

Loyalty and Filiality Park¹

CHEN Yingzhen (Translated by CHEN Po-hsi)²

1.

Ma Zhengtao³ stands beside the worktop in the kitchen, looking at the meat stewing in the little white iron pot over a slow fire. He is fond of roasted pork shoulder chops stewed with tomatoes, and makes a small pot of it every couple of days. He soaks the rice in the meat broth that carries the taste of freshness and fruit tartness, eating it with the over-stewed meat. The ventilator is humming and buzzing. From time to time, he takes a clean rag, wipes and rubs the stainless steel worktop next to the stove. Ma Zhengtao is a neatness freak. They say that Northeastern Chinese don't like to take showers, but this old Northeasterner particularly loves to take showers. After retiring from his government job due to a diabetic condition in 1979, he managed to secure a relatively small loan from a bank through nepotism and bought a timeworn bungalow on an old street in Ho Town. By then, the bungalow was almost twenty years old, with reinforced brickwork, flimsy and worn. Yet its detached building and courtyard had taken Ma Zhengtao's fancy, sparing him the hassle of dealing with his neighbors, and allowing him to lead a solitary life.

However, even for such a decrepit house, Ma Zhengtao basically did not refurbish it other than having it thoroughly cleaned and repainted. The one thing he didn't hesitate to do was to tear down the entire shower room and modify it into a larger and brand new bathroom with imported ceramic tiles and bathroom fixtures.

Ma Zhengtao is from the North, with a Northerner's look. Although an octogenarian, he does not appear to be ostensibly senile for his old age. After coming to

Taiwan, he has been a bachelor for decades and is used to eating alone. He has an old and square mahogany dining table. Now he puts the small pot of meat stew at the center of the table and begins to eat alone in silence. He is big and tall in stature. Although there are three seats unoccupied at the dining table, with the sheer size of his body occupying merely one side of the table, it does not seem empty nor lonely under the warm electric light that hangs from above.

Ma Zhengtao loves to eat. After coming to Taiwan, he often heaves a sigh, lamenting the fact that he no longer has the kind of refined dining experiences that he had when he was still back in the Northeast. As he collects and washes the dishes, he begins to reminisce apathetically about the year when Japan was defeated. At the time, while most Northeasterners were rejoicing and celebrating, many lives and souls were also dying and suffering. Meanwhile, a bunch of merchants as well as officials, gentries and secret agents from the Manchukuo era were busying themselves in bribing various officials from Szechuan who were appointed by the central government, taking them to extravagant banquets day in and day out. Roasted piglet, crisp pomegranate-flavored prawns, braised goose webs with abalone sauce... delicacies not even seen by the Japanese during wartime in the Northeast were magically obtained by those officials and merchants. Ma Zhengtao starts to laugh in his reminiscences while he curses silently. Upon hearing the recovery of the lost territory, before the soldiers arrived, high officials in the central government—who were all hiding behind⁴ and beyond the frontline when the Japanese ravaged throughout the entire China—these

generals, commissioners, inspectors were all there already, indulged in utter wantonness, drunken in lascivious debauchery.

"Son of a b—h..."

Ma Zhengtao shakes his head slightly, laughs to himself with a grin and talks to himself. Ma Zhengtao was born with a smiling face. He smiles when he talks, smiles when he listens to people talk. Even when he's arguing with someone, you could see a faintly grim smile on his large square face. On the street or alone in the house, whenever he thinks of something, even of unpleasant thoughts, he always grins. In the Northeast, he was given a sobriquet, the "Smiling Tiger."

As a matter of fact, while Ma Zhengtao was eating earlier, the thought of a certain Old Lin made him smile silently as he gnawed on a piece of bone. Now he sits in a rattan rocking chair in his small living room, gently fanning himself with a cattail leaf fan, and thinks about Old Lin's look this morning.

Ma Zhengtao has made the acquaintance of Lin Piao, whom in private he calls "Old Lin," in a small neighboring community park. The small park, named "Loyalty and Filiality (*Zhongxiao*) Park" for it sits on *Zhongxiao* Road, is neither small nor large, with 16 old camphor trees and six silk cotton trees planted there. The trunks of the camphor trees aren't straight, with creases and lumps on the bark that, at first glance, resemble pine trees, and the whirling leaves' colors are most beautiful when they start to bud in spring and turn lush green in summer. When the silk cotton trees blossom in summer, they manage to shake off all their leaves as the other trees are in full bloom and big, orange flowers blossom on the bare intertwining branches, as if they were paper flowers pasted on a fake tree by a human being.

In May and June, every time Ma Zhengtao sees the silk cotton trees with the tips of their branches laid bare, he would remember rows after rows of bare and leafless white poplars whose branches shook against the north wind in the snow-capped Northeastern village. Loyalty and Filiality Park is

always filled with elderlies who rise early to practice shadowboxing and do calisthenics. But in the past five to six years, more and more private cars have started to park next to Loyalty and Filiality Park until, at a certain point, the small park was finally enclosed by them, even blocking its entrance and exit. The number of elderly and middle-aged people who come to exercise thus gradually became fewer and fewer. As of two years ago, the only people left included Ma Zhengtao, who came to swing his hands; Old Lin, who always methodically finished a full round of calisthenics before leaving; and a small band of Tai-chi boxers. Fewer than ten people in total, saying hello every day, they soon came to know one another.

Just this morning, Ma Zhengtao swung his hands for almost an hour. His palms became hot, his body began to sweat. He then walked out of Loyalty and Filiality Park. When walking through a small alley as usual, he immediately spots Old Lin, wearing the full getup of white Imperial Japanese Navy combat uniform, complete with a battle cap on his head, standing at the bus stop across the street. The white battle cap is strapped with a blue ribbon. He has a white short-sleeved shirt, white short pants. On the heels of his two scrawny, sallow legs, a pair of white cotton socks are rolled down on a pair of old dusty leather shoes.

As Ma Zhengtao hides behind a roadside autumn maple tree, with his eyes wide open, he watches Old Lin who is looking to his right for a bus. He happens to remember that it was more than ten years ago when he saw Old Lin wearing the full getup of Imperial Japanese Navy combat uniform for the first time. Ma Zhengtao was on a business trip in Kaohsiung. While there, as he lifted his head abruptly, he saw Old Lin and some thirty-odd old men also wearing Imperial Japanese Navy combat uniforms blocking the incoming traffic on a crosswalk on the main thoroughfare in East District, Kaohsiung, as they tried to cross the street. Ma Zhengtao was stunned by what he saw. What the heck was that? Ma Zhengtao said

to himself. After Manchukuo collapsed, had there still been people wearing the Manchukuo military uniforms, idling along the streets of Shenyang, they would surely have been beaten to death.

On this particular morning, while Ma Zhengtao watches buses come and go behind the autumn maple tree, Old Lin is still standing next to the bus stop, looking around. But passengers who get off the buses hardly notice Old Lin's outfit. Compared with the Old Lin he saw 15 years ago in Kaohsiung, today's Old Lin has aged a lot. At that time, Old Lin's back was less slouched, his legs less scrawny and weak. During those years in the Northeast under Japanese rule, even at the last phase of the war when Japan was short of soldiers and many old Japanese farmers were sent there to serve in the Kwantung Army, a Japanese soldier as senile, frail or even ridiculous as Old Lin was not seen on the Northeast streets. Before long, three buses with different routes arrive. When they drive off, Old Lin has disappeared as well. Ma Zhengtao figures he must have boarded the bus going to Kaohsiung.

Now, Ma Zhengtao sits in the medium-sized living room. The sky gradually grows dark, yet he leaves all the lights on in the living room, the dining room and even the kitchen. Ma Zhengtao likes a brightly lit house, even leaving a tiny light on when he sleeps.

He remembers now that after seeing Old Lin dressing up as a Japanese soldier more than ten years ago, he could not get rid of his enormous astonishment and curiosity regarding Old Lin. On the second day, Ma Zhengtao sees Old Lin doing calisthenics in Loyalty and Filiality Park as if nothing had happened. He suddenly recalls that, back in the Old Manchukuo era, he often saw the Northeastern youngsters from the Japanese organization "Kyōwa Concordia Youth Association," finishing the entire calisthenics routine methodically like this on the chilly drill ground.

On the third day, Ma Zhengtao cannot withhold his increasing curiosity. In the

small Loyalty and Filiality Park, he put on his smiling face, walks in front of Old Lin, who is doing bending exercises, and casually greets him in Japanese,

"Good morning."

Old Lin stops doing his calisthenics as if suffering from an electric shock, stares at Ma Zhengtao, dumbfounded.

"You, why, Japanese, understand?"

While Old Lin speaks in Japanese, a most sincere smile ripples on his face. "Mainlander, why, Japanese..."

Old Lin's glaring face, like an oil lamp, is lightened up by Ma Zhengtao's Japanese. Ma Zhengtao says he grew up in "Old Manchuria" and received a Japanese education.

"Ah, Old Manchuria," Old Lin says cheerfully.

"Yes. Old Manchuria," Ma Zhengtao replies with a smile.

"My name is Lin Hyō. Hyō as in *hyōjun*," Lin says in Japanese, reaching out his hand for Ma Zhengtao to hold it. Before Ma Zhengtao controls himself, Old Lin suddenly takes a solemn stance and chants in classical Japanese intonation ...

"... under the providence of Amaterasu, and the blessing of His Imperial Majesty Tennō Heika ... The nation is anticipated to be established solely on god's way, and the principles of the nation reified in the teaching of loyalty and filiality ..."

Although Ma Zhengtao still puts on a smile, he is all the more astounded inwardly. After more than 40 years, to his surprise, in a small park in Taiwan, Ma Zhengtao suddenly hears again the exact words in the Imperial Rescript on the Foundation of the Nation, promulgated by the Old Manchukuo Emperor Puyi in Showa 15—1940—after his return from sailing eastward to the "Family-State Japan" and commemorating the "2,600th anniversary" of the founding of Japan!

"Still remember?" Old Lin says proudly in Japanese with a smile. "You must remember."

"Oh. I remember."

Ma Zhengtao says as if heaving a sigh. In that year, he graduated from the Law Department of the "Kenkoku University,"

founded by the Japanese to cultivate elites in Manchuria. Puyi's "Imperial Rescript on the Foundation of the Nation" was ubiquitously memorized and recited in institutions and schools in the chilly, vast expanse of the Northeast. Ma Zhengtao begins to remember, under the red, yellow, green, white and black-colored Manchukuo national flag, in the auditorium where His Majesty Puyi's portrait was hung, the uniformly rumbling recitation of almost a thousand teachers and students. Now, Ma Zhengtao can still recall Puyi's portraiture vividly. On his refined face hung a pair of gold-wired glasses. His meager contours adorned with various medals and badges. The cordon worn across his chest proclaiming the glory of a parasitic emperor. His left hand was on his waist stroking a sword, his collars and cuffs were embellished with splendid, intricate design patterns embroidered with gold stencils, and his shoulders bore brilliant epaulets.

Lin Piao, the old man, asks Ma Zhengtao what he did for a living in "Old Manchuria." "Well, small business," Ma Zhengtao replies in fluent Japanese. Despite his smiling face, he is gradually rattled by Old Lin's nattering and awkward colonial Japanese. "Soybean business," he whispers.

In an instant, the *Kōnō Kumiai* (Co-op) controlled by the Japanese suddenly resurfaces in Ma Zhengtao's head. In "Old Manchuria," business trades of all agricultural products must be conducted under the direct supervision of the *Kōnō* Co-op controlled by big Japanese *kaisha*. Farmers transported bags and bags of orange-colored soybeans by trailers, donkey-drawn carts, shoulder poles to the trade field controlled by the Japanese and pro-Japanese Northeastern gentry-merchants. During the chilly springtime after snowfall, in the enormous adobe-enclosed *nyūka* market, makeshift storage tents as tall as houses using rattan mats and gunnysacks to build scattering all over the place were used to store soybeans. The stench of farmers' body odor, donkey dung and the smell of dust permeated the chilly air in the *nyūka* market as soybeans were being dumped. Ma Zhengtao's father, Ma Shuojie—dubbed Ma the Third, was the

second-in-command of this trade field. Carts after carts of soybeans towed by those farmers wearing patched cotton-padded coats and pants were first pilfered off weights by the trade field, with the purchase price lowered, and were finally filtered and chosen carefully by the workers employed by Ma the Third and his gang of pro-Japanese wealthy merchants, in order to supply the Japanese *shōsha* to export to Japan. During that time, Ma Zhengtao was merely a dissolute, misbehaving 18-year-old youngster who, relying on his father's wealth and influence in the Northeast, lived in the Deer Bell Hotel in Beiping, befriending a gang of preppies and ruffians, drowning in carnal and sensual pleasures.

In the next summer, the Japanese Army suddenly opened fire, occupying the Marco Polo Bridge in the suburbs of Beiping. Less than a month later, the door to the room of Ma Zhengtao on the second floor was knocked open in the morning. Ma the Third, wearing a thin silk long gown and a fedora, appeared at the doorway. Ma Shuojie saw a naked woman, two opium lamps and scattered wine bottles and gambling paraphernalia in the room. Ma Zhengtao sighs at his memory.

Old Lin and Ma Zhengtao walk around Loyalty and Filiality Park. Old Lin chatters in Japanese. Ma Zhengtao can hear that Old Lin's Japanese is too awkward, misusing the easily misused auxiliaries, while the auxiliaries that shouldn't have been mistaken are full of mistakes. Ma Zhengtao is annoyed by listening to it. "The other day, I saw you in Japanese combat uniform ...," says Ma Zhengtao with a smile.

Ma Zhengtao starts to talk in Mandarin. It is then that Old Lin says he was recruited and transferred to Nanyang; after so many years, Taiwanese Japanese soldiers would ask Japanese for compensation. "To form a *Senyū* Comrade-in-Arms Association in Kaohsiung, and negotiate over compensation ...," says Lin Piao.

It gets dark outside the window. Ma Zhengtao feels like eating, and opens a Norwegian

imported crab can and eats it with iced German beer. Ma Zhengtao thinks, son of a b—h Old Lin. Ever since Ma Zhengtao learned that he went to apply for compensation in Japanese Navy combat uniform, he no longer wants to pay attention to him. By then, Old Lin is talkative. He talks about having heard of the “Kingly Way and Ethics, Harmony between Ethnicities” of Manchukuo in his adolescence, but Ma Zhengtao smiles without response and digresses from the subject. Old Lin ... son of a b—h, he says in silence. He refills the beer for himself, reminiscing about Deer Bell Hotel. Back then, the nearly naked young Ma Zhengtao stood in front of Ma Shuojie and couldn't stop trembling, could hardly stand still, and all the color had drained from his cheeks. “You useless bastard,” said Ma Shuojie neither too fast nor too slow. Ma the Third was intimidating without expressing anger. Ma Zhengtao knew all too well his father's cold-blooded character. The next day, he paid his gambling debt, smashed the opium lamps, kicked the woman out, paid the hotel bills, and went back to the Northeast without the slightest resistance.

Back home, Ma the Third had not asked a single question about his promiscuous lifestyle in the Deer Bell Hotel in Beiping, nor about the silver spent like a flowing river. After the Mid-Autumn Festival, Ma Shuojie summoned his son.

“The dynasty is ordained to change,” Ma Shuojie said contemplatively. “The Japanese have attacked Shanghai.”

Ma Zhengtao thought of the propaganda newsreel screened in the movie theater. Japanese soldiers riding on horses into Shanghai, carrying their national flags. Alongside the road are the Chinese people sparsely holding Japanese flags, with inert expressions, as the Japanese magnificently march forward.

“If the Japanese want to sit on the Emperor's throne under the Heaven in China, they can't do without Chinese assistants,” said Ma Shuojie. “When Puyi was inaugurated as the Chief Executive, how many long-sleeved coated, sunglasses-

bespectacled, bearded Northeastern gentry-merchants stood side by side with fully equipped Japanese?”

“...”

“To prosper, it's not enough to do business under the Japanese.” Ma Shuojie said, falling into silence, moving his eyes towards Ma Zhengtao, who stood in front of him with hands dangling.

“Gotta sneak into the Japanese institutions, and be a Japanese official,” said Ma Shuojie.

Within days, Ma Shuojie hired a cold-and round-faced doctor to check the pulse for Ma Zhengtao, and perform acupuncture and concoct herbal medicines in order to rehabilitate him from opium intoxication, in Ma Shuojie's compound. Ma Shuojie also hired a high school teacher, a Chaoyang University graduate who bowed and paid respect to Ma the Third whenever he met him, to give Ma Zhengtao make-up lessons. And then the son of a Japanese trader to teach him Japanese. Before long, through his connections with several Japanese, bribing them with gold bullion, Ma Shuojie managed to send Ma Zhengtao to the Kenkoku University Law School.

The year Ma Zhengtao graduated from college, Yang Jingyu, Commander in Chief of the First Regiment of the Northeastern Counter-Japanese Alliance, a communist-led armed guerilla, died in a battle in Changbai Mountain. The newspaper published a striking picture in which, beside the body of Commander Yang, in overstuffed cotton anorak, with a dark beard over his face, stood several Japanese officials in uniform greatcoats, with long *nihontō* Japanese sword hanging at their waists. Ma Zhengtao was stout but eloquent by nature, acquiring fluent Japanese during his years in Kenkoku. Plus Ma Shuojie was known for being pro-Japanese gentry; before the autumn following Ma Zhengtao's commencement, Lieutenant Commander Muto asked for him, and inserted him in the Detective Unit of the *Kempeitai* (military police corps), accounting for investigation and translation. Since then, Ma Zhengtao practiced what he learned, specializing in

various skills such as interrogation, kidnapping, investigating, arresting, and execution.

"And you son of a b—h Old Lin..." Ma Zhengtao grins, swearing in the empty living room.

And you son of a b—h Old Lin, Ma Zhengtao sneers silently. You were merely a "military serviceman," not even a regular Japanese soldier. Taiwanese military servicemen and military staff followed behind the Kwantung Army, I've seen a lot in the Northeast, Ma Zhengtao says to himself. And you Old Lin swaggered around in Japanese Navy combat uniform in broad daylight, even clattering poor Japanese. What the hell is going on? He thinks of his days in the Japanese *Kempeitai*, even the Japanese soldiers saluted him, to say nothing of those Manchukuo army and police composed of Northeastern warlords and their motley crew. Yet now a small military serviceman is even cockier than Japanese *Kempeitai*. Hey, this son of a b—h. Ma Zhengtao laughs soundlessly, alone.

In the Northeast, Ma Zhengtao was more than "cocky." When Japanese Military Police, holding bayonet-fitted rifles, were examining Chinese civilians who passed through the posts, he always stood aside, putting on a smiling-without-joy face, looking extraordinarily saturnine. The MP and *Kyōwa* Police checked every passing Chinese citizen's and farmer's papers, with occasional pat-downs, opening up cases and luggage. And Ma Zhengtao used only a pair of owlish eyes to gnaw on every anxious and terrified passer-by. "This one," when Ma Zhengtao whispered in Japanese, on eight out of ten something could be found, and they would be immediately escorted to the prowl car and sped away, stirring up rising yellow dusts and terror that clouded the roads.

Between 1942 and 1943, the *Kempeitai*'s prowl car sped through the entire Northeast, hunting those counter-Japanese, anti-Manchukuo activists proliferating from who-knew-where. In the interrogation room, Ma Zhengtao eventually saw that, under his command, people were scalded by boiling

water and tortured into a pool of deboned flesh and blood. Some pleaded for mercy and confessed, and then immediately some more were arrested according to the testimonies. Knocking and beating, wailing and roaring, bloody and fleshy, yet at the end the testimonies often turned out to be half real and half false. Some of them, who swore never to confess even if they were to be killed, and eventually died suddenly under the brutal torture, were not anti-Japanese martyrs, but simply penniless peasants darting headlong into their deaths. But Ma Zhengtao could sense, degree by degree, that, on the silent, vast, chilly Northeastern earth, more and more "ominous" will powers lay everywhere, haunting and preoccupying, slowly outflanking him.

Even now, whenever Ma Zhengtao would loosen by a tiny crack that door of memory which had been tightly sealed by himself, some memory that had been tightly repressed for years would float out, with the odor of cadavers, from the cavern of that dark place. In dreams, he sees handicapped old men, who were abandoned in the "Evacuated Zone" from which the farmers were relocated in order to prevent the spread of communism, freeze to death in a shabby farmhouse; sees a bunch of homeless orphans in ragged clothes, wandering alongside the railway, waiting to pick up leftovers dumped by Japanese soldiers from the military railcars passing by.

Nightmares like these have apparently begun to baffle the 80-year-old Ma Zhengtao. In the sultry house, when Ma Zhengtao waves the big jaundiced cattail-leaf fan and sits still, his memories would flow in front of his eyes like a carousel lantern. Under the escort of Japanese troops and *Kempeitai*, hundreds of Northeastern farmers and their donkeys and horses, carts and shoulder poles were forcibly commandeered to carry army provisions and ammunition for the Japanese, trekking and trudging on the maroon-color ground frozen, as hard as rock from the chill of winter. At that time, escorting the procession, Ma Zhengtao heard from the far end of the line a bout of uproar, and the sound of shots as the

Japanese soldiers opened fire, shooting dead a corvée-worn farmer trying to escape. Ma Zhengtao walked over to inspect the body. A farmer, head wrapped in a scarf, face turned gray, laying on the ground, with his eyes and mouth wide open, revealing a row of yellowish teeth as if extremely astonished, crimson blood gurgling from the two holes in his head, soaking the cotton-padded cloth smeared with grease.

At that time Ma Zhengtao, wearing a woolen military overcoat of which the right arm was laced with a piece of white cloth with the word "*Kempeitai*" written on it, was escorting counter-Japanese death row inmates with a squad of armed MP to the execution ground, an uninhabited wilderness. The hands of every death row inmate were tied behind their backs, and the dog tags would hang on their necks: "Counter-Japanese Zhao Shanxi"; "Chungkinger Zhou Qi"; "*Kempeitai* Resistance Yang Shude"; "Communist Liu Jichi." They were pushed onto the Japanese-made military trucks. White blankets pulled on both sides of the trucks on which a few larger-than-life, childish words were written, "Execution by Firing Squad." The trucks whizzed through the streets. Pedestrians on both sides of the road couldn't help but stand still, seeing the Black Maria, with an expression of carefully hidden hatred and sorrow. Sitting on the Black Maria, Ma Zhengtao observed the passers-by. After several rides back and forth, he found that those innumerable retarded eyes of Northeastern farmers focused only on the death row inmates and the dog tags on their necks, yet turned a blind eye to the *Kempeitai* in military and casual outfits.

The wilderness and vastness of the execution ground lowered the temperature even more. The north wind blew like sharp blades. Japanese MP pulled down and buckled up the woolen earflaps on their battle caps. Yet the death row inmates, hands cuffed behind their backs, could only let the north wind blow off the ragged felt caps one by one from their heads. The team leader handed cigarettes to these 18 bearded inmates, three of whom audaciously

stretched their necks out to hold the cigarettes between their lips. The MP lit them up. And they listlessly started smoking. Many shuddered in the chilly wind. Some lowered their heads. Some looked aimlessly at the dim gray sky.

After the time it took for a cigarette to burn out, they were brought to lower ground. A few Japanese military officers equipped with *nihontō* in combat boots stood far away watching, their *nihontō* wavering from time to time with the long woolen coats at their waists in the north wind. The anti-Manchukuo, counter-Japanese prisoners who were waiting to be executed sat in a row. Two steps behind each one of them stood a Manchukuo MP, aiming their guns at the backs of their heads. In one single order, against the inevitably disordered gunshots, those whose hands were tied behind their backs were all like released tree frogs, bumping and leaping forward, falling flat uncomfortably on the ice cold wasteland.

Then, the Manchukuo MP, under the guidance of the Japanese *Kempeitai* squad leader, flipped everybody over into a tidy row, to let the executioner, Second Lieutenant Kawai, "inspect" them. Following Second Lieutenant Kawai's lead, Ma Zhengtao inspected every corpse's back. Most of them had shut their eyes as if asleep, but there were always some who stared with tongue out, some with eyes half opened, as if on the verge of waking up. Blood streamed down from their nostrils, mouths and broken chins. In the midst of the ferocious snowfall, Ma Zhengtao remembers vividly, blood just froze and blackened rapidly on the snowy white ground.

Ma Zhengtao doesn't like these memories. Not at all. Were it not for his age, that bolt which seals the memory would not loosen even a little bit, setting free those black memories with their cadaver stink and bloodiness which, catching Ma Zhengtao off guard, preoccupy him willfully.

But why a mere Japanese "military serviceman"—Lin Piao, the Old Lin, who was just like the military servicemen growing

vegetables, repairing fortifications, driving cars, sailing ships, transporting freight cars behind the Kwantung Army at the rear of the battlefield—dressed up again this morning in that navy combat uniform going to Kaohsiung? Ma Zhengtao contemplates silently. The image of the Japanese military officers, who rampaged throughout the entire Northeast in woolen military uniforms with belts buckled up, shoulder straps hanging obliquely, feet in Wellington leather boots and hands in white gloves holding the *nihontō* at their right waists, overlapped from time to time with the image of that senile, hunchbacked, forlorn yet ridiculous image of Old Lin. And Ma Zhengtao has been absolutely keeping his lips sealed as tight as an oyster's shells for decades about his past where he killed people without a blink of an eye. But that son of a b—h Old Lin... Ma Zhengtao curses mockingly, and finishes his second can of beer to go with the Norwegian crab.

2.

It is almost five in the afternoon when Old Lin Piao returns from Kaohsiung, and walks around Loyalty and Filiality Park to his place. He sweats all day long, truly sensing that his stamina is dwindling. He takes off the Japanese Navy combat uniform and hangs the battle cap on the bedroom wall. He showers in the bathroom, sees his senile, shriveled-up body, and thinks that if the fight under Legislator Chen Yen-lei's lead for the Japanese government's unpaid military payment and military postal deposits is again revoked, he's afraid that he could never live long enough to receive that Japanese money for which he has craved for almost 20 years.

He puts on clean clothes and pants, sitting on the leatherette sofa before finding a letter under the door crack, slid through by the postman. By merely seeing the handwriting on the envelope, he knows immediately that it is from his granddaughter, Lin Guát-ki. "Grandfather: Without correspondence for a long time. Pray often for your health," reads the letter. Guát-ki says she

plans to return for a visit next week. "May bring a friend over."

Over ten years ago, granddaughter Guát-ki, who had always been tender and filial, on her 17th birthday suddenly eloped with a barber from out of town; the agony felt like a piece of bloody flesh was scooped out from his body for Lin Piao the old man.

At the time, Lin Piao was heading to Kaohsiung with several former Taiwanese Japanese soldiers with him who had returned alive from the Huanan and Nanyang battlefields. Lieutenant Miyazaki, surprisingly, after over 30 years, suddenly came to Taipei. Through the connections of Tsan Kim-hái who now lived in Taipei, it stirred up an uproar among the former Taiwanese Japanese veterans who were now dispersed around the island, uncared-for over decades. It turned out that Tsan Kim-hái built and sold houses in the early 1970s, made a fortune, and travelled to Japan in 1979, finding his primary school classmate—another "Taiwanese Japanese soldier" who had also been recruited to the Northeast, escorted by the USSR troop to Siberia's detainment and labor camp, and again was repatriated back to Japan in the 1950s and never came back to Taiwan since then. Through him, Tsan Kim-hái made contact with a *Senyū* Association consisting of former Japanese soldiers and officers who had been on the South Pacific battlefield, but inadvertently bumped into Lieutenant Miyazaki of the former company. The well-to-do Tsan Kim-hái generously promised to pay for the reception of the senile, poverty-stricken Lieutenant of the former Japanese company.

In a large tatami room inside a renowned Japanese restaurant in Taipei, invited by Tsan Kim-hái, half a dozen elderly former Japanese soldiers of Taiwanese origin of the same company (but actually not of the same team), lined up in a row. "Attention!" shouted Tsan Kim-hái upon seeing the line. The elders stood erect with a solemn expression. With effort, Tsan Kim-hái took a big step forward, shouting in Japanese, as if quarrelling at the top of his voice, at the attired Old Miyazaki in yellow-starred battle cap:

"Reports, Tsan Kim-hái, the Third Team, of so-and-so Company ..."

Old Miyazaki's eyes reddened, his saluting hands trembling unstopably. By the time everyone sat on the tatami in the Japanese manner, relishing the food, Miyazaki had already burst into tears. "In the South, during the war, thanks for your hard work" Miyazaki, still sitting, bowed deeply. Tsan Kim-hái went ahead and spoke in rather fluent Japanese, "Everybody misses the days in the South." A few elders then echoed that one after another. "Maybe I was too strict then," said Miyazaki with a slight expression of guilt, and again bowed to everyone. At that time, Lin Piao was reminded of himself, serving as a pilot, being late from a mission at dinner time. He sneaked into the kitchen looking for leftovers, but instead was spotted by the Lieutenant, who took off his military boots and knocked a couple of bloody teeth from Lin Piao. Lin Piao's face was swollen for four or five days; he couldn't take in a grain of rice.

However, at the nostalgic and joyful reunion in this Japanese restaurant in Taipei, it seemed that Old Miyazaki and his Japanese soldiers of Taiwanese origin had completely forgotten Lin Piao's bloody teeth. After three rounds of drinking, with alcoholic excitement, they boldly opened their mouths speaking the nearly forgotten Japanese, filling the small room with nattering, and fragmented Japanese with a Taiwanese accent flowed. But, to the ears of Miyazaki, how euphonious is the fragmentary, incorrect Japanese? It exhibited precisely the colonized Taiwan's heartfelt admiration and longing for motherland Japan. Miyazaki was moved. All of a sudden, Miyazaki was no longer a down-and-out elder living on a postwar *onkyū* pension from his country, but was rather again a Squad Leader of the Imperial Army. Miyazaki thus gradually lost his reservations and started to drink wildly to his heart's content, reddening his wrinkled, mustached face against his thin hair and gray beard.

"Hey, Tsan Kun!" slurred Old Miyazaki.

"Hai!" Tsan Kim-hái straightened up and answered.

"Tell them: Japan ... has never forgotten ... its loyal Japanese subjects in Taiwan!" said Miyazaki in military-accented Japanese, his face glowing with sweat and splotched under the light bulb. "Isn't it the reason why I, Lieutenant, come to Taiwan"

"Hai," said Tsan Kim-hái.

Tsan Kim-hái thus spoke seriously in fluent Japanese. In Showa 49, almost 30 years after the end of the war, a Japanese serviceman of Amis origin named Teruo Nakamura from a troop of Taiwanese Takasago Volunteers was found in the deep mountains of Morotai Island, Philippines, said Tsan Kim-hái. Thus, in the following year, "intellectuals" in Japan organized a "Research Committee on the Issues Regarding Compensation for Japanese Soldiers of Taiwanese Origin," said Tsan Kim-hái.

The Japanese government was finally forced to express its attitude, Tsan Kim-hái continued, the "*Engohō Act of Relief and Onkyūhō Public Officers Pension Act* promulgated by Japan concerning the casualties and the injured veterans during the war apply only to those of Japanese nationality." This is the Japanese government's stance, Tsan Kim-hái said.

A waitress now served a toy-like big wooden boat, filled with multi-colored delicious sashimi. From the adjacent room suddenly came the yelling of Taiwanese drinking games of finger-guessing. Tsan Kim-hái said firmly in Japanese:

"*Shokun* (Everyone)! On the Southern battlefield, didn't we, every one of us, battle as Japanese, as a loyal and brave Imperial soldier?"

The entire audience started stirring. "Yes, yes!" The elders mumbled excitedly, inebriated with Japanese liquor *soju*. "*Shokun!* My 'Expedition Army *senyū* Association on Hito (the Philippines)' is campaigning for the Taiwanese soldiers to be treated as Japanese, striving for the legitimate compensation for Taiwanese *senyū*," said Miyazaki.

"Only the *senyū* comrade-in-arms who battled in blood together on that battlefield

can comprehend that the Taiwanese *senyū* are deserving members of the Imperial Army, having sworn loyalty to His Imperial Majesty Tennō Heika to fight to their deaths,” said Tsan Kim-hái in an ardent tone. “The purpose of the Captain’s coming here is to urge us to form a *Senyū* Comrade-in-Arms Association branch as soon as possible, to fight for legitimate compensation for the Imperial soldiers in Taiwan.”

Tsan Kim-hái said that the meaning of fighting for compensation does not lie in money. “The Compensation Movement is a movement to strive for us as Japanese, as sons of His Imperial Majesty Tennō Heika ...,” said Tsan Kim-hái. At that time, several elders, as if they were just awakened from a dream: they were about to get an unimaginable large amount of *onkyū* (pensions) from Japan, leading a peaceful dusk of their lives, because after all, they are, as Japanese mentioned before they set off on expedition, members of the Japan Imperial Army!

Unsinkable, steel castle
On which defense and attack both rely
Unsinkable castle
Safeguards the four corners of Japanese territory
Castle made of real steel
Defeats the enemy of Japan ...

Before realizing who started it, the elders began to sing *Gunkan Kōshinkyoku* (Warship March) in Japanese. The waitress pushed open the shoji with a smile, again serving a one-liter bottle of heated saké. The elders clapped and sang.

From then on, a considerable amount of Japanese *onkyū* money emitted a provocative, dazzling radiance in their elderly minds. Under Tsan Kim-hái’s guidance, the elders became the backbone of the Taiwan *Senyū* Association, contacting the comrade-in-arms who have been to Nanyang, and have been servicemen and military staff for Japan around the island. Lin Piao started suiting up his Japanese Navy combat uniform, going to Kaohsiung, Tainan, Jiayi

and even Taipei, not returning for days. It was around this time his granddaughter Guát-ki eloped with a barber from out of town.

Organizing the “Taiwan *Senyū* Association” and fighting for the lucrative *onkyū* and *nenkin* (annual pensions) according to the standards for Japanese veterans was like a fever that numbed Lin Piao of his agony, resentment and shame for losing granddaughter Guát-ki. The old man Lin Piao who now sits on the leatherette sofa, throws the letter from Guát-ki, his granddaughter, onto the TV set. He begins to think of Guát-ki’s father—his son Lin Him-bok. On the day he turned 19, Lin Piao and Lu, his bride—whom he married in that spring—paused their heavy workload on the farm in the midst of the summer, and went back home together with their bodies fully drenched in sweat. He saw his father, old tenant farmer Lin Hue-iam, sat idly in the dark adobe thatched cottage. “Dad,” Lin Piao called out to Old Hue-iam, before seeing the old man’s hand grasping a Japanese conscription sheet. Lu, his newly-wed bride who had just become pregnant, started sobbing.

Not long after the spring passed, Lin Hue-iam’s son, Piao, was suited in the “National Defense Uniform” distributed to him and a combat cap, with legs wrapped in gaiters and, accompanied by his red-eyed wife Lu, registered at the village *yakusho* (municipal office) two miles away. Black characters of “Congratulations to Lin Piao Kun in going out to battle” on a white flag, along with other white flags with others’ names on it fluttered in the hot wind. Lin Piao looked indifferently at 200-or-so yellow dragonflies flying and swarming above the roof of the *yakusho*, paved with Japanese-style *renga* tiles, yet his heart filled with anxiety and bitterness for not knowing how to bid farewell to his pregnant wife.

“*Shokun’s* families, the nation will take good care of them, so there is no need to worry,” the Japanese superior in a black police uniform, equipped with a short sword, lectured in a tone not unlike a

funeral oration. “*Shokun* will be loyal Japanese nationals, be a member of the Great Japanese Imperial Army, be the strong and sacred shields of His Majesty the Emperor ...”

It was translated into Southern Min by an interpreter. Lin Piao, along with seven or eight other youngsters from the village, “volunteered” to be sent to a military camp to receive short-term training, and were subsequently transferred again and again and finally to the frontline of Nanyang under the scorching sun.

In retrospect, Lieutenant’s words a dozen years ago made sense. “... You are deserving members of the Great Japanese Imperial Army!” Lin Piao seems to have again heard Miyazaki’s drunken, military-accented Japanese. Taiwanese military servicemen and military staff were indeed treated by the US Army and the Philippine guerillas as their hated Japanese enemies, limbs destroyed by bombs, brains blown open by bullets. When Taiwanese soldiers walked on the streets, overseas Chinese shop-owners piled up fawning smiles on their faces, but deep down their eyes betrayed their fear, resentment and detestation for the Taiwanese, seen as real Japanese soldiers by them. Lin Piao remembers that summer when, after Japan lost the war, they were transferred on a truck by American troops to a big concentration camp. Japanese and Taiwanese-Japanese soldiers, exhausted, in ragged clothes and beards on their faces, were crammed into four roofless, shabby freight cars. The train panted hurriedly at the foot of tropical hills. He remembers that on both sides of the railway stood coconuts layer upon layer, arecas here and there, and various lofty, luscious tropical woods. The fast-moving train brought gusts of wind, making the Japanese POWs in the rocking and squeaking freight cars fall into deep sleep, with their mouths opened and saliva trickling down.

Suddenly, with thundering noises, rows of gigantic and hard rocks were flung from the mountain slope, and from the side of the railway sprang swarms of Filipino

farmers, who threw stones with all their strength towards the train, cursing furiously. For the moment roaring noises were pounded out of the freight cars, emitting a series of wailing and groaning. The American soldier who escorted the train beeped his whistle, firing upwards to deter the natives’ raid. Tallying the casualties afterwards, nine in total had been stoned to death, 49 injured. Those resentful stones did not differentiate Japanese from Taiwanese. Lin Piao often thought: the natives treated Taiwanese soldiers as Japanese. The stones also injured Lin Piao’s arm. Fresh blood stained and smeared his entire right arm.

But, in actuality, even when in need of Taiwanese soldiers to risk their lives for Japan on the Nanyang battlefield, the Japanese would from time to time remind the Taiwanese that they were not real Japanese. Lin Piao thinks of that time when two bloody teeth were knocked out by the Lieutenant’s leather boots, he heard Miyazaki fly into a rage, calling him “Chink.” Another Hakka who allegedly went to high school in Japan was also transferred here to the Philippines as a military staff. He was light-skinned with beautiful eyes, his mind stuffed with out-and-out “*Nihon seishin*,” Japanese spirit. “I am a real registered *shiganhei* military volunteer.” There was once when, in order to deliver documents to a regiment miles away, he hitched a ride on Lin Piao’s car, whispering in the car. He said that, although he gave himself a Japanese name, Umemura, when the military authorities learned that he was Taiwanese, they simply did not let him be a “glorious soldier of the Imperial Army,” and instead dispatched him to the first type of military staff in the brigade to oversee non-confidential documents. “I must strive to temper myself, to prove that I am an outstanding Japanese.” It was when Umemura got off and walked into the Regiment that Lin Piao found that Umemura was slightly effeminate. Before long, Lin Piao heard that Umemura was sodomized by a drunken Japanese soldier, who slapped and kicked him, calling him “Chink! Asshole!” over and over again. The

Taiwanese Umemura finally hanged himself with a belt. His body, silently hanging from a horizontal branch on an old coconut tree, steamed and was exposed for two days in the tropical forest in a scorching summer, before it was discovered by someone who had his nose covered.

In the second year on the Philippine battlefield, the military post delivered to Lin Piao a letter from his family who had pleaded with someone to write it in Japanese. The letter said, his woman Lu had given birth to a baby boy, and "All is fine at home. Hope you serve the country wholeheartedly." It was in the very next January that the war was totally turned upside down; the US Army counterattacked the Philippine islands. Like whirlwinds and rainstorms, American bombs, canons and bullets, fired from the air and from warships, blew the Japanese troops to pieces. The regiment to which Lin Piao belonged was scattered. Two companies patched together fled deep into the mountains, and a hoard of overseas Japanese women and children also followed the lines, trekking into the tropical forests.

Marching in the woods, people gradually came to realize that this was a hopeless death march. In the mountains, they gradually lost track of hours and days. At that moment, the Taiwanese military servicemen who engaged in agriculture on the battlefield played an important role. They dug and picked wild yams, potatoes, beans, peppers, and used snares to trap wild game. In the world of tropical forests, the authority of national institutions gradually faded, and the military policy and order systems naturally collapsed. Without knowing when it all began, the discipline of a military salute to commanders disappeared. The procession gradually scattered, with each group choosing to depart for whichever direction they perceived as safer. Thousands of Japanese officials and soldiers who fled into deep mountains and rain forests became wild animals that hungrily roamed the mountain streams to find food for daily survival.

During his journey, Lin Piao often thought of his son in Taiwan whom he had never met.

The incredible love and the feeling of missing his own flesh-and-blood baby boy set ablaze his strong will to survive, making his fleeing steps more resolute. During one rainy season, when Lin Piao estimated that his baby boy must be two years old or so, the rain poured down heavily. The whole forest was filled with the deafening pitter-patter of heavy rainfall dropping on wide tropical leaves. The rain soon drenched the clothes, guns and the messy hair and beards of the exiled soldiers.

It was in that jungle in the pouring rain, that the procession that zigzagged and marched on rugged surfaces gradually stopped. They came to a deserted Japanese defensive stronghold deep in the mountains. Several tunnel entrances had traces of black smoke from American flamethrowers. Skeletal remains wrapped in burned Japanese uniforms were spread all over the tunnels, drenched by the heavy rain. Japanese helmets were buckled up untidily on one skull after another. Firearms were scattered around. Next to a corpse was left a newly rusted *nihontō*.

Hundreds of shabby officials and soldiers all silently surrounded the bank of trenches, standing, and soundlessly looking at the old battlefield, covered as it was with war-torn bodies. To identify the number of the military unit whose soldiers had now become ghosts, Captain Koizumi ordered Lin Piao to search for documents in the pockets of the corpses. Hundreds of eyes silently watched the Taiwanese military serviceman, Lin Piao, searching the pockets and backpacks on the bodies, and then walking towards Captain Koizumi, standing to attention on the muddy ground, saluting.

"Forget it."

Captain Koizumi said forlornly, softly reaching for the documents that Lin Piao had found.

The rain howled down. Captain Koizumi examined the documents speechlessly in the rain, dropping carelessly what he had already read, but held several colored sheets for a long time.

The rain was almost roaring, intensifying the death-like silence of the hundreds of

people. Not knowing how much time had passed, Koizumi said in a cold voice:

"Japan has long been defeated."

No one understood immediately what Captain Koizumi was saying. But Lin Piao immediately thought of the possibility that he should be able to go home alive to see his child, whom he yearned for day and night, and also Lu, his wife.

"Captain! What are you talking about?" someone shouted.

"Japan has long been defeated!" Silent for a while, Koizumi said in a shivering voice, "It's all on the flyers." He held high the white, pink, and yellow flyers dropped by the US Army on his hand, swaying a bit in the rain.

"Lie!" another desperate cry. "That's a lie!"

Koizumi lowered his head. The beads of raindrops dripped like a string from his beard.

"You're saying that the Imperial Rescript of His Majesty the Emperor, and the order of the Ministry of Defense are all lies ...," he said quietly. "It's all on the flyers."

Captain Koizumi stood alone in the heavy jungle rain. The *nihontō* dangled steadily around his waist. The sobbing of Japanese officials and soldiers began to spread from everywhere. Some started looking for flyers in the pockets of nearby bodies. It is absolutely true, Lin Piao thought, looking at the flyer in his hands. Unconditional Surrender *Shōsho* Imperial Rescript, the general order issued by the Ministry of Defense to the Japanese soldiers in all war zones. But the greatest shiver for Lin Piao was the decision regarding postwar deployment: "Korea is separated from Japan and restores independence. Taiwan and the Pescadore Islands are returned to China."

Japan lost the war. But, including Lin Piao, there was not a single Taiwanese Japanese soldier who gloated over it.

"Why defeated? Can't take it!" a Taiwanese military staff choked back his tears. Yet after seeing the flyers, the Taiwanese soldiers were perplexed and confounded. Captain Koizumi ordered that the team rest in this

deserted stronghold, clear up the skeletal remains, and rearrange the vast company command cave into a makeshift camp. At that time, Koizumi gathered some 20 Taiwanese Japanese military staff and servicemen beside the bonfire, and said amiably:

"From now on, you all become Chinese."

None of the dozen Taiwanese soldiers, Lin Piao included, said a word. Koizumi proposed that, from then on, the Taiwanese soldiers and the Japanese ones live separately, and all the decorum Taiwanese soldiers were obliged to give Japanese soldiers be abolished. "You are all nationals from the victorious nations. Go down the mountain." Koizumi said, "That's not surrender. That's reporting your arrival to your allied forces from your victorious nations."

The rain stopped the next day. The raindrops remained on the wide tropical leaves or converged into droplets and trickled down. How exactly do people of a nation "become" another national overnight? Lin Piao painfully thought about this unanswerable question. There were Japanese officials and soldiers who started hiding in the woods behind the tunnels and committed suicide. Bayonets stabbed in his chest, the blood condensed the leaves into a lump. There were exiled overseas and pain immersed the Taiwanese soldiers who refused to leave the team. Yet once separated from the Japanese under the name of "nationals from the victorious nation," Lin Piao felt at once that he had lost the standpoint from which to weep for the defeat of the Japanese. Nor could having the identity of "nationals from the victorious nation" that came from nowhere for no reason bring any joy and pride of "victory."

On the fourth day, Captain Koizumi, speechless for days, also committed suicide: the sharp *nihontō* bladed in his stomach. In the woods it became stuffy and sultry. Lin Piao and a few other Taiwanese soldiers made a decision amongst themselves, silently walking out of the forest. Along the way, troubled by the impropriety of not knowing to whom to bid farewell after Captain Koizumi's death, they ended up leaving the team silently without notification.

Down the hill, Lin Piao and the other Taiwanese-Japanese soldiers were accommodated in a concentration camp for prisoners of war guarded by the armed US Army and Filipino guerillas, along with Japanese prisoners of war, engaged in the heavy labor of repairing and maintaining a military airfield under the scorching sun. After two months, Taiwanese soldiers were finally distinguished from the others by the US Army, and were relocated to another small barracks where they waited for repatriation. Fifty meters outside the barracks was a detention center rebuilt from a chapel. At the entrance to the old chapel stood two swarthy-faced, undersized Filipino soldiers who wore loose US camouflage combat uniforms, and were equipped with guns and kettles. Before long, Lin Piao heard that there were some captured Taiwanese Japanese soldiers in the detention center who, treated as war criminals, once oversaw the American prisoners of war for Japan, was brutally tortured. As for when the repatriation would occur of Japanese prisoners of war and the Taiwanese soldiers, it was still unforeseeable. One evening, the door of that chapel was opened. Some twenty-odd Taiwanese soldiers, in their Japanese combat uniform, under US military police guard, with hands cuffed behind their backs, were escorted on a big military vehicle. Lin Piao thinks back to the night when softly-chanted Japanese battle songs drifted through the air:

Enforcing justice on behalf of Heaven,
we fight the enemy
The loyalty and bravery of our soldiers
cannot be matched

"F-k you. What the f-k are you singing!"
someone in the chapel cursed in Taiwanese.

Going out to battle amidst huray ...

That battle song sounded like a soliloquy, floating in the tropical night with dim, hidden bitterness. In the singing there was no more bravery and none of the robustness that once could be heard in the square of the

village *yakusho* bidding farewell to the departing conscripted soldiers that year.

"Stop singing, I told you ..."

The singing stopped. The one who was singing said in Taiwanese:

"The Japanese said Taiwanese are Japanese, should go fight the Americans with them ..."

"..."

"Now the Americans also treat us as Japanese. Someday, sometime, they're going to sentence us, to be their shooting targets."

Lin Piao listened to the conversation that passed in the night, quietly smoking the cigarette that the Americans passed down. He recalled that when serving as a military driver, several times he came to the concentration camp for American POWs to transport Americans' corpses, which had been lined up by the Taiwanese who oversaw the camp.

The scorching Filipino sun made the bodies swell, blacken, and stink. In the deeply hollowed eye sockets, eyes with various colored lashes were either tightly shut, or opened wide. The extreme skinniness made their elbow joints, leg joints and palms appear extraordinarily huge. Lin Piao had long heard that these Americans and Canadian prisoners of war had been clubbed with rifle stocks, or even shot dead. Lin Piao carried the bodies to the huge pit dug in the forest and, along with a heap of Caucasian bodies that had already been dumped there from other POW concentration camps, buried them with shovelful after shovelful of black mud mixed with withered fallen leaves. And those who carried and buried the bodies, in shorts and with Japanese battle caps, under the convoy of Japanese gunmen, were precisely the Taiwanese-Japanese military servicemen who worked in various POW concentration camps.

Beyond Lin Piao's expectations, it was months and months—after loads and loads of backpacked, defeated Japanese soldiers, carrying bundles of all sizes, took precedence in being shipped back to Japan in warships by the US Army—before it was the

Taiwanese soldiers' turn to board the dilapidated colliers back to Taiwan. When Lin Piao and other surviving comrade-in-arms landed at the Kaohsiung Harbor, there was no welcome, no one came to their comfort; no welcoming ranks, not even family members came to pick them up upon receiving notification. That was in autumn, Showa 23, 1948, Lin Piao returned to his hometown, only to find his wife Lu had died from impoverishment and illness in the previous year, and his four-year-old son, Him-bok, hid timidly behind a wrinkle- and tear-faced uncle of Lin Piao at his welcome.

Lin Piao accosted a landowner who barely counted as a distant relative from the older generation, bringing two capons with him, entreating him to let him continue renting a *ka* of field that he had been forced by the Japanese to turn into a castor oil plant farm. With his infant son, he strove almost to death, turning the castor oil plant into a paddy field. The year when Him-bok was nine, and the Agricultural Land Reform made Lin Piao a yeoman, Lin was overwhelmed with joy, and seeded two saplings of longan at the rear of his cottage. Day and night, Lin Piao used a worn-out aluminum pot to water the saplings. The longan trees grew slowly, but the outgrowth of khaki-colored buds were often seen growing into green leaves, shooting upwards. When the longan trees grew over the eaves, as verdant as a lush green roof that could not only shield the sun-bleached west wall, but also provide cool shade. In the summer when tiny yellow flowers blossomed on one of the longan trees, Him-bok, now over 20 years old, married a woman from Nanliao. The next year, after reaping the harvest of longans for the second time, granddaughter Guát-ki was born.

Lin Piao heaves a sigh in reminiscence, gets up to take out the broth, heats it in the kitchen, soaks a big bowl of rice, turns on the TV, sits on the leatherette sofa where he was seated before, and wolfs down the rice. Although in his 70s, Lin Piao's appetite hasn't decreased one bit. As he watches the TV news indifferently, he is suddenly astounded by the image on the screen.

It is the inaugural ceremony of the "Monument of Condolence for Spirits of Taiwanese Soldiers Deceased in Nanyang War" held in Ping-tung that morning.

A canvas-roofed reviewing stand is fully seated with well-dressed ladies and gentlemen in their 60s and 70s.

In front of the reviewing stand are three rows of elderly men in well-ironed Japanese Navy combat uniform and caps.

A lanky vet at the furthest right-hand side in the last row is palming a Japanese Navy military flag with both hands in front of his chest.

An occasional breeze lifts up the huge military flag. Whenever the blood-red Japanese Navy military flag that radiates the glare of the rising sun wavers, the lanky flag-holding vet can't help shaking.

Three rows of senile Japanese soldiers of Taiwanese origin, some of whom already appear to be hunchbacked, put on long faces in close-up shots. The sun shines on their faces under the Japanese Navy battle caps. Amidst the rapidly flowing camera shots, Lin Piao catches a glimpse of the eye bags-protruding, lips-pursing, serious-looking, yet worn-out and absent-minded expressions on one face after another.

In a moment, a marching band hastily assembled by the local funeral service providers suddenly starts playing the "Japan Warship March." Also dressed in navy combat uniform with white gloves, Tsan Kim-hái accompanies the well-attired Legislator Chen Yen-lei into the ceremonial venue.

All of a sudden, with a "Whoa!" the lanky elderly man lowers the Japanese Navy military flag to pay respect. The old men, in a high-spirited order of salutation, raise their heads and hands in inevitable disorder, and salute in a military manner.

Close shot: Legislator Chen Yen-lei's speech.

Close-up: the ladies in the viewing stand salute the monument in front of them in a military manner. Their expression haughty and proud.

Medium shot: the Japanese Navy military flag flies. The blood-red rising sun on the flag abrupt and eye-catching.

Close-up: engraved Regular Script on the monument: "Monument of Condolence for Spirits of Taiwanese Soldiers Deceased in Nanyang War"

Lin Piao holds his breath while watching the TV. He first thinks that, in the TV reportage that lasted for only a minute or two, no one else other than him would recognize him with his face half blocked. Seeing for the first time his own senile, fatigued "militant expression" from the camera shots, he can't help but be astonished. He slowly comes to feel that he and those old men are suffering from unbearable derision and mockery. Early this morning, on the train en route to Ping-tung, Lin Piao recalled Tsan Kim-hái who, over the last three or four months, had suddenly regained his fervor for requesting compensation from Japan. After Guát-ki ran off with that guy, the year when she was supposed to be 25 or 26, the Tokyo District Court for the second time rejected Taiwanese soldiers' request for compensation, fundamentally because the elderly "had already lost the Japanese nationality." "The Japanese are bloodless," said Tsan Kim-hái after returning from hearing the trial in Tokyo. Tsan Kim-hái also said that the representatives from all compensation-requesting organizations, him included, would like to resort directly to Japanese nationals, and printed out leaflets on the spot there in Tokyo, explaining that they once "battled in Huanan and Nanyang as loyal and good Japanese" They once thought: the ordinary Japanese people who received the leaflets would definitely return them with the warmest handshake, greetings, gratitude and support. Unexpectedly, in so big a megacity as Tokyo, at the hustle and bustle of the Tokyo railway entrance, there was not a single Japanese, regardless of age, willing to take the leaflet, but instead, with cold, loathing faces, refused the leaflets that the old men waved in front of their noses. "F-k. Bloodless and tearless Japanese!" said Tsan Kim-hái.

It is this Tsan Kim-hái who has, surprisingly, become active again over the past six months. "In the past, the Taiwanese went to Japan for compensation; the Kuomintang

government wouldn't come forward," said Tsan Kim-hái, "Legislator Chen Yen-lei said: we once helped the Japanese to fight the Chinese. How could we expect this government to come forward on our behalf?" And according to Tsan Kim-hái again, the chances are now that "the government will be replaced by Taiwan's own people." Were the changes to be made, there would be somebody for the Taiwanese' request for Japanese compensation. Tsan Kim-hái took the well-attired Legislator Chen, looking around for Taiwanese-Japanese soldiers to canvass for "changing the government" without stopping.

And then, in March of the next year, if the government indeed changed hands, Legislator Chen Yen-lei's official rank would be substantially elevated. This time it was Legislator Chen who initiated the inauguration of the Monument of Condolence, "trying to get some Japanese Councilors and the *Kosa* Major of the Self-Defense Force to attend the inauguration of the Monument, and form a good relationship with the Japanese political and military circles." Tsan Kim-hái came once, mobilizing Lin Piao to put on a tidy military uniform to attend the inaugural ceremony.

Rushing to the venue of the inaugural ceremony, Lin Piao saw many Taiwanese-born Japanese veterans, old and new acquaintances. Between the ladies and the veterans at the venue of the inaugural ceremony of the Monument of Condolence, there flowed fluent and poor Japanese language. After the ceremony, Tsan Kim-hái, took off his white gloves, and said to Lin Piao as if wondering, "Legislator Chen said he invited some Japanese ... how come there's no one coming"

The black sedans that were parked beside the venue of the inaugural ceremony, so cleanly washed that the car windows reflected the surrounding trees, took away those ladies and gentlemen, Japanese-speaking or not, one car after another. Lin Piao watched the cars on the grass all depart, leaving only two that had not yet driven away, whose owners were still beside the cars, talking. Lin Piao heard Tsan Kim-hái next to him say, "We grow old every year.

Don't know if we could still be convened the next time." Tsan Kim-hái also said he hopes the future new government could take responsibility for the Taiwanese soldiers for real. "From East and West, North and South, these old men had to rush back home by themselves. Legislator Chen didn't even arrange for their lunchboxes," Tsan Kim-hái complained.

On the train back from Ping-tung to Ho Town, Lin Piao thought about his son, Him-bok. Him-bok used to be a diligent lad, never knowing fatigue when laboring on the farm. To his merriment, Lin Piao saw in him his own spirit and look from when he was still a poor tenant farmer. But there was one thing about Him-bok that was different from him: he always dreamed of leaving peasantry and making a fortune. Lin Piao often told his son how bitter and poor it had been to be a peasant. "Men have to be contented, to keep their part," said Lin Piao.

Daughter-in-law Po-kui's instigation at his bedside was supposedly relevant as well, thought Lin Piao sitting on the train. When Him-bok was around 24 years old, the income from planting rice had already fallen far behind the expenses of fertilizer, pesticide and daily necessities. Youngsters in Ho Town gradually went to the cities doing odd jobs. But Him-bok was different. "Dad, I want to go outside, to open an iron factory with others," said Him-bok. His friend Khun-guán had worked in a stainless steel processing factory in Sanchong, Taipei for a couple of years. "Trading companies come to order their products for export. Fast money," Him-bok said. Lin Piao's face sank, refusing to agree. It was not until mere rice-planting really could not make ends meet, and someone came to act as a go-between, that Lin Piao sold the land to a "Chairman Li" from Taipei to build houses. Him-bok took one-third of the land prices, and took his woman and three-year-old little Guát-ki away to Sanchong, Taipei ...

3.

The following morning, Ma Zhengtao rises earlier than usual, first doing a squat

between two camphor trees, shaking his hands with eyes closed for a round. In this morning, Ma Zhengtao is ready to go to Taipei. After shaking his hands, he carries a small bag out of the park. After he waits for an old military vehicle to pass by, he looks around, and crosses the road carefully, then walks along the bus stops. Suddenly, he hears the jarring noise of brakes. Ma Zhengtao looks, following the sound, hearing the military driver curse aloud, "F-k you. You goin' to hell or what?" Ma Zhengtao's presbyopic eyes see a silhouette beside the car and the drivers curse at each other. Seeing the military vehicle driving away without any further accident, Ma Zhengtao turns around the corner and walks into a soybean milk bakery.

Ma Zhengtao likes this soybean milk bakery, which was opened by some Taiwanese. Its baked clay oven rolls are not as crispy as other bakeries that made the entire table covered with half-baked crust. The clay oven rolls here are so chewy that one can chew the flavor out of the pastry when it is mixed with fried bread sticks. Ma Zhengtao orders a set of clay oven rolls, fried bread sticks, and a bowl of hot soybean milk with an egg in it. He is suddenly aware that seated at the table beside him are several mainlander-looking vets, seemingly discussing a scene from the TV news last night.

"All suited in Japanese clothes!" a lean old man in blue-plaid check fabric shirt says. "Held a very huge Japanese Navy military flag in their hands. Ha!"

"Whole bunch of *hanjian* (traitors)!" A man with a Szechuan accent says, furious. Ma Zhengtao recognizes him. He often sees that lean old man shadowboxing in Loyalty and Filiality Park. He wouldn't open those tightly closed eyes until a round of shadowboxing was finished.

"Once I saw that Japanese Navy military flag, my heart was cramped with ache," the skinny old man in the blue-plaid checkered shirt says. "In that year, ah, it was the Japanese marines holding that navy military flag who marched into Shanghai. I saw it with my own eyes." He says that under the

fluttering of the Japanese flags, the Japanese rampaged and looted in Shanghai and all of China. "I can't forget it!" says the skinny old man.

"Whole bunch of traitors!" says the Szechuan old man. He says he's old. Had it been a decade or two ago, with him on the battlefield, he would've killed all of them before turning himself in to the officials.

"Horrible to behold!" says the skinny old man in blue-plaid checkered shirt. "Blood-like sun-disc flag, tinted with so many Chinese people's blood . . ."

"Told you. A whole bunch of motherfucking traitors! Don't know where they came from, a bunch of *hanjian*!" says the Szechuanese.

Ma Zhengtao quietly finishes his breakfast, then takes the bus to the railway station to catch the northbound express. "Whole bunch of traitors!" The curse by the Szechuan man haunts him amidst the hustle and bustle of the hurtling train. He looks outside the window. A gray sedan runs on the paths of the fields. Ma Zhengtao recalls the southern Manchurian railway.

A week before Japan announced its defeat, Mr. Li Hansheng made a call to the *Kempeitai*, asking to see him in Shenyang immediately. "Emergency. Come quickly," Li Hansheng put it very briefly. It was that one time Ma Zhengtao sat on the train speeding through the vast Northeastern plain. He saw that, in order for the anti-imperialist, counter-Japanese guerilla "Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army", not to be able to hide in order to attack the train, the Japanese have shoveled off fifteen meters wide of sorghum stalks on both sides of the railway, which, as if shaved by a Japanese hair clipper, laid bare grayish yellow mud. At that time, the Japanese Army had already been mired in fatal swamps in Huabei, Huanan and the vast Nanyang. The overpowering military capability of the US and Britain, as revealed by the Pacific War, and Japan's predicament and inability to defend, were put strikingly against each other. And the sabotage by the once dormant Anti-Japanese United guerillas

was increasing. Only three months earlier, Mr. Li Hansheng had ridden in a black sedan to the *Kempeitai* Headquarters for a meeting. No sooner had the car stopped at the compound than Japanese MP had approached to open the door and saluted to Mr. Li Hansheng, who was wearing a gray tweed cap, leather long coat with a wool lining, and pitch black sunglasses. After an entire morning of meetings and luncheon in the restaurant for the higher officials in the squad, Mr. Li Hansheng asked for Ma Zhengtao. "The activity by the Anti-Japanese United Army is not only insuppressible, but its threat grows more and more ferocious," said Ma Zhengtao, lowering his voice. Li Hansheng did not answer. His pitch black glasses made Ma Zhengtao ill at ease. Ma Zhengtao said that any slightly "suspicious" civilian, peasant, youngster or student somewhat inclined to counter-Japanese and anti-Manchukuo sentiment, was certain to be arrested and terminated. "Arresting and killing so many people for so many years made them more and more clever and cunning instead," said Ma Zhengtao. Mr. Li Hansheng remained silent, smoking his cigarette in its holder. "I asked them to transfer you from the Department of Investigation," he said, "to the Department of General Affairs. There is a large number of properties in the Departments and Bureaus, you go manage them." Li Hansheng said, looking outside the window, where two gingko trees were illuminated by the winter sun.

Mr. Li Hansheng was initially a young man studying in Japan, managing the soybean business beside Ma Shuojie, Zhengtao's father, going between Japanese merchants, Military Headquarters and local Northeastern Japanese-leaning gentries in the early days. Mr. Li Hansheng's fluent Japanese and shrewd, all-around maneuvering were appreciated by the Japanese Military Headquarters, secret agents and powerful businessmen. Ma Shuojie—how sly he was—took advantage of the opportunity, generously recommending Li Hansheng to the Japanese. Within ten years, Mr. Li Hansheng, deeply trusted by the Japanese authorities in Manchukuo, took up the post

of *Shokutaku* (Councilor), becoming one of the highest-ranking Chinese in the Manchurian secret agent system.

At that moment, Ma Zhengtao saw at the door of the first-class railcar bound for Shenyang, a conductor, a Japanese MP and a Manchukuo policeman come in to check the passengers' identities and tickets. With the intensity of counter-Japan guerilla activities, the security checks also grew increasingly severe. Ma Zhengtao recalled that a recent public security report stated that, with the increase of trouble, the "Ominous Counter-Japan Activities" proposed the "Fight the Traitors" slogan. Assassinations of pro-Japan bureaucrats, intellectuals and gentry, although few in number, were reported from time to time. Outside the window was a boundless sorghum field. Who would know that the Japanese were doomed so soon in China? Ma Zhengtao thought.

Mr. Li Hansheng lived in a huge-gardened bungalow left by a German businessman. Inside and outside of the wall stood uniformed and plain-clothed guards. Ma Zhengtao entered Mr. Li Hansheng's mansion from a little side door beside the big iron gate. Three huge chained-up wolf dogs immediately stood on their rear legs, bending over the barbed wire, barking with extreme ferocity, with teeth revealed. The doorkeeper, equipped with a sidearm, let Ma Zhengtao into a big living room with a flaming fire in the fireplace as he absent-mindedly scolded the barking beasts.

When Mr. Li Hansheng walked into the living room, Ma Zhengtao saw on his face a calm and cool composure that could not be seen elsewhere, at a time when the entire Manchukuo was feeling anxious and helpless. Mr. Li Hansheng carefully asked about Ma Zhengtao's working conditions in the Department of General Affairs, and the details regarding the *Kempeitai* treasury, assets, weapons, houses, lands, etc.

"Chungking made a contact," Mr. Li Hansheng whispered. Astonished, Ma Zhengtao was caught dumbfounded on his seat.

"Chungking is too far away from the Northeast. For the moment they are unable to stop the Soviet Army and the Eighth

Route Army from taking over the Northeast from Japanese-Manchukuo at the end of the war," Mr. Li Hansheng said, putting on a long face. "They turned to us for help."

Ma Zhengtao remained dumbfounded. At the end of the war... "It's gone this far?" he thought in bewilderment.

"Grasp firmly all the properties and resources of the Japanese *Kempeitai*," said Mr. Li Hansheng. "I calculated several steps ahead, and transferred you away from the killing machine Department of Interrogation before it was too late."

Ma Zhengtao comprehended all at once. Not long after Japan formally announced its surrender, Chungking dispatched someone to send the letter of appointment, officially stamped with the central authorities' seal, into Mr. Li Hansheng's hands. Once Japan was defeated, and the people were rejoicing, Mr. Li Hansheng was suddenly announced to become the Directorate of the "North China Shuanfushi Department" as a Chungking Nationalist underground agent long hidden in the Northeast. The trade-off was to assure that all the Japanese-Manchukuo assets, armaments, intelligence secret agents and military police systems, as well as the resources, security files, and the names of anti-Manchukuo, counter-Japan Communists that remained imprisoned, would be transferred to the hands of the Nationalist government. And while some "Japan-leaning" inconspicuous writers, officials and policemen were labeled as traitors, spat on and cursed by the masses, arrested, prosecuted, or even imprisoned and executed by the new authorities, Ma Zhengtao, depending on his relations with Mr. Li Hansheng, could also metamorphose into a "patriotic" underground agent long hidden in the Northeastern enemy territory, and partake in the works of the Northeastern Division, Bureau of Investigation and Statistics. From then on, Mr. Li Hansheng even bribed the Nationalist advance team, and released the pro-Japan gentry who had been incarcerated during the purging campaign, issuing them with certificates and identification as Northeastern Nationalist secret agents, who rose from the depth of

the dungeon to the height of the VIP seats. "In terms of the great trends in China, for decades, anti-communism has been a consistent top priority," Mr. Li Hansheng once said in a reception banquet for the new secret agents recruited from the Old Manchukuo. "When we were in ... , say, in the Old Manchukuo era, everything we did was also to counter communism, to prevent communism. Today, the party-state wants to counter and prevent communism, it also has to depend on all of you nameless heroes." Seated at the end of the seats, Ma Zhengtao still remembered the splendid lights, exquisite cuisine and fine wine, excitement and jubilation in the banquet hall. Puyi's portrait that was hung on the wall had long been changed into the portrait of the Generalissimo. Two different faces, two different appearances. But in terms of badges, cummerbunds, epaulettes, and sleeve plackets, the two of them were no different, thought Ma Zhengtao at that time.

Through Mr. Li Hansheng, Chungking managed to have an unobstructed channel through which it could be in touch with the Kwantung Army after the war. The Kwantung troops and *Kempeitai*, with millions of soldiers, capitulated only to the Nationalist government, and were instructed to stick to their posts before the arrival of the central military institution, and not to give in a single rifle or bullet to the Occupation Army of the Russians or the Eighth Route Army; and also, under the guidance of the Nationalist government advance team, to cooperate with the US Army in Luda City to resist the Soviet Army from marching southward to occupy the entire Northeast. Mr. Li Hansheng told Ma Zhengtao that the highest authorities had put their strategic vision at the vantage point of the Third World War, triggered by the US-Soviet conflict in the future. "The Generalissimo has foreseen the momentum of the US-China coalition to fight against the Soviets and the Communists. 'Forward-looker', it's called. That's to talk about 'converting an enemy into a friend'," Mr. Li Hansheng said. According to him, the Nationalist government had already appointed him to send a

message to the high-ranking officials in the Japanese Kwantung Army. "If Japan cooperates with us on preventing and countering the Communists in the Northeast after the war, we'll guarantee, first, not to punish war criminals from Yasuji Okamura downwards; second, to repatriate two million or so Kwantung soldiers and overseas Japanese safe and sound." Mr. Li Hansheng said. The big lampstand on the desk shone on the left side of his face, making his right eye glare as the right side of his face was in the dark. "Even Yasuji Okamura can serve our interests, what else, should we fear ... ?" Mr. Li Hansheng said, almost smiling.

Sitting alone on the express bound for northern Taiwan, Ma Zhengtao smiles with a cold face. It is in the season when the paddy fields outside the window are full of blossoming flowers. Looking out from the window of the fast-moving train, the blossoming fields are shrouded by fog, like a layer of fine silk. "Whole bunch of traitors!" Ma Zhengtao thinks of the heated exchange in the soybean milk bakery that morning. It must have been decades since I heard anyone use the word "traitor" to curse someone. Ma Zhengtao thinks: if all the things in the world are like what those chuffs thought, it would be much simpler. He remembers in that August, Japan lost the battle, Manchukuo collapsed. In early October, the Americans helped send high-ranking officials from Chungking and a few military policemen to the vast Northeast via air, land and sea. Mr. Li Hansheng had had a ready plan in mind, taking with him Ma Zhengtao and some agents, seeking grandiose interim offices for the central bureaucrats, helping previously pro-Japan local high officials and wealthy gentry and merchants to arrange banquets for days and months in a row, balls and singing night after night, to fawn over the new masters from Chungking. "Delicacies from land and sea, fine liquor and real beauties, without them not a single day!" proclaimed Mr. Li Hansheng. He was soon patronized and trusted by the central advance high officials. Under his

authorization, the clever Ma Zhengtao was able to arrange mansions and cars of different sizes and specifications for the takeover high-ranking officials, in accordance with their rank and position, and with the enormous amount of “fortunes of enemy and puppet” left by the Japanese. And the gentry and merchants were not idle, either. They were busy weaving a far-flung network with gold wires and silver threads. Through Ma Zhengtao’s arrangements and connections, they distributed huge profits from opium smuggling, used gold and women as bribes in exchange for such titles as Senior Executive Officer, Chief of Staff, or Secretary in the Shuanfushi Department or the Advance Team Headquarters, and metamorphosed into patriotic gentlemen overnight. On the depleted northern Chinese earth after the war, they “established an enclosed castle, leading lives in luxury and dissipation, in wine and promiscuity.” Daring newspapers and magazines started criticizing them as such.

The castle was so stable and firm that, even in that spring, when the news of Dai Li’s death in a plane crash came suddenly from Nanking, the reclusive castle was not shaken in any way. Mr. Li Hansheng ordered all Northeastern provinces and cities to hold funeral commemoration for “Mr. Dai.” For the moment, people from political and military circles, whether they were sincere or not, all sent over elegiac scrolls and paid their last respects in person. In summer, when the signboard of the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics was removed, Mr. Li Hansheng still took up the post of the Commissioner of the Changchun Branch of the Department of Inspection that supplanted the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics.

A month later, the Nationalist Army suddenly launched attacks against some important Chinese Communist bases. In an agent meeting in the Department of Inspection, Mr. Li Hansheng, placing his hands on the top of the thick folders, said that students, workers and ambitious schemers in Shanghai and Nanking were all causing riots; only the Northeast remains undisturbed. “The higher officials are very

pleased,” he said. “This is indeed not accidental.” Mr. Li Hansheng stood up, using his hands to cover half of the Three Northeast Provinces on the national map hanging on the wall. “The Northeast is far away from the inland, self-contained. Wind and rain from the inland does not hit the Northeast,” he said, “not to mention the number of espionage bandits we had arrested and killed during the Japanese-Manchukuo era. To the tranquility in the Northeast today, our works during the Japanese-Manchukuo era have contributed!”

Yet Mr. Li Hansheng, after all, put it too early and incorrectly, thinks Ma Zhengtao. In the winter, as the heavy snow sealed off the entire Changchun City, in Beiping, along the southern front of the Northeast, the “Shen Chong Incident” suddenly erupted, sensationalized by the students at Peking University, who clamored for the US Army to withdraw from China. The Bureau of Inspection, nerves highly-strung, made incessant phone calls to the Department at Beiping before gradually realizing that the Shen Chong Incident, like the wildfire in the vast forests on the Stanovoy Range, radiated heat as well as billowing smoke and fire, and was spreading and burning throughout the entirety of China.

The Bureau of Inspection held one meeting after another. Before dawn or at night, several military vans and American new-style jeeps drove in and out of the compound of the Bureau of Inspection in a rush, capturing loads and loads of “suspects of espionage” and democrats. Many official mansions left by the Japanese, on which were hung small stone boards such as “Garden of Quietude,” “Garden of Rain,” and “Garden of Harmony,” all became tightly locked down, strictly guarded detention and interrogation centers. Day and night, Ma Zhengtao directed secretive arrests, entrapments, tortures and interrogations. To his astonishment, he saw that the critic Zhou Shu—who once collaborated with the “National Propaganda Department” in the Japanese-Manchukuo era, occasionally wrote some pro-Japanese routine articles for the supplemental section

"Night Guard" of the semi-official *Manchurian Public Opinion* and *Datong Newspaper*, and attended the Japanese-controlled "Greater East Asia Literary Conference"—was also captured. "Don't ask me why. Didn't you also turn from Japanese *Kempeitai* to the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics?" Zhou Shu asked Ma Zhengtao in the grilling room, with smashed lips swollen as large as half a steamed bun. Not a bit did Zhou Shu play a hero. His body was full of bruises and contusions. He groaned in pain, shook with fear, yet neither forcing chili pepper water into his nose and mouth, nor beating him or hanging him up could force a single name, address, or institution out of his blood-filled shattered mouth. Ma Zhengtao's professional eyes suddenly spotted the danger of Zhou Shu's imminent dying of shock, and approached to examine him. Zhou Shu suddenly threw up blood over the upper half of Ma Zhengtao's body before dying with eyes shut. It was ever since then that Ma Zhengtao had become increasingly addicted to showers.

But deep down in Ma Zhengtao's heart, he gradually sensed a faint uneasiness and melancholy. The meticulousness of the deployment of the secret police went even further than the Japanese-Manchukuo era. The techniques of grilling compared to the Japanese-Manchukuo era were even harsher and fiercer. However, this nation, long worn out by the prolonged war, desiring peaceful and stable lives, seemed to be on the verge of rage. After summer and fall, the anti-Civil War cry for peaceful nation-building and democratic reform, with the situation turned upside down in the Northeast, instigated a wave of student, worker, and market strikes, jolting the entire Chinese land.

In the next summer, under the most sweeping nationwide arrest order directed by the Central Bureau of Protection of Confidential Documents, the Changchun Department of Inspection, regardless of day and night, captured loads of teachers, college students, editors, unionists and democrats, cramming all the secret prisons, detention

centers and interrogation rooms in the entire Northeast. The Northeast was in a grave situation. As tens of thousands of people dared to stand up and bare-handedly approach pistols and whips, for the first time Ma Zhengtao came to realize that the power of the secret police, which had always chilled one's spine, would also melt and evaporate like solid ice under the scorching sun. Before thousands of newly arrested "suspects of espionage" in detention centers and interrogation rooms could have been grilled, at the end of August when more leaves were falling day after day and the autumn wind was blowing from outside, the Northeastern Border grew increasingly colder every day, the death match between Nationalist and Communist troops broke out in Liaoshen, Huaihai and Pinjin on the vast Northeastern land. In September, Changchun was besieged by the Communists. Mr. Li Hansheng escaped in a reserved vehicle a day earlier; Ma Zhengtao broke out in disguise, but was intercepted by the Liberation Army and civilian soldiers, and was sent to Jilin with a bunch of Nationalist officials and policemen.

The train passes Taichung. Taipei is not far away. Today is the anniversary of Mr. Li Hansheng's death. Mr. Li Hansheng arrived in Taiwan almost one year ahead of him. Although the Bureau of Protection of Confidential Documents was still in existence, old Bureau staff members from various provinces and cities around the country all came to Taiwan in a torrential flood, and there were not enough jobs to go around, let alone one for a secret agent such as Li Hansheng, seeking refuge after leaving the "Puppet Manchukuo." Mr. Li Hansheng, well-adjusted to the circumstances, retired from his post early before fading and dying of old-age in the first-class ward at the Veterans General Hospital. During this time of the year, Ma Zhengtao always comes to Taipei, to an old cemetery in Yangmingshan to burn incense for Mr. Li Hansheng. "Here Lies Major General Li Hansheng." Ma Zhengtao thinks of that solitary tombstone, the inscriptions on which were written by

Commissioner Mao personally. For Ma Zhengtao, Mr. Li Hansheng's nurture, guidance and influence over half of his life are too great. In his memory, Ma Zhengtao returns to inside the wall of the "Liberation Group", located in the Department of Public Security, Jilin, and reserved especially for the Nationalist KMT soldiers, politicians, policemen and secret agents.

The Liberation Group was established in an old Buddhist temple, which had been abandoned for years in suburban Jilin, where a clay-sculpted statue of Guanyin in the main hall was covered with thick dust. The grounds of this Gadgadasvara thatched hut, along with a vegetable garden, amounted to more than one acre. The hut was equipped with Zen quarters, dining rooms and kitchens. The mud wall was not tall with newly erected iron caltrops. The Liberation Group was loosely managed, neither confiscating bills and possessions, nor searching luggage and packages. Surprised, Ma Zhengtao thought there must be something wrong, and was thus uneasy at heart. Fortunately, most of the people gathered here were captive Nationalist military officials—many of whom even swaggered about in brand new American woolen military coats—but very few recognized Ma Zhengtao.

In an October morning, as Ma Zhengtao was washing his face by the washstand, a chubby, bald man beside him lowered his head to brush his teeth. "Station Chief Ma, here you are," said the man, without lifting his head. Ma Zhengtao recognized that he was a Group Leader in the Public Security of Changchun City Police Department., where Ma Zhengtao once gave a lesson in a temporary special training class. "Stop calling me Station Chief," Ma Zhengtao smiled with a grin, and wiped his face with a towel. "Now my name is Liu An, a Platoon Leader, Second Lieutenant of a logistic company of the Fifth Army," he whispered. "Let's pretend we didn't know each other before coming here."

"Got it," the Group Leader rinsed with force, and spat into the sink. "Hi, there," he raised his voice to Ma Zhengtao, smiling.

"It's getting cold," said Ma Zhengtao, wringing the towel dry.

"Isn't it? Heard that Jinzhou has been liberated," said the Group Leader.

"Oh," said Ma Zhengtao. "We'll talk later." He put on the kindest and amiable smiling face for the Leader, gave him a wink and walked away.

Jinzhou was lost so soon. Ma Zhengtao thought in surprise. Once Jinzhou fell into the enemy's hands, the Nationalist Army in Shenyang would be called "the rat in a hole." He thought: once Changchun was also liberated, the Communists would deploy the Liberation Army from Changchun to Shenyang... Ma Zhengtao was burning with anxiety. "Not to mention that I'm trapped in the Liberation Group in Jilin right now. Even if the Communists let me out right away, perhaps the war would be lost faster than I could escape," Ma Zhengtao started murmuring to himself. "Ain't I at the end of the rope?"

In the third morning, people behind the wall of the thatched hut walked in twos and threes around the courtyard. Ma Zhengtao recalled the political prisoners previously jailed by him in the detention centers were also let out on a dirt ground by the prison wall. In the thatched hut a row of poplars were planted, whose leaves had all but fallen. Ma Zhengtao walked alone at a slightly faster pace, glimpsing out of the corner of his eye the Group Leader, whose name he had recalled was Zhao Dagang. Ma Zhengtao raised his hand to Zhao Dagang from afar. "Morning," Ma Zhengtao said. Zhao Dagang also waved at him, like two recent acquaintances. Zhao Dagang slowed his pace, Ma Zhengtao rushed forward.

"The registration form was handed down yesterday," Ma Zhengtao said. "How should I fill it out?"

"This is troublesome," Zhao Dagang said.

Most people, Zhao Dagang said, except for those Nationalists who had nothing to conceal, and those dejected and despondent Nationalist Colonels wandering in American military uniforms, had to calculate carefully

to fabricate a seemingly truthful résumé to carry with them. "From now on, all the forms, biography ... will follow the fabrication," he said.

"For fear of self-contradiction," said Ma Zhengtao.

"In fact, even when it's self-contradictory sometimes, they don't bother asking you," Zhao Dagang said, heaving a sigh. "They are setting nets and traps everywhere. Whatever we do, there's nowhere to hide."

Ma Zhengtao fell silent. "You'd better be honest. We know you very well." He recalled himself intimidating anxious, helpless and terrified college students in the investigation rooms with the same threat. "I'd better follow your instructions, sketching a draft," he told Zhao Dagang.

"That'll be safer," said Zhao Dagang. "You'll have to fill out other forms later on, your résumé and whatnot."

"Oh."

"After the form is submitted, the Political Security Director would still ask you for a talk."

Ma Zhengtao frowned: "So I'll have to memorize the draft?"

"It's not that serious," said Zhao Dagang, breathing out white mist in the chilly wind. "However, guys with background like us can't be more careful. Preparedness averts peril."

That night, Ma Zhengtao drew up a draft under the light of an oil lamp. Making up a pseudonym, a masquerade, a fake identity, and false résumé wasn't hard for him; after all, he had been in the Japanese *Kempeitai* and the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics. But as he was making stuff up, he was always afraid and terrified. Ma Zhengtao thought of those youngsters falling into his hands. When the confessions that they painstakingly drafted with beaten and swollen fingers were seen through and torn to pieces by the roaring Ma Zhengtao, their pale, horrified and hopeless looks now emerged one by one amidst the halo of the oil lamp. He understood too perfectly: what he wrote by racking his brains could not escape a group of men's thorough scrutiny. Ma Zhengtao tore up what he wrote, and

then tore up what he rewrote. He was restive, totally at a loss.

It was then that Ma Zhengtao suddenly thought of Mr. Li Hansheng. On the eve of the Liberation Army's besieging the city, a small car with its headlights off waited in Li's yard in the depth of the night. Mr. Li Hansheng personally burned the critical documents, ready to flee on a vehicle. In the enormous living room where only Ma Zhengtao and Mr. Li Hansheng were present, Mr. Li Hansheng suddenly told Ma Zhengtao:

"If one falls into the KMT's hands, the chances are that he won't survive even if he confesses everything." He said, "If one falls into the Communists' hands, he might have a chance to be spared a death sentence and get a probation if he confesses honestly."

Ma Zhengtao sent Mr. Li Hansheng into the sedan with its headlights off but the engine on. The gate of his mansion opened silently. At this moment, the headlights were suddenly turned on, revealing the flickering shadows of a few trimmed cypresses and plainclothes security guards. The car silently turned around in the yard, and sped out of the gate, into the dark night of broken flowers covering the frosty ground.

As if divining an oracle, Ma Zhengtao suddenly decided to turn himself in. He never took heed of the mimeographed instructions of "Lenient Policy" handed out to everyone escorted into the Liberation Group. But he thought that Shenyang was about to fall, and the Northeast had replaced all banners of the Beiyang Government in Manchuria with the flag of the Nationalist Government,⁵ and once the Northeast was taken by the Liberation Army, the entire Northern China would eventually collapse. He thought of Mr. Li Hansheng's words, not knowing why; he was sure that turning himself in would be the only way to survive ...

Upon expressing his intention, the Liberation Group immediately sent a car to transport Ma Zhengtao to the Department of Public Security in Jilin. The stubble-bearded Chief Liu in a shabby Liberation Army

uniform told Ma Zhengtao that he had made the right decision. "We do know you," he said. "Turning yourself in is not only good for you, but mainly it's good for the people." Ma Zhengtao recalled that Mr. Li Hansheng brought him from the Japanese *Kempeitai* to the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics. If Mr. Li Hansheng also fell into the hands of the Eighth Route Army, what would he do? Ma Zhengtao started to confess to Chief Liu. Starting from Kenkoku University and the Japanese *Kempeitai*. "These materials can be recorded later," Chief Liu handed him a cigarette, and lit one up for himself.

"Then I'll talk about my works at the Shenyang Branch under the Changchun Department of Inspection," said Ma Zhengtao, who explained that an estimation of some 170 people were killed under his command. "Most of them were your underground operatives," said Ma Zhengtao, lowering his head: "This is a serious crime."

"This can also wait until later." After a moment of silence, Chief Liu said, "You know about the materials that we are eager to know. Just spell them all out. Do not have any scruples."

For the whole afternoon, Ma Zhengtao talked in great detail without any omission about the Latent Unit deployed by the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics in Shenyang, about the underground telegraph unit, about the ex-BIS members who have not yet been evacuated, hidden in the commercial and cultural circles from Shenyang to Changchun, even about the weaponry and ammunition buried underground.

Two weeks later, Chief Liu asked for him. "What you said was all true." Chief Liu said sincerely, "All those who should be caught are caught." It was in an early November morning. "By the way, Shenyang has been liberated. Many refugees flooded into Jilin," said Chief Liu, "maybe you'll meet a couple of acquaintances."

Ma Zhengtao understood immediately. "In the turmoil of the war, nobody knows that I've already surrendered." Ma Zhengtao thought: "They're going to use me as bait."

He thought of his old skills in the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics. He knew all too well: he could no longer turn back.

Ma Zhengtao walked to the more populated area in Jilin City, three cops disguised as passers-by were also walking a dozen steps in front of or behind him. Ma Zhengtao bumped into the Inspector General of the Changchun Police Department.

"Station Chief Ma, how come I heard that you were caught in Shenyang?" the Inspector General lowered his voice.

"Rumor. When will you leave?" asked Ma Zhengtao.

"In a few days," he said, "I live with a family of complicated background. I'm looking for a clean spot."

"My place is secure. But I can accommodate you for only a couple of days. The longer you stay the less convenient it would be."

While Ma Zhengtao was talking, he gave him an address. That night, the guy came looking for him with his luggage, and was caught immediately. Ma Zhengtao ran into people on the streets, giving them addresses, and asking for their addresses. A dozen people were caught within a few days. Ma Zhengtao was determined to give himself in completely, and was indeed rewarded with great trust from the Bureau of Public Security.

"Shenyang has been liberated. There are some works there for you to do." One day, Chief Liu told him the news while having a meal with Ma Zhengtao. Ma Zhengtao said that he is familiar with Shenyang, and even more so with Changchun. "I'll go tomorrow," said Ma Zhengtao.

On the second day, a young and quiet cadre accompanied him to Shenyang. On their way to the Jilin Train Station, Ma Zhengtao wanted to chat with the young man in a gray half-worn Liberation Army uniform, yet was always responded with a wall of silence. Waiting for the delayed train at the noisy station, Ma Zhengtao could not but think of the young underground Communist agents in the investigation cell who harbored hatred in silence. "I am, after all, what

they call a class enemy," Ma Zhengtao thought as if suddenly having an epiphany.

"I'm going to the washroom," the young man said hesitantly.

"I'll come with you," Ma Zhengtao said immediately, "I'll wait at the door."

The young man felt greatly relieved. The washroom was crowded with people, waiting in line for a spot at the urinal trench. The young cadre looked back several times at Ma Zhengtao standing at the door. When Ma Zhengtao smiled at him, the young man also returned with a bashful smile. As the young man lowered his head, beginning to take a leak, almost by instinct, Ma Zhengtao started running away, soon vanishing into the flood of tens of thousands of refugees.

4.

Last night, Lin Piao was woken up by a ringing telephone. It was a relative who called him "grand-cousin-uncle," calling from Yencheng, Kaohsiung. On the phone, he said he had found Lin Piao's son Him-bok. "I've noticed him for days. Though his face was covered in a beard, I still recognized Uncle Bok's pair of eyes." Since he was little, Him-bok's eyes had been a little bit swollen and protruding, but he could open those big eyes, with layers of eyelids as obvious as if carved by a knife, looking firm yet sorrowful. Just for this particular reason. Lin Piao, almost 74, finishes a round of calisthenics in Loyalty and Filiality Park early in the morning, before walking to the General Highway station heading to Kaohsiung.

On his way, Lin Piao thinks about his young relative's words. The emaciated, bearded Lin Him-bok goes to clean the sewer at a Malaysian restaurant every two days, earns a meager wage, and takes some leftover food with him. "My Uncle doesn't like to talk. His clothes aren't that filthy and greasy like the other vagrant 'street bums'," his relative had said on the phone, "I can tell that his hands aren't as dirty as other 'street bums' either." While listening to him, Lin Piao fell silent for a while and

then said, "I've looked for him for so many years, this unfilial son." The young relative said that he finally followed Him-bok to where he slept. "It's under a pylon in the alley beside Kaohsiung Normal School. Come over, and I'll bring you there."

Lin Piao feels miserable in his heart. He remembers that on the eve of Him-bok and his wife's departure northbound, daughter-in-law Po-kui prepared a full table of dishes and wine. "This farmland of us Lin family, though we got it from 'Rent Reduction to 37.5 Percent',⁶ Pa and I have toiled and sweated on the ground for years," said Him-bok holding a small cup of wine with both hands trembling high up to the eyebrows towards Lin Piao, "selling the lands is like cutting off a piece of my flesh." Lin Piao did not speak. He saw the teetotaler Him-bok's swollen eyelids had already been plastered, flushed red, eyes wide open, gleaming with determination. "If I fail in business, if I fail to bring back more money than the money you sold the land for, I won't come back to my hometown!" Him-bok said.

Lin Piao remained quiet, gulping down the rice wine in the cup. Not at all did he want to sell the lands to that "Chairman Li." But, not only his Him-bok, but all the young manpower in the village was like irrigation water flowing out from the ridge scooped open.

"Never did I try to stop you. If I don't sell the land, we keep it. If I sell it, we keep the money. Just in case, remember there's still a leeway back," said Lin Piao to Him-bok in his mind. Now he really feels the remorse for not having told his son about his thoughts; otherwise, a responsible, diligent young man like him won't get into such a plight now.

The next day, Lin Him-bok tightly wrapped the large pack of cash bills in newspapers handed to him by his father, then tore some used blankets into strips to tie that pack of bills tightly around his waist, and then got dressed, leaving his wife and child early with reddened eyes. Arriving in Sanchong City, which was densely populated with small-scale underground factories and which also

had polluted air, Lin Him-bok and Lâu Khun-guân—hot with intense desire for success and prosperity—looked for factory grounds amidst squalid alleys. They asked around, bought used machines from closed factories, and began their production of pressed stainless steel spoons, knives and forks, ENT tongue depressor, and soup bowls. The three of them, with greasy blackened faces, clothes and hands, sped up their work day and night. Him-bok felt that the entire underground factory area was like a chaotic, dark, suffocating and filthy mine, where tens of thousands of people panned for gold. Many could not pan out decent golden sand, but some managed to pan out pounds of gold nuggets. Those who threw away all their small amounts of capital withdrew from the black flowing-water mine in despair, yet there were more who brought a little capital from the countryside and who, regardless of everything, jumped into the quagmire. They wiped each other off the map by price concessions, while being exploited by the cold-blooded trading companies. They used liquor, women or even gambling to relieve the fatigue and tension caused by the exhausting competition and strain. But in this competition-for-survival Ashura Hell, the three of them, including Him-bok, served simultaneously as producers, travelling representatives and book-keepers, plus they endured the heavy labor, and finally they managed to scrape through.

On the stages of glove puppet plays, the line of "Accidents will happen" was often heard. It was in that year, when the big waves of the international oil price rise crashed in out of the blue, that Lin Him-bok was stunned to realize the meaning of this puppet play line. Like an epidemic suddenly sweeping over vast farmlands, in the midst of palpitation, the rice ears were dried, darkened, and the spraying of pesticide could not keep pace with the epidemic. Trading companies couldn't receive any orders, which was like the upstream irrigation water being cut off, so drying up downstream farmlands. The underground factories could not receive subcontracted orders, and started, one by one, to collapse,

like a landslide. Eventually, Him-bok and his partners could not escape the nightmarish fate of closing down.

At the time, unemployed youngsters who had left their countryside farmlands all returned like trout swimming back against the current to their self-tilled farming hometowns. Lin Piao anticipated Him-bok and his family's return every day, but no news came even after half a year had passed. Lin Piao was suddenly reminded of Him-bok's remarks before departure: "... If I fail to carry the money back, I won't come back to the hometown!" Lin Piao wrinkled up his brows and became anxious and restless. He therefore reproached himself all the more for not having uttered those most important words: "Just in case, remember there's still a way back!"

It is then that a truck brakes beside him, making a jarring, piercing sound.

"F-k you. You goin' to hell or what?"

A military man in the driver's seat swears angrily in Taiwanese.

"Take somebody with you if you're blind," the driver yelled, "rushing across street against the red light to hell!"

Before he is back to himself, Lin Piao cannot but say, "Sorry. Excuse me." Yet the exasperated driver is still cursing. Lin Piao gets angry.

"When I was a driving military van, you hadn't even been born," says Lin Piao, "Who the hell d'you think you are? F-k you ..."

The military truck drives away, emitting a belch of black smoke. Lin Piao sees the truck is filled with vegetables and fish, and two soldiers on the truck laughing at him. Lin Piao smells the stanch of fish and exhaust smoke. This must be the purchase car of a barracks at the foot of the mountain, thinks Lin Piao.

Lin Piao gets on the bus heading for Kaohsiung. The vehicle turns around, passing outside Loyalty and Filiality Park, exiting Ho Town. Even though it is in deep autumn, the sun is shining brightly. Ever since he underwent a cataract operation two years ago, Lin Piao's eyes have been a little sensitive to light. The sunlight outside

the bus window is stinging his eyes, while the air-conditioner inside blows from the air vent right above him directly onto the top of his head and his thin gray hair. "For real. When I was driving the Japanese military van in the Philippines, didn't even know where he was," Lin Piao thinks of the driver just now, sneering.

When he went on "Expedition" to the Philippines, the Japanese Army had just defeated the US Army and, not long after surging into Manila, followed up the victory by landing on the Bataan Peninsula to pursue and, like a hot knife through butter, attack American and Filipino armies. The Japanese Army captured about 70,000 defeated American and Filipino soldiers. It dispatched all of its limited military land transportation vehicles here to carry munitions and weapons to the advancing frontline. Once Lin Piao arrived in Manila, he was immediately transferred to a transportation company in Bataan as a driver, day and night advancing with the endless motorcade on the smoky and steaming yellow earth. Short of extra military vans to carry them, the Japanese Army forced these 70,000 American and Filipino POWs to walk under guard and under the scorching sun on the Bataan Peninsula, to the San Fernando concentration camp a hundred kilometers away. It was then that Lin Piao, in the transportation motorcade, saw from his driving seat tens of thousands of people marching, tumbling and stumbling in the sultry summer. Left at the roadside were the bodies of POWs who, falling down, lagging behind, or even attempting to escape, had been clubbed to death, gunned down, or chopped down with bayonets, like puppets cut from their strings. Their bodies crumbled into filthy bloodstains, fried by the scorching sun.

Ever since learning that his son Him-bok has also become one of those "street bums," who would rather detach themselves from modern society, roaming unsheltered on city corners, Lin Piao would occasionally think of the dying and dead POWs on the Bataan Peninsula. White POWs mostly still

wore headgear, looking like the White explorers in silent films only with shriveled and withered faces, beards all over their cheeks, and barely breathing. Filipino POWs, on the other hand, were in ragged clothes; only a few of them wore straw hats—the rest of them could only cover their heads with handkerchiefs and rags under the scorching sun. The hot weather dried their excrement that many POWs, infected with dysentery, dumped into their pants, thus emitting an even more suffocating stench. Lin Piao once went under the Taipei Bridge in Dadaocheng, Taipei, where "street bums" lived in groups, to inquire about his son.

"How should I know," a fat street bum said, looking elsewhere, "people livin' here like us don't know nothin' about others' background."

Lin Piao managed to ask a thin, tall, gray-haired man. Lin Piao saw that the man, in the not-cold-at-all fall day, had put on all his sweaters, woolen shirts and ragged suit, revealing only his thin greasy neck. He sat with legs crossed, while his body swayed slightly. The half-finished bottle of Red Label rice wine that sat in front of him made his face perspire and redden. His expression was joyful.

"How long have you been searching?" said the gray-haired man, with both eyes shut.

Lin Piao heaved a sigh. "Been ten ... twelve years."

The gray-haired dude suddenly opened his eyes. "After a dozen years, still lookin' for him?" he said with an astounded voice, "normally the family searches for the first one or two years. After the third year, nobody comes."

Lin Piao was in a deep sorrow. He slowly walked through a totally forsaken, gloomy corner in this capital city. He saw a few people spreading out the big cartons they had collected as their beds, coiling their bodies, sleeping soundly. They looked too much like those POWs falling to their deaths halfway through the march.

Lin Piao's truck had carried those POWs' corpses. Ragged leather shoes were

peeled off by the living. Filipino corpses stretching out their dark, swollen feet, while Caucasian feet appeared particularly pale, with blood dripping from festering wounds caused by the long march. The Filipinos' beards were like goatees'. The Caucasians' beards were like vines, densely crawling on the yellow-grayish, hollow-eye socketed, high-bridged-nosed faces, while tropical flies hovered above the dead bodies.

The road bus is zooming on the highway. Lin Piao suddenly falls asleep. Not knowing how much time has passed, he suddenly hears someone at the front left seat talk and laugh in a monosyllabic foreign language. Lin Piao wakes up in astonishment, sits up straight and looks toward the front left, seeing that the man and the woman, who had been sound asleep when he got on the bus, have long since woken up. They are chestnut brown, and with just one look he knows right away that they're Filipino migrant workers in Taiwan. Now they take out packs and packs of snacks and eat them while drinking Coca-Cola, full of joyful laughter and conversation. Lin Piao, of course, does not understand their words, but he is all too familiar with that staccato, monosyllabic Philippine Tagalog sound. But deep in his memory, the Tagalog tone is full of fear for death, desperation, and shrill plea for survival.

Not long after Japan took Manila, José P. Laurel propped up and organized a puppet government, in collaboration with the Japanese military authorities, and outrageously enforced Fascist military rule. The normally amiable and sluggish Filipinos eventually rose under the Fascist reign of terror. Lin Piao remembers an anti-Japanese civilian troop called "Hook," which gradually became active on many Philippine islands. On Corregidor, guerilla fighters ambushed a Japanese motorcade. An iron bridge was blown in half, and 50 cars were sabotaged. The Japanese were burning with a frenzy of rage, and dispatched Lin Piao's truck to carry 14 armed Japanese MP. They gathered up a hundred or two hundred

males from three small neighboring villages, populated with thatched cottages, took them to a thick bamboo forest, and slaughtered them all, and then sent two gunmen to stab with bayonets those who weren't fully dead. Lin Piao remembers those tropical bamboo bushes, growing much taller than the ones in Taiwan's countryside, whirling and swaying in the Nanyang heat. But under the bamboo bushes were pools of dark red blood. It was when the young adult men in the villages were forced to squat on the ground, waiting for execution, that the elderly, the women and the children started wailing, with that short-syllabic dialect, uttering the most panicked, fearful and desperate sounds that Lin Piao had ever heard.

Yet that staccato monosyllabic language also once expressed rage and fearless will. Just as the harder one hits a gong, the louder the gong sounds back, so the Filipino guerilla's anti-Japanese sabotage—with the Japanese military and political authorities' mass killings being as frantic as an entrapped wild beast—unstoppably blazed across the Philippine archipelago. Lin Piao's military truck also carried loads and loads of Filipino guerilla soldiers, hands tied behind their backs, escorted by the Japanese MP to a brook's edge in the suburbs. Most men were silently pushed off the truck, standing numb and in line on the brink of a big hole dug in advance. However, every time there was a few people who cried slogans in that monosyllabic Tagalog in high-pitched, resentful, firm voices. But they were shot by the Japanese MP and fell into the pit before the end of their utterances, leaving the clanging, monosyllabic sound coagulating under the riverside night sky, and haunting Lin Piao's mind to this day.

The two Filipinos at the front left seats are still eating snacks, chatting lively. Both wear light blue jeans and jackets, and are behaving intimately. Lin Piao looks at the scenery rapidly passing outside the window, thinking of the years when the US Army counterattacked and landed in downtown Manila. The Seventeenth Infantry

Regiment of the Imperial Japanese Army indiscriminately massacred, slaughtered, raped and looted Philippine citizens. Yet decades later, the race that luckily survived the butcher's knife now manages to earn a living around the world, vigorously, as if a lifetime away. Lin Piao recalls that, in those years, even on the battlefields, the Japanese would not equip the Taiwanese military servicemen with any weapons. However, it was also because of the lack of weaponry that Lin Piao and other Taiwanese military servicemen were bystanders to the purgatory of killing. But this is not to say that the hands of the Taiwanese in the Imperial Army were absolved of the bloodstains of the Japanese Army's brutalities. Word came from the Taiwanese military servicemen who had been transferred from Guangzhou Bay in the mainland and Leizhou Peninsula to Bataan Peninsula, that a small number of Taiwanese volunteer soldiers in the mainland, like the Japanese soldiers, had killed and raped Chinese civilians. "If you've never seen it, you wouldn't know it," a Taiwanese military driver who had been transferred from Guangzhou to the Philippines, with scabs all over his head, told Lin Piao. "Knowing that we're both Taiwanese, you speak Taiwanese to those Taiwanese volunteer soldiers. Unexpectedly, one would slap your face until blood gushed from both your nostrils. 'Bakayaro!' He'd even curse at you. F-k him!"

The scab-headed guy continued, these "volunteers" really thought of themselves as Japanese. "A Taiwanese *gunsō* sergeant raped a woman on the street of Guangzhou in broad daylight. He even used a bayonet to cut open her vagina," said the guy scratching his scabbed head. "Once Taiwanese got their weapons, they became animals. F-k that!"

At that time, Lin Piao was silently smoking Japanese cigarettes. He recalled a tiny, dim and even squalid small grocery store in the Manila suburbs. The shopkeeper of the grocery store was an overseas Chinese of Quanzhou origin, surnamed Iáp. When Lin Piao first visited the small grocery to buy local wine, the storekeeper was full of

fawning smiles. As Lin Piao thought of him as Filipino and used body language to communicate with him, this Iáp from Quanzhou said in Southern Min, in a testing tone:

"Looking for *soju*?"

Lin Piao was astounded. "You speak Taiwanese?" He said, surprised. "I'm like you Taiwanese, we all speak Hoklo," said the Quanzhou guy, piling up a face full of smile lines. Lin asked the Quanzhou man how he knew he was not Japanese. "Japanese soldiers of Taiwanese origin are not equipped with guns. Not even bayonets," said the Quanzhou man.

Since then, "Hoklo" was like the only gurgle of an oasis in this war zone with its barren hills and treacherous rapids, obstinately luring Lin Piao to use the excuse of buying daily necessities to help out the shabby business of the grocery store. On one day, sitting on the wooden chair in front of the store, Lin Piao and that Quanzhou guy exchanged cigarettes, chatting. Lifting up his head, Lin Piao suddenly saw in the somber inner room of the grocery store, the figure of a maiden, around fifteen years old, flash by. Her eyes were big and bright, and slightly opened lips revealed a charm unique to a maiden. "My daughter," the Quanzhou man said in a panic, the smile on his face appearing all the more fawning. But Lin Piao suddenly realized that, behind this man's constant fawning smiles was hidden much fear, suspicion and even loathing. In troubled times when raping and looting were everyday occurrences, this old Quanzhou man, who hid his newly blossoming flower-like daughter deeply in the inner room, was defending his family the best he could with his desperate servility and superficial fawning. When Lin Piao, in his Japanese military uniform, glimpsed at the maiden in the inner room, the Quanzhou man's smile became a hopeless, begging imploration. Lin Piao understood that by wearing a Japanese military uniform, he had always been the scary enemy and fearful foe to the Quanzhou man. Lin Piao silently finished the cigarette. "I'm leaving," he said to the ill-at-ease Quanzhou man in a low voice, stepped onto his military truck and drove off, raising some torrid

dust. After that, Lin Piao felt lonely, felt heart-ache. Several times he thought of returning to that lowly grocery store, yet thinking of that Quanzhou shopkeeper's panicky, precautious and servile smiling face, Lin Piao found he would rather sit on the staircases of the motorcade control room, smoking by himself.

The year before the war ended, even a serviceman driver like Lin Piao could sense that the warfare was severely reversed. Japan's navy and air force reinforcements to the Philippines were on the brink of paralysis. The Filipino counter-Japan armed forces were more active, and not a single day passed by without some anti-Japan sabotage here and there. And the usually hypocritical and cowardly overseas Chinese in the Philippines were secretly in contact with the Filipino Communists, clandestinely providing provisions for the guerillas. and on the other hand the trace of their donation to support Chinese resistance to Japan in the mainland became gradually more evident; the Japanese *Kempeitai* thus issued a secret order, "Purge the antagonistic overseas Chinese," and began to search the stores and households of overseas Chinese gentry-merchants in downtown Manila, arresting and killing them, which developed into the indiscriminate and maniacal arresting, interrogating and murdering of the Chinese people. One day, Lin Piao inadvertently learned at the unit dinner table that, the very next morning, the *Kempeitai* would dispatch military vans to push "purging" further to the suburbs. Lin Piao dropped his bowl and chopsticks, made up a hasty excuse to send for a car, jumped on his truck, and drove directly to that tiny grocery store in the Manila suburbs. The big and bright eyes of the Quanzhou man Mr. Iap's beautiful daughter, her pretty eyes that revealed panic and helplessness, flickered in Lin Piao's head on his way there. As Lin Piao pulled up in front of the grocery store and walked towards the old Quanzhou man who gazed back at him with a puzzled smiling face, he saw an army patrol unit with a Japanese MP and two Japanese gunmen emerge from the side of a row of coconut trees. Lin Piao was

shocked, but immediately kicked fiercely with his leather shoes at a lean swine raised by the Quanzhou man that was digging the earth with its snout and running around. The swine howled in a grating voice. Lin Piao, with furious facial expression, roared angrily at that poor Quanzhou man in "Hoklo":

"The Japanese are gonna slaughter the villagers in the night! Pack your stuff! Leave with your family immediately!" Lin Piao waved his fists, shouting in an angry tone, "Listen up! Hurry!"

The Quanzhou man stared with the eyes of a dead fish, bending and bowing. "Yes, yes," said the Quanzhou man. Seeing the Japanese soldiers approaching, Lin Piao darted forth, slapping the Quanzhou man with full force. The Quanzhou man staggered and fell to the ground.

"Take your family! Leave now!" Lin Piao roared in Southern Min, and then shifted into Japanese to curse: "*Bakayaro!*" He then turned around to stand at attention, saluting the approaching Japanese soldiers. "What happened?" asked the MP. "He ripped me off," Lin Piao answered in awkward Japanese, and then turned around to curse at the Quanzhou man, "*Bakayaro!*" The three Japanese soldiers laughed, climbed into Lin Piao's military van, and drove away in the midst of raised dust. "*Bakayaro!*" Lin Piao said ferociously. As he turned the vehicle in front of the grocery store, again speaking in Southern Min, as if cursing, "Leave when the sun sets!"

The Quanzhou man's family escaped into the mountains that night, their lives saved. Lin Piao, however, has not heard about them since.

By the time the road bus arrives at Kao-hsiung, it is already dusk. As the bus approaches the station, Lin Piao is worried about a conundrum that has been haunting him on the road. How should he, this 75- or 76-year old man face a son in his 50s who has been a tramp for a dozen years? "Bok, let's get back. Don't say anything." Lin Piao plans to tell Him-bok. Maybe Him-bok would be reluctant, too disgraced to go

back, Lin Piao thinks anxiously. And then Lin Piao wants to say, "Bok, Guát-ki is over 30 years old. She always wants to find her dad. She has gone through so much hardship and bitterness, do you know that?" The bus finally drives into the Kaohsiung terminal station. In his mind, Lin Piao says to his son, Bok, "Not to mention that, at my age, people could die as soon as tonight or tomorrow morning. There must be someone there to put me in my coffin, and take me up to the mountain..." Lin Piao, the old man, says to Bok in his mind, not knowing his eyes are brimming with tears. Lin Piao wipes the tears with the back of his hand, getting off the bus. He stands still, looking at a city at night, lit by flashing and flickering neon lights, full of hustle and bustle, feeling bewildered.

5.

Ma Zhengtao exits the Taipei Railway Station, makes a call to Zhu Jing, the son of Zhu Dagui, tells him that he has arrived, and then transfers to the bus that heads to the big suburban public cemetery. A kid that looks like a high school student yields his seat. "Thank you," says Ma Zhengtao. Sitting on the seat, he starts sensing fatigue from inside out. He is an old man over 80 years old after all. When Mr. Li Hansheng passed away, a dozen military officers in casual clothes burnt incense in the funeral hall. But once buried in the ground, there remained only a couple of students and subordinates going to sweep the tomb on Tomb-Sweeping Days, on anniversaries of his death, and on his birthdays. Soon there remained only Ma Zhengtao, Mr. Li Hansheng's attendant Zhu Dagui, and Mr. Li Hansheng's Colonel Secretary Zhao Songyan. A dozen years ago, Zhu Dagui's gastric cancer dragged on for three years, and then he died. In the next year, Zhao Songyan suddenly sank into dementia; when no one was watching him closely he slipped out and couldn't find his way back home. During the ten years from then, the only one who has thought of him, come to Taipei and stopped by this public cemetery

to visit Mr. Li Hansheng was none other than Ma Zhengtao. Ma Zhengtao couldn't come last year, and now the grass is so overgrown that it almost covers the tombstone. At this old age, his stamina has been degrading faster and faster over the years. Fortunately, every time Zhu Dagui's son Zhu Jing is willing to come with Ma Zhengtao; otherwise there is no way Ma Zhengtao can clean up these weeds all by himself.

Ma Zhengtao sits down on a slab beside the tombstone. Not a single person is in the cemetery except for a female worker who wraps her face in ragged calico to prevent sunburn, and sweeps a rich family's graveyard in the new lot in the west end of the cemetery, watering flowers and plants. Ma Zhengtao is reminded of the mass grave site at the edge of Baoding City and Qinghe City, Hebei Province.

That year, he escaped from the washroom entrance at the Jilin Rail Station, not fleeing towards the crowded platform for the departing train bound for Shenyang, but rather scurrying out of the station, vanishing into the flood of people and traffic that went into exile southwards. After walking for days, he arrived in the tumult that was Baoding City.

"Director Ma, it was really you."

Ma Zhengtao turned his head, saw a peasant-looking man carrying a small rucksack, and recognized that it was Liu Lide, a Section Chief in the Changchun Bureau of Protection of Confidential Documents. Ma Zhengtao rapidly glanced in all four directions, his mind thinking of how he was the bait for the Bureau of Public Security in Jilin.

"If there weren't Communists inquiring about your whereabouts, seeing your cadre outfit, I would definitely shun away from you," said Liu Lide with a smile.

"I'll follow you," said Ma Zhengtao. "I don't feel safe following the tide of people with my eyes shut."

Liu said that by walking along this road until tomorrow afternoon, they would reach Qinghe. "Over there, we should be able to find our people," he said. Ma Zhengtao

was again shocked. "I'm hungry," said Ma Zhengtao.

"Director Ma, don't be suspicious of me," said Liu Lide smiling, "I don't trust you either. I have long heard that you were captured by the Communists. Walking with you for half a day, and seeing that your face is emaciated and jaundiced from hunger, then I'm sure: those who serve as informers among the refugees for the Communists shouldn't have suffered from starvation."

Liu Lide fished out half a flatbread from his rucksack and handed it to Ma Zhengtao. "No water to drink with it. Chew slowly, don't choke yourself," he said. Ma Zhengtao felt his hand, which received that half piece of stiffened flatbread, shaking.

"You're right. This cadre outfit of mine is too conspicuous," Ma Zhengtao said while biting his flatbread. He wanted to ask if Liu Lide carried extra clothes with him, but couldn't say it. "Wearing a cadre outfit is inconvenient, but it also has some advantages," said Liu Lide, "it depends, right? We'll try to get a set of used cotton pants and short gown when we get to the edge of Qinghe River."

Who was waiting at "the edge of Qinghe River"? Ma Zhengtao couldn't help wondering, sensing a fear for imminent calamity. "I'll just follow you," Ma Zhengtao said ingratiatingly. Liu Lide talked about years ago, when he violated the inner rules of the Bureau, it was Director Ma who exculpated him. "I've forgotten all about that," said Ma Zhengtao. In fact, he remembered. Back then Liu Lide slept with the wife of a political prisoner he held, and was reported to the State Administration. That half of stiffened flatbread was like adding gasoline to a car, Ma Zhengtao's steps had grown some strength.

After the sky darkened, they found a broken bridge over a dried brook, and settled down to sleep. The breeze that night grew colder and colder. Ma Zhengtao, eyes wide open in the night, listened to the wind. As soon as Liu Lide fell asleep, Ma Zhengtao silently rose, took hold of a shoulder pole, and smashed Liu's head

with his full force. Liu slightly groaned and grunted. The night, in the tumult of a raging war, remained totally silent. Ma Zhengtao reached out his hand to two rag rucksacks. One hard, one soft. Ma Zhengtao grasped the soft one, sprinting up towards the hill by the roadside without turning back.

He did not know how long he ran in the dark. The cloud lifted, revealing the moon, such that cold moonlight spilled over the ground. Ma Zhengtao realized then that he had charged into a mass grave site, covered with withered grass. Breathing heavily, he opened the rag rucksack. In the moonlight, he found three bunches of large-denomination bills, which were depreciating daily like spilling water, five or six gold bars, some gold ornaments and dried rations. Besides these were some folded peasant clothes. "Killed the wrong guy," thought Ma Zhengtao, stupefied. He sat on a tombstone, gradually seeing the farthest place in this dark night, a glow of water lights appearing and disappearing under the moonlight. That must be Qinghe River over there, he thought. He knew that this Qinghe River flowed eastward and exited from Bohai. Once out of Bohai, boundless was the sea and vast was the sky, wild and free. Yet he was tightly trapped in the floundering wave of exile. "Killing Liu Lide was a mistake," he sat silently watching the sky turn from dark to light, his lips pursed tightly, not knowing what to think about. The sky at dawn was like a lamp that gradually lit up the stage, lighting the village at the foot of the hill, where no smoke came from chimneys, lighting up the flood of refugees on the road early in the morning, seeing Qinghe River radiating white light from afar.

Compared with the dilapidated village seen from the mass grave site by Qinghe River, without the sound of a cock crowing or dog barking, Taipei City as seen from this suburban public cemetery on a slope is populated with clusters of skyscrapers. "Uncle Ma." Ma Zhengtao looks toward the direction of the voice, from where Zhu Dagui's son Zhu Jing is approaching. He is tall and bulky, wearing sunglasses with small frames.

"You look chubbier," says Ma Zhengtao smiling.

"Even drinking water makes me fat," Zhu Jing sighs, "you're thinking about something?"

Zhu Jing wears a long-sleeved black shirt. His hands are in cotton gloves. His right hand holds a small bundle of white chrysanthemums, and the plastic bag in his left hand contains two worn sickles.

"Take a break. Take a breath," says Ma Zhengtao. He heaves a sigh. He says he's thinking about himself, Ma Zhengtao, going so far as to flee from Baoding, from morning till dusk to Beiping, then from Tianjin to Shanghai, from Shanghai to Yunnan. When he learned that Szechuan was about to be liberated, he tried to cross the border to stay with the guerilla group in Northern Thailand for a year. "Found your dad and Mr. Li Hansheng as guarantors before coming to Taiwan. Your dad came to Taiwan with Mr. Li a year earlier," says Ma, "how many years since he passed away?"

"Twelve years," says Zhu Jing. He takes out a half-rusted sickle and a bottle of mineral water from the plastic bags. He gives the mineral water to Ma Zhengtao.

"Your dad got married late in Taiwan. Got married in his forties," says Ma Zhengtao. He opens the mineral water bottle and gulps it down. Zhu Jing begins folding up his sleeves to cut the grass. Ma Zhengtao recalls when Zhu Dagui got married, he only invited two tables of guests. It was hosted by Mr. Li Hansheng. Mr. Li Hansheng looked even more senile than when Ma Zhengtao had re-encountered him in Taiwan in the spring of 1952. After coming to Taiwan, Ma Zhengtao found that Mr. Li Hansheng lived in a small dorm room of the Shilin Bureau of Protection of Confidential Documents. Mr. Li Hansheng shut the windows and doors for him, letting Ma Zhengtao relate in detail the whole story of how he turned himself in, and then was "used by the enemy." Li Hansheng fell into silence for a long while. "I thought it over when coming to Taiwan. If staying in the mainland was a dead end, and coming to Taiwan was to be the death of me, then I'd

rather die in the KMT's hands," Ma Zhengtao said to Mr. Li Hansheng, "from now on, I'll follow you, Commissioner."

"As for those who were dragged into it by you, if they were killed by the Communists later, you might as well say they're forever silenced. If put into jail alive, they wouldn't get out for a dozen years or so," muttered Mr. Li Hansheng. A month later, with Mr. Li Hansheng's guarantee and recommendation, Ma Zhengtao went to report to the building that housed the Bureau of Protection of Confidential Documents, which was responsible for the task of "Purge and Prevent" like wind blowing and fire spreading across the island. Ma Zhengtao, who boasted a long-term résumé, from the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics to the Director-General of the Bureau of Protection of Confidential Documents, no longer went into interrogation rooms to grill the "communist suspects" caught day in and day out from all over Taiwan, but rather endlessly attended meetings behind screens, decrypting written confessions that piled up in mountains, pointing out the flaws in them, and instructing the direction of the interrogation. Tens of thousands of Taiwanese and mainlander youths were sent to the Machangding execution ground, or locked up in prisons to serve long-term sentences.

Zhu Jing has almost done cutting the weeds around the grave. Ma Zhengtao sees him panting slightly as he wipes the sweat off his face with his sleeves. "Take a rest," says Ma Zhengtao with a smile. Zhu Jing unbuttons his front shirt, and lights a cigarette against the mountain breeze.

"The marriage between your dad and mom was hosted by this Mr. Li Hansheng," says Ma.

"So I've heard."

"Your name, Zhu Jing, was also given by him."

Zhu Jing lifts up his head. "This I've never heard. I sometimes wonder, what is behind this character Jing my father used," he says.

"Jing, means grandiosity."

Ma Zhengtao says—as the old saying goes—“Jing Xing Xing Zhi.” “Jing Xing, walk the big road—a broad and open road, perhaps,” Ma Zhengtao says, “Jing Xing Xing Zhi means when you’re walking, you must walk on the just and honorable road, don’t stop ‘til the end. This was Mr. Li’s expectation for you.”

“Oh.”

That was in 1963, Ma Zhengtao remembers. Zhu Dagui invited people to his baby’s one-month-old celebratory banquet, and Mr. Li gave the baby a name right on the spot. The banquet ended. “Zhengtao, send me home,” said Mr. Li Hansheng. Ma Zhengtao hailed a taxi. Mr. Li Hansheng got on the taxi first, looking outside the window. “Let’s go to the botanical garden,” he said.

Ma Zhengtao helped the obviously aged Mr. Li Hansheng walk into the botanical garden. Mr. Li Hansheng walked very slowly. “You’re tired,” said Ma Zhengtao, worried. Mr. Li Hansheng did not speak, but sat on a bench under the shade of a tree, panting slightly. Sitting beside him, Ma Zhengtao saw Mr. Li Hansheng’s face, murky and pale.

“I saw the documents,” Mr. Li Hansheng said after sitting listlessly for a while. “The Communists amnestied a whole bunch of war criminals.”

Li Hansheng said that the Communist Party had amnestied the first bunch of “war criminals” at the end of 1959. “All of them were high-level political, military, secret staff of our KMT Party,” said Mr. Li Hansheng. “You remember Tianjin Garrison Commander Chen Changjie?”

“Yes.”

“He’s one of the first to be released,” said Mr. Li Hansheng. “A bunch of them was amnestied last year. The BIS Major General Shen Zui was also out... This year they amnestied another group.”

The chirping of cicadas in the botanical garden clamored all the more. Ma Zhengtao felt a heavy stone growing in his heart.

“From what I saw, to this point, those who were released were the highest ranking figures among the captured KMT

members,” panted Li Hansheng. “Kang Ze, who was equally famous as Mr. Dai in the BIS, was released this year.”

Ma Zhengtao said, if these people revealed publicly that he had surrendered and had arrested people for the Communists, he would take the responsibility all by himself. “Suppose some day they ask you. I didn’t tell you anything, and you didn’t know anything.” Ma Zhengtao lowered his head.

Li Hansheng heaved a sigh. A few male and female students were sketching on their easels nearby. “The ones you put in jail for the Communists during that year were all small potatoes. Probably won’t get out at the moment,” he said. “Besides, my ailing body is already half in my coffin. Maybe I’ll be already gone before they can implicate me.” He started to laugh. “On the contrary, you should lay all the blames on me.”

“Commissioner Li!” said Ma Zhengtao with reddened eyes. “I can never do such a thing.” In the latter half of that year, Ma Zhengtao followed Li Hansheng’s arrangement, retiring from the Garrison Command Headquarters, and voluntarily transferring to a regional county government to assume a low post of overseeing confidential security. Away from the center, with his smiling face, he retreated to the small county. In 1975, the Communist Party released all “Civil War criminals.” When Ma Zhengtao learned this confidential information locally, three years had already passed, and nothing had happened. He also knew that a few released ex-KMT secret agents applied for entry into Taiwan, but were simply rejected entrance despite their arrival in Hong Kong. Ma Zhengtao stealthily sighed with relief.

Zhu Jing cuts the weeds, and is soaked in sweat. Now Mr. Li Hansheng’s tombstone looks like a man who had just had his hair cut, neat and shiny. Zhu Jing starts stacking up weeds, and tries to ignite them with a lighter.

“Forgot to bring an old newspaper to light them up,” said Zhu Jing after failing several times to light a fire. Ma Zhengtao

fishes out two invoices and a handful of tissue paper. Zhu Jing carefully lights a fire. A glow of bluish white smoke floats in the tail of the wind. Zhu Jing watches the tongues of flame attentively. "Next month I would like to pay a visit to Suzhou," said Zhu Jing. Zhu Dagui was from Suzhou. Ma Zhengtao does not speak. The damp weeds apparently cannot fully burn, and emit a thick white smoke. The chirping of light-vented Bulbul comes from far away. Zhu Jing says he knows that it was not until his dad was seriously ill that his dad expressed his nostalgia for his old home in Suzhou. "Tears rolled down his face whenever he said so," Zhu Jing says, smoking and looking at the smog-shrouded Taipei City.

Of course, Ma Zhengtao understands what Jing's words mean. Truth of the matter is, he is asking if Ma Zhengtao had ever wanted to go home. Ma Zhengtao thinks, the grudge between him and the Communist Party is too deep. Before Mr. Li Hansheng fled from the Northeast, the number of underground agent suspects arrested and killed under Ma Zhengtao's guidance was at least 200. Now, those who committed murder and arson even more ferociously than he did are being released, he says to himself. Can't release them, he says to himself, genuine grievances nursed against him were even greater on the mainland. Not to mention that, once on the mainland, how should he meet with the old comrade-in-arms he implicated in Jilin? Ma Zhengtao silently argues with himself.

The water content of the weeds is high, so the tongue of flame is extinguished after a puff of white smoke. Zhu Jing suddenly thinks of the old newspapers wrapping the bouquet of white chrysanthemums. This time the fire burns more fervently. Zhu Jing uses the tip of the sickle to slacken the haystack, allowing more oxygen to contact the smoldering kindling, which shoots out orange tongues of fire. Amidst the hissing burning sound, the thick smoke chokes the tears out of Zhu Jing.

"Uncle Ma, I have been thinking for a long time." Zhu Jing says, "The Taiwanese have treated us as outsiders. No matter

how you act as a cowardly bastard, you're still an outsider." He says that if the mainlanders also treat themselves as outsiders from the mainland, both sides of the road are blocked. "My dad spent half of his life in Taiwan. His death settled all scores," says Zhu Jing, "but our generation still has so many long days to live ..."

Ma Zhengtao stands up to avoid the thick smoke blown by the headwind. He does not talk. He knows that even without saying Zhu Jing will understand. They actually fought over this once. Ma Zhengtao said, many mainlanders bear grudges against the Communist Party. "As long as the KMT is still ruling Taiwan, I will follow the KMT closely, rely on the KMT closely. There is no other way," Ma Zhengtao once said. "But where is the KMT now? Once the opposition party took over presidency, the KMT is died!" said Zhu Jing, his face blushing. "You can't say that. Politics, power, finance, security system, and the army—don't you forget—are still in the hands of us KMT. The Blue Sky White Sun flag is still wavering ..." said Ma Zhengtao as if smiling, but not quite.

"Anyway, I'll go back to visit Suzhou first," says Zhu Jing, "if it looks befitting, next time I'll bring my dad's bone ashes back as well ... to fulfill his wish."

"That's right," says Ma Zhengtao. Mr. Li Hansheng, Zhu Dagui and himself are doomed never to return to their hometown, never to write to families and friends in the mainland, doomed forever to turn their backs on the mountains and rivers long grown inside their flesh and blood ... , Ma Zhengtao thinks, and can't help feeling a little sadness.

The scythed off weeds burn into dark red ashes. Ma Zhengtao puts the white chrysanthemum bouquet on the stone base in front of the tomb. He stands up. His right hand holds Zhu Jing's left hand. He stands still in front of Mr. Li Hansheng's tomb, bowing three times in a row.

"Mr. Hansheng was like the third parent for me and your dad," Ma Zhengtao gazes at the tombstone, saying as if in deep meditation.

The two of them leave the cemetery in the twilight. Zhu Jing lets Ma Zhengtao sit in the second-hand Civic parked on the hillside. The car drives downward, along the mountain road. Ma Zhengtao takes out three thousand-dollar bills from his wallet.

"Uncle Ma, what are you doing ...?"

"These are not for you," says Ma Zhengtao, "you always help me to express my gratitude to Mr. Hansheng. It's hard to tell how many more times I could come."

"Uncle Ma ..."

"Don't know how happy Mr. Hansheng would be if he knew about your filiality."

Ma looks outside the window, grinning.

"Uncle Ma, I should pay you a visit some time," Zhu Jing takes the money, looking at the rearview mirror.

"You could come," says Ma Zhengtao happily.

"Uncle Ma, your place is not easy to find, though," says Zhu Jing.

"Find Loyalty and Filiality Park on Zhongxiao Road, then you'll find it," says Ma Zhengtao, "the first alley at the right from the entrance of Loyalty and Filiality Park."

"Oh, got it," says Zhu Jing.

6.

Lin Piao thinks: as it is often said, "Relatives are considered by the generation, not by the age." Tsiu Bing-hué, who called Lin Piao grand-cousin-uncle and is actually only four or five years younger than Him-bok, is already 50. When Lin Piao returned from Nanyang he rented a castor oil plant field to grow rice, and held on to it until the 1949 "Rent Reduction to 37.5 Percent," the year when the field surprisingly became his own and Him-bok had just passed his ninth year. During that time, Him-bok often took the four-year-old Hué to the field, catching loaches and edible frogs. Bing-hué's father was a poor farmhand, and the Rent Reduction didn't make him a well-off yeoman. Him-bok often brought the nose-running Hué home for dinner. Lin Piao would fill a big bowl of soup for both kids, soaked with sponge gourd soup stir-fried

with lard, and then both kids would just sit on the threshold wolfing down the rice. Hué, more than four years younger than Him-bok, ate as fast and as much as Him-bok. The poor were endeared by the poor. Tsiu Bing-hué remembers everything, still calling Lin Piao "grand-cousin-uncle" in accordance with rural customs, and daring not to directly call "Bok" when mentioning Lin Him-bok in front of Lin Piao, but still customarily calling him "cousin-uncle."

Tsiu Bing-hué picks up Lin Piao, taking Lin to a small restaurant when the night is about to fall, before leading Lin to a towering pylon in an alley beside the Normal School. The foundation of the pylon is made of fairly thick concrete, and it looks like a four-footed bridge pier, allowing a person to stand and crouch inside.

"My cousin-uncle sleeps right here."

Tsiu Bing-hué points at the "house" framed by four pier pillars with only a sturdy rooftop but without any wall. Old Lin Piao feels a bitter sorrow in his heart, seeing several pieces of fallen leaves on the concrete ground, not knowing which garden they flew in from. At the foot of the inner pier are stacked some empty cans and bottles on a piece of evening newspaper from yesterday. Lin Piao looks around, "Why isn't there bedding?" Lin Piao says with a deep frown. "There're many cartons here." Hué points at a big thick khaki carton against another pier. Lin Piao has seen its kind at the Taipei Bridge in Dadaocheng. In his head emerge the hobos sleeping on flattened thick cartons and then folding two big cartons into a windshield. His eyes mist and his breath catches in the throat. "I'm sure that's my cousin-uncle Him-bok. Can't be wrong," says Tsiu Bing-hué, "this time I'll definitely persuade him to go home." Lin Piao is absorbed in looking at the cans and bottles at the piers' feet. "This unfilial... unfilial son." He mutters. The alley is the backyard of a row of houses. Someone plants sponge gourds with yellow flowers in their backyard. There are many pots of flowers which, not watered, have long withered. Gradually it becomes so dark that Lin Piao and Tsiu Bing-hué can

hardly see each other's face clearly. Tsiu Bing-hué lifts up his hands to look at his watch by the lamplight leaking from someone's kitchen. Fifteen past eight. "My cousin-uncle should be back around nine," says Tsiu Bing-hué. Mosquitoes start buzzing as they attack. How does Him-bok sleep with so many mosquitoes? Lin Piao scratches the itchy spots on his arm, thinking silently.

However, the two of them wait until nine forty-five, and there is still no sign of anyone coming into the alley. From the windows of one after another dark building yellowish gentle lamplight leaks out.

"Grand-cousin-uncle, cousin-uncle Him-bok will definitely come back to sleep. I have been following him for days," Tsiu Bing-hué says sincerely, "but I have to go on the graveyard shift at 10 p.m." Hué mentioned on the phone that he oversees a production line in a fiberfill molding factory. "Go ahead," says Lin Piao. "Call me from the station if you find my cousin-uncle," says Tsiu Bing-hué, "maybe I could make time to see cousin-uncle at the station. He was very good to me when we were little." Definitely, says Lin Piao. Hué rushes away in a hurry. But, Lin Piao thinks, if he indeed sees Him-bok, and Him-bok is willing to come home, he will spend a substantial amount of money to hail a taxi non-stop to Ho Town no matter how far.

Before long, someone runs toward him from the other end of the alley. Lin Piao stands up to look, and sees, to his surprise, Tsiu Bing-hué coming back with a mosquito-repelling coil as well as water and snack bought from a convenience store. "When you meet, don't say anything too harsh to my cousin-uncle Him-bok," says Hué, "let the past flow away like water. Persuade him to come home no matter how," Tsiu Bing-hué hurries away again upon finishing his words.

"I am off to work now," he says. "Go ahead," says Lin Piao.

Half past ten, still without the sound or shadow of anyone walking in. Lin Piao is tired of standing. He might as well sit in

the "house" under the pylon. He lights up the mosquito-repelling coil. Green smoke that carries the smell of some sort of medicine floats from a tiny spot of dark red firelight. Lin Piao opens his eyes, staring at this only entrance of the alley. All alone, he starts telling Him-bok the words swelling from the bottom of his heart.

Him-bok, listen to me, if it's really you this time, if this time you're willing to come home with daddy, our family will be reunited. Your daughter Guát-ki, count yourself and you'll know, is now over 30. She'll come visit me the very next week, said she's going to bring a friend over to have fun. If you really come back, our family of the three of us will be reunited. No war, no natural disasters, how come our family is scattered around like this? This is fate? I can't believe it. You sold the land in that year, the remaining money is still there, it's not that there's no home for you to return. Him-bok, why torture yourself roaming around, like a beggar?

In that year, when your family moved out, Guát-ki was only two or three. By the time you sent Guát-ki back, she was 12. You brought her back to our Ho Town, but you went so far as not to step into our house. You got off at the highway station, drew a map, wrote the address, and asked Ki to try to find her way home. How come you were so cruel-hearted?

But this child Ki was special. Taken out by you at the age of two or three, returned at 12 or 13, but as if leaving for only two or three days. The day she returned, I still remember. Grandpa, I'm Lin Guát-ki. I was dumbfounded for a long while. I said, is that my grandchild? She said with a smile, "yep". Bok, this daughter of yours is not only pretty, she's good-natured as well. Kissed me upon entering home, rattling with her grandpa. Then I knew the year when you closed the factory, she was already in the fifth grade. The next year, you and your woman Po-kui began waiting for odd jobs at the Taipei Daqiaotou and Longshan Temple in Wanhua, paid by daily wages. Ki said you rented a cabin

under a water gate where the poor lived. Days were difficult. Ki said when she was about to be in the sixth grade, your woman left home. Gone. I asked her why, she just said with a smile, life's so exhausting, so difficult, that my mom couldn't live on. Why aren't you afraid of difficulties? Your daughter said, if I'm also afraid of difficulties, who's going to take care of my dad? Bok, listen, those words were from a teenage girl.

Heard that your woman Po-kui left you and went away alone, I was also pissed off, but also felt sorry for her. Po-kui was a relative of your grandma from Nanliao. Back then, they didn't despise our poverty, "reinforce old ties by kinship marriage," that was best. Married into our household, except for not talking much, what a women's virtue she had! Guát-ki said her mom couldn't endure difficulties, gone. Of course I didn't believe it. People from Nanliao work hard tilling and reaping, it's well-known. Men and women all worked till death. After marriage into our household, Po-kui and you went out early in the morning, returned late at night; it seemed that she worked with joy and willingness. There must've been a reason for Po-kui to leave. You should explain to me. You don't have a little sister, Po-kui was like my daughter. Said she couldn't bear difficulties, Him-bok, I can't believe it.

This Guát-ki of ours, 12 years old, cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, everything, helped me to clean up my pigsty of a house within days. You worked in the morning, seemed like your household chores were all taken care of by this grandchild of mine. Guát-ki came to study in junior high school here. Her grades were fine. Such a lovely grandchild, when she was still under 17 years old she was about to go to business high school, but then ran off with a barber from out of town.

Bok, you didn't know any of these things. How could you know? You went roaming around, to be a hobo, you wouldn't know even if a mishap befell us grandpa-and-grandchild. Ah, I'm mad! If that barber was really in front of me, if I met him, I'd definitely beat the hell outta

him. I ran to the train station, to the highway station, to find them. It's so easy to go on a ride today, where to find them? The owner of Bright Moon Barbershop cursed that barber to everyone who went there for a haircut, saying that the barber took away some hairdressing gadgets. There were three chairs in Bright Moon Barbershop, two for washing women's hair and doing their hairdos, only one for cutting men's hair. It wasn't until later that we found out our Guát-ki often went to see women having their hair washed and done, said half-jokingly she wanted to go to Bright Moon to be an apprentice. But never had anyone seen our Ki talk to that barber. I'm mad, Bok, the family used to be whole, this kind of thing happened because you wouldn't come back.

But, really, it was my fault. At that time, me and those who had served as Japanese soldiers in Nanyang from North and South were being crazy, crazy about asking the Japanese government for compensation, to reissue the *onkyū* that should've been issued to us after Japan lost the war. If I hadn't been so crazy, thinking crazily for what was said to be a large sum of Japanese money, always running everywhere from North to South, not coming back to sleep for days, Guát-ki wouldn't have run off without me knowing.

A 16- or 17-year-old girl, ran off with a homeless barber. On the other hand, the Tokyo District Court dismissed our appeal in that year. Bok, they said that we no longer had Japanese citizenships, did not qualify for *onkyū* from Japan. At that time, when Japan issued the red sheet to conscribe people, who dared not to go? The Japanese distributed military uniforms for us to put on, then said how kind the Emperor was to let Taiwanese be Japanese. "Mainland and Taiwan as One," this Japanese expression I said, I knew you wouldn't understand. That meant mainland Japanese and us Taiwanese were equal, were both good sons of the Emperor. Making us delighted and willing, to fight to the death for the Japanese nation, for the Emperor His Majesty. Today we want them to issue annual pensions to

us as demobilized Japanese vets, but they turned away from us.

A lovely grandchild was gone. The Japanese said clearly they won't give us money. Bok, you are all over the place, life and whereabouts unknown. But I always thought, even if you and your daughter were dead, they should let me see your bodies; if alive, I should see you in person, then I, Lin Piao, could shut my eyes when I die. Seven or eight more years passed by like this. One midnight, somebody knocked on the door. Opened the door, saw a young woman, on her knees, knelt down to me. That young lady said, Grandpa, I'm Guát-ki. Bok, your daughter Guát-ki came back. I helped her up. Guát-ki sat beside the dining table in the kitchen, wailing without stopping. My heart ached. Eight years of harsh life, a 16-year-old girl rolling in society, how could she not be abused, swindled, bullied? I poured a cup of water for her. Finally home, I should let her cry to her heart's content. Outside, it's not easy even to cry.

But I didn't expect, Bok, from the beginning to the end, that she was crying for you, her dad.

She said, when she was 13, you took her to the highway station of our Ho Town, wanted her to try to find her way back to live with me all by herself. She said you, Him-bok, on the bus, in the station, swore over and over again, that as Guát-ki graduated from junior high, you'd definitely come back to take her to study in senior high in Taipei, but asked her not to disclose your plan to Grandpa. Then I remembered, the year when Guát-ki finished junior high, struggling, not willing to take the High School Entrance Exam. Him-bok, you let Guát-ki wait for you for almost two years, without any news from you. At the age of 16, Guát-ki ran off with that guy, mostly because that barber promised to take her to Taipei to look for her dad. That was what Guát-ki said.

Your daughter and Bing-huat, that barber, went to Taipei. They first contracted a co-op barbershop in an office, and later they opened up a small beauty parlor on the street by themselves. In the first months

in Taipei, whenever your daughter had time, she went with Bing-huat to Daqiaotou, Taipei and Longshan Temple in Wanhua to look and ask for your whereabouts, but found no news. Guát-ki said, after three or four years, those who were waiting for odd jobs in Daqiaotou and at Longshan Temple entrance had already been replaced by another bunch of people, no one remembered her daddy anymore. I asked your daughter, why was there no message for her grandpa over so many years? Your daughter said, she followed Bing-huat to Taipei at that time, grandpa must be too angry to forgive her. She thought unless one day she could find you, Him-bok, and come home together, her grandpa wouldn't forgive her. If she hadn't said that, I wouldn't know that the personalities of you father-and-daughter were so alike.

On one rainy night, your daughter said, it was almost midnight. And the rain fell like a big basin of water pouring from the sky. Although Guát-ki held a small umbrella, her clothes were soaking wet. Guát-ki said that she ran and walked, hid from the rain under the overhanging sidewalk of a closed bank. Then she saw, right beside her, a homeless guy holding his own bedding, squatting on the passageway, hiding from spattering splashes, and looked at the cars speeding by on the street.

Even on a dark rainy night, by the street light, Guát-ki recognized you at first sight, although your appearance had changed. Guát-ki said she called out to you: Daddy, I'm your daughter, Guát-ki. That's how you were reunited. Right in that passageway on that rainy night, Guát-ki said you, father and daughter, cried and then talked, talked and then cried. You told her that daytime jobs were hard. You were too old, nobody wanted you. There was only heavy and cheap work left for you to do. Being a porter for moving companies, cleaning oil sinks in factories, or packaging goods for long-distance trucks. Eventually, no one came to hire you. Ki said that she asked you, for so many years how come you never thought of coming back to her grandpa? You didn't say anything. Guát-ki

said she couldn't stop crying thinking about how much you had suffered. You silently looked at the road as the rain started to stop. You suddenly said to Ki, Ki, you bring me back to your Grandpa's. Guát-ki wailed. You said don't cry Guát-ki. Dawn started to break. You go back to prepare, I will wait for you to take me to cut my hair, take a shower, change my clothes. Tell you the truth, Him-bok, you were too cruel-hearted. Guát-ki turned around, took the taxi home, grabbed a handful of money, rushed to the scene with her man Bīng-huat, in less than an hour, but in the passage-way remained only your bedding and a big paper bag with filthy clothes in it. You were nowhere to be seen.

Him-bok, now dawn is breaking. For a whole night, in this alley, although a drunkard came in to puke, and took a long pee after he puked, there was no trace of you. To tell you the truth, Hué took me here, when I saw it was empty, especially without your bedding, I thought that you must have left. It was impossible for you to hide from me knowing that I would come to find you today. All I could say is that it must be that we damned father and son are still not destined to meet. You're gone again, you could be anywhere. You do have a home, but you chose to roam. Your daughter couldn't find you, didn't say a word for days. That was what her man told me later. She suddenly asked her man for a divorce. Must divorce, no matter how. Huat, I'm sorry. Your daughter told her man, I can no longer let days go by in the hair salon. I've got to go everywhere to find my dad. She left Bīng-huat, sold life insurances policies from North to South, sold health food, worked as a beautician, a restaurant supervisor ... wherever she went, after inquiring about the street bums' gathering place, she would go there to try to find you.

It is said that the vagrant "street bums" are all gobblers and lazy sluggards. I don't know about the others, but my son Him-bok is definitely not like that. Around the time you married Po-kui into our family, you rose early and returned late. Farming

and reaping. Which young lad in our village could match your work? Seeing you work your hardest, willing to work then, I recalled receiving military mail in the thick forest of Nanyang, informing that your mom had given birth to a boy for me. Him-bok, you wouldn't have known. All alone on the dangerous battlefield, even for a second-tier military serviceman or staff, only the minutes and the seconds when you were still alive counted. Next minute, next second, dead or alive, nobody could foresee. So, your ties with your relatives, family, homeland ... were all severed. The relatives and homeland that you didn't know if you would come back alive to see were in fact no longer related to you. But that military mail suddenly pulled a thick and firm tie between me and you the baby, and therefore the baby's mother, the baby's Grandpa. Coming back alive suddenly became extremely important, and for no reason I believed that I definitely would come back, definitely could come back, only because I had my own flesh and blood. I stuffed that military mail in my pocket, took it out to read from time to time. Bok, that letter's paper was worn out from my over-reading, but the fuzzy, faded handwriting I could still remember. It was those days of heavy rainfall I encountered when fleeing from the American soldiers in the forest that eventually soaked that letter in my pocket completely, and turned it into a pulp. Once in the deep mountain woods, knowing Japan's defeat for sure, the Japanese cried, the Japanese committed suicide. Quite a few Taiwanese cried as well, feeling their future was bleak. What's strange was that, for Japan's defeat I didn't feel ecstatic, but inside my mind I was assured, *assured*, that I would finally come home alive to see my son, and while others were crestfallen, I couldn't stop estimating your age, guessing how tall you must have been.

I boarded a coal ship from the Philippines to return to Taiwan, and disembarked at the Port of Kaohsiung. Looked around, I didn't see your mom with you in her arms to pick me up, and my heart suddenly

throbbled uncontrollably. A mainlander official and a Taiwanese picked us up, gave us a little bit of travelling fare, told us to go home by ourselves. The day I arrived home, neighbors and several poor relatives came to our house. Your grand-auntie said your mom passed away just a year ago. The poor and the diseased couldn't be treated, said your grand-auntie while weeping. Piao came back, and it was a joyous occasion. Don't wail, said a neighbor. At that moment, I saw a child hiding behind an uncle. How well he had grown, my son, I thought. You had slightly popped-out eyes, double eyelids as if carved by a knife. As soon as I saw them I knew it was my son. Your eyes didn't look like mine, but too much like your mom's. Too much alike. That wrinkled- and teary-faced uncle of mine pushed you forward towards me. "Say Dad," my aunt said. You were frightened to tears. That was when I started to cry my heart out ...

Him-bok, you should come home. What kind of afflicted sorrow made you wander and suffer, you must clarify. I'm old now. Someday I won't be able to get up to put on the shoes that I took off the previous night before going to bed, I need someone to wash me, clothe me, put me in the coffin, burn some incense to send me up the mountains. Now the morning has already broken. The smell of fried eggs floats from someone else's kitchen. Last time, Guát-ki let you run away. This time, your old father didn't see you. But if you are alive, I need to see you; if you are dead, I need to see your body. I won't shut my eyes before I find you. Please come home.

Lin Piao carries a small bag of snacks bought for him by his grand-cousin-nephew Hué, and dragging his fatigued body, he walks out of the alley. Outside the alley is a big road full of increasing hustle and bustle. Him-bok, you simple-minded son, you unfilial son. Lin Piao says silently to this gradually awakened city, tears brimming in his eyes.

Lin Piao falls asleep on the bus back to Ho Town, dreaming of his son Him-bok

sleeping in the small pavilion at the corner of Loyalty and Filiality Park ...

7.

Not long after Ma Zhengtao returned from visiting Li Hansheng's tomb, his body suddenly senses weakness for no reason. Now he seldom practices his hand-swinging routine in Loyalty and Filiality Park. After the solar New Year, this Ho Town in southern Taiwan that hardly ever has cold weather is suddenly struck by a powerful cold front coming from the Mongolian grassland. However, the heat of Presidential Election escalates degree by degree across the island. Many old comrade-in-arms who lost contacts for years telephone him from everywhere, cursing Taiwan Independence. "Old Ma, if they really came to power, we mainlanders would die without a burial place," a retired Director-General Cao of Shanxi origin said. "Won't happen," says Ma, "playing the election game, even if the KMT is unable to attack, it has enough to defend its political power. How we helped the Party with elections, how we organized and mobilized, you remember them all." Director-General Cao says Ma has been hiding in the countryside for a dozen years, no longer knowing that the situation has changed drastically. Director-General Cao strongly exhorts Ma Zhengtao to definitely vote for "Mr. Soong."⁷ Same with Zhu Jing's several calls. "I vote for my KMT," says Ma Zhengtao. "If your dad is still alive, he will do the same. Without the KMT there'll be no Ma Zhengtao, no Zhu Dagui." From the North of Taiwan, Zhu Jing boldly reproaches the KMT President over the phone: "The KMT is long gone, Uncle Ma, long collapsed," says Zhu Jing. Zhu Jing continues, now the mainlanders lead their lives nonchalantly on the surface, but are horrified to the bones! As long as Taiwanese are present, they never dare to speak out the words in their stomachs. They also try to learn Southern Min with stutters. "Uncle Ma, you ... you're old now. Me and my daughter-in-law and son are unable to move to the US or Canada, to run away

from here," says Zhu Jing, "but our family can't lead a worried and terrified life on a daily basis." Ma Zhengtao falls silent for a while, and says, "Once leaving the KMT, Mr. Soong can't even protect himself, who else can he protect?" Ma Zhengtao didn't expect Zhu Jing to be enraged. "Alright, Uncle Ma, you keep sleeping and dreaming," Zhu Jing says in a cold voice, "when the moment comes, you won't even know how you die."

Astounded, Ma Zhengtao hangs up with great force.

"This kid has crossed the line," Ma mumbles to himself.

As the outcome of the Election reveals, the KMT has indeed lost its rivers and mountains in Taiwan. Ma Zhengtao is dumbfounded, alone for days in his house, unable to make of this what should be a drastic unforeseen event that turns heaven and earth upside down for him. For the following six months, he sees on the TV tens of thousands of senior mainlanders band together on the square in front of the Office of the President in Taipei, waving Blue Sky, White Sun, and a Wholly Red Earth flags.⁸ Ma Zhengtao has seen countless demonstrations and marches to overthrow the KMT with tens of thousands masses, instigated by "espionage bandits," using students, news reporters, professors and democrats, but never has he seen tens of thousands of people who, like him, regard the KMT as home, as mother, as asylum, all gathering together to clamor in front of the Office of the President—the symbol of the KMT's 50 years of power—in the Bo'ai Special District, to express their dejection, infuriation, fear and sorrow towards the KMT's loss of political power. For the first time, Ma Zhengtao realizes from the outcry, the senile tears and the infuriation on the TV, the deep hesitation,⁹ disquietude, and fear that Zhu Jing expressed over the phone.

All of a sudden, Ma Zhengtao feels as if the record of half of his life has become a blank sheet of paper: all the records on his household certificate have disappeared, his bankbook has become entirely blank, the

notes on his identification card have vanished, the records of his Party membership and discharged veteran certificate have all faded, become illegible. That half of his life of kidnapping, arresting, grilling, judging and sentencing from Old Manchukuo *Kempeitai*, to the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics, to the State Secrets Bureau, eventually to the Garrison Command Headquarters, has all at once appeared to be matter-of-fact and self-confident thanks to the everlasting KMT, without the nightmare of self-attribution. From now on, it's hard to guarantee the day won't come when those innumerable files about killing, with his signatures on them, tightly sealed in various institutions, are disclosed and publicized. He becomes a man falling in an endless void. He has no road ahead, nor a safe place to live. It seems that he is suddenly forsaken by an enormous game of deception, plummeting towards a bottomless, eternal void and darkness.

Ma Zhengtao becomes skinny, staying indoors all the time. He starts clearing up his closets and drawers, collecting documents and identification papers. He fishes out bronze handcuffs from the bottom of a carton. These bronze-steel alloy handcuffs have followed him for half of his life, in his carton, since the Old Manchurian era. During these days, every night under the light, Ma Zhengtao concentrated attentively on brass-polishing the handcuffs that had been rusted by time into a dark auburn color. Ma Zhengtao then oiled the cuffs which, once slightly touched, would immediately move in a half circle and cuff up. During the time in the Northeast, so many youngsters' wrists were locked tightly, quickly and agilely whenever he slightly knocked this pair of frequently-oiled handcuffs. The more they struggled, the tighter they bit. Ma Zhengtao always found enjoyment in it.

About a month later, following the stench, people find in that solitary old house Ma Zhengtao's dead body on the bed, his hands cuffed at the back by a pair of

golden handcuffs. His entire head is tightly wrapped in a big plastic bag. There is a little pile of burned documents on the floor. A shiny key to the cuffs has been thrown far away, by the door of the bedroom. The smiling-without-joy corners of his lips hang on a face whose eyes are half open, revealing deep sorrow.

"No trace of fighting and struggling was found in the room, but the police haven't ruled out the possibility of homicide. The whole case is still subject to further investigation."

In a tiny corner of the Local Society page in the newspapers next day, this not-so-conspicuous news item is published.

8.

After returning from Kaohsiung, Lin Piao sees another letter in the mailbox from Guát-ki, who says her work has become more hectic due to the annual settlement account, and she probably won't take her friend home until after the Lunar New Year. The Election is gradually coming to the boil, mobilizing almost every man and woman, old and young, everywhere. Every morning, there are no early birds in Loyalty and Filiality Park who do not talk about the Election, and Tsan Kim-hái is especially enthusiastic. He says Legislator Chen Yen-lei was very pleased with that parade; says although he wasn't born early enough to be a Japanese soldier, his father was a Japanese soldier of Taiwanese origin who died in Nanyang; says when he saw the Japan navy flag fluttering against the wind that day, his "tears almost fell."

By car and plane, Tsan Kim-hái has been all over Taiwan, from North to South, mobilizing all *senyū* who had been to Nanyang and Huanan. Tsan Kim-hái says, now don't talk about the *onkyū* of demobilized soldiers. "They Japanese never admitted that we are Japanese, that's alright. Now we only talk about the unpaid military pensions and unsettled military postal savings you Japanese have been in arrears since Japan's defeat ...," says Tsan Kim-hái.

"Japanese spirit is all about trust and justice," Lin Piao says. "He who owes shall pay back. That is trust and justice."

Tsan Kim-hái says, it seems that the Japanese are going to pay the money. It's just that the Japanese money is of 50 years ago, in arrears until today, how to convert its value? To canvass for the Election, a few months ago, Tsan Kim-hái specially gathered a dozen Japanese soldiers of Taiwanese origin around Tainan to have Japanese cuisine together.

"Originally, the Japanese said the compensation would be calculated by a hundred and twenty times," says Tsan Kim-hái. "We wouldn't allow it. Eventually they said two hundred times. No more bargaining. We didn't concede either."

The old men in the Japanese restaurant complained indignantly. Thousands of Japanese yen in savings, converted by a 120 times, amounted to merely several hundred thousand NT Dollars. "Taiwanese people's lives are worthless like this," an old man who dyed his hair into a blinding black color said. "All we asked for is to convert it according to the commodity price ratio of the past 50 years. We don't want to take advantage of the Japanese. He who owes shall pay back. The Japanese should be fair in words."

"Outrageous!" someone said in Japanese.

Tsan Kim-hái said, Legislator Chen Yen-lei and he, according to various indices, had summed up so that, including principal and interest as well as the CPI, it should be multiplied by one thousand and seven hundred times. There was therefore a joyful, momentary period of silence. "When our own government takes over in the future, Legislator Chen, with his strong connections with the political and military circles in Japan, will represent Taiwanese in negotiations," said Tsan Kim-hái, "In fact, the Japanese love the Taiwanese dearly." This last sentence, Tsan Kim-hái said in Japanese.

"In order to win the Election, comrade-in-arms *shokun*, long live Election victory!" yelled the old man, with his hair dyed

black, in Japanese. And Viva was chanted thrice in the Japanese fashion by the old men present that day.

In March, the government really changed hands. "The destined year for Taiwanese," Tsan Kim-hái said on the phone with excitement.

Two months later, Lin Piao heard that the Japanese-speaking mainlander, Ma-san from Old Manchukuo, had abruptly died in that single-door, single-compound, old solitary house of his. The ambulance whizzed past Loyalty and Filiality Park to Ma Zhengtao's solitary house, transporting away the body covered by a white blanket.

In May, Legislator Chen Yen-lei becomes Senior Advisor. But the Japan Exchange Association has already published large announcements in all major newspapers, bypassing various kinds of compensation-requesting organizations—including Chen Yen-lei's *Senyū* Comrade-in-Arms Association—asking Japanese soldiers of Taiwanese origin or their remaining relatives to contact directly the Japanese for 200 times compensation money.

"That is to say, multiplied by two hundred times, whether you take it or not," the old guy with dyed-black hair curses over the phone. "The Japanese are apparently waiting for all of us to die, then the debt will be wiped clean. Vicious! B—h!"

Unable to stand all the inquiries by comrade-in-arms from all over the place, Senior Advisor Chen asks Tsan Kim-hái to make phone calls, one by one.

"The new government is our own. Our new government especially needs diplomatic support. Can't make things difficult for Japan when in need of Japan's support. Don't be penny wise and pound foolish. That's what Senior Advisor Chen said," says Tsan Kim-hái sincerely to Lin Piao on the phone. "For our own government, everyone, please understand. Accept the two hundred times as it is."

It is in Japanese that Tsan Kim-hái speaks to emphasize the words: "For the nation."

"Didn't the Japanese use 'For the nation,' 'For His Majesty the Emperor' to coax people

into dying in Nanyang without returning home ..." Lin Piao raises his voice, yelling at the receiver.

The bell rings, and at the entrance are Guát-ki who has been postponing her return date, and a grey-haired man.

"Tsan Kim-hái, what are you up to? You cheated a bunch of old people until they die like this," says Lin Piao with fury, "these old people didn't die from American bombing, but are cheated to death by guys like you Tsan Kim-hái. Then you're satisfied!"

Lin Piao hangs up with great force. Guát-ki, eyes wide open, looks at Lin Piao not knowing what has happened. "Grandpa," says Guát-ki. Lin Piao walks angrily into the kitchen to get some water. Guát-ki follows. "Grandpa, what are you angry about?" she asks. "My friend in the living room is called Sakamoto-san." "How come he's a Japanese?" says Lin Piao, taking a look from the kitchen at the middle-aged Japanese in the living room, with bags of gifts in his hands. "You want to marry him, to be his daughter?" says Lin Piao sulkily.

"Grandpa!" says Guát-ki.

Lin Piao walks into the living room. Guát-ki is already thirty-something, he thinks, but how come her friend is a Japanese?

Guát-ki follows him.

"This is my grandfather," says Guát-ki in Mandarin, "Mr. Lin, how are you?" says Sakamoto in Mandarin with a heavy Japanese accent. Guát-ki takes all the gifts from Sakamoto's hands.

"You speak Chinese really well, Sakamoto-san," says Lin Piao in Japanese.

"I do small business in Taiwan, have lived here for more than ten years," Sakamoto replies still in Mandarin, with a Japanese accent. "Speak not well. Chinese very difficult."

"Speak in Japanese then," says Lin Piao with a laugh.

"Ah! Is that so?" Sakamoto says in Japanese also with a laugh as if relieved of a heavy burden, "Lin-san's Japanese is really good."

Lin Piao smiles happily. Not knowing why, Lin Piao himself has been wondering,

whenever he sees Japanese people, no matter what, he spontaneously feels intimate and carefree; whenever he hears the Japanese language, he would naturally turn his tongue, even if stammering, to start speaking in Japanese, with passion. Lin Piao has now already flung to the winds the resentment sparked by Japan's heart of stone on the issue of compensation.

Guát-ki begins to prepare some dishes in the kitchen. She guesses that her Grandpa, Lin Piao, is talking about the battlefields in Nanyang. It seems that whatever anger her Grandpa had felt when she entered the room has already dispersed. She serves the first dish, and puts out two bottles of iced beer, then returns to the kitchen to cook.

The beer turns Sakamoto's face red, while Lin Piao's face grows paler and paler as he drinks.

"I once served as a Japanese, for Japan, went to battle," says Lin Piao.

"When the war was lost, I was only five years old. Almost all Japanese people have become penniless beggars." Sakamoto says, "The war was horrible, wasn't it?"

"It was horrible," Lin Piao's tongue twists a bit, "but, at that time, the Japanese told me, for the country, for His Majesty the Emperor, I should fight to death like a real Japanese."

Sakamoto smiles anxiously with a blushed face. "But nowadays Japanese, seldom care about the country, His Majesty the Emperor, and so on . . ."

"Then you must be saying, that we were fooled." Lin Piao, with a smile on his face, stares at Sakamoto, who is a little out of countenance. Guát-ki sees that her Grandpa is somewhat agitated.

"Grandpa, don't drink too much," Guát-ki, unable to understand the entire Japanese conversation, says in Southern Min, tenderly.

"It's fine. Pour me another cup," Lin Piao, also in Southern Min, says to Guát-ki as if scolding her, with beads of sweat oozing out of his face.

"At that time, the Japanese, asked us to die, as unashamed Japanese warriors." Lin

Piao's tongue becomes duller. "But, when it comes to compensation, the Japanese say clearly, right in front of you, well, you are not Japanese!"

"Ah, excuse me, but what compensation?" says Sakamoto timorously, with a smile.

"Ha! Japanese don't even know about compensation for Taiwanese soldiers," says Lin Piao with a seemingly joyful expression, yet his eyes betray fury.

"I'm so sorry," Sakamoto senses that the atmosphere is strained. He doesn't know what to do.

"When in war, you asked us to die as 'sons of His Imperial Majesty' . . ."

Sakamoto blushes, anxiously looking at Guát-ki who sits beside him.

"Grandpa, there's a guest here, don't be so loud," Guát-ki says, not knowing what has happened, worried but with a smile.

"I'm really sorry," says Sakamoto, full of sweat, bowing in his seat, timorously.

"And now you say, we're not Japanese, don't give us money! This is not . . . not a question of sorry or not," Lin Piao says, eyes wide open. "Let me ask you, I, who am I? Who am I!"

Lin Piao bellows. He starts to sob.

"Lin-san . . ." Sakamoto says in astonishment.

"The Japanese lied to me," says Lin Piao while crying, "They'd rather people like us die sooner, devour our military pensions and military postal deposits."

"Grandpa, what's wrong with you?" asks Guát-ki with a frown.

"Now, it is our own people's turn, to say, for the country . . . should listen to the Japanese. *Bakayaro!* Lies and lies, cheating a bunch of poor old folks 'til they die . . ."

A fit of anger surfaces on Guát-ki's face.

"Grandpa, in terms of the Japanese, haven't you already seen a lot in your lifetime?" says Guát-ki in Southern Min, her voice trembling a bit, "How come you're such a mean drunk, losing our faces like this!"

She stands up, fetching her purse, walking out of the door and leaves.

"Who am I—" Lin Piao wails in Japanese, "who am I, exactly—"

"Mr. Lin, Lin-san ..."

Sakamoto says, not knowing what to do.

It is so dark that only flickering dark shadows can be seen in Loyalty and Filiality Park. Guát-ki bypasses Loyalty and Filiality Park. Dad, I must get you home. Grandpa has dementia, you must come back. At the intersection across Loyalty and Filiality Park, she hails a taxi and leaves.

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Notes

1. "Zhongxiao" is a double entendre, at once denoting the name of the park and connoting Confucian virtues of loyalty (*zhong*) and filiality (*xiao*). The double entendre is lost in transliteration, and thus it is translated according to its meaning, rather than to its pronunciation.
2. Note on spelling: all the East Asian names in the text are presented in the original order: last name first.
3. Translator's notes on romanization: Wade-Giles is currently the official transliteration in Taiwan (Republic of China) for names, as against Hanyu Pinyin used by the People's Republic of China. For instance, the author's name, when romanized according to Wade-Giles, is ChenYing-chen, whereas it is Chen Yingzhen in Pinyin. In this translation, Pinyin is used to transliterate the names of the characters of mainland Chinese origin (or *waishengren*), e.g. Ma Zhengtao, Zhu Jing, etc. On the other hand, the names of the characters of Taiwanese background (or *benshengren*), e.g. Tsan Kim-hái, Bing-huat, etc. are transliterated according to Taiwanese romanization instead of Wade-Giles, because these names are meant to be pronounced in Taiwanese/Southern Min. For readers who know Taiwanese/Southern Min, words in names such as *bok* [木 wood], *hué* [火 fire], *lu* [女 woman], and so on are themselves evident registers of their Taiwanese-speaking

origin. Here, Taiwanese romanization with intonation is used as the visual marker of the characters' origin. Complicating the matter further is one of the main characters, transliterated here as Lin Piao. According to the Taiwanese romanization, "林標" should be transliterated as Lim Piao. However, since another main character, Ma Zhengtao refers to him as Old Lin, the surname Lin is used instead for the sake of coherence. The surname of his son and granddaughter is transliterated accordingly.

4. The term "behind" is used to refer to Chungking (now Chongqing), to which Chiang Kai-shek evacuated the government during the Sino-Japanese War.
5. Referring to the decision by General Zhang Xue-liang in 1928 to unite Manchuria with the Nationalist Government after his father, Zhang Zuolin, was assassinated by the Japanese Kwantung Army.
6. Referring to the Land Reform policy in 1949, which reduced the tenant farmers' farmland rent to below 37.5% of the tenant farmers' annual crop production.
7. Referring to James Soong, a candidate for the 2000 Presidential Election after his departure from the Kuomintang.
8. The national flag of the Republic of China.
9. Both "outcry" (*nahan* 吶喊) and "hesitation" (*panghuang* 徬徨) are allusions to Lu Xun's titles of story collection, translated in English as *Call to Arms* and *Wandering* respectively.

Author's biography

Chen Yongshan [陳永善] was born in 1937 in Taiwan. Chen Yingzhen [陳映真] is his literary pen name, whereas the pen name Xu Nancun [許南村] is used for his review articles. He started writing literary works in 1959, and was incarcerated for seven years in 1968. After his release from prison, he continued writing and involved himself in various leftist social practices. His writings and deeds remain one of the most important resources for leftist thoughts and practices in Taiwan, East Asia and the Chinese speaking world.

Translator's biography

Po-hsi Chen is a Ph.D student in East Asian Languages and Literatures at Yale University.

Contact address: po-hsi.chen@yale.edu

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