

REMINISCENCES
"For a Fresh Upsurge of the Revolution "
From "The Lesson of Qingfeng" of "With the Century" Vols.7
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At the start of the Arduous March, we sent the wounded and sick guerrillas to the Qingfeng Secret Camp for service units. There were many secret camps of this kind around Mt. Paektu and in West Jiandao. In the camp area our supply officers had already planted potatoes. The wounded and sick guerrillas were able to stay there in safety for a few months without worrying about food.

After the battle of Shisandaowan in 1939 I sent part of the enemybooty to the secret camp. In Qingfeng they had potatoes, but how could they celebrate the lunar New Year's Day with only potatoes? So I got special foods singled out and sent them to our comrades-in-arms in the secret camp.

A messenger from our unit went to the camp with the food. On his return he reported to Headquarters the surprising piece of news that an "incident of a spy ring" had taken place in the camp. The staff of Headquarters were quite startled. If there really were a spy ring in the revolutionary army led by communists, this would be a grave matter indeed.

The messenger produced a letter from Ri Tong Gol, outlining the alleged incident, as well as a packet of "poison" seized as "evidence". Ri wrote that it had been exposed that the women guerrillas Kim Jong Suk, Kim Hye Sun, Kim Son and So Sun Ok were spies of Japanese imperialism and that they had attempted to poison our comrades-in-arms in the revolution. The messenger told us that in the secret camp he had seen the women guerrillas with their hands bound and showing evidence of torture.

The shock I got at that time was several times stronger than the one I experienced when Hunter Jang, Han Pong Son and other fighters had been charged with being "Minsaengdan" suspects. As you know, the issue of "Minsaengdan" was resolved finally at the Nanhutou meeting in 1936. From then on we hated to even mention the word "Minsaengdan" because the losses we had suffered from it were so great and the wounds it had caused were so deep.

And now a spy ring similar to "Minsaengdan" was apparently exposed in

Qingfeng. What was I to think of this?

From the very moment I heard the news, I judged the incident to be cooked-up nonsense. The charge made by the officers against the women guerrillas whom they had labelled as spies was not based on any convincing evidence. The "poison" they had sent us as evidence was actually tooth-powder. Though my men tried to hold me back, I tasted it with the tip of my tongue and found that it was undoubtedly nothing more than tooth-powder. How absurd of them to allege that the tooth-powder was poison!

The women guerrillas in Qingfeng had been trained and tested fully in revolutionary practice. They were single-heartedly loyal to the revolution.

Their sole ideal was to liberate their motherland. Why else would they take up arms in their tender hands, forgoing marriage and treading a difficult path wearing snow-shoes, eating grass roots and tree bark and enduring hardships that even men found hard, if it weren't for this ideal?

To label them as spies was not only farfetched but insulting, ridiculous and criminal.

I will not dwell on what a woman Kim Jong Suk was. I could vouch for her without a second thought. Judging from her class origin and her fighting record, she had no reason whatsoever to collude with the enemy. It made no sense that this woman, who had lost her parents and brothers at the hands of the Japanese imperialists, would act as a spy for the enemy.

Kim Hye Sun, Kim Son and So Sun Ok were all highly prepared for the revolution. They were not the sort of people who would be taken in by wicked individuals.

It was preposterous to accuse them of spying.

What difference was there between this accusation and the reckless acts of Kim Song Do and Gao Ya-fan, who had branded so many people in Jiandao as "Minsaengdan" members and executed them?

In our unit there was not a single woman guerrilla who was likely to become an enemy spy. Neither in our days in the guerrilla zones nor after we had abandoned these zones was there a betrayer among the women guerrillas. Look for a woman guerrilla among those who deserted their comrades during the Arduous March: you will find none. Rim Su San, when surrendering to the enemy, took with him a woman he had been intimate with, but she did not spy for the enemy while she was

a guerrilla.

Women in the army took greater trouble than men. Those people who appreciate the responsibilities women have in their homes today will understand what I mean. Though they work for society on an equal footing with men, they bear most of the heavy burdens of household chores. We have put forward a number of policies to relieve them of this burden, but our mothers, wives and sisters still carry it to a certain degree on their shoulders.

In the days of the anti-Japanese revolution, women guerrillas also worked harder. They took part in every battle and cooked meals in addition. They carried most of the cooking utensils and provisions. When the men guerrillas sank with fatigue and fell asleep around the campfire, women did the needlework to mend the torn uniforms of the men. Tears could be stitched up, but burnt parts had to be patched. When pieces were not available, they cut the edges off their own skirts to patch the holes.

Seeing them doing this, I made sure the women guerrillas were supplied with two skirts each.

They overcame difficulties as persistently as men guerrillas. In some aspects, they were even more persistent.

By the way, I shall speak more about Choe Sun San. She is the wife of Song Sung Phil, a renowned worker of the arsenal. She was a veteran party member who carried out party activities underground in the Yanji area, worked as a cook in the guerrilla army and had been a part of the united front with the National Salvation Army. The fighters from Yanji were unanimous in their opinion of her as a responsible, tough woman.

After joining the guerrillas she worked as a cook for a long time. One day during break on a march, she pricked the palm of her hand with a needle while washing rice in preparation for supper. The broken tip of the needle went deep into the flesh, but she had no time to pick it out. She had to cook supper quickly so that the unit could resume march.

From that day she suffered sharp pains in her palm. An ordinary woman would have asked to be excused from kitchen duty for the time being, but this tough woman neither complained about the injury nor did she ask anyone to pull out the broken needle for her. When her platoon leader scolded her for a delay in cooking, she did not try to defend herself. She was aware that if she stopped cooking,

another combatant would have to do it in her place.

Meanwhile, the needle tip worked its way to the back of her hand. Only when it popped out through the skin on the other side did she ask her comrades-in-arms to pull it out. They plucked it out with tweezers. This woman, who cooked for her comrades-in-arms for a fortnight, silently enduring the pain caused by the broken needle, is typical of the women fighters in our ranks who went through the flames of war against the Japanese.

I thought and thought, but I could not understand why these women fighters had been given the shameful name of spies. Om Kwang Ho, the head of the secret camp, had done political work for some years. How could he be so rash as to suspect them without any grounds and accuse them of being spies? Didn't he know that the women guerrillas he had manacled and locked up in a log cabin were patriots, spotlessly loyal to the revolution? If these people were spies, as Om testified, then whom could we trust in this world?

I could not make out the real state of affairs from the written report of Ri Tong Gol or tell what was going on.

I called Kim Phyong, ordered him to go to the secret camp to investigate the case and then bring back to Headquarters not only all the arrested women guerrillas, but also Om Kwang Ho, the head of the camp, and Ri Tong Gol, political chief, who were said to have detected this "spy ring".

On his return I met one by one those involved in this incident.

What emerged was something surprising beyond imagination.

Om Kwang Ho was in charge of the camp. We had sent him to the service camp out of comradely consideration in order to help him to rectify some bad habits. He had been seriously affected with bad ideology and a bad style of work.

He had pernicious habits that should be avoided at all costs - the habits of a factionalist. Factionalists had a way of putting on important airs and looking down upon others. Being contemptuous of others, they ran their comrades down and found fault with them.

Factionalists are greedy careerists without exception. When they have no chance of promotion, they try their best to get promotion either with the backing of others or by resorting to trickery. That is why they are denounced as being ambitious. Om Kwang Ho was a man of this sort.

From the first day he joined the revolutionary ranks he revealed his ambitious

streak. Having drifted into the revolutionary movement by the whirlwind of the May 30 revolt in the Yanji area, he worked as the political instructor of a company in the 1st Independent Division, but from the very start he earned a bad reputation among his men, for he gave excessive prominence to himself and constantly belittled his comrades-in-arms. No one likes a man who is self-opinionated and ignores his comrades and seniors in the revolution.

He attempted to turn the struggle against "Minsaegdan" into a springboard for his own promotion and branded many people as reactionaries. His ultra-party phraseology rang loudest at meetings where "Minsaengdan" members were indicted and condemned. Though he had forsaken many of his comrades deliberately, the revolutionary organization did not abandon him; it pardoned him with magnanimity and gave him a chance to make up for his past.

When we were forming a new division around Maanshan, he called on me and pledged that he would rectify his mistakes by working faithfully. I believed him and appointed him political instructor of a company.

However, he betrayed my trust. He often shouted at his men and instead of helping out the company commander behaved like the cock of the walk by merely admonishing him. Conducting himself as if he were a retired veteran, he refused to put his shoulder to the wheel and do the hard work required. In the battlefield he did not fight in the first line, but hung about outside the range of enemy fire. He was not fit to be a political instructor who had to set an example for the masses and steer them.

For this reason, we dismissed him from his post and sent him to the service camp, hoping thus to give him a chance to correct himself.

When sending him to Qingfeng, I gave him the tasks of ensuring proper medical care and living conditions for the wounded and of growing good crops in cooperation with the supply-service men so as to build up food reserves for the unit. But he neglected the tasks. He did not build additional barracks either, which was another task given by Headquarters.

The wounded and sewing-unit guerrillas who had parted with us at the end of Qidaogou and arrived at the Qingfeng camp suffered great discomfort because of inadequate accommodations. They had to live in tents in the severe winter cold. Medicines and provisions were also running short in the camp.

However, the guerrillas, tempered as they were by hardships, did not utter a

word of complaint. They endured all the difficulties, thinking of their comrades-in-arms who would be fighting bloody battles. They also strictly observed the daily routine of the camp and held regular study sessions.

As the saying goes, an awl hidden in a sack will pierce its way out in the end. During the study sessions his harmful ways of thinking and his real self as a defeatist finally revealed themselves.

One day a debate was held in the secret camp on the policies adopted at the Nanpaizi meeting. Taking an example of the Russian revolution, Om Kwang Ho said, "Any revolution will experience a high tide and a low ebb. A high tide requires a high-tide strategy and a low ebb needs a low-ebb strategy. To meet these requirements it is necessary to make a correct judgement of the changes in the situation and be frank enough to admit the arrival of a low ebb when its indications are in evidence. If this is true, then which stage does our revolution find itself in at the moment? I would say it is at a low ebb. Look! The expedition to Rehe ended in failure and in the 'Hyesan incident' many revolutionary organizations were destroyed, Isn't this a low ebb? In this situation we should learn from the lessons of 'one step forward and two steps back'. In other words, we must avoid offensive and frontal confrontation and retreat until an advantageous situation presents itself. This is the way to save the revolution".

He attempted to bludgeon all the soldiers in the camp into accepting this argument. Since the revolution was going through some twists and turns at the time because of the disastrous expedition to Rehe and the "Hyesan incident", his argument might have sounded logical to casual hearers.

Nevertheless, the women guerrillas in the camp instantly felt that his opinion differed radically from the policy of Headquarters. They disproved his argument then and there. They asserted, "Of course we don't deny the great influence the objective situation exerts on the revolutionary struggle. But we must not consider it absolute. The worse the revolutionary situation gets, the more revolutionaries must react to it and make redoubled efforts to turn a disadvantage into an advantage. This is the intention of the Comrade Commander. The Korean communists have continued fighting at all times, whether or not the situation was favourable. If they had gone into hiding when the situation was unfavourable and operated only in an advantageous situation, could they have formed such a standing armed force as the KPRA (Korean People's Revolutionary Army)? Could

they have advanced to the homeland, breaking through the enemy's tight border watch, and carried out such a daring military campaign as attacking Pochonbo? Marxism-Leninism is a communist theory, so it is, of course, a good thing to follow it in our revolutionary activities and practice. But as the Comrade Commander always emphasizes, we must apply Marxism-Leninism creatively to suit the actual situation of the Korean revolution, not mechanically. You seem to have misunderstood what 'one step forward and two steps back' means. Don't you know that the Korean revolution has advanced through manifold difficulties? You claim that it is best for us to retreat in the present situation; is there any rear we can retreat to? If we retreat, who will usher in the period of revolutionary upsurge for us? As the Comrade Commander declared at the Nanpaizi meeting, we must make headway against obstacles in the difficult situation. Thus, we must turn the disadvantageous situation into an advantageous one".

Kim Jong Suk led others in criticizing Om for his defeatist tendency. She fought without compromise against wrong ideas that ran counter to Headquarters' lines and strategic policies. She was a dyed-in-the-wool advocate of our ideology.

Under this counterattack by the women guerrillas, Om tried to rationalize his opinion by every means, even reciting this or that proposition of Marx and Lenin. The more he tried, the more offensive he smelled. His true colours as an ambitious opportunist were laid bare during the debate. Only now did the women guerrillas realize why he had idled away his time in the camp the whole summer without making preparations for treating patients or for wintering.

However, they did not brand him as a betrayer or a capitulationist. Since the debate was held during a study session, the matter would have been settled without trouble if he had admitted his fallacy and accepted the others' opinion with an open mind. We never made an issue of this or that misconception revealed in debates during study sessions. On account of the difference in their qualifications and level of preparedness, people differed from one another in understanding and grasping things and phenomena. No one can attain ideological perfection right from the start. One overcomes one's ideological immaturity through studying and revolutionary practice, and in this process one is tempered and matures ideologically. That was why we did not denounce or criticize people whose opinions conflicted with revolutionary principles; we convinced them of the errors in their opinions by the method of argument.

But instead of accepting the women guerrillas' opinion as a just one and trying to transform his ideology, he started retaliating against them while trying to gloss over his own image as a capitulationist. His true colours were fully revealed in his persecution of them.

The crime he committed against them differed in no way from that committed by those involved in the "purge committees" during the anti-"Minsaengdan" struggle in Jiandao. His motive and purpose, however, were even more dastardly and insidious.

His attack on them was to cover up his own crime. In order to gag them, he resorted to the mean method of inventing a crime and making a false charge against them. He thought that if they were labelled criminals, they would not dare to touch him or report the matter to Headquarters. What a cowardly and dangerous way of thinking!

There was a young recruit in camp. One day he left his post without Om's leave. Making a fuss about him as a deserter, Om dispatched a search party. The party found the recruit eating potatoes he had baked near the camp. On their return they reported truthfully that he had left the camp, not to desert, but to bake potatoes and eat them, as he could not endure the hunger. The recruit was not yet used to hunger.

Om Kwang Ho, who had been looking for a chance to cook up an incident to startle the camp, branded him as a deserter. He went so far as to call him a spy, charging that he had made a fire not to bake potatoes but to signal the enemy. The recruit protested repeatedly against the charge, but to no avail. Om even tortured him, forcing him to confess what orders he had received from the enemy and whom he had turned among guerrillas in the course of carrying out his orders. How appalling it was of Om to brand the youth a "deserter" and a "spy" and put him to torture, the comrade he had shared board with, even if the boy's act had not been particularly praiseworthy!

The young recruit Om had branded as a spy was highly class conscious, though he had not yet been trained fully. He had no reason to desert his comrades or to spy for the enemy. Despite this, Om tortured him until he made a false confession that he had coaxed the women guerrillas into performing "acts of sabotage" and attempted to kill his revolutionary comrades in the secret camp with poison. In the end Om detained the women guerrillas with this confession as grounds and

inflicted violence on them without hesitation.

I could not see why Om, who for many years cried for unity in the ranks while conducting work with people, had come to this pass. Only through investigating his crime at a later date did I realize the motive of his sinking to such a degraded state.

When he was sent to the service camp, he saw himself as having been demoted. Unhappy with the Headquarters' decision to relieve him of the post of political officer, he did not perform the duty of supply officer but loafed about intentionally. After the debate with the women guerrillas, he made one ultra-revolutionary demand after another in order to cover up his stained reputation as a defeatist. On the pretext of keeping the camp well prepared for action he put it frequently on alert, tormenting the weak and wounded; on the pretext of economizing on provisions, he reduced two meals a day to one, starving them. The secret camp was not really so short of provisions as to be forced to eat only one meal a day. Rice was not available, but a considerable amount of potatoes was stored in a cellar. In the plateau in a forest not far away from the secret camp there was a fairly large field under cultivation with plenty of potatoes and cabbage. Had Om performed his duty faithfully, he could have provided enough food for our whole unit throughout the winter in Qingfeng.

From the moment he judged that the road to his promotion was blocked, he felt weary of the revolution. As the situation at home and abroad grew more complex and difficult, he began to see the future of the revolution as uncertain. This ideological malady was revealed at long last during the debate in the study session.

Ri Tong Gol, political head of the secret camp, was the only man who could have restrained Om from acting arbitrarily. As the political commissar of the 7th Regiment, he was Om's senior in rank. Since he had been wounded, we had sent him to Qingfeng on assignment to take charge of political work in the secret camp at the time we were switching over to scattered operations at the end of Qidaogou. But taken in by Om's flattery and trickery, Ri failed to see the nature of the incident. Had we not sent a messenger to the camp, Om could have carried out his plot to kill the women guerrillas.

While investigating the case, I realized that Om was a man more degenerate and wicked than even Ri Jong Rak had been. Ri's crime was committed after he was arrested and forced by the enemy to surrender. But Om became degenerate ideologically while he was still in the revolutionary ranks, and in order to cover up

his own corruption he plotted against his comrades and maltreated them.

Except for the first half of the 1930s, when the guerrilla zones were in chaos because of the "Minsaengdan", there was no torture or punishment inside our ranks. Errors and defects revealed in the ranks were rectified through explanation, persuasion and criticism. Such an extremist act as an officer torturing his subordinates was inconceivable to us.

As his true nature came to light, Om regarded his relationship with his subordinates as irreconcilable - that of one person conquering another - and plotted against them without hesitation. He thought that if he was to survive, he had to kill them. To put his plot into practice he branded as a deserter and a spy the recruit who had slightly violated discipline and defined as poison the tooth-powder the women guerrillas had used. He went to the length of charging the women guerrillas, the owners of the tooth-powder, of being spies.

Om had conducted underground work with Kim Jong Suk for some months in Taoquanli, yet he was still vicious enough to stigmatize her as a spy. He knew only too well what type of woman Kim Jong Suk was.

The example of Om Kwang Ho shows that a man obsessed with careerism will become a villain who does not care a straw about his organization, comrades or moral obligation and who will betray the revolution. As Om confessed, he had planned that if his plot against women guerrillas had failed, he would have run away in order to escape responsibility.

As we learned from Om's case, ultra-revolutionaries, extremists, double-dealers, those who criticize others in public while scheming with them in secret, capricious, disgruntled or self-opinionated people, fame-seekers and careerists always cause trouble in a revolution. Unless you take measures to deal with such people before it is too late, you will find yourself in a terrible mess.

Om's case also teaches the lesson that if a person fails to cultivate himself ideologically in everyday life, he loses confidence in the victory of the revolution and grows discontented and faint-hearted, yielding to even the most ordinary hardships. In the end he becomes a defeatist and does immeasurable harm to the revolutionary struggle.

The spy ring incident fabricated by Om was an unusual event that might have played havoc with our unity based on ideology and will, morality and ethics. This was why we of the Headquarters' Party Committee examined the case very

seriously before putting it to the officers and men at a meeting held in Beidadingzi for mass judgement.

When the events at the Qingfeng Secret Camp were made public, all the officers and men unanimously supported the women guerrillas who had kept our line without yielding their faith in adversity. On the other hand, they demanded that Om Kwang Ho and Ri Tong Gol who had failed to view the real nature of the incident with a keen political eye and had overlooked Om's crime, be executed in the name of the People's Revolutionary Army.

At first Om tried in every way possible to defend himself. Only after he was denounced by the masses did he admit his crime. He begged us to spare his life, shedding tears.

By contrast, Ri Tong Gol did not utter a word of excuse from the start; he admitted his mistake and asked for execution himself. He accepted the criticism of the masses open-mindedly and repented bitterly.

Ri was a man of strong will, warm heart and amiable character. He was efficient in both political and underground work. When appointing O Jung Hup commander of the 7th Regiment at the Nanpaizi meeting, we appointed Ri political commissar of the same regiment, because we had a high opinion of his qualifications and experience in political work.

He made the mistake of playing into the hands of his subordinate because he was taken in by Om's flattery. This happened because he remained in his room and failed to get in touch with his men. As he had been wounded seriously, he must have found it difficult to go out among them, but even though he could not go outside, he should have called them to his room and had frequent talks with them.

If he had met even one guerrilla when Om was making a fuss about his "spy ring", he would have discovered the truth about the incident. However, he met no one after hearing the report from Om and left the latter to do whatever he wanted. When Om said he would interrogate a recruit, he told him to go ahead; when Om asked if he could detain the women guerrillas, he made no objection.

Ri listened only to Om, not to the other guerrillas, so he could not safeguard people's political integrity from the cunning plots of such an ambitious fellow as Om. This was the greatest mistake of Ri Tong Gol as a political worker. That was why all the officers and men put him in the same category with Om. Whenever a political worker stops breathing the same air with the masses, he will invariably

land in this kind of mess.

Officials who deal with people's political integrity must not stop breathing the same air with the masses, not even for a moment. This means that they must pick up a spade when people take up spades, eat millet when people eat millet, and share everything with them. Officials who neglect their work among the masses do not understand people's feelings or mentality, their demands or aspirations.

Some of our officials overtly or covertly persecute those who criticize them, and depending on the seriousness of the criticism, toy with the political integrity of innocent people. Some officials are swayed by the words of a few flatterers and deal thoughtlessly with matters that decide the people's destiny. If officials abuse their authority and deal with people's political integrity as they please, they incur people's resentment and hatred and thus divorce the Party from the masses.

Our Party carries out benevolent politics, and in our country every one leads a harmonious life in one great family, enjoying the benefits of the benevolent politics. Our kind of politics has assumed the mission of taking care of people's political integrity as well as their physical existence. Our Party values their political soundness more than anything else.

People with the same ideology and ideals get together and form an organization, a political party, and each of them acquires political uprightness in that collective. For this reason the political purity of the masses numbering in the millions immediately becomes the lifeline of the organization, the party. Therefore, dealing with people's political integrity improperly or tarnishing it reduces the life-span of the party. If the party is to remain strong and sound until it carries out its highest programme, it must work among the people efficiently and safeguard their political soundness. This is the lesson we must learn from the incident in Qingfeng. You must bear it in mind at all times.

Though his mistake was serious, Ri Tong Gol was a man deserving mercy. He made a mistake because he had forgotten his duty as a political head and had been fooled by Om Kwang Ho. He did not mastermind the plot but acted passively - siding with Om and overlooking his scheming.

Taking this into consideration, we simply demoted him.

As he was let off with a demotion instead of severe punishment, he called on me and insisted that the punishment was too light. He said, "I want to be given a heavier punishment. Please send me to the most dangerous places so that my

mistake might be rectified at the cost of my blood and life. My comrade-in-arms will pardon me only when I shed blood and sacrifice my life. They will then call me their comrade as before".

Later he faithfully discharged the assignments handed to him by Headquarters. He was finally arrested by the enemy and hanged in Sodaemun prison on the eve of the liberation of the country in August 15, 1945.

During the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle he went by the assumed name of Kim Jun along with his original name.