

TUNG TSUN-JUI

The Making of a Hero

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"Little Tiger"

Tung Tsun-jui lived in Nanshanpao, Huailai County, Hopei Province. When he was still a child, the Japanese occupied Shacheng Town, a place not far from his home. The news of Shacheng's fall threw the people in Nanshanpao into a panic. Tung Tsun-jui's uncle was very alarmed. He wandered aimlessly from one place to another, murmuring "Hey! The Japanese will come. How will we live under the Japanese!"

"What can we do? What can we do?" Tung Tsun-jui's father was beside himself.

Nobody knew what to do. The Kuomintang-appointed magistrate and the district chief had fled long ago, leaving the people to their own fate.

One day, someone stationed at the entrance to the village cried out, "The Japanese are coming! The Japanese are coming!" The people immediately started running to the hills. Tung Tsun-jui really wanted to have a look at the Japanese, but his father took him by the hand and they started off.

At dusk the people returned to their homes. They found that their draught animals, food and chickens had all been taken away by the Japanese. Their pots and pans were smashed. Some of the villagers had left grains in bins, but because the Japanese could not carry so many things away they had spoiled them. The younger people banged on the tables in anger while the womenfolk started crying bitterly.



Shortly thereafter the landlords formed a supply service for the Japanese. Nearly every day the Japanese bandits and traitors came to the village, demanding money and grain. The landlords put the burden entirely on the shoulders of the peasants and used every means to suppress them.

The Japanese bandits and the puppet soldiers came to the village from Shacheng Town in groups of two or three, walking on the streets with their chests thrown out. When the young people met these intruders, they could hardly suppress their fury, they would have liked to chop these bandits into pieces. But the presence of a large unit of the Japanese army in Shacheng Town, only a few miles away, reminded them that any violence done to a few bandits would invite unmerciful retaliation against the whole village.

In Tung Tsun-jui's home they had only soup and potatoes to eat. His father sat silently all day long, drawing on his water pipe. His mother cried quietly, when the others were not looking.

The family owned a yellow ox. Tung Tsun-jui was fond of the animal and he named it "little yellow." Every day he took the ox to graze on the grass on the hill. That was the best he could do, for he had no food for it. It hurt the young boy's heart to watch "little yellow" grow thinner and thinner.

One day, his father said, "I want to sell the ox."

Tung Tsun-jui protested, "Daddy, please don't sell 'little yellow.' I would rather go hungry."

His father really felt as if his heart were being cut into pieces. To a peasant, the loss of a draught animal means the loss of half his property, but with the Japanese bandits in occupation, how could he afford to feed

the animal? He could hardly find anything to feed his family.

When the ox was about to be taken away, Tung Tsun-jui hung on to it, giving "little yellow" water to drink and the last bit of fodder stored in the house. Both his eyes were swollen from crying. It was a sad scene for the parents to witness.

The father settled some of their debts with the money from the sale of the ox. With the rest of the money they bought a few sheep for Tung Tsun-jui who gradually became interested in his new pets.

But the boy never forgot the day the ox was sold. That day marked the beginning of something new in his mind. His hatred of the Japanese bandits began to take form. He started to call them "big dirty wolves" and he told his friends, "We must chase the 'dirty wolves' out. If they had not been here, I would not have lost my ox."

Tung Tsun-jui roamed the hills with his sheep. He liked to climb the highest peaks and soon people were calling him "Little Tiger."

Once, his friends teased him saying, "Little Tiger, we bet you can't get to the top of that hill."

On hearing this, he turned red to the tips of his ears, and immediately dashed up. The small stones on the hill had sharp points which made climbing difficult and before he got to the top the small stones began to roll down. He lost his footing and rolled down like a rubber ball.

The children, looking at his bruised hands, said, "We'd better call the challenge off, Little Tiger." But before they finished speaking, Tsun-jui made another dash. This time he succeeded in reaching the top of the hill. His friends were convinced that he was really a tough fellow,



"Now you have seen something," Tung Tsun-jui said. "Do you believe me when I say I will chase the 'dirty wolves' out?"

Comrade Wang

Not long afterwards, the anti-Japanese resistance forces stationed in the county had several successful skirmishes with the Japanese in this area. These victories gave a great deal of encouragement to the people. They organized their own governments and their own militia in the villages and from then on the people no longer paid taxes to the Japanese. The enemy did not dare intrude into the village in groups of less than ten, nor did they venture out of their barracks alone.

Tung Tsun-jui's uncle was the chairman of the "Save China from Japanese Aggression Society." Guided by the Communist Party, he knew how to get things done. Though he was over 50, he became as energetic and active as a young man. Tung Tsun-jui admired his uncle and availed himself of every opportunity to steal away and run to his house. There he could have a chance to see the cadres of the Eighth Route Army led by the Communist Party. He knew they were trained by the Party and they always had interesting stories to tell.

During this period the district Party secretary, a young man in his early twenties, came to the village very often. His name was Wang Ping. He had left school at the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War and joined the Eighth Route Army. Not long before, he had requested to be transferred here because he considered that the struggle was more acute and difficult in the new areas and that

as a Party member he should stand at the forefront of the struggle.

He wore a green suit with a pistol strapped to one side. He had a ready smile when he talked with people. Tung Tsun-jui was very fond of him. Wang Ping came to the village regularly regardless of heavy snowfalls or rain. He was always there at the most critical moment of the enemy's mopping-up operations.

One day, when it was raining, gunfire suddenly broke out and the people were alarmed. Wang Ping came in out of breath and wet through and through. He quickly took charge of the military operations against the enemy. At the same time, he instructed the people to take refuge in the hills on the east side of the village. The Japanese were outwitted and they were disappointed when nobody was found in the village. Tung Tsun-jui said to himself, "This is the sort of man I want to be when I grow up."

Wang Ping organized a children's corps in the village and Tung Tsun-jui became its captain.

Once Wang Ping told the children's corps the story of the five heroes at the Langyashan Hill. "One day," he said, "three thousand Japanese bandits, in nine columns, came to attack the hill. In order to cover the removal of the troops for an attack on the enemy in another place, the commanders of the Eighth Route Army decided to leave two squads behind. With adroit tactics they drew the Japanese soldiers halfway up the hill, thus enabling their own troops to move out quietly. The task was accomplished and the men in the covering squads also prepared to retreat. But it was necessary to leave a few men behind to cover their own retreat. 'Please let me do this.' 'I volunteer for this task.' Five

men jumped forward, eager to be chosen. These five men made a firm stand on the hill despite the repeated and fierce assaults by five hundred Japanese soldiers. Each time the enemy closed in upon them they were repulsed." The children were absorbed in the story. All eyes were fixed on Wang Ping.

"As the fighting continued the five brave soldiers found they were running short of ammunition. They decided to retreat to a 200-foot precipice. The enemy renewed their fierce attacks, but the volunteers answered with hand-grenades, killing 40 of their men. Finally they were left with only one grenade."

"Ah!" Tung Tsun-jui cried out. He could no longer keep quiet. "What then!"

"They threw the last hand-grenade," Wang Ping went on. "Squad Leader Ma Pao-ling said to the four others, 'Let's destroy our rifles.' 'Right!' came the ready reply. Then they smashed all five rifles."

"Sure, that's the way to do it. Never let the bandit soldiers get the rifles," Tung Tsun-jui said in approval.

"Finally, Squad Leader Ma slapped his thigh and said firmly, 'Comrades, there is only one way out. Let's jump off the precipice.'

"Yes, yes. We won't give up, even at the end."

"The five men jumped at the same time. Two of them did not fall all the way. They were caught in the branches of some small trees growing on the hillside and they were not killed. At midnight, the two heroes slipped away and rejoined the main body of their own army. It was said that sometime afterwards they were given the honour of visiting Chairman Mao Tse-tung at Yen-an."

"How heroic!" the children said. Tung Tsun-jui was very moved. The story remained firmly fixed in his mind.

From that time on Tung Tsun-jui became more active in the children's corps and he always carried a wooden sword with him. During the day, he took some of the children out and they acted as sentries. When messages came he delivered them as speedily as his legs could carry him. At night, when the local militia had military exercises in the mountain gullies, he took the children's corps to join them in the drilling.

Happy People

One winter morning, his uncle rushed into Tung Tsun-jui's home, with beads of perspiration on his forehead. He said in great haste, "Have you got any cooked potatoes? Hurry, send them over to Nanshan."

No sooner had he said this than he dashed out. Tung Tsun-jui's father immediately took up a pot of cooked potatoes and went after him. The boy was more than curious and followed them.

Outside he saw groups of people carrying baskets and bags, all heading for Nanshan. His father overtook the uncle and asked, "What's the hurry? What's going on?"

"Well! Don't you know! You can never tell where the Eighth Route Army will be. If they have orders to move, they move right away. If you don't hurry up, they will be gone."

"I say, why is the Army here in daytime? And so suddenly. Has something happened?"

"You'll find out," the uncle replied as he began the trip up to Nanshan.

Soldiers sat on the snow-covered slope dressed in grey uniforms. Their cotton-padded clothes were torn and bits of cottonwool showed through the holes. Some were cleaning their guns, others were dozing as they sat, with their legs folded beneath them. One man with a long moustache was looking at a map while he blew on his frozen hands to warm them. His breath was quickly turned into a sheet of white mist, which enveloped his moustache.

Most of the soldiers were thin and their eyes looked tired and bloodshot. It was easy to see that these men were weary and had had little sleep for many a night.

As soon as the people arrived they gave the men the cooked potatoes they had brought. They talked with them and asked questions like old friends. What a happy moment! Laughter, jokes, and fun could be heard everywhere on the slope. It was like a temple fair.

Tung Tsun-jui was there too, edging in and out among the crowds. He was interested in news and stories about the fighting. He noticed his uncle chatting with the man with the moustache and he squeezed himself in next to his uncle.

Taking him by the hand his uncle said, "Little Tiger, don't you kids in the children's corps have any manners? You don't even salute the magistrate when you meet him?"

Tung Tsun-jui immediately stood at attention, raised his hand and saluted. Magistrate Tsai drew the boy to his side with a smile and patted his head, saying, "He is really like one of the 'little devils' in the Eighth Route Army." Tung Tsun-jui felt his friendship and warmth. He wanted to say, "Just a few minutes ago I was afraid of you because of the long moustache on your face." But

he didn't say it. Instead he said, "Magistrate Tsai, tell us something about the fighting."

"All right, later on."

Magistrate Tsai stood on a big stone and said in a loud voice, "Comrades, we must thank the people for the things they have brought us. You see, with such good people on our side we don't have to worry about licking the enemy. Comrades, for the sake of these people, we must give the enemy a good thrashing."

Then he continued in a friendly tone. "We have tightened our belts for a long time, but we must not let an empty belly make a fool of the head. The head must do the directing. In other words, comrades, don't eat too much. Two potatoes would be enough for the time being. Put the rest in your pack. Eating too much will kill you."

Tung Tsun-jui was surprised. He asked a soldier standing next to him, "Can you die from eating too much?"

"Oh, yes. If one goes hungry for a long time one mustn't eat too much at first. Overeating in such a case will get you in trouble and might even kill you."

"I see. How many days did you go without eating?"

"Well, a little over three days. It was three days ago that we blasted the enemy from a stronghold. On the way back we suddenly found ourselves surrounded. More and more enemy troops arrived. There were only 300 of us and they thought they could finish us off."

"What did you do then?" Tung Tsun-jui held his breath as he listened.

"We just threw the enemy off, but first we gave them a damn good licking. Those bandits were like a pack of hungry wolves. They just rushed upon us, wave after

wave. We repulsed them all. After it was over we were really hungry. We had nothing to eat. I made a snow ball and put it in my mouth."

"Later, Magistrate Tsai directed us to break through the encirclement," he continued, "but the enemy had anticipated our plans and they had every inch of ground covered by troops. How could we break through?"

"Last night Magistrate Tsai thought of a trick. He took some soldiers to one point and fired steadily on the enemy troops. They thought we were trying to break through at that point and so they moved their soldiers up there to stop us. Just at that moment we moved to an unguarded spot. We broke through the enemy's line and rushed down the slope. On our way we hit them hard and killed a great many of those bandit soldiers. We also had some casualties. Here you are, meet our wounded soldiers."

Tung Tsun-jui grasped the soldier's hands in his and said, "You're fine fellows!" and flew off to one of the wounded soldiers.

He was a light case. His left hand was bandaged and was supported by a sling around his neck. After each bite of potato he put a handful of snow into his mouth. From time to time he frowned a bit, a sign that the wound was still painful. Tung Tsun-jui sat down and looked at him with two big eyes.

"Uncle, does it hurt?"

"If you take a knife and scratch a bit of flesh off your body would it be painful?"

"Sure. Sometimes even a prick of the skin can be very painful."

"So you know how I feel. It seems as though something is biting my arm off."

