



FOR THE FREEDOM AND LIBERATION OF THE PEOPLE

Taking a Machine Gun Himself

THE PARTY HISTORY INSTITUTE OF THE
C.C. OF THE WORKERS' PARTY OF KOREA

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Foreign Languages Publishing House
Pyongyang, Korea
1977

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TAKING A MACHINE GUN HIMSELF

Chon Mun Sop

On the dawn of April 27, 1938 the main unit of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army under the personal command of the great revolutionary leader Comrade Kim Il Sung was on their way home in high spirits, after wiping out the enemy at Liutaokou in Linchiang County, one of the major strongholds of the enemy's "punitive forces". The enemy would pursue us desperately as soon as the day broke, because Liutaokou of which they had boasted as an "impregnable fortress" had been smashed overnight.

We had left Liutaokou later than we had expected because of the enemy's frantic resistance, and so when we were near the Lanyitang village the sky was already turning grey. But suddenly dogs in the village began to bark. Comrade Kim Il Sung sank in deep thought for a while, before he asked the whole unit to move up to Latzukou Hill in front of the village. Then he ordered them to be ready for action.

The mountain taken up by the main unit faced hillocks with gentle slopes overgrown with reeds and

wormwoods and behind it were precipitous cliffs.

When the whole unit had climbed up the mountain he personally fixed the combat position for each regiment and even machine-gun emplacements. And he asked us to dig good trenches, saying that in spite of the rather unfavourable terrain conditions we could defeat the enemy, if only we were well prepared for action.

Headquarters was located on the right of the height. It was so close to the positions taken up by the guerrillas that while digging trenches we were all worried about the safety of Headquarters.

In all the previous battles he had been in the van, but the guerrillas anxiously hoped that the Comrade Commander would move Headquarters a bit to the rear at least that day.

But he had a different idea from ours. He said it was rather good to be near his men and advised them to dig their trenches more quickly than Headquarters'.

Then he looked round all the trenches, examining the digging work, weapons and their camouflage and inspiring the men to beat more enemy soldiers in the forthcoming battle.

The harder the situation, the more he treasured and loved his men like this. Feeling his warmth the guerrillas completed excellent trenches linking the whole mountain ridge, with scanty tools in a little more than an hour.

When the sun spread its beams over the eastern sky a dozen or so enemy horsemen appeared on the highroad winding along the bottom of the mountain

where we were.

The Comrade Commander had expected that the enemy who had received information from the Lanyitang village would pursue us before long, and manned his troops at this place.

As the enemy's cavalry ran away under our fire, more than one hundred infantry men attacked us from the opposite forest.

From near the highroad 700 metres from our position the enemy came up step by step, spreading out and concealing themselves in the dense wormwood land. As the wormwoods swayed, it was obvious that the enemy's vanguard had already climbed up to the mid-slope of the mountain. When the attackers' faces were faintly visible, our machine guns and rifles started firing simultaneously on the Comrade Commander's order. Because of our vociferous firing from every trench the mountain seemed to be bursting out.

We could hear the enemy's screams here and there in the wormwood land. We pulled the triggers at the enemy who were scattered like ants caught in fire, fleeing through the wormwoods.

Heavy blows were given to the enemy from the outset, but they stubbornly attacked us, incessantly throwing in reinforcements. Gradually the battle grew fierce.

At that moment one of the recruits came running to Headquarters; he was panting. He went to the Comrade Commander, and straightening himself, reported that several hundred enemy horsemen were rushing just now towards the northeastern part of

the ridge, on the left of Headquarters. That spot was manned by seven or eight comrades and most of them were recruits.

Though he heard the report on the critical situation, he was as calm as ever and, with a smile, said:

"You mean many horsemen are rushing to us? Good. You go first. I'll be with you right away."

Soon the Comrade Commander left for the place. With other orderlies I followed him fearing his safety.

On our arrival there we looked down the mountain. Numerous enemy horsemen were dashing up in high spirits as if to overrun the whole mountain ridge. Some were firing, some wielding swords—this was quite a sight to see.

The Comrade Commander, who had been studying the enemy's movement carefully, looked smilingly round his men, and in a soft but firm voice said to this effect:

As many enemy troops are coming up, you recruits who are going to take part in this sort of battle for the first time seem to be a bit confused, but you needn't be afraid.

Why is the enemy using the cavalry to attack us? He is attempting to take our position at one stroke, giving us no time to counteract. But he has some disadvantages.

We can shoot down the enemy, depending on trenches, but they can't do so; and their movement is quite fast, but our targets are very big.

We must shoot the horses first. When a horse falls, the rider will also tumble down, so the others behind him will throng together at one place, unable

to go forward. Shoot then, and you will finish off the enemies, without wasting a bullet.

Once you are aware of these advantages, you will not be confused and will confidently study how to wipe out the enemy.

Saying this the Comrade Commander walked up to a machine gunner and said, "Let me fire it..." He approached the machine gun. The machine gunner scrupled a moment; he was worried about the Comrade Commander's safety. He let go his hold of the machine gun and took a step backward, but he was still at a loss what to do.

The Comrade Commander cast a circular look over the approaching attackers and brought the butt of the gun slowly to his shoulder.

We were unboundedly moved, lying down beside him who had taken the machine gun himself; we held our rifles firmly in our hands and watched spots where enemy's snipers might be hiding.

This was not the first time for the Comrade Commander to take a machine gun in person.

Ever since the anti-Japanese armed struggle was started the Comrade Commander had personally trained young guerrillas in practice. How many times he had braved death at the head of them! How many times he had taken machine guns at critical moments and led us to victory smashing the enemy attacking us from the front and the rear! He had looked after and educated the guerrillas with fatherly love, setting examples in the ordeals of severe battles. And again he had taken a machine gun himself in this trench on Latzukou Hill which was within a calling distance

from the homeland.

Lost in these thoughts my whole body was hot like a mass of flames, and my heart was filled with a resolve that I must defend him more firmly.

With bated breath I waited for his order to fire, glaring at the climbing enemy soldiers.

The enemy horsemen had reached the mid-slope of the mountain, but the Comrade Commander only watched the enemy's movement carefully. The distance was one hundred metres and then sixty metres... The enemy came nearer and nearer. At last the machine gun held by the Comrade Commander emitted fire fiercely.

The horse in the forefront fell down. The following horses whirled round and round with their forefeet high up in the air, and instantly the enemy troops thronged at one place.

We poured a violent fire on them.

Some of them fell forward or backward from the horses, others rolled down the ridge with their horses; there were screams and whinnying. A shambles of death unfolded before our eyes.

He kept concentrating fire on the utterly confused enemy. We, too, continued to fire. The bloodthirsty attackers were mowed down. Seeing the enemy fleeing helter-skelter to save their skin, the Comrade Commander looked round the recruits with a smile and asked:

"How do you feel after hitting the enemy? Now do you think you can fight?"

Now confident, each of us guerrillas gave an affirmative answer to the Comrade Commander who had

personally come to the outpost and fought along with his men, setting example in practice. And we renewed our firm determination to go through thick and thin, whenever he ordered. The morale of all of us guerrillas became higher and higher. With redoubled courage we shattered wave after wave of enemy attackers.

The enemy kept throwing in fresh troops to attack, although the ridge was littered with his corpses. In addition, he changed his tactics, which complicated the situation still more.

However, the Comrade Commander shrewdly saw through the enemy's intention and directed the battle.

Around noon, the enemy began to concentrate on the position of the Chinese anti-Japanese unit located on the left of Headquarters. He had noticed that it was a vulnerable point.

The Comrade Commander immediately moved the 8th regiment from the right of Headquarters towards their position so as to crush the enemy's attempt in good time.

As time went by, the battle grew fiercer. This scared some commanders of the Chinese anti-Japanese unit. The cowards even proposed to retreat.

The Comrade Commander reasoned with them that retreating before the enemy attacking from all directions was, after all, tantamount to allowing him to hit us. And he issued another order, saying that we must not be afraid of the enemy's attack but must fight more vigorously and turn this place into a place of his complete annihilation.

Upholding his order we guerrillas displayed greater

valour, counterattacking with confidence to mow down the enemy.

In the afternoon the enemy's spirit weakened markedly, but the severe battle continued.

The day broke amidst battle and grew dark amidst battle.

Around five o'clock a shower began to fall. Taking advantage of this the enemy raked up all the survivors and crawled up the mountain desperately, depending on the wormwoods.

The hard battle which had continued all day long was nearing its decisive hour. At this strained moment, a powerful song was heard from Headquarters. The Comrade Commander, too, was singing with his men.

*For hills in north and south Manchuria
swept by snowstorms
The Revolutionary Army with a resolve leaves.
All trials and hardships uncounted
With sweat and tears we all stood.*

The song imbued us with a strong will to fight and wipe out the enemy.

As the members of the 7th regiment near Headquarters joined in the chorus, the song resounded more powerfully.

*We lost the comrades who pledged to fight
to the end,*

We fought the battles harsh and hard.

After a charge amid thunderous shouts of hurrahs

The banner of communism triumphantly flutters.

Now the song swelled into a chorus of the whole unit, forcefully resounding throughout the mountain.

Singing this song, we wiped out the enemy; and this song roused some soldiers of the Chinese anti-Japanese unit, who had been frightened and escaped to the far side of the mountain, to rush back to their trenches.

The revolutionary song we sang with the Comrade Commander in the trenches gave us boundless conviction and strength, but fear, terror and death to the enemy.

Under the guidance of the Comrade Commander who led his men to victory at the head of the revolution like this, we always won brilliant victories in all arduous battles that ensued.

ON AN EXPEDITION TO NORTH MANCHURIA

O Jin U

Throughout the long years of the anti-Japanese armed struggle, the respected and beloved leader Comrade Kim Il Sung looked after us, the rank and file, with utmost care and made every effort to bring us up to be staunch revolutionary fighters.

It would be difficult to give a full account, oral or written, of how we young guerrillas grew up under his warm care in those difficult and trying days and have become what we are today.

I want to confine myself to a few out of my own unforgettable experiences from the many stirring events which occurred while I was fighting under his leadership.

In June 1935 the main force of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army set out on the historic expedition to north Manchuria, directly led by Comrade Kim Il Sung. I was one of the main force troops. Still young, I found the expedition a grim trial, with test after test all the way.

After the battle of Laoheishan our guerrilla unit worked through the Lotzukou area and crossed the

Laoyehling Range to the areas of Ningan and Emu Counties, delivering crushing blows on the enemy in many battles. At the same time we inspired broad sections of the local people with revolutionary spirit.

In those days the revolution had had far less influence in this region than among the people of east Manchuria. We set about actively explaining and spreading among the people the facts about the aggressive policies of the Japanese imperialists, the rightness of the guerrilla cause and the prospects of the revolution, imparting to them our firm faith of victory.

Everywhere we won the warm support of the people as we moved from Emu County towards Chiao-ho County in the winter of 1935. It was really tough going, forcing our way through waist-deep snow in the thick forests, often in the teeth of a howling snowstorm.

It was in the course of this strenuous march that I saw how kind and warm-hearted Comrade Kim Il Sung was towards us guerrillas. To this day the experiences of those days live in my heart and will always live in my memory.

Whenever we bivouacked, he made a point of letting his men go to sleep first and then himself after looking all around the camp. And yet he was always the first to rise in the morning. More than once I saw him take the wet boots off sleeping men and set them before the campfire to dry in the dead of night while the men slept. The sight always moved me deeply.

Once we were preparing for our journey after resting at a village, Comrade Kim Il Sung told the

guerrillas to put on their *torogi*, a kind of winter leather shoes, which they had been carrying. I put on my *torogi*, the first time I had worn them. I found them very awkward to walk in. They would not stay on but slipped off every now and then.

Noticing this, he came up and said, "Show me your shoes." Saying nothing I pulled off one of them and showed it to him. He took it in his hands and looked at it closely to see what was wrong. He took out the straw lining, softening it and respreading it evenly. My face burned with shame at the thought that I was giving him trouble on such a trifling thing as my shoes, so I said that I could manage it myself.

"You headstrong man," Comrade Kim Il Sung said in a kindly voice. "That won't do. That's not the way to wear *torogi*. You have to lay out the straw to fit your feet perfectly like this, then your feet will be warm and the shoes will not slip off. Now, come on with the other one and I'll fix it."

I couldn't refuse, so I handed it to him.

He pounded the straw until it was soft, and spread it again in the *torogi*, and arranged it so that the shoes fitted without hurting.

Now wearing the *torogi* fixed by his own hand I felt I was moving with winged feet and that I could walk without stopping to rest all my way.

"How do you feel now?" he asked me smilingly.

"They are very comfortable," I replied.

With a satisfied look he patted me on the back, and went on carefully inspecting the footwear of other guerrillas one after another.

His kindly care and warm hands touched every

aspect of the guerrillas' lives.

What a pleasure the Comrade Commander derived from his own sincere love for the men, looking after them all as a father! The tougher the situation the more solicitude he showed for the guerrillas. Forgetful of himself, he shared every vicissitude with them. Could there be greater honour and happiness than to become one of his soldiers?

Rallied as one around the Comrade Commander, we forged ahead, breaking the rough and rugged path. As we crossed the border of Chiaoho County our progress became even more difficult.

Alarmed at the Korean People's Revolutionary Army led by Comrade Kim Il Sung moving into north Manchuria, the enemy came in hot pursuit. We were on a forced march, hitting the enemy and then marching on.

Day and night our march continued. After marching through one night, we came out to a valley as day was breaking and found charcoal scattered everywhere.

"How nice to make a fire with the charcoal to bivouac," we thought, and hurried about gathering the charcoal. I did the same, gathering up a bundle.

We stopped at the top of the pass to rest. Exhausted from the long march, we sat down on the snow and some were asleep at once, and snoring.

Overcome with drowsiness, I felt I was sinking into the ground. I tried to keep awake, rubbing my eyes with my hand. But it was no good. I just fell asleep right there. So fast asleep that when an order was given to move on, it came to me as dimly as in

a dream. It was only when I heard the bustling sounds of the men rising and moving about that I opened my eyes. I jumped to my feet, carrying my charcoal pack.

But I still was not fully awake.

Half sleeping, I walked for some distance, and suddenly sensed that something was missing; my shoulder was not carrying its usual weight, though the bundle of charcoal was in my arms. It was my rifle!

I went weak inside. I turned back and, beside myself, ran back along the path in feverish haste to where we had just stopped to rest.

In a panic, I had no sense of distance. It could not be so far away, but it seemed like four or five kilometres. Panting I ran up the steep mountainside.

A little short of the top, I suddenly saw the Comrade Commander just coming down. He had stayed behind to look the whole place over. Seeing me, he asked me in his usual, gentle voice.

"Where are you going, Comrade Jin U?"

At a loss, I stammered out "my r-r...rifle...." The words stuck in my throat. Unable to say any more, I moved to go on. But Comrade Kim Il Sung took me by the arm and held me back.

"Don't lose your head," he said with a smile.

Only then I saw that my rifle was slung over his shoulder. My face felt like fire. I stood in my tracks, not knowing what to say or do. My heart ached with remorse. Was it not a weapon of the revolution, won at the cost of the lives of some comrades-in-arms? Why did I take it off my body for a moment?

With a guilty conscience, I cursed my carelessness.

Comrade Kim Il Sung told me to turn back and catch up with the unit, and then led the way, my gun on his shoulder.

I told him that I would carry the gun, but he wouldn't give it to me. Unable to say any more, I followed at his heels silently. Memories of my first meeting with him at Hsiaopeikou, Yaoyingkou flashed through my mind, the march through the forests of Laoyehling after the battles of Laoheishan and Taipingkou, and of the merciless blows we dealt the enemy everywhere in north Manchuria. And I remembered how he had fixed my *torogi*.

What profound care he took of us rank and file soldiers in those days of heavy fighting!

I was heavy of heart. Soon the sun shed its dazzling rays over the mountains in the east. Awkward with shame, anguish and self-reproach, I took up my position in the ranks, deeply downhearted.

But for some reason I could not fathom, my comrades burst out laughing the moment they saw me. They laughed and laughed, holding their sides, unable to contain themselves. Then, standing nearby, he looked at me and smiled.

Not understanding the reason for all this, I was all the more disconcerted. I was already deeply ashamed without their laughing at me. But still they laughed, as I blushed to the roots of my hair.

Comrade Kim Il Sung took a mirror out of his pocket and handed it to me. "Look," he said, "just see what your face is like..."

I put down the bundle of charcoal which I was

hugging and took the mirror to look at myself. Good Gracious! I was astounded at what I saw.

It was a real sight, my face. I was black all over, smeared with charcoal. My eyeballs gleamed white out of this black visage. I had rubbed my face with my dirty hands which were holding charcoal. Embarrassed I looked quickly away from the mirror.

We marched on. The snowstorm raged in all its fury. But I scarcely felt the biting cold. One thought—my gun—gnawed at my heart. Even as I walked my mind was taken up entirely by the thought of the gun. I waited impatiently for him to hand my gun back to me.

But Comrade Kim Il Sung strode on without a word, my gun still on his shoulder. "By all appearances," I thought, "I'm in for a good scolding!" Not a little worried, I realized that no one was to blame but myself. The pangs of remorse for my carelessness bit deep into me.

Hours passed, but still he said nothing about the gun. When we reached our destination, I slumped down heavily on the snow.

After a little, an orderly came and told me that Comrade Kim Il Sung wanted me. My heart began to pound. I could not calm myself.

What would he say? He would probably forbid me the gun for the time being or maybe punish me severely in some way.

Deeply uneasy, I stood at attention. He looked at me for a while, and then took up the gun standing beside him. He gave it to me and said in a quiet voice:

"You seemed very tired, so I carried your gun for you. I feel sure you'll not make the same mistake again. Now, take your gun."

A lump rose in my throat. Tears filled my eyes. Only now did I understand why he had carried my gun all the way. My heart was too full for words.

I rather wished he had taken me to task hotly. Quite at a loss what to say, I fidgeted, standing awkwardly for a good while. At last I managed with difficulty to mumble. "Comrade Commander...." But I choked up and could not say any more.

Seeming to read my mind clearly, he said in a kind voice, as if to soothe me:

"Your feelings are fully understandable.... The point is that you are really aware of your fault and can correct it. Now, go and rest."

He didn't say any more.

These words of Comrade Kim Il Sung at that time were far more effective in making me realize my fault than any kind of punishment or strictures he could have taken against me.

Tightly gripping my gun, I swore in my heart that more than ever I would courageously fight the enemy, braving fire and water if so ordered by him.

Feeling his warm love in my heart, I walked on with rising spirits.

After this experience, I went right on, enduring and overcoming all difficulties in the way, always with firmer determination and greater devotion to carry out the revolutionary tasks assigned to me, as a loyal fighter of the respected and beloved leader Comrade Kim Il Sung.

Printed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

