

The Autumn of 1940

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Reading articles recently about the history of the anti-Japanese revolution, I have found some phases that need deeper exploration, although historians have made many research achievements in this field.

Especially, information about the events in the period centring on the Xiaohaerbaling conference is scarce.

The autumn of 1940 was unusual. Several tomes would not be enough to cover all the tortuous events we experienced. Because we were engaging in small-unit actions after the change-over from large-unit operations, we did not have big engagements like the Battle of the Fusong County Town or the Battle of Jiansanfeng.

Everyone says that no march was so hard as the Arduous March and no period was so trying as the period of the Arduous March in the history of the revolution against the Japanese. That is correct. It may be said, however, that the trials we underwent in the autumn of 1940 were no less severe. During the Arduous March we had to endure unbearable physical hardships, whereas our adverse circumstances in the autumn of 1940 were another trial in which our mental sufferings were just as great.

Strong will power is needed to endure mental suffering just as much as for physical hardships. And the process of their endurance is accompanied by a ceaseless struggle with oneself. Our experience in the autumn of 1940 was exactly of this kind.

After adopting the policy of change-over from large-unit operations to small-unit actions at the Xiaohaerbaling conference, we reorganized ourselves into many small units under the 2nd Directional Army, in keeping with the changed fighting strategy.

After designating the missions and areas of activity for the small units, I moved towards the Yanji area in command of a small unit.

At that time, Kim Il's small unit was given an assignment to operate around Wangqing and Dongning, and O Paek Ryong's small unit was given the task of obtaining food grain for the winter around Yanji and Antu, before they were sent

off on their assignment.

We waited for O Paek Ryong's small unit at the edge of Facaitun, Yanji County. But there was no word from them for many days.

I did not wonder why, because in those days it cost us blood to obtain even a single ear of maize. To obtain a few pounds of cereal, it was necessary to break into an internment village, a venture that had to be made at the risk of our lives.

Throughout the previous summer, we had lived almost entirely on boiled-down musuhae (a plant of the family Compositae Tr.). There were plenty of these plants in the mountains, but by themselves they could not dispel the feeling of hunger, no matter how much we ate.

A reconnaissance party, which had been sent to look for a possible source of food, came back with a report that they had found a farmhouse down at the foot of the mountain. They said that there was a spacious ploughed field around the house, in which three Koreans were living. They added that if we asked them, we might get some food grain.

I sent Kang Wi Ryong to the farmhouse, telling him to talk to the farmers, without hiding the fact that we were guerrillas.

When he asked them for help, they were reticent, saying that they would have to go to Mingyuegou to obtain food, but that they could not get past the enemy's surveillance. After thinking it over, however, they said it would be ignominious to decline the guerrillas' request, and left for Mingyuegou.

Hearing this report from Kang, I ordered my men to be wideawake and stand guard with especial vigilance.

The men on mess duty were preparing gruel from todok (*Codonopsis lanceolata* Tr.). This plant, if crushed and boiled down, made something like gruel, and when mixed with a little cereal it tasted very good. It was the best of similar grass foods.

Just as the gruel was coming to the boil, Son Jang Chun, who was standing guard, shouted that the enemy was swarming upon him. The men rushed to the guard post, but said that they could see no enemy anywhere. Still, Son Jang Chun insisted that the enemy was approaching, pointing down towards the foot of the mountain. But there was nothing but tree stumps where he was pointing.

A man who has had a fever can be subject to such a hallucination, and Son had had a fever not long before.

While I was calling the officer on duty to account for having posted a sick man to keep watch, the alarmed men in the kitchen threw away the gruel that had cost us much effort.

A few days later, I received a report that the farmers who had gone to Mingyuegou to obtain food, had returned together with a man in a Western suit, who was requesting an interview with me. The man turned out to be Choe Yong

Bin who had once been a company commander of the Wangqing guerrillas.

He was one of the best fighters as well as a man of great physical strength.

Once he had come to see me and asked me for leave of absence, saying that he needed to recuperate from exhaustion. I had sent him home on leave so that he might hunt in the backwoods of Xiaowangqing and help the Party organization there in its work.

Later on, he had been charged with involvement in the "Minsaengdan" case. He fled to the enemy-ruled area, leaving behind a note to his wife, which said, "Good-bye to you and the baby, I would hate to be killed on a false charge of involvement in the 'Minsaengdan' case while fighting for the revolution. So I am going away. I will continue to work for the revolution there." His wife, who had given birth to the baby only a few days before, came to see me in tears, with the note. Her face was swollen probably because of ill health after delivery. The baby seemed to have trouble breathing.

How can you run away to the enemy area to save your own skin, deserting your wife and baby in distress! Are you a man at all? These feelings of indignation flared up in my heart. Though condemning him for his cold heart, I hoped that he would continue to work for the revolution, as he said in his note.

We looked after his wife and baby, and later sent them to the Soviet Union, together with our wounded men.

Now, after five years, that man, Choe Yong Bin, appeared before me again. Our current circumstances were worse than at the time of the "Minsaengdan" hullabaloo.

He had climbed up the mountainside carrying a knapsack from which a pan was dangling. The fact that he was in good shape gave me the impression that he had not gone through many hardships. "How many years has it been?" he bellowed, as he stepped into the Headquarters tent, and hurried towards me.

I received him cordially. His past was not without blemish, but he had been an officer under my command at Wangqing.

He immediately reeled off a lengthy account of how he had trekked around in the mountains to join the guerrilla army again. I asked whether he had eaten, and he said that he had just had a meal of boiled rice down the hill. He produced a packet of rice, dried flatfish and a bottle of liquor from his knapsack.

I noticed that the pan tied to the knapsack was not sooty at all. It was strange that a man who said that he had been trekking in the mountains looking for the guerrillas for many days and had boiled rice only a short while before, had a brand-new pan.

I did not doubt that he had degenerated into scum of the Earth like Ri Jong Rak. There had in fact been a rumour in my unit that Choe Yong Bin had surrendered to the enemy.

Not knowing that he had aroused my suspicions, he filled a cup to the brim with liquor and offered it to me as a token of a memorable reunion.

When I declined, his hand holding the cup suddenly began to tremble. Hearing my angry voice, he must have felt that his real identity had been revealed.

I demanded that he tell the truth, how he had met the farmers, and what was his real purpose in coming to see me.

He instantly realized that it would be useless to lie any further. He confessed that the three men in the farmhouse were enemy spies, and that, hearing their report, he had brought three "punitive" units, which had now surrounded the area. At his signal the "punitive" troops were to fall upon us.

I felt that we were trapped.

My heart, however, ached more at the fact that Choe Yong Bin had become a lackey of the Japanese imperialists and had so shamelessly appeared before me than at the thought of the danger that had to be faced with a determination to fight to the death.

What appalled me more than that was that he was resorting to all kinds of absurd rhetoric to try to persuade me to surrender: "General Kim, I know how hard your circumstances are," he blabbed, reading my face. "The whole of Manchuria is swarming with Japanese troops. No matter how hard you might try, it would be useless now. General Kim, you have done all that you can for the good of the nation, and no one will blame you even if you surrender right now. Those who have surrendered are sitting pretty. They say that if you come down, they will give you the position of governor of Jilin Province."

Unable to hear him out, I interrupted with angry words: "Yong Bin, how is it that you've come to this pass? You were once a company commander at Wangqing. Shame on you! We were sorry that we had lost a good commanding officer when you deserted your wife and child. How dare you come to see me in this wretched state? Do you have an iota of human conscience, you who have thrown yourself into the enemy's embrace, abandoning your family? You have degenerated in a shocking way."

A man who thinks of himself alone ends up like this fellow.

Choe Yong Bin's treachery had started already when he left the company on an excuse of ill health to live in the backwoods of Xiaowangqing, I should say. At that time he placed his own health above the revolution. He later claimed to have run away to the enemy area to escape death on a false charge of involvement in the "Minsaengdan" case, but that was the outcome of his weak faith in the revolution.

As Choe Yong Bin's case shows, one step back from the road of revolution will end up in treachery. That was why I always said to my men that the only way for a revolutionary to follow was the road of revolution, dead or alive, that going

astray from this road would lead to reaction, to treachery, to being human scum, and that a man who would abandon the cause of revolution, afraid of the rain and snow, bullets, hunger, marching through mountains, prison and gallows, would instantly change his colours if he was dragged to the rack a couple of times and forced to gulp down peppered water.

It can be said that treachery begins with the discarding of conscience. This is the lesson we learned from the incident of Choe Yong Bin.

A considerable number of people left the guerrilla zone for the enemy area, as Choe Yong Bin did, in those days, when many people were executed on false charges of involvement in the "Minsaengdan" case in Jiandao. But most of the revolutionaries stood firm in the revolutionary ranks, instead of deserting the guerrilla zone, although they were unfairly subjected to persecution, stigmatized as "Minsaengdan" members. Why? Because they could not afford to sell out their consciences even if they were to be murdered, because they knew well that deserting the cause of revolution was the way to counterrevolution and nowhere else. As you can see, the revolutionaries considered it a disgrace and a living death to abandon their consciences and turn away from the red flag of the revolution. They thought that, in short, it would be an inhuman act.

In the years of the Shenxiandong guerrilla zone, there was a woman guerrilla named In Suk in Pak Song Chol's company.

One day she showed a letter secretly to Pak Song Chol, who was on sentry duty. It was a letter from her husband, the commander of another company. The gist of the letter was that he was "bound with a red rope", meaning that he had been charged with involvement in the "Minsaengdan".

In those days, Pak Song Chol was an instructor in charge of the young guerrillas of his company. From the point of view of her attitude towards her organization, it was a good thing that she showed the letter to her instructor to discuss her problem with him. She said to him that because her husband had been branded a "Minsaengdan" member, she, too, would not be safe. She asked him what he thought about her going down to the enemy area, instead of suffering undeserved death.

Pak Song Chol advised her that that would be absurd, that going down to the enemy area would mean abandoning the cause of the revolution and surrendering to the enemy, and that she should by no means do so.

She said that she was not giving up the revolutionary struggle, but escaping from the "Minsaengdan" uproar.

Pak Song Chol explained that by leaving the revolutionary ranks she would end up becoming a counterrevolutionary.

The woman guerrilla realized at last that she had been on the brink of going astray, wandering from the road of revolution. It was fortunate that Pak Song

Chol gave her good advice. Had he encouraged her to run away if she didn't want to be killed, what would have happened to her?

In Suk continued to fight in the revolutionary ranks and died a heroic death in battle, so I heard.

When poised between revolution and desertion, she was able to choose revolution, because she took her personal affairs to her instructor, instead of dealing with the matter as she pleased, and received advice from her organization. As a result, she regained her reason and overcame her vacillation like a revolutionary.

By contrast, Choe Yong Bin ran away, unlike a man of integrity, to the enemy area, leaving behind a note to his wife, not even thinking of getting assistance from his comrades in the revolution. If he had valued human conscience even a bit, he would not have run away in that cowardly manner to the enemy area, deserting his wife who had just given birth.

He lost control of his personal feelings, and that decided his fate. Loss of self-control may result in committing an unimaginable capital crime. A man who thinks only of himself and regards his own feelings as absolute will probably betray the revolution sooner or later. Treachery always starts from self-centredness, while the concept of the collective cannot and will not give rise to treachery.

Revolutionaries must, therefore, exercise self-control at all times and try to become accustomed to the concept of the collective. This means that revolutionaries must have clear consciences as well as engage in a ceaseless process of self-cultivation leading to self-perfection.

A man who thinks only of himself can never be a revolutionary, nor can he follow the road of revolution to the end.

At Nanpaizi, Ri Jong Rak, in the uniform of a Japanese army employee, appeared before me and advised me to surrender; at the time of the Arduous March, Ri Ho Rim ran away, and Rim Su San too became a turncoat; and now Choe Yong Bin had come to see me and was blabbing absurdities. How much heartache they caused me!

What was the crux of the question?

The point was that both Ri Jong Rak and Choe Yong Bin were men I had had confidence in and had taken loving care of. Had I not trusted them and had I not loved them so much, my heart would not have ached so bitterly.

Commander of the Korean Revolutionary Army was not a simple job, nor was the job of company commander in the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla Army. It would have been a different matter if the turncoats had stayed quietly at home. My heart ached all the more bitterly because these brazen-faced traitors appeared in front of their one-time commander and preached "surrender", without an iota

of conscience and not at all ashamed of betraying the revolution.

How did they dare to appear so shamelessly before my face?

It was because they had become blind to the situation and degenerated to such an extent that they believed that the revolution had come to naught, and that, therefore, they could preach "surrender" to the face of their old commander with impunity.

Choe Yong Bin met the same end as Ri Jong Rak.

That day the enemy surrounded our mountain base in double and treble rings. Campfires could be seen all around. No matter how tight they might surround us, however, they were not able to cover all the mountain. They usually posted sentries on ridges and valleys after surrounding us.

We slipped away down the mountainside, leaving the enemy to clash among themselves.

We crossed the road that led from Mingyuegou to Antu, and then took shelter in a nearby forest. While getting our breath, we saw the "punitive" troops fighting among themselves in the gorge of Facaitun, where we had been.

We disappeared deeper into the forest.

Because of this unexpected situation, we found it difficult to get in touch with O Paek Ryong's small unit.

Originally we and O Paek Ryong's small unit were to meet in the gorge of Facaitun. So somebody had to go there to meet his messengers a very risky venture.

A more serious matter was that his small unit had no idea that the gorge was in the enemy's hands.

We sent Ji Pong Son and Kim Hong Su to the rendezvous.

When he had joined the guerrilla army at Changbai, Kim Hong Su had got the nickname of "little Bridegroom". He had a strong sense of responsibility.

Ji and Kim met the messengers from the small unit at the rendezvous the next day, and returned safely with a note from O Paek Ryong.

On their way to the rendezvous they had had a hair-raising experience. They had had to dodge from tree to tree to avoid the enemy's eyes.

Meanwhile, O Paek Ryong's small unit had obtained some food grain by raiding an internment village. Later they sent most of it to Headquarters.

From Facaitun we proceeded to the base in Huanggouling, Antu County. We decided to spend the winter of 1940 there, conducting small-unit actions.

To engage in small-unit actions and restore the damaged revolutionary organizations, building up a mass foundation, it was necessary to winterize ourselves properly.

I had given many other small units, in addition to O Paek Ryong's assignments to procure food rations, salt, cloth and other supplies needed for the

winter.

Politico-ideological preparation was the most important of the preparations for the winter. It was especially important to give the men ideological training so as to help them keep their revolutionary faith, however difficult the circumstances might be. In addition, we had to tighten discipline more than ever to prevent any accidents.

Later, however, Kang Wi Ryong's small unit revealed a sign of ideological laxity. On their way back from their mission to look for a place suitable for setting up a secret camp, they came upon a stream teeming with fish and fired at them at random.

I felt a chill in my heart when I heard the account of the incident. How dangerous it was to fire shots when enemy soldiers were building a gun turret on a hill nearby!

Our plans for doing a lot of things, entrenched in the secret camp, might have fizzled out because of their gunshots.

Another thing that I still remember from those days is an incident concerning a cow.

Jang Hung Ryong was involved in this incident. Jang, a squad leader of the machine-gun platoon, was out in command of a small unit seeking to obtain food supplies in the vicinity of Jiapigou.

He came back with a cow that belonged neither to a lumber station nor to the "people's association", the cattle of which were branded with the Chinese character for "king" on the horns. It obviously belonged to a peasant.

We could, of course, make allowances for Jang's situation at the time. On their way down to a village to obtain food grain, they saw the cow on the mountainside. Jang Hung Ryong looked here and there for the owner of the cow, but in vain, and told his men to take it to the secret camp. He stayed at the spot where the cow had been tethered, to pay the price to the owner if he came.

Jang waited for a long time, but the owner did not turn up. So he returned to the secret camp without paying the price after all.

As we found out later, when the owner came to take the cow back he saw an armed man hanging about there, and ran away in fear.

Hearing this account of the incident, I got indignant at Jang.

It would have been another matter if he had been a raw recruit without a good knowledge of the regulations of the revolutionary army. I could hardly believe that a veteran revolutionary like Jang Hung Ryong could make such a blunder.

In 1932 he had lost a finger to an enemy bullet and been taken prisoner in an engagement with Self-defence Corps men. He soon escaped, however, and returned to his unit. At that time, the other guerrillas suspected that he might have been given a mission by the enemy and allowed to return.

He had made strenuous efforts to recover the confidence of his comrades and, in this way, endured severe hunger in the Chechangzi guerrilla zone and the Arduous March.

It was beyond my understanding that such a man could steal a cow.

Maintaining good relations with the people had been emphasized ever since we first embarked on the armed struggle, and this principle was clearly stated in the regulations of the revolutionary army. By 1940 our relations with the people had been maintained on a high level. How good were these relations? When local people brought aid goods to us we would return them as soon as possible.

In the spring of 1940 we engaged in a battle at Yangcaogou. When the battle was over, the local villagers sent us many chickens. We, for our part, offered them a price more than twenty times what the chickens were worth. The villagers were unwilling to receive the payment. They even got angry, saying that they were not the sort of people to sell chickens to the revolutionary army, to their own sons and daughters, and that we were indifferent to their goodwill. We had nothing more to say. It was natural that they were offended at us responding to their goodwill by offering cash. Then we said we would not accept the chickens if they refused to accept the money. The money and chickens were passed back and forth several times. Finally, we accepted the chickens and they the money. When we withdrew from Yangcaogou, we released the chickens for which we had paid.

Now this was only a recent event, not an event of many years or months before. But Jang Hung Ryong, ignoring this precedent, had transgressed the principle of maintaining good relations with the local people.

His comrades criticized him severely. They insisted that Jang would be unable to amend his mistake even by death.

Jang also criticized himself unmercifully.

Therefore, we only punished him and told him to return the cow.

He belonged to Kim Il's small unit and fell in battle in 1941, when I entered Manchuria again in command of a small unit.

When we were at the Huanggouling base, a man of Chinese nationality, named Cai, deserted.

He was unusually homesick. One Harvest Moon Day he was so homesick he ate moon cakes in tears. He was very weak-minded, so the Party organization had given him a lot of individual education.

As he had caught a fever, we sent him to a hospital in a secret camp. Later, Headquarters received a report that he had egged on a woman guerrilla of a cooking unit to join him in returning to their home village. He was not faithful to military service. When on duty, he used to doze off. When told to stand guard, he used to complain that he had a stomachache. One cannot carry out revolution

against one's will.

At last he deserted us, turning his back on our goodwill, and to make matters worse, he soon came back as a guide for a "punitive" force.

Most of my men were out on a small-unit mission at that time. Only a few orderlies and I remained in the secret camp, so, as Headquarters, we moved to the backwoods of Mengshancun.

Small units and groups assembled there after carrying out their missions.

O Paek Ryong's small unit obtained hundreds of sacks of maize and stored them in secret places. They bought maize standing in the fields, harvested the crop, put the ears in hemp sacks and then stored them in chests deep in a forest nearly 13 miles from Fuerhe.

It was around that time that the Comintern sent its messengers to invite us to the conference of Korean, Chinese and Soviet commanders to be held in the Soviet Union. As I mentioned before, I sent an advance party to the Soviet Union to get to know the situation there in detail, at the same time ensuring that the preparations for the winter in Northeast China were finished in keeping with the policy we had adopted.

Unfortunately, however, word soon came to me that all the stored food supplies had fallen into the hands of the enemy. Because Regimental Commander Bi turned traitor, the location of the stored food rations was revealed to the enemy. The regimental commander was a man, nicknamed Bilaogada, who had been saved by Kim Myong Hwa's kind nursing in the forest near Dunhua. Even the regimental commander turned renegade, unable to endure the hardship.

Having discovered the location of the maize storage, the enemy set fire to the forest and took away all the maize. Months of hard work came to naught overnight.

Despite all these setbacks, however, I did not despair. True, the difficulties in those days were great, but we had gone through many such before.

How arduous the hardships we had suffered on the tableland of Luozigou, the two expeditions to northern Manchuria, and the expedition to Fuson were! What an agonizing experience the Arduous March was!

We had endured all these trials. We had endured freezing cold, hunger and the darkness of despair. We had stood up, enduring heartache and grief over our fallen comrades.

That was because we all had firm confidence in the victory of the revolution, and always bore in mind the mission and responsibility we had undertaken before our motherland and nation. We always kept true to our revolutionary conscience, no matter what situation arose.

"Let us overcome this crisis, come what may, and bring about a fresh upsurge

in the revolution. All right! Let us see who will be the winner!" I said to myself at Mengshancun at that time.

The sense of revolutionary mission in my innermost heart set me afire with greater audacity, and with ardour and a lofty sense of responsibility for the revolution in the recurrent trials.

What was the way out?

A forced march was the sure way to break out of our dilemma. But such a course required ideological mobilization for inspiring the men with confidence and courage.

The upshot of this was the convocation of the Mengshancun conference.

I told my men frankly: "The situation is growing more and more rigorous and arduous. We all believe that our revolution will triumph and that our country will become independent, but nobody knows when. We have fought for some ten years or more already, undergoing all sorts of hardships. But it is difficult to say definitely how many more years we shall have to endure such sufferings five years, ten years or more?"

"It is clear, however, that the ultimate victory will be ours.

"Needless to say, our road ahead is beset with many difficulties. These difficulties may be much more serious ten times or twenty times than those we have experienced so far. So any of you who is not confident about following us to the end in carrying out the revolution may go home.

"If any of you wants to go home, we will give him travel expenses and food rations. We will not take issue with him for giving up the revolution. It cannot be helped if he is too weak and lacking in confidence to remain in our ranks. Anyone who wants to go may go. But you must say goodbye to us for ever when you go."

Hearing this, the men rushed to cling to my arms, saying tearfully: "General, we won't regret it even if we die without seeing the day of the revolution's triumph. Dead or alive, we won't leave you, General. How long can a man live after all? We prefer fighting here to the death to betraying our comrades and going down the mountain to live in submission to the enemy. We'll share life and death with you, General!"

Their resolve moved me to tears. You can't imagine what great strength and courage I derived from their determination. No speech, no matter how eloquent, could move people as profoundly as what the men said to me that day.

The pledge we made at that time was our resolve not to waste our own blood that had been dedicated to the great cause of revolution against the Japanese.

The conference held at Mengshancun reaffirmed the unbreakable unity between the commander and his men, the steel-like unity of the leader and the masses. This conference deepened the belief of the anti-Japanese guerrillas that

the basic way of saving the anti-Japanese armed struggle from the current crisis was to keep their revolutionary conscience intact, and for the commander and his men to share the same lot through to the end.

The conference inspired us with a firmer conviction that the Korean revolutionaries would surely emerge victorious if they fought indefatigably with unshakable revolutionary faith and will.

At this very moment, a message came from the comrades I had sent to the Soviet Far East region.

The message again requested that Wei Zheng-min and I, and other delegates of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army (KPRA) and the 1st Route Army of the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Army (NAJAA), come to the Soviet Union as soon as possible to participate in the conference of the Korean, Chinese and Soviet army commanders to be convened by the Comintern at Khabarovsk. The message also said that preparations had been made to receive the guerrilla forces coming to the Soviet Union from Northeast China, availing themselves of this opportunity.

The Comintern proposed that we spend the winter in the Far East region and then discuss measures for further operations to suit the circumstances.

Now that the Comintern's purpose of holding the conference was clear, and now that the other commanders of the NAJAA were said to have arrived, I decided to go to the conference in command of part of the main force of the KPRA.

Making this decision was not easy. In general, the men were reluctant to go farther from their motherland and leave the battlefield, even on a temporary basis.

When I announced the decision to the men after making it at a meeting of the commanding officers, some of them asked if it wouldn't be better for myself and a few other delegates to go there, since the Comintern had invited the commander to the important conference, leaving the other men behind to continue the fighting.

Of course, it might have been an alternative. But I thought at that time that it was better to take the unit to the Far East region. So I said, "We are not going there to give up the revolution or to live there for good. I think I must participate in the conference this time, although I did not do so the last time, and discuss the future of the Korean revolution on a broader scale with the Comintern or the Soviet authorities. Doing so may be beneficial to us. I am not sure how long the conference will last, so I intend to take you, comrades, with me. I must not leave you behind when the preparations for the winter are not satisfactory. So let's go to the Soviet Union together, and return to the battlefield when the winter is over."

Later, looking back upon rigorous autumn of 1940, I thought that I, as Commander, had made the right decision at the right time.

We finished the preparations to go to the Far East region and left Chechangzi towards the end of October.

Before our departure, I sent messengers to Wei Zheng-min and O Paek Ryong, both of whom were too ill to go with us.

O Paek Ryong, who had not met the messengers, searched the whole area of Antu looking for us, so I was told. He arrived at Chechangzi when we had already started off.

It was at that time that he and his men shed tears when they found the food supplies and winter clothing we had stored underground for them. The two straw sacks of rice and scores of padded clothes we had buried for them before our departure saved them from great difficulties over the winter.

Later, O Paek Ryong and his small unit came to the Far East region in our wake.

On our way there, too, we went through many hardships. In the daytime we mostly took shelter in woods and marched by night, which cost us much effort and time, to avoid the enemy's surveillance. But as far as Laotougou we marched at a stretch.

When we were marching towards Baicaogou, we encountered a "punitive" force. As we were crossing over a mountain pass in single file, the enemy was climbing up the pass towards us from the other side. We turned back and ran up over the ridge.

Kim Jong Suk, who was carrying a heavy load on her back, lagged behind, finding herself in a great danger.

When we crossed the ridge, I checked the column and found her missing. I went back onto the ridge and looked down the pass along which the enemy was approaching. Kim Jong Suk was plodding up under the weight of the heavy load. The enemy was pursuing, shouting that she must be caught alive.

I fired my Mauser at the pursuers. The Guard Company men also protected Kim Jong Suk with machine-gun fire. Thus she was saved.

We shook off the enemy and camped near Hamatang. That day the enemy prowled all around, so we had to lie hidden in foxtail millet fields near the village until dusk.

There were cabbages and radishes growing in the furrows, and we allayed our hunger eating them, but the cold was unendurable. We lighted candles to warm our fingers that were numb with cold.

From Hunchun onwards, two Korean peasants guided us nearly to the Soviet-Manchurian border. They said that beyond the mountain in front of us was the territory of the Soviet Union. We crossed the mountain and found a wide

stretch of fields without any landmark. It was impossible to identify the boundary between the Soviet Union and Manchuria.

I told Ri Tu Ik to climb a tree and see if any river flowed in any direction and if there were any houses. He had been good at climbing trees since his boyhood. But he said that he could see neither a river nor houses.

We moved further to the east for some time, and found telephone lines in the woods. The insulators differed from those in China and Korea, so we felt that we must be in the Soviet Union, but further confirmation was needed before we moved on.

That night we sent out a reconnaissance party and took a rest for a good while. Then, we suddenly heard the crackle of machine-gun fire in the east. Soon the reconnaissance party returned with the report that they had found a sentry box about four kilometres away, and that they had been discovered while they were fumbling with the cups and kettle there, and had fled. They said that, judging from the unusually large and clumsy shapes of the cups and kettle, it was clear that the sentry box belonged to the Soviet border guards.

The Soviet border guards fired their machine-guns all through the night. Our reconnaissance party must have alarmed them.

The next day, I sent Ri Ul Sol and Kang Wi Ryong to parley with the Soviet border guards.

They came back with some of the Soviet guards, but the language barrier caused us a lot of trouble. I said over and over again that we were Korean partisans and I was Commander Kim Il Sung. Fortunately, they seemed to understand the word "partisan" and my name.

Our journey to the Far East region of the Soviet Union was difficult in this manner. Although we were going there at the invitation of the Comintern, we had to suffer so much, for our route and time of entry into the Soviet Union had not been notified to the border guards.

Quarantine upon our entry into the Soviet Union delayed our journey for several days.

My men felt bored, spending whole days in one room, not doing anything in particular. Some of them sang all day. They sang all the revolutionary songs they knew; and when their repertoire was exhausted, they sang whatever ditties they had picked up many many years before. The sight was spectacular.

My comrades had a large repertoire of songs.

I went to their room and urged them not to feel too bored.

"You may be sorry about being delayed for several days at the border," I said, "but you must not think that the Soviet comrades are inhospitable to us. Every country has its regulations about border transit. There may be the necessary investigation of personal identities in accordance with the regulations.

Quarantine is needed to discover carriers of diseases. Recently, the bacteriological research group of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria has spread infectious diseases in the Soviet Far East region. So the Soviet government has adopted a decision to make strict investigations of people entering its territory. We have a lot of work to do as well as a lot of trials to go through. Our revolution is now facing a new phase, and the day of our national liberation is not far off. So we must make up our minds firmly and stoutly fight till the day of the liberation of our country, loudly singing revolutionary songs."

Then, Soviet guards took us to Posiet.

At the border post I met Kim Sung Bin who had been an interpreter for Hong Pom Do's volunteer army. He acted as an interpreter for us and the Soviet people. He knew a lot about Chechangzi.

Our women guerrillas saw Soviet women walking about freely and wearing fashionable dresses. They wondered aloud, in tears, how long it would be for Korean women to be able to walk about like them.

As you can see, each day of the autumn of 1940 was replete with hardships and trials. But even in the midst of these hardships and trials, we were not stifled but survived, because we faced and broke through whatever adversity cropped up, without wavering in the least, cherishing our revolutionary faith.

We never took a roundabout way when treading the thorny path. We always rushed straight forward to liberate the country. We never avoided any trial if it could hasten the day of the liberation of our motherland.

It may be said that revolutionaries are destined to go through trials, because the lives of revolutionaries who change the outmoded and create new things are always accompanied by trials and difficulties. A man who is afraid of trials or avoids them cannot be called a revolutionary.

I still remember the autumn of 1940. The mountains of Jiandao, where we used to sleep in fallen leaves in the late autumn, still swim before my eyes.

In the Soviet Far East region, where there were neither gunshots nor death, we felt as if we were in a wonderland. However, we still had many trials to endure, as five years still remained till the day of the liberation of our motherland.