

**KIM IL SUNG**

*With the Century*

**1**

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1994



# **Part I**

# **THE ANTI-JAPANESE REVOLUTION**

# **1**

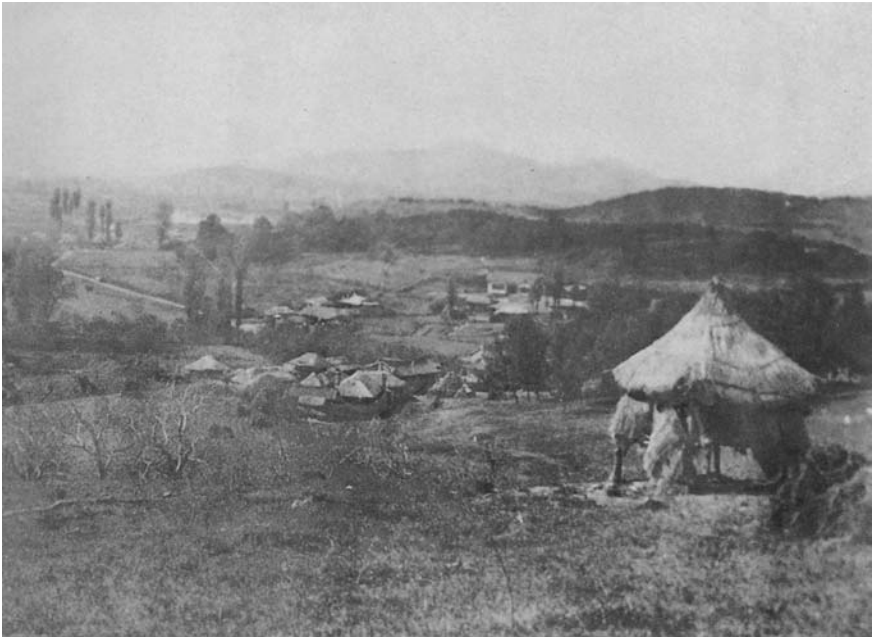
정각 명경 하듯 사활은  
언제 내 인민을 믿고  
인민에 의거하면 백번  
승리하지만 인민의  
테러를 받게 되면 백번  
패한다는 진리를 삼아  
후쟁의 좌우명으로  
삼아야 한다.

김일성

*Translation from the preceding page:*

Revolutionaries, believe in the people and rely on them at all times and you shall always emerge victorious; if you are forsaken by them, you will always fail. Let this be your maxim in your life and struggle.

Kim Il Sung



**Mangyongdae before liberation**

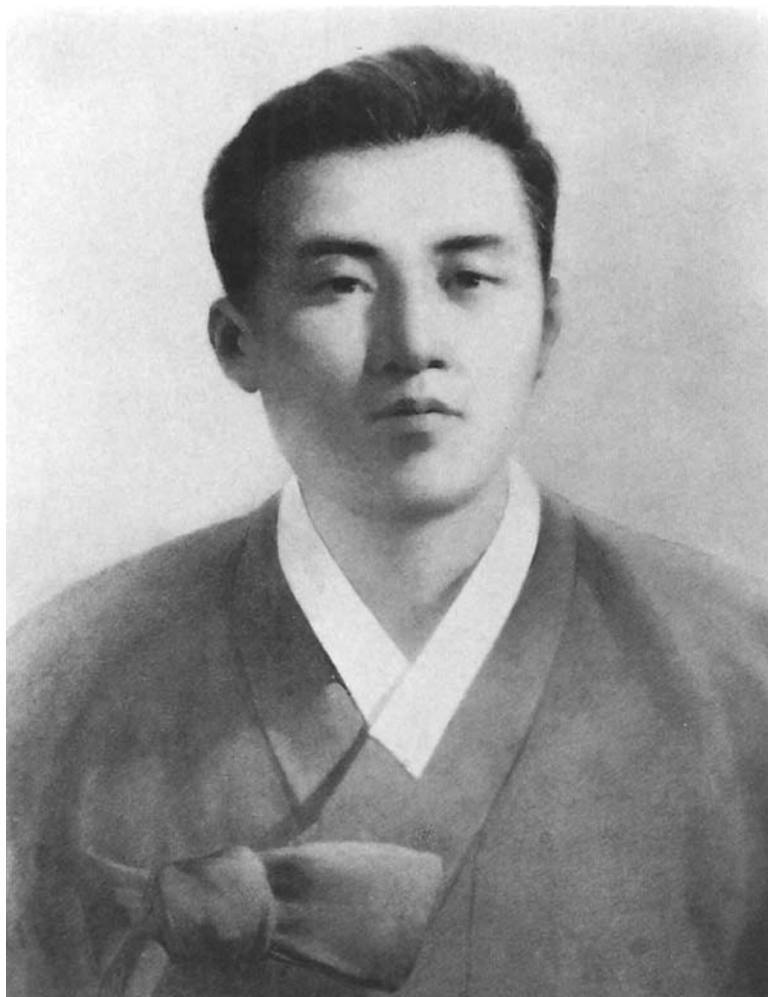
# **My Family**



**Grandfather Kim Po Hyon** (August 19, 1871—September 2, 1955)



**Grandmother Ri Po Ik** (May 31, 1876—October 18, 1959)



**Father Kim Hyong Jik** (July 10, 1894—June 5, 1926)





**Mother Kang Pan Sok** (April 21, 1892—July 31, 1932)



**Uncle Kim HyongGwon in prison**  
(November 4, 1905—January 12,  
1936)



**Younger brother Kim Chol Ju  
in his days in Fusong**  
(June 12, 1916—June 14, 1935)



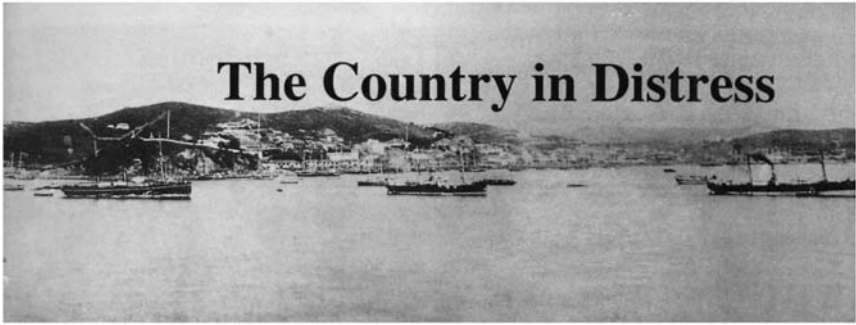
**Maternal grandfather Kang Ton Uk**  
(February 3, 1871—November 14,



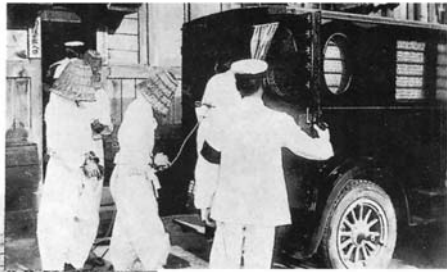
**Cousin Kim Won Ju** (September  
22, 1927—June 28, 1957)



**Maternal uncle Kang Jin Sok** (January  
19, 1890—November 12, 1942)

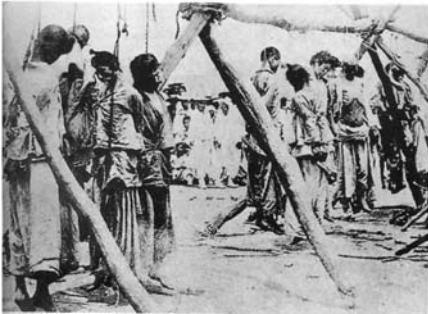


**Japanese warships in  
Inchon Harbour (1894)**



**The whole country turned  
into a prison**

**A Japanese mounted  
policeman puts down the  
people**



**Patriots are executed for resisting the Japanese invaders**



**The Righteous Volunteers soldiers under the banner of anti-Japanese national salvation**



**The March First Popular Uprising**



**An Jung Gun and his writing**



Father's maxim—"Aim High!"



Sunhwa School in Mangyongdae



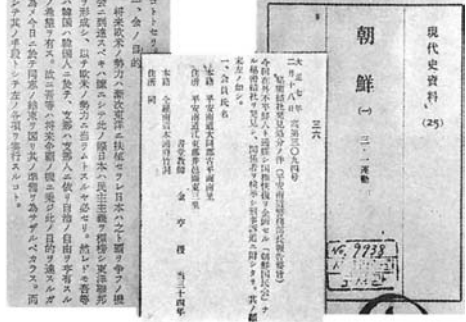
Myongsin School in Ponghwa-ri,  
Kangdong County



The stone monument to the Stone  
Monument Association in Ponghwa-ri



Pyongyang prison



The report on the case of the Korean  
National Association



**O Tong Jin and his house where the Chongsudong branch of the Korean National Association was formed**



**Junggang inn at which anti-Japanese independence fighters used to lodge**



**The place where the Chongsudong Meeting was held in 1918**



**The inn at Yonpho-ri where my father escaped from the escort**



**A secret rendezvous in Linjiang**

# The Route of the 250-mile Journey for Learning

(March 16 to March 29, 1923)



Kanggye inn



Korea



Kanggye Post Office where I sent a telegram for the first time in my life



The locomotive which plied between Sinanju and Kaechon



China

South Hamgyong Province  
River Jangjin





**My mother's maiden home in  
Chilgol**



**Changdok School**



**Kang Ryang Uk in his youth**



**Kang Yun Bom, my friend  
in the days of Changdok  
School**



**Pyongyang city centre in the early 1920s**



**Phophyong, a town on the northern tip of Korea**



**A laundry site on the River Badao (on the opposite side from Phophyong)**



**Ogubi on the bank of the River Amnok where I stayed overnight with my younger brothers on our journey to Linjiang on a horse-drawn sleigh in January 1925**

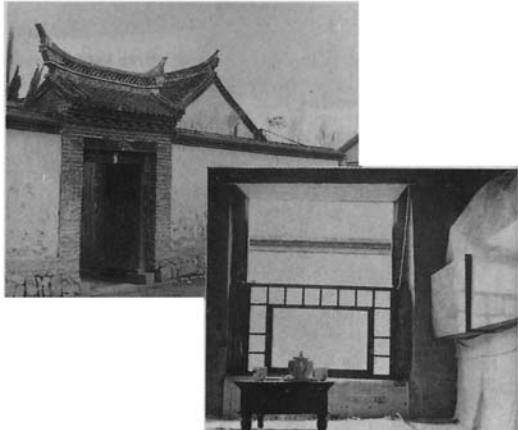
**A restaurant in Linjiang where the independence fighters used to visit**



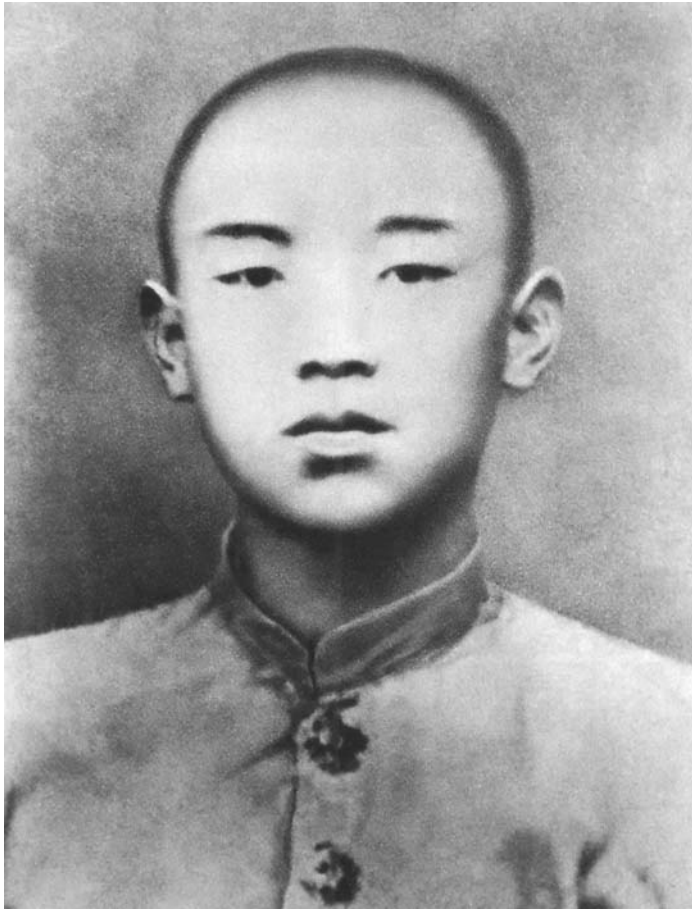


**My house in Xiaonanmen Street in Fusong**

**Paeksan School in Fusong  
(the thatched building)  
where the newspaper  
*Saenal* was launched**



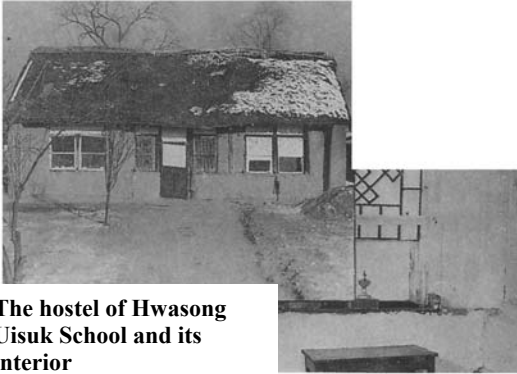
**Zhang Wei-hua, an unforgettable man, his house in Fusong and the room where he committed suicide**



**In the days when I formed the DIU (1926)**



**The site of Hwasong Uisuk School**



**The hostel of Hwasong Uisuk School and its interior**



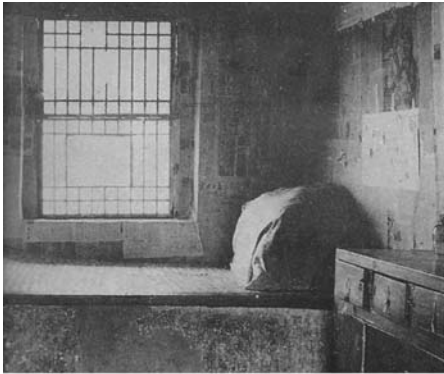
**Kang Je Ha, the school superintendent**



**Kim Si U and his house where the members of the DIU frequently held secret reading sessions**



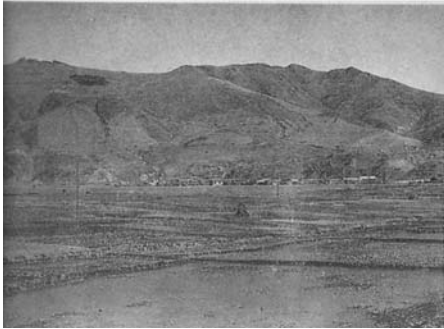
**Choe Tong O, the headmaster of the school**



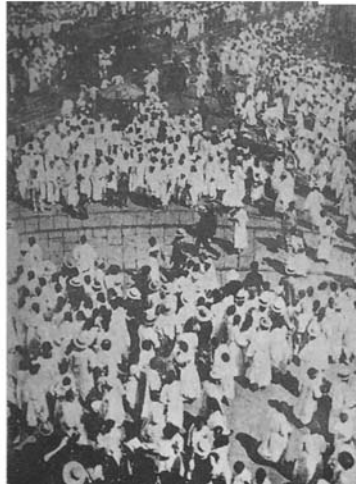
**The room in my house in Fusong where my father passed away on June 5, 1926**



**Ri Kwan Rin, a heroine of the Independence Army**



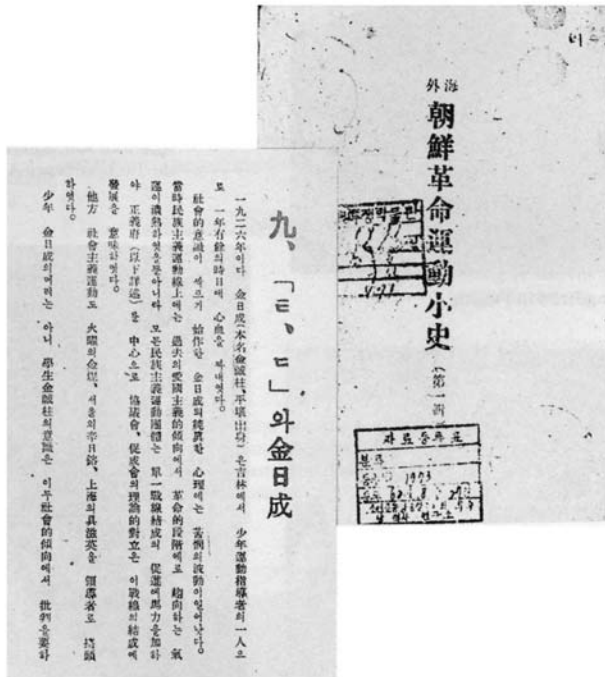
**Yangdicun in Fusong**



**June 10<sup>th</sup> Independence Movement (1926)**



The bank of the River Huifa and a general view of Huadian

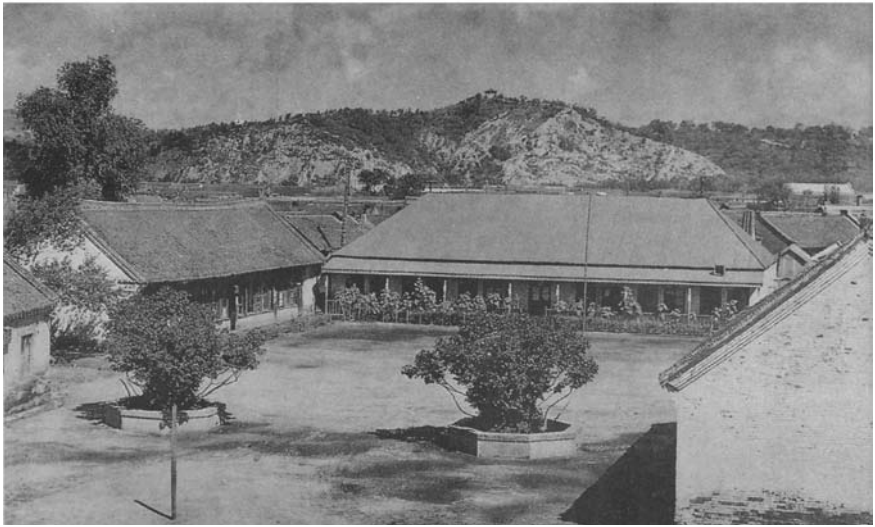


A publication introducing the formation of the DIU and its activities

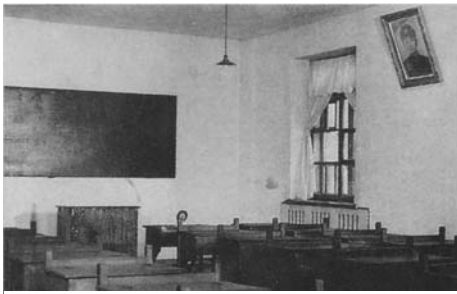


**In the days in Jilin (1927)**

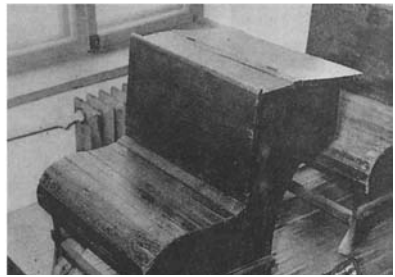




**Yuwen Middle School in Jilin**



**The classroom where I studied**



**My desk and chair in the classroom**



**The school hostel**



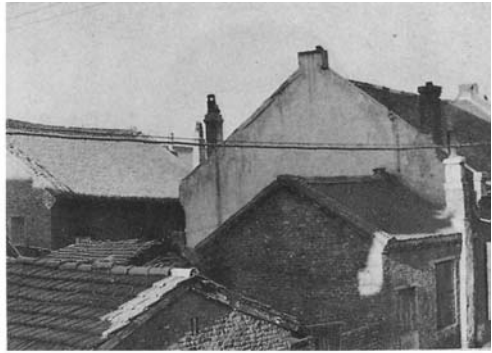
**The school library**



**A cap-badge**



**Jang Chol Ho**



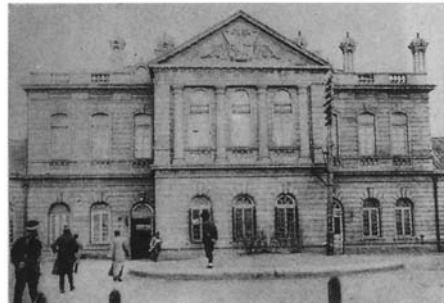
**Fuxingtai Rice Mill in Shangyi Street, Jilin**



**An Chang Ho and Tong-A Ilbo reporting his arrest**



**The Rev. Son Jong Do**



**Jilin Railway Station in the early 1930s**



**Cha Kwang Su, a young communist**



**Beishan Park in Jilin**



**The Yaowang Shrine in Beishan Park and the cellar of the shrine where the Young Communist League members in Jilin used to hold secret meetings**





Publications reporting the struggle of the young people and students in those days



ShangYue and his reminiscences





**The Jilin prison**



**A watch-tower of the prison**



**An outer view of the  
cross-shaped prison**

**The corridor of the prison**



**The cells in  
which I was  
imprisoned**



**Kang Myong Gun whom  
I met in the prison**



**In my days before launching the underground struggle (with Ko Jae Ryong on my right) when I sometimes wore Chinese *dabushanzi* dress**

## Preface

It is extremely moving for a man to look back on his past in his latter years. People lead different lives and their experiences are varied, so it is with different feelings that they look back on their past.

I look back on my life with deep emotion and I have strong memories as an ordinary man and as a politician who has served his country and people. The country and people I have served always occupied an important position in world politics.

I was born in the first period of the country's ruin in the great national tragedy and spent the early years of my life in the vortex of the rapidly-changing situation at home and abroad, and I came to join my fortune with that of the country and share good times and bad with the people in my childhood. Following this path, I have now reached 80 years of age.

My whole life, which has flowed with the current of the 20th century when the life of mankind has undergone unprecedented vicissitudes and the political map of the world has changed beyond recognition, is the epitome of the history of my country and my people.

Naturally, the course of my life has not been all joy and success. There have been heart-breaking sorrows and sacrifices, and many twists and turns and difficulties. While I made many friends and comrades on the path of my struggle, there were also many people who stood in my way.

My patriotic spirit made me as a teenager cry out against Japan on the streets of Jilin and carry on a risky underground struggle dodging the enemy's pursuit. Under the banner of anti-Japanese struggle I had to endure hardships going hungry and sleeping outdoors in the deep forests of Mt. Paektu, push my way through endless snowstorms and wage long bloody battles convinced of national liberation, fighting against the formidable enemy scores of times stronger than our forlorn force. After liberation I had to spend many a sleepless night in an effort to save the divided country and again go through indescribable difficulties and distresses in the days of building and defending the people's state.

In this course, however, I never once shrank back or hesitated.

I have always held a steady helm in my life's rough voyage, and I owe this to my comrades and to the people who have helped me in good faith.

"The people are my God" has been my constant view and motto. The principle of Juche, which calls for drawing on the strength of the masses who are the masters of the revolution and construction, is my political creed. This has been the axiom that has led me to devote my whole life to the people.

I lost my parents at an early age and have spent my whole life amid the love and expectations of my comrades. I hewed out the path of bloody struggle together with tens of thousands of comrades, and in this process I came to realize keenly the real value of the comrades and organization that shared their lot with me.

I remember my early comrades of the Down-with-Imperialism Union who believed in me and came to follow me on the hill at Huadian in the 1920s when there was no telling as yet if we would ever liberate our homeland, and then those splendid comrades



who shielded me from the enemy's bullets and who laughed as they took their comrade's place on the scaffold. They never returned to the liberated homeland; they are now lying as spirits of revered memory in the fields and mountains of a foreign country. The many patriots who started on a different path of struggle but joined up with us in the end are no more by our side.

As I witness our revolution progressing triumphantly and our country prospering, with all the people singing its praises, my heart aches with the thought of the comrades who laid down their lives unhesitatingly for this day; often I lie awake at night with their images before my eyes.

In fact, I little thought of writing my reminiscences. Many people, including celebrated foreign statesmen and well-known literary men, urged me to write my reminiscences, saying that my life would serve as a precious lesson for the people. But I was in no hurry to do so.

Now that a large part of my work is done by Secretary for Organizational Affairs Kim Jong Il, I have been able to find some time. With the change of generations, veteran revolutionaries have departed from this life and the new generation has become the pillar of our revolution. I came to think that it was my duty to tell of the experiences I have gained in the common cause of the nation and of how our revolutionary forerunners gave their lives in their youth for this day. So I came to put down in writing what has happened in my life, a few lines each time I found a spare moment.

I have never considered my life to be extraordinary. I am content and proud to think that my life has been dedicated to my country and nation and spent in the company of the people.

I hope that what I write will convey to posterity the truth and the lessons of life and struggle that if one believes in the people

and relies on them, one will regain one's country and win victory every time, and if one ignores people and is forsaken by them, one will surely fail.

Praying for the souls of the departed revolutionaries,  
The Myohyang Mountains  
April 1992

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER 1. THE COUNTRY IN DISTRESS

1. My Family
2. My Father and the Korean National Association
3. An Echo of Cheers for Independence
4. Repeated Removal
5. *The Song of the River Amnok*
6. My Mother
7. The Inheritance

## CHAPTER 2. UNFORGETTABLE HUADIAN

1. Hwasong Uisuk School
2. Disillusionment
3. The Down-with-Imperialism Union
4. My Mind Turning towards a New Theatre of Activity
5. Ri Kwan Rin, Heroine of the Independence Army

## CHAPTER 3. IN JILIN

1. The Pursuit of Progressive Thoughts
2. Mentor Shang Yue

3. The Young Communist League of Korea
4. The Expansion of the Organizatio
5. The Demonstration of Unity
6. An Chang Ho Delivers a Political Lecture
7. The Merger of the Three Nationalist Organizations
8. The Path Taken by Cha Kwang Su
9. The Lessons of Wangqingmen
10. Behind Bars

CHAPTER 1

**The Country in Distress**

My Family

My Father and the Korean National  
Association

An Echo of Cheers for Independence

Repeated Removal

*The Song of the River Amnok*

My Mother

The Inheritance

*April 1912 — June 1926*

# 1. My Family

My life began in the second decade of the 20th century when Korea was going through the bitterest period of its national tragedy. Before my birth my country had been reduced to the colony of Japan. With the signing of the “annexation of Korea by Japan”<sup>1</sup> the sovereign power of the King had passed to the Japanese Emperor and the people of this country had been made slaves who were compelled to act under the “Decrees of the Government-General.”<sup>2</sup> Our country, with its long history, rich natural resources and beautiful mountains and rivers, found itself trampled underfoot by the Japanese military.

The people were deeply grieved and trembled with indignation at being robbed of their state power. In the fields and houses of this land, where there was “wailing all day after the nation’s fall,” many loyalists and Confucian scholars killed themselves, unable to bear the agony of the country’s ruin. Even nameless people from the lowest class, lamenting the tragic fate of the country, responded to the disgraceful “annexation of Korea by Japan” by committing suicide.

A barbaric system of rule by gendarmerie and police was established in our country, and moreover even primary schoolteachers, to say nothing of policemen and civil servants, wore gold-laced uniforms, regulation caps and sabres. On the strength of Imperial ordinances the governor-general controlled the army and navy and exercised unlimited power to stop the ears and mouths of our people and bind them hand and foot. All political

and academic organizations founded by Koreans were forced to disband.

Korean patriots were thrashed with lead-weighted cowhide lashes in detention rooms and prisons. Law-enforcement agents who had adopted the methods of torture used in the days of the Tokugawa shogunate burned the flesh of Koreans with red-hot iron rods.

Successive decrees of the government-general that were issued to blot out all that was Korean, even forced Koreans to dye their traditional white clothes black. The big businesses of Japan that had come across the Korean Strait carried off heaps of treasure and the riches of our country in the name of various ordinances such as the “Company Act” and the “Survey Act.”

While visiting various parts of the world I have had the opportunity of seeing many former colonial countries, but I have never seen imperialism so hideous that it deprived people of their language and surnames and even plundered them of their tableware.

Korea in those days was a living hell. The Korean people were no more alive than dead. Lenin was absolutely correct when he said, “...Japan will fight so as to continue to plunder Korea, which she is doing with unprecedented brutality, combining all the latest technical inventions with purely Asiatic tortures.”

My boyhood coincided with the time when the imperialists were struggling fiercely to redivide their colonies throughout the world. In the year of my birth successive sensational events took place in many parts of the world. That year a US marine corps landed in Honduras, France made Morocco its protectorate and Italy occupied the Rhodes of Turkey.

In Korea the “Land Survey Act” was published and the people were restless.

In short, I was born at an uneasy time of upheaval and passed my boyhood in unfortunate circumstances. This situation naturally influenced my development.

After hearing from my father about the circumstances of our country's ruin, I felt a profound bitterness against the feudal rulers and made up my mind to devote my life to the regaining of our nation's sovereignty.

While other people were travelling the world by warship and by train, our country's feudal rulers rode on donkeys and wore horse-hair hats, singing of scenic beauties. Then, when aggressive forces from the west and east threatened them with their navies, they opened the doors of the country that had been so tightly closed. The feudal monarchy then hosted a contest for concessions in which the foreign forces had their own way.

Even when the country's fate was at stake, the corrupt and incompetent feudal rulers, given to flunkeyism towards the great powers for generations, indulged in sectarian strife under the manipulation of the great powers. So, when the pro-Japanese faction gained the upper hand, Japanese soldiers guarded the royal palace, and when the pro-Russian faction was more powerful, Russian soldiers guarded the Emperor. Then, when the pro-Chinese faction got the better of the others, Chinese guards stood on sentry at the palace.

As a result, the Queen was stabbed to death by a terrorist gang within the royal palace (the "Ulmi incident" of 1895), the King was detained in a foreign legation for a year ("Moving to the Russian legation" in 1896), and the King's father was taken away as prisoner to a foreign country; yet the Korean government had to apologize to that country.

When even the duty of guarding the royal palace was left to foreign armies, who was there to guard and take care of this country?



In this wide world a family is no more than a small drop of water. But a drop of water is also a part of the world and cannot exist apart from the latter. The waves of modern history that spelled the ruin of Korea swept mercilessly into our house. But the members of my family did not yield to the threat. Rather, they threw themselves unhesitatingly into the storm, sharing the nation's fate.

Our family moved north from Jonju in North Jolla Province in search of a living at the time of my ancestor Kim Kye Sang.

Our family settled at Mangyongdae at the time of my great-grandfather Kim Ung U. He was born at Jungsong-ri in Pyongyang and worked as a farmer from his early years. He was so poor that he became a grave keeper for the landlord Ri Phyeong Thae in Pyongyang and moved to the grave keeper's cottage at Mangyongdae in the 1860s.

Mangyongdae is a place of great scenic beauty. The hill by our house is called Nam Hill, and when you look out over the River Taedong from the top of the hill you command a view that is like a beautiful picture scroll. Rich people and government officials vied with one another in buying hills in the Mangyongdae area as burial plots because they were attracted by the beautiful scenery there. The grave of one governor of Phyongan Province was at Mangyongdae.

Working as tenant farmers from generation to generation, my family eked out a scanty living. The family line had been continued by a sole heir for three generations before my grandfather Kim Po Hyon produced six sons and daughters. Then the number of members of the family increased to nearly ten.

My grandfather worked hard to feed his children. At early dawn when other people were still in bed he would go round the village to collect manure. At night he would twist straw ropes, make straw sandals and plait straw mats by lamplight.

My grandmother Ri Po Ik spun thread every night.

My mother Kang Pan Sok weeded the fields all day long and wove cotton by night with my aunts Hyon Yang Sin, Kim Kuilnyo, Kim Hyong Sil and Kim Hyong Bok.

Ours was such a poor home that my uncle Kim Hyong Rok was unable to attend school and helped my grandfather in farming from his boyhood. A slight knowledge of the Thousand-Character Text (a primer of Chinese characters) he learned at the age of nine was all the education he got.

All the members of my family toiled as hard as they could, but they could never afford enough gruel. Our gruel was prepared from uncleaned sorghum, and I still remember that it was so coarse that it was difficult to swallow.

So such things as fruit and meat were way beyond our means. Once I had sore throat and grandmother obtained some pork for me. I ate it and my throat got better. After that, whenever I felt like eating pork I wished I had a sore throat again.

While I was spending my childhood at Mangyongdae, my grandmother always regretted that we had no clock in our house. Although she was not a covetous woman, she was very envious of clocks hanging on the walls of other houses. In our neighbourhood there was one house with a clock.

I have heard that my grandmother began to speak enviously of that clock after my father began attending Sungsil Middle School. Because we had no clock, every morning she would wake up before dawn after a restless night and, guessing the time, quickly prepare breakfast. It was 12 kilometres from Mangyongdae to Sungsil Middle School, so my father might have been late for school if she had not cooked breakfast early enough.

Sometimes she would prepare a meal in the middle of the night and, not knowing if it was time for her son to leave for school, sit looking out through the eastern window of the kitchen for hours. At

such times she would say to my mother, “Go and find out what time it is at the house behind.”

However, my mother would not enter the house, reluctant to bother the people there, but would squat outside the fence waiting for the clock to strike the hours. Then she would return and tell grandmother the time.

When I returned home from Badaogou, my aunt inquired after my father before telling me that whereas my father had a hard time walking a long way to school every day, it would be good for me to go and stay at my mother’s parents’ home at Chilgol, as the school was nearby.

My family could not afford the clock my grandmother so desired until national liberation.

My family, though living only on gruel, were warm-hearted and ready to help one another and their neighbours.

“We can live without money, but not without humanity,” was what my grandfather used to say when admonishing his sons and daughters. This was the philosophy of my family.

My father was sensitive to new things and had a great desire to learn. He was taught the Thousand-Character Text at the private village school, yet he was always anxious to go to a regular school.

In the summer of the year when the Emissary Incident at The Hague<sup>3</sup> took place, a joint athletics meeting was held in Sulmae village with the participation of the pupils from Sunhwa, Chuja, Chilgol and Sinhung Schools. My father went to the athletics meeting as a champion of Sunhwa School and took first place in many events such as the horizontal bar, wrestling and running. But in the high jump he lost first place to a competitor from another school. What happened was that his pigtail was caught in the crosspiece, and this prevented him from winning.

After the sports meeting my father went up the hill at the back of the school and cut off his pigtail. In those days it was no easy

thing to cut off one's pigtail without the permission of one's parents and in disregard of the old convention that had been passed down over hundreds of years.

My grandfather took the matter very seriously and created a great fuss. By nature my family were strong in character.

Afraid of grandfather, my father dared not come home that day. He hung around outside the fence, so my great-grandmother took him to the back gate and gave him a meal. She loved him dearly, he being the heir to the family. My father would often say that he was able to attend Sungsil Middle School thanks to her kind assistance. She persuaded my grandfather Kim Po Hyon to allow my father to go to a modern school. In those days when feudal customs still prevailed, my grandfather's generation were not very impressed by modern schools.

My father started at Sungsil Middle School in the spring of 1911, the year after the country's ruin. That was in the early period of the introduction of modern civilization, so few children of the nobility were receiving the new-style school education. It was very difficult for poor families like ours that could hardly afford enough sorghum gruel to send their children to school.

The monthly tuition fee at Sungsil Middle School at the time was two *won*. To earn two *won* my mother went to the River Sunhwa and collected shellfish to sell. My grandfather grew melons, my grandmother young radishes, and even my uncle who was only 15 years old made straw sandals to earn money to help his elder brother with his school fees.

My father worked after school until dusk in a workshop run by the school to earn money. Then he would read books for hours in the school library before returning home late at night. After sleeping for a few hours, he would go to school again in the morning.

As is clear, our family was a simple and ordinary one the like of which could be found commonly in any farm village or town in Korea in those days. It was a poor family that was not particularly outstanding or remarkable in comparison with other families.

But my family were all ready to sacrifice themselves without hesitation when it came to doing something for the country and the people.

My great-grandfather was a grave keeper for another family, but he ardently loved his country and home town.

When the US imperialist aggressors' ship *General Sherman*<sup>4</sup> sailed up the River Taedong and anchored at Turu Islet, my great-grandfather, together with some other villagers, collected ropes from all the houses and stretched them across the river between Konyu Islet and Mangyong Hill; then they rolled some stones into the river to block the way of the pirate ship.

When he heard that the *General Sherman* had sailed up to Yanggak Islet and was killing the people there with its cannons and guns, and that its crew were stealing the people's possessions and raping the women, he rushed to the walled city of Pyongyang at the head of the villagers. The people of the city, with the government army, loaded a lot of small boats with firewood, tied them together, set them on fire and floated them down towards the aggressor ship, so that the American ship was set on fire and sank with all hands. I was told that my great-grandfather played a major role in this attack.

After the sinking of the *General Sherman*, the US imperialist aggressors sent another vessel, the warship *Shenandoah*,<sup>5</sup> which sailed into the mouth of the River Taedong, where its crew committed murder, incendiary attacks and pillage. The people of Mangyongdae again formed a volunteers unit and fought to defend their country from the *Shenandoah*.

My grandfather, who used to say, “A man should die fighting the enemy on the battlefield,” always told his family to live honourably for their country and he offered his children unhesitatingly to the revolutionary struggle.

My grandmother, too, taught her children to live uprightly and stoutly.

Once the Japanese treated her harshly by dragging her round the mountains and fields of Manchuria in the depth of winter in order to make me “submit.” But she scolded them and remained strong and proud as befitting the mother and grandmother of revolutionaries.

My maternal grandfather Kang Ton Uk was an ardent patriot and teacher who devoted his whole life to the education of the younger generation and the independence movement, teaching the children and young people at the private school he had founded in his home village. My maternal uncle Kang Jin Sok was also a patriot who joined the independence movement when still young.

My father taught me tirelessly from my early childhood to foster profound patriotism. From his desire and hope he named me Song Ju, meaning that I should be a pillar of the country.

As a pupil of Sungsil Middle School he, with his two younger brothers, planted three white aspens near the house to symbolize the three brothers. In those days there were no white aspens in Mangyongdae. That day my father told his brothers that the white aspen was a rapidly growing tree and that they, the three brothers, should grow rapidly and strong like the tree so as to win national independence and enjoy a good life.

Later, my father left Mangyongdae to continue his revolutionary activities and, following him, my uncle Kim Hyong Gwon took the path of struggle.

Then only my eldest uncle was left behind in Mangyongdae, but the three white aspens grew into tall trees. But their shadows fell across the fields of the landlord. The landlord said that the shadows would harm his crop, and he felled one of the trees. Yet, our family could not protest. Such was the lawlessness of the time.

I heard of this when I returned home after the liberation of the country. I felt really angry about it as I remembered my late father's beautiful dream.

This was not the only cause of regret.

Several ash trees had stood in front of my old home. As a boy, I would often climb the trees and play in them with my friends. When I returned home after 20 years' absence, I discovered that the tree that had stood closest to the house was no longer there.

My grandfather told me that my uncle had cut it down. The story was really pitiful.

While I was waging the war in the mountains, the police had tormented my family unbearably.

Police from the Taephyong sub-station took turns to keep our house under surveillance. Taephyong was some distance from Mangyongdae, and in summer the shade afforded by the ash trees served as a sort of guard post. As they sat in the shadow, they would call to the villagers or fan themselves to sleep. Sometimes they would drink alcohol and eat chicken or harass my grandfather and uncle.

One day my uncle, who was so good and quiet, went out with an axe and cut down one of the ash trees, and my grandfather told me that he had not even thought of dissuading him. He added, "There's a saying that one is pleased to see the bugs die in a fire even though one's house is burnt down."

His words caused me to smile wryly.

My grandparents had a very hard time because of their revolutionary sons and grandsons. But in spite of their bitter trials

and persecution they never gave in but fought on stoutly. In the closing period of Japanese rule the Japanese imperialists forced Koreans to change their names to Japanese ones. But my grandparents refused to do so. In my home village only my family held out to the last without changing their names to Japanese ones.

All the other families changed their names. If they did not change their names, people found it hard to survive because the Japanese government authorities refused them food rations.

My uncle Hyong Rok was beaten and summoned to the police sub-station many times because he would not agree to change his name.

“Now you aren’t Kim Hyong Rok. What’s your name?” the policeman in charge would demand. To this my uncle would answer, “It’s Kim Hyong Rok.”

At this the policeman would leap on him and slap him across the face.

“Tell me again. What’s your name?” the policeman would ask him once more. Then he would answer calmly, “It’s Kim Hyong Rok.”

Then the policeman would slap him even harder on the face. Every time he replied, “Kim Hyong Rok,” he was boxed on the ears. Yet he never submitted.

My grandfather said to his son: “It’s a truly good thing that you haven’t changed your name to a Japanese one. When Song Ju’s fighting the Japanese, you can’t change your name into a Japanese one, can you? We mustn’t change our names on any account, even if it means we’re beaten to death.”

When members of the family said farewell to my grandfather and grandmother and left the house, they would walk out through the brushwood gate in high spirits, saying that they would return after liberating the country.

But I was the only one who returned.



My father, who devoted his whole life to the independence movement, died under a foreign sky at the age of 31. A man of 31 is in the prime of his life. My grandmother came from home after his funeral. Even now I can see her before my eyes as she wept at the side of her son's grave in the village of Yangdicun, Fusong, Manchuria.

Six years later my mother, too, passed away, in Antu, without seeing the day of national independence.

My younger brother Chol Ju who joined a guerrilla unit after our mother's death and fought the enemy was killed in battle. Because he fell on the battlefield his body was never recovered.

A few years later, my youngest uncle who had been sentenced to long years in prison and was serving his term in Mapho gaol died from cruel torture. Our family received notice that they should recover his body but could not do so because they had no money. So, my uncle's ashes were committed to the earth in the prison cemetery.

Thus, over a period of 20 years many of the strong, healthy sons of our family turned to ashes and lay scattered in foreign lands.

When I returned home after liberation, my grandmother hugged me outside the brushwood gate and pounded me on my chest, saying: "How have you come back alone? Where did you leave your father and mother? Did you not want to return with them?"

With her heart bursting with such deep grief, what was my agony as I walked through the brushwood gate of my old home alone without bringing with me even the bones of my parents who were dead and lying in a far-off foreign land?

After that, whenever I passed through the gate of someone else's home, I would wonder how many members of the family had gone out through that gate and how many of them had returned. All

the gates in this country have a story about tearful partings and are associated with a longing for those who have not returned and the heart-rending pain of loss. Tens of thousands of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters of this country gave their lives on the altar of national liberation. It took our people as long as 36 years to win back their country, crossing a sea of blood, tears and sighs and braving storms of shells and bullets. It was 36 years of bloody war which cost us too high a price. But if it were not for this bloody war and sacrifices, how could we ever imagine our country as it is today? This century of ours would still be a century of misery and suffering with the disgraceful slavery continuing.

My grandfather and grandmother were old country people who knew nothing but farming. But truth to tell, I marvelled at their firm revolutionary spirit and was greatly inspired by it.

It is not easy to bring up children and send them all out on the path of the revolution and then give them constant support while enduring silently all the ensuing trials and hardships. I think this is much more impressive than a few battles or some years in prison.

The misfortune and distress of our family is the epitome of the misfortune and distress that befell our people after they lost their country. Under the inhuman rule of Japanese imperialism millions of Koreans lost their lives—dying of starvation, of the cold, from burning or from flogging.

In a ruined country neither the land nor the people can remain at peace. Under the roofs of houses in a ruined country even the traitors who live in luxury as a reward for betraying their country will not be able to sleep in peace. Even though they are alive, the people are worse than gutter dogs, and even if the mountains and rivers remain the same, they will not retain their beauty.

A man who perceives this truth before others is called a forerunner; he who struggles against difficulties to save his country from tragedy is called a patriot; and he who sets fire to himself to

demonstrate the truth and overthrows the unjust society by rousing the people to action is called a revolutionary.

My father was a pioneer of our country's national liberation movement. He dedicated his whole life to the revolution from his birth in Mangyongdae on July 10, 1894, until his death as he lamented the dark reality of national decay on June 5, 1926.

I was born the eldest son of my father Kim Hyong Jik at Mangyongdae on April 15, 1912.

## **2. My Father and the Korean National Association**

“Jiwon” (Aim High!) was my father’s lifelong motto.

He used to write this motto in large strokes on the walls at Sunhwa and Myongsin Schools and in many other places, as well as at his home.

Some of his writing still remains, and it demonstrates that he was quite good at writing with a brush.

In those days calligraphy was celebrated, and it was the fashion to obtain handwritings from renowned people and famous calligraphers and keep them in scrolls, in frames or on screens. As a little boy I thought that this was normal for calligraphy.

My father used to hang up his handwriting without decoration in places which attracted public attention.

When I was old enough to understand the world, my father began to teach me how I should love my country, saying that in order to become a patriot I should aim high.

“Aim High!” means what it says.

There is nothing extraordinary about a father who teaches his son to aim high. One cannot succeed in a venture unless one has a noble ideal and a high ambition and works tirelessly.

But “Aim High!” has nothing in common with worldly preaching about personal glory or a successful career; it implies a revolutionary outlook on life in which genuine happiness is sought in the struggle for one’s country and nation, and an unbreakable revolutionary spirit to liberate the country by fighting through the generations.

My father told me a great deal to explain why I should have a noble aim. What he told me amounted to the history of our people's struggle against the Japanese.

... Once Korea was a very strong country, he said. Korea, having developed her military art, had seldom been defeated in war, and her brilliant ancient culture had spread across the sea to Japan. However, her strength waned because of the corrupt government during the 500 years of the Ri dynasty until finally she lost her sovereignty.

Before you were born, he continued, the Japanese conquered our country by force of arms. The five ministers<sup>6</sup> of the feudal government who sold out the country to the Japanese invaders in the year of Ulsa (1905) are now condemned as traitors.

These traitors, however, could not sell the Korean spirit.

The Righteous Volunteers fought with spears in hand against the Japanese marauders in order to win back the sovereignty of their country. The Independence Army, armed with matchlocks, fought to destroy the invaders. Sometimes the people rose in revolt, cheering and throwing stones at the Japanese invaders, and appealing to human conscience and to international justice.

Choe Ik Hyon<sup>7</sup> was taken to Tsushima as a captive but, as a protest, he refused to eat the enemy's food until he died with honour. Ri Jun demonstrated our nation's true spirit of independence by ripping his own belly open before the representatives of the imperialist powers at an international peace conference. An Jung Gun<sup>8</sup> demonstrated the mettle of the Koreans by shooting Ito Hirobumi<sup>9</sup> to death at Harbin Station and cheering for independence.

Even Kang U Gyu who was in his sixties threw a bomb at the Japanese Governor-General Saito. Ri Jae Myong took revenge on traitor Ri Wan Yong by stabbing him in the back.

Min Yong Hwan, Ri Pom Jin, Hong Pom Sik and other patriots called for the regaining of national sovereignty by committing suicide.

At one time a campaign was launched to pay back a loan of 13 million *won* which Korea had received from Japan after the Russo-Japanese War. To this end, all the Korean males gave up smoking, and even King Kojong<sup>10</sup> joined the no-smoking campaign. The women cut down their expenses on food and sold their trinkets. The girls offered articles they had prepared for their marriage. Rich men's servants, seamstresses, cake sellers, vegetable sellers and even straw sandal sellers contributed their hard-earned pennies for the payment of the national debt.

Nevertheless, Korea failed to maintain her independence.

What is essential is to rouse all the Koreans to a determination to win back the lost sovereignty of their country and develop sufficient strength to repel the invaders. With an unshakable determination you will be able to develop your strength, and if you develop your strength you will be fully able to defeat even the strongest enemy. If we are to recover our nation's sovereignty, we must rouse the people throughout the country to the struggle, but this cannot be done in a day or two. That is why I tell you to aim high....

My father used to tell me these things from the days when he would lead me by the hand up and down Mangyong Hill. Everything he said was permeated with patriotism.

Once my father said to my grandparents, "What is the use of living if I cannot win my country's independence? Even if I am to be torn to pieces I must fight and defeat the Japanese. If I fall in battle, my son will continue the fight; if my son cannot accomplish the cause, my grandson must fight until we win our nation's independence."

Later, I remembered these words when the anti-Japanese armed struggle, which I had believed we would win in three or four years, dragged on. As I lived through the long years of tragedy caused by national division after liberation, the division that compelled the north and the south to take opposite courses, I reminded myself of my father's profound words.

What he said always reflected his idea of "Aim High!", his conviction and his thought and aspiration for national liberation.

In spite of his family's poverty, my father went to Sungsil Middle School with a strong resolve to achieve his idea of "Aim High!"

During the period of a little more than a decade from the reform in the year of Kabo (1894)<sup>11</sup> to the signing of the treaty in the year of Ulsa (1905), a lot of work was being done to establish a modern educational system, though belatedly, on the strength of the trend towards political reform in our country. At the time when in Seoul Paejae Haktang, Rihwa Haktang, Yugyong Kongwon and similar schools were being set up to teach Western culture, Sungsil Middle School was established in west Korea by American missionaries as a part of their religious effort.

This school took pupils from all parts of the country. Many young people who wished to receive modern education came to the school. History, algebra, geometry, physics, hygiene, physiology, physical training, music and other subjects of a modern education offered by Sungsil Middle School attracted the young people who wished to eliminate national backwardness and advance in step with the new world trend.

My father said that he attended this school in order to receive a modern education. He had no desire to learn the difficult Nine Chinese Classics that had been taught at Confucian schools.

Apart from the educational aims set by the missionaries, the Sungsil Middle School produced many renowned patriots who, in

subsequent years, worked hard for the independence movement. For instance Son Jong Do who became the first Vice-Chairman and then the Chairman of the political council of the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai came from this school. Cha Ri Sok who was a member of the state council of the provisional government towards its closing years was educated at the school.

Yun Tong Ju, a talented patriotic poet, also attended it, but left it early.

Kang Ryang Uk, too, attended the specialized course of the Sungsil School. In those days the specialized course was called the Sungsil College. Sungsil Middle School meant the secondary course of the school in those days. The Japanese called the school the source of anti-Japanese thought because it produced so many fighters for independence against the Japanese.

“Learn to read and write for Korea’s sake! Learn technology also for Korea’s sake! Believe in a Korean God, if you believe in one!”, my father used to say to his schoolmates as he rallied the young patriots and pupils together.

Under his guidance a reading circle and a single-hearted friendship association were formed at Sungsil Middle School. These associations inculcated patriotism in the pupils and, at the same time, worked hard to enlighten the popular masses in Pyongyang and the surrounding area. In December 1912 they organized a school strike against the inhumane treatment and exploitative practices perpetrated by the school authorities.

During the school holidays my father used to travel around Anju, Kangdong, Sunan, Uiju and other places in North and South Phyongan Provinces and Hwanghae Province, enlightening the masses and recruiting comrades.

The greatest achievement made by my father at Sungsil Middle School was to find many comrades with whom he could share life and death.



Many of his classmates were not only friends of my father but also ready to take up the common cause with him in order to shape the destiny of the country and nation. They were all young men with foresight and a high reputation, men of great ability, wide knowledge and outstanding personality.

Ri Po Sik was one of them. He came from Pyongyang and participated in the work of the reading circle and of the single-hearted friendship association, made a major contribution to the formation of the Korean National Association, and played a significant role in the March First Popular Uprising.

When we were living at Ponghwa-ri, many times he visited my father who was teaching at Myongsin School.

Among my father's classmates from North Phyongan Province was a man named Paek Se Bin (Paek Yong Mu) from Pihyon. When my father was travelling around North Phyongan Province, Paek Se Bin frequently served as his guide. He was an overseas correspondent of the Korean National Association. When the Central Council for Independent National Reunification was formed in south Korea in December 1960, Paek Se Bin worked as its member.

Pak In Gwan stayed in the same hostel as my father in their days at Sungsil Middle School. For some time after he began attending school my father stayed at the hostel.

While teaching at Kwangson School in Unryul, Hwanghae Province in the spring of 1917, Pak In Gwan joined the Korean National Association. While out rallying comrades in Songhwa, Jaeryong, Haeju and other places he was arrested by the Japanese police and sent to Haeju prison for a year. Compositions written by his pupils at Kwangson School under the title "The Peninsula in Relation to Us" are even now on exhibition at the Unryul Museum of Revolutionary Activities. The compositions provide a glimpse of

the ideological trend and spiritual world of the pupils at the school which was under the influence of the Korean National Association.

Of all the independence fighters O Tong Jin was the most intimate with my father.

It was in my father's days at Sungsil Middle School that O Tong Jin would visit our house frequently. He was then attending Pyongyang Taesong School that had been established by An Chang Ho. Since they were not only on friendly terms, but also in ideological harmony, they were sincerely and ardently associated with each other from the start. It was at the athletics meeting held on the military drill ground at Kyongsang-gol in the spring of 1910 that O Tong Jin first sympathized with my father's opinions, so I was told.

The athletics meeting was attended by more than ten thousand young people and pupils from Pyongyang, Pakchon, Kangso, Yongyu and other places.

At the debating contest held at the end of the athletics meeting, my father became the focus of attention by claiming that our country should be modernized by our own efforts, in opposition to some pupils who asserted that, if our country was to become a civilized country, it should adopt Japanese civilization. Among the audience was O Tong Jin, who later became the head of Jongui-bu. Whenever he recollected the event, O Tong Jin used to say with deep emotion, "Mr. Kim's speech that day made a great impression on me."

In the guise of a trader, from around 1913 he travelled around Seoul, Pyongyang, Sinuiju and other major cities in the country and to China, visiting my father whenever he had the opportunity, to discuss the future of the independence movement.

At first I took him for an honest businessman. It was only when we had moved to Badaogou and Fusong that I learned that he was an important fighter for independence.

By that time he enjoyed such a high reputation that there was no one who did not know his name, O Tong Jin (alias Songam). Judging from his property status and background, he could afford to live comfortably instead of taking the thorny path of revolution, but he took up arms and fought the Japanese.

O Tong Jin respected my father highly and loved him dearly. Many people visited his home in Uiju. The outbuilding of his house was wholly reserved for such visitors. He had so many visitors that he had to keep a cook exclusively for them. But he met my father in the main building and the mistress of the house herself used to cook for my father, so I was told.

Once O Tong Jin and his wife visited us. My grandmother gave them a brass bowl as a souvenir. I am writing about him in great detail not only because he was a friend and comrade of my father's, but also because he played an important part in my younger days. From my childhood I felt greatly attached to him. He was arrested by the Japanese imperialists while I was studying in Jilin. Many years later, that is, in early March 1932 when I was travelling around Jiandao in order to organize the Anti-Japanese People's Guerrilla Army, he was put on trial at the Sinuiju local court. I had been greatly surprised to hear that the record of Gandhi's preliminary examination amounted to as many as 25 thousand pages, but I was told that the record of O Tong Jin's preliminary examination numbered as many as 35 thousand pages, or 64 volumes.

On the day of his trial thousands of visitors thronged the court with the result that the trial scheduled to begin early in the morning started at one o'clock in the afternoon. Then he denied the power of the court and shook the room by jumping into the chief judge's seat and cheering for Korea's independence.

The confused Japanese judges quickly suspended the trial and sentenced him without his even being present. At his appeal he was

sentenced to life imprisonment, but he died in prison without seeing the day of liberation.

As we struggled to build up the guerrilla army, the press reported his trial, telling of his unstained honour and his unbreakable fighting spirit, and carrying a photograph of his being escorted in a prisoner's hood to Pyongyang gaol. When I saw his photograph I recollected his unbreakable patriotic spirit with deep emotion.

Many of my father's close friends in his Sungsil Middle School days became stalwart revolutionaries and later formed the backbone of the Korean National Association.

My father left Sungsil Middle School early and began to teach at Sunhwa School in Mangyongdae and then at Myongsin School in Kangdong, applying himself to the education of the younger generation and to rallying his comrades. He explained that he had left middle school with a view to concentrating on the practical struggle and to extending the theatre of his revolutionary activities.

During a school holiday in 1916 he toured Jiandao in northeast China. I do not know whom he got in touch with, but he went to Shanghai from Jiandao and there he contacted Sun Yat-sen's nationalist revolutionary group.

My father had a high regard for Sun Yat-sen as a forerunner of the bourgeois democratic revolution in China. My father said that in China the men's pigtails had disappeared and weekly holidays introduced through the efforts of the bourgeois reformists.

In particular my father spoke highly of the Three Principles of the People—the nation, the people's rights and the people's life—proposed by Sun Yat-sen as the programme for the Chinese revolutionary coalition, the Alliance Society, and of his new three-point policy of alliance with the Soviet Union, alliance with communism and assistance to the working class and peasantry which had been formulated under the influence of the May 4

Movement. He said that Sun Yat-sen was a revolutionary of large calibre, strong will and foresight, but he added that Sun Yat-sen had been mistaken when he had conceded the office of generalissimo to Yuan Shi-kai after the establishment of the Republic of China, on condition that he establish a republican system and remove Qing Emperor.

In my boyhood I often heard my father talking about the bourgeois reformist movement in Korea. He greatly regretted the failure of the coup in the year of Kapsin (1884) led by Kim Ok Kyun who remained in power for “only three days,” and said that his policy of human equality, the abolition of the caste system and the promotion of able people that had been formulated in his reformist programme of the Enlightenment Party as well as his idea of independence that suggested the renunciation of dependence on the Qing dynasty was all progressive.

Judging from what my father said, I realized that Kim Ok Kyun was a pre-eminent figure and that, if his reformist movement had succeeded, the modern history of Korea might have been different.

It was much later that we discovered the limitations in Kim Ok Kyun’s reformist movement and its programme and analysed them from the point of view of Juche.

Most of my teachers in Korean history regarded Kim Ok Kyun as pro-Japanese. The academic circles of our country after liberation labelled him as pro-Japanese for a long time because he had received help from the Japanese in his preparations for the coup. But we did not consider this estimation of the reformist to be fair.

I told our historians that, although he was wrong to neglect the link between his movement and the popular masses, assessing him as pro-Japanese simply because he had drawn on the strength of Japan would lead to nihilism, that the aim of his use of Japanese forces was not to effect pro-Japanese reforms but to turn the

balance of forces in those days in favour of the Enlightenment Party on the basis of a meticulous calculation of the balance, and that such tactics were inevitable in the situation in his time.

My father said that Kim Ok Kyun had failed in his attempted coup mainly because the reformists relied only on their supporters within the court, instead of believing in the forces of the popular masses, and that we must learn a lesson from his failure.

My father toured Jiandao and Shanghai to obtain a firsthand knowledge of the independence movement abroad of which he had heard rumours, recruiting new comrades and defining his policies and strategies for the subsequent years.

Judging from the international situation in those days, the national liberation struggles in the colonies were not fully developed. The mode and method of the independence movements in colonies had yet to be evolved.

When my father was visiting Jiandao and Shanghai, the Chinese revolution was experiencing difficulties on account of the insidious manoeuvres of the warlords and intervention by imperialist powers. The United States, Britain, Japan and other foreign forces created major problems for the Chinese revolution. In spite of this, many of the independence fighters in exile harboured illusions about the imperialists and wasted their time on empty talk about seeking aid from some of the major powers.

The situation in Jiandao reaffirmed my father's belief that Korea's independence should be achieved by Koreans themselves. After his visit to Jiandao, my father worked day and night to enlighten the masses and recruit comrades.

By that time our family had moved from Mangyongdae to Ponghwa-ri, Kangdong. There he taught at Myongsin School during the daytime and enlightened the masses at night school, as he had done in Mangyongdae. He used to return home very late.

In a literary exercise at school I made a speech against the Japanese, from a composition prepared for me by my father.

In those days he composed revolutionary poems and songs and enthusiastically taught them to his pupils.

Many independence fighters visited my father at Ponghwa-ri. He himself travelled frequently around North and South Phyongan Provinces and Hwanghae Province to visit his comrades. In the course of this, hardcore elements were trained and a mass foundation for the independence movement was laid.

On the basis of these preparations, he and other patriotic independence fighters such as Jang Il Hwan, Pae Min Su and Paek Se Bin formed the Korean National Association at Ri Po Sik's house at Haktanggol, Pyongyang on March 23, 1917. The young members of the association cut their fingers and wrote "Korea's independence" and "Resolved to give our lives" with their blood.

The Korean National Association was a secret organization with the aim of achieving national independence and establishing a truly modern state through the efforts of the unified Korean nation. It was one of the largest anti-Japanese underground revolutionary organizations of Korean patriots at home or abroad at the time of the March First Popular Uprising<sup>12</sup>.

In 1917 there were not many clandestine organizations in Korea. By that time the Independence Volunteers, the Great Korea Liberation Corps, the Korea's Sovereignty Recovery Corps and similar organizations that had been formed after the annexation had all been disbanded under the repression of the Japanese imperialists. Because underground fighters were indiscriminately arrested, ordinary people dared not think of joining them in their activities. The situation was such that even those who were determined to fight for independence were compelled to leave the country and form anti-Japanese organizations abroad. People who were not brave enough to do this engaged in moderate activities at

home with the permission of the government-general, without offending the Japanese.

It was in this situation that the Korean National Association was born.

It was a revolutionary organization that stood firmly against imperialism and for independence. Its manifesto stated that, in view of the clear evidence that European and American forces were heading East and that they would soon rival Japan for hegemony, the association must, by taking advantage of their rivalry, promote the rallying of the masses and preparations for achieving Korea's independence through the efforts of the Korean people.

As is clear from the manifesto, the Korean National Association, unlike those who pinned their hopes on foreign forces, adopted the independent stand that Korea's independence should be won by the Korean people themselves.

The Korean National Association drew up a great plan for sending its members to Jiandao and developing that area into the strategic base for the independence movement.

The association had a closely-knit network of organizations. It admitted to its membership only well-prepared, tested and well-selected patriots, had an organizational system that worked from top to bottom and used code words for communications between its members. Its secret documents were compiled in code. It planned to hold a general meeting of its members every year on the day of starting a new school year at Sungsil Middle School. It was thoroughly concealed by means of such lawful fringe organizations as the School Association, Stone Monument Association and Home-town Association. It had area leaders under it and posted correspondents to Beijing and Dandong for the purpose of liaising with people working abroad.

The association had a solid mass foundation. It drew its membership from among workers, peasants, teachers, students,



soldiers (of the Independence Army), shopkeepers, religious believers and artisans—people from all walks of life. Its organizational network spread throughout the country and even reached Beijing, Shanghai, Jilin, Fusong, Linjiang, Changbai, Liuhe, Kuandian, Dandong, Huadian and Xingjing in China.

In the course of forming and building up the Korean National Association, my father recruited many new comrades such as Jang Chol Ho, Kang Je Ha, Kang Jin Gon and Kim Si U. It would be impossible to describe all the painstaking efforts made by my father in order to discover them. He did not mind walking hundreds of miles if it was to meet a comrade.

O Tong Jin, on his way to Hwanghae Province, one day called unexpectedly on my father. He looked handsomer than usual and made a great impression on me.

He boasted that he had found a fine man.

“He is a young man named Kong Yong, living in Pyoktong,” O Tong Jin said. “He is well-informed, nine feet tall and handsome. Being a man of composure and skilful at *Kyoksul* (an art of self-defence—Tr.), he would have made a good defence minister if he was living in a feudal age.”

Delighted at the news, my father remarked, “From olden times someone who recommended a good man has been more appreciated than the services of the good man himself. So your recent visit to Pyoktong has been of great benefit to our movement.”

When O Tong Jin had left, my father asked my uncle to make a few pairs of straw sandals. The next day he put on a pair and set out on a journey.

He returned home before a month had passed. He had walked such a long way that his sandal had worn almost to shreds. Nevertheless, he was smiling as he entered through the brushwood gate, and showed no sign of fatigue.

My father was extremely satisfied with his interview with Kong Yong.

In my boyhood I learned from my father the ethics of comradeship.

The Korean National Association was the result of many years of my father's energetic organizational and propaganda activities at home and abroad after the annexation. He planned to build up the movement on a large scale on the strength of the organization.

But the organization was put down harshly by the Japanese imperialists. In the autumn of 1917 the enemy discovered a clue concerning the organization.

One windy day three policemen fell upon my father as he taught at Myongsin School and arrested him.

Mr. Ho who had followed my father as far as the Maekjon ferry hurried back to my mother with a secret message from him.

My mother, as my father had written in the message, climbed up to the attic and came down with some secret papers which she destroyed in the kitchen fire.

From the day following my father's arrest the Christians living in Ponghwa-ri gathered at Myongsin School early every morning and prayed for his release.

People from Pyongyang, Kangdong and the surrounding area swarmed to the Pyongyang Police Station with petitions for his release.

On hearing that my father was soon to be put on trial, my grandfather in Mangyongdae sent my uncle to the police station. He wanted to know whether my father wished to have a lawyer to defend him at the trial or not. When my uncle said that he would find the money to hire a lawyer by selling some household goods, my father flatly refused.

“A lawyer speaks with his mouth, and I can do the same. So there is no need to waste money on a lawyer. An innocent man does not need a lawyer to defend him!”

The Japanese imperialists tried my father three times at the Pyongyang local court. Each time my father protested against the trial, saying, “How can it be a crime for a Korean to love his country and work for it? I cannot recognize this unwarranted examination by the authorities.”

As a result, the trial dragged on. At the third trial the Japanese imperialists sentenced him to a term in prison.

After my father’s imprisonment uncle Hyong Rok and my second uncle on my mother’s side (Kang Yong Sok) came to Ponghwa-ri to take us to Mangyongdae.

But my mother said that she would remain at Ponghwa-ri through the winter. She wanted to remain there in order to get in touch with the members of the Korean National Association and other anti-Japanese fighters who might visit there, and to resolve any problems caused by my father’s arrest.

After dealing with all such problems my mother took us to Mangyongdae in the spring of the following year. My two grandfathers came to Ponghwa-ri with a cart to carry away our household goods.

For me the spring and summer of that year were miserable.

Whenever I asked my mother when father would return, she would answer that he would return soon. One day she took me to the Swing Park on Mangyong Hill. As she sat on the swing holding me in her arms, she said, “Jung Son, the icefloes on the River Taedong have melted away and the trees have produced green leaves, but your father hasn’t returned home. He was fighting to win back his country. How can that be a crime? You must grow up quickly and take revenge on the enemy for your father.... You must grow up to be a hero and win back the country.”

I answered that I would do so, come what may.

After that she visited the prison many times without my knowledge, but she said nothing about it when she returned home.

One day she took me in the direction of the city, saying that she was going to Phalgol to have her cotton ginned. She left the cotton at her mother's house at Chilgol on the way, asking her mother to have it ginned, and then took me to Pyongyang gaol.

My grandmother told her daughter to go without me, saying that a child too young to understand the world should not see a prison. If I saw my father behind bars, how frightened I should be! She was dead against her taking me to the prison. At that time I was six years old.

On crossing the wooden bridge over the River Pothong, I recognized the prison building. Nobody had told me what a prison looked like, but I could judge it from its unnatural shape and from the dreary atmosphere of its surroundings. The exterior of the prison building was forbidding and dreadful enough to terrify people. The iron gate, high wall, watch-tower and iron bars, as well as the black uniforms of the guards and their sharp glances were all menacing.

The visitors' room was dim, screened from the sunshine. The air in the room was thick and oppressive.

Even in such an atmosphere my father was smiling as usual. He was delighted to see me, and praised my mother for having taken me with her. The gaunt face of my father who wore prison clothes defied instant recognition. His face, neck, hands, feet and all the rest of his body were scarred and wounded. Despite his condition, however, he was worrying about the safety of his family at home. His imposing and dignified bearing inspired me with an irresistible feeling of pride, mixed with a grievance and hatred for the enemy.

“You’ve grown up. Obey your elders at home and be good at your school work!” he said to me in his usual tone of voice, calm and composed, without so much as glancing at the warden.

The sound of his voice brought tears to my eyes. I said in a loud voice, “Yes. Please come home soon, father.” He nodded with satisfaction. He asked my mother to help the brush-sellers and comb-sellers who might occasionally come to visit her. By these he meant his comrades in the revolution.

His indomitable image that day left a lasting impression on me. I saw Ri Kwan Rin in the visitors’ room, and that also made an unforgettable impression on me. She was a student of art at Pyongyang Girls’ High School and a member of the Korean National Association. It was fortunate that she had not been arrested by the police. She had come with her classmate and fellow member of the association to see my father. It was strange in those days when feudal customs prevailed for a girl to visit a political prisoner. Things were such that if her visit to the prison were generally known no man would marry her. Even the wardens were surprised to see the smart, modern girl visiting a political prisoner and treated her with caution. With a bright face she consoled my father and my mother.

My visit to my father in prison was a great event for me. I understood why my mother had taken me with her to the prison. The physical wounds to my father made me feel to the marrow of my bones how fiendish was Japanese imperialism. Those wounds gave me a much more real and visual image of Japanese imperialism than the image provided by numerous statesmen and historians through their analysis and assessment of it.

Until that time I had not really experienced the atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese army and police. I had seen some Japanese policemen in Mangyongdae who had come to take a census or inspect the cleaning and found fault with one thing or the

other and in the end slashed the door of the kitchen of my house with a whip and broken the lid of the cooking pot. But never had I seen them inflicting such appalling wounds upon an innocent person.

The wounds remained in my mind throughout the period of my revolutionary struggle against the Japanese. The shock I received on that visit still has a strong effect on me.

In the autumn of 1918 my father was released after completing his term in prison. My uncle and my grandfather went to the prison with a litter and the villagers waited for my father at the fork of Songsan-ri that leads to Mangyongdae.

With wounds from his beatings all over his body, my father tottered out through the prison gate. My grandfather, trembling with indignation, told my father to lie down on the litter.

“I will walk. How can I be carried on a litter under the eyes of the enemy? I will walk to spite the enemy,” my father said walking boldly forward.

Back home, my father said to his brothers, “In prison I even drank as much water as I could out of my determination to survive and fight to the end. How can I leave unpunished the Japanese who are the worst of living creatures? Hyong Rok and Hyong Gwon, you, too, must fight the Japanese. The enemy must be made to pay for our blood even if we must die.”

Listening to him, I resolved to follow my father in the fight to destroy the Japanese imperialists.

My father read books even in his sickbed. To convalesce he stayed for some time with his aunt’s husband, Kim Sung Hyon, an ophthalmologist, and there he continued with his medical studies which he had started in prison. From Kim Sung Hyon my father obtained many books on medicine. Earlier in his Sungsil Middle School days my father had learned medicine from the doctor, and read medical books enthusiastically at home.

It was in prison that my father made up his mind to change from a teacher to a doctor.

Even before he had completely recovered, my father went on a journey to North Phyongan Province, resolved to restore the disrupted organizations of the Korean National Association.

My grandfather encouraged him to stick to his cause until it was accomplished. Prior to his departure, my father composed a poem, “The Green Pine-tree on Nam Hill.” The poem expressed his firm resolve to bring a new spring of independence to the silk-embroidered land of three thousand *ri* by fighting on even if he were to be torn to pieces.

### **3. An Echo of Cheers for Independence**

My father left home one very cold day.

I anxiously waited for the spring. The cold was a great enemy for us who were poorly fed and dressed.

As the weather became a little warmer, my grandmother grew anxious, saying that soon it would be my birthday. Her worry came from her concern about how she could make my birthday not too bad during the lean spring, although the buds would be in flower and my father who had gone to the north would suffer less from the cold.

Although my birthday is in the spring when the farmers' food has run out, my family used to put on the table a bowl of boiled rice and an egg fried with shrimps. An egg was a sumptuous feast for our family who could hardly afford even gruel.

However, in the spring of that year I gave no particular thought to my birthday. This was because my father's arrest had shocked me and, on top of that, I was constantly worried about my father who was far away.

Soon after my father left home the March First Popular Uprising broke out. The March First Popular Uprising was an explosion of the pent-up anger and resentment of the Korean nation who had been exposed to extreme humiliation and mistreatment under the ten-year long brutal "sabre rule" of Japanese imperialism.

The ten years that followed Korea's annexation by Japan were a period of ordeals, a period of darkness and a period of starvation. During this period our nation, living under mediaeval terrorism which had reduced the country to a huge prison, was robbed of all social rights including the freedom of speech, assembly, association and demonstration as well as of its wealth, and groaned in dire distress.



Our people who, following the country's annexation by Japan, had built up their strength through secret associations, the Independence Army and the patriotic enlightenment movement, rose up boldly, unable to tolerate meekly this period of darkness, the period of plunder.

The March First Popular Uprising was scrupulously planned and carried forward under the leadership of people in the religious world, from *Chondoism*, Christianity and Buddhism, and patriotic teachers and students. The national spirit of our people which had been inherited and sublimated through the reformist revolution in 1884, the movement for defending justice and rejecting injustice, the peasant war in 1894, the patriotic enlightenment movement and the volunteers' struggle, erupted at last like a volcano in a call for sovereignty and independence.

In Pyongyang thousands of young people, students and citizens gathered in the playground of Sungdok Girls' School on Jangdae Hill at 12 o'clock on March 1, a bell summoning them there. There they read aloud the "declaration of independence" and solemnly proclaimed Korea to be an independent state before holding a menacing street demonstration shouting the slogans "Long live the independence of Korea!" and "Japanese and Japanese troops, get out!" As the ranks of demonstrators thronged into the street, tens of thousands of people joined them.

People from Mangyongdae and Chilgol also thronged to Pyongyang. We had our breakfast at dawn and all our family left to take part in the demonstration and cheer for the independence of the country. The ranks of the demonstrators which had numbered only several hundred when leaving increased to several thousand. The demonstrating masses thronged towards the Pothong Gate shouting "Long live the independence of Korea!" and beating drums and gongs.

I, then six years old, also joined the ranks of demonstrators in my worn-out shoes and went as far as the Pothong Gate, cheering. It was hard for me to keep up with the adults who were thronging towards the city in angry waves. So, from time to time I took off my straw sandals, the

sliding shoes being a nuisance to me, and ran after the ranks with the shoes in my hand. When the adults cheered for independence, I joined them.

The enemy used swords and guns indiscriminately against the masses, even mobilizing mounted policemen and troops. Many people were killed.

Despite this the demonstrators resisted the enemy fearlessly, becoming human weapons. A battle was fought in front of the Pothong Gate.

This was the first time I saw one man killing another. This was the day when I witnessed Korean blood being spilled for the first time. My young heart burned with indignation.

As the sun set and it became dark the villagers climbed Mangyong Hill with torches in their hands and there they again cheered for independence blowing bugles and beating drums and cans.

The struggle continued in this way for many days. With my aunt Hyong Bok I used to go up Mangyong Hill after my mother and there we cheered until late at night before going back down. My mother carried drinking water for the other people and peeled hemp stalks to be used as torches.

In Seoul a courageous demonstration was held with the participation of hundreds of thousands of people, including those peasants who had come there from the provinces to attend the funeral of King Kojong.

With a view to repressing the demonstration, the Japanese governor-general Hasegawa mobilized the 20th army division stationed in Ryongsan. The enemy brutally massacred the demonstrating masses, shooting and stabbing them. The streets of Seoul became a sea of blood in an instant.

However, the demonstrators continued their march, the second rank stepping forward to the van if the front rank fell.

People in other parts of the country also fought heroically, shedding their blood and not yielding to the brutality of the enemy who suppressed the demonstrators by force of arms.

When a young girl student had her right arm that held the national flag cut off by an enemy sword, she took the flag in her left hand and, when she was unable to move any further having had her left arm cut off, too, she continued to shout “Long live the independence of Korea!” striking terror into the hearts of the Japanese imperialist soldiers and policemen.

With the demonstration in Seoul and Pyongyang as the start, in the middle of March the uprising swept across all the 13 provinces of the country, spreading even to the Korean compatriots elsewhere such as Manchuria, Shanghai, the Maritime Province of Siberia and Hawaii and thus becoming truly nationwide resistance. At that time every Korean with a national conscience took part in this uprising irrespective of occupation, religious belief, age and sex.

Even women from respectable families who would previously not have gone outdoors because of feudal custom and *kisaeng* girls who were treated as women of the lowest birth formed ranks and rose in the demonstration.

For a couple of months following the outbreak of the uprising the whole country shook with cheers for independence. Then, as the spring passed and summer came, the spirit of the demonstrators gradually began to flag.

Many people believed that the enemy would withdraw if they raised their spirit and shouted cheers for only a few months. However, this was a delusion. It was most unlikely for the Japanese imperialists to give up their occupation of Korea willingly in the face of such resistance.

In order to seize Korea, Japan waged three wars, counting only the major ones.

As long as 400 years ago Kato Kiyomasa and Konishi Yukinaga, Hideyoshi's subordinates, ignited a fire in the land of our country,

bringing with them a large army amounting to hundreds of thousands of men. That incident was called the “Imjinwaeran” (the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592—Tr.).

As soon as Japan took the road of civilization through the so-called “Meiji Restoration” in the middle of the 19th century, one of the first things her ruling circles advanced was the “theory of the conquest of Korea.” The “theory of the conquest of Korea” was an aggressive argument by the Japanese militarist group that they should conquer Korea by force of arms for the prosperity of Japan and for the greater strength of the emperor state.

Although the “theory of the conquest of Korea” was not put into effect in those days because of disagreement among the Japanese political circles and military authorities, the advocates of this “theory” raised a rebellion and waged a civil war for more than six months.

It is said that a bronze statue of Saigo Takamori, head of the advocates of the “theory of the conquest of Korea” who raised a large-scale rebellion against the emperor, stands even today in state in Japan.

Japan waged wars against China and Russia in order to swallow up Korea. The United States of America and Great Britain supported her surreptitiously.

How cold-blooded the Japanese military clique was can be seen from the following story.

It was Nogi who commanded the Japanese forces at the battle at Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese War. In his attempt to seize Height 203 he went up the mountain by climbing up a ladder of corpses. They say that the grave on Paiokshan at Port Arthur holds only some of the more than 25,000 people who were killed there at that time.

Nogi won the war at a great cost, but he could seize neither Siberia nor Manchuria despite of the fact that he had boasted that he would swallow up both of them. Those Japanese who had been innocently deceived and become widows and orphans, thronged to the wharf in

misery on hearing the rumour that Nogi was returning home. Their intention was to do him some harm.

They are said, however, to have shut their mouths at the sight of three boxes of ashes hanging on the breast of Nogi as he disembarked from the ship. Nogi had lost all three of his sons in the battle.

There is no knowing how truthful this story is. However, it was clear from this that the Japanese occupationists would not give up Korea readily.

However, the leaders of the March First Popular Uprising defined the character of this movement as non-violent from the outset, ignoring the elated fighting spirit of our people, and oblivious of this historical lesson. They confined themselves to formulating a “declaration of independence” and clarifying to the world the intention of the Korean nation for its independence. They did not want the movement extending any further and turning into a mass struggle led by the popular masses.

Some leaders of the nationalist movement went so far as to try to achieve the independence of Korea by means of a “petition.” When Wilson’s “theory of national self-determination” was made public, they launched a shameful petition campaign in the preposterous belief that a decision might be reached on the independence of Korea at the Paris Peace Conference by the representatives of the United States of America and other parties to the entente. Kim Kyu Sik and some other people visited the lodgings of the representatives of the great powers with a “petition for independence” in their hands, appealing to them for help.

However, the representatives of the parties to the entente gave the Korean question no consideration; they were concerned only about themselves.

Properly speaking, it was a miscalculation for senior figures from the nationalist movement to pin their hopes on Wilson’s “theory of national self-determination.” The “theory of national self-determination” was a hypocritical slogan which the US imperialists put forward in order to reduce the influence of the October Socialist Revolution and lord it over

the rest of the world. Under the deceptive slogan of “national self-determination” the US imperialists schemed to undermine from within the multi-national USSR and isolate small and weak colonial nations from one another to prevent them from uniting in the independence struggle. At the same time they plotted to occupy the territory of the countries defeated in the war.

It was impossible for the US imperialists to help Korea to gain her independence because as early as the beginning of the 20th century they had “approved” of Japan’s invasion of Korea in the “Katsura-Taft Treaty.” There is no historical precedent for a major power to sympathize with a small country and give freedom and independence to the people of a weak country. The sovereignty of a nation can be achieved and preserved only through the independent efforts and indomitable struggle of that nation. This is a truth which has been proved through many centuries and generations.

During the Russo-Japanese War and the Portsmouth Peace Conference King Kojong sent a secret envoy to the United States of America to call upon it to expose Japan’s aggression and assist Korea in maintaining her independence. However, the United States of America unsparingly offered support in many, varied ways to Japan so that she could win the Russo-Japanese War. Then, at the Portsmouth Peace Conference to discuss a postwar settlement, it gave every possible assistance to Japan so that the result of the conference would be favourable for her. President Roosevelt ignored the confidential letter from King Kojong on the ground that it was not an official document.

Kojong then sent emissaries to the International Peace Conference held in The Hague in an attempt to have the illegality of the “Ulsa Treaty” (the treaty between Korea and Japan concluded in 1905—Tr.) proclaimed and maintain the nation’s rights by appealing to international justice and humanitarianism. However, the King’s letter to the conference was not effective because of the persistent obstructive manoeuvres of the Japanese imperialists and the lukewarm response of the representatives of

the various countries, and all the efforts of the emissaries in appealing to the great powers for sympathy were frustrated. Under the pressure of the Japanese imperialists Kojong was held responsible for having sent secret envoys and was forced to hand the throne over to Sunjong.

The incident of the emissaries at The Hague was a loud alarm-bell which shook off the deep-rooted flunkeyist consciousness of the feudal rulers. The red blood of Ri Jun which dyed the site of the International Peace Conference was a serious warning to the future generation that no major power in the world would make a present of her independence to Korea and that it would be impossible to gain the country's independence by relying on foreigners.

That the highest levels of the nationalist movement again pinned their hopes on the United States of America and the "theory of national self-determination" without taking this lesson to heart was because the ideas of worshipping and kowtowing to America were deep-rooted in their minds. Whenever the country was in danger, the incompetent feudal rulers looked to the big countries and tried to shape the destiny of the country with their help. This was implanted in the minds of the highest levels of the nationalist movement.

The March First Popular Uprising demonstrated that bourgeois nationalists could no longer be the leading force of the anti-Japanese national liberation movement.

The class limitation of the leaders of the March First Popular Uprising was that they did not go so far as to totally reject Japan's colonial rule. They set the aim of the movement to be to obtain some concession which could ensure the interests of their own class within the limit of Japan's ruling system. This became the ideological basis which later either reduced many of them to reformists or made some of them even call for "autonomy" as a compromise with the Japanese imperialists.

Until that time in our country there existed neither a progressive idea capable of smashing reformism nor a large army of the industrial proletariat who could fight under the guidance of a progressive idea. The

young working class of our country did not have its own party whose mission it would be to establish Marxism-Leninism as the idea of the new era and to rally under its banner the working masses.

If the popular masses of our country who were groaning under the misrule of the Japanese imperialists were to find the true way ahead for their struggle and have a vanguard which would defend their interests, they had to travel along a longer and thornier path.

Through the March First Popular Uprising our people became keenly aware of the fact that no movement could emerge victorious without a powerful leading force.

Although millions of the masses came out into the streets in resistance with the common desire to win back their country, their struggle was dispersed and spontaneous; it was not waged according to a unified programme and combat plan because they were not led by the working class, by the party.

The March First Popular Uprising served as a serious lesson that if the popular masses were to win in the struggle for national independence and freedom, they must fight in an organized way with a correct strategy and tactics under the leadership of a revolutionary party, and that they must completely reject flunkeyism and prepare a strong revolutionary force for themselves.

Through the March First Popular Uprising the Korean people demonstrated to the whole world that ours are a people with a strong spirit of independence who do not want to live as the slaves of others and that they are a people with indomitable stamina and ardent patriotism who fear no sacrifice in order to regain their country.

This uprising dealt a heavy blow to the Japanese imperialists. In order to soothe the anti-Japanese feelings of the Korean people after the March First Popular Uprising, the Japanese occupationists had to change, although it was for form's sake, the "sabre rule" for a "civil government."

With the March First Popular Uprising as a momentum, in our country an end was put to the era of the bourgeois nationalist movement



and the national liberation struggle of the Korean people began to enter a new stage.

The shouts for independence which echoed to the whole world shaking my ill-fated country continued ringing in my ears throughout the summer. Those cheers made me mature at an early age. In the street in front of the Pothong Gate where I witnessed the fierce struggle between the demonstrating masses and the armed policemen, my world outlook leapt into a new phase. It can be said that my childhood ended as I shouted for independence standing on tiptoe squeezed in between the adults.

The March First Popular Uprising marked the first time that I stood in the ranks of the people and that the true image of our nation was implanted in my mind's eye. Whenever I heard the cheers for independence which echoed like a roll of thunder to my mind I felt boundless pride in the indomitable fighting spirit and heroism of our people.

In the summer of that year we received a letter from my father.

With the letter my father sent me some Chinese ink sticks with the trade mark "Jinbuhuan" and some writing brushes. They were a special gift for me to improve my handwriting.

I ground one of the ink sticks onto an inkstone, dipped a writing brush in it so that there was plenty of ink on it and wrote the word "Father" in bold characters on a sheet of Korean paper.

That night our family took turns to read the letter by lamplight. My uncle Hyong Rok read the letter three times. Although he was of a carefree disposition, he was as careful as someone elderly when reading letters.

My mother read the letter quickly and, handing it over to me, told me to read it aloud so that my grandfather and grandmother could hear. Although I was under school age, I could read Korean letters because my father had taught me the Korean alphabet when he was at home.

When I had finished reading the letter, my grandmother stopped her spinning and asked me, “Doesn’t he say when he’s coming back?” And, without waiting for my answer, she said to herself:

“Whether he is in Russia or in Manchuria.... This time he has been in a strange place for quite a long time.”

The fact that my mother had merely glanced at the letter worried me. So, when I went to bed, I told her in a whisper of what I remembered of my father’s letter. My mother never took long over reading letters in the presence of my grandfather and grandmother. Instead, she would keep them in the breast of her coat and read them secretly during breaks as she worked in the field.

When I told her of what I remembered of parts of the letter, my mother said, stroking my hair: “It’s all right. Sleep now.”

My father returned home in the early autumn of that year to fetch his family. It had been a year since we had seen my father.

During that time my father had worked hard to restore the organizations of the Korean National Association, win comrades and rally the masses in the area of North Phyongan Province such as Uiju, Changsong, Pyoktong, Chosan and Junggang, as well as in Manchuria.

It was around that time that my father convened the Chongsudong Meeting (November 1918). This meeting, which was attended by representatives of the organizations of the Korean National Association in North Phyongan Province and by the liaison agents of various regions, drew up policies for the immediate restoration of the organizations of the Korean National Association and for rallying the proletarian masses closely around these organizations.

My father, now back at home, told us many things, particularly about news from Manchuria and about Russia, about Lenin and about the victory of the October Revolution. He told us that a new world had come to Russia in which the workers, peasants and other unpropertied masses had become the masters, and he did not conceal his envy. He also expressed his great anxiety, saying that new-born Russia was facing

ordeals because of the attack of the white party and the armed intervention of 14 countries.

Because all his stories were woven with vivid detail and facts, I thought that my father might have been to the Maritime Province of Siberia.

Like Manchuria, the Maritime Province of Siberia was also a base for the Korean independence movement and an important rendezvous. At the time of the March First Popular Uprising the number of Koreans residing there was several hundred thousand. In this area lived many patriots and fighters for independence who had gone there from Korea as exiles. It was through there that Ri Jun and his party went to The Hague. And Ryu Rin Sok and Ri Sang Sol also formed here (Vladivostok) the combined headquarters of the volunteers from the 13 provinces of Korea. It was also here that the Korean Socialist Party headed by Ri Tong Hui started to disseminate Marxism-Leninism as the first socialist group of Korea. It was also in this area that the Provisional Government in Russia known as the Korean National Assembly was formed and proclaimed its existence at home and abroad. Hong Pom Do<sup>13</sup> and An Jung Gun conducted their military activities focussed on this area.

Korean fighters for independence and patriotic people who had come to the Maritime Province of Siberia as exiles, formed self-governing organizations and anti-Japanese resistance organizations throughout the area and conducted vigorous activities for the restoration of national rights. Units of the Independence Army based in the Maritime Province of Siberia advanced into such areas of North Hamgyong Province as Kyongwon and Kyonghung and attacked Japanese troops and policemen, thus seriously disrupting the enemy's rule and border guard. Some fighters for independence who had moved to this area from Manchuria formed large units and fought with the Red Army in defence of the Soviet Republic.

When the combined forces of imperialism and the internal enemy who followed their dictates pounced upon the Soviet Union from all

directions in order to strangle the new-born political regime there, thousands of Korean young people gave their blood and lives with arms in hand either in the guerrilla ranks or in the Red Army in order to defend the socialist system which mankind had longed for as their ideal. The names of Koreans are engraved in large letters on the monuments erected in the Far East to the memory of the heroes of the Russian civil war.

Such people as Hong Pom Do, Ri Tong Hui and Ryo Un Hyong who had worked hard for the independence movement for some time with the Far East of the Soviet Union as their base, met Lenin to gain his support for our national liberation movement.

The activities of the Korean fighters for independence in the Maritime Province of Siberia left traces which cannot be ignored in the history of the national liberation movement of our country, even though they once led to the heart-breaking tragedy as the Heihe Incident, brought about by the interference of outside forces and the antagonism among various associations.

I was not wrong to have guessed that my father had been to the Maritime Province of Siberia in order to win comrades.

My father told the family about the demonstration of the people in the northern border area, and we told him of how courageously the people of Kophyong Sub-county had fought at the time of the March First Popular Uprising.

Of what my father told us that day, the following is still vivid in my memory. He said:

“It is unlikely that robbers, who have intruded into your house and are wielding knives will let you live simply because you make a fuss begging them for mercy. If the man outside is also a robber, he will not come to your aid when he hears your cry. If you want to save your life you must fight the robbers. You can prevail over those who are armed with knives only when you fight them with a knife.”

My father had already formed a new view and a new determination with regard to the independence movement. I learned later that at the time

of the March First Popular Uprising and before and after this uprising my father had sought continually for the way ahead for national liberation, carefully following the events taking place at home and abroad and conducting his activities with the northern border area and south Manchuria as his base. He also had paid close attention to the process of the change in the socio-class relations in our country.

As the lesson of the March First Popular Uprising shows, the aggressors will not withdraw if we only hold demonstrations and cheer. It would also be impossible to regain the country only through the struggle of the Independence Army. We must fight the aggressors with a nationwide effort because all the country has become the prison of the Japanese and is covered with a forest of bayonets. To this end we must make a popular revolution, as in Russia. The popular masses should rise up with arms in hand and fight the enemy to win back the country and establish a new society free from exploitation and oppression.

This is the conclusion my father had drawn after all his hard work. This was the policy of the proletarian revolution.

With the independence movement unable to get out of its stagnation and only blood being spilled, my father asserted that a popular revolution should be made, necessitating a fresh method.

After the October Socialist Revolution had emerged victorious in Russia, my father began sympathizing with the communist ideology. Later, with the March First Popular Uprising as a momentum, he formed his own idea and a firm resolution that the national liberation movement in our country should shift from a nationalist movement to a communist movement.

At the Chongsudong Meeting held in July 1919 my father proved the historical necessity for a proletarian revolution. On the basis of this, he convened, in August of that year, a meeting of the heads of various districts under the Korean National Association, liaison agents and chiefs of the organizations for independence in Hongtong District, Kuandian County, China, formally proclaimed the policy of shifting the anti-

Japanese national liberation movement from a nationalist to a communist movement and advanced, in keeping with the change in the time, the task of defeating Japanese imperialism with the strength of our nation and building a new society which would ensure the rights and interests of the unpropertied masses.

My father's proposal of the policy of shifting from the nationalist to a communist movement is another of his exploits in the anti-Japanese national liberation movement.

My father used to explain his idea of the proletarian revolution plainly as the building of a new society which would provide rice to those who had no food and supply clothes to those who had no clothing and, through his practical activities he awakened the workers, peasants and other working masses to a progressive idea and united them into one revolutionary force by forming and expanding a variety of mass organizations.

Another feat my father achieved was his success in the struggle to prepare for fresh armed activities and unite armed groups.

My father expedited the preparations for fresh armed activities out of his conviction that the country could be regained only through armed activities, not through "petitions" or "diplomacy".

My father's plan was to select patriotic young people from the proletariat and train them into military cadres, ideologically remould the commanders and the rank and file of the existing armed organizations and thus turn their ranks into an armed force of the workers and peasants that was capable of carrying out the proletarian revolution.

Having put forward this policy, my father sent members of the Korean National Association to various units of the Independence Army to guide them in various matters—in the spreading of progressive ideas in the armed units, in the purchasing of weapons and in the training of military cadres and the increasing of the combat efficiency of the army.

At the same time he worked hard to achieve the unity of the armed units. What distressed my father most in those days was the lack of unity in the ranks of the independence movement.

At that time there were many units of the Independence Army and organizations engaged in the independence movement in Jiandao and the Maritime Province of Siberia. The so-called Association of Koreans, the Korean Independence Association, the Thaeguk Association, the War-fund Raising Association and suchlike would spring up overnight. There were more than 20 such organizations engaged in the independence movement in south Manchuria alone. If these organizations had united with one another and worked hand in hand with one another they would have been able to display great strength. However, the factionalists became engaged in a scramble for power from the start, rejecting other organizations and regarding them jealously.

If this situation was not put to rights, there was a fear that the ranks of the independence movement would be disrupted and the movement forsaken by the people or destroyed piecemeal by the enemy; and it would be impossible to promote the great cause of shifting the direction of the movement which my father had resolved to undertake.

Under these circumstances, when my father heard that the conflict between the Korean Independence Youth Association and the Kwangje Youth League was becoming aggravated, he hastened to Kuandian and, while staying there for several days, persuaded the leaders of the two organizations to merge. Thanks to my father's efforts, the armed organizations in the area along the River Amnok, such as the Corps for the Promotion of Industry and the War-fund Raising Corps, merged to form the National Corps.

It can be said that my father's intention in preparing for fresh armed activities was to build up the strength of the armed organizations with people of worker and peasant origin to make a fresh start in the armed activities geared to the communist movement and ensure that the various armed organizations worked in concert by merging them.

My father was concerned with implementing the policy of shifting the direction of the movement until the evening of his life and, in the course of this, he suffered from a persistent illness.

After the policy of shifting the direction of the movement to the communist movement was proclaimed at the Kuandian Meeting the process of ideological disintegration was accelerated among the nationalists.

With my father bedridden, some of those who shared his idea and purpose were arrested, some became turncoats and others were scattered. So there remained only a few people who would work for the communist movement.

Conservatives from among the nationalists were building a wall against the new. However, many progressive people chose the new road and later joined the communist revolution with us.

My father's idea about the communist movement served as great food for my growth.



## 4. Repeated Removal

As father often moved the centre of his activities, we had to move house many times.

When I was five years old I left my birthplace for the first time. In the spring of that year we moved to Ponghwa-ri. At that time I was not particularly sorry to part from my grandfather, grandmother and family. Still young, I was curious about the unfamiliar place and new things rather than concerned about parting.

But my heart ached that autumn when we moved to Junggang.

My family was very sorry about having to move to the northern tip of the country. My grandfather would normally support father and not offer a contrary opinion whatever he did, but he was stunned by the news that his son and grandsons would be going so far away.

Father made great efforts to console my grandfather when he showed his sadness at the forthcoming parting. Still ringing in my ears is what father said, while giving my grandfather a helping hand in his work on the earthen verandah for the last time.

“Watched, I cannot move freely within Korea. Upon my release from prison, they told me to stay away from the independence movement and farm at home. But I must fight even if I am thrown into prison repeatedly. The Japanese are hard-hearted fellows. We cannot win back the country by merely cheering for independence.”

The day we moved to Junggang my elder uncle wept as he held my father's hand and asked him not to forget his home even if he was far away and to write to him often if he had no time to return.

Father said, holding his hands in his:

"I will not forget my home. How can I forget it? This evil time forces us to part in this way, but when the country wins its independence we will live together and lead a life full of pleasure, I believe. From a child you have helped me by making sandals, getting blisters on your palms. I am sorry to leave this large family for you to keep."

"Brother, it's nothing. I will take care of father and mother. Be sure to put up a good fight and achieve your cherished aim. I will wait here for the day."

I could not repress my sorrow as I watched them part.

Mother said that we would return home again when the country was independent, but I did not know when that would be and felt myself choking. In fact my parents were buried in a foreign country without seeing Mangyongdae again. Time and again I looked back at my grandparents, so loath to part from them.

I did not like to leave that place where I was born and grew up, but I felt relieved about one thing. I liked Junggang because it was far from Pyongyang gaol. To tell the truth, I still felt uneasy even after my father was released from prison. I feared that the Japanese might send my father to prison again. In those days I knew nothing of the world and was naive enough to think that in the mountainous areas far from Seoul and Pyongyang there was neither prison nor Japanese.

When I asked how far it was from Pyongyang to Junggang, someone told me that it was 250 miles. This relieved me. I did not think that the Japanese would pursue us that far. Junggang was said to be the coldest place in Korea. I could easily stand the cold if only father was safe.

All our household goods we were to take were the bundle mother made of a few bowls and spoons and the haversack father was to sling over his shoulder. When we moved to Ponghwa-ri, we carried some boxes, a table and brassware and earthenware, but this time we had nothing to speak of. At that time a friend of my father's accompanied us.

Getting off the train at Sinanju, we trekked all the way to Junggang, passing through Kaechon, Huichon and Kanggye. At that time there was no railway to Kanggye.

As we set out on the journey my father was concerned, doubting that I would be able to walk such a long distance. Mother, too, seemed to fear that I would not keep up. As I was only seven years old my parents were naturally anxious about me.

I got a lift on a passing cart at times but walked most of the way. It was the first major physical trial of my life.

At Kanggye we stayed overnight at the inn outside the Nam Gate and the next day resumed our journey. The owner of the inn, together with the members of the underground organization in the Kanggye area, warmly welcomed our party. The 125 miles from Kanggye to Junggang covered many passes and much desolate scenery.

Mother had a hard time when we crossed Paenang Pass. She was carrying three-year-old Chol Ju on her back and a load on her head and had blisters on her feet, as she wore wornout straw sandals. This caused her much trouble.

When we arrived at Junggang, I was disappointed. There, too, the Japanese were swarming like they did in Hwanggum and Somun Streets in Pyongyang. The Korean people were wandering around, having been driven out of their native land, whereas the Japanese had come to this remote mountainous area and were lording it over the people there.

Father said that wherever Koreans lived there were Japanese. I learned that in Junggang there were a police station, a prison and some military police. On my arrival at Junggang I realized that the whole of Korea had been converted into a sort of a prison.

The Japanese had taken over more than half the upper street of Junggang, where there were a school, some shops and a hospital for them.

The people of Junggang said that the Japanese imperialists had begun to stretch their tentacles of aggression there ten years before. Having wrested the right to fell trees in Korea after the conclusion of the Protectorate Treaty in 1905, the Japanese imperialists had set up a forestry administration in Sinuiju and a branch of it in Junggang and transferred their felling section there. It was a felling section in name only; in fact it was a sort of a paramilitary group including many ex-servicemen who had received systematic military training, which could be called out at any time in case of emergency. Also in Junggang there were armed policemen and a garrison.

Father had taken us to Junggang because he intended to set up a surgery there which the independence fighters could frequent and, with it as a base, wage the anti-Japanese struggle more actively. The position of physician would enable him to hide easily from the enemy's surveillance and to contact people reasonably and freely.

We settled at Kang Ki Rak's inn. Kang Ki Rak allotted to us the quietest and cleanest room at the inn. My father had stayed there for a while on his way back from Jiandao where he had gone upon his release from prison. He used the room where my family stayed.

Kang Ki Rak was both a dentist and a photographer, while running the inn, and he secretly maintained contacts between the organizations abroad of the Korean National Association and my

father when he was active inside Korea and between its organizations at home and him when he was active abroad.

Through the inn father established contacts with the champions of the independence movement active in the areas along the River Amnok such as Linjiang, Changbai, Junggang, Pyoktong, Changsong and Chosan, and in other places at home and abroad.

Being an influential figure in Junggang, Kang Ki Rak had free access to the government office. The information about the enemy he obtained through the government authorities was a great help to my father in his activities.

To help father I used to keep watch, look after the champions of independence movement who visited the inn and carry out secret liaison missions, going to Jungsang, Jungdok and other places. One of my strongest memories from Junggang is that of my wrestling with a Japanese boy bigger than me who I got down with a belly throw. If a Japanese boy bullied Korean children, I would not let him get away with it. The owner of the inn feared that this might bring trouble later, but my father praised my courage, saying that one should never bow to those who look down on the Korean people.

In those days the anti-Japanese sentiment ran high in Junggang and the distribution of leaflets, a school strike and the disposal of some wicked stooges were common.

The enemy came to consider that all the changes in Junggang were connected with my father. The Junggang Police Station, acting on information from the Police Department of South Phyongan Province, listed my father as a “recalcitrant Korean” and a “person to be placed under the closest surveillance” and kept watch over him. At the sub-county office Kang Ki Rak chanced to see a copy of my father’s census register in which his name had been underlined in red. He intimated to my father that he had better leave as soon as possible for his safety since the police had marked

him down for arrest. In the meantime a policeman serving at the Junggang Police Station let drop the remark that my father was going to be arrested. So my father could no longer stay in Junggang. We had to leave even the cold northern tip of the country, taking our bundles with us, and cross into a foreign land.

A step on from Junggang, and there was China. I could not hold back the tears that poured from my eyes as I rode in a small boat across the River Amnok from the Jungdok ferry. Leaving Junggang meant my fourth removal. I had looked on Junggang as a strange place, but at the thought that I was having to leave it for a foreign country it seemed as dear as my birthplace. At any rate, it was part of my homeland. Mangyongdae had cradled me, whereas Junggang and Ponghwa-ri were unforgettable places which made me realize that Korea, wherever one went, had been converted into a prison by the Japanese imperialists.

The day we left Junggang was unusually gloomy. The fallen leaves of late autumn drifted desolately up to the ferry. The migratory birds were flying in a flock towards the southern sky. The sight of them saddened me in spite of myself.

Junggang was the last my mother saw of her motherland, and my younger brother Chol Ju was unable to return to his homeland after crossing the river.

Man experiences many sorrows in his lifetime. The greatest of them is the sorrow of leaving one's country as a stateless person. However great a sorrow one feels when leaving one's birthplace, it cannot be compared with the sorrow one experiences when leaving one's homeland. If a birthplace can be likened to a mother and a place away from home, to a stepmother, I wonder what a foreign country which is far stranger can be likened to.

The thought that I would be living in a foreign country where there were no people to welcome me and where I could not make myself understood disgusted me, though I was young, and

everything went dark before my eyes. But in silence I had to endure the sorrow of leaving my country for the sake of my father's aim of winning back the country.

The boatman groaned over the wretched plight of the Korean people, saying that more and more people were migrating to Manchuria.

My father said that no one knew how many people had gone abroad, abandoning the fertile land of their birthplaces.

Even before the ruin of the country hordes of people from this country had left for the wilderness of Manchuria and Siberia to earn a living. People who had been deprived of the right to existence left the country in desperation, suffering cruel punishment. The waves of emigrants flowed to the United States, Mexico and other countries on the American continent. Deceived by the fine words that "Flowers are in bloom in all seasons; once seeds are sown they yield a bumper crop; and if one works three hours a day, one becomes rich in three years," farmers and casual labourers had sailed over the Pacific to the American continent where they were treated as barbarians and hired as servants in restaurants and rich men's houses or were worked hard on plantations under the scorching sun.

Nevertheless, then they had their own country.

After the ruin of the country, tens of thousands of farmers deprived of their farmland had drifted like fallen leaves to the desolate wilderness of Manchuria.

The Japanese upstarts and merchants who had dreamed of a windfall swarmed to the land where our forefathers had lived from generation to generation, and the masters of the land who had made it fertile were driven out and were forced to wander off to foreign countries. So the plight of the nation which has lost its state power can be likened to the fallen leaves or roadside pebbles, I think.

Every day now children of the emigrants visit the ancestral land their forefathers abandoned. Whenever I meet them, I am reminded of the wanderers I saw on the banks of the River Amnok.

In Linjiang many things were strange to me and not good for me, but one thing was good: I saw little of the Japanese.

Linjiang, a commercial town in Liaoning Province, China, was a centre of communications linking Korea with north and south Manchuria.

The Japanese imperialists could not openly extend their influence to China at that time, so they secretly sent in their special agents to threaten the independence champions. But Linjiang was better for conducting revolutionary activities than Junggang.

On arriving at Linjiang my father made me learn Chinese under a Chinese teacher for six months and then immediately saw to it that I was admitted to Linjiang Primary School. After starting at that school I began to learn Chinese in earnest. Later on I continued to study it at Badaogou Primary School and Fusong Primary School No. 1.

That I gained a good command of Chinese from my early years is entirely thanks to my father.

At that time I did not understand fully why my father was so quick to make me study the Chinese language and go to Chinese schools; however, looking back on those days now I realize that father's farsightedness based on his idea of "Aim High!" was a great help to me. If my father had not made me learn Chinese at an early age I might have had to face a great language barrier at every step of my life for the quarter of a century I spent in China.

Without a good command of Chinese it would have been impossible for us to gain a foothold in Manchuria, the major theatre of our struggle which was waged under the enemy's harsh repression, let alone an easy establishment of friendly relations



with the Chinese people and a success in effecting an anti-Japanese allied front with them.

The Japanese detectives who were said to have a hound's sense of smelling and the Manchukuo police did not suspect me to be a Korean when I was walking in the street, dressed in Chinese clothes and speaking Chinese fluently. After all, I can say that my knowledge of the Chinese language contributed greatly to the Korean revolution.

Father rented a house through the good offices of Ro Kyong Du, an old acquaintance of his, and set up a surgery. He used one room as a surgery-cum-dispensary and hung up a large sign, "Sunchon Surgery," on the outside wall. He also hung up a diploma from the Severance Medical College. He obtained the diploma from a friend of his prior to his departure from Pyongyang, I think.

After several months father was known as an excellent physician. That he won fame as a physician though he began clinical practice only after reading a few books on medicine cannot be attributed to his diagnostic skill but to his humane treatment. Wherever he went, my father valued people. With unusual devotion he treated and took good care of his fellow Koreans who, deprived of their birthplaces and homeland, were leading a sorrowful life in a foreign country.

Many patients visited Sunchon Surgery with little or no money.

Whenever they worried about paying the doctor's bill, my father would tell them to pay it after the country had won its independence, if at all, and consoled them, saying, "Though we are now living in poverty in a foreign country, the day is not far off when we will win back our country and cross the River Amnok again."

Our house in Linjiang was always alive with guests, just as in Ponghwa-ri. Among them were patients, but most of them were anti-Japanese champions.

It was in those days that my uncle Kang Jin Sok came to Linjiang and formed the Paeksan Armed Group. This was an armed group with independence champions active in Phyongan Province forming its backbone. The meaning of Paeksan is Mt. Paektu.

In those days the farsighted people of Korea living in Manchuria set great store by the name "Paeksan." They called the private Korean school set up in Fusong Paeksan School. The youth organization we formed in Fusong in December 1927, was also called the Paeksan Youth League.

The Paeksan Armed Group was a fairly large and well-knit grouping of large and small units from the Independence Army in the Linjiang and Changbai areas. Its headquarters was in Linjiang County. The Paeksan Armed Group was active in Jungang, Chosan, Huchang and other areas of North Phyongan Province in Korea and, farther, its activities reaching Pyongyang, Sunchon and Kangso areas.

After his arrival in Manchuria my uncle who had been active as a member of a secret youth organization in Pyongyang became a lumberjack for a while, staying with us in Linjiang until the armed group was formed. With the formation of the armed group he was appointed commissioner for foreign affairs and became involved in conducting political work and raising war funds in North and South Phyongan Provinces.

My uncle, together with the commanders of the armed group, frequented our house. In those days Pyon Tae U and Kim Si U, who was in charge of the financial affair of the Paeksan Armed Group, visited our home, accompanied by my uncle. Its commanders often stayed at our home overnight.

Other guests stayed in the front room, but my uncle always slept with us in the back room, with his pistol under his pillow.

In those days my father made great effort to prepare an armed struggle based on his progressive ideas as required by the

switchover in the struggle declared at the Kuandian Meeting. Father went frequently to Hongtuga to work with the Paeksan Armed Group. When I woke up one night, I saw father and my uncle taking a pistol apart under the lamplight. For some reason the sight of it conjured up a scene before me of demonstrators cheering in front of the Pothong Gate at the time of the March First Popular Uprising. At that time I had seen only rakes and sticks in the hands of the demonstrators. But within a year I saw a pistol in the hands of my uncle. Drawing a bloody lesson from the death of several thousands, the leading spirits of Korea had armed themselves.

A few days later I received from father the task of fetching some ammunition and gunpowder from Junggang. He seemed to have decided to entrust the task to me since in those days the adults were subjected to close examination at customs posts.

I went to Junggang with a firm determination and came back safely, carrying with me a bag stuffed with ammunition and gunpowder. The policemen at the customs post had closely examined the people boarding the boat, but for some reason I had not feared them.

Later my uncle left Linjiang to work with the armed group in the homeland.

But within a month corporal Kim Tuk Su from the military police in Junggang came to Linjiang and informed us that my uncle had been arrested. Though he was a corporal in the military police, Kim Tuk Su was a conscientious man who did errands for my father on many occasions.

On returning home from school, I found my mother weeping. The arrest of my uncle had stirred the whole of my family.

After leaving Linjiang my uncle conducted vigorous activities in the Jasong, Kaecheon and Pyongyang areas at the head of an armed group. He was arrested by the Japanese police in April 1921 in Pyongyang and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. He was

imprisoned for 13 years and 8 months before being released on bail and dying in 1942.

My uncle who fought against gambling, drinking and superstition, forming an enlightenment organization called the Miphung Society at his birthplace came to join the noble movement to save the nation. This can be ascribed to the good influence of my grandfather Kang Ton Uk and my father.

A revolution is not conducted by a few special people alone. If awakened ideologically and placed under a good influence, anyone is capable of rendering distinguished service in the revolutionary struggle for the remoulding of the world.

After the arrest of my uncle the enemy sent many secret agents and plainclothes policemen to Linjiang to arrest father. So he used to take shelter in his friend's house in the suburbs of Linjiang at night, while working at home during the daytime.

But it became impossible for him to remain in Linjiang any longer. We had to move to another place in a foreign country, taking our household goods with us. The whole family left Linjiang, carrying loads on their backs and shoulders, but it was impossible for us to carry all our household goods, so Missionary Pang Sa Hyon accompanied us, taking them on a sledge to Badaogou, Changbai County where we were to settle. It is about 62 miles from Linjiang to Badaogou.

Like Linjiang, Badaogou was a border village near the River Amnok. As in Junggang on the opposite side of the river from Linjiang there were Japanese military police and a police sub-station, so in Phophyong just opposite from Badaogou there were a branch station of the Japanese military police and a police sub-station.

Though Phophyong is in the northern tip of Korea, the Japanese imperialists deployed repressive forces there densely since the main arena of the independence movement had shifted to

Manchuria. The secret agents, military police and policemen sent from Phophyong went to Badaogou and went wild searching for patriots every day.

My house was near the place where the River Badao joined the River Amnok. Father hung up a new sign “Kwangje Surgery” at our house.

To the right of my house there lived the family of Kim, a member of the Korean National Association, and to the left another family Kim who ran a noodle house. Just across the street from our house there lived yet another family Kim who earned a living by selling noodles.

In our neighbourhood lived the merchant brothers Kim who furnished supplies to the armed units in the areas along the River Amnok under my father’s direction. Thus four families Kim who lived around our house were good people.

Only the family who lived to the back of our house was questionable. It turned out later that Son Se Sim, the head of the family, was a secret agent for the Phophyong police sub-station. Son’s family had lived in Junggang before moving to Badaogou after us to keep watch on my father on the instructions of the Japanese police.

In Badaogou my father contacted people from various walks of life. Among them was a thinker with the surname of Hwang. While working as a clerk at the Namsa Timber Mill, he had embarked on the road of revolution under the influence of a progressive idea. He secretly carried out liaison missions for my father. After being given a task he would leave Badaogou immediately and fulfil it, wherever it was, and then return to my home to wait for another task to be given.

Sometimes he had long talks with my father over a glass of wine. Once he commented animatedly on the situation, referring to an article in the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*.

When my father went fishing, he followed him to the riverside, carrying a pot stuffed with peppered bean paste, and caught fish and gutted them. He frequented our home for about three years, and one year he joined us in celebrating Harvest Moon Day.

Father was many times taken to the Namsa Timber Mill by him, which was 50 miles away, and there he taught and rallied the workers around the anti-Japanese organizations. The teachers of Rajuk Primary School, too, were given guidance by my father. One year—I am not sure which year it was—the school went on strike, which caused a great sensation.

Phophyong chapel was one place my father frequented in those days. It had no spire tipped with a cross but was an ordinary tile-roofed house. The only difference that marked it out from other houses was that the whole of the house was a single room without partitions.

After father's arrival in Badaogou the chapel was used as a place for teaching people and as a rendezvous for revolutionaries. Whenever a service was held he went over to Phophyong and conducted anti-Japanese propaganda. At times he taught them to sing songs, accompanying them on the organ.

When father could not go, mother or uncle Hyong Gwon met those who had come to attend the service and conducted anti-Japanese education among them. I, too, went to the chapel, taking Chol Ju with me, and learned how to play the organ from father.

There were many places for secret rendezvous in the streets of Phophyong which father used.

The cleaner at the Phophyong police sub-station undertook clandestine work. When he discovered some secret information at the police station and conveyed it to the mail depository, the information would be sent to father.

I often went on secret errands for father. Once I sent some clothes and food to the patriots detained at the Phophyong police

sub-station. The place I frequented most was the mail depository. Father told me to bring from the mail depository *Tong-A Ilbo*, *Joson Ilbo* and other newspapers, magazines and publications from Korea. Father was in charge of the branch office of *Tong-A Ilbo* in the name of my uncle Hyong Gwon; he received no pay but got the newspapers free.

I used to go to the mail depository a couple of times a week. Unless the river was iced over, it was difficult to travel to and from Phophyong.

But after the river was iced over, at times I went there every other day. When I was busy with my studies uncle Hyong Gwon used to go on the errand. When there was a lot of mail addressed to my father, uncle Hyong Gwon and I would at times go over there together to fetch it. The mail was mainly parcels, magazines and books on medicine published in Japan.

When we went to Phophyong, we received a great deal of help from Hong Jong U, an assistant military policeman. He became the supporter and helper of the revolution under father's influence. Of course, our relations with him were not satisfactory from the beginning.

Badaogou was under the jurisdiction of the Phophyong military police sub-station. Subordinated to it were policemen from the police sub-station and the local customs officials. In those days the military police organs had great authority in the border areas.

Father and other members of the organization always kept movements at the observation posts of the military police under close surveillance and they, too, kept close watch on our house.

When Hong Jong U first appeared in the dispensary at our house, wearing the uniform of an assistant military policeman, all my senses were on the alert and father and mother were careful to guard against him.

After looking around the dispensary awkwardly for a while, he said:

“Today I have visited you merely to convey the compliments of Jang Sun Bong in Anju. When I left for my new post in the border area he told me to seek out and meet his friend Kim Hyong Jik in Huchang. I was also eager to meet you and ask you for instruction.”

His words and manner were very modest for a person wearing the uniform of a military policeman. But my father gave him the cold shoulder the first day.

“You were on intimate terms with corporal Kim Tuk Su in Junggang, so what is the matter with you today?” mother asked him after Hong Jong U had left.

“The sight of Hong in the uniform of a military policeman reminded me of Pyongyang gaol,” he said.

Father regretted having behaved like that towards Hong Jong U who had gone to the trouble of conveying a greeting, and decided to treat him better the next time.

Later Hong Jong U visited our home again.

One day father said, while talking with mother:

“If Jong U intends to make some secret inquiries into our house, I will make some secret inquiries into the military police through him. If I fail here, I will only endanger myself. But if I could win him over, what a great help it would be for our cause! We have Kim Tuk Su in Junggang and Hong Jong U in Phophyong. Wherever I go, there are military police.”

From that day on my father gave Hong Jong U positive education. Throwing aside the formal manner used in speaking to assistant military policemen, he behaved sincerely towards him as a compatriot and treated him well.

Gradually he began to open his mind. It turned out that originally he had had a national conscience. He was born in



Sunchon, South Phyongan Province. However hard he farmed at his home, he could not make ends meet. So he took the examination for an assistant military policeman to make his fortune. But, witnessing the barbarity of the gendarme and the police in cracking down on the demonstrators during the March First Popular Uprising, he regretted his decision to sit for the examination and decided to go back to farming. At this juncture he received a notice informing him that he had passed the examination and a summons to attend drill. Thus he became an assistant military policeman.

The Japanese imperialists reduced their military police organs at home, set up and expanded their police organs on a large scale in Korea and reinforced the military police organs in the border areas in the name of the reform of government organization, switching over from “sabre rule” to “civil government.” Most of the Korean assistant military policemen were reappointed as policemen or transferred to the border areas. So he came to Huchang.

One day he came to my father and expressed his readiness to take weapons from the military police and join the independence movement.

Father spoke highly of his courageous decision.

Father said, “It is praiseworthy for you to have decided to join the independence movement. Your Japanese military uniform has not corrupted you. How can we who boast a 5,000-year-long history meekly resign ourselves to slavery in bondage to the Japanese? I think it is better for you to help us in our work by remaining at your present post. If you wear the military police uniform, you may be able to help the independence movement in many ways.”

Later Hong Jong U helped the independence champions as father told him to.

Often visiting father, Hong Jong U notified him beforehand on which day he would be standing guard at the ferry and at what time and told him to send anyone who wanted to cross the river during his duty. In this way he saw to it many times that revolutionaries crossed the river safely.

Thanks to him my father, too, escaped critical situation on many occasions. When something unpleasant was likely to happen to father, he would come over immediately to Badaogou and warn him, "Some policemen will soon be here. Take care," or he would say to my mother, "When Mr. Kim returns home, please tell him to go to the countryside and stay there for a few days."

One day when he came over to Badaogou, having been given the task by the head of the military police sub-station of enquiring into the movements of the independence champions active on the opposite bank and the Koreans there, he saw a policeman from the Phophyong police sub-station escorting my father who was bound with a rope to the ferry.

Hong Jong U stood in his way and shouted at him, "He is one of our men who is working for the military police. Why have you arrested him without notifying us? If any question about Kim is raised, don't meddle but notify me."

The policeman begged his pardon for his error and undid the rope which bound my father's arms.

Thus father escaped from a critical situation.

On returning from patrol, a military policeman once said to the head of the sub-station that doctor Kim was said to be a thinker and suggested that he be arrested and questioned.

Hong Jong U showed them the logbook of the military police which recorded information, and said that it had all been obtained through doctor Kim. He said, "If you want to know the mood of thinkers, you should disguise yourself as a thinker. Only then can you grasp their inmost thoughts. Doctor Kim has rendered us great

service in our work.” The information was false, concocted by Hong Jong U himself.

In May 1923 when the post of assistant military policeman was abolished, he said that he would come over to China with his family and join the independence movement. He did not want to serve the enemy any more, he said.

My father took great pains to dissuade him. He said, “You would do better to return home and serve in the police, continuing to help us in our work as before. That will be of greater help to us than if you join the Independence Army and serve in it. When you return home, please visit Mangyongdae and convey my best regards to my parents.”

On arriving home he visited Mangyongdae and gave my father’s compliments to my grandparents. He served as a policeman in the homeland as my father had told him to. On several occasions he asked his superiors to transfer him to the Taephyong police sub-station and began to serve there in 1927. On arriving there to take up his fresh post, he visited our old home at Mangyongdae, having a servant at the sub-station take wine, pork and oranges, and offered my grandparents New Year’s greetings. Mangyongdae was under the jurisdiction of the Taephyong police sub-station.

Hong Jong U did not abandon his conscience as a member of the Korean nation, as my father had taught him, and consistently protected our family. He transferred to the Taephyong police sub-station to protect our home at Mangyongdae. When he was in charge of Nam-ri, my grandfather and uncle Hyong Rok were less troubled by the enemy. The head of the police sub-station always told him to watch Kim Hyong Jik’s family closely and search his house from time to time since his family had the reputation of being anti-Japanese, but each time Hong Jong U said that he had found nothing special.

Immediately after liberation people everywhere caught and beat up the pro-Japanese, but Hong Jong U was left alone. Although he served as a pensioned policeman in his home town, he did not incur people's hatred because he did not wrong them and always overlooked a violation of Japanese law.

He was misunderstood because of his past, but never sought praise for what he did. An ordinary man would have written to me to dispel any misunderstanding, but he did not do so.

Several years after the Fatherland Liberation War I told some officials to search for him and they succeeded in finding him in Sunchon. He was an old man of over sixty years. Nevertheless, we sent him to the provincial cadre-training school to give him education.

Even after graduating from the provincial cadre-training school he led a simple and quiet life, such being his natural disposition. He devoted his last years entirely to unearthing relics of my father's revolutionary history.

A police uniform or title of policeman was no impediment to those who decided to live conscientiously for the country and nation like Hong Jong U. The important thing is not one's title or uniform but one's idea and spirit.

The education of the younger generation was always my father's concern during his time at Badaogou. Even after he left teaching for medicine, father made a great effort to educate young people as before. It was father's conviction that only when many able cadres were produced by enlightening people at regular schools and evening schools was it possible to win back the country and build a rich and powerful independent country. The summer short course for Korean primary school teachers was held in Sanyuanpu in the summer of 1924 when my father drew up detailed educational and musical programmes for the pupils.

A Korean school was established in the valley of Badaogou through my father's efforts. Young people and children from Phophyong learned to read and write Korean at the school, cooking food for themselves with rice they had brought from home.

Wherever he went, my father would say:

“The education of the younger generation is the foundation for national independence and state building.”

“If a man is illiterate, he is as good as an animal. Only when a man is literate can he prove his worth and win back his country.”

Bearing what he said in my mind, I studied hard. Badaogou Primary School was a four-year Chinese school. Classes were conducted in Chinese and Chinese subjects were taught. There was no Korean school in the town.

So, on my return home from school I received private education from my father. He taught me the Korean language, geography and Korean history, told me many stories about Lenin, Sun Yat-sen, Washington and other famous men. He chose progressive novels or books for me and gave me systematic guidance in my reading so that I never failed to read the books he recommended and related my impressions after reading them. Thanks to him, I read many good books such as *Great Men of Korea*, *Biographies of Korean Heroes* and *The Revolutionary History of Russia and Lenin* and many newspapers and magazines.

Father exercised tight control over my studies. When we neglected our studies, he at times made not only me and my brother Chol Ju but also uncle Hyong Gwon stand up so he could lash us on the calf.

Mother, too, showed a great deal of concern for my studies. When I was going to the mountains to collect firewood on returning from school, she would say, “Don't worry about collecting firewood. Do your lessons, instead,” so that I spent a longer time on my studies. Seeing mother so solicitous about me,

though she led a life of hardship without even being properly clad, I always wondered what I could do to please her. Once when I went over to Phophyong I bought a pair of rubber shoes for her with the money she had given me to buy a pair of canvas shoes for myself, and I gave her them.

At this she said, "Though young, you think deeply. I don't mind what kind of shoes I wear. If you study hard and grow up fit and well, it will give me pleasure."

Mother put her whole heart into making me merry and seeing that I grew up with a bright heart.

So I grew up with optimism and free of any cares and worries. Looking back on my childhood, I think I was most mischievous when I lived in Badaogou. Sometimes I worked such terrible mischief that the adults were astounded. How can we think of our childhood apart from mischief?

When I recall the winter in Badaogou when we made a metre-wide hole in the ice on the River Amnok and jumped over it for fun after lining up on the riverside, it seems to me that I am reliving my child's feelings of 70 years ago. We jumped over the ice hole, saying that those children who failed were not qualified to become Korean soldiers in the future. The children used to run towards the hole with all their might, taking it as a shame to be unqualified to become Korean soldiers.

Sometimes the children whose stride was short or who were frightened fell into the water, failing to jump over the ice hole. Then, as they dried the wet clothes of their children over a brazier, their families would complain, saying that because of Song Ju from the family which had come from Pyongyang all the village children might freeze. As the old villagers had heard that Song Ju was the head of the village children, they often muttered my name to lay the blame on me for what had happened to their children.

Sometimes I and the children played games of soldiers on the hill behind Badaogou till late at night, causing their parents to worry. Then the people of Badaogou would search for us all night, losing their sleep. Because this happened frequently, the parents were stricter with their children. However, they could not lock up children whose thoughts were apt to take free flight.

Once my classmate Kim Jong Hang brought a detonating cap he had taken out of a box kept in the shed of his house and showed it to us. The shed at his house was packed with weapons, clothes, shoes and the like which were to be sent to the troops of the Independence Army. His brothers bought work clothes, shoes and the like in large quantities through the agencies of Japanese companies and sent them to the troops. Having furnished themselves with two boats and even horses, they bought in goods by lots to supply to the Independence Army.

That day we played near the brazier, cracking pumpkin seeds. Kim Jong Hang whistled with the detonating cap in his mouth. In the course of this the detonating cap came in contact with embers and exploded, injuring him in many places.

His brother wrapped him in a blanket and hastily carried him on his back to my father.

If the police had heard that he had been hurt in the explosion of a detonating cap it might have caused great trouble. So, my father hid him in my house, giving him medical treatment for more than 20 days.

On that occasion I learned that Kim Jong Hang's family was of patriotic merchants who distributed war supplies to the troops of the Independence Army.

Those years were years full of adventure.

But even in those days I was shadowed by one care.

As I grew older, my mental agony due to the ruin of the country increased.

## ***5. The Song of the River Amnok***

One day early in 1923 my father told me to sit at his side and asked me what my intention was having finished my primary education.

I said I wanted to go to secondary school. That was also my parents' long-cherished desire, and I wondered why he was asking such an obvious question.

He said with a serious look that I should go to the homeland and continue to study there.

This advice was unexpected. Studying in Korea meant leaving the care of my parents, something I had never considered.

My mother who was sewing was surprised and asked if I couldn't study somewhere nearby for I was still young.

My father seemed to have made a determination. He repeated that I must go, though we might miss one another for a time. He would never change his decision without a proper reason.

He said in earnest: You have suffered a lot of hardship, moving with us from place to place since your childhood; you may find yourself in a worse plight when you are in Korea again; nevertheless, I am determined to send you there; a man born in Korea must have a good knowledge of Korea; if you get to understand clearly while you are in Korea why she has been ruined, that will be a great achievement; share the fate of the people in your home town and experience how miserable they are; then you will see what you should do.

I said that I would do as he told me to do. In those days the rich people in Korea were sending their sons to study abroad. They



believed that the United States or Japan was the place to seek modern civilization and academic pursuits, and that was the trend of the times. So I was going to Korea while others were going abroad.

My father's way of thinking was unique. As I recollect the event, I think he was right in sending me to Korea. Anyhow, he was no ordinary man to send his scarcely 11-year-old son on a 250-mile journey alone through a then uninhabited land. His character served me as an encouragement and filled me with confidence.

To be frank, my feelings at that time were not simple. I was happy to hear that I was to study in the homeland, but I didn't want to leave my parents and younger brothers. However, I was eager to see my home town. I spent several restless days with mixed feelings of yearning for my homeland and reluctance to leave the sweet family atmosphere.

My mother asked my father if it wouldn't be better to send me when the weather was warmer. She was afraid of sending her young son on a 250-mile journey alone.

My father did not agree with this suggestion, either.

Though anxious over her son's long journey, my mother spent the nights making me an overcoat and socks so that I might start on the date appointed by my father. She did not dispute her husband's decision, as was her trait.

On the day of my departure my father told me that it was 250 miles from Badaogou to Mangyongdae and asked me whether I could walk all the way alone. I replied that I could. Then he drew the route in my pocketbook, marking off the names of the major places on the way as well as the distance between them, for instance, from Huchang to the next place, from Hwaphyong to the next, and so on. He further told me to send him two telegrams—one from Kanggye and one from Pyongyang.

On the last day of the first lunar month (March 16 by the solar calendar) I left Badaogou. A snowstorm was severe from the morning. My friends in Badaogou accompanied me for 7.5 miles to the south of Huchang across the River Amnok to see me off. They insisted on accompanying me the whole way, so I had trouble to persuade them to return home.

As I began my journey, various thoughts flooded my mind. For more than half the 250 miles of my journey I would have to walk over steep, craggy mountains which were virtually uninhabited. It would not be easy to cross them alone. Even in full daylight beasts of prey prowled about the woods on both sides of the road from Huchang to Kanggye.

I suffered a lot during the journey. I really had a hard time of it while crossing the Jik Pass, Kae Pass (Myongmun Pass) and the like. It took me a whole day to cross the passes in Mt. Oga. When I had crossed one pass another would appear. It seemed there was no end.

As I crossed Mt. Oga, I got blisters on my feet. At the foot of the mountain I fortunately met an old man who cured my blisters by burning them with matches.

After Wolthan and Mt. Oga, I passed through Hwaphyong, Huksu, Kanggye, Songgan, Jonchon, Koin, Chongun, Huichon, Hyangsan, Kujang, arrived at Kaechon and then proceeded to Mangyongdae by rail.

A narrow-gauge railway service was available from Kaechon to Sinanju; a light train pulled by a small English locomotive *Nikisha* covered the route. From Sinanju to Pyongyang a wide-gauge railway as we have today was working. At that time a rail ticket from Kaechon to Pyongyang cost 1 *won* 90 *jon*.

During that journey I met many kind-hearted people. Once, when I was suffering from sore feet, I was picked up by a peasant

on an ox-drawn sleigh. When parting, I offered him some money, but he declined it and bought me some toffee instead.

The most memorable of them was the inn-keeper at Kanggye.

I arrived at Kanggye late in the evening and came to the inn. The inn-keeper came out to the gate and received me cordially. He was a small man who wore his hair in the Western fashion and dressed in Korean jacket and trousers. He was affable and sociable. He told me that he had received a telegram from my father and was expecting me.

His elderly mother, referring respectfully to my father as “Mr. Kim,” was as glad to see me as if I were her own grandson. She said, “When you were here with your father 4 years ago on your way to Junggang, you were a small boy but now you are quite grown up.” She served me with beef-rib soup and fried herrings which she had probably been saving for her own grandchildren. She made a bed for me with new quilts. They showered me with full hospitality.

The next morning I went to the Kanggye Post Office and sent a telegram to my parents as my father had told me to. The telegram would cost 3 *jon* for each of the first six characters and 4 *jon* each for any more. So I wrote 6 characters “Kang Gye Mu Sa To Chak” (Arrived safely in Kanggye—Tr.).

The next day the inn-keeper went to the bus station to arrange for my transport. On returning, he told me that I should have to wait for about ten days because the bus had broken down. He added that he had made a reservation for me, so I should stay with him. I was grateful for his kindness, but I said I could not afford to wait. He did not hold me back any more but offered me two pairs of straw sandals. Moreover, he introduced me to a cartman who was heading for the Kae Pass.

The keeper of the “West-Korea Inn” in front of Kaecheon Railway Station was also a kind man.

At the inn I ordered a 15-*jon* meal, which was the cheapest of the meals they served there. However, the inn-keeper served me with a 50-*jon* meal. When I said I could not afford it, he told me not to mind the cost.

At night they gave a mattress and two blankets to each guest for 50 *jon*. I examined my purse and found that I could not afford the luxury of sleeping under two blankets. So I ordered only one blanket. Again the inn-keeper told me not to worry about the cost and said that he could not be so cruel as to see a boy sleeping miserably when other travellers were comfortable.

Though living in poverty as a ruined nation, the Korean people still preserved their traditional fellowship and beautiful customs. Up until the turn of the century there were many people travelling without money in our country. Villagers used to provide free accommodation for travellers. This was a Korean custom, which was the envy of the people of the West. My journey made me realize that the Korean people were truly kind-hearted and morally excellent.

The keeper of the “West-Korea Inn,” like those of the Kanggye and Junggang Inns, was under the guidance and influence of my father. As I had experienced on my previous journey to Junggang at the age of seven, my father had comrades and friends everywhere.

When I saw people receiving and taking care of our family as their own flesh and blood, I wondered when my father had made so many friends and what distance he had travelled to rally such comrades.

With so many friends everywhere my father, when away from home, was always helped by them. I, too, benefited a great deal from their assistance.

An unforgettable memory of my journey was of the town of Kanggye, lit by oil-lamps 4 years before, being flooded with

electric light. The townsfolk were happy with the introduction of electric lighting, but I was sad at the sight of the streets because they seemed to be more Japanese.

The profound meaning of what my father had said to me on my departure about learning about Korea came home to me. As I remembered his instructions, I closely studied my unfortunate homeland.

The 250-mile journey was, for me, a journey of learning about my homeland and my fellow countrymen.

Towards sunset on March 29, 1923, fourteen days after my departure from Badaogou, I entered the courtyard of my old home.

My grandmother, who was making yarn inside, hurried out to the yard, without stopping to put on her shoes, and took me in her arms.

“Who has come with you? How have you come? How are your father and mother?”

She showered me with questions, giving me no time to answer.

Grandfather stopped making straw mats and ran out into the yard.

When I answered that I had come alone on foot, she exclaimed doubtfully, “Oh Lord! Really? Your father is more hard-hearted than a tiger.”

The whole family sat together, and we talked all through the night.

The mountains and rivers were familiar and beautiful as ever, but the signs of poverty in every corner of the village were more conspicuous than ever before.

After staying for a few days at Mangyongdae, I started in the fifth year of Changdok School where my grandfather on my mother’s side was the head teacher. This was the beginning of my education in the homeland. From that time on I stayed in my mother’s maiden home in Chilgol to attend school.

My mother's parents were in no position to support me. They were having a difficult time because my mother's brother, Kang Jin Sok, was in prison. After his arrest, the police kept the family under strict surveillance, bothering them and, worse still, my uncle was in poor health. The whole family worried about him. The family were living in dire poverty, eating gruel made from coarsely ground grain or boiled rice mixed with ground beans. They always ran short of farm produce and my younger uncle had to carry goods on a cart for hire to eke out a livelihood.

However, they did not reveal any signs of poverty in my presence and supported me wholeheartedly while I attended school. They provided me with a separate room furnished with a kerosene lamp and fine floor mats. They were kind to my friends who used to visit me at all times.

Changdok School was a progressive institution established by my grandfather on my mother's side and other far-sighted people from Chilgol and the surrounding area and aimed at promoting the restoration of national sovereignty as a part of the patriotic movement for cultural enlightenment.

Towards the end of the Ri dynasty and after the "annexation of Korea by Japan" a brisk patriotic education movement was launched as a link in the whole chain of the national-salvation movement. The pioneers and patriots, who attributed the shameful loss of national sovereignty to the backwardness of the country, regarded education as the foundation of and fundamental factor in self-development and clearly realized that, unless education was developed, neither the independence of the country nor the modernization of the society could be achieved, so they established private schools throughout the country.

This movement was led by patriotic fighters An Chang Ho, Ri Tong Hwi, Ri Sung Hun, Ri Sang Jae, Yu Kil Jun, Nam Kung Ok

and others. The learned societies formed in all parts of the country also pushed ahead with the education movement.

At the height of the educational and cultural movement that swept the country, thousands of private schools sprang up, awakening the intellect of the nation that had slept in feudal fetters. It was around this time that village schools which had been teaching the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius were transformed into institutions for modern education and encouraged the younger generation to kindle the spirit of patriotism.

The leaders of the nationalist movement, without exception, regarded education as the starting-point of their independence movement and concentrated their financial power and energy on the undertaking. Kim Ku<sup>14</sup>, who was the mastermind behind the heroic ventures undertaken by Ri Pong Chang<sup>15</sup> and Yun Pong Gil<sup>16</sup>, with terrorism as his major policy for the independence movement, had been engaged in education in Hwanghae Province in his early years. An Jung Gun, too, was a scholar who had established a school in the area of Nampho to teach the younger generation.

Among the private schools established in west Korea Taesong School in Pyongyang supervised by An Chang Ho and Osan School in Jongju financed by Ri Sung Hun were famous. These schools produced many famous patriotic fighters for independence and intellectuals.

My grandfather used to say that it would be an honour for Changdok School if it could produce only one great man such as An Jung Gun and that I should study hard to become a prominent patriot.

I replied that, even though I might not become such a praiseworthy martyr as An Jung Gun, I would become a patriot who would not spare himself for the independence of the country.

Of the private schools established in west Korea Changdok School was fairly large and modern with more than 200 pupils. A school was in a position to promote the enlightenment of the people in its vicinity. Therefore, the people and public-spirited men in the Pyongyang area attached great importance to Changdok School and spared nothing in support of it.

Paek Son Haeng, too, contributed a vast amount of money to this school. This woman, better known as Widow Paek than by her real name, was popular in Pyongyang before liberation for her charitable efforts. Widowed before the age of 20, she remained faithful to her dead husband until the age of 80, becoming rich by saving every penny she earned. Her way of making money was so bold and unique that she was the focus of public attention from her early days. It is said that the site of the present limestone mine belonging to the Sunghori Cement Factory was once her property. She had bought the rocky mountain which nobody cared for at a low price and sold it to a Japanese capitalist for dozens of times more than she had paid.

This woman, who did not even know how to use an abacus, had made this fabulous profit in a deal with the Japanese capitalist at a time when public resentment was running high at the traitors who had sold out the whole country to the Japanese imperialists with the signing of a paper. That was why people took pleasure in talking about her as if she were a great war hero.

People respected her because she had helped the community a great deal. Even though she was rich, she did not seek personal glory; she led a simple life, eating frugal meals, and donated her money unsparingly to society, money she had saved all her life. The money had been spent on building a bridge and a public hall—the Pyongyang Public Hall—which still remains intact before the Ryongwang Pavilion.



A few days after I began school my grandfather brought me a bundle of fifth-year textbooks. In excitement I took them and turned over the pages one after another. But, when I opened the textbook titled *Mother-tongue Reader*, I felt offended. It was a textbook of the Japanese language.

The Japanese imperialists forced our people to use the Japanese language in order to make them the subjects of the Japanese emperor. As soon as they had occupied our country they proclaimed that the official language of the government and public offices, courts and schools would be Japanese, and prohibited the Korean people from using their own language.

I asked my grandfather why the Japanese language book was titled *Mother-tongue Reader*.

He merely heaved a sigh.

With a pocket-knife I scratched out the word *Mother-tongue* from the title of the book and wrote in its place the word *Japanese*. The *Mother-tongue Reader* became the *Japanese Reader* in an instant. My urge to resist Japan's assimilation policy encouraged me to act with such resolution.

After I had been at the school for some days, I found a few children speaking Japanese in the classrooms, streets and playgrounds. Some of them were even teaching Japanese to other children. Nobody seemed to feel ashamed of this or criticized it. They seemed to think that our language was disappearing for ever with the country ruined.

Whenever I saw children trying to learn Japanese, I told them that Koreans must speak Korean.

The day I arrived in Chilgol after my return to the homeland from Badaogou the villagers gathered at my mother's maiden home to hear about the situation. They said they wanted to hear me speak Chinese as they thought I might speak it well after living for some years in Manchuria. Even children at Changdok School often

pestered me to teach them Chinese. But I would refuse, asking them why we should speak a foreign language when we had our own excellent language.

Only once did I speak Chinese in the homeland.

One day my mother's brother asked me to go sightseeing in the city with him. Because he was usually very busy he seldom went outings, but that day he managed to find time for me. Saying that as I had been away for a long time he would buy me lunch in the city that day, he took me to Pyongyang.

After touring the city we entered a Chinese restaurant in the western part of the city. In those days there were many Chinese restaurants in the area where the Ponghwasan Hotel now stands.

In order to earn more money the restaurant-keepers would come out to the door and receive customers kindly, saying, "Welcome!" They vied with each other to attract guests.

The keeper of the restaurant we went to asked us in poor Korean what we would like to eat.

I ordered in Chinese, for his convenience, two plates of Chinese pancakes.

Wide-eyed, he asked me if I was a Chinese pupil.

I said that, though not a Chinese pupil, I knew some Chinese because I had lived in Manchuria for some years. Then I chatted with him in Chinese for a while.

The restaurant-keeper was very glad to see me, a young boy who had a good command of Chinese. He said with tearful eyes that he was reminded of his homeland on seeing a pupil from Manchuria.

He placed dishes we had not ordered on the table as well as pancakes and told us to eat plenty. We declined but, as he insisted, we ate everything. After our meal we tried to pay the bill, but he would not even take payment for the pancakes.

On our way home uncle said, laughing, “I took you to the city to give you a treat but instead you gave me a treat.” The whole village heard of this episode.

As I had hoped I joined the class of Mr. Kang Ryang Uk.

I had gone to stay at Chilgol not long after Mr. Kang left Sungsil School and began teaching at Changdok School. He was very sorry to have left the middle school, but he was unable to pay his fees.

His family was so poor that his wife (Song Sok Jong) left him to stay at her maiden home for a while. It is said that her parents admonished her severely, saying, “You may not be a good wife in time of destitution for lack of grace, but how dare you abandon your husband because you are tired of poverty? How many households are there in Korea which are not as poor as his? Did you expect to eat rice with honeyed water sitting on a golden cushion after you married? Speak no more and return to him at once and apologize to him.” I do not think the reader will need further explanation to understand the situation of Mr. Kang’s family.

We called his wife “Sukchon auntie,” for she came from Sukchon, South Phyongan Province. Whenever I went to his house “Sukchon auntie” would serve me with rice mixed with ground beans. I ate it with relish.

One day after liberation I went to Mr. Kang’s to wish him a happy birthday and talked to his wife, recollecting what I ate in those days:

“Madam, on occasions I still recall the rice mixed with ground beans you would serve me in Chilgol. You can’t imagine how I enjoyed it. Having been away from the homeland for 20 years I could not thank you for it. Please accept my thanks today.”

To this, she replied with tearful eyes:

“My family was so poor that I served you only rice mixed with ground beans, not proper rice. But as you say you are grateful for that, I do not know what to say. Those meals were never tasty.”

Saying that she would make up for her poor treatment of me in my days at Changdok School, she served me with dishes she had cooked herself.

One year she sent me some wine called *Paekhwaju*, which she had distilled, to wish me a happy birthday. The name of the wine means distilled from a hundred flowers.

The poetic name of the wine aroused my interest but I could not drink it with a light heart because the vision of her struggling against hunger with no proper meal of boiled rice, swam before my eyes.

For me who had felt to the marrow of my bones the misery of a ruined nation, a tree, a blade of grass and a grain of rice in the homeland seemed many times more precious than they were before. Moreover, the teacher steadily inspired the pupils with national consciousness, so I was constantly under a patriotic influence at home and at school. In those days he organized picnics and excursions frequently to inculcate patriotism in the pupils.

An excursion to Mt. Jongbang in Hwanghae Province was particularly noteworthy.

After liberation Kang Ryang Uk, as Secretary-General of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People’s Assembly and Vice-President of the Republic, had many opportunities to meet me in connection with his work. We would recall with emotion the excursions we went on during our days at Changdok School and how we had seen Songbul Temple and Nammun Pavilion on Mt. Jongbang.

Another unforgettable event of those days was the music lessons he gave. His music lessons were particularly interesting, so we used to look forward to them.

He had a wonderful voice which sounded better than professional tenors. When that voice sang the *Song of Advance* or the *Song of the Young Patriot*, the whole class listened with bated breath.

I think the melodies of the songs he taught us infused patriotic feelings into our minds. Later, when waging the anti-Japanese armed struggle, I would often sing those songs, and I still remember their words and melodies clearly.

Back in the homeland I found that the people were poorer than before.

When spring sowing began, the children of the very poor would be absent from school, for they had not only to help in the farming but also to gather *mulguji*, pickpurse, the roots of bindweed and other herbs to supplement their meals when the grain ran out. There were some boys who would go to the city on market days to sell wild vegetables to buy grain and others would babysit at home for their parents. Children from poor families would eat boiled sorghum, foxtail millet or barnyard millet for lunch. Worse still, some had to skip lunch.

In Chilgol and Mangyongdae there were many families that could not afford a school education for their children. It was a pity to see children cooped up in their homes with no access to schooling because they were so poor.

For such children I would organize night classes whenever I went to Mangyongdae on holidays. I called them all to the class and taught them. I began by teaching them the Korean alphabet with the *Korean Reader* and then taught history, geography, arithmetic and songs. It was simple enlightenment that I undertook for the first time in my life.

While visiting the city frequently with my friends, I came to realize that the citizens of Pyongyang were leading no better a life than the people of Mangyongdae and Chilgol.

Of the 100,000 people living in Pyongyang only a small number of Japanese and Americans were living well. The Americans in Sinyang-ri, the most beautiful part of Pyongyang, lived in luxury; and the Japanese made their settlements in Ponjong and Hwanggumjong, the most thriving places in Pyongyang, and lived in clover.

In the “Westerners village” inhabited by Americans and the Japanese settlers, brick houses, shops and churches increased in number; on the other hand, in such places as the area along the River Pothong and in Ppaengtae Street the slum quarters were getting bigger.

Now with the construction of such modern streets as Chollima, Kyonghung and Ponghwa Streets and of such large buildings as the People’s Palace of Culture, the Pyongyang Indoor Stadium, the Ice Rink, the Changgwang Health Complex and skyscrapers, no evidence of old Pyongyang can be found, but when I was going to Changdok School, many small slum dwellings with straw-mat doors and board roofing were huddled there.

In the year when I returned home, there was an epidemic in Pyongyang and the surrounding area, torturing the people. To make matters worse, the whole city was suffering from flooding. Reporting the disaster caused by floods that year, *Tong-A Ilbo* said that about 10,000 houses, or half the total number of houses in Pyongyang, had been submerged.

Today 105-storeyed Ryugyong Hotel, the tallest hotel in the world, is being built behind Pothonggang Square, but the younger generation will not be able to imagine the misery their grandfathers and grandmothers suffered in small slums in the same place in those years.

While living through the miseries I came to aspire to a society where the toiling masses could live happily and harbour a bitter

hatred for the Japanese imperialist aggressors, landlords and capitalists.

When I was a pupil at Changdok School there were great earthquakes in the Kanto area of Japan, and the news reached Chilgol, sparking the anger of my schoolmates. Rumour had it that Japan's ultrarightists had instigated the army to massacre thousands of the Koreans living in Japan under the pretext that the Koreans, taking advantage of the earthquakes, were planning to revolt. This came as a great shock to me.

But it gave me a clearer understanding that Japan, even though she was preaching "impartiality" and "Japan-Korea harmony," despised Korean people, treating them as worse than beasts.

From that time I would not allow Japanese policemen on bicycles to pass with impunity. I would bury spiked boards in their way and their tyres always went flat.

Feelings of hatred for the Japanese imperialists and of love for our motherland were reflected in the musical play *Thirteen Houses* we produced. In this play thirteen pupils appeared on the stage and sang and danced while assembling a map of Korea, each pupil taking a map of cardboard of each of the 13 provinces of Korea.

We staged this musical at a school athletics meeting in the autumn of 1924. In the middle of the performance a policeman appeared in the playground and ordered us to stop at once. In those days holding a small-scale athletics meeting required approval from the police, and even an approved event had to have police surveillance.

I met my teacher, Kang Ryang Uk, and said, "What is wrong in our loving our motherland and singing and dancing in praise of it?" I insisted that we continue our performance, come what may.

He, with the other teachers, protested against the unjustifiable conduct of the policeman and told us to continue the performance. Since we primary schoolchildren had such a high spirit of

patriotism and resistance, is there any need to say more about the adults' spirit?

In the summer of the year when I returned to the homeland a general strike broke out in the Pyongyang Hosiery Factory. The newspapers gave front page headlines to this event. At the news, I thought, even though Japan was advertizing her deceptive "civil government," she would sooner or later have to face resistance greater than the March First Popular Uprising.

Thus I spent two years. One day a few months before I left school I heard from my mother's father that my father had been arrested again by the Japanese police. This was a great shock. I felt a terrible anger and hatred for the enemy. The distressed people of Chilgol and Mangyongdae seemed to examine my face.

I made preparations for a journey with a determination to fight at the risk of my life to take revenge on the enemy of my father, my family and my nation.

When I said I would go to Badaogou, my mother's family advised me to go after finishing at school. My grandfather at Mangyongdae also tried to dissuade me, saying that I should wait a few months until I had finished school and the weather was warmer.

But I could not wait. I thought: How can I study here when misfortune has befallen my father?; I must go at once to help mother with her young sons; I must do my bit wherever it means going.

Knowing that he could not dissuade me, grandfather relented and said that I should do as I was determined and that it was up to me now that my father was behind bars.

The next day the family saw me off. The whole family wept—grandfather, grandmother and my uncle. My mother's younger brother (Kang Chang Sok) who came to Pyongyang Station to see



me off and Kang Yun Bom, my classmate from Chilgol, also wept in sadness.

My most intimate friend at Changdok School was Kang Yun Bom. He had no one to whom he could open his heart, so he would come to see me frequently. We would often go to the city together.

When the time came for the train to depart he gave me some boiled rice in a packet and an envelope. He told me that as he was not sure when he would see me again, he had jotted down a few words for me to read on the train. I opened the envelope after the train had left. In it were a short letter and 3 *won*. I was very moved by the letter and money. No one without a good heart could be so considerate towards his friend. In those days it was not easy for a boy to obtain 3 *won*. Even though I had started out on the journey, determined to avenge my father, money was a serious problem. He saved me from many difficulties.

It seemed that he had had a great deal of difficulty in getting the money. He came to see me after liberation. The first thing I told him was how grateful I had been for the money 20 years before, to which he confessed that he had had great difficulty in obtaining it. That money was more precious to me than millions of *won* to a rich man. What can compare with all the pure and beautiful feelings of friendship that produced that 3 *won*? Money cannot buy friendship, but friendship can produce money and everything else.

He said that while I had been fighting in the mountains to liberate the country, he had done nothing in particular. I said that we should combine our efforts and build a new country, and that the shortage of cadres was an obstacle to nation-building. I asked him if he could do his bit by helping to build schools. He readily agreed. After a short time he had set up a school in Jochon and asked me to give it a name. I named the school Samhung Middle School. *Samhung* means the thriving of knowledge, morality and

physique. In other words, it meant that the school should train its pupils to be knowledgeable, morally sound and physically strong.

Afterwards he took charge of the setting up of a university. These days building a university is no great problem, but there were many difficulties at that time because we had neither funds, building materials nor skilled builders. Whenever he had a problem with his work he would come to see me and discuss the problems with me throughout the night, staying in my house.

Kang Yun Bom was an unforgettable comrade and friend who saw me off on my way to national liberation. I still remember him as he saw me off in tears at Pyongyang Station that day. The letter he gave me read: Dear Song Ju, when parting with you I cannot keep back my tears. When shall we meet again after this parting? Let us remember our days at Changdok School even if a vast distance lies between us. Let us remember our home town and our motherland.

Encouraged by his friendship and moral support, I again negotiated one steep pass after another. In the evening of the thirteenth day after my departure from Mangyongdae I arrived at Phophyong. Having reached the ferry I hesitated to cross the Amnok; I walked the bank of the river restlessly. The mountains and rivers of my motherland held me back from crossing over to Badaogou.

I was held back by a vision of my grandmother and grandfather who had seen me off at our brushwood gate, weeping, stroking my hands, adjusting my dress, and worrying about possible snowstorms. I felt I could not hold back the tears that welled up if I crossed that river. And, looking back at my motherland in misery at the bleak border I could scarcely suppress the impulse to rush back to my home town, to the house where I was born.

I had spent only two years back in my motherland, but I had learned and experienced much in those years. My most valuable

experience was to have acquired a deep understanding of our people. Our people were simple, and industrious yet brave and strong-willed. They were staunch people who did not yield, whatever the adversity or hardship; they were polite and kindhearted and yet resolute and uncompromising against injustice. When the national reformists were conducting the reactionary “autonomy” campaign in the name of the “Yonjong Association,” the popular masses, particularly the workers, peasants, young people and students, were shedding their blood in resistance to the Japanese imperialists. From the image of them I felt an undaunted sense of national dignity and unbreakable spirit of independence. From that time I believed that our people were the greatest in the world and that I could liberate the country if I organized their efforts properly.

While seeing the Japanese army and the number of police and prisons increasing with each passing day behind the screen of “civil government” and looking at the waggons and cargo ships carrying the wealth plundered from our nation, I formed the clear understanding that Japanese imperialism was the most heinous destroyer of the liberty and dignity of our people and a vicious aggressor and plunderer imposing unbearable poverty and hunger upon our people.

The oppressive situation in the motherland gave me a firmer belief that only through a struggle would the Korean nation be able to drive out the Japanese imperialists and live in happiness in a liberated country. My desire to liberate my country as quickly as possible and turn everything into ours, into Korea’s, burned in my heart.

I walked a little way down from the ferry to the rapids to evade police observation and set foot on the frozen river. Across the river, which was only 34 metres wide, was the town of Badaogou and my house which was in the street near the river bank. But I hesitated

again, obsessed by the uncertainty of whether I would ever cross back to my homeland to which I was going to bid farewell.

I stepped back and picked up a pebble from the river bank, holding it firmly in my hand. I wished to take everything that could be a token and memento of my motherland and to keep it as a treasure. That day I underwent a truly painful psychological experience. Because this experience had left a wound in my heart, at the banquet given by patriots in the homeland in my honour after my triumphal return home, I spoke first about that experience.

I walked slowly towards the opposite side of the river singing quietly the *Song of the River Amnok*:

*On the first of March in the 19th year  
I crossed the River Amnok.  
The day will come round every year  
I'll return when my work is done.*

*Blue waters of Amnok, my homeland,  
Wait the day I return to you.  
I crossed to attain our dearest wish  
I'll return when we have won.*

I looked back at the mountains in the motherland over and over again with sorrow and indignation. I thought: My dear Korea, I am leaving you. I know I cannot live even for a moment away from you, but I am crossing the Amnok to win you back. Across this river is a foreign land, but I will not forget you, even in there. Wait for me, my Korea.

Then I sang the song again. As I sang this song, I wondered when I would be able to tread this land again, when I would return to this land where I grew up and where my forefathers' graves lay. Young as I was, I could not repress my sorrow at this thought.

Picturing in my mind the miserable reality of the motherland, I made a grim resolve not to return before Korea had become independent.

## 6. My Mother

I entered Badaogou at dusk. Having felt uneasy throughout the long journey, I became more strained the moment I reached my house.

But my mother was calmer and more composed than I had expected. She hugged me in delight and said, “You’ve made the 250-mile journey all by yourself. I’ve never done that, but you’ve played the man!”

I told her briefly about affairs in Mangyongdae and asked about my father. She said in a low voice that he was well.

From her look I guessed that my father had passed the crisis but was still in danger. She was clearly being very cautious about being overheard or watched.

I gave my younger brothers some biscuits I had bought from the money I had saved from what I had received in Mangyongdae, and settled down for the night to swap experiences.

After supper, however, mother unexpectedly told me to leave at once because the family was under strict surveillance by the enemy. She did not tell me where my father was; she just said that he had escaped, and that I must go. Though normally tender and gracious, on that evening she gave no thought to my will or intention. She ordered me to set out immediately, even though I had travelled hundreds of miles on foot in the coldest season and she had not seen me for two years; she was not allowing me to stay with her even for a night. I was struck dumb with amazement. When she told me to take my brothers with me, I asked her what she was going to do with herself.

“I am waiting for your uncle to return from Sinpha. On his arrival here I will dispose of our household articles and wind up our affairs here. But you must leave quickly.”

She cautioned me to slip out quietly and go to Ro Kyong Du’s house in Linjiang. Then she requested a sleigh from Taskmaster Song.

He complied willingly with her request. His real name was Song Pyong Chol, but the people in Badaogou used to call him Taskmaster Song because he always behaved like a taskmaster.

With his help we left Badaogou by sleigh for Linjiang.

All my life as a revolutionary I have met and bid farewell to many people, but that was a particularly memorable experience.

As I set out on a journey again as soon as I had met my mother after a fortnight’s long travel from Mangyongdae, I thought a lot about her.

My mother was of a gentle character. My father was stout-hearted and strict as a revolutionary, so I received a warmer love from my mother.

Being tender-hearted, she had bitterly regretted our parting when I left for Korea to study two years before.

Although she had done nothing to stop me leaving her, being in the presence of such a strong husband who, as my grandmother in Mangyongdae had said, was harder-hearted than a tiger, I saw tears gathering in her eyes.

She was a woman with such a kind heart as to accord a warm welcome to a stranger of my age of thirteen if she knew that he needed shelter after a journey.

One spring day a boy with serious boils on his left leg and neck had come on his uncle’s back to my house from Huchang, Korea. He was living with his uncle because his parents had divorced.

After examining the patient my father told my mother that if the boy underwent an operation on his leg he would be unable to

walk for some time, so he should stay at our house during his treatment. She gladly agreed. Once every day after the operation my mother helped my father to mix honey, wheat flour and soda and apply it to the boils. As she dressed the dirty wounds, she never frowned.

Thanks to her kind care, the boy recovered.

His uncle, when he came to fetch him, offered a one-*yuan* note to my father, saying, “The medical fee would normally amount to hundreds of *yuan*, but please accept this as a token of the thanks of a poor family. I hope you will buy some wine with it...”

Hearing this, my mother said, “Please don’t bother about the medical fee. It is unreasonable to take it from a poor man. I am sorry I haven’t fed the boy as I should.”

But the man insisted on paying. If he had been rich it would have been a different matter. But he was a poor man who had earned the money by gathering fallen pine-needles from the mountain and selling them. So my parents were embarrassed.

My father said to my mother that if he refused to take the money it would be a rejection of the man’s gratitude, so she said that they should accept his thanks. So she went to the market with the money and bought five yards of cotton cloth and gave it to the boy saying that he should have some new clothes made with it for the forthcoming *Tano* festival. At that time one yard of cotton cloth cost 35 *fen*. So, she added 75 *fen* of her own to the one *yuan* to buy cloth for the boy.

Poor as she was, she was not mean.

She used to say, “A man dies not because he hasn’t money but because he is mortal. Money changes hands.”

That was her philosophy.

She was a truly good-natured and sympathetic woman.

When father criticized her once in a while, she never answered back. She would apologize for having done wrong and promise not



to do it again. When through mischief we got our clothes dirty, damaged the household utensils or played noisily in the house, grandmother would ask her why she left her children alone without so much as scolding them once.

“I don’t think it necessary to scold them for such a mistake,” she would say simply in reply.

She herself was proud of helping her husband in his revolutionary work, but as a woman she lived through endless hardship that she could hardly endure. She seldom lived in comfort with her husband, because he was always away from home working for the independence of the country. I can say she was happy for about a year, when her husband was teaching at the school in Kangdong, and then at Badaogou for a year or two while they lived a home life together.

With her husband in prison, ailing after his release and moving from place to place under police surveillance, and after his death, with me, her son, fighting away from home for the revolution, she spent her whole life in misery and under constant strain.

When she was living in Mangyongdae, too, she was always on her feet as the eldest daughter-in-law of a family of twelve. What with caring for her husband and her parents-in-law, and what with the household chores of washing the dishes, laundering and weaving, she had not a moment of leisure. During daylight she had to work in the fields without a moment to relax, gazing up at the sun. At a time when feudalism prevailed and etiquette was extremely complicated, the duties of the eldest daughter-in-law of a large family were not simple. When boiled rice was prepared for a meal at times her share was the scorched portion at the bottom of the pot, and when gruel was made she drank the thinnest part of the liquid.

When she was exhausted she would go to church with my aunt. In Songsan where the Military University is now situated there was

a Presbyterian church. Many Christians lived in Nam-ri and its vicinity. Some miserable people thought they would go to “Heaven” after death if they believed in Jesus Christ.

When parents went to church their children followed them. In order to increase its congregation the church frequently distributed sweets and notebooks to the children. The children liked such gifts, so they went to Songsan in groups every Sunday.

At first I, too, was interested in the church and sometimes went to Songsan with my friends. But I became tired of the tedious religious ceremony and the monotonous preaching of the minister, so I seldom went to church.

One Sunday, as I ate some bean toffee made by my grandmother, I said to my father, “Father, I won’t go to church today. Attending worship is not interesting.”

“Do as you please,” he said to me who was still too young to know the world. “In fact, there is nothing in the church. You may not go. You must believe in your own country and in your own people, rather than in Jesus Christ. And you must make up your mind to do great things for your country.”

After that I stopped going to church. When I was a schoolboy in Chilgol, too, I did not go to church although the pupils who did not were under suspicion. I believed that the Christian Gospel had nothing in common with the tragedy which our people were suffering. The Christian doctrine preached humanism, but the call of history for national salvation was more pressing to me who had been anguishing over the destiny of the nation.

My father was an atheist. But, because he had once attended Sungsil Middle School where theology was taught, he had many friends who were Christians, and I had many opportunities to meet them. Some people ask me if I was much influenced by Christianity while I grew up. I was not affected by religion, but I received a

great deal of humanitarian assistance from Christians, and in return I had an ideological influence on them.

I do not think the spirit of Christianity that preaches universal peace and harmony contradicts my idea advocating an independent life for man.

Only when my mother went to church in Songsan did I go. She went to church, but she did not believe in Jesus Christ.

One day I asked her quietly, “Mother, do you go to church because you believe in God?”

She smiled, shaking her head.

“I do not go to church out of some belief. What is the use of going to ‘Heaven’ after death? Frankly, I go to church to relax.”

I felt pity for her and loved her all the more. She often dozed off during prayers. When everyone else stood up to say amen at the end of the minister’s prayer, she would wake up with a start. When she did not wake even after the amen I would shake her to tell her that the prayer was over.

One evening, together with my friends I passed the funeral director’s located by the pass at the back of the village. We children were in dread of it.

As we were passing it a boy shouted, “A ghost is coming.” Surprised by his shout we ran for our lives, without stopping to pick up our shoes when they slipped off.

That evening we could not return home, so we slept at a friend’s house. Early the next morning we returned home, collecting our lost shoes on the way.

Back at home I told mother about it.

“Sing a song when you pass such a place,” she said. “If you sing, nothing will come out for fear of you.”

She said this probably because she considered that singing would dispel my fear. After that I used to sing a song as I passed the shed.

She was gentle and generous at ordinary times, but before the enemy she was bold and stout-hearted.

In Ponghwa-ri, a few hours after my father's arrest, some Japanese policemen stormed into my house to search it. They began to search for secret documents. Filled with anger she shouted, "Search all over the house if you want." She faced the enemy with an indomitable spirit, even throwing around and tearing clothes. The policemen lost heart and left, quite at a loss.

My mother was such a woman.

That evening a snowstorm raged over the River Amnok.

The sound of the howling wind that seemed to sweep away the forest and the roar of beasts in the dark night stung my heart, aching as it was with the sorrow of national misfortune.

Sitting on the sleigh that glided along the boundary between the two countries, holding tightly in my arms my two younger brothers who were trembling with fear, I realized that the road of revolution was not smooth and that it could not be easy for a mother to love her children.

We three, wrapped in a quilt, trembled with cold. The night was pitch-dark and my brothers huddled up against me, murmuring that they were afraid.

We stayed overnight at Ogubi on the Korean side of the river and arrived in Linjiang the next day.

We met Ro Kyong Du and discovered that he was none other than the inn-keeper who had helped us to get a house in Linjiang and called frequently on my father to discuss the destiny of the nation. He warmly welcomed us as important guests and treated us hospitably.

His house had seven rooms arranged on two sides and we stayed in the quietest, second room on the quieter side. There were three guest rooms opposite our room with a kitchen between them. These rooms were always full of guests, most of whom were going

to Korea from Manchuria via Linjiang or were coming to Manchuria from Korea. Ro Kyong Du's was virtually an embarkation house for fighters for Korea's independence.

A nationalist who was thoroughly anti-Japanese, Ro Kyong Du was a man of mild yet obstinate and stubborn character. He used some of the income from his inn to support independence fighters. Because he made a scant living by selling food I considered him as a labourer, so to speak. I was not sure why he had settled in Linjiang, but rumour had it that he had been in hiding in the Dandong area for a while because of his involvement in the diversion of tungsten ore into illegal channels to gain funds for the independence movement, and that after things had quieted down he had moved to Linjiang for safety.

His home town was Ha-ri, Kophyong Sub-county, Taedong County, South Phyongan Province. Ha-ri was next to Nam-ri, my home town, with the River Sunhwa between them. He was said to have been a hard-working farmer, but after he met my father, he had got into the habit of living away from home because of his involvement in the independence movement. In the course of this he had fallen into disrepute in the eyes of his whole family who blamed him for peddling goods instead of caring about his farm work. At ebb tide he would cross the River Sunhwa to meet my father. For this reason he fed us well and took good care of us.

My family and I owed him a great deal. During our month-long stay in his house he did everything to make us comfortable and always treated us with a kind smile. Once he arranged on our behalf and at his own expense a long-distance call to my father in Fusong. Thus I spoke on the phone for the first time in my life. My father wanted to hear the voices of all his children, so each of us, as well as my mother, spoke on the phone in turn.

Mother had come to Linjiang with my uncle Hyong Gwon on the appointed day. On her arrival, she took us to a Chinese

restaurant, telling us we were going sightseeing through the city. She bought a bowl of meat dumplings for each of us and asked us about various things.

At first I thought that she had taken us to the restaurant because she wanted to buy a good meal for her children who had been under the care of other people for a month, but I discovered that she had done so because she wanted to hear how we had been faring.

“Has any suspicious character appeared at the inn looking for you during your stay?” she asked. “Have you ever visited another house to play? How many people know you are staying at Ro’s house?” And then she exhorted us not to reveal our identity anywhere on any account and to be cautious in everything we did until we moved to a new place.

In Linjiang, too, she could not sleep at ease because of her worries about us. A rustle in the night made her wake up and listen with her full attention.

How could a mother who was so anxious about her children’s safety be so firm in sending us to Linjiang?!

I think that it was the real love of a mother, a revolutionary love.

No love in the world can be so warm, so true and so eternal as maternal love. Even if a mother scolds or beats her children, she does not hurt them; she loves them. Her love can bring down a star from the sky if it is for her children. A mother’s love knows no reward.

Still now in my dreams I see the image of my mother.

## 7. The Inheritance

Mr. Hwang who would often call at our home in Badaogou made a great impression on my father's life. It was he who rescued my father from the hands of the Japanese police in Huchang.

My father had crossed the river to go to Phophyong to liaise with the organizations within the country. There he was caught by policemen lying in ambush near the noodle house which he used as a secret meeting place. It was Son Se Sim, the keeper of the inn at the back of our home, who had informed against my father. This man used to come to our house once every few days and, sitting close by my father, flatter him, calling "Mr. Kim," "Mr. Kim." My father had not known that this fellow was a spy.

In order to uncover the underground organization, the police affairs bureau of the government-general kept my father's arrest in absolute secrecy and dispatched high-ranking officers to the police department of North Phyongan Province to investigate the case. Police Sergeant Akishima and a policeman from the Phophyong police sub-station were ordered to escort my father quickly to the provincial police department in Sinuiju via Huchang police station. The Japanese decided to escort my father to Sinuiju as soon as they arrested him in case the Independence Army troops operating in the area along the River Amnok should try to rescue him.

While my father was locked up in Phophyong police sub-station they would not allow us, the members of his family, to see him. Therefore, we were unaware that he was going to be escorted to Sinuiju. It was Mr. Hwang who told us of it. He said:

“Madam, I’ll engage a lawyer even if it costs me my whole fortune. I’ll stay to see his trial and then come back. Don’t worry. Now, would you give me a few bottles of wine if you have some?”

Taking with him some bottles of strong wine and a string of dried pollack in a bag, he stealthily followed my father. The police started on the trip early in the morning and when the convoy arrived at the inn in Yonpho-ri village, it was almost lunchtime. Complaining of hunger, the policemen ordered meals at the inn. Mr. Hwang who had trailed along after them entered the inn and, looking round, got the wine bottles out of his bag and invited the police to have a drink. At first they declined because they were escorting a prisoner. But as Mr. Hwang insisted, they began to take a glass or two, praising him, saying, “You’re a very good man.” Mr. Hwang said soothingly that the prisoner should be fed and persuaded the police to unlock the handcuffs to free one of my father’s hands. Mr. Hwang himself drank a great deal but was not drunk. He was a heavy drinker. Finally, Akishima and his Korean subordinate fell asleep and began to snore.

Seizing his chance, my father got free of the handcuffs with the help of Mr. Hwang and escaped with him from the inn. They climbed Ppyojok Hill opposite. When they were nearly at the top, it began to snow. When the policemen woke having recovered from the effect of the wine, they rushed out in pursuit of my father, firing their guns blindly. While they were rushing about firing, my father parted with Mr. Hwang at the top of Ppyojok Hill. After that, they never met again.

After liberation I sent people to many places to find this Mr. Hwang. Somehow the man who had risked his life unhesitatingly to help my father when he was in distress would not appear readily when a good world had been created. Mr. Hwang was a true friend and comrade who would have mounted the scaffold in my father’s place. But for the help of so faithful a comrade as Mr. Hwang, my



father would not have been able to escape at the critical moment. It was natural that my father's friends told him that he was blessed with many good comrades. Because my father did not spare himself in the cause of the country and the people and shared good times and bad, life and death with many independence movement champions, he had many people around him and a great many revolutionary comrades and friends.

During the strategic retreat of the People's Army in the Korean war, I heard the story of my father's escape from Mr. Ri Kuk Ro. In the year when the war broke out, in early autumn, the Government of our Republic sent out many members of the Cabinet to the provinces as plenipotentiary delegates in order to speed up the delivery of taxes in kind. Mr. Ri Kuk Ro who was then a minister without portfolio was sent to an area which was a part of North Phyongan Province at that time. When he had completed his assignment, the People's Army had started a strategic retreat and I was staying in the Kanggye area. One day he came to see me, as he wanted to make a report on his work to the Cabinet, when unexpectedly he changed the conversation to the subject of the inn of Yonpho-ri. Before leaving for Kanggye after completing his work in Huchang County, he went with the county chief for internal affairs to Yonpho-ri, where he looked round the inn from which my father had effected his escape. He said that the building was still there. In those days both Kanggye and Huchang had belonged to North Phyongan Province.

Mr. Ri Kuk Ro had spent all his life in south Korea and abroad before coming over to north Korea prior to the building of our state after liberation. So it was quite surprising and wonderful to hear what he said about the inn at Yonpho-ri. If my father's exploits had been known widely to the people then as they are now, that would have been fully understandable. But when I heard him talking about the inn at a time when few people knew about it, I was very

surprised. Out of curiosity I asked him, “How on earth do you know about my father?”

“Twenty years ago,” he answered, “I had heard of Mr. Kim Hyong Jik by reputation. In Jilin a kind person told me about your family. When this war is over, I think I would like to write a biography of your father. But I feel diffident because I am not a good enough writer.”

Although he was usually so reticent and quiet, Mr. Ri Kuk Ro talked a great deal that day without hiding his excitement. We left the busy office of the Cabinet and strolled along the deserted banks of the River Tongno (Jangja), talking for more than an hour.

The man who had told him about my father was Hwang Paek Ha, father of Hwang Kwi Hon. Mr. Ri Kuk Ro had been in Manchuria as a member of a delegation of the Singan Association at the time. The mission of the delegation was to provide relief for the Korean nationals who had suffered because of the May 30 and August 1 Uprisings. As there were many victims of the uprisings, the leadership of the Singan Association sent a delegation to Manchuria to relieve them. At that time he had met Choe Il Chon in Fengtian. He it was who advised him to meet Hwang Paek Ha if he should go to Jilin. In accordance with his advice, Mr. Ri Kuk Ro had met Hwang Paek Ha upon his arrival in Jilin and received his help in the relief work. It was then that he had heard about my father and learned that Yonpho-ri was in Huchang County and that Huchang County was a major centre of my father’s activity.

The Singan Association had sent him to Manchuria because he had spent many years teaching in the area. He had once been in charge of training in an Independence Army unit at Naidaoshan, and then taught at Paeksan School in Fusong and at Tongchang School in Huanren County. Therefore, it was not so surprising that he had heard about my father in Manchuria. He went on to say:

“The county chief for internal affairs was quite in the dark about the story of the inn. So I criticized him a little, telling him it was a shame for the people of Huchang County not to know about the inn. Then I told him to take good care of the house.”

He said with a concerned look that young people who knew nothing of the history of their patriotic forerunners’ struggle would become worthless, yet officials did not seem to educate people properly in the traditions of the struggle.

In that crucible of the war when the destiny of our young Republic, no more than two years old, was at stake, what he said about the need to preserve our revolutionary traditions really filled me with a deep sense of gratitude. I felt warm inside; it seemed as though the spirits of the patriotic martyrs who had fallen fighting for the country had appeared before my eyes all at once calling on me with all the force of their voices to fight on and win, to defend the country to the end. At a time when it was suggested that Korea was going under, the remarks of Mr. Ri Kuk Ro about Yonpho-ri inspired me with strength.

After parting with Mr. Hwang, my father wandered about the mountain all day long before finding a dugout hut at a place called Kadungnyong which was not very far from the inn at Yonpho-ri, and asked the man living there for help. While introducing themselves to each other, my father learned that the other man was named Kim and from Jonju. The man was pleased to meet a revolutionary with the same name as himself in such a deep mountain as Kadungnyong, and with friendly feelings towards my father helped him all he could. The old man Kim hid my father in a stack of millet straw near his hut. It was then that my father got frostbite on his feet and knees and all across the lower part of his body. While he hid in silence with bent limbs in the cold straw stack over several days, he caught an incurable illness. The old man protected my father, thrusting balls of rice or roast potatoes

into the stack. Akishima was harangued by his superiors for losing my father. The police department of North Phyongan Province kept a sharp lookout along the River Amnok from Huchang to Jukjon-ri and continued the search for many days. But they never noticed the millet straw stack at Kadungnyong. I think my father understood the situation and chose the right place to hide. In the meantime, the old man Kim went out to the River Amnok to examine whether the river was frozen over. He then taught my father how to cross it with the help of a long pole. The ice was not yet very thick, so the crossing was still hazardous. As he was taught by the old man, my father put the pole on the ice and, pushing it forward with both hands, sprawled ahead. In this manner he crossed the Amnok safely. If you carry a long pole with you, you will not drown even when the ice gives way under you. This was a unique way of crossing a river that was coated with only thin ice. But during this river crossing my father got frostbite again. The frostbite he got at that time was a factor contributing to his death in Fusong a year later.

After safely crossing the river in such a desperate fashion, my father stayed in Taolaizhao village for a few days for treatment before leaving for Fusong, conducted by Kong Yong and Pak Jin Yong who were Independence Army men from the unit stationed in Fusong under the command of Jang Chol Ho; this unit was attached to the nationalist organization Jongui-bu.

I have already mentioned the fact that my father became acquainted with Kong Yong through the introduction of O Tong Jin. Kong Yong came from Pyoktong County. He was a faithful young man guided by my father from the time when he was a member of the Pyoktong Youth Association for Independence and then an armed member of the Pyokpha detached army barracks. He was on very intimate terms with my father. When he came to our home, he always stroked my hair, saying “Song Ju,” “Song Ju.”

I called him uncle until he later became a communist and our comrade, our comrade-in-arms. After my father's death Kong Yong, who was living in Wanlihe, would visit our home at least once every week bringing with him rice and firewood, and console my mother. His wife came to our house with her husband carrying a basketful of edible herbs on her head. He was so grieved at my father's death that he did not stop wearing his mourning dress for quite a long time.

On his way to Fusong with the two men, my father was captured by mounted bandits near Manjiang and was thus in danger again. That was a time when bandits were rampant everywhere. The confused and uncertain situation at the time when warlords were at daggers drawn in their struggle for influence produced many bandits. Many men from the dregs of society, finding no way out of their hopeless situation, took this road. To make matters worse, the Japanese imperialists infiltrated the bandit groups and manipulated their leaders or bred new bandits for the purpose of weakening the anti-Japanese forces. Moving about in hordes, the bandits would sack the people's houses or capture and rob wayfarers of their money or belongings. When they were out of humour, they would not hesitate to commit such brutalities as cutting off people's ears or beheading them. So the two men who were escorting my father were on the alert. My father told the bandits that he was a doctor, but the robbers would not let him go, insisting that a doctor must be rich. My father soothed and humoured them; he said to them that being a doctor who was earning a scant living from his patients, he had no money, that if any one of them was ill, he could cure him, and that back home, he would not report them to the authorities. With this he asked them to let him go, but they would not listen.

At this Kong Yong came to a decision. While the bandits were off their guard smoking opium after dinner, he extinguished the oil

lamp and helped my father and Pak Jin Yong to escape before attacking the rascals, some ten in all, with skillful boxing. Then he made off from the den of the bandits. That was a truly dramatic sight, resembling a fight scene in a film. My father often recalled with deep emotion the self-sacrificing deed of Kong Yong in this escape. Kong Yong was a devoted fighter who would not spare himself when it came to helping his comrades.

A few days later my father met Jang Chol Ho in Fusong. He had been a surveyor until a few years previously, but now he was a commander of a company of the Independence Army. When he saw the pale face of my father he was extremely worried and asked him to rest until he was well again, at a place they had arranged for him. Other people, too, advised him to rest. In fact, my father was in such a state at the time that he should not keep going any longer without some treatment. My father realized this. It was the coldest time of the year. But he set out immediately on a journey to the north without thinking even of putting a wet compress on his sick body. Company Commander Jang Chol Ho conducted my father to his destination.

Huadian and Jilin were the places he went to at that time. He went there in a great hurry, ignoring his frostbitten body, to speed up the integration of the independence movement organizations into a single front and the unity of the anti-Japanese patriotic forces. In those days the founding of a political party was at the top of the agenda for the independence movement champions.

With the development of thought and the deepening of the infusion of the revolutionary idea, party politics had become the trend and was spreading rapidly in the political circles of the world. Both bourgeois politicians and communists supported party politics. With the October Revolution as a turning-point, Communist Parties were founded in succession in many Asian countries. With the spread of new ideological trends, the age of

party politics began in the East. In 1921 a Communist Party was founded in China, our neighbour.

In this situation the pioneers of Korea pushed ahead with their activities to create an organization capable of political leadership over the national liberation struggle.

Party politics requires as its prerequisite the establishment and development of an idea and ideal to serve as its guiding principle and basis; without this it is scarcely conceivable.

Bourgeois nationalism emerged as an ideological trend in the modern history of our country and guided the national liberation movement, but it withered away without having its own political party. In the arena of the national liberation struggle the new, communist ideological trend emerged in place of bourgeois nationalism. Among the pioneers of the new generation who were aware that bourgeois nationalism could no longer be the banner of the national liberation struggle, the number of adherents to communism increased rapidly. Many progressive elements in the nationalist camp turned to the communist movement.

The line set out at the Kuandian Meeting of changing course did not end simply as a declaration but was carried into reality by the pioneers within the nationalist movement. O Tong Jin was the first to put into effect the line of the Kuandian Meeting. After the meeting many people belonging to the Independence Army unit commanded by O Tong Jin came out in support of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The Japanese imperialists called the new force that appeared in this period the “third force.”

The mid-1920s, when my father escaped from the grip of the Japanese police and went to Jilin via Fusong, was a period when the nationalist movement was being broken up between the reformists who sought a change of course and the conservatives who opposed this.

With a clear understanding of the situation, my father decided that it was time to found a political organization which would be capable of carrying the idea of reorientation into effect. The nationalist movement of the Koreans in Manchuria had so far been conducted with the idea of restoring state power primarily through direct armed operations and through activities for self-government mainly with regard to education and the people's livelihood. But they had no organization which could provide political leadership for this movement. So my father, together with the nationalists of the reformist group active in the Jilin area, set about preparing for the foundation of a new organization capable of giving political leadership to all the military organizations and self-government bodies scattered across Manchuria.

The first thing done in this regard was the convening of a meeting at Niumaxiang in Jilin at the suggestion of my father. The meeting took place at the house of Pak Ki Baek (the father of Pak Il Pha) at the foot of Mt. Beishan, Jilin, early in 1925. It was attended by Ryang Ki Thak, Hyon Ha Juk, O Tong Jin, Jang Chol Ho, Kim Sa Hon, Ko Won Am, Kwak Jong Dae and others who were the veterans or the leaders of medium standing of the independence movement. They unanimously recognized the need for a political organization capable of providing unified leadership for the independence movement and adopted a decision by common consent on founding a single party in the near future. The meeting discussed various important problems relating to the founding of the party. According to what Ri Kwan Rin remembered, there was a particularly lively discussion at the meeting with regard to the name of the party. The question was whether the party would be called the Korean Revolutionary Party or the Revolutionary Party of Koryo. It was agreed in the end that the name was important, but that it was still more important to lay down proper duties and a proper programme for the party in line with the aim of their



activities. So they settled on naming it the Revolutionary Party of Koryo and passed on to debating its programme.

After a year the leaders of the independence movement who attended the Niumaxiang Meeting held a joint conference with delegates from the Chondoist reformist group and from the Hyongphyong Association from the homeland, as well as with delegates from the Maritime Province of Siberia, at which they formed the Revolutionary Party of Koryo with the aim of “abolishing the present system of private property and doing away with the existing state organization so as to build a unitary world state based on communist institutions.” My ailing father was unable to attend this conference. After looking round Beishan and Jiangnan Parks and meeting the cadres of the young men’s organization in Xinantun, my father returned to Fusong and told us over the telephone to leave Linjiang. After travelling a short distance from Linjiang, we met two Independence Army men sent by Company Commander Jang Chol Ho. They wore mourners’ hats, and this was to evade the suspicious eyes of the special agents. We set out for Fusong in the horse-drawn carriage they had brought with them. Father came out as far as Daying, some 10 miles from Fusong, to meet us. I felt as if all my anxieties were gone when I saw father smiling brightly, though looking unwell. Leading my younger brothers by the hand I went running up to him. Even before I could greet him, my brothers had seized him and poured out what they had kept in their hearts for two months. While answering all their childish questions, father kept his eyes steadily on my face.

“I can see the water of the homeland has really done you good! After I sent you home to Korea, I could hardly sleep. And here you are back, having become so grown-up and strong!” said father joyfully.

That night our family sat in a happy circle and talked until late, saying everything we wanted to tell one another. That was when I heard of Mr. Hwang and old Mr. Kim from Jonju who had helped my father to escape, and of the saga of Kong Yong in the bandits' lair in Manjiang.

While I was talking about what I had seen and felt in the homeland, I told my father of my resolve never to cross the River Amnok again before Korea had regained her independence. Father looked at me with satisfaction; then he supported my resolve by saying that that was what a son of Korea should naturally do. Then he remarked that I should not think that my study of Korea had ended at Changdok School; I should continue to study with greater zeal to understand the homeland and its people even after settling down in a foreign land.

A few days later I started at Fusong Primary School No. 1. My closest friend at that school was Zhang Wei-hua, a Chinese boy. He was a son of the Chinese who was the second or third richest man in Fusong. There were dozens of private soldiers at his house. Almost all the *insam* (ginseng) farms in Donggang, Fusong County, belonged to the Zhangs. Every autumn they dug up *insam* roots and took them to other provinces on horses or donkeys to sell them. When they were going to other places to sell *insam*, their private soldiers would stand guard along the route. Although the father of Zhang Wei-hua was a wealthy and well-known man, he was a man of conscience who hated imperialism and loved his country. So was his son. In later years when I was engaged in my revolutionary activities, I was saved many times thanks to their help.

Among the Korean pupils, Ko Jae Bong, Ko Jae Ryong, Ko Jae Rim and Ko Jae Su were my friends.

In the days when my father was conducting revolutionary activities in and around Fusong, the situation was very

unfavourable because the reactionary Chinese warlords had turned pro-Japanese and were obstructing the activities of the Korean patriots in every possible way. Moreover, my father's health was not good owing to the aftereffects of the terrible torture inflicted on him in Pyongyang and in Phophyong and of his frostbite. Nevertheless, my father did not slacken his revolutionary struggle in the least.

A new doorplate outside our house in the street of Xiaonanmen read "Murim Surgery." In fact, my father was not in a position to treat any patients. Rather, he needed treatment himself. But before long he set off again on a trip. Everyone tried to dissuade him. Jang Chol Ho, Kong Yong, Pak Jin Yong and all the other independence movement fighters in Fusong remonstrated against the trip. Uncle Hyong Gwon and I tried to stop him, and even my mother who normally supported and backed up silently whatever he did entreated him to refrain from going for this once.

But he stuck to his decision and left Fusong. My father was so uneasy at the news that, because the upper levels of the Independence Army units operating in the area of Naidaoshan were not united and were squabbling in several factions for influence, the army was in danger of disintegration.

On the instructions of Jang Chol Ho, a man escorted my father to Antu. When he left Fusong, he took some ten kilogrammes of millet and a pot of bean paste for two men's provisions in a knapsack, and carried an axe and a pistol with him. They would have to go hundreds of miles across a deserted country to reach their destination. They had a hard time going through the no-man's-land, I heard later. At night they built a campfire in the open and slept, leaning against a pile of logs with nothing to cover them. My father kept coughing so hard that the other man was constantly worried.

Even after his return from Antu, he continued to cough violently. A few days later, in spite of the bad state of his health, he began to work to obtain authorization for the opening of Paeksan School. This was a school with a long history established by the Korean exiles and patriotic forerunners in the Fusong area in cooperation with the farmers at a time when a movement to establish private schools was briskly under way in the homeland. At first, the school was no more than the size of Sunhwa Private Village School for the study of Chinese classics in Mangyongdae which my father attended. So it was as big as a two-room farm house of today. Yet, the tiny Paeksan School had to be closed down for a long time because of a lack of funds. When our family moved to Fusong, a movement was afoot to reopen the school. Since the local warlord in authority backed up by the Japanese imperialists would not readily grant permission for the opening of the school, my father became extremely concerned.

Wherever he went, my father used to pay primary attention to the education movement and set up schools. On the eve of its opening, my father went to the school with Jang Chol Ho, taking with them on carts desks and chairs made at a woodworking mill. Although he did not stop working as a doctor at the “Murim Surgery,” his heart was always at the school. He became honorary headmaster of Paeksan School. He did not teach in person, but he showed interest in what was taught and in the work of supporting the school. He often made speeches and guided the extracurricular activities of the children at the school.

The *Mother Tongue Reader* used at Paeksan School was written by my father. After opening the school, he went to Sanyuanpu in Liuhe County, and then wrote the textbook with someone named Pak Ki Baek (Pak Pom Jo). When he wrote teaching materials, interested people took them to Sanyuanpu for printing, and the printed books were distributed around Manchuria.

There was a printing house in Sanyuanpu under the control of the political organization Jongui-bu, and this printed school textbooks. Printing was done by lithography, and the books printed there were attractive. The textbooks printed there were used at Korean schools in Manchuria.

My father called many meetings in Fusong to discuss problems of education and dispatched able people to Antu, Huadian, Dunhua, Changbai and other areas to set up schools and night schools everywhere there were Koreans. The Yugyong School in Deyongcun village, Shibadaogou, Changbai County, was also founded in those days. Ri Je U who later joined the Korean Revolutionary Army and became a member of the Down-with-Imperialism Union, and anti-Japanese fighter Kang Ton attended this school.

As matters at Paeksan School were a success, my father again toured other parts of Manchuria and conducted work among the independence movement fighters. The main part of his activities in this period was the struggle for achieving the unity and cohesion of the independence movement. Since top of the agenda was the founding of a single party capable of implementing the line of the change of course, the problem of achieving the unity of the ranks of the independence movement which was the prerequisite for it became an urgent task which nobody could ignore. My father gave his last years entirely to this cause.

A new era was ushered in when the three organizations of Jongui-bu, Sinmin-bu and Chamui-bu came into being in Manchuria as a result of the amalgamation of the many small independence movement organizations that had had their own areas of influence in the three provinces of Manchuria. But these three organizations, too, were given to squabbling to expand their spheres of influence, only to be scorned by the people at large.

In this situation my father, who was convinced that unity was the most pressing historical need, held discussions about the measures for achieving the unity and cohesion of the ranks of the independence movement with representatives from the Korean National Association and military organizations at home and abroad in Fusong in August 1925, and formed the Association for the Promotion of the Alliance of National Organizations. My father's intention was apparently to hasten the establishment of a single party through the activities of this association. He worked against time every day, busier than ever. It seems that he realized that his days were numbered.

Not long after that my father became seriously ill. From the spring of 1926 he was confined to bed. Hearing of his illness, many people from different places visited our house. Every time I came home from school I saw five or six pairs of unfamiliar shoes on the earthen verandah. The people came to inquire after the condition of my father, bringing medicines they believed to be efficacious for his health, and consoled him. However poor they were, nearly everyone of them brought at least one *insam* root. But my father's illness was too far-gone, so medicine had no effect on him. Spring was bringing a rich lifeblood to everything alive on Earth and everything was singing of the new season. But alas, this could not restore my father's health, even though everyone desired it so earnestly.

I was too worried to go to school in peace. One morning I turned back halfway to school and went home. I was anxious about father.

"Why don't you go to school?" he asked me sternly. I heaved a deep sigh, unable to say anything in reply. "Go," he said. "A man with such a weak heart will never do anything great." Thus he made me go to school.

One day O Tong Jin came from Jilin with Jang Chol Ho to see my father. In accordance with the line set out at the Fusong conference he had been working hard to unite the anti-Japanese patriotic forces, but as things had not turned out as he had desired, he had been in anguish. So, he said, he had come partly to discuss the matter with my father and partly to ask how he was. With this, he indignantly denounced those who were guilty of separatist acts. The hot-tempered Jang Chol Ho declared in a rage that they should break with those diehards.

My father who had been listening attentively to the two men took both of them by the hand and said, "No, that won't do. It may be a hard job, but we must bring about unity at all costs. We won't win independence before we are united and rise in arms against the enemy."

After they had left, father spoke of the factional strife which had continued from the period of the Ri dynasty, and he deplored the fact that when the country had been lost due to the factional struggle, the people who professed themselves to be champions of the independence movement were still unaware of the truth and, split into many small groups, were squabbling in factions. Without doing away with the factional strife, he went on to say, it was impossible either to achieve the independence of the country or to bring about civilization and enlightenment. Factional strife is a cause of decline in national strength and attracts foreign forces. When foreign forces come in, the country will go to ruin. During your generation it is imperative to root out the factional strife, achieve unity and rouse the masses.

When I returned home from school to nurse him, father had me sit by his bedside and told me about many things. They were mainly accounts of his experiences in life, and they were very instructive. One thing I cannot forget to this day is his remark

about how a revolutionary should be prepared for three contingencies.

“Wherever he may go, a revolutionary must always be prepared for three contingencies. He must be prepared for death from hunger, death from a beating and death from the cold; yet he must stick to the high aim he set himself at the outset.”

I engraved these words of my father deep on my heart. His remarks about friends and friendship were also instructive.

“A man must not forget the friends he has gained in adversity. One must rely on one’s parents at home and on one’s friends outside; that is what is traditionally said, and it is an important saying. True friends who will be one’s partners through thick and thin are dearer than one’s brothers.”

That day he talked for a long time about friends and friendship. He said: I began the struggle by winning comrades. There are people who obtain money or pistols to begin the independence movement, but I started by seeking in all places for good comrades. Good comrades will not fall from heaven nor spring out of the earth. They must be looked for at great cost by oneself just as gold or precious stones are prospected for, and must be fostered. That is why I have moved around Korea and the wilderness of Manchuria all my life until my feet were blistered. Your mother, too, has had a hard time being hospitable to guests, going hungry all her life. If you have a true heart that is dedicated to the country and the people, you can obtain many good comrades. What matters is the mind and the heart. Even without money people can be comrades if they are like-minded. This is why friendship that is hard to obtain with a mountain of money can be acquired with only a glass of hot water or a slice of potato. I have neither a fortune nor power, but I have a great many good friends. If this can be called a fortune, I think I have the greatest of fortunes. I have never grudged my comrades anything. That is why my comrades have protected me at



the risk of their lives. It is because my comrades have helped me selflessly that I have been able to devote myself to the movement for national liberation in the face of every manner of hardship and trial.

He said that even in his sickbed he missed his friends more than anything else, and told me over and over again to find many good comrades.

“Only he who will die for the sake of his comrades will find good comrades.” Still now this teaching given me by my father remains deeply impressed on my mind.

For several months my mother nursed my father devotedly as he fought desperately against his illness. Her devotion was unequalled and really touching. But even her superhuman exertions could not save my father.

On June 5, 1926, my father passed away under the small roof of a hut in a foreign land hundreds of miles away from his home, grieving over his lost country.

“When we were leaving our home, we said we would achieve independence and return together. But I am afraid I cannot return. When the country wins its independence, you return home with Song Ju. I do not want to depart without attaining my aim. I entrust Song Ju to you. I wanted to give him education up to secondary school, but I think that is impossible. If you can, please send him to secondary school at least, even if you must live on gruel to do so. Then, as for the younger boys, everything will depend on Song Ju.”

My father’s last wish imparted to my mother began with these words. Handing over to her the two pistols he had always carried with him, he said:

“If these guns are discovered after my death, there will be trouble. So bury them and then give them to Song Ju when he has grown up and starts on the road of struggle.”

Then he gave us three brothers his last injunction:

“I am departing without attaining my aim. But I believe in you. You must not forget that you belong to the country and the people. You must win back your country at all costs even if your bones are broken and your bodies are torn apart.”

I wept loudly. My father’s death let loose my pent-up grief for my lost country. My father died after passing his life enduring every manner of hardship and suffering for the sake of his country. Even when he was mortally ill because of repeated torture and severe frostbite, he did not give in but went to meet the people and his comrades. When he was exhausted, he walked with a cane, and when he was hungry, he allayed his hunger by eating snow. He never looked back or wavered; he always walked straight forward. My father did not take sides with any faction or seek power but dedicated his whole life without hesitation to the cause of national liberation and the working people’s well-being. He was free from worldly desires and self-interest. When he had money, he suppressed his desire to buy sweets for his children and saved it up and bought an organ, which he contributed to a school. He placed his fellow-countrymen above himself, and his motherland above his family. He moved forward without faltering in the teeth of the cold wind. He lived as a man of integrity and an upright revolutionary. I never once heard my father talking about household affairs. I inherited a great deal from my father in ideological and spiritual wealth but nothing in the form of property and money. The farm implements and household utensils now on display in my old house are all legacies left behind by my grandfather, not by my father.

The thought of “Aim High,” being prepared for the three contingencies, the idea of gaining comrades, and two pistols—this was all I received from my father. My heritage was such that it portended great hardship and sacrifice for me. Nevertheless, there could be no better heritage for me.

My father was accorded a public funeral. On the day of the funeral the street of Xiaonanmen was crowded with mourners. Many of his comrades, friends and disciples who had followed and respected him in his lifetime, as well as his former patients, streamed from all parts of north and south Manchuria, Jiandao and from the homeland. Even the head of Fusong County called with a bundle of gilt incense papers. He burned incense and bowed in tears before the spirit of my departed father.

It was decided that my father's body would be laid to rest at Yangdicun on the bank of the River Toudao-Songhua some four kilometres from Xiaonanmen. During his lifetime my father had often visited the village. He was great friends with the villagers, as close as brothers and sisters, and talked with them and treated their illnesses. After his death, my father would have wished to be among the people with whom he had been so close. That day the four-kilometre-long road from Xiaonanmen to Yangdicun was a sea of wailing. The independence movement followers who were carrying the coffin wept bitterly. The Korean women in the Fusong area wore white ribbons in their hair for a fortnight after the funeral.

Thus I lost my father. I lost my father overnight, and with him a teacher and leader. He was my flesh and blood who had given me a life and, at the same time, a teacher and leader who had led me along the path of the revolution from my early years. His death was a heavy blow to me. The irreparable loss left a hollow in my heart. At times I would go and sit alone in tears on the riverside gazing at the far-off sky of the homeland.

To think back, my father's affection for me had been extraordinary. After I had grown a little, he used to tell me earnestly about the future of our country and people. His love for me had been stern and yet infinitely deep. Now I could no longer receive or expect such love and such guidance.

But what lifted me up from the depth of grief was the extraordinary heritage my father had left me: “Aim High,” preparedness for the three contingencies, the gaining of comrades and two pistols. When I was at a loss what to do in my inconsolable and sombre grief, I drew strength from my inheritance and began to seek the path I must follow.

## CHAPTER 2

# Unforgettable Huadian

Hwasong Uisuk School

Disillusionment

The Down-with-Imperialism Union

My Mind Turning towards a New  
Theatre of Activity

Ri Kwan Rin, Heroine of the  
Independence Army

*July — December 1926*

## **1. Hwasong Uisuk School**

After my father's funeral, his friends stayed in Fusong for a few days to discuss my future.

It was in mid-June of 1926 that I left for Hwasong Uisuk School at their recommendation.

That was immediately after the June 10th Independence Movement in our country.

This movement was a mass anti-Japanese demonstration organized by the communists who had recently appeared in the arena of the national liberation struggle following the March First Popular Uprising.

As is well known, the March First Popular Uprising was a turning point in the national liberation struggle in our country in its

shift from the nationalist to the communist movement. Among the forerunners who realized through the March First Popular Uprising that bourgeois nationalism could no longer be the banner of the national liberation struggle, the trend to follow the new current of thought rapidly increased, and through their activities Marxism-Leninism spread quickly.

In the year after the March First Popular Uprising a working-class organization called the Labour Mutual-aid Association appeared in Seoul and, following this, mass organizations such as peasant organizations, youth organizations and women's organizations came into being one after another.

Under the guidance of such organizations, an energetic mass struggle got under way in our country from the beginning of the 1920s to defend the rights and interests of the proletarian masses and oppose the colonial policy of the Japanese imperialists. In 1921 the dockers of Pusan went out on a general strike. Following this, successive workers' strikes broke out in such industrial centres as Seoul, Pyongyang and Inchon, as well as in many of the provinces. Under the influence of the working-class movement, tenant disputes against Japanese landowners and vicious Korean landlords swept the Namuri Plain in Jaeryong and the Amthae Island. Also, students went on strike in many places in opposition to the colonial slave education and in demand of academic freedom.

By replacing their "sabre rule" with the silk cloak of "civil government" and drawing some pro-Japanese elements into the "Advisory Council," the Japanese imperialists pretended to encourage the participation of Koreans in politics. At the same time, under the specious title of "promoting the expression of public opinion," they permitted the publication of some Korean newspapers and magazines and made a fuss as if an era of prosperity had come. However, our nation would not tolerate such trickery and continued its struggle against the aggressors.

The trend of the development of the mass movement, particularly the working-class movement, called for a powerful political force capable of giving it unified leadership. To meet this historic demand, the Korean Communist Party was founded in Seoul in April 1925. At that time many political parties of the working class were appearing in a number of European countries, too.

The Korean Communist Party did not fulfil its role effectively as the vanguard of the working class because of some essential limitations—its lack of a guiding ideology that conformed with the actual situation, and its failure to achieve the unity of its ranks and strike root deep among the masses. However, its foundation, marking as it did an important event that demonstrated the change of the old current of thought to a new one and the qualitative change in the national liberation struggle, gave impetus to the development of the mass movement, particularly the labour movement, the peasant movement and the youth movement, as well as of the national liberation movement.

The communists started to prepare for a fresh anti-Japanese demonstration on a nationwide scale.

It was around this time that Sunjong, the last King of the Ri dynasty, died. His death stimulated the anti-Japanese feelings of the Korean nation. At the news of the King's death Koreans, irrespective of age and sex, wept loudly in mourning. Even though the country had been ruined Sunjong, as the last King, symbolized the Ri dynasty. However, now that he was dead Koreans' pent-up sorrow for their ruined country again burst out. The following song sung by some students to the band music added to the grief of the mourners.

*Farewell to you, Changdok Palace  
For ever and ever.*

*Go I shall to my grave  
To a place forlorn.  
Now that I am leaving you,  
When shall I come again?  
May the 20-million  
Korean people thrive.*

Their wailing was a great irritation to the Japanese occupationists.

Wherever Koreans gathered in crowds to mourn, Japanese mounted policemen immediately moved in and dispersed them with clubs and by force of arms. Even pupils from elementary schools were clubbed mercilessly. What the Japanese desired was that Koreans should not grieve over the ruin of their country and should shut their mouths, without weeping over the death of their King. This was the true nature of rule by the governor-general who disguised his “sabre rule” with the “civil government.”

The enemy’s outrageous repression of our people added fuel to their burning anti-Japanese feelings.

Taking advantage of the anti-Japanese spirit of the popular masses, the communists planned a nationwide anti-Japanese demonstration on the day of the funeral of Sunjong and secretly pushed ahead with preparations for it.

However, the secret was betrayed to the Japanese imperialists by factionalists who had found their way onto the preparatory committee for the demonstration. The preparations for the anti-Japanese demonstration were ruthlessly suppressed.

However, patriotic people did not discontinue the preparations.

On June 10 when the bier of Sunjong was passing through the streets, tens of thousands of Seoul citizens launched a mass demonstration shouting, “Long live the independence of Korea!”, “Japanese troops, get out!” and “Fighters for Korean independence,



unite!” Their grudges and anger pent up during the seven years of “civil government” burst out at last into an outcry of “Hurrah for independence!”

Even pupils from elementary schools who were only twelve years of age joined the demonstration. The demonstrators grappled courageously with the enemy’s armed soldiers and policemen.

The June 10th Independence Movement failed to overcome the ruthless suppression by the Japanese imperialists because of the machinations of the factionalists. If the bourgeois nationalists’ worship of the great powers was a basic reason for the failure of the March First Popular Uprising, the factional activities of the early communists were the root cause that ruined the June 10th Independence Movement. In leading this struggle the Tuesday group worked from their factionalist point of view, whereas the Seoul group resorted to obstructive moves to oppose them.

After the June 10th Independence Movement, most of the principal figures in the leadership body of the Korean Communist Party were arrested.

As a result of the June 10th Independence Movement the deceitfulness and craftiness of “civil government” were revealed to the whole world. Through this movement our people demonstrated their indomitable will and fighting spirit to regain their country and defend their national dignity whatever the adversity.

If the communists had rid themselves of factionalism and organized and led this struggle in a unified way, the June 10th Independence Movement would have expanded and developed as a nationwide struggle and a heavier blow would have been dealt to the colonial rule of the Japanese imperialists.

This movement left a serious lesson that without getting rid of factions it would be impossible to achieve either the development of the communist movement or the victory of the anti-Japanese national liberation struggle.

In those days I analysed the result of this movement in my own way. I wondered why the organizers of this struggle had used the same peaceful method which had been applied at the time of the March First Popular Uprising.

There is a saying, “Train soldiers for a thousand days to use them for a day.” Likewise, if one wants to send the popular masses to the battlefield once, one must educate and organize them sufficiently and train them well.

However, the organizers and leaders of the June 10th Independence Movement sent tens of thousands of empty-handed people to confront armed soldiers and policemen, having failed to make full preparations. So it was natural that the outcome should be tragic.

I could not sleep because of my indignation at the setbacks suffered by the anti-Japanese movement, each time entailing wholesale deaths. The failure of this movement made my blood run hot and made me still more firmly determined to defeat the Japanese imperialists and regain my country.

With this ideological urge I resolved to make my days at Hwasong Uisuk School worthy of the teachings of my departed father, of the wishes of my mother and of the expectations of the people.

Hwasong Uisuk School was a two-year military and political school belonging to Jongui-bu. The school was founded at the beginning of 1925 with a view to training cadres for the Independence Army.

Having found the way to national resurrection in building up strength, the fighters for independence and the patriotic champions of the enlightenment movement worked hard to establish military schools to train military personnel at the same time as founding general schools. Thanks to their efforts many military schools were established in various parts of Manchuria. Among them were

Xinxing Training School (Liuhe County), Shiliping Military Academy (Wangqing County), Xiaoshahe Training School (Antu County) and Hwasong Uisuk School (Huadian County).

Such leaders of the independence movement as Ryang Ki Thak, Ri Si Yong, O Tong Jin, Ri Pom Sok, Kim Kyu Sik and Kim Jwa Jin played the central role in the establishment of these military schools.

Those admitted to Hwasong Uisuk School were servicemen on active duty selected from companies under Jongui-bu. The candidates from the different companies were allotted by the higher authorities, and they were selected from among the best soldiers. When they had finished the two-year course new ranks were conferred on them according to merit and they were returned to the companies they had come from. Outside the Independence Army some young people entered this school on the recommendation of individuals. Such cases, however, were rare. So, young people with a noble will and who were in the prime of their life wanted to go to this school.

Now there remain very few of my fellow students from Hwasong Uisuk School who can look back upon those days.

When my father was alive I worried little about my future and household affairs. After he had passed away, however, I was obliged to consider my future and to deal with the many complex problems which were raised in household management.

I was at my wits end because of the sorrow and distress caused me by the death of my father. However, I pondered over my future with the single desire to devote my whole life to the independence movement, whatever the cost, as my father had hoped, and with the ambition to go to a higher school, if the circumstances permitted it, even though it might be a burden to my mother.

In his will my father had wished that I be sent to a secondary school. However, my family was so poor that I felt I could not

express my wish to go to a higher school. If I were to go back to school my mother would have to bear the heavy burden of raising money for my school fees. However, the small amount of money my mother was getting for doing laundry and needlework for others was not enough to pay for my education, it being spent on keeping our poor family.

After my father died my uncle Hyong Gwon, who had been his assistant, soon lost his job in the dispensary. There was only a small amount of medicine left in the dispensary by my father.

It was at this time that my father's friends advised me to go to Hwasong Uisuk School. The will my father left to my mother included the matter of my going to a higher school. My father's last request addressed to my mother and uncle was to write to his friends and get their help in sending me to a higher school.

My mother wrote to many people, as he had requested. My mother had to do so, although she regretted it, because the world was so cruel that it was impossible to live even for a single day without the help of kindness. So the question of my future was presented for discussion among those fighters for independence who remained in Fusong after my father's funeral.

This is what O Tong Jin told me:

I have sent a letter of introduction to Uisan Choe Tong O for you to go to Hwasong Uisuk School. A military education there will meet your ambition. As your father said, independence cannot be attained through argument. We will take responsibility for your future after your graduation from that school. So study all you can at school.

It appeared that my father's friends wanted to train me as a reserve cadre who would succeed their generation in the future. It was good that the leaders of the Independence Army were concerned about training reserve cadres and attached importance to it.

I readily agreed to O Tong Jin's proposal. I was extremely grateful to the independence fighters for their kind concern about my future. Their intention to send me to a military school and train me for the independence movement conformed with my desire to devote my whole life to the cause of national liberation. My view in those days was that we could defeat the Japanese imperialists only through a military confrontation and that one could stand in the front rank of the independence movement only when one had a military knowledge. The way was open now for me to realize my dream.

I regarded Hwasong Uisuk School as a short cut to joining the anti-Japanese struggle for independence, so I hastily began to make preparations with a light heart for my journey to Huadian.

Once a foreign statesman asked me: "Mr. President, how did it happen that you, a communist, went to a military school run by nationalists?" This must seem quite puzzling.

It was when I had not yet joined the communist movement that I entered Hwasong Uisuk School. My world outlook was not at a sufficiently mature stage for me to regard Marxism-Leninism completely as my doctrine. All I had learned about communism at that time was what I had read in Fusong in such pamphlets as *The Fundamentals of Socialism* and *The Biography of Lenin*. I was attracted to a socialist and communist society through the rumours I heard about the development of the newly-born Soviet Union where the idea of socialism had been realized.

There were more nationalists than communists around me. The teachers at the schools I attended in various places advocated nationalist ideas more than communist ones. We were surrounded by nationalism, which, though destined to give way to a new trend of thought, had more than half a century of history, and its influence could not be ignored.

The fact that there were many sturdy young people at Hwasong Uisuk School and that it was giving free political and military education made me resolve to go to Huadian. Better educational conditions than those at this school were inconceivable for me who wanted to go to a higher school although I was in no position to pay any school fees and harboured the ambition to start on the road of national restoration in accordance with the will of my father.

Frankly speaking, in those days I pinned great hope on the education provided at Hwasong Uisuk School. I was delighted to think that after being taught at the school for two years I would have acquired a military knowledge, to say nothing of the fact that I would have received a secondary education.

However, when I actually left home I frequently looked behind me even as I stepped forward. As I turned back to see Yangdicun where my father's remains were buried and my mother and younger brothers who were far away, watching me out of sight, I could not move my feet easily because of my distraction.

I was worried about my mother who would have a hard time of it with my little brothers. In those days it was not easy for a mother to support her family single-handedly in such a godforsaken place as Fusong.

I calmed myself by thinking over the words of my mother, that a man who has started on a journey should not look back.

It was about 75 miles from Fusong to Huadian. Rich people made the journey in comfort in a covered carriage called a Hanlinche. But I could not afford to do so because I had only a little travel money.

Huadian was a mountain town under the jurisdiction of Jilin Province. Situated 12 to 15 miles away from the confluence of the River Songhua and the River Huifa it was a leading centre of the independence movement in south Manchuria.

When I started on my journey, one fighter for independence in Fusong said that Hwasong Uisuk School was in extremely strained circumstances, and he expressed his worry that I would have difficulties. I imagined that the board and lodging at Hwasong Uisuk School would be poor because the Independence Army as a whole was in financial difficulties. However, such a difficulty was no problem for me. I, who had been living on gruel and had dressed in cotton clothes from my childhood, believed that Hwasong Uisuk School could not be poorer than my family in Mangyongdae, however strained its circumstances might be.

What made me uneasy was the thought of whether Hwasong Uisuk School would receive me who was young and had no record of military service. However, the fact that Kim Si U was in Huadian and that my father's friends such as Kang Je Ha were working at Hwasong Uisuk School was a great reassurance for me.

When I got to Huadian I first visited Kim Si U's home, as my mother had told me. He was the Huadian area controller under Jongui-bu. The area control office was a self-governing organization which helped the Koreans residing in the district under its control in their everyday life. There were such offices in Fusong and Panshi, as well as in such localities as Kuandian, Wangqingmen and Sanyuanpu.

Kim Si U was a fighter for independence who had known my father from the time when he was in Jasong County. After the March First Popular Uprising he went to China and conducted his activities in the area of Linjiang and Dandong. He moved to Huadian in 1924. Having built a rice mill there he raised money for the independence movement while working hard to enlighten the masses.

The rice mill he built was the Yongphung Rice Mill situated in Nanda Street. While performing his duties as an area controller he obtained money by operating the rice mill to provide food for the

Independence Army and give financial support to Hwasong Uisuk School and the nearby model elementary school for Koreans.

From my days in Linjiang I had followed with awe and highly respected him, being fascinated by his openhearted character typical of a northern man and by his strong disposition. He loved me dearly like his own son.

Kim Si U and his wife who were mending a hencoop in the yard, received me gladly, shouting for joy as I appeared. There were so many chickens in the yard that they got in my way.

Kim Si U took me to Hwasong Uisuk School.

He wore clothes that gave off the smell of rice bran, typical of a rice-dealer.

Hwasong Uisuk School was situated on the banks of the River Huifa. It had a steep, straw-thatched roof and blackish walls of blue bricks common to Manchuria, and it stood against a forest of Zelkova trees. The hostel of Hwasong Uisuk School was situated behind the school building with the playground between them.

Both the school building and the hostel were much shabbier than I had imagined, but that did not matter. I suppressed my misgivings by thinking that it would be fine if I could only learn a lot of good things, although the building was shabby.

Nevertheless, the school grounds were spacious and tidy.

Carefully I examined the whole appearance of Hwasong Uisuk School with hope and curiosity.

I remembered how once, when we were living in Badaogou, O Tong Jin had called on us one cold winter day, not even wearing a fur cap, and consulted my father about the founding of Hwasong Uisuk School.

Having arrived at the school as a new student and looked around it, I was full of deep emotions.



The headmaster, a middle-aged, shortish man with a receding hairline and a pleasant appearance, received me in his office. He was Uisan Choe Tong O.

Uisan was a disciple of Son Pyong Hui, the third high priest of Chondoism and one of the leaders of the March First Popular Uprising who were known as the thirty-three people. He graduated from the training school founded by Son Pyong Hui, and then started in the independence movement by building a village schoolhouse in Uiju, his home town, and giving an education to the children of believers in Chondoism. He had taken part in the March First Movement. Later he came to China as an exile and, having opened a Chondoist mission, conducted patriotic activities to propagate religion among the exiles.

The headmaster said to me that he would repent all his life of his failure to be present at my father's funeral. He and the area controller spoke about my father for a good while.

What Choe Tong O said on that day made a great impression on me. He said:

“Song Ju, you have come to our school at the right time. The independence movement has entered a new era which requires talented people. The era of Hong Pom Do and Ryu Rin Sok when people worked in a random way has passed. In order to overcome the tactics and the new types of arms employed by the Japanese, we need our own modern tactics and new types of arms. Who can solve this problem? It is the new generation such as you who should take charge of this and settle it...”

The headmaster also told me a lot which could serve as a lesson for me. He said that the board and lodging were poor, but, he urged me to put up with and endure all the difficulties and look forward to the future—the independence of Korea. My first impression of him was that he was gentle and surprisingly eloquent.

That day Kim Si U's family prepared supper for me. As I sat face to face with people belonging to my father's generation at a modest table that expressed the sincerity of the host and hostess, I was full of deep emotion.

There was a bottle of alcohol made from cereal at one edge of the round table. I thought that Kim Si U had put it there to drink with his meal. But he poured some into a glass and offered it to me, much to my surprise.

I felt so awkward that I flapped my hands. I was bewildered because this was the first time in my life that I had been treated as a grown-up. True, during my father's funeral Jang Chol Ho had offered me some alcohol when he saw me so upset. However, he had acted so towards a mourner and no more than that.

Nevertheless, Kim Si U treated me as if I were completely grown-up. He also changed his style of speech, making it a little more respectful.

He said:

“At the news of your arrival, I thought eagerly of your father. So I saw that a bottle of alcohol was prepared. Whenever your father came to Huadian he would drink the alcohol I offered him at this table. Now you take this glass in place of your father. You are now the head of your family.”

Although he offered me the glass as he said this I could not bring myself to take it readily. Although the glass was so small that it could be hidden in the palm of one's hand, it was loaded with inestimable weight.

At that table where Kim Si U treated me as an adult, I solemnly felt that I should behave like a grown-up for the sake of the country and the nation.

He offered me the room which he used as a bedroom and study. He surprised me by saying that he had discussed the matter

with the headmaster and that I should stay at his home without ever thinking of living in the dormitory.

He said that, because my father Kim Hyong Jik had requested him to take good care of me in the letter he wrote in his dying moments, he was under an obligation to do so.

Thus in Fusong and in Huadian my father's friends behaved with the utmost sincerity towards me. I suppose they did so because they wanted to be loyal to my father. At that time I thought a great deal about their sincerity and faithfulness. That faithfulness was based on the ardent hope of the people belonging to my father's generation that I would do something for the independence of the country. That hope made me feel a heavy responsibility as a son of Korea, as a member of the new generation. I became fully determined to live up to the expectations of the people by studying and training hard, bearing my father's last injunctions in mind.

From the following day I started a strange life at Hwasong Uisuk School, a military academy. Choe Tong O took me to a classroom. When they saw me the students expressed their curiosity about such a young fighter from the Independence Army. They seemed to presume that I was a youngster who had been sent there after running a few errands for one company.

There were more than forty students there, but none of them was as young as me. Most of them were about 20 years of age. Some of them had sparse beards; some had children. All of them were like elder brothers or uncles to me.

As soon as the headmaster had introduced me, the students applauded.

I went to the front row by the window and took the seat the teacher had told me to take.

The student sitting next to me was Pak Cha Sok from the first company. Whenever a new lesson began he briefly whispered into my ear, telling me about the teachers as they entered the classroom.

The teacher whom he introduced with the greatest respect was military instructor Ri Ung. Ri Ung was a member of the military commission under Jongui-bu and had attended Huangpu Military Academy. In those days everyone looked up to graduates from this academy as if they were extraordinary beings. Because his father was running a large chemist's shop in Seoul he was said to take a lot of *insam* that was sent to him. He was respected by the students because of his wide knowledge and varied attainments, although he tended to be rather bureaucratic.

Pak Cha Sok told me that Hwasong Uisuk School taught such subjects as the history and geography of Korea, biology, mathematics, physical education, military science and the history of the world revolution. He also wrote down the daily routine of the school on a sheet of paper.

This is how my ties with Pak Cha Sok were established. Later, in the days of the armed struggle, he left an indelible wound in my heart. Although later he was to take a wrong path, in our days at Hwasong Uisuk School he was exceptionally friendly to me, like my own brother.

That afternoon Choe Chang Gol from the sixth company, accompanied by more than 10 of his comrades, came to Kim Si U's home to visit me. It seemed that their first impression of me had been favourable and that they were curious and felt an urge to talk to me because I had entered the school at a very young age.

Choe Chang Gol had a big scar on his head. His wide forehead and black eyebrows were very manly. He was tall and had a good constitution. So he could have been called handsome but for the scar on his head. There was something free-and-easy in his way of speaking and in his manner which attracted people. During our first meeting he made a great impression on me.

"You say you are only 14 years old, but you seem very advanced for your years. How did you come to serve in the

Independence Army at your young age and how is it that you are attending Hwasong Uisuk School?”

This was the first thing that Choe Chang Gol asked me. His eyes never left my face, and there was a smile on his lips all the time, as if he had met an intimate friend with whom he had lived for a long time under the same roof.

Briefly I told him what he wanted to know.

When they learned that I was the eldest son of Kim Hyong Jik, they became more friendly towards me, expressing their surprise on one hand and casting respectful glances at me on the other. They asked me many questions in order to learn of my experiences of the country.

A little while later I asked Choe Chang Gol about his time in the Independence Army.

First he told me how he had got the scar on his head. He embellished his story to make it more interesting, sometimes cracking jokes so that it was really splendid. What I remember in particular about his story was that he always spoke of himself in the third person. When he meant, “I did so,” or “I was deceived,” he said, “Choe Chang Gol did so,” “Choe Chang Gol was deceived,” thus provoking a smile from his listeners.

“This happened when Choe Chang Gol was a common soldier under Ryang Se Bong. Once he captured a spy in the vicinity of Kaiyuan. On his way back he stopped at an inn. But that extremely careless Choe Chang Gol started nodding off with the spy in front of him. He was tired after walking many miles. Meanwhile the spy undid the rope that bound him, hit Choe Chang Gol on the head with an axe and escaped. Fortunately he did not strike very hard. The ‘decoration’ on Choe Chang Gol’s head had this dismal history. If a man is careless, he will suffer the same fate as Choe Chang Gol.”

After a few hours of heart-to-heart talks I found him to be a very interesting man. I made friends with hundreds and thousands of people in my youth. However, this was the first time I had met such a buffoon as Choe Chang Gol who, referring to himself in the third person all the time, skilfully wove his stories.

Afterwards I learned more about his personal history. His father ran a small hotel in Fushun. His father had wanted him to join the business and help him. However, Choe Chang Gol left home and joined the army to help win the country's independence. When he was serving in the Independence Army his grandmother had come to Sanyuanpu many times in order to persuade her grandson to go home. However, Choe Chang Gol never gave in. Each time she came, he said: With the country ruined, it is not the time to keep our hotel.

I became friendly with Choe Chang Gol, Kim Ri Gap, Kye Yong Chun, Ri Je U, Pak Kun Won, Kang Pyong Son and Kim Won U. In addition to them, I got to know many young people who came to Hwasong Uisuk School from south Manchuria and various parts of our country, determined to join the anti-Japanese movement.

Every afternoon they called at Kim Si U's to talk with me. I was grateful for the fact that so many of my fellow students visited me, yet I was surprised at this. I became acquainted from the start with people who were five to ten years older than me, and not with those of my own age. This is why many of my comrades-in-arms in the days when I was working among young students and in the period of my underground revolutionary activities were older than me.

Within a few days of starting at Hwasong Uisuk School I discovered that the circumstances there were more strained than the fighter for independence in Fusong had told me. What could be

called the property of Hwasong Uisuk School was only some old desks and chairs and a few items of sports equipment.

But I had a great ambition. Although the house was grey, shabby and cramped for space, what reliable young people were growing up in that straw-thatched house! Hwasong Uisuk School was short of funds but it had many sturdy young people. In this sense it could be called wealthy. This gladdened me above all else.

## **2. Disillusionment**

I soon became accustomed to life at Hwasong Uisuk School. After attending classes for about two weeks I found that the subjects taught there were not too difficult.

The biggest headache for the students was mathematics. One day during class several students were called on to solve a long

problem of four arithmetical equations, but they could not do so. They marvelled at me when I solved it without difficulty. It was little wonder that they had failed; they had been away from regular education for several years, serving in the Independence Army.

From then on I found mathematics harassing. Whenever we had mathematics homework, I was bothered by bearded young students who were loath to use their own brains.

As a reward for my labour, so to speak, they related their various experiences to me. Many of them were instructive.

They strove to help me in many ways in military drill, which was physically very tough.

In the course of this we became intimate friends and came to relate frankly our inmost thoughts and stories that we kept locked away in our hearts. They thought that I, a young first year student, might hold them, who were older than me, up, but I did not lag behind them in class or at drill and mixed well with my classmates, being liberal in everyday affairs. So we were close in spite of the difference in age.

Such being the situation, my situation was good.

Some time later, however, I gradually became dissatisfied with the education provided at Hwasong Uisuk School. Although the school had been set up by my father's friends and was mainly run by those who had known him, I found there the remnants of outmoded ideas and methods handed down by the preceding generation.

Although the bourgeois nationalist movement had a history of several decades, the education at the school did not cover a theory to encapsulate, critically analyse and generalize it. The bourgeois nationalists led the nationalist movement for decades, but they prepared no proper treatises or textbooks which might serve as a guide to the movement and provide lessons. The leaders of the Independence Army and patriotic figures who visited the school



only spoke vaguely about winning independence as they banged their lectern. They said nothing about methods of aligning revolutionary forces, of mobilizing the masses and of achieving the unity and cohesion of the ranks of the independence movement, or about proper tactics and a proper strategy for the armed struggle. The Korean history they taught mainly described the history of dynasties, and their world revolutionary history, the history of the bourgeois revolution.

What was taught at Hwasong Uisuk School was only nationalist ideas and outmoded military training reminiscent of old Korea.

The teachers, imbued with nationalist ideas, talked a great deal about opposing Japan and about national independence, but the struggle methods they advanced were outmoded. The school authorities often invited men from the Independence Army who had battle experience to the school and asked them to speak about their distinguished military service. In their stories about deeds of arms they advocated the method of individual attack applied by An Jung Gun, Jang In Hwan, Kang U Gyu, Ri Jae Myong, Ra Sok Ju and other patriots.

The students complained, “The school is an officer-training school producing cadres for the Independence Army only in name. How can we drive out the Japanese when we drill only with wooden rifles and have no cartridges for target practice?”

Once one student asked the drill instructor when they would be able to handle the new type of rifle. Embarrassed at this the instructor prevaricated, “The cadres of the Independence Army are conducting vigorous activities to raise funds to buy weapons from the United States, France and other countries. So, the problem will be solved before long.” They were looking towards distant Western countries for a few rifles. Such was the situation.

Whenever I ran with sand bags attached to my trouser legs at military drill, I wondered whether we could defeat the Japanese by acting like that.

Previously a Tonghak Army tens of thousands of men strong led by Jon Pong Jun had been routed by a Japanese army of one thousand men on Ugumchi Hill. The Japanese army had been armed with a new type of weapon. If the Tonghak Army which was a hundred times stronger had beaten the Japanese, they could have attacked Kongju and advanced up to Seoul and the situation would have developed in their favour, but they were poorly armed, their military power was weak and so they suffered an ignominious defeat.

The arms and equipment of the Righteous Volunteers Army were no better than those of the Tonghak Army. The Volunteers Army, too, had a small number of new rifles but most of its men used swords, spears or flintlocks. I think that is why historians qualify the struggle of the Volunteers Army as a struggle fought between flintlocks and Model 38 rifles. It is not difficult to imagine what perseverance it would have required to overpower the Model 38 rifle which could fire ten rounds per minute with a flintlock which required priming each time it was fired, or what a hard fight it would be.

The Japanese troops at first fled, scared at a flintlock's report, its powers being a secret that only the volunteers knew. But after they learned the flintlock's powers they were no longer afraid and made little of it. So, what was the result of the battle? The volunteers who came from intellectuals' families and respected the nobility's ethics and Buddhist precepts are said to have fought wearing broad-brimmed hats and cumbersome gowns.

Those volunteers were mowed down by the cannons and machine guns of the Japanese troops.

The power of the Japanese army was much stronger than in those days. So, I wondered whether we, by running with sandbags, could defeat the troops of an imperialist country which produced tanks, artilleries, warships, planes and other modern weapons, as well as heavy equipment, on assembly line.

What disappointed me most was the ideological backwardness of the school.

The school authorities followed only the road of nationalism and guarded against other ideological trends, so the students naturally followed that course.

Some young students at the school still believed in dynastic rule or harboured illusions about US-style democracy.

These trends found fullest expression in seminars on world revolutionary history. The students called on by the teacher enlarged on capitalist developments, repeating what they had been taught in the lesson.

I was dissatisfied with their dogmatic approach to lessons. At the school, politics lessons did not deal with the independence of Korea, the Korean people and other questions about the reality. The textbooks contained mechanical explanations which accorded with the teaching programme, and the students were requested only to repeat what they had learned.

I asked what type of society should be built in Korea after she won her independence, turning to the student who had just joined the debate, for I considered it right to hold debates on practical problems, problems concerning the future of Korea.

The student replied without hesitation that Korea should take the capitalist road. He said: "Our nation lost its country to the Japanese because our feudal rulers idled their time away reciting poems while other countries advanced along the road of capitalism. We should build a capitalist society and thus avoid a repeat of the past."

Some students held that the feudal dynasty should be restored.

No student asserted that a democratic society should be built or that a society where the masters were the working people should be established. At that time the national liberation movement was switching over from the nationalist movement to the communist movement, but they did not seem to take into account the prevailing trends.

Some students said, as they sat with their arms folded, that the country to be built should be discussed after the country became independent, and that a controversy over capitalism or the restoration of the dynasty before independence was pointless.

As I listened to them, my feeling that the nationalist education provided at Hwasong Uisuk School lagged behind the times grew stronger.

The thought that the arguments over the restoration of the feudal dynasty and the adoption of capitalism were anachronistic, made me feel frustrated.

I could not endure any more. So, standing up, I said, “Our country cannot carry out a bourgeois revolution like the European countries, nor should we restore the old feudal ruling machinery.

“Capitalist and feudal societies are ones where people with money lead a luxurious life by exploiting the working people. After Korea becomes independent we should not build such an unfair society. It is wrong to consider only the development of a technological civilization without taking the malady of capitalism into account. It would be absurd to restore the feudal dynasty. Who can support the dynastic rule which sold the country to foreign forces? What have the kings done? They bled the people white and beheaded or banished loyal subjects who spoke the truth. What more did they do?

“After making Korea independent, we should build a society free from exploitation and oppression, a society where the workers,

peasants and other working people lead a bountiful life in their homeland....”

Many students expressed their sympathy with my argument. Who can oppose a proposal to build a rich and powerful country which is free from exploitation and oppression and in which everyone is equal?

After school Choe Chang Gol, too, expressed his support for me, grasping my hands firmly and saying that I had made a good speech. He remarked with great satisfaction that I had advocated communist ideas superbly without mentioning communism even once.

The limitations of Hwasong Uisuk School were the epitome of the limitations of the nationalist movement itself. I could see the whole picture of the nationalist movement through Hwasong Uisuk School.

In this period troops from the Independence Army became powerless and were engaged only in a struggle for influence. They rarely launched military actions as they had done in the homeland and in the areas along the River Amnok in the first half of the 1920s and, lying low in the areas under their control, engaged only in collecting war funds.

People from the Shanghai Provisional Government which professed to be the “national government representative of the Korean nation” were divided into factions called the “self-government group,” the “independence group” and the like and became engaged in a fierce struggle for power. That was why the head of the provisional government was frequently replaced. There was even a time when two government reshuffles took place in a year.

The leading figures of the provisional government continued to press the mean “petition,” to the extent of impairing the nation’s dignity, instead of drawing a due lesson from the fact that at the

Paris Peace Conference the “petition for the independence of Korea” had not even been included on the agenda of the conference due to the wicked obstructive manoeuvres of the delegates from the United States and other entente powers.

When the “US congressmen’s Eastern inspection mission” went to Seoul via Shanghai, they even urged the pro-US flunkeyists to present a gift of *insam*, silverware and other valuable goods to the US congressmen.

But the provisional government found it difficult to support itself due to a shortage of funds in the mid-1920s until finally it had to maintain its miserable existence with the help of Jiang Jie-shi’s Chongqing government.

Frightened by the revolutionary advance of the working masses, many of the nationalist leaders coming from the propertied classes, characterized by political vacillation, turned their coats and surrendered to the enemy. They degraded themselves, becoming the stooges of the Japanese imperialists, national reformists instead of “patriots,” and stood in the way of the national liberation movement.

In the name of the “civil government” the Japanese imperialists decided that if the Korean people wanted national independence they should cooperate politically with Japanese rule instead of opposing it, strive to acquire the right to self-government under Japanese colonial rule, develop their culture and the economy and improve their nation.

Their decision was accepted by the nationalist leaders from the propertied class. They advocated the “development” of education and industry, the “self-cultivation” of individuals, “class cooperation,” “unity” and “national autonomy” under the cover of “national reform” and the “cultivation of strength.”

So, the wind of reform swept Hwasong Uisuk School.

The front room of Kim Si U's house was always alive with young people who had come to discuss politics with me. In those days I read books on Marxism-Leninism that I found in Kim Si U's study, so our conversations generally drifted to politics.

In Fusong I read *The Biography of Lenin*, *The Fundamentals of Socialism* and a few other books, but in Huadian I read even more books. Previously I had confined myself to grasping the content of the books I read, but after going to Hwasong Uisuk School I came to consider the principles of revolution contained in the classics in connection with the situation in Korea. I wanted to know many things related to the Korean revolution.

How to overthrow Japanese imperialism and win back the country? Who is the enemy and who an ally in the struggle for national liberation? What course to take to build socialism and communism after winning national independence?... I wished to find answers to all these questions.

When I picked up a book to get an answer to these questions, I delved into it at length until I found an appropriate passage. In particular I read the passage dealing with the question of colonies twenty times. So, when friends came to see me, I had many topics to discuss.

We talked a great deal about the new trends of thought and about the Soviet Union. When the students listened to these stories, they pictured a new world free from exploitation and oppression, and were reluctant to leave. They were more interested in these stories than in the argument about the restoration of the Ri dynasty, capitalism or national reform. The students, who were passing their time frivolously, gradually began to aspire after something new.

But at school they could not speak freely about Lenin or about the October Revolution. The school authorities prohibited such talk.

The expectations I entertained of Hwasong Uisuk School gradually began to crumble.

### **3. The Down-with-Imperialism Union**

The old-fashioned nature of Hwasong Uisuk School made me realize that outdated methods were of no avail. As the days went by I became more firmly convinced that organizing small armed units equipped with a few rifles to kill a few Japanese policemen across



the Amnok and raising war funds was not the way to achieve national liberation.

I made a firm resolve to employ new methods in paving the way to national liberation. My comrades agreed with my resolve. But we were few. The majority of the students would not readily accept my new idea; they were guarded in their reaction to it or rejected it.

The school prohibited its students from reading books on communism. Whenever I went to school with *The Communist Manifesto*, the other students would nudge me and tell me that I should read such a book at home. They told me that the school authorities guarded against, and exercised strict control over, “Red” books and had threatened even to expel those who persisted in reading them.

I argued: If a man does not read the books he wants to because he has been prohibited from doing so, how can he undertake a great cause? We should read books that teach us the truth even though we are threatened with expulsion.

I had borrowed *The Communist Manifesto* from Kim Si U. He had many books on communism in his study. His study could be said to be demonstrating the trend of the times when the national liberation movement was turning from the nationalist to the communist movement, and to be revealing the view of Kim Si U himself who was trying to swim with the current of that time.

I could only feel dissatisfied with the fact that the school authorities prohibited the students from reading such books. But we were so fascinated by the new thought that the school regulations could not dampen our passion to delve into it. I devoured the books on communism, disregarding the policy of the school authorities. By that time the number of students who were eager to read such books had increased to such an extent that we drew up an order and the timetable for reading each of them and insisted that it be

returned on time. Most of the students observed the reading regulations, being approved by schoolmates who aspired to the new thought.

Only Kye Yong Chun, who was absent-minded, violated these regulations, and he did so frequently. He didn't observe his reading timetable and was careless about selecting a suitable place to read. He kept *The Communist Manifesto* for more than ten days. When I told him to hand it to another comrade right away, he said he needed two more days to extract something from it. The next day he was absent from school, and even slipped away from the hostel. He did not turn up throughout morning classes, and lunch time came. We found him absorbed in the book in a thicket by the River Huifa. I told him quietly that, although it was good to read avidly, he should never miss classes and that he should be careful about when and where he read. He said that he would, but during the history lesson the next day the teacher snatched the book from him while he was reading it secretly. The book was handed to the headmaster, and we got into serious trouble.

Having discovered that I had borrowed the book from the study of Kim Si U, the school authorities sent the history teacher to take Kim and me to task. He said to Kim Si U that it was not proper for him, an area controller who was in a position to help the school in its work, to fail to prevent the students from reading Leftist books and that from then on he should see to it that the students refrained from reading such books. He told me in a threatening tone to watch my step.

I was angry with the authorities' handling of the affair. In front of Kim Si U I gave vent to my pent-up indignation against the school. I said: "For a man to develop sound qualities he must acquire a wide knowledge. Why do the school authorities deprive young men who need to imbibe new ideas of their right to study a progressive idea recognized by the world? The works of Marx and

Lenin are on sale even in ordinary bookshops, so I can't understand why only Hwasong Uisuk School keeps its students from reading such books." Heaving a sigh, he confessed that he could do nothing as it was the policy of Jongui-bu and the school authorities.

As a man's idea is the basic criterion for defining his value, so its educational ideology is the basic criterion for determining the value of a school and its education. However, the school authorities tried in vain to counter the current of new thought with an outdated idea that did not accord with the trend of the times. This incident let the students know that there was a group which was studying Marxism-Leninism in the school. The authorities made a fuss about punishing and expelling the group but this only stirred up the aspiration for and interest in the communist idea among the progressive young men. After that incident, the number of students coming to me to borrow Leftist books increased sharply.

I began to meet individually those with whom I could share my idea, purpose and fate.

My father had always said that one should have reliable comrades and many of them. He also said that a man who had a just and wonderful aim could not attain it if he had no comrades with whom he could share his fate. I always remembered his teachings.

I mixed with many students, among them a certain Ri from the first company. Because he was clever, proficient and good-natured he was popular with the students. But he was strangely conservative in his idea. It was he who had insisted that the monarchy be restored during the class on the history of the world revolution.

Normally we only greeted each other when we met, but after a football match with senior course pupils of the Koreans Exemplary Primary School we became close friends. Ri, who played as a

forward that day, ran into a player from the other side and injured his leg.

I went to the hostel and lived there for more than ten days while I nursed him. In the course of this we became quite open with each other. He said that it had been ridiculous for him to insist on the restoration of the monarchy and that, as I had said, our country, after independence, should develop into a society in which the toiling masses ate their fill and lived in happiness. He said we should drive out the Japanese as soon as possible and live happily.

I asked him: “Do you think you can defeat the Japanese after receiving military training at this school? People say that Japan is one of the five great powers of the world, so do you think the Independence Army, with hardly any rifles, can match such a powerful enemy?”

He answered: “In order to fight, we must train our bodies and become marksmen. So there is no other way than to follow the methods of the veteran independence fighters, is there?”

“No. That is not the way to win independence. I am now reading the works of Marx and Lenin to learn the right method, and I have learnt a lot from their works. The Japanese imperialists slander the communist idea, and bigoted nationalists reject socialism. Even though rich people speak ill of socialism we, the sons of workers and peasants, must not denounce communism indiscriminately without even studying it. If one wants to become a true independence fighter and a patriot, one must study Marxism-Leninism closely.”

It appeared he agreed with me. He remained silent for a while, and then asked me to lend him some books.

I told him that I would lend them to him after he had recovered, and I encouraged him to get back to normal soon by taking good care of himself.

The tide of sympathy for the new thought swept the school with an irresistible force. Except for a few bigoted students who followed nationalism, the overwhelming majority accepted the progressive idea. I frequently organized seminars with the progressive students on the books they had read. The seminars were held at the houses of Kim Si U and Kang Je Ha, the school superintendent, and at the side of the River Huifa.

When a seminar was taking place in his study, Kim Si U would, secretly, take strict measures to ensure that the members of his family and his guests kept away from it. Sometimes he would sit on the porch to keep watch while pretending to do odd jobs. I would recognize his warm heart and tacit support in such actions.

We decided on Kang Je Ha's house as a place for seminars because not only was his son Kang Pyong Son my close friend but also Kang Je Ha himself had been a friend of my father's and his ideological tendency was good. He was a nationalist, but he did not reject communism. Whenever I visited his house he would talk to me about communism. He used to say that he was too old and that we should triumph by using communist methods. This was a great encouragement to us. He had several books on communism in his house.

When I look back now, I think we discussed the practical problems arising in the Korean revolution at a very high level at that time. In the course of those discussions the young men would reach a consensus and adopt similar positions on the revolution in Korea.

One day when we were holding a seminar at Kim Si U's house, Ri whom I had been nursing arrived on crutches and asked me to lend him the books I had promised. He said that, with the other students following a new road, he, as he lay in the hostel, was afraid he might fall behind. Thus he, too, joined us.

Capitalists say they take great pleasure in making money, but I took the greatest pleasure and interest in making comrades. How can we compare the happiness a man feels when he has won a comrade to the delight a man feels when he has obtained a piece of gold! Thus my struggle to win comrades started at Hwasong Uisuk School. Since then I have devoted my whole life to gaining comrades.

With so many reliable comrades coming together, I wondered how I should organize them so that we could work on a greater scale. I spoke of this to my comrades. As far as I remember the meeting was held towards the end of September. I think I said a lot about the need for an organization. I said to the following effect: We must open up a long and thorny path in order to liberate the country and build a society in which the working people can live happily; if we build up our ranks and fight tenaciously at the cost of our blood, we shall emerge victorious; after forming an organization we should rally the masses behind it and arouse them to liberate the country by relying on their own efforts.

The comrades were all delighted; they insisted on forming the organization as soon as possible.

I said that we should make further preparations for forming it and attract more comrades who shared our idea and would fight at our side. The meeting marked eligible people out for membership of the organization and gave an assignment to each of us to educate individual candidates. But some of the comrades were apprehensive lest the forming of the organization should mean the appearance of factions. I said to them: The organization we are going to form is a revolutionary one of a new type that will be quite different from the factions of the nationalists and communists; it is not an organization for factional strife but one for revolution, and we shall fight tenaciously by devoting ourselves to revolution.

After a period for preparation we held a preliminary meeting on October 10, then the national day of China, and discussed the name of the organization, its character, its fighting programme and its rules and regulations. A week later, on the 17th of October, 1926, we formally set it up at Kim Si U's house. The meeting was held quietly in a simply-furnished room with under-floor heating, but no platform. Even after more than 60 years I still remember the animation and passion that filled the room.

That day everyone was excited, including me. Being on the threshold of forming an organization I was reminded, in spite of myself, of my late father and the Korean National Association. In order to form that association he had travelled tens of thousands of miles over several years and rallied comrades from everywhere. After the formation of the association he had devoted his whole life for the realization of the ideal of the association. He had left his cause unaccomplished for his sons to take up. I felt my heart beating and tears welling up in my eyes as I thought that I was taking a first step on my way to executing my father's will that we must liberate our country even if our bones were to be crushed and our flesh torn to shreds.

The programme for our organization embodied my father's ideal.

I still remember vividly the faces of the young men who spoke with fervour at the meeting that day. Choe Chang Gol, Kim Ri Gap, Ri Je U, Kang Pyong Son, Kim Won U, Pak Kun Won, Ri Jong Rak, Pak Cha Sok (though the last two of them later turned traitor)—they all took a militant oath that they would devote their all to the revolution. Some of them were good public speakers while others were not. But they all made good speeches. I, too, made a speech, quite a long one in fact.

At the meeting I suggested that we name the organization the Down-with-Imperialism Union, abbreviated to DIU. The Down-

with-Imperialism Union was a pure, fresh political organism of a new type created in the throes of a historic cause by young people of the rising generation who aspired to socialism and communism, for the realization of national liberation and class emancipation with the ideal of anti-imperialism, independence and sovereignty. We formed this union with the aim of building socialism and communism, but we named it the Down-with-Imperialism Union in order to avoid it being open to suspicion by the nationalists as an excessively Leftist organization. We attached a great deal of importance to our relations with the nationalists in those days. My proposal to name the organization the Down-with-Imperialism Union was passed unanimously. The fighting programme of the DIU I suggested was also adopted unamended. As it was an organization to fight to overthrow imperialism as its name suggested, its programme was also great. The immediate task of the DIU was to defeat Japanese imperialism and achieve the liberation and independence of Korea, and its final objective was to build socialism and communism in Korea and, further, destroy all imperialism and build communism throughout the world. We also adopted policies for putting this programme into effect. The young men attending the meeting received the printed Rules of the union.

At the meeting Choe Chang Gol nominated me as head of the Union.

We rushed hand in hand to the River Huifa and, singing a song, made a grim resolve to share life and death on the road of the revolution for the motherland and the nation.

I sat up all that night. I was too excited and moved to sleep. Frankly speaking, we were elated with excitement and joy as if we had gained the whole world. How can the pleasure a billionaire feels when rolling in money be compared to our pleasure?

In the communist movement at that time there were many organizations with eye-catching slogans. Ours was a new



organization which could scarcely be compared with those organizations in terms of scale. The public did not even know about the existence of the DIU.

Nevertheless, we were feverishly excited because we were proud of the fact that ours was a communist revolutionary organization of a new type that was totally different from the conventional organizations. The DIU was not an organization formed by a certain faction and its members were not people who had broken away from any faction or from an organization in exile. They were from the new generation, as white and pure as snow. The blood running through the DIU was free from any impurities.

Its members were not insignificant people. They were virile, young talented people; they could make speeches, write treatises, compose songs and were good at self-defence. They could “match one hundred or one thousand” as we say nowadays. With such young men gathered together to blaze a trail, their gallant spirit was unimaginable.

Whenever the revolutionary cause we had launched was in a predicament in later years, the members of the DIU always found a way out, even if it meant sacrificing themselves. As hardcore elements of the Korean revolution, they played a leading role everywhere they went. Among those the DIU produced many young people, particularly Kim Hyok, Cha Kwang Su, Choe Chang Gol, Kim Ri Gap, Kang Pyong Son and Ri Je U, fought heroically in the van of the struggle, until the last moment of their noble lives; only a few were otherwise. I think it deplorable that some of those who made a good start came to betray the ideal of the DIU as the revolution progressed.

I have now lost all those comrades who worked hand in hand with me in the days of the DIU. Many sons and daughters of the DIU who fought through thick and thin for the independence of the motherland and for the society of the proletarian masses left us in

the prime of their youth, too early to enjoy this happy life. By giving their youth they laid the foundations of our Party and our revolution.

In the history of our Party the DIU is recognized as the root of the Party, and the formation of the DIU as a starting-point or the genesis of the Korean communist movement and the Korean revolution. From this root came the programme of our Party, the principles for building our Party and its activities, and the backbone for its foundation. With the formation of the DIU our revolution advanced on the basis of the principle of independence.

I think the ideal of the DIU and our mettle at that time have been described in part in “The DIU and Kim Il Sung” in the book *A Short History of the Korean Revolutionary Movement Overseas* written by Choe Il Chon (alias Choe Hyong U) immediately after liberation.

When the Revolutionary Army was formed a few years later and the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland was founded, calling upon the 20 million Korean people to rise up in one body, and when the revolution was at its height with tens of thousands of supporters and sympathizers surrounding us, I would look back with deep emotion on the day when we formed the DIU in Huadian.

## **4. My Mind Turning towards a New Theatre of Activity**

Hwasong Uisuk School experienced many difficulties because of a shortage of funds.

There were less than 100 students at the school. But given the circumstances of the Independence Army at the time it was not easy to provide for even this number of students.

Although Jongui-bu was in charge of the school, it was unable to provide sufficient money. Jongui-bu had three departments, in charge of the administration, the military and civil affairs and was barely maintaining its existence with funds collected from the people penny by penny. Therefore, it was in no position to provide large sums of money for the school.

In order to solve the difficulties caused by lack of funds, the authorities of Hwasong Uisuk School mobilized its students from time to time to collect funds. The students formed groups each consisting of 20 people. They returned to the companies from where they had come, received weapons and collected funds while travelling for two months around the districts under the jurisdiction of Jongui-bu and, when their scheduled time was over, left with other groups taking their turn.

The money they collected in this way was all used up within a few months. So they again had to go to Jilin to request Jongui-bu for aid.

Once headmaster Choe Tong O sent the school superintendent to the headquarters of Jongui-bu to obtain the money that would be needed for the winter.

However, the school superintendent returned empty-handed cursing the commander of the third company. He said that the third company commander had taken the money intended for Hwasong Uisuk School and used it for his wedding. It was said that the company commander had spent the money like water in order to treat all his neighbours to food and drink over several days. Some food had remained even after that so he had even invited people from the neighbouring village to celebrate with him.

I could not repress my indignation when I heard this.

The money in the coffers of Jongui-bu had not fallen from the sky. It was money contributed as war funds by the people in tiny amounts to regain their lost country even though they themselves lived on gruel and sometimes missed meals. If they had no money, our people contributed to the war fund even by making straw sandals and selling them. Only then could they feel at ease.

The commander of the third company seemed to think nothing of this. He must have been completely blinded by self-interest to have, as a company commander, resorted to such mean deception.

The fact that a commander whose mission it was to fight a bloody battle against the enemy, felt no compunction in committing such misappropriation was proof that the highest circles of the Independence Army were degenerating.

It is said that, following the "Ulsa Treaty," a commander of the Volunteers' Army, upon hearing of the defeat of the volunteers under the command of Choe Ik Hyon in Sunchang, gathered hundreds of volunteers and conducted vigorous activities in Jolla Province. Upon hearing that his men had robbed some people of their household effects he, having lamented the fact, disbanded his unit and hid in the mountains. From this we can see that the commander regarded an infringement upon the interests of the people as a great shame and crime.

The misdeed of the commander of the third company could be considered, in the final analysis, to be an encroachment on the interests of the people.

When I was living in Linjiang some soldiers of the Independence Army became the talk of the town because they had gone to Korea and taken a cow from some peasants. The commander of the unit to which these soldiers belonged once visited our home and was sharply reproved by my father.

In those days, when soldiers of the Independence Army appeared in areas where Koreans were living in order to collect funds, those in charge of the districts had a document circulated around the settlement in which they had written the amount of money or rice which each household was to contribute. The residents had to contribute funds as was noted in the document. This was a heavy burden on the poor farmers.

Nevertheless, the soldiers of the Independence Army disregarded the people's poverty and simply tried every possible means to exact as much as possible. Groups with different districts under their control fought to expand them. Some soldiers of the Independence Army forced men from other armed units into giving them the money they had collected and then taking to their heels.

Members of large and small armed units vied with one another to squeeze money from the people. They regarded the people as mere taxpayers and attendants who should provide them with money, grain and bedding.

Such misdeeds were no better than those of the bureaucrats in the former feudal society.

Sitting in palaces with jewelled crowns on their heads, the feudal rulers of Korea constantly enacted new tax laws to bleed the people white and keep their purses empty.

At one time the feudal government used colossal sums to build the Kyongbok Palace and, with a view to compensating for this,

they even invented a door tax (travel tax). If they had built universities and factories with the money they obtained in this way, they would at least have been thanked by posterity.

The progressive young people at Hwasong Uisuk School deplored the fact that the Independence Army seemed to be going to ruin with a company commander having degenerated to such an extent. However, they simply blamed and deplored him. In the bright society we have now, the army and the people would have gathered public support and taken him to court or tried the case among themselves to force him to break his bad habit. However, nothing could be done in those days when there was no law and military discipline was not rigid.

True, there was an organization under Jongui-bu in charge of civil cases. However, it only existed in name. Before it they brought only those people who could not contribute sufficient funds, and they were beaten on the hips. They connived at such illegal acts as that committed by the company commander. Their law had a loophole through which the higher circles could slip.

With this event as the impetus I resolved to give a serious warning to the soldiers of the Independence Army and to all the fighters for independence. However, the problem was how to do so.

Choe Chang Gol proposed that we select representatives of the students and protest against it by visiting all the companies, from the first to the sixth.

Some people suggested that they should expose the bureaucratic acts of the soldiers of the Independence Army by having an article published in a periodical such as *Taedong Minbo* issued by Jongui-bu. It would have been good to do so. The problem was, however, whether the headquarters of Jongui-bu, the commanders of other companies and the members of the editorial department of the said publication who were little different from the commander of the third company would accept the article.

I proposed that we write a letter of protest to all the companies of the Independence Army instead of attempting methods about which we were undecided. The others supported my proposal and asked me to write the letter of protest.

That letter of protest was the first criticism we offered of the nationalists following the formation of the Down-with-Imperialism Union.

It was the first time for me to write a letter of protest. It seemed to me that in it I failed to include everything I wanted to say. However, my comrades told me it was good, so I gave it to Kim Si U and asked him to convey it to the correspondent from Jongui-bu when he came. The letter of protest was quickly conveyed to all the companies by the correspondent.

There was a big response to the letter. Even O Tong Jin who was intolerant of anything that hurt his pride or censured Jongui-bu, not to mention the man who had used the war funds for his wedding, appeared to have been shocked by the letter.

At the beginning of the following year when I was studying in Jilin, O Tong Jin spoke of the letter of protest to me. He said that he had read it with the company commanders and platoon leaders who had gathered where the sixth company was stationed.

He said:

“Having read your letter of protest, I sharply reproved the third company commander. I even thought of removing him from his post. Such people bring shame on the Independence Army.”

Although he frankly admitted that the highest circles of the Independence Army were degenerating, O Tong Jin was indignant and irritated over the fact that he was unable to save the situation.

I wonder how O Tong Jin managed to appease his fiery temper when he had to remain an on-looker to the corruption of the Independence Army, unable to check even what he saw with his own eyes and felt keenly.

As I listened to O Tong Jin I realized that the depravity of the Independence Army was a source of anguish not only for us younger generation but also for conscientious nationalists.

However, it was scarcely possible to arrest the political and moral depravity of the Independence Army with one letter of protest.

The Independence Army was heading towards irretrievable decline. The fate of the Independence Army, nationalist army to defend and represent the interests of the propertied class, could not be otherwise.

The students of Hwasong Uisuk School were little different from the soldiers of the Independence Army when it came to treating the people rudely and imposing economic burdens that were too heavy on them. When they were mobilized to collect contributions they, too, collected the people's property and provisions on a rival basis in the districts under their control.

Those families who did not readily contribute were forced to give them animals such as pigs or chickens. With these families they either claimed that they lacked patriotism or found fault with them without good reason by saying, for instance, that they did not support the Independence Army.

They even complained about the meals served at the school saying that they were continually given cooked millet and that the non-staple foods were not good enough, and so on. Once at supper a student complained that only cooked millet and soup made of dried vegetable leaves were served in the dormitory's dining-room. In the end, he even quarrelled with Hwang Se Il, the inspector of the dining-room. Hwang Se Il took his duties very seriously. However, the students said that the inspector was not doing his job properly even if the quality of the meals was only a little below standard.



Following the country's liberation I once met Hwang Se Il who was working as the vice-chairman of the Uiju County People's Committee and we recollected our days at Hwasong Uisuk School. Then he told me that when he visited the village, he never complained about the meals, remembering the lesson he had learned during his days at the school.

I believed that those who complained about cooked millet at Hwasong Uisuk School would also complain about the meals when they returned to the Independence Army after graduating. I also thought that such people would, in the end, be reduced to despicable creatures who knew nothing but money and power.

The problem was that, in two years, such people were to command the companies and platoons of the Independence Army. Nothing could be expected from soldiers who were not ready even to live on cooked millet, let alone die of starvation.

Disappointment at the nationalist movement as a whole centring around the Independence Army, as well as disillusion in education at Hwasong Uisuk School grew in my mind with the passage of time. Hwasong Uisuk School did not meet my expectations and I could not fulfil the expectations of the school. As Hwasong Uisuk School could not meet my desire, so I could not be the student for which Hwasong Uisuk School hoped. My discontent with Hwasong Uisuk School and the dissatisfaction of this school with me were in direct proportion to each other.

The more I loved the progressive idea of Marxism-Leninism, the more I shunned the education provided at Hwasong Uisuk School, and the more I rejected the education of this school, the more I felt in agony. I feared that staying away from the school would mean betraying the trust of those who had sent me there and going against the will of my father who had asked them to look after me. I felt terribly sorry at the thought of O Tong Jin who had quickly covered hundreds of miles to attend my father's funeral

and consoled me and urged me to go to the school, even pushing travel money into my pocket, as well as of Kim Si U who had poured me liquor to welcome me on my arrival at the school, of Choe Tong O and of Kang Je Ha.

If I was to remain loyal to them, I had to take an interest in the education provided at Hwasong Uisuk School, even though I was disillusioned with it. I could save my face before them by studying for two years, shutting my eyes to everything and meekly serving in the Independence Army in the company to which I would be appointed.

The trouble was not that I would be unable to study the new current of thought or solidify the foundation of the Down-with-Imperialism Union if I served in the Independence Army.

It was inconceivable for me, however, for the sake of saving my face, to get along politely and diplomatically, being given education which I considered to be conservative. I did not want to compromise with the outdated education in such a manner.

So, what should I do? Should I return home as head of the household, taking over the surgery from my uncle? Or should I go to a city—Shenyang, or Harbin or Jilin—and go to a higher school?

After these complicated thoughts I resolved to leave Hwasong Uisuk School and go to Jilin to attend secondary school. I chose Jilin as my next stop after Huadian because this city was an important political centre of Manchuria where many anti-Japanese fighters for independence and Korean communists gathered. For this reason Jilin was even called the “Second Shanghai.” In China, Shanghai was the assembly place of the Korean revolutionaries.

I wanted to break out of the narrow enclosure of Huadian and step into a broader arena, launching the communist movement which had taken its first step with the formation of the Down-with-Imperialism Union on a higher stage and conducting it on a full

scale. This was the main reason why I left Hwasong Uisuk School early.

Going to Jilin after attending Hwasong Uisuk School for only six months was the first great and courageous decision in my life. My second courageous decision was to set fire to the bundle of documents accusing those who were allegedly affiliated to the pro-Japanese organization called “Minsaengdan,” when I was forming a new division following the Nanhutou Meeting.

Even now I think that it was right for me at that time to make the courageous decision to leave Hwasong Uisuk School and go to Jilin to mix with other young people and students. If I had stayed at Hwasong Uisuk School all the processes which later helped to lead the Korean revolution to a rapid upsurge would have been delayed.

The members of the Down-with-Imperialism Union were surprised to hear of my intention to leave the school and go to Jilin. I told them: “Now that we have formed the Down-with-Imperialism Union we should extend its organization and idea far and wide. It seems that I can do nothing by remaining here. I think there will be no great benefit for me in remaining at this school. After I leave, you should take advantage of your opportunities also and establish yourselves either in units of the Independence Army or in some appropriate place and go among the masses spreading the line of the Down-with-Imperialism Union. Because you are all members of it you must receive unified leadership from the organization no matter where you may be working.” I agreed with some of my comrades to meet later in Jilin.

I had already discussed with Kim Si U the matter of leaving Hwasong Uisuk School.

I confessed to him:

“I will consult with my family, too. However, I don’t find Hwasong Uisuk School much to my liking.... Although I have no

money, I would like to go to Jilin to attend secondary school. Could I ask for your opinion?"

The area controller expressed great sorrow. Nevertheless, he did not try to stop me leaving the school.

He said: "If this is your intention, I will talk over the matter with my friends and use my good offices on your behalf. Each man has a favourite cart. If you don't like the Hwasong Uisuk School cart, ride in your own."

I felt much easier in my mind because Kim Si U, who had been so delighted at my coming to Hwasong Uisuk School and welcomed me, understood me. He told me to pay courteous respects to headmaster Choe Tong O so that he would not be sorry at my leaving the school. He also asked me to call on him without fail on my way to Jilin after seeing my mother.

Winning Kim Si U's consent was easier than I had expected.

However, parting with headmaster Choe Tong O was accompanied by unbearable agony. At first he was angry and criticized me for a good while. He stormed at me, saying: "Once you, a man, have resolved to do something, you must see it through. It is unreasonable for you to leave the school in mid-course. You say you are leaving because you do not like the education here. Where is there in this uncertain world a school that can be to everybody's liking?" Then he turned his back on me and looked out of the window.

Thus he stood looking vacantly at the sky from which snow was falling.

"If this school is not to the liking of such talented students as you, Song Ju, I, too, will leave."

At these words spat out by the headmaster, I was nonplussed, not knowing what to do with myself. I wondered if I had been too cruel in criticizing the education being given at the school in front of its headmaster.

After a while Choe Tong O calmed down and approached me, placing his hand on my shoulder.

He said: "I will not oppose any ism, be it nationalism or communism, if it aims at winning the independence of Korea. Anyhow, I wish you success."

Even after we had gone out into the playground, the headmaster said many fine things to me, things which would serve as a lesson for me. Snow fell continually on his head and shoulders.

Afterwards, whenever I recollected how the headmaster had seen me off in the heavy snow, I repented of my failure to brush the snow off his shoulders.

Thirty years later Choe Tong O and I had a chance, emotional meeting in Pyongyang. I was the Premier and he was a cadre of the Consultative Council of Former South Korean Politicians in the North for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification. However, that meeting was simply a meeting between teacher and pupil. The idea behind the Down-with-Imperialism Union which had been put forward in Huadian was blossoming into socialism in this land which had emerged victorious from the ordeals of the war.

"So, Premier Song Ju, you were right at that time!"

As he smilingly spoke my childhood name, my mind travelled back to the playground at Hwasong Uisuk School a few decades before on the day when snow was falling.

The old teacher, who had spent his whole life amid complicated political upheavals, appreciated my leaving Hwasong Uisuk School 30 years ago with this short remark, with no explanation or commentary.

My mother also supported me in leaving Hwasong Uisuk School. When she first heard of it, she looked very grave. However, when I told her the reason for my leaving the school, it put her mind at rest.

She said: “You are always worried about your school fees. A man can do nothing if a lack of money deprives him of his vitality. I will provide your school fees by all means. I only want you to achieve your aim. Now that you have resolved to follow a new path, be bold.”

What my mother said was a great encouragement to me in my fresh ambition.

In Fusong, I discovered that many of my schoolmates were still there, having been unable to go on to higher school because of their straitened family circumstances and that they were at a loss, not knowing what course to take. I decided to awaken them ideologically and lead them along the road of revolution.

I was impatient to do something, with the DIU having just been formed, and I decided to spread its roots in all directions.

I formed the Saenal Children’s Union of patriotic children in and around Fusong to educate them in progressive ideas and lead them to the road of revolution. I formed the union on December 15, 1926. It was a communist organization for children, the aim of which was to fight for the bright new day when Japanese imperialism would be overthrown and national liberation achieved, the day when the old society would be destroyed and a new one built.

The formation of the Saenal Children’s Union marked an important event in extending the activities of the DIU. The slogans put up by the children’s union were truly impressive. We put up the slogan, “Let us fight to achieve Korea’s liberation and independence!” and for this purpose set some immediate tasks such as that of studying new progressive ideas and explaining and disseminating them among broad sections of the masses.

I defined the organizational principles and a work system for it to carry out its tasks, as well as a daily routine for its members, and I gave them guidance in their union life before I left for Jilin.

I helped my mother to form the Anti-Japanese Women's Association on December 26, 1926, on the basis of the experience I had gained in forming the DIU and the Saenal Children's Union.

After my father's death my mother embarked on an energetic revolutionary struggle. In those days my mother organized evening classes in the Fusong County town and in the rural areas around it; she taught Korean women how to read and write and gave them revolutionary education.

I visited Kim Si U in Huadian as I had promised, on my way to Jilin after my short stay in Fusong.

Kim Si U gave me a letter addressed to Kim Sa Hon, saying that Kim Sa Hon had been a close friend of my father. It was a letter of introduction in which he asked him to have me accepted at a school when I arrived there. That was my last meeting with Kim Si U.

Kim Si U was someone whom I shall always remember and who left a deep impression on me. He was taciturn, but did much work for national liberation. He took part in the enlightenment of people, the education of the younger generation, the purchase of weapons, fund raising, guiding political workers to and from the homeland, the conveyance of secret materials and information, and the amalgamation of the armed organizations and their cooperation; there were almost no fields in which he had no hand.

He not only helped my father in his work but also gave me sincere support in my work. It was Kim Si U who kept watch on the day when we formed the DIU and who was most delighted at the event.

After our parting he continued to supply the Independence Army with food grain and aided Korean students enthusiastically, while continuing to run the Yongphung Rice Mill. During the civil war in China he, as the chairman of the aid-the-revolution association, took great pains to protect Korean people's lives and

property from attacks by the Japanese and Jiang Jie-shi's armies in Huadian.

He returned to the homeland in 1958. Although he had worked hard for the nation all his life, he never mentioned the fact. So, I did not discover his whereabouts.

He became seriously ill in Jonchon, and only when he had just a few days to live did he tell his children about his relations with my father and me.

His children were surprised to hear his story. They said to him: Why did you never visit the General if you knew him so well? How glad the General would be to meet you, father! The General is currently giving field guidance in Jonchon. Even now it is not too late. We must invite him to our house as you cannot move.

It was true that at that time I was giving field guidance in Jonchon County.

Having listened to them, he chided them. "It is not for your benefit that I tell you this old story just before I die. It is the history of our family, and you should be faithful to him and fully support him. We should not keep him away from state affairs even for a moment, should we?"

The old man had been stout-hearted in this way for many years. If he had acted as his children had told him, I would have met him. I was very sorry. My failure to meet him again is one of the greatest regrets of my life.

Whenever I recall my days at Hwasong Uisuk School and the DIU, I am reminded of Kim Si U. I cannot speak about my Huadian days without mentioning Kim Si U, who made quiet, persistent efforts to help me in those unforgettable days when we disseminated the new ideas and formed the DIU.

The DIU grew to become invincible owing to the positive support of Kim Si U and other honest people.



Bearing the hope of these people in mind, I left for Jilin with a great ambition and great determination.

## **5. Ri Kwan Rin, Heroine of the Independence Army**

When I was back in Fusong after leaving Hwasong Uisuk School, there were fewer independence champions who visited my home than before.

The house was quiet and lonely, whereas it had been alive with people day and night before.

One strong impression I got in Fusong concerned Ri Kwan Rin. After the death of my father, she came to stay with us. I am told that O Tong Jin said to her, as he sent her to our home, “You are greatly indebted to Mr. Kim. In view of this, go to Fusong and help Song Ju’s mother.” Ri Kwan Rin kept my mother company while working for the South Manchurian Women’s Education Federation.

She was a bold woman with an optimistic disposition. She was attractive, bold and of firm character and had both literary and military accomplishments. The like of her was rarely found in Korea in those days.

When, dressed in man’s uniform, she rode about on horseback, people she passed would look at her with curiosity as if she came from another world, because in those days women used to go about with their faces veiled in accordance with feudal custom.

But back in Fusong I found her looking less lively than before.

She was surprised to learn that I had left Hwasong Uisuk School. She wondered why I had given up the officer-training school which young people were anxious to attend.

When I told her why I had left the school and how, she said that I had made a courageous decision, and she gave her support to me in my determination to leave for Jilin. Nevertheless, she could not hide her sadness.

The fact that I had rejected and broken away ideologically from a school that was under nationalist influence seemed to make quite an impact on her. On seeing the change in my life, the sensitive Ri Kwan Rin seemed to have felt more keenly the demise of the Independence Army and nationalism. Mother said that she had changed greatly and had recently become more taciturn and subdued.

At first I simply attributed this to the mental agony that was usual for unmarried women of her age. She was then 28 years old. In those days early marriage prevailed, so the ladies 14 or 15 years old married wearing their hair done up. In those days if a girl was said to be 28 years old, people would shake their heads and say that she was too old to marry. It was very likely that old maidens like Ri Kwan Rin would suffer mental agony over the question of marriage.

She often looked moody, so one day I asked her why she was looking so thin and gloomy.

Heaving a sigh, she said, "The years pass, but things are no better. That's why I am gloomy. When your father was alive I could easily walk 25, even 50, miles a day. Whatever I do since your father's death, I don't feel elated; even the pistol I carry is likely to rust. The trouble is that I can find no mental support anywhere. The Independence Army no longer seems effective. Its situation is utterly wretched. The old leaders only put on airs and do not report for work. I can't understand what they are thinking about. Strong fighting men enjoy a family life and the unmarried men chase women. One agile man with fighting spirit married a few days ago and left the Independence Army to go to Jiandao.

They all copy one another and flee. It is inevitable that when men reach a certain age they get married. However, if they throw away their rifles to get married, who will fight for national independence? I don't know why they behave so shamelessly.”

Then I understood her mental agony and indignation. She, without marrying, was making strenuous efforts for the independence movement, whereas able-bodied men were fleeing for safety, throwing away their rifles. This had aroused her resentment.

When educated girls acted like modern women following the trend of civilization, Ri Kwan Rin, carrying a pistol, fought bravely against the Japanese soldiers and police, crossing and recrossing the River Amnok.

I think that the instances of a woman, dressed in man's uniform and carrying a pistol, becoming a professional soldier and fighting the foreign enemy, are few in the history of Korea. Because I feel this to be important, I have covered her story under a separate title in this book. It was hard to imagine that in Korea, where the old practices of treating women as inferior to men still remained and were, in fact, prevalent, a woman carrying a pistol went to the battlefield.

Our women's resistance to a foreign enemy has differed historically in its style and method, but what has always been true is that their resistance in most cases has assumed a passive form based on the feudal Confucian view on chastity.

Whenever a foreign enemy invaded the country and murdered and harassed our people, the women would conceal themselves deep in the mountains or in temples so as to avoid violation. Those women who failed to hide would resist by killing themselves. During the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592 the number of women martyrs officially registered is said to have been over 30

times greater than the number of male patriots. Thus it is clear how much Korean women valued their honour.

When Choe Ik Hyon died for his country by fasting on Tsushima Island, his wife is said to have killed herself after mourning for two years to share the fate of her husband.

From a moral point of view her act should be regarded as the act of someone loyal to her country and faithful to her husband.

But a problem arises. If all choose to die, who will defend the country against the enemy?

With the progress of civilization in our country a change took place in the way of thinking of our women and in their view of life. Rejecting the passive form of resistance to the enemy such as escape and suicide, our women, together with the men, demonstrated in the face of the bayonets of the Japanese troops and police and threw bombs into the enemy's government offices and other public buildings.

However, it was perhaps only Ri Kwan Rin who took part in the armed resistance as a woman soldier of the Independence Army. This she did for over ten years in a foreign country.

She was beautiful, so wherever she went it was a problem for her to get rid of the men who chased her. In the light of her looks, scholarly attainments and family background she was fully qualified to teach at a school, find a good match and live well as others did, but she devoted herself entirely to the independence movement.

Her father was a landed farmer belonging to the middle class who had a ten-roomed house, though it was straw-thatched, and several hectares of land and forest in Sakju. When Ri Kwan Rin was 12 years old she lost her mother and two years later her father took a 16-year-old girl as his wife.

Ri Kwan Rin could not call a woman only two years older than herself her mother. On top of that, her father, who believed

strongly in feudal custom, gave no thought to sending her to school; when she was 15 years old he began looking for a suitable match for her.

She had always begged her father to send her to school, envying those who did attend, but as her father refused, she left home at the age of 15.

While her father was away from home she went to the River Amnok. There she placed some of her clothes and shoes beside an ice hole before setting out for Uiju. There she entered Yangsil School through the good offices of a distant relative of hers. She attended the school for about six months before, with the approach of autumn, sending her father a letter asking him to send her school fees.

Her father had been spending his time in tears, thinking that his daughter had drowned in the river. On receiving a letter from his daughter he was so glad that he went immediately to Uiju. He told his daughter that he would now allow her to study and that if she had anything to ask of him she should write to him at any time.

From then on she studied hard without any worries about her school fees. As she had a fine school record, the school authorities recommended her for the art course at Pyongyang Girls' High School.

She attended the school for a year or two and in that time came to know the world; she was admitted to the Korean National Association with my father vouching for her. From then on she became a fully-fledged member of the revolutionary organization and took part in underground activities. It was around this time that she learned about the idea of "Aim High!" from my father. She secretly worked to absorb comrades from among the pupils of Pyongyang Girls' High School, Sungsil Middle School, Sungi Girls' School and Kwangsong High School.

One day she came to Mangyongdae on an excursion. At our home, she had a talk with my father and helped my mother in her work.

At that time it was difficult to get to Mangyongdae, but in spring many pupils from Sungsil Middle School, Kwangsong High School and other schools came there with their lunch boxes to enjoy the fine scenery.

When the March First Popular Uprising broke out in Pyongyang, she fought bravely at the head of the demonstrators. When the demonstration broke up she took a short rest at her hostel before returning to encourage her schoolmates. When there was a sweeping roundup of the prime movers of the demonstration after its reversal, she joined the independence movement full-time, returning to her home town. It was her decision that she would not return to school until the nation had been saved from ruin. Initially she managed the general affairs of the Kwangje Youth League that had been formed by O Tong Jin.

She shot two Japanese policemen to death in the homeland and threw their bodies into an ice hole in the River Amnok before going over to Manchuria.

When she had returned to the homeland to raise funds after joining the Independence Army, she had been stopped and examined by the police. She had had a pistol in the bundle on her head, so the situation was critical.

A policeman urged her to undo the bundle. Pretending to unfasten it, she whipped out the pistol and, pointing it at the policeman, took him to the forest where she disposed of him.

As she frequented the homeland to raise funds, many things happened to her on her journeys. Once she received the task from O Tong Jin of touring South Phyongan Province to raise funds. During her return to headquarters in the company of a man from the organization at home, she stayed overnight at Sandaowan; there

they were threatened by the members of another armed band from the neighbourhood. At the time they were carrying several hundred *won* with them. The bandits demanded money, firing blank shots with the pistols they produced. Frightened by their threats, the man accompanying her meekly produced the money he kept, but she did not offer them a penny and instead drove them away.

There were many women soldiers among the guerrilla troops when we waged the anti-Japanese armed struggle, but up to the time of Ri Kwan Rin there had been no such women in Korea. She was bold and plucky although she had been a schoolgirl learning embroidery and sewing in her high school days. Once such newspapers as *Tong-A Ilbo* and *Joson Ilbo* published sensational articles about her.

Ri Kwan Rin was upright and faithful to her principles.

After the March First Popular Uprising the work to merge the organizations of the independence movement went ahead vigorously in south Manchuria. But the amalgamation did not progress smoothly because each organization put its own men forward, thus displaying a self-centred attitude, and ignored people from other organizations. The merger negotiations always ended without success because of pointless wrangles and conflicts.

My father decided to draw the veterans of the independence movement into the merger work to tide over the difficulties. The first person he marked out for this was Ryang Ki Thak. It would not be easy to remove him from under the enemy's surveillance and escort him from Seoul to south Manchuria. After some serious thought my father chose Ri Kwan Rin as the right person and sent her to Seoul, giving her a letter to Ryang Ki Thak.

Ryang Ki Thak had great influence among the nationalists. Born into the family of a scholar of Chinese classics in Pyongyang, he had worked hard to cultivate the anti-Japanese sentiment for independence among the people through his patriotic activities as a



journalist and educator. He was famous for the *Korean-English Dictionary* he compiled, the first of its kind in Korea, and for his leadership of the campaign for the repayment of the national loan to Japan. He was thrown into prison for several years because of the “case of the 105 people” and had a hand in the Sinmin Association, in the Shanghai Provisional Government (as member of the state council) and in the formation of the Koryo Revolutionary Party (as chairman). He, together with O Tong Jin, formed the organization of Jongui-bu. Because of his record he was respected by the independence champions irrespective of their party affiliation.

When she got to Seoul Ri Kwan Rin was arrested by detectives and thrown into the detention room at the Jongno police station. She was put to terrible torture every day. They tortured her by pouring chilli powder up her nose, pricking her flesh around her fingernails with a bamboo needle and hanging her from the ceiling with her arms tied behind her back. Some days they stamped on a wooden board placed across her face after making her lie on her back on the floor. They kicked, beat and trampled on her while asking her, “Did you come from China or Russia? Why did you come?” After spraying paraffin over some ash paste on her legs, they threatened to burn her to death.

But she did not yield; she shouted at them, “I am a jobless wanderer. I came to Seoul to find a job as a seamstress or a nurse for a rich family. Why do you detain and harass me, an innocent woman, like this?” She insisted on her innocence and, after a month, she was released.

She was in so bad a condition that she could hardly move, but she brought Ryang Ki Thak to Xingjing. On her arrival in Xingjing she was confined to bed because of the aftereffects of the torture. Her colleagues nursed her but her condition did not improve, so they found an old doctor to treat her. Taking her pulse, he made the

absurd diagnosis that she had conceived. It must have been a silly joke the old doctor played on her, a noted beauty, out of caprice.

Dismayed at this, she asked him what he meant. He said that it meant she was pregnant. No sooner had he uttered this than she shouted at him, throwing a wooden pillow at him, "You scoundrel, why do you mock me, a young unmarried woman who is fighting arms in hand for national independence? What do you want to gain by slandering me? Say it again." Frightened at this, the doctor fled without even putting on his shoes.

She was so brave that my father frequently entrusted her with important tasks. She did whatever my father asked of her. If she was told to go to Pyongyang or to Seoul, she went. If she was asked to go on an urgent errand, she went. If she was requested to enlighten some women, she would do so.

When my father conducted political work in the homeland, she often went with him to ensure his personal safety and help him in his work. She went to Uiju, Sakju, Chosan, Kanggye, Pyoktong, Hoeryong and other northern border areas, the Jiandao area, Sunan, Kangdong, Unryul, Jaeryong, Haeju and other areas in west Korea and Kyongsang Province. She covered thousands of miles on her travels.

Ri Kwan Rin was the only girl in our country to cross and recross Mt. Paektu in those days.

She led a soldier's life that was so hard for a woman, roaming the dew-sprinkled fields of a foreign country in the golden years of her youth which she should have spent in the warmest happiness.

My heart ached at the sight of her agony over the declining independence movement, the agony of a woman who, carrying two pistols with her, was active throughout the length and breadth of the stormy world with a single-hearted patriotic spirit.

When I began my preparations for my journey to Jilin, she said that she, too, wanted to go there to do something. However, she was unable to fulfil her desire.

When I was attending school in Jilin I met her on two or three occasions at Son Jong Do's house. When she asked me to tell her about the situation, I spent a long time telling her about the prospects for our revolution. She said that she liked what we were doing. Nevertheless, she could not break away from Jongui-bu. She belonged to the Left faction of the nationalists who accepted communism but failed to put their ideas into practice.

I was sorry to see Ri Kwan Rin agonizing over the decline of the nationalist movement. In the nationalist camp there were many patriotic-minded people such as Ri Kwan Rin who were devoted to the independence movement with no concern for their personal lives. But, having no proper leader, Ri Kwan Rin, a plucky woman who was faithful to her principles, did not know what to do. As the Down-with-Imperialism Union had only just been formed she could not join our movement.

When I saw Ri Kwan Rin who was agonizing with no mental support to rely on, although my father had believed in her and brought her up with affection, I lamented over the lack of a genuine leading force for our national liberation movement which was capable of uniting and leading all the patriotic forces of Korea.

Her mental agony made me think that our new generation should work harder for the revolution. I made up my mind to open up as early as possible a new path for enlisting the support of all, including the patriots like Ri Kwan Rin who were groping about without a proper leader and usher in a new era of revolution in which all the people who desired national independence could advance, riding the same current.

With this determination I speeded up my preparations for my trip to Jilin.

I sought her for half a century since seeing her in Jilin.

When we formed active guerrilla units in east Manchuria there were many women in their 20s in the ranks. I was reminded of Ri Kwan Rin, the heroine of the Independence Army, whenever I saw the courageous women soldiers who marked a new chapter in the history of national liberation, displaying the same stamina and fighting spirit as the male soldiers. Not knowing her whereabouts, I was anxious to know where she was and what she was doing. Although I made enquiries through many channels, I heard nothing of her whereabouts and what she was doing.

After national liberation I searched Sakju, her birthplace, for her but failed to find her.

It was in the early 1970s that I discovered where she was. After making many enquiries, our comrades from the Party History Institute discovered that she was living in China with her son and daughter.

From among the people who fought alongside Ri Kwan Rin, Kong Yong, Pak Jin Yong and other people who had embraced communism under the influence of the DIU opened up a new path with us. They all died heroic deaths worthy of revolutionaries.

But Ri Kwan Rin had to abandon the struggle halfway due to the lack of a proper leader for her to follow.

When O Tong Jin was alive, however, she took great pains and walked long distances to implement the line of the proletarian revolution laid down at the Kuandian Meeting. In the summer of 1927 when I left for Jilin Ri Kwan Rin and Jang Chol Ho, along with other members of the Independence Army, were engaged in enlightening the people in Naidaoshan, where they lived in straw-thatched huts and grew potatoes. It seemed that O Tong Jin had made Naidaoshan the base for the activities of the Independence Army.

But after O Tong Jin was arrested, these activities were abandoned. Among the Leftist forces of the nationalist movement O Tong Jin was the person most inclined towards communism. After the arrest of such a central figure no one came forward to risk his life to implement the line of the Kuandian Meeting. Some people within Jongui-bu sympathized with communism, but they were powerless.

After the birth of Kukmin-bu with the amalgamation of the three organizations the highest levels of the nationalists rapidly became reactionary and it became difficult even to utter the word communism. The leaders of Kukmin-bu did not scruple to commit treachery by informing the Japanese police of people from the Left wing of the nationalist movement who sympathized with communism, or even assassinating them.

Ri Kwan Rin had to roam about in search of a refuge, subjected to persistent pursuit and threats by the terrorists of Kukmin-bu. Finally she married a Chinese man and settled down. She was unfortunate in marriage, too, because she could not marry a man who she wanted to marry.

Thus the “flower of the Independence Army” and the “red flower among the green,” she who caught the attention of the public, “appearing like a lodestar in the desolate land of Manchuria,” and struck terror into the enemy, withered away.

Figuratively speaking, she was an independence champion who set sail on a lengthy voyage in a wooden boat called nationalism.

It was too frail a boat to sail the vast expanse of the rough sea of the anti-Japanese resistance movement for independence, a voyage beset with manifold trials and hardships. Such a boat could not reach the destination of national liberation.

Many people set sail on the boat, but most of them gave up without reaching their destination. After that they looked out for an opening to earn a living or to lead an easy life pretending to be

patriots. Some from the upper levels who allegedly “represented” the nation became petty bourgeoisie producing ointments, and others became monks and escaped to the mountains.

Those who settled down to a family life or simply earned their living without turning traitor were not so bad. Some independence champions who sailed on the nationalist voyage with Ri Kwan Rin betrayed their country and nation and became the stooges of the Japanese imperialists.

It was several years before Ri Kwan Rin returned to the homeland having spent more than half a century in a foreign country since our last meeting.

I was told that she became more anxious to return to the homeland after learning that I was Song Ju, the son of Mr. Kim Hyong Jik to whom she had been attached in her Independence Army days. If Song Ju was leading the country, Mr. Kim Hyong Jik’s idea of building a society where all are equal must have been made the reality, she thought. So she wanted to witness that reality. She wanted to have her body buried in the homeland in which she was born and grew up, the homeland which she used to picture in tears whenever she looked up at the stars in the sky, lying on her back in the vast fields of Manchuria swept by the cold wind.

But, unknown to others, she suffered a mental agony for many years before deciding to return to the homeland. She had a son, a daughter and many grandsons and granddaughters. It was not an easy matter for an old woman in her twilight years to decide to return to her homeland alone, leaving her dear family in the distant foreign country which it would be difficult for her to visit again once she had left it.

However, Ri Kwan Rin made up her mind to return to the homeland even if it meant leaving her family for ever. It was a courageous decision no woman can make except a plucky woman

like Ri Kwan Rin. If she had not devoted the prime of her life to the country, she could not have made such a courageous decision.

Only those who have devoted themselves body and soul to the country, weeping, laughing and bleeding, can truly realize how dear their homeland is to them.

When I met Ri Kwan Rin after her return to the homeland alone with her grey hair flying, leaving her family in a foreign land, I admired her burning patriotic spirit and her noble view of life.

Ri Kwan Rin, who was in her 20s when she parted from me in Fusong, appeared before me as an 80-year-old grey-haired woman. Of her rosy face which had attracted everyone there was no sign.

When grey-haired Ri Kwan Rin, who had not told us of her whereabouts although we had taken such pains to find her, appeared before me, I was seized with sadness about the cruel world which had kept us apart for more than half a century.

We provided her with a house in a scenic spot in the heart of Pyongyang and with a cook and a doctor in consideration of her old age. The house was near the girls' high school she had attended in her girlhood. Kim Jong Il, secretary for organizational affairs, chose a house in this spot in consideration of her feelings. Secretary

Kim Jong Il went to her house and saw to it that the furniture was arranged to her liking and the lighting and heating equipment was properly installed.

Though infirm with age, she made a kitchen garden in front of her house and planted some maize there. She wanted to prepare food from maize with her own hands and treat me to it since I had very much enjoyed corn on the cob in my childhood. Even after half a century's time she still remembered my likes and dislikes. When she was living in Fusong, in summer she used to buy and cook corn on the cob as a treat for my brothers.

In consideration of the service she had rendered to the homeland and nation in her youth, after her death we held a grand funeral for her and buried her remains in the Patriotic Martyrs Cemetery.

Wherever they may live in the world, those who truly love their country and nation will visit their homeland where they were born and where their forefathers' graves lie. Even those with different views when parting will some day meet again and share their feelings with each other.



## CHAPTER 3

# **In Jilin**

The Pursuit of Progressive Thoughts  
Mentor Shang Yue  
The Young Communist League of Korea  
The Expansion of the Organization  
The Demonstration of Unity  
An Chang Ho Delivers a Political Lecture  
The Merger of the Three Nationalist  
Organizations  
The Path Taken by Cha Kwang Su  
The Lessons of Wangqingmen  
Behind Bars

*January 1927 — May 1930*

## **1. The Pursuit of Progressive Thoughts**

I remained at home for about a month to celebrate New Year's Day. Then in mid-January I left Fusong. When I arrived in Jilin it was noon and the streets were full of people. I thought it would be awkward to take out my pocketbook and turn over the pages with numbed fingers to look up the addresses of my acquaintances each time I was going to ask my way. So I had committed to memory the names of the streets and house numbers I was looking for. From the first moment the bustling scenes in the large city with its long history seemed to press down upon me who had been living only in the quiet and lonely countryside.

After leaving the station I could hardly move because of my great excitement. I stood looking for a long time at this lively new scene which represented a new life for me. The most memorable thing I saw in the streets of the city that day was that there were many water vendors. I heard some passers-by grumble that there was not enough drinking water so that only the number of water vendors was increasing in a place once known as a city of water, even called a quay, and that life in the city of Jilin might well grow harder in time. The city life in which even a glass of water had to

be reckoned in terms of money weighed down heavily upon me from the first moment, but defying this weight, I threw out my chest and marched down the street into the city.

Having walked some distance along Chelou Street towards Beishan from the station I came to a wall which separated the inner city from the outer part and saw a gate in the wall with a sign reading Zhaoyang Gate above it. Near the Zhaoyang Gate there was another gate called Xinkai Gate. Besides these two gates, there were Bohu, Linjiang, Fuxiu, Desheng, Beiji Gates and others, ten in all. All of these gates were guarded by soldiers of Zhang Zuoxiang's army. The ancient-looking wall of Jilin marred here and there by weathering showed that this was an old walled city.

Although I was a stranger to the place, the city did not seem so unfamiliar to me. This was probably because I had long wished to see it and there were many friends of my late father in the city. In my pocketbook I had the addresses of more than ten friends and acquaintances of my father to whom I would have to pay courtesy calls. Old friends of my late father O Tong Jin, Jang Chol Ho, Son Jong Do, Kim Sa Hon, Hyon Muk Kwan (Hyon Ik Chol), Ko Won Am, Pak Ki Baek, and Hwang Paek Ha were all living in Jilin. I had to call on all of them.

O Tong Jin was the first person I decided to visit. I called at his house which was located between Chelou Street and Xiangfu Street. To tell the truth, I was feeling rather nervous at the time. I was afraid that Commander O might have been displeased to hear that I had left Hwasong Uisuk School to which I had been admitted through the kind offices of my father's friends. But he was as kind as ever and delighted to see me. When I told him why I had left Hwasong Uisuk School and come to Jilin, he sat nodding his head in silence for a while, looking serious. Then he said:

“Seeing you in Jilin all of a sudden, I am reminded of your late father. Your father, too, unexpectedly left Sungsil Middle School. I

heard that with many regrets at the time. But much later I realized that your father had been right in making the decision. Anyhow, I marvel at your resolve to leave the school after only six months and come to Jilin. If Jilin is what you want, then, dig your well here.”

This was all O Tong Jin said after hearing my account of how I had come to Jilin. I felt grateful to him for his broad-minded way of thinking which was fully worthy of him. He remarked with regret that now that I had decided to come to Jilin for schooling, I should have had my whole family, my mother and younger brothers, move there to settle. When he had come to my father’s funeral he had asked my mother many times to move to Jilin where there were many friends of her late husband. Mother was grateful for his kind suggestion, but she would not leave Fusong. With the grave of her husband in Yangdicun village, she thought, how could she move out to Jilin?

That day O Tong Jin introduced his secretary Choe Il Chon to me. Since he had previously boasted a great deal about his secretary, I already knew something about this Choe Il Chon. He was well-known in the Jongui-bu organization as a good writer. Our meeting that day marked the beginning of the special comradesly ties between Choe Il Chon and me.

That afternoon, O Tong Jin took me to the Sanfeng Hotel and presented me to some independence fighters. Among them were Kim Sa Hon to whom Kim Si U had written a letter of introduction for me and Jang Chol Ho who commanded the Jongui-bu guards. Besides these two men there were many independence fighters staying at the hotel whose names I did not know. Along with the Taifenghe Rice Mill, this hotel was one of the two nests for independence fighters in Jilin that they used for lodging and liaison. This hotel also provided accommodation for many emigrants from Korea. The manager was from the same province as the Rev. Son Jong Do. He had lived in Jungsan County, South

Phyongan Province, before moving to Jilin on the advice of the Rev. Son and opening the hotel. Though it was a hotel in name, it looked more like a dormitory or public hall. It was within only 100 metres of the Japanese consulate. So it was virtually on the threshold of the consulate, which might just as well have been called the headquarters of the Japanese detective service in the Jilin area. It seemed risky, therefore, for the followers of the anti-Japanese independence movement to visit the hotel day and night with secret agents and policemen so close at hand. But they came there all the same, saying, “The darkest place is below the candlestick.” Strangely enough, there was never any instance of a Korean patriot being walked off from the Sanfeng Hotel. So, after we formed our organizations later, we often used this hotel.

After reading the letter of introduction from Kim Si U, Kim Sa Hon asked me if I would like to go to Yuwen Middle School in Jilin where a Korean by the name of Kim Kang who was a good friend of his was teaching. He said that it was a private school founded by the newly-emerging public circles in the city and that it was the most progressive school in Jilin. It was widely known that this school was progressive by nature. The newspaper *Jizhang Ribao* had written about it many times. As early as 1921 the paper had said that it was a school in financial difficulties but making a very good showing, so it was aided by various social organizations. Owing to the disputes over funds and the headmaster’s abuse of his authority, there had been many headmasters. When I arrived, Li Guang-han had recently taken over, replacing Zhang Yin-xian, a graduate of Jinling University in Nanjing. The fact that the headmaster had been changed four times sufficed to show how highly justice and lawfulness were esteemed at the school. This reformist tradition of the school captured my fancy.

The next day Kim Sa Hon introduced me to teacher Kim Kang of Yuwen Middle School. Kim Kang was a good English scholar.

He presented me to the headmaster, Li Guang-han. Li Guang-han was a Left-wing nationalist from China and he had been a classmate of future Prime Minister Zhou En-lai at secondary school. He was an intellectual of conscience who had largely been subject to the future prime minister's influence even in his younger days. It was several decades later that I came to learn of the relationship between Prime Minister Zhou and Li Guang-han. Once, when I met Prime Minister Zhou En-lai when he was on a visit to our country and talked about my youth and those Chinese people who had helped me, I happened to mention the name of Li Guang-han. The prime minister was delighted to hear his name and told me that they had been classmates at the middle school affiliated to Nankai University in Tianjin.

Li Guang-han asked me what I was going to do after finishing at school. When I answered without hesitation that I would like to devote myself to the cause of winning back my motherland, he said approvingly that my intention was highly praiseworthy. It seemed that because I had opened my heart to him, he readily granted my request that I join the second year without going through the first year.

Later, when I was engaged in the youth and student movement and underground activities, I was given assistance on many occasions by Mr. Li. Even when he learned that I missed classes frequently on account of my revolutionary work, he ignored the fact and shielded me so that the reactionary teachers bribed by the warlord authorities should not touch me. When the warlords or consulate police came to arrest me, he informed me of their attempt before I escaped out of the fence. Because the headmaster was a conscientious intellectual, many people with progressive ideas were able to conduct their activities under his wing.

When I returned after registering at Yuwen Middle School, Mr. O Tong Jin and his wife told me that I should live with them

instead of boarding at the hostel. This was an offer for which I was truly grateful in view of my situation at the time. I needed the support of my mother to attend the school, but she was infirm. She worked day and night all the year round, doing washing or needlework for money, and sent me about three *yuan* every month. After paying my school fees and the cost of notebooks and textbooks, I could scarcely afford to buy a pair of shoes. Such being my situation, I was obliged to accept the kindness and advice of the old friends of my late father. In Jilin I lived with O Tong Jin at first. Then, after his arrest, I stayed with Jang Chol Ho for a year, with Hyon Muk Kwan for several months and then with Ri Ung who replaced O Tong Jin as the leader of Jongui-bu.

Most of the prominent figures in Jilin in those days had been on intimate terms with my father, so they cared for me and looked after me in many ways. While frequenting the houses of my father's old friends, I became acquainted with many cadres of the Independence Army and leaders of the independence movement, and met a large number of various people on their way in and out of Jilin. Almost all the cadres of the Jongui-bu organization were living in Jilin at the time. This organization had a splendid central and local setup comprising administration, finance, judiciary, military affairs, education, foreign affairs, prosecution, and inspection and supervision, and it exercised as much power as that of an independent state, collecting taxes from the Korean inhabitants of the areas under its control. In order to protect this huge machinery it maintained a permanent central guard consisting of more than 150 soldiers.

As a provincial capital in China, Jilin was, along with Fengtian (Mukden), Changchun and Harbin, one of the political, economic and cultural centres of Manchuria. The Jilin military control station was headed by Zhang Zuo-xiang, a cousin of Zhang Zuo-lin. He would not listen readily to what the Japanese said. When the

Japanese told him that someone was a communist and another a bad man, he would reject it, telling them that it was none of their business. He did so more from his ignorance and self-conceit than from any political conviction. This characteristic of the man was of benefit to the revolutionaries and people engaged in the social movement.

The greater part of the Koreans resident in Manchuria lived in Jilin Province. So Jilin was the haunt of many Korean independence fighters and communists who were fleeing from the Japanese army and police. This made the city a theatre and a centre of political activities for Koreans. The Japanese had good reason for stating, “Jilin is the operational base for anti-Japanese activities in the three eastern provinces.”

In the latter half of the 1920s Jilin was an assembly point for the leaders of the Jongui-bu, Chamui-bu and Sinmin-bu organizations which constituted the main forces of the Korean nationalist movement in Manchuria. Huadian, Xingjing and Longjing were the principal centres where the supporters of the independence movement published newspapers and opened schools, but it was Jilin where their leaders assembled and conducted their activities.

It was also Jilin where the factionalists belonging to the M-L group, the Tuesday group and the Seoul-Shanghai group made reckless efforts to expand their respective forces. Nearly all the major figures of the communist movement conceited enough to think themselves important haunted this city. All sorts of people flocked here—nationalists, communists, factionalists, political refugees and so on. Young people and students seeking eagerly for new things and for the truth also came to this city. In short, it could be said that Jilin was a scene where ideological trends of every description were breathing together.



It was here that I unfolded my revolutionary activities under the banner of communism. When I came to Jilin I found that some members of the Down-with-Imperialism Union had come to the city as they had promised in Huadian and were on the register of such a school as Wenguang Middle School or were working at the locomotive depot and the wharf. As soon as they heard of my arrival in Jilin, they hurried to the house of Commander O Tong Jin. “Money, drinking water and firewood are scarce here, but this is a good place because there are plenty of books,” they said in telling me of their impressions of Jilin. I jokingly said I could stand even the pain of hunger if I had many books. I said it for fun, but at the same time I meant what I said. They had a favourable opinion of Yuwen Middle School. Some of the teachers were Right-wingers from the Kuomintang, but most of them were affiliated to the Communist Party or followed the Three Principles of the People, they said. Their words eased my mind. As it became known later, both teacher Shang Yue and teacher Ma Jun at the school were communists. We resolved to learn the revolutionary truth as we wished and fight for all we were worth to attain the goal of the Down-with-Imperialism Union in this new place.

Those members of the Down-with-Imperialism Union who had remained in Huadian had left for areas in Manchuria inhabited by Koreans such as Fusong, Panshi, Xingjing, Liuhe, Antu, Changchun and Yitong Counties in search of new theatres of activity. Some of them had returned to their old Independence Army companies.

In a confusing city like Jilin it was not easy with only a small number of hardcore members to make all the people listen to what we had to say and struggle for the realization of the Down-with-Imperialism Union’s ideal. But we were filled with a firm determination that each of us should become a spark to rouse a hundred people and ensure that the hundred people in their turn

would set the hearts of ten thousand people around them on fire to reform the world.

I began my activities in Jilin by conducting a deeper study of Marxism-Leninism. When I was coming to Jilin, I had made up my mind to pursue in earnest and more profoundly the study of Marxism-Leninism which I had begun in Huadian. The social and political atmosphere in Jilin stimulated my resolve to inquire deeply into new ideas. I was more keen on reading the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin than studying the school subjects.

In those days China was going through a period of great revolution and therefore many good books published in the Soviet Union and Japan were available in translation. A magazine with the title *Translation Monthly* was issued in Beijing and it often carried progressive literary works which the young people and students found interesting. In Jilin we could have any number of books which were difficult to obtain in Fusong or Huadian. But I had no money to buy them. People will find it hard to believe me when I say now that I put on my canvas shoes only when going to school and would walk about barefoot almost all the time after school.

The admission fee for the library on Niumaxiang Street was ten *fen* a month. I bought an admission ticket every month and would stop at the library on my way home from school every day and spend hours reading books and newspapers. This enabled me to read various publications at little cost. When I could not afford to buy the good books on sale in bookshops, I would persuade some rich students to buy them, and would borrow them from the sons of families who bought books not for reading but for the sake of displaying them in bookcases.

At Yuwen Middle School the administration of school affairs was democratic. The chief librarian was elected every six months at a general meeting of the students. The elected chief librarian was supposed to draw up a plan of management for the library and had

the right to acquire books. I was elected chief librarian twice at the school. Availing myself of the opportunities, I laid in a large stock of Marxist-Leninist books. But with plenty of books available, the trouble was that I did not have enough time to read them all. I tried hard to find a minute for reading and to read even one more book within the given time and understand its substance in full.

In my childhood my father would give me books to read and then make me put down in writing the gist of the books and what lessons I had learned from them. This habit of mine cultivated by my father proved of great value. If you read a book carefully without losing sight of its essential point, you can seize its substance clearly no matter how complicated it may be and you can read many books in a short time.

It was not simply out of academic interest or from a spirit of inquiry that I spent night after night reading in my secondary school days. I did not delve into the books with the object of becoming a scholar or for the purposes of a career. How could we expel the Japanese imperialists and win back our country? How could we do away with social inequality and make the working people prosperous? These were the questions the answers to which I wanted to discover in the books. No matter what book I was reading and where, I was always seeking the answers to these questions. I am sure it was in the course of this that my position was established of approaching Marxism-Leninism not as a dogma but as a practical weapon and of searching for the truth not in an abstract theory but always in the practice of the Korean revolution. In those days I read *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Capital*, *The State and Revolution*, *Wage Labour and Capital* and other Marxist-Leninist classics and books expounding them which I came across.

In addition to political books, I read many works of revolutionary literature. I found the works of Gorky and Lu Xun the most interesting. When I was in Fusong and Badaogou I used to

read many old tales such as *The Tale of Chun Hyang*, *The Tale of Sim Chong*, *The Tale of Ri Sun Sin*, and *Monkey*, but after coming to Jilin I read many revolutionary novels and stories and progressive books which described the real life of the time, including *Mother*, *The Iron Flood*, *Blessing*, *An Authorized Life of Ah-Q*, *On the River Amnok*, and *A Boy Wanderer*. Later, when we ran up against severe trials like the “arduous march” during the anti-Japanese armed struggle, I recalled the revolutionary stories such as *The Iron Flood* I had read when I was in Jilin and drew strength and courage from them. Literary works play a great role in the formation of the world view of people, so every time I meet writers, I tell them to produce many revolutionary stories and novels. Our writers are now writing many revolutionary masterpieces.

We became politically aware also through seeing at first hand the absurd social phenomena and the miserable living conditions of the people at the time. Many of the Koreans coming from Korea to Manchuria passed through Jilin on their way to other places. We often heard from them about the pitiful conditions of the people at home. Some of the travellers crossing the River Amnok would pass through Dandong and come to Changchun on the south Manchurian railway, from where they would either proceed to north Manchuria by the Dongzhi railway or go by the Ji-Chang line to Jilin and then into the backlands nearby. Others would pass through Fengtian to go to the Dunhua, Emu or Ningan regions by the Feng-Hai and Jilin-Hoeryong lines. In the cold winter and early spring many Koreans could be seen at Jilin station and at the hotels in the city. Among them were people with truly sad and pathetic stories.

One day I went to the theatre with my friends to see a Chinese opera. After the performance the actress who had recited the poem came to us and asked us if a man with the name of Choe so-and-so

was living in the city. He was her fiance. We were all surprised to hear her speak Korean. In Korea Chinese opera was not known.

The actress, whose name was Ok Pun, hailed from Kyongsang Province, Korea. Her father had one day been drinking with his friend who lived behind his house, and the two men had promised that if their wives gave birth to a boy and a girl, they would match them as man and wife, and that if the babies were only boys or only girls, they would make them sworn brothers or sisters. After a while a boy and a girl were born to the two houses. Their parents cut a silk kerchief into two and kept one half each in token of the marriage of their children. Later the two families had to leave their home village in search of a living. The boy's family went to live in Jilin. The boy grew up and was now a student at Wenguang Middle School. After coming to Jilin his parents had managed somehow to obtain a house and made a reasonable living by running a small rice mill. On the other hand, the girl's family had found themselves with no money when they arrived in Dandong and were compelled to sell their little daughter to a Chinese family. Ok Pun had been trained with a whip in Chinese opera and become an actress. As she grew older, she began to think of the boy she had been betrothed to back in their home village. Whenever she came to a new place, she would secretly meet any Koreans there and ask them if they knew where her betrothed was.

That day the actress Ok Pun had a dramatic reunion with her intended husband from Wenguang Middle School. When Ok Pun said she would stop her part in the play and join her husband, the owner of the theatre company who had been travelling with her demanded a huge sum of money. So, Ok Pun said to her fiance that she would return to Jilin after paying off the sum within a few years with money she would save from her pay. Witnessing all this, we felt indignant and angry in our hearts. We students denounced

the mercenary and heartless manager of the theatre company as a “viper-like woman.”

Life in the large city where hundreds of thousands of humans were locked desperately in a struggle for existence gave off the stink of a class society. One summer day when the sun was beating down, I was returning from Beishan with my friends. On our way we witnessed a roadside scene in which a rickshaw driver was bickering with a rich man. It appeared that the rich man who had ridden in the rickshaw had not paid enough. Insisting that, since the Three Principles of the People was in force the gentry should duly pay heed to the matter of the “people’s livelihood,” the rickshaw driver asked for a little more money. But the rich man, far from giving him more money, countered the Three Principles of the People with the Five-Right Constitution and hit the poor man with his cane. Scandalized at this scene, we students swooped down on the rich fellow and made him pay some more money.

Such experiences made us skeptical and disaffected; we asked ourselves how it was that there were people who rode in a rickshaw while there were others who had to pull it, and, why it was that certain people were living in luxury in palatial mansions while others had to wander the streets begging.

A man can be said to have established his revolutionary world view when he becomes aware of his class position and interests, hates the exploiting classes, is prepared to safeguard the interests of his class and then embarks on the path of revolution with a determination to build a new society. I began to realize my class position through reading the Marxist-Leninist classics and other revolutionary books, became aware of many inequalities by observing social phenomena, conceived a growing hatred for the exploiting classes and exploiter society and, in the end, embarked on the road of struggle with a resolve to reform and rebuild the world.

The more I read the works of Marx and Lenin and the deeper I became absorbed in them, the greater the urge I felt to disseminate their revolutionary theories among the young people and students as soon as possible.

The first student I made friends with at Yuwen Middle School was a Korean named Kwon Thae Sok. There were four Korean students in all at the school; Kwon Thae Sok and I were the only ones who were interested in the young communist movement. The other two had no interest in the political movement. They were only concerned about money and were thinking of going into business after graduation. Kwon Thae Sok and I shared similar aspirations and similar views on society and so we were friends from the first. Of the Chinese students a young man called Zhang Xin-min was a friend of mine. He would always be in my company and discuss politics with me a great deal. We talked about various topics ranging from social inequality to the reactionary character of imperialism, the Japanese imperialists' scheme to invade Manchuria and the Kuomintang's traitorous acts.

Marxism-Leninism was still no more than an object of admiration among the young people and students of Jilin. Because Marx was said to be a prodigy, they would at most leaf through his classics just to see what sort of a man he was, or they would think they were behind the times if they did not know what Marxism was.

Drawing on my experience in Huadian, I organized a secret reading circle at Yuwen Middle School with several like-minded students. Its mission and aim were to arm the progressive young people and students closely with Marxist-Leninist thoughts and theory. This organization quickly grew and had soon expanded to many schools in the city, including Wenguang Middle School, Middle Schools No. 1 and No. 5, the Girls' Middle School and the Normal School. With the increase in the number of members of the

reading circle we got a room at the rice mill run by supporters of the independence movement and opened a library there, with members of the Ryugil Association of Korean Students running it.

Today libraries can be found everywhere, and if we choose to, we can build large palatial libraries like the Grand People's Study House. But it was not an easy task furnishing a library in those days when we had nothing but our bare hands. We needed to lay in a stock of books, set up bookshelves, and install desks and chairs, but we had no money. Every Sunday, therefore, we worked to earn money, carrying sleepers on our shoulders at the railway construction site or gravel on our backs at the riverside. The girl students went and sorted rice at the rice mills. We purchased books with the money we earned penny by penny with so much pain. We installed a secret bookshelf to keep revolutionary books. After we had finished equipping the library we put up notices with brief yet interesting book reviews throughout the city. Then a great many students hastened to call at our library.

We even had love stories prepared to attract students. Young people often came to the library to read the love stories. After we had thus given them a taste of reading, we started offering them books on social science. When the students were awakened gradually through reading social science literature, we offered them the Marxist-Leninist classics and revolutionary stories and novels from our secret stock. We provided the young people and students with novels by Ri Kwang Su such as *Resurrection*, *Heartlessness* and *Trailblazer*. Ri Kwang Su drafted the "February 8th Declaration of Independence" in Tokyo on the eve of the March First Popular Uprising and wrote many progressive works while he was involved in the independence movement. Therefore, young people read his novels with keen interest. But later he deserted his principles and failed to write works with any instructive value. In the end, he went so far as to write reactionary novels like the *Wife*



*of a Revolutionary*. After founding the anti-Japanese guerrilla army, I made for south Manchuria with the guerrilla force. On my way I stopped at Fusong for a brief visit, and there I read the novel. Its story is about a communist lying in his sickbed whose wife forms a liaison with the medical college student who comes to her home to treat her husband. Thus the work was about her scandalous life. It was an insult to the communists and defiled the communist movement from start to finish.

Of a Saturday or a Sunday we gathered at Jilin Church or Beishan Park to discuss our impressions of the books we had read. At first there were some who talked about the love stories. But they were snubbed by the other students who said that their observations were quite worthless. Once humiliated in this way, the students who had been infatuated with love stories would turn to revolutionary stories of their own accord.

“Story-telling” was another method we used in widely propagating the revolutionary thought among the young people and students and the masses. One day I had a sore throat, and because a poultice had been applied, I could not attend a class. On my way home from school, I dropped in at Beishan, where I saw a large crowd of people sitting around a blind man who was telling an old tale. As I approached, I found that the blind man was reciting a passage from the *Three Warring Kingdoms*, in the manner of a shaman narrating a spiritual message. When he came to the scene in which Zhu-ge Liang takes an enemy position through trickery, he even beat a drum to add to the fun. Then, when the narration reached a climax in an interesting scene, he abruptly stopped and held out his hands to the listeners for money. In those days this was called “story-telling” by the Chinese, and it was a good way of drawing the masses.

After that we adopted this method in popularizing revolutionary thoughts. Among our companions there was a man

who was a real jester and quick of tongue. He had been given the assignment of working with men of religion, and he was more clever and accurate than the pastors in offering up a prayer and reciting from the Bible. I told him to take up “story-telling” and found him to be better at this than at reciting from the Bible. He would go to a guest room in a village or a park where people flocked and narrate good stories in an interesting manner; he enjoyed great popularity. The blind man did his “story-telling” for money, but our friend did not ask for a penny. Instead, he would stop his narration at an interesting point and make an inflammatory speech for a while before telling his audience to come at a certain hour the next day when he would resume the story. So the next day the people would come to the appointed place to listen to the rest of the story.

Of the people I got to know through books in those days, Pak So Sim impressed me deeply. In the busy quarters of Jilin there was a large bookshop by the name of Xinwen Shushe. I would go to the shop several times a week. Pak So Sim was also a regular customer there. He would always linger before the social science counter to find out which books had arrived. We often bumped into each other there. He was tall and thin and had an intelligent air. When I went to the shop with some other students and bought armloads of books for our library, he would be as pleased as if he were choosing books for himself and tell us about the content of certain books and advise us as to which books we should read and therefore buy. This was how I came to form a close friendship with Pak So Sim through books. When I was going to school from Dongdatan, he came to my quarters and stayed with me for a while.

He had lived in Seoul before going there. He was in such poor health that he gave no thought to joining the communist movement, but wrote short articles for newspapers and magazines. His articles were carried in the newspaper *Haejo Sinmun* and the magazine

*Joson Ji-gwang*. Although he had nothing to do with the communist movement, he was contemptuous of the factionalists. As he was upright and had great insight, those involved in various movements who frequented Jilin tried to win him over to their camps.

He would sit up until late reading *The Capital* in Japanese. He was an enthusiastic reader; when he ran out of money, he would pawn his clothes to buy books. He was not a pedant who would pretend to be a Marxist-Leninist theoretician after reading a few primers, yet he was someone with a thorough knowledge of the major works of Marx and Lenin. He was a memorable teacher who initiated me into *The Capital* and explained it to me. As was the case with Marx's works in general, *The Capital* had many points that were difficult to understand. So, Pak So Sim gave me explanatory lectures on *The Capital*. To grasp the substance of the classics, one needs a primer or a guide. Pak So Sim acted as a faithful guide for me. He was extremely well-read.

Once I asked him about the Marxist-Leninist propositions on the dictatorship of the proletariat. He explained to me the propositions of the Marxist-Leninist classics which interpreted the proletarian dictatorship from different angles at different stages of historical development. For his theoretical attainments and learning, he could be called a master of Marxism. But there was something that was beyond the reach of his knowledge, something he found it hard to answer. I asked him the question: Although the Marxist-Leninist classics say that the class emancipation of the working class comes before national liberation, is it not true that in our country the yoke of Japanese imperialism should be thrown off first before the class emancipation of the workers and peasants? This question was argued about a great deal among our comrades. We found that the Marxist-Leninist classics fell short of providing a theoretical explanation of the interrelations between the

emancipation of the working class and national liberation. As for the national liberation struggle in colonial countries, there were many problems which required scientific elucidation. Pak So Sim answered my question only vaguely.

I asked him another question: The Marxist-Leninist classics generally say that the revolution in the suzerain state and that in a colonial country are organically linked with each other and stress the importance of the victory of the revolution in the suzerain state. That means that our country will be able to attain its independence only after the working class of Japan have won their revolution, doesn't it? So should we wait until they win their victory?

Pak So Sim was at a loss what to say in reply to this. He gazed at me in surprise. He said it was an internationally-accepted line of the international communist movement that, as was pointed out in the classics, the emancipation of the working class came before national liberation and that the struggle of the working class in the suzerain state was considered more important than the national liberation struggle in a colonial country. When I tilted my head in doubt, he became annoyed and said frankly that he had only studied Marxism-Leninism as a science and that he had not viewed it in the light of concrete revolutionary practice related to the independence of Korea and the building of communism in Korea. His words somehow saddened me. It was useless to study communist theory only as a science detached from practice, as he said he did.

The greatest anguish my friends and I felt in studying the progressive thoughts of Marxism-Leninism was that while we were anxious to reform society by means of a revolution as the Russians had done and thus liberate our country, the situation in Korea was different from the situation prevailing in Russia when the October Revolution had taken place. We were confronted with such complex problems as how to carry out the proletarian revolution in

a colonial country like Korea, a backward semi-feudal state, how to establish contact with the revolutions in neighbouring countries, particularly China, when we had to wage the struggle on Chinese territory away from our homeland due to the harsh repression of Japanese imperialism, and how to fulfil our national duty to the Korean revolution and our international obligations to the world revolution. It took us a long time and cost us dear before we found correct answers to these questions.

Pak So Sim became intimate with me and was drawn deeply into my revolutionary aspiration in the days of my pursuit of Marxist-Leninist studies. He joined the Anti-Imperialist Youth League and then the Young Communist League and worked selflessly with us to educate and enlighten the young people and children. Although he had been a bookworm, he displayed an amazing passion for work once he had made up his mind and jumped into the arena of practical activity. We sent him to the Kalun area to receive treatment for his tuberculosis. He built a hut on the banks of the River Wukai some two kilometres from Jiajiatun and lived a lonely life there cooking for himself. Once when I was working in the areas of Kalun and Wujiazi, I found time to pay him a visit. He was delighted to see me. We had a hearty talk and discussed many things. He showed me a picture of his wife. I was surprised because I had thought his wife was dead, or they were divorced. Her picture showed her to be beautiful and intelligent, a modern woman. Pak told me that a letter had come from his wife in Seoul a short time before. When I asked him why he did not summon her, he explained that she was a daughter of a rich family. I asked him if he had not known that when he married her. Pak heaved a sigh and said that after their marriage his world view had undergone a change. His words struck me as very odd, so I asked him if he had forgotten her. He had thought so, he admitted frankly, but after receiving a letter from her, he thought of her

often. So I told him that if he loved her, he should write and send for her. How can a man who is incapable of re-educating his wife overthrow the old society and build a new one? If his wife were by his side, it would also prove good for the treatment of his illness, I advised him. Pak sighed and said that he would do as I advised.

“I’ll do so because it’s your advice. But my life is already on the decline. I lead a frustrated life, I mean.”

He had no children, and no estate or mental legacy to be left behind should he have any. He wanted to devote his whole life to the study of Marxism-Leninism and write books which could help the working class. But, he said, he could not attain his objective. He said that when he had been fit and strong, he could not write because he was ignorant, and that now that he was awakened to the truth, his health would not allow him to do so.

His remark grieved me. He was a devoted scholar, tireless and inquiring. If he had not buried himself in books but plunged into practical activities a little earlier, he might have hit upon some valuable theories helpful to the revolutionary cause of the working class and made some practical achievements. A theory is born of practice and its accuracy is verified through practice. The practice we are not allowed to lose sight of even for a moment consists of the independence of Korea and the welfare of our people. To our regret, Pak So Sim had no sooner awoken to this truth than he departed from our side. His wife came from Seoul and nursed her sick husband, and he kept writing short essays and occasional notes before dying at Kalun.

The ancients said that if a man learns the way in the morning, he may die in the evening without regret. It was a pity that a man like Pak So Sim who could have accomplished many useful things should have died as soon as he awoke to the truth.

I spent a little more than three years in Jilin. Jilin is a place dear to me, with vivid memories from one period of my life. In this

city I came to understand Marxism-Leninism as a scientific theory, and with the help of this theory came to a deeper realization of the practical truth for the independence of Korea and the people's well-being. My quick comprehension of the essence of the new ideology was due to my sorrow and indignation as a son of a stateless people. The intolerable misery and distress of our nation led me to early maturity. I accepted the fate of my suffering country and compatriots as my own. This brought me a great sense of duty to the nation.

In the days I spent in Jilin my world view was established and strengthened, and it provided me with a lifelong ideological and moral foundation. My accumulation of knowledge and experience in Jilin enabled me to build the framework of an independent revolutionary thought in the future.

Study is a basic process for the self-culture of revolutionaries and represents an essential mental endeavour that must never be suspended even for a single day in laying the groundwork for achieving social progress and reform. Proceeding from the lesson learned in the process of pursuing progressive ideologies in Jilin, I emphasize even now that study is the first duty of a revolutionary.

## 2. Mentor Shang Yue

While Pak So Sim was my teacher and introduced *The Capital* to me, Shang Yue was my teacher and introduced *Mother* by Gorky and the *Dream at the Red Mansion* to me. Shang Yue taught philology and literature at Yuwen Middle School.

Shortly after his appointment to the school, we heard that a new teacher of philology and literature, a graduate of the English faculty at Beijing University, had arrived at the school, and we all looked forward to his lecture.

However, we were somewhat anxious about the new teacher. We wondered if he had been appointed by the Office of Education as its agent. There were several undesirable elements bribed by the warlord authorities among the teachers at Yuwen Middle School, and they had been appointed by the Office of Education. It was not long since Zhang Xue-liang, on the orders of Jiang Jie-shi, had hoisted the flag of the Kuomintang in Manchuria. The intelligence machinery of Jiang Jie-shi was already stretching its tentacles from Shenyang to Jilin. The agents of the Kuomintang had not yet got their hands on Yuwen Middle School, but the progressive teachers and students at the school were placed under constant surveillance by the warlords and their agents. This being the situation, the appointment of a new teacher could not but make us feel nervous as we awaited his lesson.

The teacher dispelled the students' suspicion and won their popularity after only one lesson. He explained the long story of the 120-part *Dream at the Red Mansion* in an hour. He was so proficient in explaining the essentials, weaving the plot with



important details of life, that we were able to digest instantly all the messages carried in the novel and the process of the decline of a noble family in which the patriarchal tradition held sway.

As he left the classroom after the lecture, the students exclaimed joyfully that the new teacher at Yuwen Middle School was a talented man.

He had spoken a great deal about the content of the novel, but only a little about its author. So the next day I stopped him as he strolled around the playground and asked him to tell me about Cao Xue-qin, the writer of the novel. He said that he had omitted a biography of the writer because of a lack of time, and that it was natural for me to ask about him. He went into the details of the writer's life and his family background.

After his explanation I asked him some questions about the correlations between the class origin of a writer and the class character of his works.

He gave me clear answers to those questions, too. Saying that he was giving me his own opinion, he explained that while it was true that the class origin of a writer might influence the character of his works, the dominating factor defining the character was not the author's class origin but his outlook on the world. He took Cao Xue-qin as an example. He said: Cao was born to a noble family that received the favour of the Emperor Kangxi and grew up in comfortable circumstances but, because he had a progressive outlook on the world, he was able to give an artistic description of feudal China in her disintegration and of the inevitability of her collapse.

He went on to tell me:

“You were right to come to see me today, Song Ju. If a student has a question, something he wants made clear, he should immediately receive help from his teacher. That is the attitude a student in pursuit of science should adopt. Ask me many questions

at any place and at any time. I am fond of students who ask me many questions.”

I was pleased that he told me to ask many questions. I had been known as a pupil who asked many questions from my days at primary school. Even at Yuwen Middle School I bothered the teachers with many questions. He said that he had the *Dream at the Red Mansion* and a short biography of Cao, and told me I could read them at any time if I wanted to. So I was lucky enough to be the first visitor to his boarding house.

My grandfather would always say that it was not advisable for a pupil to visit his teacher's house. Not only those from the older generation who had grown up by learning *Tongmongsonsub* (the first textbook for a boy—Tr.) at village schools, but also many other elders who claimed that they had become civilized thanks to modern education were of the same opinion as my grandfather. My grandfather's opinion was this: If pupils peep into their teacher's private life frequently, they lose their awe of him; the teacher must give his pupils the firm belief that their teacher neither eats nor urinates; only then can he maintain his authority at school; so a teacher should set up a screen and live behind it.

Grandfather had this opinion at the time when my father was attending the village school. There was a teacher named Kim Ji Song at Sunhwa Village School which my father was attending. He was helplessly fond of drinking. He would often send my father, who was the class monitor, on errands to buy wine for him. At first my father obeyed him meekly, but after seeing the drunken teacher fall flat on his face in a ditch on his way home, father changed his mind.

One day the teacher gave him a large bottle and sent him on the same errand. But outside the school gate he threw the bottle at a rock and smashed it to pieces. He told the teacher that, chased by a tiger, he had tripped over a stone and broken the bottle. In blank

dismay the teacher said, “Oh! Has a tiger from Mt. Paektu come as far as Mang-yongdae? How shameful it is for me that you must lie to me! It was wrong of me to send you boys for wine.” Thus he stopped drinking. Even though his teacher had stopped drinking, the image of the teacher flat on his face in the ditch smelling of wine was engraved on my father’s memory. My grandfather’s opinion of a teacher’s code of conduct was based on this anecdote.

But before my teacher Shang Yue could set up a screen, I had plunged into his private life.

There were hundreds of books in his bookcase. It was the richest and most impressive of all the bookcases I had ever seen. His room was a library. The bookcase contained many English novels and biographies. I was fascinated by his books. If I were to digest all the knowledge in these books, wouldn’t that be better than a university education? It is fortunate for me that this teacher has come to Yuwen Middle School, I thought.

After a cursory inspection of the books I asked:

“Excuse me, sir. How many years did it take you to fill this bookcase?”

He came up to the bookcase and, looking into my face, said with a smile:

“Almost 10 years.”

“How many years do you think it would take me to read all these books?”

“If you are diligent, three years, and if not, 100 years.”

“Sir, will you open this bookcase to me if I promise to read all these books in three years?”

“Why not? But there is one condition.”

“If you will lend the books to me, I will accept any condition.”

“The condition is that you become a writer in the future, and that’s all. I have always wanted to train a few writers from among

young people who will work for the proletarian revolution. You will be one of them, won't you?"

"I am extremely grateful for that. Frankly, I feel a particular attachment to literature and I admire writers. After the liberation of the country I might take up literature; however, sir, we are the sons of a ruined nation. My father fought to liberate the country, braving difficulties all his life, before passing away. I am determined to devote myself to the struggle for national independence in accordance with my father's will, and that is my highest ideal and ambition. I am set on fighting to liberate my nation."

The teacher, leaning against the bookcase, nodded continually, a serious look on his face. Then he came to me and placed his hand on my shoulder, saying, "That's wonderful, Song Ju! If the struggle for independence is your ideal, I will open this bookcase to you on that condition."

That day I returned home with the *Dream at the Red Mansion*. The next books I borrowed were the novels by Jiang Guang-ci, *On the River Amnok* and *A Boy Wanderer*. I found these two novels very interesting. The first novel, *On the River Amnok*, in which Ri Maeng Han and Un Go, a Korean young man and girl, were the principal characters made a special, unforgettable impression on me. Later I borrowed from him Gorky's *Mother*.

In this way we got on exceptionally well through books and literature. He would lend me any book I wanted to read. If I asked for books he didn't have in his bookcase, he would go to the trouble of obtaining them for me from other sources. In return for his helping me with my reading, I had to tell him about my impressions of each book I had read. We swapped our opinions on *The Enemy* by Gorky and *Blessing* by Lu Xun.

Thus we frequently exchanged our views on literature. The topic of our conversations always focussed on the mission of

literature. We talked a great deal about how literature should reflect the reality and promote social progress.

The teacher said that literature was a light that gave men intellect. He said that while machines promoted the development of production, literature perfected the qualities of the men who operated machines.

He would talk about Lu Xun and his works with particular fervour. He was a literary friend of Lu Xun and a member of the literary circle that was led by him. The short story *The Axe-head* he wrote during his circle activities was highly thought of by Lu Xun. The novel depicted the people in the Luoshan area who were fighting against feudal customs. According to Shang Xiao-yuan, Shang Yue's daughter, Lu Xun also expressed his dissatisfaction with the story, saying that it lacked literary sharpness.

By overcoming the immaturity revealed in his early works, in the 1930s he produced a work with perfect ideological and artistic qualities, *A Plot*, which was favourably spoken of by readers. This novel was carried serially in a magazine published in Yunnan Province. In the 1980s the People's Literature Publishing House of China published this novel in paperback.

In addition to *The Axe-head* and *A Plot* he produced the novels, *Spear* and *The Dog Problem* and published them. While working as a teacher he never abandoned his creative endeavours as a writer. So it was only natural that he tried to lead me into literary pursuits in those days.

I even borrowed from him the *Selected Works of Chen Du-xiu*. Chen was one of the founders of the Communist Party of China; he had been at the helm of the Chinese party. At first, he was reluctant to lend the books to me because he was afraid that I might be corrupted by Chen's Rightist capitulationist line. He added that Chen had been the Dean of School of Letters at Beijing University before he had gone to the university and that many teachers and

students were proud that Chen had been one of them at the university.

He confessed:

“To be frank, I once worshipped Chen. I became fascinated by him while reading the magazine *New Youth* he published and his early treatises. But now my opinion of Chen has changed.”

According to him, the great popularity Chen had enjoyed at the time of the May 4 Movement and in the early days of the Communist Party had fallen because he had adopted the line of Rightist opportunism.

Chen’s opportunist error was particularly evident in his attitude towards the peasant question. As early as 1926 Stalin had pointed out that the peasantry was the main force of the anti-imperialist front in China and the most reliable ally of the Chinese working class. Nevertheless, Chen ignored the peasantry. Out of his fear of a conflict between the peasants and the landed proprietors, he opposed the peasants’ interference in the administration and their active self-defence. In short, he tried to restrain the peasants’ struggle. Chen’s mistake was that, on the pretext of opposing imperialism, he was against the revolution in the rural communities because he feared that the bourgeoisie might break away from the revolutionary front. His capitulationist line resulted instead in encouraging the bourgeoisie to betray the revolution. This was Shang Yue’s view of Chen Du-xiu.

As he rightly pointed out, the works of Chen contained capitulationist elements which could do great harm to the revolution. After reading the *Selected Works of Chen Du-xiu* I had a long conversation with him on our views on the peasant question. This talk centred on the following points: What similarities and differences are there concerning the peasant question in the Korean revolution and the Chinese revolution; what are the points we should refer to in Lenin’s strategy on the peasant question; and

what should be done to enable the peasantry to play their role as the main force of the revolution?

I said that it must be right to regard the peasantry as the great force of a country since agriculture was the major foundation of a country.

He affirmed my view and went on to say that neglecting the peasantry meant neglecting farming and the land, so the revolution, however noble its ideal, would inevitably fail if the peasantry was neglected. He added that Chen was mistaken because he had forgotten this principle.

This conversation convinced me that the teacher was a communist. He discovered that I had been working for the Young Communist League. He had marvellous sensibility and judgement. He joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1926. He had been arrested by the reactionary warlords of the Kuomintang while guiding the peasant movement in his home town and experienced many hardships for over a year in military prison in Zhejiang Province. Later he was released on bail with the help of a Korean army surgeon and came to Manchuria under an assumed name of Xie Zhong-wu. He had got employment at Yuwen Middle School in Jilin through the good offices of a man named Chu Tu-nan.

After exchanging our views on the peasant question, we frequently discussed political questions. The young people and students in Jilin in those days used to discuss politics widely. Since China was then in the throes of a great revolution and Korea was at the height of a mass movement, we had a host of questions to discuss. It was around this time that there were vehement arguments among Korean young people about which was right, Ri Jun's method or An Jung Gun's method. Many young people and students were definitely in favour of An Jung Gun's fighting method.

I asked the teacher about his view on An Jung Gun's method. He commented that what he had done was certainly patriotic at the time but his method was unsure. His opinion coincided with mine. I thought that the struggle against imperialist Japan's aggression could not succeed by using the terrorist method of killing a few stooges of the warlords, and that it would achieve its aim only by educating and awakening the popular masses to political consciousness and encouraging all the people to join the struggle.

We also swapped opinions on the history of imperialist Japan's aggression in Korea, her colonial policy in Korea, her scheme to invade Manchuria and the warlords' support for it, and the necessity for solidarity and cooperation between the peoples of Korea and China in the anti-imperialist, anti-aggression struggle.

In those days the students of Yuwen Middle School frequently discussed the attitude of the League of Nations towards disarmament. There were many students who harboured illusions about the League of Nations. So I wrote an article exposing the league's trickery in dealing with the question of disarmament. Many students spoke in support of my article. My teacher, Shang Yue, read it and commented that my opinion was correct.

In his days in Jilin he lost contact with his Communist Party organization but he gave several lectures on the works of such progressive writers as Gorky and Lu Xun for the purpose of enlightenment. Once at the request of the members of the secret reading circle he gave a one-week special course in the school library on the subject of "Let us oppose imperialism." The students' reaction to his lectures was very good. I let him know this to encourage him. He was loved by his students for his progressive ideas, high sense of responsibility in education and profound and wide knowledge of the cultures and history of all ages and countries.



The reactionary teachers who were bribed by the warlord authorities were unhappy with him and tried to sully his reputation as a teacher. The students who were loved and supported by him were also subject to their jealousy and slander. A certain Fang tried to force the headmaster, Li Guang-han, to expel the Korean students, and Ma, the physical-training teacher, schemed to stir up opinion against me, saying that the Korean students were hostile to the Chinese teachers. Shang Yue always shielded me from their attack.

The English teacher, too, was hostile to the students who aspired to the new trend of thought. He was steeped in flunkeyism. He was so contemptuous of Oriental people that he said it was uncivilized of the Chinese people to smack their lips while eating; Westerners did not, he said. He, a Chinese, behaved like a Westerner.

His frequent show of contempt for Oriental backwardness was seriously offensive to us. So when we were on kitchen duty we prepared noodles and invited the teachers to dinner. As they ate their hot noodles, the hall was loud with sucking sounds. The English teacher, too, was sucking his noodles down. The students roared with laughter at him. Sensing that he was being made fun of he flushed and left. After that he never again spoke ill of Oriental people. As he worshipped the West so much, the students were not interested in his lessons.

The reactionary teachers' pressure on Shang Yue grew towards the beginning of 1929.

On one occasion he said that it was desirable to encourage as many people as possible, rather than only sportsmen, to take part in physical training. He said that it was undesirable that only basketball players should use the court in the school playground. Some rowdy players who were unhappy with his remark tried to attack him after school when he was returning to his boarding

house from school. I saw to it that the members of the Young Communist League and the Anti-Imperialist Youth League prevented them from such misconduct and scolded them severely.

The literature teacher, as he looked at the fleeing attackers, sighed, saying, “Ma has trained some wonderful stooges.”

I said to him with a laugh, “Don’t be afraid, sir. This, too, is a sort of class struggle. We should prepare for a possible clash that may be worse than this one.” To this he replied, “You are right. We are fighting now with the warlords.”

While trying to reinstate the students who had been expelled without due cause by the Office of Education, he was dismissed and left Yuwen Middle School. When I returned to school after guiding the mass organizations in the Changchun and Kalun areas in their work, Kwon Thae Sok hurried up to me and gave me a letter the teacher had left for me. The letter said: I have been defeated in the fight with the warlords and am leaving you, but we will defeat them in the future. Wherever I go I will send you, Song Ju, my wholehearted blessing on your ideal to live your whole life as a true son of your motherland and your people. Those were the last words of encouragement from him to me.

I have not seen him since. I discovered that he was still alive when I received from him in 1955 his essay, *The Historical Relationship between Marshal Kim Il Sung and I in His Boyhood* and in 1980 his book *The Outline of Chinese History*. Reading them, I recalled the days at Yuwen Middle School when we would discuss the situations in Korea and Manchuria, the aggressive policy of the Japanese imperialists and the joint struggle of the Korean and Chinese peoples, and I sent my heartfelt gratitude to my old teacher.

Whenever Chinese leaders have visited our country I have inquired after him. To my regret, I have not met him again. I must say that I have not fulfilled my obligation as one of his pupils. The

border between countries is something strange. He passed away in 1982 while a professor at Chinese People's University in Beijing.

His eldest daughter Shang Jia-lan, a researcher at the Dynamics Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, visited our country in 1989 and his third daughter Shang Xiao-yuan came to our country to see me in 1990. The latter is teaching at Chinese People's University. I could not suppress my joy when I saw his image in his daughters' faces after 60 years of separation. Can a difference in nationalities change people's feelings? Friendship knows no barrier of skin colour, language and religion. If Yuwen Middle School had been nearby, I would have picked a handful of the lilac petals that blossomed in the school garden and given them to his daughters, saying, "This is the flower your father loved. Your father and I met frequently by a lilac bush."

Leaving Jilin, he devoted himself to party work, education, culture and writing in Harbin, Shanghai, Beijing, Hankou, Chongqing, Ningxia and Yanan. He once worked as the chief secretary of the provincial party committee of Manchuria, I was told.

He never forgot me throughout his life and always maintained friendly feelings for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a close neighbour of China.

He was buried in the Martyrs' Cemetery in Babaoshan in Beijing.

A man who has a mentor he can recollect throughout his life is truly a happy man. In this sense, I am a happy man. Whenever I miss this man who left a lasting impression on me in my youthful days, I take a stroll in my heart in the garden of Yuwen Middle School.

### **3. The Young Communist League of Korea**

With the rapid dissemination of Marxist-Leninist ideas through the activities of the members of the DIU and secret reading circles a qualitative change began to take place in the thinking of the young people and students. The progressive ideas gradually made them understand the tasks set before them by history and the nation.

We united the young people and students into various organizations, while continuing to awaken them ideologically. Only through organizations was it possible to disseminate Marxist-Leninist ideas wider and train hardcore forces more rapidly.

I started my revolutionary activities in the youth and student movement. I attached great importance to this movement partly because I was a student and particularly because it played an important role in and had an important influence on awakening and organizing workers, farmers and other broad sections of the masses.

In Marxist-Leninist theory the youth and student movement is likened to a bridge. In other words, the youth and student

movement is a bridge for the dissemination of progressive ideas, the enlightening and awakening of the masses and the encouragement of them to join the revolutionary movement. We supported this theory.

With the revolution progressing and getting into its stride our view on and attitude towards the role of the young people and students changed radically. We defined the young people and students as constituting the fully-fledged main force of the revolution, thus breaking away from the old viewpoint according to which the motive force of the revolution had been defined with the main emphasis on the workers and peasants. This is proved to be correct by the course of the youth and student movement.

Young people and students fought bravely in the van of the March First Popular Uprising, the June 10th Independence Movement, the student incident in Kwangju<sup>17</sup> and other historic events which constituted the peaks of the anti-Japanese patriotic struggle in our country before liberation. We opened a new history of the communist movement on the strength of the youth and waged the 15-year-long anti-Japanese armed struggle with young people and students as the backbone. Today, too, young people and students are fulfilling the role of the shock brigade in our revolution.

Young people and students are the main force of the revolution in south Korea, too. Young people and students played an important role in triggering off the April 19 Uprising<sup>18</sup>, the leading role in the people's resistance in Kwangju (1980)<sup>19</sup> and were standard-bearers in the June Resistance which overthrew the political regime of the "Fifth Republic."

As is well known, young people and students were the vanguard of the May 4 Movement which the Chinese people regard as the starting-point of their new democratic movement.

The long and rich history of the struggle of the Korean people in which they constantly accumulated new experience, clearing an untrodden path for mankind, has proved that the old theory which did not regard students even as a social stratum does not conform with the actual situation in our country.

The problem with our youth and student movement up to the first half of the 1920s was that it did not stand firmly by the class and anti-imperialist view and was not rooted deep in the masses. Most of the top level of the movement were intellectuals, and the main force of the movement attached too much importance to the enlightenment movement.

We made every possible effort to take a resolute first step while strictly guarding against any repetition of the shortcomings revealed in the youth and student movement previously.

But the formation of the organization and the enlisting of young people and students in it came up against complex problems. Our greatest difficulty in organizing the young people and students was deciding what method and form to adopt in founding an organization, in view of the fact that youth organizations formed by the nationalists and factionalists already existed. In Jilin there were already the Jilin Youth Association, the Ryogil Association of Korean Students in Jilin, the Children's Association and other organizations.

If these organizations had not existed, new organizations could have been formed without hindrance, like building houses on an empty site. But various organizations had already been formed and were working among the young people and students, and they could not be ignored.

After serious discussion we decided to ignore or renovate the organizations which existed only in name and were not active and leave the organizations which were active, though uninspiring, as they were, and use and reform them in the future.

The Association of Korean Children in Jilin was the first organization we formed there. At that time there was the Children's Association that had been formed by the nationalists in Jilin but it was an organization in name only and the Korean children in Jilin knew nothing of its existence. We formed the Association of Korean Children in Jilin, a legal organization, in April 1927 at Son Jong Do's chapel.

I, together with Kim Won U and Pak Il Pha (Pak U Chon), presided over the meeting. At the meeting it was decided to set up organizational, propaganda, and sports and leisure sections within the association and to establish branches in schools and regions.

Hwang Kwi Hon, who attended Jilin Girls' Normal School and was then in charge of the propaganda section of the Children's Association, remembers this well.

The Children's Association embraced all the Korean children in Jilin, including the children of workers, peasants and small and medium manufacturers and merchants, as well as of nationalists. The aim of the Association of Korean Children in Jilin was to educate children in the anti-Japanese idea and bring them up to be reliable reserves for the revolution.

In its programme the Children's Association made one important task for its members to be to study the new progressive ideas and explain and propagate them to the broad sections of the people.

In May that year we reformed the Ryogil Association of Korean Students in Jilin into the Ryugil Association of Korean Students in Jilin.

The Ryogil Association of Korean Students in Jilin had no small number of members and a certain influence.

Originally it had been formed to promote friendship among Korean students in Jilin and had been aided by the nationalists. Son Jong Do was one of its advisers.

When we proposed to reform the Ryogil Association of Korean Students in Jilin into the Ryugil Association of Korean Students in Jilin, some people suggested that it be disbanded, criticizing it as a fraternity organization directed mainly by the nationalists. They alleged that, as the organization was based on nationalism and heterogeneity, whatever might be done to it, it would still remain nationalist. The essence of their argument was that nationalism was an outdated trend and should be done away with.

In those days there was intense rivalry in winning over the masses. The communists and the nationalists, being in opposition to each other, vied to draw the masses to their side, while even within the same communist movement factions tried hard to attract the masses. If one day the Seoul group seized the leadership of the Young Communist League of Korea, the next day the Tuesday group would form the Hanyang Youth Association in opposition to it, and if the following day the Tuesday group formed the General Association of Workers and Peasants in Korea, the Seoul group in its turn would form the Kyongsong Association of Workers and Peasants to counter it, and this became the fashion. Factionalists even vied with one another in forming terrorist bands so as to contain other groups.

But we, the communists of the new generation, could not follow in their steps. If we had ignored the Ryogil Association of Korean Students in Jilin the way the factionalists did and formed another youth organization, it would have complicated our relations with the nationalists and disrupted the ranks of young people and students. The result would have been unwelcome and harmful in every respect.

We proposed to join the Ryogil Association of Korean Students in Jilin and gradually reform it from a pure fraternity organization into a revolutionary one, while continuing to preserve its status. I, a communist, became its honorary chairman, but as I



acted under the patronage of the nationalists, I drew little attention from the Chinese warlord authorities. While leading the Ryogil Association of Korean Students in Jilin, I reformed it into the Ryugil Association of Korean Students in Jilin.

The Ryugil Association of Korean Students in Jilin, on the surface, professed itself to be an organization for promoting friendship among Korean young people and students but, in fact, it acted as a revolutionary youth and student organization for implementing the ideas of the DIU. The change in the name of the Ryogil Association of Korean Students in Jilin and the reformation of it from a fraternity organization into a revolutionary one were a great experience for us in the youth and student movement.

Influenced by the activities of the organizations we formed the tide in Jilin began to turn.

The daily routine of the young people and students changed beyond recognition. The young people and children within the Children's Association and the Ryugil Association of Korean Students in Jilin met by districts every morning. On Sundays all members used to go to Beishan Park in a column, march through the streets singing or hold an athletics meeting in the playground at the foot of Beishan Park.

In working among the young people and children, we applied different forms and methods to suit their tastes and ideological levels.

There were many children of Christians among the pupils in the Children's Association. They believed that God existed under the religious influence of their parents. However hard we explained to them that there was no God and that it was absurd to believe in one, it was useless because they were under such strong influence of their parents.

One day I asked a woman teacher at a Korean primary school under our influence to take the pupils who believed in God to church for a service.

She took them to church and made them pray all day as I had said; “Almighty God, we are hungry, please send some rice-cakes and bread for us.” But they received no rice-cakes or bread and still felt hungry. Then I asked the teacher to take them to the wheat field after the harvest and glean the grain. She did as I had said and they gleaned many ears of wheat. She threshed them and made some bread which she shared out among the pupils. While eating it, the pupils learned that it was better to earn bread by working than by praying to God for it.

This simple instance demonstrated how the thinking of the young people and children was remoulded and old conventions were abandoned.

In dissuading the children from going to church and constantly educating them so that they would not fall a prey to superstition, our aim was not to do away with religion itself. We wanted to prevent them from becoming weak-minded and enervated and so useless to the revolution if they were to fall a prey to religion and hold the Christian creed supreme. There is no law preventing religious believers from making the revolution, but young people and schoolchildren who lacked a scientific understanding of the world could be adversely affected by non-resistance advocated by religion.

In Jilin I saw members of the Children’s Association singing psalms in the street. That was how great was the influence exerted by religion on the children. But singing psalms would not block the enemy’s gun muzzle. We needed fighters who sang of decisive battles more than religious believers who sang psalms.

So we disseminated many revolutionary songs among the children. Soon the members of the Children’s Association who had

been singing psalms in the street marched through the streets singing the *Song of a Young Patriot* and the *Song of the Association of Korean Children in Jilin*.

I still remember the short course in Korean arranged in that summer holiday from among our activities after the birth of the Association of Korean Children in Jilin and the Ryugil Association of Korean Students in Jilin. We saw to it that the short course was attended by all the Korean children at Chinese primary schools and other Korean children who did not know their mother tongue. Most of them were born in Manchuria. They spoke Chinese better than Korean.

We proclaimed, “Koreans must know about Korea!” Kye Yong Chun, Kim Won U and Pak So Sim each gave lectures. Until then we had no qualified teacher. All the hardcore members of the organization were teachers and lecturers. The children who attended the 20-day course could all read children’s magazines after finishing the course.

The Children’s Association and the Association of Korean Students arranged an excursion to Mt. Lungtan, a picnic in Jiangnan Park, visits to sites of historical interest, public lectures, discussions, study sessions, debating contests, readers’ meetings, singing lessons, art performances and other extracurricular activities.

In most cases we used Jiangnan Park and Beishan Park for our secret rendezvous. Jiangnan Park was situated on a beautiful islet in the River Songhua, reminiscent of Rungna Islet. Some capitalists in Jilin had created a beautiful landscape there, like a botanical garden, by planting many trees; they earned money by charging for admission. They even grew peanuts in one empty place. In this park we often held secret meetings, in the guise of picnics.

Beishan Park was a more ideal rendezvous point than Jiangnan Park. Beishan Park could be used in all seasons, whereas Jiangnan

Park was mainly used in summer when it was covered with greenery. Bei-shan Park was usually full of the people of Jilin, so there were many public service facilities in and around Beishan Park. The street running up to Beishan Park was lined on either side with restaurants, sweet shops, toyshops, tobacconists, general stores, tea houses and places of amusement. There was also a big shop which specialized in Western goods.

People used to swarm to Beishan Park, attracted not only by the fine scenery there but also by the many sites of historical interest such as Yaowang Shrine (a place for worship to the God of Medicine) where sacrificial rites were performed.

In Jilin the three days of June 4 to 6 were fixed as a time for a festival at the shrine and every year during the festival under the auspices of the provincial government an official function was held in Beishan Park in honour of the birthday of the God of Medicine. The function was attended not only by ordinary people but also by local officials. The three days of the festival were a holiday.

When the festival was being celebrated the police authorities set up a temporary branch station on the east side of the road up to Beishan Park where they installed a telephone, and they stationed police squads on the hill to maintain public order and keep a constant watch and supervision so that sparks given off by the sticks of incense burning at the shrines of Yaowang, Guandi and Niangnian would not cause a fire. During the three days of the festival cabmen and rickshaw-men earned ten times more money than at ordinary times.

While the merchants were concerned only with making money, taking over the three days of the festival, the influential figures and far-sighted people of the town conducted social education designed to enlighten people, advertising popular short courses sponsored by the province.

Enlightenment champions from different professions coming from various places, brandishing their fists, delivered fervent speeches on patriotism, morals, the defence of law, aesthetics, unemployment, physical culture, hygiene and other subjects. This was a splendid spectacle, the like of which could not be seen elsewhere.

Taking advantage of the crowd we, too, sought out the masses and implanted progressive ideas in their minds; at times we held secret meetings. The basement of the Yaowang Shrine was a marvellous meeting place used exclusively by us. The priest of the temple had been won over to our side.

While attending school in Jilin, I gave lectures on many occasions. At times I delivered speeches at discussion meetings arranged by the nationalists. O Tong Jin, Ri Thak and other leaders of Jongui-bu often gathered together their fellow countrymen and the young people and students of the town and held lecture and discussion meetings for them on National Humiliation Day (August 29), March first and Tangun's birthday (October 3).

Members of the Ryugil Association of Korean Students in Jilin often argued whether Ri Jun's method was right or An Jung Gun's method was right. However much they argued, they could not reach a decision. So, in the summer of the year when the Ryogil Association of Korean Students in Jilin was reformed into the Ryugil Association of Korean Students in Jilin we submitted the question to debate, gathering together all the Korean students of the town at Son Jong Do's chapel. The discussion served to awaken the younger people of Jilin ideologically. Firstly they realized that the terrorist method did not serve the proper purpose and that a petition, even less so. They learned that it was a daydream to expect help from great powers and unanimously deemed it necessary to explore a new path for the independence of Korea.

At the symposiums and readers' meetings held in Jilin in those days questions relating to practical aspects of the Korean revolution were often discussed.

We fixed the first Sunday of May for Children's Association Day and created an atmosphere of unity by holding an athletics meeting attended by the Korean young people and students, their parents, influential figures and independence champions in Jilin on that day every year.

By uniting the children in this way we ensured that they took part in the work of educating and enlightening the people. Even the members of the Children's Association who were only ten years old went out to Jiangdong, Liudamen, Xinantun, Dahuanggou and other rural villages nearby in their holidays and enlightened the peasants there, while helping them in their work. It was a valuable achievement and a great experience for us to have made the children who had been breathing one hundred kinds of breath share the same breath, and this in Jilin where the factional strife was rife.

With the activities of the Association of Korean Children in Jilin, the Ryugil Association of Korean Students in Jilin and Marxist-Leninist reading circles proceeding briskly, a revolutionary force from the new generation grew rapidly in the Jilin area with the members of the DIU as its backbone.

Recognizing this, the Japanese consul general resident in Jilin turned his attention to our activities. Alarmed at the appearance of a new revolutionary force in the Jilin area and its rapid expansion, the consul general warned in his official report to the foreign minister of Japan that it was deserving of special attention since it was well organized and was likely to grow stronger in the future.

More than the factions of the Korean Communist Party which was disunited and disrupted and the nationalist force whose practical ability and ability to penetrate the masses were weak, the Japanese imperialists feared us who had broken with factional strife

and were clearing an original revolutionary path, penetrating the masses deeply.

The news that a new movement had been launched in Jilin spread not only to different parts of Manchuria but also to the homeland and to China proper. The news was spread mainly by the students studying at schools in Jilin and their parents.

Many young people flocked to Jilin from the homeland, Japan, the Maritime Province of Siberia and Manchuria to join our movement. We were visited by all sorts of young people from different backgrounds with different political opinions coming from different groups such as young people from the Independence Army, those who had been studying under adversity in Japan, those who had fought the white party, those who had taken part in the revolt in Guangzhou after graduating from the Huangpu Military Academy, those who had been evading pursuit by the Kuomintang reactionaries, and followers of Lenin, Sun Yat-sen and Rousseau. In this period Kim Hyok, Cha Kwang Su, Kim Jun, Chae Su Hang, An Pung and others joined us.

We admitted them to the DIU after educating them and extended our organization to the various schools in the town.

In the course of this we came to believe that it was necessary to create an organization which was bigger than the DIU and capable of embracing more people. Out of this necessity we reformed the DIU into the Anti-Imperialist Youth League (AIYL) on August 27, 1927 and the next day formed the Young Communist League of Korea (YCLK) from the core elements of the DIU. The AIYL was a mass illegal youth organization which was anti-imperialist and took over the aims and programme of the DIU. It was basically composed of young Korean people but we also allowed young Chinese people with a strong anti-imperialist stand to join.

The AIYL made a great contribution to rallying the anti-imperialist young people into the revolutionary ranks and to strengthening the mass foundation of the anti-Japanese struggle.

The organization spread to all the schools attended by Koreans in the town including Wenguang Middle School, Jilin Middle School No. 1, Jilin Middle School No. 5, Jilin Normal School, Jilin Girls' Middle School and Jilin Law College and struck root in Jiangdong, Xinantun and other rural areas around Jilin and in Liuhe County, Huadian County and Xingjing County. It spread to every place where there were Korean young people.

Soon the AIYL began to issue propaganda with the help of a mimeograph.

On Saturdays we used to go out to the rural villages nearby immediately after school to rally more young people. Leaving after school on Saturday, we returned home on Sunday afternoon after doing our work.

We reorganized the DIU into the AIYL and, following it, founded the YCLK because, since various organizations embracing young people and students in the Jilin and Fusong areas had been formed in a little over six months, an organization capable of leading these organizations in a unified manner was badly needed.

The formation of a new vanguard organization for the young people was a necessity for the development of the youth movement in those days.

As I had connections with all of these organizations, connections among them used to be established through my activities. In the case of Choe Chang Gol, Kim Won U and Kye Yong Chun, they had a hand in youth and student organizations as individual young communists.

The formation of a new vanguard organization was also an urgent need in the light of the prevailing situation.



At that time the Japanese imperialists were hastening their invasion of Manchuria. They ran wild to suppress the anti-Japanese feelings of the Korean and Chinese peoples, in collusion with the reactionary warlords in Manchuria, while intensifying their oppression of the Korean people.

The Korean youth rose in a widespread struggle against the Japanese imperialists and the reactionary Chinese warlords. This required a powerful vanguard organization to rally the young people and students organizationally, to control them in a unified manner and to lead their struggle.

Because the youth movement was on the road to disruption due to the strife for hegemony among the bigoted nationalists and factionalists the communists of the new generation were faced with the urgent task of forming a vanguard organization to save the young people from the danger of becoming disunited and guide them to unity and cohesion.

In northeast China at the time the Korean Young Communist Association of Manchuria was formed as an underground youth organization and such overt youth organizations were founded as the General Federation of Korean Youth in South Manchuria, the General Federation of Korean Youth in North Manchuria, the General Federation of Korean Youth in East Manchuria, the Jilin Youth League, the Kilhoe Youth League and the Samgakju Youth League.

The factionalists of different hues tried to draw these youth organizations to their side, and the nationalists of different factions vied with one another to stretch their hand out to these organizations with the result that the members of these organizations were not clear whether their organization was a communist one or a nationalist one. So the young people and students were divided into different groups. Some students were under the influence of the M-L group and others, under the

influence of the Tuesday group. As for the sons and daughters of the nationalists they sided with Jongui-bu, Chamui-bu or Sinmin-bu according to which organization their fathers belonged to and, further, were divided into a conservative group and a progressive one. As the young people and students had different opinions and belonged to different organizations, they were always at loggerheads with one another.

There was a need for a new vanguard organization to put the disrupted youth movement on the right track, remove young people from under the influence of the nationalist forces and factionalists and lead them along the true path of the communist revolution.

Frankly speaking, if the Korean Communist Party had played its part reasonably well, we would have been spared the trouble. There existed a party with communist ideas and many youth organizations, but they were of no benefit to us at all. This was a matter of regret and annoyance.

The Korean revolution was faced by many complex problems due to its specific character. It was beset with manifold difficulties and bottlenecks.

Complex problems constantly arose in our relations with the factionalists, nationalists, the Chinese people and the Comintern. On top of that, the Korean communists active in Manchuria were threatened by both the Japanese imperialists and the Chinese reactionary warlords.

In the light of this situation, the effective leadership of the revolution required a seasoned leadership core capable of countering it and a correct guiding theory.

Many fine young communists developed in the course of the struggle to implement the ideas of the DIU. A new type of young communist immune to factional strife, flunkeyism and the lust for power and untainted by the past developed into genuine core

elements capable of leading our youth movement and communist movement along a new path.

We acquired a guiding theory for the Korean revolution in the course of studying the new trends in Huadian and Jilin and paving the way for the struggle in the DIU.

Having decided to found the Young Communist League as a vanguard organization with a guiding theory, I set about to draw up a programme and rules for it.

Its programme emphasized that the Young Communist League should be guided by a theory that was bound up closely with the practice of the Korean revolution and should fully repudiate factionalism.

With these preparations as our basis, we held a meeting to found the Young Communist League of Korea (YCLK) beneath the Yaowang Shrine in Beishan Park on August 28, 1927.

The meeting was attended by Choe Chang Gol, Kim Won U, Kye Yong Chun, Kim Hyok, Cha Kwang Su, Ho Ryul, Pak So Sim, Pak Kun Won, Han Yong Ae, core elements of the AIYL and other young communists.

I delivered a report, which was published in pamphlet form.

That day we sang the *Internationale* side by side as we had done when founding the DIU.

The YCLK was an underground youth organization fighting against imperialism and for national liberation and communism, and which was formed by seasoned and tempered young people from different revolutionary organizations, the core elements of the AIYL forming its backbone.

The YCLK, the advance detachment of the Korean young communists, was the vanguard of the various mass organizations.

After founding the YCLK, we paid special attention to ensuring the purity of its ranks and strengthening their organizational and ideological unity and cohesion. If we had not

done so it would have been impossible to maintain its existence because of the manoeuvres of the military and civil police and the frantic subversive activities of the reactionaries and factionalists.

The YCLK attached great importance to the ideological education of its members and ensured that they made great efforts to study so as to raise their political, theoretical and leadership levels. They conducted serious study sessions and discussions on imperialism, colonies and national problems, as well as the immediate fighting tasks of the Korean revolution.

We attached importance to the organizational life of its members. In those days the YCLK held meetings for examining the conduct of its members once a month and reviewed their life. The members of the YCLK were tempered through their organizational life and it grew into a collective with a strong organization and rigid discipline.

We constantly tempered the members through practical activity, giving them a variety of assignments such as to lead lower organizations, enlighten young people, students and other people and make the rural villages revolutionary.

We constantly replenished the YCLK ranks with fine young people tempered in revolutionary organizations. As a result, the YCLK rapidly spread not only in and around Jilin but also to wide areas of Manchuria including Dunhua, Xingjing, Huadian, Fusong, Antu, Panshi, Changchun, Harbin, and to Korea including its northern part. The YCLK played the vanguard role in the Korean revolution. It is common knowledge that in the communist movement the party assumes the leadership of the mass organizations. But in our country the party was not playing its proper role, so the YCLK had to guide the organizations of workers, peasants and women, as well as of young people and students, taking upon itself the work devolving on the party.

After founding the YCLK, we went among the masses quietly and without a fuss. It is enough to do things for the revolution and the people whether others recognize it or not. This was our view and attitude. When others went about, claiming to be legitimate out of a desire for hegemony, the young communists of the new generation advanced along the path of revolution step by step, shunning vanity.

The YCLK played a glorious role in promoting the organizational unity of young people, training hardcore elements and strengthening the internal forces of our revolution. The founding of the YCLK was a great impetus to the work of the young communists to found a new type of party and played a pivotal role in expediting it. Most of the members of the first party organization formed in the summer of 1930 were vanguard young fighters trained through the YCLK.

Recently we have fixed August 28, the day of the foundation of the YCLK, as youth day.

## 4. The Expansion of the Organization

Following the formation of the Anti-Imperialist Youth League and the Young Communist League we widened our activities over a vast area. In order to expand the organization, the hardcore elements of the YCLK and AIYL left Jilin.

Although I was a student in those days, I also used to visit various places. I even frequented places several hundreds of miles away from Jilin in order to seek a new theatre of activity. I would leave Jilin by the evening train on Saturday and return by the night train the following day after visiting places such as Jiaohe, Kalun and Guyushu. Sometimes due to unavoidable circumstances I would miss classes. Most of the teachers with the exception of the headmaster, Li Guang-han and teacher Shang Yue, regarded my behaviour as very strange. Some people even guessed that probably I was working to pay my school fees because I had no father and my family was poor.

Being a student, many restrictions and limitations were imposed on me. I was always short of time because I had to attend classes, study after school and supervise the work of various organizations in every spare moment.

It was during my school holidays that I could conduct my activities freely without the restriction of time. At ordinary times we would make preparations and, when our holidays came, visited various places to form organizations and enlighten the masses.

Going among the people was a trend in the homeland, too. During their holidays many students in the homeland visited the farmers to educate them. In the summer of the year when I was

attending Hwasong Uisuk School, the newspaper *Joson Ilbo* formed enlightenment groups of students from secondary schools and older who were returning to their home villages during their holidays and sent them to the countryside after giving them a short course. Back in their home villages those students in the enlightenment groups conducted a campaign to abolish illiteracy by using the textbook on the Korean language prepared by the newspaper.

Those Korean students who were studying in Japan also returned to their homeland during their holidays. They formed lecture tour groups and visited various parts of the country to conduct enlightenment work. The youth associations belonging to the Chondoism and Christianity also visited the farmers and promoted the work of arousing the rural communities.

But the enlightenment movement conducted by the students at home did not develop to the level of revolutionizing and organizing the masses; it was confined to a mere reformist movement aimed at overcoming the nation's backwardness. This was owing to cruel suppression by the authorities of the Japanese government-general that regarded all national movements aspiring to the development of national consciousness as against their colonial rule, and to the ideological limitations of the leaders of such movements. Even the enlightenment movement started to decline in the middle of the 1930s.

That this movement was merely a reformist movement can be seen clearly from the activities the students conducted in the rural areas. The main aspect of their activities was to abolish illiteracy and reform the living environment in the rural communities to make it more healthy. The activities conducted by the members of the Christian youth association included all kinds of cultural enlightenment aimed at guiding and inducing the rural population to lead a modern life. Their activities embodied a campaign to

improve cooking and a movement to keep wells clean, and then proceeded to explaining chicken-raising and silk making and how to understand the certificates and applications issued by the authorities.

Taking advantage of the favourable conditions in which there was no direct suppression by the Japanese imperialists, we paid great attention to gearing our activities to enlightening the rural communities to conduct a positive political struggle; we closely combined these activities with those to organize the masses and make them revolutionary. Our work with the masses was conducted in such a way as to awaken them with education in patriotism, revolutionary education, anti-imperialist education and class education as the main aspect and to unite them in various mass organizations.

We made every possible effort to make the masses revolutionary. We did so because we had broken with the old way of thinking that the masses were only ignorant and uncivilized people who needed enlightenment; we held the view that the people were our teachers and the main motive force behind the revolution, and we made this view our absolute belief.

With this point of view we went among the people.

“Go among the people!”

From that time on this became my motto throughout my life.

I started my revolutionary activities by going among the people and today, too, I am continuing to make the revolution by mixing with the people. I am also reviewing my life by going among the people. If I had neglected contact with the people just once and forgotten the existence of the people even for a moment, I would not have been able to maintain the pure and genuine love for the people which I formed in my teens and become a true servant of the people.



Whenever I think of our society today in which the rights of the people are fully ensured and their wisdom and creativity are displayed without limitation, I feel grateful to the vehicle which first took me to the people when I was in Jilin.

It was during the winter holidays of 1927 that we first went among the people in real earnest.

The winter holidays were a bed of roses for the children of rich families. They either spent the whole winter at home reading love stories or travelled by train to such large cities as Changchun, Harbin and Beijing to see the sights. On lunar New Year's Day they prepared tasty food and made merry with fireworks. The Chinese have the custom of celebrating for a month from January 1 to February 2 by the lunar calendar. They call February 2 by the lunar calendar *lontaitou* (the day when the dragon raised its head), and finish their holiday only when they have eaten all the pigs, even the heads, which they killed in January.

But, we could neither go sightseeing nor enjoy the holidays as they did. Instead, we thought about how we could do more for the revolution during the holiday.

When our holiday started I went to Changchun, taking with me the members of our art troupe. No sooner had I returned from there than I left for Fusong. Pak Cha Sok and Kye Yong Chun also went to Fusong with me, having agreed to spend the winter at my home.

We were very busy during that winter holiday.

As soon as I reached home I was surrounded by the members of the Saenal Children's Union. They told me about the difficulties the union was encountering in its work.

From what the chairman of the union told me I realized that there were many problems to be solved.

In order to settle their difficulties we devoted a great deal of time to working with the members of the Saenal Children's Union. We told the leading members of the union how they should conduct

the activities of the art propaganda troupe, how they should conduct social activities, how they should work with the masses and how they should conduct the internal work of the union. At the same time, we frequently attended political symposiums and meetings to assess the conduct of the members.

Following an improvement in the work of the Children's Union we formed the Paeksan Youth League with hardcore young people from the area of Fusong. We gave it the name of the Paeksan Youth League in that it was an organization of young people living around Mt. Paektu. However, that organization was in fact a guise for the Anti-Imperialist Youth League. We called the organization simply a youth league instead of giving it the name of the Paeksan Anti-Imperialist Youth League because we wanted to confuse the enemy and disguise the organization. The Paeksan Youth League conducted overt activities in the guise of an organization under nationalist influence.

By rousing the members of the Paeksan Youth League we ensured that night schools were set up in Chongwajae and other rural villages in the area.

I judged that, in view of the growing number and expanding ranks of youth organizations, a newspaper to provide ideological nourishment for young people and broad sections of the masses was imperative. But we had to start the newspaper from scratch. We wanted to print some 100 copies of each issue. However, we had neither a mimeograph nor paper.

True, there was a small printing house in Fusong which was run by a Chinese man. But, in view of the content of the newspaper, it was impossible to rely on that print shop.

After pondering over the matter deeply, I was determined to produce the newspaper by copying articles by hand. I mobilized the activists of the Saenal Children's Union and the hardcore members

of the Paeksan Youth League to do this. It took us more than a week to transcribe 100 copies.

On January 15, 1928 we finally published the first issue of the newspaper *Saenal* (New Day—Tr.).

It is hard to believe now that in those days we had the energy to write all the articles. I frequently miss the strength and youth we displayed in those days. At that time we felt the greatest happiness in devoting ourselves wholly to the revolution.

A youth who has no dream, no courage, no ardour, no aspiration, no fighting spirit and no romance is not a youth. In one's youth one must have a noble ideal and fight stubbornly to realize it whatever the difficulties. All the fruits which young people, who possess fresh ideas and a healthy and strong body, have cultivated and plucked at the cost of their sweat and blood are valuable wealth for the country. The people never forget the heroes who have created this wealth.

A man in his latter years misses his youth because his youth is the period of his life when he can do most work. A man is happiest when he can do a lot of work.

Afterwards I had the newspaper *Saenal* printed with the help of a mimeograph I had obtained from some close acquaintances of my father.

The most conspicuous of our activities during the winter holiday of 1927 was the performances of the art propaganda troupe. The art propaganda troupe in Fusong comprised members of the Saenal Children's Union, the Paeksan Youth League and the Women's Association. This art troupe performed for about a month in Fusong and the neighbouring rural villages. During our performance tour we formed organizations and enlightened the masses in many places. Such dramas as *Blood at an International Conference*, *An Jung Gun Shoots Ito Hirobumi* and *A Letter from a*

*Daughter* are literary works which we created and put on the stage in Fusong in the winter of that year.

When the art propaganda troupe, prior to its performance tour, was performing in the city of Fusong, the warlord authorities arrested me for no reason and took me to prison. Some feudalists had informed against me to the authorities because they did not like the content of our performance.

Zhang Wei-hua, a primary school fellow of mine, went to a lot of trouble to free me. He persuaded his father to put pressure upon the police authorities to stop them from searching our house.

Zhang Wei-hua's father had been an intimate friend of my father because he had formed a good understanding with my father in the course of visiting our house to receive medical treatment. Although he was very wealthy he was a conscientious man. When my father initiated the re-establishment of Paeksan School in Fusong and was anxious to get permission for it, he had to negotiate with the people concerned about the matter.

Because such an influential man as Zhang Wei-hua's father put pressure on the police, the warlord authorities had no choice but to release me.

The Koreans in Fusong rushed to the warlord authorities and demanded that they release me. My mother roused the organization to action and urged the masses to work for my release. Even some influential Chinese figures condemned the conduct of the warlord authorities and demanded my freedom.

A short time later the warlord authorities were compelled to set me free.

After being released from the police station I left for Fusuhe village at the head of the art propaganda troupe. The art propaganda troupe put on performances in this village for three days.

People from the neighbouring villages came to see our performance. So news about it spread widely around the surrounding settlements.

Having heard of our performance, some people from Tunzidong came to invite us to their village. We accepted their invitation with pleasure. The performance in Tunzidong was a great success. At the request of the villagers we had to extend our stay several times.

After the first performance, the chairman of the Saenal Children's Union rushed backstage and told me that the village elder had sent for me.

An elderly man with a noble presence, a pipe in his mouth, was waiting for me outside the house where we had just given our performance. He was gazing at me attentively from beneath his long, thick eyebrows. The young man from Tunzidong who had guided us to his village approached me and told me that the elderly man was "Cha Cholli." (Cha is the family name and Cholli means a thousand *ri*, i.e., 250 miles—Tr.)

No sooner had I heard the name Cha Cholli than I bowed my head, saying:

"Old man, I am sorry that I am greeting you only now. I have not been able to greet you earlier because I heard you had gone out to the neighbouring village."

"I heard about your art troupe there and have rushed back. Is it right that you are the son of Mr. Kim Hyong Jik?"

"Yes, it is right."

"With a son like you, Mr. Kim can rest easy in his grave. It is the first time in my life that I have seen such a fine performance."

I was somewhat perplexed, for the old man was treating me courteously and formally.

So I told him: "Old man, don't speak like that, please. Why do you speak like that to someone who would be your own son?"

That day the elderly man invited me to his house.

On my way to his home I asked him quietly:

“Old man, excuse me for asking you such an indiscreet question. Is it true that you cover 250 miles a day?...”

“Ha, ha! So you, too, have heard that rumour. In the prime of my life I could cover half that distance.”

Hearing him I realized that the elderly man Cha Cholli must have been a great fighter for independence as he was painted.

There was a reason that his surname was followed by a nickname Cholli instead of his real name.

Because of his nickname Cholli the elderly man was considered a mysterious figure among the Koreans in Manchuria.

During his lifetime my father had once expressed his admiration for the fast walking-speed of the elderly man. Then he told me that the nickname Cholli had been used for the elderly man from the time when he had conducted volunteer activities in the Kanggye area.

After coming to Manchuria Cha Cholli had belonged to Chamui-bu and been a subordinate of Sim Ryong Jun. I was told that he had most resolutely opposed Chamui-bu being placed under the rule of the Shanghai Provisional Government. Some people from Jongui-bu who were against the idea of an organization of the Independence Army falling under the jurisdiction of the Provisional Government, highly praised the stand of the elderly man. Among the people in Jongui-bu, the leadership body of which mostly consisted of ex-soldiers, the tendency prevailed of being dissatisfied with the Provisional Government which was made up of an overwhelming majority of civil officials.

That day elderly Cha Cholli told me a lot which would later serve as a lesson for me. He lamented bitterly over the fact that we had been deprived of our country owing to the corrupt and incompetent feudal rulers, although the Korean nation had

previously been quite able to repulse the Japanese imperialist aggressors and develop as the dignified people of an independent state. He told me that one must not merely talk if one wants to conduct the independence movement and that one must take up arms and kill more Japanese. In addition, he said that we must sharpen our vigilance against the Japanese imperialists because they were extremely crafty; then he told me the following story:

“Have you ever heard how the Kyongsong Match Factory was ruined? The matches produced at this factory had the trademark ‘Monkey’ and were very famous. Although the matches themselves were good, the trademark caught the eye of people because it was so strange. The trademark showed a monkey with a peach branch on its shoulder. It is said that the Japanese built a match factory in Korea, but they did not make much money from it because of its matches. So, after contriving various artifices they bought tens of thousands of boxes of ‘Monkey’ matches, went to a desert island and there soaked all the matchsticks in water. Then they dried them and sold them at the market. Everyone who bought these matches found that they were not fit for use because they did not light, so they bought only the Japanese matches. The Kyongsong Match Factory went bankrupt. That is what the Japanese are like.” Although it was impossible to confirm the truth of the story, it was very valuable in understanding Japanese imperialism.

The old man told that when the Japanese fired five shots with a five-chambered rifle he, in the prime of his life, could fire three shots with a matchlock. He added that now that he was confined to his home and was unable to fight any more because of his old age, he had become anxious and found it unbearable.

The old man said that the singing and dancing *Unity Pole* which we had put on the stage that day was very good. He deplored the fact that all the volunteer activities had come to nothing because they had failed to be combined and that the Independence

Army had become impotent and was being chased by the Japanese because the soldiers did not combine their efforts and acted separately.

“Koreans should fight the Japanese in unity even if they are only three.”

This was what old man Cha Cholli said in a harsh tone. He was quite right. Only those who had experienced that unity meant victory and disunity meant ruin could say such a thing.

The old man took my hand and asked us, the younger generation, to fight well, saying that he would not be able to fight for Korea's independence because of his old age. Hearing him I felt my noble mission to be to make the revolution well as a son of Korea, never failing to live up to the expectations of the people.

What old man Cha Cholli told me that night made a great impression on me. His words that Koreans should fight the Japanese in unity even if they were only three, later served as a great lesson to us in our struggle.

Thus when we took the art propaganda troupe and mixed with the people we not only awakened the masses but also learned from them. As it is so now, so in those days, too, our teacher was the people.

Therefore, whenever I meet officials I tell them earnestly to go among the people. I always emphasize that going among the people is like taking a tonic and that failing to do so is like taking poison. One can find such people as old man Cha Cholli only when one mixes with the people. One finds philosophy, literature and political economy among the people.

Old man Cha Cholli was assassinated by his superior officer Sim Ryong Jun while he was working as head guard of Chamui-bu.

When I heard this sad news I was in a fury of indignation. I recollected the words of old man Cha Cholli that Koreans should unite to fight the Japanese even if they were only three. Such



grievous misfortune would not have happened if the leaders of Chamui-bu had combined their strength as the old man had said.

We greeted lunar New Year's Day that year in Tunzidong.

After New Year's Day I sent the members of the art troupe back to Fusong and headed for Antu with Kye Yong Chun and Pak Cha Sok. In Antu County was Naidaoshan village inhabited solely by Koreans. This village, situated at the foot of Mt. Paektu and known as the first village under the sky, was a remote mountain village in a dense forest. The word Naidaoshan meant the mountain like an island in a forest. The Chinese call this mountain Naitoushan, meaning like a teat.

Fighters for the independence of Korea had been visiting this mountainous village for a long time. Hong Pom Do and Choe Myong Rok, veterans of the Independence Army had been to this village at one time.

We had already sent Ri Je U, a member of the DIU, to Naidaoshan with instructions to rally the young people of the area in an organization. We had done so because we intended to make the area around Mt. Paektu a major revolutionary base in the future.

Ri Je U (Ri U) hailed from Hwanghae Province. His father, while engaged in the independence movement, had been in contact with my father in the days when he was in Changbai. For that reason Ri Je U naturally joined me.

After our departure from Huadian I met Ri Je U again when I was organizing the Paeksan Youth League in Fusong. At that time I discussed with him the matter of forming a branch of the Paeksan Youth League in Naidaoshan village. He told me, half jokingly, not only to give him tasks but also to come to him once and help him.

It was nearly 80 miles from Fusong to Naidaoshan. If one views Naidaoshan from China it is the last village in Manchuria.

However, if one sees it from Korea it is the first village on the other side of Mt. Paektu. Nobody lived within 25 miles of Naidaoshan.

We arrived at the village towards evening and, led by Ri Je U, stopped at the house of Mr. Choe who worked as a doctor of Korean medicine.

Choe told us that Jang Chol Ho had stayed twice in the room where we were staying and that Ri Kwan Rin had also been there. I could not help feeling solemn at the thought that we were continuing the revolution in a place which had been visited by my father and cultivated by his friends.

After a few days in Naidaoshan village I could understand why Ri Je U had insisted that I visit the place. Naidaoshan village was very difficult for outsiders to establish a foothold.

Most of the inhabitants of the village had the surnames Choe, Kim and Jo. They shunned the outside world and married among themselves. The daughter of a Choe married the son of a Kim, the daughter of a Kim was married to the son of a Jo and the daughter of a Jo became the daughter-in-law of a Choe. Because marriages were conducted in this way in a small village in a valley, all the people in the village were related and addressed one another as "Sister," "Brother," "Uncle" and "In-laws."

Most of the people in this village believed in the religion of Chonbulgyo. There was a legend that 99 fairies had descended from the sky and bathed in Lake Chon on Mt. Paektu before going back up to the sky, so, they had built a 99-room temple called the Tongdok Palace which they visited twice a year to offer up prayers. They had also built a temple called "Chonbulsu" in their village and went there every week or 10 days to pray.

The day after our arrival in Naidaoshan was the day when the believers in Chonbulgyo were to pray at the temple. Guided by Ri Je U, our party went up near to the temple and saw something splendid. The believers had gathered in one place, all of them,

irrespective of sex, doing up their hair like the people of Koguryo and wearing colourful dresses. They were beating gongs, small cymbals and drums and ringing wooden bells with a clapper; the sounds of these instruments “Tongdokgung, tongdokgung” were very solemn. They said that this was the reason why the temple was called Tongdok Palace.

Ri Je U said that the Chonbulgyo religion was a source of trouble in the Naidaoshan area. He disliked Chonbulgyo because of his simple conception that religion was opium. When I heard about this religion from Ri Je U in Fusong, I thought the same about it. However, having seen how serious were the believers in Chonbulgyo who were performing the ceremonies and how magnificent was the Tongdok Palace, I was obliged to think about it more deeply.

Guided by Choe and accompanied by Ri Je U, I went that day to see Jang Tu Bom, the founder of the religion of Chonbulgyo.

Jang Tu Bom had once fought in the Independence Army. However, with this army becoming impotent, he threw away his rifle and went to Naidaoshan. There he prayed to the mystical wonders of Nature on Mt. Paektu to deal out divine punishment to the Japanese and bless the Korean nation; thus he created the Chonbulgyo faith.

While I was talking to the founder of the religion, I could not take my eyes off the ears of millet hanging from the ceiling of his house. This was because the ears of millet were hanging in the same way as in Choe’s house. I asked Ri Je U if they were keeping these ears of millet for use as seeds. But he said that the millet was used in offering prayers.

The people in this area, where rice could not grow, used millet instead of rice when preparing sacrificial food. So in every household ears of millet hung either from the pillars or the ceiling. Even when they missed meals because of a shortage of food, they

never touched this millet. They used it only when going to the temple on Mt. Paektu to offer up prayers. They pounded it on a quern with great sincerity, winnowed it and, with a wooden spoon, picked out the broken bits of millet, the grass seeds, the unhulled or half-hulled millet and odd ends of straw or blades of dry grass. Then they collected only grains of the same size one by one and wrapped them in Korean paper before putting the millet in clear spring water.

“Because of the damnable religion of Chonbulgyo the people of Naidaoshan have all gone crazy. It seems that the words of Marx, who defined religion as opium, are extremely wise. I wonder whether it is necessary and possible to remould these religious believers....”

Ri Je U grumbled thus and confessed that he sometimes felt the urge to set fire to the Tongdok Palace which he felt was taking the soul out of the people of Naidaoshan.

I criticized Ri Je U for his narrow point of view.

This is what I told him:

“Needless to say, I don’t deny the proposition of Marx that religion is opium. However, you are mistaken if you think that this proposition can be applied in all cases. Do you think it right to brand as opium Chonbulgyo, a religion which prays for dealing out divine punishment to Japan and blessing the Korean nation? I regard Chonbulgyo as a patriotic religion and all the believers in this religion as patriots. Our only task is to rally these patriots into a single force.”

Ri Je U and I exchanged opinions seriously. In the course of this we reached the conclusion that we should not destroy the religion of Chonbulgyo but actively support the anti-Japanese feelings of the believers in it. So I stayed there for about ten days and worked among the villagers. The believers in Chonbulgyo

readily agreed with me when I said that one could not liberate the country merely by believing in a religion.

Indeed, that winter the people of Naidaoshan were utterly sincere in their treatment of us. The principal food of the people of Naidaoshan was potatoes. Potatoes mixed with kidney-beans were peculiarly tasty. Kye Yong Chun even joked, saying that the flat pieces of stone covering the floor of the room would crack because of people passing wind.

If we had judged the situation merely on the strength of Ri Je U's report in Jilin without going to Naidaoshan, or of rumours, we would not have gained a favourable impression of the religion of Chonbulgyo. We were able to appreciate the religion of Chonbulgyo and its believers fairly because we went to Naidaoshan and saw the Tongdok Palace and the sincerity of the believers as they offered up prayers, as well as the ears of millet hanging from the main beam of every roof.

It is never possible to possess a popular personality and a popular way of thinking that conform to the interests of the people if one only sits at one's desk. Nor can one possess them by indulging in empty talk. They can be attained only through direct contact with the people to enable one to see and apprehend personally, with one's own eyes and ears, the feelings of the people, their glances, their countenance, their manner of speaking, their gestures and their behaviour, not to mention their voice.

We gave precedence to political work to educate the villagers. Then we formed a village branch of the Paeksan Youth League and Children's Expeditionary Corps.

After I returned to Jilin my uncle Hyong Gwon took charge of the work of the Paeksan Youth League. Together with Ri Je U he formed branches of this youth league in many villages in the area of Changbai such as Toksu, Tokgol, Cholgol, Yaksudong, Imsugol

and Diyangzi as well as in the different areas of the homeland such as Sinpha, Pochon, Hyesan, Kapsan and Samsu.

The Paeksan Youth League entrusted the task of taking charge of its Changbai area organization to Ri Je U. He discharged this heavy responsibility with credit. My uncle Hyong Gwon and Ri Je U underwent many trials in working to make the area around Mt. Paektu revolutionary. Thanks to this we got a lot of support from the masses when we were conducting our revolutionary struggle later in this area.

One's holidays are periods when one stops studying and takes a rest for a while. However, during the winter holiday of that year I learned a lot which I would not have been able to learn from books.

After returning to Jilin from our winter holiday we reviewed the work conducted by the Young Communist League and the Anti-Imperialist Youth League over the previous six months and set the task of forming more mass organizations for various social strata involving young people and other people from all walks of life.

In order to implement this task, hardcore members of the Young Communist League such as Kim Hyok, Cha Kwang Su, Choe Chang Gol, Kye Yong Chun and Kim Won U left for Xingjing, Liuhe, Changchun, Yitong and Huaide Counties and for Korea. There they rapidly increased the numbers of various kinds of mass organizations such as the Young Communist League and the Anti-Imperialist Youth League.

I stayed in Jilin and conducted the work of organizing the Peasants Union in Xinantun. Uniting the peasants in an organization is the work of preparing them as the motive force of the revolution. In particular, under the circumstances in our country where the peasants made up the vast majority of the population, winning them over was a matter of key importance on which depended the victory of the revolution.

We went to Jiangdong village and organized there the Peasants Union, a branch of the Anti-Imperialist Youth League and the Women's Association. Following this we formed branches of the Anti-Imperialist Youth League in Kalun and Dahuanggou.

In the area of Jiaohe, too, we formed a branch of the Anti-Imperialist Youth League. It was after I met Kang Myong Gun, head of the organizational department of the Ryosin Youth Association, that I established relations with the young people in Jiaohe. This man seemed to have heard a great deal about me from Jang Chol Ho. Jiaohe was like an intermediary stop for Jang Chol Ho. Whenever he travelled between Jilin and Fusong he dropped in at Kang Myong Gun's house in Jiaohe and informed him of the movement of the young people and students in Jilin. Then, when he returned to Jilin, he told me the news from Jiaohe. This is how Kang Myong Gun came to know me and I became interested in the youth movement in the Jiaohe area. It was at this time that Kang Myong Gun came to Jilin to see me.

In those days I was staying at Jang Chol Ho's house in Dongdatan to attend school.

Kang Myong Gun was more than 10 years older than me. However, he addressed me as "Sir" all the time and confided to me all the sufferings he was undergoing in his work and impatiently appealed to me for help. I could not help feeling sympathetic towards him, and could not but admire his revolutionary ardour, for he had come to visit me who was no more than an ordinary secondary school pupil, from Jiaohe which was 45 miles from Jilin.

In Jiaohe County in those days the Ryosin Youth Association was operating in the northwest and the Lafa Youth Association was active in the southeast with the Lafa Mountains as the boundary. The young Korean people in the Jiaohe area were mainly involved in these two youth organizations.

Initially the young people joined an organization with a noble aim. However, they gradually became disillusioned at the conduct of the leaders of the nationalist movement who only struggled for power and collected funds.

At the same time they were stunned by the empty talk of the pseudo-Marxists who clamoured only for the “proletarian revolution” and “hegemony.”

This was more than enough for me to understand the feelings of Kang Myong Gun when he said that they were in confusion and unable to find a path to follow.

I told Kang Myong Gun about the state of the movement of the young people and students in the Jilin area and about the experience we had gained in our work.

I also told him to make good preparations, when he was back in Jiaohe, for forming a branch of the Anti-Imperialist Youth League. And, when he was leaving, I gave him many Marxist-Leninist publications.

Although I had tried hard to awaken him in all sincerity, I could not feel easy about the work in Jiaohe after Kang Myong Gun had returned there.

After being determined for some time to visit Jiaohe, I went there at last through Laoilling. It must have been the spring of 1928. Kang Myong Gun was delighted to see me, saying that he had been thinking of visiting Jilin again. He said that, although nothing had seemed to be a problem when he was in Jilin, he had found many problems upon his return.

The rural youth in Jiaohe disagreed firstly on the matter of how to form the organization. Some claimed that, because the Ryosin Youth Association was an organization of nationalists, they should break with it immediately and form the Anti-Imperialist Youth League comprising those who shared the same idea. Others insisted that they should break up the Ryosin Youth Association.



On the problem of whom they should admit into the organization, too, they did not have a correct view. They excluded acceptable young people from those wishing to be admitted into the organization claiming, for instance, that it was difficult for some people to become members of the organization because they were “hostile elements” or “waverers.”

I spent the day with the villagers in a room they used for enjoyment. Lying there with my head on a wooden pillow, I told them that in order to form an organization it was necessary to win over as many people as possible and that, to this end, it was important to educate and persuade people persistently instead of dividing them into one side or another.

I also told them about the need to prevent young people from being affected by the nationalists and factionalists and to increase the role of the progressive hardcore young people in the Ryosin Youth Association and Lafa Youth Association. I also discussed their tasks with them one by one. Then I selected five hardcore young people from the Ryosin Youth Association and formed the Jiaohe branch of the Anti-Imperialist Youth League with them. After that I visited the Jiaohe area frequently and worked with the members of the Anti-Imperialist Youth League there.

I also started to unite in our organization the young people in the General Federation of Korean Youth in East Manchuria. In those days most of the young Korean people who were studying in Longjing were involved in the General Federation of Korean Youth in East Manchuria. They were under the influence of the Tuesday group.

But, Kim Jun, a pupil from Tonghung Middle School who was working as the head of the organizational department of this organization, came to see me after reading the magazines and pamphlets we had issued in Jilin. Through him I learned about the situation of the youth movement in the area of Longjing.

After his return from Jilin, Kim Jun maintained contact with me and started to spread my ideas among the pupils of various schools in Longjing such as Taesong Middle School, Tonghung Middle School and Unjin Middle School. Through them we taught our progressive idea to the young people of Jiandao and in the area within the jurisdiction of six towns in the homeland, including Hoeryong and Jongsong.

In those days I also paid attention to dealing with workers. In Jilin there were many factories, large and small, such as a thermal power station, a locomotive depot, a match factory, a textile mill and a rice mill. However, there was no organization to speak of, no organization to embrace the working class. The only organization that existed in those days was the Hansong Association which was formed in the spring of 1927 with the aim of finding employment for Korean workers and helping them in their everyday life.

We educated a young man who had come to the rural area after working at the Jilin Thermal Power Station and admitted him to the Anti-Imperialist Youth League. Then we had him take a job at the power station again. Thus we established a foothold at the Jilin Thermal Power Station and started to rally progressive workers.

By rousing the members of the Ryugil Association of Korean Students, we organized a night school for the workers at the pier on the River Songhua and, on such days as the anniversary of the March First Popular Uprising, May Day and national humiliation day, we visited them to make speeches and give art performances. On the basis of such preparatory work we formed the Anti-Japanese Trade Union in August 1928. The man in charge of this organization was a core member of the Anti-Japanese Youth League.

This was the first time for us to extend the domain of our activities to the working class and unite them in an organization. Until that time we had been expediting the awakening and

organization of the young people and students, regarding them as the main object of our work.

We had this Anti-Japanese Trade Union, with Korean workers as its core, revitalize the Hansong Association, an overt organization. The Hansong Association gradually acquired a distinct political trend. Afterwards the Hansong Association collected subscriptions and sent them to the Wonsan Labour Federation in order to help the workers of Wonsan with their general strike. When Korea suffered from a flood disaster in the summer of 1930, this organization formed a relief association in cooperation with various Korean organizations and collected a contribution for the flood victims. This organization also played a major role in the struggle against the Jilin-Hoeryong railway project.

We accumulated extremely useful experiences in the course of reforming into revolutionary organizations, with Jilin and Jiaohe as the centre, the youth organizations which were under the influence of the nationalists and factionalists.

It can be said that the life of a revolutionary begins by going among the masses and that it is over when he parts from them.

I think that if my days at Hwasong Uisuk School when I organized the DIU were the start of my work among the young people and students, my days at Jilin Yuwen Middle School when I formed and expanded the Young Communist League and the Anti-Imperialist Youth League were the heyday of my work among the young people when I, going beyond the bounds of the students, went deep into the midst of all sections of the masses including the workers and peasants and sowed the seed of the revolution everywhere I went.

At that time people referred to the activities of the young communists from among the new generation and their influence, the “Jilin wind.”

## **5. The Demonstration of Unity**

Having formed and built up our organizations we launched our practical struggle.

The struggle began with a student strike at Yuwen Middle School in the summer of 1928.

Until that time various matters concerning the running of Yuwen Middle School ranging from the management of the dining-hall, to the financial administration and to the operation of the library had been handled without problem in accordance with the democratic opinions of the progressive teachers and students. Our activities at the school were relatively free from restraint. This was a result of our struggle in cooperation with the school affairs committee.

However, the reactionary teachers manipulated by the warlords were never happy about this democratic system established through the joint efforts of the teaching staff and students. They tried to disrupt this system and deal with all matters at the school as they pleased. Among the teachers at Yuwen Middle School appointed by the Office of Education there were warlords' agents who were always on the alert. Reactionary teachers, such as those in charge of school affairs, moral education and physical training were all paid agents of the enemy's intelligence service. They manipulated the conservative students and young delinquents from the families of the landlords and bureaucrats who followed the warlords' administration in order to probe constantly into the students' ideological trends and the activities of the revolutionary organizations.

In the summer of 1928 we held mass rallies at the school almost every day to protest against the piratic second expedition of the Japanese imperialist troops to Shandong and the atrocities they committed in Jinan.

This expedition was an important event by which the policy of the Tanaka government towards China could be judged. Japan's first expedition to the Shandong area had been made immediately after the formation of the cabinet of Prime Minister Tanaka Kiichi in May 1927. At that time the National Revolutionary Army of Jiang Jie-shi was advancing towards the Shandong peninsula in pursuit of Zhang Zuo-lin's army stationed in Fengtian. In order to protect the warlord Zhang Zuo-lin whom the Japanese imperialists had trained from Jiang's army that was advancing northward, the Tanaka government, on the pretext of protecting the lives and property of the Japanese, dispatched 2,000 troops from Lushun (Port Arthur) to Qingdao and later sent a reinforcement of 2,000 troops from Japan proper to the Shandong area.

Because Japan's first expedition frustrated the northward advance of Jiang's army and because Jiang guaranteed the safety of the lives and property of the Japanese resident in the Shandong area, the Japanese troops withdrew from the area that autumn.

But Jiang's army resumed its revolutionary advance northward in the spring of 1928, so the fascist Tanaka government decided to send a second expedition and moved its troops in Tianjin and 5,000 troops from the Kumamoto division in Japan proper to occupy the railway in the Shandong area and seize Qingdao and Jinan. Jiang's National Revolutionary Army also entered Jinan, and there was a clash between the soldiers of the two countries. The Japanese occupation army massacred many Chinese people in Jinan. A diplomat of the Kuomintang government was also killed by the Japanese soldiers.

The three shameless expeditions of the Japanese imperialist army to Shandong triggered off an outburst of resentment at the Japanese among the Korean and Chinese peoples. It provoked a strong protest and denunciation within Japan against the diplomatic policies of the Tanaka government.

Japan's ultimate aim in dispatching her troops to Shandong was to separate Manchuria and the Huabei area from continental China and make them her colony. She needed a lever for that aim, and this was to be Zhang Zuo-lin. Japan calculated that she could occupy Manchuria without great difficulty if she were to tame and support him properly. The shots that echoed in Jinan were a warning of a possible massacre of tens of thousands of people in China in later years. When the Japanese imperialists were freely killing even their compatriots in China in order to create a pretext for sending in their troops, the Chinese people had a premonition of the imminent misfortune that would befall them.

We organized public lectures, speeches and protest meetings to denounce the Japanese imperialist policy of aggression and the

treacherous acts of the Kuomintang, and thus stirred up our fellow students.

The reactionary teachers labelled our activities as communist propaganda and thus created a pretext for repression. They suddenly raided the school library and seized the progressive books there. They put pressure on the headmaster, Li Guang-han, to expel all the Korean students from the school, pretending to have found some important evidence against them. They alleged that the Korean students were either communist masterminds or the “spies of Japan” and were hostile to the Chinese teachers, so they could not conduct the noisy classes they attended. By the same token, the Right-wing students wantonly violated the democratic system at the school, insulted the progressive students and slandered the headmaster and the progressive teachers. Shang Yue was the prime target of their attack.

If the reactionary teachers and the students they manipulated had been left to their own devices, it would have been impossible for us to continue our academic pursuits and the youth movement freely. With the aim of driving out the reactionary teachers and defending the democratic system by drawing on an organized force, we began a student strike centred on the members of the Young Communist League and the Anti-Imperialist Youth League.

Our demands were, first, that the treatment of the students be improved; second, that subjects be taught as required by the students; and third, that no more pressure be put on the progressive teachers and the headmaster.

The progressive teachers also threatened the provincial government, saying that they would enlist the help of the public if the students’ demands were not met. Leaflets and written appeals demanding the expulsion of the reactionary teachers were posted everywhere in the city. They were also thrown into the boarding

houses of the reactionary teachers and the provincial government building.

As the student strike at Yuwen Middle School reached its height, the other middle schools in the city threatened the provincial government that they would join the strike.

The provincial government sensed that the student strike was spreading across the city; they reluctantly dismissed the reactionary teachers, including the teachers in charge of moral education, and accepted our demands.

That was our first victory in the mass struggle. In the course of this we became confident that we could emerge victorious in the struggle if we defined a proper target and organized the masses well.

Through our successful student strike, we gained experience and training. The strike encouraged the young people and students to follow us with greater confidence. We reviewed the success we had achieved in the strike and made preparations for mobilizing the enthusiastic young people and students in an active anti-Japanese struggle on a grander scale.

The schemes of the Japanese imperialists who had long been speeding up their preparations for the invasion of Manchuria became more blatant around this time.

In May 1928 Muraoka, the commander of the Japanese Kwantung Army, planned to send the 40th composite brigade to Fengtian (the present Shenyang) on the excuse of dealing with developments in China proper, and to move the army's headquarters to Fengtian. Subsequently they blew up a train on a railway bridge at the entrance of Fengtian, the bridge where the south Manchuria railway and the Beijing-Fengtian railway met, killing Zhang Zuo-lin who was on his way back from Beijing to Fengtian. This was a deliberate prelude to the invasion of Manchuria.



If they occupied Manchuria, it would mean great difficulties for us who were active in northeast China. Until that time the Japanese imperialists could not deal with the Korean communists and independence fighters as they pleased because Manchuria was under the jurisdiction of China, but their occupation of Manchuria would alter the situation.

While making careful military preparations for the invasion of Manchuria, the Japanese imperialists, who had contained Jiang Jieshi during three expeditions and stretched their tentacles deep into continental China, speeded up the Jilin-Hoeryong railway project they had been pushing ahead with for a long time as a part of their preparations, the project to connect Jilin, a provincial seat of Manchuria, with Hoeryong, a northern border town of Korea.

It was from the time of Emperor Meiji that Japan had harboured the ambition of laying such a railway, even if it meant resorting to force. The Japanese imperialists attached great strategic importance to this railway.

After the so-called “Oriental meeting” the Tanaka government submitted a letter to the Emperor in which, referring to the importance of the railways between Manchuria and Mongolia including the Jilin-Hoeryong line, they called the project the key to Japan’s policy towards the Continent.

As is well known, the main state policy proposed in this notorious letter which underlined their ambition and delusion of world domination, just as Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* had advocated the theory of world supremacy in Europe, was to invade Manchuria and Mongolia, and the essential lever for this invasion was the 5 railway lines between Manchuria and Mongolia, including the Jilin-Hoeryong railway.

In this letter Tanaka hinted that with the finishing of these 5 railways Japan would have a grand rail network connecting the whole of Manchuria with Korea and a direct line to north

Manchuria, rendering it possible to move troops and the necessary military supplies to any part of the area and suppress the Korean national liberation movement.

The shrewd brains in Japan estimated that if the Jilin-Hoeryong line was completed and the soldiers and goods were transported from Tsuruga in Japan to Jilin in Manchuria via Chongjin and Hoeryong in Korea, the distance and time of their transportation could be shortened considerably. This was why the Japanese imperialists proclaimed the Jilin-Hoeryong railway project to be their state policy and completed it in 26 years, in spite of all the difficulties.

The Chinese people at large, the young people and students in particular, regarded it as an encroachment upon the rights of the Chinese people for the Japanese imperialists to construct railways as they pleased in Manchuria by wringing concessions on the plea of the unfair treaty they had entered into with the corrupt and inefficient bureaucrats in the last days of the Qing dynasty. In opposition to the agreement on laying railways through the introduction of foreign capital, the masses of people rose up to have the agreement revoked.

Instead of heeding the reasonable demands of the people, the reactionary warlords tried to win them over through a grand inauguration ceremony of the Jilin-Dunhua line which had been planned for November 1, 1928, while scheming to undertake the Dunhua-Tumen railway project by force.

A daring act was needed to frustrate the Jilin-Hoeryong railway project, an act to warn the enemy that the Korean and Chinese peoples would not tolerate his invasion of Manchuria. It would also give the popular masses a signal to resist the Japanese invasion of Manchuria.

In order to organize a mass struggle against the Japanese to frustrate the Jilin-Hoeryong railway project, we called a meeting of

heads of the YCLK and AIYL organizations in the cellar of the Yaowang Shrine in Beishan Park early in October 1928.

The meeting discussed slogans, methods of struggle and a course of action and gave each of us detailed assignments. It also discussed the placards, written appeals and leaflets to be used during the demonstration. In accordance with our policy that the struggle against the Jilin-Hoeryong railway project must be a joint undertaking by the Korean and Chinese peoples, we decided to write all the propaganda such as leaflets, appeals and placards in Chinese and Korean and to conduct street agitation in the two languages.

The meeting decided that such organizations as the students' committees formed in the schools in Jilin, the Ryugil Association of Korean Students and the Korean Children's Association should be activated and that such underground organizations as the YCLK and the AIYL should refrain as far as possible from overt action.

After the meeting at Beishan we worked all night to prepare for the demonstration.

Han Yong Ae who belonged to the propaganda squad worked very hard. She, as a member of the Ryugil Association of Korean Students, had fallen under our influence during art performances and at the gatherings where impressions on books were swapped. Later she became a member of the Young Communist League. A pupil of Jilin Girls' Middle School, she was good-natured but reticent and usually passed unnoticed. However, she carried out every task given her, be it difficult or irksome, for the sake of the revolution. During art performances she volunteered to play characters which others would not play, and when teaching materials for the reading circle were in short supply, she mimeographed hundreds of pages of her own accord and distributed them to the circle members.

She stayed up almost every night preparing for the demonstration. She took a mimeograph to a barn of a house and, with a few Children's Association members, duplicated tens of thousands of appeals and leaflets. She was known as a girl orator for the fiery speeches she made in Korean and Chinese to hundreds of people in the street.

I came to work as the head of the Young Communist League of Korea even among the Chinese young people and students because I upheld the banner of the communist movement from my early days in Jilin. When we launched the communist movement, the Manchuria provincial committee of the Communist Party of China had not yet been formed and there were not many Young Communist League members in Jilin.

While engaged in the work of the YCLK I also worked among Chinese young people. As we were at the helm of the YCLK, a great number of Chinese young people followed us. Cao Ya-fan who was the head of the Young Communist League organization at Jilin Normal School, and Chen Han-zhang who was in charge of the Young Communist League organization in the Dunhua area, were Chinese who maintained relations with us.

In the course of making preparations for the demonstration, we were informed that the railway authorities were intending to hold the inauguration ceremony of the Jilin-Dunhua railway on November 1, 1928.

We launched the demonstration a few days earlier than we had planned, with the aim of lighting the torch of opposition to the building of the Jilin-Hoeryong line at the same time as disrupting the inauguration ceremony of the Jilin-Dunhua line.

At dawn on October 26, 1928, the propaganda squad scattered leaflets and put up written appeals in the streets of Jilin. Observation squads, each of which consisted of two or three

members of the Children's Association, took their designated places at daybreak.

At the appointed time the students at all the schools in Jilin held simultaneous meetings and marched into the streets after issuing appeals against the building of the Jilin-Hoeryong railway. The streets were quickly filled with thousands of students. With placards reading, "Down with Japanese imperialist aggressors!" and "Oppose the Jilin-Hoeryong railway project by Japan!" written in Korean and "Down with Japanese imperialism!" "Down with the traitors!" and "Stop the Jilin-Hoeryong line project!" written in Chinese, they marched through the streets and gathered in the square in front of the provincial assembly building situated outside the Xinkai Gate.

Hundreds of soldiers and policemen checked their advance. The students, confronted by them, shouted slogans, awaiting our instructions. They had to advance at any cost. So we sent into action pickets made up of the workers and peasants living in and around the city, as well as the students, in order to protect them.

The students, with the pickets leading them, marched forward shoulder to shoulder in the face of the bayonets. In the square a mass rally took place. I appealed to the thousands of people gathered in the square for the young people and students of Korea and China to unite and fight staunchly against the Japanese imperialists' building of the Jilin-Hoeryong line.

After the meeting the demonstrators' column marched in high spirits to New Street where the Japanese consulate was situated. The street was seldom frequented by the people because of the outrageous behaviour of the consular police. The demonstrators shouted anti-Japanese slogans in front of the Japanese consulate, getting worked up, and continued their demonstration through Dama, Beijing, Chongqing and Shangyi Streets as well as other streets in the city.

Hard hit by the demonstration in Jilin the Japanese railway company indefinitely postponed the inauguration ceremony of the Jilin-Dunhua line. Japanese shopkeepers deserted their shops and fled to their consulate. The windows of the Oriental Hospital run by the South Manchuria Railway Company were smashed.

The demonstration mounted higher as the days passed. We formed several student groups and saw to it that they installed platforms in dozens of places in the city and delivered speeches against the railway construction from dawn until late at night.

The anti-Japanese struggle that had started in Jilin spread all over Manchuria. The students and citizens of Changchun, in response to our struggle, waged a fierce struggle against imperialism and the building of the six railway lines. They also raided the house of the head of the Jilin-Changchun railway bureau. In Harbin and Tianjin they conducted a brave solidarity struggle, with many people sacrificing themselves. Our Korean compatriots living in the Yanji area also joined the struggle. Newspapers in the homeland reported our struggle every day.

As the demonstration expanded, we pushed ahead with the campaign to boycott Japanese goods. The masses ransacked Japanese shops and burned the goods with Japanese trademarks in the streets. Some of them were dumped into the River Songhua.

Alarmed by the possibility of the struggle against the Jilin-Hoeryong railway project combined with the boycotting of Japanese goods developing into a full-scale anti-Japanese struggle, the barbarous Japanese imperialists instigated the reactionary warlords to open fire on the demonstrators. We had tried to keep the reactionary warlords in check. But as they were suppressing us, hand in glove with the Japanese imperialists, we could no longer confine ourselves to this. The demonstration developed onto a wider scale coinciding with a funeral ceremony for the victims under the slogan, "Down with the reactionary warlords aligned

with the Japanese imperialists!” That day the demonstration reached its height with the participation of many more citizens.

The struggle continued for about 40 days.

In order to improve the situation, the Japanese imperialists sent for Zhang Zuo-xiang who was in Fengtian; but the appeasement measures the Jilin military control station adopted failed to check the surging spirit of the masses. This struggle was a heavy blow to the Japanese imperialists. They were particularly surprised at the united resistance of the Korean and Chinese peoples to Japan’s aggression in Manchuria.

The nationalists and those who, frightened by imperialist Japan’s invasion, had been thinking of turning tail, received a shock from our struggle. Up until then the nationalists had slighted the young people and students. Seeing that we, in our teens and twenties, had carried out something they had not dared to attempt, they changed their attitude towards us. From that time on they recognized that a fresh force from the new generation that was totally different from their own generation had appeared in the arena of the national liberation movement, and they ceased to slight us.

Through our struggle to oppose the Jilin-Hoeryong railway project we once again became keenly aware that the strength of the masses was inexhaustible, and we formed a firmer conviction that the masses, if properly organized, could display formidable strength that no force of arms could ever crush.

My faith in the strength of the masses became more unshakable and our method of leadership of the masses became more seasoned. In the practical struggle not only was I trained but also the organizations developed.

## 6. An Chang Ho Delivers a Political Lecture

In February 1927, the Korean immigrant society in Jilin was excited by the prospect of welcoming someone. An Chang Ho, a veteran of the independence movement and an important member of the Shanghai Provisional Government, had arrived in Jilin via Beijing.

The Korean immigrants in Jilin gave him a red-carpet reception as if he were a Head of State. We, too, welcomed him warmly, singing *Farewell to the Motherland*. This was a song An Chang Ho had written when he was going into exile. It begins with the line *Off I go, leaving you behind* and ends with the line *Don't feel so sad for my leaving, my dear peninsula*. In the days after the annexation of Korea by Japan the young people and students loved to sing this song; it was once known as the *Song of Exiles* because it was sung by so many exiles.

The Korean people respected and worshipped An Chang Ho as much as they loved his song *Farewell to the Motherland*. In speaking of his character and ability, many people used to say that he was fit to be the president of the country. This was no exaggeration. Even the leaders of the Independence Army organizations who looked down upon the provisional government respected him, calling him the “veteran fighter of the independence movement.”

It is well known that Ito Hirobumi, recognizing An Chang Ho's value and trying to bring him under his control, had once proposed that he would establish a Tosan (An Chang Ho's pen name) government if he supported Japan's policies.

Kangso, South Phyongan Province, is now celebrated as the birthplace of Chollima, the Taean work system and the Chongsanri spirit and method, but in the years of Japanese rule it was renowned as the



home town of such independence fighters as An Chang Ho. As he came from Kangso, most of the people from west Korea would proudly say that he was one of them.

Saying that Korea had been conquered by the Japanese imperialists because of her low national quality, he formed such independence movement organizations as the Kongnip Association, the Sinmin Society, the Youth and Students' Association, the Great Korean Citizens' Assembly and the Hungsa Association, and he founded such educational and cultural establishments as Jomjin School, Taesong School and Thaeguk Sogwan School. He also launched the newspaper *Tongnip Sinmun*, and thus rendered a great contribution to the enlightening of the nation.

Among the veterans who dedicated themselves to the independence movement was the famous educator, Ri Sung Hun (alias Namgang). His name would remind everyone of Osan School. This was a famous private school he had founded and financed from his own purse.

Ri was granted an audience by Emperor Ryunghui<sup>20</sup> for his distinguished service in the education of the younger generation. For the previous 400 years no one from among the common people of west Korea had ever had an audience of the Emperor. So one can easily imagine the reputation he won from the unprecedented audience.

Ri Sung Hun, a man of such high renown and reputation, had once been a brassware peddler intent on making money and had made a fortune of more than 500,000 *won* in the form of real estate. He, a man of fortune, had happened to hear in Pyongyang a public lecture delivered by An Chang Ho in which he said that the cultivation of strength through education was the basis of national independence. Moved by this lecture, he had cut off his topknot, returned to his home town and started an education movement. An Chang Ho's oratory overflowing with patriotic feelings had transformed the merchant's outlook on life.

This example shows how great an influence the leader of the nationalist movement had on the public.

*Tong-A Ilbo*, *Joson Ilbo* and other newspapers in the homeland reported his arrival in Jilin in their headlines.

Students called on him at the Sanfeng Hotel and asked him to lecture the Korean students in Jilin. Many independence fighters also went to him and asked him to give a lecture. He accepted the invitation with pleasure.

The independence fighters used several channels to circulate news of the lecture, when and where it would be given and by whom. They put up large advertisements in many of the city's streets including Xiangfu, Chelou, Tongchuan, Henan, Beida and Niumaxiang Streets.

The Korean residents in Jilin became extremely excited and buoyant because of the advertisements; they even greeted one another by saying, "Have you heard that Mr. Tosan has arrived?"

The night before his lecture I spent my time with O Tong Jin, talking about An Chang Ho. O Tong Jin (alias Songam), having met in a foreign land after 17 years his former teacher from his days at Taesong School, was overcome by extremely warm emotions. He recollected how An Chang Ho had examined him orally when he was entering the teachers' training course at the school and how he had come to love him after his enrollment there. He even sang the *Song of the Youth and Students* written by his old teacher and recalled with feelings of high respect how much energy he had directed to cultivating the younger people's spirit of independence. In particular, he gave me a vivid description of his art of public speaking.

In his lifetime my father used to speak highly of An Chang Ho's oratory. From what I had heard from my father in Mangyongdae I had learnt that An Chang Ho started his independence activities through his oratory and that his reputation was inseparable from his art of public speaking. I often wondered if it was true that when he spoke even the womenfolk of noble families were moved by his oratory and his theory of an ideal society and donated their rings and ornamental hairpins to the patriotic cause. If it was true, then what was the secret of his oratory that

touched the heartstrings of the people? How good it would be if such a man of high reputation were to live in Jilin, instead of in America or in Shanghai?

“If I had the right to elect the president of my country after its independence, I would choose An Chang Ho,” O Tong Jin said.

His words stimulated my interest in the political lecture.

After the memorial service for Martyr Ra Sok Ju<sup>21</sup> in the Dadong Factory outside the Zhaoyang Gate, An Chang Ho delivered a lecture.

The lecture was attended by representatives of the three “bu” organizations who had come for the memorial service and almost all the independence fighters, public figures, and students and young people from the city. The hall was filled to capacity, and many of the people in the audience had to stand around the sides.

The orator spoke about “The Future of the Korean National Movement.” As we had heard, he was no common orator. His eloquence provoked admiration from the audience from the outset. As he emphasized how the Korean nation could find a way out, filling the lecture with his profound knowledge of world history, the audience gave him several ovations. But the message of his lecture was questionable.

An Chang Ho lectured on the theory of perfecting the national character and the theory of an ideal society. His first theory consisted of the renovation of individual characters and the development of the national economy.

By the renovation of individual characters he meant that, since our backward country had become a colony of the Japanese because of the low level of the people’s characters and of their self-training, the people should improve their characters so as to lead an honest life, work honestly and achieve social harmony. His opinion was somewhat similar to that of Tolstoy in his *Theory of Self-perfection* and to Mahatma Gandhi’s view that man could not win his freedom without transforming and training himself.

In those days the symptoms of the worldwide economic crisis were evident in every aspect of life, causing the people to tremble with apprehension and fear. Fascistized imperialism was preventing the independence of mankind at the point of the bayonet and with the rope. The petty-bourgeois intellectuals trembled at the power of the iron-clad imperialists. In this situation they found spiritual refuge in the doctrine of non-resistance. This doctrine was the last refuge of those who were weak in their revolutionary will and were scared by the imperialist offensive. Those who had neither power nor will to combat the counterrevolution could only appeal for non-resistance.

The doctrine of non-resistance found expression in reformism in our country. After the March First Popular Uprising some of the leaders of the nationalist movement renounced the revolutionary policy of active resistance to destroy the Japanese imperialist colonial rule, regarded the development of education and national industry as the highest aim of the nationalist movement and conducted a brisk movement for the cultivation of national strength in order to improve the spiritual qualities of our people and their standard of living. The modern intellectuals in the leadership of the nationalist movement tried to save the nation from economic collapse by patronizing domestic products and developing national enterprises. They launched a nationwide campaign to use home-made goods under the slogan, "Let us live on our own!" Their purpose was to pave the way to economic self-sufficiency.

Jo Man Sik, a leader of this campaign, dressed for his whole life in a Korean coat and trousers made of cotton and in a Korean overcoat as a symbol of his patronage of Korean products. His name cards were made of home-made paper and his shoes were a Korean make.

Ri Kwang Su's *Theory of National Transformation* had a considerable effect on spurring the spread of national "reformism." If one reads this article, one can identify the true nature and danger of "reformism."

What I hated most in that article was that the author regarded the Korean nation as inferior. I thought that our country was backward, but I never believed that our nation was inferior. Koreans form a civilized and resourceful nation that was the first to build armoured ships and produce metallic type in the world; it can take pride in having made a great contribution to the development of Oriental culture. Our forefathers rendered no small contribution to the development of Japanese culture. Our nation's gallant spirit of self-reliant defence that did not tolerate any foreign invasion was demonstrated even in ancient times, and our people's impeccable morality has won the admiration of the world. Certainly, there were some shortcomings in the customs and conventions of our people; but they were minor and incidental, not important. Such incidental elements cannot be regarded as national traits.

In his article Ri Kwang Su attributed the fall of Korea to what he called the "inferiority of the nation," but it was her corrupt and incompetent rulers who were really responsible for the nation's ruin.

His comments about the "inferiority" of our nation were in tune with what the Japanese imperialists were saying. The Japanese, whenever they had a chance, would slander our nation, calling it "an inferior nation." They claimed that, therefore, Japan should "protect," "guide" and "control" the Korean nation.

Ri Kwang Su's article was, in fact, an open letter of conversion addressed to the Japanese imperialists occupying Korea. In return for this letter he was allowed to write love stories with impunity under the nose of the Japanese government-general in spite of his past involvement in the independence movement. In his early years as a novelist he had been popular among his readers because he had written progressive works that catered to their tastes. He had written so many novels of a new style that he was called a pioneer of modern stories in our country. But his *Theory of National Transformation* damaged his reputation. The "reformist" elements that had been lurking and occasionally revealed in his novels loomed large in that article.

Worse still, the modern intellectuals who diverted the nationalist movement to the reformist trend even attempted to establish a private university sponsored by Koreans with funds raised through the campaign to pay the national debt. But the government-general did not permit the founding of such a university as it would possibly have been a hotbed of independence fighters.

The non-violent campaign to patronize home-made goods also encountered obstacles laid by Japanese imperialists, for the government-general did not connive at the Koreans' boycotting Japanese goods in favour of Korean ones. They regarded the campaign from its beginning as anti-Japanese and did all they could to disrupt it.

The "reformist" movement conducted under the slogan of cultivating national strength, in spite of its professed patriotic ideal, was conservative and passive resistance employing the method of non-violence. Their attempt at resisting the economic inroads of Japanese imperialism by developing the economic power of the nation within the limits permitted by the government-general was a delusion. Clearly Japan would not tolerate the development of Korea's industry as it might outrival her. So how should their attempt to find the way for the nation to survive by launching enterprises and patronizing home-made goods be explained?

The nationalist campaigners who had degenerated into reformists either overlooked the true nature of imperialism or shut their eyes to it. Their change from armed resistance to a peaceful cultural movement was a retreat in their method of struggle. It meant coexistence with the colonialists or a compromise that would result in degeneration. In fact, quite a few of the "reformists" deserted the nationalist cause or became the cat's paws of the Japanese imperialists in subsequent years.

An Chang Ho's theory of the cultivation of the national strength (or the theory of preparation), a modification of the theory of self-development, was the theoretical basis for the national "reformists."

He went so far as to say that the Korean nation was at the lowest spiritual level of all the nations in the world, and that, therefore, Koreans

would be able to build an independent, sovereign state only when they had refined themselves at least up to the level of the Americans or British.

The atmosphere in the lecture hall indicated that the majority of the audience agreed with him. Some of them were even moved to tears. His patriotic spirit permeated his lecture.

But I was disappointed with his lecture, believing it to contain dangerous elements that could weaken the fighting spirit of the masses. On the whole, his argument contained questionable points. I agreed with him that everybody should improve himself and enhance his individuality and that, on this basis, the nation's strength should be cultivated. But I could not approve of his opinion that our nation was at the lowest spiritual level of all the nations in the world, and of his opportunist methodology for cultivating national strength. The development of strength should, to all intents and purposes, be a process of promoting the independence struggle; it could never supercede the revolution itself.

However, An Chang Ho wanted to substitute the cultivation of strength for the struggle for independence. The cultivation of strength did not mean that the independence struggle would advance automatically, but he mentioned nothing about how the strength of the nation should be organized and mobilized for the final victory. Worse still, he said not a word about the violent struggle, the basic form of the national liberation struggle.

His assertion that industry, the foundation of independence, should be developed in Manchuria contained something that had to be taken issue with. Who would give a ruined nation a loan to build power stations? Even if a major power were to grant us a loan, how could we construct the power stations and cultivate rice on a wide scale in a foreign land when all our territory was in the hands of the Japanese imperialists? Furthermore, would the Japanese imperialists leave us alone to do so?

Unable to endure his lecture any longer, I jotted down the following questions on a piece of paper: First, you say that the Korean nation

should cultivate its strength by developing industry and education. Do you think it will be possible to do so when the whole country is in the hands of the Japanese imperialists? Second, why do you say that our nation is at the lowest level of spiritual cultivation? Third, you had in mind the United States or Britain when you referred to major powers; should we follow their examples and will we be able to achieve independence with their “aid”?

My questions were handed to the lecturer by the students in front and the chairman. Even though I had written the questions I was rather embarrassed when I saw the chairman staring at the students with an uneasy look on his face. I was also afraid that the independence fighters and audience who worshipped the lecturer would be disappointed if he were displeased at my questions. If the lecture should end in a failure O Tong Jin, who had been particularly enthusiastic about it, might feel vexed with me for having put the questions, so I thought.

Of course, that was not what I hoped for. When I submitted the questions, I only wished that he would reflect on them if only for a moment and refrain from preaching any longer against national dignity and the spirit of independence. In addition, I had a burning desire to hear from him a new guideline, a new method or strategy for the independence movement that he might have overlooked, he being a man who was held in such high esteem as a great veteran fighter for independence.

But the situation did not develop as I had expected.

Having stared at my piece of paper for some time, the lecturer asked the chairman something. Later, Son Jong Do told me that the lecturer had asked the chairman whether he knew the man named Kim Song Ju who had signed the questions.

An Chang Ho, who had been speaking with an unchallenged command of the audience, began to falter. Hastily he wound up the lecture he had been delivering so eloquently a moment before and withdrew from the platform. The lecturer seemed to have taken my questions very seriously. I had intended to give him a little stimulus but



he had abandoned his lecture without making any comment on the questions.

The disappointed audience crowded to the door, saying, “Why did Mr. Tosan lose heart all of a sudden?”

At that moment something unexpected happened. Hundreds of gendarmes and policemen from the military control station in Jilin raided the lecture-hall and arrested more than 300 people. Among those arrested were not only An Chang Ho, the lecturer, but also Hyon Muk Kwan, Kim Ri Dae, Ri Kwan Rin and many other independence fighters. They were detained at the police station.

The mastermind of this wholesale arrest was Kunitomo of the police bureau of the government-general in Korea. Kunitomo, who had appeared at Fengtian at the same time that An Chang Ho had arrived in Jilin, had requested the Chinese Provost Marshal, Yang Niu-jing, to arrest the hundreds of Korean communists gathered in Jilin. On Yang Niu-jing’s order, the police and gendarmes from the Jilin military control station under the control of Kunitomo searched the houses of Koreans and raided the lecture-hall in an unprecedented round-up.

Even though An Chang Ho had not delivered a very good lecture we could not repress our surging indignation at the enemy’s arrest of hundreds of Koreans, including him. Worse still, having seen the lecture break down as a result of my questions and the lecturer being arrested immediately after it, I was haunted by the distressing thought that my written questions had been responsible for the chain of events.

The warlord Zhang Zuo-lin who ruled the northeastern region of China had joined hands with Japan through the “Mitsuya Agreement” and was clamping down upon the Korean communists and anti-Japanese independence fighters. The agreement was vicious and aimed at destroying the Korean national liberation struggle in Manchuria. In accordance with this agreement their agents who had arrested the Korean patriots were awarded prizes. Some Chinese government officials would even make false reports in order to win prizes.

The wholesale arrests at the Dadong Factory were also reactionary repression carried out by the Zhang Zuo-lin warlord at the instigation of the Japanese imperialists.

We held a meeting of the members of the DIU immediately and seriously discussed measures for freeing those arrested. Straight from the meeting we visited independence fighters and discussed with them how we could rescue them. But they were at a loss what to do. We insisted that we could get all of them, including An Chang Ho, out of jail if we put joint pressure on the military control station in Jilin. We emphasized that nothing was greater than the strength of the masses.

They said, "How can you, empty-handed, bring those brutes to their knees? It would be better to bribe them than to have the masses make a fuss." They spoke thus because they were not in the habit of believing in the strength of the masses.

I tried to persuade them that the masses, in a united force, could do anything, more than money. Then, we called a mass rally at Jilin chapel run by Son Jong Do with the participation of the Korean independence fighters, public-minded Koreans, and the young people and students in the city. We explained to them that the military control station, hand in glove with the Japanese, had arrested the Korean patriots and our innocent compatriots en masse and we warned them that, in return for a few pennies, they might hand the arrested people over to the Japanese police. We appealed to them, "It is quite clear that if they are handed over to the Japanese, they cannot escape their cruel punishment. Korean people who love their compatriots and motherland should rise up with one accord in the mass movement to rescue the patriots."

When we were striving to have An Chang Ho released from prison, quite a few people shook their heads, saying that they could not understand us. Not only the nationalists but also the people who were said to be engaged in the communist movement and, moreover, the students and young people under our influence said, "Why are you, who questioned An Chang Ho's theory, troubling yourself to rescue him?"

I said, “Although we question An Chang Ho’s idea, we do not oppose An Chang Ho himself. He is a Korean and a patriot who is fighting for the independence of the country. Why should we not rescue him?”

At that time I tried to persuade them in the name of our great cause that required that the suffering Korean nation must unite when facing difficulties. I had attacked An Chang Ho in his lecture because I wished him to discard his flunkeyistic, national nihilistic and opportunist attitude and work with greater devotion for the noble struggle for the liberation of the country. Our ideological struggle with the nationalists was aimed not at breaking them but at awakening them to political awareness so as to rally more people under the anti-Japanese banner.

After the mass rally there appeared on the walls and lamp-posts of Jilin leaflets and appeals reading, “The Chinese police have arrested the Korean immigrants unwarrantedly and are beating them in the prison,” “The Chinese government officials should not be deceived by the Japanese imperialists’ trickery!” and “Release the Korean immigrants as soon as possible!”

We also contributed articles to newspapers in China to stir up public opinion. The children, young people and others in Jilin crowded round the building of the military control station every day, shouting for the release of the detained people. On some days they held demonstrations in front of the building. We did all we could to prevent the reactionary warlords from handing the arrested Korean independence fighters over to the Japanese police.

Hard-pressed by the masses, the military control station freed all the detainees including An Chang Ho after 20 days. His release as a result of our intensive struggle made me very happy. We went to the independence fighters to see An when he had returned to his colleagues after his release from captivity. I wished inwardly that he would at least understand the feelings I had expressed in my questions. But An left Jilin in haste after his release. I was not sure what his feelings were as he returned to

Shanghai, but I believe that he left Jilin in good heart. This was proved by his life in the subsequent years; he never brought disgrace on himself as a patriot and stood up against all his ordeals to the last day of his life. I did not see him again after he left Jilin.

Ten years later, when we were waging the armed struggle in the area of Mt. Paektu, I heard that he had died of an illness he had contracted in the prison of the Japanese imperialists. At the news I grieved over the fate of a man who, having devoted his whole life to the enlightenment and unity of the nation, had passed away so early without seeing the independence of the country. But my strange relationship with him did not end with his death. Although he had passed away, his sister, An Sin Ho, worked with us after liberation as Vice-Chairwoman of the Central Committee of the Democratic Women's Union of Korea (DWUK).

On returning home after liberation I was told by the independence fighters in the homeland that An Chang Ho's sister was living in Nampho. At that time Comrade Kim Kyong Sok was working in that area as our representative. I gave him the assignment of finding her. A few days later I was told that he had found her. I asked him on the telephone about her attitude, to which he replied that she seemed to be a faithful religious believer as she carried a Bible under her arm all the time.

Reminding Kim Kyong Sok that An Sin Ho was a sister of a renowned patriotic martyr, I said that, although she was a religious believer, she must love her country. I told him to educate her by keeping her under the Party's influence.

He said he would, but he did not seem to be very interested. The practice of giving a wide berth to religious believers would not cease in spite of my repeated warning against it because in those days it was a tendency for believers to be indiscriminately prejudiced against.

A few months later, Kim Kyong Sok gave me the happy news that An Sin Ho had been admitted to our Party and was devoting herself to the building of a new Korea, carrying her Party membership card between

the pages of her Bible. At the news I thought that An Chang Ho's patriotic spirit had not been buried.

Whenever I saw An Sin Ho working honestly for the motherland and her fellow people until she breathed her last, I was reminded of the tortuous life of the independence fighter, An Chang Ho, and remembered with deep emotion all the painstaking efforts he had made in his lifetime for the good of the nation.

Kim Ku, who had wasted most of his life as an anti-communist, was surprised to encounter An Sin Ho when he came to the north for the North-South Joint Conference. He did not seem to have imagined that the communists would entrust a sister of a prominent figure in the Shanghai Provisional Government with the Vice-Chairwomanship of the Central Committee of the DWUK. An Sin Ho had been his fiancée in his young days.

Our trust in An Sin Ho was our trust in An Chang Ho.

That was always our attitude towards all our forerunners who, dedicated to the independence movement, were tied to us as one nation out of a patriotic feeling, regardless of their political ideas and religious beliefs.

## **7. The Merger of the Three Nationalist Organizations**

It can be said that the 1920s was the period when the merger of the anti-Japanese patriotic forces into a single front was promoted. The farsighted people and patriots who were truly concerned about the future of the nation were convinced that the foundations of independence lay in the unity and cohesion of the anti-Japanese forces, and they made great efforts to this end.

The various organizations engaged in the working-class movement which had been born with the dissemination of the new thought under the influence of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia and of the March First Popular Uprising, merged to form the General Federation of Workers and Peasants of Korea towards the middle of the 1920s. The work of uniting the anti-Japanese patriotic forces was also conducted in the nationalist camp.

In 1927 the Singan Association was founded as the organ of the united front of the communist camp and nationalist camp amid the maturing trend to organize a single national party and it increased its membership to tens of thousands.

The movement for the merger of the anti-Japanese patriotic forces was also conducted vigorously in the area of Manchuria, which had become the strategic base for the independence movement. The small organizations of the independence movement which had sprung up in Manchuria following the “annexation of Korea by Japan” went through a process of countless meetings and partings. By 1925 they were generally divided into the three

organizations of Jongui-bu, Sinmin-bu and Chamui-bu, each of which was working independently.

The three organizations divided up the areas under their jurisdiction and held their own ground, turning their backs on one another like small dukedoms in the middle ages none of which had any cooperative contact with another. Therefore, faced with repeated attacks by the Japanese imperialists, they were in danger of being destroyed one by one. The organizations of the Independence Army in Manchuria were dealt heavy blows because of Japan's repeated massacre operations such as the Hunchun incident, the Xingjing incident and the Gumaling incident, as well as the "Mitsuya Agreement."

After suffering crushing defeats in the Battle of Fengwugou and in the Battle of Qingshanli the Japanese army continually reinforced its numerical strength in order to check the armed activities of the Independence Army. It employed vicious psychological warfare by which it killed 10 Koreans if one Japanese soldier was killed and thus held in check the Independence Army, which was still at the stage of its growth.

Under these circumstances the leaders of the various organizations who were intent on gaining supremacy, were obliged to seek the merger of the organizations engaged in the independence movement as a solution for overcoming the difficulties confronting the army.

The farsighted leaders of the independence movement realized the need for a merger in the first days after the three organizations came into being, and they made every possible effort to achieve it.

In those days the three organizations regarded one another with jealousy and were at odds with one another, wasting their energies on their rivalry to widen the area under their jurisdiction. The competition between the three organizations for dominance sometimes gave rise to heart-rending clashes and bloodshed.

In the summer of 1925 I witnessed the leaders of the three organizations seriously discussing the way to realize their merger at a meeting chaired by my father in Fusong. The meeting was held over 10 days in three places—Fusong, Wanlihe and Yangdicun—moving from one place to another. This meeting resulted in the formation of the Association for the Promotion of the Alliance of the National Organizations.

The people involved in this association accelerated the preparatory work for the formation of a single national party. At the same time, they maintained constant contact with the leaders of various groups and, on a number of occasions, conducted meetings to discuss the autonomy of the Korean compatriots in Manchuria and the unity of the revolutionary front.

In the course of frequent meetings, moving from one place to another, a strange incident, called the “Wangba Incident,” occurred.

At that time the leaders of the three organizations, including Kim Tong Sam, Choe Tong O, Hyon Muk Kwan, Sim Ryong Jun, Rim Pyong Mu, Kim Ton, Ri Yon and Song Sang Ha, were holding a meeting on the merger in Xinantun. Xinantun is a village situated approximately seven miles southwest of the Jilin-Changchun railway. Together with Jilin, Xingjing and Huadian, it was one of the few strategic bases of the political movement in Manchuria.

The police of the Japanese consulate, which had been making secret inquiries into the purpose of the meeting on the cooperation of the three organizations, sent five spies there disguised as ordinary people.

The secret agents, having arrived at the village of Dangshangshuigou in the vicinity of Xinantun, spied on the meeting while pretending to be catching snapping-turtles. But their true identity was exposed by some young people in the village, and



they were all disposed of by being tied together and drowned in the River Songhua.

The police of the Japanese consulate in Jilin gave the Chinese police office an account of this incident and, claiming that Koreans had killed some innocent Japanese, demanded that they should conduct a joint investigation at the scene of the incident and in Xinantun. This fact was reported to the delegates to the meeting by O In Hwa, who was working as an interpreter at the police office. The meeting adjourned and the delegates left Xinantun.

This is known as the “Wangba Incident.” Wangba is Chinese slang for snapping-turtle.

The meeting for the merger of the organizations engaged in the independence movement was accompanied by innumerable difficulties and twists and turns. The first difficulty was the obstinate shadowing and destructive moves committed by the Japanese imperialists who feared the alliance of the three organizations. A greater difficulty than that was the antagonism between the factions within the three organizations. Jongui-bu was divided into the group of the Promotion Association and the group of the Conferential Association, Sinmin-bu was divided into the military government group and the civil government group which were opposed to each other, and Chamui-bu was divided into those supporting the Promotion Association and those supporting the Conferential Association. Those in the Promotion Association such as Kim Tong Sam, Ri Chong Chon and Ri Jong Gon seceded from Jongui-bu, and the military government group headed by Kim Jwa Jin and Hwang Hak Su left Sinmin-bu.

It was in Jilin that meetings to merge the three organizations were held most frequently.

In Shangyi Street in Jilin there was a rice mill called Fuxingtai which was run by a Korean. Those engaged in the independence movement in Jilin used the office at that mill to sleep and hold

meetings. Even for the fighters for independence who visited the city from south Manchuria, north Manchuria and east Manchuria it was their favourite place to stay. Therefore, there was never a quiet day at the Fuxingtai Rice Mill.

It was here that meetings to merge the three organizations were held year after year. I had the opportunity to contact the delegates to the meetings on numerous occasions because the Fuxingtai Rice Mill was on the corner on my way to Yuwen Middle School. The manager of the rice mill was a nationalist aspiring to communism. He was a small businessman who barely managed to earn a living, charging a fee for hulling rice for others.

One day when I dropped in at the rice mill some old men with whom I was acquainted introduced me as the son of Mr. Kim Hyong Jik to such delegates to a meeting to merge the three organizations as Kim Jwa Jin, Kim Tong Sam and Sim Ryong Jun. At this they jokingly said, “This lad’s idea is different to ours.”

I said with a smile, “I am embarrassed by what you say. You want the independence of Korea and so do I. So our idea is not different.” Hearing this they remarked: “We said that because you young people seem to be engaged in a socialist movement.”

This presented a marvellous opportunity for me to conduct communist propaganda.

I attacked them by saying: “Now it is a world-wide trend for young people to be engaged in the communist movement and it is young people who aspire to communism. So, why should young Korean people not pursue communism when those in other countries are doing so? What will be the future of Korea if we continue to cling only to the old while ignoring the new? Ours is a different generation from yours. So, if you disregard the feelings of us young people we find ourselves in an awkward position.” To this one of them said, “I don’t care what you do. Perhaps you won’t overthrow us, will you?”

I asked them gently on what grounds they believed we young people wanted to overthrow them.

Later similar things happened occasionally.

Although I dropped in at the rice mill from time to time on my way to and from school, I heard nothing about the merger of the three organizations. The leaders of the Independence Army were dillydallying over the matter.

In the course of my contact with the leaders of the three organizations I realized how they led their life. Their life was extremely bigoted and dull.

I have already mentioned that there was a hotel called the Sanfeng Hotel near the Zhaoyang Gate outside the walled city of Jilin. Whenever a meeting to merge the three organizations adjourned, the leaders of the Independence Army gathered at this hotel where each group discussed how it could hold the other groups in check.

Near that hotel there was the chapel of Son Jong Do which we used as a place for educating the masses. So, on Saturday afternoons or on Sundays I witnessed the activities of the senior figures of the Independence Army when they gathered at the hotel.

A glossy, hand-stained chessboard was always to be found in their room. It had been specially made by the host of the hotel so that the fighters for independence should not be bored.

The old men from the Independence Army spent the whole day in that room either bickering or playing chess.

The host and hostess of the Sanfeng Hotel had a hard time serving the bosses of the Independence Army. When entertaining them they prepared food with the best rice hulled at the Taifengha Rice Mill and never failed to serve dishes of meat, bean-curd and fish.

As they sat up all night playing chess, the commanders of the Independence Army were always treated by the owners of the hotel to buckwheat noodles as a midnight snack.

According to the host's daughter, everything was free of charge. She said that she could not even get enough sleep because she was sent to buy cigarettes and alcohol every night. Once she said to her mother: "Mother, if we continue to serve those people like this, we shall be beggars in less than three months." Hearing this her mother rebuked her, saying: "We should not spare anything for them because they are fighting to regain our country. When everything is ready they will leave to fight. Never say such a thing again."

However, far from leaving to fight, the commanders of the Independence Army gathered their weapons and hid them in an arsenal; then they spent their time doing nothing. When we visited them they pretended to be doing some work with something like an account book open in front of them. They did so because they did not like to appear to young people as loafers.

Sometimes they used extremely foul language against one another, while banging the table either with their fists or with wooden pillows. The main argument was always over which group should take effective power after the merger of the three organizations. Each of the groups put itself forward and slandered the other groups claiming, for instance, that it had been active for a longer period and had achieved more than the others and that it covered a wider area and had more people under its control than the other groups. And when evening came they would drink, and spend the whole night in a drunken frenzy, getting up only at noon the following day.

One Sunday we went to the Taifengha Rice Mill where we argued with a man who claimed to be the minister of finance in the Shanghai Provisional Government.

With a few colleagues he had been taking part in a meeting in Jilin for several months to merge the three organizations. He mixed with the young people, was fond of playing with them and frequently said something apparently progressive. Therefore, when we met him we addressed him as “sir” and opened our hearts to him unreservedly.

That day we had a talk with him on various subjects and criticized the Shanghai Provisional Government a little. Some of us young people sat around him and attacked him, saying, “Even now when you have been driven to a foreign country, you quarrel with one another over your positions, disregarding the country and the nation and irrespective of what becomes of the people. How dare you talk of patriotism? Taking office here merely means going to the rural villages and collecting funds from a few farmhouses and giving the people there various orders. What is the use for scrambling for such power?” For a while the minister of finance was at a loss for an answer, confronted with our reasonable admonition. Then he blazed with fury, taking what we had said as an insult, and abused us.

He shouted: “Are you against me? Right you are! You alone are clever and we are stupid. Well, let all of us, me and you, bring disgrace upon ourselves.”

Shouting thus, he removed his clothes on the spot. His intention was to go out into the street naked and bring disgrace on the Koreans by running along it. He planned to avenge himself on the young people by bringing disgrace on the nation for the insult he had suffered. Although I had met many people, I had never met such a man before. He was a minister of the provisional government, but his conduct was that of a villain and a hooligan. If he were to go out through the gate of the rice mill, it would not be good for us. It would mean shame for the minister of finance as

well as for us and all other Koreans. So we managed to soothe and dress him.

On our way home that day, we determined never to deal with such people again. A man who so rashly decided to run into the street naked because he was criticized could hardly be expected to conduct the independence movement well. It would be a different matter if it were naive children who did so. However, now that he had acted so shamefully, how could he be entitled to be a politician?

This man brought utter disgrace upon the Shanghai Provisional Government. In those days there were many people in Manchuria who did not like the Shanghai Provisional Government. They disliked this government because they were engaged in factional strife, resorting to mendicant diplomacy and leading an idle life, squandering funds. Not satisfied with the head tax and the compulsory donation for national salvation, the provisional government even issued bonds. They visited well-to-do people and sold government posts to them. They issued “writs of nomination” to them to the effect that such-and-such a man was to be appointed as the governor of such-and-such a province, such-and-such a man as the headman of such-and-such a county and such-and-such a man as the head of such-and-such a sub-county, taking money and goods corresponding to each position.

While the nationalists continued their factional strife without achieving a merger, the Japanese imperialists made their stooges go among them and easily arrested the anti-Japanese fighters for independence. The most grievous loss was the capture of O Tong Jin. The Japanese police induced their lackey Kim Jong Won to draw O Tong Jin out by telling him that Choe Chang Hak, a major Korean proprietor of a gold mine, was in Changchun and that he would therefore be able to obtain a colossal sum of money for the independence movement if he were to negotiate with the

proprietor, and arrested him at Xinglongshan Station near Changchun. The news so grieved me that I lost my appetite for some time.

On top of that, O Tong Jin's son O Kyong Chon was burned to death in a fire which broke out at the Jilin Cinema where he had gone to watch a film. I ran into the burning cinema and carried him out on my back, but unfortunately his life could not be saved. O Tong Jin's wife was so grieved at her husband's being thrown into prison and at her son's death that she became deranged. We consoled her and nursed her, but to no avail. Finally she passed away.

When O Tong Jin was battling in court, the leaders of the three organizations had drinking parties on the plea that they were to merge the three organizations, getting together almost every day, and passed their time fighting for supremacy. At the sight of this we felt hurt.

Prompted by the arrest of O Tong Jin, the Japanese police intensified their efforts to arrest more independence movement champions.

But the leaders of the three organizations persisted in empty talk without drawing a due lesson from this. One day for some reason they practised running with sand bags attached to the fringes of their trouser legs in the yard of the rice mill. The sight of this made me feel heavy in my heart. What a piteous sight those who are allegedly fighting for the independence of Korea present at a time when the Japanese invasion of Manchuria is imminent and the future of the homeland looks so gloomy, I thought.

My patience was quite worn out and so I appealed to them: I believe the arrest of Commander O Tong Jin has stirred you up greatly. You still continue to hold meetings here while the Japanese are arresting the noted anti-Japanese fighters one by one by fair means or foul and executing them. Is that right? We young people

and students hope that you will achieve the merger of the three organizations as soon as possible so that all the independence champions in south, north and east Manchuria can pool their strength and all the Korean people achieve unity.

Nevertheless, the leaders of the three organizations continued to bicker and indulge in empty talk.

Our vexation in those days defied description. Those who were allegedly engaged in the communist movement were engrossed in factional strife, while the nationalists who had a small armed force were in such a state. How lamentable it was!

After much thought we prepared a satirical drama dealing with the nationalists' scramble for power in order to provoke them to action. It was the *Three Pretenders* which is still staged today.

After making preparations for it, I went to invite the leaders of the three organizations. I said, "We have prepared a play for you who are taking so much trouble over holding meetings. Please come and see it." They were delighted to hear this and came to Son Jong Do's chapel.

The play was staged after several song and dance items.

At first they seemed to take an interest in the play. But realizing that the play depicting three people scrambling for office was a satire directed against them, they shouted, their faces flushed, "You bad lot, how dare you insult us? How impudent Song Ju is!" and they stormed out of the chapel.

Early the next morning I visited them and asked, feigning ignorance, "Why did you leave halfway through the performance yesterday evening? Isn't it interesting to watch a play to the end?"

Getting angry at this, they asked me why we had criticized them the evening before.

I explained to them what we thought.

"Why are you so angry, sir? Disgusted with your persistent bickering, we prepared the play. Yesterday evening's play reflected



the will of the young people. You should know what the young people aspire after and what the people want, shouldn't you?"

They felt ashamed at this and said that they should do something. Later the three organizations were formally merged under the name of Kukmin-bu. It was a partial amalgamation comprising the remnants of Jongui-bu, the civil government group of Sinmin-bu and Sim Ryong Jun's group.

The secession group of Jongui-bu, the Promotion Association support group of Chamui-bu and the military government group of Sinmin-bu separately formed the Provisional New Assembly in parallel with Kukmin-bu.

But the leaders of the different groups, with different thoughts, turned their backs on the others even under the same Kukmin-bu roof.

Thus the conservative groups of the nationalist camp were engrossed in factional strife, rejecting the new trend, and this brought them to ruin. They passed their time in factional strife and disputes while giving no thought to fighting the Japanese imperialists on the battlefield because they had no firm determination to win back the country through the efforts of the Korean nation itself.

So history posed as a task which brooked no delay a change from one generation to the next in the national liberation struggle. We decided that the young communists should replace the fighters of the old generation.

## 8. The Path Taken by Cha Kwang Su

When I recall my Jilin days, many unforgettable faces appear before my mind's eye. In their forefront there is always Cha Kwang Su.

It was in the spring of 1927 that I first met him. It was Choe Chang Gol who introduced him to me. After Hwasong Uisuk School had closed down Choe Chang Gol served in the Independence Army in Sanyuanpu, Liuhe County, which was a Jongui-bu base.

One day his orderly unexpectedly visited me, carrying a slip of paper. On the slip he had written that he hoped that I would meet Cha Kwang Su who would soon arrive in Jilin and that he himself would come to Jilin before long.

A spectacled young man with his head inclined somewhat to one side appeared before me a few days later when I was leaving the Young Christians' Hall after giving a lecture. He asked me if I knew Choe Chang Gol. When I said yes, he silently held out his hand for a handshake. This was Cha Kwang Su.

That day Cha Kwang Su made me speak a great deal while he spoke only a little; he asked questions and I replied.

He left without saying where he was going, giving me the impression that he was brusque and hard to approach.

Not long after that Choe Chang Gol came to Jilin as he had promised. The leadership of Jongui-bu and its central guard squad were in Jilin, the latter at the barracks outside the Xinkai Gate. Choe Chang Gol's company needed to send a messenger to the central guard squad. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Choe Chang Gol came to Jilin.

I told him what Cha Kwang Su and I had talked about and what my first impression of him was. I added that he did not seem to want to open his heart to me as yet.

Choe Chang Gol said, "When I met him I, too, received the same impression, but when you get sufficiently acquainted with him, you will find him to be an honest man."

One day the commander of the company of the Independence Army to which Choe Chang Gol belonged was informed that a teacher at Liushuhezi School was conducting communist propaganda.

The company commander told him to arrest the teacher and bring him immediately.

Choe Chang Gol sent some men who were under his influence, giving them an earnest warning in the fear that they, who regarded communists as heretics, might treat Cha Kwang Su badly.

The Independence Army men had supper in the house where Cha Kwang Su was staying. The supper they were served seemed to have been very humble. When they put a spoonful of cooked millet into their water-filled bowls, dead moths and bran rose to the surface. Seeing this they, accustomed to being treated well, blustered, "Is this food? Your attitude to Independence Army men is not good."

At this Cha Kwang Su said in defence of the master of the house, “This family eats only vegetables, without any grain. To offer you hospitality he borrowed some millet from a landlord’s family and cooked it for you. It is not the host who prepared the food for you who is to blame but the landlord who lent him bad millet.”

Listening to Cha Kwang Su, the Independence Army men who had been shouting angrily fell silent. He had been right and they could not find fault with him.

The Independence Army men finally gave up the idea of arresting Cha Kwang Su, finding him likable. Having returned empty-handed, they told their commander that Cha Kwang Su was not a communist but a great patriot.

Choe Chang Gol said that he himself had met Cha Kwang Su and found him worth getting to know. Choe Chang Gol always behaved sincerely to anyone, once he considered him to be good.

If Choe Chang Gol thought him good, he must be good, I believed.

Cha Kwang Su again came to me without previous notice a week after Choe Chang Gol had left. He said he had been to Jilin for a while to take the air and abruptly asked me my opinion on the alliance with the nationalists.

In those days the question of an alliance with the nationalists was being hotly discussed by the communists after Jiang Jie-shi’s betrayal of the Chinese Communist Party. It was taken as a touchstone, so to speak, to tell the genuine communist from the opportunist. That is why, I think, on meeting me he asked me my view on the alliance with the nationalists. Jiang Jie-shi’s treachery created complications for the Chinese revolution.

Before Jiang Jie-shi’s treachery the Chinese revolution had been on a brisk upsurge. The cooperation between the Chinese

Communist Party and the Kuomintang had been a powerful factor promoting the revolution.

In the latter half of the 1920s the Chinese revolution went over to overthrowing the reactionary rule through the revolutionary war. The National Revolutionary Army which started a northern expedition in the summer of 1926 under the slogans “Down with imperialism!” “Down with the warlords!” and “Eliminate the feudal forces!” seized Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Fujian and other provinces and occupied the main cities along the River Yangzi, thus bringing pressure to bear on the Zhang Zuo-lin-led reactionary warlords who held the area up to Huabei under the manipulation of the Japanese imperialists.

The workers in Shanghai seized the city, bravely rising in revolt three times, and the people of Wuhan and Jiujiang, encouraged by the victory of the northern expedition, took back the British concession. The workers went on a general strike in response to the attack of the northern expeditionary army, and the peasants together with the workers took part in the northern expeditionary campaign en masse at the risk of their lives.

At this juncture Jiang Jie-shi began to wreck the cooperation between the Communist Party and Kuomintang and to betray the revolution. In order to achieve hegemony over the revolution he began to remove communists from the leadership of the Kuomintang and the government through conspiracy and worked to hold behind-the-scenes negotiations for receiving support from the imperialist powers.

Cha Kwang Su greatly regretted this, saying that if Jiang Jie-shi had not betrayed it, the Chinese revolution could have advanced further, and the question of an alliance with the nationalists could not have been so seriously considered.

When the Guangdong revolutionary base was consolidated and the northern expedition developed, Jiang Jie-shi immediately

established a military dictatorship and went over to a fascist terrorist campaign against the Communist Party. He concocted the incident of the warship *Zhongshan* in March 1926 and, following that, removed Zhou En-lai and all the other communists from the Huangpu Military Academy and from the First Army of the National Revolutionary Army. Then, in March 1927, he forcibly dissolved the Nanchang city party and Jiujiang city party which supported Sun Yat-sen's three policies and on March 31 he ordered a raid on the Mass Meeting Hall in Chongqing which resulted in the massacre of the citizens.

On April 12, 1927, he committed the barbarous massacre of the revolutionary masses in Shanghai. The waves of this bloodbath spread to the provinces.

Following this incident, the Chinese revolution went into a period of temporary decline.

Pointing to the need to draw a lesson from the current state of the Chinese revolution, some people within the international communist movement even came forward with the extremist argument that communists should not join hands with nationalists.

Such an idea seemed to have influenced Cha Kwang Su.

The stand we had advocated since forming the DIU was that the Korean communists should join hands with the nationalists for national liberation.

That day I said to Cha Kwang Su, "Some degenerate Korean nationalists are advocating 'self-government' and national reformism, giving in to the Japanese imperialists, but conscientious nationalists and intellectuals are fighting at home and abroad for the independence of Korea without yielding. The Korean nationalists who are experiencing the barbarous colonial rule of the Japanese imperialists have a strong anti-Japanese spirit. So, we should join hands with these nationalists and non-comprador capitalists."

This opinion on the question of alliance with the nationalists was derived from our own understanding of nationalism. We regarded in those days and are still regarding nationalism as a patriotic trend of thought which first emerged on the arena of the national liberation struggle.

Originally nationalism appeared as a progressive idea that championed national interests.

It can be said that nationalism came out on the arena of history, advocating “independence and sovereignty,” “national defence and public welfare,” and “the expulsion of the Westerner and Japanese invaders,” upholding a torch of reform, at a time when the destiny of the country was at stake because of the recurrent troubles both at home and from abroad with the decline of monarchism and under the pressure of foreign forces that compelled Korea to open the door. It accorded with the law of historical development that nationalism emerged and became a guiding idea of the masses at a time when the national sovereignty was trampled upon by outside forces and the country was turning into an arena of competition by the great powers for wresting concessions.

It is unfair to view that nationalism was the idea of the capitalist class from the outset simply because the newly-emerging bourgeoisie led the national movement under the banner of nationalism.

During the period of bourgeois-national movement against feudalism the interests of the popular masses coincided, in the main, with those of the newly-emerging bourgeoisie. Therefore, nationalism represented the common interests of a nation.

Later, as capitalism developed and the bourgeoisie became a reactionary ruling class, nationalism became an ideological instrument of the capitalist class for defending its interests. So we must always distinguish genuine nationalism that truly defends national interests from bourgeois nationalism, an ideological

instrument that represents the interests of the capitalist class. If we identify one with the other, we may commit grave mistakes in the revolutionary practice.

We reject and guard against bourgeois nationalism, but we support and welcome genuine nationalism because the ideological feelings that constitute the basis of genuine nationalism emanate from patriotism: Patriotism is an ideological feeling that is common to communists and nationalists; it is the greatest common ground that enables both of them to live in concord, cooperate and unite with each other on the same national orbit. Love of the country and nation is the main artery that connects communism with genuine nationalism and a motive force of leading genuine nationalism to cooperate with communism.

In the past the genuine nationalists performed great exploits in the struggle for modernizing the country and taking back the usurped land from the invaders under the banner of patriotism.

Now in our country there exist different systems and ideologies in the north and south, but we are making a stubborn struggle to reunify the divided country with a strong conviction that we can do it because we see the real possibility of achieving the great cause of national unity in patriotism which is common to both the communists and the genuine nationalists. It is immutable that genuine nationalism means patriotism for our homogeneous nation. So, I always attached great importance to unity and cooperation with true, patriotic nationalists and regarded this unity and cooperation as a sure guarantee for victory in our revolution. This has been my view and standpoint ever since I was in the youth and student movement. On the day when I met Cha Kwang Su I also emphasized that we must distinguish between genuine nationalism and bourgeois nationalism.

Having heard me out, he clasped my hands and passionately spoke my name, “Song Ju.”



I don't think that the reason I succeeded in persuading him was that I was strong in theory. My way of thinking and my stand of judging all problems on the basis of the actual situation in Korea and attaching great importance to revolutionary practice, not to doctrinairism, seem to have aroused his sympathy.

From then on Cha Kwang Su began to open his mind to me. His attitude towards me changed rapidly. Until then I had mainly spoken and he had questioned and listened, whereas from then on he spoke freely without my asking.

As I talked frankly with him, I discovered him to be a fine man. He was seven years older than me. He had studied at a university in Japan. He was good at writing and making speeches. Being kind-hearted, he was liked by many young people and was popular as a specialist in Marxism. When Cha Kwang Su and Pak So Sim had an argument over Marxism, neither of them wanted to be beaten by the other.

Kim Chan, the head of the Tuesday group, would have a hard time when he argued with Cha Kwang Su. He could not beat Cha Kwang Su in any debate on Marxism. Cha Kwang Su had been in awe of Kim Chan as a major figure in the communist party, but after meeting him several times, he treated him like a secondary school student. When Sin Il Yong from the Seoul-Shanghai group was made to contend against Cha Kwang Su he, too, could not beat him.

Cha Kwang Su walked with his head inclined slightly to the left. He had got into this habit because he had had a boil on his neck as a child and had used to walk with his head inclined, he told me.

He came from North Phyongan Province. The villagers said that he was a bright boy in his early years and in his teens he went to Japan and studied in the difficult conditions there. It was around

that time that he read books on Marxism-Leninism and began to yearn after communism.

The communist movement in Japan was on the decline when Cha Kwang Su was working his way through school, embracing the new trend. The Communist Party of Japan was seriously weakened by the first arrest of the core elements of its leadership in June 1923, a short time after its foundation, and by the white terrorism during the great earthquakes in the Kanto area. Later it was dissolved due to the machinations of the opportunists who wormed their way into the leadership. It was absurd for Cha Kwang Su to read Marx's books and plan some kind of movement in Japan where the communist movement was on a decline.

Cha Kwang Su returned to Seoul. There he met people who were allegedly engaged in the communist movement. However there were so many groups who advocated the same Marxism-Leninism and their combination was so complicated that he could not make head or tail of them.

In order to judge which group was right in its arguments and to find the way for him to take, Cha Kwang Su took time to study the history of the early communist movement in our country, its genealogy and its different branches. It was like working his way through a labyrinth.

There were many groups—parties of three here and groups of five there. The groups were opposed to one another but, in fact, had no essential differences in ideological stand and political view.

When Cha Kwang Su had been in the homeland, he deemed the Ragyang Restaurant incident the meanest of the factionalists' actions, he said. When people from the Tuesday group and the North Wind group held a meeting at the Ragyang Restaurant, people from the Seoul group who were opposed to the collusion between the two groups raided the place and seriously injured some of them. The seriously wounded people brought an action in the

Japanese court against the assailants from the Seoul group. A few days after the incident the people from the North Wind group attacked some people from the Seoul group and seriously injured them. Then the seriously wounded people from the Seoul group, in their turn, filed an action in the Japanese court against the offenders from the North Wind group.

The factional strife went so far that each group formed a terrorist band to counter other groups.

Cha Kwang Su had lamented day and night, wondering how people who were allegedly engaged in the communist movement could degenerate to such an extent, and after serious thought had left Seoul for Manchuria. This was because he entertained a slight hope that he could get in touch with the Comintern in Manchuria which bordered the Soviet Union and that he could find a new path for the Korean communist movement. But in Manchuria he read the declaration of the Jongu Association.

In the declaration of the Jongu Association the factionalists proposed to hold open discussions instead of slandering one another and thus save the Korean communist movement from factional strife, and they stressed the need to open up the genuine path for the masses through theoretical debate.

If open discussions had been held as the declaration proposed, it would have benefited the Japanese special services but not the Korean communist movement.

After the founding of the Communist Party of Korea the Tuesday group, which was opposed to the Seoul group and engaged in factional strife with it, published in a newspaper a list of 72 members of the preparatory committee for a meeting of mass movement champions which they were preparing in order to display its strength. But this was nothing more than openly informing against the cadres of the communist party whom the factionalists, who were hell-bent on hegemony, were handing over

to the Japanese imperialists. With the help of this list the Japanese imperialists made a sweeping arrest of the cadres of the communist party. Almost all the members of the Tuesday group were arrested and thrown into prison.

If an open debate was held as the factionalists proposed, ignoring this lesson, it was clear what would happen.

Cha Kwang Su, who knew a lot about Japan, denounced the declaration of the Jongu Association as a replica of the Hukumoto doctrine, an opportunist trend revealed within the Japanese communist movement.

Hukumoto stressed that, for the restoration of the party, the pure elements alone should be rallied after those with pure revolutionary ideas had been separated from those with impure ideas through a theoretical debate. His argument was divisive and factional and did great harm to the Japanese labour movement.

Cha Kwang Su spat on the declaration of the Jongu Association which copied Hukumoto's theory, and he rejected it.

Disgusted with the criminal acts of the factionalists he left for Liuhe. He decided to become a rural teacher and lead a quiet life, while implanting the national spirit in the children's minds. In the meantime, having met Choe Chang Gol, he came to Jilin with an introduction from him.

As he trod a foreign land in the cold rain, he yearned for the right course of struggle and the appearance of a leader capable of giving him strength and hope, he owned.

After talking about his life, he said aloud, "Song Ju, can we conduct a movement, believing in and loving one another? I mean, without factional strife and a fight for hegemony."

This appeal reflected the experience of his life and the lesson he had learned after roaming the length and breadth of a foreign country, seeking the path of revolution.

Holding his hand, I said with a strong feeling that we, the new generation, should closely unite in thought and purpose and take the straight path of revolution instead of taking the path of disunity like the factionalists.

He told me of the genuine feeling he had entertained when introduced to me by Choe Chang Gol. Hearing that I was conducting the student movement in Jilin, he wondered how much I, a secondary school student, knew about Marxism-Leninism and the communist movement, if anything at all, and decided to size me up, he owned frankly. That was why at first I took him as a taciturn man, although in truth he was sociable and lively.

He soon became a member of our DIU.

That summer I sent Cha Kwang Su to Xinantun. Xinantun, which was situated a little to the west of the road from Jilin to Changchun, was a small village which some Korean patriots had developed as an ideal village. It was one of the small number of bases for the political movement among the Korean settlements in Manchuria. If the village was made revolutionary, it could provide initial access to the peasant masses. I wanted to entrust Cha Kwang Su with this task.

When I told him to go to Xinantun village and work there, he gave me a dubious look. He asked me, part joking and part in earnest, why I was sending him to the countryside after he had come up from the countryside to join the movement. He was wondering what he could do in a small country village when others were going about in Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and other big cities conducting the movement and, unsatisfied even with this, were visiting the Comintern. He opposed the old way of conducting the movement, but was still shackled by the accepted ideas.

I said the following to him: "It is wrong to think that only when one is ensconced in a big city can one make the revolution. We should not draw distinctions between the city and the countryside if

there are people there. The overwhelming majority of our population is peasants. A large proportion of the Koreans in Manchuria live in the countryside. Without going among the peasants it is impossible to enlist the people in the cause of national liberation or to think about the victory of the communist movement in our country. I want to go to the countryside and work there after finishing school. It is wrong to think that only those who frequent the Comintern have dignity as communists. Communists respect the Comintern because the cause of the working class assumes an international character and because only when the working class of the world is united can it break the international shackles of capital. Only when we make sincere efforts to discharge the national and international duties devolving upon us can we gain the recognition of the Comintern and hasten the longed-for day of national liberation. Those who are now allegedly engaged in the movement all move up—to the county town from the countryside, to the capital from the county town and to the Comintern from the capital. People suppose that only by moving up can they gain the recognition of others. What if those who are allegedly making the revolution for the proletarian masses continuously move up, leaving the masses behind? Let us go down. Let us go down among the workers and peasants.”

“Let us go down instead of up,” Cha Kwang Su repeated these words earnestly to himself and remained in thought for a while. Then he said aloud, thumping the desk, “What a good idea!”

With Cha Kwang Su’s appearance the core force of the DIU was reinforced. It meant that within our movement there was a prominent theoretician capable of countering the major figures from the upper levels of the Communist Party of Korea.

From then on Cha Kwang Su shared good times and bad with us for more than three years. He rendered immortal services in developing the youth and student movement, promoting the process

of making the masses revolutionary and laying the foundation for the anti-Japanese armed struggle. The fact that the Xinantun, Jiangdong, Jiaohe, Guyushu, Kalun, Wujiazi and Liuhe areas became revolutionary is linked to his name.

He at first took part in making the Korean villages around Jilin revolutionary and then together with Kim Won U, Kye Yong Chun, Zhang Wei-hua, Pak Kun Won, Ri Jong Rak, Pak Cha Sok and others, he rallied the young people in the Korean settlements in Liuhe, south Manchuria and in Kalun, Guyushu, Wujiazi and other areas of central Manchuria, with Jilin as the centre. In later years he took part in founding the Anti-Japanese People's Guerrilla Army in the Antu area.

Wherever he went, he made friends easily with people, because he was sociable. People liked and respected him because he was lively, well-read and talkative. The lessons in the social sciences he conducted at Samgwang School in Guyushu were popular with the students and they used to wait for his lessons with great expectation and interest. He delivered lectures on many occasions for young people and students and peasants and taught them many songs. The memorial address he delivered at the memorial service for Paek Sin Han was spoken about widely.

Xinantun was the place Cha Kwang Su visited most frequently. He taught at Kilhung School there for some time, staying with the school superintendent, and gave revolutionary education to the peasants, young people and students and women of the village and made the village revolutionary by rallying them in the Anti-Imperialist Youth League, Peasants' Association, Women's Association and Children's Association.

Xinantun had been under the influence of the nationalists and factionalists. As the factionalists, on their occasional visits, had made absurd remarks about the proletarian revolution, the village

elders and old people who were swayed by feudal customs shook their heads at the mention of socialism.

So, at first Cha Kwang Su had difficulty in gaining access there. Having obtained the front room of a house, he renovated it, having its walls papered. Then he invited a couple of learned old men to his room, and persuaded them to conduct propaganda among the old people.

Every evening old men with their pipes at their waists would come to Cha Kwang Su's room to chat. Then an old man, as planned by Cha Kwang Su, told them interesting stories, he had prepared, interlacing them with remarks on the revolution such as "It is now a bad time. If the world is to be reformed it is necessary to do away with the landlords, to begin with."

After educating the old people like this, he opened an evening school, gave lectures and danced and sang songs, mixing with the people. In this way he enlivened the village. The village people took an active part in the revolutionary work, saying that they were not opposed to the socialism which Cha Kwang Su advocated.

After Cha Kwang Su had settled in Xinantun I used to visit him on Saturdays after school.

We used to have to change into peasants' clothes in the kaoliang or maize field in the outskirts of Jilin to evade the enemy's surveillance.

In Xinantun, I heard his experiences and helped him in his work. In the course of this I obtained a deeper understanding of him and he, of me.

One day Cha Kwang Su came to Jilin and took me to Beishan Park. When we were sitting in the shade of a tree, he said that there was a man called Ho Ryul who was worthy of attention. According to him, he had had a hand in revolutionary work since attending Dongxing Middle School in Longjing. A short time before he came



to Jilin to enrol in the law college but gave it up because of a problem with the school fees, he said.

Cha Kwang Su took an interest in Ho Ryul because of his background. Ho Ryul was sent to Jilin by Kim Chan, he said. At that time Cha Kwang Su harboured illusions about Kim Chan.

I was surprised at what he said.

Kim Chan was a major figure in the early communist movement in our country. He was in charge of the propaganda section for the first communist party and played a leading role in founding the second communist party. Threatened with arrest later, he went to Shanghai and formed the Shanghai branch of the Communist Party of Korea. A representative of the Tuesday group, Kim Chan was the organizer of the “general bureau in Manchuria” of the Communist Party of Korea.

He dispatched young people under his influence to Jilin because he was very interested in us. As the rumour spread that we were launching the youth and student movement under the banner of communism in Jilin, he turned his attention to us. As our force expanded, he tried to exert his influence upon us by sending the cleverest of his men.

Kim Chan himself came to Jilin and met many young people and students. He delivered lectures on many occasions. I attended one of his lectures. Told that an “authority on Marxism” was going to deliver a lecture, Cha Kwang Su and I went to Ri Kum Chon’s house outside the Dadong Gate where Kim Chan was staying. We were disappointed at the absurd remarks he made which were detrimental to revolutionary practice.

That day Kim Chan spoke ill of other groups, qualifying his group as the “orthodox” one of the Korean revolution. He went so far as to put forward the absurd argument that, since the Korean revolution was a proletarian one, only workers and poor peasants

could be the motive force of the revolution and no other non-proletarian elements could form the motive force.

As I listened to his speech, I realized that this was a dangerous sophistry which might confuse the people and do great harm to the revolutionary practice, and that without fighting his sophistry it would be impossible for us to lead the communist movement along the right path.

Cha Kwang Su said that he shared my opinion, even though he had previously been in awe of Kim Chan.

In those days the factionalists stretched their hands out to young people everywhere in order to expand their forces.

An Kwang Chon from the M-L group, wearing a white Korean overcoat, came to Jilin to expand his group, behaving as if he were the “leader” of the communist movement. He had once been the chief secretary of the M-L group-led communist party and thought very highly of himself. Many people in Jilin worshipped him as an “authority on Marxism.”

Because Cha Kwang Su said that An Kwang Chon was a famous theoretician, I met him twice in the hope that I might hear from him something helpful to us in our activities. On meeting him, I found he was good at making speeches, like Kim Chan.

At first everyone admired his speech, but our impression of him was reversed before long. He made foolish remarks which ignored the mass movement. He said that it was possible to emerge victorious in the revolution without the mass struggle if the help of the Comintern or of the great powers was enlisted. He emphasized that a small country like Korea should attain her independence with the help of the great powers instead of launching a mass struggle and shedding blood in vain. This absurd sophistry was like a castle built on sand.

Thinking that he was a doctrinarian like Kim Chan, I said to his face that I did not understand him.

“Why did you form the communist party if you make light of the mass struggle? Why are you conducting the communist movement? Why do you come to Jilin to rouse people to the revolution?” I asked. I countered him, saying that if we did not awaken the masses to ideological awareness and rally and rouse them to the struggle, we could not emerge victorious in the struggle with only a few people forming the leadership of the communist party, and that it was wild daydream to try to win independence with the help of others without believing in one’s own people.

He said that only those who had tasted the bitters and sweets of life could understand those things, speaking to us as if we were on too low a level and not a match for him, and he laughed aloud before leaving.

From then on we had nothing more to do with him.

Then the factionalists came out with the Left opportunist theory that “The Korean revolution is a proletarian revolution” and “Let us build a socialist society first in the Korean settlement in Manchuria on a trial basis,” and the Right opportunist theory that “The national bourgeoisie should seize hegemony in the revolution since the Korean revolution is a bourgeois democratic one and its immediate aim is to achieve national liberation.”

Some factionalists deemed it impossible to conduct a political movement, although an ideological movement was possible, in such an unfavourable political situation as that in Korea, others said that “Priority should be given to independence over revolution,” while yet others perplexed the masses with the ultra-revolutionary slogan “Let us oppose capitalism and carry out the world proletarian revolution.”

Cha Kwang Su and I had theoretical battle with Sin Il Yong and his like as well.

We met many factionalists and they were without exception snobs, bigoted flunkeyists or dogmatists obsessed with fame-seeking and petty-bourgeois heroism.

That day I dissuaded Cha Kwang Su from harbouring any illusions about Kim Chan, however famous he might be, because he was a bigoted factionalist, and I said that when we approach anyone we should consider his ideas, his attitude toward the revolution and his views on the people before his fame, life history and position.

Cha Kwang Su said that he had harboured illusions about him because he deemed it favourable for us to join hands with a major figure like Kim Chan rather than turning our backs on him, having just joined the communist movement, and that he would immediately break also with Ho Ryul.

The change in his attitude made me consider the matter in a serious light.

If Ho Ryul was contaminated by factionalism, we should cut all our connections with him without delay. But, if he had inadvertently taken the wrong path, we should educate him and take him in hand. We decided to see him directly.

Led by Cha Kwang Su, I headed for Jiangdong village. After covering a short distance in the direction of Dunhua from Jilin across the bridge over the River Songhua, we came in view of Longdan Hill. Jiangdong village lay at the foot of the hill. Our plan was to form an organization of our Anti-Imperialist Youth League there, educate the people and make the rural community revolutionary, like Xinantun.

Meeting Ho Ryul, I found him to be stalwart and serious-minded. In every respect it was a pity to leave him to fall into the mire of factionalism. I made Cha Kwang Su give him help and a good influence, and I often visited the village and helped him in a variety of ways.

Ho Ryul did not betray our trust. He, who had come to expand the influence of the factionalists, opposed them and turned his back on Kim Chan. Finally we formed revolutionary organizations in the village and, on the basis of them, made the whole village revolutionary and trained Ho Ryul into a hardcore member of the DIU and later into a leading member of the AIYL and YCLK.

## 9. The Lessons of Wangqingmen

In the autumn of 1929 Kukmin-bu held a meeting in Wangqingmen, Xingjing County, in order to merge the General Federation of Korean Youth in East Manchuria and the General Federation of Korean Youth in South Manchuria. This meeting was known as the Conference of the General Federation of Korean Youth in South Manchuria.

In the belief that the dispersion of the youth movement should be prevented and unified guidance ensured in the movement in view of the situation in which the three “bu” organizations had been merged, the leaders of Kukmin-bu sponsored this meeting in an attempt to form a single organization called the Youth League of Korea. They tried, through this meeting, to prevent the infiltration of a new ideological trend into the youth organizations and to bring all the Korean youth organizations in Manchuria under their control.

As we were independent of such youth organizations, we had nothing to do with that conference. But we could not leave this meeting exclusively in the hands of Kukmin-bu. Because the two Korean youth organizations in east and south Manchuria were greatly influenced by the factionalists, their internal disputes were extremely severe. A slight provocation in this meeting might aggravate such disputes and lead them to greater division.

We thought it necessary to take part in this conference on our own initiative in order to prevent the young people from being divided and to exercise a positive influence on the representatives of the youth organizations.

I decided to participate in this conference as a representative of the Paeksan Youth League and left Jilin with Kim Sa Hon, who was going to Wangqingmen to attend a meeting of the Korean Revolutionary Party. He paid my travel expenses. The Korean Revolutionary Party was a party formed by the Independence Army leaders on the basis of the charter of Kukmin-bu after it had been established. The nationalists called Kukmin-bu an autonomous administrative body and the revolutionary party the one and only party of the nation to guide the nationalist camp as a whole, but this party was merely Kukmin-bu in another form.

I had intended to go directly to Wangqingmen, but I changed my plan because I wanted to see Kim Hyok, Cha Kwang Su and Choe Chang Gol on my way. So I passed through Liuhe County where they were working. They had been working well, expanding the organizations of the Anti-Imperialist Youth League in Liuhe and the surrounding area. Cha Kwang Su had organized a special course at Tongsong School in Gushanzi and there trained some communists. A special course was advertised there, but really it was an institute of social sciences. A branch of the AIYL worked in this institute. They organized such institutes not only in Gushanzi but also in several of the rural communities in south Manchuria, educating many young people and enlisting them in the organizations of the YCLK and the AIYL.

It was not until I had gone there that I realized that my comrades working in Liuhe had achieved a greater success than they had reported. When I left Liuhe after finishing my business there, Cha followed me, saying that he would not feel easy if I went alone as the leadership of Kukmin-bu were so watchful over the movements of young sympathizers with communism. When we arrived in Wangqingmen, the representatives of the Jilin Youth League, the Kilhoe Youth League and the Samgakju Youth League and other youth organizations were already there.

On my arrival I called on Hyon Muk Kwan. Hyon had left Jilin after the formation of Kukmin-bu and was staying in Wangqingmen. He told me that the headquarters of Kukmin-bu was expecting a great deal from me, so I should play a major role in the conference. He hoped that I would stay at his house during the conference, and discuss with him the future of the youth movement.

I was grateful for his kindness, but I declined his offer and instead put up at the house of Kang Hong Rak, a distant relative of mine on my mother's side. Hyon's house was so frequented by the members of the preparatory committee for the conference that I decided that staying there was not a good idea for me.

An intellectual belonging to the Leftist group of the nationalists, Kang Hong Rak was teaching at Hwahung Middle School. Hwahung School, like Taesong Middle School in east Manchuria, taught nationalist ideas for the Independence Army. No matter how hard it tried to imbue its students with nationalism, it could only produce communists. The form of its education was nationalistic whereas its content was communistic.

O Sin Ae, Kang's wife, was a modern woman with a beautiful face. She sang so well that members of the organizations in south Manchuria called her the "nightingale" instead of using her real name.

Before the conference Kukmin-bu held a preliminary meeting attended by the representatives of the youth organizations from various areas and elected the members of the preparatory committee for the conference. Several of our comrades, including Choe Pong, were involved in the committee. I had become acquainted with Choe at Hwasong Uisuk School. In those days, as a leadership member of the General Federation of Korean Youth in South Manchuria, he would make speeches as he travelled around the Korean settlements. His speeches were popular at Hwasong



Uisuk School, too. He was very clever, well-prepared theoretically and also enterprising. Later he became friendly with me and inclined towards communism.

I was also elected a member of the preparatory committee. The members held serious discussions and drew up a draft resolution for the conference which everyone would be able to accept readily. Other documents, too, were prepared as we intended.

From the day after my arrival I worked among the youth representatives. As the first part of this work I held a meeting of a few youth organizations in the playground of Hwahung Middle School. I used this opportunity to get to know them and influence them. If they were not warned, they might be ideologically affected by the leadership of Kukmin-bu. At this meeting I emphasized that Korean young people must unite in ideology and purpose to achieve true cohesion in their movement, and such cohesion must be based on the new, progressive thought.

Apparently my speech was brought to the notice of the Kukmin-bu leadership a short time later. Kim Ri Gap informed me of the fact that they had become nervous and were watching my activities. So it was natural that Cha had been worried about me when I was leaving Liuhe.

Kim Ri Gap, one of the first members of the DIU, stayed at the house of Chon Kyong Suk, his fiancée, not far from Wangqingmen, after Hwasong Uisuk School had been closed, and he was making this area revolutionary. He was a man of courage and with a strong drive; he did his work boldly. It was not easy to infuse communism into people in the area where nationalists shouted anti-communist slogans whenever they had the chance.

He was staying in Wangqingmen to attend the conference as an observer. The day after I made a speech at the school he called on me and invited me to dinner at his fiancée's house. He said he wanted to share past experiences with me, but in fact his aim was

to inform me of the attitude of Kukmin-bu. He told me that the people of Kukmin-bu were plotting to arrest all the members of the preparatory committee. He said that I had better escape as soon as possible before they started the arrests and expressed his intention to leave Wangqingmen that night if the situation got worse. Hyon Muk Kwan, he said, had proclaimed to the Kukmin-bu cadres that Song Ju had a different idea, so they should end their relation with him.

I, however, did not hurry to escape, as I thought that they would not dare to arrest me who had done nothing against Kukmin-bu. It was unreasonable for Hyon to accuse me because of my communist propaganda. All the nationalists in Jilin knew that I had joined the communist movement. Of course, Hyon must have known this because I had stayed at his house for a while. So, why was he trying to arrest me now? We had not advocated the overthrow of Kukmin-bu; we had only appealed for the unity of all the Korean young people on the basis of the new idea. This was no reason for persecution.

I was determined to negotiate with the Kukmin-bu cadres if necessary. After I had returned to Kang Hong Rak's house, his wife O Sin Ae came home and told me more unhappy news, that the soldiers of Kukmin-bu had already arrested some members of the preparatory committee, including Choe Pong. She said that I had better escape as soon as possible because I was one of those for whom they were searching.

I could hardly control my surging indignation. Since the first day of our stay in Wangqingmen we had tried our best to make the conference an important occasion for forming a united front with the nationalists. The draft resolution of the conference stated this aim. This notwithstanding, the leadership of Kukmin-bu was answering our sincerity with terrorism.

I made up my mind to see Ko I Ho who was in charge of youth affairs in Kukmin-bu and talk to him. On hearing of what Kukmin-bu was doing, Cha Kwang Su had come to Kang Hong Rak's house with some members of the AIYL. They insisted that the members of the preparatory committee, the objects of the attack, should leave Wangqingmen before anyone else.

However, I could not escape simply because I was in danger. I thought: Now that our aim cannot be attained through this conference, the only method remaining is to hold talks with the terrorists of Kukmin-bu and clarify our just stand. We must open our minds to them and have a heart-to-heart talk with them in order to cooperate with them. Threatening as the atmosphere is, it is a golden opportunity. Someone had to go to rescue our comrades who were under arrest. I was the someone.

After talking to my comrades, I entrusted Cha with future affairs, and went to see Ko I Ho. Ko was the most conservative of all those in the conservative group in Kukmin-bu. He was known as a "theoretician" in the nationalist camp. When I entered his room, he was so embarrassed that he could not speak. He had never thought I would come to see him. I asked him outright why they had arrested Choe Pong and other members of the preparatory committee. With an air of innocence he replied that they were looking for them. I became more indignant at his inconsistent behaviour, but I tried to talk to him with composure.

"Kukmin-bu convened this conference for the sake of the unity of the youth movement, but you have arrested the representatives, frightened by the draft resolution, even before listening to their opinions. That is reckless and arbitrary behaviour. I was told that you arrested them because you were not happy with the conference memoranda. So please tell me which item you are unhappy with. They are all drafts so they can be amended. Since you are the sponsors of the conference, you should discuss with the young

people on the items you do not agree with. How can people imbibe new thoughts and train themselves into staunch anti-Japanese fighters when you are arresting innocent people?”

Ko repeated that he was sorry that some young people were going to the extreme and that, of arresting people, he did not know anything about it.

I went on to say: “Since you were once engaged in the student movement in Seoul and tried to go to the Soviet Union to shelter from the Japanese police, you must have a good understanding of the communist idea and to what extent it is disseminated across the world. None of those who are willing to conduct the revolution is ignorant of communism. Take me for example. I attended Hwasong Uisuk School established by the independence fighters and stayed at the houses of the leaders of the Independence Army for three years in Jilin. Yet I did not follow the road of nationalism, but joined in the communist movement. We young people adhere to the new thought because we have the firm conviction that the communist ideal will hasten the liberation of the motherland and bring happiness to our nation in the future. You, a man who is fighting for the independence of the country, how dare you arrest the young people who are struggling for the bright future of the country and nation, instead of helping them?”

I said in earnest that they should not persecute the young people who aspired after the new thought, but wage a joint struggle against the Japanese hand in hand with them. To tell the truth, the General Federation of Korean Youth in South Manchuria itself could not maintain its existence without young communists.

Sneering at what I said Ko stated that Kukmin-bu would rather abandon the federation than hand it over to the communists. When I asked him why, he took as an example the raid made on the nationalists in Panshi by a terrorist gang known as Cudgel that had

been formed by the factionalists of the M-L group. He said sarcastically that they could not join hands with such people.

We had also been aware that, in an attempt to throw out nationalists, some of those from the M-L group had made a false report to the Kuomintang police that the Korean independence campaigners were plotting a rebellion in the area around Sanyuanpu in the summer of 1929. They were displeased with us who advocated the united front with the nationalists and went so far as to mobilize the Cudgel gang to attack the cadres of the AIYL. Because of the violence of this gang, the members of the AIYL in Liuhe and its vicinity had to work under the escort of an armed group led by Choe Chang Gol.

I explained to Ko that we were totally different from such factionalists. I emphasized that he should not judge us together because they were social scum who were fighting with anyone, whether they were nationalists or our comrades and, worse still, fighting among themselves in factions.

However, Ko would not accept my sincere opinion. So I warned him, "If you are so stubborn as to dampen the spirit of the young people, you will leave an indelible mark in the pages of history. You may arrest or kill a few people, but you cannot restrain the thoughts of young people who aspire after communism. So, if you want to, kill me. I am ready to die."

I thought he might have been affected by my words, but he became more contradictory. At the very night the leaders of Kukmin-bu summoned the Independence Army unit stationed at Wangqingmen and tried to arrest us.

In order to prevent any bloodshed, I sent Cha Kwang Su back to Sanyuanpu immediately. There was the danger of the leadership of Kukmin-bu laying their hands on our comrades in Liuhe County. I instructed the YCLK and the AIYL members gathered there for the conference to leave Wangqingmen that night. I proposed to

them that, as Kukmin-bu had called a conference of the General Federation of Korean Youth in South Manchuria and persecuted the progressive young people, we should break away from the conference and expose their terrorism by making a written protest.

As a consequence, the conference broke up.

I made up my mind to leave Wangqingmen.

Some comrades proposed that we should go to Sanyuanpu, Liuhe County, where Choe Chang Gol was working, and draw up a letter of protest there and send it to various parts of Manchuria before holding a conference of our own. However, it was risky to go to Sanyuanpu where the Independence Army held sway. I hesitated for a while over where to go, Sanyuanpu or Lingjie, before deciding to go to the latter. Our next step could be discussed there. I planned to go to Jilin after resting at Lingjie and, if the situation in Jilin was not favourable, to go to Fusong and guide the mass organizations until the whirlwind of terrorism of Kukmin-bu had calmed down.

That night I went to Kang Hong Rak's house and told him, "I may be arrested if I sleep here. I am going to Lingjie. Will you please lend me some money for my journey?"

Heaving a sigh, he said in worry, "How can you escape along a strange road?"

"If I run 20 miles along the road, I will be all right. Don't worry."

I said that I would be safe for a while in Lingjie for a comrade of mine from Wenguang Middle School who was working in our organization was there. Then, somewhat relieved, Kang and his wife gave me some food and a few bars of toffee wrapped up that I could eat on my way. My comrade from Wenguang Middle School was Sin Yong Gun, who was working as the schoolmaster at Hanhung School in Lingjie.

I arrived at Lingjie towards lunchtime the next day. Some girl students studying in the advanced course of Hanhung School looked after me. Sin's fiancée, An Sin Yong, who had been working as a member of the AIYL in Jiangdong and was now studying at this school, cooked with her friends green-bean jelly and cold soup for my lunch. I still remember how tasty that lunch was.

After lunch I took stock of the situation at the school, despite my fatigue. Then, I fell asleep because I was deadly tired after walking 20 miles throughout the night. Later I was told that Sin did not ring the school bell so as not to interrupt my sleep, and beckoned the pupils at play one by one to start their lessons.

During my stay in Lingjie I was informed that the Kukmin-bu people had executed the members of the preparatory committee of the conference they had arrested. They executed six promising young people—Choe Pong, Ri Thae Hui, Ji Un San, Ri Mong Ryol, Ri Kwang Son and Jo Hui Yon—in a valley at Wangqingmen. They were all in their early twenties. At the last, the six young people accused Kukmin-bu, saying, “We are always ready to die for the working masses. But it is deplorable that we are killed at your hands.” They sang the *Revolutionary Song* and shouted, “Long live the victory of the revolution!”

Afterwards the terrorists of Kukmin-bu schemed to arrest and kill all the families of those six people. Ko murdered even O Sin Ae who had informed me of their sinister plot.

With tears in our eyes, we wrote a letter of protest in Lingjie denouncing the criminal acts of the Kukmin-bu leadership. We had this letter mimeographed in Sanyuanpu where Choe Chang Gol was active and published there. We also sent copies of it to the revolutionary organizations in other regions for them to hold protest meetings. The letter of protest denounced Kukmin-bu which had massacred the vanguard of the young masses merely because

they were communists, as a profit-making organization and a den of murderous conspirators of a few counterrevolutionaries, as well as a gang of traitors, no different from Jiang Jie-shi's soldiers who had slaughtered the workers and peasants of China.

After issuing this letter the communists of the new generation came into direct confrontation with Kukmin-bu. Whenever they met our comrades the Kukmin-bu terrorists would slay them without reason. We lost a lot of fine young people in those days. Thus we came to bear an inveterate enmity for Kukmin-bu.

After the Wangqingmen incident I felt my heart rent, and I could not sleep for several days. I felt deeply resentful that our comrades who had set out on the road of revolution to liberate the country had become the victims of those with the same blood.

Since the day of the foundation of the DIU we had made strenuous efforts to fight alongside the nationalists. When we realized that An Chang Ho's idea was reformistic, we criticized his way of thinking, but when he was arrested, we did not hesitate to fight for his release. When the meeting to merge the three organizations had dragged on because of their scrambling for supremacy, we warned the nationalists in a play which showed our sincerity for the unity of the patriotic forces. When the independence organizations had been merged into Kukmin-bu, we were delighted and welcomed it.

Nevertheless, the leadership of Kukmin-bu answered our sincerity with brutal atrocities.

At that time in Lingjie I recalled the old man, Cha Cholli, who had said, "The Korean people, even if three of them get together, must unite to fight against the Japanese imperialists." Many independence fighters had cried out for unity. The popular masses expected all the patriots to join hands irrespective of ideology, affiliation and religious belief and rise in the anti-Japanese struggle



in unity. However, the Kukmin-bu terrorists had trampled upon these expectations.

Whenever I recall the tragedy at Wangqingmen, it makes my blood run cold, as it did on the day of the bloody massacre. And whenever I look back on the tragedy, I think that such a merciless, nonsensical massacre should never be tolerated again by our nation. I am sure that Ko I Ho and Hyon Muk Kwan, if they were still alive, would think as I do. Hyon, though he was on good terms with me, could not follow the road I was following because of our differences in ideals, and was later killed by terrorists in Changxi. In the long run, he also became a victim of terrorism. The letter his daughter Hyon Suk Ja wrote to her mother at the Pando Hotel in Seoul after returning home with the members of the Shanghai Provisional Government after liberation, is now in the Party History Institute. Her sons and daughters are now living in happiness in the northern part of their divided country.

The history of the national liberation struggle of Korea proved that the road communists had been following was a truly patriotic road and that the communists were faithful, steadfast patriots who cherished an ardent love for their motherland and people.

Whenever I feel that unity is the lifeblood of the nation, in view of the present division of the country and intolerable foreign interference, I recall the tragedy at Wangqingmen.

## 10. Behind Bars

As the “wind of Jilin” blew across many areas of Manchuria, the Japanese imperialists and the reactionary Chinese warlords soon heard of our existence. The youth and student movement in Jilin, the Zhongdong railway incident and the incident of the conference of the General Federation of Korean Youth in South Manchuria caused rumours of us to spread far and wide, and this made the enemy aware that the young people and students were at the bottom of the disturbances in Jilin and set him on our trail. The Japanese imperialists planted their spies everywhere to keep a sharp watch on every movement of the Koreans prior to their invasion of Manchuria and, at the same time, egged the reactionary Chinese warlords on to arrest and imprison the communists and anti-Japanese independence fighters. The situation in Jilin became extremely grave and ordeals were lying ahead of us. As the situation became more threatening, the factionalists who had been lying low in Jilin fled to Longjing, Panshi, Dunhua and other places and the independence fighters either disappeared into China proper with Chinese citizenship or escaped to places like Wangqingmen. Jilin in the autumn of 1929 was no longer the centre of the political movement of Koreans abroad, the centre which had once been crowded with anti-Japanese champions.

Then the students of Jilin Middle School No. 5 made a senseless fuss at a meeting of a reading circle, which caused our comrades to be arrested. As soon as I had returned from Wangqingmen and was busy trying to save the situation, I was caught in the web of the reactionary warlord authorities. The

students of Middle School No. 5 had revealed the secret of the Young Communist League at Yuwen Middle School.

The police claimed that they had rounded up the leaders of the student movement and tortured us brutally every day. They were trying to discover details of the activities we had conducted and of our organizational network in the city, and to find the men behind the scenes. We decided not to say anything except that we had read some Leftist books. We held out to the interrogators, arguing, “What is wrong for a student to read books? We read books that are on sale in the bookshops. If you are going to incriminate anyone, you should lay the guilt first on the authorities who have permitted the publication and sale of the books, shouldn’t you?”

One day when I was being put to finger-breaking torture, I saw Mr. Choe Tong O, the former head of Hwasong Uisuk School, looking at me for a second from behind a screen set up to one side of the interrogation room and then disappearing. It was such a surprise to me that I doubted my own eyes at first, wondering if it was merely an illusion. But it was Mr. Choe Tong O, there was no mistake. As they had gone so far as to summon my old teacher from Hwasong Uisuk School to the interrogation room, I thought, they were really digging deep into my activities. The appearance of my old teacher set me thinking. He spoke good Chinese and was an able diplomat, so he was the chairman of the foreign affairs committee of the Kukmin-bu setup. He stayed mostly in Jilin to coordinate relations with the reactionary warlord authorities of the Kuomintang and maintained some ties with the young people and students. If he should disclose my past activities to the warlord authorities, my efforts to settle my case as quietly as possible might come to naught. Moreover, should any of the facts about my activities in support of the Soviet Union at the time of the Zhongdong railway incident come to light, I would not get away with my life.

Instigated and manipulated by the British, American, French and Japanese imperialists, the Kuomintang government and the Fengtian warlord of China had been guilty of treacherous anti-Soviet moves towards the end of the 1920s. Following the unsuccessful Guangzhou popular uprising, the Jiang Jie-shi government shot to death the Soviet consul in Guangzhou and broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. This anti-Soviet move was the boldest move of Jiang Jie-shi, who was flattering the imperialist powers in order to secure their protection and support. The slogan “We are against red imperialism” passed the lips of the warlords frequently. Craftily playing on the Chinese people’s national sentiments, they covered up the truth about the imperialists’ aggression and persistently stirred up anti-Soviet feelings. Taken in by the propaganda conducted by the warlords, university students and young intellectuals said such bellicose and provocative things as “Let’s take the Ural Mountains and seize Lake Baikal!” and “Let’s water our horses in Lake Baikal!” as they turned their eyes to Soviet territory. Taking advantage of this atmosphere, the warlords attacked the Zhongdong railway as the first step in their anti-Soviet provocation. According to an agreement, China and the Soviet Union had been managing the railway jointly through a council, sharing its property and equipment with each other. The warlords seized the wireless station and management bureau by force of arms and captured the railway, unilaterally revoking the Soviet side’s right of control. Following the seizure of the railway, they invaded Soviet territory in three directions across the border. In consequence, there was an armed clash between the Soviet army and the troops of the reactionary Chinese warlords. At that time some Right-wing students at Fengyong and Dongbei Universities, abetted by the reactionaries, took up arms against the Soviet Union.

In order to check the anti-Soviet acts of the Kuomintang government and reactionary warlords, we roused the members of the Young Communist League and Anti-Imperialist Youth League in defence of the socialist country. Some politically ignorant young Chinese gave us a wide berth, vilifying us as evil people who were helping the “trespassers” on the national interests of China. This was very annoying. In many places in the city we distributed handbills exposing the true nature of the warlords’ anti-Soviet moves and went among the Chinese people, telling them that the seizure of the Zhongdong railway and the invasion of Soviet territory by the warlords’ troops was an inexcusable act of perfidy against the Soviet Union that had repealed all its unequal treaties with China and given material and moral aid to China after the October Revolution, and that this was motivated by a desire to obtain loans from the imperialists. After hearing our explanation the people who had been deceived by the propaganda of the reactionary Kuo-mintang and warlords and taken a hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union came to recognize the danger and true character of the invasion of the Soviet Union, changed their attitude and position and denounced the moves of the reactionaries. In conjunction with the young progressives of China we dealt a severe blow to the students of Fengyong University who took up arms to attack the Soviet Union. Our activities in connection with the Zhongdong railway incident represented an internationalist struggle to defend the Soviet Union politically. At that time we regarded the first socialist system established on Earth as a beacon of hope and considered it our solemn internationalist obligation as communists to fight in its defence. Our struggle in relation to the Zhongdong railway incident helped the Chinese people to see clearly the true nature of the warlords and to realize what the imperialists’ motives were in manipulating the warlords to turn

against the Soviet Union. The incident opened the eyes of the Korean and Chinese peoples.

In those days the Kuomintang warlords would not tolerate the pro-Soviets. Even after I had seen Mr. Choe Tong O in the interrogation room, the interrogators treated me only as the leading spirit of the reading circle. It appeared that the warlord authorities had asked Mr. Choe about my past activities and if I had had anything to do with the Soviet Union, as well as what sort of movement I had been involved in. But it seems that he said nothing against me.

After a while we were sent to Jilin prison. The prison was a cross-shaped building with the passages stretching in four directions—north, south, east and west. The passages were lined with cells on both sides, so that the warder might have a full view of them while sitting in the centre. My cell was the second on the right of the northern passage. Being in the north, the room never got any sun all the year round. So it was unbearably musty and, in winter, its walls were white with frost. It was autumn when we were transferred to the prison, but it was as cold in the cell as in winter.

The warlord authorities employed national discrimination in their treatment of the prisoners. The warders would use insulting language like “Korean swines” and “homeless Korean devils” and fetter the Korean students with heavy leg irons. The authorities drew a distinction between Korean and Chinese political prisoners in their diet and in the use of medical facilities.

I made up my mind not to give up my struggle in prison. It can be said that for revolutionaries the prison is a theatre of struggle. If one regards prison merely as a lockup for prisoners, one will lose the initiative and be unable to do anything. But if one thinks of it as a part of the world, one will be able to do something beneficial for the revolution even in a narrow walled-in space. I calmly began to

cast about in my mind for a way to struggle. First of all, I decided to contact the comrades outside and restore and put into action the dislocated organizations within the shortest possible time. Also I decided to wage a struggle against the warlord authorities and hasten the day of my release. In order to wage a struggle in prison, the problem was to establish contact with the outside world. The solution of this problem required bringing warders round and making them sympathetic towards us. My plan to win over the warders came off more easily than I had expected. The prison authorities had begun to repair the cells, so they kept us together with some infamous offenders for a while. This offered us a favourable opportunity. One day a Chinese criminal, a fellow inmate, suddenly went down with influenza and took to his bed. He had been arrested on the charge of robbing a rich house, and he was very rough in his manner. When I was transferred to the ordinary criminals' cell, this man, who was known as "Kkangthul," and considered himself to be important, demanded peremptorily that I should treat him to something, either money or food. A newcomer to the cell, whoever he was, was in duty bound to keep this rule. And he growled that I, too, should obey the rule. He was an extremely fierce and wild creature. I fired back point-blank: I have spent days in the interrogation room undergoing severe ordeals, so where do you think I can get hold of money or food? As for a treat, would it not be more reasonable for you who have been in this cell a long time to give me one? At this "Kkangthul" was tongue-tied and merely sat glaring fiercely at me, turning alternately pale and red.

He had always been so despotic that none of the other inmates would nurse him, but just looked at him with indifference, although he was suffering from a high fever and unable to eat or sleep. I covered him with the quilt that had been sent to me by the family of the Rev. Son Jong Do when I was being taken to the prison and

called the warder and asked him to fetch some medicine for the sick man from the prison hospital. The warder, whose name was Ri and who disliked the gruff and unsociable criminal, was mystified to see a Korean looking after a Chinese with brotherly care. Because I nursed him devotedly, the sick prisoner soon got well. After that his attitude towards me was different. Seeing that an infamous offender who was so perverse and fierce that even the gaolers had found it hard to deal with had suddenly turned obedient to me, a secondary school student, the warder Ri was struck with wonder and began to show respect for me. Of all the warders at Jilin prison he was a good-natured person with national consciousness. The members of our organization outside informed me that he was a man of low birth and that he had become a prison guard simply to earn a living. After finding out what kind of a man he was, I decided to win him over, so I seized various opportunities to speak to him. Soon I came to know that his younger brother was having problems because he could not obtain the articles he needed for his marriage despite the fact that the ceremony was near at hand. When my comrades came to the prison to see me, I told them of the embarrassment of the warder and asked them to rouse the organization to help him. A few days later warder Ri came and thanked me for the kind turn of buying the necessary marriage articles. Then he asked me if it was true that I was a communist, as the prison authorities were calling me. When I answered that it was, he said that he could not understand it and went on to remark with great heat, "They say the communists are all bandits, but can it be true that such good people as you rob others? If it's true that you are a communist, it's absurd to label the communists as bandits." So I told him kindly, "The communists are people who struggle to build a society free from exploitation and oppression where all the people are equally well-off. We, the Korean communists, are fighting to expel the Japanese imperialists from



the land of Korea and win back our lost country. The rascals who are rich and powerful vilify the communists as bandits because the communists want to overthrow the rotten society where the landlords, capitalists, local squires and traitors to the nation rule the roost.” At this, the prison guard said, nodding his head, that he had been taken in by the false propaganda of the authorities because he was ignorant, but that from then on he would never take them at their word.

After that Ri made it a point to come to see me before going off duty, and he readily complied with my request to pass messages to the other cells. Before long I was able to communicate with the outside with his help. From then on I enjoyed considerable freedom in my prison life.

But not all the warders treated me kindly as Ri did. There was one unpleasant senior warder who would look into the cells through the peepholes and maltreat the prisoners. There were three senior warders in all at the Jilin prison, and of these he was the worst. When he was on duty, the prisoners were so cowed that they could not even yawn freely. So I decided to teach him a lesson. One day we held a discussion in the cell to select the right person to carry out the task. A Chinese student from the third year of Middle School No. 5 in Jilin whose name was Huang Xiu-dian volunteered for the job. Of the students imprisoned because of their involvement in the reading circle only two were Koreans and all the rest Chinese. I asked him if he would not mind the pain of at least five months’ solitary confinement should he be punished. He answered that he would consider himself a martyr for the sake of his comrades and would do whatever he could to teach the warder a lesson. He told us just to watch while he was correcting the senior warder by an ingenious method. He sharpened one of a pair of bamboo chopsticks, and when the man was peering into the cell through the peephole, he thrust the bamboo stick into his eye. In

addition to blood, a black liquid flowed out of the eye of the man. This was something nobody had expected. All the students in the cell applauded Huang as a hero. But Huang himself suffered terribly for this for several days in an unheated solitary cell in the cold winter. The students pressed the prison officials to release him from isolation, threatening to stab their eyes, too, if they did not release Huang. Finally the prison authorities yielded to the demand of the students. After that we did whatever we liked in the cells. We held a meeting when we wanted to, and visited other cells when the need arose. When I said I wanted to go to a certain cell, the prison guards agreed readily and unlocked the door for me.

While in prison, I received a lot of help from the Rev. Son Jong Do. Through the whole period of my revolutionary activities in Jilin, the Rev. Son Jong Do gave me active support just as he would his own relative. From his days in the homeland he had been on terms of close intimacy with my father. That might well have been because they had been fellow students at Sungsil Middle School, but I think rather that the community of their thinking and ideal drew them into a warm friendship. My father in his lifetime told me a great deal about the Rev. Son Jong Do. Immediately after the March First Popular Uprising Son Jong Do fled to China as an exile and for some time held the post of chairman of the Political Council of the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai. Then, in collaboration with Kim Ku, Jo Sang Sop, Ri Yu Phil, and Yun Ki Sop, he formed the Worker-Soldier Association with the object of training military personnel to conduct armed resistance and headed the Workers Department of that organization. But when the association was dissolved and a factional struggle developed in the provisional government, he felt disillusioned and moved to Jilin. In Jilin he set up a chapel and conducted the independence movement. That was the very chapel which we used extensively as a place for educating the masses. Originally the Rev. Son Jong Do was a very

devout Christian. He was a man of consequence among the Christians and independence fighters in Jilin.

Many Korean Christians were respectable patriots like Son Jong Do who devoted their whole lives to the independence movement. They prayed for Korea and appealed to God to relieve the unhappy Korean people of their stateless plight. Their immaculate religious faith was always associated with patriotism, and their desire to build a peaceful, harmonious and free paradise found expression invariably in their patriotic struggle for national liberation. The greater part of the Chondoists and Buddhists were also patriots.

Since Son Jong Do was an adviser to the Ryugil Students Association, I met him frequently. Whenever he saw me, he would say he felt chagrined and regret at my father's death at so young an age and encouraged me to take on my father's aspirations and work with devotion for the nation at the head of the independence movement. I owed my three-year-long education at Yuwen Middle School in Jilin to the generous help of my father's old friends like Son Jong Do. The Rev. Son Jong Do was worried about the hard life of our family and about my mother who did washing and needlework for other people, and gave me money for my school fees on many occasions. His wife, too, cared a great deal for me. On holidays she would invite me to eat Korean delicacies. The bean-curd and rabbit-meat stew and rice cakes mixed with a herb called *Jjondugi* which I ate at their home was delicious. With leaves covered with soft down, the herb had neither scent nor toxin. They said they had used the herb in making rice cakes since when they were living in Pyongyang. The rice cakes I ate at the minister's house that day had been prepared with the *Jjondugi* herb that had been picked in Beishan Park. Son Jong Do had two sons and three daughters. The second son Son Won Thae and the youngest daughter Son In Sil took part in our movement in Jilin.

Son In Sil, together with Hwang Kwi Hon, Yun Son Ho, Kim Pyong Suk, Yun Ok Chae and other children, worked as a member of the Association of Korean Children in Jilin. She frequently went on errands for me when I was engaged in the youth and student movement and when I was suffering in prison.

One day the warden threw a new prisoner into our cell. The victim had been tortured so badly that it was almost impossible to recognize him. It was Kang Myong Gun, head of the organizational department of the Ryosin Youth Association. After his sudden arrest by the warlord authorities in the spring of 1929 no one knew whether he was dead or alive. So I was surprised and delighted to meet him again. He had been arrested on a false charge laid by factionalists who had informed against him to take their revenge on him for the incident of the General Federation of Korean Youth in China (GFKYC). The representatives of the Ryosin Youth Association to the meeting of the GFKYC held in Jichangji had withdrawn from the meeting and issued a letter of protest exposing the reckless acts of the factionalists. Out of malice against the protest, the factionalists had been plotting against them and, when a young man died of illness in Jiaohe, they informed the warlord authorities that he had poisoned the young man.

Kang Myong Gun complained with tears in his eyes that he was being punished for no reason. I encouraged him to fight against the warlord authorities and prove his innocence, advising him that a man who had taken up a great cause should not be dispirited because of such things and that there would be nothing impossible for a man who fought with determination, even until he died.

After that, he fought resolutely at the law court as I had told him to do. He lived honourably until the country was liberated. After returning to the liberated homeland, he received an

appointment from the Party and worked faithfully with the allied parties.

It was only after many years that I learned that he had been living not far from us. I sent a man to him to arrange an appointment for us to meet. The news must have been a great shock to him. To my regret, he had a cerebral hemorrhage before our reunion. If he had not died, we could have talked with warm feeling over our days in Jilin.

While in prison I analysed the experiences and lessons of the national liberation struggle and the communist movement in our country and went over those of the revolutionary movement in other countries.

Our nation had staged demonstrations against the colonial rule by the Japanese imperialists, conducted strikes, waged a Righteous Volunteers struggle and conducted the Independence Army movement against them. But all these struggles had failed. Why did all this bloodshed and all these struggles end in failure?

Factions had appeared in the anti-Japanese struggle and had done tremendous harm to the national liberation struggle. The Righteous Volunteers, which was the first to raise the torchlight of resistance to the Japanese and fought all across the country, had lacked unity of command. The commanders, who came from Confucian aristocratic backgrounds, had wished to restore the royal government, whereas the men, who came from among the populace, had demanded the reform of the outmoded system. The conflict and contradiction between them had seriously affected their fighting efficiency. Some of the die-hard Volunteers commanders who advocated the restoration of the old system had even organized battles simply to win fame in the hope of receiving official appointments from the government. Such practices had broken the unity of the army.

The Volunteers commanders who came from among the ordinary people had refused to cooperate with those of aristocratic origin. This tendency had weakened the army.

The situation with the Independence Army had been much the same. Its organization itself lacked unity and order. Even after the various independence movement organizations operating in Manchuria had merged to form the three major organizations, factional strife among them had continued. Although the merger of the three organizations resulted in the establishment of Kukmin-bu, the top level of the Independence Army had been divided into the pro-Kukmin-bu faction and the anti-Kukmin-bu faction, and their tug of war had never ceased. These nationalist factions were given to useless argument, each looking up to a major power.

Some of the leaders of the independence movement had wished to win Korea's independence with the backing of China, some of them had tried to defeat Japan with the help of the Soviet Union, and others had hoped that the United States would bring them Korea's independence on a plate.

The nationalists worshipped the major powers because they did not believe in the strength of the popular masses. Their movement had remained an aristocratic movement which was divorced from the popular masses. Therefore, it had neither a strong foundation nor support from the people.

The practice of some high level people of wasting time on an empty talk and scramble for power instead of rousing the masses to the revolutionary struggle had also been in evidence among some self-styled communists. This was a serious weakness. The communists at the incipient stage of the struggle had given no thought to mixing with the popular masses, educating them, organizing them and mobilizing them in the struggle. They had been divorced from the masses, engaged in an empty talk and scramble for hegemony.

The factions that appeared in the early years of the communist movement had not been eliminated. The factionalists in our country were intellectuals who came from the nationalist line of the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie or from the feudal aristocracy. Swimming with the tide in the years after the October Socialist Revolution when the labour movement was mounting rapidly and Marxism-Leninism was winning enthusiastic support from the masses, these intellectuals had plunged into the revolution in the name of Marxism. But, forming factions from the start, they had been engrossed in a tug of war to gain hegemony. They had employed every manner of fraud and trickery, and had even resorted to a free fight by forming terrorist squads. Due to their factional strife, the Communist Party of Korea had been unable to ensure its unity and withstand the repression by the Japanese imperialists. Steeped in flunkeyism towards the major powers, the communists in the early years of the struggle had given no thought to organizing a party and fighting for the revolution by their own efforts; each faction claimed that it was the orthodox party and travelled about in order to gain recognition from the Comintern, carrying even seals engraved in potatoes with it.

I analysed the situations of the nationalist and communist movements in our country and decided that the revolution should not be conducted in that way. I believed that the revolution in our country would emerge victorious only when it was undertaken on our own responsibility and by the efforts of our own people, and that all the problems arising in the revolution must be solved independently and creatively. This was the starting-point of the Juche idea, as it is known nowadays.

While in prison I pondered over the way to lead the Korean revolution. I racked my brains about the forms and methods I should employ in the struggle to defeat Japanese imperialism and liberate the country, how the anti-Japanese forces should be united,

and how the party as the leadership body of the revolution should be founded. I also considered what tasks I should undertake preferentially after my release.

At that time, in view of the specific situation and the socio-class relations in our country, I defined the Korean revolution as an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic revolution, and formulated the fighting policy that an armed struggle should be waged in order to defeat the armed enemy, imperialist Japan, and to liberate the country, that the working class, the peasantry, national capitalists, religious believers and all other patriotic forces that were against the Japanese should be rallied under the anti-Japanese banner and roused to action and that a new revolutionary party, free from factional strife, should be formed.

Because I had acquired a clear viewpoint and attitude towards the Korean revolution and because I was able to visualize the line and policy, I felt an irresistible impulse to get out of prison as soon as possible. I resolved to fight for my early release.

Together with the comrades who had been imprisoned on the charge of involvement in a “student incident” I made preparations to battle for our release.

A hunger strike was the method we adopted. We started the struggle with a grim resolve to battle until our just demands were met. Before we began the struggle I thought that it would be difficult to ensure unity of action in a struggle that was to enlist even criminals. But when we went on hunger strike, I discovered that the meals were being removed from every cell without being touched. Even the criminals who used to fight among themselves over a bowl of food ate nothing. That was the result of the silent education given them by our comrades who had been arrested at the time of the “student incident.”

Our comrades outside the prison gave us active support in our struggle. In response to our struggle in prison, these comrades



exposed the inhuman treatment in the Jilin prison and won public support.

The warlord authorities yielded to our united struggle. I was released early in May 1930. As I walked out through the arched gate of the prison, my heart was full of confidence and enthusiasm.

While in prison I made a summary of the early communist movement and the nationalist movement and, on the basis of the lessons I learnt from this, I planned the future of the Korean revolution.

As I remember, my father sought the way to switch over from the nationalist movement to the communist movement while he was in Pyongyang gaol; I planned the Korean revolution while I was in Jilin prison.

Being sons of an unfortunate, ruined nation, both my father and I had to think about the future of the nation while we were in prison.

## NOTES

1. **“Annexation of Korea by Japan”**—The forcible annexation of Korea by Japan on August 29, 1910.
2. **“Decrees of the Government-General”**—Various evil laws enacted by the Japanese governor-general in order to suppress the Korean nation and plunder Korea of her natural resources.
3. **The Emissary Incident at The Hague**—In 1907 the emissaries of King Kojong of Korea attended the Second International Peace Conference held in The Hague, the capital of the Netherlands. At the conference the emissaries laid bare the Japanese imperialists’ ambition to invade Korea and appealed to the conference for assistance in guaranteeing Korea her independence; Ri Jun, one of the emissaries, disembowelled himself in protest at the Japanese imperialists’ aggression in Korea.
4. **General Sherman**—A US armed pirate ship which intruded into Pyongyang along the River Taedong in 1866 and whose crew committed murder, arson and plunder. It was sunk by the heroic attack of the people of the walled city of Pyongyang.
5. **Shenandoah**—A US ship repulsed after intruding along the River Taedong in 1868.
6. **The five ministers**—They were Ri Wan Yong, Minister of Education, Ri Ji Yong, Minister of Home Affairs, Ri Kun Thaek, Minister of Defence, Kwon Jung Hyon, Minister of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry, and Pak Je Sun, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who yielded to the Japanese and signed the “Japan-Korea Treaty” (Ulsa Treaty), an unfair and aggressive treaty which Japan forced upon Korea in November 1905.

7. **Choe Ik Hyon** (1833-1906)—A commander of the Righteous Volunteers from a Confucian family. He hailed from Phochon, Kyonggi Province.

8. **An Jung Gun** (1879-1910)—An independence fighter, hailing from Haeju, Hwanghae Province. He studied military science from the age of 17. He was a member of the Sobuk Academy. At the end of 1907 he went to the Maritime Province of Siberia and became a commander of an anti-Japanese Righteous Volunteers unit. In June 1909 he led a 300-strong unit in an attack on the Japanese garrison in Kyonghung (the present Undok), North Hamgyong Province. In October 1909 he shot to death Ito Hirobumi, the mastermind of Japan's occupation of Korea, at Harbin Railway Station when the latter came to Manchuria on a tour of inspection of north Manchuria.

9. **Ito Hirobumi** (1841-1909)—A politician of modern Japan, the first Japanese resident-general in Korea and later the president of the Privy Council. He was assassinated by An Jung Gun at Harbin Railway Station in 1909.

10. **King Kojong** (enthroned 1864, abdicated 1907)—The 26th king of the Ri dynasty.

11. **The reform in the year of Kabo**—A bourgeois reform carried out by the government that was formed in 1894.

12. **The March First Popular Uprising**—A nationwide popular uprising of the Korean people which broke out on March 1, 1919, against the bestial colonial rule of Japanese imperialism.

13. **Hong Pom Do** (1868-1943)—A commander of the anti-Japanese Righteous Volunteers and the Independence Army. In 1907 he formed the anti-Japanese Righteous Volunteers with some hunters and, from then, fought against the Japanese aggressors on several occasions, mainly in the area of South Hamgyong Province. In 1917 he formed the Korean Independence Army in north Manchuria and became its commander-in-chief. He led the army in raids on the Japanese aggressor army in Kapsan, Hyesan, Kanggye, Manpho, Jasong and other parts of Korea. Later he formed the Independence Army Corps in the area of Heilongjiang Province, China, and became its commander.

14. **Kim Ku** (1876-1949)—A Korean independence campaigner. Hailing from Haeju, Hwanghae Province, he participated in the anti-Japanese Righteous Volunteers struggle at an early age. After the March First Popular Uprising he went to Shanghai, China, where he occupied the post of President of the Korean Provisional Government and other posts in succession and founded the Independence Party of Korea. After the defeat of Japan he returned to the homeland and in south Korea fought against the enslavement by the United States. He participated in the Joint Conference of Representatives of Political Parties and Public Organizations in North and South Korea held in Pyongyang in 1948; he returned to Seoul and fought for national reunification in alliance with the communists before being assassinated.

15. **Ri Pong Chang** (1900-1932)—An independence fighter hailing from Seoul, Kyonggi Province. He was a member of the Group of Korean Patriots formed by Kim Ku. In January 1932 he threw a grenade at the procession of the Japanese Emperor and the Emperor of Manchukuo.

16. **Yun Pong Gil** (1908-1932)—An independence fighter hailing from Ryesan, South Chungchong Province. He was a member of the Group of Korean Patriots. On April 29, 1932, he threw a bomb in Hongkou Park in Shanghai, killing several high-ranking Japanese civil and military officers.

17. **The student incident in Kwangju**—A mass anti-Japanese patriotic struggle of Korean students which started with a conflict between Korean and Japanese students in Kwangju, South Jolla Province in 1929, and spread across the country.

18. **April 19 Uprising**—A popular uprising of the south Korean youth, students and people which broke out in the spring of 1960 against the US imperialists and the dictatorial regime of Syngman Rhee; the people called for a new government and a new life. Syngman Rhee's dictatorial regime was toppled by this uprising.

19. **The people's resistance in Kwangju** (in 1980)—A mass uprising of the youth, students and people from all walks of life in the Kwangju area in South Jolla Province for the democratization of society and the termination of the military fascist dictatorship.

20. **Emperor Ryunghui** (1874-1926)—The last king of the Ri dynasty. He came to the throne in 1908 and was forced to abdicate in 1910. Ryunghui is the name of King Sunjong's period.

21. **Ra Sok Ju** (1892-1926)—An independence fighter hailing from Jaeryong, Hwanghae Province. In 1926 he attacked the buildings of the Oriental Development Company and the Industrial Bank, Japanese institutions of exploitation, with explosives and killed himself during an exchange of fire with the Japanese police.