithful to his principles to the end of his life. My father did not tell me anything more, as I was still a child.

Mr. Kang Ryang Uk provided me with detailed information for the first time on the life of General Green Bean (Jon Pong Jun) and the Kabo Peasant War. He was a devout Christian, but was versed in Chondoism as well. I came to consider the Kabo Peasant War and Chondoist faith in relation to each other, after listening to his coherent lecture.

The disastrous failure of the rebellion of the Tonghak followers and the tragic death of General Green Bean led me to resent flunkeyism and the incompetence of the feudal court, which had reduced our country to misery, and the evil designs and interference of both Japan and Qing in the affairs of Korea. I considered the rebellion of the Tonghak followers as a great event, which adorned the modern history of our people's struggle against aggression and feudality, and

the heroes the war produced were eagles exerting a great influence upon the political and mental life of the Korean nation in modern times. Jon Pong Jun, the lion of the Kabo Peasant War, has remained as a lasting, unquenchable spark in my memory.

My understanding of the Chondoist faith deepened during my Hwasong Uisuk School days. There were many Chondoists in the school. In his recollections of the past, Choe Tok Sin, the son of Choe Tong O, the schoolmaster, said that his father was a disciple of Son Pyong Hui, the third leader of the religion. School superintendent Kang Je Ha and his son Kang Pyong Son were also devout followers of Chondoism. At the Hwasong Uisuk School many students displayed their learning, by reciting *Tonggyongdaejon* (Complete Collection of Tonghak Scriptures), *Ryongdamyusa* and other Tonghak scriptures by rote, while others eagerly read the monthly *Kaebiyok* (Creation), issued by the Chondoist centre, taking it with them, and commented on the Korean rural community from the viewpoint of the Tonghak doctrine and Ri Ton Hwa's writings.

Choe Tong O prevented the students from reading *The Communist Manifesto*, but encouraged them to read *Tonggyongdaejon* and *Kaebiyok*. When the history teacher was absent, the schoolmaster often appeared in his place and gave us a lecture. In such cases history lessons used to be transformed into a lecture on the history of Tonghak without exception. He always analyzed and judged all the shocking events and facts from our modern history in relation to Tonghak. Proceeding from the Chondoist doctrine, Choe Tong O advocated the three principles centred on nation, people and man, similar to Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles.

The most striking of the stories he told us in connection with Chondoism concerned his introduction to Choe Je U, the founder and first leader of the religion.

I still recall vividly what he emphasized, after telling us about Choe Je U's career and how Tonghak was enunciated.

"We all call Mr. Choe Je U, who founded Tonghak, the Most Venerable Suun. So it is desirable that you do not simply call him Choe

Je U, but rather use the honorific title of Most Venerable.”

According to Choe Tong O, Koun Choe Chi Won, a famous scholar of our country in the ninth century, was a remote ancestor of Choe Je U.

Choe Je U’s father Choe Ok had a remarkable talent for poetry. His collection of poems *Kunammunjip* was famous in his day.

Choe Je U lost his mother when he was six and his father at sixteen and roamed about the country for nearly twenty years. He sought a way to deliver the country and people from mismanagement and evil practices, and in April 1860 proclaimed the doctrine of the Chondoist faith, which exerted a great influence on the modern history of Korea and founded Tonghak.

Choe Je U called Chondoism Tonghak (Eastern Learning), in order to stress that it was a religious philosophy of the Korean people in the East, in contrast to Roman Catholicism, a “Western Learning.”

When Choe Je U was active, abuse of royal power and factional strife precipitated the nation to an abyss of ruin, and national strength declined to the extreme. The rebellions of peasants against the feudal tyranny occurred successively and socio-political chaos, aggravated by famine and flood, went to the extreme. Social and class conflicts between the nobility and common people reached the limit. The feudal caste relations, which had supported the existence of the Ri dynasty for several hundred years institutionally, became a cursed fetter impeding the prosperity of the country and social development. Tyranny and molestation by corrupt officials reduced public welfare to the greatest misery, and the popular rights, which were only nominal, were deplorable.

Korea in the East, which remained a closed country for several hundred years, was coveted by the great powers, which sought to acquire wealth and expand their territory. Western powers, with Roman Catholicism serving as a guide, were about to stretch their tentacles to the Korean peninsula.

The prelude to “Wailing all day over the nation’s fall” was, in effect, already ready at that time. It was only natural that in those days

the pioneers of the times, who were sincerely concerned about the destiny of the country and nation, sought new thoughts and ideals. Choe Je U, leading the pioneers, enunciated Tonghak, whose basic ideas were “Innaechon” (Man and God are one) and “Poguk anmin” and carried out energetic efforts to preach and propagate its doctrine throughout the world.

“Friends, if you want to understand Tonghak, look at the slogan ‘Poguk anmin.’ ” Whenever Choe Tong O spoke about Chondoism he set the theme up like a placard.

“ ‘Poguk’ means defending the country from aggression, while ‘anmin’ implies the provision of welfare for the people and countering tyranny. What a fine doctrine it is! Song Ju, how do you like ‘Poguk anmin?’ ” the schoolmaster once asked me unexpectedly.

I said, “I think it is a good slogan. If Chondoism advocates ‘Poguk anmin,’ I will support the faith.”

I really meant it. At that time the communist idea had already become an important ideological pillar in my life, but I expressed my support for Tonghak without hesitation. All sensible people want to defend the country and promote the welfare of the people.

Pleased, Choe Tong O looked at me with a smile, and said:

“Those who oppose ‘Poguk anmin’ are not Koreans. The slogan of the world revolution that the Communist Party advocates is good, but the slogan of ‘Poguk anmin’ is vital for our country and the Korean nation, isn’t it? I’m sure the Most Venerable Suun is a wonderful man.”

My knowledge of Chondoism in my Hwasong Uisuk School days was not linked with practice; it was narrow, raw, commonplace and fragmentary.

During my life in Jilin I began to pay deep attention to the study of Tonghak in connection with practice. The search for a new path for the Korean revolution mostly kept us away from doctrines and the interpretation negated by history. However, we refrained from assuming a nihilistic attitude toward the former ideas and movements themselves. We were opposed to a blind transplantation of established

theories and the experience of others, but adopted with an open mind what we considered good there.

The question of the united front was raised as an important strategic task around the time of the Kalun meeting in our revolutionary practice. The question of the forces to be embraced, shunned or isolated was raised everywhere and frequently caused heated dispute. Whenever a debate arose over the parties, which the united front was to be formed with, the question of religion, together with that of non-comprador capitalists, became the major topic, which could not be ignored.

The Chondoist faith, along with the Christian faith, was one of the important religions in my consideration. Chondoism attracted our attention in those days and the activity of its followers became a matter of concern, for as a Korean religion, it consistently advocated patriotism and love of the people ideologically and in practice, and was widely propagated and had a strong permeability.

Like *Capital*, the *Tonggyongdaejon* merited deep study, but was difficult to read. Choe Je U's writings, which described the universe, things, natural and other phenomena in a mystic and abstruse manner, were hard to understand. Kim Tal Hyon, too, who was active as a cadre at the Chondoist centre after liberation, admitted that the writings of the Most Venerable Suun were hard to understand. Kim Tal Hyon said that if Choe Je U's writings had been as easy as Ryu Rin Sok's appeal, Tonghak would have attracted tens of thousands more followers.

The journal *Kaebuyok* served as a guide for us to understand the Chondoist faith. The title *Kaebuyok* was derived from the phrase "Huchon Kaebuyok" (a posteriori creation) which was one of the main doctrines of the Chondoist faith. Throughout the issues of dozens of numbers since the inaugural issue, *Kaebuyok* maintained the characteristics of a comprehensive political and current affairs journal and contributed greatly to the enlightenment of the nation. The journal was rich in nationalist colouring, but also carried articles introducing socialist ideas. It was an innovative mass journal, which was very popular among readers in those days.

The Young Chondoist Party was expanding its branches in the northern part of Korea, eastern, southern and northern Manchuria up to Harbin in those days. Consequently *Kaebiyok* had many readers in Manchuria as well.

I read an article by Sin Il Yong in *Kaebiyok*. He was a theoretical adversary during my life in Jilin. He was entirely absorbed in the rural question in the mid-1920s. His article *Study of the Rural Question* carried in the journal was theoretically profound.

*Kaebiyok* carried many articles about different countries. Ri Ton Hwa's travelogue *Journey through Southern Manchuria* stood out most. I read it in Guyushu or Wujiazi. It provided a detailed account of the scenery of Manchuria, the customs of the Chinese, the wretched plight of coal miners in Fushun and the efforts of independence champions of our country. According to the travelogue, the inhabitants of southern Manchuria had a strange custom of leaving a dead body placed in a coffin outdoors without burying it in the earth, and if it was a child who died under the age of seven, of hanging it wrapped in a mat on a tree.

Of the different genres carried in *Kaebiyok* the articles advocating patriotism whetted the appetite of the readers most. The journal often carried such articles as *The Unique Merits of the Korean Nation*, *The Mettle and Efforts of Koguryo People*, *The Geography of Korea Blessed with Natural Resources*, providing us with an account of the history and geography of Korea, its natural beauty and features of different districts and local products, including an article *Pride of Eight Provinces by Their Representatives*. This article was based mainly on a realist scholar's comment on the mettle of the inhabitants of eight provinces of Korea. He likened the character of the inhabitants of Phyongan Province to that of "a tiger rushing out of a forest." In the article a man from Phyongan Province, who was as fierce as a tiger rushing out of a forest, but was never ill-disposed, boasted of his province, while a man from Hamgyong Province, named "unyielding Jo," who was tenacious like "a dog fighting in mud," reeled off the pride of his province by prefacing his story with the fact that the

ancestral mountain Paektu was in Hamgyong Province, and so on. It described the characteristics of the people of each province so vividly that it always drew a smile from the reader.

All the boasts of these eight provinces were interwoven with interesting stories which aroused national pride and self-respect in the reader.

As officials concerned found out, the *Pride of Eight Provinces by Their Representatives* was carried in the July issue of the journal in 1925. Recently I got hold of the journal and read the article again, experiencing new feelings. Although half a century had passed since then, I still found it interesting.

The popular articles in *Kaebiyok* included one called *Foreigners' Impressions on Korea*. It gave fragmentary impressions on Korea of the German, French, Chinese, Japanese, American, Russian, British and other people under such titles as "Most Talented People in the World," "Three Wonders," "Most Polite People in the World," "Four Beauties of Korea," "Seven Creeds about Korea," "Natural Beauties and Kind Hearts" and "Impressions on Koreans." It was pleasant to appreciate Korea by reading foreigners' impressions from a Korean standpoint.

The journal *Kaebiyok* described the pride of Korea as seen by Koreans to be the "best-natured people in the world," "excellent health," "unexcelled morals," "future model people of the world," and "Koreans without cruelty."

The article *Tonghak Party of Korea and the Kuomintang of China* also aroused the readers' interests. The author remarked that the only groups, which fought with the aim of reforming society in the Orient, were the Kuomintang of China and the Tonghak Party of Korea and proudly boasted that Choe Je U had enunciated Tonghak over 40 years earlier than Sun Yat-sen. Tracing back in memory, it seems to me that the biggest contributor to the journal *Kaebiyok* was Ri Ton Hwa, chief of the editorial section of the central Chondoist body and editor of *Kaebiyok*. His pen name was Yaro. He was a talented theoretician who played a leading role in establishing the Tonghak doctrine theoretically

and expounding it philosophically. I believe that the services he rendered to its propagation by his works *The Essence of "Innaechon," Regeneration Philosophy, Lecture on Suun's Doctrine* and *History of the Foundation of the Chondoist Faith* will occupy worthy pages in the history of the Chondoist faith.

I became interested in Ri Ton Hwa after reading the journal *Kaebiyok*. Pak In Jin gave me comparatively detailed information about him. Pak In Jin was favourably disposed to him. Pak In Jin even advised me to meet him. But as I fought the Japanese imperialists in the mountains, it was very difficult for me to meet him, as he was in Seoul. I knew that he lived in Yangdok and served the Chondoist faith after liberation, but I could not find the time to meet him. At times I received fragmentary information of his activity from Kim Tal Hyon, chairman of the Chondoist Chongu Party.

Kim Tal Hyon, too, did not know exactly how he died.

According to the officials, he went to Jagang Province following the People's Army soldiers who were going northwards in autumn 1950 and stayed there for some time before being killed in the bombing by US planes.

Ri Ton Hwa's death was a sad, heartrending loss to the readers of *Kaebiyok*, who had loved him, and also to the followers of Chondoist faith.

In the light of his political views, Ri Ton Hwa seems to have belonged to a conservative and moderate group rather than the young reformers. However, judging from his writings which advocated the preservation of nationality and national prestige and moral self-cultivation, I believe he was a conscientious intellectual with a clean record, as well as a religious man who ardently loved his nation.

I used to exchange views with Kang Pyong Son after reading articles in *Kaebiyok* and debate the position and doctrine of Tonghak. He was best informed of the Chondoist faith among members of the Down-with-Imperialism Union. An ardent adherent of communism at the same time, he looked favourably on the Tonghak idea he had worshiped and the organization of the Chondoist faith. There were

many followers of Chondoist faith in Changsong, where Kang Pyong Son was born, and in Uiju, Pyoktong and Sakju. Kang Je Ha, Choe Tong O and Kong Yong were patriots who played a leading part in the community of the Chondoist faith in those areas in North Phyongan Province. Through the channel of the Chondoist faith, Kang Pyong Son greatly expanded the subordinate organizations of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland in North Phyongan Province in the latter half of the 1930s.

As most of those, who belonged to the young reformist force of the Chondoist faith, at first he practically absolutized the role, which Chondoism played in the anti-aggression and anti-feudal struggle in our country in modern times, beginning with the Tonghak rebellion, and thought that all problems, both big and small, related to the shaping of the destiny of the nation could only be solved by Chondoism. This probably was the main point in our argument about Chondoism.

Naturally I fully recognized the services Tonghak had rendered to the struggle against feudalism and aggression and for the modernization of the country and social development. I recognized the national, patriotic and people-loving character of Tonghak as well. However, I did not adhere to the view and attitude that all problems could only be solved by relying on Tonghak.

Kang Pyong Son himself abandoned his view of the omnipotence of the Chondoist faith during practical struggle. He engaged in underground activity together with Zhang Wei-hua in Fusong in the early 1930s and was arrested by the police while acting as our political worker in northern Manchuria in the late 1930s; he died a heroic death in prison.

The idea of “Man and God are one,” maintained by the Tonghak followers can be said to be relatively progressive, as it valued man, likening him to God, but was inevitably theoretically inconsistent, because it was not free of religious elements and regarded man as a divine existence.

Choe Je U, the founder of Tonghak, and the second and third

leaders of this religion who succeeded him, maintained that Chondoism represented the ultimate truth, born of the organic integration of three religions—Confucianism, Buddhism and *Songyo*—and accordingly was not a heretic religion, unlike Roman Catholicism.

The theoreticians of the Chondoist faith further developed the predecessors' theory on the integration of the three religions and advocated the originality of Tonghak as the national religion.

Advocating the originality of the doctrine of the Chondoist faith, one of its reformist theoreticians negated the doctrines of all former religions, including the Nirvana theory of Buddhism, the *Hyonmyo* theory of *Songyo*, the Paradise theory of Christianity and the Divine will theory of Confucianism and other mysticisms and idolatries, and preached “God-man identity” or “Man and God are one,” that man is Buddha, Divine, God or Heaven and that, consequently, there is nothing beyond man.

The basic idea of Tonghak is “God-man identity” or “Man and God are one,” which means that man is “Heaven.”

Chondoism maintains that “Heaven,” that is, the entire universe, is composed of special ether called *jigi*. It holds that it is neither material or spiritual, but rather something both material and spiritual and that nature, man and God are all composed of *jigi*.

The “*jigi* theory” of Tonghak, which holds that *jigi* is the origin of the world and the source of all matters, is a sort of spirit theory, which maintains that all matters contain spirit. It can be regarded as part of pan-psychism.

The Chondoist faith, based on the “*jigi* theory,” holds that like “Heaven” man has spirit, whether alive or dead. Namely, man is a special being with a spirit, which ranks first among all things in the world.

It follows from the spirit theory that man does not lead an independent and creative life at his own discretion, but instead has to live, following the predestined course of life under the control of the spirit. The spirit theory inevitably resolves into fatalism. From fatalism

it cannot be inferred that man is master of everything and decides everything himself, that one is responsible for one's own destiny and that one has also the ability to shape one's own destiny.

The prospect of the future society, offered by Tonghak, is not a scientific goal conforming with the law of social development. It stipulates that if virtues are promoted throughout the world by non-violent struggle, the time will come when all men become like God and then earthly paradise will come. It holds that man will be transformed into God, when he examines and realizes himself continuously and thereby promotes the awakening of conscience, while making daily incantations.

In short, the idea of "Man and God are one" is not based on materialism, but rather on theism.

The Chondoist faith did not play a leading role in the anti-Japanese national liberation struggle, owing to its class limitation, theoretical and practical immaturity. That was the main reason why we did not support the omnipotence of Tonghak.

Although this was our attitude to the Chondoist faith, we valued its merits and believed there was a possibility for it to join hands with us ideologically and practically for the united front.

Chondoism's highest ideal is to build a paradise on earth. The former religions held that this world is distressful and irredeemable, while Chondoism preached that this world can be transformed into an earthly paradise. From this principle, Chondoism regarded "a posteriori creation" as one of its important missions and launched a practical struggle for the three reforms, called "spiritual reform," "national reform" and "social reform."

The theoreticians of Tonghak hold that Chondoism differs not only from the Christian faith, which sets the aim of attaining happiness in the world to come and paradise after death, by merely professing their faith, and from Confucianism, which regards moral culture and acquisition of knowledge as essential for indoctrination and advocates agreement between politics and religion, attaching importance to the promotion of virtues in this world, but also from Buddhism, which

considers mercy as the basic tenet, while maintaining that man can become a Buddha.

Christianity is dynamic, they said, in comparison with static Buddhism, but Chondoism is more dynamic than the Christian faith, and that Buddhism markedly tends to reason, Christianity to sensitivity, while Chondoism combines both aspects.

The doctrine of the Chondoist faith opposes blind worship of Heaven and maintains the need to believe in man himself, unlike other religions which preach that the feudal social system or caste is the order ordained by Heaven, talking about the supernatural and superhuman character of Heaven or God. Therefore, we considered that the Chondoist faith had a positive aspect of progressive religion, advocating respect to man and human equality.

While establishing the Juche-orientated line of our revolution, naturally I displayed interest in different established theories and movements and positively recognized the position and role of Chondoism as national religion. However, proceeding from the specifics of our country's historical development, the environment of our revolution and historical analysis of previous movements, and fully taking into account our national tradition and balance of class forces, I evolved the Juche theory, explored the path for our revolution and accordingly worked out a strategy and tactics.

The new generation of communists never contemplated engineering a revolution with the help of Heaven or according to God's will, but rather embarked on the path of struggle, convinced that we must fight, believing in and depending on the strength of our people.

After the foundation of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland heated debates ensued on how to view the Chondoist faith. Particularly around the time of Tojong Pak In Jin's visit to our secret camp, interest in Tonghak increased among the commanding officers of our troop.

After his visit to the secret camp we pushed ahead more confidently with the line of a united front with the Chondoists.

In retrospect, proceeding from its religious doctrine, Chondoism

waged a practical struggle for “defending the country and providing welfare for the people” which aimed to secure public welfare by rejecting foreign forces and establishing national independence and people’s sovereignty, and securing a peaceful world, that is, an earthly paradise by “promoting virtues in the world” and “delivering the people.”

Tonghak received support from broad sections of the poor and lowly and the ruined nobles for the patriotic and people-loving character of its doctrine and spirit of strong resistance. The propagation of the Tonghak doctrine, which claimed abolition of the discrimination between the noble and mean, constituted a great threat to the prevailing position of the feudal Confucian idea, which absolutized discrimination between the noble and mean, a formidable challenge to the feudal privileged class. Therefore, Choe Je U, the founder of Tonghak and first religious leader, was executed in Taegu in March 1864, charged with violating the laws and disturbing the government. The second religious leader Choe Si Hyong, who had secretly been engaged in the dissemination of Tonghak and expansion of the organization, in the face of harsh suppression and pursuit of the feudal government of the Ri dynasty and fought as a leader of the Kabo Peasant War, was condemned to death in Seoul.

The third religious leader, Son Pyong Hui, who named Tonghak as Chondoism, in accordance with the intention of its founder and was a mastermind of the March First Movement, was harshly suppressed and persecuted by Japanese imperialists. As the lives of its successive leaders show, Chondoism was entirely patriotic and people-loving in its origin and development.

The Kabo Peasant War, called the first Tonghak revolution in the Chondoist community, was the biggest and fiercest war in the anti-aggression and the anti-feudal struggle of our people in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Kabo Peasant War was neither planned by the upper echelons of the Chondoist faith or triggered off by their directives, but was rather an anti-government rebellion of the peasants, who resented the

tyranny and brutal plunder of the corrupt and impotent feudal privileged class. The Kabo Peasant War was started by Jon Pong Jun and other leaders of the peasants' rebellion, under the banner of "eradicating tyranny and saving the people," "driving out Westerners and the Japanese" and "defending the country and providing welfare for the people," independent of the upper echelon of Tonghak. The leaders of the rebellion transformed the peasants' rebellion in Kobo into an all-out peasant war by establishing contact with local Tonghak organizations through the Tonghak organizations they belonged to.

The Kabo Peasant War was a historic event, which served as a prelude to the anti-imperialist national-liberation struggle in Asia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Along with the Taiping Rebellion in China and the Sepoy Mutiny against England in India, it was notable as one of the three big resistance wars in Asia.

The Kabo Peasant War ended in failure owing to the intervention of the Japanese and Qing armies, but the peasant troops, who scattered to different parts of the country, became the main force of the subsequent anti-Japanese volunteer movement and continued the resistance war for national salvation.

The Kabo Peasant War not only left serious traces in the historical development of our country, but also exerted a considerable influence on the development of the political situation in the Orient and rest of the world. A Korean historian, who examined the worldwide significance of the Tonghak revolution, commented that the origin of world-historic events, which threw the world into upheaval in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, can be traced back to the Tonghak revolution in Korea. He wrote, "If it had not been for the Tonghak revolution in Korea, the Sino-Japanese War would not have broken out. If China had emerged victorious in the Sino-Japanese War, Russia would not have been able to invade Manchuria. Had it not been for the Russian invasion of Manchuria, the Russo-Japanese War would not have broken out. If Russia had not been defeated in the Russo-Japanese War, the Austro-Hungarian Empire would have been unable to spread its wings over the Balkan peninsula. If the empire had not annexed Bosnia and

Hercegovina, the war between Austria and Serbia would not have broken out, and had it not been for the Austro-Serbian War, World War I would not have broken out. If World War I had not broken out, the overthrow of the Romanov dynasty in Russia would not have been dreamed of and the world could not have seen the birth of Red Russia. Oh, Tonghak Party, you indirectly served as the spark for the world war and brought about the birth of a worker-peasant Russia.”

Advocates of the Tonghak idea regarded Tonghak as the first step to the modernization of the East.

The Chondoist forces played a big role in the March First Movement. The main force of the popular uprising naturally came from the broad masses of workers and peasants, youth, students and intellectuals. The national champions, who started the uprising, were not only Christians and Buddhists but also Chondoists and these Chondoists took the initiative. In addition, more than half of all Chondoists (3 000 000) took part in demonstrations. These facts indicate the considerable role played by Chondoism in the anti-Japanese struggle.

The spirit of strong resistance of Chondoism constituted the major reason, why we attached importance to the united front with the Chondoists.

The Chondoist faith, as the Korean religion, was novel in its ideas and doctrines, it had a spirit of strong resistance: as it was simple in rites and practice, it was popular in nature.

Kim Jong Ju, the first Minister of Communications in the Cabinet of the Republic, used to say proudly that Tonghak was a modest national religion. About the time when we organized the anti-Japanese guerrilla army, he had joined the faith and later became a member of the central executive committee of the Young Chondoist Party. He was versed in the doctrines of the faith.

Kim Jong Ju was a good-looking Chondoist. Whenever he met me, he used to joke.

“Premier, you must be tired working all day. Please relax a bit and listen to my old stories.” Beginning in this way he would tell his old

stories in my office for some time.

Once on a visit to me during a holiday, he boasted of Chondoism.

“Our Chondoism has the flavour of homely bean paste soup.” When I asked what he had in mind, he answered, “It can easily be seen even from ‘services with clean water.’ When performing ‘services with clean water,’ one may sit as one chooses—cross-legged, with knees raised or sideways. Such liberty is never allowed in other religions.”

I talked much about religion with Kim Tal Hyon. He often repeated the anecdotes he had experienced when active in the organization of the Chondoist faith under Japanese rule. Frequent talks with him helped establish our human ties, independent of the business-like notion that I was the Premier and he was the Chairman of the Chondoist Chongu Party. He frankly told me the problems he faced in his daily life.

Once he came to the building of the Provisional People’s Committee of North Korea past midnight and asked for an interview. This happened when I was working as Chairman of the Provisional People’s Committee of North Korea: it must have been 1946.

It was surprising that he called on me past midnight, without giving any notice. I even had the ominous presentiment that something unusual had happened to him which he felt obliged to tell me.

But he surprised me further with an unexpected request, totally unrelated to official business.

“Don’t blame this old man for lacking a sense of honour. I know it may sound very presumptuous, but would you get me some tonics like wild *insam* (ginseng) or antler, please?”

Even after entering my office, he hesitated, before saying what he had come to see me about and then, bracing himself, blurted out these words. Then he lowered his head without looking at me as if he were guilty. Wondering what the matter was with the old chairman, I looked closely at him and saw that he had blushed up to his ears.

Inviting him to sit down, I gently asked, “You always boasted about your health. How come you suddenly need tonic?”

“To tell the truth, the trouble is that I cannot manage my wife. I married a young woman recently and she treats me badly. ... General, please help me.”

“I’ll help, if your wife slights you.”

At this he beamed with joy and left.

I obtained some wild *insam* and antler and sent them to him.

After a year he called on me again.

“Thanks to you I begot a son at the age of seventy. My wife is very happy. I would like to invite you to attend the party to celebrate the first one hundred days of our baby.”

“It is a very happy event. These are good times, so we have such happy events. I accept your invitation with pleasure. Please convey my congratulations to your wife on the birth of her son.”

This time, too, he beamed as he left my office.

I called at Kim Tal Hyon’s house as I had promised, to attend the party on the hundredth day after his son’s birth. His wife served me tasty dishes and bowed to me, saying, “You brought happiness to our home.”

That day she offered me hospitality, smiling all the time.

During the war I met Kim Tal Hyon in Pyolo in Jagang Province. We talked about the Chondoist faith over noodles. He said that rice donation was an excellent customary practice peculiar to the Chondoist faith and served as the main financial source for the practice of the faith.

In fact, most successive leaders of Chondoism, except Choe Rin and some others, led a frugal life, disregarding personal gain and fame. They always experienced a dearth of funds. It might be easy to say, but not so easy to practise the faith, without receiving pay. Chondoist ministers do not receive pay, I am told.

The followers of the Chondoist faith in south Korea once financed the faith with earnings from a theatre they had built on the site of a former printing house for *Kaebiyok*, I hear. Two wedding halls arranged in the central temple served as the main means to boost their finances and rent was charged per hour. It was an awkward stopgap, but unavoidable.

We attached importance to the united front with the followers of the Chondoist faith, mainly because their overwhelming majority were anti-Japanese and patriotic, although its upper echelons were irresolute and opportunist, and also because the grassroots were poor and lowly, mainly poor peasants, in class composition.

Originally the Chondoist faith had started as a peasant movement, based on peasants and its doctrine was peasant in nature. It was natural and inevitable that the Tonghak movement was based on peasants in our country, in those days when capitalist development was still incipient and the modern working class lacked a true force. The Tonghak movement was not only for the peasants. It was a broad mass movement, which represented the desires and interests of all the poor and lowly, including the poor and shopkeepers in cities. At the same time a nationwide anti-aggression patriotic movement, which opposed all foreign aggressors, it tended towards the modernization of the country.

After failure in the March First Movement, the upper echelons of the Chondoist faith lost its fighting spirit and confined themselves to insignificant propagation of the faith and little theoretical activity to maintain nationality, and some of them, Choe Rin, for example, turned pro-Japanese after three years' imprisonment.

However, the lower echelons of the faith made every effort to carry forward the patriotic tradition of the faith under harsh Japanese rule, disregarding the treachery of the upper echelons. This was the mass base, which made us attach importance to a united front with the Chondoist faith and convinced us of its possibilities.

The progressive leaders of the Chondoist movement, who did their best to link the movement with other revolutionary forces of the country and sought cooperation with the international revolution, professed that Chondoism was in the "service for the poor and lowly," that it was a "homogeneous communist party of a different scale" and hoped for contact with the Comintern.

For instance, Ri Ton Hwa applied for membership of the Red Peasant International on behalf of the Council of the Korean Peasant

Group towards the end of October 1925.

The Korean Peasant Group was a peasant organization under the Young Chondoist Party, which was founded in Seoul in October 1925.

After the end of World War I and establishment of the worker-peasant government in Russia and development of the internal and external situation following the March First Popular Uprising, Ri Ton Hwa, Jong To Jun, Pak Rae Hong and other young Chondoists founded the doctrine lecture department for young Chondoists in September 1919, with a view to studying and disseminating the Chondoist doctrine and promoting the Korean new culture, to set up the first militant youth organization in our country. Some time later the organization was renamed the Young Chondoist Society. The society founded the *Kaebiyok* Company as its mouthpiece and began to issue the political and current affairs journal *Kaebiyok* in 1920. It set up a children's department and conducted vigorous activity to cultivate the Korean children's aesthetic sentiments and improve their moral treatment and social status, in conformity with the doctrine, "Man and God are one."

In 1923 the Young Chondoist Society was reorganized into the Young Chondoist Party and acted as the vanguard organization of Chondoism, aiming at building an earthly paradise by "a posteriori creation."

The party had a well-organized system, consisting of the head office in the capital, local branches in provincial capitals and county towns and the lowest organizations called *jop* in sub-counties and dong. It conducted vigorous activity to propagate the faith, drawing up a three-year plan for expansion of the party influence and extended its ranks by attracting many young people from the poor and lowly strata in a short space of time. The Young Chondoist Party became the most influential denominational force, particularly in the area north of the River Ryesong, which had not been ravaged by the Tonghak rebellion.

According to the *History of the Young Chondoist Party*, published in 1935, in those days at least 100 local branches of the party existed at home and abroad. A large proportion of them (70%) were located in

the northern part of the country. Phyongan Province had 40 of them, the largest number. In fact, almost every county had a local branch of the Young Chondoist Party in the former Phyongan Province, which covered today's Jagang Province, Pyongyang and the area up to Nampho City.

The presence of the overwhelming majority of the Chondoist force in the northern part of the country in those days constituted another major reason why we attached importance to the united front with the Chondoist faith.

The reformist force of Chondoism also made every effort to extend their influence and energetically waged an anti-Japanese patriotic struggle, riding the tide of the world situation, following the March First Movement.

In July 1922, after the death of Son Pyong Hui, the third Chondoist leader, the young revolutionary reformists of the Chondoist faith strove to restore and reorganize their forces by organizing the Koryo Revolutionary Committee and conducted vigorous activity at home and abroad, in the Maritime Province and in Manchuria, in particular. Subsequently the Koryo Revolutionary Committee was reorganized into the Extraordinary Supreme Revolutionary Chondoist Commission, a secret underground revolutionary organization.

What is particularly conspicuous in its activity is that it requested the Soviet Russian government and the Comintern to provide political support and considerable military aid to the revolutionary activity of the Chondoists, and carried out energetic efforts to attain them. It is said that they planned to train about a thousand soldiers under the guise of employing labour in two years' time around three gold mines near Chita in Siberia and further organize a Koryo National Revolutionary Army, composed of 15 composite brigades.

The secret organization of the Chondoists called on the Soviet worker-peasant government to provide positive assistance for the implementation of the plan.

The old documents in our hands reveal some of the diplomatic activity carried out by the reformists, meeting personages from Soviet

Russia and the Comintern in Vladivostok in the Far East in early 1924.

Then Choe Tong Hui sent a letter to Katayama Sen and asked him how the Comintern viewed the Korean revolution and the situation developing in Korea and urged unprejudiced positive assistance to the Korean revolution.

The Chondoists aimed to establish close ties with the social revolutionary force of Japan in the east and Soviet Russia and the Comintern in the north for cooperation between Korea, Japan and Russia in the case of an outbreak of revolution in Korea.

As mentioned above, the revolutionary reformists made every effort to wage an armed resistance struggle in cooperation with the international revolution, disregarding the obstruction and hatred of the conservative Chondoist faction.

The revolutionary reformists strove in every way to dedicate themselves to the anti-Japanese struggle, with their patriotic and people-loving zeal and grievances kindled by the Tonghak movement, but achieved no real results. Worse still, after the failure of the March First Movement, the Chondoist faith divided into radicals and moderates and sharp conflicts occurred between them. The Japanese imperialists tried to exploit this factor and the radicals compromised in a bid to prevent a split. This seemed to weaken the revolutionary reformists, and their anti-Japanese movement gradually regressed into some sort of non-violent movement. Once the upper echelons of the Chondoist faith became non-violent national reformists and tended to be openly pro-Japanese, Chondoism gradually lost its revolutionary nature and reached a low ebb.

However, the local Chondoist organizations and overwhelming majority of their grassroots and members of the Young Chondoist Party formed legal and illegal organizations and fought Japanese colonial rule in various ways. Unfortunately they had neither a definite strategy of struggle or a force capable of unified leadership.

At this juncture we advanced to Mt. Paektu and proclaimed the Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland.

Millions of Chondoists provided their enthusiastic support for the programme. They firmly united under the banner of the ARF, convinced that the morning star they aspired was shining over Mt. Paektu. Therefore, the Chondoists accepted the united front and many of them joined the subordinate organizations of the ARF. It was the result of our positive and active efforts, based on a fair appreciation and broad understanding of the Chondoist faith, as well as the inevitable outcome of the development of the organization of the Chondoist faith, whose guiding ideas were patriotism, love of the people and opposition to foreign forces.

Naturally, there were certain differences between our movement and theirs in ideal, principle and doctrine and in starting points, but we firmly joined hands for the great cause, because we were one nation, of the same stock. At that time I keenly felt that there could be no communist movement, divorced from the nation and that the national interest, as well as class interest, should always be respected.

Because of this community I could easily become reconciled with Choe Tok Sin, who had been in the forefront of the battle against communism.

Although Choe Tok Sin and I were on the wrong side of seventy when we met, I received him excitedly with no past enmity at the thought of having fostered patriotism under Choe Tong O, and enjoyed a friendly, warm-hearted talk with him as colleagues of the same nation and stock, transcending ideological differences between communism and Chondoism.

Recently I published the *Ten-Point Programme of Great National Unity for National Reunification*, which could be called a renewed version of the Ten-Point Programme of the ARF. In the 1930s, when we were cooperating with Pak In Jin in the area of Mt. Paektu, national liberation constituted the supreme task for our nation. Today, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, our supreme programme and ideal are to reunify the divided country. It was only natural that our struggle to wipe out foreign forces and restore national sovereignty received enthusiastic support from the Chondoists, who had put up the slogans

“defending the country and providing welfare for the people” and “driving out the Westerners and the Japanese” in the past.

Owing to the division, our nation has experienced all kinds of suffering for nearly half a century. This is not a tragedy caused by our nation itself, but rather one which was imposed by foreign forces. Why should we not oppose the foreign forces and advocate national reunification, building up the nation and great national unity?

Consequently, the patriotic-minded Chondoists, Christians and Buddhists in the north and south of Korea and abroad are all fighting to bring an end to the tragic national division imposed by the foreign forces and bring about the new day of national reunification more rapidly.

It was not for personal comfort or personal glory, or for the interests of a certain class or social stratum, but for the liberation of the entire nation from Japanese colonial rule that we waged earlier on the anti-Japanese armed struggle in the expanses of Manchuria and area around Mt. Paektu for over twenty years.

It is the unanimous belief of all Koreans in the north and south of Korea and abroad that no God, interests of a certain class or party can stand above the nation and that they should climb over any abyss or barrier for the good of the nation; they realize this more keenly with the passage of time.

If the aim and ideal we communists have fought for, devoting our whole lives for the good of the nation, are realized, and if the 70 million compatriots live in lasting happiness in a reunified country, I think this is the very earthly paradise, which the Tonghak martyrs yearned for.

The ideal of Tonghak, the ideal of Chondoism, throbbing with national spirit, is the pride of our nation. The patriotism of these martyrs, who dedicated themselves to the motherland and fellow countrymen, will remain enshrined for ever in the history of our nation.

## **6. Living Apart from the People Is Impossible**

We felt one truth intensely during the whole anti-Japanese revolution: if an army does not enjoy the support of the people, it can never be strong and win a battle. During the anti-Japanese armed struggle, we invariably maintained that “As fish cannot live without water, so guerrillas cannot live without the people.” One slogan encapsulated in a nutshell, “supporting the army and loving the people.” This means that the people should defend the army and the army should love the people.

I have already described the active and self-sacrificing nature of the support we received from the people, when we were fighting in Mt. Paektu.

What was the source of the zeal and spirit with which our people defended and supported the army, a zeal and spirit unprecedented in the history of guerrilla warfare? What enabled them to support and encourage the People’s Revolutionary Army at all times and at the risk of their lives?

We must seek the secret above all in the popular character of our army. Our army was organized by the sons and daughters of the people, fought for the freedom and liberation of the people and safeguarded their lives and property. So it is only natural that the people were attached to such an army and helped them.

However, the people do not defend and support, at the risk of death, all armies, whose composition and mission are popular. The people do not like an army, which purports to be “popular,” but misbehaves and lacks discipline. An army can only enjoy unsparing support from the people, when it truly loves the people and is deferential to their wishes, defends their interests and protects their lives and property.

The Korean People's Revolutionary Army possessed all these qualities.

The public morals of the KPRA were based on the thoroughgoing spirit of love for the people. Every commander and man of the People's Revolutionary Army found a reason for their existence in the people. They felt that they existed for the people and that they could only be happy when the people were happy. Consequently the joy of the people was their joy and the sorrow of the people was their sorrow. The existence of the KPRA itself was meaningless and worthless, if isolated from the people. If we had kept our distances from the people, our guerrilla army could not have maintained its existence.

On the very first day when we started the guerrilla warfare, we regarded the embrace of the people as the cradle for our happy lives and the support of the people as the source, guaranteeing our lives.

As a matter of fact, the parent body of our guerrilla army was the people. Our parents also came from the people and the protectors of our revolution were none other than the people.

Consequently, we considered unity between the army and people as a *sine qua non*.

The army's love of the people and enjoying their support determined its existence more than the outcome of the battle. If we had not attached great importance to this, we would have been transformed into a "drop in the ocean" as the enemy used to describe us, and would have broken up, after falling back hither and thither.

When waging guerrilla warfare, we felt a need to codify an idea, which could serve as the regulations and codes of behaviour for the revolutionary army in relations between the army and people and between the officers and men, as well as in the everyday life of the army. So we formulated and made public the provisional regulations of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army.

We drafted the regulations to strengthen the popular character of our revolutionary army, legalize its spirit of loving the people and maintain it firmly.

Admittedly, the People's Revolutionary Army was not a regular

army. However, it boasted a military force as good and well-organized as a regular army. A large number of men could not be moved only by the orders and instructions of the commanders or on the strength of conventions.

The mid-30s marked a period, when the enemy stepped up the construction of concentration villages in west Jiandao and sought to “isolate the bandits from the people” to prevent the influence of the People’s Revolutionary Army. The Japanese imperialists resorted to every conceivable means to drive a wedge between the guerrilla army and people and cut off the route, the lifeline of the guerrilla army, by which assistance passed on to the army. They left no stone unturned to disgrace the People’s Revolutionary Army and blockade it militarily and politically, as well as economically.

They themselves knew full well that our army was genuinely popular and morally sound, and that our soldiers would not behave like the bandits and their army therefore paled in comparison. However, the enemy defamed our revolutionary army calling our soldiers “bandits.” This reflected their craftiness and real intentions to impair the political and moral prestige of our army.

Whereas we regarded unity between the army and people as vital, the enemy persistently attempted to “isolate the bandits from the people.”

The Japanese imperialists tried to denigrate the popular nature of our People’s Revolutionary Army, imputing to us even those crimes, which had been committed by gangs of mounted bandits. In order to restore the image of the revolutionary army, which had been reversed, owing to pernicious enemy propaganda, and elevate its status, it was necessary to give fuller play to the popular character inherent in our army. To this end, we had to codify our demands and seal them in a document.

The organizations of the Independence Army, which held their own ground in various parts of Manchuria in the past, had left positive and negative impressions in their relations with the people. Sometimes the people looked unfavourably on the Righteous Volunteers Army and

the Independence Army, mainly because they did not properly fulfil their obligations to the people and imposed too many economic burdens upon them. Some commanders of the Independence Army, like a certain company commander of Jongui-bu, collected an enormous amount of money and goods, under the name of war funds or contributions to the independence movement, only to unscrupulously misappropriate them for personal pleasure.

The Japanese imperialists even exploited such misdeeds, in order to slander and blaspheme our People's Revolutionary Army. They painted the Independence Army and People's Revolutionary Army with the same brush, claiming that all people waving the banner of independence were robbers, who plundered and misappropriated the property of the people. To clear ourselves of such a false charge, intentionally imposed by the enemy, we had to clarify the popular character of our army.

We also drafted the provisional regulations, because the number of army recruits had rapidly increased.

The KPRA never waged a battle, which might harm the people. Aware of this fact, on the defensive in battles, the enemy soldiers entered a village and offered resistance, by leaning on the walls of residential houses or on fences. However, we never thought of fighting, by relying on the villages or residential houses, regardless of the adversity.

This was also true, when our army entered Sandaohezi village in early summer 1934 prior to the battle in Luozigou. The enemy started to attack our unit by mobilizing a large force with a view to checking its advance into Luozigou. At that time, too, I intentionally ordered my men to beat the enemy by luring them out to a field, located on the outskirts of Sandaohezi. Otherwise, the villagers might have suffered. As we did so, we missed a chance to remove about half the enemy's manpower. We experienced similar cases more than once.

Even when they stayed at a village for a short time, the People's Revolutionary Army never behaved arrogantly under the pretext that they were fighting for the liberation of the people. No sooner had they

taken off their knapsacks than they fetched water, made a fire, swept the yard and chopped firewood. I was no exception. We always saw to it that the commanders themselves served as a model for the men and educated them by setting an example.

In this way, ever since the first founding days of the guerrilla army, we regarded loving and helping the people as the most important duty and precept of the men of the KPRA.

However, at first, after our advance to the area around Mt. Paektu, some recruits frequently acted scandalously, jeopardizing the relations between the army and people. The recruits in our unit included former rural youth, men from the Chinese anti-Japanese nationalist armed units and also those, who had defected to our side, after rising up in revolt in the puppet Manchukuo army. These recruits from different origins, who had still not gone through the elementary stage of drills, occasionally behaved, contrary to the traditional discipline of the revolutionary army and besmirched the honour of the unit.

The following events occurred, when our unit stayed for some time at old man Ri's at Liutiepaodong in Shijiudaogou. At that time the old man introduced us to a young man, his nephew, who had allegedly come to help him gather in the crops. Judging by his new shoes and gaiters, the young man had apparently made full preparations for the harvesting. Our subsequent talk was very interesting. He was extraordinarily eloquent. He depicted the special features of any object briefly and vividly.

The young man had been out for some time and came back in a gloomy mood with shabby gaiters and shoes. I asked him what had happened, but he hesitated and refused to answer.

I instructed platoon leader Kim Jong Phil to make detailed inquiries into how the gaiters and shoes had been changed. Kim Jong Phil subsequently came back and reported full of indignation that one soldier, who had defected from the puppet Manchukuo army, forced the young man to change his leggings and shoes, and that the soldier lightly shrugged off criticism, although he had committed such a preposterous misdeed.

“He had justified himself: ‘The soldiers are having a hard time in the mountains for the sake of the people. Surely the people should take care of them, then? The puppet Manchukuo army do this about all the time.’ ”

I was shocked by the platoon leader’s report. In the bygone days there had been numerous instances, where the brass hats of the aggressor armies had legalized such crimes, as murder, robbery, rape and pillage in areas under their occupation, allowing their men to perpetrate such acts. During the Sino-Japanese War and Pacific War, the Japanese soldiers had even taken comfort women for the army to battle fields. The puppet Manchukuo army followed the Japanese army’s lead, in maintaining ignoble relations with the people.

As the soldier had been unduly addicted to such wrongdoings as murder, incendiarism and plunder in an army, which specialized in these misdeeds, he considered it natural to exchange such things as gaiters and shoes with another man. However, in our People’s Revolutionary Army such an act was a serious mistake, which could not be overlooked. As we regarded the love of the people as a strict rule, we considered such actions as heinous crimes.

I apologized to old man Ri on behalf of the revolutionary army.

“Old man, this happened owing to our failure to educate him properly. Please forgive us, although I know you are displeased, believing the blunder to be the fault of your own stupid son.”

The old man started up and cut me short.

“When you say this, I feel even more ashamed. It is quite right to swop shoes for soldiers, who are fighting in the mountains all the time. Why on earth are you asking for forgiveness?”

After this incident, the relations between the old man and us became more friendly. Whenever we went to Shijjudaogou, we never failed to visit Liutiepaodong to see and inquire after him.

Our men went to that village and conducted a lot of work to obtain supplies. Once they came back with two chickens they had got there. I made sure that the chickens were stewed for infirm Wei Zheng-min. At that time he was staying in our unit, because his health had

deteriorated. The man who had got the chickens said that he had not been able to pay for them because the owner had refused money. I asked for the name of the owner: once again it was old man Ri. The guerrilla was experienced in the procurement of supplies, but had not dealt with the matter very well.

I visited old man Ri, taking with me the man's platoon leader from the supply unit.

After giving a helping hand to the old man in threshing for some time, I made the platoon leader produce 10 *yuan* and say, "I'm sorry for my late payment for the chickens." In those days the market price of a chicken was about one *yuan* and fifty *fen*. Although the price for the two chickens was three *yuan*, we paid generously, because we wanted to help the old man. However, this only served to incur his anger. "I'm not a Korean if I take this money. The saying goes, 'He that does fear no shame, comes to no honour.' And this old man also has face."

"Accept it, please. If we had known that they were brood hens, we'd have returned them to you. Unaware of this fact we've consumed your brood hens, which would have hatched out chicks in spring, so we've spent all your capital, haven't we?"

Eventually we managed to slip the money into his hands.

Wiping away tears with his sleeves, the old man told us about a robbery two years earlier when he had been the victim.

One day he had hunted a deer. He had sold the deer to a rich man. On hearing this news, a crowd of soldiers rushed to him and rashly demanded money, producing their guns. He was robbed of all the money he had received for the deer, for they threatened to shoot him to death then and there. Since then he had said "No" at the mere mention of soldiers. However, when he saw how our men respected the people, he thought he should not spare anything for such soldiers. And one day he had heard that our men were searching for black hens. He said that he had given our men his two hens in a desire to show his sincerity at such a time, although it was a small amount. Now that he had received money, which amounted to more than three times the price of the hens,

he had a guilty conscience that he had not fulfilled his duty as one of the people, he said.

On hearing the old man I felt that we were abusing his sincerity too much. Nevertheless, we could not disregard the revolutionary army's traditional regulation of unflinchingly repaying the people's sincerity. Some recruits regarded the people's disinterested support for the revolutionary army as a matter of course; they disposed of the aid materials imprudently, without taking the people's status and living conditions into serious consideration. A typical example was provided by the ox incident, which happened in Yaoshuidong in autumn 1936.

At that time our unit had stopped at the entrance to Diyangxi, Shijiudaogou of Changbai County. Then we were all having a very hard time, owing to a shortage of food. One day two recruits, who had gone towards Yaoshuidong to gather some dried vegetable leaves, came back with an ox beaming with joy. We then discovered that the ox had been sent by peasants from Yaoshuidong, upon hearing that the guerrillas were taking only soup made of dried vegetable leaves for their meals.

At first the two men had refused to take the ox. However, they said that they had been compelled to bring it, because the peasants had entreated them to accept their sincerity and forced the reins into their hands.

Water was already boiling in one corner. As they had not tasted cereals for many days, even the veterans and commanders, to say nothing of the recruits, were delighted at the thought of eating plenty of beef soup after such a long break. I also felt like telling them to slay the ox promptly, at the thought that my men would otherwise have to eat a bowl of dried vegetable leaves soup for their supper. However, after examining the decorations of the full-grown ox, sadly looking up to the sky, I changed my mind. The neatly made nose ring, the bridle nicely wound with red cloth, yellow brass bell and coins—all these bespoke the wholehearted devotion of its owner. I told the men, who were excitedly moving about, as if preparing to slay the ox, tear its limbs off and put them into the cauldron immediately, to gather in one place and then said gently:

“Let’s return the ox to its owner.”

The men who had brought the ox looked up at me dumbfounded. The other recruits were also extremely disappointed; the smile disappeared from their faces. It must have seemed quite an unexpected order for such men, who had been appeasing their hunger for several days. I reasoned with the recruits, who were heaving a sigh:

Why are we going to return this ox to its owner? Precisely, because it is the precious property of the peasant, its owner. Look how dearly he has held his ox and loved it! This brass bell has probably been kept with much care for several generations in his family. Most likely the grandma of the family brought the coins in the strings of her purse attached to her skirt, when she was married and treasured them all her life. Our mothers express their affection for oxen in such a way. We should also return the ox, because the farming of the peasants in Yaoshuidong is largely dependent on it. What will happen there, if we slay the ox because it is the sincerity of the people, without taking this into consideration? The owner of the ox and his neighbours, who have become indebted to the ox, will have to do the work of the ox from tomorrow onwards. They will have a hard time of it in carrying the load, which used to be carried by the ox, on their backs and turning over, with picks and hoes, the fields, which have been ploughed by the ox until now. When we think of this, we can’t feel at ease, if we were to eat this ox, can we? Almost all of you are the sons of poor peasants, so think of your parents, who are toiling away.

The soldiers, who had brought the ox, seemed to feel the pricks of their consciences. They said with tears in their eyes that they were to blame and asked me to punish them. Instead of punishing them, I sent them again to Yaoshuidong to return the ox.

In those days, when I received recruits I shared bed and board with them for some time. By mixing with them, I trained them for some time, before sending them on to a company or a regiment. It was difficult to do so when I received scores of them; however, when I received three or four of them, I kept them company for at least several days. In this way I could acquaint myself with their family

circumstances, preparedness, characters and aptitudes and also adopt appropriate measures for their education.

Around October 1936 over 10 lumberjacks joined our unit at the same time. From the very first day I kept company with three young men from the new recruits.

One day, on their way back from sentry duty, they each brought back a knapsack of unhusked maize from a peasant's field without asking his permission. They said that, as even I drank only plain water at mealtime because of the unit's dearth of food, they wanted to pick at least some maize and treat me to plenty of it. I was surprised above all by the fact that, although they had committed an illegal act, laying hands on the people's property, they believed that they had fulfilled their duty as men for the sake of their Commander.

I could understand their concern for their Commander, but could not accept their sincerity.

"Thank you for your sincerity. Nevertheless, today you seriously harmed the interests of the people. You have picked three knapsacks of maize, without even obtaining the owner's permission. How is such lawlessness acceptable!"

"We're soldiers who are having a hard time for Korea's independence. So three knapsacks of maize are nothing. In former days the people in my village even contributed gold for the fighters of the Independence Army. If any peasant has grievances against the removal of a few ears of his corn, he is as good as a pro-Japanese element." This speech was made by a stocky, short young man on behalf of the three.

They put in a word in turns. They showed no signs of repenting for their mistake. It was impossible to predict the serious mishaps and vices in future, if I failed to correct their mistaken view, that it was all right to encroach upon the interests of the people and boast about fighting for the liberation of the country.

It took me more than an hour to convince them of their error. Then I ordered the three recruits to take all the maize back to the edge of the peasant's field. A company commander accompanied them.

The party did not come back, even though several hours had passed.

I was afraid that some accident might have happened. I went to the maize field with my orderly. The three men were sitting at the edge of the field with the ears of corn.

I asked the company commander why they were doing this.

He replied that they were waiting for the owner.

I looked at the men. All their eyes were red and moist with tears. I was reminded of the first phrase “Ren-zhi-chu Xing-ben-shan” (A man’s real nature is originally generous) of “San-zi-jing” (a Chinese book, in which each phrase consists of three words–Tr.), which I had read at primary school in Badaogou. As the phrase shows, man’s intrinsic nature is truly beautiful.

Returning to our bivouac, I emphasized to the three men again: You should learn a lesson from what you have done today and love the people more ardently from now on. If we are rude to the people, they will turn their backs on us. Nothing is more horrible than abandonment by the people. The greatest tragedy for a revolutionary is to forfeit the love of the people. If we forfeit the love and support of the people, what shall we rely on in our struggle?

That night they did not utter a single word until they went to bed. I held the hand of the youngest man and asked him why he had remained so silent, maybe he disagreed with what I had said that day.

“No, not at all. I just think that ours is a really good army. I’ll never do such a thing again.”

He pledged between tears to become without fail a good guerrilla and merit the love of the people.

Deviations, which were detrimental to the honour of the revolutionary army, were not only revealed in relations between the army and people.

As the numerical strength of the army increased, the regimental commanders and higher officers did not mix well with the soldier masses: they did not provide guidance for the lower echelons and merely gave general orders. Worse still, some commanders even claimed that, as the number of soldiers increased to several hundreds, the superiors and inferiors should wear different uniforms by rank and

eat and sleep separately; otherwise, they said, extreme democracy might be fostered in the army, which would make it impossible to command the troops.

Some newly selected junior commanders frequently assumed airs, regarding themselves as very important dignitaries.

This happened when our unit, which had been active in the Changbai area, was marching at night towards our secret camp, leaving the neighbourhood of Shisidaogou in autumn 1936. Prior to our departure, I appointed a scout party and told my men what they should beware of during the march. I laid particular stress on refraining from smoking. Smoking during a night march was tantamount to exposing oneself to the enemy of one's own accord.

When we were about to turn a mountain bend, a strong smell of cigarette smoke suddenly spread from the direction of the company, walking at the head of the ranks. Clearly someone from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company had quickly lit a cigarette, the moment Headquarters in the rear of the ranks was not visible, as his company turned the bend.

Next morning I summoned the company commanders to inquire into the matter. To my surprise, it was not the rank and file, but rather company leaders Ri Tu Su and Kim ThaeK Hwan, who frankly confessed that they had disobeyed my order not to smoke the previous night. When they buckled to any task, they habitually rolled a cigarette.

I sternly reasoned with them.

“Today I will not dwell on the need to refrain from smoking. What would have happened to our unit, if the enemy had surprised us last night on seeing your lit cigarettes or smelling the smell of your cigarette smoke?”

“The anti-Japanese war we are now waging is a war of will power and discipline. This war represents a serious confrontation between our revolutionary will to liberate our country and the aggressive ambitions of the enemy to legalize and perpetuate its occupation of another country. We are now winning victory after victory in this confrontation, for the very reason that our will and discipline are stronger than those of the enemy and that we are incomparably

superior to the enemy both politically and morally.

“What will happen, if such feeble-minded people as you frequently appear in our ranks? A military group with lax discipline and a weak will is doomed to defeat in a battle with the enemy.

“You pose as rare habitual smokers, but there are many heavy smokers, among ordinary soldiers, too. When you smoke, they also want to smoke. However, not a single rank-and-file soldier smoked on the march last night.

“What does this mean? It means that you consider yourselves special. There can be no privileged individuals in the case of military discipline. But you behaved yourselves as if you were special. If we permit such a behaviour, this would mean that we condoned privileges for commanders. We do not admit privileges. If we were to admit them, the rank and file would not trust their superiors. In that case only unity between the officers and men and the spirit of defending the cadres and taking loving care of the men will suffer a loss. Is your mistake serious or not?”

Ri Tu Su and Kim ThaeK Hwan said that they were ready to face any punishment, because their error was serious.

“I could punish you. However, that would be facile. I sincerely advise you not to repeat the same mistake. Regard this advice as punishment itself.”

That day I assigned Ri Tu Su as “head of the no-smoking corps.”

At around that time the orderly of regimental political commissar Kim Phyong advocated equality between the rank and file and their superiors, an extreme and undisciplined claim, vitiating the atmosphere in the ranks. Ho Pom Jun, the orderly, was a veteran, who was somewhat aged and had joined the armed struggle comparatively early. He had previously been my orderly, but Kim Phyong had taken him to his regiment, saying that he was not suitable for an orderly at Headquarters, because he was too slow. Kim Phyong sent his orderly Ri Kwon Haeng to Headquarters as successor to Ho Pom Jun.

Once he had been put under the command of Kim Phyong, Ho Pom Jun caused troubles from time to time, answering back to his

commanders. When he was sent on a liaison mission by regimental commanders, he was sometimes disobedient. At their wits' ends, the commanders submitted Ho Pom Jun's matter to the superiors. If such a matter had been overlooked, comradeship between the rank and file and their superiors might have been damaged and the spirit of defending cadres might have flagged.

Taking due account of the aforementioned reasons and the new situation in our People's Revolutionary Army, we drafted and proclaimed the provisional regulations of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army.

I think it was around the end of 1936, for this was the time when Kim Ju Hyon was busying himself, saying that we should not make light of the first lunar New Year's Day we would celebrate in Mt. Paektu. Kim Phyong had compiled the draft, but it lacked the attributes of provisional regulations. Therefore, we made another draft consisting of 15 articles. We termed the document "Provisional Regulations," as we planned to supplement and perfect them in future.

The provisional regulations of the KPRA clarified in detail the character and mission of our revolutionary army, as well as the regulations and codes of action, which should be observed by the commanders and men in their everyday lives.

In the provisional regulations we paid particular attention to the problem of relations between the army and people and between the officers and men. This can be seen from the fact that all the articles of these regulations emphasize the popular character of our revolutionary army.

"This army shall be the KPRA, which fights against Japanese imperialism and its lackeys and for the restoration of the country and the freedom and liberation of the people."

This was the first article of the regulations.

The second article of the regulations laid down the organizational principle of our People's Revolutionary Army, stating that it was a genuinely revolutionary army of the Korean people organized by their fine sons and daughters.

The regulations described in the following manner relations between the army and people.

“Given that ‘fish cannot live without water,’ this army shall fight for the restoration of the country and emancipation of the people, defending and protecting the lives and property of the people and sharing life and death, good times and bad with them and in concert with them.”

The article on unity between the officers and men read as follows:

“The commanders and men of this army shall voluntarily observe military discipline and public morality in the spirit of protecting of the cadres and taking loving care of the men, as well as unity between the officers and men.”

The provisional regulations also included an article, which stipulated that the property of the Japanese imperialists and their stooges should be confiscated and appropriated for the anti-Japanese war and that some of it should be used to help the poor. Furthermore, the provisional regulations included an article, stipulating that a common front would be formed with those units, which desired to conduct joint operations with the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army as well as with those countries and peoples, which sympathized with this army.

The provisional regulations also defined the military structure of the People’s Revolutionary Army and the authority of Headquarters, with regards to the appointment and dismissal of the commanders at all levels; in addition they laid down the qualifications for joining the army, the procedure for entering and leaving the army, as well as all acts subject to punishment.

The provisional regulations prescribed the flag, badge and star of the military cap, of the KPRA.

The aim of the provisional regulations was clear: To attain without fail the historic cause of national restoration, which the people yearned for, by our own efforts, without encroaching upon the interests of the people, the army and people, as well as the officers and men, becoming one and displaying the revolutionary spirit of

self-reliance and strenuous efforts.

One basic emotion ran through the provisional regulations: love. In other words, love for the people, men and commanders should be regarded as an iron rule.

According to my experience, unity between the army and people or the officers and men comprises identity of thoughts and feelings, which cannot be achieved merely with regulations and principles. To achieve this goal, human feelings of caring and doing something for the good of others should be simultaneously shared between the army and people, between the officers and men, and between the rank and file and their superiors. The human feelings of love for each other and consideration of one another as dear and valuable are strong ties, which solidly unite the people's ideas.

We can quite justly say that the provisional regulations of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army were not a rule or legal document used to control or supervise someone: they constituted an affectionate code of laws or charter, which linked the army and people as well as the commanders and men with warm feelings.

After the promulgation of the provisional regulations of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, we made sure that all the commanders and men observed them strictly. Following the promulgation of these regulations, relations between the army and people and between the officers and men improved, becoming more cordial and unbreakable.

Even in difficult circumstances, when we the commanders and the men were threatened with death from hunger and cold, we did not recklessly lay hands on any property of the people. And when we dug even a few potatoes, without obtaining the owner's consent in unavoidable circumstances, we left a written apology and money, which was several times more than the cost, either at the edge of the field or in the potato cellar.

When we entered a village, our first thought was to help the people. We never hoped to be entertained.

Even now I cannot forget what happened when our unit stopped at a village in Ershidaogou, Changbai County.

At that time, too, I put up at a small straw-thatched house, which looked the poorest in the village. In that house an old couple aged over sixty were living, bringing up their little grandson as the apple of their eyes. Their son was said to have died before his time while working as a raftsman, while their daughter-in-law had died of typhoid fever. Rain was leaking from the ceiling of their house, which lacked able-bodied people. The thatched roof had decayed and the earthen porch had crumbled. Consequently the house looked jumbled, as if uninhabited. On the first day I cut, together with my orderlies, some ten bundles of grass on the hill at the back of the village, replaced the roof and also repaired the earthen porch.

At the dead of night a chicken could suddenly be heard flapping its wings. I looked out, wondering if a weasel was taking away the chicken. The old man of the house was taking the chicken out of the hen coop with the help of his wife, who was holding a lit pine-knot. When I asked him why he was doing this at midnight, he said that he needed it urgently. There were only three chickens in the hen coop, and the old man took out two of them. One was a cock, while the other was a fat hen. In daytime we heard how the hen cackled for a good while after laying an egg. The old man tied up the two feet of the hen and the cock with a string. He put the hen into the kitchen and went out through the twig gate holding the cock under his arm. His wife followed him; I don't know why. They did not come back in even two or three hours.

I waited for them, sitting on the earthen porch. The old couple only made their appearance towards daybreak. They were extremely crestfallen. The cock was still under the old man's arm.

"Old man, where have you been, and why have you only come back now?"

"We've been to all fifty-odd houses of the village," said the old man, putting the cock down on the earthen porch.

I asked him why they had taken such trouble in the middle of the night.

"We learned that the name of your Commander is Kim Il Sung. So we've been looking for the house, where he is boarding and lodging,

but failed to find it.”

“Why are you looking for that house?”

“We want to tell your Commander about your commendable deed and bow low to him. Indebted as we are to you, we can’t sit back with folded arms, can we? We wish to treat your Commander at least to a rooster, although it’s nothing special, but. ...”

The old couple had first gone to the landlord in the village. He said that he expected the Commander to be staying in the largest house in the village.

They also visited the house of the landlord’s agent, the second largest one in the village. Then they visited, one after another, all fifty-odd houses of the village. The old man said that all the villagers had treated him and his wife badly, because they lived in poverty with no one to rely on.

“It is true that we can’t appear before your Commander in these clothes. However, they’re going too far. Some even went so far as to tease us, saying, ‘Well, he’s in your house, and yet you’re looking for him here!’ Tell me, please, which house is your Commander staying at?”

It was clear that, even after visiting the whole village, the old man could not imagine that the man he was anxiously looking for was putting up at his own house. As the old man was very much anxious to learn my whereabouts, I disclosed my identity. But the old man did not believe me. He said that it could not be true.

He said: “In the past when the soldiers of the Independence Army frequented my village, even a company commander used to stay in the largest house, making people slay an ox and hold a drinking party. How can the Commander stop at such a humble house as mine? Moreover, how can the Commander replace our roof, repair our earthen porch and enjoy sorghum gruel? Clearly you also despise us and conceal his whereabouts,” he went on, greatly displeased.

The old man acknowledged my identity only after hearing the truth from my orderly the following day. We barely managed to dissuade the old couple from killing their rooster for us and left the village. Similar

incidents happened on many occasions.

The provisional regulations of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army demonstrated our great viability in consolidating unity between the army and people.

If we had failed to establish in our ranks the spirit of loving the people and serving them devotedly, we would not have endured the manifold hardships and might have abandoned the revolution halfway in those stern and trying days, when the destiny of the People's Revolutionary Army and our own existence was constantly at risk.

After the promulgation of the provisional regulations of the KPRA, a new advance was also made in the unity between the officers and men in our revolutionary army.

As the commanders we got into the habit of sharing good times and bad with the men. When the men ate gruel, so did the commanders; when the men slept on tree leaves in the snow, so did the commanders.

All the commanding personnel of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, from the Commander down to platoon leaders, strictly guarded against and opposed the "small pot."

The terms "large pot" and "small pot" emerged in the Kuomintang Army of Chiang Kai-shek. In this army an officer regarded it as natural to have food specially prepared in a small pot separately from the large one, where ordinary men prepared their meals. The Japanese army went to extremes, strictly discriminating between the rank and file and their superiors and unconditionally treating the superiors with preference and categorically treating the rank and file coldly. In this army, when one rose to at least the rank of corporal, one did as one pleased, enforcing such barbarous discipline and punishment to the rank and file as making them lick the soles of his feet or shoes.

The KPRA never permitted such a "small pot." If there is a "small pot," it will inevitably engender a special section, which will enjoy the privilege of eating special food. Then a difference will inevitably be created between this special section and the rank and file, who have to eat from a large pot. If someone exercises discrimination and fosters inequality in food, but talks glibly about equality for all, no one will

support and follow such a hypocrite.

We made it an iron rule for all the commanders, irrespective of rank, to share with the rank and file food from the same pot at all times, in all places and in all circumstances. Everyone shared food from the same pot: this constituted the inviolable discipline and ethics of the People's Revolutionary Army.

As everyone shared the same food, clothing and bedding, the commanders authorized to take care of the men, were frequently given less to eat, dressed more poorly and had worse bedding than the men.

Today we also oppose the "small pot." Although this happened long ago, at one time many restaurants in the capital and provinces kept a separate room to serve cadres with special food. Although the central authorities warned them many times to refrain from maintaining a separate room, the people working in public service persisted in keeping a "small pot." In the end such individuals, who were being disloyal to the people, assumed the air of being special.

Some officials, guided by their subordinates to a separate room or reception room for distinguished guests, considered it natural and wanted to receive special treatment.

We do not support the "small pot," as this will engender all kinds of "evil spirits." The "small pot" will only produce capitalist ideas. If we were to retain such a "small pot," relations between the Party and the masses would be impaired and the people might forsake their belief in socialism. The strength of our socialism has to do mainly with the fact that our Party has not become bureaucratic and we do not allow the "small pot."

Loyalty to the people always underlies all policies formulated and carried out by the Workers' Party of Korea. Loyalty to the people is the main factor underlying the character of our Party, army and state. Through our own experience we have confirmed the truth that a party or an army, which considers loyalty to the people as the main mode of existence, is ever-victorious. The existence of a handful of privileged circles is not humanism; it is open expression of the anti-popular spirit.

In a capitalist army genuine relations between the army and people,

between comrades and between the rank and file and their superiors do not exist, nor can they exist. Only coercion, deception, conflict, confrontation, blind obedience and belief can exist. Sadly in the army of an imperialist state it is difficult to find, even among rank and file, the beautiful trait inherent in human beings, the trait of serving others' interests and caring for others.

“Eat first. If you don't eat him, he'll eat you!” This is the philosophy of life which officers in the armies of capitalist countries use to indoctrinate their men. According to this philosophy, all other beings except “myself” are enemies and should be eaten up. Allegedly, towards the end of the Second World War, the Japanese soldiers on the New Guinean front caught human beings and ate their flesh, when they ran out of food.

Even today the armies of capitalist countries foster a brutal mode of life, the “law of the jungle,” among the soldiers.

The unity between the army and people and between the officers and men was further consolidated during the implementation of the provisional regulations of the KPRA. The traditions of this unity are now being implemented in full under the correct leadership of our Party.

The soldiers of our People's Army regard it as their greatest pleasure to love and help the people. Now it is commonplace everywhere in our country that the army helps the people and the people assist the army.

As we frequently hear and see in newspapers and on TV, our girls volunteer to become the eyes and limbs of disabled soldiers, who were wounded while defending their country. I feel the greatest happiness at seeing the unity between the army and people, which is displayed more fully with the passage of time.

The People's Army continues to consolidate the traditions of unity between the officers and men.

Today the commanding officers of our People's Army treasure and love their men like their children or younger brothers. Many of them have rescued their men heroically at the risk of their own lives. The

men regard their company commander as their eldest brother and company political instructor as their eldest sister. Relations between the rank and file and their superiors in the company, the main combat unit of our People's Army, are so close.

Our country has a powerful weapon which we can justifiably be proud of in the eyes of the world. I am referring here to the unity between the army and people and the unity between the officers and rank and file.

Such a powerful weapon cannot be made by any military science or technology. It can only be made by genuine love.

## 7. A Written Warranty for a Good Citizen

In March 1937, on the eve of the Xigang meeting, I dispatched Kim Jong Suk to Taoquanli.

That year the organizations in various places were requesting that I send able workers; Ri Je Sun, Pak Tal, Kwon Yong Byok and Kim Jae Su all asked me to send them political workers. To honour such requests, I dispatched Kim Jong Suk to Taoquanli.

Whereas the underground network connecting Xinxingcun, where Ri Je Sun lived, to the Khunungdengi village, where Pak Tal lived, was a route, which enabled us to expand the network of our underground organizations to the whole region of North Hamgyong Province and the eastern region of South Hamgyong Province, the underground network linking Taoquanli to Sinpha could be called the route we used to ramify such a network to the western and southern areas of South Hamgyong Province and the inland area of the homeland. Situated at the centre of the Xiagangqu area in Changbai County, Taoquanli could serve as a central base for expanding the network of the ARF to the vast areas of southern Manchuria, including Linjiang County, to say nothing of the Xiagangqu area, and for establishing contacts in the network.

Sinpha, located opposite to Taoquanli, was a suitable place for establishing a relationship with the industrial region of Hungnam, where a large army of our country's working class was concentrated; it could serve as a good stepping-stone for ramifying the network of our underground organizations to the southern region on the east coast and deep into the inland.

We also attached special importance to Sinpha, because we believed that it provided a chance to open with considerable ease a route to the underground organizations in the homeland.

Jang Hae U (alias Jang Hyo Ik) lived in Sinpha. Some visitors to our secret camp had told me that he seemed to have degraded into a petty bourgeois after his release from prison; however, this represented a subjective estimation of the people of other localities, who had a poor understanding of the underground world of Sinpha. Kwon Yong Byok informed me that Jang Hae U had not been reduced to a petty bourgeois and was in fact engaged in the revolution and had already made contacts with Kim Jae Su.

Jang Hae U had enjoyed the favour of independence campaigners. Maintaining close ties with my father, he had frequented Maritime Province in Russia, where many independence fighters and exiles were concentrated. On these occasions he would stay in my house for a night or two. Whenever he visited my house, my father would take meals at the same table, serving him wine; I cannot forget it.

I had heard of his arrest in the mid-1920s for his links with the independence movement and prison term, but had not learned about the length of his imprisonment and the circumstances of his switch from nationalist to communist movement. I only discovered after liberation that he had been sentenced to seven years in prison, but had been released after two years by the “amnesty” to mark the accession of Hirohito to the Japanese throne.

The presence of Jang Hae U, a very experienced worker in the revolutionary movement and my intimate friend through my father, in Sinpha constituted a good omen for our future work. Later I heard of him from the underground organization in Taoquanli, which confirmed that his thoughts seemed to have remained unchanged and that there had been little change in his temperament. If we came in contact with Jang, we could open a reliable route to the homeland.

Who should we dispatch for work with Jang Hae U? Who could carve out with comparative ease a promising route to the homeland? Kim Phyong and I racked our brains to select the right person for the job. Kim Phyong, political commissar of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment, was at the same time in charge of the secret work of dispatching political operatives.

One evening, when it was snowing, I called Kim Phyoung to the campfire at a bivouac. At that time we were marching northward, to the secret camp in Yangmudingzi, Fusong County, over the Duoguling. His lean face seemed to have become quite haggard from successive battles and marches in the snow.

“Have you decided which person is fit for opening the Sinpha route?” I was asking him the same question as a few days earlier. So far he had failed to provide a good response. However, this time he seemed to be brimming over with confidence.

“Yes, I have. ‘Black Jong Suk’ seems the best choice.”

His answer surprised me, as she was the same nominee as the one I had in mind.

“Black Jong Suk” means Kim Jong Suk. In my unit there were three girl soldiers with the name of Jong Suk—Jang Jong Suk, Pak Jong Suk and Kim Jong Suk. When someone called, “Comrade Jong Suk!” the three of them would commonly answer in chorus, “Here!” This frequently provoked merry laughter, but also created inconveniences and confusion. Consequently their comrades-in-arms distinguished them by calling them respectively “Gallant Jong Suk,” “Blue Jong Suk” and “Black Jong Suk.” “Gallant Jong Suk” was the nickname of Jang Jong Suk, named after her habit of breathing heavily when working and marching. Some veterans recall that she was nicknamed in that way, as she was always courageous and gallant. (The Korean words for “To be gallant” and “To breathe heavily” are pronounced the same—Tr.) I think both opinions are correct. Pak Jong Suk’s nickname of “Blue Jong Suk” originated from the blue skirt, which she had worn when she joined the guerrillas. The origin of Kim Jong Suk’s nickname, “Black Jong Suk,” is identical. She had worn a black skirt, the only one she had had during her life in the guerrilla zone, until the day of her admission to the revolutionary army.

“Can she handle the serious task of breaking fresh ground in Sinpha?” I asked Kim Phyoung, as I wanted to know what had made him pick Kim Jong Suk.

“When I carried out party work in Badaogou in Yanji County, she worked in the Young Communist League under my guidance. She is prudent in every undertaking. Moreover, she is experienced in political work in the Women’s Company. I am afraid I don’t know her own feelings on this matter. ...”

I voiced the same opinion. For all that, I still did not thoroughly understand the person in Kim Jong Suk. Only one year had passed since she had been assigned to my unit. She and I had lived in this ruined nation in different places and immersed ourselves in the revolution through different channels. I had first heard her name in Macun in Xiaowangqing. The children’s art troupe members from Beidong, Wangyugou, to Wangqing had mentioned her name now and then along with that of Yun Pyong Do. The butterfly-like children had harboured great illusions about the instructor of their Children’s Corps. In later years Ri Sun Hui, recalled from the post of the chief of the children’s affairs bureau in Yanji County and appointed to the same post in Wangqing County, frequently remembered her. Yun Pyong Do had also talked about her now and then. The common name “Jong Suk” which a man would come across once or twice at every village, consequently found its way into my memory. According to all the assessments of other people about her, she was quite daring and persevering and at the same time kind-hearted and unusually sympathetic. My understanding of Kim Jong Suk in the days in Wangqing had been limited to these generalizations.

When the art troupe of the Children’s Corps in Yanji County visited Wangqing, I sent them 40 red ties as a present. I was told that Kim Jong Suk, YCL committee member of the district No. 8 and head of the art troupe of the Children’s Corps in the county, had been quite moved by the present.

Kim Jong Suk was the only soldier of the 4<sup>th</sup> Company in the Maanshan Secret Camp, whom the Leftists could not rashly stigmatize as a member of the “Minsaengdan.” Nevertheless, the Leftists assigned her to the company of “Minsaengdan” suspects for no reason at all. They apparently thought that she should live with the “guilty”

Koreans, as she was a Korean no matter whether she was under suspicion or not.

However, she accepted this willingly. She was determined to share her fate with her comrades-in-arms, who had been falsely charged. She did not feel ashamed to be living in the same quarters as the “Minsaengdan” suspects. Later on in life I came to realize why that little, ordinary girl guerrilla of inconspicuous appearance, won the favour of the whole company.

Kim Jong Suk lived for other people, not for herself. She devoted her entire life to others. She always took care of other people at her expense. Whenever she was served food, she would share it with soldiers with bulkier bodies or with young soldiers. The young curly-haired soldier of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, 4<sup>th</sup> Company, who was said to have been a bosom friend of her younger brother, Ki Song, must have eaten her share more than anyone else. She would mend the torn uniforms and shoes of male soldiers, when everybody else had gone to bed. Devotion to her comrades and the common cause was the nucleus of her personality and personal charm.

Rim Chun Chu, Kim Jong Phil, Pak Su Hwan and other guerrillas from Yanji had told me on many occasions that in the days, when the whirlwind of the anti-“Minsaengdan” campaign was sweeping the whole of eastern Manchuria, a young girl had stealthily brought food everyday to the “Minsaengdan” suspects behind bars in Nengzhiying, and that the sufferers, who had been falsely charged, had escaped death from hunger thanks to her efforts. That young girl had been none other than Kim Jong Suk. If it had been revealed that she had brought food to the “Minsaengdan” suspects, she would have been stigmatized as a “Minsaengdan” member.

I had first seen her at the guerrilla zone in Sandaowan. In Mengjiang in spring 1936 I heard in detail the story of her life and family. One day I went out to the riverside, looking round the sentries, with a light heart as I had finished writing my report for the Donggang meeting. I could hear clear singing, full of nostalgia. I went upstream, where the singing voices were ringing out and found two women

soldiers rinsing out the wash in a willow grove. One of them was Kim Jong Suk.

That day I learned that she had been born in Hoeryong, North Hamgyong Province, and that her family had left the hometown and emigrated to Manchuria when she was five or six years old.

The people in Hoeryong are proud that their native place is a scenic spot in North Hamgyong Province. During the anti-Japanese revolution this historic place, known as one of the six border points, was designated conspicuously on our operations map as a military strategic point, the seat of the headquarters of the 75<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Ranam 19<sup>th</sup> Division of the Japanese army, and an air corps.

The Hoeryong people take great pride in the fact that such a talented cinema actor as Ra Un Gyu and a renowned poet as Jo Ki Chon were born there. They also speak highly of their hometown as the famous production centre of white apricots. All visitors of Hoeryong in the bloomy spring will see the whole town covered with white apricot flowers.

However, Kim Jong Suk had only lived in that beautiful place for a few years. As she began to understand the world, she would stare at the barren mountains and fields of north Jiandao, where the mounted bandits were roaming, raising clouds of dust.

Kim Jong Suk was bereaved of her parents, sister and brothers one after the other. Her father was an independence fighter, who had undergone trials in the enemy's gaols; he had received serious frostbite during the arduous struggle. He suffered from the illness only to die an early death. At the last moments of his life, he requested that his dear daughter, Jong Suk, open the window. Then he looked out at the southern sky with tears in his eyes, saying, "I wanted to be buried in Korea and thereby fertilize the soil of Korea. I am afraid I can't fulfil that wish. Wherever you go, don't forget your home village and Korea. And fight for Korea."

When she turned 15, the aggressors who had turned the whole of Jiandao into a bloodbath, pounced on Fuyandong, set the village on fire and cold-bloodedly killed her mother and the wife of her elder brother.

The wife of her elder brother left her a suckling baby. From that day she began to beg for breast milk for the baby. She would go round other people's houses several times a day, carrying her nephew who was crying for milk, and even went to a neighbouring village more than four kilometres away to beg for milk.

She had to part from the nephew she had raised with such care. When she was going to the guerrilla zone, her elder brother, Kim Ki Jun, who had to go to a mine in Badaogou to conduct underground activities, took the baby from her bosom by force. She was determined to take her nephew to the guerrilla zone, but her brother did not allow her to do so. So she postponed her departure for a day. At dawn the next day the enemy's "punitive" force suddenly swarmed into the village. At the gun fire, she carried the baby in her arms and ran up the mountain. She planned to go to the guerrilla zone on the way. Her brother followed her panting and scolded her for being ill-prepared for the revolution. He said: "You should think of the revolution before anything else, as you have embarked on the road of the revolution. How can you wage a revolution, when you think only of your family? Don't worry about the baby."

He took the crying baby in his arms and climbed down to the valley without looking back. Apparently he felt like crying so much, despite the harsh remarks, that he could not look back at his younger sister. This marked the life-long parting between sister and brother.

Kim Jong Suk never saw her brother and nephew. Her brother was arrested during his underground work in the mine; he was tortured to death. Her nephew disappeared without leaving his whereabouts. Her younger brother, Ki Song, her only flesh and blood, was shot dead by enemy bullets, while luring the enemy's "punitive" force with a bugle of the Children's Corps, in order to rescue the people of Cangcaicun on the move from Fuyandong to the guerrilla zone in Sandaowan.

Even after liberation she would shed tears at the thought of her younger brother. Whenever she saw teenagers on the streets, she would heave a silent sigh, thinking that her nephew, if he was alive, would have been that age.

After consulting Kim Phyoung, I called Kim Jong Suk to Headquarters.

“Comrade Kim Jae Su has made several requests, through messengers, for more people skilled in underground work. Although agile and experienced in underground activities, he seems to be experiencing great difficulties as the area under his charge is so vast. He is extremely anxious about failing in his work with women. He says that, in order to involve the women in the underground organizations, he has to work efficiently with the elderly, who are controlling them, and that this is no easy job. You must base yourself in Taoquanli and provide guidance for the work with the women in the Xiagangqu area, offering active assistance to Kim Jae Su.

“After improving the work there, cross the river to Sinpha and, while maintaining relations with Jang Hae U, build up a solid network of underground organizations in the Samsu area. Then, try to rapidly expand the network of the organizations of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland in such industrial towns on the east coast as Hungnam, Hamhung, Pukchong, Tanchon, Songjin and Wonsan, and in rural and fishermen’s villages.

“The creation of secret organizations in the homeland is far more dangerous and difficult than work among the masses in Changbai under the protection of the People’s Revolutionary Army. Take care and work efficiently.

“We are confident that you can carry out this challenging task. Whenever you face difficulties, please rely on the comrades and people.”

These are some of the things I said to Kim Jong Suk when dispatching her to Taoquanli.

The line of our operations had already begun to be stretched since late summer 1936 in Taoquanli area. According to Jong Tong Chol, when the news of the Berlin Olympic Games reached as far as the mountainous village of Taoquanli, a strange “gambler,” named Kim Won Dal, had appeared in the Xiagangqu area and begun to make gambling popular among young people; he had told gamblers mostly

that the Koreans were first and third in the marathon event during the Olympic Games, but that the Japanese flags had been hoisted on the flag poles at the time of the prize ceremony.

The short, agile, intelligent-looking young “gambler” was Kim Jae Su, a political worker we had dispatched there. He had a peculiar fighting history, reminiscent of an adventure story. First chairman of the Wangyugou soviet government, secretary of the Yanji County Party Committee, head of the organizational department of the East Manchuria Special District Party Committee—these positions marked his career moves in the first half of the 1930s, which can be condensed in a few words.

Then, an event had happened, which might otherwise have checked his normal career. When the East Manchuria Special District Party Committee moved to Luozigou, he had been arrested along with another member of the committee and dragged to the military police. They had made Kim Jae Su and Zhu Ming write letters of conversion and given them tasks, forcing them to help them in their work respectively.

They said, “Don’t tell anybody that you have been arrested by us, and continue your work in the special district party committee. Continue to form revolutionary organizations. We will not care. If you regularly hand over the lists of new members, we’ll be satisfied.”

The enemy was overcome with delight that cadres at the special district party committee had been converted. In fact, Kim Jae Su had merely pretended to convert and given a false pledge in order to resume his work in the revolution. He had taken secret documents and funds for his work from the enemy and frankly reported the particulars of the event to the committee. Zhu Ming, who had subsequently gone to the committee had cheated his organization, just as the enemy had instructed. In return the committee had duly punished him.

Kim Jae Su had been pardoned, but expelled from the party ranks. His political integrity had been undermined. He had also been debased in the moral aspect. Deprived of everything in a day and forced out of the fighting ranks, he had hidden himself away in a mountain village

and groaned in agony, repenting of the false conversion, which was proving worse than death.

In the world of revolutionaries, who regard adherence to the faith, will, mental and moral integrity of communists in any adversity as the greatest honour and virtue, false conversion is recognized as an inexcusable crime. This is because, even if one makes a bogus conversion, it will provide the enemy with a clue for counterpropaganda, give the real betrayers a precedent and pretext for their betrayal. It is indeed true that, even if one maintains one's conscience and loyalty as a revolutionary, declaration of conversion to the enemy does not merit praise.

Kim Jae Su had acted against the noble moral norm of revolutionaries, proceeding from the simple thought that it was OK, as long as he remained alive by cheating the enemy and then continued the revolution. On hearing how I had burned the bundle of the "Minsaengdan" documents at Maanshan and had relieved some 100 men and women from being suspected as guilty, he visited me after much mental suffering and told me that he wanted to prove his innocence in the practical struggle. At that time he had appealed in this way, beating his own chest, "Either kill me or spare my life; it's up to you. But I want to be involved in the revolution. I can't bear it any longer."

I had trusted him. I had authorized him to conduct underground activities and sent him to the area on Xiagangqu in Changbai County. I was confident that he would never again leave a stain on his career. His frankness with the organization provided patent proof that he had preserved his revolutionary conscience. I believed this conscience. Although he had once made a false conversion owing to narrow thought, it was clear that he would never again take the shameful path at the cost of his life, as he had realized and experienced the disgrace of his act.

He had infiltrated Taoquanli via Tianshangshui under a pseudonym. At first he had organized gambling to become acquainted with Jong Tong Chol, Kim Tu Won, and Kim Hyok Chol (alias Kim

Pyong Guk), introduced to him as reliable men by Ri Yong Sul, head of an ARF chapter in Tianshangshui. No one in the Xiagangqu area could rival him in gambling. When gambling he would put wristlets on his forearms and hoodwinked the others by putting in and taking out cards from the wristlets with lightning speed. When he made the highest score, he would hum *Orang* ballad.

The elderly with no inside information had complained that the prodigal was spoiling the young men. However, while they made a fuss, the organization had grown in the gambling den. The organization had subsequently turned out to be a core organization of the Xiagangqu ARF committee, Changbai County. Thanks to his energetic activities, the ARF organizations had been formed in nearly all the villages in the area centring on Taoquanli by early 1937, and later a paramilitary corps had also been organized.

Kim Jong Suk, dispatched to Taoquanli, made first contacts with Kim Jae Su at Ri Yong Sul's house, which was called by the people in Tianshangshui as "inner village house." Ri's was an unusually big family of eight brothers and sisters. The Tianshangshui chapter of the ARF had been organized in this house, and was headed by Ri Yong Sul, the fourth brother of the family.

We owed a great deal to that family. Many of our comrades had received much help from them on their way to localities for work. I put up at their house on three occasions from the end of 1936 to summer 1937; on my first visit I stayed for three days. Although they were struggling to make both ends meet by slash-and-burn farming, they were very generous.

Ri's eldest brother had two seals of our unit prepared on Kim Jae Su's request and sent them to us. We used the seals for a fairly long time.

Staying in the "inner village house" for about 15 days, Kim Jong Suk helped the work of the ARF chapter and at the same time prepared to work under the guise of a civilian.

Assuming the pseudonym of Om Ok Sun, she went to Taoquanli as a member of a family immigrating from Musan. A black red jacket,

long, serge skirt and knee-high padded socks were the trademarks of the first appearance of Om Ok Sun, the “baby of Musan house,” in front of the Taoquanli people. People hailing from Hamgyong Province would call any young lady a baby.

Taoquanli was a mountainous village about 12 kilometres away from Sinpha. According to Wi In Chan, who had lived since birth in one place in Taoquanli for over 20 years, the independence fighters, who had crossed the river from Korea immediately after the “annexation of Korea by Japan,” had been the first inhabitants of this village.

Until the beginning of 1930, it had been under the influence of the Independence Army. Later on, following the mass immigration of the pioneers of the peasant union movement from the homeland, the ideological trend of communism began to gain the upper hand in the area of Taoquanli. From the latter half of 1936, small units of the KPRA frequented the area, exerting revolutionary influence on the inhabitants. Taoquanli and the surrounding area were covered with ARF organizations.

Frequent visits by the People’s Revolutionary Army and its successive victories in Taoquanli and its vicinity heightened the spirits of the people and imbued them with fighting zeal. Indeed, they struck terror in the hearts of the enemy.

Here is one episode to illustrate how frightened the enemy were.

There was a spring in front of the school in Taoquanli. The spring water was so cold that if you drank it on a boiling summer day, you could feel your teeth chatter. On hearing that the spring water was especially good, the Japanese police weighed it on scales to explain why. It was heavier than ordinary water.

“Such spring makes the eyes of the Taoquanli scoundrels dark and sparkling. They are all associates of the guerrillas.”

The enemy attempted to close up the spring. On learning of this news, Jong Tong Chol, the village head, said to the policemen, “The guerrillas drink this spring water on their way. If they find out that the spring has been closed up, won’t they bring you to account?”

The enemy did not dare close up the spring.

In brief, the mass foundation of Taoquanli was favourable and the revolutionary force enjoyed the upper hand.

Although busy with farm work, Kim Jong Suk visited other people's houses at nights to become acquainted with them. Then she familiarized herself with the names of the houses—Pukchong house, Kapsan house, Hungnam house and so on. She mentioned later on that she had learned by heart the names of the villagers and their houses in a week. She regarded this trivial matter as the first step to mixing with the people.

“After taking charge of a class, teachers familiarize themselves with the names of their pupils, from the roll call, in order to mix with the pupils. I felt that political operatives are no different from the teachers. How can they mix with the people, when they don't know their names?”

This is what Kim Jong Suk said to Kim Phyoung, after finishing her task in Taoquanli.

As instructed by Headquarters, she placed most emphasis on work with the women and made frequent contacts with them. Up until that point there was no women's organization in Taoquanli. Absorbed in household affairs, most women did not know what was happening in the world. To make matters worse, the old men and women severely restricted them. When any woman glimpsed into night school out of a desire to learn letters, the old men raised a fuss, as if a great disaster had happened.

Kim Jong Suk concluded that the revolutionary transformation of women in Taoquanli could only be expedited via efficient work with the elderly. Compared to the young, who were sensitive, the old people were bigots. Although they bemoaned their fate, they never thought about carving out their own destiny. Unless the old people were brought to their consciousness, the rallying of young people to organizations could not be conducted without a hitch. In fact, she had considerable trouble, owing to the old people and women on several occasions.

The experience of our activities in Jilin, Guyushu and Wujiazi testifies to this fact. As I have mentioned in a previous volume, the old man “Pyon Trotsky” had impeded our efforts to transform Wujiazi in a revolutionary manner. Until we won over the old man, we could neither transform Wujiazi in a revolutionary fashion or form any organization. It was only when we won over the old man that we could organize the Anti-Imperialist Youth League there. Hyon Ha Juk in Guyushu had been an important person in our work. As he had been a friend of my father’s and enjoyed great influence, I would drop first of all at his house, whenever I went to Guyushu, to say hello and convey my mother’s greetings to him.

Kim Jong Suk naturally respected and treated old people warmly. When I heard of her experience of work with the elderly in Taoquanli, I did not feel that the work had been deliberate. Kim Jong Suk did not regard people as one to be educated; she looked on them as simple and common men and women. Even if she met an individual she had to win over for her work, she did not consider him or her to be educated and herself as educator; she treated him or her just as she would attend to her tender neighbour. In this way she became the people’s daughter and their neighbour trusted by them. These were the basic characteristics of Kim Jong Suk as an underground operative.

As I myself have keenly experienced throughout my life, a man must think of himself as a son, servant and friend of the people to mix with them and at the same time regard them as his parents, brothers, sisters and teachers. Anyone who purports to be the teacher of the people, a bureaucrat reigning over them and leader governing them, cannot mix with them or enjoy their trust. The people do not open up their minds to such individuals.

Kim Jong Suk did not leave the house without doing anything, even if she had only dropped in for a minute; she chopped firewood, brought water and pounded grain with a mill for the family. Her devotion to the villagers was earnest enough to bring a flower into bloom on a rock. In this way, the old people began to follow her. She achieved the breakthrough in transforming Taoquanli in a revolutionary fashion.

One day the landlord in Liugedong banished his young kitchen maid, suffering from typhoid, into a hut on the mountain. Nobody dared to take care of that pitiable girl. On hearing this news, Kim Jong Suk went to the hut without hesitation and nursed her, sharing bed and meals with her.

Her comrades rushed to the hut on learning the news and tried to dissuade her, saying, “If you get infected in this risky humanitarian venture for the hopeless girl and something happens to you, what will happen to the important task assigned to you by Headquarters and who will be responsible? You can nurse her, but do not share her bed and meals.”

Smiling, Kim Jong Suk comforted them, saying, “Don’t worry, and please go back. If we can’t save a child for fear of our lives, how can we restore the country and rescue our fellow countrymen? I am determined to sacrifice my life for the sake of the people, so I fear nothing.”

Her comrades could not bring her out of the hut.

Kim Jong Suk rescued the young girl in the long run. At last the people in Taoquanli began to call her “our dear Ok Sun.” When they happened to get salted mackerel, they called for “our Ok Sun”; when a ceremony for a one-hundred-day-old baby was held, they asked for “our Ok Sun.” Kim Jong Suk was their daughter, granddaughter and sister and indispensable in their lives.

When she took tender care of the villagers, she paid deep attention, ensuring the safety of Kim Jae Su, who was busy accelerating the transformation of Xiaganqu in a revolutionary way.

In February that year, while distributing among the ARF organizations the *Samil Wolgan* we had sent from the mountain, Kim Jae Su was caught by the enemy holding one last copy. In the police station, he pretended to be illiterate and kept repeating, “I got it on the mountain, when I collected firewood. I’m going to roll tobacco with it. Why do you take it away? Please give it back to me immediately.”

Thinking that he was an ignoramus, they set him free for a while. However, they continued their investigations in secret.

After covering Xiagangqu area under the pseudonym of Kim Won Dal, Kim Jae Su had settled in the house of Ri Hyo Jun in the main hamlet of Taoquanli and changed his full name to Ri Yong Jun based on the common part of the name of Ri Hyo Jun, in order to disguise himself as his cousin.

Kim Jong Suk discussed with Kim Jae Su an effective way to put an end to the enemy's secret investigation. They reached agreement that the best method would be to demonstrate to the enemy "Ri Yong Jun's stupidity."

According to their script, a fuss was raised the next day in Ri Hyo Jun's house, disturbing the whole village. Ri Hyo Jun's young wife committed a scandalous act, beating with a paddle her husband's "cousin" dependent on her family, and expelling him. She wailed loudly, saying that her family was now as poor as a church mouse, because her husband's stupid cousin had constantly stolen her family's property for gambling.

At the same time as his wife's fuss, Ri Hyo Jun called in at the police station and said that his family had been ruined by his stupid cousin, who knew nothing other than gambling and implored them to strike his brother's name off the census record and expel him.

Meanwhile, the "stupid cousin" called in at the police station carrying a copy of the *Samil Wolgan* proudly and asked, "I'll give you this book you are fond of. But, for God's sake, dissuade Hyo Jun and his wife from beating and expelling me."

Wide-eyed at the *Samil Wolgan*, they asked him where he had got it.

Kim Jae Su replied that he had picked it up at Sanpudong, where the guerrillas and Japanese army had fought the other day, and said, "Frankly speaking, I got the book you took away from me the other day on that battlefield, but I cheated you into thinking that I got it on Mt. Baotai behind our village."

As the police reproved him seriously, glaring at him, he produced a ticker from his inside pocket and said, smiling:

"Tickers of this kind, fountain-pens, money and many other things

are spread all over the place; if this is known, others will get them. If you prevent my brother and his wife from expelling me, I will tell you where you can find them.”

This was enough to convince the police of his stupidity. Then the enemy stopped their secret investigation.

The forerunners of Taoquanli, including Jong Tong Chol, Ryu Yong Chan, Kim Hyok Chol and Ri Chol Su, and the revolutionary masses there made every effort to protect the underground activities of Kim Jong Suk and ensure her personal safety. They crossed the river to Sinpha for her sake and regularly brought her newspapers to read. Jong Tong Chol remitted money to the miscellaneous shopkeeper, a member of the underground organization in Sinpha, who in turn entered subscription for papers in his name and sent them, as soon as he received them, either by packing goods with them or in bulk. Kim Jong Suk thereby read regularly *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Joson Ilbo*.

On ceremonial occasions Jong Tong Chol invited Kim Jong Suk, to enable her to meet operatives from the guerrilla army and messengers from the secret organizations in other localities, who paid visits to Taoquanli.

In summer 1937 he arranged a ceremony in his house for the birth of his son. The ceremony was attended by several political workers, including “Blue Jong Suk” (Pak Jong Suk), who had been dispatched from the guerrilla army recently, the members of secret organizations, policemen, village heads and secret agents of the enemy. To disguise the operatives from the enemy, Jong Tong Chol asked them to bow to each other. Kim Jong Suk and Pak Jong Suk bowed to each other, according to convention. Kim Jong Suk kneeled down in front of “Blue Jong Suk” and made a bow, saying, “How do you do?” For that moment Jong Tong Chol had taught her to bow for days.

At nights Kim Jong Suk went to the well to practise putting a water jar on her head and walking with the jar on her head. She also practised riding on a swing for several nights for the *Tano* festival (the fifth day of May on the lunar calendar).

She regarded them all as essential steps to enable her to acquire the

status of woman underground worker.

She realized that the main link in the whole chain of her efforts to transform Taoquanli in a revolutionary fashion involved bringing the masses to their consciousness and rallying them to revolutionary organizations. She gave wide publicity to our revolutionary ideology through the “Ten-Point Programme of the ARF,” and organized leading core elements in stealth; she activated the core elements to form the Anti-Japanese Youth League and the Women’s Association. The mountainous village, which had been quiet, finally became a solid base for our activities. Wherever she went, Kim Jong Suk educated the people in the spirit of defending the army and loving the guerrillas; she prepared supply goods with members of the Women’s Association, youth and children and sent them to the guerrilla unit. She launched education to support the army so efficiently that even the Chinese settlers in Taoquanli from the Shandong region volunteered to send support goods to the People’s Revolutionary Army. The Children’s Corps members wandered the battlefields to collect bullets.

The highest form of the movement’s efforts to support the army involved joining the army. With the help of members of the Xiagangqu committee of the ARF, Kim Jong Suk selected from the core elements the young men she had gained good understanding of through organizations, and sent them to the People’s Revolutionary Army. As far as Jong Tong Chol can recall, over 100 young men and women joined the revolutionary army from the Xiagangqu area. In Taoquanli alone, more than ten men joined the guerrillas, including Kim Hyok Chol, Ryu Yong Chan, Ri Chol Su, Choe In Dok and Han Chang Bong. Han Chang Bong, the first generation of our revolution, led his regiment and crossed the River Raktong in the teeth of sacrifices during the great Fatherland Liberation War; his regiment occupied the heights on the opposite side of the river and rendered distinguished services in defending the heights.

Yun O Bok, chairwoman of the Women’s Association in Yaofangzi under the guidance of Kim Jong Suk and the mother of three children, came to our secret camp located more than 30 kilometres away,

carrying a two-year-old baby on her back, and importuned to be admitted to the guerrilla army.

Their enthusiasm for joining the army went so far that one family made a sham grave for their son who had joined the guerrillas and held memorial services for him in order to deceive the enemy, because its surveillance and oppression were so severe for guerrillas' families.

Shortly after the detection of Kim Jae Su's distribution of the *Samil Wolgan*, we dispatched Choe Hui Suk to Yaofangzi to support Kim Jong Suk's operation in Sinpha. As Choe arrived, Kim Jong Suk entrusted her with the task of providing guidance for the organizations of the women, young men and children in Taoquanli and other places in the Xiagangqu area. She preoccupied herself with the operation in Sinpha.

Her activity in Sinpha began with work with Jang Hae U, who was at that time involved in the anti-Japanese revolutionary movement in the Sinpha area with members of the Working Committee of Communists in Samsu. Around that time contacts were made between Jong Tong Chol, village head of Taoquanli and a special member of the ARF, and Jang Hae U, Rim Won Sam and So Jae Il, members of the Working Committee of Communists in Samsu. They began to communicate with each other.

So Jae Il, devoting himself to the work of the organization, while working as a washerman, kept up contacts with Kim Jong Suk.

To obtain a detailed understanding of Jang Hae U and his organizations, Kim Jong Suk made Jong Tong Chol swear brotherhood with Rim Won Sam, a member of Jang Hae U's organization. Only once she had sufficient understanding through Jong Tong Chol beforehand, did Kim Jong Suk make direct contact with Jang Hae U.

She first met him in the back room of Sokjon Tailor's. That day she conveyed my personal letter to him.

"You say General Kim Il Sung was Kim Song Ju in his childhood, a son of Mr. Kim Hyong Jik? I'll follow the General just as I followed Mr. Kim Hyong Jik."

When I received a report on this remark, I became certain that

Kim Jong Suk's operation in Sinpha would be successful.

Jang Hae U was not a petty revolutionary, who took into account other people's ages and the duration of their struggle or who was proud of himself or behaved narrow-mindedly. He followed and supported without any presumptions what was righteous. Putting to one side his own personal feelings, he joined the great duty and cause without hesitation; he was a man of such calibre.

Some time later he formed the Singalpha chapter of the ARF, involving members of the Working Committee of Communists in Samsu. In the same period, under the guidance of Kim Jae Su and Kim Jong Suk, a party branch of the Sinpha area was organized in the back room of Sokjon Tailor's, directly under the authority of the Party Committee of the KPRA with the Working Committee of Communists in Samsu as the parent body.

The meetings of the ARF chapter and the party branch were held mainly in Kwangson Photo Studio. The retouching room on the second floor of the studio was the secret liaison place, which Kim Jong Suk used most frequently.

Ri Sun Won, who ran the studio, was a core member of the Singalpha chapter of the ARF. He had attended a short course on photography in Seoul and opened the photo studio. He was good at photography, was popular and sociable; we would find it easy to work with the people if we included him in our work. He took snaps of a considerable amount of the enemy's data and sent them to us. On one occasion he sent us a snap of the view of Sinpha to help the People's Revolutionary Army's advance into the homeland. Plenty of leaflets were printed in his developing room. His wife was a faithful assistant, who tacitly backed the secret work of the organization.

As well as Kwangson Photo Studio, Kim Jong Suk used many places in the Sinpha area—Sokjon Tailor's, the noodle house near a well, Sinpha Inn, bowl shop, the watermill house—as secret liaison places and working places, and conducted underground activities, when she made secret visits to these places.

The noodle house beside the well, Sinpha Inn and bowl shop were

used mainly to make contacts and communicate with members of organizations. They also served as sites for the collection and storage of supply goods for the guerrillas.

The secret place on the main route used for transporting supply goods was the watermill house. Situated away from the streets of the county town, it was well out of the enemy's attention and therefore provided quite a convenient place for the storage and dispatch of goods. A relative of the host of the house was a raftsman, who could provide ready help in sending the supply goods over the River Amnok. The host of the watermill house and raftsman were both members of the ARF.

A considerable amount of supply goods were sent to us from Sinpha. As not that many goods were available in Shisandaogou, the organizations in the Xiagangqu area in Changbai County had to buy most supply goods in Sinpha across the Amnok.

Large quantities of supply goods, like grain and cloth, sent by the organizations in Sinpha area to the guerrillas, were carried over the Amnok by rafts or ferries mostly via the watermill house and the inn in Ohamdok. The family running the inn in Ohamdok was a special branch of the ARF.

During her activities in Taoquanli and Sinpha Kim Jong Suk went to Paektusan Secret Camp and Samsu, as well as such eastern coastal areas as Sinhung, Pukchong and Tanchon to conduct in-depth work with the revolutionaries there.

The secret liaison places in Aan-ri and Ohamdok were used mostly for sending operatives to other localities. Kim Jong Suk dispatched most members of secret revolutionary organizations to Pujon, Jangjin, Sinhung and Hungnam at the house of the head of the Aan-ri branch and those to Kapsan, Pukchong, Toksong and Tanchon at the secret liaison places in Ohamdok. At the secret place in Aan-ri she sent Wi In Chan's group to the Hungnam industrial area, with the task of forming secret revolutionary organizations there.

Kim Jong Suk travelled to these many secret places spread all over Sinpha area to expand organizations. She never used a fixed secret

place. By disguising herself, she skilfully used various secret liaison places and working places in turn, as it was convenient to conceal the organizations and also ensure her personal safety.

After her return from Taoquanli, I asked her to describe the methods she had employed to hide her true colours, as I had heard that the police in Sinpha were sharp-eyed, and the secret behind her free activities during her visits to Sinpha scores of times without arrest by the enemy.

Instead of answering she smiled; then she told me an anecdote of her shadowing by an enemy's agent.

“When I was entering the town from the Sinpha ferry, a man with a shabby straw hat on his head followed me. At first I didn't notice that he was shadowing me, but he still lingered behind me even in the town and I became suspicious. The man took out a cigarette, rather than tobacco, to while away the time in front of a restaurant. I felt even more suspicious when I saw the cigarette. Can poor peasants really afford cigarettes?”

As the enemy was shadowing her, she roamed about the alleys and went into the market; she quickly took a load from a woman familiar to her; the woman was carrying a heavy wicker on her head with a baby on her back. As a result she lost the enemy.

“My sense of responsibility ensured that I was not caught by the police or its agents. When I realized that I wouldn't be able to carry out the task assigned by Headquarters if I was caught, I felt myself growing braver. And the masses protected me at the cost of their lives.”

This remark of Kim Jong Suk constituted the resume of her activities in Taoquanli and Sinpha. The important secret behind her successful execution of the difficult task of underground work was indeed her sense of responsibility and involvement with the masses.

The wonderful creativity displayed by her in secret work in the enemy area emanated in the long run from such a sense of responsibility. When I dispatched her to Taoquanli, I had told her only to carry out tasks related to political operations, not any other tasks, to avoid overburdening her in her activities in the enemy area.

However, although she paid primary attention to the political work, Kim Jong Suk also frequently collected military information needed for the operations of our unit and sent it to Headquarters. She motivated the underground organizations in Taoquanli and Sinpha to collect large amounts of information. In particular such revolutionaries as Jong Tong Chol, Jang Hae U and Rim Won Sam supplied her with a lot of information.

Jong Tong Chol was a master hand in obtaining information. He swore brotherhood with the chiefs of the police station and customs office, the sub-county head and other leading personnel of the enemy's ruling organs, and collected information behind their backs, while maintaining "close relationships" with them. This sworn brotherhood involved the ruling hierarchy in Shisandaogou and even the policeman of the special political division dispatched from Sinpha. He frequently arranged parties for them, as well as opium-smoking for drug addicts.

The Xiagangqu committee of the ARF adroitly infiltrated its members into the enemy establishments. Allegedly two or three special members of the ARF made inroads into the sub-stations under the authority of the Shisandaogou police station. Most village heads and ten household heads, the servants in the lowest hierarchy of the enemy's administration, were involved in the revolutionary organizations.

Availing himself of the opportunity to work as a calligrapher in the regimental headquarters of the Jingan army, Rim Won Sam gathered a lot of military secrets. When the operations maps or statistical data, which could be used by the revolutionary army, were made available, he copied them quickly on paper and crumpled them into a ball, before throwing them into the waste basket; when incinerating the wastepaper at night, he would take them out and send them to his organization.

Kwangson Photo Studio and Sokjon Tailor's were also used on many occasions to gather information about the enemy's movements and make contacts. Some ARF members under the Sinpha chapter worked as clerks in such enemy establishments as sub-county offices and banking offices. They collected the enemy's information on a

regular basis and concentrated it in the photo studio and tailor's before reporting back to the organization. Through these secret places Kim Jong Suk amassed details on the movement of the troops, led by Kim Sok Won at the battle in Jiansanfeng and reported them to Headquarters in time, rendering a great contribution to the victory of the People's Revolutionary Army.

Kim Jong Suk instructed members of organizations to learn the strength of enemy troops and police stationed in the Sinpha area, the distribution of their military installations and their military equipment. She herself personally confirmed the width and depth of the River Amnok, the speed of its current and even the most favourable site for crossing the river and returning; she then made a rough sketch before sending it to us.

When I reviewed her work in Taoquanli, I highly praised such creative effort and asked her why she had located the sites for crossing the river and withdrawing. She replied that she believed our revolutionary army might one day attack Sinpha.

In summer 1937 Kim Jong Suk was arrested by the enemy.

The rolls of paper which Women's Association members in Taoquanli had prepared to send to our printing shop were detected during a search by Jingan army soldiers. This served as the prime reason behind her arrest. Kim Jong Suk offered the plausible excuse that she had bought the rolls of paper for the register of inhabitants, at the request of Jong Tong Chol, the village head, and had been keeping them. Her unflinching appearance and logical answer aggravated the enemy. The enemy officer, dumbfounded and enraged, said that she must be a spy of the revolutionary army as she was fearless and spoke glibly; then they bound her and took her to Yaofangzi, the seat of their headquarters.

Believing that this was the last moment of her life, she wrote her will to the organization, which read as follows:

"Take it easy. I will be killed, but the organization must continue its existence. I enclose two *yuan*, my only assets. Please use it for the organization's funds."

The slip of paper written in pencil and two *yuan* were handed over from the granny, in whose house she was detained, to her neighbour and the organization via Jong Tong Chol.

The organization called on its members to take emergency measures to rescue her. The organization members in Taoquanli formed a delegation and visited the headquarters of Jingan army unit; they filed a strong protest against the unwarranted arrest of a guiltless, innocent citizen, demanding her immediate release.

Their protest proved worthwhile. The headquarters of Jingan army unit handed her over to the police station in Shisidaogou on the pretext of the unit's transfer. Jong Tong Chol conducted negotiations for her transfer from this police station to the one in Shisandaogou. As the latter was a first-class police station, a grade higher than the former, her transfer was resolved without difficulty.

Kim Jong Suk was escorted with her arms tied. Taoquanli was situated between the two police stations.

A little past midday she passed Taoquanli under police escort. Seeing the "baby of Musan house" walking bound and barefoot at police gunpoint, the villagers of Taoquanli saw her off with indignant tears. A granny rushed out to the road carrying a pair of straw sandals and put them on Kim Jong Suk's bleeding feet; she then severely reprimanded the policemen escorting her, "You rascals, what crime did our Ok Sun commit to be arrested? I heard that you arrested her for being a communist; if Ok Sun is a communist, I, too, will become a communist."

Jong Tong Chol followed her and conducted negotiations with the chief of the police station in Shisandaogou over her release.

The station chief promised that he would recognize her as a "good citizen" and release her, if Jong prepared a warranty as a good citizen signed by 500 people. He was demanding this document, in order to provide documentary evidence for shirking his responsibility, if his superior called the matter into account at a later date. It was a tall order, which was almost as impossible as crying for the moon. Nevertheless, Jong Tong Chol prepared the written warranty they demanded and put

it on the chief's desk. The chief's eyes almost popped out in astonishment. It was a common, popular mentality not to seal rashly with one's thumb a document testifying that a "disturbing element," spotted as a "traitor" or "communist bandit," was in fact a "good citizen." Although he had promised to release her in exchange for the written warranty as a matter of prestige arising from his "friendship" with Jong Tong Chol, the station chief thought it could never be carried out.

The warranty was signed by 500 seals and thumbs—this was indeed a miracle.

How could this happen? There could not have been such a large number of secret organization members in Taoquanli, which comprised 200 households. However the organizations were arranged, non-members of organizations, which constituted several times more people than the organization members, would not have rashly affixed their seals on such a risky document.

So many people placed without hesitation their stamps on the document as proof of their infinite love and support for her. In other words the people's absolute trust and support proved more powerful than the power of authority and money.

Released in safety from the enemy's hand, Kim Jong Suk returned to Taoquanli and was surrounded by the villagers; on the spot, she said, "Oh, my! I am hungry. Please give me something to eat, sister." These unceremonious words can only be uttered between family members. She would not have readily spoken in this way, if she had not really regarded the villagers of Taoquanli as members of her family.

Rim Won Sam, who worked as chairman of the Hungnam City People's Committee after liberation, visited our house with Jang Hae U and Jong Tong Chol, his friends in those days in Taoquanli and Sinpha, as he came to Pyongyang to attend a meeting. Jang Hae U and Jong Tong Chol were working at that time in important posts in the capital. Kim Jae Su, who was working as chairman of the South Phyongan Provincial Committee of the Democratic Party, accompanied them. That day Kim Jong Suk prepared dumplings for these guests. The

conversation of the day drifted naturally to the days in Taoquanli and Sinpha.

Kim Jong Suk recalled tearfully her rescue from the jaws of death, thanks to the help of her comrades. She said that during her detainment in Yaofangzi, she could easily have escaped, but had decided not to. She said:

“Frankly speaking, it is not difficult to kill a guard and run away, but I just couldn’t. Thinking of the pitiable old couple, in whose house I was detained, I couldn’t run away. When I looked at them, I thought: I can easily slip off; but if I do so, what will happen to the old couple and village head Jong, who vouched for my innocence and how much suffering and distress will the underground organizations and people in Taoquanli have to face?

“This thought made me determined to protect the organizations and people at the cost of my life. That night I slept soundly in the front room of the house. My determination to sacrifice my life calmed me. I feared nothing.”

This was the image of the “baby of Musan house” in those days in Taoquanli and Sinpha.

Saved from the jaws of death by the written warranty for a good citizen, Kim Jong Suk continued her underground activities for some time in the Taoquanli area and the homeland before returning to Headquarters with Ryu Yong Chan, a member of the Taoquanli chapter of the ARF. He joined the guerrillas, on the faith of Kim Jong Suk. In 1944, while we were absorbed in preparations for the final anti-Japanese operations at the training base near Khabarovsk, Ryu Yong Chan unfortunately drowned to death in the Amur, when transporting on a ship the requisite materials for the building of the camp.

Kim Jong Suk would recall his name, whenever she had the opportunity to do so. She said that he was an unforgettable benefactor.

Ryu Yong Chan was not the only one determined to follow Kim Jong Suk, when she left Taoquanli, I was told. The Women’s Association members also followed her, shedding tears and begging

her to take them with her. One of them kept following her until she crossed over Mt. Baotai without any thought of returning home. After repeated attempts to dissuade her from coming with her, Kim Jong Suk put her silver ring on the woman's finger and untied the woman's red belt and tied it round her own waist. The red woollen belt was the woman's dear belongings she had knitted in memory of the day when she had joined the Women's Association on the faith of Kim Jong Suk and had worn for boasting.

"It is not that I don't feel like taking you. I'm going alone, because I can't take you, so please don't feel sorry. By wearing this red belt until it is worn out to the last thread, I won't forget the dear people in Taoquanli."

On hearing these words, the woman did not try to follow her any more; she merely asked her to provide news wherever she went.

True to her promise, Kim Jong Suk wore the red woollen belt under her uniform all the time after her return to the unit. It was only after I married her that I came to know the meaning of the belt, which had never been removed from her waist.

Kim Jong Suk always lived, cherishing the warmth of the people in her body along with the belt. Her soul was never separated from the people.

At times I ask myself; how could Kim Jong Suk carry out such challenging underground activities, enjoying the love and support of so many people?

If Kim Jong Suk hadn't loved the people sincerely, they would not have paid any attention to her on the eve of her death. Anyone who does not devote his whole for the sake of the people, cannot receive sincere help from them at crucial periods. She was duly paid back by the people, whom she had treasured and nursed with so much care, with all the affection she had devoted to them. All in all, the written warranty signed by 500 people should be called an eternal document, vouchsafing her fidelity to the people.

In autumn 1991, more than half a century after Kim Jong Suk left Taoquanli, I paid a visit to Sinpha during field guidance to Ryanggang

Province, the place she had devoted her heart and soul to. Although scores of years had passed, the relics associated with her secret activities were preserved, as they had been in those days. The devotion of the people in Sinpha to each of the relics and historical sites was really admirable.

That day the guide-lecturers showed me every historical site, replete with Kim Jong Suk's footprints, and explained to me the details of her activities. Their explanations included quite a few events and details, which were unfamiliar to me.

Looking at the nasty fort standing on the River Amnok as it had been, I thought that Kim Jong Suk must have run many risks and gone through several fateful moments to transform this locality in a revolutionary fashion.

As I headed for the railway station at dusk, I looked back at the streets in Sinpha; I do not know why, but I felt reluctant to leave this place.

