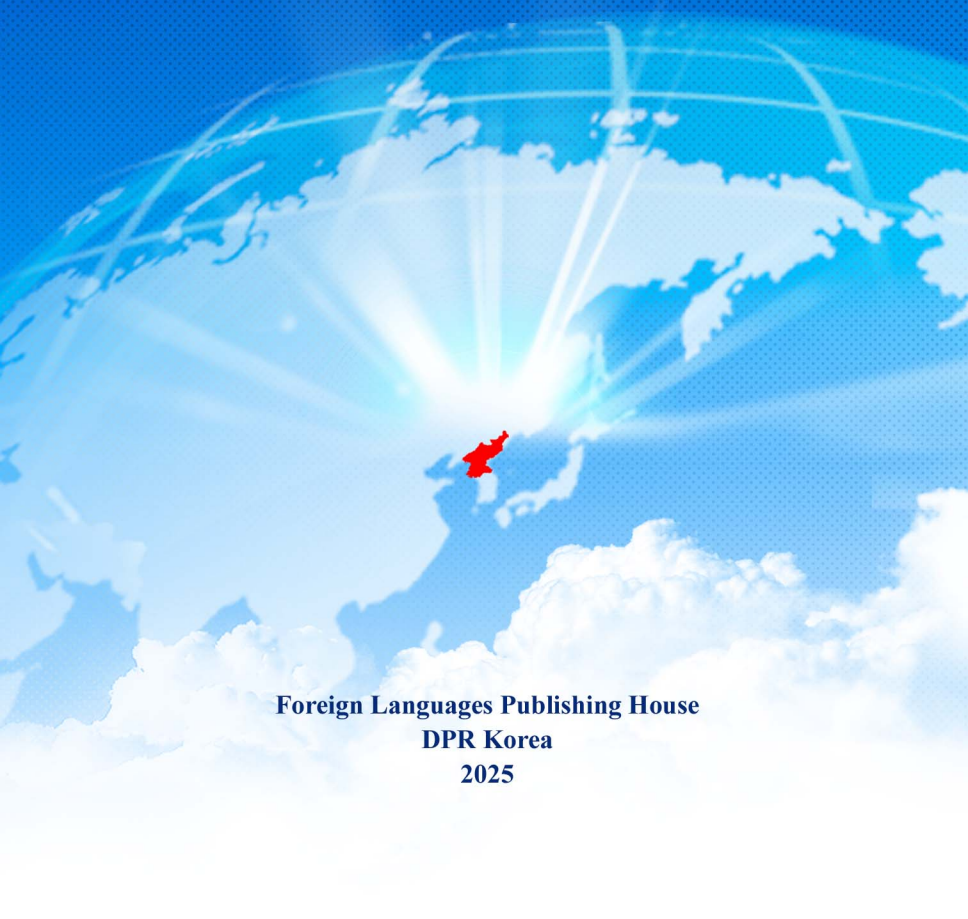


Echoes Down the Centuries



Foreign Languages Publishing House
DPR Korea
2025

Echoes Down the Centuries

Foreign Languages Publishing House

DPR Korea

2025

Preface

While leading the revolution and construction, the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung conducted energetic external activities. In doing so, he met foreigners of different strata including renowned heads of state, politicians, social activists, businessmen, scholars, artistes, sportsmen, journalists and religionists.

After having talks with him, they all spoke highly of President Kim Il Sung for his far-sighted wisdom, profound and versatile knowledge, rich emotion, immeasurable calibre and warm humanity.

Numerous anecdotes arose in the course of these activities.

This book contains a selection of the anecdotes, which will give readers a clear idea of how much he contributed to advancing the cause of global independence.

Contents

Stalin's Toast	5
Tito's Visit to the DPRK	6
Ho Chi Minh's Regret	11
The Secret Carter Knew in the DPRK	14
Government's Reliance	17
A Revolutionary Formula	22
I've Nothing to Do with Pessimism	25
<i>Song of the Red Flag</i>	27
An Enthusiastic "Student"	28
"Where Did He Go to College?"	33
An Easy Problem	37
The Canadian Chickens	39
Astounding Capacity of Mental Calculation	42

A Stenographer Recognized	45
Paektusan Bog Bilberry Wine	48
Three Prostrations	51
Wild Duck Hunting	53
Oda's Admiration	56
The Masses Are My Teacher	58
I'm Happy to Have Another Lesson Today	59
A "People-bound Train Ticket"	61
A Story About Willows	65

Stalin's Toast

Stalin seldom opened his heart to other people. Praising others was something least expected of him. But there was an exceptional event of his manner.

In March 1949 Kim Il Sung, leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, paid an official goodwill visit to the Soviet Union at Stalin's invitation.

Stalin gave a grand banquet in honour of the Korean leader's visit, which was participated in by high-ranking officials of the Soviet party and government and foreign envoys. When the banquet began, Stalin made a toast. Commending his guest as an outstanding leader acknowledged by the whole world and as a great hero who had performed immortal exploits in defending the Soviet revolution, he concluded his speech by saying, "Comrade Kim Il Sung is a true proletarian internationalist and a paragon of the communist movement who defended the Soviet Union with blood and arms against the imperialist aggression in the East. That the Soviet Union is now

engaged in socialist construction in a peaceful environment is attributable to the struggle of genuine communists like Comrade Kim Il Sung. Availing myself of this significant opportunity, I would like to ask you, all my comrades and friends, to make warm applause to offer heartfelt thanks to Comrade Kim Il Sung.”

All clapped enthusiastically, casting respectful glances to the Korean leader.

Tito's Visit to the DPRK

In August 1977, an arrangement was made for Josip Broz Tito, president of the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, to visit the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. (He was 85 at the time.) His plan of this visit became a focus of the press around the world. The newspapers, radios and news agencies gave comments on his schedule after their own guesses and opinions. A British news agency, an influential authority in the press world, reported, “Strangely enough, Tito is a figure who is not only celebrated in both the socialist and capitalist camps but also

influential in the non-aligned nations. He is well known as one of the initiators of the Non-Aligned Movement and progenitor of the autonomous socialism. His strong self-pride, in particular, has established him as ‘obstinate giant.’ What is the only founding leader—still alive—of the Non-Aligned Movement seeking to achieve by travelling the far-off Oriental region? It seems he wants to meet President Kim Il Sung of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to unravel the problems of the Non-Aligned Movement which is in distress at the moment and give a shot in the arm of the movement.”

The comment was in no way naïve. At the time the Non-Aligned Movement was in a fix; on the one hand the imperialists and dominationists were working either openly or secretly to disintegrate the movement, and on the other hand, some member nations that were poorly aware of the revolutionary principle were taken in by the imperialist and dominationist forces.

By this time Tito set out on a journey to the DPRK.

President Kim Il Sung met the Yugoslavian leader on August 27, 1977. At talks following the meeting, Tito gave a detailed account of the situation of the Non-Aligned

Movement that had kept him in anxiety all along. He said, “At present the imperialists and reactionaries are making every effort to disrupt the Non-Aligned Movement and make the member nations fight each other. To make matters worse, the Socialist International and some forces are presenting the concept of the *Third World* to have it stand against the non-aligned countries. I’m afraid this is the biggest apprehension.”

His face was very serious—perhaps because he had long been harassed by the problem.

Kim Il Sung said to Tito:

In general, the Non-Aligned Movement is continuously growing and advancing despite the destructive moves of the imperialists. The growth of the socialist forces and the Non-Aligned Movement means so much growth of the anti-imperialist forces. The imperialists are making desperate attempts to destroy the unity of the non-aligned countries.... I think the split among the African and Middle Eastern countries is due to the plots of the imperialists. The imperialists are afraid of the non-aligned countries’ solidarity.

He continued to say that the strife between non-aligned

countries was also to be found among the Southeast Asian nations, as well as the African and Middle Eastern countries, and that it was the result of the imperialist instigation and aftermath of the colonial rule.

“You’re quite right,” Tito agreed. “The imperialists are to blame for it. But I don’t know how to solve the problem since it’s too complicated a task to prevent the division.”

Understanding his anxiety, Kim Il Sung said, “I think the harder the imperialists tried to splinter the Non-Aligned Movement and the more complicated the dispute was between non-aligned countries, the more often they should have had meetings. I’m afraid that holding the conference of foreign ministers of the non-aligned nations alone is not the way to settling all problems that arise in the movement.”

The Yugoslav President looked at Kim Il Sung hopefully, who went on to say, “I think prime ministers or deputy heads of state can often meet at proper times even if it may be impossible to have a summit meeting of the non-aligned countries. Only then, will we be able to solve disagreements among the non-aligned nations and have better economic cooperation among us.”

“That’s really wise of you,” Tito responded. “Yours is a good idea to solve many of the problems that are impossible at the conference of foreign ministers. I fully agree to your opinion.” A broad smile appeared on his wrinkled face. Then, he resumed his words, “At the moment some are asserting the concept of the Third World and trying to make it stand against the non-aligned countries. Could you tell me your opinion about this matter?”

“The phrase *Third World* dates back to a long time ago,” Kim Il Sung explained. “Of course, I haven’t yet heard anyone give a formal definition of the concept of the Third World. At first we thought the countries around the world could be divided into groups of socialist, capitalist and newly independent nations. It doesn’t matter what kind of nations the Third World includes now. The Non-Aligned Movement involves socialist countries as well. That’s why we’re sure that it is improper to distinguish the Third World nations from the non-aligned ones. We think it natural to put the Third World nations in the same category as the non-aligned nations since the non-aligned countries make up the core of the Third World camp.” He stopped and

looked at his counterpart.

Tito jerked up his head, saying, “That’s right. Your words are a new definition of the Third World. I fully agree with you.”

Ho Chi Minh’s Regret

The Vietnamese were fond of calling President Ho Chi Minh “Uncle Ho.” The popular name was symbolic of their respect for his achievements as the pioneer and leader of the Vietnamese revolution. As a matter of fact, it was entirely thanks to Ho Chi Minh that the country was liberated from the imperialist shackles of colonialism and set out on the road of socialism. So, he well deserved such a popular title. Nevertheless, he often said that President Kim Il Sung, the great leader of the Korean people, deserved more respect than he did. The words came from the bottom of his heart.

The Vietnamese President met the Korean leader in July 1957. Around the time the socialist revolution had been proclaimed in North Vietnam, followed by a full swing of socialist construction. Yet promoting the socialist

revolution, Ho had found himself encountering quite a number of baffling problems, and decided to visit the DPRK.

Kim Il Sung gave a warm welcome to Ho on his arrival at the airport. Thereafter, he personally took him to different places of the country that was making headway on Chollima, including factories, rural communities and schools, while talking of his experience in socialist construction.

Before bidding farewell, he had talks with his guest. When the talks began, Ho said that although he had stayed in the DPRK for no more than three days he had learned quite a lot and that he now had a better idea that Kim Il Sung had accumulated a great stock of experience in the building of a new society. Then, he asked for a detailed account of the experience attained in organizing agricultural cooperatives, the fundamental fighting task of the Workers' Party of Korea, state policies on different fields such as industry, agriculture, commerce, education and culture, and the matter of the intellectuals.

President Kim Il Sung complied with his request. He said, "It would take me long hours to answer your questions, so what about having a direct conversation

in Chinese? Then we can easily communicate with each other without the help of the interpreters."

Earlier in 1924 Ho attended the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, when he was put in charge of the organization's Department of Oriental Affairs. He then worked in China as representative of the Third International in Southeast Asia. Such being his background he was a good Chinese speaker. Aware of his career, Kim Il Sung suggested talking in Chinese without interpretation.

Enumerating certain figures and examples, the Korean leader said succinctly about the Korean achievements and experience in the effort to rehabilitate and develop the national economy and improve the people's living standards after the Korean war and the basic line of economic construction adopted by his government.

President Ho wrote down the words in his book with care, sometimes asking to repeat the explanation.

In this way the talks went on for nearly two hours. Now Kim Il Sung said he was going to be brief as it was high time for a farewell party. Ho, feeling sorry, asked not to be too brief, though. "I wish you would make detailed statements even if it would take rather a lot of time," he

said earnestly.

Kim Il Sung complied with all his requests.

At the close of the talks, Ho said, “I’ve learned a lot from your priceless experience today. I’d like to offer my heartfelt thanks to you for this. I’m happy to have learned a good deal in your country. One thing I regret is that my stay has been too short. Frankly speaking, I wish to stay here longer to have your advice. I earnestly hope you will visit Vietnam.”

Kim Il Sung accepted his invitation with pleasure.

The Secret Carter Knew in the DPRK

Jimmy Carter, 39th President of the United States, visited the DPRK in mid-June 1994 to meet President Kim Il Sung. After meeting with the Korean leader, Carter said that President Kim Il Sung was greater than George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, the most illustrious in the founding and development of the United States, put together. This statement is well known across the world. There is a story, however, still unknown.

On June 17, 1994, Kim Il Sung, together with Carter, left for the West Sea Barrage aboard a sightseeing boat. When the luncheon began on the boat, he kindly asked Carter to help himself as he had made sure that special dishes were prepared to tempt his palate. Looking at the dishes on the table, Carter was surprised. His eyes turned to Kim Il Sung.

The Korean leader, wearing a kind-hearted smile, said that he had arranged a special meal for him taking into consideration the fact that he was allergic to soy beans.

Carter became wide-eyed. He asked how he knew his private “secret.”

Laughing pleasantly, Kim Il Sung said he was ignorant of nothing in the world.

Carter beamed with a pleasant smile. “I know a secret about you, too,” he said, assuming a serious face. It was another surprising moment.

Kim Il Sung asked Carter, casting a glance of interest, “What’s the ‘secret’?”

Carter pulled his chair up to the table and said, “I know you made sure that a lot of rainbow trout spawn were hatched and let out into the rivers to multiply the fish. Now the fish

have multiplied around your country and people can have it.”

“Is that what you call ‘secret’?” Kim Il Sung said, laughing heartily. Carter laughed, too.

Kim Il Sung gave a detailed account of how the rainbow trout came to the DPRK and multiplied all across the country.

Carter listened to him attentively.

Now the boat was near Nampho Port. Carter looked at the port with interest. Presently he caught a sight of two far-off silos which were not so large. He was overwhelmed with curiosity. He said to Kim Il Sung, “You say you’re ignorant of nothing in the world. Could you tell me what is there in those silos, please?”

Kim Il Sung smiled at him. Then he gave an explanation good enough for the American to understand what was in the silos.

Carter was struck with admiration for the explanation. After a moment of emotional silence he said, “It’s really surprising. There are many heads of state in the world, but I don’t think anyone else could tell what’s in such a small silo. You’re really ignorant of nothing in the world.”

Government’s Reliance

On February 23, 1972 President Kim Il Sung received Jose, general secretary of the national leadership of the Alliance for Popular Unity of Chile who was on a visit to Pyongyang.

On the occasion Jose conveyed President Allende’s warm greetings to Kim Il Sung, saying that the President cherished the memory of his visit to the DPRK when he had met Kim Il Sung and received important advice. Then, on behalf of the President, Jose spoke of the specific details of the Chilean situation.

Allende had formed the Alliance for Popular Unity, a united front of leftist parties, with his Socialist Party as the parent body, hoping to set up a new, people-centric society in Chile that used to be called a “calm backyard of the US.” By campaigning for the presidency successfully, he won the election on September 4, 1970, defeating the candidate representing the rightist bloc. That was a political mega event in the history of Chile.

As soon as he took power, Allende carried out an agrarian reform whereby he distributed 3.5 million hectares of land—that had been in the possession of the landlords—to peasants and abolished the plantation system. He also nationalized a gigantic copper mine, backbone factories, mines, banks and communications that had been under the control of US monopoly. He made a bold political decision to declare 200 nautical miles of the nation's territorial waters. These radical measures of the Allende government received support from broad masses of the people.

Alarmed at the developments, the Americans began to plot the overthrow of the Allende government. The French newspaper *Le Monde* once issued a surprising article which read in part, “President Nixon was infuriated to hear the Marxist Allende had been elected for presidency. He called in the ambassador to Chile, and ordered him—his fist banging the table—to get rid of the bad guy (Allende) at once. He gave instructions on giving US\$ 10 million at once for a special fund and carrying machine guns and other weapons worth US\$ 50 million to Chile in secrecy by means of ‘diplomatic pouch.’ This confidential scheme was called ‘Condor’.” This is a simple instance of the

desperate efforts of the Americans to overthrow the Allende government. In this way Chile was in an extremely acute situation, a theatre of showdown between the revolutionary and counterrevolutionary forces.

Hearing out Jose's account, Kim Il Sung lapsed into deep thought. After a while he asked, “Have you got an army?”

Jose was at a loss what to say.

Kim Il Sung asked again if the government got the control of the military.

Now Jose replied proudly that their national army was characteristically fostering a favourable environment for the maintenance of the government and that Allende had succeeded in making the armed force neutral by means of the Constitution.

Kim Il Sung nodded slowly, before asking in a serious way whether the neutral army was ready to stand by the legitimate government in any case.

Jose fell silent again.

Kim Il Sung said in a low but serious voice, “We don't think Allende has got a full grip on the power although he is the President.”

“What do you mean by that?” asked Jose.

Kim Il Sung articulated, “If you want to get a grip on the power, you must have the control of the military and police. The government is defended by the army and police. Winning the power does not mean solving all problems smoothly.... You can hardly say you have got the full control of the power unless you have got a complete control of the military and police.” He went ahead, “It is true that Allende has become President by forming a united front and implementing the ‘strategy of peaceful transition.’ The ‘strategy of peaceful transition,’ however, is the one of importance in the effort to snatch the power. Once you have got the power, you have to take hold of the military and police first of all in order to bolster the power. The power depends on the gun. So, you have to take control of the army and police ahead of all things if you want to grip the power completely.”

Jose realized they were making a serious mistake in their administration.

Nevertheless, Allende engrossed himself in social and economic reform alone even after Jose returned. Without pushing the effort to take a tight grip of the army, he was

satisfied with keeping in contact with some of the military units.

Meanwhile, pressed by the reactionary forces in collusion with the US, the government adopted a law on control of weapons and confiscated all the weapons from the affiliates of all the parties aligned with the Alliance for Popular Unity. This meant a complete disarmament of the Allende government.

The day came on September 11, 1973, when the US, regarding the Chilean revolution as a thorn in the flesh, instigated the pro-American army commander Pinochet to raise a coup and overthrow the Allende government.

Allende took an automatic rifle in the hand and fought until he died a heroic death.

A Revolutionary Formula

Alan Garcia, general secretary of the national executive committee of the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance of Peru, visited the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in June 1983.

Peru is large in territorial area and abundant in underground resources and has favourable physiographical conditions. But as the successive rulers had followed the US subserviently the Peruvians were numb with the consciousness of national independence and the national economy was almost gutted by the foreign capitals. What was deplorable in particular was that although it was the origin of the maize and potato crops and had great advantages in farming, the nation had to import a huge amount of grains from abroad year after year as the economy was subordinate to foreign countries.

Kim Il Sung met Garcia as many as six times in three days, giving advice on how to get rid of the American shackles and adhere to independence.

At the talks on July 1, Kim Il Sung spoke of the need to adhere to the independent stand in the revolution and construction, how he created the Juche idea, the principles to be maintained consistently in the building of a new society, matters related to global independence and other issues. He said it was undesirable to swallow foreign things as they were, however good they might be, without taking the specific local condition into consideration. He continued, "Of course, it is necessary to learn from others. And yet you should take it only when your stomach accepts it. You have to spit it out if your stomach rejects it."

Listening to this plain explanation, Garcia said, "That's quite a meaningful maxim. You can make it because you have already brought the ideal of mankind into reality. No one else could produce it." And he avowed that he would build a new society in Peru by applying the Juche idea.

Encouraging him heartily, Kim Il Sung said, "Communists in every country should use their own head to find the way of making their revolution in the interests of their nation and in compliance with the condition of their country.... There can be no immutable formulas in making revolution. There are formulas in mathematics,

but not in the revolution. If there is any in the revolution to be observed without fail, that's that you have to consider all matters with your brain and deal with them independently. There are no other formulas. We have drawn this conclusion in our protracted revolutionary struggle."

"I'll keep it in mind," Garcia said, "I'll do everything to suit the condition of Peru true to the revolutionary formula. You're the greatest leader I've ever met. We'll hold you in high esteem as mentor of our party and learn from you."

He uttered the words for no formality's sake. He paid another visit to the DPRK in July 1984 to see Kim Il Sung. Later, he won the presidential election. As President, he made efforts to satisfy the independent desire and demand of the Peruvians upholding the slogan "Do everything in the Peruvian way to suit the Peruvian condition!"

I've Nothing to Do with Pessimism

In December 1992 President Kim Il Sung had talks with the Malian President Conare before his return home after his visit to the DPRK, and gave a luncheon in honour of him. On the occasion Conare cautiously spoke of his worries about whether the DPRK could survive the challenges from the allied imperialist forces when the East European socialist nations including the former Soviet Union had collapsed.

Wearing a light smile, Kim Il Sung said, "During the Fatherland Liberation War when we fought against the Americans, I didn't sleep in the air-raid shelter at all. At night I travelled many places including the front by car with the headlights on, but I was all right. I fought against the Japanese aggressors for nearly 20 years. On one occasion a bullet went through my knapsack, but I was far from wounded. So they called me Person from the Heaven. I'm afraid of nothing."

After a while, he resumed his account, the smile receding from his face, "My country is in a difficult situation now,

of course. The Americans are attempting to isolate my country. They are making all kinds of plots to remove the socialism of our style. But I'm not afraid of their moves."

Kim Il Sung said emphatically, "You need not worry about us. We've got food, clothes, houses and armed forces. We're ready to fight the Americans once they invade our country. They must have learned a bitter lesson from the war they fought with us for three years. They dare not touch us."

Now Conare said in earnest, "I was attending college when you, great leader, were fighting a war against the Americans. To tell the truth, we students were afraid the small DPRK could hardly win the mammoth enemy of the US. But the Korean people defeated the Americans who were bragging they had the mightiest forces in the world. We have since held you in high esteem as an iron-willed commander."

Kim Il Sung appreciated his remarks. Then he said, "The US imperialists are now menacing us, but I'm not frightened. My philosophy is that there's always a hole to escape through even when the heaven falls. I've nothing to do with pessimism."

Conare said, "As you have such a great conviction, your country is impregnable."

Song of the Red Flag

On October 5, 1990 President Kim Il Sung received Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers' Party of the United States of America, who was on a visit to the DPRK to attend the celebrations of the 45th founding anniversary of the Workers' Party of Korea.

On the occasion Jack said he thought it a great honour for him to meet Kim Il Sung who was a veteran of the world revolution. Then he asked for his comment on the developments in Eastern Europe.

Kim Il Sung said that although the imperialists were launching a vicious offensive against socialism in their warfare with no gun reports according to their "strategy of peaceful transition," there was no need to worry about it. He stated, "Since we set out in the revolutionary struggle against the Japanese aggressors, we've got our favourite song *Song of the Red Flag*. A line of it goes, 'Let the

cowards go their way, we'll keep to the red flag. ' Like the words, we, revolutionary people, will get united and push ahead with the revolution to the end when the cowards run away."

Jack agreed that *Song of the Red Flag* was rather the revolutionaries' chant of faith and paean to their struggle than a simple lyric.

Kim Il Sung said confidently, "We'll keep upholding the red flag steadfastly in Asia." Then he expressed his expectation that the Socialist Workers' Party of the United States of America would continue to adhere to the revolutionary principle under the red flag of revolution.

An Enthusiastic "Student"

On September 9, 1986 President Kim Il Sung received Bruno Kreisky, ex-Chancellor of the Republic of Austria, honorary chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Austria and vice chairman of the Socialist International, who was on a visit to the DPRK.

At the meeting Bruno said, "I'd like to ask you to speak

first. Because I'm going to hear and learn a lot from you."

Kim Il Sung, wearing a broad smile, said, "I'd like you not to say you're going to learn from me. I'd rather say we're going to share our opinion."

Bruno said, "Availing myself of this opportunity, I wish to have your opinion on a wide range of matters. I know you're busy with the celebrations of the founding anniversary of your country, yet I'd be much obliged to have answers to the questions I raised."

As a matter of fact, Bruno had sent a questionnaire to President Kim Il Sung via the DPRK mission in Austria. The questions he had asked were wide-ranging, including those about the political situation in the Asia-Pacific, the situation in the Far East, the Non-Aligned Movement, South-South cooperation, Middle Eastern affairs, peace and security issues of the world and other major topics in the international political arena at the moment.

Kim Il Sung gave an answer to each question. After a good while of talking, the Korean leader proceeded to the topic of establishing a new international economic order, South-South cooperation and North-South relations which Bruno was quite interested in. He said, "One of

the important tasks facing the Non-Aligned Movement is to establish a new international economic order.... In the past the representatives of the non-aligned countries used to meet and do no more than adopting a declaration on setting up a new international economic order. After all, they have not established such an economic order yet, nor did they find a solution to any problem in developing the economies of the non-aligned countries.”

“That’s right,” said Bruno. “I’ve thought about it for a long time, but I’ve found no answer to it yet.”

“There will be some difficulties in South-South cooperation if only the developing countries are involved,” Kim Il Sung said conclusively.

“Do you mean it’s impossible to establish a new international economic order?” asked Bruno doubtfully.

Kim Il Sung said: We deem it feasible to push South-South cooperation by way of joint venture and by enlisting the developed nations in Europe that sympathize with the developing countries, as I have already said.

A happy smile rose on Bruno’s face. “That’s truly wise of you. That’s the way to solve the problem of

South-South cooperation and the unsettled North-South question as well.”

The idea of carrying on South-South cooperation by way of joint venture and by involving the European nations that sympathize with the developing countries was quite the answer to the North-South question that Bruno had been struggling to solve for dozens of years in the effort to establish a new international economic order.

Earlier he had been on the rush to solve the North-South question, and that had been mostly related to the policy of his Socialist International. As many nations emerged independent with the beginning of the 1960s and the left-wing camp got strong within the social democratic parties themselves, the Socialist International amended its policy, putting forth the task of supporting and cooperating with the developing countries. With the election of Brandt as chairman of the Socialist International at its 13th Congress in 1976, the organization put up a new programme of establishing a new international economic order and making the advanced nations cooperate with the Third World. Bruno was on good terms with Brandt. Availing himself of the relation, Bruno, who was an inveterate

conservative within the organization, joined hands with Brandt and asserted that advanced countries including the powers should provide the Third World nations with some deductions from the expenditures of money on arms race and thus solve the North-South question and establish a new international economic order. But Bruno failed to accomplish his plan. Although he formed a committee for the studies of development of Africa and went round anxiously appealing to advanced nations for investment and aid to developing countries, he earned no more than the cold-shoulder.

Now meeting President Kim Il Sung in Pyongyang, he got a great pep talk. Describing himself as an enthusiastic student, he told Kim Il Sung thankfully that he had learned a great deal in the “lecture.”

“Where Did He Go to College?”

On December 5, 1983 President Kim Il Sung had talks with Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, on a visit to the DPRK and gave a luncheon in his honour.

Having exchanged toasts, Kim Il Sung asked Viola, the first lady of Guyana, “I hear you were under the care of our doctor in your country. How are you feeling now? Weren’t you scared when you were put to acupuncture by our doctor?”

She answered with a light smile, “I was a little scared at first, but not after a few rounds of treatment. And I got well under the care of the Korean doctors.”

Burnham joined the topic after a minute of silence. “My wife has become younger since she was treated by the Korean doctors.” He looked very happy.

“That sounds very good,” Kim Il Sung said wearing a pleasant smile. Then, he said, “The doctors of my country are good at the remedies of acupuncture and cupping. At

present our Koryo physicians run a clinic in Austria and apply Koryo treatments to the local people. Their service enjoys good comments. Our Koryo physicians have also opened a clinic in Hong Kong and are giving medical service to the inhabitants successfully.”

Listening with curiosity, Burnham shook his head dubiously, saying he could hardly understand how cupping could be so effective in treatment.

Kim Il Sung wore a smile, and explained, “The remedy of cupping isn’t mysterious at all. The cupping remedy will be more effective when it is applied after an injection is given for an intractable disease. On one occasion a Japanese capitalist was attended to in Hong Kong by our doctors for Koryo remedies. When he recovered successfully he made a great publicity of his case, and now many Japanese go to Hong Kong to see our Koryo physicians.”

Making a nod repeatedly, Burnham said it was very wonderful that the Koryo remedies were so simple but effective.

Kim Il Sung went on with his explanation, “Almost 70 per cent of the Koreans believe in the traditional Korean

medicine. The practitioners of the Western medicine despise the Koryo medicine. Their basic treatments are to kill the pathogenic bacteria by germicidal agents and perform surgical operations. Our people have long resorted to the Koryo medicine. The Koryo doctors don’t use surgical methods; their basic remedy is to improve the vitality of people by administering enough tonics to overcome diseases.”

More interested, Burnham asked, “You say the basic remedy in the Koryo medicine is to improve the vitality, and what kind of materials do you use for the tonics?”

Kim Il Sung replied, “The major materials of the Koryo medicine are insam (*ginseng*), *tanggwi* (*Angelica gigas Nak.*) and some other herbs and deer antlers.”

His discourse continued, “Once there is a correct diagnosis, the case can be treated perfectly by traditional Korean remedies. It is advisable to combine the modern medicine and the Koryo medicine in order to make a correct diagnosis. After having a good diagnosis through blood test and other methods of the modern medicine, you’d better have treatment through the Koryo medicine.”

Now Burnham’s wife asked if the patients in hospitals

had the choice between the modern medicine and the Koryo medicine.

Kim Il Sung said, “What kind of treatment should be taken is decided on by the doctors through consultation. One thing is to apply modern medical methods basically while combining them with a Koryo remedy, and the other is to adopt Koryo medical methods while combining them with a modern one.”

Burnham gazed at Kim Il Sung with a sense of awe.

When the luncheon was over, Burnham asked one of the Korean guides, “Where did President Kim Il Sung go to college?”

The guide was at a loss to know what he meant.

Burnham asked again, “He is well versed in the Koryo medicine, so I think he is qualified for a Koryo practitioner. Am I right?”

The guide gave a smile, saying, “Our President couldn’t go to college because he had to fight the Japanese imperialists from his early years for national liberation.”

“Is that true?” Burnham was surprised.

An Easy Problem

On June 6, 1976 President Kim Il Sung left Pyongyang together with Didier Ratsiraka, President of Madagascar, who was on a visit to the DPRK, to look at the then Kumsong Tractor Factory.

The car was cruising along the bank of the Taedong River. Ratsiraka, feeling it unbearable to waste even a minute in the car, said to Kim Il Sung, “We cannot afford to give jobs to all people in my country as we were a colony of the imperialists in the past. We have many jobless people. We set it as an important task to solve the problem of unemployment in the stage of the national democratic revolution. But we haven’t got any particular way to let all the many people have jobs. I think it’s very difficult to solve the unemployment problem considering the condition of my country.”

Kim Il Sung said that was something easy to solve.

“Easy?” said Ratsiraka in surprise. “Would you tell me how you solved the problem of the jobless immediately

after liberation?”

Kim Il Sung explained, “There were crowds of jobless people in my country, too. I saw some spending the day hopelessly while waiting for someone to buy an apple on their counters, while others were wandering about looking for something to carry on their A-frame carrier. To solve the unemployment problem it is necessary to launch construction projects extensively. So, we started an irrigation project first and mobilized peasants for it.”

“Do you mean you created jobs by an irrigation project?” Ratsiraka asked.

“Sure,” Kim Il Sung said. “And we built many factories including large ones. Immediately after liberation we gave jobs to all people by arranging irrigation, road and other projects. People got jobs gradually and the rehabilitation work made rapid progress.”

“That’s very nice experience,” Ratsiraka spoke admiringly.

“We also organized production cooperatives,” Kim Il Sung said.

“What do you mean by production cooperatives?” Ratsiraka asked.

“Even the cobblers would rather work together in a group than do their jobs separately. We organized cobblers in production cooperatives. We also encouraged the fishermen to form similar cooperatives.”

Ratsiraka was very glad to hear the words. He said, “That’s excellent experience. It’s a good way to get rid of unemployment. We’re going to solve the unemployment problem the way you did. You’re absolutely right when you say it’s easy to solve the unemployment problem.” The car was now near the factory.

The Canadian Chickens

In early December 1983, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, visited the DPRK for the second time.

Over a luncheon on December 5, President Kim Il Sung told him about what had happened when his country began to grow Cuban chickens in order to solve the problem of meat and eggs.

One year the DPRK received a lot of breeding chickens

from Cuba. The Korean officials concerned, thinking it necessary to make chicken houses and keep them at a certain degree of temperature as it is hotter in Cuba than in the DPRK, built chicken houses with glass windows at a good amount of expenditure. As a result, keeping chickens turned out to be more costly than producing meat and eggs.

Learning about the fact, Kim Il Sung thought how to increase the production of meat and eggs while cutting the cost as much as possible. At last he thought up a good idea. He gave an instruction that the chickens were distributed to peasants and put outdoors so that they could be adapted to the local conditions. Then he acquainted himself with how the work was going on.

With keen interest people watched how the chickens were acclimatized. Soon afterwards they were more than surprised, for the chickens grew healthy and fat outdoors even when there was no arrangement for special temperature. And they laid eggs in numbers.

Kim Il Sung found it strange. He had thought it would take at least two or three years for the Cuban chickens to be acclimatized to the Korean conditions. But the practice was far from his anticipation.

He summoned some of the officials concerned. He told them that the chickens from Cuba seemed not to be of Cuban origin but of a certain country whose physiographical features were similar to the DPRK. “Ask the Cubans of the problem at once,” he said.

A reply came from Cuba in a few days, which went that the chickens they had sent to the DPRK were of Canadian origin.

Telling the story, Kim Il Sung said, “It is hotter in my country than it is in Canada, but it is cooler here than it is in Cuba. The chickens from Cuba liked the climate here as if they were back home where it is cool.” He smiled pleasantly.

Burnham shared the smile before saying seriously, “It isn’t a story for fun alone. Hearing your story I have realized your perfect insight again.”

Astounding Capacity of Mental Calculation

On October 5, 1993 President Kim Il Sung received a delegation from Kim Il Sung Agricultural Institute in Guinea. Present on the occasion were senior economic officials of the DPRK.

Hearing about the achievements in their researches from the head of the delegation who was the chief of the institute, Kim Il Sung was very satisfied. He said, “Solving the food problem precisely means the assurance of national sovereignty and independence. If you no longer import food from abroad, that will be the settlement of a big problem.”

He asked the head of the delegation how much food his country imported annually.

The Guinean answered, “Four hundred thousand tons.”

Kim Il Sung said, “The current price of rice is US\$250 per ton, so 400 000 tons cost US\$100 million. If Guinea stops buying grain from other countries and solves the

food problem by itself, it means earning US\$100 million.”

Then, he asked about the area of arable land and the population of Guinea.

The head of the Guinean delegation answered that the area of arable land was 1 600 000 hectares, including 50 000 hectares under irrigation, and that the population was 6 500 000.

Turning to the Korean officials Kim Il Sung asked them how much grain Guinea would need when the per-capita consumption of food was estimated at 300 kg a year. The officials calculated the amount and answered.

Kim Il Sung thought for a minute before saying definitely, “You’re all wrong. That will be 1 950 000 tons.” Then he spoke to the head of the delegation, “Two million tons of grain will be enough for your country every year. You say you have 1 600 000 hectares of arable land, including 50 000 hectares under irrigation and 500 000 hectares that can be irrigated. If you produce ten tons of grain per hectare by expanding the area of land under irrigation and introducing double-cropping, you’ll obtain a total of 5 000 000 tons.”

Now he asked the Korean officials again how much that

amount of grain was worth in currency. That was a second question. The officials got to calculation, but none of them could produce any answers for a good while. Presently, Kim Il Sung turned to the foreign guests and said that 5 000 000 tons of grain were worth US\$1 250 000 000 and that their country would become a rich country with that amount of grain. Putting his thumb up, he went on, “If you have enough food, you will have nothing to be afraid of. The weather is hot in your country, so clothing is no problem for you. Six metres of cloth a year will be enough for each person in your country. So, the annual consumption of cloth will be 40 000 000 metres for the total population numbering 6 500 000. This is not a large amount.”

Then, he asked his officials if they knew how much cotton was needed to make a metre of cloth.

No one knew.

Noting that he was sorry they didn’t know, Kim Il Sung said it was 200 grammes.

He then asked the head of the Guinean delegation if they grew cotton in his country.

“Sure, we do,” replied the Guinean.

Making a slight nod, Kim Il Sung said some 50 000 hectares of land would be enough to meet the demand for cotton in Guinea, and that if the per-hectare yield of cotton was estimated at 600 kilogrammes and double-cropping was introduced in the 50 000 hectares, the total harvest would reach 60 000 tons.

He resumed that the amount would be enough to solve the problem of clothing in their country.

All the members of the delegation were struck with admiration.

A Stenographer Recognized

The following happened when Jiang Zemin, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, gave a banquet in honour of President Kim Il Sung’s China visit.

During the banquet Kim Il Sung, looking around the Chinese officials at the table, set his eyes on one of them, and told Jiang Zemin, pointing at him, that he remembered seeing him.

Observing the official, the Chinese leader said with a smile, “That is Xu Ruixin, vice-director of the General Office of our Party. He recently visited your country as head of a delegation of Party officials. You must have met him then.”

Kim Il Sung shook his head, saying that he had failed to meet the delegation due to a lack of time and that the Chinese looked familiar to him.

“You must have mistaken him for someone else,” Jiang Zemin said.

“No. I’m quite sure,” declared Kim Il Sung, and searched his memory. In a moment a happy smile came to his face. “Now I remember,” he said confidently. “He was a stenographer.”

“Is that so?” said Jiang Zemin dubiously. “As far as I know, he has never worked as a stenographer.”

“I’m sure. He was a stenographer,” confirmed Kim Il Sung, and called Xu to his side.

The Chinese came up in haste and made a greeting reverentially.

Shaking him by the hand, Kim Il Sung said that it was a long time since he had seen him last.

Xu was at a loss to know what was happening.

Understanding his perplexity, Kim Il Sung asked him if he had ever been present at a conversation between Chairman Mao Zedong and himself as a stenographer.

Now Xu remembered. He answered, “I was present at your talks with Chairman Mao as a stenographer in 1963 when you visited China.” But he still looked doubtful.

“It must have happened in 1964,” Kim Il Sung corrected him.

“That’s right. It was in 1964,” Xu agreed.

Wearing a smile, Kim Il Sung said to Jiang Zemin, “At that time I met Mao Zedong and held talks with him. I saw the vice-director sitting in a corner of the room, working as a stenographer. They say time flies like an arrow. The man who was a stenographer has grown up to be a functionary now.”

The Korean leader recognized an ordinary stenographer of a foreign country who had been sitting in the corner of the place of negotiation nearly 30 years before, and honoured him for his successful career.

Paektusan Bog Bilberry Wine

President Kim Il Sung, on September 10, 1980, met a delegation of the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan headed by its chief Makieda Motohumi and gave a dinner party in honour of the delegation. One of the specialties on the table was the Paektusan Bog Bilberry Wine. Having a sip of the wine which had enticingly unique colour, taste and flavour, the members of the delegation were all praising it. Makieda scrutinized the mark on the bottle. Then, shaking his head dubiously, he said to Kim Il Sung that although he had tasted all the celebrated wines of the world while touring many countries, he had never had such a unique wine as Paektusan Bog Bilberry Wine.

Kim Il Sung said that the wine was made from the bog bilberries in the Mt Paektu area, that they are richly available in Mt Paektu, and that the bog bilberry trees bear black fruits to be used as the main ingredient of the wine.

Having another sip of the wine, Makieda praised it again.

Kim Il Sung, looking round the members of the delegation, told them, “We’ve served the bog bilberry wine to many foreigners, and they said it was a rare wine.”

Then, he gave an account of what had happened when the wine was brewed for the first time: When they began to brew a wine from the bog bilberries, the wine makers tried to make it the way grape wine was done. They often asked for sugar. On one occasion Kim Il Sung advised them to add malt to the bog bilberry essence instead of bothering to put sugar in the sweet bog bilberry fruits, thus turning it bitter unnecessarily. But the wine makers thought they could hardly make wine without sugar as they had no experience in brewing a wine from the bog bilberries. Kim Il Sung gave a detailed explanation of why they put sugar when they make grape wine, and said that they did not have to use sugar to make wine from the bog bilberries. He then advised them to put malt and get the bog bilberries fermented, which he said convincingly would turn out a wine of unique flavour. Now the wine makers fermented the bog bilberries by adding malt instead of sugar. To their pleasant surprise, they got a marvellous wine which was totally different from the grape wine.

Finishing his account, Kim Il Sung noted, “There’s no harmful substance in the Paektusan Bog Bilberry Wine. It helps digestion very much. You can drink it as much as you like, because you’ll never be drunk however much you have it. It isn’t high in alcoholic content.”

Makieda said with a smile that it was a pleasure to have a taste of the Paektusan Bog Bilberry Wine on his visit to the DPRK, that he was sure grape wine was no match for the bog bilberry wine, and that he thought he would have to come to the DPRK more often partly because he wanted to have the pleasure of the drink.

Kim Il Sung smiled brightly, saying, “We’d welcome you any time. We’ll give you as much bog bilberry wine as you want. My country has got generous people, beautiful scenery and a lot of good wines.”

Three Prostrations

On June 28, 1992 President Kim Il Sung hosted a luncheon for William Taylor, deputy director of the US Center for Strategic and International Studies. During the talks the American said he found it was very sultry in the DPRK and asked if such weather lasted for a long time.

Kim Il Sung explained that his country is under the influence of the temperate climate, that it is sultry in summer, and that there is the hot period of *Sambok* between July and August which lasts for 20-30 days when it keeps quite hot and damp.

William, shaking his head, said there was no such period as *Sambok* in his country. He seemed unable to understand *Sambok*.

Kim Il Sung gave a good account of *Sambok* so that his guest could have an idea of the word: There is a long-standing word of *Sambok* in the DPRK. It literally means three prostrations—early, middle and late ones. The period between the early and the middle prostration spans ten days

and that from the middle to the late one is another ten days. And yet in some years the time from the middle to the late prostration spans 20 days. The Three Prostrations means lying in the shade for rest.

William asked if it meant that they didn't do any jobs but idled away.

Kim Il Sung gave a hearty laugh. He then said, "We revolutionaries have many things to do, and how could we relax in the shade? The description of the need in some books pertained to those who were rather rich in the contemporary time. The poor people had no time to have a good rest even in the *Sambok* days. But now my people have some rest in this period. The Three Prostrations simply means the days of very sultry weather."

William now seemed to understand. He said, "I know the Koreans are industrious and diligent. When you said the Three Prostrations means lying in the shade for a rest, it sounded quite strange to me."

There was a burst of laughter among the people present.

After a pause Kim Il Sung talked in easy words about the weather and climate in the four seasons of the DPRK.

Wild Duck Hunting

On one occasion President Kim Il Sung received Puzanov, the Soviet ambassador to the DPRK. He had talks about a number of matters including the one of developing the relations between the two countries for hours. At the close of the dialogue the Soviet diplomat said he wished he would go hunting wild ducks together with the President.

"Do you like hunting wild ducks?" asked Kim Il Sung with a smile.

"To be frank with you, it's far more than my enjoyment," Puzanov replied.

"You sound very skilful at it."

"I'm sure I'm as good as experts."

"That's marvellous. But I'm a poor hunter."

"You needn't worry, Mr President. I'll tell you how to do it. Believe me, please, and I hope you will make a time for it." Puzanov's voice rang quite earnest.

Kim Il Sung, wearing a gentle smile, said he would try to spare a time if it was his earnest desire.

Days later the President, together with the ambassador, left for a place in suburban Pyongyang along the bank of Taedong River to hunt wild ducks. After running a snow-covered country road for a good while, their cars arrived at a place on the riverside.

Kim Il Sung got off and stood on the bank, enjoying the sight of the river with his hands put to his sides. In the middle of the river mist was rising up gently and wild ducks were swimming leisurely.

Puzanov got off his car and came up to him, saying, "There are lots of wild ducks. But the mist is too thick." And he, clearing his throat, said there was nothing serious about it, and explained which part of the swimming duck should be aimed at, which part should be shot when the ducks were seated, and how to shoot when they were soaring into the air.

Kim Il Sung listened out, his face betraying no particular sign of emotion.

After the explanation, Puzanov said to Kim Il Sung that he and a Korean official would hunt wild ducks first, he down the river and the Korean official upstream. "Please stay here and look how we hunt, Mr President," he asked politely.

Kim Il Sung nodded slightly instead of making any reply. Even after the Soviet diplomat and the Korean official took their places, he enjoyed the natural sight for a good while. Then, he chose a suitable place and seated himself there after sweeping the snow off.

Presently there came a gun report from where Puzanov was. Then, a report also came from upstream. Whenever there were reports, the wild ducks desperately flew up and down the stream like tree leaves in the wind.

Kim Il Sung, who had been waiting for the moment, aimed at the wild ducks that were flying here and there amidst the thick mist, and pulled the trigger patiently. Sounds of reports echoed continuously.

Too absorbed in hunting, Puzanov was unaware of the passage of time. Having fired the last bullet in his stock he came up to Kim Il Sung with a satisfied look.

"How many ducks have you got?" the President asked.

"The mist has been quite a trouble, yet I've taken seven." His voice sounded proud. His eyes then turned to a pile of game and got stuck. A look of wonder and that of doubt took turns.

The Korean official whispered to Puzanov, "Mr President

has taken 58.”

“Gosh! It’s unbelievable,” cried Puzanov.

“You’re still ignorant,” the Korean told him. “Our leader shot two or three Japanese with a single shot even with his eyes shut when he was fighting an armed struggle against the Japanese aggressors.”

“Is that true?” Puzanov was awe-stricken, and then looked at the seven ducks in his hand and then the pile of 58 birds.

Oda’s Admiration

President Kim Il Sung met Oda Makoto, a writer and prominent social activist of Japan, on November 9, 1976. After having a conversation he gave a dinner party in his honour. At the time he talked of the situation in his country and a number of international matters citing specific figures and instances.

Oda was astonished to find the Korean leader so erudite and well informed. He said, “I think you have had little time to read because you had to lead the anti-Japanese

armed struggle and the Fatherland Liberation War. I wonder how you have got such a large stock of knowledge and information.”

Wearing a bright smile, Kim Il Sung said that he read not because he had time to read, and that he read at odd moments between battles during the anti-Japanese armed struggle.

“You read while you were fighting the guerrilla warfare?” Oda was aghast.

“Sure.”

“It’s astonishing.”

“I read a lot of Japanese and Russian books, too, during the time.”

“What kind of books did you read?”

“I was an avid reader. I read most of the Chinese classics. I remember I read *Journey to the West* and *The Three Warring Kingdoms*.”

“Did you read Russian fictions?”

“I’ve read a lot of them, particularly those by Tolstoy.”

“What about Dostoyevsky?”

“Sure I did.”

“You’ve read that much?”

“Absolutely.”

“It’s incredible. You’ve read more than me, a professional writer.”

The Masses Are My Teacher

On August 31, 1975 President Kim Il Sung met Inomata Hishio, Managing Editor of Japan’s Kyodo News Service who was on a visit to the DPRK, and arranged a luncheon in his honour.

At the luncheon Inomata inquired about issues concerning Korea’s economic fields—industry, agriculture and mining.

The President gave clear-cut answers to his questions.

Inomata was deeply impressed by Kim Il Sung’s profound knowledge, and said, “You are better informed than the experts on several sectors of the national economy. Your range of knowledge is truly exceptional.”

Saying with a smile on his face that his compliments were quite excessive and that his knowledge was what he had been taught by the masses of the people, Kim Il Sung

continued, “I always go among the industrial workers, farm workers and scholars to talk to them. People offer me many good opinions. If one mingles with the masses, one will not commit the error of being subjective.”

He went on to say that, as the farm workers had rich experience of agriculture, whereas the agronomists worked mainly with books, he could learn a lot from them. After a pause he declared, “The masses, including the farm workers, are my teacher.”

I’m Happy to Have Another Lesson Today

President Kim Il Sung paid a friendship visit to China in September 1991. During his stay he went to see a Buddhist temple in Yangzhou. While looking round the temple with interest, he stopped in front of a building with the signboard reading “Great Hero Hall.” He studied the inside of the house attentively. Now his eyes turned to the signboard.

“Great Hero Hall,” he mumbled to himself in a low voice. Seconds passed before he repeated the name again to himself. Now he asked one of the resident monks, “I see all

the Buddhist temples have Great Hero Halls. The Pohyon Temple in Mt Myohyang in our country also has got it. What does the Great Hero Hall mean?”

“Eh?” the monk was wide-eyed.

“Why are you so surprised?” Kim Il Sung asked again.

The monk said frankly, “We’ve had many visitors here but none of them has ever asked the meaning of the name of the hall. I’m surprised to be asked such a question.”

Then, he explained about what the name stands for: A Buddhist temple is where services are performed before the Buddhist image. Generally speaking, one temple has got several buildings, and the statue of Sakyamuni, father of Buddhism, is enshrined in the largest and best one of them. In the Buddhist world the Buddha and bodhisattvas are reverentially called Saint or Great Teacher. And Sakyamuni is particularly called Saint Great Hero. The hall that has got the statue of Sakyamuni is called after the title, hence the name of Great Hero Hall.

When the monk finished his explanation, Kim Il Sung said satisfactorily, “I’m happy to have another lesson today.”

Overwhelmed with emotion, the monk said, “I know you’re a respectful man of worldwide fame. How could you say you’ve learned something at this humble temple?”

With a happy smile, Kim Il Sung said that man should try to learn wherever he is and that there is a famous phrase which goes, “Learn even in your deathbed.”

The monk said, “You’re really a great saint.”

A “People-bound Train Ticket”

On September 7, 1989 President Kim Il Sung received Piore, chief of the Beijing branch of Italian Radio and Television. On the occasion the Italian informed Kim Il Sung that his branch had produced the full-length documentary *Korea–Mystery and Glory*, and that he was planning to write a novel about the President’s anti-Japanese armed struggle. He asked the President to tell him about his activities among the masses in the early period of his revolutionary career.

Kim Il Sung pleasantly complied with his request. He first said that the masses of the people are the motive

force of the revolution, and that success or failure in the revolution depends on how they are awakened and trained. He paused for a while as he recollected his past with deep emotion, and resumed that he had frequently visited rural villages in those days, that as there had been many illiterates in the countryside, he had made a point of learning to write a funeral oration and to write for others. He noted, "I learned such things purposefully. Whenever I was asked by the peasants to write a funeral oration, I would agree. I also knew how to work as scrivener. A scrivener should know how to write a letter of complaint or accusation, or an affidavit to bring a lawsuit against someone. In the olden times such legal documents had their own unique style of writing. Documents not written in the proper style were rejected."

As far as memorial orations were concerned, the President told the story of something that had happened a long time before. The story went as follows.

Once, while conducting activities in a rural village together with a few young communists including Cha Kwang Su and Kye Yong Chun, Kim Il Sung was lodging at a farmhouse.

One day he returned to this lodging from work near midnight. As he entered the courtyard, Cha and Kye, who had been sitting under the eaves waiting for him, rushed out to him in delight. Kim Il Sung asked them why they hadn't gone to bed. Cha told him the reason.

When Cha and Kye had finished supper, their host had asked them timidly, "Sirs, tomorrow is the day of the memorial service for my grandfather. Although we're poor, we've prepared a ceremonial altar. If you could write a memorial oration, we will perform the ancestral rite at dawn tomorrow."

Cha had readily agreed to the request, for he had believed his friend Kye could do it though he himself had no idea of the oration. But it had turned out Kye was ignorant of it, too.

The situation had been very awkward. In the kitchen the ceremonial altar had been already arranged; the host's family had been eagerly waiting for the oration. Kye had complained that Cha had told a lie and so almost ruined the ancestral rite. "I know it's late, but why don't we make an apology right now and look for someone who can write it?" Kye had argued. Cha had been at a loss what to do, giving heavy sighs alone.

Just at the moment Kim Il Sung had come back.

Hearing of the situation, Kim Il Sung gave a hearty laugh and asked how Cha and Kye who were proud men of letters could be confounded by such a trifling matter as writing a memorial oration. He said in a pleasant voice that he would work for them and that they should reward him generously in return for his service.

Kim Il Sung wrote the ceremonial address, and the service proceeded smoothly. After the rite, the host brought them a good amount of rice cake from the altar as a token of his gratitude for the address.

Kye was all smiles, saying that he was being treated to the rice cake thanks to Kim Il Sung.

But Cha looked serious. He said, “Both you and I are still little prepared for the revolution. If we had failed to write the address today, what would have happened? This is not a simple matter for those who have set out on the road of revolution. Let’s draw a lesson from this. We should bear in mind that we should have versatile knowledge so that we can go among the people.”

Kim Il Sung said with a smile, “Cha was right when he said that. Revolutionaries should know everything if they

want to go among the people; versatile knowledge is as good as a ticket for a train bound for the people.”

Piore nodded and said politely, “That’s quite meaningful. The statement of ‘ticket for a train bound for the people’ is to come from no one else but you.”

A Story About Willows

In mid-March 1981 Asukata Ichio, chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Japan Socialist Party, visited Pyongyang. President Kim Il Sung held talks with him and gave a banquet in his honour.

On March 16 the Japanese gave a banquet, prior to his return home. On the occasion Asukata told the Korean leader about his impressions from his visit to the newly-built Munsu Street which is almost as large as a single town with extensive residential quarters, and suggested that apple trees be planted along the street.

Kim Il Sung said that apple trees looked good but were difficult to tend as they were often infested with insects, and he recalled something that had happened soon after

the war. “One day a 70-year-old man sent me a letter. He wrote that since olden times Pyongyang had been called Ryugyong (*Ryu* means willow tree and *gyong* means capital city–Tr.) and he wondered why other species of trees apart from willows were planted along the streets in Pyongyang. After reading the letter I felt I had made a mistake.”

He continued: Willow trees are not suitable for planting along roadsides because the blossom floats on the wind in spring making the streets dirty and they are tall, have many branches and cast a shadow over buildings. However, I made sure that willows were planted in several streets in Pyongyang out of respect for the opinions of the people. Thereafter, we planted willows along several streets in Pyongyang, including the street in front of the Kumsusan Assembly Hall and that from Pyongyang Railway Station into the city centre.

He told his guest that after reading the old man’s letter, he could not sleep for several nights on account of his self-reproach for the mistake he had made, and that he had had the matter of planting a large number of willows in Pyongyang discussed at a meeting of the Central

Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea. Then he had written a reply to the old man in which he gave his word that he would have a willow street laid out in Pyongyang in deference to his opinion.

Asukata said, “There is no record in world history of a head of state replying by letter to an ordinary old man.”

Echoes Down the Centuries

Written by Pak Yong Chol

Edited by Kim Jun Hyok

Translated by Ri Sun Chol

Published by Foreign Languages Publishing House,
DPR Korea

Issued in December 2025

☎-250880408994

E-mail: flph@star-co.net.kp

<http://www.korean-books.com.kp>

ISBN 978-9946-0-2601-5



9 789946 026015 >

