

REMINISCENCES

The Revolutionary Kim Chaek

From "With the Century", Vol.8

KIM IL SUNG

"In the Kumsusan Assembly Hall there was a safe used by the leader. No one, including his aides, knew what he kept in the safe.

"After his death we wanted to open it but we could not find the key. Some days ago we found the key and opened the safe to find... a photo of him posing with Comrade Kim Chaek.

"He usually kept all his photos in the Party History Institute. But he was keeping in his safe a photo he had had taken with Comrade Kim Chaek. This shows how dearly he cherished the memory of his comrade-in-arms Kim Chaek."

To be immortal in the memory of his leader - this is the greatest glory a man can win in his lifetime and the greatest happiness a revolutionary can feel. Kim Chaek was the loyalist of loyalists, standing on the peak of such glory and happiness.

How could he live for ever in the memory of his leader?

I met Kim Chaek for the first time at the conference the Comintern convoked in Khabarovsk. I also met Choe Yong Gon there. For this I will never forget Khabarovsk. Kim Chaek was representing the North Manchuria Provincial Party Committee and the 3rd Route Army of the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Army (NAJAA) at the meeting.

As we stayed there for several months, not just a day or two, Kim Chaek and I frequently met each other. I shared board and lodging with An Kil and So Chol, and Kim Chaek would visit us and talk with us for a few hours before returning to his lodgings.

I was so impressed by my meetings with him that I still vividly remember the very first meeting.

He had a calm demeanour, and he was going bald even though he was not yet 40. Strangely enough, even though I had not met him before, I had the strong feeling that he was an old friend of mine. I think it was because I had heard so much about him and had looked forward to seeing him.

After the usual exchange of greetings, I told him I felt that he was an old friend in spite of the fact that it was our first meeting. Kim Chaek replied that he also felt that Kim Il Sung was not in the least a new acquaintance.

The fact that Kim Chaek and I felt that way means we thought about, and missed, each other equally.

I had wanted to meet Kim Chaek and Choe Yong Gon so much that I had made special trips to northern Manchuria. Kim Chaek wanted to see me so much that he had visited Jilin in 1930. Choe Yong Gon yearned for a joint struggle with me so much that he had dispatched a liaison man to Jiandao four times.

Whether the theatre of our struggle was northern Manchuria or eastern Manchuria, we all thought at that time about the Korean revolution and never forgot that we were Koreans, revolutionaries and sons of Korea, who should devote their life to the liberation of their motherland irrespective of organization affiliation and theatres of struggle.

This community of like minds can be said to have made the Korean revolutionaries in eastern and northern Manchuria continually miss and long for each other.

Why did Kim Chaek and Choe Yong Gon cast a covetous glance all the more at eastern Manchuria? It was precisely because they missed Koreans. While the 2nd Corps in eastern Manchuria was composed exclusively of Koreans, Chinese were in the majority in the 3rd and 7th Corps. Living among the Chinese whose language and customs were different from theirs, they could not but grow envious of eastern Manchuria, where hundreds of thousands of Koreans swarmed, and miss our units where Koreans were in the majority.

"Why did it take so long to meet Commander Kim?" Kim Chaek muttered to himself after we had exchanged greetings at our first meeting.

I did not know why, but his soliloquy went straight to my heart.

He did not let go of my hands for a long time, even after we had greeted each other. I looked at him, and saw that tears were brimming in his eyes. For a man of few words to show tears, how sorely must he have missed the Koreans in Jiandao and the units of Koreans?

That day I also shed tears.

Immediately after Korea was seized by the Japanese, Kim Chaek's father moved to Jiandao with his family. He had probably heard that Jiandao was a fertile land where a farmer could make a good living. The Haksong area, where they came from, was also fertile. But they could not escape poverty in their native land, however diligently they farmed.

Who does not cherish his native land? But people joined the northward exodus one after another to eke out a living.

Kim Chaek's parents thought that once they were in Jiandao, their troubles would be over. As they had three sons, they did not worry about labour. Nevertheless, the sons whom they had pinned such great hopes on abandoned the household and joined the revolution.

It was Kim Chaek's elder brother, Kim Hong Son, who let the wind of revolution into

this household. During the March First Popular Uprising he cheered for independence on the street, fought at the Battle of Quingshanli as a soldier of the Independence Army and joined the communist movement. In the Tonghung Middle School in Longjing, where he was a teacher, there were many students who had come from Russia. He was apparently introduced to the socialist ideology during contacts with these students. He worked as a district committee member of the Communist Party in Ningan County before being assassinated.

Kim Chaek's younger brother was also a prominent revolutionary. Kim Chaek told me that he had once come across an article in a newspaper about his younger brother being held in Seoul's Sodaemun Prison, but that he did not know what became of him later.

While tending the fields by day, Kim Chaek diligently attended night school.

At that time he threw himself into the revolutionary movement.

The organization he first affiliated himself with was the General Federation of Korean Youth in Eastern Manchuria (GFKYEM). Subsequently he was admitted to the Korean Communist Party. The Party cell he belonged to was under the influence of the Tuesday group. Though he knew that the Korean Communist Party which had been organized in 1925 had been disbanded owing to factional strife, he did not hide the fact that he had been a member of a cell of that Party.

In those days there were two general bureaus of political groups in Manchuria, one being the general bureau of the Korean Communist Party, controlled by the Tuesday group, and the other being the general bureau of the M-L group, formed in opposition to the former.

Learning the inside story of factional strife filled with feuds for hegemony, Kim Chaek felt disillusioned with the hierarchy of the Communist Party. A turning point in his thinking came about at this time. Writhing in mental agony over the debacle in the communist movement resulting from factional strife, he heard the news that the Comintern had disbanded the Korean Communist Party while he was languishing in a prison cell. Though the Party had been stained with factional strife, its disbandment rent his heart.

Then, which path should Korean communists follow from then on? And what should I do? Kim Chaek thought when in prison and out of it, he told me. He could do nothing by relying on the existing generation of Party members, but there seemed to be no new force that could replace them. However hard he thought, the way ahead was bleak. In these circumstances, not knowing which way to turn and penniless, he decided to say thanks to his benefactor Mr. Ho Hon.

When Kim Chaek had faced trial, Ho Hon had defended him in the court. From the outset Kim Chaek had not asked for a lawyer. He had neither money to engage a lawyer nor did he want someone to speak for him. Then Ho Hon had volunteered to plead for him free of charge. This lawyer had undertaken to defend many

revolutionaries and independence fighters in court, getting them released or their sentences reduced.

Kim Chaek stayed at Ho Hon's house for some days. When he was leaving Seoul, Ho Hon gave him an overcoat and travel expenses. With the 3 or 4 won he bought the train ticket and meals on the way.

The two men established relationship in this way. It was out of pure patriotism that Ho Hon defended Kim Chaek in the court. He did it free of charge as he was mortified to see a Korean patriot facing a penalty for doing what he, as a Korean, ought to do. Sympathy, solidarity and the obligation of an elder patriot—three feelings influenced him, I would say. All considered, Mr. Ho Hon was truly an excellent man.

After liberation, when Kim Chaek was Vice-Premier and concurrently Minister of Industry in the Cabinet, Ho Hon served as the first Speaker of the Supreme People's Assembly. How strange their relationship was, as a man who had stood in the dock in the past and a man who had spoken in defence of him became senior cadres of a state!

The day he was appointed Vice-Premier, Kim Chaek said to Ho Hon: "In the bygone days, sir, you spoke for me in the court; now you have the duty to criticize me. If I make mistakes, whether as Vice-Premier or as a private citizen, please take me to task without mercy."

Though good-natured, Ho Hon was a man of principle. He really would have criticized Kim Chaek severely had the latter made mistakes in his work. But he had no opportunity to do so, for Kim Chaek did nothing deserving scolding as Vice-Premier or as a private citizen.

Instead, Pak Hon Yong was always hated by him when Pak was Vice-Premier. Ho Hon advised me to be watchful of Pak, apparently because he felt some foreboding about him.

I can never forget how loudly Ho Hon wept over the news of Kim Chaek's death. He deeply grieved over his death, saying that my right-hand man whom no one could replace had passed away so early.

Kim Chaek told me that he was embarrassed to receive such kind treatment from Ho Hon and his family. He had done nothing particular for the nation, he said, but had been a tool in the hands of factionalists before serving a prison term. Yet Ho Hon's family took care of him as if he had been an outstanding revolutionary, and he felt as though he was sitting on needles.

Even if I have to die one hundred times and come back to life one hundred times, I will live up to the people's expectations—this was what Kim Chaek determined when leaving Ho Hon's household for Jiandao.

Entering Jiandao, he heard the heartbreaking news that his father and wife had died of illness during his absence. Only his two infant sons were left in the house.

Nevertheless, he had no time to care about private affairs. He was informed that secret agents of the Japanese imperialists had been sent to arrest him. How cunning

the Japanese imperialists were! They arrested revolutionaries, gave them a good beating and released them through the front door as if showing great generosity, before taking them in again through the back door. They were masters of such tricks.

Kim Chaek left the village, leaving his sons in the care of his wife's brother. In peasant's attire and with a shabby reed-hat on his head he went past the entrance to the village driving a cow belonging to his wife's brother. Reaching a hill the cow lowed ceaselessly for its calf left behind in the stable. The calf also bleated plaintively for its mother. Disguising himself was crucial, but he could not go further in this way. Hearing the mother and her young calling to each other so pitifully, he thought of the sons he had left in his wife's brother's house and wept in spite of himself. He felt sorry for the calf as well as for his sons, he told me. So he let the cow go. For the next 16 years he did not see his sons. Only a revolutionary like Kim Chaek could endure such an experience.

I asked him if he knew how his sons were getting on.

He replied he did not, saying, "If my wife's brother is still alive, they will keep body and soul together. If something bad has happened to his family, then my sons will be beggars. For all that, I hope that they remain alive. Then they will see the day of liberation sooner or later and meet their good-for-nothing father."

In Ningan, Kim Chaek heard rumours about us. After taking leave of his sons, he proceeded to Ningan County, where he met his colleagues from his days in the GFKYEM and the Manchurian general bureau. They told him that a new force quite different from the ones of the preceding generations had appeared in Jilin, and that the leader of that force was Kim Song Ju (President Kim Il Sung's name in childhood), who, though young, enjoyed great popularity because of his affability. They added that they had heard Kim Song Ju had been arrested by the warlords and released, but they had not known where he was and what he was doing.

When I was in Jilin, I had contacts in the GFKYEM, so they must have had inside information about our activities. Many students from the area of Ningan County were studying in Jilin at that time.

Soon after this, Kim Chaek went in search of me. But by that time I had already left the city. He instead happened to meet in an inn some of my comrades, who had apparently been tailing him.

After confirming his identity and hearing the purpose of his visit to Jilin, my comrades said to him, "Kim Song Ju is not here at the moment. You seem to be in Jilin for the first time. Don't hang around here. Please get away. In the aftermath of 'Red May', the warlords are hell-bent on picking on revolutionaries. You can meet Kim Song Ju later. Please get away from Jilin before the police can lay their hands on you."

They then gave him travel expenses and saw him off. He went to northern Manchuria, where he was again arrested, this time by the Kuomintang army. While he was behind bars, the September 18 incident took place.

As soon as he was released, he was again detained by the warlord police and

sentenced to death. It was quite nonsensical to give the death penalty to a man who, though a communist in name, had not yet been engaged in a movement worth mentioning and who had not harmed the warlords at all. Manchuria in those days was literally a land of lawlessness.

He escaped death by the skin of his teeth on the execution ground. An officer appeared and ordered that he not be shot. He seemed to be a progressive officer with strong anti-Japanese sentiments. Leaving the execution ground Kim Chaek thought the world was not so hard-hearted after all.

What lesson did he learn while undergoing all these trials? He told me that, though he had tried to wage the revolution from the days of his youth, he had been on the run, doing nothing worth mentioning and wasting most of his time in prisons and on the roads, and that he had given the enemy blows on his own initiative only after taking up arms.

"The enemy regards revolutionaries fighting empty-handed as scarecrows," he said, laughing.

He meant that unless one armed oneself, one was a powerless and defenseless being, like a scarecrow, in front of the armed brigands. He said that this was the most important lesson of his life.

Hearing what he had to say, I thought he had learned a correct lesson. It was not only a lesson Kim Chaek learned through half his lifetime; it was also the general law-governed nature of the revolutionary struggle.

Revolution must be waged with the force of arms, and the end of all forms of struggle for national independence and social liberation is decided generally by the armed struggle. The basic factor of our victory in the anti-Japanese revolution was that we had our own independent revolutionary armed forces.

In the theatre of the national liberation struggle of our country there were various forces, like Kim Ku's Syngman Rhee's and Ryo Un Hyong's, but the force that the Japanese imperialists saw as their most fearful enemy was our Korean People's Revolutionary Army (KPRA). And why? It was precisely because we fought against them tenaciously by the method of armed struggle, the highest form of national liberation movement, not through petitions, strikes, writings or speeches.

The victory of the anti-Japanese revolution convinced us of the correctness of the truth that revolution must be waged with the force of arms, and after liberation it induced us to hold fast to the line of building a revolutionary army and channel all our efforts into building powerful revolutionary armed forces throughout the whole course of building a new Korea and accomplishing the cause of socialism.

The power of a nation and its pride rest on arms. A strong army ensures a reviving nation and a prospering country. Independence is inconceivable apart from arms. If arms get rusty, the people become slaves.

That Comrade Kim Jong Il is today training the Korean People's Army to be an

unrivalled, ever-victorious army and scoring marvellous successes in army building at the helm of the revolutionary armed forces is the most brilliant, historical achievement he has made in inheriting and consummating the revolutionary cause of Juche pioneered on Mt. Paektu.

Kim Chaek spoke a lot about the harmfulness of factions. He told me that it was because of factions that he had been thrown behind bars after doing nothing special, and went on:

"After experiencing prison life I keenly realized that the communist movement could not be waged through conventional methods and that unless factions were eliminated, nothing, let alone national liberation and class emancipation, could be achieved. I wanted to meet you, as I thought that if it was true that the force that had appeared in Jilin was a collection of people of a fresh generation separate from the Korean Communist Party and unrelated to any factions, I could join hands with them without hesitation."

He said that what could be called proper life for him started when he organized a guerrilla unit in Zhuhe and began an armed struggle. His life before then was one of roaming and groping, he said. It was true. From the time he organized the guerrilla unit in Zhuhe, he played a conspicuous part in the revolutions of Korea and China at important posts in the North Manchuria Party Committee and the 3rd Route Army of the NAJAA. The Korean and Chinese revolutionaries and peoples in northern Manchuria unanimously respected him and loved him as a veteran revolutionary.

"I have long looked forward to meeting you," he said. "Do you know how earnestly the Korean revolutionaries in northern Manchuria wished to see you? We fought always looking up at Mt. Paektu where your unit was fighting. Had I met you in Jilin, Commander Kim, I would not have experienced mental agony all this while."

He continued that when we had organized an expedition to the motherland and attacked Pochonbo, he had earnestly wished to shake my hands and extend words of gratitude to me in the name of the Korean revolutionaries in northern Manchuria.

Kim Chaek, known as a stern man, was surprisingly sentimental in front of me.

Saying that he had heard a lot of the news about eastern Manchuria and West Jiandao from the people I had dispatched to northern Manchuria, he told me that what he regarded as a model to follow in the activities of the main-force unit of the KPRA was the trait of unity between officers and men, between superiors and subordinates, and between the army and the people. In addition, he said, he admired the spirit of independence with which I had justifiably insisted on the Korean people's fighting for the liberation of Korea, holding aloft national liberation as the fighting programme, though fighting in an alien land.

Kim Chaek was well-acquainted with the course of my struggle. He even knew the story of how I had repaired a rifle stock for one of my men. He said that he had regarded me as a model in his revolutionary struggle and everyday life. He was such a

modest man.

Though he held me up as a model, frankly speaking, he himself was a paragon of revolutionaries.

He had earned the reputation of being a fierce man, but he was a political worker who loved his men more than anybody else. Though he said he had been impressed by my anecdote about the rifle stock, there were as many uplifting anecdotes about his relationship with his men.

What is the combat power of a revolutionary army? It is love between comrades. Value and love your comrades. When you love, love them as you would your own heart. No one is more precious than revolutionary comrades in this world—this is what he stressed to his men.

Once a guerrilla from another contingent came to him with a document. Kim Chaek ordered him to sleep in his own quarters while he himself studied the document. At night he went to the quarters, taking with him a needle and thread, and patched up the messenger's clothes and underwear. When he was accepting the document, he had noticed that the messenger's clothes were torn, and decided to mend them. The messenger belonged to another unit, but he took care of him as his own father or brother would do.

After every battle he would congratulate his men. He did this not to them as a group, but meeting them one by one. He praised each in concrete ways—You did this and that well when breaking through the gate; you did such-and-such well when attacking the puppet Manchukuo army barracks; you did this and that well and this and that wrong when shouting to demoralize the enemy. According to those who had fought in northern Manchuria, the soldiers fought more bravely after getting this kind of review.

Kim Chaek worked in quite an experienced way with soldiers who were criticized or punished. When a soldier was criticized by his commander, Kim Chaek would meet him and examine him as to whether he had realized his mistake; if the man had not, he would talk to him persistently until he saw what he had done wrong.

The following happened when Kim Tae Hong was a platoon leader:

He once hurled severe abuse at an assistant machine-gunner. Under a hail of enemy fire, the assistant, who had joined the guerrillas only a short time before and had not been tempered in battle, fired in the air. Incensed, Kim Tae Hong shouted, "You, coward! If your life is so dear to you, put down the gun and go back to your parents!"

After the battle, Kim Chaek sent for Kim Tae Hong and said to him: "You mustn't treat your men in that way. He is a raw recruit, isn't he? How can you hurl abuse at a man who is in battle for the first time? Instead of abusing him, you should first set a personal example."

Thereafter, Kim Tae Hong never hurled abuse at his men.

For all that, Kim Chaek did not show only affection for his men. He was a commander of principle; he persuaded, criticized or punished his men according to the

situation. When someone made a serious mistake, he would subject him to a severe rebuke.

This is what Jang Sang Ryong said in recollection of Kim Chaek after his death:

In the winter of 1942—i.e. when Kim Chaek was fighting with a small unit in Manchuria after the Khabarovsk conference—his unit suffered greatly from a shortage of food.

One day Jang went hunting outside the secret camp. Finally, at dusk he shot a bear and a wild boar. After burying the animals, he hurried off, but he could not reach the camp before dark, for he was exhausted and the way was rugged. He stayed overnight in a hunter's hut not far from the camp and returned the next morning. Kim Chaek had ordered his men not to use the hut, saying it could be used by enemy spies.

Learning that Jang had stayed overnight in this hut, Kim Chaek summoned Jon Chang Chol and ordered him to call Jang to account for it, saying Jang was not fit to be a guerrilla.

Jon Chang Chol asked him to forgive Jang this once, as Jang had thus far fought faithfully for the revolution.

Kim Chaek said, "No, I can't. Make him stand outside in the cold for three hours."

Jon Chang Chol took Jang outside as ordered. But before two hours had passed Jang was in such a pitiable state that Jon Chang Chol asked Kim Chaek to call Jang in, as he must have fully repented of his mistake by that time. Saying that attempting to commute the penalty given to a wrongdoer was an equal violation of discipline, Kim Chaek ordered his orderly to stand Jon outside as a penalty.

He called Jang into the tent only after the passage of three full hours. He told him to take a meal first. Jang sat at the table, but he could not eat the food put before him. He realized to the marrow of his bones what he had done wrong.

Kim Chaek sat near him and said in a gentle voice: "You might think your mistake was not so serious. That's wrong. Why do I take it seriously? It is because your mistake might reveal the whereabouts of our small unit and consequently ruin our revolutionary task, not to mention our safety. This is why I ordered the men not to use that hut. However, you neglected the order of your superior and risked your life overnight. What would have happened if there had been spies there?"

Jang engraved every one of these words on his heart, he told me.

Kim Chaek was a man of few words, but each word he spoke was so weighty that it was as inviolable as an article of the law.

Once the enemy, to dishearten the anti-Japanese guerrillas, spread the rumours that Kim Chaek had been arrested, Pak Kil Song had surrendered, such-and-such a contingent had defected and some calamity had overtaken Ho Hyong Sik.

The commanders and guerrillas, who were well aware that these were sheer lies, were enraged. Disgusted by the false rumours, the commander of the 2nd Contingent decided to teach the enemy a good lesson, and drew up a plan to make the enemy pay

dearly. He lured an enemy spy who was roaming about his camp and asked him to go down the mountain and negotiate with the military police for the surrender of his contingent.

The military police informed him, through the spy, of the place and time of surrender, promising the contingent commander a generous reward. The police, guided by the spy, appeared at the promised place at the set time. Grinning at the contingent standing in lines in the forest, the police even waved their hands to them.

At that moment the guerrillas aimed their rifles at them, shouting, "Stay where you are!"

The contingent commander said, "You fools! We came here not to surrender, but to capture you. Hands up!"

The enemy leader protested.

"I have heard that the communist army does not tell lies. How can you go against your promise? An army must keep faith."

"Shame on you," the contingent commander replied. "How dare you talk about faith when you spread false rumours and tell lies every time you have a chance? As you tell so many lies, we also told a lie."

The contingent returned with the captured police. All praised its commander, saying he had done a great meritorious deed and a successful operation. It was similar to the incident of Pak Tuk Pom who had been criticized for advertizing his "surrender" in order to capture food.

Kim Chaek gathered the officers of the 2nd Contingent and criticized them severely, saying, "To think that the guerrilla army could lie like the enemy do! What on earth is this way of thinking? However false the game was, how could you use the surrender of guerrillas as a trick? You are not entitled to be officers of a revolutionary army."

He then demoted all the officers, including the contingent commander.

Perhaps this makes you think that Kim Chaek knew nothing besides punishment. But he was not an officer to give punishment at random.

Let me tell you another anecdote.

In a battle a guerrilla was so flustered that he retreated, carrying only his grenade-launcher, and leaving his knapsack full of grenades behind on the battlefield.

His unit assembled and criticized him. Criticizing or punishing a guerrilla who had lost his rifle happened occasionally in the units of the revolutionary army. The guerrilla thought he deserved the criticism of his comrades-in-arms, and made up his mind not to repeat such a mistake. Then, a senior political cadre suggested that a severe penalty be given him, making the atmosphere of the meeting threatening.

Finding out that guerrilla was a new recruit, Kim Chaek concluded that his officers were responsible for not training him properly and that the recruit should be given assistance, not a penalty. He dismissed the suggestion of the senior political cadre.

Had the issue finished there, everything would have been all right. But, as the

political worker insisted that the man be executed, the new recruit fled in the night. Thus, a problem that could have been settled without a hitch developed in an unforeseen direction. The political officer became an object of hatred. All denounced him as an inhumane man. Some condemned him as a counterrevolutionary and others urged that he be punished.

Receiving a report about this, Kim Chaek said that he and none other was responsible for it, and it was a fault in his own work, the work of the chief political officer, that there was a political officer who did not treasure the political integrity of his men. That day he enrolled the political officer in his guard unit, and took him with him to give him individual education.

At every opportunity Kim Chaek stressed to his officers and men the need to establish a good relationship between the army and the people and between superiors and subordinates.

He spoke highly of my holding aloft, though in a foreign land, the banner of the Korean revolution, relating it to the spirit of independence. He told his Korean guerrillas that though they were fighting in a Chinese unit, they should bear in mind the Korean revolution at all times, that the revolution must be carried out by Koreans, not by others, and that they should always remember their motherland.

Kim Chaek and I had many things in common — from the aspect of the revolution, the approach to the people, the stand on the spirit of independence, to the issue of the method and style of work, not to mention the issue of building the Party, the state and the army.

To Kim Chaek, who was surprised to find that I knew every detail of his life, I said I also had long observed his progress.

Smiling, he said, "If men who have neither seen nor met each other pay attention to and miss each other, then it is a predestined relationship."

I agreed.

As it was in the summer of 1930 that he had gone to Jilin to see me, our friendship may be said to have started thereafter.

In consideration of his age and the course of his revolutionary struggle, Kim Chaek, ranking high in the north Manchurian unit, could be called a senior among the Korean military and political cadres of the guerrilla army from Manchuria.

As for me, I was not yet the Head of State nor the General Secretary of the Party.

For all this, Kim Chaek gave prominence to me as the representative and leader of the Korean revolution in front of the Soviet and Chinese people.

Why did he so absolutely trust and give prominence to me, a man nine years his junior? This can be explained in various ways. His heart was full of the idea that there should be a centre of leadership for the revolution, and all should be firmly rallied as one around the centre. His yearning for and missing of the centre were expressed finally in his special concern and affection for me.

After he met me, he became one of my closest comrades, and followed and helped me consistently. Regardless of changes in circumstances, he entrusted himself wholly to me and worked faithfully.

Returning to the motherland after its liberation, he never relaxed for a single day, as he was constantly on the move to build the Party, the state, the armed forces and industry.

It was the same during the Korean war. In those days he went wherever he was wanted. When he was the Front Commander he went as far as Chungchong Province. He was in the frontline area, but when I went to the front to inspect it, he rebuked my aides, saying, "How could you bring the Comrade Supreme Commander here of all places?"

The people who accompanied me to Suanbo were scolded sharply by Kim Chaek at that time.

While young communists of the new generation upheld me as the centre of leadership in the days in Jilin, in the 1930s and in the first half of the 1940s, Kim Chaek and other anti-Japanese revolutionary fighters put me at the centre of unity and cohesion, and strove to carry out the Juche-orientated line of the Korean revolution. In this way the centre of leadership was formed in our revolution. In this undertaking Kim Chaek rendered distinguished service. This is precisely the contribution he made to the communist movement and to the history of the national liberation struggle in our country.

At the training base in the Soviet Far East region in those days were guerrillas who had fought in northern Manchuria as well as in southern Manchuria. There were also Koreans who had grown up there. Had each of them given pride of place to his unit and stubbornly stuck to his own opinion, the revolutionary ranks could not have been united, and the centre would not have been formed. But nothing like provincialism or scrambling for hegemony took place among the Korean communists at the training base. And such things could not take place, as they were all pure-hearted. Moreover, such veterans as Kim Chaek and Choe Yong Gon gave prominence to me from the outset, confirming the centre of leadership.

I will give you an example that shows how Kim Chaek followed and trusted me.

After participating in the Khabarovsk conference Kim Chaek spent most of 1942 and 1943 in Manchuria. He went there in order to guide the small units fighting in northern Manchuria. He did not come back to the base even after he finished his work. By that time, Ho Hyong Sik and Pak Kil Song, commanders of the units in northern Manchuria, had died in action, and Kim Chaek was loath to leave the land soaked with the blood of his comrades-in-arms. When the International Allied Forces (IAF) were organized, its Headquarters wired him several times to withdraw, but each time he replied that he would only return after finishing his work. His small unit was carrying a wireless set at that time. And each time they received his reply, the commanding

personnel of the IAF were displeased with his conduct.

I sent a telegram to him in my name, judging that he was not well aware of the fact that we had formed the IAF in view of the changed situation, and were expediting the final victory of the anti-Japanese revolution.

He returned to the base only after receiving my telegram. Why did he come back as soon as he received my message, a man who had remained unmoved even by the order of the IAF Headquarters? It was because he followed and trusted me so much. He regarded my words and requests as absolute, thinking that it was proper for him to return when I ordered him to do so, and without any conditions.

From the days at the base in the Far East region he not only gave prominence to me, he sincerely protected me.

When I was leaving with a small unit in the spring of 1941 he showed concern for each man of the company which was to guard me.

When we were making preparations for the final operations against the Japanese troops, he called a meeting of Korean commanders in the IAF without giving me notice. The meeting discussed the issue of ensuring my personal safety. He told the meeting: "Everyone must ensure the personal safety of Comrade Kim Il Sung with a high sense of vigilance. Comrade Kim Il Sung is the leader representing the people and revolutionaries of Korea, so we must defend him at the risk of our lives."

After the triumphal return of the soldiers of the KPRA to their motherland, he called another meeting on guarding me.

"Returning to the motherland," he said at this time, "we can see that the situation is more complicated than we heard. The manoeuvrings of terrorists are quite threatening. We must be on the highest alert, or else I'm not sure what might happen. The chief secretary of the South Phyongan Provincial Party Committee, Hyon Jun Hyok, was assassinated by terrorists. You must never allow the news of General Kim Il Sung's triumphal return to escape your lips. The time will come when the news will be made public, so until then you must keep it a secret. We must ensure General Kim's safety particularly well, as we are his personal bodyguards."

Later he took the initiative of organizing my Guard Unit.

If I were to recount all the details of how faithful he was to me, it would take more than a day.

As I still do today, I channelled great efforts into working with the people after liberation. I really had a busy time working with the people, the revolutionaries from south Korea and with foreigners at that time. Nosaka Sanjo went to Japan via our country.

Though we had distinguished guests, we had no system of entertaining them. We had not even a guest house where we could provide them with board and lodging. Most of them were accommodated in my house, where only boiled rice and soup were served. Everyone regarded this as normal, as it could not be helped just after liberation. But

Kim Chaek showed considerable concern over it. He worried about the fact that not even good liquor was available in my house.

It is true that the country is in a pitiful state and we have no money. But how can we go to the market to buy liquor each time a guest visits the General? When the Republic is founded, guests will come to see the General in droves. We have to build a distillery with our own hands and make liquor for entertainment purposes. Besides, for the safety of the General we should make it ourselves—this was what Kim Chaek thought.

Without my knowledge, he began to inquire into which liquor was the most famous across the country and who was its distiller. The liquor made in Ryonggang was said to be the best soon after liberation. A distiller and his daughter made it, and senior Japanese and well-to-do people enjoyed drinking it before liberation. Kim Chaek went to Ryonggang to meet them. Moved by his words, the distiller asked Kim Chaek to take his daughter with him if a specialist in making liquor was needed by the country. She was Kang Jong Suk. After that, Kang Jong Suk cooked meals for Kim Chaek and made liquor in her spare time. When she laid out a place for distilling, Kim Chaek went to the market with another man and bought rice. Soon his house became a distillery.

After several days Kim Chaek came to me with the first bottle of the new liquor.

Filling a glass to the brim, he said, "This is the first Ryonggang liquor Kang Jong Suk has made for you."

Kim Chaek was delighted when I praised the taste.

From then on, the Ryonggang liquor Kang Jong Suk made was served at state banquets, and as another happy ending to this episode, Kim Chaek and Kang Jong Suk became man and wife.

To what degree he considered his leader's authority absolute can also be known from the fact that whenever I called him over the phone, he stood up, adjusted his dress and buttoned up his jacket before speaking on the phone. When he was ill in bed, he would still rise to his feet to receive a call from me, whether there was anybody nearby or not. A man who does not respect his leader from the bottom of his heart cannot do as he did.

He thought he could not exist without me.

The severest of times during the Fatherland Liberation War were the days of retreat. Though it was announced that it was a temporary and strategic retreat, some timorous people even thought the Republic was coming to an end. When the enemy advanced to Sariwon, Kim Chaek, the Front Commander, built a line for defending Pyongyang covering the areas of Junghwa, Sangwon and Kangdong. Reporting on the situation at the front to me, he said that he would reinforce the defences with the retreating units and defend the frontline to the last, requesting that I leave Pyongyang with the staff of the Supreme Headquarters. A few days later he again phoned me to ask me to move the Supreme Headquarters to another place. I answered that he should also retreat before the enemy attacked.

But instead of retreating he sent me his Party membership card. Apparently he was

resolved to fight a do-or-die battle.

I called him on the phone, and said I would not leave Pyongyang unless he retreated. Only then did he come to Pyongyang with the defence units. He took back his Party membership card when the Korean People's Army began the counteroffensive.

Some people said he was a very stern, truculent man. But, frankly speaking, he acted severely only in front of idlers, sycophants, the discontented, the selfish, careerists and factionalists; he was boundlessly kind-hearted and modest in front of his subordinates and the people. As he so hated those who played a double game, Pak Hon Yong was mindful of his behaviour in front of Kim Chaek. Kim Tu Bong, though himself Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, avoided encountering him.

Kim Chaek was completely free from affectation and hypocrisy.

Immediately after liberation, his son, who had been wandering in Manchuria, was reunited with him. The young man was wearing shabby clothes and straw sandals. Nevertheless, Kim Chaek wanted to introduce him to me without first dressing him up in new clothes and shoes, as other parents would have done.

He said to his son: "Don't feel ashamed of your straw sandals. You seem not to know what kind of man General Kim Il Sung is. Don't worry. You have so far lived barefooted, and you can't imitate a wealthy son all of a sudden. The General will be happier to see you in straw sandals and those clothes. If you were in a Western suit and leather shoes, he would not be happy."

When he appeared in my office with his son in straw sandals, the son he had met after 16 years of separation, I could not hold back tears. That day I shed more tears than Kim Chaek did. How copiously he must have shed tears in his mind!

But his family reunion lasted only for four years.

Kim Chaek died because he overtaxed himself. He carried too large a burden.

It was on January 30, 1951 that I saw him last. At the time the Supreme Headquarters was in Konji-ri. That evening he came to me without prior notice. He said that the 24th of the previous month had been Comrade Kim Jong Suk's birthday but he had failed to come to see me because he had been busy, although he knew I would feel lonely. He apologized, continuing that the end of this month was approaching and he had come now as the more he had thought the more he had felt he had been remiss and he could not stand it any longer.

I said to him: "In December last year we were in quite a hurry to drive out the Americans from the north of Korea. We didn't have time to visit each other, did we? Please don't worry about it."

That day he was not like himself. I did not know why, but he was strangely sentimental.

He asked me to take a stroll, so I went outside with him. He told me that he did not know before the war that there was such a scenic place there, and we should build an

excellent rest house there after the war. I agreed. To be candid, we had been so busy after liberation building a new country that we failed to inquire into where valleys suitable for building rest houses and scenic places were situated. As for our own recreation, all we could do was go to the Maekjon Ferry or the Jangsuwon Bridge and wash our feet before returning.

I still remember Kim Chaek trying to hide from my eyes his socks ripped open at the heels.

I gave him a pair of my socks, saying, "Don't overtax yourself with work. Take care of yourself. How can you stand the winter cold wearing torn socks? Please take care of yourself for my sake."

That evening he wanted to dine with me. But Ho Ka I unexpectedly appeared to report about Party work. He took a great deal of time over this report, without coming straight to the point. So Kim Chaek left Konji-ri without taking a meal.

Leaving the Supreme Headquarters, he said to me: "We will be victorious over the Americans, General. Please don't work too hard, and look after your health."

This was the last request he made to me. The request moved my heart in a special way on that day.

That day Kim Chaek burned the midnight oil in his office before dying of heart failure.

When the Minister of Public Health and Director of the Medical Bureau, Ri Pyong Nam, reported the news, I could not believe it. I could not believe that a man, who had talked with me just a few hours before, had died so suddenly. Disregarding my bodyguards' dissuasion, I went by car during the daylight hours, despite the danger from enemy bombers, to the place where the Cabinet was situated. Only there did I realize that Ri Pyong Nam had told the truth.

I regretted having failed to make Kim Chaek stay with me the previous night. Had he done so, he would not have worked late into the night and he would not have had a heart attack.

Another thing I regretted was that on the evening when he called on me I saw him off without having a meal with him. Even if I had had a meal with him that evening, my grief would not have been relieved, and it still weighs on my heart.

I cannot remember most of the things that happened on the day when I bade him my last farewell. The only thing I remember clearly is touching his hands for the last time before the departure of the hearse, the hands I had shaken for the first time in Khabarovsk 10 years before. I had not forgotten the warmth of his hands at that time, but on the day of the funeral they were icy cold, the hands of Kim Chaek who would rush to me before any one else and clasp my hands whenever I returned from a field tour!

Kim Chaek lived all his life as my faithful comrade-in-arms. That is all the more reason why I cannot forget him. After his death, I looked after his sons as he would

have done. I sent them abroad for study and arranged marriages for them. When his granddaughter was born, I congratulated them on her birth. I often invited them to my house and dined with them. Nonetheless, I could find no relief from sorrow, as I felt I had failed to do enough for them for Kim Chaek's sake.

Whenever our revolution encounters trials and difficulties, I yearn for Kim Chaek.

As I said before, I did not go to his grave by car. Whenever I went to his grave, I felt guilty about riding in a car, so I got off at the foot of Mt. Taesong and walked up to his grave.

Even if he is now in the world beyond, how can my love and respect for him change?

I have experienced a lot while waging the revolution, and what I cherish most deeply is the experience of comrades.

For a person who has embarked on the road of revolution with a determination to dedicate his life to the freedom and liberation of his fellows, the most precious things are comrades and camaraderie. A faithful comrade can be said to be one's alter ego. I do not betray myself. If faithful and obliging comrades unite, they can prevail against Heaven itself. This is why I always say if one gains comrades, he can win the world, and if one is forsaken by one's comrades, one will lose the world. The word "comrade" means a like-minded man. The mind is inseparable from ideology. The relationship between comrades formed through temporary interests or mental calculation cannot be solid; it breaks up easily, depending on the circumstances. But the relationship of comrades based on ideology and will is eternal; even bullets or the gallows cannot break it.

The Korean revolution has produced many comrades who showed noble examples of fidelity. They constitute a galaxy around us.

After Kim Chaek's death, we named Songjin, a city near his home village, the Chongjin Iron Works, an enterprise associated with his devoted life, and Pyongyang University of Technology after him—namely, Kimchaek City, Kim Chaek Iron Works and Kim Chaek University of Technology. A military academy was also named after him. A statue to him stands in Kimchaek City.

I hope that the city, the enterprise and the university named after him will always take the lead in socialist construction.

Kim Chaek hated following in the wake of others. He always stood in the van. He performed significant things in the building of our industry. When I see factories and enterprises that fail to manage themselves efficiently, I say to myself, "If Kim Chaek knew this.... If Kim Chaek knew this...."

In the days when Kim Chaek was Minister of Industry, the industry of our country operated smoothly. Some of our officials who are still active once worked with him. I hope they will not make his service to the building of our industry come to naught.