

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE RISE OF THE SOUTH KOREAN LEFT, THE DEATH OF UNITARY SOCIALISM,
AND THE ORIGINS OF THE KOREA WAR, 1945-1947

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE 2019

Abstract

In stark contrast with efforts to understand the Korean War as a military and an international conflict, very little has been discussed about the complexities of Communist activism in southern Korea under the leadership of Pak Hōnyōng and the South Korean Workers' Party (SKWP), the largest Communist organization in southern Korea before the war. By examining the *Official Documents of the SKWP*, south and north Korean government documents, and American military government reports, I will argue that analyzing the 1945-1947 moment from the SKWP's perspective offers an important ideational origin to the Korean War—the elimination of "Unitary Socialism." I will trace the early history of the SKWP, from its revival as the Chosŏn Communist Party in September 1945 to the CCP's full transformation as the SKWP—a singularly representative party of the southern Left in November 1946.

I will argue that the SKWP's adoption of a rigid and an exclusionary Communism and support for north Korea assured the death of Yō Un-hyōng's "Unitary Socialism" and any possibility for a peaceful non-ideological and nationalist unification of Korea. The SKWP launched Pak's personality cult, supported north Korea's land reforms, survived a minting scandal, and launched two major small civil wars against the Rightists to realize Communist political supremacy in southern Korea. In response, the southern Rightists used the Korean national police and the extremely anti-Communist Northwest Youth Corps, and established a Legislative Assembly to launch anti-Communist operations against challengers or skeptics of anti-Communism. The Korean War was a southern civil war because the SKWP's quest for a "more perfect Communist revolution" directly clashed with Right-wing attempts to impose martial law and political terrorism to consolidate an anti-Communitistic security state. The clash lit the fuse of the war by expulsing "Unitary Socialism" and introducing a Manichean Cold War political culture in the Korean peninsula. The war was north Korea's extension of the struggle between the southern Left and Right for political supremacy in southern Korea.

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Glossary

- CCP Chosŏn Kongsantang (Chosŏn Communist Party)
- CDIHK Taehan Tongnip Ch'oksŏng Kungminhoe (Committee for Demanding the Immediate Independence of Korea)
- DNF Minchuchuŭi Minchok Chŏnsŏn (Democratic Nationalist Front)
- DPK Hanmintang (Democratic Party of Korea)
- DRC Minchuŭiwŏn (Democratic Representative Council)
- FRUS Foreign Relations of the United States*
- HUSAFIK History of United States Army Forces in Korea*
- IDFTYSL Kwangpok Samsipnyŏn Ch'ungyo Charyochip (Important Documents From Thirty Years Since Liberation)*
- KCP Koryŏ Kongsantang (Koryŏ Communist Party)
- KPP Inmintang (Korean People's Party)
- NKWP Pukchosŏnnotongtang (North Korean Workers' Party)
- NMP Sinkanhoe (New Middle Party)
- NRC Kŏnkuk Chunpi Wiwŏnhoe (National Reconstruction Council)
- ODSKWP Namnotang Yŏnku Charyochip (Official Documents of the South Korean Workers' Party)*
- PSMKH Hyŏndaesa Charyoch'ongsŏ (Primary Sources on Modern Korean History)*
- RG Record Group
- RRLC Chwaik Sakŏn Sillok (Real-Time Records of Left-wing Cases)*
- RRSKWP Sillok Namnotang (Real-Time Records of the South Korean Workers' Party)*
- RSR Kim Il-sung, Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Kŭriko Yŏ Un-hyŏng Pimil Hoetam (Record of Secret Rendezvous between Kim Il-sung, Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Yŏ Un-hyŏng)*
- SKWP Namchosŏn Notongtang (South Korean Workers' Party)
- SLP Sahoenotongtang (Social Labor Party)
- TRKAHD Charyo Taehan Minkuksa (The Republic of Korea: A History in Documents)*
- U.N. United Nations

Acknowledgements

Writing this dissertation was an unforgettable journey filled with much intellectual and moral encouragement. The University of Chicago has always generously provided both forms of encouragement since I had the privilege to be a member of a vibrant academic community from my first day as a History student in college to my relative maturity as a doctoral student, all in a decade.

Intellectually, I owe much gratitude to Professor Bruce Cumings, for it is through his seminar on modern Korean history that I was able to conceive and incubate this dissertation in its current structure and argumentation. Although there were several moments when I thought I had to push my arguments farther than what I had written, Professor Cumings was always willing to remind me to maintain a careful balance between a commitment to pure truth as a scholar and a realistic and careful eye for ideological tension as a participant in a highly political world. Professor Cumings has been a wonderful and understanding scholar of many books from which I drew and still draw an immeasurable inspiration. Had it not been for his continuous email exchanges and discussions in his office, and finally, his demands for historical precision and a perfect marriage between theories and historical facts, I still wonder how my journey would have ended, let alone begun. Perhaps, the completion of this dissertation will hopefully serve as an indirect, although by no means sufficient, way of paying my debt. His seminar on modern Korean history was essential in providing the time and resources with which I crafted a paper that became the blueprint for the current project. Professor Cumings' emphasis on the subtle but necessary marriage between raw facts and elaborative theories has been and will always be a beacon with which I navigate through this dissertation and through subsequent books in the future. Most importantly, Professor Cumings helped me appreciate the beauty of theoretical rigor, which has successfully prevented me

from drowning in the boredom of merely laying out facts with little interpretation. Instead, he instilled within me the joy of finding the right place and moment for theoretical analysis, providing the double-layered enjoyment of determining which theory best describes which situation and the joy of assuring that analysis facilitates a smooth transition from a list of facts to tell a flexible and reasonable story, thereby molding and sculpting words to provide an objective yet also very personal effort to provide the most accurate portrait of the past.

The University of Chicago is also that rare place where, regardless of which region or era one studies, students and professors are united by a firm belief that the pursuit of continuous learning literally does make life enriched. I have had the fortunate opportunity to realize what that belief really means through two great mentors. I would like to thank Professor James Sparrow and Professor Mauricio Tenorio for their patience and passion for exactitude and precision in presenting historical argumentation. Professor Sparrow introduced me to history, and eventually, my life as a professional historian. His office hours are always so dear to my mind, for without them, I would have even doubted about my interest and passion to become a historian, and the courage to face the numerous challenges that confront the sacred profession. His maintenance of a calm composure while addressing all of my concerns about academia and about life has taught me the deep virtue of being patient and undisturbed under any circumstance. His reminder that the historian's job is first and foremost to evaluate and contemplate the past without worrying about what the future would bring inspired a deep confidence within myself about maintaining a sacrosanct pride in enjoying the very essence of *being* a historian. From the day I took my first colloquium to the day he was on my dissertation committee, Professor Sparrow always displayed his patience, understanding nature, and most importantly, his integrity as a historian, which I hope to emulate in its complete form some day. Spending an exciting decade with Chicago was possible because it began with meeting Professor Sparrow. I hope that this dissertation would make him proud.

Professor Mauricio Tenorio has been another great supporter. Although our fields are different, their geographical difference is nothing compared with our ultimate similarity—our passion for history itself. Professor Tenorio had the rare intellectual gift of demonstrating interdisciplinary history in its finest form through his stimulating lectures which have never left my memory. Indeed, his fervor, his push for accuracy in factual organization and his graceful blending of sociological theory and history, and finally, his frequent jokes in the classroom which helped me learn that sometimes fun can live and breathe at Chicago, are just invaluable treasures.

I will always remember deeply penetrating words he engraved in my heart after my oral exam. As a young but hot-headed graduate student, I was perhaps too eager to set my feet quickly into the professional world and I had naively thought that presenting my knowledge rapidly, rather than deeply, was a virtue. Professor Tenorio told me that I had to think the other way around: “Kyu-hyun, when you walk out of my office, it is perfectly fine if you do not remember anything we discussed or any of the questions and answers you gave on the exam. However, please do remember that there was a Professor Mauricio Tenorio who told you that speaking slowly rather than quickly, with precision rather than disorganized rapidity, is always, always the golden rule, and this applies whether you defend your dissertation or give lectures, and even when you write. Please, please remember this, even if you would forget everything else.” I do not know whether I will be adequately answering him, but I am certain that I will think, speak, and write slowly, and with precision for the rest of my career, for his words are dear to me as though he had spoken them as a father or a mother would to their child. Indeed, I once felt that Professor Tenorio’s demand for accuracy and precision was delivered in a voice so like that of my mother, so I accidentally answered, “*Yea, om-ma,*” (yes, mother) in Korean. He is a unique and gifted teacher of history and above all, of life to me, that although I had answered him incorrectly during our conversation, I feel proud to have made that

mistake. He will always be like a spiritual parent to me. I wonder if there is a deeper word than *gracias* to thank him, but surely even that word might not be enough.

Thanks to the professors' encouragement, this project had the fortune of making its shy debut before its ultimate maturation into a dissertation. A condensed article-length version of the dissertation was published in December 2018's issue of the *UCLA Journal of History*. I would like to thank my former editor-in-chief Anna Accettola for her guidance and patience as I put my first step into the arduous yet highly enjoyable process of publishing a professional journal article. The pride I felt after the article was published was immense, and I thank Ms. Anna Accettola for helping my work mature into a publishable article.

Finally, there is my family to deeply thank. My parents have always been supportive of my rite of passage through that deeply mysterious and uncertain tunnel of history. From the moment I called them over the phone in the middle of dawn to announce that I would switch to history from political science to the moment they saw me enter the Ph.D. program, they were always present. They have seen and felt with me my ten enjoyable yet arduous years with the University of Chicago, and their invaluable and immeasurable support has been the ultimate force that helped me maintain my composure and a smile on my face, even through moments of hardship and perplexity. It would take a hundred pages more to express my love and gratitude to them, but I think one sentence that they will so deeply understand and have always said to me, is appropriate, if not sufficient: *Saranghamnita* (I love you).

Note

I will use "Chosŏn Communist Party" ("CCP") to mean the predecessor to the SKWP which existed prior to November 23, 1946, and "Southern Korean Workers' Party" ("SKWP") in reference to the party that existed since November 23, 1946 to respect the fact that this dissertation is also a history of the party as much as it is of the southern Left. The CCP and SKWP can be considered as identical entities, since the CCP would be the centerpiece of the SKWP throughout the SKWP's existence. With regard to the use of "north Korea" and "south Korea," I will use lowercase letters as Roy Grinker did in his book out of the recognition that Koreans have always been one people but were just divided into two semi-states after the horror of June 25, 1950.¹

¹ Roy Grinker, *Korea and Its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

Introduction

" ..The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
Now men will go content with what we spoiled.
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
Courage was mine, and I had mystery,
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery;
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.
I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.
I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark; for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now. . . ."
-Wilfred Owen, "Strange Meeting" (1918)²

1. A Review of the Scholarly Literature

The scholarly literature on the Korean War can be summarized into three strands of thought. The first strand enjoyed that rare balance between popularity and realism, especially in the United States, for it comfortably conversed with the immediate reality of war so quickly, as though that reality certainly began on June 25, 1950. Even the presumably liberal political philosopher Michael Walzer (2015) considered the 38th Parallel as a real national border and branded June 25, 1950 as the date of an "initial aggression" without considering complex layers of Korean history before the war, addressing only the familiar theme of exclusively fighting north Korean Communism, as though the specificity of a once united nation's geopolitical dynamics in southern Korea barely mattered.³ Works such as *Korea: The War Before Vietnam* (1986), *The Korean War* (1987), and *The Coldest Winter* (2007) did

² Wilfred Owen, "Strange Meeting," in C. Day Lewis ed., *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen* (New York: New Directions, 1965), 35-37.

³ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 118-119. Walzer posits northern contact with southern insurgents merely as a hypothetical consideration as though such an event was unlikely or unrealistic without giving much justification for why he believes as such.

acknowledge that the war was a tragic event, but they still primarily emphasized the war as a military and diplomatic exercise of containing Communism rather than as a civil and national conflict which began before June 25, 1950, as though only the war itself and its pertaining American operations represented the entire essence of what one historian bluntly termed the "disaster in Korea."⁴ Although these books are notable for their painstaking analysis of specific details on events during the war, they are more invested toward emphasizing military clashes after June 25, 1950 and do not venture much into events prior to the war, treating the process behind the local build-up of war as an afterthought.

However, the more significant drawback of this approach was a simplification of war as an event detached from Korean national politics. Even the most important question of whether the war was genuinely an unforeseen surprise was a question of whether the war had to occur based only on military reports in 1950, without considering how the situation mushroomed from a civil war into a full-scale military confrontation.⁵ Since much of the literature assumed that only the war as a military conflict was worth analyzing, it neglected to explain how the war originally began or under what specific circumstances it grew into an international war. As a result, the war described became something of a sudden torrent, but strangely without clouds to initiate its formation. The "Korean War" was merely about the war that commenced from June 25, 1950. The time warp that existed before this date had absolutely no significance as though it was a black hole. The "life" of the war as a historical event began with people killing each other but without knowing why they had to originally do

⁴ Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Vietnam* (New York: The Free Press, 1986); Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), and David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter-America and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007). For the label "disaster in Korea," see Roy Appleman Williams, *Disaster in Korea: The Chinese Confront MacArthur* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1989).

⁵ I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (New York and London, England: Monthly Review Press, 1952), 1-6.

so.⁶

The second strand courageously assumed the burden of becoming a major corrective of the first strand. More specifically, unlike the first strand's disregard for south Korean agency, the second strand, derisively called "revisionist," emphasized Korean agency in the war. In its infancy, there was a meek attempt to suggest the possibility that the south Korean military was equally responsible for the war because it participated in skirmishes across the Ong-jin Peninsula. However, beyond the problem of a poverty of theory in diplomatic history, the attempt and debate surrounding the attempt focused too much on a limited definition of "origins" as the beginning of military preparedness stemming from state directives.⁷

It took almost two decades before Korean agency and origins to the war began to receive serious scholarly inquiry. Historian Bruce Cumings sought to rigorously explain through previously unknown or unreleased documents in Record Group 59, 242, 554 and other top secret American government files. Rather than engaging with ideological interpretations and ascribing blame on either north or south Korea, Cumings suggested that the Korean War was a conflict which had roots in local politics and its intensification into a civil war. To prove this point, Cumings chose a neutral, phenomenological, and structural analysis of socio-economic conditions to determine the environmental ripeness for a civil war based on an interpretation of agencies and relations between the Left and the Right and between the provinces and the central administration.⁸ He meticulously explicated that the Korean War was an extension, not an anomaly, which grew from the chaos of Communist versus anti-Communist struggles and tensions surrounding the solution to a proper form of land reform in a country where 4 in

⁶ Allan R. Millett, "The Korean War: A Critical 50-Year Historiography," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2001), 188-224.

⁷ Karunakar Gupta, "How Did the Korean War Begin?" *The China Quarterly*, No. 52 (October-December, 1972), 699-716; Robert Simmons, "Some Myths about June 1950," *The China Quarterly*, No. 54 (April-June, 1973), 354-361.

⁸ Leighanne Yuh, "The Historiography of Korea in the United States," *International Journal of Korean History* Vol. 15, No. 2 (August, 2010), 133.

5 people were peasants but the traditional *yangban* based landlords held most of the agrarian lands. It specifically laid blame on the American failure to appreciate Korean historical conditions and concentrated on balancing the shares of mistakes on both American and north Korean officials. In doing so, the label "Korean War" gained a more thoroughly plausible historical reputation as an event that began and ended unsatisfactorily in Korea.⁹

Yet, Cumings' books—a "significant scholarly victory" despite not considering the Sino-Soviet Alliance and the impact of the Soviet atomic bomb's explosion on shaping American foreign policy in East Asia—are exceptions rather than norms within the second strand.¹⁰ Like the first strand, the literature ascribes very little agency to the southern Left and the SKWP and is merely content with providing an anthology, rather than poignant analysis. Within the second strand, there were early precursors which examined the history of Korean Communism concentrated on showing the highly disorganized and chaotic factionalism within the Communist movement. Scholars concentrated on explaining why the northern regime was illegitimate because it eliminated its opponents rather than unite them into a single force. Dae-sook Suh's *The Korean Communist Movement* (1967) provides the most original attempt to write a comprehensive history of the Korean Communist movement before the Korean War, from its origins in 1918 to the founding of north Korea in 1948, but he omits Pak and Yō's roles in shaping that history because no significant materials on these men or the general political milieu in Korea were accessible while he was writing his book.

Furthermore, because Suh's basic methodology is largely oriented toward an encyclopedic

⁹ Of course, while this dissertation is being written, Korea still remains divided. I am only using "end" to signify a termination of conflict across the 38th Parallel in 1953, although it is technically neither a termination *de jure*, nor *de facto*.

¹⁰ Roger Dingman, "Korea at Forty-plus: The Origins of the Korean War Reconsidered," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* (Spring, 1992), Vol. 1, No. 1, 137-143. Although Dingman criticizes Cumings for ignoring Sino-Soviet relations, including that dimension would have made the second volume rather too long and is not really central to Cumings' argument, since the first chapter of the second volume is specifically devoted to explaining the contours of American foreign diplomacy in general.

description of the intense factionalism during the 1920s and 1930s, very little is actually revealed about the late 1940s regarding the southern Left and the SKWP's inability to tightly enforce their dominance. Fundamentally, because there is no analysis linking the various factions to the overall historical ambiances in which they found themselves, the book is mostly a long list of names and events which will be unfamiliar to foreign and even Korean readers.¹¹ In a similar vein, political scientist Chŏng-sik Lee (1977) briefly surveyed the northern and southern sections of the Communist Party, but he does not sufficiently contextualize the history of the Southern Korean Workers' Party on the eve of the war because he is more interested in providing a general institutional narrative of the northern and southern branches since the 1920s. Thus, he ignores how the SKWP was responsible for eliminating Yŏ Un-hyŏng's pacifist "Unitary Socialism" and, to a larger extent, the possibility of peaceful and non-ideological reconciliation and union before the war.¹²

Considering all of these interpretations, the most comprehensive, representative, and by far the most successful effort to present the full essence of the second strand came from Bruce Cumings. He was the first scholar to accurately grasp that the Korean War was a civil war, meaning that the war commenced from the complexities of Korea's post-colonial politics, the struggle between Communism and anti-Communism, and finally, the question of land reform. Due to the collective responsibility south and north Koreans shared in initiating and fermenting the conflict, Cumings also correctly argued that "Why did the invasion occur and who initiated it?" is a wrong question to ask because it does not do justice to the fact that both south and north Koreans immensely suffered from the tragic violence which ensued from the polarization of Communism and anti-Communism in the peninsula. Yet, simultaneously,

¹¹ Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement, 1918-1948* (Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 1967).

¹² Chŏng-sik Lee, *A Short History of Korean Communism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977).

Cumings was careful not to suggest that he had no clear position in the debate. Cumings argued that the southern provocation across the Ong-jin peninsula in 1949 is a convincing picture of the military conflict's origin, thereby correcting the "north first" theory which had been popular for decades prior to the publication of Cumings' book. Cumings provided the most neutral and balanced account of the war by making sure that political correctness did not subjugate historical objectivity, using previously classified Korean and American documents. By doing so, Cumings was able to be consistently faithful to his personal creed that history has its own sacrosanct space which cannot be violated or compromised by any external force, thereby showing his dedication to writing a pure and scientifically analyzed history.¹³

He also showed that the colonial legacies of Left-Right conflict, American lack of comprehension regarding the banal influence of Japanese colonialism before 1945, which led to subsequent employment of pro-Japanese collaborators in the American military government, and finally, an American political ambience which had no centrist platform but was torn between nationalist isolationism and internationalist rollback were important historical nuggets that explained the background to the war. Given this complex mix of political causes, when the war truly erupted on June 25, 1950 it was truly, to put it in Cumings' own words, the "roaring of the cataract."¹⁴ The cataract not only roared but was immense, for it was an amalgamation of American political calculations about grand strategy that encompassed Japanese, Taiwanese, and Korean security against a Communist menace. The answers to this problem formed a waterfall of their own, with nationalist isolationism pitted against containment, the latter of which perverted into rollback, with some politicians such as John Foster Dulles choosing to deliberately, ambiguously, and circumstantially swing

¹³ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 2: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990; Seoul, south Korea: Yöksa Pip'yöng-sa (History and Criticism), 2003).

¹⁴ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 2*.

from one position to another like a pendulum.¹⁵ In short, the Korean War was a product of many streams harboring diverse political stripes in Korea and the United States, converging into a large mass which *literally* is a cataract, pouring forth in no distinctively orderly fashion.

However, even the wildest cataract originates as a part of rivulets whose currents vary in strength and direction, and since the publication of Cumings' work, internationalization has become a major rivulet which served to mediate between the first and second strands of thought. "Internationalization" was synonymous with mediation because it agreed to disagree with both of its earlier predecessors. The most representative works that displayed such an effort are John Lewis's *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (1985) and Wada Haruki's *The Korean War: An International History* (2014). Lewis provided a very orthodox and minimalist view of north Korea, almost completely denying north Korean agency in planning the war. Instead, Lewis argued that the Korean War was merely a war fought in Korea in the opposing interests of the Chinese and the Soviets to contain American advancement. The Chinese desired to fulfill this goal by choosing direct military confrontation while the Soviets wanted to use their primary Communist ally to counter American aggression on foreign soil, while also making sure that China would merely contain American expansion rather than use Korea as a bargaining chip to surpass Soviet leadership in the Communist world. It was the uncertainty about each partner's intention in fulfilling the terms of this agreement that led to their cooperation in planning the Korean War.¹⁶

The most promising fact about an international historical approach to studying the Korean War is that, despite being a young field of research which centered around exploring the agencies of American, British, and Chinese involvement in the war, it has much potential for diversity, expanding into inquiries about the role of the United Nations in shaping the

¹⁵ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 2, 25 and 27.

¹⁶ John W. Lewis, Xue Litai, and Sergei Goncharov, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1985).

electoral system of south Korea before the war. Most importantly, it enlarges the identity of a war from a mere phenomenon to a comprehensive system, allowing historians to look at the war as a process of complex interconnectivity. In doing so, the field was able to produce both notable correctives and a holistic synthesis. The former entertained works by historians Allen Whiting (1960) and Robert Simmons (1975), which respectively demonstrated that there was no Moscow conspiracy to control East Asia and that there were no orders from Mao Zedong or Iosif Stalin for China to attack south Korea until the U.N.'s intervention in the war. They were, according to historian Lester Brune (1996), important "revisionist" contributions, for they clarified that there were no grand Soviet and Chinese imperial designs behind their decisions to intervene.¹⁷

However, these works did not "revise" any previous theories but were novel contributions in their own right, for they used original sources or reinterpreted sources scholars had used prior to the works' publication and were chiefly devoted to expanding the horizon of previously existing knowledge. By focusing on Chinese motivations behind intervening in Korea, Whiting and Simmons had introduced a fresh perspective to understanding the geopolitical significance of the Korean War to East Asia's Cold War order. Since the 2000s, a serious effort to go beyond the immediate focus of the war only in Korea and introduce a holistic international system-oriented analysis of the war's geopolitical importance through an emphasis of the war's diplomatic complexity. The best representative was Wada Haruki's (2014) international history of the Korean War. Wada's work significantly expanded Cumings' localized narrative by including perspectives of countries outside Korea's immediate borders but had clear political and economic interests emerging from the conflict within Korea.

¹⁷ Allen Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York: MacMillan, 1960) and Robert R. Simmons, *The Strained Alliance: Peking, P'yöngyang, Moscow and the Korean Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1975). See also Lester H. Brune ed., *The Korean War: Handbook of the Literature and Research* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 62.

Unlike Lewis, Whiting, and Simmons, Wada offered a more successful method in interpreting the meaning of an international history by including Korea within the sphere of a holistic system of East Asian-American relations during and after the Korean War. Using a diverse body of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian diplomatic documents, Wada argued that the Korean War had important consequences for East Asia's geopolitical system as a whole, rather than for Korea alone. Japan emerged as the greatest benefactor from the war, winning significant American financial support to build Japan into a major bulwark against Communism in Asia. By contrast, Taiwan witnessed a grand moment of increasing political prestige as a haven for anti-Communist Chinese prisoners of war who, rather than returning to the mainland and facing certain death sentences, chose to remain in Taiwan to enjoy democratic liberties and civil rights. Conversely, that choice represented Taiwan's confidence in defying Chinese military prowess by advertising herself as a liberal democratic and capitalist paradise, a definite contrast to an illiberal and totalitarian Communist world which was far less appealing. In contrast to her neighbors, Korea, both north and south, suffered the most horrendous outcome of utter political, social, and economic destruction from which Koreans would struggle to rebuild themselves for the next two decades.¹⁸

2.The Central Thesis and Methodology

Unlike much of the literature on the Korean War, which tends to focus directly on the questions of assigning local and international responsibility, I believe that understanding the origins of the war must not only be concerned with determining the exact geographical space in which it was fought. There must also be a consideration of the ideational space where ideological battles between the southern Left and Right set the original theme of the Korean War as a competition between anti-Communism and Communism. My project's central purpose is to complement the scholarly literature by distancing away from the premise that

¹⁸ Wada Haruki, *The Korean War: An Interational History* (New York: Little&Rowfield, 2014).

north Korea's invasion and the decisions of Great Powers were the only central agents in initiating the Korean War. The problem with focusing only on military origins to identify mutual responsibility in a war, but not the entirety of the war's process as a historically holistic phenomenon, is akin to displaying what philosopher of science Karl Popper (2002) called "a poverty of historicism." History must not just matter for what it must offer for the present or the future but must be studied on the past's own terms to understand why the result of the past manifests itself in the present without wondering how the present diverged and therefore has some alternative value from the past.¹⁹ The beginning of a historical event is always a relative concept hinging on the assumption that the end is a familiar result, but the two concepts cannot be juxtaposed for they require a passage of time between them. The passage must have a corporeal essence by having both identity and difference, and the analysis of these two conditions is what gives meaning to historical causality. There is no such thing as a collection of histories concerned strictly with only "presents" such that their appearances are completely new and foreign; every historical moment that led to the present is a portrait of Dorian Gray, always concealing some twisted traces of an old visage beneath what appears to be beautiful and perfect.²⁰

Moreover, as historian Jack Chen (2010) aptly points out, history is always prone to have many gaps, and the goal of writing history, especially hidden and secret history, is to widen the horizon of what can be reliably known—the “epistemological condition” of historiography.²¹ Following Chen’s cue, I will fill these lacunae on the SKWP and more broadly on 1945-1947 by closely examining north and south Korean government documents, American military government reports and British Foreign Office telegrams on Korea. I will

¹⁹ Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (Routledge, 2nd edition, 2002).

²⁰ George Herbert Mead, "The Nature of the Past," in John Cross ed., *Essays in Honor of John Dewey* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929), 236 and 241.

²¹ Jack W. Chen, "Blank Spaces and Secret Histories: Questions of Historiographical Epistemology in Medieval China," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (2010), 1071.

also peruse south Korean newspapers and the *Official Documents of the Southern Korean Workers' Party (ODSKWP)*—a two-volume collection of previously unpublicized official documents from the largest Communist organization in southern Korea during the late 1940s. I wish to show the rise of the SKWP and the southern Left as an intellectual origin of the war—a history of intense factionalism and a war of ideas before the war between semi-states—which never got resolved except for a brief respite of a failed attempt at a forced and an incomplete union of southern Leftists under the South Korean Workers' Party (SKWP). From its rebirth on September 2, 1945, the southern Left was highly eager to establish its supremacy by ardently supporting the trusteeship over Korea (a trusteeship is a territory administered by the United Nations Trusteeship Council aimed at promoting the national interests of the territory's inhabitants and international security and peace) and by establishing a personality cult to prepare for "a more perfect Communist revolution," in which the party envisioned itself as leading the unity of the northern and southern Communists under the leadership of Pak Hŏn-yŏng. In making such a decision, the party was also responsible for completely eliminating "Unitary Socialism"—a vision which aspired to found a non-ideological political climate for Korea in which all Koreans could unite as patriotic Koreans and overcome the storm of the Cold War which was intent on dividing the nation between Communists and anti-Communists. These responsibilities laid the groundwork for the war and for establishing the political framework within which north Korea's dictatorship would sustain itself by adopting proto-nationalism and a personality cult.

By "laying the groundwork," I do not mean that the SKWP had any power to directly order northern Communists to strike the south. I mean that the SKWP gave the ultimate signals to the north that invading the south was necessary because the Korean War was a northern effort to conclude the southern Communists' struggle against the Rightists as a "more perfect Communist revolution." I will concentrate on demonstrating the essence of this necessity and

argue that the intellectual and southern origins of the Korean War can be traced to the SKWP's struggle against Rightists and the American military government to realize this very idea by eventually uniting with its northern counterpart. The southern Right's attempt to prevent a southern Communist victory through the establishment of an anti-Communist security state unleashed even more terror and violence as the southern Right used terrorism and extortion to hunt down any real or suspected opponents of Syngman Rhee's administration after Rhee's inauguration as south Korea's President in 1948. The death of "Unitary Socialism" was a product of this very clash between southern Communism and anti-Communism, for the clash confirmed that there would be no opportunity or political space for "Unitary Socialism" to realize its aspiration of a non-ideological unification based on an appeal to historical Korean nationalism. In other words, a war of ideas between the southern Left and Right that persisted until north Korea founded its constitution *and* the death of "Unitary Socialism" as the war's major outcome confirmed the arrival of a manichean political climate in the Korean peninsula, was the intellectual epicenter of the Korean War. The hot war which carries the brunt of the Korean War's infamy was actually an extension of this intellectual war in post-liberation south Korea rather than an entirely new or different conflict.

In essence, I wish to suggest that the Korean War was more than the opening chapter of the global Cold War. The war needs to undergo a "struggle for a label" to do justice to the fact that the war was not just a struggle against Communism or from north Korea's viewpoint, a struggle for Communist dominance over the Korean peninsula.²² Instead, the war was the first Cold War which originally erupted in Korea featuring national themes: Korean nationalism, Japanese imperialism, and anti-Americanism. The Korean War began as a

²² For a discussion of the Cold War as a "struggle for the word or label" see Christian G. Appy, "Introduction: Struggling for the World," in Christian G. Appy ed., *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States' Imperialism, 1945-1966* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 3. See also Heon-ik Kwon, *The Other Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 6.

southern Communist insurrection against south Korea's Right-wing establishment and the American military government, and it is this intense Communist insurgency which set the overall tone and gave information to north Korea about when to launch an invasion against south Korea.

Furthermore, one must account for the SKWP's critical role in informing the northerners about the tumultuous political situation in south Korea and the fact that the Korean War was a clash between the SKWP and the northern Communists' common desire to absorb each other and bring all of Korea under the rule of a single, united Communist party. The SKWP desired to complete a "more perfect Communist revolution" using north Korea's military, while the northerners wish to use its superior bureaucratic and infrastructural organization to subdue not only the southern Right but also the SKWP itself. Hence, my project is one focused on formulating a southern Communist-led interaction with the American military government, the southern Right, and ultimately, north Korea, which would allow for a consideration of southern Communists motives behind initiating the Korean War as an ideological civil war between the southern Left and Right.

Although the southern Communists would eventually suffer a massive defeat by the Rightists and the American military government in late 1948, their importance must not be overshadowed by the rapidity of their downfall. With the elimination of "Unitary Socialism," the southern Communists bought enough time to perfect their strategy of holding onto their power—blend the personality cult with an emphasis on anti-imperialist rhetoric, which, in turn, influenced north Korea's nationalist Communism, because the SKWP offered a prototype for north Korea's political strategy in maintaining a firm grasp on political power. Furthermore, however many flaws Pak Hŏn-yŏng had as an immature theoretician of Communism, his fledgling expertise was a valuable asset in a country where the majority of the agrarian population was illiterate and poor. The southern Communists would use these

two assets and later provide the ideological and theoretical legitimacy for Kim Il-sung's personality cult and ultimately, the foundation of north Korea, albeit ironically resulting in a mass purge of the southerners for what Kim Il-sung felt as an excessive interference to exercising and aggrandizing his influence. In other words, the northern regime was born as a product of hybrid co-optation between the southern and northern workers' parties and Communists in southern Korea had to deal with an equally or perhaps more wild and dynamic political scene than those in northern Korea throughout the late 1940s.

In short, southern Korea was the focal epicenter of much chaos and turbulence prior to the war and the SKWP was responsible for organizing and fermenting the tense ambience of pre-war southern Korea by inviting the rise of a southern anti-Communist security state and the rise of a northern pseudo-Communist regime, both of which sought to edge the SKWP out in a competition for political supremacy in the Korean peninsula. The party was thereby responsible for laying a key cornerstone of the war: setting a Left-Right tension as its main theme. To illustrate my point, I will focus on the Southern Korean Workers' Party (SKWP)—what the north Korean defector and major Left-wing academic Yi Yǒng-hee (2005) called a "formidable mainstream intellectual current in Korean politics during the 1940s"²³—and affiliated southern Leftists to examine how the largest Communist party in southern Korea prior to the outbreak of the war became north Korea's sole partner in planning and unleashing the infamous terror of June 25, 1950. I will specifically show that the SKWP's confrontation with the southern Rightists and the American military government radicalized the party's resolve to completely align itself with the Communists in the north, and that this determination was manifest through the party's organization of mass protests and resistance

²³ Yi Yǒng-hee and Im Hǒn-yǒng, *Taehwa: Han Chisikinŭi Samkwa Sasang (A Dialogue: The Life and Ideas of an Intellectual)* (Seoul, south Korea: Han-kil Publishing, 2005), 209. Yi Yǒng-hee (1929-2010) was a leading Left-wing journalist, intellectual, and social activist who was famous for his vehement criticism of south Korean dictators in the 1960s and 1970s and of pro-Japanese collaborators who constituted most of south Korea's Right-wing establishment during the 1940s.

against the American military government.

A consideration of intellectual and southern origins to understand the Korean War as a civil war is necessary to make this argument. Before the hot military contest between the south and north Korean armies, there was an intellectual war of ideas in which an extreme desire to realize a Communist supremacy in southern Korea resulted in the complete erasure of a non-ideological middle ground in Korean politics. The SKWP was effectively monitoring and advising for northerners outright agitation and rebellion against what it perceived as detestable Rightist elements and American “imperialists” in southern Korea. In organizing these events, the SKWP effectively canceled out the possibility of non-ideological unification by eliminating any possibility for the growth of a middle ideology that would reconcile the Left and the Right. Simultaneously, by maintaining continuous contact with the north, the party aspired to realize its grand ambition of igniting and completing what party leader Pak Hōn-yōng called “a more perfect Communist revolution.”²⁴ The Korean War that erupted barely three years after the SKWP exited southern Korea was, in short, Kim Il-sung's desire to fulfill Pak's ultimate aim, albeit without Pak to oversee the entire operation. Instead of maintaining his alliance to realize a theoretically orthodox Communist party, Kim chose to quickly slake his thirst for absolute power. This choice ultimately unleashed the tragic conflict which would leave the peninsula divided into two semi-states.

The aftermath of the SKWP's victory in the intellectual war against "Unitary Socialism" was bitter, for while the party had succeeded in setting the tone of the eventual disaster of June 25, 1950, it failed to capitalize its hold on power. Kim outmaneuvered Pak in what Kim perceived as a competition to determine the undisputed leader of Korean Communism

²⁴ "Report on the Progress of the Fervent Agitators' Congregation," September 2, 1945. in Kim Nam-sik ed., *Namnotang Yōnku Charyochip (Official Documents of the South Korean Workers' Party)* (Seoul, south Korea: Tolpekae (Stone Pillow) Publishing, 1984), Vol. 1, 4. Noted as *ODSKWP* hereafter.

through a show-trial that ultimately led to Pak's execution in 1955. The execution not only ended Pak's dream of realizing a "more perfect Communist revolution," but also deprived north Korea of any legitimate credentials to call herself a truly Communist regime, leaving her with only a pseudo-Communist party hanging riskily to a shadowy personality cult to give her authoritarian character. What became later known as the Korean War was but north Korea's failed attempt to fulfill Pak Hŏn-yŏng's dream in her own terms and then to redress it as a victory of Communism. The decision to eliminate the possibility of non-ideological unification and thereby prepare for a southern-led Communist regime sheds light on the origins of the Korean War as an southern Korean battle of ideas between the Right and the Left in which the SKWP was instrumental for igniting a southern Communist insurrection to inspire north Korea to invade south Korea in an attempt to expand and complete the insurrection into a pan-Korean Communist revolution.

Hence, beyond understanding the Korean War as a civil war initiated by the southern Left, I wish to ascribe some agency to the concept of war as an intellectual rather than a political phenomenon. History is a study of the past, but it is also an art of figuring out how a historian ought to imagine about the past. Imagining about time, I believe, includes the liberty to decide its interpretive content. History never quite repeats itself; nothing must be taken for granted or be deemed inevitable.²⁵ The historian has the duty to exercise the liberty of employing historical imagination to accurately distinguish between what is true and false since historical knowledge, like its primary subject matter of time, is fundamentally relational as it reflects the views of an historian presenting it.²⁶

The southern Left under the SKWP's leadership suffered a devastating blow at the hands of the American military government and the Korean National Police, and this simple result

²⁵ Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1944), 1.

²⁶ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1946), 71.

might pale significantly in importance when compared with what would follow in 1950. Nevertheless, to ignore the southern catalyst while attempting to understand south Korea's political milieu as a catalyst for north Korea's invasion is a case of vulgar Hegelianism. The ignorance can only stem from an historian's use of presumed authority to know the future of the past, when no such thing exists. Results just compile a baggage of vapid one-dimensional endings, excised of beginnings and plots. They do not create the structure of stories to make history worthy of pure structural inquiry which is History. A purely historical argument which does justice to the historical scene in itself is that the *process* to the defeat is in itself significant because it essentially laid the leitmotif for the structure of the Korean War. Without the SKWP's critical and direct confrontation with the right-wing forces' political and military strength prior to the war, north Korea could not have fully known of the need to prepare so thoroughly for June 25, 1950. The war was a collaborative product of the southern Left's bloody "intelligence activities" under SKWP leadership as a catalyst and the north's military preparations and diplomatic dealings with the Soviets and Chinese, the latter of which is interesting, but is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

This "procedural alloy" approach to understanding the war's history is necessary because Korean War studies critically suffers from a major imbalance between southern and northern analyses. The general picture of a northern-led revolution and a phenomenological summary of the war as a chiefly north Korean and a state-based military affair has almost blotted out discussions about the importance of the SKWP's initiative and its relevance to the origins of the north Korean regime, and ultimately of the Korean War.²⁷ In tandem with my earlier argument about the SKWP's responsibility for laying the groundwork for Kim's dictatorship, I wish to make a case for multiplicity and continuity in illustrating historical causality by

²⁷ Even historian Jeremy Black has referred to the Korean War as "an instance of Communist regimes willing to sacrifice large amounts of manpower to achieve their goals." See Jeremy Black, *The Cold War: A Military History* (London, England, and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 79.

arguing that it was the southern Leftist ambition to realize Communist supremacy and initiative to launch the prototype of a civil war which gave north Korea the ultimate inspiration to send its forces to south Korea.²⁸ The southern Leftists never relinquished their hope to complete a "more perfect Communist revolution" even after the SKWP escaped from the south, albeit by late 1948, it was only Pak Hŏn-yŏng, the SKWP's leader, who was left to complete it. Until his execution by the firing squad 7 years later on charges of espionage and treason, Pak continuously attempted to realize his ideal, only to be perverted by Kim's lust for absolute power.

Thus, the great tragedy for north Korea since 1945 is a failure of pure idealism, a triumph of false orthodoxy and a pseudo-Stalinist state that emerged out of the hodge-podge. In other words, the SKWP's enduring historical legacy is north Korea as a symbol of a failed Communist state, and that in itself suggests much to be known about the party's role, and to a larger extent, the south's contribution to creating the political infrastructure of a northern semi-state. I wish to supplement both views and provide more autonomous agency to the south by arguing that the SKWP, as the second largest Communist organization in Korea before the Korean War, had devised its own goals, tactics, and historical mission of uniting Communists in a pan-Korean struggle for Communist supremacy. The Korean War was an extension of the SKWP's violent and serious attempt to overthrow the southern Rightists and destroy the dream of non-ideological unity and found a Communist hegemony in which the SKWP would become the sole leader with the northern Communists merely serving as expedients to expand the organizational base. The war was, in this sense, a product of a

²⁸ In other words, this project is an attempt to write a southern history of the Korean War reflecting Geir Lundestad's insistence on the need to transcend the question, "who is to blame?", address the multiplicity of causes, and finally, the interaction between various national interests while rewriting (but not revising) the history of the Cold War. See Geir Lundestad, "How (Not) to Study the Cold War," in Odd Arne Westad ed., *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London, England, and Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 75.

clandestine rivalry within the south Korean Leftist camp as much as it is popularly yet incompletely known as a unilateral north Korean invasion of south Korea.

3. Contributions to the Scholarly Literature

The central point I wish to make can be expressed from theoretical and methodological perspectives. Theoretically, I am arguing that no historical time is ever so naturally or absolutely determined such that every mind can instantly agree on what constitutes "the beginning" or "the end" without any possibility for changing the chronological scopes of both terms. To search for origins is not merely to engage in such chronological determinism but to judiciously and accurately trace the genealogy of the present and explain how the temporal essence of whatever present a historian wishes to clarify and verify came to be as it is. Even the most obviously dualistic phenomenon of war, in which the distinction between a belligerent and a defender seems clear is liable to perceptual changes in interpretation based on different geographical and chronological considerations. The multiplicity of perspectives does not disfigure or convolute the accurate portrayal of reality, but allows a historian to write a history "pregnant with meaning," since a perspective is both a component and a principle of organizing reality.²⁹

This is why debates on history must have multiplicity of perspectives as their inherent nature, and I believe that the Korean War must have this feature to understand how the war originally began as a southern civil war between the southern Left and Right, with the SKWP aspiring to become north Korea's chief collaborator by partaking in the making of the initial chaos. Doing so would not only provide another layer of justification for why the Korean War was indeed a Korean affair before it became internationalized, but also help us understand how the interplay between factional political agitation and a raw competition for dominance

²⁹ Georg Lukács, "Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization," in Lukács and Rodney Livingstone trans., *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1971), 339.

facilitate the beginning of war as a clash between two national state-based armies. The idea of an international war has a national origin, which in turn, has local actors and their specific conflicts between each other which define the national character of a civil war.

From a methodological standpoint, my thesis is that the Korean War must not be understood just as a political event but also as an intellectual one and must therefore be investigated as a history of ideas. Understanding the war's southern origins involves not only understanding the institutional rise and fall of the southern Left but also the southern Left's ideological relationship to the socio-historical reality of the Korean War as a pan-peninsular war. By understanding points of intellectual connection or disconnection a political force has with its surrounding environment, one could, as philosopher Karl Mannheim (1966) argues, conduct a historical study of ideology that concentrates on analyzing not only how an ideology's theoretical components internally relate with each other but also externally with a larger systematic inquiry into the structure of society in which the ideology exerted its most potent form.³⁰ It is such procedural and systematic understanding of ideology as an interactive universe of ideas for which society is its representative embodiment.

Interpreting the Korean War as a southern intellectual and civil war is also beneficial because it prevents a historical phenomenon's reliance on what I call "chronological determinism"—a focus on why a phenomenon occurred at all rather than inquiring about why that phenomenon had to be the ultimate missing link. The main error of "chronological determinism" is that it concentrates on evaluating the significance of a particular event too much that it becomes easy to be fixated with a supposedly inflexible "beginning" or "end" which does not reflect the flexibility of human behavior and its unpredictability which cannot be tightly bound or restricted by time. History must be like a natural cataract. The cataract

³⁰ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 81 and 84. See also Johannes Fabian, "Ideology and Content," *Sociologist*, New Series, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1966), 5-6.

rumbles with great intensity, but the cacophony from the initial body of water as it falls soon quickly dies to introduce another body. This is because the "body" is actually an amalgamation of several different but eventually converging strands of cascades to form the body itself. The resulting cacophony is never a singular or an independent sound, but an amalgamation of resonances from the collective presence of the multiple cascades, each with its own origins and paths. Fundamentally, water, as the main essence of the cascades and the cataract, retains its form, regardless of differences in the origins of many cascades.

Therefore, if the "Korean" in the commonly used label "Korean War" is to have an historically accurate meaning as a war fought in Korea and among Koreans, it must include a discussion of the southern initiative in contributing to the making of war. In particular, my examination of the SKWP's rise, destruction of non-ideological unity, and the party's allegiance to Kim Il-sung as his primary partner but also paradoxically, his rival in building a "more perfect Communist revolution" will shed light on how the southern Left in Korea during the 1940s constructed its own leitmotif for the Korean War—a quest to realize their own hegemony in competition with north Korea. This leitmotif is important because it shows that north Korea's invasion on June 25, 1950 was not a surprise or an unforeseeable attack, but was a continuing chapter of a southern Communist operation to found their own hegemony. The SKWP's rise and subsequent engagement in constant battles with the southern Rightists and American military government served as clear signals that the struggle between anti-Communism and Communism was already well under way after Korea's liberation rather than an isolated development which sprouted without any roots.

Overall, tracing the SKWP's rise throughout 1945-1947 is not merely an attempt to provide a biographical sketch of an institution, but in a sense, an inquiry into the genesis of the idea and structure of the Korean peninsula's division into two Korean semi-states. Just as no magnet can be made without north and south poles, so it is with the Korean War. While the

SKWP's history itself cannot substitute the entirety of southern Korea's history before the war, it does provide a glimpse into the genealogical origins of Communist agitation and resistance to the southern Rightist and pro-American regime. It also pinpoints to a core reason behind the Korean War's tragic character. It is not the division into north and south Korea alone that was tragic, but the very fact that when the winds of revolution finally blew from south to north, the distinction between the two Koreas had virtually lost any meaning, for the SKWP was simultaneously a Communist and southern Korean organization.

My inquiry will not only elaborate on Cumings' work by emphasizing the war's fundamental nature as a civil war, but also hint at the larger southern turmoil which the SKWP unsuccessfully used to set the central theme of the war as a conflict between nationalist Communism and American imperialism. This pretext and a desire to maintain this theme fatally led to the elimination of any neutral and non-ideological approaches to actualize Korean unification and "unitary socialism." I will also complement Lewis and Haruki's works by suggesting that a consideration of south Korean society after liberation is important to understand how the formation of a distinct north Korean regime and society resulted from a political collaboration between the SKWP and north Korea to bring the Korean Communist movement under their hegemony. The southern Left's participation in a small but an intense south Korean War between the Right and the Left had already established the war's leitmotif as a southern-initiated civil war in which north Korea's invasion of south Korea was an effort to intensify the gusts of a revolutionary wind that had already been blowing from south to north since 1945. The Korean War was not originally a north Korean attempt to "liberate" south Korea on northern terms, but a continuation of a south Korean civil war and the SKWP's failed quest to lead the southern clash between the Left and the Right to a Communist victory by punishing pro-Japanese collaborators and "American imperialists." Since the late 1940s, the southern Left had already been in the maelstrom of a war to realize a

"more perfect Communist revolution" against Rightists and the American military government; north Korea used information about the southern Right acquired from the southern Left to plan and carry out an invasion of south Korea and divide a historically united people into two semi-states awaiting a postponed reunion.

An account of a causal, if not neat and orderly, sequence of events in southern Korea from the Leftists is necessary to understand how the seeds of the Korean War were planted first in southern Korea before they exploded their flowers of flame in an effort to complete "a more perfect Communist revolution." A consideration of the southern Left's initiative in starting the Communist revolution is necessary and worthwhile because it ultimately shows how the rise of the first ambers of violence in southern Korea out of an ambition to realize a southern-dominated Communist order provided the Korean War with its violence and strategic aim to subdue the Rightists. The Korean War was the Korean peninsula's greatest tragedy but not an illogical or unpredictable one, for it was the southern Leftists' desire to establish their own hegemony and expand it into north Korea which made the Korean War sustain its southern Korean character as much as its commonly assumed north Korean one. The Korean War was a pan-Korean tragedy featuring gross violence, tears, and blood, but it was the southern Left, rather than the northern Communists, who initially made sure that it was a civil war placed between Hobbesian anarchy and Schmidtian manipulation by foreign powers by setting the overall theme of anti-Communism versus Communism.

4. The Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation will consist of ten chapters and a conclusion. In chapter 1, I will address the early history of the Korean Communist movement. The CCP was but one of many Communist factions which contested for leadership and would spend the majority of the 1920s overshadowed by an intense factionalist struggle with its rivals, ultimately leading to a complete fragmentation of the Communist movement by the end of the decade. The outbreak

of the Alexeyevsk Incident, which saw the Soviets massacre thousands of Korean Communists, the breakdown of the New Middle Party's attempt in 1927 to unite the southern Left, and finally, a diaspora among Korean Communists upon the arrival of the Great Depression to Japan, all had provided a deeply historically rooted motivation for the SKWP to conclude an unfinished project that was suspended for two decades. Considering this historical background, the re-institutionalization of the Chosŏn Communist Party on September 2, 1945 was the southern Left's attempt to continue a previously disrupted project of unifying the Korean Communist movement and to prove itself as a direct successor to its earlier prototype from the 1920s. Even after the Americans devastated Japan's major cities to bring her down to her knees, the southern Left did not recognize the end of the Second World War as the end of the Communist interpretation of "national liberation." In short, the rise of the southern Left was borne from an ambition to become a supreme leader of the Korean Communist movement and introduce its renaissance after its twenty-year fragmentation borne from Japanese imperialism and factionalism.

However, the CCP was not the first major attempt at appealing to nationalism for Korean unity. I will also examine the rise of the National Reconstruction Council in August 1945 as the first serious experiment with the possibility of constructing a moderate political climate in post-liberation Korea. The council was born from centrist politician Yŏ Un-hyŏng's disappointment with an intense factionalism within the Provisional Government during the 1910s and 1920s. Instead of concentrating on amalgamating an exclusively Right or Left-wing clique, Yŏ believed that Korean nationalism was the most suitable ideology with which Koreans could build a Korea for Koreans. Yŏ sought to unite Koreans solely to encourage their concentration on the immediate and urgent task of reorganizing post-liberation Korea. The council's main objectives of securing Japanese promises to guarantee finances, food, and security to realizing a politically stable Korea served as a cornerstone for constructing Korea

into a nation where nationalism was the single creed which would unite Koreans as Koreans. Yet, Yŏ's vision could not sustain itself for too long, since it found a formidable rival in CCP's co-chairman Pak Hŏn-yŏng's Communistic interpretation of Korean nationalism.

Pak was formidable because Communism was the most important theory which shaped his formative years. In chapter 2, I will argue that Pak's rise to the chairmanship of the CCP owed its roots to Pak's early development as a Communist politician and theorist, a career which focused on combining anti-imperialistic nationalism with orthodox Communism. I will examine some of Pak Hŏn-yŏng's major essays to highlight his ardent commitment to orthodox Communism and trace the origins of his decision to adopt a combination of anti-imperialism and Communism as his main political ideology and show that his response to the American military government was not impulsive or spontaneously conceived, but was informed by his steadfast commitment to merge Communism with anti-imperialism, albeit being unclear about which element had priority over the other. I will also examine Pak Hŏn-yŏng's August Thesis and its relationship with the Soviets' December Thesis and show that the SKWP was originally conceived as a serious albeit an incomplete effort to bridge orthodox Marxism and anti-imperialistic nationalism. The main reason for the incomplete connection was primarily due to Pak's lack of acquaintance with the analytical nuances of Marxism and his own proclivity towards an understanding of Communism chiefly as a tool to combat imperialism such that he did not carefully consider what role Korean nationalism ought to exactly play in defining Communism.

Indeed, as chapter 3 will demonstrate, Pak's such indecisiveness invited the rise of the Chang-an faction, a pseudo-Communist organization which focused exclusively on discrediting Pak Hŏn-yŏng, and Pak Hŏn-yŏng's defeat of this challenge influenced the CCP to conceive itself as a direct successor to an abruptly disjointed Korean Communist movement. The defeat of these pseudo-Communists was important not only because the CCP

absorbed the Chang-an faction to mark the CCP's first stage of institutional expansion and unification of the southern Left, but the absorption also clarified the CCP's ultimate goal as the unification of the Left in south to serve as a pivot to realizing a perfect Communization of the peninsula. Thus, the reorganization of the CCP was not a spontaneous response to the turbulence of the 1940s, but the product of a strong desire to end a chaotic history of intense factionalism within the southern Left. When Korea's liberation finally materialized in 1945, the party not only considered it a moment to promote the liberation of the proletariat, but a renaissance, a resuscitation of the Left as a whole.

However, the commencement of the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference delayed the CCP's chance to seize a momentum to promote proletarian liberation because a newspaper article's erroneous claim that the Soviets wanted to impose a trusteeship for forty years while the Americans wanted five years would inflame passions from the Left and the Right on the question of whether Koreans ought to support or oppose the trusteeship. Although the CCP initially opposed the trusteeship because it viewed the measure as imperialistic, it soon switched to supporting the trusteeship because it thought that supporting the Soviets' promise of national liberation would be a golden ticket to catapulting the party as a genuinely populist and nationalist institution.

Chapter 4 will trace the origins of tensions between the southern Left and the Right by examining Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Yŏ Un-hyŏng's confrontations with Syngman Rhee and the American military government. I will discuss Pak's meetings with Rhee and American military government officials and argue that for Pak, the meetings confirmed an eternal irreconcilability with the Americans and the Right-wing establishment because Pak refused to understand how the Americans could employ former pro-Japanese collaborators in their administration, while the Americans disliked the extremism behind Pak's insistence that the Americans must make all efforts to eradicate pro-Japanese collaborators and initiate a

nationalistic land reform focusing on a redistribution of agrarian lands to the peasantry at the expense of the wealthy and pro-Japanese bourgeoisie. However, it was not only Pak who was frustrated with the American military government's lukewarm attitude toward eliminating pro-Japanese collaborators. Yŏ Un-hyŏng also met a bitter failure in his negotiations with the Americans due to his and their inability to clearly explain and understand "Unitary Socialism" as a coherent program for unification of the southern Left and the ideology's emphasis on non-ideological unification of the Korean peninsula aimed at a full restoration of Korean nationalism and sovereignty. Yet, confronted with the urgency of turning Korea into a bulwark against Communism, American military government officials could not understand Yŏ's position and considered it merely as a thought born out of a mistaken or increasingly rosy view of the Cold War. Hence, Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Yŏ Un-hyŏng were able to understand that cooperation with the American military government was impossible unless either Pak or Yŏ were willing to compromise by bending their beliefs and instead favor the Americans' commitment to anti-Communism—something that both men were absolutely unwilling to do.

Chapter 5 will closely examine "Unitary Socialism" as an ideology and identify its central tenets which helped establish Yŏ Un-hyŏng as a major nationalist and a supporter of non-ideological unification. I will discuss Yŏ's early career as an independence activist in Manchuria and as a diplomat and argue that the roots of his disagreement with the Right-wing establishment began since the founding of the Korean Provisional Government in the 1930s. Against the Provisional Government's exclusion of Left-wing politicians and intellectuals in constructing a nationalist government, Yŏ argued that the Provisional Government must not consider itself to be a successor to the Korean Empire because the latter's adoption of *Taehan*—derived from *Taehan Chekuk*, the Korean term for the Korean Empire (1897-1910)—had no clear historical precedent and the Empire was merely a puppet regime of the Japanese colonial administration. In Yŏ's view, a genuinely independent Korea had to be led by a

populist and nationalist government founded by, of, and for the Korean people. Instead of appealing to either Communism or democracy, Yŏ believed that Korea had to be a nation which prized the unity of Koreans in and of itself to maintain a genuine sense of national sovereignty.

However, despite Yŏ's nationalistic vision, Korea during the late 1940s was a far more tumultuous and chaotic place without much liberty to entertain such a purely nationalistic view. The primary weakness of Yŏ's vision was that it prized on being too unique such that it was liable to various interpretations from opponents who could feign that they shared Yŏ's appeal to nationalism even without knowing what Yŏ had in mind. To prove this point, I will examine the rise of Pak's personality cult, the CCP's support of the trusteeship and the polarization of south Korean politics. I will argue that the CCP's support of the trusteeship under Soviet guidance was not conceived impulsively just out of a desire to unite the Left but because the highly chaotic mix of diverse opinions on the trusteeship, ranging from fervent opposition, neutrality, ambivalence, to steadfast support compelled the CCP to quickly find a position in the Korean political spectrum to guarantee an influential and independent foothold in Korean politics. Furthermore, with the north Koreans increasingly favoring a Soviet-led trusteeship of Korea, the CCP would be emboldened enough to discredit Yŏ Un-hyŏng's "Unitary Socialism" by deliberately infiltrating some of its members in an event Yŏ Un-hyŏng hosted. Although the members did nothing but feign their support for Kim Ku and Korean nationalism, the infiltration was the CCP's first warning to Yŏ Un-hyŏng that "Unitary Socialism" was an insufficient ideology to unite all Koreans because its amalgamative nature made it susceptible to political manipulation and eventual transformation into Communism.

Hence, even though Yŏ founded the National Reconstruction Council to reorganize post-war southern Korea by winning Japan's promise for repatriations and emphasizing the urgent need for land reforms, Yŏ's program quickly crumbled as the CCP leader Pak Hŏn-yŏng

exploited these Left-wing sentiments by redressing them as the CCP's own. Since Pak knew well that Yŏ's only dependable allies who would actually support his program only existed in the CCP, Pak easily offered to help Yŏ, which became an excuse to infiltrate Communists deep into the NRC's ranks and eventually lead to a Communist infiltration into the NRC. The CCP's successful infiltration into the NRC marked the first defeat for Yŏ Un-hyŏng and "Unitary Socialism" as the NRC degenerated into nothing more than another auxiliary branch of the CCP and inadvertently helped Pak Hŏn-yŏng expand his influence and power over the southern Left. Barely after a few months since the NRC's establishment, Yŏ would quickly realize that his invitation of Pak into the NRC was Yŏ's first step into a giant Communist maelstrom, one from which he would struggle in vain for the rest of his political career. In short, Yŏ would critically learn that the uniqueness of his ideology had dangerously mutated into an aloofness about Korea's political climate.

Chapter 6 will examine the consolidation of Pak's personality cult and the initiation of the demise of "Unitary Socialism." I will argue that the CCP quickly interpreted the breakdown of negotiations between Pak Hŏn-yŏng and the American military government as a chance to experiment with the possibility of founding a Communist regime in southern Korea. After Pak Hŏn-yŏng succeeded in expelling Yŏ Un-hyŏng from the party's headquarters by January 1946, the CCP sought to make the possibility into a reality through the consolidation of the Pak personality cult. Chapter 6 will also examine how the CCP's effort to consolidate the southern Left and show the CCP's allegiance to the north splintered the southern Left and forced "Unitary Socialism" into isolation. I will argue that the CCP's failure to consolidate Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Korean People's Party (KPP) and Paek Nam-un's Social Democratic Party (later, New Citizens' Party) further splintered the Left and created more alienation among Pak's former allies against the CCP dictatorship. During this process, the CCP's main contribution to the Korean War was its elimination of a solid middle ground for non-ideological

reconciliation. Although Bruce Cumings has argued that 1947 was a "year of no significance in modern Korean history,"³¹ I will implicitly modify this interpretation by arguing that the death of Yŏ's "Unitary Socialism" in 1947 was due to the ideology being unique, and rather too unique in a country where anti-Communist-Communist competition was the only world politicians cared about. The consolidation of the Pak personality cult considerably weakened influence of "Unitary Socialism" as a path to reconcile the Left and the Right increasingly dimmed the feasibility of a non-ideological solution to the Korean War. This enabled the CCP to intensify its efforts to challenge the American military government despite its recognition that it stood little chance against the latter in direct confrontation. This response would later influence Pak's decision to report the Americans' and south Koreans' "unruly behavior" and the war was conceived as a means to inflict divine punishment and demonstrate the superiority of Communism as a nationalistic and pro-peasantry philosophy to unite all of Korea.

I will argue that Pak Hŏn-yŏng made an immense tradeoff between his reputation as an orthodox Marxist and his desire to oust his main rival Yŏ Un-hyŏng from the CCP because he wanted to quickly affirm his unwavering allegiance to north Korea. The tradeoff exposed a major pitfall for Pak because it demonstrated that the personality cult was only a means to consolidate his dictatorship whose expediency would best be demonstrated by his demand for the CCP's total worship of his cult and for his opponents to immediately leave the party should they refuse to comply. Yŏ Un-hyŏng's self-conscious decision to walk out from the party marked the beginnings of Pak's extreme adherence to Communism and Yŏ's realization that non-ideological unity would be impossible in Korea under the CCP's leadership.

However, realizing Communist solidarity was not the only motive for launching the personality cult, since a strong individual will must complement a public's desire to grant

³¹ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 2, 237.

legitimacy to the cult; a strong personal motivation to become a personality cult must fundamentally accompany a public's endorsement to make the personality cult become an instrument of formidable power.

Chapter 7 will extend the discussion from chapter 6 by examining Pak's hatred for Christianity as a personal motivation to establish the personality cult. Pak had an ardent desire to ally the CCP with the NKWP, and to that end, Pak believed that the CCP ought to follow north Korea's example of blending anti-imperialistic nationalism with orthodox Communism's rejection of Christianity. Hence, the founding of a personality cult was an effort to demonstrate the CCP's accelerated transition to an orthodox Communist party and a signal to Yŏ Un-hyŏng that there would be no room for any experiments with "Unitary Socialism" in the party. Yŏ's walkout from the party in January 1946 was a clear sign that Yŏ had paid the ultimate price of having no solid political home because he had failed to systematically organize and deliver "Unitary Socialism" to both the southern Left and Right. However, Yŏ's failure was also a sign of how his failure was inevitable because of the intense polarization between the southern Left and southern Right which could not entertain anything close to a middle-of-the-road ideology.

Indeed, it did not take long for the CCP to unabashedly show that it had desired Yŏ Un-hyŏng's exit to promote a Communist hegemony within the southern Left. After securing Yŏ's exit from the party, Pak concentrated on expanding the CCP's influence within the south Korean Left by proposing a pan-Leftist union under the CCP's dominance and, by supporting north Korea's land reforms. The CCP's creation of the Democratic Nationalist Front in February 1946 was an effort to extend the Communist network and consolidate the south Korean Left to maintain a balance of power against the Right-wing establishment; Pak intended to use this strengthened political base to transform his personal hatred of Christians and the Right as an institutional one to plant the seeds of a southern Communist insurrection.

The completion of north Korea's land reforms in March was for Pak an icing on the cake, for it gave him confidence that the CCP's support for an emulation or outright implementation of the northern land reforms in south Korea would serve as undeniable proof for north Korea that the CCP's desire to ally with its northern partner was thoroughly genuine.

By contrast, Yŏ Un-hyŏng's exit from the CCP was a complete disaster for Yŏ's political career because "Unitary Socialism" had not only been banished from the skeptical Right but also from the southern Left, a phenomenon which informed Yŏ that the time for his ideology's retirement was drawing near. As chapter 8 will discuss, Yŏ's exit not only meant the elimination of "Unitary Socialism" but also of a solution to assure that both the Soviets and the Americans could leave Korea as honorable guests and simultaneously preserve Korean independence. Yŏ believed that the Americans were occupying the "living room" of Korea's "house," while the Soviets were occupying the "guest room." Korea needed the presence of the two Great Powers as guests, but he was more favorably inclined towards the Soviet Union because the United States' military government was, in Yŏ's view, primarily responsible for constructing the ideological antagonism in Korea.

On one hand, Yŏ's exit from the CCP meant a permanent failure of "Unitary Socialism" to function as a workable program for Korea's non-ideological unification by ensuring that both foreign forces left Korea in peace, but on the other hand, Yŏ's "house analogy" shows the tension within "Unitary Socialism," since Yŏ not only understood the American military government as an affront to Koreans' pride as a historically unified people, but also understood the Soviets to be performing a more auxiliary and beneficial role in Korea by informing her of land reform could not explain why nationalism was more important than Socialism in his vision. In short, Pak's plan to confirm Communism as the CCP's dominant ideology materialized very quickly because he had gotten rid of Yŏ's failure to designate a clear hierarchy between nationalism and Socialism within "Unitary Socialism."

Another major factor which aided the acceleration of Pak's plan was north Korea's announcement of land reforms just three months after the DNF's founding. Although north Koreans were initially engaged in a heated debate about whether the reforms were necessary to erase the vestiges of imperialism or unnecessary because they did not fundamentally answer why the bourgeoisie had to be sacrificed regardless of whether they had collaborated with the Japanese, for Kim Il-sung and Pak Hŏn-yŏng, the reforms were most welcome. For Kim Il-sung, since the reforms helped emphasize the primacy of Korean nationalism over Marxism by removing northern Christians, and for Pak, Kim Il-sung's endorsement of the reforms legitimized Pak's similar stance expressed in the August Thesis, and by extension, his anti-American and anti-imperialistic rhetoric with which he was leading the CCP. In short, the formation of the DNF and support of the northern land reforms were measures implemented not only to prevent any future appearances of anti-Pak individuals who may disrupt or overthrow the personality cult, but also to demonstrate Pak's firm belief in his confidence to bring the entire Korean Communist movement under his leadership. Although the confidence would meet an unexpected compromise through the completion of north Korea's land reforms, Pak's creation of the DNF laid the critical cornerstone for a lasting partnership between the northern and southern Communists and prepared the first step toward achieving a reasonable degree of parity in strength against the southern Rightist establishment. In short, these two major developments sounded the first bugle of a major civil war in southern Korea.

However, as chapter 9 will demonstrate, the CCP's relegation of the DNF merely as a tool to strengthen Pak's personality cult rather than the southern Korean Communist movement quickly proved to be shallow and myopic when the CCP became embroiled in a counterfeiting scandal and experienced a permanent financial collapse by May 1946—a crisis from which the party would not fully recover until its complete dissolution in October 1948. Although Pak Hŏn-yŏng nearly eliminated Yŏ Un-hyŏng from the CCP, he still faced

considerable political and financial problems which could jeopardize the party's future. Politically, Pak faced a deeply frustrating ambiguity with the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference. Throughout the Spring of 1946, the Americans and Soviets were still at loggerheads over the proper form of democracy in Korea. The Americans favored representation from all sides of the political spectrum, while the Soviets wanted a Leftist-dominated public referendum to solidify Moscow's control over Korea. From Pak's point of view, the stalemate was very unhelpful to increasing his legitimacy as the ultimate Communist leader because he could not find much justification to accuse the American military government and the Rightists of disrupting the political unification of the peninsula. Furthermore, the outbreak of a major counterfeiting scandal in May placed the party in an unexpected quagmire, for on one hand, they were on the verge of a complete breakdown due to a lack of funds, and the American military government's shutdown of all Leftist newspapers ensured that the party was isolated from world affairs and blocked from accessing news about how the global Leftist movement was unfolding.

Such dire circumstances suggested that Pak could not be sure about prolonging his struggle against the Right-wing establishment through direct engagement by force, and should he fail to continue his operation to realize a "more perfect Communist revolution," he could risk losing northern support and his dream of becoming the unchallenged leader of the Communist movement in Korea. Hence, as I will show in chapter 9, Pak Hŏn-yŏng made a desperate attempt to sustain the CCP's operations in southern Korea by embroiling the party in a counterfeiting scandal. By May 1946, it was becoming clear that the Americans and Soviets were not making a significant headway in negotiations, entering into a deadlock over whether all political parties or just Left-wing parties in the Korean peninsula ought to be represented in the Moscow Conference. The prolonged and inconclusive debates between the Americans and Soviets instilled apprehension and discomfort in the CCP, with many members fearing

that the party was in danger of losing its sense of purpose, since there was no signal from either Moscow or P'yŏngyang that a Communist revolution was feasible. Moreover, with the party rapidly running out of funds, Pak Hŏn-yŏng had to stifle any internal complaints against his leadership. Therefore, the CCP illegally opened a small printing station in central Seoul, where they printed counterfeit bills to supplement the party's finances.

However, the counterfeiting scandal quickly ended as a disaster for the party when the American military government issued an order to suspend all Left-wing media. This decision effectively meant that the CCP lost a major means of contact with other Communist parties around the world and most critically, with Moscow and P'yŏngyang. The lack of communication with the international Communist camp was compounded with the south Korean police's unexpected raid on the printing station itself, leading to the arrest of many cadres. Although the counterfeiting scandal was a brief and relatively minor event in terms of scale, the CCP would suffer from a permanent operational paralysis, lacking in both information and funding to carry out large-scale insurgencies against the Right-wing establishment. Yet, in another sense, the minting scandal and the southern Communists' preoccupation with securing sufficient finances to continue confronting the Right meant that Pak Hŏn-yŏng had inadvertently assured that Yŏ Un-hyŏng would have no chance to robustly promote "Unitary Socialism." The chaos that ensued from the south Korean police's arrest of CCP cadres warned Yŏ that his political project was not only unrealistic but also impossible against an ever darkening shadow of the Cold War in Korea. In other words, the minting scandal marked an evident beginning of the CCP's political downfall and ensured the party's total financial collapse. The scandal also confirmed the existence of the Cold War's Manicheanism as a political culture in southern Korea, a strength which was impervious to any attempt to neutralize, smother, or completely extinguish it, marking an emerging twilight of "Unitary Socialism."

After using Yŏ Un-hyŏng as an unexpected political lifeboat, a financially cornered Pak Hŏn-yŏng became desperate to search for a more extensive political lifeline, hoping to confirm that he would be Kim Il-sung's sole partner within the southern Left. As chapter 10 will discuss, the southern Right, under the leadership of Syngman Rhee, was constantly calling out for separate elections in south Korea, thereby signaling a desire to see the emergence two separate regimes in the Korean peninsula. Fearful of the possibility that the southern Communists have no political turf following the disastrous minting scandal, Pak spent much of July trying to assure that the CCP was thoroughly supporting his cult by announcing the Five Principles, which collectively suggested that all southern Leftists were united in recognizing the supremacy of the CCP. Although Yŏ Un-hyŏng made an effort to urge for the realization of a Right-Left alliance by announcing his Seven Principles and proposing a pro-peasantry oriented land reform resembling that of Swedish Social democracy, Pak's announcement of Yŏ's "support" of the Five Principles while Yŏ was busy meeting Kim Il-sung in P'yŏngyang assured that the Communization of the CCP was complete.

Yet, Pak was not satisfied with bringing about a twilight of "Unitary Socialism" in what I call the "September Lobby"; Pak needed an immediate and a clear mandate from Kim Il-sung that his appointment as Kim's right-hand man was permanently sealed. As chapter 11 will show, upon finding out that Yŏ was busy severely criticizing him to Kim Il-sung, Pak engaged in a lobbying campaign to smear Yŏ and draw Pak himself closer towards a permanent partnership with Kim Il-sung. Pak would eventually seal a victory against Yŏ by securing a "Two-to-One Deal," in which he promised Kim that he would bring southern Korea under the CCP's control and await north Korea's military intervention, an outcome Pak believed to be sufficient to realize a "more perfect Communist revolution" of Communizing the entire Korean peninsula. Although Kim Il-sung did sympathize with Yŏ Un-hyŏng's determination to create a non-ideological political culture by combining electoral politics and Socialistic

state-led land reform, Kim eventually favored Pak's vision, which meant that the end of the September Lobby had turned Yŏ into a complete iconoclast to both south and north Korea. The September Lobby had thereby confirmed the coming of a fading twilight for "Unitary Socialism." Barely two months later, Pak would complete the unification of the southern Left by renaming the CCP as the Southern Korean Workers' Party, thereby completing the southern institutional preparation for the fulfillment of the "Two-to-One Deal."

However, Pak made a grave error by trusting his elevation to the second most powerful man in north Korea rather too much by impulsively ordering the outbreak of the September and October labor strikes. What seemed to begin as peasants and factory workers' legitimate protest and expression of grievances soon exploded into utter chaos and mayhem as the CCP sought to use the strikes as a test of a "new tactic," which was simply nothing more than a direct armed confrontation with the Right-wing forces. The CCP mutated the peasants and workers into the party's militants and encouraged them to shout anti-American and anti-imperialist slogans while ferociously battling against the south Korean police and the American military government. The strikes laid waste to most of south Korea's communications and industries, thereby completely paralyzing the region's economy. The only certain outcome from the strikes was the CCP's bitter defeat and Pak's devastating first-hand experience of the Syngman Rhee's exercise of raw power. The defeat also confirmed the hollowness behind Pak's claim to have prepared an orthodox Communist party, for an excessive concentration on maintaining the personality cult had led to the party's neglect of military preparedness and strategy. The party would never fully recover from this defeat and in this sense, the strikes brought a permanent paralysis to the CCP's offensive capabilities, and much worse, to the southern Communist insurrection.

However, as chapter 12 will argue, the September and October labor strikes were not pointless. Despite the unruly violence, lack of discipline among the peasants and workers, and

the CCP's disregard for protecting the strikes' participants and the party's failure to draw support from the moderates and the Right, the CCP managed to use the outbreak of the strikes to consolidate the southern Left under its singular rule, and shut out any internal opposition. Moreover, by deciding to initiate a southern Left-wing attack on the Right-wing establishment, Pak completed the "Two-to-One Deal" by stirring a major insurrection which Pak hoped would beckon north Korea's attention. To make sure that P'yŏng-yang would concentrate on Pak's call for a Communist insurrection, Pak kidnapped Yŏ and forced Yŏ to pledge that he would never challenge Pak again by maintaining contact with P'yŏngyang. Such preliminary preparations would eventually bear their fruit for Pak with the official founding of the SKWP as the singular authority of the southern Left, assuring that "Unitary Socialism" would soon meet its political death, having no solid footing in southern politics. Having assured the permanent removal of Yŏ Un-hyŏng from party headquarters, Pak Hŏn-yŏng and his supporters were free to proceed with completing the rejuvenation of the Korean Communist movement. As a finishing measure to ensure an institutional unity among the southern Left, Pak Hŏn-yŏng adopted the seemingly inclusive label of "SKWP" and solidified his control over the organization by transforming it into an exclusively southern Communist club.

The southern Left's preparation of a coffin for "Unitary Socialism" had its counterpart from the southern Right as well. Chapter 13 will address the south Korean state and show that the southern Right-wing establishment also played a considerable role in bringing about a definitive prelude to the emerging death of "Unitary Socialism" and ushered the peninsula's rapid descent into the eye of the Cold War's maelstrom. It will examine the rise of an autocratic police state in response to what the Right-wing perceived as a growing Communist threat. The consolidation of power in the southern Left did not go unnoticed and inspired the southern Right to strengthen their anti-Communism by establishing the Legislative Assembly and employing anti-Communist terrorists to introduce a totalitarian anti-Communist

security state. As the SKWP increased its degree of belligerence, Syngman Rhee and his aides responded with overwhelming force, employing not only the south Korean military in anti-guerrilla operations but also forming their own network of terrorists by recruiting northern defectors to hunt down Communists.

To make things worse, the SKWP failed to conceive of a genuinely strong alliance within the Left as its major partners crumbled due to internal factionalism. The KPP, which had changed its name to the Social Labor Party under the joint leadership of Yŏ Un-hyŏng and the moderate politician Paek Nam-un in October 1946, suffered from constant factionalism until the party would completely disintegrate under the weight of the division between the "47 Left clan" and the "31 Moderate clan" by the summer of 1946. This division was fatal, not the least because it was not a division due to any sophisticated difference about ideological systems, but largely based on the pointless question of who was more suitable to be Yŏ's closest associate based on seniority, experience, and other bureaucratic considerations which did not materialize into any meaningful contribution to ideological unity within the Left.

More egregiously, the split would critically spell the end of any organized activity for the moderate Left, and for the rest of his political career, Yŏ became a political vagabond, pleading to one party after another, including a request to the SKWP to reaccept him as a member, but to no avail. Similarly, the Social Democratic Party—the other major Leftist party under the leadership of Paek Nam-un—would struggle to maintain unity, but Paek, who critically lacked political charisma primarily due to his scholarly orientation as a Marxist economist, would eventually choose integration with the SKWP by the end of 1946. Thus, the facade of Leftist unity under the SKWP was actually the Left's critical weakness because it was purely a product of the SKWP dictatorial coercion. It is no wonder that the American military police and the Korean National Police took advantage of this weakness, having little difficulty in crushing the September and the October labor strike in 1946—events which had

strongly Communist initiatives but lacked sufficient prowess to maintain their vigor due to a lack of strong leadership. In essence, the SKWP critically failed to capitalize on its supremacy granted almost *gratis*, thanks to the near suicidal downfall of the smaller Left-wing parties. It was never able to effectively absorb or win agreement from Yŏ or Paek because the SKWP was too occupied with acquiring power for power's sake which caused the grand vision of making a Communist haven in Korea to never truly become the party's prime objective. To make this argument, the chapter will largely be devoted to analyzing how the SKWP centralized its authority to silence all opposition in the Left and diagnosing the causes behind the SKWP's failure to capitalize on this extreme advantage, and how the fragile Leftist coalition quickly broke down as the SKWP's allies became increasingly alienated by the SKWP's relentless monopolization of power.

Simultaneously, as chapter 13 will show, the official founding of the Northern Korean Workers' Party completely dashed Pak Hŏn-yŏng's hope to become the absolute leader of Communist movement. Although Pak attempted to make the March First celebrations a *cause célèbre* for the CCP's continuation of an anti-imperialist and anti-Rightist struggle, the party's quick defeat yet again at the hands of the Korean police only raised suspicion from the Right that the party was intent on transforming south Korea into a satellite of the Soviet Union. By contrast, Kim Il-sung was very eager to accelerate the founding of the NKWP because the desire to quickly amass absolute power and confirm the northern Communists' superiority over their southern counterparts were far more important than keeping faith with his second-in-command, and he filled all major governmental posts with his trusted northern colleagues. Trapped between an increasingly fortified anti-Communist dictatorship in the south and a full-fledged Communist state in the north, the SKWP would spend the last two years before the outbreak of the Korean War fighting for its own survival, only to ironically be forced to meet a premature death at the hands of the south Korean military and the American military

government. Although Pak had planned to limit the southern Communist insurrection into a brief skirmish between the Korean Communist camp and the Right-wing establishment, he had instead provided a signal for the north Korean military to attack south Korea in an attempt to finish "a more perfect Communist revolution."

The signal did not go unnoticed in southern Korea, for, as chapter 13 will demonstrate, it led to two major developments: the formation of the Legislative Assembly and the rise of the south Korean security state. Although the Legislative Assembly was originally conceived by the American military government and the Right-wing establishment to foster the growth of electoral democracy, the intensification of conflict between the SKWP and the American military government forced the southern Right to make anti-Communism overshadow democracy. A vicious network of indiscriminate terrorism to root out any suspected Communists served as the cornerstone for the introduction of the notorious National Security Act, which allowed the south Korean state to imprison anyone suspected of subversion without parole. In essence, the death of "Unitary Socialism" ensured the erasure of non-ideological centrism by inviting the south Korean authorities to strengthen their commitment to anti-Communism and render it equivalent with protecting democracy.

In short, the southern Right's perception of the SKWP as the most formidable opponent increasingly grew to such an extent that the more the latter tried to maintain its presence by violently resisting against the former, the former replied in the same fashion with utmost intensity through the construction of a security state that the stalemate ultimately liquidated "Unitary Socialism" and rapidly confirmed the coming of the Cold War to the Korean peninsula. The southern Left and Right were collectively responsible for initiating a Manichean political climate in which the loss of "Unitary Socialism" translated into the erasure of political centrism and ensured that Communism and anti-Communism were the only acceptable political ideologies in the Korean peninsula.

The conclusion will synthesize the previous chapters and argue that the SKWP's consolidation of the southern Left under a strict Communist hegemony and the southern Right's attempt to crush that hegemony both contributed to the death of "Unitary Socialism." The absence of a viable paradigm for non-ideological unification allowed for the rapid introduction of the Cold War's Manichean contest between Communism and Anti-Communism. The rise of the SKWP was initially an attempt to unify the Korean Leftist movement after two decades of disunity, but it soon spiraled out of control as the party increasingly became radicalized into the Korean peninsula's second largest Communist force under the leadership of Pak Hŏn-yŏng. The SKWP's legacy of eliminating "Unitary Socialism" ensured that there was no non-ideological middle ground in Korean politics, and the constant skirmishes between the Right-wing establishment and the SKWP during that very process set the theme of the Korean War for the southern Left as an unfinished quest for "a more perfect Communist revolution."

The Korean War was a tragedy not only because northern Korean Communists invaded the southern half of the peninsula. The southern Leftists were largely responsible for precipitating that northern response by beginning an insurgency against the Right-wing establishment and setting the theme of the Korean War for north Korea as a struggle to punish and eliminate the Right-wing establishment to complete the SKWP's "more perfect Communist revolution." This is precisely why the Korean War is a civil war among a people who would be divided by the Manichean political climate of the Cold War. In a civil war, there are no foreign enemies; "defeat" is not merely the opposite of "victory" and does not mean the end of political battles. It is an interregnum, a moment for respite and recuperation because it, as a product of a national war, is not merely a continuation of politics by other means, but a conflict among a unified people aimed at creating a concrete enemy within the people. This is because, as political theorist Carl Schmitt (1929; 2016) argues, a war continues so long as there exists a

real manifestation of the enemy rather than nebulous goals or ideals.³² Furthermore, since a political party's existential purpose is to advance its own political agenda, usually through the declaration of war, the party must always pursue that agenda by identifying an enemy. For the party, it was necessary to prolong the southern civil war against the American military government because a failure to do so would effectively symbolized the end of Pak Hön-yōng's personality cult; the most omnipotent human being will lose his function as a politician, arguably losing his fundamental nature as a person.³³

Hence, from the SKWP's perspective, the initiation of a southern civil war against the Right-wing establishment led by Syngman Rhee and the American military government was an experiment to fathom whether its dream of a Communist revolution could fully materialize solely under the SKWP's leadership. The process behind figuring out the feasibility of this dream is important because the SKWP's preparations to achieve this ambition effectively ensured the total erasure of a non-ideological middle-ground represented by Yō Un-hyōng's "Unitary Socialism." With respect to the fact that "Unitary Socialism" envisioned a unified Korea with a Democratically-elected government which would prioritize the welfare of the Korean people regardless of ideological differences and concentrate on distributing land to the poor, the SKWP was responsible for assuring that there was no room for centrist or Socialist politics to neutralize the intensity of the competition between anti-Communism and Communism. In doing so, the party expanded from its initial role as a unifier and rejuvenator of the scattered Korean Communist movement into one that concentrated on maximizing absolute power under its control so it could become the undisputed authority of Communism in Korea. In this sense, the tumultuous road that the SKWP took—its rebirth in September

³² Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 35 and 48. See also Leo Strauss, "Notes on Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*," in Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 110.

³³ Strauss, "Notes on Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*," in Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 110 and Julianne Rebetisch, *The Art of Freedom: On the Dialectics of Democratic Existence* (Cambridge, England, and Malden, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2016), 168.

1945, disputes over the American military government's hiring of pro-Japanese collaborators, the SKWP's support of the Moscow trusteeship, the party's involvement in a minting scandal, and finally, the ouster of Yŏ from the SKWP's headquarters—is the trajectory of the southern Left's Korean War before the more familiar one involving soldiers.

Although the SKWP eventually disintegrated under the weight of its massive defeat by the Syngman Rhee Administration and the American military government, it produced two paradoxical yet critical outcomes for the southern Left. On one hand, there was the punitive outcome of the NKWP's absorptive amalgamation of the SKWP, which effectively liquidated the SKWP as an autonomous institution and assured that the absolute and supreme leader of Korean Communism would exclusively be Kim Il-sung, thereby originating the one-party state that north Korea would eventually become. On the other hand, the SKWP left an important legacy for the north—an abundance of logistical information about the Rightists and the Americans which critically led to the north's decision to send southern guerrillas into southern Korea to collect logistical and tactical information about south Korea's military and to engage in guerrilla warfare, harassing southern soldiers. In short, these measures led to two major preparations for the Korean War—the completion of a systematic founding of the North Korean Communist Party and the initiation of the first trial-runs for what would develop into the infamous and infernal horror of June 25, 1950.

Ultimately, Kim Il-sung emerged as the eventual victor by organizing a pretentious show-trial intended to make Pak into a scape-goat for the disastrous war and to frame Pak Hŏn-yŏng as a collaborator with American imperialists and deny him any credit for his services on behalf of the northerners during his time in south Korea. The clash between Pak's ambition to realize a theoretically orthodox Communism and Kim's pursuit of power for its own sake had ended with the defeat of pure Communism. However, because the southern Left's participation in a small south Korean War between the Right and the Left had already

established the *leitmotif* of the larger Korean War as a Communist insurrection against the southern Right-wing establishment, the north Koreans actually only had chronological legitimacy in continuing the SKWP's unfinished task of punishing pro-Japanese collaborators and "American imperialists," but no political legitimacy because the north Korean regime was completely devoid of any real commitment to Communism; what remained was merely a relic of Kim's bitter struggle with Pak—a personality cult which only represented superficial and visual representation of Communism without any of its theoretical complexities. In short, the Korean War was originally not a north Korean attempt to "liberate" south Korea on north Korean terms, but a continuation of a south Korean civil war and within it, the SKWP's quest to lead the southern clash between the Left and the Right to a Communist victory—one that north Korea, despite originally not knowing how or why the SKWP's insurrection in southern Korea was perfectly Communist or revolutionary, wants to believe is ongoing because south Korea did not sign the armistice on July 27, 1953.

Chapter 1

The Revival of the Chosŏn Communist Party, the December Thesis, and the Rejuvenation of the Korean Communist Movement

...The first to go outside know in their bones
Paradise will not be there, nor wild loves.
They know they go to the swamp of law, and numbers,
to play without art, and labour without fruit.
The light is buried by chains and by noise,
in the shameless challenge, of rootless science.
All across the suburbs, sleepless crowds stumble,
as if saved, by the moment, from a shipwreck of blood."
-Gabriel Garcia Lorca, "Dawn" (1940)-³⁴

1. The Revival of the Chosŏn Communist Party

As the sun sprayed its last thin rays of heat on September 2, 1945, the Chosŏn Communist Party (CCP) celebrated from its headquarters in central Seoul the "successful conclusion of the final congregation of fervent agitators," which effectively "secured its foothold in southern Korea."³⁵ The intense fervor for Communism had materialized such that three of the largest Left-wing parties in Korea—the Korean Workers' Party, the People's Party, and the Southern Korean New Citizens' Party—united together to reconsolidate Socialist and Communist members throughout the peninsula.

The southern Leftists were no longer merely an anti-Rightist clan; they were now a firmly established political organization. Although it was a "pity that the supreme representative of the labor organizations was absent," the party's founding was "most fortuitous" because "Japanese imperialists were still adamantly refusing to retreat" and the Soviet Union was expected to offer "support to securing the independence and liberty" of the Korean people.³⁶ Unification was essential because it was serendipitously in tandem with an international effort to bring about Korea's imminent liberation and the only means to prevent Left-Right

³⁴ Gabriel Garcia Lorca, "Dawn" in Gabriel Garcia Lorca, *A Poet in New York* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 73.

³⁵ "Tang Yŏlsŏngcha Taehoe Chinhaeng e kwanhan Poko," (Report on the Progress of the Fervent Agitators' Congregation) September 2, 1945. Kim Nam-sik ed., *Official Documents of the Southern Korean Workers' Party, Vol. 1* (Seoul, south Korea: Tolpekae (Stone Pillow), 1984), 1.

³⁶ "Report on the Progress of the Fervent Agitators' Congregation," September 2, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 1.

polarization from consuming the party and Korean peninsula.

Yet, polarization was not an entirely negative outcome, but a double-edged sword. On one hand, it would "strengthen the counterrevolutionary forces and severely disarm the Left," thereby forcing a genuine people's revolution to "lose considerable steam."³⁷ On the other hand, it would "infinitely delay a true unification of the people," outcomes that will spell "despair for the entire Korean people."³⁸ I would argue that it was precisely due to the polarization that national unification had the potential to become both a private and a public good—the ultimate panacea that would salvage both the party and the people. Privately, national unification would ensure the CCP's political survival by catapulting its members as true nationalists. This reputation, in turn, would also publicly ensure that the CCP's political legitimacy increase as the party of the Korean people.³⁹

In tandem with the conclusion of the Second World War, September 2, 1945 seemed to be a ripe moment to finish a revolution of national liberation that had already commenced seven years ago through the "great underground struggles against Japanese imperialism."⁴⁰ As Pak Hŏn-yŏng, the son of a poor merchant, a fervent Communist, and one of the party's original founders put it, establishing the party offered a "golden opportunity for a more perfect Communist revolution," in which every Korean ought to partake in the completion of "a great revolution to overthrow imperialism and the bourgeoisie."⁴¹ Pak even argued that the party would serve as the vanguard of that commitment, vowing to "fight to the end for a true Bolshevik revolution."⁴² The repeated use of "revolution" importantly suggests that national liberation was a form of and analogous to class liberation and vice-versa—a situation in

³⁷ "Report on the Progress of the Fervent Agitators' Congregation," September 2, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 2.*

³⁸ "Report on the Progress of the Fervent Agitators' Congregation," September 2, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 2.*

³⁹ "Report on the Progress of the Fervent Agitators' Congregation." September 2, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 2.*

⁴⁰ "Report on the Progress of the Fervent Agitators' Congregation," September 2, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 3.*

⁴¹ "Report on the Progress of the Fervent Agitators' Congregation," September 2, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 4.*

⁴² "Tangkwa Polshwepiki Wŏnch'ik," (The Party and the Precepts of Bolshevism) September 2, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 22.*

which the former and the latter mutually had, borrowing sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein's (1987) apt phrase, an "ideological and a political relationship."⁴³

Accordingly, the Communist revolution would be "perfected" when the ideological consolidation of the Left and the Right would politically eradicate two of the worst agents of oppression that could endanger the making of a harmonious nation—imperialism and its collaborators, who, under the guise of ethnically being Korean, kept their wealth and used it to *extend* imperialism by liberally brandishing economic power to torture the working class. In short, the party was essentially declaring its *raison d' être*—the liberation of Korean workers, and to a larger extent, the Korean nation from that infamous history of oppression.⁴⁴ Japan's compliance with the Allies' demand that the "Japanese emperor fully extinguish Japan's potential for all acts of belligerence by handing over weapons and selecting a hospitable area from which all prisoners of war could board Allied ships" confirmed the ultimately favorable milieu for Koreans' jubilant celebrations.⁴⁵

As the Second World War came to a definitive end in Europe and Asia, even the Americans and the Soviets agreed with Pak's assessment. John Reed Hodge, head of the newly installed American military government, celebrated Korea's independence by congratulating "the Korean people for taking matters into their own hands" and urged the

⁴³ Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins, and Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Liberation of Class Struggle?" *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Winter, 1987), 403-404.

⁴⁴ Although August 15, 1945 is still celebrated as Liberation Day in south and north Korea, September 2, 1945 ought to be Korea's genuine Liberation Day, for no international deal is ever complete until national seals are stamped. The historian Herbert P. Bix and political scientist John Mearsheimer have argued that the main reason for the Japanese' delay in acknowledging surrender was because of a two-week conflict between Hirohito and Japanese military leaders who supported the continuation of the war effort in the Pacific front out of a hope that America would have to pay a "heavy blood price" and become more diplomatically flexible. while the Soviet Union would offer to be a mediator between the U.S. and Japan, possibly letting the Japanese avoid agreeing to an unconditional surrender. For a detailed discussion on these points, see Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (Perennial Classics, 2001), 487-532 and John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York and London, England: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 93.

⁴⁵ "Potsdam Sonon Surakul Tullossan Yōnhapkukkwa Ilpon Chōngpu saiüi woekyo Sōhan," (Diplomatic Exchange between the Allies and Japan on Accepting the Potsdam Declaration) *Maeil Sinpo (Daily Newspaper)*, August 16, 1945. Adapted from *The Republic of Korea: A History in Documents* (Seoul, south Korea: The National History Publication Council, 2008), Vol. 1. Noted as *TRKAHD* hereafter.

Koreans to "make every effort to pursue a prosperous way of life and to enjoy its advantages permanently by promptly establishing democratic governance."⁴⁶ The Americans "sought full cooperation" from Koreans out of the hope to "avoid handing down any directions which may cause discomfort in leading a normal way of life."⁴⁷ The Soviets echoed a similar sentiment. The "Red Section of the Allies" congratulated the Koreans on rediscovering their freedom and their historic pride in a national tradition of putting forth a consistent effort toward accomplishing an admirable culture," and urged Koreans to "rekindle that spirit to rejuvenate Korean culture through a continuous effort to revive traditions" and thereby avoid "retreating back to a most nightmarish degradation to imperial slavery."⁴⁸ Only then would Koreans be able to "open the genuine first page of the history of the Korean people."⁴⁹ In short, both Americans and Soviets celebrated Korea's reclamation of her national sovereignty and interpreted national liberation as a grand opportunity to enjoy democratic freedom and a chance to revive Korean national culture as a means to completely overthrow the imperialist yoke.⁵⁰

However, Pak Hŏn-yŏng and the CCP did not find the Americans' and Soviets' supposedly pure purpose of only helping Korea re-establish her national sovereignty very convincing and

⁴⁶ John Reed Hodge, "Chosŏn Minchung eke Kohanŭn P'oko Palp'yo," (Letter from the Commander of American Forces in Korea to the Korean People) September 2, 1945. Reported in *Hankuk Ilpo (Korea Daily)*, August 18, 1955 and adapted from *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*.

⁴⁷ Hodge, "Letter from the Commander of American Forces in Korea to the Korean People," September 2, 1945, *Hankuk Ilpo*, August 18, 1955. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*.

⁴⁸ Pulkŭn Kunchung Saryŏngpu (Headquarters of the Red People's Army), "Yŏnhapkun Saryŏngkwan P'oko," (A Manifesto from the Allied Headquarters) September 3, 1945 in *Kwangpok 30 Nyŏn Chungyocharyochip (Important Documents From Thirty Years Since Liberation)* (Seoul, south Korea: *Chungang Monthly*, January, 1975), 23. This collection will be abbreviated as *IDFTYSL* hereafter.

⁴⁹ Headquarters of the Red People's Army, "A Manifesto from the Allied Headquarters," September 3, 1945. *IDFTYSL*, 24. See also *Haepang Hu Samnyŏnkan Kuknae kuriko Kukche Chungyo Sakŏn Yŏnp'yo, 1945 Nyŏn 8 Wŏl-1948 Nyŏn 9 Wŏl (A Chronology of Important National and International Events During Three Years Since Liberation, August 1945-September 1948)* (P'yŏngyang, north Korea: Democratic Korea(Chosŏn) Press, publication date unknown), 2. Record Group 242, Entry No. NM-44, 299-C: Korean Language Publications and Records Captured in P'yŏngyang (College Park, Maryland: National Archives and Records Administration) [SA 2005] [1946-1950]; 01/1952-01/1958, Box 56. "Record Group" will be noted as "RG" hereafter.

⁵⁰ "Act of Military Surrender, Germany," May 8, 1945, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Multilateral Agreements, 1931-1945; "Yalta Conference Agreement, Declaration of a Liberated Europe," February 11, 1945, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, National Archives.

decided to pursue an independent Communist interpretation of national liberation. The blatant drive for an uncompromising Communist supremacy in Pak's rhetoric is especially noteworthy if we compare it with the more measured and negotiated rhetoric of the Provisional Government or the stringent and fervent northern rhetoric used to justify P'yŏng-yang's decision to launch the northern counterpart to the CCP, the Northern Korean Workers' Party (NKWP). A day after the CCP's announcement, the Provisional Government called for the formation of a "most ardently desired alliance with the Soviets, Chinese, Americans, and the British who fought till their last drop of blood for the liberation of Korea."⁵¹ The Provisional Government also opted "to pardon all Japanese prisoners of war" but nevertheless was determined to "confiscate all of the enemy's finances, assimilate Korean escapees into the Korean military, and finally to severely punish all who actively obstructed or hindered the progression of the Korean independence movement."⁵² In contrast to the CCP's vow to relentlessly punish all pro-Japanese collaborators to wipe imperialism off from the memory of a liberated Korea, the Provisional Government favored a more gradualist approach, blending the *realpolitik* of the power dynamics between the Allies with the CCP's objective. The Provisional Government was espousing the belief that idealism had immediate international relations as its bounded rationality; optimum and tangible results can only arise if the former operated within the latter's parameters, for failure to do so would amount to nothing but daydreaming.

However, the Provisional Government's realism ultimately produced a conservative compromise. Even though the Provisional Government shared a considerable tinge of progressivism by founding the Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) to "establish a Democratic

⁵¹ Kim Ku, "Imchŏngŭi Tangmyŏn Chŏngch'aekkwa Kungnaewoe Tongp'o eke Kohanŭn Sŏngmyŏng Palp'yo," (Immediate Policies of the Provisional Government and a Declaration to the Korean People at Home and Abroad) September 3, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1.*

⁵² Kim Ku, "Immediate Policies of the Provisional Government and a Declaration to the Korean People at Home and Abroad," September 3, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1.*

edifice, to enhance the welfare of the working masses, and cultivate a national ethnic culture to contribute to world culture," the DPK—founded by Conservatives who had studied in the United States and Europe and opposed those who did not support or recognize the legitimacy of the Provisional Government—was still a passive attempt to avoid challenging the status quo of the Allies while preparing Korea's independence within the framework of an acknowledged appeasement toward the Great Powers.⁵³ In other words, compared with Pak's rigid interpretation of national liberation as a prime opportunity to launch a full-scale Communist revolution, the Provisional Government adopted a more neutral, centrist, and even arguably in Pak's eyes, an appeasement policy toward the so-called "Allies" of whom the majority consisted of Western imperial powers and was therefore an anathema to Communist hegemony.

The southern Communists waited for another week to finally have a firm ideological ally. On September 14, 1945, the Central Committee of the People's Republic announced a manifesto arguing that the people's government had "the absolute duty to pulverize all remaining traces of Japanese imperialism with respect to the will of the people."⁵⁴ By extension, the Korean people were endowed with a "sacred mission to struggle valiantly against all Rightists and nationalist compromisers," which would significantly contribute to the "full establishment of an independent nation and the culmination of a genuinely democratic society."⁵⁵ To that end, all "feudal features of society would be totally eliminated to make way for the drastic improvement in the livelihood of farmers and peasants," and to emphasize the democratic character of the state, the people's republic would "strengthen

⁵³ Hanmintang (Democratic Party of Korea), "Palki Sōnōn mit Kangryōng, Chōngch'aek," (Foundational Manifesto, Precepts and Policies) September 6, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*. For detailed studies on the DPK, see Han Pae-ho, *Hankuk Hyōndae Chōngch'iron (A Theory of Modern Korean Politics)* (Seoul, south Korea: Orūm Publishing, 2001) and Sim Chi-yōn, *Hanmintang Yōnku (A Study of the Democratic Party of Korea)* (Seoul, south Korea: Pulpit("Grass-light") Publishing, 1982).

⁵⁴ Kim Nam-sik, *Sillok Namnotang (Real-Time Records of the South Korean Workers' Party)* (Seoul, south Korea: Sinhyōnsil (New Reality) Publishing, 1975), 44. Noted as *RRSKWP* hereafter.

⁵⁵ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 45.

cooperation with democratic nations," while preserving the state's Communist character by "nationalizing all privately owned lands," and introducing democratic reforms such as the implementation of an eight-hour work day and universal suffrage extended to "citizens aged eighteen years or older."⁵⁶

Yet, north Korea's declaration on September 14 was actually the real origin of an intense rivalry between Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Kim Il-sung and of the CCP's forced establishment in south Korea. Barely three weeks after the declaration, Kim requested that the CCP authorize the founding of a northern branch. Although loyal followers of Pak intensely opposed the decision by decrying the request as "an attempt to fracture the Korean Communist movement whose party-center was clearly located in Seoul," Pak eventually acquiesced to Kim's demand.⁵⁷ On October 10, Pak attended an informally held "Fervent Agitators of the Five Southwest Provinces' Korean Communist Party Meeting" and agreed to establish a northern branch of the CCP under the north's agreement that the party-center was "indisputably in Seoul."⁵⁸ This agreement was a major defeat for Pak, for he had officially acknowledged the legitimacy of Kim Il-sung as a co-leader of a Korean Communist party whose Seoul branch had yet to even complete its full organization.⁵⁹ Conversely, Pak's acknowledgement also meant that Pak had admitted that his decision to establish a southern branch was an act of sectarianism and that Kim had the full authority to police and dictate terms for intra-party unification. Kim made sure that Pak understood the establishment of such a hierarchy by implicitly accusing Pak of treason:

⁵⁶ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 45.

⁵⁷ "Sŏul Tang Chungang, Kongsantangŭi P'yŏngyang Chipu Sŭngin," (Seoul's Party-Center Authorizes the Establishment of the Communist Party's P'yŏngyang Branch") *Haepang Ilpo* (*Liberation Daily*), November 15, 1945.

⁵⁸ "Seoul's Party-Center Authorizes the Establishment of the Communist Party's P'yŏngyang Branch." *Hae-pang Ilpo*, November 15, 1945.

⁵⁹ Cho Han-sŏng, *Haepang Hu Sam Nyŏn: Konkukŭl Hyanghan Choehuŭi Kyŏlchŏn* (*Three Years After Liberation: The Final Battle for National Reconstruction*) (Seoul, south Korea: Saengkak Chŏngwŏn (A Garden of Thoughts), 2015), 147-148.

"Sectarianism caused damage to past Communist movements and still play a mischievous role in present Communist activities..they alienate other comrades and slander others. They pretend that they support party plans, but violate the principles in private..they flock together by saying that establishing a branch office is betraying the Seoul office, and also saying that someone is trying to take over the whole party. They do this only because they want to seize power and achieve their political ambitions."⁶⁰

In short, Kim warned Pak that any potential challenge to his authority was a clear act of sedition and slander. Kim would not tolerate any gossip behind his back because the establishment of the northern branch was not an act of tyranny, but a gesture toward achieving unity among Communists and any devious behavior converging toward usurpation of Kim Il-sung's leadership would be considered as outright sedition. Therefore, Pak had to be careful with his words, for any future debate among southern Communists about Kim's decisions would be nothing more than scheming to assume the sinews of power under the hands of the southern Communists and be akin to committing betrayal and treason.

Furthermore, Pak's inability to demand the same right as Kim Il-sung to preside over the decision-making process meant that the CCP's founding was Pak's sign of admittance that he was Kim's inferior in a blatantly unequal and hierarchical balance of power. While Kim would be able to assume complete informational control over the southern Left, Pak could not enjoy the same advantage over the north. In short, the September 14 declaration laid the blueprint for the command structure within the Communist movement, in which Pak would be a permanent inferior to Kim. By introducing a potentially powerful rival who was already enjoying clandestine yet considerable Soviet support, Pak had unknowingly tilted the scale of power against himself even before he could formally be sworn in as the leader of the CCP. Considering the fact that the northern branch would later exercise more autonomy in building north Korea's political and economic culture to the extent of eventually absorbing the CCP (later, SKWP) by 1949, it can be argued that Pak had inadvertently planted the seed of

⁶⁰ Kim Il-sung, "On the Build-up of a Marxist-Leninist Party and the Present Task of Our Country: Report before the Inaugural Conference of the Central Organization Committee, North Chosŏn Communist Party," October 10, 1945. *The Collected Writings of Kim Il-sung* (P'yŏngyang, north Korea: The North Korean Workers' Party, 1954), Vol. 1, 314.

political suicide.

Moreover, as much as the southern Communists were successful in producing an independent blueprint for post-liberation politics, political unity between Pak and Yŏ never quite materialized into a mutual respect and affinity for their personalities, which were clearly at loggerheads. Barely five days after the establishment of the CCP, Yŏ narrowly escaped the first of what would be a staggering total of twelve assassination attempts in his lifetime—a bomb planted by an unknown assassin near Yŏ's home. The bombing was significant because it psychologically distanced Yŏ from Pak out of a suspicion that the latter was planning to murder the former in the guise of offering a feigned sense of brotherly camaraderie. Yŏ especially detested Pak's crafty and even artful personality, a hatred which only grew more intense when Yŏ learned just a day before the bombing at his house that Pak had clandestinely conspired with Communists and planned the bombing.⁶¹ The facade of political unity through the CCP's founding was too thin and obvious to conceal a deep condescension and resentment the two felt toward each other, feelings which had Pak's pride and arrogance as its common denominator and seed to what would become a mutually eternal hatred.⁶²

Seventeen days after enduring the immense physical and psychological ordeal, an exhausted and a confused Yŏ gave his reluctant agreement to establish the CCP, upon which the party finalized its decision to unite the Left and the Right. Unity was necessary during a most fortuitous time when "Americans were finally disarming the Japanese," providing the most auspicious opportunity to "permanently expulse the Japanese from the peninsula."⁶³ The consolidation of the Left would ideally produce a powerful Communist union, which in turn

⁶¹ Yi Wan-pŏm, "Mikuküi Chŏmryŏng Chŏngchaekkwä Hankuk, 1945-1948" (America's Occupational Policy and Korea: 1945-1948) in *Hankuk Kunhyŏndaeüi Minchok Munchaewa Sinkukka Kŏnsŏl (National Problems of Modern and Contemporary Korea and Building of a New State)* (Seoul, south Korea: Chisik Sanŏpsa (Knowledge Industry Press), 1997), 539.

⁶² Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 46-47.

⁶³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Chosŏn Notongtangŭn Mach'imnae Tongiltŏeŏtta," (The Korean Workers' Party is Finally United) September 19, 1945, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 6.

had a more explicit aim of "protecting the political, economic, and social interests of the peasantry, the intelligentsia, and laborers."⁶⁴ Fulfilling this aim was necessary, for although the Second World War had ended with the "victory of internationalism over a myopic nationalism," Korea had unfortunately failed to play an important role in securing that victory.⁶⁵ In short, the party was espousing the belief that nationalism was the basic unit of internationalism. The party had the moral duty to translate the victory of the Allies over the Axis powers by fulfilling class liberation in Korea and defeat the "myopic nationalism" of ideologies such as Fascism or Nazism—ideologies which promoted antagonism between classes rather than the collective political and socio-economic interests of a national public. Therefore, the party's inaugural speech was an effort to ensure that the Korean people also tasted a "virtuous victory" by "ousting the propertied classes and the bourgeoisie who had collaborated with the Japanese."⁶⁶ Doing so would prepare a "moment for the Korean people enlighten themselves of the need to realize a genuine Communist revolution with their own hands."⁶⁷

The party was declaring itself as a godsend to the Korean people, presenting three vital gifts that would definitively grant them true national liberation—the taste of victory after over three decades of bitter defeatism at the hands of imperialism, the empowerment of the Korean people as sovereigns of their own homeland, and finally, the realization of a more humanistic society where workers claimed control over their rightful property rather than workers degenerating into property of the bourgeoisie. Only the gifts of such enlightenment would

⁶⁴ Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "The Korean Workers' Party is Finally United." September 19, 1945, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 6.

⁶⁵ Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "The Korean Workers' Party is Finally United." September 19, 1945, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 6.

⁶⁶ Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "The Korean Workers' Party is Finally United." September 19, 1945, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 6.

⁶⁷ Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "The Korean Workers' Party is Finally United," September 19, 1945, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 6-7. On the scattered peasant and workers' organizations in 1945, see Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 78-79.

liberate workers who had suffered from harsh labor conditions and met the dreadful fate of being bullet-bearers as they exchanged their lives fighting for the Japanese for the miserably meager wages while working in the Pacific front.⁶⁸

2. The December Thesis and the Rejuvenation of the Korean Communist Movement

Yet, Pak and Yō had really founded the CCP out of great hope *and* disappointment. On one hand, there was great optimism for the permanence of a united Leftist coalition which would put an end to decades of intense internal factionalism that had once torn the entire history of the Korean Left apart. The CCP's rise in September was not a spontaneous response to the immediate problem of resolving Rightist-Leftist tension within the context of the Second World War, or as Syngman Rhee, the Chairman of the Korean Commission derided, a grandiose effort "to work toward a Lublin Committee for Korea."⁶⁹ Rather, it was an effort to eliminate tensions stemming from a lack of cohesion and unity within the southern Communist and Leftist front since the 1920s. A chronological discussion of the main causes behind the breakdown of Leftist unity—the KCP-CCP factionalism, the Soviet massacre of Korean Communists in Alexeyevsk, and the failure of the Sinkanhoe (New Middle Party) to recover from the factionalism and the massacre is in order to understand the historical weight of the new CCP's reunification of the southern Left.

Initially, the Koryō Communist Party espoused genuine anti-imperialism and patriotism, blaming "unprecedented forms of struggle for markets, unjust modes of distribution, and the

⁶⁸ On this topic, see Brandon Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy: Koreans in Japan's War, 1937-1945* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2013). For a detailed analysis of Japanese colonial rule in the eyes of Korean workers, see Ken C. Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble: Korean Workers in Interwar Japan* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009). On the state of workers and peasant organizations in August, 1945, see Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 77-78.

⁶⁹ "Telegram from the Chairman of the Korean Commission in the United States (Rhee) to the Acting Chief of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Lockhart)," July 25, 1945 in *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1034.

capitalization of land" for producing an outpour of proletariats.⁷⁰ However, since such undisciplined capitalist avarice had "halted the social and cultural progress of the Korean people through inhumane acts," the ultimate goal of national liberation was social revolution devoted to "eliminating all classes in society."⁷¹ Indeed, the Koryŏ Communist Party was intent on making the complete obliteration of capitalism its foremost goal. Realizing that unity was at the core of a party's political strength, it aspired to "unite the workers and destroy all the classes present" in Korean society, which was "the root of all inequity and lack of freedom," upon which "the harmonious development of everyone in society would be realized."⁷² In particular, the party advocated a wholesale destruction of "free economic competition and private ownership of production machinery which were "the backbones of the capitalist system," and the "main force of anarchic condition in the industry."⁷³ The only method to restore order to this chaos was to return all industrial control back to the state to realize "the most equitable and harmonious world."⁷⁴

However, attempts to search for the chimera of absolute power can pervert into unnecessary chaos as long as the thirst for power remains a quantitative question of increasing its degree at the expense of ignoring the more critical qualitative question of how to maximize its pragmatic and moral usage dedicated to the advancement of the public good. From 1919, the KCP had housed both extreme radicals like Pak and moderates such as Yŏ. Yet, after the outbreak of the infamous Alexeyevsk Incident on November 1921—around 600 Korean Communists and Socialists were brutally murdered by Soviet troops, presumably under Stalin's fear-ridden order to execute all spies suspected of collaborating with the Japanese—a

⁷⁰ "Manifesto of the Koryŏ ("Korean") Communist Party," in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism, 1918-1948* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 26. Noted hereafter as *Documents of Korean Communism*.

⁷¹ "Manifesto of the Koryŏ Communist Party," in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 26.

⁷² "Manifesto of the Koryŏ Communist Party," in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 29.

⁷³ "Manifesto of the Koryŏ Communist Party," in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 29.

⁷⁴ "Manifesto of the Koryŏ Communist Party," in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 29.

major irreversible tragedy was a rife factionalism in which the KCP found itself in an intense competition with the CCP for supremacy, which grew egregious beyond any possibility for reconciliation.

According to Soviet observers, it was a genuine crisis of political identity, since two organizations bore the same name of "Korean Communist Party" and were wildly competing for power. Of course, one has to take into account the Soviets' ignorance of the subtle difference in the Korean used to denote "Korean," since the earlier counterpart used "Koryŏ," and the latecomer used "Chosŏn," names of two chronologically successive dynasties. Yet, the Soviet observers were astutely aware that at the heart of the irreparable relationship was the intense disagreement over organizational tactics and the amount of trust Koreans had about Soviets, despite acknowledging the Soviets' leadership in the Communist world.⁷⁵ No human being can ever be so perfectly objective, and naturally without any faults. The Soviets, while in the guise of posing concerns and presenting advice for the Korean Communists' future directions, were in actuality, trying to mask Moscow's general indifference and ignorance about the Korean situation as a whole. Moreover, as historian Dae-sook Suh correctly criticizes, the Soviets were guilty of not only being completely ignorant about the value Koreans ascribed to Communism as an instrument, as a means to realize the penultimate political ideal—Korea's complete liberation from Japan—but also indifferent to factionalism within the Korean Left, to properly monitoring funds for Korean Left-wing activities, and the proper formation of a Communist party. Such indifference signified that the Soviets did not even consider Korea as a potential branch for international Communism.⁷⁶ The heat of infighting over ideological correctness was far more intense than the heat from bullets

⁷⁵ "Decision of the Inspection Committee of the Communist International," November 15, 1921, in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 67-70; "The Decision of the Executive Committee of the Third Communist International on the Korean Problem," April 22, 1922, in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 71-72.

⁷⁶ Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement*, 51.

sprayed on the battlefield such that the former completely replaced the latter.

Although Korean independence fighters were promised considerable material and logistical support from the Soviets, such as the guarantee of a ten-year lease of mines south of Khabarovsk, an exemption of railroad fares, and supplying 6,000 rifles and ammunition to the Korean Independence Army, such generosity could not conceal the Soviets' fear of the possibility of a Korean mutiny or betrayal amidst the continuing war against the Japanese—an unfounded and a deeply racist fear.⁷⁷ In Stalin's eyes, Soviet national security donned an intensely Orientalist mask. Since Koreans and Japanese were intelligible, there was a growing distrust among Soviet troops about Korean intentions to join them, possibly to plan sabotage and outright betrayal through selling top military secrets.

The Alexeyevsk Incident lucidly informed the Korean Communists that the most important controversy left unsettled was the question of deciding who had sufficient authority to claim leadership over the entire movement. The first schism within the nationalist groups began to appear regarding this issue and effectively marked the end of Left-Right cooperation in fighting the Japanese. Leftists who reported on the incident believed that the Rightists "had clandestinely stabbed the Leftists on the back, indiscriminately allowing the Soviets to kill all of our comrades in cold blood."⁷⁸ By contrast, Rightists mostly associated with the Korean Provisional Government argued that the Leftists were primarily responsible for "conspiring to kill a majority of the Right's leaders," and, upon Pak Ilia, the conspirators' leader's signal, a Leftist even attempted to "throw a bomb at one of our leaders," which promptly caused the meeting to be adjourned, with the date for resumption indefinitely postponed.⁷⁹ In short,

⁷⁷ "Agreement between the New Korean Government and the Russian Government," in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 24.

⁷⁸ "Declaration of Six Nationalist (Left-wing) Groups," September, 1921, in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 62.

⁷⁹ "Declaration of Six Nationalist (Left-wing) Groups," September, 1921, in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 64; "Declaration of the Korean Military Government Council," September, 1921, in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 65-66.

rather than finding a conciliatory solution through reconciliation based on the common viewpoint that all Leftists and Rightists were united under the singular identity of independence fighters, ideological passion quickly and too easily consumed the will to realize Korean independence with Korean hands.

In short, the Soviets were never serious about propagandizing Communism solely out of the altruism of helping a people desperately fighting for national independence, but merely viewed Korea as another potential territory to Communize by exploiting some of the independence fighters as soldiers and the rest as propagandists for justifying and internationalizing Soviet victory and supremacy in the Russian Civil War. The Soviets' myopia of exercising a dishonest and strategic manipulation for the pursuit of victory in a civil war won over an honest and dedicated instruction in Communism to sincerely assist national liberation movements based on strict Marxist orthodoxy. International Communism was a false creed which merely served as a veneer to hide the urgency of selfishly promoting the expansion of Soviet ideological imperialism. International Communism's only difference from European imperialism was that the Soviets controlled local leaders to voice their propaganda instead of exerting a direct physical presence, as was the case with classic imperialism, which emphasized an imperial nation's direct military control over a country's territory to extract resources and manpower.

Nothing could prove Suh's argument and the Soviets' such tactical intent more accurately than the Communist International's announcement of what would later be known as the "December Thesis." The thesis called for "a comprehensive reorganization of the CCP," in which factory workers and peasants would assume party leadership instead of the intelligentsia. Such a policy was necessary because it was the only means through which the party could effectively disassociate itself with "nationalist compromisers" who had "completely abandoned their allegiance to orthodox Communism" and hence, could not be

"trusted to carry out the Communist revolution to its fullest potential."⁸⁰ It also pointed out that "most of the Korean economic infrastructure remains under Japanese control," which relegated Korea merely as an "agricultural backwater" whose only value lay in offering a market for Japanese merchandise."⁸¹ In short, Japanese colonial rule produced an unhealthy intensification of bourgeoisie-worker conflict and exacerbated an already impoverished Korean economy by denigrating Korea into a flea market.

The most egregious socio-economic phenomenon which pointed to such backwardness was the continuation of "antiquated feudalism," which featured an ever-growing landlords' oppression of peasants, and a bourgeoisie which was "completely addicted and wired" to the flow of Japanese capital. The only solution to elevate the peasantry's socio-political status was "revolution, which, without it, would mean an eternal enslavement of peasants."⁸² Thus, imperial capitalism further deteriorated the farmer's living standards to such an extent that the only hope for restoring any sense of human personality and dignity into the peasantry's consciousness was through a radical and violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie and Japanese imperialism. The latter was especially responsible for feeding the opium of addictive oppression to the bourgeoisie, who neither had the incentive nor the will to liberate themselves from the intoxicating addiction.⁸³

Ironically, the thesis was more interested in blaming the CCP internally for all the troubles and argued that the "predominance of intellectuals and students," which was not ideal for the most "Bolshevik and healthy Communist party" was the root cause of the CCP's immediate

⁸⁰ "Chōsōn Nongmin mit Notongchaūi Immu e kwanhan Kyōlūi," ("Resolution of the Executive Committee of the Communist International on the Plight of Korean Peasants and Laborers") ("December Thesis"), December 10, 1928. Adapted from Im Yōng-t'ae, *Sikminchisitae Hankuk Sahoewa Untong (Korean Society and Political Movements During the Colonial Period)* (Seoul, south Korea: Sakyechol Ch'ulp'ansa (Four Seasons Publishing), 1985), 6. An earlier document which contained the Thesis's core principles that encouraged a united front for a nationalist revolution can be found in Bericht Uber die tatigkeit der Exekutive der Kommunistischen Internationale von IV. bis V. Weltkongress, Hamburg, Germany, 1924, Sektion 68.

⁸¹ "December Thesis," in Im Yōng-t'ae, *Korean Society and Political Movements During the Colonial Period*, 6.

⁸² "December Thesis," in Im Yōng-t'ae, *Korean Society and Political Movements During the Colonial Period*, 7.

⁸³ "December Thesis," in Im Yōng-t'ae, *Korean Society and Political Movements During the Colonial Period*, 7.

crisis. More specifically, the thesis criticized the lack of camaraderie between the intellectuals and the peasantry which was responsible for the "perpetual crisis from which the party could never liberate itself."⁸⁴ To correct this problem, the party had to "ardently promote the inclusion of the most impoverished peasants and radically forfeit the creation of "circles" and concentrate on factories to create labor unions which would be catapults to fulfill "Bolshevik operations" on the masses, which would complete "this grand task called 'revolution.'"⁸⁵ In other words, the promotion of camaraderie was essential for the rapid introduction of orthodox political organizational methods to Korean Communists, of which following the "from the masses, to the masses, and finally, from the masses" method will clearly establish itself as the backbone of a new Communist movement in Korea.

To that end, rejuvenation was the engine to "modernize" Korean Communism by promoting a new and steadfast commitment to an unbreakable unity between intellectuals and the peasantry, a feature which was completely absent from the traditional method. However, the Thesis did not permit "any conceivable bond with the bourgeoisie," and only encouraged peace agreements when "the bourgeoisie would allow the mobilization of the peasantry."⁸⁶ To ensure this, the Communist had to achieve "complete political autonomy" which was the only panacea to extinguish the fantasy of bourgeois democracy, which only "masked the uncertainty and risk of falling into its temptation."⁸⁷ Instead, the Communists had to concentrate on securing a six-hour work-day for laborers to enhance their livelihood and their "respectability as human beings."⁸⁸ In essence, the December Thesis firmly clarified its purpose to thoroughly encourage Korean intellectuals to maintain a sustained and committed focus on realizing a swift liberation of the proletariat through a violent overthrow of the

⁸⁴ "December Thesis," in Im Yǒng-t'ae, *Korean Society and Political Movements During the Colonial Period*, 7.

⁸⁵ "December Thesis," in Im Yǒng-t'ae, *Korean Society and Political Movements During the Colonial Period*, 7.

⁸⁶ "December Thesis," in Im Yǒng-t'ae, *Korean Society and Political Movements During the Colonial Period*, 7.

⁸⁷ "December Thesis," in Im Yǒng-t'ae, *Korean Society and Political Movements During the Colonial Period*, 7.

⁸⁸ "December Thesis," in Im Yǒng-t'ae, *Korean Society and Political Movements During the Colonial Period*, 7.

bourgeoisie.

However, the December Thesis's critical flaw was that it did not explain how “class liberation” was Koreanized enough as a concept to be an answer to a country which did not yet have a formal Communist party and was busy trying to reorganize a post-colonial society. It merely tried to export the Russian model of revolution from 1905 to Korea by assuming that Korea was still a feudal society, without accounting for the fact that Korea was actually a considerably industrialized country, albeit by suffering through the tyranny of an imperial yoke.⁸⁹ Unlike the Soviets who, as an imperial power, had the freedom to choose which socio-economic reforms to engineer first over others, Korea had to forcedly undergo extensive political and economic reform to establish an autonomous democracy and capitalism under imperial Japan's guidance. The Japanese Government-General's dictatorial encouragement of rapid industrialization had sapped Korea's capacity to autonomously instate these infrastructural changes by severely restricting Koreans from voting for the Japanese parliament and nearly saturating the independent farmer's potential to pursue autonomous growth. Hence, although the Soviets had defined class struggle as the fundamental priority of the revolution to allow the proletarians to emerge victorious against the bourgeoisie, they did not bother to explain how Koreans ought to politically or economically organize their society.⁹⁰

However, it is the political debacle which ensued shortly after the publication of the thesis which demonstrates the thesis's historical importance as an omen of a great tragedy: the rapid erosion of the Korean Communist movement. The December Thesis was a colossal atomic bomb for the Korean Communist movement, for it destroyed three main cornerstones. First,

⁸⁹ Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement*, 111.

⁹⁰ Sō Chung-sōk, "Yangkūkhwa Sitaeüi Kyekūpkanüi T'uchaeng," ("Inter-Class Struggles in a Bi-Polar Era,") in Sō Chung-sōk, *Hankuk Hyōndae Minchok Untong Yōnku (A Study of Nationalist Movements in Modern Korea)*, collected in Yi Chōng-sōk, Kim Tong-ch'un, and Kim Sōng-po et al., eds., *Hankukhak Yōnku Ch'ongsō (A Handbook for Research in Korean Studies—The Modern Era and North Korea)* (Seoul, south Korea: Yōksa Pip'yōng (History and Criticism), 2008).

the Thesis essentially erased any possibility of a center-Left coalition in Korean politics. For a very brief period, nationalist moderates and Leftists who were dissatisfied with the extremism of choosing either Communism or anti-Communist democracy had convened together in 1927 to found the New Middle Party (*Sinkanhoe*). The NMP was an exhaustive effort to coalesce an already severely fragmented Leftist movement that showed almost no sign of recuperation. Yet, factionalism had already grown out of proportion after the Soviets' betrayal of the Korean Communists, and as with most middle-of-the-road parties, the NMP ironically found itself torn apart over the very problem it sought to cure: the question of whether the Right or the Left must assume leadership over the NMP. The NMP could not endure the immense heat of the conflict and quickly crumbled, an inadvertent victim of a minor squabble over which ideology is better for its own sake, preventing the party from becoming a unifying center of the Left for the common good of pursuing political stability in a firm unity of strength. In essence, the NMP's ambiguity and lack of strength to firmly solidify a Leftist union stemmed precisely from the party's inability to decide whether its primary allegiance lay in preserving Korean nationalism or in supporting the Soviet Union as the unquestioned premier of the Communist camp.⁹¹

Although some Leftists tried to maintain an unfounded air of optimism by interpreting the disbandment of the party as a new opportunity to forge a more vigorous and energetic union of the Left, the disintegration of the NMP was first and foremost a product of intra-party factionalism.⁹² The consequence of the party's downfall is symbolic because, as the Left—Communists and Socialists, primarily—would quickly find out to their horror, it effectively

⁹¹ Yi Chǒng-sǒk, Kim Tong-ch'un, and Kim Sǒng-po et al., "Kongsanchuŭichatŭlkwa Namchosǒnnotongt'angŭi Paekyǒng: Sinkanhoeŭi Haech'e," (The Background of the Communists and the South Korean Workers' Party—The Disintegration of the New Middle Party) in Yi Chǒng-sǒk, Kim Tong-ch'un, and Kim Sǒng-po et al., eds., *A Handbook for Research in Korean Studies—The Modern Era and North Korea*.

⁹² "The Background of the Communists and the South Korean Workers' Party—The Disintegration of the New Middle Party," in Yi Chǒng-sǒk, Kim Tong-ch'un, and Kim Sǒng-po et al., eds., *A Handbook for Research in Korean Studies—The Modern Era and North Korea*.

marked the first egregious and near-total collapse of a united Communist movement.⁹³ The 1930s was the most abysmal decade for the Communist movement and, to a larger extent, the majority of the Korean working class as the fierce storm of the Great Depression swept across the world. Many migrant laborers left for Japan in search of petty opportunities as day laborers, earning far below sustainable living standards. To make matters worse, these laborers soon found themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty. As historian Ken Kawashima (2009) meticulously demonstrates through a rigorous Marxist analysis, the laborers were not only subject to the vicissitudes of their bosses' racial prejudice and whims, but also subject to unexpectedly soon evacuation orders from their Japanese landlords who disliked Korean lodging habits and their inability to promptly pay monthly rents. In essence, the laborers were stuck in the vicious cycle of low wages and a consequently low supply of housing, thereby exacerbating the already miserable living condition of near-absolute poverty.

The problem was no different for the Communists. They faced an intense political gridlock over the NMP and imminent capture from a ruthless Japanese police who had undertaken what Kawashima describes as a "massification of the police and the policification of the masses," or the total organization of the public and officialdom into a near-omnipresent surveillance machine to completely blur any distinctions between private and public, and between social and political life.⁹⁴ Since Korea was subject to a nearly suffocating degree of surveillance that could land a Korean Communist in prison at any moment, many Communists fled to Japan and China to avoid the intense and systematic incarceration.⁹⁵

However, their prospects for a better future became increasingly dim, as most had to either eke a living by joining the fledgling Japanese Communist Party or by entering the People's

⁹³ Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement*, 127-131.

⁹⁴ Ken C. Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble: Korean Workers in Interwar Japan* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009), 133-138.

⁹⁵ Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble*, 39.

Liberation Army as reserve soldiers. For those who could not settle down with these occupations, the only fate awaiting them was immediate arrest and extradition by the Chinese police, only to be handed over to the "nearest Japanese police station across a river," for intensive interrogation and torture. Escaping from Japanese detection was nearly impossible because the Chinese and the Japanese agreed to "mutually supply information, and to cooperate with frankness so that each party may be constantly kept acquainted with the views of the other party."⁹⁶ In other words, the Korean Communists were entrapped in a bilateral-cooperative Panopticon, which, as philosopher Michel Foucault (2008) explains, "induces a state of conscious and permanent visibility to ensure the automatic functioning of power."⁹⁷ The Sino-Japanese surveillance system was a machine which created and sustained a power relation which was totally independent from any physical manifestation of human agency in operating it. Koreans themselves ironically became the unintended bearers and movers of the very surveillance system the avoidance of which was the Diaspora's original aim.

The CCP naturally found itself in a dire shortage of members to manage the party as a full-fledged political institution. Very few members remained in Korea such that the idea of reconstructing the party was out of the question, and it was only a matter of time before the party would effectively cease to exist. Unfortunately, the Communists who joined the Diaspora did so because their commitment to ideological solidarity could not survive under the pressure to liberate themselves from a perpetual quagmire of extreme destitution. Indeed, during the late 1930s, as the Japanese state encouraged more forced conscription and total

⁹⁶ "Detailed Regulations Governing the Supervision of Koreans, as Agreed Upon between the Chinese and Japanese Police Authorities in the Agreement between the Chinese and Japanese Police Authorities Embodying the Principles to Regulate the Residence of Koreans in Chinese Territory," Article 5 and Article 10. June 11, 1925 in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 125-126. For a discussion of the regulations, see Chŏng-sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1963), 161 and Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement*, 143-144.

⁹⁷ Michel Foucault, "'Panopticism' from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison System*," *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary and Global Contexts*, Vol. 2, No. 1: The Dynamics of Race and Incarceration: Social Welfare, Social Welfare, and Social Control (Autumn, 2008), 6.

mobilization of Korean laborers, the minimum wage, which was already barely enough to pay for all necessary daily expenses, became smaller. As historian Bruce Cumings (2005) points out, Koreans became mobile human capital, a phenomenon which exploded into a hemorrhage, with most peasants leaving their countryside homes because they no longer could find any work there and because they had large families, which required higher income.⁹⁸ The Communists who had to turn into laborers to eke out a living, were no exception. They faced a vicious cycle of continuously searching for various odd jobs just for the sake of survival, to the extent that the only economic value of a Korean was purely measured by the value of his labor. The Communist Diaspora rendered the Korean Communist's expertise in Marxist theory as nothing more than a trinket while in service of the Communist's sworn enemy—the capitalist.

Considering such dire conditions, for Pak Hŏn-yŏng, the December Thesis was a wake-up call for the need to vigorously reorganize the Communist program and found a renaissance for the Korean Communist movement as soon as possible. The CCP's founding prevented the continuation of "virtual pauperism" and restored party cadres as bureaucrats with a stable career, one bestowing much authority as opposed to years of enslavement by the Japanese, albeit one with irregular payment.

The December Thesis's true irony was that although it was supposed to theoretically advise Koreans to fight against imperialism, it stopped short of just encouraging the growth of an anti-bourgeois sentiment because such an option was the most realistic method for the Soviets to display their ignorance and lack of commitment without directly getting Moscow involved in Korean affairs. Soviet political expediency, rather than a genuine commitment to principled orthodoxy, forced the Korean Communist movement to confront the grim reality of severe economic destitution. The only solution for a Communist organization operating in a country

⁹⁸ Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 175-176.

where the flow of capital was near to stagnancy was to commit suicide in the shortest time possible.

3. Yŏ Un-hyŏng and His Abandonment of the Korean Provisional Government

However, factionalism was not just an intra-Left phenomenon but a thorny and persistent problem which also plagued the Right. Reconciliation was fundamentally very difficult, if not impossible because there was already a deep chasm even within the Korean Provisional Government which, like the CCP, had been actively resisting the Japanese from their youthful years. The main issue creating severe disagreements and conflict was the problem of how to incorporate nationalism and Left-wing militant activism and which activities deserved the latter label. Most Communists, Socialists, and moderates returned to Korea from China after spending much of the 1910s fighting against the Japanese imperial army stationed in Manchuria. Radicals who identified with Pak Hŏn-yŏng's orthodox Marxism and his belief in a vanguard party with a personality cult mostly came from Shanghai, earning the name, "Shanghai clan."⁹⁹ Although radicals in the Shanghai clan did not wholeheartedly agree with the Korean Provisional Government, especially with the latter's overtly extreme anti-Left-wing disposition, the two were nominal allies because of the supposedly common belief in the primacy of nationalism as the main objective behind the realization of Korea's liberation from Japanese rule. It was the unity in terms of aspiring toward a common end despite a radical difference in means—the Communists favored guerrilla resistance compared with the Provisional Government's more measured yet conservative approach of waging sporadic assassinations of top Japanese military leaders.¹⁰⁰

By contrast, Yŏ's supporters hailed mostly from northern China and Manchuria, where Yŏ

⁹⁹ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng: Chŏnpochŏk Minchuchuiŏcha* (*Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng: A Biography of a Progressive Democracy Advocate*) (Seoul, south Korea: Ch'ae-ryun Publishing, 2015), 27-28.

¹⁰⁰ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 28.

himself spent much of the 1910s, engaging in military resistance against the Japanese as well as establishing a wide network of contacts within China to gather funds and weapons. Since much of the fighting occurred in Manchuria, Yō's supporters operated mainly in Beijing, and hence adopted the name, "Beijing clan." The "Beijing clan" disliked the Shanghai faction more than the latter hated the former because Yō and his supporters distrusted diplomatic methods for their passivity and "effeminate" assumption that independence can be earned by appealing to a world which knew almost nothing about Korea.¹⁰¹ Given the ominous and blatant sign of an imminent and irreparable factionalism, the Beijing clan thought that armed resistance was a more certain method of eliminating a Japanese imperialist than waiting for the leaders of countries such as Britain, France, and the United States, who, mindful of the fact that Japan was in a similar position as they were as colonizers, had little incentive, let alone interest, in assisting the liberation of a country they were unfamiliar with.¹⁰² Fundamentally, having been a diplomat himself as the Korean representative to the 1919 Versailles Conference, Yō was clearly aware of the futility of relying heavily on diplomacy alone in a world where imperialism was very much in vogue. Even if Korea was liberated with the help of the Great Powers, the Great Powers themselves would be subject to intense criticism from their own colonies and face imperial disintegration.¹⁰³

In other words, the Beijing clan had a realist understanding of a fundamentally pro-imperialist world order as one driven by raw power which had nothing positive to offer for Korea, and did not trust the rather idealist and nebulous method of diplomacy which could end up merely being a passive and futile rhetorical exercise with very few clear results in Korea's favor. Furthermore, with the international political arena under a near monopoly of power by imperialist powers like Britain, France, and Japan, who shared a mutual interest in

¹⁰¹ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yō Un-hyōng*, 27-28.

¹⁰² Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yō Un-hyōng*, 28.

¹⁰³ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yō Un-hyōng*, 28-29.

preserving their territorial positions by minimizing the possibility for any clear sense of political liberty, and most importantly, independence, Yŏ was well aware that Korea had very little chance or influence to challenge the imperialist tide. One had to fight with one's life at stake to truly understand the bitter desperation with which independence was worth pursuing—something that armchair politicians donning clean black suits could never understand unless they had looked or more rarely, worn the blood-soaked military uniforms of independence fighters. It was a truth Yŏ knew too well, since he was a veteran in both worlds. Yŏ's familiarity with the truth explains why from Yŏ's point of view, it was extremely frustrating to see the Shanghai clan claiming the leadership of the provisional government without "having set foot on Manchurian soil to shed blood for the sake of liberation."¹⁰⁴ Indeed, when Kim Ku, the head of the Provisional Government, invited Yŏ to pursue peaceful negotiations between the Shanghai and Beijing clans, Yŏ eagerly seized the opportunity to reflect his frustration and hear the Provisional Government's justification for becoming the leader of the Korean people.

4. Yŏ Un-hyŏng and Syngman Rhee

Unfortunately, the opportunity was extinguished before it could even surface. Kim Ku (1876-1949), a native of Hwang-hae Province, was a seasoned veteran of the Korean independence movement. After participating in the Tong-hak Rebellion alongside disgruntled peasants, he directed the anti-Japanese resistance movement of The Society of Righteous Fervor (*Ŭiyŏltan* in Korean), which would be the main engine of the Korean independence

¹⁰⁴ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 30. Yŏ was not the only one to be uncomfortable with Syngman Rhee's adamant refusal to compromise with any opposition. Moderates such as An Chang-ho, also experienced immense frustration with Rhee's stubbornness. When An Chang-ho requested that Rhee refrain from claiming himself to be the President of the Korean Provisional Government, Rhee threatened An that should reports about internal factionalism within the KPG become public, responsibility would solely rest with An. See "Telegram from An Ch'ang-ho to Syngman Rhee," August 25, 1920 and Rhee's reply to An on August 26, 1920 in Warren Y. Kim, *Fifty-Year History of Koreans in America* (Seoul, South Korea: Pochincha Ch'ulp'ansa (Publishing), 1971), 459-460. For a detailed discussion of the Korean Provisional Government (Shanghai Clan)'s internal factionalism, see Chŏng-sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 129-155.

movement throughout the 1920s and 1930s in south Korea and Shanghai. As the Society's president, Kim was responsible for planning the assassination of many Japanese diplomats and military officials who had promoted the idea of colonizing Korea.¹⁰⁵ However, in Yŏ's eyes, after only a few years since he was elected the President of the Provisional Government in 1927, Kim seemed to have lost his touch with patriotism because Kim abruptly asked Yŏ to support Syngman Rhee for the Presidency of the Provisional Government after Kim's retirement. Yŏ, white-faced in shock, immediately refused.¹⁰⁶

Yŏ retorted that of all people, Rhee was the most unqualified candidate because he had "done almost nothing significant to improve Korean welfare" after spending most of his time in the United States.¹⁰⁷ Given that many Koreans in Manchuria and Siberia had been imprisoned for a considerably long time, many Korean leaders in Korea had suffered more if not less than Rhee under the ruthless policies of the Japanese. Yŏ believed that the Provisional Government had to elect an individual who was acquainted well with the pain and hardship that independence fighters in China and the Soviet Union had to endure, and Rhee was not someone who could be trusted to fully understand the radical militancy of activists in these regions.

Most importantly, Yŏ believed that the Provisional Government had yet to win international legitimacy and yet was keen on dividing the independence movement into Left and Right-wing factions. Yŏ argued that the Provisional Government had no right to monopolize power unless it acknowledged the equivalence or even superior value of violent revolutionary struggle compared with what he perceived as a relatively obsolete propagandistic

¹⁰⁵ Yi Yŏn-pok, *Hankuk Minchok Untongsa Yŏnku (A Study of Korean Nationalist Movements)* (Seoul, south Korea: Archival Center for Korean Studies, 2006), 119. For an autobiographical account of Kim Ku's life and political activities, see his *Autobiography* (Seoul, south Korea: Hankil Ch'ulp'ansa (One Road Publishing), 1980) and his *Paekpŏm Diaries* (Seoul, south Korea: Tol-pe-kae (Stone Pillow) Publishing, 2002).

¹⁰⁶ Yi Man-kyu, *Yŏ Un-hyŏng Sŏnsaeng T'uchaengsa (A History of Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Struggles)* (Seoul, south Korea: Democratic Culture, 1946), 225-226.

¹⁰⁷ Yi Man-kyu, *A History of Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Struggles*, 225-226.

diplomacy.¹⁰⁸ Yŏ believed that the right to form a government had to be measured by the intensity with which an individual sacrificed his or her blood for a country, and the Right-wing faction was only filled with “old men” who had not ventured beyond Shanghai, but only “bickered amongst themselves all day and night” and had miserably failed this test.¹⁰⁹

Yŏ was implicitly referring again to Syngman Rhee (1875-1965)'s long exile to the United States, during which Rhee met with President Theodore Roosevelt to plea for American assistance in realizing Korean independence. Rhee, an American citizen who graduated from George Washington University and earned a Ph.D. from Princeton, had an extensive network of American politicians who lobbied for Korean independence on Rhee's behalf. Rhee understood the importance of conducting diplomacy in accordance with international law. Indeed, he believed that knowledge of international law was essential if Korea wished to be accepted into the international community and preserve her national sovereignty against all foreign attempts to usurp it:

"Because a solitary nation is vulnerable to a sudden assault by a strong power, many nations unite to form a community and maintain mutual relations so that no one may exploit another's weakness and commit an unlawful act. If I, first of all, do not violate the spirit of international law and behave in a fair and just manner, maintaining close and warm relations with various foreign powers, others with honor will be bound to treat me as a good friend."¹¹⁰

In short, Rhee believed that Korea had to make haste in joining the international community because it was a pivotal defensive measure to ensure maximum security against any outbreak of foreign aggression. Such assurance could only arise from Korea's autonomous will to behave morally toward other nations while bearing amicable designs, which could guarantee that foreign powers will respond in kind and not commit any hostilities toward Korea. Korea had to enter world politics because numerical superiority produced through a wide network of

¹⁰⁸ Yi Man-kyu, *A History of Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Struggles*, 226-227.

¹⁰⁹ *Tonga Ilpo (East Asia Daily)*, "Mikunchŏng Are Samnyŏn Tonganŭi Pimil Iyaki," (Secret Stories During Three Years under the American Military Government) June 11, 1982.

¹¹⁰ Syngman Rhee, *The Spirit of Independence: A Primer for Korean Independence* (Honolulu, Hawai'i and Seoul, south Korea: University of Hawai'i Press and The Institute for Modern Korean Studies, Yŏn-se University, 2001), 264.

international alliances was the most definitive insurance policy against the web of complex international relations which could unexpectedly generate the desire within a foreign power to invade Korea.

However, Rhee also warned that while Korea ought to treat foreign nations with fairness, moral rectitude in discerning right from wrong was essential, for it was only in peace that Korea could be friends with other countries; in times of war, they would be Korea's enemies. This distinction was crucial for Rhee because like most Korean patriots, he was deeply wary and suspicious of Japanese designs on Korea. He cautioned that Japan's expansionism into Korea was an inevitable, if not necessary, outcome stemming from Japan's dilemma as a country with a booming population but suffering from a dire lack of resources to support it, coupled with Korea's inability to effectively utilize her vast quantity of natural resources:

"At the present, Japan's population is growing every year, yet their land is small, and there is not much land for people to live on, driving a large number of them to move elsewhere. This is why their government and people are working so hard to gain new colonies. Korea's land and climate are very good, while gold, silver, and other sources of wealth are abundant, although they remained buried. Moreover, the people of this country are unenlightened and they do not intend to use their underground resources. They are also willing to submit to the power of outsiders. Therefore, once the Japanese move in and settle down, they will easily become masters in that locality. Why would they not want that?.." ¹¹¹

Rhee was arguing that Japan's internally exponential population growth could not be controlled solely within her own islands and hence, overseas colonies were desirable to relocate some of its surplus population. However, new technical knowledge pertaining the extraction of underground resources would also move along with this population, meaning that Japan was essentially interested in exporting human capital to Korea in exchange for importing precious industrial materials. The real crisis behind Japan's attempt to deny Korea's sovereignty was not merely Japan's physical occupation of Korea, but the Koreans' inability to comprehend such an intent and to actually invite the realization of that intent without any criticism. Hence, it was not just Japan's display of hard power represented through the military's actual acquisition of colonies but its concurrent attempt to use soft power by

¹¹¹ Syngman Rhee, *The Spirit of Independence*, 245-246.

introducing an "imperialistic production of human capital," resulting in a mutually combined and balanced reinforcement of both forms of power to transform this imperialism into what communications theorist Ernest J. Wilson III (2008) has termed "smart power."¹¹²

Unfortunately, Rhee's rich attention to eloquent theoretical discourse was not consummate with his actual diplomatic ability to vocally deliver his arguments. Rhee was unable to achieve much in the United States except for urging constantly to American diplomats to recognize Korea's national sovereignty and writing letters to the White House, pleading for American assistance to achieve Korean independence. When he did finally meet Roosevelt, Rhee did not present himself as an envoy of Korea, but ironically, a representative of the notoriously pro-Japanese Society for Japan's Progress (*Il-chin-hoe* in Korean) and emphasized friendly relations between the United States and Korea which was essential to prevent Russia from "grinding Korea into pieces like grain between millstones."¹¹³ Moreover, instead of strongly pushing for the preservation of the monarchy along with Korea's independence, Rhee mostly used the opportunity to advertise how weak the Korean monarchy had become and his desire to replace the monarchy with a republican government under his leadership.¹¹⁴

Yet, in reality, Rhee had no genuine mandate to promote himself as a leader of any Korean government because the Provisional Government was constantly plagued by intense disagreement between moderates who favored working with American officials to realize gradual independence through diplomatic means and radicals who had spent much of their

¹¹² On "soft power," see Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, No. 80 (Autumn, 1990), 153-171; on the combination of "hard power" and "soft power," see Joseph S. Nye, "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power," *Foreign Affairs*, No. 88 (July/August, 2009), 160-163, and Ernest J. Wilson III, "Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616: Public Policy in a Changing World (March, 2008), 110-124.

¹¹³ "Korea Hesitates to Be Swallowed," *The Stark County Democrat*, August 8, 1905, 7. On the Society for Japanese Progress, see Yumi Moon, *Populist Collaborators: The Il-chin-hoe and the Japanese Colonization of Korea, 1896-1910* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2013). For a more general history of Japan's road to colonizing Korea, see Peter H. Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995).

¹¹⁴ "Corean[sic] Envoys at Oyster Bay," *New York Tribune*, August 4, 1905, 7. See also Chŏng-sik Lee, *The Origins of the Republic of Korea*, 247.

political and revolutionary careers in Manchuria and Japan and favored immediate armed rebellion against the Japanese. The highly fractured nature of Korean politics—a contest between diplomatic gradualism and immediate insurgency as the ideal means to achieve independence—meant that Kim had no centralized structure of command and there was no clear consensus on many pressing issues such as alleviating Korea's financial health, because each of Rhee's followers and opposers all had their private clans of loyal followers.¹¹⁵ Moreover, when Rhee finally returned to Korea in 1945, he was virtually unknown throughout the country and had yet to show much for credentials as an independence activist in deep contrast to many Left-wing activists who had sacrificed their lives to demonstrate Korea's will for her liberation.¹¹⁶ Thus, from the perspective of a seasoned diplomat and long-time militant independence activist such as Yō, Rhee was unqualified to be the leader of a country for whose liberty he had barely shed any blood in comparison to the copious amount of ink he spilled on paper to make pleas that had no emotive effect on a pro-imperialist United States.

However, Yō did not believe that engaging in arm-chair diplomacy was merely an individualistic predilection but a culture bred and promoted by lethargic minds which only saw the brutality of violence and not its political capacity and significance in discouraging the continuation of Japanese militarism in Korea. Hence, Yō also sharply criticized Kim for leading a "bunch of armchair diplomats" who waxed too romantic and theoretical about an independence which "could only exist in the clouds unless one put a finger to a trigger to

¹¹⁵ Robert Oliver, *Syngman Rhee: The Man Behind the Myth* (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1954), 150. Oliver was one of Rhee's closest confidants, and his occasionally false and positive portrayals of Rhee, such as his account about Rhee's supposedly fictional meeting with the novelist and activist Herbert George Wells, or Oliver's praise of Rhee's dictatorship as a pure effort to install Democracy, must be taken with a grain of salt, for throughout his biography of Rhee, the border between his subjectivity as a confidant and his objectivity as a supposedly neutral observer is thin. For other biographies of Syngman Rhee, see Yi Wōn-sun, *Inkanūrosōi Yi Sūng-man (Syngman Rhee as a Human Being)* (Seoul, south Korea: Sin T'ae-yang (New Sun) Publishing, 1965), Chōng Pyōng-chun, *Unam Yi Sūng-man Yōnku (A Study of Syngman Rhee)* (Seoul, south Korea: Yōksa Pip'yōng, 2008), Ko Chōng-hyu, *Yi Sūngmankwa Hankuk Tongnip Untong (Syngman Rhee and the Korean Independence Movement)* (Seoul, south Korea: Yōn-se University Press, 2005), and Sō Chung-sōk, *Yi Sūng-mankwa Che I Konghwakuk: Haepang esō 4.19 Hyōkmyōngkkachi (Syngman Rhee and the First Republic: From Liberation to the Revolution of April 19)* (Seoul, south Korea: Yōk-sa Pip'yōng, 2014).

¹¹⁶ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 189-190. See also Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, chapter 8.

extract blood from the hated Japanese."¹¹⁷ Kim was upset at Yŏ's disrespect for the Provisional Government's diplomatic and carefully measured approach, and demanded an apology. Yŏ curtly refused. He was furious at Kim's aloof and obtuse attitude toward independence which only emphasized diplomacy without having a balanced and nuanced mixture of armed resistance in tandem with it.

Yŏ was also frustrated with what he believed to be Kim's erroneous justification of the Provisional Government's legitimacy by claiming heritage from a deeply corrupt, inefficient, and dead political system, and minimized the historical heritage of Korean nationalism. Yŏ angrily retorted that he would "immediately sever ties with those who wear the masks of patriotism but deeply harbor undemocratic Conservatism."¹¹⁸ In other words, Yŏ believed that it was better to display an unwavering commitment to a historically informed nationalist politics than a politics governed by an ornamental affection for power which completely disregarded historical nationalism. An extremely flustered and frustrated Yŏ arose and pretended to walk out of the office. He suddenly returned and violently flung a chair at Kim, throwing everyone present into disbelief and a cold silence. Yŏ slammed the office door and left, never to return to the Provisional Government for the rest of his career as a politician.

In other words, Yŏ's decision to co-found the CCP was a product of his deep frustration with the Right's inability to comprehend the genuine importance of independence through concrete political action and through a solemn respect for historical nationalism. Although he felt immense betrayal from the Provisional Government, Yŏ's search for political redemption based not on lukewarm idealism but steadfast and concrete political coalition among the Left by joining the CCP to push for a nationalistic reconstruction of Korea finally bore fruit on

¹¹⁷ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 30.

¹¹⁸ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 30.

September 2, 1945.¹¹⁹

Yet, as the Korean saying goes, although rivers and mountains may change every ten years, for people, it might take forever. Even after two decades, the Right had still failed to learn from its mistakes. Instead of recognizing the urgency of rooting out imperialism and pro-Japanese collaborators, Syngman Rhee and the DPK chose to be a symbol of how decadently corrupt and immoral Korean politics had become. The DPK was a herd which learned to live "unhistorically" rather too soon, interpreting Nietzsche's emphasis on the need to forget history rather too literally and forgetting that Korea was under Japanese rule for over three decades.¹²⁰ A notorious Right-wing favoritism within the Korean provisional government under Syngman Rhee influence was most noticeable through his support of formerly pro-Japanese financiers and Conservative media such as Kim Sŏng-su and the *Chosŏn Il-po*. There were also politicians who had shady affiliations with the Japanese. Men such as Chang Tŏk-su and Song Chin-u were infamous for supporting the Japanese war effort during the 1930s by raising funds or promoting pro-assimilation propaganda, or were neutral voices calling for a "nurture native talent" movement, which was a euphemism for ambivalence and passivism toward national liberation.¹²¹

What held men like Kim, Chang, and Song together despite their different ideological orientations was their anti-Communism and virulent rejection of a nationalist alliance with the Leftists, a position which earned these men public ire for being opportunists. The gravest problem was that the term "Rightist" had a two-dimensional complexity. On one hand,

¹¹⁹ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 30-35.

¹²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1980), 7-9.

¹²¹ See Sŏ Chung-sŏk, "Chang Tŏk-su: Kŭntaehwa Chisangchuwŏe Maemoltoen Chaesa" ("A Man Obsessed with the Supremacy of Modernization,") in Panminchok Munchae Yŏnkuso (The Research Council for Un-Korean Activities) ed., *Ch'inilpa 99 In (99 Pro-Japanese Collaborators)*, Vol. 2 (Seoul, south Korea: Tol-pe-kae, 1993). See also Yi Kyŏng-nam, *Sŏl-san Chang Tŏk-su* (Seoul, south Korea: *Tonga Ilpo Ch'ulp'ansa* (Press), 1981) for a complete biography. On Song Chin-u, see Kim sŏng-hwan, *Ch'ŏnnyŏnŭi Hankuksarŭl Mantŭn 100 In (100 People Who Made 1,000 Years of Korean History)* (Seoul, south Korea: Onŭlŭi Ch'aek (Books of Today), 1998), 285.

Rightists such as Kim Ku deserved respect for leading anti-Japanese struggles and rallying Koreans under nationalism and patriotism, and were anti-imperialistic as Leftists in their hatred for the Japanese.¹²² However, on the other hand, anti-Communism white-washed the absence of nationalist credentials in men who had been notorious national traitors before they were ideologues who expressed an excessive “patriotism” only against Communism and very little for democracy. Thus, a "Rightist" did not necessarily mean supporting democracy and believing in the merits of free elections and diversity of opinion, but was a convenient umbrella to lump together anyone who opposed Communism or any Leftist or progressive social-Democratic agendas for opposition and hatred's sake. While they were fond of interpreting ideology in the supposedly most orthodox fashion, none really believed in the true credentials of their professed creed on their own terms.¹²³

In addition to the DPK's shameful alliance with pro-Japanese collaborators and media, its "unprincipled solution to unification," which emphasized "covering up the past for the sake of unity," was a great betrayal to the Korean people who had sacrificed their blood to earn their freedom. Rhee's attempt to pardon such national traitors was a direct abandonment of national honor and respect toward those who sacrificed themselves to restore it.¹²⁴ Should this carry on, "Fascism would regain its strength" under the auspices of Rhee's "willful betrayal of democracy and freedom."¹²⁵ By rebranding themselves immorally as nationalistic anti-Communist Democrats, Rightists were "slowing historical progress" and were busy turning "national traitors into counterrevolutionaries" under a dubious pursuit of an "unprincipled

¹²² Bruce Cumings, "American Policy and Korean Liberation," in Frank Baldwin ed., *Without Parallel: The American-Korean Relationship since 1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973;1974), 64.

¹²³ Cumings, "American Policy and Korean Liberation," in Baldwin ed., *Without Parallel*, 65.

¹²⁴ An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng P'yŏngchŏn (Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography)* (Seoul, south Korea: Silch'ŏn Publishing, 2009), 259.

¹²⁵ "Yi Paksawa P'asichmŭi Taetu," (Dr. Rhee and the Resurgence of Fascism) March 27, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 77.

unity" of the nation.¹²⁶ Moreover, Rhee's inclusion of billionaires in the Democratic Reconstruction Council was akin to inviting "war criminals" and would serve as a "clear barometer" of Rhee's "irresponsible approach to uniting the nation."¹²⁷ By rendering "pro-democracy" synonymous with "nationalist" in gathering a Rightist clan that had little remorse for its pro-Japanese past, the Rhee faction was deliberately poisoning the blatant present of a liberated Korea—the most "un-Korean" sin that could ever be committed against Koreans who had suffered for over three decades under a harsh and savage colonial regime.¹²⁸

Therefore, only a government led by Koreans with true patriotism had the right to govern Koreans as Koreans. Such a government was in a superior moral position to claim a possession of Foucauldian "political reason"—influencing the manner of governmental performance, including the appropriation, redistribution or allocation of governmental power and the promotion of sectional interest as a common public virtue—than an institutionally "Democratic" government which protected Koreans who were physically Korean but spiritually Japanese.¹²⁹ Such hypocrisy was no longer compatible with the fervent demand of the Korean public to found a thoroughly nationalist government in a year when the elimination "for all time of the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest" was complete.¹³⁰ The Japanese Government was expected to remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights were to be universal norms for the restoration of humane conduct in international relations. Korea had, by virtue of her

¹²⁶ "Dr. Rhee and the Resurgence of Fascism," March 27, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 78.

¹²⁷ "Yi Paksawa Chungang Wiwŏnhoe," (Dr. Rhee and the Central Commission) March 7, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 50-53.

¹²⁸ "Yi Paksawa Kukkaekŏn Kikŭm," (Dr. Rhee and the National Reconstruction Fund) March 10, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 60-61.

¹²⁹ On Foucauldian "political reason," see Hindess, "Politics as Government," 397, and Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978), 54.

¹³⁰ "Potsdam Sŏnŏnmun," (Potsdam Declaration) July 26, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*.

liberty from the tyranny of colonialism, the right to contribute to the permanent stability of this new global political culture.

Indeed, as Yŏ enthusiastically emphasized in a speech delivered in front of a cheering crowd of adolescents—most of whom were die-hard fans of Yŏ due to his charisma and progressive reputation as a moderate politician and ardent nationalist—after August 15, 1945, Korea's liberation was complete and final all thanks to the full recovery of Korea's economic and political sovereignty from Japan. Yŏ "seized on the American privilege of free political endeavor" and triumphantly declared that the Japanese officially admitted their surrender and urged the Japanese to accept five central demands in the name of the Korean people.¹³¹

First, the Japanese had to immediately and unconditionally release all economic and political criminals who were wrongfully prosecuted under false charges.¹³² Second, since a national government sustained on organizational life and popular support, winning the Korean public's heart through a guarantee of the public's livelihood was critical. Thus, food was of utmost importance, and therefore, the Japanese were expected to provide three months' supply to assuage the anger of many farmers who had suffered from excessive quotas which had deeply impoverished them.¹³³ Third, the Japanese would present "absolutely no interference whatsoever on matters of security and peace," so that Koreans could organize their own constabulary and listen carefully and deliver the demands of the Korean public. Fourth, the Japanese would legalize all previously banned youth organizations which were the central

¹³¹ "Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State," September 29, 1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1064.

¹³² "Chosŏn Kŏnkuk Chunpi Wiwŏnhoe Wiwŏnchang Yŏ Un-hyŏngŭi Hwimun Chunghakkyo Kyochŏng esŏŭi Poko Yŏnsŏl," (National Reconstruction Council President Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Speech at Hwi-mun Middle School's Courtyard) August 16, 1945, in *IDFTYSL*, 19. See also Grant E. Meade, *American Military Government in Korea* (New York: King's Crown Press, Columbia University, 1951), 55 and Yi Wan-pŏm, *Korean History, 1945-1948* (Seoul, south Korea: The Academy of Korean Studies Press, 2012), 76.

¹³³ "National Reconstruction Council President Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Speech at Hwi-mun Middle School's Courtyard," August 16, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 19.

engineers of "every effort for the liberation of the Korean people."¹³⁴

Finally, all laborers formerly conscripted by the Japanese "under extreme duress and by inhumanely coercive circumstances" had to be released immediately for the reconstruction of Korea and for the sake of fulfilling that objective, the Japanese had to pledge that they would not subject the workers to "any misery any longer, whether physical or psychological in disposition."¹³⁵ The Japanese, anxious about the possibility that the Soviets rather than the Americans might come to occupy Korea and bring the Communist threat closer to Japan, had no time to carefully assess Yō's demands and accepted them unconditionally.¹³⁶ In short, Yō explicitly made it clear that "liberation" did not simply mean Japan's surrender of all weapons and soldiers returning to Japan; it meant the fulfillment of Japan's necessary duty to provide for the basic infrastructural needs from which Korea could reconstruct herself as a welfare state. "Liberation" was not merely the termination of imperialism or of the war to end imperialism but the preparation of socio-political conditions to realize and permanently secure the liberty of pursuing any social, political, or economic activity which constituted as evidence of Korea's ability to define modernity on her own terms.

After winning the Government-General's promise to deliver 20 million Yen, the NRC quickly established a security task force of 162 outposts across the peninsula in accordance with the third demand.¹³⁷ This not only clearly demonstrated that national liberation was consummate with the Koreans' ability to defend their own fatherland by and for themselves without any reliance on foreign technology and manpower, but also established military

¹³⁴ "National Reconstruction Council President Yō Un-hyōng's Speech at Hwi-mun Middle School's Courtyard." August 16, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 19.

¹³⁵ "National Reconstruction Council President Yō Un-hyōng's Speech at Hwi-mun Middle School's Courtyard." August 16, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 19.

¹³⁶ Cho Han-sōng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 25.

¹³⁷ C. L. Hoag, *Military Government in Korea: War Policy and the First Year of Occupation: 1941-1946* (Washington, D.C.: OCMH at the Department of the Army, 1970), 471-472.

security as an emblematic expression of Korean martial sovereignty.¹³⁸ This effort was jointly met by a timely adherence of the Japanese to the NRC's remaining demands. Upon hearing news of Yō's speech, Japanese authorities promptly adhered to his demands, releasing all political prisoners except for "those convicted for larceny and murder."¹³⁹ Most importantly, the NRC was able to deliver a "promising and reassuring 147,438,144 Kilograms of food."¹⁴⁰ In short, the surrender of the Japanese had effectively assured the NRC of founding a solid populist platform by swiftly delivering critical daily necessities for the Korean masses.

Two observations deserve emphasis. First, Yo was heavily inclined to interpret liberation as an economic necessity, which conversely means that it perceived imperialism primarily as an economic form of violence. Yō believed that Korean independence was not the product of the Allies' victory in the Second World War alone, but was a successful attempt to eradicate imperialism and destroy Fascism.¹⁴¹ However, because Yō also believed that Koreans had fought hard for their independence in their own right and capacity, they had the authority to carve the future of Korea with their own hands. This is why the restoration of justice is largely understood as an exercise of the right to procure daily necessities, as the second precept suggests.¹⁴²

Second, Yo understood the maintenance of internal order as pivotal to externally demonstrating political stability. In other words, a demonstration of political stability by

¹³⁸ "Kōnchun, Ch'ian Yuchi e Himūl Kiulita," (The NRC Concentrates on Maintaining Security) *Maeil Sinpo*, August 17, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*. See also United States' Armed Forces in Korea ed., *A History of the United States Armed Forces in Korea* (Korean Translation), Vol. 1 (Seoul, south Korea: Tol-pe-kae, 1988), 429. Noted hereafter as *HUSAFIK*.

¹³⁹ "The NRC Concentrates on Maintaining Security," *Maeil Sinpo (Daily News)*, August 17, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*.

¹⁴⁰ "Kōnchun, Kakto e itnūn Sikryang Hwakpo," (The NRC Secures a Nation-wide Supply of Provisions) *Maeil Sinpo*, August 17, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*. On Japan's compliance with Yō's demands, see Yi Man-kyu, *A History of Yō Un-hyōng's Struggles*, 191.

¹⁴¹ Yō Un-hyōng, "Urinara chōngch'iūi Mirae," (The Future of Politics in Our Country) *Hakpyōng (The Student-Soldier)*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (January, 1946), 5. Yō had expressed a similar opinion earlier in an interview with *Chosŏn Inminpo (The Korean People's Daily)*, September 8, 1945. See also Sim Chi-yōn, *Inmintang Yonku (A Study of the People's Party)* (Seoul, south Korea: Research Center for Far Eastern Affairs, Kyōng-nam University, 1991), 21.

¹⁴² Yō Un-hyōng, "The Future of Politics in Our Country," *The Student-Soldier*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 5.

mobilizing youth groups was necessary because it was the primary method to gain Korea's international recognition and acceptance as a proud and dependable supporter of the Allies, who were domestically stable Democracies, with the possible exception of China. This was why Japanese cooperation to demonstrate Korea's capability to become a Democratic country was essential, because the release of political prisoners and the legalization of all youth groups not only symbolically meant a complete termination of Japanese domination but also the initiation of Korea's autonomous ability to appreciate and legally enforce the respectable honor of human rights as a core principle of international law and hopefully win acceptance into the international community as a sovereign country.

Indeed, as Yō stressed in a speech clarifying his demands to the Japanese, the maintenance of internal stability was crucial because when "the Allies finally reach our[Korea's] front door," Koreans must take care to "shun individualistic heroism and display their dignity and pride through political unification."¹⁴³ It was such orderliness that would garner "the entire world's attention on Korea as Japan raises a white flag to admit her surrender."¹⁴⁴ When that moment came, Koreans "must not display the arrogance of victors, but the compassionate tolerance of noble pacifists respecting international justice."¹⁴⁵ It was such respect for a high moral virtue which could dutifully earn the respect of powerful countries, and until Koreans succeeded in earning it, they had to "remain absolutely united and cooperate with one another, despite the comparative inferiority of Korea's political influence on the global stage."¹⁴⁶ Put differently, the only beneficial function that the Allies would and had to offer was just infrastructural assistance from which the Korean people

¹⁴³ National Reconstruction Council President Yō Un-hyōng's Speech at Hwi-mun Middle School's Courtyard August 16, 1945. *IDFTYSL*, 19. See also Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 34.

¹⁴⁴ "National Reconstruction Council President Yō Un-hyōng's Speech at Hwi-mun Middle School's Courtyard," August 16, 1945. *IDFTYSL*, 19; Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 34.

¹⁴⁵ "National Reconstruction Council President Yō Un-hyōng's Speech at Hwi-mun Middle School's Courtyard," August 16, 1945. *IDFTYSL*, 19; Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 34.

¹⁴⁶ "National Reconstruction Council President Yō Un-hyōng's Speech at Hwi-mun Middle School's Courtyard," August 16, 1945. *IDFTYSL*, 19; Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 34.

would gain autonomy, upon which the Korean people would have sufficient independence to exercise it for their own interests. The kindling of such independence was not only necessary for national sovereignty, but was a pivotal condition for growing the eventual ambition to join the world stage as a proud state committed to shunning the evil of imperialism and enforcing pacifism for the public good of contributing to global security. In short, national independence was a golden ticket to raise Korea's international profile and respectability.

5. Conclusion

For Pak Hŏn-yŏng and his Communist followers, the long-awaited arrival of national liberation on August 15 and the CCP's official founding shortly after was a prime opportunity to resolve the irony of the December Thesis of focusing primarily on the proletariat's overthrow of the bourgeoisie while neglecting the agency of nationalism despite orthodox Communism's support of anti-imperialism. Pak's solution was to definitively unite the south Korean Communist movement and restore Korea's nationalism and full sovereignty by removing pro-Japanese collaborators and realizing true independence of, by, and for the Korean people. The rise of the CCP was an attempt to complete the December Thesis's aspiration to unify the Korean Communist movement after intense factionalism between the old CCP and the KCP and then within the NMP tore the movement apart.

This chapter also showed that the New Middle Party was a desperate but an ephemeral effort to eliminate such factionalism because the Soviets betrayed the NMP in three aspects—their emphasis on class over nation, or the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, a betrayal of this principle by massacring Korean Communists in Alexeyevsk, and finally, a betrayal of camaraderie, since the Soviets left no concrete instructions on how Korean Communists should act when they confront a major economic crisis. Despite the Soviets' emphasis on orthodox Communism, the first betrayal provided no specific guidance on how Koreans ought to define themselves as distinctive classes or on why the overthrow was necessary, whereas

the second betrayal was a physical representation of the first betrayal because it was based on the Soviets' racial fear of Koreans as potential spies for Japan. The third betrayal caused much confusion and a loss of direction for the future of the Korean Communist movement, since the Great Depression had paralyzed the CCP's procurement of finances to sustain itself and when the party finally crumbled under the weight of immense debt, Korean Communists emigrated to Japan, where they hoped to build a new base for the CCP and politically redeem themselves. What they found in Japan however, was a vicious cycle of poverty, debt, and unstable employment—a trap of virtual pauperism. In short, the 1930s marked the Dark Age of Korean Communism.

The new CCP's rise in the Autumn of 1945 and the party's attempt to restore Korean nationalism was an effort to overcome these betrayals and an attempt to end the Dark Age of Korean Communism. The CCP's anti-Japanese nationalism, which featured a strong emphasis on reviving Korea's nationalism and its national culture, had the intent of publicly advertising itself as the only rational and truly Korean party of the Korean people. By rendering nationalism as an ethical rationale for exercising governmentality, or as a value which exclusively must remain within the managerial domain of the state—the pursuit of perfection and intensification of the process it directs by using laws to govern people and things toward realizing specific ends—and as a means to police public morale from without, the party was arguing that its anti-imperialist nationalism was the ultimate spiritual source of legitimacy that resonated directly with the Korean people.¹⁴⁷

Finally, this chapter examined two different notions of "anti-imperialistic nationalism." On

¹⁴⁷ If the core of governmentality rests on maintaining the "structural order of things" for the sake of political efficacy, then by declaring that nationalism be the yardstick for determining political rationality, the party was *compartmentalizing* nationalism into an instrument for governmentality. For Foucault's original idea, see Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in Graham Burchell, Coline Gordon, and Peter Miller eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), especially 87-104. See also Barry Hindess, "Politics as Government: Michel Foucault's Analysis of Political Reason," *Alternatives*, Vol. 30 (2005), 394.

one hand, there was Yŏ Un-hyŏng's emphasis on restoring Korea's historical nationalism aimed at uniting Koreans solely because they comprised an ethnically united community. This notion was Yŏ's main reason for his abandonment of the Provisional Government, an organization which only seemed to care about diplomatic struggle at the expense of armed struggle and seemed to draw its legitimacy from a decadent and corrupt monarchy whose collapse at the hands of the Japanese, in Yŏ's view, marked the death of the Korean state. Yŏ believed that a full restoration of Korean national sovereignty was only possible if the Japanese promised the resuscitation of Koreans' rights to own private property, restoration of control of youth organizations to Korean youths, and Japanese procurement of basic foodstuffs and essential commodities to allow for a Korean to humanely lead his or her daily life. In short, Yŏ believed that a recovery of national sovereignty meant that national liberation underwent a translation from an abstract ideal to a pragmatic program of social engineering aimed at advancing the welfare of the Korean public.

Yet, because the CCP was just beginning to learn how to stand up on its own after a twenty-year slumber, the rise of the NRC was not as important as preparing a definitive answer to whether its institutional revival was sufficient proof of political unity within the Left or a lone edifice standing yet again in the middle of a wild cacophony which twenty years ago, had dug the party's grave. The CCP was not only confronting the challenge of making sure that such an ominous history did not repeat itself but also ensuring that the party could begin writing its brief and tumultuous history as the first and only unitary party in the history of the south Korean Left. The next chapter will provide an answer to how the party earned the right to write that history by considering Pak Hon-yong's intellectual biography and the relationship between Pak's and the Soviets' interpretations of Marxism.

Chapter 2

An Unfathomed Tide of Interminable Pride: A Portrait of a Communist as a Young Man and the August Thesis as a Blueprint for Korean Marxism

"A dark unfathomed tide
Of interminable pride-
A mystery, and a dream,
Should my early life seem;
I say that dream was fraught
With a wild and waking thought
Of beings that have been,
Which my spirit hath not seen,
Had I let them pass me by,
With a dreaming eye!
Let none of earth inherit
That vision of my spirit;
Those thoughts I would control,
As a spell upon his soul:
For that bright hope at last
And that light time have past,
And my worldly rest hath gone
With a sigh as it passed on:
I care not though it perish
With a thought I then did cherish."

-Edgar Allan Poe, "Imitation" (1827)-¹⁴⁸

1. An Intellectual Portrait of Pak Hŏn-yŏng

Pak Hŏn-yŏng's ascendancy to the leadership of the CCP in September 2, 1945 marked an end to two decades of intense factionalism within the Korean Left. However, Pak's ascendancy was not sudden or unexpected, as it was an outcome he had prepared for throughout his early career as a Communist. Pak's early intellectual and political career best explains how his commitment to Communism was informed by an inflexible adherence to both orthodox Communism and by his own mistaken interpretations of the ideology. Contrary to American suspicion that Pak's control of the SKWP was evidence of the Communists "being under complete Russian control," Pak (1900-1955) already had an impressive résumé as a seasoned theorist and a revolutionary.¹⁴⁹ Although Pak only stood barely over 5 feet tall, his aspiration for power compensated for his height. Seizing the leadership of a Communist

¹⁴⁸ Edgar Allan Poe, "Imitation," in Edgar Allan Poe, *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (1827).

¹⁴⁹ "Top Secret Telegram from General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Secretary of State," (undated) Telegram 2-2446, *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 640.

party had always been Pak's ambition, and as he personally believed, his destiny. A precocious polyglot—in addition to English and Japanese, he knew Chinese, Russian, and Esperanto—and an avid reader of Marxist theory who called *Capital* "my Bible," Pak had built an extensive and deep knowledge of Marxism such that he won all the top honors as a student at the University for Toilers of the East. Pak's reputation was such that Stalin personally met and praised him as the "most respectable and reliable comrade to complete Korean national liberation."¹⁵⁰ In short, Pak had cultivated what would later be an obsession with Communism from an early age such that it was already manifest even in the eyes of the leader who controlled the largest Communist empire.

Furthermore, Pak was no stranger to party politics, since he had tasted success in unifying the Left in the 1920s. Pak initially joined the Koryŏ Communist Party (KCP) in 1921 as an editor for the party's unofficial newspaper, *Information*. It was in this capacity that he had his brief but intense education in Marxist theory, teaching himself English and to read Marx in Japanese translation. However, shortly after his registration, he was sentenced to a year of hard labor and imprisonment for "subversive activities," which was a common euphemism for Communist activism, after which he promptly left the KCP.¹⁵¹ Frustrated by its incessant factionalism and by the realization that he would never be able to claim an influential bureaucratic position, the highly ambitious Pak congregated several fervent Leftists including

¹⁵⁰ Pak Tal-hwan, "Pak Hŏn-yŏng e Taehayŏ," (On Pak Hŏn-yŏng) *Inmin (The People)*, March 1946, 68, adapted from *Chosŏn Minchuchui Inmin Konghwakuk (The Democratic People's Republic of Korea)* (Seoul, south Korea: *Chungang Ilpo*, 1992), 366. See also An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 45. Pak also made a lot of friends as a student in the University for Toilers of the East—an anomaly for an extreme introvert. Among those friends was Ho Chi Minh. The two were close friends throughout Pak's lifetime. On a state visit to Hanoi, Pak is reported to have presented Ho with *Mok Min Sim Sŏ (On a Proper Mindset for Good Governance)*, the *magnum opus* of Chŏng Yak-yong (1762-1836), who is considered the greatest political theorist and sociologist of the Chosŏn Dynasty. Ho would treasure the book, signed "friend" in Chinese on the front cover in Pak's own script, his entire life. Ho's copy is preserved at Hanoi's Museum of National History.

¹⁵¹ Sŏ Chung-sŏk, "Wŏnsan Chihat'uchaeng kŭriko Sŏul K'omkŭrup," (The Underground Struggles in Wŏnsan and the Seoul Communist Group) in Sŏ Chung-sŏk, (*Hankuk Hyŏndae Minchok Untong Yŏnku, Vol. 2: 1948-1950: Minchuchui, Minchokchui, kŭriko Pankongchui (A Study of Nationalist Movements in Modern Korean History, Vol. 2: 1948-1950: Democracy, Nationalism, and Anti-Communism)* (Seoul, south Korea: Yŏksa Pip'yŏng, 2008).

Cho Pong-am, who would serve as the first Chairman of the Northern Korean Workers' Party and formed the "Tuesday Faction," named in commemoration of Marx's birthday. This faction was important because it would become the basis from which he would eventually found the Chosŏn Communist Party.¹⁵²

Of course, since the CCP was but one of many Communist factions competing for absolute power, there were several limitations. First, because Communist activities had to be largely secretive, the pool for Communist talent was very small and was reliant on blood ties and private connections. Party meetings had to be held in small groups and brief sessions, limiting chances for bureaucratic expansion or for making extensive connections.¹⁵³ Second, since the CCP attracted mostly people who received very little or no education, there was much hero worship, vague liberalism, and careerism. Indeed, Pak himself was mesmerized by such fantastical notions in the early 1930s, during which he led Communists' underground struggle against the Japanese in South Chŏlla Province.¹⁵⁴ However, because Pak probably did not have sufficient time to deeply ponder about the theoretical underpinnings of Marxist theory, the personality cult would soon become a convenient tool to hide such unpreparedness, rather than function as a tool for Pak to genuinely invest in maximizing power for his own sake.¹⁵⁵

Finally, the second limitation can be conversely interpreted as a small sign of illegitimacy behind the CCP's claim to call itself as a fully Communist organization because while some members did display a considerable theoretical understanding of Marxism, the potential *use* of their promising theoretical acumen was compromised by the more immediately urgent task of rendering Marxism primarily as a tool to combat imperialism

¹⁵² "The Underground Struggles in Wŏnsan and the Seoul Communist Group," Sŏ Chung-sŏk, *A Study of Nationalist Movements in Modern Korean History*, Vol. 2.

¹⁵³ "The Underground Struggles in Wŏnsan and the Seoul Communist Group." Sŏ Chung-sŏk, *A Study of Nationalist Movements in Modern Korean History*, Vol. 2.

¹⁵⁴ "The Underground Struggles in Wŏnsan and the Seoul Communist Group." Sŏ Chung-sŏk, *A Study of Nationalist Movements in Modern Korean History*, Vol. 2.

¹⁵⁵ "The Underground Struggles in Wŏnsan and the Seoul Communist Group." Sŏ Chung-sŏk, *A Study of Nationalist Movements in Modern Korean History*, Vol. 2.

rather than the bourgeoisie. These problems would continue to haunt the Korean Communist movement after Korea's liberation—a ghost from which the SKWP would never be able to fully escape, as it would increasingly rely on Pak's personality cult to administer a highly coercive discipline and fail to completely eradicate factionalism.¹⁵⁶

Yet, Pak's hardship in his early career as a politician only served to strengthen his passion and resolve to unite the Left, which bore fruit a year later. His official founding of the original Chosŏn Communist Party in 1925 was a milestone, for it rapidly eliminated Communist factionalism by absorbing the Shanghai and Ikurtsk clans which had been warring against each other throughout 1919-1920.¹⁵⁷ In essence, the CCP's revival in September 1945 was a welcome sign for Pak because it was an auspicious opportunity to reclaim his former glory as the foremost representative of Korean Communism. Moreover, having already forcedly incorporated many former members of the old factions from the 1920s as well as some of Yŏ Un-hyŏng's closest comrades in August of 1945, Pak had enough confidence in his political power to reject Hodge's effort to convert him into a Rightist.¹⁵⁸

In addition, Pak's support for Communism was by no means reactive or impulsive toward the political ambience of liberation in 1945, but was a pedigree bred throughout his struggle against Japanese authorities. It was through such resistance that he formulated some fundamental thoughts that became the cornerstones of his adherence to Communism. Since the early 1910s, when he was summoned to court for his alleged involvement in the March

¹⁵⁶ Kim Nam-sik, *Namnotang Yŏnku (A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party)* (Seoul, south Korea: Tol-pe-kae Publishing, 1984), 14 and 17.

¹⁵⁷ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Yakryŏk" (Résumé), November 20, 1928, The Russian National Archives for Political and Social History, in *Yichŏng Pak Hŏn-yŏng Chŏnchip (The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng), Vol. 1*. The Shanghai and Ikurtsk clans had themselves combined numerous factions under the Koryŏ Communist Party in 1921, but the old factional belligerence was still very much alive between the Shanghai and Ikurtsk clans such that they incessantly fought amongst themselves until the GCP disintegrated in 1922. For details regarding the factional struggle, see Korean Government General, High Court, Prosecutor's Bureau, *Chosŏn Sasang Untong Chosa Charyo (Korean Thought Movement Investigation Materials), No. 1* (Seoul, south Korea, 1932), 26-27 and Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement, 1918-1948*, 20-52.

¹⁵⁸ Kim Tŭk-hwang, *Hankuk Sasangsa (A History of Korean Thought)* (Seoul, south Korea: Namsantang, 1958), 286-288; Nam Koon-woo (Nam Kŭn-u), *The North Korean Communist Leadership, 1945-1960* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1974), 3; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 83.

First Movement and sentenced to two years in prison, Pak was an unabashed Communist, writing essays which featured some of the key principles which would become the backbone for the SKWP's Communist program, such as the obliteration of pro-Japanese bourgeoisie, restructuring of land reforms to favor the peasantry, and the idea of the Communist party as a vanguard of a purely proletarian revolution. Some of the most exemplary papers which illustrate such thoughts are his early essays which express the blueprint for the eventual organization he would found as the SKWP.

Some works which illustrate this proclivity toward Communism are "Communism," "Our Path: Death or Revolution?" and "In the House of Death." In "Communism," an essay Pak wrote a few years before he founded the Chosŏn Communist Party, he revealed his comprehension of Communism and how it can be realized *vis-a-vis* its relationship with capitalism. Pak argued that the "fundamental premise of all economies is that they all originate from an impulse to build and develop capitalism to create continuous profit and economic growth."¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, "the cusp which facilitates such progress is in changing the modes of production, which becomes the centerpiece of in social development."¹⁶⁰ In other words, because modes of production are in harmony with an economic system by sharing the common goal of social development, Pak was arguing that by virtue of having a healthy relationship between an economic system and modes of production, the rate of production would naturally increase and therefore, the relations between society and modes of production are not only stable but harmonious.

The formation of this healthy relationship, in Pak's view, constituted the "first half of capitalist development."¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, Pak believed that the fundamental problem with

¹⁵⁹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Kongsanchuŭi," (Communism) April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

¹⁶⁰ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism," April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

¹⁶¹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism," April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

capitalism was that it could never keep up with the rapid changes in the mode of production. More specifically, Pak argued that technological advancements would "outpace that of capitalism, which is by nature, stagnant," and eventually, the "eternally accelerating pace of change in the mode of production and a perpetually stagnant capitalism which will not permit technological advancements to supersede its own pace of development would inevitably go on a collision course."¹⁶² In other words, Pak was implying that the early clash between capitalism and Communism arose not from any fault within capitalism itself or any conflict against other economic systems, but from capitalism's own impatience and intolerance with technology's natural inclination to pursue continuous development. Capitalism's jealousy of technology's such independence was the essential root of an internal conflict within capitalism itself—an ironic conflict in which an economic system envies the prime component which accelerates the system's efficiency and adaptability in generating more productive prowess.

What emerged was a state of antimony between capitalism and technology such that one can describe the relationship as "mutually utterly incompatible, as are ash and ice, which can never harmonize or mix all too well."¹⁶³ In other words, Pak believed that Communism was the ultimate ideal which could smother capitalism's impatience with its own inability to control economic inequality resulting from technological advancement. Communism did not have to compete against capitalism but eventually replace it by being compatible with technological development through an emphasis on equal distribution of wealth regardless of how well developed technology would be. By extension, Pak argued that what are normally understood as social revolutions, or more specifically, revolutions which usher a radical abandonment of feudalism in favor of technological and socio-economic progress toward Westernized modernity, were essentially efforts by the state to make additional room to

¹⁶² Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism," April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

¹⁶³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism," April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

expand the capacity and quality of technology to increase the rate of production. However, because the basic conflict between capitalism's urge to harness technology and technology's urge to pursue eternal development still exists, Pak argued that "the second half of capitalism finds itself falling into a pit, which invites social disorder and chaos, which in turn, invites societal commotion and calls for reform."¹⁶⁴ These tumultuous changes accumulate into a revolution. The modes of production evolve to demolish contradictions within capitalism and finally realize the termination of capitalism. In its place, a new economic and political order arises, and that order is called Communism.

In other words, Pak saw the driving force behind the transformation of capitalism to Communism as a clash between capitalism and technology's unlimited desire for improvement and since the two desires are unrelenting in their quest for perfection, the competition itself saturates its own potential and finally forces capitalism to die out before technology does, making way for Communism. Communism was an outgrowth of capitalism to perfect rather than supersede capitalism and therefore, there was no reason to conceive Communism and capitalism as antagonistic rivals. The relationship between Communism and capitalism was closer to that between a successor and a predecessor for which the linkage of a historical legacy—the common denominator—was the permanence of technological development.¹⁶⁵ However, Pak emphasized that there was also the capitalist as a self-interested human being, an identity which had to be taken into account to make sure that the pursuit of profit was a "natural and obvious law in the world."¹⁶⁶ Since the capitalist had no desire to relax the law so long as it continued to produce profits, the proletariat was destined to "lose out against the capitalist" no matter how robust or frequent the proletariat would try

¹⁶⁴ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism." April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

¹⁶⁵ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism." April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

¹⁶⁶ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism." April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

to dismantle the capitalist's supremacy in the market economy.¹⁶⁷ In addition, because all modes of production rested comfortably and exclusively in the hands of the capitalist, there was no way for a "small capitalist to defeat a big capitalist."¹⁶⁸

Due to such concentration of capital to the extent of monopolization, Pak argued that the proletariat naturally relegated to a "non-proprietary class" whose members had to fight, or more specifically, overthrow the bourgeoisie to even hope to clinch some property to call his or her own. The capitalist however, not only uses the proletariat's labor but also the means to harness and abuse that labor through the development of science and technology, which helps "lessen production costs and cheapens the value of labor" eventually forcing the proletarians to "search for their livelihoods on the streets."¹⁶⁹ This phenomenon, Pak suggested, "made acrimony between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats more acute," because while the bourgeoisie controlled the means of production, or the flow of supply, "demand virtually plummets to zero" since the proletariats have no monetary means to purchase any goods," unless "they seized the means of production themselves."¹⁷⁰ In short, the bourgeoisie's use of science and technology to increase profit and rate of production is actually just a means to protect the interest of the bourgeoisie in permanently remaining as a bourgeois against the desperation of the proletariat to claim their own properties for the sake of a more secure livelihood.¹⁷¹

It was within this framework of a scientifically determined bourgeois-proletarian hierarchy that the Communist was "obliged to scientifically criticize capitalism," because that would foster a new step toward the construction of a new society, a phenomenon which Pak referred

¹⁶⁷ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism." April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

¹⁶⁸ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism." April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

¹⁶⁹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism." April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

¹⁷⁰ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism," April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

¹⁷¹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism," April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

to as "an ongoing process of the Communization of capitalism."¹⁷² Pak acknowledged that "Social democracy is a feasible bridge between capitalism and Communism" but since social democracy depended on the assumption that government would be responsible for lessening the burden of economic inequality for the impoverished, whose "number would continuously grow as long as the bourgeoisie dominates the means of production," social democracy would also quickly reach a "saturation point" in which equal distribution of wealth alone will not be an adequate solution for an already capitalist society "wired in the drug of eternal growth."¹⁷³ Pak argued that a "perfect Communist revolution" would arise when the proletarian "courageously participates in politics to demand a full recognition of their rights," and because modern society was a "product of numerous outbreaks of such revolutions," what people called the modernization of society was in effect, "the Communization of society" which given the "objective operative laws of technology and capital," was an "inevitable and naturally historical process."¹⁷⁴

Pak was arguing that Communism was the next natural course of social development because capitalism and Social democracy had both already been thoroughly tested of their fullest potential such that there was nothing further to be demonstrated from these two systems that would amount to anything progressive. In their place, Pak believed that Communism was scientific because it inherited and advanced capitalism by creating a society in which wealth would reach an equilibrium between the capitalist and the proletarian such that rather than replacing capitalism, Communism would mold and reconstruct capitalism to allow the latter to adapt the former's equilibrium, hence the term, "Communization of capitalism." For Pak, this process served as undeniable evidence that Communism and capitalism were not contradictory, but complementary, for the former would perfect the latter

¹⁷² Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism," April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

¹⁷³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism." April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

¹⁷⁴ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism." April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

for the purpose of creating a paradise for the proletariat.

"Communism" reveals the entirety of Pak's understanding of Communism and the role of the proletariat in initiating a revolution to seize the means of production. Given that this was written in the form of an introductory lecture, the essay cannot be used as a definitive piece of evidence to suggest that Pak fully or incompletely understood Communism, because he did acknowledge in the introduction of the lecture that "to discuss all intricate matters regarding the complex and convoluted process by which the capitalist became a bourgeoisie would take thousands of pages to explain."¹⁷⁵ Pak clearly committed himself to promoting what I would call a "technocratic interpretation" in which the primary culprit behind the capitalist's egoistic pursuit of profit is largely assumed to be scientific and technological progress, which is premised as being endless. Still, the essay did not explain why a vanguard party was necessary or why the capitalist could not be reformed to cooperate with the proletariat if there was any possibility to do so.

Most importantly, Pak did not address a major question about consequences, which, if addressed, could destroy his logic altogether: if the proletariat seized the means of production away from the bourgeoisie, what would happen next? Put differently, once the proletariat became a propertied individual, would not such a condition turn him or her ironically into a bourgeois capitalist? Who did the Communist have to defend then? The perpetuity of the bourgeois-proletarian struggle is a contradiction because if the production of means and its ownership determined the identity of the capitalist, then what was the true nature of the proletariat's victory other than turning into a capitalist him or herself? In other words, the lack of an endpoint or a goal in a Communist revolution is the greatest weakness of Communism, for the "Communization of capitalism" would not end the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat but make it more acute because the entire structure of the original conflict

¹⁷⁵ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Communism," April 26, 1926 in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

is already cyclical and interchangeable based on the single and constant variable of the ownership of the mean of production. Technological advancement has no great impact on reducing the importance or permanence of the variable, since more technological progress would only tempt the owner of the means of production to cling onto the means of production more tightly because it becomes much easier to control the proletariat as long as technology continues to develop.

Yet, these criticisms are also incomplete to fully portray Pak's belief in Communism without considering Pak's commitment to anti-imperialism. In "Our Path: Death or Revolution?"(1928), Pak saw no problem in marrying Communism with anti-imperialism because he was always deeply aware that it was his direct experience with the horror and unbearable suffering from Japanese torture which ignited a deep hatred for the Japanese and a desperation to find any ideology which could justify a total expulsion of the Japanese through Korea's own autonomous resolve and actions. For Pak, the pragmatic value of Communism was exclusively its capacity to resist the imperialistic intrusion of Japanese capitalism, which was responsible for destroying the foundations of Korea's traditional agrarian economy by uprooting the peasantry and rendering them into homeless and jobless proletarians. In 1925 alone, nearly 150,000 farmers had their lands illegally confiscated without any clear reason and after three years, the number explosively jumped to 1000,000 farmers, whose lands mostly ended up in the hands of retired Japanese soldiers.¹⁷⁶

Korean farmers were unjustly being cheated of their claim to land ownership by Japan's devious plan to use the farmers' unexpected weakness of being unable to punctually pay rent as a manipulative tool to merely switch the hands of ownership to that of the Japanese through

¹⁷⁶ Pak Hön-yŏng, "Uriükil: Chuküminka, Hyökmyönginka?" (Our Path: Death or Revolution?) *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 24, No. 11 (1928), in *The Complete Works of Pak Hön-yŏng, Vol.1*. MOVVRE was the Russian acronym for The International Committee for the Salvation of Revolutionaries, an organization established in 1921 to monitor and advise Communist revolutionaries in Europe and Asia.

a relentless and unlimited intrusion of Japanese privatization.¹⁷⁷ Pak believed that there were only two solutions to rectify this desperate situation: death or the pursuit of a perpetual revolution. Pak succinctly but forcefully enshrined this point in "Our Path." Pak argued that there were only two kinds of fate awaiting Korean revolutionaries—the pursuit of Communism or death. The urgency in carrying out the revolution was "self-evident" for the Japanese had "pulverized all the peasantry's agricultural lands, mines, industries and fisheries" destroying almost "a fifth of Korea's national wealth."¹⁷⁸ To make things worse, "all of Korea's telecommunications, electricity, and railroads were under Japanese ownership."¹⁷⁹

Finally, a semi-national bank, the Bank of Korea, was practicing a pervasive financial imperialism over Korean finances such that the entire Korean economy was victimized by Japan's "gross puppetry of financial imperialism."¹⁸⁰ In other words, Pak believed that the fundamental character of Japanese imperialism was financial and hence, the *raison d' être* for a Communist struggle against Japanese imperialism was precisely because recovering national sovereignty specifically translated to recovering financial independence and autonomous economic growth by forcing the Japanese to relinquish their ownership of Korean capital through an armed struggle if it was already clear as day that Korean

¹⁷⁷ However, Pak is guilty of exaggerating the plight of the peasants, for the cadastral surveys from 1910-1918 demonstrate that the surveys, while coercive, were not major contributors to the destitution of the peasantry. Japan found the cooperation of the landed bourgeoisie useful and let them preserve their socio-economic privileges, in exchange for the bourgeoisie's collaboration with the colonial administration. Thus, Pak forgot to meticulously investigate the cause behind the effect he had found. It was Japan's desire to maintain Korea's traditional social order, rather than the order itself, which produced the peasants' plight. If Pak's interest was in documenting the poverty of the peasant, it would have been better for Pak to compare the qualitative difference in tenancy rates, which in Korea was only one-third of the entire population, while in Japan, two-thirds. Moreover, Pak did not acknowledge Japan's introduction of new agricultural techniques and machinery, which contributed to the elevation of some, albeit a very small number of peasants, to economic prosperity. See Edwin H. Gragert, *Landownership under Colonial Rule: Korea's Japanese Experience, 1900-1935* (Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994) and Clark N. Sorensen's review of the book in *Korean Studies*, Vol. 20 (1996), 262-265.

¹⁷⁸ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Our Path: Death or Revolution?" *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 24, No. 11 (1928), in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol.1*.

¹⁷⁹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Our Path: Death or Revolution?" *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 24, No. 11 (1928), in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol.1*.

¹⁸⁰ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Our Path: Death or Revolution?" *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 24, No. 11 (1928), in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol.1*.

revolutionaries would have to land in jail regardless of whether they engaged in armed struggles or not.

Yet, it was not only Japanese financial imperialism that was singularly subject to blame; Korean landlords were also equally guilty for engaging in usury and disabling the peasantry's ability to punctually pay rent. The inability to pay rent immediately translated into a "most certain and eternal confiscation of land" leaving almost all peasants financially insecure and "crestfallen about the lack of any security or promise for a stable future."¹⁸¹ The workers also faced a similar or even worse fate, for they were not only "paid abysmally low wages, but subject to harsh and intense labor which "well exceeded eight hours," and averaged around 12 hours at the minimum, making workers feel as though they were expected to "work like horses all day long."¹⁸²

Pak Hŏn-yŏng also criticized the conduct of the Japanese police, accusing the Japanese of "deception and disingenuous conduct" in announcing "Cultural Politics" during the 1920s, only to betray that creed so "swiftly and easily," imprisoning many Communist independence fighters without parole.¹⁸³ Pak argued that it was the Japanese who provided a "blatantly obvious reason" for the Communists to ever continue the struggle for freedom, since the Japanese police relished in their "barbaric exercise of excessive, bestial torture, which maimed and even killed many Communist comrades," and it was because of this "utter lack of any civility" in the Japanese imperial mind that the "determination to wage a continuous revolution to oust and expel the Japanese permanently from Korean soil must persist until

¹⁸¹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Our Path: Death or Revolution?" *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 24, No. 11 (1928), in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol.1.*

¹⁸² Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Our Path: Death or Revolution?" *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 24, No. 11 (1928), in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol.1.*

¹⁸³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Our Path: Death or Revolution?" *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 24, No. 11 (1928), in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol.1.*

Korea emerged victorious with freedom safely and tightly clenched in her hands."¹⁸⁴ The monstrosity behind Japan's ill treatment of Korean workers was dehumanizing not only because of the physical abuse inflicted, but also because it was crudely used as a demonstration of how cunning and untrustworthy the Japanese deliberately advertised themselves to be by rescinding a promise for more benign politics. Along with the lack of decency in humanely treating prisoners, the Japanese had thrown morality down into another deep-layered abyss of forgetfulness by even legitimizing murder without any legal consequences. Human rights had completely, *de jure* and *de facto*, been exterminated under colonialism.

Finally, living conditions in the prisons were "absolutely deplorable" that it was "much preferable to die with dignity and honor by killing one more Japanese soldier than to face one more month of imprisonment."¹⁸⁵ Pak described how "meals were extremely unsanitary and pitiful," consisting merely of a "soup made with mashed peas and served with vegetables which looked as though they came out of a pig sty."¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, the Japanese deliberately provoked their prisoners' anger by only allowing the "Bible, psalms, and small pamphlets justifying imperialism," and by "beating anyone who refused to comply with a guard's orders mercilessly like a beast" or "subjecting dissenters to inhumane amounts of unbearable labor which could easily destroy one's body, health, and soul."¹⁸⁷

However, Pak did not believe that the ferocity of such mistreatment ought to be any reason to discontinue or rescind the Communist struggle for national independence because "the mistreatment has had the unintended but fortunate effect of transfixing many Japanese eyes to

¹⁸⁴ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Chukŭmŭi Chipesŏ," (In the House of Death) *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 17 (1929) in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 1.

¹⁸⁵ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "In the House of Death," *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 17 (1929) in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 1.

¹⁸⁶ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "In the House of Death," *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 17 (1929) in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 1.

¹⁸⁷ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "In the House of Death," *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 17 (1929) in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 1.

the development of the proletarian movement in Japan and Korea," and therefore, the Communists ought to be "encouraged further to stage a more vigorous protest against imperialism to bring justice and happiness to workers and peasants who were suffering more terribly than any Communist in prison."¹⁸⁸ In short, Pak interpreted the Communist resistance against Japanese rule as a measure for restoring parity in terms of exercising vicious and vengefully violent justice against the Japanese, who had performed hideous jesters against the Korean people and even grotesquely escaped charges of murder based on a crude calculus of imperialist supremacy. Furthermore, because Koreans received sub-human treatment both outside and inside Japan's prisons, that fact alone was enough to justify an all-out struggle against the Japanese for the sake of avoiding the filthy and harsh conditions one had to endure in a jail at the heavy cost of sacrificing their physical and spiritual well-being.¹⁸⁹ Against such injustices, Pak was arguing that the Communists' armed struggle against the Japanese was not only pragmatic given the increasingly brutal reality posed by the Japanese police state, but also legitimate because it was an attempt to punish an unethical but "legal behavior with an "illegal" but morally superior conduct of resisting imperialism by igniting the spirit of resistance.

In conjunction with Pak's description of the prisons, Pak was justifying a dual necessity to resisting Japanese rule: a moral necessity of rejecting imperialism as a vile practice of poisoning the human condition, and the physical necessity of a resistance as a means to avoid the most detestable environment of the prison as an unbearable dictatorship of a Foucauldian Panopticon, under which the Japanese sadistically enjoyed punishing and even maiming Korean Communist independence fighters while the latter could do nothing, terrorized and

¹⁸⁸ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "In the House of Death." *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 17 (1929) in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 1.

¹⁸⁹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "In the House of Death." *The Path of MOVVRE*, Vol. 17 (1929) in *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 1.

victimized by the sheer brutality of the Opticon *in extremis*. However, the intensity of control in turn, motivates an even more intense desire to liberate from control, and Pak believed that oppression and the desire for liberation ought to be in an equilibrium at the very least, and with popular interest, if not support, in favor of the desire for liberation coming ironically from the citizens of the imperialist state, Pak thought that there was much hope for liberation because even those citizens started to become convinced somewhat in the banality of imperialism and its provocation of social protests in a colonized nation. Thus, waging a war against Japan's financial imperialism was not a choice but a necessity informed by the extreme cruelty facing the coldness of a prison's iron bars or that of a bullet by a firing squad biting through a revolutionary's neck. Furthermore, because Japan's imperialism aimed to further exacerbate economic inequality, Pak was urging that the political identity of a genuine revolutionary had to be a Communist, for such inequality had to be confronted with an ideology that emphasized a fair distribution of wealth and communal ownership of finance capital to resist the erosion of Korea's financial health initiated and continued by an emphasis on privatization and capitalism. What connected the Communists' fate and their method of struggle was the Manichean construct of imprisonment or death, and imperialistic capitalism or nationalistic Communism. The only choice which would imbue a deep sense of pride in every Korean's heart was the recovery of nationalism while confronting two unfavorable outcomes regardless of which path an independence fighter chose.

2. The August and December Theses and Marxism

By the end of 1945, the south Korean Left underwent a major transaction. In exchange for a newly found stability in the form of an official political party, they still had yet to clearly settle upon a definitive solution to the central problem facing Korea shortly after liberation—the punishment or pardon of pro-Japanese collaborators. Yet, the founding of the CCP coincided with the thorny problem of interpreting the restoration of justice on Korean terms

and figuring out what that outcome would amount to. The rise of the National Restoration Council was, in the context of the dilemma, both a boon and a curse for the CCP. On one hand, it could mean the potential rise of a powerful nationalistic ally to popularize the Leftist vision of national liberation. On the other hand, the NRC symbolized the arrival of a powerful rival within the Leftist camp should the Council be successful in mobilizing the public's support. If the CCP allowed the NRC to realize its demands for redistributive justice and property rights, it would become all too evident that the mantle for populist politics would be securely in the NRC's hands. Thus, the final months of 1945 saw the meeting between a blessing and a curse for the southern Left. Even before they could celebrate the revival of the CCP as the final chapter to intense political factionalism, the rise of the NRC implied that such unity was facing an imminent threat of immediate dissolution and eventually, the regression of the southern Left back to its ominous past of political disharmony.

The arrival of the Allies and the prospect of having a national government, however promising they may have been as signals to establish a long-awaited political stability in Korea, did not enjoy a complete endorsement. There were Leftists who disagreed with what they perceived as a strongly Right-wing interpretation of democracy, and accordingly, tried to project strong disagreement with Yŏ Un-hyŏng by charting their distinctive program of a Communist interpretation of "democracy." In these extreme Leftists' view, Yŏ was not echoing an authentically Korean interpretation of democracy because there was no acknowledgement of lasting economic and political problems which continued, rather than ended, colonialism, such as the dominance of the bourgeoisie and the flamboyant masquerade of pro-Japanese collaborators posing as "Democrats."¹⁹⁰ Such a dishonest pantomime had to end as soon as possible, and to that end, some stalwarts such as Pak Hŏn-yŏng believed that

¹⁹⁰ Kim Nam-sik, *Namnotang Yŏnku (A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party)* (Seoul, south Korea: Tolpekae (Stone Pillow Publishing), 1984), 24.

the only legitimate method to counter the distasteful tyranny of Right-wing hypocritical democracy was to revive the Communist party.

In fact, Pak Hŏn-yŏng already had a clear blueprint to concretely transform these sentiments into a systematic practice of orthodox Communism by establishing a unified party under Communist dominance. The details of the blueprint were most clearly articulate in what is perhaps the most seminal declaration for the establishment of an orthodox Communism—the August Thesis. The August Thesis, consisting of short, uncompromising, declarative sentences, aimed for a total rejuvenation of the Communist movement and insisted that eight principal facts had to either be confronted or accepted as necessary reforms. Fundamentally, the Communist objective of a complete liberation of the masses remained failed for a long time because there was no "concrete program to engineer an autonomous realization of independence."¹⁹¹ What took place instead was a substitutive effort to grant Korea her freedom through the formation of a "clique of progressive, nationalist countries such as the United States, Britain, and China."¹⁹² Most of the revolutionaries, "regardless of their domestic or foreign locations" were too weakly committed to the formation of a united front.¹⁹³ In short, Pak believed that the absence of a systematic program and sufficient determination and will on part of Koreans to clench freedom with their own hands would make Korea's freedom become a debt to foreign nations rather than her own possession.

More specifically, some "counter-revolutionaries" forfeited their allegiance "wholesale, to ideology, nation, and the people," and instead "pursued their own interests scot-free."¹⁹⁴ Such "hypocrites were destroying the sincerity of the Communists in dedicating to national

¹⁹¹ Ironically, although Pak was displaying a thorough commitment to realizing orthodox Communism, his praise of the "progressive countries," especially the United States, would later count against him as evidence of "cooperation with American imperialists" in the north Korean show-trial that led to his execution. On this point, see Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 24.

¹⁹² Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "P'alwŏl Teche," (August Thesis) in Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 10-11.

¹⁹³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "August Thesis," in Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 11.

¹⁹⁴ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "August Thesis," in Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 11.

independence, which already had the egregious precedent of robbing the most orthodox Communists of their populist bases."¹⁹⁵ The only fortunate outcome for the Communists was that the ambience of victory allowed the communist party to hope that it could complete its own revolution. To do so, Pak argued, the Communist Party had to infiltrate into "women's associations and other cultural organizations by upholding the creeds of sexual egalitarianism and women's liberation to subdue them under Communist leadership, and defend the right of the jobless to claim opportunities for employment."¹⁹⁶

Furthermore, a "relentless commitment to a ruthless extermination of Rightists and nationalist compromisers" was necessary and crucial to ensure the realization of a proletarian hegemony.¹⁹⁷ To achieve that end, a "powerful alliance with the proletariat and the peasantry was essential for the complete obliteration of the bourgeoisie from the face of the earth."¹⁹⁸ To illustrate what he meant by political assimilation, Pak encouraged the reorganization of the women's associations into replicas of the CCP itself. At the top of the hierarchy was the General Assembly, followed by the Central Commission, which was in charge of executing decisions handed down from the General Assembly. The Central Commission, for the sake of ostentatiously demonstrating the party's appreciation for diversity and division of labor, was divided into the Physical Education Department, the Press Committee, the Education Department, the Science Department, and finally, the Ministry for the Arts. Below the Central Commission was the Regular Task Force, which was in charge of handling minor or mundane bureaucratic paperwork, and the Secretariat Office, which was in charge of recording the daily activities of the entire bureaucracy.¹⁹⁹ In short, the party was, from its inception, attempting to administratively and bureaucratically become the official headquarters of south

¹⁹⁵ Pak Hön-yǒng, "August Thesis," in Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 11.

¹⁹⁶ Pak Hön-yǒng, "August Thesis," in Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 12.

¹⁹⁷ Pak Hön-yǒng, "August Thesis," in Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 12.

¹⁹⁸ Pak Hön-yǒng, "August Thesis," in Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 13.

¹⁹⁹ Pak Hön-yǒng, "August Thesis," in Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 13.

Korean Communism.

Finally, in addition to an airtight bureaucracy, Pak also believed that a balanced two-pronged tactic to purify the party as a thoroughly Communist organization was pivotal. Pak urged for the adoption of a "two-dimensional strategy," in which "all Rightist opportunists and revisionists" would be expelled as "counter-revolutionaries."²⁰⁰ This, in turn, was the necessary condition to successfully accomplish a "struggle for proletarian hegemony."²⁰¹ A rapid initiation of this particular form of hegemony was necessary because contrary to some "radical progressives who meekly suggested a gradual bourgeois revolution," Pak insisted that the "time was not ripe for it," and a quick programming of a proletarian revolution was required to ensure a "swift transition."²⁰²

This argument is notable for its orthodoxy and extended application with regard to Leninist doctrines. On one hand, it faithfully implements Lenin's unrelenting emphasis on the state as an instrument of oppression of one class by another. More specifically, the emphasis on building a proletarian hegemony as the objective for which the bourgeoisie had to be destroyed echoes Lenin's insistence on the formation of a "repressive working-class government, a product of the producing class against the appropriating class," which had to exclusively be under the proletariat, charged with "leading a whole people to Socialism, organizing and directing a new order, guide and leading the toiling and exploited in the task of building up their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie."²⁰³ In response to the bourgeoisie's inability to comprehend the centrality of force in assuring the structural reorganization of the political hierarchy, Lenin (1917;1987) had emphasized the need for the proletariat to consciously extend and mold the order through an endless struggle

²⁰⁰ Pak Hön-yǒng, "August Thesis," in Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 13.

²⁰¹ Pak Hön-yǒng, "August Thesis," in Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 13.

²⁰² Pak Hön-yǒng, "August Thesis," in Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 13.

²⁰³ Vladimir Ilych Lenin, "The State and Revolution," in Henry M. Christman ed., *Essential Works of Lenin: 'What is to be Done?' and Other Writings* (New York: Dover Classics, 1987), 288.

by declaring civil war against an established government.²⁰⁴ What is called the "state" is but a method by which violence is organized, the condition of having weapons to use or being prepared to use them. This antagonism was inevitable because

"The state has always been a certain apparatus which stood outside society and consisted of a group of people engaged solely, or mainly, in ruling. People are divided into the ruled and into specialists in ruling, those who rise above society and are called rulers, statesmen. This group of people who rule others always possesses certain means of coercion, of physical force. The methods of violence changed, but whenever there was a state there existed in every society a group who ruled, who commanded, who dominated..who possessed an apparatus of physical coercion, an apparatus of violence.."205

The fundamental core of a Leninist conception of the state was the state's maximization of its ability to dominate, and the use of violence was the ultimate source of domination. Alternatively, the possession of the instruments of violence divided the ruled from the ruling, rendering governance into a matter of specialization over the art of dominance and of using violence by controlling a coercive political machine. Victory was secure when one class maintained a permanent monopoly over this core by possessing the state as a central political machine capable of delivering absolute force and means of coercion.²⁰⁶ Pak's "proletarian hegemony" shared Lenin's aspiration for building a Socialist state under proletarian dominance not only as a goal in itself but as a means to permanently sustain that goal to show a resilient opposition to the bourgeoisie. A proletarian-led Socialist state's existence alone was the guarantor of its longevity, and Pak's insistence on hurrying the founding of a political hegemony was in tandem with this thought, for Pak was concerned with quickly finding the right moment to rapidly establish the hegemony, which would then, by virtue of its own existence, would be able to guarantee its own sustainability.

Yet, the August Thesis also remarkably represents an extension of Leninist strategy in formulating a proletarian vanguard, for it translates the necessity of the workers' transformation into proletariats into a physically communal reality. Pak's recognition of the

²⁰⁴ Eckard Bolsinger, *The Autonomy of the Political: Carl Schmitt and Lenin's Political Realism* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 17.

²⁰⁵ Lenin, "The State," in his *Collected Works*, Vol. 29 (Moscow, Russia: Progress Publishers, 1975), 477-478.

²⁰⁶ Bolsinger, *The Autonomy of the Political*, 64.

need to lead the proletarian vanguard can be seen as an attempt to overcome Lenin's criticism that intellectuals were too distant from a genuine Communist movement. Pak's focus on the proletarian vanguard also reflected Lenin's belief that incorporating workers was necessary to make a worker understand that oppression was both ubiquitous and identical with the bourgeoisie's oppression of the laborer and Lenin's dictum that "calls for action could only be made at places of action."²⁰⁷ Pak Hŏn-yŏng's strategy expanded Lenin's argument by actually transplanting members of the oppressed classes directly next to workers, thereby internalizing the Leninist promotion of the workers' comprehension of "oppression."²⁰⁸

Pak was arguing that his method of "transplanting education" would allow for a more *rapid* expansion of the proletarian vanguard. The worker would naturally perform the expected Leninist functions as an agitator and encourage the cultural groups to transform themselves into a unitary and centralized bureaucracy to resemble an extended branch of the party itself to strongly impress the fact that the groups were firmly and undeniably under the party's direct control.²⁰⁹ Once the party gained direct control over the entire bureaucratic apparatus, Pak envisioned a rapid Communist subjugation of all opposition to create an Utopian proletarian monopoly of power, allowing the party to be intact from all possible sources of criticism and thereby maintain a solid exercise of unbridled power. The communitarian character of the party as a pro-proletarian institution was a necessary condition for the totalitarian exercise of unrestrained power.

Put differently, the most important feature of the party's inclusion of the cultural organizations under its wing is that it demonstrates how political assimilation and absorption were Pak's two principal strategies to ensure an efficient rapidity and economy in

²⁰⁷ Lenin, "What is to be Done?" in Christman ed., *Essential Works of Lenin*, 105.

²⁰⁸ Lenin, "What is to be Done?" in Christman ed., *Essential Works of Lenin*, 105-106.

²⁰⁹ Pak Il-wŏn, "Namnotang Pip'an," (A Critique of the SKWP), *ODSKWP, Vol. 2* (Seoul, south Korea: Tol-pe-kae Publishing, 1988), 373.

organizational expansion, which in turn, ensured that the Communists would independently achieve a clear strengthening of their political position. The most important point to note is that assimilation, absorption, and expansion would all occur in a simultaneous and unitary fashion such that unlike the Leninist model, the three stages will not be separated from each other. The failure to autonomously achieve national independence would be a historical mirror warning the need to avoid such a failure using all means necessary. The urgency and absolute importance of this avoidance is such that the August Thesis proposes a radical solution—excluding the bourgeoisie from an organization which desperately needed capital—whose possession essentially defined the condition of "being bourgeois." This alternatively meant that Pak desired the proletariat to exclusively focus on the exclusion of the bourgeoisie to such a degree that the August Thesis clearly entertained no idea of a “centrist” platform.

More specifically, Pak did not wish to include socialists, “social compromisers,” or those who had forfeited or opted out of the class struggle, or the pseudo-Socialism and pseudo-democracy of “social Fascists” who had collaborated with the Japanese and undermined Korean nationalism. This approach exposes a critical paradox in Pak’s outlook of the Korean political landscape because he does not make any attempt to make fine internal distinctions with his categories. For example, within the category of “Socialists,” one could include progressives who wanted to build an autonomous Korean nation-state or include people in the Chang-an faction who literally could not define whether they were more democratic than Communistic or the converse. However, even these elements might not be accurate choices, for if Pak considered Chinese “Socialists” as models to identify who were truly “Korean Communists,” he would have struggled to neatly categorize the “Socialists” into a single camp.²¹⁰ Many in Jiang Jieshi’s camp favored an alliance with Communists for the sake of realizing the nationalist imperative of driving out the Japanese from the Chinese mainland and

²¹⁰ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 24.

Pak himself praises these Socialists for formulating a democratic alliance without bothering to explain how the Chinese Socialists are more worthy of adulation than Koreans who were categorized under the same label.²¹¹ In short, the August Thesis exposed Pak's lack of analytical complexity in choosing his terms because he did not bother to carefully control for differences between domestic and international conditions in justifying why a particular group had to fit into one category while others had to be excluded.²¹²

The August Thesis further highlights the importance of the December Thesis in two important ways. First, the document was structurally very conscious of its predecessor's influence in accepting the need to reach out to the factories and ideologically educate workers to turn them into Communists. In addition, like the December Thesis, the August Thesis critically realized how detrimental Japanese imperialism was on the destruction of the Korean economy, and even went further by demanding a reconstruction of the Communist party to ensure the completion of the December Thesis's mission of liberating the peasantry and the workers. In short, the August Thesis was a highly queer document which embedded Pak's personal ambition to become the leader of a major Communist party in southern Korea, while masquerading as a committed orthodox Communist to please the Soviets.

However, the August Thesis also inherited and expanded the logic of its December counterpart by offering itself as a grand attempt to revise its predecessor's logic by adding flexibility to orthodoxy. Unlike its December counterpart, the August Thesis was more pragmatic, for it understood that infiltrating into other major organizations such as women's associations with sufficient capital could significantly raise prospects for acquiring a steady flow of capital to finance the party's operations. The pragmatism was possible because Pak was essentially rebutting the December Thesis's encouragement of an absolute Manichean

²¹¹ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 24.

²¹² Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 24-25.

opposition to the bourgeoisie because of a commitment to ideological orthodoxy. In Pak's view, although it was understandable that any true Communist would understand why class had to trump over nation, in a severely impoverished country such as Korea, "class" could be interpreted flexibly so long as the strategy of mass indoctrination carried an implicit understanding of Communist superiority over the bourgeoisie by indoctrinating *them* as part of the masses. Since the bourgeoisie would then be liquidated and no longer exist as a separate class, squeezing much needed capital from the bourgeoisie would do no harm to the orthodoxy of Communism and to the CCP's financial health—an example of how adherence to orthodoxy could flexibly be used as a stone to hunt two birds at once.

Nevertheless, the linkage of inheritance between the December and August Theses is no excusable veneer to cover up the latter's blatantly ill comprehension of Korea's political reality at the time of the August Thesis's composition. Fundamentally, the August Thesis has no historically informed and programmatic ideology, which historian Michael Hunt (1990) defines as "a related set of convictions or assumptions that reduces the complexities of a particular slice of reality to easily comprehensible terms and suggests appropriate ways of dealing with that reality."²¹³ The August Thesis contains no identification of a specifically Korean reality, which lends itself to two problems: a lack of comprehension about the Allies' role in bringing about Korea's independence, and ultimately, an absence of a concrete solution based on such a comprehension. Pak made the critical flaw of acknowledging that Koreans did not realize independence for themselves but were dependent on the military prowess of the Allies, and this, by extension, implied that he was praising the Americans, who, in the eyes of many Communists who would later lead north Korea, were anathema for being the epitome of imperialism. More specifically, Pak did not solve the dilemma between the fact that Japan and the United States were both capitalistic countries and that the former was an

²¹³ Michael H. Hunt, "Ideology," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (June, 1990) 108.

imperialist nation while the latter was the former's enemy and an imperialist nation herself since the beginning of the 20th century.

This was because Pak misunderstood what historian Giovanni Arrighi (1978) calls the "geometry of imperialism." Pak did not understand that "imperialism" can assume many different forms when amalgamated with capitalism and nationalism. Although Lenin had defined imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism, it was in effect an attempt to extend the two synonyms to allow for greater generalization without accounting for differences in monopoly capital, imperialism, and finance capital or the commonality that bound these forms of capital with imperialism—the constant tendency for war. Insofar as it is impossible to witness an even development of trusts and industries, rivalries between imperial powers for the pursuit of more capital were destined to arise, which is why Lenin believed that "alliances between imperial powers are inevitably nothing more than a 'truce' in periods between wars."²¹⁴ Furthermore, colonialism was no longer manifesting itself in the traditional form of expanding a nation's territory while filiating nationalism in others.

The result of this expansion—empire—was also not just a hierarchical order focusing on suppressing diverse forms of nationalism at the expense of promoting the grandeur of an imperial nation. Rather, the idea of "empire" faced intense resistance as nationalism aspired to directly challenge imperial nationalism. The only pathway to building a successful empire was to inculcate a strong sense of nationalism within the heartland of imperialism to promote a "nationalist imperialism."²¹⁵ In other words, the 20th century's political landscape presented an entirely different environment in which imperialism had to morph itself into a more intricate system to harness capitalism. Imperialism was not just trying to harness a singular type of capitalism but in effect trying to unilaterally become an umbrella term for a wide array

²¹⁴ Giovanni Arrighi, *The Geometry of Imperialism: The Limits of Hobson's Paradigm* (London, England: Verso, 1978), 37. .

²¹⁵ Arrighi, *The Geometry of Imperialism*, 38-39.

of "capitalisms." Of course, simultaneously, imperialism itself had also undergone a massive transformation since the 19th century, from a geographically oriented "internationalist imperialism" to a more specific and in a sense, regionalized "nationalist imperialism," in which the centrality of an imperialist nation pitted against the nationalisms of conquered regions.²¹⁶

Pak's negligence of a history of wars between imperialist nations would critically render the August Thesis as a portent for his death, because Pak's unintentional and naively positive rhetoric toward the Americans was a failure to comprehend the simultaneous yet mutually reinforcing yet bilaterally distinctive transformations of both imperialism and nationalism. This failure would prove to be a serious offense for the northerners, especially Kim Il-sung, who did not want any challenges to his absolute power. It is unsurprising that the August Thesis would become a main piece of evidence used in Pak's show-trial to conclude his execution by a firing squad. In short, the August Thesis had no systematic ideology because it suffered from a poor understanding of the historical origins of the situation examined in the thesis and because Pak was unable to turn his assertions into truths through a rigorous analysis of imperialism and war, which would have made his political assertions become natural components of his concept of truth.²¹⁷

Yet, from Pak's point of view, as a self-made man who had a direct experience of not only fighting against the Japanese but also as a witness to the sheer prowess of the vicious war machine that had slaughtered many comrades, he was just echoing a sentiment based on direct observation of the fact that indeed, Korean independence could not be and was not a self-procured phenomenon but a gift bestowed by the Allies through the dropping of atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. His main point was that had Koreans built their own

²¹⁶ Arrighi, *The Geometry of Imperialism*, 39.

²¹⁷ Jonathan Culler, "Structure of Ideology and Ideology of Structure," *New Literary History*, Vol. 4, No. 3: Ideology and Literature (Spring, 1973), 471.

capacity to bring an end to the war, there would be no question about whether the Koreans had really achieved an autonomous independence through their own resolve and means. Therefore, in a phenomenological sense, Pak considered himself to be merely reporting facts that no Korean could objectively deny because it was an inevitable reality. Furthermore, that Pak conceived Communism as a path to national liberation was nothing unusual, for it was a classic symptom of Communism meeting colonialism at the crossroads, which produces a desire to combine and integrate orthodox Communist theory with nationalism such that the former adapts to the specific situations to realize and justify the latter as the ultimate goal while attempting to overthrow colonial rule. Having spent much of his adolescent years under Japanese colonial rule, Pak might have been unable to resist the complex mix of joy over liberation and gloom with the fact that Koreans never had a hand or voice in its making.

Whatever Pak's motivation for including the critique about passive liberation may have been, such an unforeseen mistake must not be a license to assume that the document itself was flawless in its historical contextual assessment, for the August Thesis was a failed marriage between Communist theory and Korea's post-war socio-economic reality. In particular, it did not address how most Korean people, regardless of their social status, would have the time and fervor to seriously care about building a party based on Karl Marx's abstruse theories when books were luxurious for the majority of the population? Furthermore, Pak was not consistent in his use of the term "bourgeoisie" while demanding that the Party perform two very contradictory functions. On one hand, if the CCP was to promote the application of "mass" to the bourgeoisie, which class remained as the real enemies of Communism? Once the bourgeoisie became members of the CCP, how was it going to originally conceive of a new ideological objective to justify and prolong the party's existence, and to what purpose? Although forecasting the future is difficult for any political organization, the August Thesis's sole concentration on eliminating opponents for its own sake—an entirely negative

function—left no explanation for the party's positive existence for the realization of a common good. In other words, the party was ironically digging itself into a state of nihilism, for which Pak provided no cure or panacea.²¹⁸

On the other hand, the natural question that emerges from such deficiencies is, how exactly was the CCP supposed to bureaucratically realize "autonomy"? Pak believed that the mobilization of the peasantry and the creation of a grassroots organization in factories were essential, for every local chapter of the CCP, having completed this organizational task, would convene at the center through a national meeting, in which the Central Party Commission and details concerning its bureaucratic organization would be discussed. In other words, Pak was interpreting the fulfillment of workers' complete employment and the punishment of all counter-revolutionaries as the ultimate end to which the centralization of the party's bureaucratic structure had to be the essential means. The emphases on factories and peasant mobilization are important because they signify attempts to legitimize the party as a Communist organization by strictly following Marxist principles. However, Pak failed to specify how he would organize an orthodox Communist party, including questions related to party discipline and the organization of subsidiary institutions. This omission, in turn, meant that Pak did not fully grasp Lenin's emphasis on Democratic Centralism. According to Lenin, Democratic Centralism had four characteristics, all aimed at preventing factionalism:

1. That all directing bodies of the Party, from top to bottom, shall be elected;
2. That Party bodies shall give periodical accounts of their activities to their respective Party organizations;
3. That there shall be strict Party discipline and the subordination of the minority to the majority;
4. That all decisions of higher bodies shall be absolutely binding on lower bodies and on all Party members.²¹⁹

These four policies can only converge toward Democratic Centralism if there are no

²¹⁸ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the SouthKorean Workers' Party*, 25 and Cho Han-sǒng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 73-74.

²¹⁹ Iosif V. Stalin, *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Short Course* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), 198.

factions competing for power. However, because the Korean Communist movement had yet to unify diverse and fiercely competing factions, the four principles of Democratic Centralism were precisely problems which fundamentally prohibited Pak from writing the August Thesis. There was no strict political hierarchy within a fixed central party; consequently, there was no chance for periodic reports of party bodies to reach the center. Since there was no majority which proclaimed allegiance to a leader, there was yet to be a strict subordination of the minority to the majority. Finally, since there was no minority-majority distinction in place, there was no binding power between lower bodies and party members, both of which fundamentally did not yet exist. Without even the four basic elements of Democratic Centralism firmly under control, Pak was hastily trying to place the cart before the horse. In short, the root problem of the August Thesis is that Pak mistakenly identified Korea's revolutionary stage as a "bourgeois Democratic revolution," because his solutions of land reform and nationalization of industries are only possible under socialism, which can only exist before Communism. Thus, in Pak Hŏn-yŏng's theory, Democratic Centralism cannot exist because Korea had yet to be a fully Communist state.²²⁰

Essentially, as Marxist historian Perry Anderson (1974) would argue, Pak forgot that Lenin was part of the Western Marxist tradition, which was a result of a series of failures specific to Europe's political turmoil and was therefore "less Marxist than to the extent that it was Western or European."²²¹ Pak forgot that "Western" cannot be a metonym for "universal," since its regional limitation represents a limitation to establishing the absolute nature of truth. Marxism, like most theories, did not have any innate universality but only an aspiration to achieve that condition because being a "Western" theory *is* a sign of Marxism's parochial world-view. Marxism's limitation as a Western theory is most apparent in the

²²⁰ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 25.

²²¹ Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London, England: Humanities Press, 1976), 94.

position of nationalism within Marx's thought. While Marx held that the proletarians would replace nationalism and the nation-state, Marx saw very few benefits arising from the peasants' participation in that replacement. He held the peasantry with utmost contempt, "incapable of having any revolutionary capacity" and filled with "national and local narrow-mindedness."²²² Simply being a member of the oppressed was not a satisfactory condition to wage a Communist revolution; one had to be a member of the right class to earn the right to do so.

Marxism reflected its heritage as a cultural product of 19th century Europe and was a partially racist, and ironically, an imperialist theory. Marx had a racially motivated Germano-centric view of Europe which became his basis for holding certain ethnicities more capable of realizing a proletarian state, or "revolutionary peoples"—Italians, the Irish, Hungarians, and Poles—and other ethnicities as "wholly reactionary" and composed mostly of peasants who would retard the growth of a powerful proletarian class.²²³ Marx even used his ethnocentrism to justify the American annexation of California, arguing that "energetic Yankees" were more fit to govern the territory than "lazy Mexicans" and that the annexation would be beneficial for the world economy.²²⁴

Marx's racism and ironic support of imperialism raise the critical question of whether Korea in the 1930s, as an Asian and a colonized country, would even be a good candidate for a successful Communist revolution, since as a non-Caucasian people, Marx would surely judge Koreans as incapable of successfully carrying out a societal Communist revolution in the European tradition. Even if Korea already had sufficient industrial growth to justify the

²²² David Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasant: A Study in Social Dogmatism* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and London, England: University of North Carolina Press, 1951), 216. See also Marx-Engels' *Werke*, Vol. 6, 167.

²²³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke*, Vol. 16 (Berlin, Germany: 1960), 156-157 and Neil A. Martin, "Marxism, Nationalism, and Russia," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (April-June, 1968),

²²⁴ Horace B. Davis, "Nations, Colonies, and Social Classes: The Position of Marx and Engels," *Science and Society*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Winter, 1965), 31.

realization of a Communist revolution, it would still have been suspect in Marx's eyes to fully qualify as a "success" because there was already a pro-Caucasian racial hierarchy implicitly hidden beneath the hierarchy measuring the readiness of a country for a Communist revolution purely based on industrial capacity. In short, Marxism was originally a pro-proletarian and anti-peasant theory. It was also fundamentally an Occidentalist and ethnocentric theory which only allowed for a complete implementation of Communism selectively, even in the main region about which the theory was originally concerned, such that Marxism was not meant to be applied to countries such as Korea, where peasants comprised the majority.

While Pak was well aware of the economic inequalities between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry as a cause for discontent, he did not sufficiently consider the fact that Korean industrial capitalism had been hurriedly and forcedly established through imperialism and therefore, the primary and only function of Communism was its emphasis on anti-imperialism, not its emphasis on an anti-capitalist struggle. Hence, if Pak wanted to better approximate the compatibility between Communism and Korea's socio-political reality after liberation, he ought to have focused more on Communism as an anti-feudalistic and anti-imperialist theory.²²⁵ This particular point is important to understanding why Communism could never structurally function very well in Korea, and therefore, to do adequate justice, a theoretical discussion of Marx's thought on wage labor and capital and a comparative discussion of Japan's native development of feudalism and transition to capitalism and Korea's absence of such development are necessary.

In *The German Ideology* (1968), Marx pointed out several sources of antagonism between the peasantry and the European bourgeoisie which facilitated the transition of the Medieval period to the modern era of capitalism. The fundamental principle of Communism is "the

²²⁵ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 25.

abolition of the antagonism between town and country," because the "separation of town and country can also be understood as the separation of capital and landed property," since "the existence and development of capital independent of landed property is the beginning of property having its basis only in labor and exchange."²²⁶ Indeed during the Middle Ages, serfs only could claim their own labor as their property. Furthermore, since the countryside constantly warred against towns, guilds often had their private military forces and craftsmen had their own buildings and organizations through which they would produce and sell their merchandise, often by eliminating competition from serfs, which in turn necessitated the rise of workers' guilds—the first formation of unions. The serfs, by contrast, were newcomers to the cities and were therefore foreign to the established unions and had no power to exercise control over anyone.²²⁷

The unorganized condition of the newcomers starkly contrasted with the highly organized crafts guilds, which gave masters of these guilds an immense amount of power. The masters were free to control the newcomers in the guise of providing directions to the newcomers, which in turn had the effect of the new workers forming clans around their respective masters. However, because commerce and communication were limited between towns, every worker became highly specialized and devoted to developing unique skills which became the basis for defining individual property. The relationship was such that the worker was "absorbed into, and enslaved by his work."²²⁸ In other words, the origins of proletarian sentiment against the bourgeoisie arose from a desire to protect a worker's feeling of control, of absorption into his work against an opposing class whose main objective was to exploit and eventually rob the worker of his main capacity so that he merely became a tool and a commodity for the bourgeoisie in terms of his labor and his exchange value.

²²⁶ Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (Moscow, Russia: Progress Publishing, 1968), chapter 3.

²²⁷ Marx, *The German Ideology*, chapter 3.

²²⁸ Marx, *The German Ideology*, chapter 3.

Conversely, it is precisely the complete erasure of this alienation that justifies the necessity behind the marriage of the particularity of the abolition of the proletariat as a separate class and the universality of the proletariat's eventual goal of realizing an entirely classless society. The negation of private property, which had been the bourgeoisie's engine for systematizing oppression, thereby becomes a principle for society, which is identical with being a principle for the proletariat, rendering the proletariat into the embodiment of this negative definition of "liberation."²²⁹ In Marx's own declarative language, the dissolution of a feudal society is the proletariat's *raison d' être* because

"From the relation of the alienation of labor to private property it also follows that the emancipation of society from private property, from servitude, takes the political form of the emancipation of the workers; not in the sense that only the latter's emancipation is involved, but because this emancipation includes the emancipation of humanity as a whole. For all emancipation includes the emancipation of humanity as a whole. For all human servitude involved in the relation of the worker to production, and all types of servitude are only modifications or consequences of this relation."²³⁰

In other words, the proletariat's status as the vanguard of a Communist revolution is not an artificially attained status stemming from the outbreak of a Communist revolution itself, but the status arises immediately from the proletariat's attempt to liberate him or herself. The proletariat's experience of private liberation becomes communalized as many other proletariats join the cause of replicating and universalizing that experience. This is why Marx believes that human servitude is dependent on the worker's private relation to production, rather than the converse. The final sentence in the passage above reinforces this dependency by explicitly stating that servitude is like the color of a flower—varied but whose variance is somewhat expected from the fundamental fact that no matter what color a flower is, the flower's essence as a flower does not change because it naturally must arise from a seed. This is why, despite being a comprehensive socio-economic system, as Shlomo Avineri (1971) explains, Communism is for Marx not the "starting point, but a product of philosophical

²²⁹ Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London, England: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 58-59.

²³⁰ Marx, *Early Writings*, 132-133; Shlomo Avineri, *The Political and Social Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge University Press, 1971), 59-60.

principles," and it is only the emancipation of the proletariat which can guarantee the emancipation of humanity.²³¹ Hence, the proletariat can become genuinely autonomous because by abolishing the idea of social hierarchy, the proletariat not only liberates him or herself from within the class system. The proletariat also learns to live without it because unlike the bourgeoisie, which "still depended on the existence of their opposite" to define their own existential value, the proletariat can become a member of a "universal class" which requires no oppositional entity to appreciate themselves.²³²

3. Conclusion

This chapter showed that Pak Hon-yong's theoretical rigor behind his interpretation of Communism was the main source of legitimacy behind rise to the leadership of the CCP. Pak Hon-yong's effort to combine Korean nationalism as an anti-imperialistic sentiment with Communism's emphasis on the proletarians' overthrow of the bourgeoisie was borne from his strong belief that anti-imperialist nationalism and a cultivation of anti-bourgeoisie consciousness within the bourgeoisie were compatible. This chapter specifically examined the basis for Pak's belief in the feasibility of demonstrating this compatibility because it was Pak's such belief which provided the institutional and theoretical foundations for the rise of the CCP.

The sources of this belief came from his intellectual and political career as a committed Communist. Yet, as the August Thesis demonstrates, the level of theoretical rigor Pak had developed in his early essays to merge anti-imperialist nationalism with Communism demonstrates a rather obnoxious refusal to yield to any position other than the ones he strongly believed in and also a precarious understanding of Communism, which Pak believed to be a tool in service of nationalism but did not explain why the converse could also be true or false. It is a feature which could positively interpreted as a sign of intense conviction and

²³¹ Avineri, *The Political and Social Thought of Karl Marx*, 60.

²³² Avineri, *The Political and Social Thought of Karl Marx*, 60; Anderson, *Considerations on Marxism*, 195.

will to persuade and penetrate his own beliefs, a will that guided him to overcome the limitations of having the Communist party operate as an underground institution and of forcing party members to sacrifice their potential for theoretical sophistication almost singularly to promoting anti-imperialism.

Pak's uncompromising stance is also simultaneously a negative sign of extreme dogmatism and insufficient comprehension of Communism and illiberal rigidity, which had greatly angered many of his rivals and opponents since Pak's early stint as the leader of the CCP. Pak expanded the party's bureaucracy by creating cultural groups to externally show that the party also valued cultural diversity as democracy did. Moreover, Pak believed that Korea's liberation was a passive one granted largely through the assistance of the Allies, rendering Korea's independence incomplete. Genuine independence for Pak meant mobilizing the peasantry and the proletarians to claim their rights and properties from the bourgeoisie to simultaneously realize class liberation. However, Pak was not meticulous enough to consider how he would arrange an institution to guide and lead class liberation into national liberation.

Furthermore, Pak did not realize that industrialization produced a societal division into class, not the other way around. Hence, he was unable to explain why the proletariat had to be a member of the proletariat and why the proletariat had the duty to overthrow the bourgeoisie other than the "fact" that orthodox Communism demanded it. This problem was rooted in Pak's ignorance of the fact that Marxism was a fundamentally Western, Germano-centric ideology which did not actually support Communist revolutions erupting in largely agrarian countries such as Korea. Finally, the August Thesis' vision of Communism was responding to a very recent history rather than a long tradition of feudalism that one witnessed in Japan or Western Europe. The thesis was not cognizant of the fact that Korea did not have the prerequisite of a genuine and traditional feudal system which could serve as a common object that had long amassed the popular ire of the proletariat to overthrow the bourgeoisie.

The August Thesis was, in a Marxist sense, merely a philosophical *interpretation* of a reality for which the theory generally describing it did not specifically apply to Korea, and therefore missed the point in finding a unique Korean theory or method to *change* a Korean socio-economic reality.²³³

Yet, Pak's ambition to become an undisputed leader of Korean Communism began at the very moment the August Thesis was published such that he would begin to rapidly consolidate the CCP's monopoly over the Communist movement by defeating the Chang-an faction, a pseudo-Communist organization. However, Pak's attempt to rapidly realize the monopoly would hit the massive icebergs of the Moscow Conference and a newspaper article whose misinterpretation of the conference's decision to place Korea under American and Soviet trusteeship would see southern Korea engage in a passionate and increasingly divisive debate about Korea's future. The next chapter will examine how the CCP defeated the Chang-an faction and how the Moscow Conference's decision to place Korea under a trusteeship became a witch of Atlas posing an immense challenge for the CCP to put democracy and anti-imperialism into learned rhyme.

²³³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Theses on Feurbach," in *Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Vol. 1*, 15.

Chapter 3

The CCP's Defeat of the Chang-an Faction, the Debate Over Trusteeship, and the Pains of Putting Democracy and Anti-Imperialism into Learned Rhyme

"Before those cruel twins whom at one birth
Incestuous Change bore to her father Time,
Error and Truth, had hunted from the earth
All those bright natures which adorned its prime,
And left us nothing to believe in, worth
the pains of putting into learned rhyme.."
-Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Witch of Atlas" (1820)-²³⁴

1. The CCP's Defeat of the Chang-an Faction

The simple yet greatest advantage that the August Thesis enjoyed as a central blueprint for the reorganization of the Communist party was its direct and clear articulation of its goals and aspirations than the ones proposed by rivaling factions, especially from the Chang-an faction. The faction was the chief opposition against Pak's attempt to imbue an orthodox Communist culture in the party because it believed that Pak was erroneous in haphazardly worrying about means to promote rapid, even immediate expansion of Communism without preparing the fundamental cornerstones which would initially allow an institutional party to represent Communism. Therefore, the faction argued, a proper bureaucracy and headquarters for planning the execution of Communist operations were first necessary to conceive of a clear direction and possibility for Communism to bloom in Korea. Institutional preparedness, rather than hot-headed revolutionary fervor without deliberation, was the most critical and urgent ingredient to start brewing a soup, instead of haphazardly and rashly preparing a fire of insurgency first under the assumption that a soup would naturally cook itself to give itself a deep flavor.

The Chang-an faction's emphasis on institutional preparedness is most evident in its official manifesto announced on October 6, 1945. The faction accused Pak Hŏn-yŏng of "perverting

²³⁴ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Witch of Atlas," in Zachary Leader and William O'Neill eds., *The Major Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 486.

Communism into a tool to grotesquely expand his own individual influence, which was a clear betrayal of Communism's spirit of communal living."²³⁵ In addition, Pak was "guilty of promoting extremism, of being delusional about international relations, and an absolute loss of any direction with regard to the planning and execution of strategy," and for "adamantly refusing to realize that the Communist movement had reached the bourgeois stage of Trotskyism and therefore required an all-out struggle with a proletarian-bourgeoisie united front."²³⁶ Once the front materialized, it would make way for a National People's Representative Council, which would "incorporate all non-Japanese people from the masses and establish itself as a true mass organization."²³⁷

From such a thoroughly populist base, the Council could mobilize proletarians, the "people's vanguard," and utilize the proletarians' "revolutionary prowess."²³⁸ The Council could also "draw out the masses' autonomous creativity in demolishing hackneyed practices and systems and found new ones."²³⁹ Finally, the Council could unite the Korean people "under the single most notable creed of national independence, educating and training them to form nationalist masses."²⁴⁰ The faction believed that a unitary Communist front was necessary to not only prevent Pak's perversion of Communism as a tool to build a personal dictatorship but also simultaneously elevate Communism into a genuinely populist ideology by encouraging a revival of nationalist consciousness within the Korean public.

²³⁵ "Chang-anp'aui Kongsik Sŏnŏnmun," (Official Manifesto of the Chang-an Faction) reported in *Hyŏkmyŏng Sinmun (The Revolutionary Newspaper)*, October 16, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 5*.

²³⁶ "Official Manifesto of the Chang-an Faction." reported in *Hyŏkmyŏng Sinmun*, October 16, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 5*.

²³⁷ "Official Manifesto of the Chang-an Faction." reported in *Hyŏkmyŏng Sinmun*, October 16, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 5*.

²³⁸ "Official Manifesto of the Chang-an Faction." reported in *Hyŏkmyŏng Sinmun*, October 16, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 5*.

²³⁹ "Official Manifesto of the Chang-an Faction." reported in *Hyŏkmyŏng Sinmun*, October 16, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 5*.

²⁴⁰ "Official Manifesto of the Chang-an Faction." reported in *Hyŏkmyŏng Sinmun*, October 16, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 5*.

However, the big irony was that the magnitude of the faction's institutional preparation belied that of its rhetoric. The faction itself had no plans after the construction of an edifice called a "Communist party"; there was no theoretical structure guiding the faction's rationale for deciding to launch a Communist revolution. Since the faction was so self-conscious of its positional identity as an inferior rival of Pak stemming from the former's lack of familiarity, let alone training in Marxist theory, it was always under a self-built pressure of immediate dissolution because its physical proof of legitimacy was extremely thin such that none of the members were orthodox Marxists. In other words, it was only criticizing as a convict would feign an illness to suspend his execution. It was only opposing Pak for opposition's sake; it had no original system of ideas that could directly address the logical flaws in Pak's thinking. Unlike Pak, who had succeeded in expressing his arguments and ideas with uncompromising language, the Chang-an faction had no concrete program to replace that of Pak. For example, although the Chang-an faction was cognizant of a need to establish a formal party, that realization did not autonomously or self-consciously arise because the faction was genuinely committed to Communism, but because they were fearful of repeating the painful memory of rapid disintegration from the 1920s if they did not have a formal organization. The faction made the grave mistake of revealing this anxiety rather too clearly, thereby presenting the CCP with a strong suggestion that the Chang-an faction itself never took its opposition in a very serious and theoretically astute manner.

The manifesto also had a fundamental problem of logic. Without sufficient theoretical or evidentiary justification, the faction displayed an excessive amount of conviction that an unqualified truth exists, that it found perfect methods to find the truth, and finally, that the faction can abandon these methods once it assumed a position of influence. Consequently, the faction had to reveal itself to have no systematized or scientific thoughts but was surfeit of ignorance about Marxist theory. The faction, unwilling to admit that it could be refuted,

concentrated instead on smearing Pak's public image to discredit his claim to authority based on his supposed mastery of orthodox Communist theory.²⁴¹ The faction particularly focused on what it believed to be Pak's critical mistake of persistently adhering to a permanent peasant struggle when, like the Soviets who had encouraged the Korean Communists a few decades earlier, the faction believed that integration with the bourgeoisie was necessary to expand the Communist vanguard by indoctrinating members of a class which was theoretically the proletarians' eternal enemy. However, even if the faction's ignorance of Trotsky's three critical conditions for a revolution—a revolutionary's political consciousness, discontent of "intermediate layers" of society, and a ruling class which has lost faith in itself, torn by internal factionalism and dependent on hopes for a miracle or miracle workers—is considered, the fundamental problem with the faction's proposal was that it left more ambiguities than clarifications.²⁴²

First, the faction did not explicitly state why it was an orthodox Marxist organization or what it was trying to accomplish because the faction was not clear on whether it was reviving a party that became dysfunctional during the 1920s or whether it was an entirely new party.²⁴³ As Pak and the CCP retorted in a manifesto criticizing "virulent counter-revolutionaries," the Chang-an faction was "irresponsibly allured to the misguided notion" that "any random party could fashion itself as representing Communism without even enjoying a firm solidarity and support with and from the masses, because that was symptomatic of Trotskyism."²⁴⁴ Furthermore, the Chang-an faction was guilty of a "libertine use of the term "national unity," as though the term was a euphemism for including the bourgeoisie and pro-Japanese

²⁴¹ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 199.

²⁴² Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1957), 311.

²⁴³ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 19.

²⁴⁴ Chosŏn Kongsantang (Chosŏn Communist Party), "'Pantongchŏk Pantaep'aüi Ch'ökkyöl e Taehayŏ," (On Eliminating Unorthodox Opposition) November 5, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

collaborators—traitors who must be absolutely excluded and prohibited from joining a Communist party at all costs."²⁴⁵ Pak's criticism of the Chang-an faction was justified because in calling out for immediate violence without any institutional preparedness, the faction was misinterpreting Trotsky's (1961) emphasis on utilizing "Red Terror" as a justification for an indiscriminate use of violence against opponents:

"Intimidation is a powerful weapon of policy, both internationally and internally. War, like revolution, is founded upon intimidation. A victorious war, generally speaking, destroys only an insignificant part of the conquered army, intimidating the remainder and breaking their will. The revolution works in the same way: it kills individuals, and intimidates thousands. In this sense, the Red Terror is not distinguishable from the armed insurrection, the direct continuation of which it represents."²⁴⁶

Trotsky assumed that there existed a continuous logical thread connecting war, revolution, and terrorism. If a revolution is a kind of war, then it will share the same aim as a war: breaking the enemy's resistance through an extensive employment of violence. The intensity of resistance and of suppressive violence are proportional; increasing intensity of the former calls for the increase in that of the latter. However, what Trotsky failed to account for is the fact that the objects to which war, revolution, and terrorism wage violence against are undeniably different. As philosopher Igor Primoratz (2007) points out, terrorism is dangerous because it entertains no such calculus in its execution. During a war, soldiers may kill a certain number of enemies using coercion and intimidation and thereby spare the lives of the remaining enemies by only instilling fear in their hearts to claim a psychological-political victory.

By contrast, terrorism is illegitimate because it indiscriminately targets innocent citizens simply because they are members of an enemy state, regardless of whether they harbor an intent to actually help the enemy or remain indifferent or even hostile to their own country.²⁴⁷

Put differently, terrorism is more nihilistic than a war or revolution and assigns no purpose or

²⁴⁵ Chosŏn Communist Party, "On Eliminating Unorthodox Opposition," November 5, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

²⁴⁶ Leon Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 58.

²⁴⁷ Igor Primoratz, "The Morality of Terrorism" in David Kinsella and Craig L. Carr eds., *The Morality of War: A Reader* (Boulder, Colorado, and London, England: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), 172.

a sense of restriction to violence and lacks moral justification. Even if terrorism endorses the chaotic use of violence as is common during a war, that is no excuse to claim that people, as rational beings, can be libertine in their disregard for morality altogether. The human capacity to think morally must not be detached from the ability to act morally no matter how dire and dangerous a situation seemingly requiring terrorism might be. In other words, one is obliged to think not only of consequences behind conducting terrorism, but also its causes and means of implementation.²⁴⁸ In short, the Chang-an faction was a blasphemous organization because it not only upheld a theory of violence from one of Stalin's prime opponents but also because it grossly misinterpreted its central theorist by ignoring the importance of morality and a moral calculus in discerning the necessity or superfluity of violence.

In addition to an uncritical acceptance of Trotsky's dismissal of morality in distinguishing the individual natures of the objects toward which war, revolution, and terrorism are respectively waged, the CCP criticized that the Chang-an faction did not understand the "dangerous consequences" of including the bourgeoisie within the Communist ranks.²⁴⁹ To secure such an outcome, Trotsky had emphasized the need for a majority to arise from the vote of the peasantry. The peasantry's vote was necessary because Trotsky had argued that a Communist revolution will only then have a unitary structure, initially beginning as anti-capitalist and then finishing with a pro-Socialist conclusion, resulting first in a simultaneous attack on the bourgeoisie and foreign imperialism. Given the synonymous linkage between the two, Trotsky essentially believed that a local bourgeoisie would have no role to play in an anti-imperialist struggle unless there was approval from the peasantry about the bourgeoisie's

²⁴⁸ Primoratz, "The Morality of Terrorism" in Kinsella and Carr eds., *The Morality of War*, 173.

²⁴⁹ Chosŏn Communist Party, "On Eliminating Unorthodox Opposition," November 5, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

inclusion in the struggle.²⁵⁰ Moreover, Trotsky believed that a proletarian dictatorship had to primarily represent the interests of the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, and the intelligentsia, but only *after* these groups congregated in a people's representative assembly summoned by a proletarian leadership. In short, the confirmation of proletarian supremacy was a necessary condition for including the bourgeoisie in a Communist bureaucracy.

Fundamentally, the bourgeoisie was only eager to infiltrate into the party's ranks to weaken proletarian solidarity and given such an insincere and pretentious motive, the identity of petty bourgeoisie was "increasingly suspect" that the party could see no *positive* impact but the petty bourgeoisie's "pollution of the proletarians' moral rectitude and make the proletarians become highly addicted to the introduction of nefarious elements."²⁵¹ Once the bourgeoisie completed their infiltration, they would "disguise the cause of national unity into an excuse to dominate the proletarians and eventually to usurp the leadership of the people's republic."²⁵² The party concluded that these three criticisms "represented the essence of Trotskyism" and vowed to "excommunicate all undesirables for the sanity of the people's republic."²⁵³ In short, the CCP criticized that the Chang-an faction lacked a clear yardstick to determine who truly was a proletariat and how the faction, without any theoretical sophistication, would identify and punish possible infiltrators from the bourgeoisie posing as pseudo-proletariats.

The Chang-an faction was unclear about how its proposal for including the bourgeoisie

²⁵⁰ For this point, see Leon Trotsky, "The Second Chinese Revolution: 1925-1927," and "Open Letter to the Workers of India" (1939) in Isaac Deutscher ed., *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology* (New York: Dell, 1964), 244-245 and 248. See also Albert Szymanski, *The Logic of Imperialism* (New York: Praeger, 1981), 56-57.

²⁵¹ Chosŏn Communist Party, "On Eliminating Unorthodox Opposition," November 5, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 2*.

²⁵² Chosŏn Communist Party, "On Eliminating Unorthodox Opposition," November 5, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 2*.

²⁵³ Chosŏn Communist Party, "On Eliminating Unorthodox Opposition," November 5, 1945. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 2*.

would allow the faction to maintain its purity as a Communist party.²⁵⁴ More specifically, since the roles of newly admitted members were not explicitly expressed, the question of just how a bourgeois citizen would willingly become a representative of the masses was left unanswered. Consequently, just how new bourgeois members would guide the masses to realizing their "autonomous creativity," especially if the so-called hackneyed institutions and the pardoning of pro-Japanese collaborators were prohibiting the party from promoting such creativity. This, in turn, left open the question of just how everyone—Rightists and Leftists—would see each other clearly eye to eye and overcome their ideological differences merely because they were united in waning national independence. Even if that could be possible, the faction also did not clearly express whether such a change would help maintain an unwavering commitment to Communism. More specifically, there were no promising measures to ensure that upon accepting bourgeois elements, the faction could sufficiently maintain its Communist character and never let the bourgeoisie dominate the original Communist Party members.

In short, the Chang-an faction did not understand that an inclusion of the bourgeoisie in an anti-Japanese struggle was actually an anti-Trotskyist move and was based on a fundamentally superficial understanding of Trotskyism. Any attempt to include the bourgeoisie under proletarian leadership would not preclude the formation of the dictatorship, as the Chang-an faction desired, but *after* a proletarian dictatorship is securely in place. The dictatorship had popular legitimacy not because it allowed for a liberal inclusion of all bourgeois groups but because the dictatorship had, as its basis for popular legitimacy, a strong vote of confidence from the peasantry who would become the metonym for "the people." The inclusion of the bourgeoisie was not a natural outcome from the formation of a proletarian

²⁵⁴ "Chang-an-p'a e kwanhan Pukwi Oto Tang Taehoeüi Kyöŭlchöng," (Decision of the Congress of the Parties from the Northern Five Provinces on the Chang-an Faction) *Haepang Ilpo*, November 5, 1945. See also Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 159-160.

dictatorship, but had to be subject to the peasantry's approval as a necessary condition.²⁵⁵

The critique on the Chang-an faction's attempt to rashly include the petty bourgeoisie in a Communist party demonstrates how orthodox Pak was trying to be by aligning his strategy as closely as possible to Leninism, for Lenin himself had voiced a similar concern about terrorists "bowing to the spontaneous passions of the intellectuals."²⁵⁶ Lenin had worried that it would be "very difficult for anyone who lost their belief in linking the labor movement with the revolutionary movement to find some other outlet for their indignation other than terror."²⁵⁷ A determined conviction about the absolute correctness of orthodox Communism was an end, never a means to become a slave to emotions.

Furthermore, Terrorists were liable to be distracted by a misplaced sense of elitism which could critically detract them from functioning as steadfast Communists whose popular legitimacy ultimately derived from mass support.²⁵⁸ The prevention of such distraction was a primary cause for Lenin's emphasis on maintaining a concentrated dictatorship of the proletariat—the ultimate goal about whose consciousness distinguished a real dedicated Marxist and a petty bourgeoisie who was only interested in infiltrating the proletarian ranks than in actually becoming a theoretically astute Marxist.²⁵⁹ Marx (1852) had warned about this perversion:

"..Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among small land-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class. They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interests in their own name, whether through a parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented."²⁶⁰

Peasants do not naturally or autonomously form a class unless there was a compellingly strong common interest which instigates the formation of a collective struggle. The problem

²⁵⁵ Larsson, *Theories of Revolution*, 297.

²⁵⁶ Lenin, "What is to be Done?" in Christman ed., *Essential Works of Lenin*, 110.

²⁵⁷ Lenin, "What is to be Done?" in Christman ed., *Essential Works of Lenin*, 110.

²⁵⁸ Lenin, "What is to be Done?" in Christman ed., *Essential Works of Lenin*, 111.

²⁵⁹ Lenin, "The State and Revolution" in Christman ed., *Essential Works of Lenin*, 294.

²⁶⁰ *The Eighteenth Century Bruimaire of Louis Bonaparte* in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. II, 187.

was that while they might have had sufficient motivation to become an independent class, they lacked the ability to independently decide whether or not to represent themselves as a class, much less if they should align with members of an opposing class. The Chang-an faction, without explaining the causes for which the peasantry ought to unite with the bourgeoisie, only concentrated on the amalgamative political power the alliance would exercise. The faction did not understand that the peasantry still could make the decision to join the bourgeoisie based on historical circumstances and the issue of representation had to win support from the peasantry.²⁶¹ Even if the Chang-an faction was right about the necessity of the alliance, it still erred in assuming that the peasantry was unable to decide their own fate by autonomously choosing the degree of cooperative association with the bourgeoisie. The peasant-bourgeois alliance was a circumstantially selective political tactic meant to primarily benefit the peasantry rather than an eternal state of unconditional or subservient bond, which would only alienate the peasantry because it would be an apologetic confirmation of the bourgeoisie's superiority.

In general, an anxiety-ridden Chang-an faction had launched a colorless criticism of the CCP, focusing on the latter's "betrayal" of the 1920s' mutually respected competition. The faction charged that Pak was trying to be an autocrat who had no regard for egalitarianism, a charge through which the faction wished to gain its own legitimacy.²⁶² However, the problem was that the criticism began and ended just there without specifying the deficiencies within the CCP that rendered it illegitimate; there was no further attempt to address what changes or structural implements had to be taken to make sure that an orthodox Communist party came into being.²⁶³ Neither was there anyone in the faction to replace Pak because it did not even have a formal leader. Most problematically, the faction was an outcast because it did not have

²⁶¹ Katz, "Marx on the Peasantry," 63-64.

²⁶² Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 159.

²⁶³ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 6.

any strong ties with Communists who had fought in Manchuria and operated in Japan during the 1930s, because from the inception of colonial rule, the faction hid underground, never to resurface according to its own will.²⁶⁴ Finally, the faction, despite claiming that the Korean Communist movement had reached the Trotskyist stage, was actually wrong in recommending an all-out struggle or terrorism even before the faction had an officially recognized leader, because Trotsky never espoused or supported such a tactic. In fact, he sternly warned *against* using terrorism or haphazard and non-strategic violence:

"Individual terror is inadmissible, precisely because it belittles the role of the masses in their own consciousness, reconciles them to their powerlessness, and turns their eyes and hopes toward a great avenger and liberator who some day will come and accomplish his mission..the more 'effective' the terrorist acts, the greater their impact, the more the attention of the masses is focused on them—the more they reduce the interest of the masses in self-organization and self-education..individual revenge does not satisfy us[Communists]. The account we have to settle with the Capitalist system is too great to be presented to some functionary called a minister. To learn to see all crimes against humanity, all the indignities to which the human body and spirit are subjected, as the twisted outgrowths and expressions of the existing social system, in order to direct all our energies into a collective struggle against this system—that is the direction in which the burning desire for revenge can find its highest moral satisfaction."²⁶⁵

Terrorism is alien to Marxism because it is a distraction for the masses initially assembled to realize Communism according to orthodox Marxism. Furthermore, there is incongruence between the means employed and the objective which it seeks to eradicate, for violence against individuals functioning within capitalism is not synonymous with capitalism as a system filled with exploitive powers, and it is the system of capitalists as a distinct class which oppresses the worker, not the power of an individual capitalist alone. Abstinence from terrorism is necessary because only then do the masses clearly learn that they must concentrate their energies to overthrow the capitalist system in its entirety and acquire genuine satisfaction from performing the correct form of revenge. In essence, the faction itself was guilty in accusing Pak of engaging in unorthodox behavior because it also did not have the time or philosophical depth to care about what it was waging violence against at all, a case

²⁶⁴ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 6.

²⁶⁵ Leon Trotsky, *Marxism and Terrorism*, 2nd Edition (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1995), 8 and 10-11.

of shouting at the mirror for one's own unsatisfying complexion.²⁶⁶ In short, the Chang-an faction was rash in deciding to employ violence because that decision neglected the importance of publicizing Communism to the masses first before launching any concrete plans to overthrow the bourgeoisie. Instead, by focusing excessively on violence, the faction was ironically operating on a complete misunderstanding of one of the fundamental prohibitions which the faction's prime theorist and leader had warned.

In other words, the CCP's critique of the Chang-an faction was aimed at redressing the faction as a lackey of Trotskyism, as a losing faction which supported an ideology which Stalin obliterated. Furthermore, by characterizing the Chang-an faction's insistence on original institutional preparedness as impulsive and rash in failing to account for possibilities of bourgeois subversion and develop the faction's own role in preventing such subversion, the party was also echoing Lenin's concern about underestimating the revolutionary potential of the masses since it was the masses that would allow the Chang-an faction to realize that prevention. The party was criticizing that since the Chang-an faction was not eagerly committed to maintaining such prevention because it was too engrossed with class struggle and did not have any conception of a proletarian dictatorship within its perceptive horizon, the party was effectively dismissing the Chang-an faction's legitimacy as a true Marxist organization.

The CCP was suggesting three contradictory messages. First, by vowing to exclude the bourgeoisie under the excuse that some might be pro-Japanese collaborators and would potentially attempt an illegitimate usurpation of power to disrupt order within the party, the CCP was displaying its committed adherence to Pak Hŏn-yŏng's August Thesis and rejecting the Soviets' December Thesis. Yet, through this adherence, the CCP was also contradictorily trying to argue that the Chang-an faction was an illegitimate and unorthodox faction because

²⁶⁶ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 7.

it did not heed closely to Lenin's warnings about hastily resorting to terror and including undesirable elements. Finally, the CCP was representing itself as the sole legitimate representative of Communism because it ironically respected Stalin and was determined to follow his line of thought and directions, unlike the more distastefully un-Leninist Trotskyism upheld by an individual who was deemed as an enemy of the Soviet Union and eventually assassinated.²⁶⁷

The Chang-an faction's disregard for organizing the masses while maintaining its claim as a Communist party was blaspheme to Pak's clan because Trotskyism assumed that Fascism arose from a structural crisis in capitalism. Indeed, Trotsky argued that the rise of Fascism meant that "workers' organizations are annihilated, that the proletariat is reduced to an amorphous state, and that a system of administration is created which penetrates deeply into the masses and which serves to frustrate the consolidation of the proletariat as an independent class."²⁶⁸ In other words, Trotsky believed that Fascism's chief interest lay in destroying the systematically fundamental roots of the worker as the prime engine of capitalism by liquidating the individual agency of the proletariat and collectively rob workers of their political independence.

However, Trotsky's critique of Fascism's objective precisely explains why the CCP criticized the Chang-an faction's reluctance to reach out to the masses. If Fascism's problem was that it liquidated the proletarian's individuality, how was Communism any different in that regard, if there was no serious attempt to organize the proletarians despite the fact that Communism also had to rely on the proletarians as the basis for mass support? Furthermore, the very possibility of insinuating that the two systems could be similar was offensive for the CCP because Communism was supposed to be superior to Fascism by ensuring the latter's

²⁶⁷ For a brief biography of Leon Trotsky, see Max Eastman, "The Character and Fate of Leon Trotsky," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (January, 1941), 332-342.

²⁶⁸ Leon Trotsky, *Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 2016), 9-10.

destruction. Hence, from the CCP's perspective, the Chang-an faction was committing a blasphemous misinterpretation of Communism's relationship to Fascism as one of synonymous compatibility instead of antonymic animosity.

In addition, the Chang-an faction's inclusion of petty bourgeois elements was a classic reflection of Trotskyism because Trotsky believed that the petty bourgeoisie could be reformed to "find a leader in the proletariat."²⁶⁹ The faction's policy of inclusion was actually direct evidence of how little they really understood about Trotsky because his belief in the reformation of the petty bourgeoisie was a direct contradiction of his call for a steadfast and uncompromising "true revolutionary Communist" who "sets himself up in opposition, in the face of the masses, to all the half-hearted and indecisive ideologues, advocates and apologists of passivity, strengthening their positions first of all spiritually, and then in the sphere of organization—open, half-open, and purely devoted to breeding conspiracies."²⁷⁰ According to Trotsky, although the petty bourgeoisie initially believes that Fascism is the force to defeat big capital and establish more justice, they ultimately do not trust the working class because the workers' parties resemble parliamentary machines. Eventually, the petty bourgeoisie suffers from a lack of clear political organization and are economically dependent on the bourgeoisie, forcing the petty bourgeoisie to ally with the bourgeoisie rather than the workers.²⁷¹ Hence, if the Chang-an faction was sincerely Trotskyist, then it would be hard to garner sufficient members from the petty bourgeoisie; the faction ought to have actually repulsed all bourgeois attempts to win membership into their faction, for granting membership to sworn class enemies would be akin to ideological contamination.²⁷²,

Moreover, confronted with a mounting proletarian pressure for reforms, Trotsky believed

²⁶⁹ Trotsky, *Fascism*, 10.

²⁷⁰ Trotsky, *Fascism*, 34.

²⁷¹ Trotsky, *Fascism*, 35-36.

²⁷² Leon Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism* (London, England, and New York: Verso, 2007), 177.

that the bourgeoisie would rely on a military-police dictatorship and when capitalism was in decline, the bourgeoisie would mobilize the petty bourgeoisie to subject Marxism under intense surveillance, but not because the bourgeoisie wanted complete Fascism. Instead, the bourgeoisie wanted to manipulate the petty bourgeoisie's incense with exploitation toward the proletarians.²⁷³ Therefore, Trotsky believed that the petty bourgeoisie needed a leader and that they could find one in the proletariat as a good alternative to the bourgeoisie. However, the fundamental flaw with Trotsky's belief in the proletarians' leadership over the petty bourgeoisie was that he offered no concrete program with which the proletarian could concretely convince the petty bourgeoisie to follow his lead. In addition, while it is plausible that the petty bourgeoisie might require proletarian leadership because the former lacked any leader, Trotsky did not bother to explain what qualities of the proletariat allowed the class to assume the leadership. Finally, Trotsky did not explain the form of leadership—would it be a single proletarian group leading the petty bourgeoisie *en masse*, or would it feature a proletarian personality cult under one individual to introduce more coercion? Without a clear clarification of the identity of the leader or an institutional leadership, the proletarians would never be able to have solid confidence in pursuing their aims, which could translate into nihilism and dissolve the solidarity of a Communist movement.

The Chang-an faction's most important error was that the Trotskyian analysis simply did not apply to Korea's political situation because the struggle against the Rightists was not about initiating a crisis of capitalism, but about punishing pro-Japanese collaborators who disguised themselves into protectors of democracy. Furthermore, contrary to Trotsky's theory, the Rhee Administration was not employing a military-police dictatorship for the sake of preserving "national security" because capitalism was in decline, but because the Rhee Administration

²⁷³ Robert S. Wistrich, "Leon Trotsky's Theory of Fascism," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 11, No. 4 Special Issue: Theories of Fascism (October, 1976), 170-171.

feared that its anti-Communist democracy would crumble without a draconian exercise of power to protect South Korea against Communism. The Chang-an faction had tied the cart to the wrong horse and was encouraging the horse to start pulling it without checking the cart's content.

Unsurprisingly, the Chang-an faction quickly experienced self-disintegration as some members aligned themselves with Rightist parties such as the DPK and declared "full support for the Shanghai Provisional Government's political and diplomatic activities and wish for a swift facilitation of the Provisional Government's return to Korea."²⁷⁴ Other members found themselves absorbed within the CCP's ranks by early September, but continued to express anti-Pak sentiments, which would continue until the CCP's downfall in late 1948 and disrupt genuine unity within the Democratic Nationalist Front.²⁷⁵ In short, the CCP had succeeded in absorbing a main rival and set its first major step toward the party's organizational expansion, which would be the basis for the CCP's evolution into the leader of the southern Left. On the other hand, the persistence of anti-Pak sentiments was a foreshadowing of Pak's myopic insistence on the exceptionalism of the CCP, which would lead to the formation of the Pak personality cult.

The Chang-an faction's real weakness was the faction's delusional vision that believing in Communism was merely an ornamental attitude, not a commitment that arose from any attempt to seriously understand what or why Communism was worth pursuing for, either for its idealism, or its theoretically attractive elements. Although the faction tried to tarnish the CCP's reputation by accusing it of rashness and unpreparedness in waging a genuine Communist revolution, the CCP was able to overcome that challenge by criticizing the

²⁷⁴ "Chang-an paüi tangwontüli Hanmintang küriko Kukmintangkwa Yönhaphata," (Chang-an Faction's Members Ally with Democratic Party of Korea and National Citizens' Party) *Chayu Sinmun*, October 27, 1945. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 1.

²⁷⁵ North and South Kyöngsang Provinces and Pusan would remain formidable strongholds for anti-Pak factions until 1948. On this point see Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 160-161, and Cho Han-söng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 69.

faction's ignorance of Trotsky's defeat at the hands of Stalin, which delegitimized Trotsky's call for the use of terrorism and his dismissal of moral agency. Most crucially, the faction reflected the very criticism it launched against the CCP; it had no concrete answer to the CCP's charge that the faction had no institutional foundation for a real Communist party itself, thereby rendering all of the faction's critique into one directed toward a chimera rather than a concrete form of Communism.

The great irony behind the Chang-an faction's fall was that the CCP would soon be put to an ultimate test against the American military government to prove that it did not become contagious to the Chang-an faction's weaknesses itself. As the CCP struggled harder to discredit the American military government, the more deeply embroiled the party became in an ideological contest with the Americans and a mysterious ideology which sought to reject the Manicheanism of the Cold War altogether. The commencement of a very important yet ultimately unsuccessful negotiation between the Americans and the Soviets and the initiation of an ideological maelstrom that would force the Korean peninsula to experience pains to put democracy and anti-imperialism into a learned rhyme will be the subject of the next section.

2. The Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference, and the Polarization of Southern Korean Politics

The most critical flaw in the August Thesis's rhetoric was its untimely invocation of Marxist concepts, making it difficult for most Koreans to ascertain the tract's accuracy of its claims. Emerging destitute and with a public severely divided over the right method of unification after more than three decades of harsh and uncompromising Japanese colonialism, Koreans simply had no time to contemplate on a highly theoretical project such as building orthodox Communism. Unlike Pak, for most Koreans who had immense difficulty in finding occupational stability during the Great Depression, comprehending Marx's writings to the point of being immersed in it day and night was a luxury no one ardently wanted or could

afford to enjoy. Since there was no single example of any Leftist successfully uniting a party under an individual's leadership, the idea of building an orthodox party was largely foreign to many Leftists who believed in socialism or Communism but had only used these ideologies to oppose imperialism rather than to seriously study Communism in its own terms. Such a functionalist perspective, while popular among the Left, offered almost no clues about how party politics worked or why it had to begin with the construction of a party. For ordinary Koreans who were unaffiliated or disinterested about the CCP and were more concerned about eking out a living each day, such matters were not only abstruse but irrelevant due to the rhetoric's lack of public appeal.²⁷⁶

In addition, Pak's promotion of his unforgiving and ruthless Manichean outlook of "Communism my way or the highway" attitude was sure to alienate moderate Leftists or those who were only beginning to be drawn to Left-wing ideologies because they had heard a thing or two about Communism's promise of egalitarianism. What "egalitarianism" amounted to, however, was ambiguous for most of the newly joining and inexperienced members, and was something only Pak could know with certainty using abstruse Marxist rhetoric.²⁷⁷ Furthermore, Pak's Manicheanism would surely destroy his own goal of uniting all of the Left, because the thesis mentioned nothing about how unity would be achieved, much less about why or whether unity was even a concrete goal for Pak at all. In other words, while there were concrete rules about how a Communist party would be run, the thesis lacked principled methodologies to ensure that the Communist party would be a centerpiece for political unity among the Left. This lack of direction provided on one hand, Pak's private liberty to lead the party in his own design, but on the other hand, created a vacuum in which the end to which that liberty was to be exercised remained opaque or even absent.

²⁷⁶ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 2, 188.

²⁷⁷ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 2, 188.

Yet, the August Thesis was right about one thing: the need to define "democracy" in clear terms so that there was no confusion or error of accepting the ironic reality in which a traitorous group of Koreans were ruling in the name of "democracy" while very few in the Korean public ever recognized them as legitimate. That irony suggested that Korea had to first seek experience and expertise from countries properly practicing institutional democracy. Passion for independence had to be tamed by the rationality of defining and practicing good governance. What this "taming" really meant was that Koreans had to temporarily depend on the nations who had successfully defeated Japanese Fascism—China, Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States—to "restore the dignity of a fully independent people through the installation of Democratic governance."²⁷⁸ Furthermore, because Japanese imperialism unfortunately bred "opportunists" and "completely destroyed the foundations" of the Korean economy, it was imperative that the trusteeship be approved "with utmost haste."²⁷⁹

For Pak and his followers, it was the rationalist-instrumentalist pragmatic value of the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers'—a conference which saw American, British and Soviet Foreign Ministers gather together in Moscow to discuss the fates of China and Japan's former colonies after the end of World War II—promise of full liberation both externally from Japanese rule and internally from the historical memory of the externality's unwanted and detestable vestiges of having pro-Japanese politicians waxing Democratic to hide or abnegate their hideous crime of selling Koreans to the Japanese war machine during the 1930s and 1940s. "Democracy" was insufficient if it only guaranteed pluralist suffrage; it had to have the moral substance of upholding nationalist historicism, or a respect for a nation's specific and necessary condition to make the nation truly democratic—a permanent freedom from

²⁷⁸ "Chosŏn e kwanhan Moskpa Samkuk Woesanghoeŭi Kyŏlchŏngsŏ," (The Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference and Its Communiqué on Korea) March 28, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 79.*

²⁷⁹ "The Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference and Its Communiqué on Korea," March 28, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 79.*

imperialism. Indeed, when the Moscow Conference concluded in December with the announcement of its principles, Pak's enthusiasm for independence was an enthusiasm about the possibility of realizing his claims in the August Thesis, and it seemed highly justified. The conference promised that China, the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union would cooperate toward the establishment of Korea "as an independent country, on the conditions of preparing for a democratic development," which would "liquidate the disastrous protraction of Japanese domination in Korea."²⁸⁰

To that end, a "provisional government would be established to "improve the industry, agriculture, and transport in Korea," as well as her "national and cultural development."²⁸¹ The Allies wished to imply that Allied efforts at Korean reconstruction would largely be auxiliary, with the majority of substantive reconstruction under the Korean provisional government's command, thereby establishing the first step toward political autonomy. However, the auxiliary function was by no means negligible, for a joint commission was to be set up for the purpose of consulting with "democratic and social organizations in Korea," the aftermath of which, the Commission would finalize decisions suited for Korea's economic and political situation. Political autonomy and economic development would ensue as a product of intensive international and local cooperation, in which the Korean Provisional government was to assist the implementation of the trusteeship.²⁸²

In short, the Allies perceived the Korean peninsula to be still learning about self-government and was a few steps short from having complete sovereignty. The Korean Provisional Government was on the borderline between an assistant and an autonomous

²⁸⁰ "Extract from Moscow Declaration on Korea," December 27, 1945. Adapted from Donald G. Tewksbury ed., *Source Materials on Korean Politics and Ideologies, Vol. 2* (New York: International Secretariat of the Institute for Pacific Relations, 1950), 74.

²⁸¹ "Extract from Moscow Declaration on Korea," December 27, 1945. Adapted from Tewksbury ed., *Source Materials on Korean Politics and Ideologies, Vol. 2*, 74.

²⁸² "Extract from Moscow Declaration on Korea," December 27, 1945. Adapted from Tewksbury ed., *Source Materials on Korean Politics and Ideologies, Vol. 2*, 74.

political participant on the question of how the trusteeship ought to shape the future of the Korean peninsula. Due to the ambiguous role of the Provisional Government, the substance of the CCP's support for the trusteeship was initially ambiguous and even amorphous because it overlooked the fact that the Allies did not yet have an interest in granting a permanent unitary government to either north or south Korea. Although the Conference was unclear about the essence of Korea's role, especially with regard to the opaque nature of her assistance to the Allies, the CCP's excitement at the prospect of imminent independence caused it to mistakenly focus more on the consequences of the trusteeship rather than its process.

By using "foundation," the party effectively prescribed a functional necessity to supporting trusteeship as the ultimate path to political and economic reconstruction of Korea to enhance the general welfare of the Korean people but the word was vapid because it could not promise which form of political or economic reconstruction could arise by whose hands. In effect, "trusteeship" was another synonym for patriotism, and the CCP was trying hard to prove that point as clearly as possible, but it was a hollow phrase.²⁸³ The Americans were already in Korea to "receive the surrender of Japanese forces" and "rehabilitate Korea for Koreans to enjoy life under a more Democratic rule," and the August Thesis was not prescient enough to provide concrete differentials from the Americans' objective.²⁸⁴ The August Thesis was a clear blueprint for the CCP's supposedly correct path toward assisting the realization of the long-awaited ideal of complete and permanent independence, but the document's gravest pitfall was that it had no certainty about a unitary structure within the Left to actualize the

²⁸³ "The Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference and Its Communiqué on Korea," March 28, 1945, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 79. The CCP's interpretation of "pro-trusteeship" as a patriotic stance draws direct contrast with the Rightist brand in terms of content and *consistency*. Rightists equated "pro-trusteeship" with "pro-Americanism," a position to which people such as Syngman Rhee were devoted for a very long time and a position which people such as Song Chin-u supported merely because that position was convenient for joining the Rightist majority. On this point, see Choi Sang-yong, "Trusteeship and the Korean Cold War," in Bonnie Oh ed., *Korea Under the American Military Government, 1945-1948*, 16-17.

²⁸⁴ John R. Hodge, "Letter to the Korean People," September 2, 1945, adapted from Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 448.

document's anti-imperialism and nationalism into policies.

Unfortunately, if one stirs a broth before it could simmer, the broth is destined to taste bland or even become tasteless, rendering all efforts to perfect the broth futile and even wasteful. Barely a few days after the Moscow Declaration was announced and even before American-Soviet negotiations could begin, *Tonga Ilpo* (*East Asia Daily*) published a highly controversial and an inaccurate article claiming that the Americans wanted the immediate independence of Korea, while the Soviets favored gradual independence after implementing a trusteeship.²⁸⁵ As if that was not enough the newspaper continued to publish anti-Soviet articles accusing Moscow of “attempting to usurp Korean interests and deny independence” and Syngman Rhee added oil to the fire by delivering a public radio address implying that the Soviets strongly favored an immediate implementation of the trusteeship.²⁸⁶ In short, Right-wing anti-Soviet yellow journalism and Rhee’s endorsement of the jingoism laid the foundations of a widespread anti-Soviet resentment across south Korea.

Controversy immediately flared among the Korean public because this hasty conclusion was a gross distortion of the actual truth: since 1943, the Americans favored a unified administration headed by two military commanders until the establishment of a trusteeship aimed at "preparing a dependent people for self-government, and promoting their economic development and social justice" through a guarantee of "equal economic opportunity" and a

²⁸⁵ *Tonga Ilpo* (*East Asia Daily*), "Woesang Hoeüi Hankuk Munchae Nonü—Soryön 38Sön Chömryöng Kalmang, Mikukün Chosönüi Chüksü Tongnip Chuchang," (Foreign Ministers' Meeting Discusses Korean Problem—Soviets Aspire to Occupy Along the 38th Parallel, Americans Argue for Immediate Independence of Korea) December 27, 1945, 1. Adapted from Ham Kyu-chin, "Sint'ak T'ongch'i Pandae Untong: *Tonga Ilpo*üi Opoman Öpssöttamyön.." (The Anti-Trusteeship Movement: Had There Not Been the Erroneous Reporting From the *Tonga Ilpo*..) *Hankyore* 21, Vol. 796 (http://h21.hani.co.kr/arti/special/special_general/26642.html). Accessed March 13, 2019.

²⁸⁶ Kang Tae-ün, "Sam-kuk Woesang Hoeüi küriko Hankuk," (The Tri-Nations' Foreign Ministerial Meeting and Korea) *Inmin* (*The People*), Special Amalgamative Issue of Vols. 1 and 2, 67; Syngman Rhee, *Sintak T'ongch'i Pantae Untongkwa T'ongil Chachu Kukkaüi Chwachöl* (*Anti-Trusteeship Struggles and the Discouragement of a Unitary and an Autonomous Nation*), December 26, 1945 (Seoul, south Korea: Tu-re Publishing, 1989), 109.

contribution to general security."²⁸⁷ As Bruce Cumings points out, the trusteeship was a reflection of Franklin Roosevelt's failure to understand Asian peoples' "impatience for a full restoration of their independence."²⁸⁸ Instead the trusteeship was a "measure to provide a benevolent condominium that would succor postcolonial peoples toward independence while maintaining an American foot in the door."²⁸⁹ Koreans were to only participate as administrators, consultants, and advisers, meaning that no nationally independent government by and for Koreans was to exist before or during the trusteeship. Furthermore, a policy paper entitled "Political Policy for Korea" clearly stated that the United States had no intention of necessarily aiming for the establishment of a unified Korean government if negotiations with the Soviets failed.

Rather, the Americans wanted to hasten the founding of a provisional government led by a select group of Democratic Koreans under the assumption that the Soviets would choose a similar policy of selecting Communists to form a separate government in northern Korea.²⁹⁰ By contrast, the Soviets favored a "prompt independence for the former Japanese colony after five years of trusteeship."²⁹¹ In short, when simply comparing the lengths of time Korea would spend under a trusteeship, the *Soviets*, not the *Americans*, had proposed what seemingly would have accelerated Korean independence, if not unification of the peninsula. The *Tonga Ilpo* was guilty of compromising its professional commitment to reporting the truth with a fervently biased anti-Communism such that the latter overwrote the former.

The more egregious problem was that one media's unprincipled compromise became a

²⁸⁷ See William George Morris, "The Korean Trusteeship, 1941-1947: The United States, Russia, and the Cold War," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1974), 71-72.

²⁸⁸ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 108.

²⁸⁹ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 103.

²⁹⁰ "Top Secret Policy Paper Adopted by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee—Political Policy for Korea," SWNCC 176/18. January 28, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 624-626.

²⁹¹ "Urgent Telegram from the Chargé in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State," Moscow, January 25, 1946; "Confidential Telegram from the in the Chargé in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State," January 25, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.8*, 618-619.

Vesuvius for the Korean political scene. Before its ink could even dry, the inaccurate report quickly inflamed ideological passions from both the Left and the Right, introducing a heated debate over whether the trusteeship was a process of national reconstruction or another form of unwanted foreign interference and imperialism. After Koreans heard that the Soviets had omitted "five years" as the maximum duration of the trusteeship, there was a near-unanimous opposition to the trusteeship, with many voicing much distrust and suspicion that the Soviets were hatching a mysterious plan without known causes.²⁹² The opposition included the CCP, which argued that it had been and "still has been struggling for an autonomous independence, and even though a trusteeship has been announced despite the promise of the Potsdam Declaration, we cannot afford to act in a divisional and an unplanned manner until we establish a united democratic front."²⁹³

Yet, the CCP's opposition quickly proved to be negligible in the Leftist camp. Within a matter of days, the majority of Left-wing politicians voiced strong optimism about the promises of independence and the founding of a provisional government. For example, Kim Tu-pong, the Chief of the Korean Independence Union, argued that supporting the trusteeship was akin to supporting the Soviets' defense of Korean nationalist sentiment because the Soviets proposed ousting pro-Japanese collaborators and removing vestiges of Japanese imperialism from Korea while the Americans favored employing Korean counsels, advisers, and politicians who had built long careers in the Japanese imperial bureaucracy. Furthermore, because the Soviets proposed a five-year trusteeship against the American proposal of a decade-long version, Kim argued that it was reasonable for Koreans to focus on rebuilding Korea as quickly as possible to "avoid the fate of Poland," a reference to the rising concern in

²⁹² "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State," January 13, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 611.

²⁹³ *Chosŏn Inminpo*, January 2, 1946. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 208.

Korea that the 38th Parallel might be permanent such that Korea would be erased from the world map as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact did to Poland by subjecting her to Nazi and Soviet partition.²⁹⁴ In other words, Kim was arguing that supporting the trusteeship was a nationalist solution to Korean unification that could eradicate traces of Japanese imperialism from Korea while also ensuring a swift organization of an autonomous and independent government which could effectively prevent another loss of sovereignty for an indefinite amount of time.

Other Leftist voices were more direct and forthcoming in supporting the trusteeship. Yi Kwan-hyŏp of the Northern Korean Preparatory Committee of the Korean Farmers' Union heaped praise on the Soviet Union as the "nearest and most honest friend of Korea," and commended Stalin for "dedicating all his life to the liberation of Korea."²⁹⁵ Yi continued his excessive praise by claiming that had it not been for Soviet assistance in arms, Korea would have "never liberated herself from the shackles of Japanese rule."²⁹⁶ Put differently, Yi believed that "supporting trusteeship" was an act of appreciation, an act of gratitude toward Soviet sacrifices during the Second World War and an acknowledgement of the quintessential importance of Stalin's decision to declare war on Japan which held the key to Korea's liberation. Supporting the trusteeship was therefore a recognition of the Soviet involvement in World War II as a necessary condition for Korean independence. In a similar fashion, Paek Nam-un's New Citizens' Party called the trusteeship as the "ultimate insurance for the complete obliteration of Japanese imperialism and feudalism in Korea," and also supported

²⁹⁴ Chosŏn Tongnip Yŏnhap Wiwŏnchang Kim Tu-pong, "Hukyŏn e kwanhan Chŏnggwakhan Ihaewa Kyŏngko," (Kim Tu-pong, Chair of the Committee on the Alliance for Korean Independence, "A Precise Understanding of and a Warning on 'Guardianship,'") February 1, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, No. 332, Record Group 59, Box 7392 (College Park, Maryland: National Archives and Records Administration); "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," March 19, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 649. On the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, see Gabriel Gorodetsky, "The Impact of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact on the Course of Soviet Foreign Policy," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January-March, 1990), 27-41.

²⁹⁵ Yi Kwan-hyŏp, "Chŏn Chosŏnin eke Sŏnŏn," (A Manifesto to All Koreans) *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, No. 332, February 21, 1946. RG 59, Box 7392.

²⁹⁶ Yi Kwan-hyŏp, "A Manifesto to All Koreans," *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, No. 332, February 21, 1946. RG 59, Box 7392.

the Soviet position of excluding Right-wing organizations because "such organizations failed to understand that only Democratic and patriotic organizations had the right to participate."²⁹⁷ In short, the New Citizens' Party adopted a purely instrumentalist view of the trusteeship's potential to bring about a thorough cleansing of pro-Japanese elements and features in Korea and equated supporting the trusteeship with supporting a purification of Korean nationalist politics.

By contrast, Pak Hŏn-yŏng dropped his earlier opposition and gave a more pronounced and blunt expression of a pro-trusteeship stance. He argued that "trusteeship" was not synonymous with "imperialism" and that the trusteeship guaranteed the development of Korea into a Democratic nation and recognized that Korean independence should only be solved by democracy. Rather than blaming the Soviets for attempting to take over Korea, Pak argued that the responsibility for inviting imperialism belonged to the Korean people's faults—the harm of long Japanese rule and disunion of the Korean people and race. Furthermore, Pak Hŏn-yŏng argued that because the Cairo Conference had promised the Korean people would be given independence in five years, the Allies had the duty to fulfill that promise and therefore, the Moscow Decision must be a developed version of the Cairo announcement. From Pak's point of view, the trusteeship was not an anomaly but a necessary measure for it was confirming his argument from the August Thesis that Korea's independence had to be determined by international Communism and the trusteeship was a decision in accordance with this principle. That the Soviets had supported the decision, regardless of the *Tong-a Il-po*'s sensationalism, was a sufficient condition for the CCP to affirm that it had to adhere to a

²⁹⁷ Sinmintang (New Citizens' Party of Korea), "Misokongwi e kwanhan Tamhwamun," (A Statement on the American-Soviet Joint Commission), April 20, 1946, from *A Collection of Statements and Writings on the American-Soviet Joint Commission* (P'yŏngyang, north Korea: The Central Committee of the Party Secretariat of the North Korean United Nationalist Front, 1946), 37-38. RG 242, Entry No. NM-44, 299-C: Korean Language Publications and Records Captured in P'yŏngyang [SA 2005] [1946-1950] ; [01/1952-01/1958], Box 60.

pro-trusteeship stance.²⁹⁸

In short, if Kim Tu-p'ong perceived the trusteeship as an external warning for Koreans to hasten national reconstruction and as an insurance against repeating the tragic history of being under colonial rule, Pak saw the trusteeship as an outgrowth, a historically, if not morally, natural outcome of the Koreans' inability to self-consciously achieve ethnic and national unification. Hence, the trusteeship, in Pak's view, was not an imposition of foreign rule, but a wake-up call to achieve a political unity among Koreans which had been forestalled by none other than the Koreans themselves. Therefore, Koreans had nothing to complain about, for the Moscow Conference was merely the Americans' and Soviets' attempt to fulfill the promise of Korean independence in "due course" made in 1943 and therefore was not a betrayal or a sell-out of Korea to American or Soviet imperialism.²⁹⁹

There were also neutral or cautious positions against hastily attaching too much significance to the trusteeship as a tool of imperialism or as a catalyst for liberation. Rather, these voices criticized Korea's possibility of being under a trusteeship itself. For example, an article in *Chayu Sinmun (Freedom Newspaper)* argued that political unity was the only remedy to overcome the dreaded malaise of facing another moment of foreign subjugation:

"The four months during which we endeavored for our hope was nothing but the mockery of foreign nations. Our endeavor to bear the unbearable living conditions and cooperate with the military government has been in vain. The liberator of our race is not the strong powers but ourselves. The Left and Right labored for the sound establishment of our nation but if they blame each other and become the chief cause for disunity within the nation, they will bring useless sacrifice upon Korea. If we bring up anti-American and anti-Russian sentiments and neglect to learn from their civilizations, we will ruin ourselves. We must correct American and Russian misunderstandings and resist the revolting treatment. We must take in their cultures and ideas and prepare the basis for Korea as an international nation. We are fighting for construction. Let us sweep away humiliation by unifying body and mind."³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ "Moskpa Woesang Hoeüi e taehan Chwaiküi Panüng," (Left-wing Responses to the Foreign Ministerial Meeting in Moscow) in Yi ch'öng-sök, Kim Tong-ch'un, and Kim Söng-po et al., eds., *Hankukhak Yöngu Ch'ongsö—Hyöndaie kûriko Pukhan P'yön (A Handbook for Research in Korean Studies—The Modern Era and North Korea)* (Seoul, south Korea: Yöksa Pip'yöng (History and Criticism), 2008).

²⁹⁹ *Chungang Sinmun (Central Newspaper)*, "Sintak T'ongch'inun Ilchae Ch'imryakkwa Katchi Anko Wönræ Minchuchökuro Chinpochök; T'ongiltoemyön 5 Nyön Kihanün Tanch'uktoel köt," Kongsantang Söngmyöng Pal'yo (Trusteeship is Not Same as Japanese Aggression and is Originally Democratically Progressive; Five-Year Period Will be Shortened with Unification, According to Communist Party Statement," January 5, 1946. G-2 Report, No. 286. RG 59, Box 7392.

³⁰⁰ *Chayu Sinmun (Freedom Newspaper)*, "Kukkachök Pikükül Chikmyönhamyö," (Confronting the National

The article was claiming that the trusteeship was neither a step toward liberation nor a retardation to imperialism but a disgraceful jester of foreign nations who believed that they could hold Korea under their sway. The article also suggested two ways to overcome this shame. First, the article favored an autonomous interpretation of liberation's essence, ascribing much credit to both Leftist and Rightist activists for laying the cornerstones of Korea's independence. Since both sides equally deserved credit, there truly was no warrant for any disagreement or factional conflict because everyone had arduously worked toward the common goal of realizing an independent Korea. Second, the article was cautioning against an excessive critique of the Americans and the Soviets lest it mutated into xenophobia. Instead, Korea had to exercise measured patience and a liberal mindset to accepting the advantages of American and Soviet culture to adapt them and enhance Korea's own so she could catapult proudly onto the world stage. The two grand goals—*independence and internationalization*—were worthy for both Leftists and Rightists to unite together in working toward a more progressive and unified Korea.

Yet, the article was only expressing an idealistic wish. These seemingly diverse neutral and Left-wing voices were strictly confined to an extreme minority because such views—one American official thought they came from "Orientals strongly affected by 40 years of Jap[sic] control who stubbornly and fanatically hold to what they like and dislike, and were impossible to reason"³⁰¹—were too dangerously bordering on apologetic depictions of what the Right perceived as foreign imperialism. Right-wing newspapers and organizations warily eyed the trusteeship with deep suspicion and rage at what they perceived as a Soviet plot to make Moscow take over Tokyo's former role in Korea. For many Rightists, the lack of clarity about Korea's role in affirming her own independence was a great betrayal because it failed to

Misfortune) January 3, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, Document No. 246. RG 59, Box 7392.

³⁰¹ "Secret Telegram from General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Joint Chiefs of Staff," Tokyo, February 2, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 629-630.

substantiate or deliver on the Allies' earlier promise that they would ensure Korea's independence "in due course."³⁰² Indeed, DPK leader Song Chin-u, who had been told by Hodge that the trusteeship was the "opinion of one man in the State Department (John Carter Vincent)" and that if Koreans united "as one body" and supported the American military government, there would be one national government in Korea, plainly argued that the trusteeship was "an insult to Korea's long history and high civilization."³⁰³ Another anonymous politician argued that if the Russians "were responsible for suggesting the trusteeship," they would "inevitably be an enemy of the Korean people."³⁰⁴ In short, for most anti-Communist and nationalist conservatives, the trusteeship was an affront to Korean nationalism rooted in historical resilience, and the Soviets' ignorant attempt to test the Koreans' resolve by administering a quasi-imperialist policy immediately qualified Moscow to earn an intensely bitter and hot animosity from Seoul.

These sentiments sufficiently summarize Right-wing political activism and public opinion. On one hand, the Provisional Government rallied to "all 30,000,000 Koreans for a mass opposition to the trusteeship."³⁰⁵ On the other hand, 40 Conservative organizations vowed in a so-called "Removal Meeting" to launch "a bloody struggle to petition for the recognition of the Provisional Government, to recommend the resignation of all Korean officials of the

³⁰² Excerpt from the Cairo Declaration in "Appendix A of a Report from the State-War-Navy Coordinating Subcommittee," October 20, 1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1095.

³⁰³ *Minchung Ilpo (The Masses' Daily)*, "Sint'ak T'ongch'i Ch'eche Ch'oltae Pantae. Kunch'ongül P'yechihaki Sichakhacha," (Absolutely Opposed to Trusteeship System. Let Us Start to Abolish the Military Government, says Song Chin-u) December 30, 1945. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, Document No. 283. RG 59, Box 7392. However, Song would overturn his opposition and support the trusteeship shortly after a private meeting with Hodge, a judgment for which Song would be assassinated shortly after a meeting with Kim Ku on the night of December 30, who presumably urged Song to be against the trusteeship but fail to convince him. On Song's reversal of his position on the trusteeship and his assassination, see Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 218-219.

³⁰⁴ *Seoul Sinmun*, "Sint'ak Ch'ongpu Ch'echeroputoüi Poho," (Protection Against the System of a Trusteeship Government) December 28, 1945. RG 59, Box 5.

³⁰⁵ *Minchung Ilpo*, "Imch'ong, Minchung Siwirül t'onghan Pant'ak T'uchaeng S'önön," (The Provisional Government Declares to Fight Trusteeship through Public Demonstrations) December 30, 1945. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, No. 283. RG 59, Box 7392.

military government, and to organize a general strike to make this will known."³⁰⁶ Of these demands, the third one actually materialized in a more radical and surprising form, as several Korean officials in the military government submitted a joint letter of resignation. The officials argued that the trusteeship originated from prejudice without regard to the fact that the Korean people have a long and glorious history," which was "contrary to international justice which had promised us independence."³⁰⁷ Since the Military Government had "proven itself to be an organization for the benefit of trusteeship and not for Korean independence," the officials refused to cooperate with it and instead declared "they will fight by taking part in the people's movement."³⁰⁸ In short, even Korean officials in the American military government considered the implementation of a trusteeship as a postponement of Korean independence and refused to work for an institution which condoned it, opting to fight along with the Korean masses to demand immediate political liberation.³⁰⁹

The resignation was a warning to the military government that Korean nationalism was a non-negotiable issue over which ideology was merely a secondary predilection, not a matter of firm and unwavering allegiance. Furthermore, because the 38th Parallel was arbitrarily drawn and, as Senator James F. Byrnes of South Carolina bluntly explained, "had no history of establishment by secret agreements at Yalta" and only had the purpose of conducting American and Soviet military operations," the American perception of Asians as culturally

³⁰⁶ *Tonga Ilpo*, "Sint'ak T'ongch'i Ch'ulp'yerül wihan Moimi 29il Ochön Yölsi Söul YMCA eso Yöllim," (The Meeting for the Removal of the Trusteeship was held at 10 AM on the 29th at YMCA Seoul) G-2 Document No. 283, January 2, 1946. RG 59, Box 7392.

³⁰⁷ *Chungang Sinmun (The Central Times)*, "Manyak Mikunchöngi Sint'ak Kwanlirül wihae Chonchaehantamyon, Urinün Hyöpchohal su öpta, Mikunchöng Hankuk Kwanryo, Ilkwäl Satöe," (If the Military Government Exists for the Benefit of the Trust Management, We Cannot Cooperate, General Resignation of the Korean Officials at Military Government) January 2, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, Document No. 283. RG 59, Box 7392.

³⁰⁸ *Chungang Sinmun*, "If the Military Government Exists for the Benefit of the Trust Management, We Cannot Cooperate, General Resignation of the Korean Officials at Military Government," January 2, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, Document No. 283. RG 59, Box 7392.

³⁰⁹ *Chungang Sinmun*, "If the Military Government Exists for the Benefit of the Trust Management, We Cannot Cooperate, General Resignation of the Korean Officials at Military Government," January 2, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, Document No. 283. RG 59, Box 7392.

inferior rather than a purely ideological bulwark against Communism was a more important rationale for dividing the peninsula.³¹⁰ Indeed, although the Cairo Conference of 1943 had promised Korea's independence in "due course" and had put an end to American indifference toward Korea, American interest in Korea was conditioned by the Orientalist view that East Asian nations were not fully capable of self-government.³¹¹

While the Cairo Declaration did symbolize what historian James Matray (1978) has called an "end to indifference," marking the beginning of America's consistent and deep attention to East Asian affairs, the consistency and depth revealed the Jekyll-and-Hyde nature of American thinking about post-war East Asia. Franklin Roosevelt and his aides harbored condescension about a formerly colonized people being unable to properly govern themselves. Simultaneously, they believed in exercising *realpolitik* through military intervention aimed at protecting American security interests in the Pacific against possible expansion of British or Chinese influence which could jeopardize America's primary interest in maintaining an anti-Communist bulwark.³¹² Indeed, as Roosevelt himself expressed in a radio address about the Philippines:

"The history of the Philippines in the last forty-four years provides, in a very real sense, a pattern for the future of other small nations and peoples of the world. It is a pattern of what men of good will look forward to in the future—a pattern of a global civilization that recognizes no limitations of religion or of creed or of race. But we must remember that such a pattern is based on two important factors. The first is that there must be a period of preparation through the dissemination of education and the recognition and fulfillment of physical and social and economic needs. The second is that there be a period of training for ultimate independent sovereignty, through the practice of more and more self-government, beginning with local government and passing on through the various steps to complete statehood."³¹³

Roosevelt and to an extent, Hodge were reflecting the view that independence for a newly

³¹⁰ "Statement of James F. Byrnes," G-2 Document No. 347. RG 554, Box 5: *USAFIK G-2 Periodic Reports, 1946, 1948*. On the American decision to draw the 38th Parallel, see "Draft Memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (undated)," *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6: The British Commonwealth, the Far East*, 1039 and Shannon McCune, "The Thirty-Eighth Parallel in Korea," *World Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (January, 1949), 223-232.

³¹¹ Cairo Communiqué, December 1, 1943 (Tokyo, Japan: National Diet Library of Japan); Andrei J. Grajdanzev, "Korea in the Postwar World," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (April, 1944), 479-483.

³¹² James I. Matray, "An End to Indifference: America's Korea Policy during World War II," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Spring, 1978), 181-196.

³¹³ Franklin Roosevelt's Radio Speech in Honor of the Seventh Anniversary of the Independence of the Philippines in Samuel Rosenman ed., *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1942), 473-476.

liberated nation-state had to be a project conceived through the providence of American *mission civilisatrice*, which focused on increasing literacy among the local populace and instructing the local population on the art of practicing national liberation in the form of self-government. However, unlike the original French model implanted in the Middle East, which relied on the pursuit of commercial interests, religious fervor of missionaries, the establishment of educational facilities, and a general appreciation of French culture from the Middle East itself, the American model was more assertive and ambitious about leaving an indelibly American mark on regions where Americans wished to introduce American culture.³¹⁴ Unlike the French model which was established to help the Middle East pave its own trajectory towards modernization by means of assimilation, one about which the French often did not mind regional adaptations and differentiations in interpreting French customs and language, the American model was less lenient, focusing more on direct imposition.³¹⁵ The irony was that along with Orientalism, Roosevelt was also espousing the Occidentalist view that a newly liberated Asian nation's independence was not her autonomous achievement, but had to necessarily be a present crafted, modeled, and ultimately bestowed by the Americans and by extension, the West.

The end product of such guidance would lead to self-government, but the ambiguity behind "more and more" begs the question of how much self-government will Americans, not the local population, be satisfied until there is a sense of complete statehood.³¹⁶ Asians did not deserve to construct independence on their own terms until America approved of its content. America had to be the Pygmalion of a newly liberated nation-state, especially those

³¹⁴ Mathew Burrows, "'Mission Civilisatrice': French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (March, 1986), 122-127.

³¹⁵ Burrows, "'Mission Civilisatrice'," 128.

³¹⁶ Such thinking arguably sustained itself from America's colonization of the Philippines to the Iraq War. On this point, see Max Paul Friedman, "From Manila to Baghdad: Empire and the 'American Mission Civilisatrice' at the Beginning and End of the 20th Century," *Revue, Francaise d'etudes Americaines*, No. 113, L'empire americain et ses critiques (Septembre, 2007), 26-38.

in the East, exclusively reserving the right to sculpt and mold these nations to ensure that their futures could only be primarily determined of, by, and for Americans until Americans were able to define what political stability strictly meant. The beauty of an East Asian nation-state was in the eye of the American beholder or no one, for it was only the former which could determine the arrival of a sufficient degree of civilization in the East. It is not surprising that Korea, as a colony of another East Asian nation, was no exception to this rule for Roosevelt. Furthermore, given the fact that the Korean Provisional Government had yet to enjoy complete legitimacy as a unitary representative of all Korean factions, the Roosevelt Administration felt that granting formal recognition would only invite more inflamed passions from rival Korean groups such as the Shanghai clan to argue for their right to represent the Korean people. On the other hand, if the Korean Provisional Government won official recognition from either China or the Soviet Union, American officials believed that it would hasten the emergence of a pro-Communist regime in Korea.³¹⁷

In short, between the two dreaded situations of exacerbating factionalism by acknowledging the Provisional Government's leadership in Korea and upsetting the balance of power in East Asia in favor of Communism by watching China or the Soviet Union obtain a major foothold in Korea once they granted recognition to the Provisional Government, the Americans had to concentrate on preventing Chinese or Soviet domination over Korea. The concentration on this geopolitical calculus throughout the implementation process of the trusteeship especially shows that America's diplomacy toward Korea still deeply reflected a paternalism which dangerously bordered on the possibility of extending imperial tutelage.³¹⁸

Indeed, among many Korean leaders, there was a growing fear that Americans, under the

³¹⁷ For a discussion of the Second World War's aftermath in East Asia from an international perspective, see William Henry Chamberlin, "The Bankruptcy of a Policy," in Harry Elmer Barnes ed., *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: A Critical examination of the Foreign Policy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Its Aftermath* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1953), 483-554.

³¹⁸ Park Hong-kyu, "From Pearl Harbor to Cairo: America's Korean Diplomacy, 1941-1943," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Summer, 1989), 344.

excuse that Koreans lacked the professionalism to effectively practice self-government, might co-opt with the Chinese and Soviets to extend the trusteeship, whereupon Beijing or Moscow might replace it with direct interference over Korea's internal affairs.³¹⁹

Therefore, it is unsurprising that there were several Right-wing groups which quickly exploited the growing fear of repeating Korea's ominous encounter with imperialism to their utmost advantage, appealing to nationalism and anti-imperialism in justifying their opposition to any sort of trusteeship. Major Right-wing interest groups such as Seoul Citizens United in Opposition to a Trusteeship and the Council for the Total Mobilization of Citizens Against the Trusteeship issued a joint declaration severely criticizing the "trusteeship's blatant ignorance and disrespect toward national sovereignty."³²⁰ The trusteeship, if imposed, would never win any general public support because the Korean people "only rightfully recognized the Provisional Government" which had "struggled overseas for 37 years to win Korea's independence," and Korean citizens "had the sacrosanct duty to continue that struggle with a dignified sense of patriotism and reverence for historical memory," which was why the Korean people declared "absolute allegiance and loyalty to the Provisional Government."³²¹ In short, right-wing groups feared that accepting the trusteeship would be akin to denying the legitimacy of the Provisional Government as the only official government of the Korean people, and this denial was akin to committing a treason of nullifying all of Korea's four-decade long effort to win her freedom.

Consequently, the struggle against the trusteeship was a "grave test of the Korean people's resilience and national potential," and hence, the Korean people "were united to organize an orderly but determined protest against the trusteeship and its distasteful consequence of

³¹⁹ Park Hong-kyu, "From Pearl Harbor to Cairo: America's Korean Diplomacy, 1941-1943," 357-358.

³²⁰ "Sint'akt'ongch'i Pandae Kukmin Ch'ongtongwŏn Wiwŏnhoe Chuchoe Sŏul Simin Pant'ak Siwi Taehoe, Sŏnŏn," (Declaration of Seoul Citizens United Against the Trusteeship and the Council for the Total Mobilization of Citizens against the Trusteeship) December 31, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 35.

³²¹ "Declaration of Seoul Citizens United Against the Trusteeship and the Council for the Total Mobilization of Citizens against the Trusteeship," December 31, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 35.

placing Korea yet again under foreign subjugation," which was a "great offense to a deep and strong nationalist sentiment of any conscious Korean."³²² However, protests must not be polluted by violence because the trusteeship was also a challenge against the Koreans as a civilized people. Protests would be firm and carried out with "utmost resolve," but with the "most grave dignity in respect for non-violence," for the "Koreans were a people with a highly cultured spirit" who will never "protest out of a whim or be swayed by any ephemeral emotion, and struggle to the death to ensure a complete obliteration of the trusteeship as soon as possible."³²³ The Rightists interpreted the trusteeship as an egregious affront to Korean nationalism, a decision borne out of a complete ignorance of Koreans' deep sense of historical resilience against foreign control. Many Right-wing leaders also thought that the trusteeship was a product of the West's inability to consider Korea as a highly civilized country which deserved international respect for her independence and political sovereignty. Hence, these leaders believed that Koreans ought to demonstrate that they knew patience and courtesy well enough to express impatience and anger at the trusteeship in the most sophisticated and peaceful manner possible.

It was the clarity of the Koreans' refusal to subjugate to the trusteeship's terms which was the most important objective, not an engagement in armed struggle out of any pleasure and mirth in committing barbaric violence for its own sake. Thus, the Rightists believed that the condition of high civility and culture through a respect for non-violence was the ultimate means to demand natural respect from countries who crassly believed in the Koreans' incapability for self-governance because they did not understand the Koreans' resilience and historical reverence for national sovereignty. If it was too much to demonstrate civility by

³²² "Declaration of Seoul Citizens United Against the Trusteeship and the Council for the Total Mobilization of Citizens Against the Trusteeship," December 31, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 35.

³²³ "Declaration of Seoul Citizens United Against the Trusteeship and the Council for the Total Mobilization of Citizens Against the Trusteeship," December 31, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 36.

showing the entirety of Korea's long association with civilization to the outside world, the Koreans could at least display their respect for peace and order to emblematically show that Koreans were worthy of commanding self-discipline and immediate political autonomy, which was why they did not wish to be under foreign rule after experiencing its most brutal form for the last three decades. Of course, the Rightists could not escape from the fact that they were appealing to nationalism while ignoring the trusteeship's legal paradigm. Thus, they could not conceive of an equally justifiable method to formally nullify trusteeship in accordance with international law. Yet, however respectable Korean historical nationalism was before colonial rule, the grim reality that unfolded before every Korean's eyes was the looming package of major post-colonial problems which required immediate attention and solutions—the restoration of Korean national sovereignty, the punishment of pro-Japanese collaborators, and providing a defining "democracy." Pak Hon-yong and Yo Un-hyong were all Koreans before they were a Communist and a "Unitary Socialist," and could not avoid being embroiled in a debate with the American military government on such critical issues.

3. Conclusion

This chapter showed that despite declaring the union of the southern Left, the CCP's ambition to achieve a complete unification of the Left met its first major challenge from a pseudo-Communist group called the Chang-an faction. The CCP's defeat and absorption of the Chang-an faction marked the first step for Pak's maddening drive for perfecting the art of dictatorship. He not only wanted to fully indoctrinate the party members into supporting him as their leader but also perform a litmus test to prove to himself that the personality cult as a method of indoctrination was impregnable against any internal criticism. In short, the personality cult was not merely a political instrument to imbue an undeniable and unchallengeable sense of hierarchy within the party, but even carried the same message outside the CCP by defeating the last major opponent within the southern Left, the Chang-an

Faction. Although the Chang-an Faction attempted to replace the CCP by criticizing Pak's use of the personality cult as an instrument to amass dictatorial power, the Chang-an Faction quickly crumbled under the weight of the CCP's criticism that the faction lacked orthodoxy because it endorsed terrorism and had no institutional preparation which could justify the faction's standing as a legitimate Communist party.

Although the faction would continue criticizing Pak until 1948, the faction would merely be a mound of gravel before the wind. The defeat of the Chang-an faction assured the transformation of the personality cult as an effective barometer of Pak's psychological control, as though he was Big Brother from Orwell's *1984*—invisible yet arguably omnipotent in his ability to monitor the members' every move without exerting a direct physical presence. Emboldened by the swift success in overcoming the Chang-an Faction's challenge, Pak made a more daring move of directly expanding his organizational base to include women's organizations and to turn the once bourgeois cliques into real Communists. Thus, the party hoped that its anti-Rightist and nationalist sentiments would catapult it as the representative of the Korean people—a position it would rigorously defend once it mastered the practice of democracy through the trusteeship.

This chapter also examined the Allies' rationale behind imposing the trusteeship in Korea and argued that the Allied consensus on Korea's lack of political preparedness was the main motive behind the imposition, and more specifically, that Orientalism colored the American decision to place Korea under the trusteeship. The ambiguity with granting Korea her liberty "in due course" produced mixed public opinion about the trusteeship after the *Tong-a Il-po*'s sensational and erroneous report that the Soviets wanted to put Korea under a long-term trusteeship while the Americans wanted only five years, despite the fact that the converse was true. Such yellow journalism saw the southern Left bitterly pitted against the Right-wing establishment, with the former supporting the trusteeship and the latter opposing it. The main

differential in their positions centered on whether it was nationalistic for Koreans to rely on foreign powers to achieve political stability and enter into an extended form of indirect colonialism or to just reject American and Soviet assistance and risk unnecessarily delaying Korea's development for too long. In short, the *Tonga Ilpo's* simple mistake of deliberately misidentifying the Americans' and Soviets' positions on the trusteeship initiated a whirlpool of intense ideological passions from the southern Left and Right, a debate in which the CCP also took part out of the hope that supporting the trusteeship would guarantee Korea her true national liberation under Soviet guidance. Although the CCP initially opposed trusteeship because it understood the measure as a form of imperialism, it soon changed its stance to supporting the trusteeship because it calculated that if it played a major role in supporting the side which endorsed Korean liberation from imperialism, it would be able to acquire a greater public stature as a literal people's party.

Or so the party thought. Unfortunately, in spite of its good will to become a voice of the people, the party still invited much suspicion from the American military government. American officials were wary of Communists trying to ferment a people's revolution against American imperialism, which would make achieving an airtight security nearly impossible and possibly inspire the Soviets to intervene on the Korean Communists' behalf. Therefore, the Americans had very little incentive to let "complete national liberation" be a euphemism for southern Korea's transformation into a haven for Communism. However, the Americans soon realized that the polarization in the streets did not take long to find itself in the halls of the military government because Pak Hŏn-yŏng would bring the ambience directly to the Americans himself. The next chapter will first consider how the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference divided Koreans such that Pak and Yo had to engage in that very debate and then the debate's procession and outcome.

Chapter 4

Telling the Truth Slant to Prevent Everyone from Becoming Blind: The Eternal Rift Between the American Military Government, Pak Hŏn-yŏng, and Yŏ Un-hyŏng

"Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise

As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind —"

-Emily Dickinson, "Tell all the Truth but tell it Slant"³²⁴-

1. Pak Hŏn-yŏng's Confrontation with Syngman Rhee and the American Military Government

Historian Marc Raeff (1983) observed that an interesting phenomenon which accompanied the rise of a scientific and bureaucratic state in the 19th century is that co-optation among elites and preference for professionalization and an increasingly visible clique-based elitism centered around key academic institutions became notable trends. Due to a strong emphasis on professionalism, the state began to value loyalty, efficiency, technical preparation, and commitment, which in turn minimized emphasis on social distinctions based on class. Yet, professionalism was not a tool to demolish social stratification; the former acted as a veneer to mitigate the influence of the latter in a bureaucracy.³²⁵

Alternatively, I would argue that Raeff's argument has a timeless quality because it suggests that elitism is an old habit, almost an old culture, that dies hard in the bureaucracy. John Reed Hodge (1893-1963), head of the American military government, was a person who had to rely on professionalism's function as a veneer to overcome his lack of elitist credentials. Despite being, as Cumings describes, a "sincere, honest, and unpretentious man" with a sterling

³²⁴ Emily Dickinson, "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant," in *The Essential Emily Dickinson* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), 1129.

³²⁵ Marc Raeff, *The Well-ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change through Law in the Germanies and Russia* (London, England, and New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1983), 165-166.

reputation as "Patton of the Pacific," Hodge was also a mental captive of his military career.³²⁶ Hodge, a native of Golconda, Illinois, inherited from his deeply Conservative family and his very rough climb to the top of the military bureaucracy a typical Conservative Manichean perception of the world as a contest between good and evil. His success in protecting democracy and the United States from Japanese Fascism at Guadalcanal and Leyte Gulf simply told him that the only thing that had changed in the Korean peninsula was the opponent—Communism. This is probably why, as An Chae-sŏng, a former Left-wing activist and Pak's biographer has argued, it was not difficult for Hodge to perceive southern Korea "merely as a base for anti-Communistic operations."³²⁷ In Hodge's eyes, southern Korea was only useful so long as it served the fundamental yet singularly strategic role of curbing the spread of Communism from northern Korea. The division of a country, however unfortunate it may be if it actually occurred, was secondary to the utmost concern for securing anti-Communistic democracy's geopolitical superiority in the peninsula, and to a larger extent, Asia. Put differently, ideological unity as a political force was more desirable and necessary than the sanctity of cultural homogeneity, whose historicity Hodge had little interest or time to deeply comprehend, for it would mean understanding at the bare minimum, 500 years of Korean history.

However, Hodge's anti-Communism was also deeply racist. Due to his lack of any prior experience with working in Asia, Hodge easily succumbed to the notorious disease of Orientalism, adhering firmly to the belief that Koreans were lazy, unreliable, and inefficient.³²⁸ It was no different from the views of leading English and French Orientalists and politicians who, as theorist Edward Said (1991) points out, assumed that the Orient is

³²⁶ Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern Library Classics, 2010), 109-110.

³²⁷ An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 295; "John Reed Hodge's Biography Sent to Major General F. L. Parks, Director of the Bureau of Public Relations," June 12, 1946. RG 554, Box 1.

³²⁸ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 139; James Matray, "Hodge Podge: American Occupation Policy in Korea, 1945-1948," *Korean Studies*, Vol. 19 (1995), 17-20.

"child-like, irrational, and different" while the Occident is "rational, virtuous, mature, and normal."³²⁹ Furthermore, Hodge was intent on reducing the Korean to what Said describes as "a human flatness, removed from its complex humanity," as if to suggest that only Americans were capable of understanding the Korean, while the Korean could not do the same.³³⁰

Indeed, such sentiments can only materialize if experience qualitatively and quantitatively develops them, and the United States was sufficient in both senses. The United States already had a tradition of reflecting a similar sentiment through the Roosevelt Corollary, "Dollar diplomacy" in the Caribbean, and "benevolent assimilation" in the Philippines.³³¹ The only difference with Korea was that, due to Soviet presence, benevolent assimilation had to be toned down to benevolent tutelage, focused on preparing the Koreans adequately to contain the spread of Communism. "Containing" did not just mean preventing the spread of Communism. It also implied demonstrating American prowess to Koreans and threatening the Communists by accusing them of suspending Democratic order, and, in a larger sense, jeopardizing national security against Soviet presence in northern Korea.

By doing so, Hodge hoped to advertise democracy's superiority over Communism in southern Korea and force Communist stalwart Pak Hŏn-yŏng to abandon his plan to use the

³²⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 40.

³³⁰ See Edward Said, "Orientalism," *The Georgia Review*, Vol. 31, No.1 (Spring, 1977), 162-205 and *Orientalism*, 150 and 289. Although Said may have been guilty of generalizing his thesis based on his examination of English and French Orientalists at the expense of other European traditions of orientalism and for misinterpreting Marx's quote, "they cannot represent themselves; they must be represented," as addressing Arabs instead of French peasants, the continuation of European historicism and universalism which provincializes the non-European "other" in favor of a Western hegemony is arguably a lasting legacy of Orientalism. See Irfan Habib, "In Defense of Orientalism: Critical Notes on Edward Said," *Social Scientist*, Vol. 33, No. 1/2 (January-February, 2005), 41 and Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," *Cultural Critique*, No. 1 (Autumn, 1985), 101-102.

³³¹ For accounts of American "Dollar diplomacy" in the Caribbean, see Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U. S. Imperial Rule* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005); Scott Nearing and Joseph Freeman, *Dollar Diplomacy: A Study of American Imperialism* (New York: B. W. Huesch and Viking Press, 1925) and Emily S. Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005). On American colonization of the Philippines, see Paul A. Kramer, *Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina and London, England: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) and Alfred McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: America, the Philippines, and the Rise of the American Security State* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

CCP as a base for anti-American operations. This would ensure that no significant local Korean threat would be posed against American influence in the peninsula while Americans focused on "developing Korean self-government and amicable relations with the Soviets."³³² As for the spoilage resulting from whatever conflict that may ensue, Hodge knew that he could always depend on the Right-wing Rhee faction to clean it up. Without getting their own hands dirty, the Americans could maintain and promote a pure image of themselves as liberators and pacifiers, not as hypocritically undemocratic imperialists and breeders of factionalism.³³³

Yet, to make the promotion of the pure image possible, the American military government had to be a good political moderator and needed more information about the southern Left because ever since the Americans arrived in Seoul on September 2, 1945, much of their information about Korean politics and the southern Left came from the Japanese, DPK members, or DPK supporters, who either labeled the southern Left as "Communist" or "pro-Japanese" while promoting themselves as the ultimate bastion of democracy.³³⁴ The effect of these propagandistic portrayals was such that a close advisor to Hodge would give the following assessment about the conservative but highly educated DPK politicians:

"..Although many of them have served the Japanese, that stigma ought to disappear. Such persons favor the return of the 'Provisional Government' and although they may not constitute a majority, they are probably the largest single group."

By contrast, the advisor expressed alarm about the possibility of Left-wing agitation:

"Communists advocate the seizure now of Japanese properties and may be a threat to law and order. It is probable that well-trained agitators are attempting to bring about chaos in our area so as to cause the Koreans to repudiate the United States in favor of the Soviet "freedom" and control.."

In short, the American military government faced the task of verifying Japanese and Right-wing allegations about the Left-wing and also whether Communists could be prevented from

³³² "Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Political Adviser in Korea," April 5, 1946. *FRUS, Vol. 8: The Far East, 1946*, 657; John Lewis Gaddis, "Containment and the Logic of Strategy," *The National Interest*, Vol. 10 (Winter, 1987/88), 27-38.

³³³ The American officials would later reveal their hypocrisy by constructing the Representative Democratic Council to better manage the Rightists. See Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 234.

³³⁴ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 140-142.

projecting an outright pro-Soviet attitude, which, if liberally expressed, could be a cause for mayhem and disorder in a country that had yet to realize complete political and social reconstruction.³³⁵

Barely a month later, Hodge had a chance to address this task and test the veracity of his advisor's assessment. On October 27, 1945, intending to censure and lecture Pak on the impropriety of his Communist stance, Hodge ordered his staff to escort Pak to the military government's headquarters for a meeting. Hodge carefully concealed his Orientalism with a wrapping called "national security" and warned Pak that the right to enjoy freedom did not imply the right to usurp it in libertine fashion by vowing to punish political opponents. Furthermore, lest Pak was thinking about creating a "Communist paradise," Hodge warned that Pak ought to abandon that idea because it was just a euphemism for an utter destruction of civil order; civility could only exist from a solid guarantee of freedom of expression. Since the party sought to deny and destroy that freedom, Hodge argued that the party was a "grave threat to maintaining a Democratic peace."³³⁶ Communists would be unable to govern according to the people's will because the CCP would be only interested in imposing its own plans on the Korean public if "stubborn ideologues" like Pak continued to lead it.³³⁷

Furthermore, because political manpower was "currently running short in supply," the Communists had to understand that integration and harmonious acceptance was more practical for the exercise of an efficient government," which was "pivotal to sort out the current state of complete bureaucratic hullabaloo."³³⁸ If Communists could accept this practical aspect of the Americans' policy, Hodge promised that Communists could also join

³³⁵ "Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State," September 15, 1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1050-1051.

³³⁶ An Chae-sǒng, *Pak Hǒn-yǒng: A Biography*, 297.

³³⁷ An Chae-sǒng, *Pak Hǒn-yǒng: A Biography*, 297.

³³⁸ Pak Hǒn-yǒng, "Hodge Chungchangkwa Taetam," (Meeting with Lieutenant-General John R. Hodge) October 27, 1945," in Yichǒng Pak Hǒn-yǒng Chǒnchip P'yǒnch'anwiwǒnhoe (The Committee for the Publication of Pak Hǒn-yǒng's Works) ed., *Yichǒng Pak Hǒn-yǒng Chǒnchip (The Complete Works of Pak Hǒn-yǒng)* (Seoul, south Korea: Yǒksa Pip'yǒng sa (History and Criticism), 2004), *Vol. 1*.

politics under the genuine, comprehensive meaning of democracy. From Hodge's perspective, this was a just demand, for he had already articulated this principle during the Moscow negotiations and opposed the exclusion of any party under the premise that it did not reflect Democracy's true spirit of harmonious and impartial integration of all ideological designs. Therefore, he was willing to sacrifice his personal hatred of Communism for his commitment to his public creed, which he believed was essential for preserving his image as a morally upright official.³³⁹

However, from Pak's perspective, Hodge was trying to pull his leg by disguising acquiescence as agreement, when he perfectly knew that even with Hodge's endorsement, the Right would never accept Pak's extremism, let alone the Left's existence as a whole. Furthermore, it was unthinkable that given the highly virulent anti-Communism in Korea, the Americans could ever be different from their Right-wing allies in just over a month since Pak had issued his major critique in September. Even if Hodge was telling the truth, Pak could not stand Hodge's pride and arrogance in every word he spoke; he seemed no different from Syngman Rhee who had initially welcomed the Communists, only to abruptly turn his back against them. Since Pak was well aware that Hodge was one of Rhee's allies, he had little confidence that Hodge would truly keep his word, especially when the Rightists already outnumbered the Leftists. There was no guarantee that a balance of power between them could be materialized any time soon.

Given the turbulent political ambience of a seemingly endless string of Left-Right conflict and Pak's awareness that Hodge had little incentive to betray the Rightists by inviting the Leftists into a united coalition, Pak did not care what Hodge had packaged because he saw through Hodge's anti-Communist wrapping. Pak also could not conceal his intense dislike of

³³⁹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Lieutenant-General John R. Hodge," October 27, 1945," *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 1.

Hodge's condescending manner of speech. Pak sharply retorted that the party only wanted to exterminate imperialism, national traitors, and Americans, having defeated Japanese Fascism, ought to be Korea's allies, not enemies. Should the Americans attempt to sabotage the Communists' plan, Pak warned, it was a natural and moral duty to "fight unwelcome occupiers to the end."³⁴⁰ If the Americans ignored his warning, the party had no choice but to consider "Americans as despicable substitutes of Japanese imperialists."³⁴¹ Should the Americans have no intention of "swiftly imprisoning and making the pro-Japanese collaborators pay their just due," the Communist party would also have "absolutely no intention of harboring an inkling of a cooperative attitude toward the Americans," which would lead to a "total collapse of a genuinely united sense of democracy."³⁴²

Put differently, Pak was clearly articulating that if the Americans continued to feign their ignorance about the importance of urgently removing relics of Japanese imperialism from the Korean peninsula, the CCP had no intention of sitting idly and watching. Should the Americans irresponsibly employ pro-Japanese officials in the name of bureaucratic efficiency, the CCP had no choice but to physically demonstrate the gravity of resolving the issue of removing pro-Japanese officials by using all means necessary, including force, to make sure that Americans complied with the Korean public's demand for a swift removal of detested collaborators of the Japanese.

2. Pak Hon-yong's Confrontation with Syngman Rhee, the Termination of the Pak-Hodge Debate, and the Irreconcilable Gulf Between "Bureaucratic Efficiency" and "Patriotism"

Unable to control his anger but also secretly desiring to flaunt his confidence as the "main

³⁴⁰ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Lieutenant-General John R. Hodge," October 27, 1945," *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

³⁴¹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Lieutenant-General John R. Hodge," October 27, 1945," *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

³⁴² Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Lieutenant-General John R. Hodge," October 27, 1945." *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

architect of the CCP,"³⁴³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng met Syngman Rhee and blasted the same anti-American and anti-imperialist rhetoric. He explicitly expressed "severe discomfort at the fact that running dogs of the Japanese were still in the administration posing as Koreans only in skin but not in heart or soul."³⁴⁴ Rhee, also putting on an uncomfortable face, responded that his employment of pro-Japanese collaborators was "inevitable," given the "highly disorganized and chaotic situation surrounding the question of national reconstruction."³⁴⁵ Furthermore, Rhee stressed that "borrowing the hands of another country (the United States) to get rid of one's own countrymen is a highly dishonorable act," and must "not be done in haste."³⁴⁶

An exasperated Pak retorted that such a position was but the opinion of "an unprincipled man who relished unprincipled behavior," and argued that the People's Republic in northern Korea had already eliminated much of the "undesirables," and saw "no reason for the south to not follow suit with the north's example."³⁴⁷ In short, Rhee and Pak failed to reach a clear compromise between employing pro-Japanese collaborators to satisfy the need to rapidly increase bureaucratic expertise to reconstruct Korea and establishing a genuine sense of national liberation by ridding Korea of people who were detested vestiges of an abhorrently cruel imperialism.

Yet, Rhee refused to cede anything, demanding that only when the northerners disbanded their "falsehood of a republic" could Rhee "begin considering and pondering about what the

³⁴³ Pak advertised himself as such through *Chŏnsŏn* (*The Front*, an official paper of the Chosŏn Communist Party on October 31, 1945. See also Chŏng-sik Lee and Robert Scalapino, *Communism in Korea: The Society* (Berkeley, California and London, England: University of California Press, 1972), 323.

³⁴⁴ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Yi Sŭng-man Paksawa Taetam," (Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee) October 31, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 1.

³⁴⁵ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," October 31, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 1.

³⁴⁶ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," October 31, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 1.

³⁴⁷ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," October 31, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 1.

essence of a unified nationalist government would amount to."³⁴⁸ When Pak continued to retort that Rhee was making a "preposterous proposition," Rhee lost his nerve and became increasingly annoyed and combative, shouting angrily that he dared Pak "to do anything he wished to do if he had the guts."³⁴⁹ Pak firmly but angrily insisted that Rhee was just adamantly refusing to admit that his long exile in the United States had forced him to "completely lose touch with the real challenges of fighting ferociously for independence, which mere theorizing and twiddling of pen and ink could never fully comprehend."³⁵⁰ In other words, if Pak was favoring the elimination of pro-Japanese collaborators as the necessary condition for unification, Rhee prioritized unification and relegated the elimination of pro-Japanese collaborators as an auxiliary and sufficient condition which would follow from unification. Unable to resolve their parallel disagreement, both men broke off negotiations; an uncontrollably agitated Rhee demanded that Pak leave at once, to which an increasingly irritated Pak promptly complied by slamming the door in extreme frustration.³⁵¹

To make things worse for Pak, Rhee rejected Pak's final offer for a Left-Right coalition government through the founding of a government for a people's republic, with Rhee as its first premier. Rhee argued that his commitment to democracy was "so firm" that he could "not envision any cause to abandon it for the leadership of a most detestable and ignoble group of pseudo-politicians who did not properly understand what democracy really was."³⁵² To make his dislike clear and final, Rhee vowed to "completely sever all ties with the Left and establish a separate republican government if the Left refused to surrender and conform to the sole

³⁴⁸ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," October 31, 1945. *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

³⁴⁹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," October 31, 1945. *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

³⁵⁰ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," October 31, 1945. *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

³⁵¹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," October 31, 1945. *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

³⁵² Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," October 31, 1945. *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

morally proper Rightist norm of parliamentary democracy."³⁵³ Should the Left still refuse to accept the Rightist version of democracy, "may God forbid that any Rightist within the Administration dare see another Leftist straight in the eye and discover an inkling of truth and conscience within the highly deceptive beast."³⁵⁴ As if that was not enough, Rhee promptly set forth to announce the Administration's official position of a firm and dedicated opposition to the Moscow Declaration which "disregarded the sanctity of Korean independence."³⁵⁵ By refusing become the Leftists' leader and support of the Moscow Declaration, Rhee ultimately dismissed the possibility that a Left-Right alliance would formulate to produce a unified government, especially because Rhee was making it clear that such a move will never be initiated from his cabinet unless the Left acquiesced to the Right's demand that Pak and his followers abandon their stubborn struggle to pressure the Right into changing their comprehension of democracy.

However, Pak refused to withdraw his adamant position that pro-Japanese collaborators must not work in a nationalistic and democratic government. He still had hope that American officials could understand his position and implement some policies to reflect it, even if it meant further isolating Communists and preventing their participation in realizing the common interest between the Left and the Right in founding a legitimately patriotic and nationalist government. Indeed, many officials in Washington were acutely perceptive about the fact that the Korean Provisional Government, "never had administrative authority over any part of Korea," and that "its following even among exile Koreans was limited."³⁵⁶ Thus, when Pak was complaining about Rhee's considerable detachment from Korean politics due to

³⁵³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," October 31, 1945. *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

³⁵⁴ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," October 31, 1945. *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 1.*

³⁵⁵ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 186-187.

³⁵⁶ "The Acting Secretary of State to the Chairman of the Korean Commission in the United States," June 5, 1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1031.

his long exile in the United States, he was actually protesting about the possibility of the need for the Korean people to "compromise their right to choose the ultimate form of government" for the sake of ceding priority to Rhee's greed for monopolizing power.³⁵⁷ Pak could not smother his frustration with Hodge or Rhee, and visited Lieutenant H. Arnold of the American military government to convince and persuade him to tell Hodge once again what the Communists expected from the American military government—the total exclusion of pro-Japanese collaborators from the Rhee Administration and the willingness of the Communists to cooperate with the Americans to realizing that objective.

Yet, to Pak's disappointment, Arnold merely repeated Hodge's refusal to invite any Communists to the Rhee Administration. In fact, Arnold gave a more steadfast reply, arguing that the "American military government was not the government of the United States, but the official representative government of southern Korea until negotiations on the Moscow Communiqué were complete and authorized for immediate implementation."³⁵⁸ Arnold had announced this position clearly a few weeks earlier. From Arnold's perspective, his direct expression of the American military government's right as the interim government of Korea was understandable. The Americans still had very little information about Korea, her history, language, culture, political situation, let alone concrete directives for her future.³⁵⁹

Furthermore, while Pak may have been right in theory to appeal to nationalist sentiment while arguing for the removal of pro-Japanese collaborators, their removal could only be nominally done and was realistically an implausible policy. Fundamentally, as the primary administrator in charge of southern Korea, the military government had the desire to

³⁵⁷ "The Acting Secretary of State to the Chairman of the Korean Commission in the United States," June 5, 1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1031.

³⁵⁸ "Mikunchōng Arnold Changkwan, Mikunchōng woe e Happōpchōk Chōngpunūn Ōptako Sōnp'o" (American Military Government Minister Arnold Announces that There is No Other Legitimate Government besides the American Military Government), *Maeil Sinpo*, October 11, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*.

³⁵⁹ Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, 5. See also Kim Joung-won (Chōng-wōn), *Divided Korea: The Politics of Development, 1945-1972* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975).

demonstrate that it could properly exercise politics, or as one political scientist defines it, "the authoritative allocation of values for a society."³⁶⁰ In other words, politics is a complex business because it not only requires the identity of who has the right to determine the appropriate distribution of values, but also the content thereof, or the answer to which values ought to be distributed and which have to be discarded. Giving in to the Communists' demand for inclusion could mean a total surrender of this bi-layered art, which could result in the Americans' symbolic surrender of democracy to Communism, the inclusion of pro-Communist sentiment, and a total restructuring of the Korean public's loyalty to democracy in favor of Communism.

In addition to the ideological cringe against Communism, the military government felt that Pak had made an untimely request. The military government was still very short of qualified personnel to manage an already understaffed and a small institution. As H. Merrell Benninghoff, the American political adviser in Korea, observed, there were "no qualified Koreans for any positions other than the low-ranking positions, either in government or in public utilities and communications."³⁶¹ Consequently, the Americans had to value meritocracy over patriotism and nationalism, employing many conservative Koreans fluent in English but had a checkered past as bureaucratic servants of the Japanese. In other words, professional bureaucratic service in Korea suffered from a binary problem of low quality and low quantity, such that both were mutually reinforcing, creating what historian James Matray (2001) has dubbed "a government of collaborators and interpreters."³⁶² By making this choice, American military government officials had dismissed Pak's warning that the military

³⁶⁰ D. Easton, *The Political System* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 129. See also Nicholas R. Miller, "Pluralism and Social Choice," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (September, 1983), 742.

³⁶¹ "The Political Adviser in Korea (Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State," September 15, 1945. *FRUS, 1945*, Vol. 6, 1050. See also Cho Han-sŏng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 115.

³⁶² Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 1, 299. See also James I. Matray, "Development Delayed: U.S. Economic Policy in Occupied Korea," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol. 10, No. 1/2 (Spring-Summer, 2001), 34.

government might suffer from what sociologist Thorstein Veblen called "trained incapacity," or the inability to effectively adapt one's skills from the past to present situations and what philosopher John Dewey called "occupational psychosis"—the display of special preferences, antipathy, and discriminatory practices—habitually formed through a long service in the Japanese colonial regime.³⁶³

Moreover, Arnold's uncompromising and perhaps too bluntly stated "there is no other government south of the 38th Parallel, and all other forms of government, including the People's Republic in the north, are deemed illegal," was rather extreme.³⁶⁴ When Koreans learned of Arnold's remaining statement which contained derogatory and offensive references to the northerners as "con-men and actors engaged in ludicrous puppetry" which had to lower their curtains immediately," they rapidly distanced themselves away from the Americans. Such disrespect was too much for even moderates to bear, resulting in Yŏ's prompt resignation from his unofficial post as adviser to the American military government, and winning the ire of north Korean People's Central Commission.³⁶⁵ Although Yŏ had resigned out of the realistic calculation that the Advisory Council consisted of many "unqualified individuals" and its voting system "ensured a definitive defeat of a Leftist in every issue" and prohibited Yŏ from "providing any constructive counsel," the northerners were greatly annoyed by what they perceived as the Americans' arrogance and ham-handling.³⁶⁶ The Commission was furious and adamantly committed to ousting a "serving the great" mentality, and argued that

³⁶³ Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change* (New York: New Republic, 1935), 50 ff.; Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York and London, England: The Free Press, 1968), 252.

³⁶⁴ "American Military Government Minister Arnold Announces That There is No Other Legitimate Government Aside From the American Military Government," *Maeil Sinpo*, October 11, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*.

³⁶⁵ "American Military Government Minister Arnold Announces That There is No Other Legitimate Government Aside From the American Military Government," *Maeil Sinpo*, October 11, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*; "Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Kunchŏngch'ŏng Komunkwanchik Sap'yo Chech'ul," (Yŏ Un-hyŏng Resigns from His Post as Advisor to Military Government) *Maeil Sinpo*, October 15, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*.

³⁶⁶ Minchuchuŭi Minchok Chŏnsŏn (Democratic Nationalist Front) ed., *Chosŏn Haepang Yŏnpo (The Yearbook of Korean Liberation)* (Seoul, south Korea: 1946), 137. See also Kim un-tae, *The Korean Government Under Japanese Imperialism* (Seoul, south Korea: Pak Yŏng Publishing, 1986), 230-231.

all "counter-revolutionaries who had sold the nation's youth to Japan's "phony holy war for the co-prosperity of East Asia."³⁶⁷ The north Koreans vowed to "never forgive the cruel and vile hands of the pro-Japanese collaborators who had clandestinely manipulated the Korean youth to sacrifice their lives."³⁶⁸

In other words, Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Yŏ Un-hyŏng, and the northern regime were frustrated and incensed by Arnold's obstinate insistence on the singular legitimacy of the American military government. From the southern Leftist leaders' and P'yŏng-yang's view, Arnold's decision fundamentally ignored the sacred mission of reconstructing nationalism as the ultimate panacea to eradicate the old but persisting parasitic disease of pro-Japanese collaboration. Although Japanese presence in Korea was becoming increasingly negligible with a continuous stream of repatriations by late October, the shadow of Japanese imperialism continued to thrive because the pro-Japanese collaborators were still alive and well without paying for their sins.³⁶⁹

The only marked difference between the three parties was their individual manner of expressing the frustration. If Pak had tried to coax Arnold and had given up in great disgust, Yŏ's decision to resign from the American military government was a silent expression of frustration upon seeing no room for "Unitary Socialism" in the minds of American officials. Hence, Yŏ chose to clearly note his desire to permanently sever all ties with the Americans by choosing to disassociate with them for life. The struggle between Arnold and the north Koreans was a clash between anti-Communist and nationalist legitimacy as the fundamental

³⁶⁷ "Inmin Chungang Wiwŏnhoe, Arnoldŭi Sŏnŏn e taehan Tamhwamun Palp'yo," (The People's Central Commission Announces a Statement on Arnold's Announcement) *Maeil Sinpo*, October 11, 1945. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 1.

³⁶⁸ "The People's Central Commission Announces a Statement on Arnold's Announcement," *Mae-il Sin-po*, October 11, 1945. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 1.

³⁶⁹ Joseph B. Coolidge, "G-3 Operations Report to the Headquarters of XXIV Corps, APO 235, No. 51," October 23-24, 1945. RG 554, Box 6: United States Army Forces in Korea (USAFIK) G-3 Operations Reports, 1945-1949.

rationale behind the establishment of a genuinely Democratic government. The north Koreans were annoyed that Arnold interpreted their resentment about Japanese colonial rule merely as an ideological problem without sufficiently considering the sentiment's historical salience and effectively declared in their critique of Arnold that if reconciliation with Americans on this issue was impossible, they would rather take care of matters according to their own interpretation with their very own hands.

It was in the middle of such a fierce rhetorical tug-of-war that Pak tried to reason with Arnold again by using an example of a pro-Japanese collaborator to demonstrate how hiring pro-Japanese collaborators would obstruct the proper administration of justice and paralyze the military government's bureaucratic operations. Although Pak did not fully trust American designs on Korea, he was not an unconditionally blind anti-American ideologue. He understood that Americans were not invaders. Most Koreans perceived Americans as liberators and a complete rejection of this image would unnecessarily isolate the southern Communists further, which could provide an incentive for Americans to attempt a complete oppression of the southern Communists.³⁷⁰ In other words, Pak's decision to negotiate with the American military government had dual objectives of delivering the Communists' demand to remove pro-Japanese collaborators in building a nationalistic democracy and assuring that the American military government did not concentrate oppressive measures on Communists. Fulfilling these objectives was a necessary measure to ensure that a Rightist monopoly of a government that had yet to enjoy a genuine popular legitimacy did not materialize too quickly before the Left had completed its own political unification.

Therefore, Pak tried to win American cooperation with punishing all pro-Japanese collaborators to help the military government understand the deep connection between Korean nationalism and Communism. Pak mentioned Kim Chŏng-ki, a former police officer

³⁷⁰ Pak Kap-tong, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng* (Seoul, south Korea: In-kan-sa (Human Press), 1983), 119.

who had "incarcerated thousands of nationalists and Communists," even "executing some in cold blood."³⁷¹ If such a "monstrous individual" should continue working for the Americans, the Korean people, who were "well cognizant of the banality and painfulness of Japanese colonialism," would never tolerate the fact that such an individual could walk this earth with his blood-stained soul intact." Rather, they would reject all orders from police officers like Kim, which would "bring immense chaos and a possible obliteration of public order and justice which would unnecessarily complicate and even prevent the American military government from administering with proper moral and Democratic conduct."³⁷² Therefore, rather than directing "the Americans' ire singularly to the Communists, the Americans must abide by the public will and shift that anger toward pro-Japanese collaborators like Kim if there is indeed genuine respect for democracy and the sanctity of the will of the majority."³⁷³

In other words, Pak was emphasizing that as much as bureaucratic efficiency is a desirable and worthy as a practical solution for good governance, the Americans had to take caution not make it the only virtue of governance such that Koreans' nationalist resentment against the Japanese disruption of land reform be ignored solely because the majority of pro-Japanese collaborators' crimes against fellow Koreans were too hideous and despicable to be pardoned by any liberal emphasis on efficiency alone, for then it would merely be a libertine exercise of governmental authority which ignored the ultimate will of the Korean people—an unsparing punishment of pro-Japanese collaborators through a just respect for the rule of law.

In essence, what Pak demanded of the Americans was a balance between bureaucratic efficiency and communicative public-governmental cooptation in building a literal democracy in accordance with the people's will. As Marc Raeff observes, centralization and

³⁷¹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Arnold Chungchangkwa Taetam," (Meeting with Lieutenant Arnold November 13, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

³⁷² Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Lieutenant-General Arnold," November 13, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

³⁷³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Lieutenant-General Arnold," November 13, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

monopolization of power are not the essential ingredient to guarantee a successful implementation of laws, but the ability to communicate and realize local demands and initiatives. A strict emphasis on order and discipline, while beneficial in promoting uniform and rational efficiency, incurs the risk of stifling creativity and emphasizing generality over specificity, thereby sacrificing the accuracy of comprehension with regard to local details which would enhance the accuracy of a law's implementation. Therefore, a sufficiently flexible eye for balancing specifics with the generality of rational and orderly socio-political engineering and policing is necessary for a nearly flawless and accurate exercise of legal authority.³⁷⁴

In short, Pak was questioning whether the Americans, if they seriously believed in democracy, had the sincere courage and will to adapt its principles strictly on their own terms to the specific country they were claiming to govern. If the American military government was the only legal government in southern Korea, then the military government was logically claiming that it understood the ideal balance between Democratic principles and local adaptation as an expression of upholding the will of the Korean people. Universalism could only be a legitimate creed if it understood that its fundamental essence was constructed through an addition of national Democratic interests, and each interest in turn had to follow the majority opinion of the nation's popular will. Thus, Pak and Arnold's disagreement was between a holistic universalist interpretation and a nationalist deconstructionist interpretation of the scope behind the application of Democratic principles.

Arnold, still unable to overcome his distrust of Pak as a Communist lackey, inquired how Pak was "related with the People's Republic."³⁷⁵ Pak replied that the People's Republic "was a political school, an educational institution dedicated to instructing the virtues of patriotism

³⁷⁴ Raeff, *The Well-ordered Police State*, 45-46, and 115.

³⁷⁵ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Lieutenant-General Arnold," November 13, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

and anti-Japanese nationalism" and in this respect, was a "highly compatible institution capable of cooperating with the American military government."³⁷⁶ The American military government had to accept "men such as Yŏ Un-hyŏng and other Leftists" who were sincerely dedicated to helping the Americans "formulate correct policies which would win the hearts and minds of the Korean people," and if criticism was "necessary to forcefully impose the morally right instructions," the Communists "would never shy away from providing the most incisive and often vehement criticism."³⁷⁷ A highly uncomfortable but seemingly unperturbed Arnold merely replied that if there were any criticisms, they "had to be directed to me [sic] before addressing them to anyone else to gain proper and sincere attention."³⁷⁸

In other words, Pak was arguing that Communists were not necessarily antagonistic to the American military government if the latter invested time to listening how close the Communists' demand was with that of the people, for the exclusion of pro-Japanese collaborators was not a uniquely Communist sentiment but a popular sentiment which bore no ideological color for or against democracy. By offering this seemingly politically neutral topic as a common ground of interest between the Communists and the American military government, Pak was hoping to smother the acute antagonism between the Left and Right such that the American military government would not be a sitting duck, feeling perpetually unwelcome as a foreign occupier.

Nevertheless, the meeting ended in mutual disappointment because by suggesting that all criticisms had to be directed entirely to his attention, Arnold was revealing his discomfort with the possibility that Pak might be having other plans up his sleeve and hence, could not be

³⁷⁶ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Lieutenant-General Arnold," November 13, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

³⁷⁷ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Lieutenant-General Arnold," November 13, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

³⁷⁸ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Meeting with Lieutenant-General Arnold," November 13, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

trusted until Pak interpreted his request as a serious test of Pak's courage and openness to verify whether he was ready to forfeit his unrelenting and dogmatic attachment to Communism. Most importantly, Pak's meeting with Arnold also ended in a disastrous failure without any concrete promises because the meeting once again confirmed that old habits die hard, and Pak was not completely ready to make any concessions to any individual who held opposing views, and Pak was not keen on letting Arnold, who was an inferior to Hodge, enjoy that exceptional luxury until Pak could renegotiate with any Rightist on Pak's own terms.

When a person "reads" into another person's personality through spoken words, he may not know everything about the era which produced the person's personality, but the "reading" can still be an effective barometer in determining how much consistency and veracity there will be to determine the person's trustworthiness, or lack of it. Ultimately, it was Arnold who was more precise and accurate in reading Pak's personality than the converse, and it took less than a month to confirm this fact. The situation did not bode all too differently between Rhee and Pak from the first time they had met, since the determination and conviction with which they held onto their original rigidly paralleling beliefs were so robustly strong; the two men failed to reconcile differences a month later, with Pak still refusing to understand why Rhee would "continue to support the Provisional Government which still has detestable DPK elements who were all pro-Japanese collaborators and even when the government of the People's Republic is soundly established."³⁷⁹

Put differently, Pak questioned how Rhee could still call himself a nationalist if his allies had betrayed the nationalist cause and were merely masquerading as opportunistic Democrats. Pak could not understand how ideological differences could be so great to become a yardstick with which one could dishonor and vilify Communists who had fought for the common cause

³⁷⁹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Yi Sŏng-man Paksawaŭi Tupŏncche Taetam," (Second Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee) November 16, 1945, *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

of nationalism just as Rhee himself had used diplomacy to achieve the same end.³⁸⁰

Rhee defended himself against Pak's accusation that he was unqualified to support the Provisional Government because he had spent too many years overseas to properly assess and genuinely identify with the anti-Japanese sentiment of the Korean public. Rhee argued that he was "right to support the Provisional Government" because he had "spent an entire diplomatic career searching for Korea's independence."³⁸¹ In Rhee's view, if there was anything obstructing unification, it was "first and foremost the People's Republic and absolutely no other."³⁸² The meeting was abruptly discontinued, and both men vowed to never see each other throughout their lives. In short, nationalism and bureaucratic expediency were two bulls locking horns, with neither willing or allowing to let each other free.

On the surface, the meeting marked the definitive end of any alliance between Pak and Rhee, as the two would never face each other for the rest of their lives. However, what is more significant for historical analysis is the main source of disagreement between Rhee and Pak—the question of whether the interpretation of north Korea's political identity and national liberation were compatible. For Rhee, the pursuit of a dictatorship was fundamentally at odds with a nation's quest for liberty from oppression. In addition, Rhee believed that the supremacy of Communism was the north's only objective behind unification, devoid of any plans for a real liberation of the entire peninsula. By contrast, Pak was insisting that given the Communists' long historical commitment to a revolution for independence against the Japanese, the northerners had an equal and even greater right than Koreans who had spent much of their lives overseas like Rhee, because Pak distrusted Rhee's ability to truly comprehend the desperation and urgency with which Communists had risked their lives in

³⁸⁰ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Second Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," November 16, 1945. *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

³⁸¹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Second Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," November 16, 1945. *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

³⁸² Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Second Meeting with Dr. Syngman Rhee," November 16, 1945. *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 2.

China to actually combat Japanese militarism with rifles and bullets instead of pen and paper. At a deeper level, nationalism directly confronted a situation in which the historical gravity of national treason pitted against the sentiment of centralized administrative power and the need to rebuild a nation's bureaucracy purely based on expertise. The bitter conflict which ended in an inconclusive draw most importantly suggested that the Left-Right divide was not merely a problem of ideological difference. There was also a deeper institutional question of whether a nation's bureaucracy was a historical creation whose present had to necessarily be changed from a sinful past, or whether bureaucratic rejuvenation at the expense of entirely dismissing the historicity of nationalism was worth pursuing.

However, the CCP, incensed by Arnold's unrelenting insistence on the American military government's status as the only legitimate government in Korea, directly rejected his claim. On November 22, the party congregated all of its members and announced a statement refuting Arnold's opinion. Yang Kok-chae of South Chōlla Province argued that the People's Republic was a government representing all of Korea and had to receive a joint consultation from both the Americans and Soviets, meaning that it was not "subject to the American military government's independent counsel."³⁸³ Yi Ku-sōn of South Kyōng-sang Province called Arnold's decision "a grave affront to the Korean masses."³⁸⁴ If there was anything to be changed, it had to be the American military government's title into the "Korean branch of the American military."³⁸⁵ In its official communiqué, the CCP declared that the American military government had no right to "change the Korean People's Republic in any capacity or form," and if it attempted to do so, it would have to "bear full responsibility for leading a considerable number of Koreans into exile to Manchuria and Siberia, if necessary."³⁸⁶ In

³⁸³ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 132.

³⁸⁴ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 133.

³⁸⁵ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 134.

³⁸⁶ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 135.

essence, the CCP believed that Arnold had overstepped the bounds of his authority and severely insulted the Korean people by attempting to deprive them of the right to name their own government and that the only rational choice that the Korean people would make was to go into exile until the American military government discontinued its disrespectful and domineering behavior.

Pak Hŏn-yŏng, by contrast, was dissatisfied with only blaming Arnold because he believed that Rhee's obstinacy against firing pro-Japanese collaborators was the real obstacle to the durability of the People's Republic. Therefore, Pak did not shy away from going so far as to accuse Rhee of being a "Korean Goehring" and an "old Fascist" who did not understand the essence of nationalism and its contribution to a moral and democratic government.³⁸⁷ When Pak heard news of Rhee's decision to announce an official statement in support of the trusteeship only because "Korea trusted the Americans," Pak furiously lashed out against both Rhee and the American military government, questioning whether they seriously cared to understand the intricate relationship between Korean anti-imperialist sentiment and adapting democracy to reflect it.³⁸⁸ In a long speech delivered on Christmas Day, Pak intensely criticized Rhee's "dubious intent in opposing the trusteeship."³⁸⁹ More specifically, Pak pointed out that the "Soviets and Americans would eventually enter into Korea as liberators," and it was proper for Koreans to equally welcome and respect what they had done for the country's independence.³⁹⁰ Furthermore, Pak criticized Rhee for being an "old Fascist" who did not really understand the nations which Rhee was criticizing for being undemocratic. Pak argued that countries such as China were dealing with the aftermath of liberation from Japanese military fascism, for which a swift redistribution of land was being instituted with

³⁸⁷ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Han Nŭlkŭn P'asist e taehan Pip'yŏng," (A Critique of an Old Fascist) December 23, 1945. *Chwaik Sakon Sillok (Real-Time Records of Leftist Cases), Vol. 1* (Seoul, south Korea: Investigation Bureau of the Prosecutor's Office, 1965), 47. Hereafter abbreviated as *RRLC*.

³⁸⁸ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "A Critique of an Old Fascist," December 23, 1945. *RRLC, Vol. 1*, 47.

³⁸⁹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "A Critique of an Old Fascist," December 23, 1945. *RRLC, Vol. 1*, 47.

³⁹⁰ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "A Critique of an Old Fascist," December 23, 1945. *RRLC, Vol. 1*, 47.

"utmost haste."³⁹¹ By contrast, Rhee seemed too busy "wasting his time criticizing others while not implementing any effective measures to take care of imperialism's banalities in Korea."³⁹² Instead, because Rhee "was keen on excluding everyone except for Rightists" in reconstructing Korea, his dictatorial tendency was like that of "a Goebbels or a Mussolini."³⁹³

The comparison of Rhee to the Nazi and Italian Fascists is especially noteworthy because what Pak was really implying was Rhee's refusal to elevate nationalism into an instrument to foster an almost religious unity among the Korean people. Indeed, Pak believed that national reunification was synonymous with "ethno-reunification" aimed at fulfilling four objectives—a "complete obliteration of all pro-Japanese collaborators, performance of concrete actions for the welfare of the people, development of Korea into a peaceful rather than a "formal" democracy which does not harbor any malicious intent toward other nations, and finally, the founding of a government filled with people who understand, if not identify, with the CCP because it had been a committed enemy of Japanese imperialists."³⁹⁴ In other words, Pak was annoyed with Rhee's refusal to understand the problem of national unification as an ethno-historical problem while being so eager to singularly interpret national unification as a matter of ideological unification. Pak's urging that Rhee must not pardon pro-Japanese collaborationists was therefore, in Pak's view, not only a Communist agenda but a nationalist one, since that was the only means to establish a genuine democracy that not only respected parliamentary elections but also shunned imperialism because it was anathema to most Koreans who had suffered long and hard from its brutality.

Indeed, even Japan's staunchest supporters of imperialism harbored great enthusiasm for imperialism's potential to promote Japanese nationalism and rapid economic growth rather than

³⁹¹ Pak Hön-yŏng, "A Critique of an Old Fascist," December 23, 1945. *RRLC, Vol. 1*, 47.

³⁹² Pak Hön-yŏng, "A Critique of an Old Fascist," December 23, 1945. *RRLC, Vol. 1*, 47.

³⁹³ Pak Hön-yŏng, "A Critique of an Old Fascist," December 23, 1945. *RRLC, Vol. 1*, 47.

³⁹⁴ "Pak Hon-yŏng, "Minchuchuŭi Minchok Chŏnsŏn Kyŏlsŏng e taehan Chosŏn Kongsantangŭi Kyŏnhae Palpyo," (Pak Hön-yŏng Announces the Chosŏn Communist Party's Views on the Formation of a Democratic Nationalist Front) *Chayu Sinmun*, October 31, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1*.

the creation of an empire for the sake of Japan's geographical expansion. As historian Miles Fletcher (1979) points out, the Japanese attraction to Fascism during the Showa period was not so much rooted in the totalitarian character of the system, but Fascism's zealous emphasis on nationalism and social welfare as a public cult. Indeed, philosophers such as Ryu Shintaro and Miki Kiyoshi were inspired by Fascism's encouragement of industrial productivity, reduction of unemployment rates and realization of a trade balance without incurring the negative impact of inflation. For many Japanese intellectuals, it was Fascism's functional promise of enhancing economic growth and social welfare rather than totalitarianism that was most attractive.³⁹⁵

In other words, Pak, who must have encountered the Japanese comprehension of Fascism through his extensive reading in his early years, was implicitly criticizing Rhee for misunderstanding the intellectual and social dimensions of Fascism but nevertheless fervently wishing to ignore Democratic elections and preserve a dictatorship, making him worse than even the Japanese. Pak was also criticizing the lack of utility behind Rhee's greed for power because he was not exercising his power to effectively address the problem of what national liberation must amount to. In Pak's eyes, Rhee was only keen on opposing Communism for opposition's sake without understanding that the urgency of defining the essence of national liberation through the implementation of concrete policies such as land reforms and redistribution.

Pak also expressed his discomfort at Rhee's lack of clear standards by which one could distinguish friend and foe when Rhee himself did not give a precise definition of "liberation." Pak thought it was impossible for one to welcome Americans who actually signed the trusteeship and yet oppose the very document which allowed Americans to initially enter

³⁹⁵ Miles Fletcher, "Intellectuals and Fascism in Early Showa Japan," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (November, 1979), 47 and 49.

Korea as liberators. As a Marxist, Pak was incredulous at Rhee's refusal to realize that history operated as an integrative process involving the interplay of social and political forces and that class struggle, especially against a bourgeoisie who had collaborated and sold off Koreans to the Japanese, was the essential core of Korean nationalism.

In essence, Rhee was a fascist in Pak's eyes because Rhee was intent on interpreting proletarians as dispensable individuals who were only valuable if they supported him and not as members of the proletariat—a class legitimately comprising Korea's socio-economic structure. As Karl Mannheim would argue, history for Rhee seemed to be too much of an instrumentalist expedient—a story of a central elite around which a vanguard exists to protect the elite and the masses only mattered insofar as they were liable to psychological manipulation. Consequently, the fundamental problem, in Pak's view, was that Rhee himself was too obsessed with interpreting and maintaining "order" as an ideological tool such that he was negligent about defining or prioritizing nationalism.³⁹⁶ Rhee was unclear on what he wanted to oppose because Rhee had conflated the trusteeship issue into a matter of ideological expediency, thereby misinterpreting the true pragmatic purpose for which the trusteeship was originally agreed: the implementation of democracy as a measure to restore order and discipline for a stable and unitary Korean government.

More specifically, he was ambiguous and capricious in his attitude toward Communists. Rhee had already promised that he would consult Communists on economic decisions two months earlier, but then announced that he would decline the Communists' offer of the CCP chairmanship because recovering "full sovereignty and avoiding another humiliating enslavement at the hands of foreigners" was the most urgent task confronting Korea.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 124.

³⁹⁷ "Yi Sŭng-man, Kongsanchuŭicha e taehan T'aeto Palp'yo," (Syngman Rhee Announces His Attitude Toward Communists) *Maeil Sinpo*, October 26, 1945. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 1; "Yi Sŭng-man, Inkong Chusŏk Cheŭi Kŏchŏl,"

However, Rhee revised his position yet again by late November toward a more blatant anti-Communism. He stated that while he "supported the Communists somewhat, respecting their credit as independence activists against Japan and as proponents of social welfare," they were guilty of "considering Russia as their homeland," whereupon they are "free to leave Korea, never to return."³⁹⁸ The best method to fight Communists was to "consider even fathers and brothers as enemies if necessary, and discard all pro-Soviet gestures for the greater public good."³⁹⁹

Thus, Rhee was arguing that supporting Communism was a treasonous act because he considered it not only as an expression of an urge to change one's nationality from Korean to Soviet, but also an unfilial urge to sever familial ties. Rhee thought that Communism embodied a negation of patriotism and ethics and was therefore an anathema to Korean sensibilities. However, from the Communists' perspective, Rhee had made an error of exposing his insincerity and duplicity. Since Rhee displayed three drastically different attitudes toward Communism in just a little over a month, it was very difficult to tell which position was reflecting Rhee's real mindset—the CCP's Central Commission went so far as to call this ambiguity "a political decoy to conceal his risky intent of providing a wide theater which could entertain pro-Japanese collaborators and national traitors."⁴⁰⁰ Hence, in his critique about Fascism, Pak was expressing his disbelief at Rhee's ambivalent attitude toward Communism and simultaneous refusal to change his stubborn and myopic anti-Communism. Pak was also criticizing Rhee's unreasoned reliance on the Americans, which seemed incomprehensibly so abrupt and steadfast compared with Rhee's initially capricious attitude

(Syngman Rhee Declines Offer for the Presidency of the People's Republic) *Chayu Sinmun*, November 8, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1.*

³⁹⁸ "Yi Sūng-man, 'Kongsanchuūicha e taehan Naūi Kwanchōm' Palp'yo," (Syngman Rhee Announces 'My Perceptions About the Communist Party') *Seoul Sinmun*, November 23, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1.*

³⁹⁹ "Syngman Rhee Announces 'My Perceptions about the Communist Party,'" *Seoul Sinmun*, November 23, 1945. *TRKAHD, Vol. 1.*

⁴⁰⁰ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 128.

toward Korean Communists.

Pak's distrust of the Americans was by this time an old theme, for he had personally heard Arnold provide a rather cold bureaucratic justification behind employing pro-Japanese collaborators. Pak was disappointed that Rhee, purporting to become the leader of Koreans, could so easily parrot the American rationale without giving much thought to how Korea must eliminate vestiges of Japanese imperialism. With regard to eliminating traces of Japanese imperialism, Pak thought that the Soviets were preferable as liberators because the Soviets were at least trying to advise north Koreans to perform land reforms and eliminate the pro-Japanese bourgeoisie in accordance with Communist theory. If the problem was the possibility of the Soviets creating a separate country, Pak asked, could it not be said that the Americans were trying to partition the country as well, whose method was different only as "two sides of a coin would be called different?"⁴⁰¹

Pak criticized Rhee's duplicity in hypocritically justifying the endorsement of the American military government's occupation of Korea as a "security measure" while fuming about the Soviet occupation of the north as an "illegal takeover," questioning why, at the very least, Rhee would not be "frank enough to admit that both the Americans and the Soviets are fundamentally imperialists in a foreign land."⁴⁰² Finally, Pak criticized Rhee's duplicity of maintaining the political form of democracy while betraying political substance by employing pro-Japanese collaborators—a theme which echoed his critique of Rhee's pro-Japanese cabinet three months earlier. Pak questioned for whom did such a "pretentious democracy" matter, and if Rhee still believed that his administration served the people, then Rhee was committing a great sin, for "democracy" would only make the world view the Korean people

⁴⁰¹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "A Critique of an Old Fascist," December 23, 1945. *RRLC, Vol. 1, 47.*

⁴⁰² Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "A Critique of an Old Fascist," December 23, 1945. *RRLC, Vol. 1, 47.*

as a "laughing stock" and "severely dent Korean national dignity and pride beyond repair."⁴⁰³

The Rhee Administration, incensed with Pak's persistent rejection of the Rightist vision of democracy, sought to finish what it perceived as an annoying and a tiresome debate by solidifying its rejection of the trusteeship. It quickly released its official oppositional statement toward the Moscow Conference, arguing that the decision to administer trusteeship was a clear violation of national self-determination, that Korea "was not a country for which any of the Moscow Declaration's points would sufficiently apply," and finally, should the trusteeship be actually implemented, it would "gravely threaten the security and peace within East Asia through the introduction of foreign troops."⁴⁰⁴ Put differently, the Provisional Government was alarmed that the Moscow Conference had presented a major bulwark to realizing Korea's genuine political independence, but also had confidence that Korea was ready to take care of her own affairs and therefore, any attempt to govern on Korea's behalf was not an act of friendship, but one that would severely disrespect Korean sovereignty and the unnecessarily disrupt the balance of power in the post-war East Asian international order.

In essence, the central question which defined the ideological content of the Pak-Hodge and Pak-Rhee struggle was, how can a compromise between democracy as a political structure be compatible with nationalism as a spirit? On the surface, Hodge and Pak's answers seem to simply suggest that it was strictly a matter of establishing a hierarchy of principles. For Hodge, democracy was more important as an immediate solution to the severe chaos and disarray in which Korean politics found itself. Since there was no meaningful opposition to the Rhee Administration and because there was yet to be a formal democratic election, Hodge believed that he had no choice but to pragmatically choose bureaucratic efficiency and expertise over

⁴⁰³ Pak Hön-yōng, "A Critique of an Old Fascist," December 23, 1945. *RRLC, Vol. 1*, 47.

⁴⁰⁴ "Sint'akt'ongch'i Pandae Kukmin Ch'ongtongwōn Wiwōnhoe Sōngmyōngsō," (Official Statement of the Committee for the Total Mobilization of Citizens Against the Trusteeship on Opposing the Moscow Conference's Decision) December 28, 1945. *IDFTYSL* 34.

nationalism and patriotic governance aimed at reflecting the Korean public's demand to remove all pro-Japanese collaborators from the Rhee Administration immediately.

In other words, expediency and professionalism were the core values of Hodge's political ethics insofar as the organization of a properly functioning bureaucracy was concerned—a highly technocratic and pragmatist approach to government. By contrast, Pak rejected Hodge's priority of maintaining the hierarchical order between restoring Democratic order and bureaucratic efficiency. Rather, he favored eliminating Japanese collaborators first and then worrying about choosing the most upright politicians with thorough nationalist credentials, "nationalist" largely implying long years of service in the Korean Independence Army or affiliated organizations resisting Japanese colonialism. Efficiency was a secondary concern, for, in Pak's view, unless the government was under the control of dedicated Communists who had demonstrated their nationalism on the battlefield or under the control of moderates who shared such nationalist sentiment, efficiency could not be guaranteed. In Pak's view, pro-Japanese collaborators could never guarantee or claim their legitimacy by pledging to adhere to the public will because their collaboration with the most hated enemy had earned them enough public ire as "bastardly turncoats."⁴⁰⁵

Put differently, Pak considered bureaucratic efficiency as an auxiliary concern which would naturally be addressed properly by politicians with the morally correct nationalist consciousness, ensuring that these politicians were directly communicating with the public's demands. Fundamentally, because Pak had advertently mixed nationalist rhetoric with Communist fervor—a blasphemous act against orthodox Marxism—he had "Koreanized" his rhetoric as a populist gesture and used it a critical advantage over Hodge, who was, in the eyes of most Koreans, another foreign administrative occupier replacing the Japanese under the euphemism of "liberation." The most decisive difference between Hodge and Pak's

⁴⁰⁵ An Chae-sǒng, *Pak Hǒn-yǒng: A Biography*, 297.

rhetoric was the latter's appeal to nationalism as an emotional authority, which, as Pak already knew too well, rested deeply and firmly within the hearts and minds of the Korean people. Moral correctness had superseded bureaucratic-governmental correctness, and therefore, Hodge, who had prepared "freedom" as his lucky punch to knock out Pak, ended up replying nothing as Pak offered "nationalism" and "anti-Fascism," values which democracy could also accept if it was a political system desiring to reflect the will of a people long oppressed under harsh imperial rule.⁴⁰⁶ In short, Hodge's first and only debate with Pak had ended in defeat and just confirmed that there would be almost no possibility of agreement or reconciliation.

3. Conclusion

This chapter showed that the CCP's opposition to the trusteeship was an amalgamative response to the Hodge's Orientalist assumption that Koreans were incapable of thinking and governing for themselves. The substance of the opposition was, as the examination of Pak's acerbic relationship with the American military government, Syngman Rhee, and Pak's essays proved, borne from an intricate mix of anti-imperialism, anti-Japanese nationalism, and staunchly pro-proletarian, anti-Christian, and Communist outlook. It was this complex web of motives which did not allow for Pak to easily reconcile with Rhee and Hodge's anti-Communism. Pak was impatient and frustrated with Rhee and Hodge's inability to comprehend the need to consider Korean anti-Japanese nationalism while pursuing Korea's national reconstruction. For Pak, national reconstruction was akin to a complete erasure of all vestiges of Japanese imperialism, whose cruelty and monstrosity Pak painstakingly critiqued in the essays examined in this chapter.

Yet, what seemed to Pak as a sign of ignorance about Korea's internal affairs was, especially for Hodge, a calculation based on the Cold War's geopolitical *realpolitik*. Hodge felt that he had no obligation to understand how that mixture operated during a time when the

⁴⁰⁶ An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 297-298.

most important international problem was winning the war against Communism. Naturally, from Hodge's view, given Korea's geographical size and his understandable lack of knowledge about Korea's pre-colonial history, due to the fact that Korea had annalists but no historians, the anti-imperialist sentiment must have seemed a relatively trivial concern. In his confrontation with Hodge, Pak ought to have considered it fortunate that Hodge was more inclined to admit that the positive aspect of Pak's personality left him with no words to discourage what Hodge saw as Pak's unrelenting commitment to nationalism rather than Communism *per se*.⁴⁰⁷ However, Hodge's acknowledgement of the positive aspect of Pak's personality was by no means a sign of acquiescence to Pak's demands but rather largely a product of Hodge's own high self-esteem about his military experience and conviction about the Soviets' deliberate failure to uphold their agreement with the Americans.

While Hodge may not have understood Pak perfectly, Hodge's acumen in distrusting the Soviets would prove to be a double-edged sword, for while he would correctly foresee the collapse of American-Soviet negotiations during the incredibly tedious and lengthy Moscow Conference, it was also an acumen which would fatally symbolize a lack of ideological flexibility due to an inability to understand the need for a non-ideological unification of Korea. In this sense, it was an acumen which would also prove to be a fatal omen to the tragedy of an ideologically torn south Korea, leading the Americans steadfastly commit to policing Communism, an intensity which would invite an equally impassioned CCP to organize its own camp of southern Communists to launch a heated and bloody insurgency. So what were the cornerstones that facilitated the acceleration of such political polarization in south Korea? To answer this question, a critical analysis of the centrist politician Yō Un-hyōng's non-ideological interpretation of national reconstruction, the Communist infiltration into Yō's

⁴⁰⁷ Pak Hōn-yōng, "T'ochi Kaehyōkūl wihan Chonghapchōk Chean," (A Comprehensive Proposal for Land Reform) in *The Complete Works of Pak Hōn-yōng*, Vol. 2.

National Reconstruction Council, and how the CCP perverted the NRC into a Communist hotbed to launch a "nationalistic Communism" intensified a Manichean political order is necessary; only then can we understand how a southern Korean War began with a rejection of non-ideological unification and erupted into a heated conflict between the CCP and the American military government. A critical examination of these issues will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

"Unitary Socialism," the Communist Infiltration into the National Reconstruction Council, and the Intensifying Divergence of Views on Nationalist Reconstruction

"Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone;
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
But has trouble enough of its own.
Sing, and the hills will answer;
Sigh, it is lost on the air;
The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
But shrink from voicing care.

Rejoice, and men will seek you;
Grieve, and they turn and go;
They want full measure of all your pleasure,
But they do not need your woe.
Be glad, and your friends are many;
Be sad, and you lose them all,—
There are none to decline your nectared wine,
But alone you must drink life's gall..."
Ella Wheeler Wilcox, "Solitude" (1883; 1890)⁴⁰⁸

1. Yō Un-hyōng's "Unitary Socialism" as a Vision for Korea's Independence and the Significance of Yō's Walkout from the Korean Provisional Government

Although he lost the rhetorical boxing match with Pak Hōn-yōng, only two months later, Hodge realized that his stance from the debate was not incorrect. The Moscow Conference had ended without definitively promising anything—a barking dog without a bite.⁴⁰⁹ However, Hodge probably had very little to complain about, for he had been listening to the Right more eagerly than to the Left ever since the day he arrived in Korea. Moreover, for a joint American-Soviet trusteeship for five years was better than having no trusteeship or a Soviet-dominated one because it satisfied four key American assumptions: a Korea under Soviet control was a security threat to the U.S.; Korea was not a country capable of self-government; a joint administration of Korea was preferable over a unilateral one; a trusteeship

⁴⁰⁸ Ella Wheeler Wilcox, "Solitude" in *The New York Sun* (February 25, 1883) and Ella Wheeler Wilcox, *Poems of Passion* (Chicago: Belford-Clarke Company, 1890), 131-133.

⁴⁰⁹ James Jong-soo Lee, *The Partition of Korea after World War II: A Global History* (Palgrave-MacMillan, 2006), 86. See also 69-91 for further analysis on the Moscow Conference's outcome. The problem of which country would dictate the terms of the trusteeship would occupy American and Soviet political thinking on Korea until 1948. On this point, see Hak-joon Kim, "The American Military Government in South Korea, 1945-1948: Its Formation, Policies, and Legacies," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring-Summer, 1988), 66-75.

was preferable under the condition that American military intervention in Korea was possible should the Soviets attempt to eclipse American influence in the country.⁴¹⁰ However, in a Korean's eyes, the American agreement to a trusteeship might seem hypocritical if the Korean learned that the Americans had "scrambled" into Seoul from Okinawa not because the Americans wanted to quickly subjugate the Japanese and liberate Korea, but because they were concerned that the Soviets might occupy Korea first.⁴¹¹ As philosopher Béla Szabados (1979) argues, while a hypocrite may use tricks to deceive others, the deception *itself* becomes the hypocrite's main weakness.⁴¹² This weakness not only exists but also, as philosopher Hannah Arendt observes, "boomerangs back" to the hypocrite because the hypocrite cannot avoid identifying with the role to play-act and therefore, is "no less a victim of his own mendacity than those who he sets out to deceive."⁴¹³ In short, the hypocrite is a captive of his own hubris and pride, one who wants to prove himself too much to appear virtuous and magnanimous to others out of the hope that he can convince himself of his own virtue.

The Americans had to face a distasteful truth that they had entered Korea harboring fundamentally a contradictory objective that yielded no space for any joint cooperation.⁴¹⁴ They wished to implement "democracy" which in principle upheld the open participation of all parties in Korea, but actually only accepted Rightists because of their staunch anti-Communism. Having already heard Pak's flat refusal to cooperate in finding a solution to this perplexing problem, Hodge now confronted the problem of finding reliable political consultants in Korea. It was going to be extremely difficult, for it meant finding a reliable Korean partner in a country where Rightists were numerous but had very few nationalist

⁴¹⁰ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 1, 114.

⁴¹¹ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 1, 125.

⁴¹² Béla Szabados, "Hypocrisy," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (June, 1979), 195.

⁴¹³ Arendt, *On Revolution*, 93.

⁴¹⁴ An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 142.

credentials to win the Korean public's approval and Leftists were fewer in number but fiercely devoted to an ideology that could possibly invite Soviet intervention at the worst.⁴¹⁵

In other words, the Moscow Conference had exposed a bitter irony about a seemingly simplistic situation of choosing an ideology that best suited a country's interests. Since the Manichean contest was fundamentally about the irreconcilable exceptionalism and extremism with which Americans and Soviets zealously defended and praised their respective ideologies, any element that sought to combine or bridge the two different ideologies was equally anathema to both parties, for it meant acknowledging some benefits of the opposing ideology. If such acknowledgement became more desirable than furthering contestation, there was the danger of falling into a state of nihilism about what the correct path for Korea ought to be since thorny common denominator found in both the Korean Left and the Right was a strong attachment and commitment to nationalism and purifying Korean politics by eliminating pro-Japanese collaborators, a thoroughly nationalist problem with no definitive ideological color. This was a fundamental challenge to the Cold War paradigm which perplexed Americans who had entered Korea without knowing anything about the historical position of anti-Japanese sentiment, whose roots extended beyond the Cold War and existed since the Three Kingdoms period.⁴¹⁶ The arrival of colonial rule in the 20th century had developed this sentiment into an intense form of nationalism, whose strength refused to acknowledge any ideological boundaries.

As much as the American military government had its own reasons to agonize over answering this dilemma, Yŏ Un-hyŏng (1886-1947) also had a good reason to be increasingly frustrated with Pak and Hodge's uncooperative attitude. Although Yŏ was a committed believer in a unified and non-ideological Korea, he was willing to openly discuss with Pak

⁴¹⁵ An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 142.

⁴¹⁶ George Sansom, *A History of Japan, 1334-1615* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961), 265.

and Hodge because he was a cultural and political liberal. Born in Yang-p'yŏng County, Seoul, Yŏ Un-hyŏng received training primarily in the Chinese classics, but he was also an avid learner of English under the encouragement of his grandfather, a former court official under the last king of Chosŏn, Kojong (1852-1919).⁴¹⁷ A daring social progressive who liberated his family's slaves by burning property documents, Yŏ held a firm belief in a literally egalitarian democracy which would respect every individual as a human being and grant them equal rights to political and social participation regardless of gender, class, and wealth. He believed that as long as democracy upheld these precepts, it did not need to engage in any sense of comparison, either to flaunt its superiority or overcome its inferiority against any other political system.⁴¹⁸

What mattered most was how democracy could become more democratic by involving diverse political parties to fully reflect the spectrum of public opinion. To that end, Yŏ believed that the most healthy democracy was one that was approximate to what would now be called a "Scandinavian model." As it will be elaborated later in my discussion of the September Lobby, Yŏ envisioned a democracy in which the Left, Right, and Center would cooperate to build a politics which emphasized social welfare political diversity and efficiency through a swift consolidation of harmonious consensus, which could sufficiently deliver the will of the majority.⁴¹⁹ Since Yŏ perceived democracy as a methodological system of good governance rather than a competing ideology, it is unsurprising that Yŏ thought both Pak and Hodge were deluded; meaningless bickering about whether one form of "democracy" was better than another would offer nothing but mutual hatred. Incorporation and harmony were more necessary than accusations of national treason against the Right, for Pak's strategy of attacking the Rhee faction with anti-imperialist rhetoric would invite more unnecessary

⁴¹⁷ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 46.

⁴¹⁸ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 47.

⁴¹⁹ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 48; Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 191.

animosity from the Right. Furthermore, with the Americans essentially possessing actual administrative and military control, Yŏ knew that the only realistic solution for the Left was to work toward uniting with the Right to form a joint coalition and work toward restoring Korean self-government.

A more fundamental reason behind Yŏ's consideration of Left-Right cooperation as the only plausible solution was due to his discomfort with the conception of Left-Right antagonism itself. Although he, like Pak, desired the expulsion of pro-Japanese collaborators and had established the Alliance for National Reconstruction in 1944 to promote a "great union" of the Korean people, Yŏ was by no means a strict Leftist, or like Pak, an orthodox Communist.⁴²⁰ After briefly participating in the March First Movement, he refused attempts by the Japanese to lure him into becoming a pro-Japanese collaborator by first hiding in the French Consulate in Beijing and then shunning all Japanese attempts to indoctrinate him about the benefits of Japan's rule over Korea.⁴²¹ He returned to Korea and led an illustrious career as a diplomat and served as a Korean representative to the Versailles Conference, while continuing to work as a renowned independence fighter in Beijing. Yŏ joined the original CCP in 1921 because he believed that the party was institutionally "ready to deliver a truly egalitarian socialism" to the Korean people; he served as a prolific translator of major Communist texts, becoming the first Korean translator of Marx's *Communist Manifesto*.⁴²²

Although he had served in the Korean Provisional Government until 1919, he was disgusted with the government's perversion into a Rightist hotbed under the influence of members such as Syngman Rhee and Kim Ku rather than functioning as a unifier of the Korean people. After he threw a chair at Kim Ku for being a hypocrite and an insincere

⁴²⁰ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 79.

⁴²¹ Emily Anderson, *Christianity and Imperialism in Modern Japan: Empire for God* (New York and London, England: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 166-167.

⁴²² Choi Sang-yong, "Yo Un-hyŏngŭi Sasangkwa Haengtong," (Yŏ Un-hyŏng 's Thoughts and Actions) in Yi Su-sŏng and Paek Nak-ch'ŏng et. al, eds., *Yŏ Un-hyŏngŭl Malhanta (Discussing Yŏ Un-hyŏng)* (Seoul, south Korea: Arūmtaun Ch'aek (Beautiful Books), 2007), 66.

Democrat bent on fermenting needless conflict by rejecting non-ideological unity with the Left and clandestinely supporting a Right-wing dominated government, Yŏ never met or spoke with Kim Ku or Syngman Rhee for the rest of his life, a choice which the other two men also had little difficulty in making.⁴²³ Yŏ's walkout from the Provisional Government effectively marked the genuine beginning of an eternal breakdown of what could have been a firm political alliance between the Right and Center, a phenomenon which has not appeared in South Korean politics ever since.

2. The *Taehan* Controversy

Yŏ was especially annoyed with the Rightist insistence on the label *Taehan*, which he felt was historically inappropriate because it was "inauspicious for a country to name itself after an 'empire' ransacked by Japanese imperialists."⁴²⁴ Supporters of the label such as Kim Ku and the Shanghai clan employed the following logic to justify their claim:

"The dynasty had ruled Korea for over five centuries and thus, has deep roots. Lee Wan-yong and the Eul-sa Five sold the country to the Japanese, but King Ko-chong sent envoys to the Hague Peace Conference and worked tirelessly for Korean independence. When His Highness passed away, the majority of the people grieved in genuine sorrow, and therefore, all Koreans must hold the royal household in high esteem."⁴²⁵

The Rightists were arguing that the royal household had sufficient historicity that could garner much respect from the people and that the termination of this history was not a responsibility of the royal household as a whole, but the responsibility of a few individuals who wished to sell the country to the Japanese to earn private favors. Since the royal household worked hard for Korean independence in accordance with the will of the majority of the Korean public, holding the royal household in high esteem was a Democratically acceptable duty. Historicity and responsibility to fulfill the popular will were two central merits for which the royal household could demand respect.

⁴²³ Chŏng-sik Lee, *Taehanminkukŭi Kiwŏn (The Origins of the Republic of Korea)* (Seoul, south Korea: Il-cho-kak Publishing, 2006) 139-140.

⁴²⁴ Choi Sang-yong, "Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Thoughts and Actions," in Yi Su-sŏng and Paek Nak-ch'ŏng eds., *Discussing Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 66.

⁴²⁵ Yŏ Un-hong, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng* (Seoul, south Korea: Ch'ŏnghakak, 1967), 41.

By contrast, Yŏ and the Beijing clan gave the following reasoning:

The Chosŏn dynasty committed more sins than it provided services to the Korean people. The royal household's humiliating acquiescence to the Eul-sa Treaty's demand to 'take the country (Korea) and her people under the custody of the Meiji Emperor' is an undeniable sin to both the state and the people. The fact that all those who received aristocratic privileges from the Japanese were either affiliated or directly related to the royal household is a grave affront to justice and akin to destabilizing the fundamental cornerstones of the Korean state. These are also reasons why it is improper for anyone to uphold the royal household in high esteem. People grieved when His Highness passed away not because it marked the passing of the royal household but because it symbolized the Korean state's demise into oblivion, and the remorse and vengeance toward the Japanese produced such immense grief."⁴²⁶

Yŏ and his supporters were pointing out that the royal household lacked sufficient popular legitimacy because it not only complied with the most serious crime of selling the country to imperialism facilitated by no other than five most traitorous Koreans who had cooperated with Japan in exchange for titles of Japanese nobility. In addition, the Korean Emperor Kojong himself only made an ostentatious and highly inefficacious attempt to reform Korea by assuming the title of emperor, which, as an American observer remarked, did not add "an iota to the king's intelligence nor increase the strength of will which he so notably lacked."⁴²⁷

In other words, this measure was not a highly judicious exit strategy for a country facing continuous waves of mounting foreign imperialistic pressure, but was merely a measure to elevate the monarchy's status to render it impervious to any criticism or reform which could amount to a total obliteration. It was nothing more than a ceremonial attempt to express a desire to distance the monarchy away from the people such that self-preservation became both the means and ends, with no goal of alleviating the lives of Korean plebeians suffering from inflation of grain prices and endless corruption. Yŏ was arguing that Kojong's passing was effectively akin to the demise of the state because the accompaniment itself was the ultimate price of the royalty's failure to realize that it had to actually choose the preservation of state sovereignty by appealing to nationalism to have any hope of extending the royalty's survival as a noble patriotic companion to the people. The hubris of individual greed to eternally sip

⁴²⁶ Yŏ Un-hong, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 42.

⁴²⁷ Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 38.

the nectar of power had intoxicated the elixir of the Korean state by inviting the Japanese and their collaborators to pollute it by manipulating and decapitating Korea's capabilities as an independent and autonomous nation.

As if this negligence was not enough, the royal household went so far as to willingly celebrate the surrender of sovereignty by requesting that most of the royalty's members become Japanese subjects. This decision was, in Yŏ's view, akin to demolishing one's home with one's own hands. Yŏ and his supporters rejected the Rightists' claim that people were grieving for Kojong's passing as a passing of an individual, but instead suggested that people were agonizing over a more holistic communal death of the state, rendering the grief of the people not merely as an emotional sadness, but a definite sign of patriotism arising from the fall of a nation. For the first time in Korean history, monarchical pageantry was inferior to the honor of the Korean state, for without a home which the people could call their own, there was no point in serving a king who had no land over which to claim or exercise regal authority.

Furthermore, in Yŏ's view, *Taehan* had no historical depth and historical legitimacy because it was not, as was the case with "Koryŏ" taken from the Koryŏ Dynasty (918-1392), which became the basis for the name "Korea," a traditional name.⁴²⁸ Instead *Taehan* was a name "under which the Korean royalty took refuge after the Qing Empire was defeated in the War of 1894 against Japan," and was therefore nothing more than "a useless veneer to hastily denote 'independence' which was but a bastard child of a war between two foreign powers."⁴²⁹ For Yŏ, *Taehan* was not only unhistorical because it had no clear historical precedent but was

⁴²⁸ Roh T'ae-ton, "Hankuk Minchok Hyŏngsŏng Sikiron," *Hankuksa Siminkangchwa*, Che 20 Ho ("A Theory on the Formation of the Korean as an Ethnic Group,") in *Public Lectures on Korean History*, Vol. 20 (Seoul, south Korea: Ilchokak Publishing, 1997), 179-180.

⁴²⁹ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Minchŏnŭichangurosŏui Yŏnsŏl," (Speech Delivered as the Chairman of the Democratic Nationalist Front) (1946, uncertain month and day) in Yi Su-sŏng and Paek Nak-ch'ŏng et. al. eds., *Discussing Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 368-369.

also illegitimate because it was not the name of a country which had exercised full sovereignty while choosing it. Rather, it was a name passively conceived to reflect an affected air of independence that was actually decided upon by foreign powers which had contested over the right to rule Korea.

Yō was also claiming that the "modern" idea of nationhood had to shift its lexicographical focus from a symbol of monarchical sovereignty to popular sovereignty. Korea had always been a nation and was never an "imagined community" which only became conceivable with the advent of the printing press and the nation-state as a form of polity, but the idea of representation had to be modernized in a more Democratic fashion to emphasize that the Korean people, inclusive of the monarch, communally determined the autonomy and independence of Korea as a sovereign state. The people, based on ethnic commonality, rather than the dynasty, based on the traditional assumption of a monarch's singular right to centralize governmental sovereignty, had to become the metonym of the state.⁴³⁰ This does not mean that Korea was *reinvented* into a "modern" country or nation, or that Korea lacked an identity as a nation-state prior to the outbreak of the war. It just means that there was a transition to a new mode of expressing the *communal* sense of nationhood, since Koreans had already addressed each other as compatriots by calling each other "Koryōin," (members relating to Koryō) to identify themselves as members of the Koryō state.

⁴³⁰ For example, one can use the term "early America" to express a communal idea of cultural and by extension, national difference from Britain, even though we know that the American nation-state did not exist until 1776 (or 1789, when "people" acquired a more communal meaning than the originally individualistic and somewhat nebulous European sense of the term.). Hence, Carter Eckert is wrong when he asserts that Koreans had no sense of nationhood prior to the 19th century, for Koreans did address each other as " Chosōnin" (people of Korea) because Koreans were long accustomed to substituting the dynastic name as that of the country, symbolizing monarchical power as a matter of geographical ownership (land) and as a matter of governmental sovereignty (figurehead for managing state affairs). See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, England, and New York: Verso, 2006) for his theory on the formation of the nation-state, and Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1789* (Chapel Hill, and London, England: University of North Carolina Press, 1969;1998), 606-615 on the transformation of the definition of "people" in the American national lexicon, and Carter J. Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: The Ko'ch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995) for a discussion of modern Korean nationalism.

In short, the Rightists' and Leftists' debate was about the true essence of the state, or more specifically, how the state ought to be represented, and Yŏ could be seen as favoring the interpretation of the state as an organic system, rather than the property of one individual. It was a clash between a privatized and public relationship between patriotism and the state, with Kim's clan interpreting patriotism to rest in the authority of a select few and Yŏ's clan interpreting patriotism to rest in the loss of a public home of all Korean people in a geographical sense.

Thus, for Yŏ, *Taehan* was an improper name for Korea because it did not sufficiently capture the essence of an independence won autonomously from imperialism. In short, Yŏ believed that Korea had to be a popular democracy run by politicians with affections for the people and also simultaneously those who the people genuinely admired and loved; these politicians had the duty to make Korea into an "ethnocracy" in which Korean historical nationalism was the core value which united the Korean people as one country.⁴³¹

3. Historical Ethno-nationalism and "Unitary Socialism"

Yŏ was frustrated with Kim Ku's refusal to reflect the authenticity of Korea's historical national heritage in the official name of the country. If Kim was content with defining nationalism as an identification with a group of people based on a common political self-identification as a group willing to inherit a Korean Empire which was borne out of Japanese pressure, Yŏ favored embracing a nationalism of "cultural self-determination" based on an appeal to common historical experiences from which Koreans can independently define distinctive ethno-cultural parameters for achieving a sense of Koreanness.⁴³² If Korea was to be a truly liberated country, she had to learn to reject a name which bore the imprint of Japan's

⁴³¹ Lasswell and Kaplan, *Power and Society*, 210.

⁴³² Ronald Grigor Suny, "The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, 'National' Identity, and Theories of Empire," in Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 23-66.

attempt to deny Korea's historicity through the assistance of pro-Japanese traitors. Furthermore, Kim Ku's comfort with a shift from a dynasty to a nation-state merely through a titular change frustrated Yŏ because it accepted the legitimacy of Japan's involvement in discontinuing Chosŏn's heritage through its replacement with a highly artificial and unhistorical name of *Taehan*. For Yŏ, this was akin to denying the fact that even though Japan sought to consistently portray Korea as despotic, feudal, and backward after *Taehan* was adopted, Kim was content with ascribing significant continuity to the ominous legacy of an imperialist interpretation of history.⁴³³

In other words, Yŏ believed that a people's ethnic consciousness was much deeper than nationhood, and the existence of nationhood did not immediately create nationalism in the Korean perception. Rather, nationalism could be the basis for a people to exercise the liberty to change the status of a country into a nation-state, but the converse was impossible because the former had a latent timelessness which could accept the possibility of choosing the latter, whereas the latter had no reason in itself unless it appealed to the former. Korean nationalism was already well alive by the time the Imchin Wars against the Japanese (1592-1598) had erupted because Chosŏn was an inheritor of Korean national unity which had existed ever since Koryŏ became known as "Korea." Moreover, Admiral Yi Sun-sin had first urged that "all soldiers are one under the name of *Chosŏn* (Korea); fight to thy death, and thou shalt live, fight as though thou would live, and thou will surely die. Those who wish to defend this country(*nara* in Korean) even at the cost of exchanging their lives, follow my lead!"⁴³⁴ In

⁴³³ On the relationship between imperialism and an ideologically imperialist interpretation of history, see Romila Thapar, "Ideology and the Interpretation of Early Indian History," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Winter, 1982), 389-411.

⁴³⁴ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 170-171; Yi Sun-sin, "9wŏl 15il, 1597nyŏn," (Entry of September 15, 1597) in *The Complete Works of Yi Sun-sin* (4 volumes). Yi Sun-sin (1545-1598) was and still is the greatest naval war hero and strategist in Korean history, never suffering a defeat in 23 battles against the Japanese during the Im-chin War (1592-1598), until his death on deck at the waters of No-ryang, near Namhae Province at the southern end of the Korean Peninsula. He is also notable for being the first person to publicly use the purely Korean term "*nara*" (country) which positioned Korea against Japan as though the war was fought between the

short, the Imchin Wars was first major incident in which Korean nationalism was born in reference to another nation. Such antagonistic nationalism importantly suggested that the Korean people as a community was specifically tied to the fate of the nation, rather than to the royal family, signifying that Korea was no longer solely the private estate of the monarchy, but a public and societal space whose sanctity lay precisely in the fact that the lives of the Korean people depended on it.

Therefore, as a staunch nationalist, Yŏ had little difficulty in believing the continuity of Chosŏn, for its death was brought about by the savagery of Japanese imperialism against the Korean people's will. Furthermore, because the Korean public, like Yi Sun-sin, had sacrificed themselves in resisting Japanese rule ever since its inception, Yŏ believed that the Korean people had the right to inherit Yi's noble echo of nationalistic fervor. Yŏ believed that "United Korea" (*Tongil Chosŏn*) was a more favorable term because "Korea was a country that Koreans had long ruled as Koreans with perfect historical autonomy."⁴³⁵ In other words, Yŏ believed that his label for Korea was simultaneously modern and historically legitimate because he was emulating Yi's unitary spirit of nationalism.

"Historical autonomy" shows how Yŏ believed that a country's people had to collectively uphold, what sociologist Craig Calhoun (1993) calls the "sanctity of historical nationalism" derived from the country's name to truly declare themselves sovereign. This is why even though Yŏ was a Leftist and sympathized with Lenin's call for a proletarian struggle against imperialism, Yŏ did not share Lenin's view that historical and dialectical materialism had primacy over national historical conditions. Rather, Yŏ believed that the converse was true:

Korean state and the Japanese state, thereby originally presenting a formal articulation of modern Korean nationalism. For a detailed discussion of the Imchin Wars and the rise of Korean nationalism, see Ja-hyun Kim Haboush, *The Great East Asian War and the Birth of the Korean Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

⁴³⁵ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 172. Yŏ was referring to the Japanese-led establishment of the Korean Empire (1907), which began a *de jure* Japanese colonial rule of Korea.

Marxist dialectics had to be adapted to reflect a nation's unique historical situation.⁴³⁶ History, as a non-ideological and collective creation borne from the hands of the people was *the* chicken which laid the egg of national sovereignty.⁴³⁷

Nevertheless, while Yŏ's decision to promptly leave the CCP to search another organization that would allow him to realize his meaning of "history" was correct, his subsequent decision to join the CCP to continue that search, was not. Instead of allowing Yŏ to concentrate on fighting the Japanese under a unified banner of the Left, Pak Hŏn-yŏng seemed only interested in Communist indoctrination until the party had to close down because the Japanese police arrested Yi Tong-hwi, the CCP's head of treasury and most officials for embezzling the party's funds.⁴³⁸ An immensely disappointed Yŏ had no choice but to walk out. After resuming his duties as the Chairman of the Federation of Korean Residents in Shanghai, Yŏ went to Taiwan in 1924, where he was briefly a member of the Wampo Clique (predecessor to the Blue Shirts Society) under the leadership of Jiang Jieshi. However, Yŏ was again disappointed, for he soon became disillusioned with the harshly Manichean conception of Jiang's anti-Communism. After hearing news of the Shanghai Massacre in 1927, a furious and frustrated Yŏ walked out of the Blue Shirts Society a year later.⁴³⁹

The more original a mind, the more inclined it is to solitude; Yŏ's critique of the Provisional Government would be the utmost source of evidence that Rightists would use to mark Yŏ for death.⁴⁴⁰ Yŏ left all three parties because of the myopic Left-Right antagonism he saw in these organizations. That divide was just incompatible with his unique and sophisticated neutral approach to Korean unification—"Unitary Socialism"—what Bruce

⁴³⁶ Choi Sang-yong, "Yŏ Un-hyŏng: Kŭi Sasangkwa Haengtong," (Yŏ Un-hyŏng: His Thought and Actions) in Yi Su-sŏng and Paek Nak-ch'ŏng eds., *Discussing Yŏ Un-hyŏng* (Seoul, south Korea: Beautiful Books, 2007), 66.

⁴³⁷ Craig Calhoun, "Nationalism and Ethnicity," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 19 (1993), 225. I am arguing that Yŏ's belief is similar to what Calhoun is arguing in this entire citation.

⁴³⁸ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 177.

⁴³⁹ Kim Sam-ung, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 178.

⁴⁴⁰ Aldous Huxley's quote from an interview in 1962.

Cumings (2005) has called "a mixture of Christianity, Wilsonian Democracy, and Socialism."⁴⁴¹ Yet, "Unitary Socialism" was not merely an amalgamation of diverse ideologies; it was an integrative philosophy which sought to neutrally unite both Left and Right, encouraging both sides to mutually cooperate under the banners of "humanism" and "egalitarianism," best shown in his poem "Zhuxi's Joke for a Visitor." (1943) Yǒ delivers the idea concisely and clearly with his superb command of the lyricism and philosophical succinctness of classical Chinese poetry:

人我人, 我不喜 (people I people, I am not happy)
 人我不人, 我不怒 (People I not people, I am not angry)
 我人, 人我不人, 我人 (I people, people I not human, I, human)
 我不人, 人我人, 我不人 (I am not human, people I human, I am not human)
 欲知我 人不人, (Wish to know me, people not human)
 我人, 我不人 人之人不人 (I am human, I am not human, people's human not human)
 人我不人欲怒知之 (people I am not human, learn to be angry from knowing)

Yǒ translated the poem as follows:

"Even if people call me human, it is no cause to be happy;
 Though some may say I am not human, it is no cause for me to express fury.
 If I am human, though others may say I am not so, I still am human.
 If I am not human, even if people may say that I am, I still am not human.
 To know whether I myself am a human, first know whether those who call me 'human' or 'not human' are themselves human."⁴⁴²

At first glance, the meaningless repetition of "people-I-people-I" gives the impression that Yǒ wrote a poem as a lingual experiment on how many sentences one could create with just "I" and "people" (the character "人" can also be translated as "human," depending on usage). However, since Yǒ's poem is written in classical Chinese and consists of a simple repetition of just a few characters, the poem requires a grammatical transliteration of "people" in "human" to make the delivery of the philosophical message of humanism smooth. Moreover, Yǒ's frequent use of "人" is an important feature of the poem because it is this character's frequency which determines the grammatical logicity of the poem, compelling the reader to alternate between "human" and "person" in a plural

⁴⁴¹ Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 191.

⁴⁴² Yǒ Un-hyǒng, "Chuchayukaekmun," (Zhuxi's Joke for a Visitor) (1943) in Yi Ki-hyǒng, *Yǒ Un-hyǒng: A Biography* (Seoul, south Korea: Silch'ŏn Publishing, 2004), 317.

or singular sense. The frequency of "人" is also important because it is the frequency which delivers humanism as the essence of the non-ideological nature of "Unitary Socialism." The *modus operandi* to convince the reader that human beings deserve respect because they are communal rather than individualistic beings. The contextual flexibility in interpreting the meaning of the character determines the philosophical depth of the poem. By rendering a word's frequency in appearance as the ultimate measure of its importance, the poem succinctly and elaborately captures the centrality of the human and the sanctity of respecting individuality—a dual function which arises from the fact that "人" can both mean "person" as an individual or "human" as human being, the latter denoting a condition of having humaneness. In other words, the dominant appearance of this character clearly demonstrates how importantly "Unitary Socialism" prized a healthy mutual respect for individuality as the basis for political and social harmony.

Thus, the status of "人" as the pivot of the poem's meaning proves the character's irreplaceable nature; likewise "Unitary Socialism" sought to integrate both the Left and the Right because Yō firmly believed that humanism cannot be replaced by a greed for political power, for the latter only promotes needless conflict and survives by destroying the former. "Unitary Socialism" also understood humanism as the condition of establishing the individual as an independent self-perceptive being, for the third line suggests that the idea of being capable of becoming a human being rests not on the judgment of others but that of one's very own. The final line complements the third line and reveals the respect "Unitary Socialism" had for the Christian precept, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."⁴⁴³ Holistically, "Unitary Socialism" favored non-ideological unity because people can only become human when they are masters of their

⁴⁴³ Matthew 7:12.

own character and learn the wisdom of treating others as they would themselves. Such egalitarian humanism is most pronounced in the last two lines, for they suggest that the universe does not revolve around an individual but revolves with people as its axis. The very last line most notably proves this, for it emphasizes how the best leader is one who is able to understand that the condition of being human compels politicians to be equal, not superior to the people—an echo of Confucius on the art of good governance:

"In ruling a state of a thousand chariots, one is reverent in the handling of affairs and shows himself to be trustworthy. One is economical in expenditures, loves the people, and uses them only at the proper season."⁴⁴⁴

Yō even took the liberty to express his philosophy in plainer language through a brief column he submitted to a newspaper on October 2, 1945:

"It is utterly laughable. How can there be any "Reds" among the Korean people who are commonly yearning for the reconstruction of Democracy in post-liberation Korea? If everyone can participate in building Democracy, that alone is sufficient. Determining the significance of each contribution is something to be left for the popular vote. Is working for the masses, laborers, and the dispossessed a Communist activity? Well, then I shall wholeheartedly be a Communist. Divided we will fall, united, we will stand. We must get rid of antagonistic thoughts and flunkeyism to build Korea for Koreans."⁴⁴⁵

Just as Confucius emphasized the importance of a politician being the prime servant of the public good, Yō's "Unitary Socialism" stressed that performing political duties is not a privilege or a power, but a non-ideological service to enhance the betterment of society as a whole. Only with this perception can politicians truly declare themselves to be human beings and liberate themselves from the meaningless debate about whether one was a liberal while others were vile Communists. As Yō's employment of Lincolnian language regarding division and unity suggests, all had to be united in mind and soul to rebuild Korea for the people and public welfare. Yō believed that government whose central value is humanism existed purely for the service of the people; as soon as it abandoned that sacred principle, a politician was but a member of a private clique embroiled in an immoral collusion for power. Alternatively, this meant that a government of the people needed to correctly understand what the people

⁴⁴⁴ Confucius, *The Analects* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 22.

⁴⁴⁵ "Excerpt from an Article published on October 2, 1945 in the *Maeil Sinpo*," in Yi Su-Sōng and Paek Nak-ch'ōng et. al. eds., *Discussing Yō Un-hyōng*, 93. (I translated the original Korean into English; *Discussing Yo Un-hyōng* does not mention the article's title.)

desired, not what a supposedly "standard" theory of foreign origin required for its so-called proper execution. Yŏ believed that flunkeyism and antagonism were obsolete because they were primarily responsible for categorizing and isolating one group from participating in Democracy while another group reserved a "right" to construct Democracy on its own terms.

Such exclusionism was fundamentally anathema to Yŏ because it did not square neatly with Democracy's creed of embodying the entire public will, which was the source of legitimacy for ruling in the name of the people. Thus, Yŏ was uncomfortable about Pak's perverse use of Communism and the party only to counter the Rightists instead of combining heads to debate on Korea's future and to love the Korean people as Koreans—the only road for politicians to be proper human beings. This eclectic and non-ideological humanism was the basis for "Unitary Socialism," since Yŏ wanted to harmonize Socialists, Democrats, and Communists toward realizing a truly non-ideological unification of the Korean peninsula. For the sake of approximation with Western varieties of ideology, "Unitary Socialism" was a Korean version of Social Democracy, which as political theorist Ben Jackson (2013) identifies as having three major characteristics. First, Social Democracy is an "ideology committed to parliamentary Democracy rather than violent insurrection or direct Democracy," which advocates "peaceful constitutional methods as the best means to reform capitalism," and "using the mass party as the optimum vehicle to advance these objectives."⁴⁴⁶ "Unitary Socialism" resembled Social Democracy in terms of its emphasis on using populism to promote political unity and a Democracy which embraced the people's will as a supreme ideal.

Second, Social Democracy concentrates on appealing to the "people" as a whole and not simply as a whole class. More specifically, it welcomes cross-class coalitions for the sake of promoting "social patriotism," which can be realized through the equation of economic

⁴⁴⁶ Ben Jackson, "Social Democracy and Democratic Socialism," in Michael Freeden and Lyman Tower Sargeant eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 351.

redistribution with the national interest.⁴⁴⁷ This principle is perhaps the most accurate explanation for the economic philosophy of "Unitary Socialism," because, like Social Democracy, it put social equity as the basis for its understanding of humanism and, as it will be shown later, Yŏ advocated a total redistribution of land in favor of the workers and peasantry, although he had to compromise with the wealthy pro-Japanese capitalists for the pragmatic purpose of engineering rapid economic growth. In short, "Unitary Socialism" was unique for the Korean political climate because it strived to achieve a humanistic understanding of capitalism by advocating a pragmatic balance between capitalistic growth and socio-economic egalitarianism.

Finally, Social Democracy relies on Democratic infrastructures such as congressional legislation and government policies to advance its goals, and "Unitary Socialism" was a close cousin to Social Democracy because although it was a Left-wing ideology and was somewhat at odds with Rightist Democracy because it did not like the latter's anti-Communism, Yŏ did not believe that Democratic institutional structures were faulty, but instead trusted them to cater to his socialist agenda without damaging the proper exercise of Democratic governance through radical means such as overthrowing the government altogether, as anarchism would support. The only demand he had for Democracy was that it had to strengthen the emphasis on "Demos" to focus on adhering to the demands of farmers and workers.

4. Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Intent Behind Founding the NRC and the Communist Infiltration of the NRC as the First Defeat for "Unitary Socialism"

Hence, Yŏ Un-hyŏng was frustrated with the Americans because they refused to understand this message, perceiving "Unitary Socialism" as a philosophy which was

⁴⁴⁷ Jackson, "Social Democracy and Democratic Socialism," in Freedman and Seargent eds., *Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, 352.

completely at odds with Washington's anti-Communism.⁴⁴⁸ From Yō's point of view, the Americans' failure to understand the feasibility of his vision was beyond any reasonable comprehension. Shortly before the Americans came to Korea, as chairman of the National Reconstruction Council (*Kōn-kuk Chun-pi Wi-wōn-hoe* in Korean) he had successfully convinced the Japanese to leave immediately after their surrender would have international recognition and the official legal guarantee of restoring perfect Korean sovereignty, upon which the Japanese had to unconditionally leave. In addition to this patriotic concern for the protection of Koreans from potential Japanese harassment which could exacerbate Korean-Japanese relations, Yō was also very eager to experiment on his idealistic "Unitary Socialism" once more, as if to repent for his supposed error of absolutely breaking ties with Kim Ku. The "Precepts of the Council for National Reconstruction" clearly reflected Yō's mixed desire to portray nationalism and simultaneously publicize "Unitary Socialism:"

1) All individuals and factions will spiritually and morally unite under the will to revive the necessary amount of strength to fully recover from Japanese imperialism.

2) Cooperate with the "Anti-Axis" Powers [sic] and join the anti-Japanese front; exterminate all pro-Japanese elements who are keen on obstructing Korea's path to absolute independence.

3) Devote all resources of the Japanese Government-General to the liberation of the Korean masses.⁴⁴⁹

The first precept is reflective of Yō's urge to equate "morality" with the nationalistic fervor of recuperating enough national potential for liberation. To that end, the erasure of factionalism—the horrible memory which must have been deeply engraved within Yō's mind from his stint with the KCP. In connecting the desire to do away with a personally distasteful memory with the public duty to eradicate Japanese imperialism, Yō was keen on uniting his personal ambition of realizing a faction-free Korea, or rather a non-ideological Korea for the

⁴⁴⁸ Hence, "Unitary Socialism" is Socialist in being a middle-of-the-road ideology and unitary in trying to unite the Left and Right for the purpose of transcending, and ultimately, eliminating the very concept of ideological division. The facts mentioned thus far explain why Conservative political scientists such as James Jongsoo Lee are wrong to contradictorily and erroneously assert that Yō was "popular with American officials *despite* being pro-Soviet"—an egregiously incorrect and heavily ideological interpretation of a man about whom further research is much desired. See Lee, *The Partition of Korea after World War II*, 102. Italics are my emphasis.

⁴⁴⁹ "Kōnkuk Chunpiwiwōnhoe Kangryōng," (Precepts of the National Reconstruction Council) August 15, 1945. Quoted in Yō Yōn-ku ed., *Naŭi Apōchi, Yo Un-hyōng (My Father, Yō Un-hyōng)* (Seoul, south Korea: Kim-yōng Publishing, 2001), 144.

national moral good of overcoming Japanese imperialism. Yō was literally proclaiming his personal belief in the mutual recognition among the Right and the Left of the need to eradicate Japanese imperialism's baneful legacy as a public good, and was expressing the hope that the latter would completely replace the former—the essence of "Unitary Socialism." In other words, the idealism of "Unitary Socialism" had found its ultimate political *purpose* behind pursuing a complete national liberation.

The ambition to combine the personal ideal of "Unitary Socialism" with the pragmatic objective of fulfilling complete national liberation logically explains the necessity of the second precept. What is particularly notable about the second precept is its use of double antagonism to denote a positive product. The condition of being "anti-Axis" rather than "Allies," as it was more commonly known, is reflecting a Korean and an anti-imperialistic identification which is perceived as a necessary condition to realize the goal which is absolutely positive in its result but expressed in an antagonistic language to express the motivation of "being opposed to the Japanese."⁴⁵⁰ In other words, the "double antagonism" is transformed positively by expressing a uniquely Korean sentiment that justice was absolutely about opposing the Japanese with no alternative choices. National liberation was a positive goal built through the amalgamation of a negative means, just as the combination of two minuses in consecutive fashion becomes a plus in mathematics, as in $-1-(-2)=1$). The negative combination of joining the "anti-Axis" forces to achieve the positive goal of national liberation by joining the forces' anti-Japanese struggle is logically maintained in the final precept. "Liberation of the masses" cannot be done in and of itself, but has to depend on and claim the national right to the redistribution of privatized national wealth to the public.

As the second precept demonstrates, the negativity of claiming something away from an

⁴⁵⁰ Yō Un-hyōng, "Kōnchunūi Sōngkyōkkwa Samyōng e taehan Tamhwa Palp'yo," (Statement on the Nature and Duties of the National Reconstruction Council) August 18, 1945. *Maeil Sinpo*, TRKAHD, Vol. 1.

oppressor is interpreted as the necessary condition for the absolutely positive deliverance of socio-economic justice. However, it is also interestingly simultaneously rendered into a political right, because divesting the Government-General of its private right to control Korean public property also implies the Council's urge to delegitimize Japanese rule as a grave offense of unwarranted and unjustified private intervention. Thus, the relegation of Japanese rule as a private offense to public welfare suggests a very Korean urge to emphasize the illegality of Japanese colonial rule both in design (the construction of the Government-General) and intent (stealing public property). Only by realizing this economic liberation could political liberation be complete, which is another way of reflecting the Council's clear perception that political liberation was the end to which economic liberation was the chief means. Achieving economic sovereignty was necessary, but not more critically important than the wholesome political experience of recognizing complete national sovereignty.

In addition to such practical concerns for economic and political reconstruction, the NRC also announced that it was imperative to "continue the struggle for independence and real Democracy," because "pro-imperialist and pro-Japanese collaborators had obstructed the realization of political and social justice for thirty-six years."⁴⁵¹ The construction of a new nation was of the utmost importance, and although international forces would "rule over Koreans" the forces were nevertheless obliged to "offer their sincere commitment only to achieving national reconstruction."⁴⁵² Therefore, the NRC had the legitimate mandate to assist these forces in "obliterating feudal elements, promoting liberal economic development," a struggle "which would surely gain national approval."⁴⁵³ Put differently, the NRC, in being faithful to fulfilling these objectives, was established to foster national unity through the

⁴⁵¹ "Kŏnkuk Chunpi Wiwŏnhoe Sŏnŏnkwa Kangryŏng," (Manifesto and Precepts of the National Reconstruction Council) September 2, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 24.

⁴⁵² "Manifesto of the National Reconstruction Council," September 2, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 24.

⁴⁵³ "Manifesto of the National Reconstruction Council," September 2, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 24.

reunion of all Leftist forces to "punish pro-Japanese elements and counter-revolutionaries."⁴⁵⁴ Yet, the NRC, being just one organization out of a myriad, knew that such a feat could not be achieved on its own, and requested that "the entire Korean public cooperate with one mind and spirit to hasten the coming of a "mass struggle" against them. Victory was essential, for only after completely defeating the counter-revolutionaries and national traitors could a "genuinely Democratic government arise with the edifice of a perfect Democracy."⁴⁵⁵ To that end, all representatives of the council had to be of "revolutionary-warrior stock" who would be "welcomed with utmost propriety and respectful honor conceivable."⁴⁵⁶ Such preparations must necessarily "produce a government fully dedicated to protecting the welfare and rights of all Korean citizens," and it was for this ultimate goal that the Council was willing to "sacrifice its heart and soul" for the fulfillment of the goal would guarantee Korea's "complete and autonomous independence."⁴⁵⁷

These measures collectively suggested that the Council perceived itself as a singular *modus operandi* for Korean independence, while simultaneously announcing the steadfast belief that it was the Left, and only the Left, who had sufficient legitimacy to carry out the ideal task of securing independence of Koreans and for Koreans. The "Leftist exceptionalism" could be expressed with so much confidence and, in a sense, arrogance because the council interpreted nationalism in an unrelentingly passionate and even dogmatic fashion of a thorough punishment of pro-Japanese collaborators. The Council was also the first Social-Democratic institution, for it interpreted Democracy not as a system opposed to Communism or allying with other political factions, but purely as a means to enhance the socio-political health of the Korean public.

⁴⁵⁴ "Manifesto of the National Reconstruction Council," September 2, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 24.

⁴⁵⁵ "Manifesto of the National Reconstruction Council," September 2, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 24.

⁴⁵⁶ "Manifesto of the National Reconstruction Council," September 2, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 24.

⁴⁵⁷ "Manifesto of the National Reconstruction Council," September 2, 1945, *IDFTYSL*, 24.

For the Council, the perfection of Democracy had a stronger socio-economic intonation, since Democracy's primary, if not sole, purpose was to ensure a healthy recuperation of the citizenry's ability to meet their daily social and economic needs with utmost ease and comfort. Finally, the Council's dedication to the realization of a "perfect Democracy" was necessary because of the blatantly imperfect prematurity of Korean politics in the immediate aftermath of liberation. Put differently, "Democracy" did not have any strongly ideological orientations which aimed to disqualify opposing ideologies but had a functionalist aim of restoring order to the state and win sufficient popular legitimacy to sustain that hard-won restoration of political and social stability. Unless this aim garnered popular support, Democracy was not Democracy in the Council's eyes. In other words, Democracy was yet to have a clearly isolationist position that would become egregiously noticeable during the next three years when Democracy's objective, under Syngman Rhee's leadership, exclusively meant promoting and fulfilling through violence, the complete expulsion of all Left-wing elements, Communists, Socialists, and all neutral or non-ideological politicians like Yō.

A split verdict can be handed out about the Council's rhetoric. On one hand, the Council was the first genuine political organization in Korea operating with sufficient legal jurisdiction and a popular mandate, for it was echoing the majority sentiment of complete independence based on a thorough eradication of all hints from the Japanese colonial past. In this sense, the Council was a thoroughly nationalistic organization dedicated toward eradicating imperialism. Yet, on the other hand, an excessive concentration on promoting anti-Japanese nationalism produced a critical flaw of omitting Yō's dedication to "Unitary Socialism" which embraced a moderate acceptance of the opposition under the crucial condition and hope for mutual cooperation toward building a new nation. More specifically, the Council's fatal weakness was that it did not have any uniquely concrete program of its own and just concentrated on unifying the Korean political landscape. Consequently, it was

unclear what the Council's genuine ideological stance was. The Council was too focused on clarifying which factions had to be excluded rather than included such that it had no formal organization and was too reliant on democratic populism. Furthermore, the Council's lack of class consciousness and its literal allegiance to national reconstruction failed to specify who ought to lead the reconstruction toward which end. This ambiguity did not bode well with more extreme Leftists who prioritized a class-based alliance with the proletariat to foster radical social changes and realize a bourgeois democracy or a Communist regime.⁴⁵⁸

Indeed, these flaws rendered the Communist infiltration into the Council inevitable. From Yŏ's perspective, although he had allied with other moderate Leftist parties to build the Council, he needed a much larger organization such as the Seoul Communist Group to guarantee the Council's stability and longevity. Furthermore, since Yŏ was always wary of his decision to leave the Provisional Government, he needed a formidable base of support to counter Rightists such as Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee. Finally, because the NRC operated its Seoul branch as the central, rather than a single institution, it needed a more extensive staff to further strengthen the authority of the center. Thus, Yŏ needed to reach out to well-established Communists to help him achieve that goal, which allowed Communists to easily infiltrate into and dominate the Council's bureaucracy, with Communists accounting for 72% of the Central Commission and 75% of the Commission's prospective candidates for the next election cycle.⁴⁵⁹ Although Yŏ Un-hyŏng announced the founding of a "Korean People's Republic" on September 6, 1945, his inability to secure any firm support from the Right and his humiliating

⁴⁹⁸ Kim Kwang-sik, "Yŏ Un-hyŏngŭi Haepanghu Chŏngch'i Hwalgongkwa Inkongŭi Hyŏngsŏngkwachŏng," (Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Political Activities After Liberation and the Formative Process of the 'People's Republic') *Hankuk Hyŏndaesa (Modern Korean History) Vol. 1* (Seoul, south Korea: Yŏl-ŭm Publishing, 1985), 193-194; Sŏul Taehakkyo Inmuntaehak Hankuksa Yŏnku Wiwŏnhoe (Seoul National University College of the Humanities' Research Council for Korean History) ed., *Haepang Chŏngkukkwa Minchuchuiiminchokchŏnsŏn (The Politics of Liberation and the Democratic Nationalist Front)* (Seoul, south Korea: Se-kye (World) Publishing, 1987), 46.

⁴⁵⁹ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 43. For the composition of Communists in the Central Commission and among prospective candidates, see the Minchuchui Minchok Chŏnsŏn (Korean Democratic Nationalist Front) ed., *Haepanghu Illyŏn (Korea: A Year After Liberation)* (Seoul, south Korea: Korean Democratic Nationalist Front, 1946), 86.

"demotion" to the Vice-Presidency due to the Left-wing majority's seizure of central power led him to resent Pak Hon-yong, who had encouraged the Leftist infiltration.⁴⁶⁰

Conversely, from the southern Left's perspective, the strongly pro-Left language was an omen for the Council's eventual demise because the language became a magnet for attracting Communists such as Pak Hŏn-yŏng to the Council. In the eyes of people like Pak, the Council was just one of many institutional tools to expand a Communist-led program of political independence not only from Japan but also Americans and their Right-wing allies in the south Korean military and police. In addition, like Yŏ Un-hyŏng, Pak wanted to solidify his hold on political power to challenge the Rightist-led Provisional Government. To that effect, it was more advantageous for Pak to mutate a standing political institution into a regime rather than to found a political party because as sociologist Lester Ward (1908) observes, political parties theoretically wish to only deal with questions of principle, but these questions are susceptible to turn into questions of interest. This is because principles are some forms of action deemed advantageous to the public, but the quality of being advantageous and the judgment involved in deeming that it is so, is fundamentally a matter of interest.

Hence, principles and interests become synonymous and intelligible. A hierarchical relationship prioritizing either one over another assumes a natural air of rationality because it becomes so easy to camouflage interests into principles for the purposes of cementing one's authority. It becomes equally convenient for principles to mutate into interests because the rigidity of maintaining moral conduct for the good will of publicity can be loosened to whatever rule that fits a dictator's liking; the uncontestable nature of absolute power allows the dictator to reconfigure private predilections and whims into harshly cold, iron, and

⁴⁶⁰ Kang Chun-man, *Hankuk Hyŏndaesa Sanch'aek—1940 Nyŏndae (A Stroll Through Modern Korean History—The 1940s)* (Seoul, south Korea: Inmulkwasa (People and Ideas Publishing Company), 2004), 62.

unbreakable laws merely with a slight gesture of the hands. The most crucial advantage behind clouding the border between principles and interests is the sheer simplicity with which one can engage in deception against one's potential rivals by rendering the very order of hierarchy between interests and principles.⁴⁶¹ Even if the highest degree of intimacy between two friends can facilitate a mutual understanding of respective personalities, the vicissitudes of passions, vices, and morality can only be under the control of the individual who possesses his or her own mind since the mind dies along with the body, and the body, along with the mind.⁴⁶²

Therefore, Pak's decision to pervert the Council into a subsidiary organ for his Communist regime can be interpreted as a calculation to avoid the tiresome entanglement involved in sifting through principles and interests by singularly dictating only principles which befit a regime capable of becoming the sole and unyielding author of its own system. Indeed, Pak's comprehension of this calculation was such that, as Yō Un-hong later reminisced about his brother's surrender of the Council to the Communists, the invitation of extreme Left-wing elements proved to be a "mad polio and cerebral palsy for which neither my brother nor any moderate politician could ever succeed in finding a cure."⁴⁶³ In other words, the neutralism of "Unitary Socialism" was ironically both the Council's gift and its own curse; while it was successful in literally uniting the Left and Right, the Council's lack of ideological color made it susceptible to manipulative infiltration, and Yō Un-hong was criticizing the absence of any resolve or solution from the Council to prevent the pollution of extremism which easily perverted political unity into political paralysis resulting from an absence of a lucid agenda and program. John Hodge expressed a similar criticism with a more forthright language:

⁴⁶¹ Lester F. Ward, "The Sociology of Political Parties," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (January, 1908), 441.

⁴⁶² Ward, "The Sociology of Political Parties," 441.

⁴⁶³ Yō Un-hong quoted in Kang Chun-man, *A Stroll Through Modern Korean History—The 1940s*, 162.

"Before being stationed in Korea, an organization called the Korean People's Republic had been founded. The organization's name and activities apparently suggested that it was not a political party, that it aspired to be a government, and its leaders spread such a rumor. Among the organization's supporters include numerous patriots who spent years ceaselessly fighting and resisting against the Japanese. The objective of these patriots was undoubtedly and beyond criticism, a most splendid one. However, many Koreans misunderstood that the Korean People's Republic was ruling the country upon the organization's founding and during its operation."⁴⁶⁴

Hodge believed that the ambiguity of the Korean People's Republic stemmed from its confusing mixture of its political ideology and its official institutional status as a national government because the Korean People's Republic harbored such a strongly nationalist and also Left-wing anti-imperialist orientation that the Korean people had actually been perplexed about whether a real Communist government was already in charge of southern Korea. More specifically, Hodge was criticizing the lack of a sense of priority in the Korean People's Republic because it did not decide whether it was nationalism or Left-wing anti-imperialism which would be its true political stance. It can also be understood as a criticism of a lack of political organization because the confusion over nationalism or Communism occurred just as Yŏ Un-hyŏng had to forcedly forfeit his authority in favor of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, whose cronies had literally usurped and liquidated "Unitary Socialism" as soon as they assumed power.

Indeed, an examination of the NRC's official statement on Korea's liberation, announced on September 2 clearly demonstrated Yŏ Un-hong's point, as the rhetoric blatantly favored a Communist conception of "liberation" over the earlier draft's moderate tone. A marked difference in the new draft compared with the original was that while the emphasis on delivering national liberation still remained, there was an increased frequency in the use of "counter-revolutionaries" as specific targets to be punished. In other words, contrary to Yŏ's intention of using the NRC as a medium to congregate the Leftists to the neutral and common goal of preparing cornerstones for a new post-liberation order, the new draft unabashedly displayed a more overt anti-Japanese nationalism and a pro-Communist sentiment to pervert

⁴⁶⁴ Headquarters of the United States' Forces in Korea, "Statement from the Commanding General USAFIK," September 8, 1945. *Hankuk Hyŏndaesa Charyoch'ongsŏ (Primary Sources on Modern Korean History)*, Vol. 2: *History of the United States Army Forces in Korea* (Seoul, south Korea: Kuksa P'yonchanwiwonhoe (National Council for the Publication of National History), 2014), 176. Noted as *PSMKH* hereafter.

the NRC into an exclusive club for Communists. Furthermore, the revised declaration unabashedly and harshly criticized counter-revolutionaries for "harboring a malicious intent of sabotaging national liberation," which was a crime that could become a "sufficient condition to wage a total war against all counter-revolutionaries and emerge victorious."⁴⁶⁵

From these phrases, it is clearly evident that in contrast to the original draft announced three weeks earlier, a pro-Left, or more exactly, a pro-Communist orientation is manifest through the unforgiving malice the language harbors toward "counter-revolutionaries," which was an exclusive term to identify Rightists—supporters of Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee, as well as the American military government. Finally, the disappearance of "Democracy" or any mention of the possibility to perfect it, and the appearance of a manifest belligerence through the promise of a total victory against "counter-revolutionaries" suggests that Pak Hŏn-yŏng and his cronies had considerable influence in penning the declaration. In other words, by September, the original, ideologically neutral, and socially progressive NRC was dead, and Yŏ Un-hyŏng had effectively lost control of the organization, marked by the Communist perversion of the spirit of "Unitary Socialism" in the original draft. Pak had handed Yŏ his first crushing defeat, and as if to eternally confirm this fact, the NRC eternally closed its Seoul headquarters on September 7, 1945.⁴⁶⁶

The Right-wing DPK pounced on this incident to mount vicious criticisms on Yŏ, going so far as to call the NRC's collapse as a "matter-of-fact failure to fanatically cram a handful of eminent people into an exclusive and elitist club with no practical purpose."⁴⁶⁷ Thus, the lack

⁴⁶⁵ "Chosŏnkŏnkukwiwŏnhoeüi Sŏnŏnkwa Kangryŏng," (Declaration and Precepts of the National Reconstruction Council) September 2, 1945, in *IDFTYSL*, 24.

⁴⁶⁶ Kang Man-kil et. al., *T'ongil Chihyang Uriminchok Haepanguntongsa (The Korean People's Liberation Movement Which Aspired for Unification)* (Seoul, south Korea: Yŏksa Pip'yŏng (History and Criticism), 2000), 307-308.

⁴⁶⁷ "Hanmintang, Imchŏngwoe e Chŏngkwŏn Ch'amch'inghanŭn tanch'e mit Haengtong Paekyŏk Kyŏlŭi Sŏngmyŏngsŏ," (The Democratic Party of Korea's Statement on a Vowed Refusal to Recognize Any Other Organization or Actions Besides the Provisional Government Purporting to Represent the Korean Government) September 8, 1945. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 1.

of ideological clarity was detrimental to the NRC's sustainability because it was not clear how the purported neutralism of "Unitary Socialism neatly squared with the sudden turn to an extremist Communism—an ambiguity that the Leftists exploited to infiltrate into the NRC themselves. The gravity of this ambiguity was obvious even to most American officials who barely knew much about Korea such that John Hodge told Douglas MacArthur that the Americans might have to "denounce this party group..which will constitute in effect a declaration of war upon Communistic elements," resulting in "temporary disorders" that may take their toll by "greatly delaying time when Korea can be said to be ready for independence."⁴⁶⁸ Little would Hodge know that these words would be frightfully prescient for exactly predicting Korea's situation for the next three years.

Yet, singularly blaming the extreme Left-wing's infiltration into the NRC for Yō's failure to convince others to adopt "Unitary Socialism" misses another key element of the issue: Yō's unfeigned indifference to the highly Manichean political ambience of Communism pitted against anti-Communism. Yō was perhaps too naive about the Americans' urgency in combating Communism in Asia and was in American eyes, living in a dreamland which did not exist. For American officials keen on containing Soviet influence in Korea, such a middle-of-the-road approach was not only unhelpful but also irrelevant. In the face of a constantly high risk of Soviet invasion, cooperating with Yō seemed to be a dangerous bet, for the Americans could not find from the man any answers to how Communism must be confronted. The Soviets were busy establishing 'people's parties' and 'democratic societies' all over northern Korea, which forced Hodge to recommend Washington's revision of its original strategy of "benign supervision" with a heavily ideologically colored objective of ensuring a

⁴⁶⁸ "Telegram from Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, at Tokyo," November 25, 1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1133-1134.

"thoroughly Democratic government in Korea."⁴⁶⁹

From the Americans' perspective, "Unitary Socialism" was not only incompatible with the ideological crisis in the peninsula but also a clear obstacle to maintaining stability under Rightist dominance. Even though the Moscow Conference had separately established southern Korea as an American zone, a lack of a formal government in southern Korea other than a "provisional government" meant that Washington's interest in forming a joint commission with Moscow was highly necessary to curb any possibility of strengthening the Communist movement in southern Korea. Hence, what mattered foremost for Americans was assuring the victory of an electoral Democracy against a Soviet-inspired authoritarian "democracy of the proletariat" centered on a personality cult without losing a single soldier. The urgency behind fulfilling this objective explains why American officials thought "Unitary Socialism" critically misunderstood Democrat-Communist bipolarity, calling the ideology the ideal of an "opportunist with no political backing."⁴⁷⁰

Thus, for Hodge and his associates, Yŏ Un-hyŏng was a chicken's rib—they were only keeping him as their "important" ally only to prevent the Communists from taking over southern Korea, but the curious mix of ambition and ambiguity in his political philosophy was also the precise reason because of which Yŏ was so dispensable.⁴⁷¹ For men like Hodge who had spent most of their lives on the battlefield constantly fighting on rough terrain against

⁴⁶⁹ "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State," January 23, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 616.

⁴⁷⁰ "Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Bennington) to the Secretary of State," January 22, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 614.

⁴⁷¹ A "chicken's rib" refers to an object which brings no great profit or advantage but is equally not worth entirely discarding because of its future potential. The phrase comes from Luo Guanzhong and Moss Roberts ed., *The Three Kingdoms* (Beijing, China: Foreign Languages Press, 2008). The uniqueness of this view is apparent if we compare it with Kim Kyu-sik, a moderate. Kim was known for his staunch opposition to a separate south Korean government, but Kim was closer to a Rightist, distancing himself from even moderate Leftists like Yŏ. This moderate stance made the Americans feel more comfortable dealing with Kim rather than Yŏ or Pak. On Kim Kyu-sik, see James Jong-soo Lee, *The Partition of Korea after World War II*, 101-102, 148-151 and Bonnie C. Oh, "Kim Kyu-sik and the Coalition Effort," in Oh ed., *Korea Under American Military Government*, 103-122. For a general discussion of the American military government's policies toward Korean moderates, see Jeon Sang-sook (Sang-suk), "U. S. Korean Policy and the Moderates During the U.S. Military Government Era," in Oh ed., *Korea Under American Military Government*, 79-102.

enemies, stability did not allow for a freedom of thought whose core value was for ideological reconciliation; stability could only promise peace which sought to exclude those who dreamed of anything close to Socialism or Communism. There was no such thing as a "family" of ideologies. One could always be against Communism, but one could never respect or accept it as a companion or family member of Democracy—a dictum which Hodge later proved by closing down all Leftist papers in May 1946 and by issuing a warrant for Pak Hŏn-yŏng's immediate arrest on September 7, 1946.

In such a volatile and precariously extreme political climate, Yŏ had limited or no utility for the Americans because Yŏ only seemed to be an opportunist in the eyes of American officials. What they saw in Yŏ was a skeptic—constantly criticizing unconstructively and ambiguously the positions of opponents, yet having no solid position with which to describe or defend himself.⁴⁷² Hence, what Yŏ perceived as a strength—the potential to unify all positions towards a center—seemed like a critical sign of nebulosity and disorganization to the Americans.

Yet, while Yŏ is guilty of his inability to systematize his thoughts and perhaps of being unable to realize that, as Nietzsche argues, if an idealist's cause is to prosper, then it requires some acquaintance with "the same evil-smelling manure that all other human undertakings have need of," Yŏ was actually not an opportunist but a centrist who was constantly searching for the a genuinely neutral party to pursue his program of "Unitary Socialism."⁴⁷³ That was why, shortly after the Communist takeover of the NRC, he resigned and founded the People's Party in November to "directly inherit the noble spirit of independence" from the NRC, to found a party which could "best holistically represent the will of the people as a genuinely populist party," and to "serve as bridge between the Left and the Right by appealing to

⁴⁷² J. R. Lucas, *The Principles of Politics* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1966), 267.

⁴⁷³ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 179.

nationalism as the single unitary ideology of Korea."⁴⁷⁴ In short, Yŏ considered a political party merely as a tool to find the perfect Centrist platform which could help Koreans overcome an ideological conflict produced from what Yŏ believed to be of foreign origin and to unite Koreans as Koreans. Nationalism was the ultimate panacea for the Cold War's Manichean outlook. Actualization of political principles was more important than securing an ornamental stability of political affiliation.

However, these principles did not resonate well with American officials who were constantly wary of the Soviet Union's probable design of Communizing Korea. For men like Hodge who had spent most of their lives on the battlefield constantly fighting on rough terrain *against* enemies, stability did not allow for a freedom of thought whose core value was *for* ideological reconciliation; stability could only promise peace which sought to exclude those who dreamed of anything close to Socialism or Communism. There was no such thing as a "family" of ideologies. One could always be against Communism, but never respect or accept it as a brother or sister to Democracy—a dictum which Hodge later proved by declaring war against the CCP in December, which in turn led the CCP and Yŏ to intensify their opposition to trusteeship.⁴⁷⁵

The real tragedy was the sheer lack of American understanding of "Unitary Socialism" which forced, as Bruce Cumings points out, Yŏ to be "a man for many seasons" but not for the Manichean world of Communism or Democracy with nothing in between—one that still haunts the Korean peninsula.⁴⁷⁶ For Hodge, Yŏ was the quintessentially delusional Sorelian optimist who conceived of small reforms to the political system to meekly address relatively

⁴⁷⁴ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Inmintangŭi Sinnyŏm," (The Creed of the People's Party) November 12, 1945. *PSMKH, Vol. II*, 8.

⁴⁷⁵ Bruce Cumings, *North Korea: Another Country* (New York: The New Press, 2004), ix; Chŏng T'ae-sik (CCP Member), "Statement of Opposition to Trusteeship," *Seoul Sin-mun*, December 29, 1945 and Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Statement of Opposition to Trusteeship," *Chayu Sinmun (Freedom Newspaper)*, December 30, 1945. Adapted from Choi Sang-yong, "Trusteeship Debate and the Korean Cold War," in Bonnie Oh ed., *Korea Under American Military Government*, 20.

⁴⁷⁶ Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 471-472.

minor issues such as land reform or pro-Japanese collaboration in a highly complex contest between Communism and Democracy, presenting "Unitary Socialism" out of a self-interested vanity which could only be a thin veneer to conceal the illusion of a poor philosophy.⁴⁷⁷

5. Conclusion

In retrospect, the CCP's reestablishment on September 2, 1945 was a sign of a major frustration for Pak and Yŏ. Under Pak and Yŏ's leadership, the CCP rose in indignation against the Conservative DPK's pardoning of pro-Japanese sinners, believing that Korea's true national liberation was only complete when the sinners were thoroughly punished in the name of the people—peasants and workers. Yet, the CCP had arisen also out of disappointment, for Hodge confirmed for the Leftists that Americans needed anti-Communist Democratic allies rather than Nationalists. More specifically, Hodge confirmed the validity of the CCP's anger by authorizing the pardon and inclusion of Japanese collaborators who extended their service with the Japanese colonial administration by entering the Korean National Police and the National Assembly. From the CCP's viewpoint, the Americans had instituted a highly myopic Democracy whose sole objective was opposing Communism, completely devoid of nationalism. In doing so, they had betrayed Pak, preventing him from punishing the DPK's un-Korean sin of rebranding Japanese collaborators as patriotic Democrats.

However, Hodge and Pak had also frustrated Yŏ because they refused to understand the importance of achieving a humanist, non-ideological unity of Koreans under the banner of "Unitary Socialism." Yŏ's frustration with virtually everyone around him, especially their failure to understand the identification between restoring Korea's initial expression of sovereignty during the Im-chin Wars and rebuilding a Korea of, by, and for Koreans was never smothered by a satisfactory answer. 1945 drew to a close with a Rightist and American victory over the CCP, for they had succeeded in fulfilling their chief goal of creating politics

⁴⁷⁷ Georges Sorel and Jeremy Jennings trans., *Reflections on Violence* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 10.

without a heart or soul. In their eyes, political expediency trumped historical and popular legitimacy, blurring the line between a Democrat and a Japanese collaborator, making it impossible to tell the two apart. Nevertheless, the party believed that it *could* and did not take long to demonstrate this by intensifying its pro-Soviet support for the trusteeship and consolidating Pak's personality cult. Furthermore, although there is no such thing as absolute inevitability in historical events since no one can claim to know everything about a single event, the Communist infiltration of the NRC was perhaps the first omen of defeat for Yŏ. The failure of the NRC had exposed the immaturity of "Unitary Socialism" because the NRC's principles were perhaps aspiring to do rather too much than what Korea's reality could digest. While the Council's focus on anti-imperialism was justified, its attempt to extend its scope to redistributing land and punishing pro-Japanese landlords had neglected the Rightist concern for electoral Democracy; the attempt might require the Council's leadership of the Korean government for an indefinite period, which could invite suspicion that the Council was trying to establish a dictatorship. Such neglect meant that the ideological allegiance of "Unitary Socialism" was unclear and undecided about whether it ought to favor the Left or the Right in a more noticeable fashion. The lack of commitment to a certain side in an increasingly bi-polar world had left "Unitary Socialism" vulnerable to manipulation, and Yŏ had failed to conceive of a more internally airtight ideology which was capable of being independent and of externally defining its parameters against both the Right and the Left.

The more egregious outcome from Yŏ's failure was that the southern Communists rapidly exploited it to their advantage by choosing Pak Hŏn-yŏng as their leader to consolidate themselves into a formal institution which would express their commitment to a distinct "Communist exceptionalism." The rise of the Pak personality cult would not only mark the beginning of an effort to blend Korean anti-imperialism against Christian pro-Japanese collaborators with vestiges of orthodox Communism, but also mark the beginning of the end

for Yō Un-hyōng's political career through the CCP's permanent adoption of Communism as its only official ideology. The next two chapters will examine the consolidation of the Pak personality cult through the rise of "nationalistic Communism," through its anti-Christian sentiment, and finally, the combination of these two sentiments whose strength overwhelmed Yō Un-hyōng such that he would be forced to walk out of the party out of his own recognition of a bitter defeat.

Chapter 6

Passions Stamped on a Lifeless and Bare Pedestal: "Nationalistic Communism," The Rise of Pak Hŏn-yŏng's Personality Cult, and Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Exit from the CCP

"...Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear—
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."
-Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias" (1818)-⁴⁷⁸

1. The Rise of "Nationalistic Communism" and the Southern Left's Support of the Trusteeship

Despite Pak Hŏn-yŏng's failure to extract a meaningful agreement from his meeting with Hodge on October 27, 1945, the CCP refused to be discouraged, publishing instead a panegyric on January 15, 1946 which denounced Hodge's "hypocritical and perverse Democracy." publishing a panegyric denouncing Hodge's "hypocritical and perverse Democracy." It was hypocritical and perverse because although the Rhee faction was Right-wing and "pro-democracy" in terms of ideological inclination, in the CCP's view, it was also merely an imperial tool of the Americans to govern Leftists whom the Americans considered threatening to their authority. If imperialism is, as theorist Edward Said (1994) put it, "the practice of a dominant metropolitan center ruling a distant territory," the CCP perceived Hodge's "Democracy" as a form of imperialism because the American-Rightist "coordinative administration" was nothing more than an extended chapter of Korea's bitter history of colonial subjugation.⁴⁷⁹

Thus, inviting a trusteeship to govern the peninsula was a humiliating repetition of

⁴⁷⁸ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias," in Isabelle Quigley ed., *Shelley: Selected Poetry* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 107.

⁴⁷⁹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 9; "Hodge Chungchangkwa 'Minchuchuŭi,'" (Lieutenant-General Hodge and 'Democracy,') January 15, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 97.

Japanese imperialism because inviting the United States—a geographically and culturally distant nation to "rule" the peninsula—only served to reinforce Korea's inability to practice self-government. Should such a "major tragedy" befall Korea, Koreans incurred the risk of repeating "35 years of shame, guilt, and sadness."⁴⁸⁰ Americans had to be "resisted at all costs" because passivity would only lead to "exchanging one imperialist for another."⁴⁸¹ This would forestall "genuine progress" and prevent Koreans from becoming a "world-historical people."⁴⁸² In short, the CCP interpreted trusteeship as a euphemism for imperialism and given that Korea had already experienced nearly four decades of the despicable crime already, the CCP saw no reason to welcome an extended chapter of that painful memory.

Yet, what is interesting about the manifesto is not its literal message, but the rhetoric used to express it. The key to understanding the panegyric's anti-imperialist discourse lies in the notion of "exchange," for it reflects the CCP's consciousness about what sociologist Johan Galtung (1971) has described as a "structural theory of imperialism." It is not only geographical distance that creates alienation between two nations with an imperial relationship. Imperialism is a direct negation of Marxist historical materialism, creating a vertically stratified distinction of a core nation and a peripheral nation which easily transforms the relationship between two nations into that between a dominant bourgeoisie and an oppressed proletariat.⁴⁸³ Korea had already experienced this relationship with Japan and there was no need to repeat it with the United States. In other words, opposing the trusteeship was the party's ultimate means to protect its ideological roots and by extension, prevent the

⁴⁸⁰ "Lieutenant-General Hodge and 'Democracy,'" January 15, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 97.

⁴⁸¹ "Lieutenant-General Hodge and 'Democracy,'" January 15, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 97.

⁴⁸² "Lieutenant-General Hodge and 'Democracy,'" January 15, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 97.

⁴⁸³ Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (June, 1971), 92-93. Yet, by interpreting imperialism merely as a problem of structure, Galtung renders imperialism only as an economic condition rather than a systematic and causal form of governance. This error occurs because he omits the agency of behavior and function, which does not allow him to account for imperialistic behavior which can be shaped by events that an imperialist nation encounters, namely, the use of violence in practicing imperialism. On this critique, see Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1979;2010), 31.

repetition of Galtungian imperialism in Korean history.

However, because the Korean public largely shared the Rightists' nationalistic opposition to the trusteeship and was upset that the trusteeship was intent on "treating Koreans like barbaric monkeys," the CCP had to redress its rhetoric so that opposing the trusteeship was akin to supporting the founding of a nationalistic and an autonomous government.⁴⁸⁴ On January 3, the CCP re-emphasized its opposition to the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference, arguing that the Conference's decision would prevent the "establishment of a Korean government by Korean hands," and was an "effective and permanent bulwark against Korea's future degeneration into a colony," and finally was a "definite method to purge all remainders of pro-Japanese collaborators and obstruct the growth of Fascist forces responsible for unpredictable acts of terrorism."⁴⁸⁵ In other words, the CCP opposed the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference because it conceived the Conference as an international bulwark against the formation of purely Korean nationalistic policies, an opposition which could solidify the Communists' agenda more firmly and give the CCP a clear leverage against the DPK and hopefully end the conflicts from late 1945. Even if the CCP should find itself united with the DPK in opposition to the trusteeship, the CCP calculated that it could still enjoy the same level of popular support as the DPK and acquire a much-needed legitimacy as a nationalistic party.

In addition, if the CCP independently supported the trusteeship, it would be pitted against the popular desire for immediate independence and anti-trusteeship, which would burden the CCP with the nearly impossible task of cutting the linkage between the two desires and alienate the Korean public. Finally, if it allied with a presumably opposing party, it could miraculously weigh its hope on the possibility of mitigating the generic antagonism between

⁴⁸⁴ Lee and Scalapino, *The Communist Movement in Korea: The Society*, 359.

⁴⁸⁵ *Chosŏn Inminpo*, January 2, 1946,. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 209.

the Left and Right. Should this hope become realized, the CCP could garner greater support among the Right, which, in turn, might boost its popularity among the public for demonstrating its genuine dedication to realizing a pan-nationalist unification. With a stronger coalition under its control, the CCP could also aspire to prove itself to P'yŏng-yang that it was ready to implement a "more perfect Communist revolution" with much of the southern political landscape in Communist hands. Shortly after endorsing the Moscow Conference, the party reached out to the DPK and won an agreement to "fully support the Moscow Conference for its guarantee of Korea's independence and Democratic development."⁴⁸⁶

As much as the CCP had its reasons to criticize Hodge, Hodge has to be credited for his sincere effort to assure Koreans that "trusteeship" was not a euphemism for American rule over Korea, since Hodge pithily and accurately captured the nature of Korean concerns about the trusteeship in a statement announced in early January:

"I fully understand what 'trusteeship' means in the Korean language. If we consider the meaning you[Koreans] assign to the term, I, as a representative responsible for my country, find the term ignoble. The diplomats representing the Great Powers, however, do not use the term synonymously with the way Koreans use it. That is because these diplomats had never experienced four decades of life under Japanese colonial rule. Had they really understood your[Koreans] thoughts regarding the term "trusteeship," they would have surely employed a different term denoting their sincerity toward assisting and helping the Korean people. I can ascertain that during future discussions about Korea, I do not wish to witness any protest which would compel me to invest everything within my power for the purpose of deleting all references to "trusteeship."⁴⁸⁷

With these words, Hodge was acknowledging the undeniable fact that implementing a trusteeship over Korea was an arbitrary division of the country against the will of the Korean public but was also a reality from which "no aspect of the military government can escape."⁴⁸⁸ Nevertheless, it was also this inevitability which prompted Hodge to assure the Korean public that he sympathized with the Korean impulse to identify "trusteeship" as being synonymous with "imperialism."

Yet, as Bruce Cumings argues, Hodge was in a quandary between addressing intense

⁴⁸⁶ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 210.

⁴⁸⁷ "24th Corps G-2 Periodic Report, No. 1, January 2, 1946." Adapted from *PSMKH, Vol. 2*, 209.

⁴⁸⁸ Meade, *American Military Government*, 92. See also Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, *Summation of Non-Military Activities in Japan and Korea, 1945-1946, No. 2*, 180.

criticism about his leadership and remaining in good faith with his supporters in the U.S. State Department. Hodge was facing intense criticism from skeptical officials in the U.S. State Department who thought Hodge "needed political direction," had advisers of unsatisfactory caliber, and that Hodge had "a limited outlook of a military mind."⁴⁸⁹ Therefore, to overcome such criticism, he also emphasized that the source of difference in interpretation came from the Great Powers' inability to comprehend what living under colonial rule meant. If there was a common ground for sharing such an experience, Hodge believed that the Great Powers would have refrained from using the term "trusteeship" in a pejorative fashion. Nevertheless, the ambiguity of Hodge's final sentence must have been very controversial, for despite his sympathy with the Korean interpretation of "trusteeship," he was making it clear that he did not wish to fully commit himself toward obstructing the implementation of the trusteeship, lest it would invite commotion. Such hesitation reflected Hodge's concern that intense Korean opposition to the trusteeship might jeopardize American efforts to impose and sustain order in south Korea.

Moreover, because Hodge himself believed that cooperation with the Soviets would be virtually impossible and because many officials in the State Department shared his concern for containing Soviet influence in Korea, he could not discard his support for the trusteeship.⁴⁹⁰ Hence, Hodge wanted to lay blame on the Soviets for using the term "trusteeship" and inviting the unwanted "protests." Put differently, Hodge was suggesting that if there was no commotion within the Korean public, the American military government would still willingly abide by their original commitment to literally implementing the trusteeship by extending foreign administration for five years or possibly more without consulting or reflecting anti-trusteeship sentiments. From the CCP's perspective, Hodge still

⁴⁸⁹ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 229.

⁴⁹⁰ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 228.

did not understand that the real problem was not what "trusteeship" meant, but whether there was any prospect that an American interpretation of "trusteeship" would be any different from how the Japanese defined "colonialism" simply as a matter of "assimilation." The party was more concerned about whether the identity of the United States—a country which had been a colonial overlord herself—was trustworthy enough to make sure that the trusteeship did not resemble American imperialism in the Philippines.⁴⁹¹

Indeed, the CCP's observation of what was happening in Korea seemed to confirm that its fear of the trusteeship's degradation into a tool for the American occupation to extend, rather than end imperialism, was not unfounded. With regard to the hated prospect of indefinitely suspending the delivery of national liberation to peasants and workers due to intense American and Rightist opposition, the CCP thought that American administration was nearly intelligible from Japanese imperial rule. Indeed, the former was expected to unfold much worse than the latter because the United States' attempt to introduce Democracy was, as Pak Hŏn-yŏng put it, a scheme to turn the Pacific Ocean into an "American lake."⁴⁹² Thus, Pak was explicitly expressing his discomfort at the ambiguity of American designs on Korea with regard to whether implementing Democracy in Korea was meant solely for Korea's political stability and transparency or merely an American scheme to put Korea perpetually under American influence by exacerbating tensions between the Left and Right, which would in turn, necessitate American military presence in southern Korea to counter Soviet plans to expand Communism into southern Korea. For Pak, the mirage of ideological conflict was just a euphemistic device to justify and eternalize American imperialism in the peninsula.

⁴⁹¹ On American imperialism in the Philippines from the analytical perspective of American supervision of bureaucratic and institutional frameworks, see Alfred McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009). For American cultural imperialism in the Philippines and the centrality of race and nationalism in shaping American-Filipino relations during and after American imperialism in the Philippines, see Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and London, England: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

⁴⁹² An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 249.

However, the generally belligerent anti-Americanism that Pak had forced upon the CCP must not be understood purely as a fear of repeating an unwanted historical chapter. Ideology has the power to force a subject to live in an ideological world and allows for an active rejection and regulation of history by presenting the ideological world as the embodiment of the good life.⁴⁹³ By combining anti-Rightist and anti-American rhetoric to make Rightists' and Americans' stances intelligible, Pak and his followers made sure that their powerful appeal of nationalism emphasized the moral superiority of the party's Communism over the Rightists' feigned "Democracy." Following anthropologist James Scott's (1985) argument about material interests, if Pak's desire to prove such moral superiority is a materialized interest—one that requires gaining comparative positional advantage over adversaries—then such "positionality" is also a prize in itself, earned through an intense political struggle.⁴⁹⁴

However, to acquire "positionality," one must first fundamentally clarify one's position; Pak decided to cement his reputation as an orthodox Communist. Hence, on January 5, during an interview with the *New York Times*, Pak retracted his original opposition from two days earlier and instead, supported an extension of Soviet trusteeship over Korea, arguing that it was a "Democratic and progressive measure which, according to circumstances could be finished in less than five years."⁴⁹⁵ Pak also argued that assuming responsibility for implementing the trusteeship was a Korean problem because it was rooted in "much harm caused by long years of Japanese rule and the Korean race's failure to unite."⁴⁹⁶ In other words, Pak was arguing that the decision to implement a trusteeship was not an external matter of extending foreign rule in Korea. Rather, implementing trusteeship was more of a solution to a historically complicated internal problem of doing away with vestiges of Japanese imperialism and

⁴⁹³ John Gerring, "Ideology: A Definitional Analysis," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (December, 1997), 972.

⁴⁹⁴ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Struggle* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1985), 193-194.

⁴⁹⁵ "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 286," January 5, 1946. RG 59, Box 5.

⁴⁹⁶ "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 286," January 5, 1946. RG 59, Box 5.

intense factional disunity that had delayed the formation of a unified ethno-national state to provide a permanently stable home for the Korean people.

A big problem with the interview was that Pak had unknowingly committed a very controversial Freudian slip which bordered on being an appeasement to imperialism when Pak merely meant to delineate his opinion as disparate from the Rightists without elaborating on its implications. The American reporter who conducted the interview, S. Johnston, was a staunch follower of Hodge's anti-Communism; without Pak's knowledge or consent, Johnston unjustifiably refashioned "support" as though Pak was calling for Korea's transformation into a Soviet satellite. In essence, both Johnston, and inadvertently, Pak, had made grave errors because the trusteeship lingered as a sign of humiliation in most Koreans' minds bearing, as political scientists Chōng-sik Lee and Robert Scalapino put it, an intent to treat Koreans as inferior natives in the south sea islands.⁴⁹⁷

Given such a hostile sentiment, Johnston ought to have phrased his question carefully so he would not mislead Pak into treating the interview as an interrogation session to confirm his ideological orientation. Rather than asking whether Pak supported the trusteeship or not, which gave Pak the impression that objecting it was the only moral course possible and that Johnston was trying to corner him, Johnston could have just asked how the Communists interpreted the trusteeship and reported what the interpretation literally was. Pak was equally at fault for falling too easily into Johnston's trap, treating a question merely meant to clarify a position on an issue as a moment to publicize Communist propaganda. Had Pak been more careful about the fact that the CCP was in a numerically inferior and politically vulnerable position compared with the American military government and the Rightists, he should have just answered "yes" or "no" without specifying the reason to maintain secrecy and not expose

⁴⁹⁷ Lee and Scalapino, *The Korean Communist Movement: The Society*, 359. An explicit expression of this sentiment can be found in "Top Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," May 8, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 671-672.

such a weakness. Pak's rather too impassioned and exaggerated comprehension of Johnston's inquiry as an American military government's challenge to the party exposed the CCP's awareness of its vulnerability and simultaneously, its unabashed allegiance to P'yŏng-yang and possibly the Soviet Union. Consequently, Pak had inadvertently but also foolishly driven his own political base to a corner, making himself liable to the threat of facing immediate expulsion from the south Korean political scene.

Ultimately, using Johnston's deliberate questions during the interview, the American military government was able to obtain Pak's "confession" that he was a staunch follower of the Soviet Union, further infuriating many Right-wing groups which already felt that the Americans had "sold Koreans down the river."⁴⁹⁸ The Rightists, deciding to take matters into their own hands, easily caught and exploited Pak's erroneously reported comments, defaming Pak as a "turncoat" willing to Russify Korea—a ploy which, as American military reports later admitted, "saw Hodge's deep involvement to concoct the interview into a devious warp aimed at branding Pak Hŏn-yŏng as a definitive Soviet agent."⁴⁹⁹ "Turncoat" importantly reflected the Rightists' wish that their protest the trusteeship's "colonial" aspect of transferring sovereignty to a foreign power would solidify their supremacy in the southern Korea. Indeed, one extreme Right-wing Christian group criticized Pak's attitude in the interview "as a fast-lane ticket to becoming public enemy number one," and also "jeopardized Korean independence by supporting the trusteeship," which was "effectively an agreement to an extension of colonialism in Korea for another decade or two."⁵⁰⁰ If Pak accepted another interview bearing a "similar intent" in the future, the group vowed to "call the entire nation to arms for the complete pulverization of Pak and his despicable cronies," and warned that "all

⁴⁹⁸ Cho Han-sŏng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 99-100. See also "Secret Telegram from General Douglas MacArthur to the Joint Chiefs of Staff," February 2, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 629.

⁴⁹⁹ "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 156," February 19, 1946. *The Complete Writings of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 6*; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 224.

⁵⁰⁰ "40yŏ tanch'e Taep'yo, Kinkuphyŏpŭihoe Kyŏlŭimun," (Representative of an Organization of 40-something Societies, "A Communiqué Following an Urgent Meeting Session) January 17, 1946. *IDFTYSL*, 44.

attempts by American or Soviet media to conduct such interviews must be restricted in the most prompt fashion."⁵⁰¹

In short, the group interpreted Pak's decision as a willingness to become a Soviet puppet, criticized him as an apologist for imperialism, and considered American and Soviet media as irresponsible and ignorant for pompously thinking that they could conduct interviews which were insensitive to Korean nationalism and by extension, the importance of a hard-won national sovereignty and national pride. Most importantly, the interview had solidified Pak and his followers not only as political enemies of the Right, but a social evil which had to be eliminated for the public good of restoring nationalism. The Rightists thought that they had cornered Pak by showing him and his followers that the interview had turned Korea into a complete desert for the Communists, where searching for public support would now be akin to finding an oasis. The Rightists' vigorous criticism was a severe blow for Pak, since it meant that Pak's hope to win their support to strengthen the legitimacy of the pro-trusteeship movement as a nationalist movement had quickly terminated with the DPK's duplicity of reversing its original agreement with the CCP.

However, the Rightists had underestimated Pak's pride as a Communist. Shortly after the fiasco with the reporter from *The New York Times*, Pak published a biting rebuttal to the Rightists, arguing that accepting trusteehip was not a sin, but a "necessary strategy for the eternal destruction of Fascism."⁵⁰² The term "trusteeship" no longer had to, as Douglas MacArthur described it, "hang over Korean minds as a sword of Damocles."⁵⁰³ Rather, supporting the trusteehip was the only rational path for the Communists. Opposing the trusteehip was the real disgrace, for it exposed an ugly truth: the Rightists and landholding

⁵⁰¹ Representative of an Organization of 40-something Societies, "A Communiqué Following an Urgent Meeting Session," January 17, 1946. *IDFTYSL*, 45.

⁵⁰² "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 156," February 19, 1946. *The Complete Writings of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 6.

⁵⁰³ "Telegram from General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Joint Chiefs of Staff," December 16, 1945. *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. 6, 1146.

classes were merely hiding behind a thin curtain of "Democracy," naively wishing that it would completely conceal their shameful past as collaborators of Japanese Fascist imperialism. Their conflation of "Democracy" with "anti-Communism" was nothing more than a camouflage to conceal their grave crime as "country-sellers" and to feign blind and deaf to their despicably sin-stained souls.

Pak's such defense of the trusteeship was important because it directly countered the Rightists' charge that the party was a group of country-sellers by arguing that accepting trusteeship was not repeating a shameful history of foreign domination. On the contrary, the trusteeship was a panacea to eternally throw imperialism into the garbage can of history.⁵⁰⁴ Furthermore, Pak sought to salvage his reputation as a nationalistic Communist against the Rightists' accusation based on incorrect information and to show that supporting the trusteeship was necessary to prevent the Americans from reintroducing imperialism into a country which had already suffered enough from it.⁵⁰⁵ Thus, supporting trusteeship had a dual function of being a strategy for the party's political survival in a hostile environment and of emphasizing Communism's uniqueness as the ultimate solution to bring about genuine independence from foreign interference that distinguished it from the Rightists' and Americans' un-nationalistic "Democracy," which justified trusteeship based on national security from Communism. Such a position in Pak's view, was an oxymoron because so long as Americans were dictating the terms of "national security," there was no real progress toward protecting Korea's political sovereignty, as the Rightists had merely exchanged the nationality of the hands which controlled Korea's diplomacy from Japanese to American.

Whether or not Pak fully understood the context under which the terms for Korea were

⁵⁰⁴ It is worth noting how strikingly similar the CCP's urgency in doing away with imperialism was with Leon Trotsky's in his original use of the phrase. For a detailed discussion of the background to this famous phrase, see Bertrand M. Patenaude, *Stalin's Nemesis: The Exile and Murder of Leon Trotsky* (London, England: Faber, 2009), 193-194, 252.

⁵⁰⁵ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "P'asichmkwa Sint'akt'ongchi," (Fascism and the Trusteeship) January 5, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 88-93.

discussed in Moscow is indeterminate, since there is no evidence clearly showing his immediate reaction to the *Tonga Ilpo's* incorrect and sensationalist report about the trusteeship. However, given that Pak had blatantly expressed his allegiance to Communism, from Hodge's perspective, it was logical for the American military government to adhere to the trusteeship as a measure to police internal Communist subversion within Korea lest Pak went to the extreme of choosing violence to express his discontent toward the American military government, while making sure to limit Soviet interference in Korea and prevent Seoul from being a satellite of Moscow.

The American military government's adaptation of "anti-colonial imperialism" to the Cold War was not strange or without a precedent. The Monroe Doctrine was already sort of an American diplomatic tradition to ensure that the United States could maintain its own security and pursue national interests while defending herself from unnecessary foreign interference. The United States already had enough experience implementing the tactic on its neighbors in the Caribbean and Latin America during the dawn of the 20th century, and the tactic had been ripe for several decades. Although the geography was now very different, the Americans could simply replicate and adapt that tactic to observe its orthodox philosophy.⁵⁰⁶

After all, a little more than four decades before Hodge came to Korea, economic expansionism had been the dominant theme for American foreign policy, which assumed that the United States could pursue its economic interests in other countries without incurring the inefficient practice of direct imperial control, which would consume much human and fiscal capital. Hodge was merely in Korea to respect both "anti-colonial imperialism" and economic expansionism by adapting the latter to render Korea into a bulwark against Soviet ideological

⁵⁰⁶ Jay Winter, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth Century America* (New York and Clarendon, England:Oxford University Press, 2012) For other exemplary studies of the Monroe Doctrine, see Dexter Perkins, *A History of the Monroe Doctrine* (Boston, Massachusetts: Little Brown, 1963), Ernest R. May, *The Making of the Monroe Doctrine* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975).

imperialism. The only difference from economic expansionism was that an ideological sphere of influence would replace the classic focus on economic gains, which was probably acceptable in Hodge's eyes, since such a change was inevitable with respect to the primary weapon of Communism that the enemy wielded clearly within Korea's borders.⁵⁰⁷

In addition, the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference's only certain outcome—to issue a trusteeship—in a country about which American historical knowledge was primarily confined to post-liberation Korea, was satisfactory in terms of continuing the American diplomatic tradition.⁵⁰⁸ Indeed, the United States needed a buffer zone against potential Soviet expansion into all of Manchuria, which was an increasingly likely outcome, given that the Soviets had already controlled Changchun, the flagship city in the region since February 1946.⁵⁰⁹ There was no telling when or how the Soviets would rescind their agreement and there was much uncertainty about whether the first Soviet bullet would strike a south Korean soldier or the Americans ought to wait for the ink to dry at the negotiation table. In short, maintaining an anti-Communist order in south Korea through a trusteeship was a pragmatic option for the American military government. It not only faithfully inherited a cornerstone tradition of American diplomacy but also served as a definitive security measure against an ideologically antagonistic empire who could always intervene in Korea to show that the bullet was mightier than the pen if the Americans waited to prove the converse.

Furthermore, the first American-Soviet Joint Commission ended in a disappointing failure to reach any meaningful consensus. Although the two sides readily agreed to expand railways and coastal transportation to facilitate more rapid and consistent cultural exchanges, the Americans and Soviets only subsequently ended up agreeing on similarly mundane issues

⁵⁰⁷ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1959), 37-38.

⁵⁰⁸ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 129.

⁵⁰⁹ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 125; Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution, 1945-1957* (New York and London, England: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 4.

such as setting radio broadcasting frequencies in Korea and the establishment of a trans-national postal service.⁵¹⁰ By contrast, more important issues such as the national circulation of newspapers throughout the peninsula, the establishment of a unitary currency, and a unified broadcasting system were all ignored or postponed for a later date.⁵¹¹ In other words, the more crucial questions of how Korea was to survive on her own as a sovereign state internally by maintaining good fiscal health and as a strongly cohesive unitary community of people in regular informational exchanges with the world were completely ignored. To make things worse, the Soviet military quickly forgot about the negotiations and looted enormous amounts of rice from poor Korean families, making a Korean's search for rice akin to "looking for fish in the mountains."⁵¹² In short, the conference ended without concretely offering any solutions to key problems such as the prospects of establishing a unitary government or abolishing the 38th Parallel.

An imminent American monopoly on dictating the trusteeship's terms following the Soviets' softened stance toward using the Korean peninsula only to secure supplies of coal and electricity but not to solve the plight of many poor Koreans who could afford adequate supplies of rice further convinced Pak and his followers to qualify their support of the trusteeship.⁵¹³ More specifically, they perceived the trusteeship's plan to divide the peninsula

⁵¹⁰ "Press Release Regarding the U.S.-Soviet Joint Conference," February 6, 1946. RG 554, Box 293: United States Army Forces in Korea—U.S.-U.S.S.R. Joint Commission on Korea: Subject Files, 1945-1947: Daily Radio Reports to News Conferences.

⁵¹¹ "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," February 15, 1946. *FRUS*, Vol. 8, 636. See also "Secret Telegram from Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to the War Department, January 18, 1946. *FRUS*, 1946, Vol. 8, 612.

⁵¹² Press Release (undated), "Results of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Conference, January 16-February 5, 1946, in Seoul," 1-2. RG 554, Box 5: United States Forces in Korea G-2 Periodic Reports, 1946, 1948. On the Russian looting of Korean rice, see G-2 Document No. 347, March 9, 1946, 4, RG 554, Box 5. See also "Rice Distribution Almost Nil," March 7, 1946. G-2 Document No. 347, RG 554, Box 5 and *Chosŏn Inminpo*, "Sikryang Hwakpoüi Öryöumkwa Uriüi Yoch'öng," (Difficulties with Procuring Food Supplies and Our Requests) March 26, 1946. G-2 Document No. 366, RG 554, Box 5.

⁵¹³ John Reed Hodge, "Letter to General Chistiakov," January 9, 1946, in "Secret Telegram from Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to the Secretary of State," January 12, 1946. *FRUS*, Vol. 8, 608-609. See also *Seoul Sinmun*, "Kumchurin Kunchung, Köri Hwalpo," (Starving Crowds are Wandering in Streets) and *Seoul Sinmun*,

into Democratic and Communist spheres as an American plot to colonize Korea, and identified the American military government as the prime culprit behind the division. Barely a week after the Soviets ceded a firm foothold in Korea to the Americans, severely criticized the "mysterious intentions" of Hodge and the American military government as attempts to "stir up disorder and confusion."⁵¹⁴ Pak further argued that Hodge was responsible for conflating "Democratic" Koreans with "patriotic Koreans" when most of the Rightists in Korea did not understand the importance of eliminating Fascism. Since Hodge was a "demagogue who was bent on promoting conflict and division among the Korean people," it was pompous for the American military government to be claiming that it was promoting genuine "Democracy."⁵¹⁵

From the southern Leftists' perspective, the American decision was unacceptable because after a long period of suffering from foreign imperialism, the Leftists could not understand what other matter besides a nationalist and anti-imperialist reconstruction would be so urgent. The decision to employ pro-Japanese collaborators while redressing them as "technical experts" was not only an attempt to delay and possibly eternally forestall this reconstruction but also encouraging historical amnesia in the name of political efficiency—a decision that only invited more suspicion that the Americans were interested in making the DPK a private servant of the American military government rather than a public servant of the Korean people. In doing so, Hodge was introducing anarchy through a libertine use of the Korean military police to arrest anyone without a warrant. Such an unprincipled use of authority was doing much harm to Korean society by pushing it into unnecessary chaos and disorder. Hence, Pak wished to demonstrate to the Americans what order and discipline precisely were. To do so, Pak knew that he had to convince the party to solidify its commitment to promoting a

"Sōul Chōnki Hoesa Ssal Paekūp e taehae Ch'ōngwōnhata," (Seoul Electric Company Petitions City Authorities for Distribution of Rice) March 27, 1946. G-2 Report No. 366. RG 554, Box 5.

⁵¹⁴ "Lieutenant-General Hodge and 'Democracy,'" January 15, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 86.

⁵¹⁵ "Lieutenant-General Hodge and 'Democracy.'" January 15, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 86.

strictly Communist political culture within its own ranks.

Thus, Pak Hŏn-yŏng chose to balance his anti-Americanism with Communism by equating pro-trusteeship with a pro-Soviet attitude. In comparison with his earlier opposition to the trusteehip, Pak praised the Soviet agreement to the Moscow Conference's trusteehip as "the most progressive decision ever made for the Korean people," allowing Koreans to "develop a true people's Democracy."⁵¹⁶ Pak now quickly reconfigured "pro-trusteeship" into "pro-Soviet," and intensely blamed the Rightists for "purposely distorting" such a "noble intention" and for manipulating the masses to continue a "false struggle against anti-imperialism."⁵¹⁷ The real sin that the Rightist "lackeys" of Japanese imperialism had committed against the Korean people was a blind worship of Fascism, and the trusteehip would serve "the most righteous cause of completely uprooting" it.⁵¹⁸ Placing Koreans under trusteehip was not subjecting the country under foreign domination, but an opportunity for them to learn the correct path to Democracy. Supporting trusteehip was the party's interpretation of the proverb "a sound mind rests in a sound body"; it was the ultimate corrective that would ensure that a thoroughly moral politics would be practiced with the sound mind of rejecting the shameful past of Japanese colonial rule, which would in turn allow for the emergence of a sound body politic in which every Korean would prosper and enjoy liberty—the fulfillment of the people's will, and hence, of Democracy.⁵¹⁹

By blurring the identity of "supporting trusteehip" as though it had to be sandwiched between a symbol of nationalism and a symbol of a pro-Soviet attitude, the CCP sought to demonstrate its commitment to the liberation of the workers and peasantry to promote itself as a group of genuinely patriotic Koreans. Yet, the party simultaneously wanted to promote itself

⁵¹⁶ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Moskpa Samsang Hoeüüi Kyŏlchŏngŭl Chichihacha," (Let's Support the Decision of the Moscow Tri-ministers' Conference) January 16, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 97.*

⁵¹⁷ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Let's Support the Decision of the Moscow Tri-ministers' Conference." *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 97.*

⁵¹⁸ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Let's Support the Decision of the Moscow Tri-ministers' Conference," *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 98.*

⁵¹⁹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Let's Support the Decision of the Moscow Tri-ministers' Conference," *ODSKWP, Vol. 1, 97-98.*

as a nationalistic group, to monopolize political legitimacy among the people and exclude the Rightists as much as possible from claiming their share. In short, Pak's endorsement of the trusteeship walked on a precarious tightrope between supporting anti-imperialism and Communism. This risk was a gamble for Pak, for on one hand, it was a definite signal that Pak had a full conviction to diverge from the Right on interpreting anti-trusteeship as a nationalist stance, since Pak saw much hope in using the trusteeship to realize an anti-imperialistic Korea by ridding her of pro-Japanese collaborators.

On the other hand, although Pak had initially succeeded in winning the DPK's support by advertising the pro-trusteeship stance as a nationalist one, Pak stubbed his own toe by failing to conceal to the Right that he was a stubborn captive of Communism, unable to convincingly demonstrate which ideal—nationalism or Communism—had more sway in determining his stance. The publication of Pak's supposedly pro-Soviet stance on January 5 in the *New York Times* served as a clear evidence for the Rightist that their patience with his ambiguity had finally ran dry, a sentiment that the Right expressed by directly accusing Pak of being an appeaser for the Soviets. Although Pak rebutted the charge by invoking nationalist rhetoric, the CCP and the Right-wing establishment had already crossed a river of no return, a gulf which would only grow larger.

2. The Rise of the Pak Personality Cult

Once the CCP finished advertising its patriotism and nationalism, members quickly realized that a personality cult was also a key ingredient for the party to further distinguish itself as a pro-Soviet and Communist organization. As political scientist Robert Tucker (1979) argues, a personality cult catches two birds with one stone, hunting heretics and establishes political solidarity among party members through indoctrination—functions which Pak precisely needed to identify any intra-party subversives and to indoctrinate pseudo-Leftists of Pak's

unquestionable authority.⁵²⁰ Furthermore, the definition of "establishing a political party" itself signifies a commitment to obliterating all possibilities of elasticity in thought and organizational practice, for as sociologist Karl Mannheim bluntly observed, political parties are structurally "public corporations and fighting institutions," whose rigid enforcement of bureaucratization on all party members "force them into a dogmatic direction," which influences them to lose their "receptivity and elasticity" as they discard their original status as intellectuals and transform into party members.⁵²¹ In other words, the establishment of a political party does not merely mean landing oneself on an occupation called "politician" but connotes a total transformation of the physical and psychological orientation from the scholarly to the political. Dogmatism becomes a natural and necessary virtue to imbue within every member's mind to make sure that the transformation, once complete, would never recede back to its original form.

However, the bureaucratization of every Communist into politicians is insufficient to assure absolute loyalty in a revolutionary party. As Karl Mannheim argues, a revolution can prevent rationality from becoming absolute and prohibit the independence of thought to "provoke a breach in the rational structure of society," which in turn, translates into dialectical thinking. Dialectical thinking is necessitated by a Communist party's quest to find its place in society and to seize its momentum in response to the demand of its contemporaneous age. In other words, a Communist party needs dogmatism because the ultimate purpose of any party is to concretely found a new standard of "rationality" which will exclusively be determined by Communist principles and replace opposing doctrines.⁵²² A Communist party, like most other bureaucratic organizations, must ensure what sociologist Robert Merton calls "structural

⁵²⁰ Robert C. Tucker, "The Rise of Stalin's Personality Cult," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 84, No. 2 (April, 1979), 352.

⁵²¹ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 34.

⁵²² Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 117-118.

overconformity."⁵²³ It necessarily has to choose between the certainty of having absolute internal loyalty to keep its own supremacy airtight or the uncertainty of accurately adapting to specific conditions not envisaged by the people who devised those rules. The symbolism of having an air of absolute power is more immediately important to the party than the uncertain utility of having prescience about an unknowable future.

Since the CCP's interpretation of that demand and of dogmatism was expressing the will to establish a formidable counterweight to an overtly dominant Rightist political climate, a rapid consolidation of an internal central authority had to be the CCP's utmost priority. Consolidation entailed restructuring a member's consciousness of being affiliated with the party because if, as Marx argued, "social being determines consciousness" but that condition also had to be founded on realistically attainable goals, it follows that "consciousness" must be given a sense of direction, emancipated from a sense of aimlessness and therefore, the emergence of a rational order to allow for a freedom to produce one's own circumstances becomes necessary. The necessity of possessing consciousness about the need for such a direction and freedom is what makes party members commonly desire a strong ideological leadership in the form of a central figurehead, the object of a personality cult.⁵²⁴

Furthermore, Pak Hŏn-yŏng took full advantage of the fact that the creation of a myth has a limited but highly potent value. On one hand, a myth might provide a deluded and fantastical vision of a revolution's outcome; on the other hand, it allows for the initiation of a revolution from the translation of an abstract and nebulous idea to a concrete program. The desire to realize the translation motivates a party leader to demonstrate to members sufficient rigidity and precision by presenting clear goals for which the revolution must be carried out. Most

⁵²³ Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 254.

⁵²⁴ Karl Marx, "Preface" in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). See also George Lichtheim, "The Concept of Ideology," *History and Theory*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1965), 176-177 and Michael Evans, *Karl Marx* (London, England: Allen and Unwin, 1975).

importantly, to realize the translation, a political party needs charismatic, and especially for Communism which requires the maintenance of a strict hierarchy between the leadership and members, a permanent leadership worthy of worship such that the distinction between concentrating on implementing the idea of revolution and advancing a party's political aspirations becomes intelligible.⁵²⁵ Pak's desire to become party leader was already evident since the early days of the CCP, and since the party was well aware that Pak Hŏn-yŏng virtually had a monopoly over Communist theory however many flaws Pak had, it did not take long for the party to select him as its permanent leader. A reiteration of the desire to do so as soon as possible was sufficient because it is through a public reiteration that the masses confirm the balance between desire and evidence, whereupon reiteration becomes the ultimate source for a leader to attain the capacity to direct the party as he wished.⁵²⁶

Hence, less than two weeks after the general meeting, the party's propaganda staff summoned all members and demanded that they pledge to consider all those who criticized Pak as "counterrevolutionaries who fail to grasp the true meaning of a revolution."⁵²⁷ Any detractors willing to make snide remarks about Pak were "ignoramuses" unaware of how "rigorously comrade Pak toiled to build the party."⁵²⁸ It was only under Pak's leadership that the party could "cruise toward a determinate victory of Bolshevism."⁵²⁹ Those slandering Pak were merely former collaborators of the Japanese opportunistically branding and selling their anti-Communism as "patriotism." Such people were doing themselves a major disservice by "foolishly adding crimes to their criminal records" and must realize that "unfavorable consequences" will befall on them.⁵³⁰ The party wasted no time in identifying the "fools,"

⁵²⁵ Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, 117.

⁵²⁶ Bertrand Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1938), 140-141.

⁵²⁷ "Pak Tongchiril Mukohanŭn Ŭmmopae," (Against Those Who Falsely Accuse and Criticize Comrade Pak) January 17, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 103.

⁵²⁸ "Against Those Who Falsely Accuse and Criticize Comrade Pak," January 17, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 103.

⁵²⁹ "Against Those Who Falsely Accuse and Criticize Comrade Pak," January 17, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 103.

⁵³⁰ "Against Those Who Falsely Accuse and Criticize Comrade Pak," January 17, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 104.

demanding that "general Hodge and his evil pro-Japanese cronies" assume "full responsibility" for the highly unequal distribution of land, which resulted in a mere 3.3% of the entire population owning over half of Korea's entire farmland.⁵³¹

By invoking the existence of such "fools" as a just cause to establish a personality cult, the party accomplished two simple but powerfully effective objectives. First, the party assured that there was not an inkling of any possibility for oppositional voices to criticize Pak and thereby destabilize the personality cult. This is because as philosopher Jonathan Harrison (1984) argues, the belief that one has at least one belief is true does not imply that an individual really has just that single belief.⁵³² Accordingly, any party member could believe in Pak's authority but that may not be the only belief a member has. There may have been chances for a member to mentally modify one's rationale for believing in the personality cult, perhaps because one feared retaliation if one did not profess the belief, rather than because he or she genuinely believed in Pak Hŏn-yŏng's authority as a Communist.⁵³³ In short, the personality cult demanded absolute concentration on believing Pak as an orthodox Communist without questioning reasons for having that belief at all.

Second, the personality cult instituted what sociologist Max Weber calls "imperative control," in which a group's generic acceptance of the cult's legitimacy implies the inclination to obey without the need to impose any coercion. Pak had thereby assumed control of the party's welfare and over the party's desires, beliefs, and most importantly, its communication by acquiring the power to persuade.⁵³⁴ Pak had seized the central authority of the entire party apparatus, granting him the right to make decisions which, as sociologist Talcott Parsons (1963) argues, binds not only on himself, but the collectivity, such that insofar as the

⁵³¹ "Against Those Who Falsely Accuse and Criticize Comrade Pak," January 17, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 104.

⁵³² Jonathan Harrison, "The Incurability of the Cogito," *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 93, No. 371 (July, 1984), 328.

⁵³³ Harrison, "The Incurability of the Cogito," 325-326.

⁵³⁴ Alvin I. Goldman, "Toward a Theory of Social Power," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (June, 1972), 262-263.

decisions' impinge on members' respective roles and statuses, they are obliged to act in accordance with the implications.⁵³⁵ He also amassed unchallenged power in the party, for all party members were now expected to perform obligations, legitimized with reference to their contributions to collective goals. The existence of a possibility for a member to fail in abiding by this rule meant that Pak also reserved the exclusive right to punish recalcitrance by imposing negative situational sanctions using all legal and extralegal means.⁵³⁶

Such multi-faceted nature of control essentially coerced all members into swearing allegiance to a proper code of Communistic behavior. Pak's supporters systematized Communism into a program to serve as a policing mechanism to reinforce Communistic solidarity in thought and action among all CCP members, intolerant of any deviation or resistance, giving the CCP its truly Communalistic character as its source of uniqueness. The erasure of questioning from the party's political culture did not just assure the elimination of the act of asking questions alone, but also, as psychologist Kelly Oliver (2004) argues, of three major forms of psychological autonomy. First, the act of questioning is an expression of revolt in search of the sublime and creativity which allow us to become who we are by remaining open to meaning, to creativity, and most importantly, to our own individual notion of a psychic space.⁵³⁷ In short, the party inhibited the development of individuality as cultivated through these elements and impaired the balance between individual autonomy and assimilation within a symbolic social order, offering all CCP members the only fate of joining

⁵³⁵ Talcott Parsons, "On the Concept of Political Power," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 107, No. 3 (June, 1963), 244. Of course, the obvious caveat which must be conceded is that a political leader's influence which is dependent on a particular group's interests, requires the politician to reciprocally submit to the group's influence on the leader by implementing policies which the group desires. Pak probably did not want to perform this submission, for it would be akin to admitting that his power was not absolute and unchallengeable. For a discussion of the caveat and a general critique of Parsons' notion of political influence, see James S. Coleman, "Comment on 'On the Concept of Influence,'" *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Spring, 1963), 71.

⁵³⁶ Parsons, "On the Concept of Political Power," 237.

⁵³⁷ Kelly Oliver, *Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 91.

the party or be permanently ostracized. Furthermore, because CCP members were now expected to simplify their lives by just choosing to remain within the CCP, there was also an automatic erasure of depression and melancholia because CCP members could now enjoy a sense of meaningfulness and powerfulness through a unilateral imposition of Communism not merely as an ideology but a robust symbol of socio-political power.

Second, the firm installation of a personality cult also assured that there was no autonomy to doubt about the capacities of the self or to question anything about why the idea of the self had to be obliterated. Since there was no longer any sense of melancholia over any lost things because the party members had so clearly obtained a newly found source of power, there was no need to rediscover any "lost bodies" in words to express individuality and creativity, or to even have the ability to autonomously negate negation and its associative elements that give negation its negative character.⁵³⁸ The elimination of all kinds of questioning assured that there was no conflation between ideal and reality, thereby rendering Communism as the undeniable and inviolable, almost singular and theistic combination of an ideal-reality. Since members were now denied any sense of distance between the ideal and the sublime, every member was now trapped within their own bodies, relegated to mere "things" within the CCP, incapable of independent thinking. All drives and passions become limited to the rawness of somatic expression, and party members are no longer human beings but members of a Nietzschean herd, which can only know to receive orders but never autonomously issue one.

Finally, the personality cult ensured that there was no room to express any kind of forgiveness, and by extension, no linkage between the individual and the community because the personality cult's absolute authority eclipsed the notion of the independently thinking individual divorced from the community. The erasure of "social forgiveness"—a communal forgiving of an individual's mistakes—meant the elimination of any idea of individual

⁵³⁸ Oliver, *Colonization of Psychic Space*, 91.

sovereignty because without any communal forgiveness, there is no possibility of expressing a desire to return to a community as an individual. This prohibition implies the negation of the right to assert sovereignty as an individual for there will only await oppression, which denies individual agency and the subjectivity of a distinctive "otherness" encapsulated through the state of being an individual.⁵³⁹ The individual thereby loses a dual sense of the self—the self perceived to exist because one acknowledges thinking as a marker for independent existence. The marker becomes a sign of confirmation that there is only one unique self inherent within the individual because that is what others perceive as the main distinction which simultaneously verifies that both the observer and the observed are indeed different people.

The elimination of individual sovereignty essentially confirmed the Communistic character of the party, for the personality cult was a symbolic warning to all members that any form of deviance, resistance, or renunciation of Pak's order would not be tolerated and would be subject to immediate punishment. Therefore, the personality cult represented a bilateral exercise of bureaucratic power: a top-down imposition of the expectation to uphold Pak Hōn-yōng's authority and a bottom-up communal policing of that support to ensure that any individual aspiring to surpass Pak's influence would be eliminated. The very existence of this holistically programmed notion of centralized authority meant the CCP had filled in the last institutional piece called the "personality cult" to complete Communism as the CCP's holistic program and system to circumscribe and monitor all party activities deemed orthodox and taboo. By doing so, the party was advertising Communism as an ideology ready to exercise *effectively* concentrated power to deliver justice to the peasantry. In contrast to the Rightists' conception of "Democracy," which only safeguarded the interests of decadent landlords, the CCP was arguing that Communism was superior because, in addition to being nationalistic, it respected fairness and equity as principal ethics of public welfare. The CCP believed that this

⁵³⁹ Oliver, *Colonization of Psychic Space*, 92.

superiority was the ultimate proof that it had the moral legitimacy to assert itself as the institutional representative of the Korean people.⁵⁴⁰

Yet, solidarity is not simply a measurement of how strongly a leader and a group shares paralleled subjectivity, since a commonly shared idea can foster compatibility between a leader and his group but one which is not strong enough to facilitate immediately coordinative action. In other words, achieving solidarity is difficult because it subsumes the leader's ability to inject a demand as though it comes from himself inclusive of all the other egos following him.⁵⁴¹ However influential an ideology may be to mesmerize thousands, even the staunchest followers understand that an ideology, strictly in the substantive sense, is always going to have some element of falsehood. This flaw is unavoidable because ideologies, insofar as they arise from a particular individual or group and demand central focus upon the originators, can never truly be societal in either the ideology's origin or scope of impact. People may distance themselves away from an intellectual tendency if they feel superior to a body of knowledge, but may also shun the intellectual tendency if the knowledge is too remotely abstruse.⁵⁴² Consequently, to avoid the two extremes, an ideology must have "permeability," or an appeal which eases the transformation of a skeptic or disinterested individual into a participant. The ideology has to undergo some simplification to be restructured and "sold" to the public.⁵⁴³

However, such simplification also implies that the critical weakness of a popularized ideology is that it must necessarily undergo an intellectual lowering of sophistication which interferes with the technical progress of grappling with an ideology's internal theoretical complexity to perfectly translate the ideology into reality.⁵⁴⁴ The influence of a leader cannot be detached from pupils willing to blindly follow him, and to make a certain perception

⁵⁴⁰ "Against Those Who Falsely Accuse and Criticize Comrade Pak," January 17, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 103-104.

⁵⁴¹ Lasswell and Kaplan, *Power and Society*, 30-31.

⁵⁴² Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 261.

⁵⁴³ Lasswell and Kaplan, *Power and Society*, 35.

⁵⁴⁴ Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis*, 151.

victorious over others often simply means that the perception has to be wedded to stupidity to assure the permanence of the victory.⁵⁴⁵ As the August Thesis clearly demonstrated, Pak could not answer why Western Marxism necessarily reflected Korea's reality or why Korea's problems had to involve Western Marxism. Hence, Pak needed to conceal his critical weakness of imposing a rational political structure to an irrational belief—not understanding why he had to profess Marxism either because he was a Communist or a Korean. The personality cult was a necessary tool for Pak to maintain the pristine image of a leader enjoying widespread prestige among the Left and to assure that party members genuinely were led to believe in an ideology through the representation of an authoritative personage—the self-proclaimed expert of Marxism.⁵⁴⁶ In short, the personality cult was to serve as the ultimate medium through which the distinction between believing about Communism as a popular belief and believing in Communism out of a perfect comprehension of Communism's particular content would become intelligible.

Unfortunately, morality and political power never bind well together. If a person pursues the latter to an absolute degree, morality can be relegated in favor of self-interest. To ensure that the peasantry's support of the party and himself be intelligible, Pak was signaling through the party's demand for absolute allegiance to his personality cult that a party member's verbal support of Communism was no longer enough because that alone did not prove a party's member's spiritual devotion to the ideology. A strong leadership accompanied by charisma and theoretical expertise was desirable to translate Communism into a systemic practice in a generally hostile region. Furthermore, simply being attached to a group might mean nothing if the connection is artificially forged by the group to pressure the individual to accept it without having any chance for critical reflection. While such attachment may generate camaraderie

⁵⁴⁵ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 68.

⁵⁴⁶ Michael Rosen and Jonathan Wolff, "The Problem of Ideology," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 70 (1996), 209-240; Michael Rosen, *On Voluntary Servitude and the Theory of Ideology*, 32-34.

between members and the leader, a critical cost is that there might be a total absence of substantive connection between a member and the group's cause.

Moreover, the party conflated the founding of the personality cult with the existence of a truth embedded within the cult itself by ironically prohibiting any criticism about the personality cult. An ideology or any attempt to represent it can only have substantive value if the ideology accepts the existence of contradictions and the possibility of being subject to practical criticism, a possibility which confirms that the ideology has some truth within itself.⁵⁴⁷ If there is no theoretical analysis of what a member is told to believe in, it is all too easy to forget why the member ought to believe one theory but not others. Consequently, the uninformed member's vision becomes myopic and impoverished, unable to pursue anything but the vain-glory associated with a vapid victory won by trampling opponents.⁵⁴⁸ As Dae-sook Suh and Bruce Cumings have poignantly pointed out, individuals with a near perfect balance between revolutionary education and experience such as Pak were pure rarities in Korea. Very few so-called Leftist leaders had a firm grasp of orthodox Marxist-Leninism. Most members joined the Communist cause because of its anti-imperialistic appeal, not because they perfectly grasped the concept of bourgeois capitalist exploitation.⁵⁴⁹ Thus, despite welcoming "anyone well aware of the urgency in achieving the Korean people's complete independence" in principle, the party's selection of the theoretically and politically experienced Pak as its leader reflected a strong determination to succeed in that translation.

The evolution of a political symbiosis between Pak and the party into an organic unity had thereby become a permanent reality of the CCP's political culture. Put differently, a more fundamental reason behind the rapid facilitation of the personality cult was because Pak

⁵⁴⁷ Etienne Balibar, *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx* (New York and London, England: Routledge, 1994), 170-171.

⁵⁴⁸ Robert M. MacIver, *The Web of Government* (New York: Free Press, 1947;1965), 331.

⁵⁴⁹ "The Party and the Precepts of Bolshevism," September 2, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 22; see Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement*, 68 and 121-122 and Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 85-86.

desired to operate a form of dominance based on unconscious subservience: the presumed intellectual inferiority of his followers would enable him to naturally dominate them such that he could just unconsciously not care or know any challenger to his authority.⁵⁵⁰ Moreover, dominance can only arise from a personality suited to exercise it as a temperament or personal trait or advantage which other individuals lack.⁵⁵¹ The relative ripeness compared with the immaturity of knowledge was the single barometer to determine the strength of dominance and permanence of power. Pak was so confident about his comparatively elite background and superior knowledge of Marxist theory to imbue a deep sense of respect and even awe among party members about the suitability and legitimacy of his leadership as an orthodox theorist. Pak had already laid the foundation of the party and the union of the southern Left in the August Thesis, and its status as a direct successor and critic of the December Thesis had proven his genius to his followers.

Furthermore, Pak also demonstrated that he was a man of action as well as a theorist by urging and directing a rapid recruitment of peasants to expand the party's bureaucracy. Given the magnitude of his contributions to the building the party's intellectual and infrastructural backbone, it must have appeared as a matter of fact to Pak that he was entitled to become a leviathan in the classic Hobbesian sense—to keep everyone in awe and thereby end the chaotic history of factional warfare that had plagued and delayed the unity of Korean Communism for two decades. Pak had thereby tightly clinched absolute authority within the party, endowing him with the right to determine policies, settle controversies, and most importantly be a leader guiding other men. Raw power had earned a glaze of legitimacy, a mandate, and most importantly, an office which could symbolically and eternally preserve the

⁵⁵⁰ Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, "Two Faces of Power," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (December, 1962), 952.

⁵⁵¹ Robert Bierstedt, "An Analysis of Social Power," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 15, No. 6 (December, 1950), 732.

glaze at least within the CCP.⁵⁵²

Yet, the human mind is liable to become a drug, for once it is attached to political power, it becomes very difficult to force a divorce between the two unless the former miraculously realizes that it is addicted to the latter. Friedrich Nietzsche (1968) even thought that extreme self-interest, especially for power, was a natural instinct in humankind, such that nothing could ever eliminate or replace it. The irreplaceable nature of power is further reinforced by the binary construct of the essential elements of power—*kraft* and *macht*. *Kraft* allows for a person to indulge in the power to exercise authority, the primordial instinct to exercise authority, whereas *macht* is the sublimation or the ability to autonomously overcome and control and channel power to be used for a creative purpose.⁵⁵³

The more important point is that the exercise of power separates *kraft* from *macht* to ensure that the true intention of the practitioner of power is in wielding *kraft* or *macht* is made deliberately unclear. This lack of clarity, in turn, assures a good degree of unpredictability among opponents, who may be reluctant to pose a challenge against the incumbent because they are uncertain about whether the incumbent pursues and maintains power for its own sake or for some ulterior end. Put differently, because the distinction between *kraft* and *macht* is so neat, the morality of presenting politically correct behavior can be merely a guise to pursue an ulterior political objective which can be irrelevant to that political behavior itself. However, insofar as the pursuit of the ulterior political objective becomes a lone goal, an obsession with achieving only the ulterior political objective might incur the cost of incorrectly comprehending or even worse, ignoring the surrounding political or social milieu. Consequently, the congruence between intentions and the realistic limits on how much the implementation of the ulterior political objective can approximate its ideals, might be non-

⁵⁵² MacIver, *The Web of Government*, 63.

⁵⁵³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Random House, 1968), 6.

existent.

Indeed, Pak's biggest mistake was to ignore the importance of reflecting on whether he had distinguished *kraft* from *macht* before choosing to concentrate on amassing immense power. He conflated his relentless drive to fulfill the August Thesis's terms with acquiring a royal road to absolute power. In other words, while he encouraged the expansion of the party's bureaucracy by remaining faithful to the August Thesis's precept that "all women's organizations be incorporated into the party's mainstream bureaucracy," Pak forgot or deliberately ignored that the only theoretical common denominator between Communism and feminism was their respect for gender equality.⁵⁵⁴ The only genuine value for which feminist organizations had any value for Pak was because their inclusion would decisively demonstrate the extent to which "public support" for his personality cult was valid, thereby strengthening the legitimacy in encouraging the formation of a personality cult. Hence, the party's incorporation of an ostentatious bureaucratic structure through the assemblage of various departments displayed a disingenuous commitment to a highly formulaic diversity which had nothing to demonstrate substantively because there was simply no organizational rationale guided by a coherent logic or philosophical commitment to a Communistic egalitarianism.

Nevertheless, Pak managed to imbue a sense of standardization and an allegiance to a strict sense of orderliness and discipline, which were enough since the new party members' "commitment" to Communism was as superficial and vapid as the departments' labels. The force with which the party promoted itself, relying on a highly coercive and unrelenting Communist rhetoric coupled with a personality cult, coupled with a fervent drive to increase membership and public appeal, can effectively be called in a Durkheimian sense, an attempt to promote Communism into a Durkheimian religion—"a unified system of beliefs and practices, relative to sacred things, that is to say things set apart and forbidden; beliefs and

⁵⁵⁴ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "August Thesis" in Kim Nam-sik ed., *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 13.

practices which unite into a single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."⁵⁵⁵ In other words, religious consolidation does not arise from the substance of a belief, but its particularistic source of mesmerizing and charismatic appeal which connects previously separated or unacquainted individuals together by the power of devotion and veneration to the substance in question.

However, as philosopher Bertrand Russell (1920) observed, religion has the instrumental quality of strictly aiming to become a set of beliefs held as dogmas to dominate the conduct of life using authoritarian and non-intellectual methods. The substance of an ideology might therefore matter less than its potential to transform into a religion and may possibly be sacrificed as a tool to consolidate and monopolize power. Absolute adherence may be the only yardstick to determine such Russellian religiosity.⁵⁵⁶ To ensure that the peasantry's support of the party and himself was intelligible, Pak was ordering through the speech that a party member's verbal support of Communism was no longer enough because that alone did not ascertain a party's member's spiritual devotion to the ideology. A strong leadership accompanied by charisma and theoretical expertise was desirable to translate Communism into a systemic practice in a region generally hostile to the ideology. In other words, Pak was well aware that the only royal road to power was to render Communism and himself intelligible so that veneration was singularly concentrated on him in the guise of believing in Communism. The ideology may still be called "Communism," but the substance which produced the ideology's appeal to the party had to be no one other than Pak himself. Thus, although Pak instituted the personality cult assuming that it was an essential element within Communism, he had inadvertently replaced the theoretical substance of Communism with his own personage, thereby acknowledging the Russellian tradeoff between "intellectual

⁵⁵⁵ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Dover Classics, 2008), 47.

⁵⁵⁶ Bertrand Russell, *Bolshevism: Practice and Theory* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1920), 117.

lowering" and the technical progress of instilling analytical rigor to establish the CCP as an authentic Communist party.⁵⁵⁷

Pak's decision to forge this organic unity is not unusual because the most ironic feature of institutional Communism is that despite Communism's eschewing of religion or any religious symbolism in adherence to Marx's claim that "religion is the opium of the masses," the personality cult endorses the existence of a patriarchal leader because this figurehead is necessary to ensure what sociologist Max Weber (1963;1991) analyzed as the rise of "a substantive content of priestly doctrine":

"The establishment of a religious congregational community provides the strongest stimulus, though not the only one, for the development of even the substantive content of the priestly doctrine, since the existence of a religious congregation creates the specific importance of dogmas. Once a religious community has become established it feels a need to set itself apart from alien competing doctrines and to maintain its superiority in propaganda, all of which tends to the emphasis upon differential doctrines. To be sure, this process of differentiation may be considerably strengthened by non-religious motivations.⁵⁵⁸

The elevation of a priest from a religious figure to an authority is conditioned upon the numerical strength of the masses, which is a direct representation of a religion's popularity. Once popularity has sufficiently been established, it allows for the invocation of a feeling of uniqueness for the congregation because it is from the existence of difference as a source of the uniqueness that a feeling of exceptional superiority *vis-a-vis* other doctrines appears. Thus, it is unsurprising that Pak's invocation of a personality cult served to distinguish Communists from other Rightists by emphasizing how more purely nationalist Communists were compared the Rightists in the Rhee Administration, whose credentials, their history of collaboration with the Japanese were especially emphasized. Nationalism was the Communists' comparative advantage against the Rightists, and the personality cult had the ultimate effect of permanently maintaining and stressing that advantage as a differential for describing the superiority of Communism over Rightist anti-Communism.

⁵⁵⁷ "The Party and the Precepts of Bolshevism," September, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 22; see Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement*, 121-122 and Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 85-86.

⁵⁵⁸ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1963;1991), 70.

Weber was also right to point out that the priest is dependent on popular support to affirm that he is invested with such immense power. The priest can only be called as such when he or she acquires a popular perception that there are priestly powers manifest within the individual, and it is the magnitude of the popularity which increases the value and potency of such power; the converse can never be true. The qualitative gravity of authority is a natural by-product of the quantitative support of human minds and the priest cannot be liberated from this relationship. Pak's emphasis on Communism's superiority operated on the same principle. The demand for absolute allegiance to the personality cult did not just promote Communism alone, but also advertised his own credentials and by extension, his suitability as the leader of the CCP, which stemmed from Pak's own confident display of his superior knowledge of Marxism and Communist theory than the average CCP member.

In other words, Pak was chosen as leader not just because he literally proved Max Weber's adage, "politics is made with the head, not with other parts of the body, nor the soul."⁵⁵⁹ Beyond the necessity of having a keen mental precision and meticulousness with which to organize and direct the order and solidification of a political bureaucracy, the party's choice of Pak as its leader more importantly meant that "awareness" specifically was an unquestioned acceptance of nationalism as strictly as a Communist promise which had to permanently remain as such. The CCP's determination to "cruise toward a Bolshevik victory" makes this nature of "awareness" very clear, since the "victory" was a conscious echo of the party's existential objective—to "fight to the end for a true Bolshevik revolution."⁵⁶⁰

The party certainly knew all too well that the time was not ripe to declare this objective outright, for the Rightists could gang up with the Americans anytime to hunt down SKWP members. Yet, to engrave this objective deeply within every member's mind while also

⁵⁵⁹ Max Weber, *Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2015), 181.

⁵⁶⁰ "Against Those Who Falsely Accuse and Criticize Comrade Pak," 104; "The Party and the Precepts of Bolshevism," September, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 22.

making sure to externally signal to the Americans and Rightists that the party had the urge to become Communist, the CCP had to secretly select a leader who was theoretically orthodox and mentally devoted to the objective as though it was a creed without publicizing the choice of leadership to enemies. To apply philosopher John Kultgen's (1973) argument, the party well understood that the art of publicity always involves an intentional concealment of private motives. More precisely, the party understood that the distinction between public and private presupposes the publicity in principle of all in the perceptual world and the publicity in fact of barriers. Publicity entails intentionality on part of the private perceiver. Consequently, what is publicized fundamentally advertises what is externally observable while making sure to knowingly conceal what is intentional as much as possible.⁵⁶¹

Of course, Pak's method was not flawless. Pak's rendering of Communism as intelligible with the personality cult ignored the danger of being overdosed with what theorist Antonio Gramsci called an excess of "theoretical fanaticism." As Gramsci explained in *Notes on Machiavelli* (1966), a Socialist or Communist state must not degenerate into a crass Fascist state because

"For some social groups which, before ascending to autonomous statehood, did not have a long period of their own independent cultural and moral development...a period of statolatry is necessary and rather opportune. This "statolatry" is nothing but the normal form of "statehood," of initiation, at least to autonomous statehood, and to the creation of a "civil society" which was not historically possible to create before the ascent to independent statehood... In any case, such "statolatry" must not become theoretical fanaticism and be considered perpetual. It must be criticized, so that it develops, producing new forms of statehood."⁵⁶²

If the passage's logic is applied to Korea, Pak Hŏn-yŏng's errors become apparent, since Korea never needed an initiation of statehood during the Chosŏn period. First, Korea did not need a period of statolatry prior to liberation because she already had a long history as a monarchical state spanning several thousands of years which, as long as governmental

⁵⁶¹ John Kultgen, "Intentionality and the Publicity of the Perceptual World," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (June, 1973), 509.

⁵⁶² Antonio Gramsci, *Notes on Machiavelli, Politics, and the State* (Turin, Italy: 1966), 128-130. See also Thomas R. Bates, "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (April-June, 1975), 359.

stability was guaranteed, did often encourage a "long period of independent cultural and moral development."⁵⁶³ Therefore, there was very little need of a Fascist concoction of Communism and the personality cult such that the emphasis was on the cult rather than the orthodoxy of Communism. In addition, the rise of Korean consciousness as a distinct country stemmed from the outbreak of the Im-chin War, an "initiation of statehood toward an autonomous state" was not necessary, for Yi Sun-sin was just the first person to confirm that autonomy by labeling a sentiment which was already nascent in the Korean people long before the Chosŏn period.

Finally, the long absence of a civil society in Korea was not because it lacked a sense of independent statehood prior to Japanese colonization, but because as historian James Palais argues, the long tradition of a landed aristocracy ardently protecting their autonomy from the state prohibited Korea's full centralization of administrative power.⁵⁶⁴ The clash of private and public power and a desire to maintain a hierarchical societal structure to preserve the *yang-ban's* land holdings was so intense that there was little room for a centralized state to arbitrate exactly when the emergence of a civil society was appropriate. The absence of an effective arbitrator delayed the existence of strong political stability as the foundation for the emergence of a civil society. In short, Pak's haphazard equation of the personality cult with Communism can be understood as a mistake of trying to apply Communism to the state first because of its theoretical promise of eliminating class conflict through proletarian supremacy without considering Korea's unique historical circumstances which did not require the imposition of statolatry at all.

Nevertheless, art is an expression of an individual's desire to record the reactions of their

⁵⁶³ One can think of King Sejong's encouragement of inventing Hangŭl and numerous scientific inventions and King Yŏngjo's promotion of a quasi-parliamentary culture for political debates.

⁵⁶⁴ James B. Palais, *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 1991), 84-85, and 129.

personality to the world they live in. No matter how suitable Pak was as a leader in the eyes of party members, qualification is only a necessary condition demonstrating fitness to perform a vocation. One must have a firm objective that guarantees superb vocational conduct—the sufficient condition which defines the value of the qualification. For Pak, that objective was to prohibit Yŏ from ever entering the party again, since he was well aware that the ideological gulf between Communism and "Unitary Socialism" was impossible to eliminate unless Communism accommodated for "Unitary Socialism," a scenario Pak did not want, since it would translate into his direct subjugation to Yŏ.

If Yŏ saw the possibility of reconciliation in the Right, Pak considered Yŏ's "moderation" as a euphemism for procrastination and a disguise to poise as a bogus Communist. Since Pak fundamentally understood a revolution as a process of workers subjugating the bourgeoisie, Yŏ's effort to unify the Left and Right was a complete anathema, because Pak feared that it might result in the workers eternally being the pawns of bourgeois capitalists and prevent the realization of Marxist historical materialism in practice. Pak also believed that Yŏ, as a "member of the landholding class," was trying to establish a "quasi-Democratic order dominated by the bourgeoisie."⁵⁶⁵ Thus, from Pak's perspective, Yŏ was a perplexing enigma—a hypocritical member of the bourgeoisie who supported a mysteriously eclectic socialism while feigning political neutrality to conceal such hypocrisy and ultimately "eat the party from inside-out."⁵⁶⁶ Pak feared that Yŏ's ideological ambiguity was highly detrimental to preserving the CCP's internal solidarity.

⁵⁶⁵ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *Kim Il-sung, Pak Hŏn-yŏng, kuriko Yŏ Un-hyŏng: Han Kowi Notong Kanpuka Pon Pimilhoetong (Record of Secret Rendezvous between Kim Il-sung, Pak Hŏn-yŏng, and Yŏ Un-hyŏng)* (Seoul, south Korea: Sunin Ch'ulp'ansa (Sunin Publishing), 2010), 95. Noted as *RSR* hereafter. This collection of first-hand accounts is valuable for its balanced insights on the political discussions between the three men mentioned in the title during the SKWP's existence. Pak Pyŏng-yŏp was the First Secretary of the SKWP and had intricate and deep knowledge of the party's internal affairs.

⁵⁶⁶ My thinking about vocational qualification and purpose was influenced by Michael Eraut, "The Role and Use of Vocational Qualification," *National Institute of Economic Review*, No. 178 (October, 2001), 94; Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 95.

The personality cult also embodied the institutionalization of the Communist party as the final measure to complete a sense of permanence or a finalization of Communist supremacy. As Gramsci had argued so persuasively, the timeless essence of Machiavelli's idea of the Prince was in its maturity, especially its ability to maturely evolve into a political machine. The modern reincarnation of the prince is no longer an individual but a political party, for it is the collective rather than the individual which harnesses far greater power to enforce political solidarity. The prince in its original conception was a *condottiere* harbored "a fanatical desire for action" and cared much for the maintenance of that power for the sake of the polity's stability against foreign invasions, thereby reflecting Machiavelli's realist interpretation of the relationship between power and the state.⁵⁶⁷ By contrast, modern politics, characterized by an intricate bureaucracy with a fine division of labor, requires a more systematic and thorough leadership of a modern reincarnation of a Machiavellian prince who is able to incorporate various institutions into a single party and elevate the party into a state apparatus and provide means for members to work as an "impartial force."⁵⁶⁸ To this end, the modern prince needs to be more bureaucratically calculative and savvy than solely thirsty for power and must keenly understand the art of control and of maintaining a deeply centralized authority.

To that end, a personality cult was necessary to not only identify the party's structure of a dictatorial concentration of power as evidence of its identity as a Communist party but also to make sure that there would no longer be any pseudo-Communists who feigned allegiance in front of Pak but were clandestinely planning alternative paths to national unification which did not respect the centrality of Pak's personality cult. The latter function of the personality cult explains Pak's remorseless decision to expulse Yō immediately from the party once he was able to perceive Yō's unwillingness and adamant refusal to admit that Communism and

⁵⁶⁷ See Antonio Gramsci, "The Modern Prince," in his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971;1985), 126-127.

⁵⁶⁸ Gramsci, "The Modern Prince," *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 147-148.

the Left were synonymous.

However, what Pak did not know or justify was why the workers and the peasantry had to be mobilized just for the sake of supporting the personality cult without having sufficient knowledge or familiarity about Marxist theory at all. Gramsci's theory is useful because it highlights what Gramsci and Pak both misinterpreted about Machiavelli. While Machiavelli did care about a state's stability and centralization's capacity to guarantee such stability, he never argued that having a large public appeal was a necessary virtue for a prince because being an ideal prince required the cultivation of the most suitable character for the job of organizationally ruling a state, such as that of Cesare Borgia, who was known for his ruthless scheming and cunning, which facilitated his effective brutality in maintaining control. Yet, as philosopher Hannah Arendt (2003) correctly points out, people who did not have Borgia's temperament—those who were concerned more with salvaging their own souls rather than the state—were never originally required to praise him blindly or form a personality cult around him; they could just entirely *stay away* from politics and care about minding their private daily affairs and only *expect* that the ruler would understand the virtues of being a good prince himself.⁵⁶⁹ In other words, the greatness of a good prince was not in his popularity, but his solid understanding of the art of governance and the composure to direct governance purely as a matter of private, individualized mastery.

3. Conclusion

Although the CCP's invocation of Communism and anti-imperialistic nationalism seemingly provided some rationale for the party's fervent support of the trusteeship and for the party's vehement clashes with the southern Right, Pak was responsible for not justifying a reasoned rationale for instituting the personality cult to mark the southern Left's rejection of

⁵⁶⁹ Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Penguin Classics, 2003); Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 80-81.

any reconciliation with the Right. To accurately assess this responsibility, I will give an ideological critique of Pak's decision to launch a personality cult through an analysis of some major fallacies in Marxist philosophy and how Pak's decision to launch a cult reflected these fallacies.

The establishment of the personality cult reflected Pak's psychological desire to silence internal opposition and concentrate the CCP's attention to upholding his authority. Simultaneously, Pak used the personality cult to satiate a personal hatred toward Yǒ by abusing the cult as a device to isolate and ultimately expel Yǒ from the CCP to the extent of driving Yǒ to a corner. The pressure would force him to consider completely retiring from politics, unable to overcome his disappointment with failing to realize his supreme ideal of "Unitary Socialism" and non-ideological unification. However, the main problem with Pak's cult was that it was only a tool to ensure a psychological superiority over "Unitary Socialism" and was an institution which suffered from a poor comprehension of Marxism. Ideologically, Pak's decision to launch a personality cult was based on a complete lack of consideration about Marx's errors in assuming that a continuous proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie had to be an objective in itself without preparing adequately for a future without the bourgeoisie. In other words, Marx did not foresee the aftermath of a Communist revolution's completion, which would mean a total obliteration of the bourgeoisie.

Consequently, a Communist state that arises after a proletarian victory no longer has any clear sense of purpose, and is subject to the danger of falling prey to nihilism because there is no end for which Communism as the ultimate ideal becomes justified to permanently exist. This problem generates some major flaws in Marxism. In *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1957), philosopher Karl Popper criticized Marxism for suffering from five logical deficiencies. First, Marx's emphasis on the necessity of the proletariat's economic liberation from the bourgeoisie's oppression was an expression of opposition to Hegel's emphasis on

humankind's relation to the natural environment as a spiritual world.⁵⁷⁰ Instead, Marx contended that it is the material conditions which comprise the notion of "economy" which define the true character of the proletariat's natural world because it is a construct based on class differences and the conflicts which ensue from the recognition of differences.⁵⁷¹

In contrast with the Hegelian dialectic, Marx's philosophy, from its emphasis on the physical rather than the spiritual idea of a "world," could be termed as "economism."⁵⁷² Yet, the second and a fundamental flaw in calling for the proletariat's liberation because of a recognition of the bourgeoisie's oppression is that Marx conflates consciousness with an impulse for immediate actions necessary to negate that very consciousness. Knowledge about economic conditions does not have to be exaggerated to the extent of generalizing and reducing even social problems to be rooted in economic problems. Interactions between social and economic forces create socio-economic problems and thus make an idealistic compartmentalization of strictly "economic problems" nearly impossible.⁵⁷³ Such impossibility suggests that Pak did not deeply consider whether the promotion of a personality cult was specifically useful or suitable to further expand Communism's influence in an environment highly unfavorable to it due to Rightist dominance. In short, Pak did not consider whether he wanted to implement the personality cult for its own sake or because there was a specific ulterior motive, perhaps, his desire for self-aggrandizement, which was more important.

Third, Pak, like Marx, did not realize that the personality cult as a concept is a self-contradiction, because if it is truly necessary for the exercise of orthodox Communism, it ought to encourage a condition of classlessness within the party. The personality cult as a

⁵⁷⁰ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. 2: The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath* (London, England: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1957), 104-105.

⁵⁷¹ Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. 2*, 104.

⁵⁷² Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. 2*, 104.

⁵⁷³ Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. 2*, 107.

concept is supposed to be egalitarian in the sense that all party members regardless of rank were united in their unwavering commitment and adulation of Pak Hŏn-yŏng as the supreme leader. However, the personality cult artificially imposes an ironic hierarchy which does not promise an equality of opportunity or protect the less intellectually or financially rich from becoming expendable objects of exploitation and manipulation by the very person at the center of the personality cult because the centrality itself assumes superiority in the very areas in which other party members are inferior. Fourth, the personality cult, for all its good intention of uniting the workers in the form of a mass party, does not specifically confirm just how workers completed their "quest for political power," as encouraged by the *Communist Manifesto*. Indeed, the relevant passage which discusses the manner of the quest's completion describes the workers' behavior as follows:

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, of the proletariat organized as a ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible...when in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, so properly called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contestation with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances to organize itself into a class; if by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force, the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions for the existence of class antagonisms, and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class."⁵⁷⁴

Accordingly, the proletariat will pursue power for the sake of concentrating all means of production in the apparatus of the state, which will relocate the focus of power away from the public and allow political power to become a privatized instrument in the service of a single class. Yet, Marx does not explain why the proletariat's particular usurpation of power away from the bourgeoisie will necessarily translate into a total abolition of class distinctions while still allowing the proletariat to remain as the only class. The character of political power is thereby contradicted, because if it retains the function for one class to oppress another and yet, one particular class has the miraculous ability to abolish all class distinctions, Marx does not

⁵⁷⁴ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* in *The Essential Writings of Karl Marx*, 179-180.

answer from which source or how the proletariat could have the motivation to destroy its own basis for power by ruling over the bourgeoisie. In short, Marx and Pak neglected the fact that class and power are both relative, for without an object of oppression, both concepts lose their fundamental function of creating differentials between groups and the varying degrees of exercising power to control the differentials favorably to a particular group.⁵⁷⁵

Finally, Pak forgot that pursuing a "conquest of political power" is vague because as Popper points out, it allows for two very different interpretations. On one hand, it could mean that a workers' party would genuinely be Democratic, or govern according to the will of the majority. However, if the focus is on the usage of the political power acquired through the endorsement of the majority, then it also could mean that the workers will do everything to maintain that power exclusively in their own hands and render it unchallengeable. What unites these two possibilities together is the ultimate danger of paralyzing all forms of opposition, both from the opposing minority and the majority from which the party's legitimacy is built. The ironic result is that the dictatorship is strengthened by the acquirement of Democratic legitimacy for which the public's will is merely a tool to eternally justify the monopoly of power because only power's Democratic origination through the proletarian's overthrow of the petty bourgeoisie, not the Democratic transfer of power within Democracy as a political system, matters for the party. For the proletariat to truly achieve a classless society, proletarians, along with the bourgeoisie, must also disappear, and artificial plurality is a necessary but not sufficient condition to amass dictatorial power.⁵⁷⁶

The next chapter will offer a critique of Pak's personality cult based on an analysis of how Pak Hōn-yōng's personal hatred of Christianity motivated Pak to commit to Communism and to building a personality cult. It will also consider how the launch of Pak's personality cult

⁵⁷⁵ Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 2, 108.

⁵⁷⁶ Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 2, 112.

became a device to isolate and ultimately expel Yŏ from the CCP to the extent of driving Yŏ to a corner. The expulsion would ultimately cause Yŏ to retire from politics, unable to overcome his disappointment with failing to realize "Unitary Socialism" and non-ideological unification. Pak used such absolute power to create a pan-Leftist union and force Yŏ Unhyŏng to walk out of the CCP after realizing the party's full identification with Communism. In short, the next chapter will consider how these three major developments occurred in a consecutive fashion to lay the groundwork for a Communist domination of the southern Left.

Chapter 7

To Wed All Separate Existences into One Supreme Whole: An Evaluation of Yǒ's Exit From the CCP, and the Founding of the Democratic Nationalist Front

"...To make the body and the spirit one
With all right things, till no thing live in vain
From morn to noon, but in sweet unison
With every pulse of flesh and throb of brain
The soul in flawless essence high enthroned,
Against all outer vain attack invincibly bastioned,

...

Mark with serene impartiality
The strife of things, and yet be comforted,
Knowing that by the chain causality
All separate existences are wed
Into one supreme whole, whose utterance
Is joy, or holier praise! ah! surely this were governance..."
-Oscar Wilde, "Humanitad" (1890)⁵⁷⁷

1. The Anti-Christian Origins of Pak Hǒn-yǒng 's Personality Cult, and an Evaluation of Yǒ Un-hyǒng's Exit From the CCP

The previous chapter provided an institutional analysis of the significance behind the rise of the Pak personality cult, with an attention to its bureaucratic organization and approximation to the Marxist standard of a Communist regime. However, the personality cult is more than an edifice of power; it is inherently a creation of the human mind and character. Understanding the decision to establish a personality cult historically requires a study of an individual's experiential-emotive motivations and their corresponding causal behavior, which is impervious to any orderly or predetermined logic because of the erratic privacy of selfishness in the pursuit of absolute political power. History is a study of human passions and requires the historian to provide psychological explanations for human phenomena. When a person dislikes someone, it is not simply a dislike of character or whatever can be physically seen, but a dislike of the individual's mind. A deep dislike of an individual is essentially a dislike of the person's philosophy, for the mind is what gives life to personality. Pak Hǒn-yǒng wanted to prohibit Yǒ Un-hyǒng from rejoining the party because in addition to Yǒ's

⁵⁷⁷ Oscar Wilde, "Humanitad," in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde: Stories, Plays, and Poems* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 791-801.

supposed bourgeois origin, Pak feared that Yō's Christian emphasis of egalitarianism and respect for humanism in "Unitary Socialism" would theoretically corrupt orthodox Communism. For Pak, Christianity was but "a golden ticket to oppress workers" because it "protected a lord's property in the Medieval Ages and that of the capitalist in a capitalist society."⁵⁷⁸ Put differently, Pak believed that no matter how much time would progress, the livelihood of workers was sure to deteriorate, for Christianity was breeding the same hackneyed sense of elitism and forced the bourgeoisie to be addicted to capital production and hence, more exploitation of labor. Hence, it was crucial that workers quickly "overthrow those lazy landlords and be masters of their own lives."⁵⁷⁹

Furthermore, since imperialism was a product of a perverse addiction to an unrestrained accumulation of capital, Pak believed that Christianity was a servant of bourgeois toadyism, whose history in Korea originates from the March First Movement, during which many Western missionaries had either cooperated or were indifferent toward Japanese imperial rule.⁵⁸⁰ Pak's hatred of Christianity, however was bi-layered. It was not merely in opposition to Pak's association of Christianity with imperialism, but was also evidence of how dedicated Pak was to Communism such that Pak would have even grimaced at the father of Communism's explanation of Christianity's service to Socialism:

"Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a Socialist tinge. Has not Christianity declaimed against private property, against marriage, and against the State? Has it not preached in the place of these, charity and poverty, celibacy and mortification of the flesh, monastic life, and Mother Church? Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat."⁵⁸¹

Thus, for Marx, who believed that religion and religious identities are products of false

⁵⁷⁸ Pak Hōn-yōng, "Yōksasang ūro Pon Kitokkyoŭi Naemyōn," (An Historical Inquiry on the Genuine Nature of Christianity) Kaepyōk (*Enlightenment*), November, 1925. Adapted from An Chae-sōng, *Pak Hōn-yōng: A Biography*, 109.

⁵⁷⁹ Pak Hōn-yōng, "An Historical Inquiry on the Genuine Nature of Christianity," *Enlightenment*, November, 1925. Adapted from An Chae-sōng, *Pak Hōn-yōng: A Biography*, 109.

⁵⁸⁰ Pak Hōn-yōng, "An Historical Inquiry on the Genuine Nature of Christianity." Adapted from An Chae-sōng, *Pak Hōn-yōng: A Biography*, 109. On Western missionaries' cooperation with the Japanese, see Donald N. Clark, "'Surely God Will Work out Their Salvation': Protestant Missionaries in the March First Movement," *Korean Studies*, Vol. 13 (1989), 42-43 and 47-48.

⁵⁸¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* in Robert C. Tucker ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York and London, England: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978), 492.

consciousness and have little value in practically confronting social inequalities and social oppression of women, the Christianization of Socialism is a religious conversion allowing Socialism to evolve into a major panacea against a hierarchical society.⁵⁸² In other words, because the customs against which Christianity practices abstinence are exactly the same list of bourgeois elements from which Socialism also abstains, the former does not harm or kill the latter but instead mixes well together to mockingly celebrate the aristocrat's delusion—the belief in the persistence of a feudal order. By contrast, Pak would have favored Communism's complete *eradication* of Christianity. Pak would have shuddered at Marx's argument. Christian Socialism did not deserve the respect Christians have for holy water; the heart-burning aristocrat will just have to accept his fate and confess to the world the sin of believing in a pro-imperialist religion. Since Japan had morally poisoned herself by perverting Christianity into an agent of imperialism—preaching it to illegally occupy the lands of another—Pak would have replied to Marx that the latter ought to have argued that Christianity in practice is theoretically incompatible with Socialism. Instead, it is an impure dross with which the priest can do *nothing* to calm down the aristocrat's heart-burn. Christianity must not and cannot have any positive influence on Socialist or Communist movements because of its dangerous potential to be perversely politicized as a cultural lackey of imperialism.

Yet, as much as it might be obvious that Pak the committed Communist was interested in allying himself closely with Marx's view of Christianity, the individual as an independent soul still could have motives which reside solely in the private mind, impervious to any grand theory from the father of Communism. Pak instituted the personality cult as a hallmark for the CCP because he wanted to demonstrate to all probable opponents of the party, including Yō

⁵⁸² On Marx's view of religion and religious identities, see Michael Walzer, *The Paradox of Liberation: Secular Revolutions and Religious Counterrevolutions* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London, England: Yale University Press, 2015), 70.

Un-hyŏng, that the CCP would reject religion, especially Christianity, from interfering with the party's strict adherence to Communism. Pak Hŏn-yŏng's understanding of Communism primarily as an anti-imperialistic ideology allowed him to combine Communism's opposition toward Christianity based on Marx's classic dictum of religion as an opium of the masses and Communism's opposition to imperialism as a tool to permanently establish economic stratification favoring the bourgeoisie's oppression of the proletariats almost as a deterministic socio-economic Darwinism.

In short, the personality cult was an instrument through which Pak was able to hide his complex bi-layered anti-Christian sentiment and his hatred of Yŏ Un-hyŏng through the party's promotion of the personality cult, since the cult was little more than the party's selfish desire to indulge in the narcissism that it solely had the authority to determine southern Korea's future. As an article in the Communist *Hae-pang Il-po (Liberation Daily)* put it, "without the party, there would be no independence," and this self-aggrandizement would be the "foundational cornerstone" to engineer a "true revolution for a complete ideological unification in the name of Lenin and Stalin."⁵⁸³ National independence had to be "complete" not only for the sake of the people's liberation, but also because the party could launch a "new war against counterrevolutionaries" without having to worry about unnecessary foreign interference.⁵⁸⁴

Yet, as much as the party wanted to aggrandize itself, it was actually in a quandary between the urge to maintain its authenticity as an orthodox Marxist group by reserving no place for nationalism in Communist thought and an urge to become a devoted follower of P'yŏng-yang where nationalistic Communism became the ultimate norm. The allure of successfully

⁵⁸³ "The Party and the Precepts of Bolshevism," September 2, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 23-24; the same points were repeated in "Minchok T'ongilkwa Wŏnch'ik," (On Principles for Uniting the People) January 29, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 112-113.

⁵⁸⁴ "The Party and the Precepts of Bolshevism," September 2, 1945. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 23-24

translating principles into practicable policies—the hallmark of activism—was so appealing to Pak because if the party successfully consolidated under Communism, he could dream of reviving the truly orthodox CCP that had closed down two decades before.⁵⁸⁵ Hence, Pak's rise to cult status also confirmed that the CCP had perverted nationalism into a hypnotized captive of Communism, for it was Pak's insistence on a Communistic anti-imperialistic, anti-Japanese, and anti-Rightist nationalism which would be an ethical norm within the party ranks. It would be a condition which the Spring of 1946 would confirm to be immutable as the party treaded along a rocky road to consolidate its Communist identity by urging "Unitary socialism" to walk the gallows. With Pak making the party's Communist culture apparent and leaving no room for "Unitary Socialism" in the party's ideology, Yŏ had no clear reason to stay in the CCP. Thus, Yŏ, not wishing to take part in the mutation of the party into a Communist hotbed any further and betray his own creed, walked out of the CCP's headquarters on January 22, 1946.⁵⁸⁶

In retrospect, Yŏ's autonomous exit from the CCP headquarters is a clear piece of evidence pointing to the lack of authenticity behind the party's decision to form a personality cult around Pak. According to orthodox Communist theory, any attempt to seize power must have the functionalist character of chiefly being devoted to the perfection of a Communist revolution. The figurehead must not relish power for power's sake, but develop prescience and wisdom to understand that the figurehead is merely the highest servant of the Communist system. Insofar as that is manifest, the party's central role must be limited to serving as the headquarters of the Communist movement and nothing less or more than that exact

⁵⁸⁵ An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 103-104.

⁵⁸⁶ "Telegram from the Political Advisor in Korea (Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State," January 22, 1946, *FRUS*, Vol. 8, 614. It is not exactly certain under what circumstances Yŏ walked out of the CCP, for there are only fragments of Yŏ's documents to verify much of the thinking behind his decisions and political activities in south Korea; most of Yŏ's official papers and writings are preserved in north Korea. Hence, I am only able to speculate that Pak's increasing Communization of the CCP's culture made Yŏ realize that he no longer had any hope of practicing "Unitary Socialism."

function.⁵⁸⁷ In short, the purpose of a Communist party's struggle is to promote propaganda to the masses, organizing and utilizing them to seize the political authority to implement the Communist revolution. Thus, the party's role is to supervise the completion of the revolution, which will largely be under the control of the proletarians rather than the figurehead of the party.

The existence of the CCP's opportunity to precisely exercise this traditional role of a Communist party also meant that Yŏ had suffered a critical blow to continue an institutional experiment on the prospects of practicing "Unitary Socialism" in a more programmatic fashion. Yŏ's exit from the party was an expression of frustration over the CCP's inflexible adherence to orthodox Communism to the point of rendering the true existential purpose of the party intelligible. Compared with his earlier frustration with the American military government, which merely confirmed that "Unitary Socialism" was structurally too nebulous for foreign minds to comprehend Korea's situation as a native Korean would perceive it, Pak's total rejection of Yŏ's scheme further uprooted Yŏ's confidence in his program because its nationalist emphasis on building Korea for and of Koreans failed to convince even those who were closest to his Leftist sympathies.

However, conversely, Yŏ's failure was also somewhat inevitable, as his exit from the party was also an urge to exit or liberate from an extremely polarized Korea he had wished to mend with an emphasis on maintaining an ideological equilibrium between the Left and the Right. The very idea of unifying the fractured ideological landscape through a nationalistic and centrist platform of Socialism was anathema for a political climate which could only digest Democracy or Communism but never both. An important quandary that Yŏ could not confidently resolve was which man's—Hodge or Pak—problem he had to answer first. If

⁵⁸⁷ Richard J. Medalie, "The Communist Theory of State," *The American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (December, 1959), 510-525.

Hodge's problem was his inability to comprehend the substantive structure of "Unitary Socialism," Pak's problem was his nonchalance and arguably, an eagerness to maintain a belligerent relationship with American-led Democracy until either side acknowledged defeat.

Within such bipolarity, "Unitary Socialism" was destined to be a meandering ship which could not decide whether to land on an incredibly rocky and inhospitable beach or to float helplessly against tempestuous waves which did not know when to cease. Hodge represented the former terrain because he could not see any compatible element in "Unitary Socialism" which resembled anti-Communist Democracy. Pak Hŏn-yŏng represented the latter terrain because although he knew that "Unitary Socialism" shared the anti-imperialistic nationalism of Korean Communism, it was also dangerous to him for its rejection of the personality cult in favor of ideological centrism. Should Pak accept Yŏ into the party, Pak was certain that Yŏ would insist on abandoning Communism for his own more moderate stance, and if Pak complied, he would risk losing his loyal followers and become a politically homeless person himself. In essence, Pak's rejection of "Unitary Socialism" was a complex mixture of ideological incompatibility and a realist calculation of choosing the best strategy to maintain his own base of maximized power.

Yet, political ambience is a creation of a leader's individual mind, and a concentration of absolute power does not arise solely from the magnitude of support that a particular leader enjoys compared with that of a rival. Rather, the concentration can become a product of a program's simple clarity which demands no higher education or special training to comprehend. In this regard, Pak's formation of the personality cult was Yŏ's implicit acknowledgement of the impractical demand of "Unitary Socialism"—to entirely reconstruct Korea based on an ideology which embraced little bits of everything available in the form of an idea, but whose eclecticism was the main obstruction against letting "Unitary Socialism" stand on its own.

In essence, Yŏ Un-hyŏng did not understand that gray is a color created by mixing black and white, but once the mixture is complete, it is an entirely different color discernible to every human eye. More concretely, Yŏ failed to identify what kind of space his ideology ought to inhabit. He did not realize that "Unitary Socialism" ought to have operated in the same fashion as an intersection within a Venn Diagram is an independent space to denote common elements shared between two groups without yielding any of its space to express the independence of that function. Thus, Yŏ's exit can be interpreted as an unexpected outcome of intense political pressure from the Communists, but also as a product of his own failure to realize that he was a captive of his own error—rendering "Unitary Socialism" into a pendulum which could not settle down, swinging incessantly between "land redistribution" and "anti-imperialism." It was this critical error which made him vulnerable, only to be quickly exploited by Communists who were bent on expanding their power by absorbing any ideological element which had the disguise of having some affinity toward their own ideology.

However, it is also true that there was no ally within the Left who could sympathize, let alone understand Yŏ's frustration about the utter lack of alternatives besides Communism. The synonymization of the "Left" with "Communist" proved how shallowly extremist the southern Left was, and in this regard, Pak was singularly responsible for Yŏ's exit from the CCP. On one hand, he drove himself needlessly into further isolation away from a broader coalition by adhering to what he himself believed to be orthodox Communism, represented almost entirely by the personality cult such that for most party members, that representation seemed to be Communism itself. This crude translation embodied how well Pak manipulated the masses' simple psychology, but it also embodied the lack of formality in his education, which was supported almost entirely through reading Japanese translations of Marx's writings while serving prison sentences, which did not often accurately reflect the nuances of the German

original.⁵⁸⁸ Furthermore, this lack of formality had the banal effect of breeding a deep mistrust within Pak about anyone who differed in the slightest from his "orthodox Communism." Consequently, his decision to oust Yǒ was a failure to appreciate the importance of forming a strong political coalition, a tactic which was especially necessary to adopt against a militarily and numerically superior enemy.

Pak's negligence of this crucial tactic created his grave mistake of blindly exacerbating the bipolarity. He failed to account for his enemy's true strength and comparative material superiority due to his penchant for the abstract and obsession with theoretical accuracy rather than its practical application. Pak Hǒn-yǒng's extreme adherence to orthodox Communism to the extent of being indifferent to this cut-throat ambience was a sign of his uncritical and overzealous dedication to Communism itself. He failed to consider the nascent superiority of resource management that the Americans and the Rightists enjoyed due to the fact that they already had a formally institutional government based on the knowledge they had accumulated from the Japanese. Although Pak probably knew well that he was at a critical disadvantage, his inflexible dedication to nationalism forced him to forfeit the practical calculus of learning how to channel and pool sufficient resources and technology to maintain at least an equilibrium in gathering information about his highly unpredictable foes. This negligence of a technocratic approach to bureaucracy exposes the main flaw in the CCP's decision to hurry with the establishment of a personality cult.

Moreover, instead of thinking carefully about the instrumental value behind a personality cult and its potential service for the workers and about the objectives for which the personality cult was necessary, it was established purely out of the members' adulation of Pak as an individual. Put differently, the exceptionality of Pak's position as the sole orthodox

⁵⁸⁸An Chae-sǒng, *Pak Hǒn-yǒng: A Biography*, 85.

Marxist was the key problem behind the legitimacy of the personality cult, since most members did not know why and how they ought to conceive of the personality cult. Yō's decision to exit the party was closely related to this obvious politically nihilistic sense of the personality cult, because Yō understood that beyond the ornamental business of choosing a personality cult, land reform and policies toward pro-Japanese collaborators were too important and urgent problems such that the question of whether there ought to have been a personality cult pales in importance as a merely artificial and obsolete luxury.

Nevertheless, despite these flaws, Yō's exit from the party was still a victory for Pak, since he got rid of a major obstacle in implementing a fully Communist organization, and that victory was a product of a profound difference in how Pak better understood the intricate nature of power as it operated in history. Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) astutely observed that history is a product of power, or more specifically, of the conditions and processes by which historical narratives are produced.⁵⁸⁹ At the root of this idea is a strong rejection of Hegelian "natural progressivism" based on the simple but powerful principle that history consists of two layers—power and an effective strategy to harness it.

More specifically, history is never *naturally* geared toward progress; it must have an original productive power which allows historians write the histories of those who had the power to make it. Power, in turn, is never given, but acquired as a skill to dictate the creation of history through meticulous planning of a clear strategy and outlook.⁵⁹⁰ Pak's rise to a cult expressed such Trouillotian power by identifying three central objectives of the party: rendering nationalism as an exclusively hypnotized captive of Communism, which, in turn, would be achieved by identifying the promotion of the CCP as the singularly genuine

⁵⁸⁹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 25.

⁵⁹⁰ For Hegel's idea of history as a natural evolutionary process toward progress, see Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Classics, 1956); for Trouillot's rejection of Hegel's argument, see Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 29.

nationalists, ultimately prohibiting Yō's return to the CCP because of Pak's intense anti-Christian sentiment. Put differently, because Pak had fully used such a rich potential of Trouillotian power by institutionalizing a pro-Soviet stance and a personality cult to ultimately pressure Yō to leave the party, Pak could now look forward to clearly reviving and consolidating his authority as the founder of the Korean Communist Party. The next section will examine how the party succeeded in theoretically distinguishing itself from the Rightists by uniting the entire southern Left under the Democratic Nationalist Front and preventing any possibility of reconciliation or having peace with the southern Right.

2. The Creation of the Democratic Nationalist Front

Yō Un-hyōng was devastated; he was betrayed by the very party he had founded out of the hope that the southern Left would share his aspiration for a non-ideological united Korea. He had fought hard to pave such a road, fighting against the Japanese on the battlefield and in red-carpeted hotels using his thunderous oratory to denounce and criticize Japanese imperialism to its roots in fascism. Yet, with his ambition of unifying the nation beyond the antagonism between anti-Communism and Communism on the verge of being a candle before the wind against both his will and ability, Yō had betrayed the hope of many Koreans outside the CCP who were his genuine friends. The intensity of the public's support became an increasingly bitter memory the more apparent it became that his exit from the CCP would serve as undeniable proof that "Unitary Socialism" had lost its vigor and potency to deliver anything concrete compared with the Communists and the Rightists. Had he succeeded in convincing Pak, he would have at least attempted to negotiate, if not reconcile, with Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee. If negotiations progressed, Kim and Rhee would have ideally been unified as patriotic Koreans under Yō's scheme.

Indeed, it was too unreal that such a scenario would remain as a mere dream. Once when Yō had finished giving a speech opposing the trusteeship, adolescents and the common folk,

from merchants to high school students, all gathered around him to support and encourage his vision. Many even believed that Yŏ must be the first president of Korea once a formal government was founded. An unofficial poll on the question, "Who is the most suitable candidate to win the presidency?" showed Yŏ winning the most votes, Pak Hŏn-yŏng placed at a distant second, followed by Syngman Rhee and Kim Ku.⁵⁹¹ The people loved his handsomeness, his confidence, his highly skilled oratory, and childish jokes he shared with students as he consistently reminded them that a strong Korea was none other than a united Korea and that the future rested on their shoulders.⁵⁹²

However, it was also such popularity coupled with his failure to live up to his creed which stung him deep in the heart. During his sixtieth birthday held in late March, upon looking at the hundreds of guests who had convened to give their birthday blessings, Yŏ wept stormily and said, "I thank everyone who came here today to wish a happy birthday for a man who has done so little to rebuild the nation—a task delayed by the greedy hands of a few who failed to understand that fulfilling this task is the ultimate dream of many."⁵⁹³ In short, Yŏ was genuinely a modest and humble man of the people and for the people whose attachment to the public was so great that for many progressives, liberals, and youths, Yŏ was already their president.

Meanwhile, the Rightists were busy trying to learn a critical lesson which Yŏ could not: quantitative superiority may be more desirable than qualitative superiority over a formidable opponent in politics, especially if the opponent's chief objective is to exploit the lack of unity, order, and discipline by demonstrating the existence of an airtight bureaucratic structure. On February 9, 1946, the DPK announced the formation of the Democratic Representative Council, the largest coalition of Right-wing parties, which, as the coalition's president

⁵⁹¹ Yi Ki-hyŏng, *Yŏ Un-hyŏng: A Biography*, 446.

⁵⁹² Yi Ki-hyŏng, *Yŏ Un-hyŏng: A Biography*, 425.

⁵⁹³ Yi Ki-hyŏng, *Yŏ Un-hyŏng: A Biography*, 446.

Syngman Rhee later explained, would be a "luminous beacon that will guide every Korean toward the ideal path of independence," whose cornerstone will be a "firm unity among all political parties in Korea."⁵⁹⁴ Kim Ku argued that there will be a close and extensive cooperation with even the most myopic of Communists, and all obstacles obstructing the formation of an "autonomous people's independent republic" must be banished, for even the most "beautiful theory could become the core cause of committing an original sin if it drives a people toward irreparable fragmentation."⁵⁹⁵ In other words, Rhee was claiming that the primary purpose behind launching a unified Rightist front was to realize a liberal political culture that could nurture the founding of a genuinely independent country which would not be embroiled in obsolete and dysfunctional squabbling about theoretical orthodoxy.

Yet, for Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Kim and Rhee's words meant little more than an expression of the Rightists' determination to prohibit and permanently terminate Pak's search for a more perfect Communist revolution, with violence continuing to thunder on the streets. Right-wing terrorist groups continued to bomb Left-wing newspaper companies, plot assassinations, and launch mob attacks, whereupon Left-wing terrorists would respond in the same fashion.⁵⁹⁶ Furthermore, in early January, the Rightists under Kim Ku's leadership had attempted to integrate Communists such as Kim Wŏn-pong into the Provisional Government and had failed. The Communists expressed their displeasure at the "lack of full consultation with the Left in forming such a blatantly pro-Rightist organization," and under such an "incomplete congregation, the Rightists had no authority to form a genuine Democratic Nationalist Front

⁵⁹⁴ "Minchuŭiwŏn Ŭichang Yi Sŭngman, Puŭichang Kim Ku Yŏnsŏlmun, Hodge Sŏngmyŏngsŏ," (Democratic Representative Council President Syngman Rhee, Vice-President Kim Ku's Speech, and Hodge's Statement) *Chosŏn Ilpo*, February 15, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 2.

⁵⁹⁵ "Democratic Represensentative Council President Syngman Rhee, Vice-President Kim Ku, and Hodge's Statement," *Chosŏn Ilpo*, February 15, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 2.

⁵⁹⁶ "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State," January 23, 1946. *FRUS*, 1946, Vol. 8, 616.

because the Provisional Government's monopolistic Rightist tendency was too manifest."⁵⁹⁷

With the Americans and Soviets agreeing in late February to establish the American-Soviet Joint Commission at Seoul, it was obvious that the Rightists wanted the two powers to quickly acknowledge the sole legitimacy of their government over that of the northerners, since Kim Il-sung's regime had yet to acquire stability.⁵⁹⁸ Indeed, the Democratic Representative Council's structure clearly reflected the Rightists' such desire. Despite DRC chairman Kim Kyu-sik's assurance that the Democratic Representative Council was "not an advisory body for the American military government but an organ of the Korean people," Kim's vague qualification that the council "will work with the Americans to establish a provisional government" was closer to the truth as the Council was filled with mostly DPK politicians who were favorably inclined toward winning American support and recognition.⁵⁹⁹

Moreover, Kim was naive to forget that political leadership is not purely a creation of individual volition, but of a corporeal group which makes and keeps the leadership within the hands of the group's desired leader. If the group's political disposition is especially at odds with that of the leader, there is not only a risk of the group's gross interference in administrative affairs. More alarmingly, there is also a high probability that the leadership has no remedy against such interference except to have the prescience of knowing that accepting the leadership means encountering such an injurious character of legislative decision-

⁵⁹⁷ *Chosŏn Ilpo*, February 2, 1946. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 193.

⁵⁹⁸ "Agreement on the Establishment of a Joint Commission, Signed from Seoul," in "Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," February 20, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 637-638.

⁵⁹⁹ Arthur C. Bunce, "Can Korea Be Free?" June 14, 1946, 9-10. RG 554, Box 293: Subject Files, 1945-1947: Daily Radio Reports to News Conferences. "Kim Kyu-sik, Ŏron eke Minchuüiwönüi Üito Sölmyöng," (Kim Kyu-sik Clarifies Intentions of Democratic Council for the Press) March 22, 1946. *Chosŏn Ilpo*. "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 362." RG 554, Box 5. See also Cho Han-söng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 200. For a general introduction to Kim Kyu-sik's political philosophy and life, see Yi Chun-sik, "Kim Kyu-siküi Minchokchuüi Untongüi Panghyangkwa Kaenyöm," *The Direction and Concept of Kim Kyu-sik's Nationalist Movement*, *Studies in Korean Nationalist Movements*, Vol. 39 and Usa Yonkuhoe, *Usachönchip* (The Kim Kyu-sik Research Group ed., *Kim Kyu-sik: His Life and Work, 5 vols*), (Seoul, south Korea: Han-ul Publishing, 2000).

making.⁶⁰⁰ Even if the fact that the Americans' favorable disposition toward Kim Kyu-sik than Syngman Rhee as a leader for the DRC stemming from the former's intelligence, democratic spirit, generosity, and fluency in English is considered, the political composition of the council was still blatantly biased toward the Right.⁶⁰¹

Although each political party from both the Left and the Right were to have three seats while the rest were allocated to various social organizations, the council deliberately arranged for Rightist social organizations to exclusively monopolize the remaining seats. As a result, most labor organizations had no representation at all, while Rightist women's organizations formed the majority.⁶⁰² In other words, the Communists were uncomfortable with the Rightist usage of "unification" as a clandestine euphemism for "Rightist dominance over Leftists" without any official agreement from the Left. Such behavior was no different from the factionalism for which the Rightists had constantly accused the Left of, and under such an irreconcilable situation, the Communists chose to be masters of their own creed than be slaves to another.⁶⁰³

Some Leftists such as Kim Wŏn-pong simply argued that the Provisional Government had absolutely no legitimacy to represent the entire Korean public. Despite the "current status of 'legal legitimacy' as a catch-phrase in current Korean politics," the Provisional Government "had no right to abusively use the label," for the organization was just expressing the "collective will of a few exiled individuals who did not always consistently work under its

⁶⁰⁰ John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1991), 121.

⁶⁰¹ Chŏng-sik Lee, *Kim Kyu-sikŭi Saengae (Life of Kim Kyu-sik)* (Seoul, south Korea: Sin-ku Mun-hwa Publishing, 1974), 137.

⁶⁰² Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 2*, 72-77.

⁶⁰³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Ippupŭiwŏn e Taehayŏ," (On the Legislative Assembly), in Chŏng Yŏng-uk ed., *Haepanghu Chŏngch'i Sahoehŏk Kirok (Political and Social Records After Liberation, Vol. 12)* (Seoul, south Korea: Tarakpang (Attic) Press, 1994), 2-5.

very title."⁶⁰⁴ Other Leftists were disappointed by the lack of militancy in the past activities of the Provisional Government, and pointed this deficiency as a source of the Provisional Government's authority as a nationalist institution. For example, Yi Yŏ-sŏng of the Korean People's Party argued that the Provisional Government lacked a convincing record of militarial activism to describe itself as a nationalist organization. If it was truly legitimate, "the Americans would have supplied weapons to these gentlemen to form a righteous army; the fact that there is no such record proves that the legitimacy of the Provisional Government is but a delusion meant to deceive the Korean people."⁶⁰⁵

The Provisional Government's view of itself as a genuine leader of the Korean independence movement was but a narcissicism devoid of international appeal or recognition. Indeed, even the Right-wing *Taedong Sinmun*, which was notorious for opposing just about every politician in the Left and Right, criticized the Democratic Representative Council for being full of "fake politicians who displayed obstinate opposition and were worse than the Japanese who treated Korea as a colony and Koreans as dunces."⁶⁰⁶ In short, the Democratic Representative Council was, in the eyes of both the Leftists and Rightists, guilty of being too pro-American for its own good that it seemed devoid of any decent respect for nationalism and patriotism.

Furthermore, since late 1945, Pak Hŏn-yŏng had already seen enough to understand how intolerant Rhee was toward Communism and Pak's attempt build the most theoretically pristine Communist party in southern Korea. Most importantly, on February 1, Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee had congregated all Right-wing parties and founded the Committee for

⁶⁰⁴ Kim Wŏn-pong, Yi Yŏ-sŏng, Sŏng Chu-sik, Kim Sŏng-suk, and Chang Kŏn-sang, "Imchŏng T'altoe Kyŏlchŏng e kwanhan Sŏngmyŏngsŏ," (Statement on the Decision to Exit from the Provisional Government) February 15, 1946. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 199.

⁶⁰⁵ Kim Wŏn-pong, Yi Yŏ-sŏng, Sŏng Chu-sik, Kim Sŏng-suk, and Chang kŏn-sang, "Statement on the Decision to Exit from the Provisional Government," February 15, 1946. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the Southern Korean Workers' Party*, 199. See also Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 234.

⁶⁰⁶ *Taedong (Great Unity) Sinmun*, "Inminchŏnsŏn: Minchokpanyŏkcha Chiptan," (The People's Front: A National Traitor Group) March 11, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, Document No. 350. RG 59, Box 7388.

Demanding the Immediate Independence of Korea (CDIIK) with Rhee as its president, a decision which clearly signified that the Rightists now had a definitive and permanent institution to carry out their anti-trusteeship movement.⁶⁰⁷ To ascribe as much morality and credibility to its stance, the CDIIK promised that it would "transcend all ideologies and factions to achieve non-ideological unity and establish an independent government for which a nationalist front would be its foundation."⁶⁰⁸ Only then would the "dream of 30 million Koreans be fulfilled, and it was for this sole purpose that all factions devote with the utmost sincerity and gravity to rapidly realize unification."⁶⁰⁹ In short, the Right was now equating anti-trusteeship as a patriotic decision because they conceived it as the only key to unifying the entire Korean nation—a creed that surely resonated with the Korean public whose fulfillment was a goal which entertained no favoritism to either the Right or the Left.

To concretely prove its point, the CDIIK announced a 27-point program which purported to incorporate both Rightist and Leftist demands. The program claimed that "all properties of Japanese and traitors would be confiscated, and promised the introduction of a tax system exempting the poor farmer."⁶¹⁰ In addition to a minimum wage, the program vowed to institute an 8-hour work day for adults and a 6-hour work-day for children under age 16. Furthermore, like the northerners, the program announced the distribution of large land owners' lands with suitable reimbursement for the owner, as well as the establishment of proper public welfare organs for workers, farmers, and peasants.⁶¹¹ In other words, the

⁶⁰⁷ Lee and Scalapino, *The Communist Movement in Korea: The Society*, 361.

⁶⁰⁸ Tongnip Ch'oksōng Wiwōnhoe (Committee for Demanding Immediate Independence of Korea), "Yi Sūng-man Paksauī Kwikuk kūrīko T'ongil Chōnsōnūi P'iryosōng," (The Return of Dr. Syngman Rhee and the Need for a United Front) (undated) *PSMKH*, Vol. 13, 346.

⁶⁰⁹ Committee for Demanding Immediate Independence of Korea, "The Return of Dr. Syngman Rhee and Need for a United Front," (undated) *PSMKH*, Vol. 13, 347.

⁶¹⁰ *Tonga Ilpo*, "Minchūi-wōn, Imsichōngch'aektūl e kwanhan 27 kaecho Palp'yo," (Announcement of 27 Articles Concerning Temporary Policies of Korean Representative Democratic Council) March 19, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, Document No. 360. RG 59, Box 5.

⁶¹¹ *Tonga Ilpo*, "Announcement of 27 Articles Concerning Temporary Policies of Korean Representative Democratic Council," March 19, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, Document No. 360. RG 59, Box 5.

CDIIK was clarifying that the Rightists wished to directly challenge the legitimacy of the Leftists as the sole representatives of nationalism in south Korea by engaging in a politics of imitation. As political scientist W. Lance Bennett (1979) argues, maintaining moral integrity in the eyes of the public involves generating a universal image for individuals to assimilate cognitively, being sufficiently ambiguous in communicating the image to allow for private assimilation of public political resolutions and to make the resolutions universally valid. Finally, there has to be an emotional and intellectual catalyst that could allow the image to attract individual interest and see commonalities between the image and individual lives to draw out emotional connections.⁶¹²

However, to the DPK's surprise, the announcement of the 27-point program coincided with Syngman Rhee's resignation from the chairmanship of the RDC, after *Pravda* alleged that Rhee had unlawfully abused his leadership of a small Korean group to "seize governmental power and mining enterprises."⁶¹³ Although the veracity of the allegation was not immediately confirmed, the DPK was undoubtedly shaken and quickly nullified Rhee's resignation. From the DPK's perspective, it had extinguished an ember which was about to grow into a wildfire and possibly, end its political life. Accepting Rhee's resignation would have potentially meant that the Rightists could face an even more strenuous struggle to confirm political supremacy without the presence of any leadership. In addition, Rhee's resignation would tarnish the party's reputation as a self-declared nationalist organization since the degradation of Rhee's moral integrity might contagiously translate into that of the party. In other words, the CDIIK's 27-point program was a decoy to ensure that Rhee's supposed lack of moral integrity did not contaminate that of the party when Rhee was

⁶¹² W. Lance Bennett, "Imitation, Ambiguity, and Drama in Political Life: Civil Religion and the Dilemmas of Public Morality," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (February, 1979), 112.

⁶¹³ "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon) to the Secretary of State," April 10, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 659;"Secret Periodical Report No. 3 from the United Kingdom Liaison in Japan," March, 1946, 17. FO [Foreign Office] 371/54144 in Jarman ed., *Korea: Political and Economic Reports, Vol. 10*, 43-44. See also Cho Han-sŏng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 202.

effectively the metonym for the party. A fountain cannot aspire to send out water which is simultaneously sweet and bitter to the same place, for the source's genuine and singular quality will be surely found in every stream.⁶¹⁴

Therefore, the DPK chose rhetorical isomorphism to conceal its internal crisis and to keep its competition with the Left alive. By invoking nationalism, non-ideological unity, and hints of building a welfare state, the DPK deliberately made its rhetoric reflect the spirit of "Unitary Socialism," thereby appealing to the Korean public that the Left and the Right both cherished these two values. This had the intended effect of portraying the Rightists as more flexible and liberal than the Leftists such that there was no need for any ideological conflict. However, simultaneously, by unrevealing reasons behind why the DPK decided to adopt Yŏ Un-hyŏng's philosophy, the Right enjoyed the advantage of being mysterious not only to the public but also to Pak Hŏn-yŏng since the Rightists could feign an ideological flexibility hinting that maintaining a Manichean antagonism with the CCP was not the DPK's chief character or purpose.

Moreover, by pretending to align with Yŏ, the DPK sought to emphasize not how strong it was in being able to side with moderates, but instead how weak Pak Hŏn-yŏng was by showing how irrelevant Communism was to south Korea's current political scene such that even once die-hard anti-Communists were willing to accept and even sympathize with Yŏ's moderate but slightly Left-wing ideology. By showing how easily the Right could mesh with a moderate stance, the DPK was advertising itself as a Pangeatic organization, capable of expanding the "Democratic" and clandestinely anti-Communistic camp. In doing so, the DPK sought to exert more psychological pressure on Pak by showing that he was waging a lonesome battle, and the earlier he gave up fighting, the better it would be for his security

⁶¹⁴ Julius H. Seeyle, "The Moral Character in Politics," *The North American Review*, Vol. 139, No. 335 (October, 1884), 305.

against a growing anti-Communist political consensus. Ultimately, rather than adopting an inflexible Communist rhetoric of punishing pro-Japanese collaborators, the Rightists chose to adopt a more positive and pro-active language of acceptance and assimilative unity to give the impression that the DPK was more sympathetic to Yō.

Finally, nationalism and unity were sentiments which many people harbored at the time, and therefore, it was easy to appeal to public sentiment to win the people's hearts and minds. Conversely, from Pak's perspective, the rise of the CDIIK meant a possible waning of his political influence since the CDIIK could lure Yō to cooperate in toppling the CCP. Should that happen, Yō would be offered a chance at political resuscitation and decide to infiltrate within the CCP's ranks to act as a spy for the Rightists. Since Yō still had popularity among both the Left and the Right, it would be improper to accuse Yō of "spying" because the accusation would easily raise suspicion from Pak's allies and anti-Pak elements within the CCP that Pak harbored too much avarice for private power such that he was willing to sacrifice a former partner. It would only lower Pak's moral reputation within the CCP. Furthermore, because the DPK was directly addressing the public's sentiment, the Leftists would be cornered and rendered insignificant if they did not offer a similar or better program. If there was no unity within the Left, there was no guarantee that Pak would be able to stand his ground alone against a massive intra-Right alliance.

Since Pak believed that he was unable to make the Rightists and the Americans see his true worth, he wanted to at least create some tension between his worth and its recognition, believing that his enemies struggled with the same problem. To maintain such an illusionary public reputation, he needed sufficient organizational strength to maintain antagonism with the Right and show that his struggle against them was still ongoing.⁶¹⁵ Since Kim Wōn-pong and other Communists had declined Kim Ku's offer to be his allies, Pak must have thought

⁶¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 187.

that winning those Communists' loyalty would be a golden ticket to enriching the degree of orthodoxy even while appealing to the same virtues of nationalism and unity as the Rightists.

To counter the CDIIK based on these three reasons and to secure a position of leadership of the Left himself, Pak emphasized that every Leftist Democratic politician had to "join a Democratic Nationalist Front in a time when the Rightists were blatantly supporting the Americans with absolute devotion while fervently opposing the Moscow Decision."⁶¹⁶ Should any Leftist hesitate to join the DNF, the party argued that it was merely "a sign that one is not ready to discern what is right and wrong, and an inability to understand that 'neutrality' postpones the introduction of justice, Democracy, and peace, delaying the realization of the Progressives' historically monumental task of founding unity and independence."⁶¹⁷ Put differently, Pak was urging for the appearance of a clear institutional counterweight to the DPK because if an alliance with the Rightists was ultimately impossible, the Leftists had to consolidate their support for the Moscow Decision.

Such support was insufficient if it just remained as a matter of rhetoric. Rather, it had to be demonstrated through concrete action that could demonstrate a cohesive dedication to preserving a permanent and uniform Leftist identity. Therefore, the DNF was a necessary measure to ensure the permanence of an unwavering allegiance to the Left, which would be the basis to define a pro-trusteeship patriotism purely on the Left's own terms. The DNF, a union of 29 Left-wing parties in south Korea whose institutional backbone was a partnership between Pak Hŏn-yŏng (Chosŏn Communist Party) Yŏ Un-hyŏng (Korean People's Party), Kim Kyu-sik (Nationalist Revolutionary Party), and Paek Nam-un (New Citizens' Party), was

⁶¹⁶ "Chosŏn Kongsantang, Minchŏn Kyŏlsŏng Ch'amkarul Kangchohanŭn Sŏngmyŏng Palp'yo," (Chosŏn Communist Party Issues a Statement Emphasizing Participation in the Formation of the Democratic Nationalist Front) *Seoul Sinmun*, February 14, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 2.

⁶¹⁷ "Chosŏn Communist Party Issues a Statement Emphasizing Participation in the Formation of the Democratic Nationalist Front," *Seoul Sinmun*, February 14, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 2.

officially born a few days later.⁶¹⁸

However, the most symbolically important organization which came under the CCP's wing was the Independence League, an organization consisting mainly of Koreans originally based in Yanan who served with the People's Liberation Army during the Chinese Civil War and whose central mission was to cooperate with the PLA and train Communist cadres. Although the majority of the League's members were in Paek Nam-un's New Citizens' Party, after the end of the Chinese Civil War, the League's members split into two groups; the larger group headed to north Korea, while the other group headed to south Korea.⁶¹⁹ The CCP absorbed the southern branch of the Independence League because Pak Hŏn-yŏng believed that the presence of northerners in the party would not only increase the legitimacy of fostering a cooperative relationship between the southern Leftists and their northern counterparts. Pak hoped that the absorption would also suggest the CCP's superiority in that relationship by dismissing the Provisional Government and Syngman Rhee and attempt to militarily demonstrate the centrality of the CCP as the Communist party with the most recognizable revolutionary credentials.

In addition, the presence of the Independence League within the party would also serve as an instrument of intra-party surveillance, strengthening the CCP's anti-Japanese and pro-Communist character to solidify the centrality of the pro-Pak faction's rule and prevent the resurgence of challenges from rivals such as the Chang-an Faction. In short, the inclusion of

⁶¹⁸ *Chungang Sinmun*, "398Myŏngŭi Taep'yocha Ch'amkaro Minchŏn Onŭl Kyŏlsŏng," (With Participation of 398 Representatives, Democratic People's Front (Democratic Nationalist Front) Will be Formed Today) February 15, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Document No. 326. RG 554, Box 5. See also Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 224. The New Citizens' Party was under Kim Wŏn-pong's leadership, but Paek Nam-un would effectively take over the NCP after Kim relocated to north Korea during late 1946. Kim Wŏn-pong (1898-1958) was a committed nationalist and moderate Socialist who called for the elimination of all pro-Japanese collaborators and national traitors. After participating in inter-Korea negotiations in April 1948, he would serve as Minister of Labor and Vice-President of the People's Council until Kim Il-sung purged him in 1958.

⁶¹⁹ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 172 and Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 196. See also "Top Secret Priority Telegram from General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Secretary of State," (undated). *FRUS*, 1946, Vol. 8, 641.

the Independence League was the CCP's attempt to officially publicize its primacy in the Korean Communist movement by attempting to politically and militarily depreciate the importance of the northern Communists and the southern Rightists and promote the idea of a singularly supreme CCP.⁶²⁰

Yet, in another sense, the relegation of the DNF to a mouthpiece for the CCP exposes some of the DNF's critical structural flaws. First, because the DNF did not take time to consider developing itself into a genuinely populist party, it could not decide the hierarchical direction of the organization—top-down or bottom-up—to give itself political features distinguishable from the DPK. Furthermore, although there were some northerners in the party ranks, their inclusion was fundamentally ornamental, only intending to show that it was a pan-Korean party without any real collaboration or agreement with north Korea. Of course, the decision to include northerners within the party was sufficient to demonstrate that it was purely a Leftist organization, but because northerners were merely “inserted” into the organization, the DNF left the risk of implying that it wished to achieve a factional hegemony around the southern Communists rather than with the northerners. In essence, the DNF, rather than promoting pan-Korean solidarity, instead became a symbol of the Korean Communists' failure to solve their chronic problem of a north-south divide.⁶²¹

Finally, the DNF was little more than an attempt to expand the CCP's organizational prowess because with the exception of the CCP, which served as the front's backbone, the other Left-wing members of the front lost their independent identities. The DNF did not allow any party to remain as a "bloc without" the coalition, giving the impression that the CCP had

⁶²⁰ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 172. The CCP would discuss strategies and tactics with the members of the Independence League while planning its insurgency operations against the Korean National Police and the American military government.

⁶²¹ “Chwa-u Punyölkwa Minchönnae Tukachi Chöngchi Kiryu,” (The Left-Right Divide and Two Political Currents within the Democratic Nationalist Front) in Yi chong-sök, Kim Tong-ch'un, and Kim Söng-po et al., eds., *A Handbook for Research in Korean Studies—The Modern Era and North Korea*.

merged or absorbed other Leftist parties against their will.⁶²² Indeed, the DNF's central precepts reflected a strong pro-CCP stance, calling for the nationalization and redistribution of land from the state *gratis*, punishment of all pro-Japanese collaborators, transfer of legislative and jurisdiction from the American military government to the People's Committees in accordance with the Moscow Conference, and finally, a committed opposition to the Rightist Legislative Council.⁶²³

In addition, under Pak's urging, the DNF became one of the CCP's "departments" under the control of the CCP's Central Commission. Even the DNF's bureaucratic structure was susceptible to the CCP's manipulation and surveillance. Although six "presidents" communally operated the DNF's Central Committee consisting of 385 members, the DNF did not clearly specify the exact ratio by which each party had to represent itself, thereby exposing the DNF to a certain party's monopolistic control of power. Indeed, the CCP pounced on this weakness very eagerly, infiltrating many party members in the DNF's provincial branches. By doing so, the DNF had turned into the CCP's panopticon, allowing for an easier screening of potential anti-CCP elements. In essence, although the DNF was nationalistic in name, it was effectively another extended bureaucratic arm of the CCP, further increasing and solidifying its monopoly of power for Communists within the Left.⁶²⁴

3.The CCP's Transition to "Communist Exceptionalism"

From Pak's perspective, delivering this message and witnessing the formation of the DNF were crucial milestones because Pak considered the DNF as symbolizing the legitimacy of his recent achievements to the Left. The formation of the DNF meant that Pak could now focus on a holistic exercise of authority because by placing the CCP at the center of DNF, Pak was

⁶²² David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 46-47.

⁶²³ *Minchuchuii Minchok Chönsön Kangryöng (Precepts of the Democratic Nationalist Front)* (Seoul, south Korea: The United Nationalist Front Headquarters, February, 1946), 2-4. RG 242, Entry No. NM-44, 299-H: Korean Language Pamphlets Captured in P'yöngyang [SA 2009] [1946-1950]; 05/1953-01/1958, Box 689.

⁶²⁴ Sö Chung-sök, *A Study of Popular Nationalist Movements in Modern Korea*, 346. See also Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 380.

reflecting his confidence in moving the entire Leftist bureaucratic structure in his favor whenever he pleased. Moreover, the confirmation of the CCP's dominance meant that Pak was ready to absorb and control the masses loyal to the other Leftist parties, which would allow the CCP to have an upper hand in leading the formulation of a pan-Leftist alliance by claiming that it monopolized the masses' support.⁶²⁵ After all, with all the ingredients for the CCP's centralization of power in place—the personality cult's construction, Yō's early exit from the party, and most importantly, the founding of the American-Soviet Joint Commission—the party could now begin to devote its attention to successfully building what I call "Communist exceptionalism," or an emphasis on class liberation as national liberation and a pro-trusteeship stance to distinguish the party from the Rightists, ultimately to stress Communism as the only answer to simultaneously achieving both forms of liberation.⁶²⁶

As Pak triumphantly declared on March 21, 1946, "success" in the Communist lexicon did not simply mean "defeating opponents," but affirming their utter obliteration to assert the party's supreme status by ushering its thorough Communization. To that end, class liberation had to be synonymous with national liberation. Imperialism was never purely an external instrument of oppression exercised by a foreign nation. It was still alive as long as the capitalist bourgeoisie and pro-Japanese collaborators remained drugged by the sweet nectar of wealth they drunk through workers' properties. Only by engaging in a prolonged struggle to realize justice and liberation from the "piggish bourgeoisie" could workers "live a life that is their very own."⁶²⁷ Accordingly, opposition to the Moscow Decision was nothing more than "treason," for any attempt to "obstruct implementation was an obstruction of Democracy and

⁶²⁵ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 191.

⁶²⁶ For the founding of the American-Soviet Joint Commission, see "Agreement on Establishment of a Joint Commission, Signed at Seoul," attached to "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," February 15, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 636.

⁶²⁷ Pak Hōn-yōng, "Mi-So Kongtongwiwōnhoe Kaechoewa Uriūi Chuchang," (On the Commencement of the American-Soviet Joint Commission and Our Demands) March, 21, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 142.

worse, postponement of genuine national liberation."⁶²⁸ Supporting the Moscow Decision was the only way to "thoroughly root out imperialism" and end the "disgraceful history of Japanese flunkeyism" in Korea.⁶²⁹ However, for an ideology to have binding power, it must publicize the empirical situation in which a collective group finds itself, for only then does the ideology become an authoritative norm dictating the group's directional future.⁶³⁰ Therefore, Pak urged all party members to deliver speeches and publish essays encouraging the execution of counterrevolutionaries and all who disapproved of the Moscow Conference's decision on trusteeship.

The speech is not only important because Pak discovered through supporting the Moscow Decision a radical objective of the party's future struggles—the workers' overthrow of the bourgeoisie as an elimination of the last relic of imperialism. In declaring that objective, Pak had also solved a major Marxist dilemma on the relationship between class and national consciousness. In *The German Ideology* (1846), Karl Marx argued that contradictions occur between a division of labor and national consciousness because

"..the division of labor only becomes truly natural from the moment when a division of material and mental labor appears. From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of "pure" theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. But even if these [theories] come into contradiction with existing relations, this can only occur because existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production; *this moreover, can also occur in a particular national sphere of relations through the appearance of the contradiction, not within the national orbit, but between this national consciousness and the practice of other nations between the national and the general consciousness of a nation.*"⁶³¹

The Marxian relationship between consciousness and the division of labor can be said to have influenced Durkheimian "organic solidarity," because the essential point is that the formation of human knowledge—that it is possible to divide and separate mental labor from

⁶²⁸ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "On the American-Soviet Joint Commission and Our Demands," March, 21, 1946. *ODSKWP*, Vol. 1, 142.

⁶²⁹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "On the American-Soviet Joint Commission and Our Demands," March, 21, 1946. *ODSKWP*, Vol. 1, 142.

⁶³⁰ On the process behind ideology's evolution as a authoritative norm, see Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1951), 349.

⁶³¹ Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, Part I in Robert C. Tucker ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 159. Italics are my own emphasis.

physical labor and let the human mind make the division so naturally routine that the distinction of whether the division is a "real" thing in itself needs no verification. In other words, over time, the division of labor deeply connects itself with daily life that it eventually gets mundane and pedestrian. However, Marx astutely warns of a sudden twist of fate. In exchange for humanity's ability to liberate its consciousness to devote it to the study of "pure theories," it is only able to do so under the assumption that social relations have produced a severe conflict with the problem of ownership over the means of production. It is for the resolution of social conflicts specifically rooted in labor relations that the study of theories not only matter, but also become practical. However, the most interesting development, according to Marx, is not just the idea that theories become practical by way of solving problems regarding labor relations, but that it also influences the labor relations to become nationalistic, transforming into a universally shared feeling of agitation for national revolutions.

In short, if the division of labor is a social relationship, Marx was asking whether class consciousness as a *reality* arising from contradictions between an employer-worker relationship could also theoretically evolve, *concretized* to coexist with national consciousness, promoting a universal recognition of those contradictions. Pak not only recognized the contradiction between the worker's social inferiority to the bourgeoisie despite the superior importance of the former's productivity to the latter's right of domination; he also found a solution to facilitate the emancipation of a general consciousness: merge class liberation with nationalism such that the former is pursued for the sake of the latter. In a country where workers and peasants constituted more than half of the entire population, the workers and peasants as the chief forces of production had numerical superiority over the bourgeoisie to overturn the social relationship of the former's subjugation to the latter. Furthermore, because workers and peasants suffered the most under Japanese rule, their liberation was equivalent to the liberation of the Korean public, or national liberation. This was why although Pak Hŏn-yŏng

still believed that national liberation was essential to class liberation, in contrast to his original dictum of September 1945, a lunar eclipse was happening in his mind—a shift to "Communist exceptionalism." Class liberation was now the dominant goal to which national liberation played a secondary role. Class liberation was, as Wallerstein puts it, to only have a political relationship with national liberation—a goal in and of itself that had to be pursued as though it *was* national liberation—because the latter, if led by the bourgeoisie, would not necessarily guarantee the former.⁶³²

Pak made this theoretical shift because he realized that national liberation fundamentally requires passion arising directly from an individual's heart; a personal fervor and a will to dedicate and sacrifice oneself for nationalism are the most critical variables determining the success or failure of national liberation. By contrast, class liberation is a collective interest rooted in a communal social consciousness. The interest attains political power by achieving popularity, which means that acquiring numerical majority is more essential for the success of class liberation than for national liberation. With his rich experience in revolutionary organization and politics, it is unsurprising that Pak strongly believed that class struggle had to continue in southern Korea to allow for a true liberation of the proletariat who would earnestly be committed to nationalism in body and soul.

What this qualification meant was that any suggestion for alliance with Rightists who had objected to the trusteeship was undesirable because the party's vision of "complete independence" would be tainted by pro-Japanese collaborators who masked their past as traitors by appealing to a misled sense of nationalism. Pak's article in the party's paper *Constructing Korean Democracy*, responding to the Rhee faction's continued protests against the trusteeship and the faction's hiring of administrative officials and officers who served under the Japanese, unequivocally emphasized this sentiment:

⁶³² Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein, "Liberation of Class Struggle," 404.

"...We[the Party] oppose the inclusion of pro-Japanese collaborators in the construction of the Korean national government. Such "Americanized" groups must be unquestionably excluded, and those who organized and promoted the anti-trusteeship movement must also be prohibited from participating or expressing their opinions. Likewise, we refuse to ally with such hypocritical groups who simply disguise their xenophobia toward Soviets as supporting "Democracy" and equate 'anti-trusteeship' with 'pro-Democracy.'"⁶³³

Pak's strategic mindset behind publishing the article is apparent in his deliberate omission of "class liberation" while mentioning another necessary condition to realize "Communist exceptionalism"—a complete and an eternal separation from the Rightists. Pak was confident that the Rightists' folly could be exposed by their very own exclusionary policy. In declaring the Rightists' opposition to the trusteehip as the singular condition under which their freedom of expression must "unquestionably excluded," Pak was essentially arguing that the Rightists ought to stand on their heads. How could they, a group of thieves who had sold Korea to the Japanese, Pak was asking, dare pretend to side with justice and to unfairly brand Communists as "country-sellers" when Communists were supporting the trusteehip out of a genuinely patriotic interest to see Koreans have their own nationalist government? The Rightists' lack of nationalistic credentials was not the only reason that prompted Pak to ask this question. The Rightists were hypocritical because while they claimed to represent the people, they understood nothing of the people's will. The Rightists' opposition to trusteehip was close to political nihilism because their opposition to trusteehip was not balanced with a *support* for anything. Unable to withhold his desire to directly reflect what he had in mind when he wrote his article, Pak publicly announced a four-point program for the future of Korean Communism:

1. The transitional government must be organized by the true democratic political parties which support the decisions of the Moscow Conference, and which are based on the public. Only in this way will that government be able to suppress Fascism, maintain world peace, and insure Far Eastern peace.
2. Remove pro-Japanese, traitors, new Fascists.
3. The founding of a legitimate government must be in accordance with the people's will. Government should be built around the People's Committee which first worked for our nation's independence.
4. Prevent individual or party despotism. When landowners' profits hinder the development of the entire nation, we must do away with land owners.

By emphasizing the public and the people's will, Pak was espousing the belief that the

⁶³³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Minchuŭiwŏnŭi Sŏngmyŏng e Taehayŏ," (On the Declaration of the Democratic Council) March, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 149-150.

core tenets of the Leftists' program—supporting the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference, land reforms, punishment of pro-Japanese collaborators, and the centrality of the People's Committee—were more Democratically legitimate because they were responding to the primary Korean sentiments of anti-Japanese nationalism and anti-imperialism.⁶³⁴ Furthermore, because the position of "opposing trusteeship" was an anti-Communist position transplanted in the minds of the Rightists, the Rightists were in Pak's view, Americanized ideologues who could not claim that they were "Korean nationalists" at all. What the Rightists were truly afraid of was the introduction of Soviet influence in Korea or Communism, not the destruction of Democracy in itself. Given that opposing trusteeship was a fundamentally non-nationalistic position for the Communists, and that Democracy was about fulfilling the will of the people through an independent Korean government, the Rightists' misconstrued equation of 'anti-trusteeship=pro-Democracy' was nothing but a fantastical delusion.

With respect to the program's content, the article's most notable feature is its use of the collective "we," for it most clearly illustrates Pak's acute perception that engaging in politics is like playing poker: the best politician is not one who has the best ideas, but one who knows the right timing to reveal them to acquire both uniqueness and communal acceptability. Indeed, with his main rival out of the party and highly optimistic evaluations of the northern land reforms pouring out from the Leftist press on a daily basis, Pak had met his "poker moment." By using "we" as a synecdoche, Pak was making full use of the inseparability of collective consciousness from individual consciousness. As sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1939) argued, it is necessarily the latter that allows for the existence and realization of the former, and collective consciousness is but a particular arrangement of individual minds. If so, then I would argue that collective consciousness is dependent on individual consciousness and,

⁶³⁴ "Kongsantangi Urinara Kõnsõlül wihan Kuch'echõkin Wõnch'ikül Chesihata," (Communist Party Proposes Concrete Principles for the Establishment of Our State) *Chungang Ilpo (Central Daily)*, March 26, 1946. G-2 Periodic Report No. 364. RG 554, Box 5.

as an individual controlling a collective group, Pak could afford to deceptively portray his private mind as representing the collective mind of the party.⁶³⁵

Pak believed that south Korea's political ambience seemed to justify his deception. By the end of March, the DPK's Legislative Council was growing increasingly unpopular among the Left after the institution, in accordance with Syngman Rhee's speech refusing to cooperate with Communists, blatantly barred all Leftists from registration. In response, even moderate nationalists, including Yŏ Un-hyŏng, announced the exit of the People's Party from the Legislative Council, citing the "irresponsible betrayal of the Democratic creed of building a consensus within a diversity of opinion."⁶³⁶ In other words, the moderates' decision to leave the Legislative Council offered Pak a timely opportunity to disguise his desire to further distance the CCP from the Right as though he was following suit with Yŏ while simultaneously concentrating on cementing his control over the Communists to charter an independent path. Furthermore, this strategy was favorable for Pak because the Rightists had failed to materialize their plan to implement Democracy due to the Leftists' collective refusal to cooperate. Since Pak himself had held acerbic meetings with the Rightists, Pak had indirectly succeeded in demonstrating to the Rightists that his dissatisfaction with Syngman Rhee's decision to employ pro-Japanese collaborators was not a demonstration of Pak's commitment to Communism, but merely a voice within the Left as a public in their own right. Pak could conveniently hide his private ambition while outwardly assuring the Leftists that he was merely cooperating with them by expressing a common dissatisfaction with the Rightists parochial favoritism.

To swiftly achieve these ends, the founding of Pak Hŏn-yŏng's personality cult was an

⁶³⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, "Individual Consciousness and Collective Mind," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 44, No. 6 (May, 1939), 818.

⁶³⁶ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "T'altoe T'ongkomun," (Official Message of Resignation from the Legislative Council) February 14, 1946. Adapted from Yi Su-sŏng and Paek Nak-ch'ŏng eds., *Discussing Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 365.

expression of Pak's urge test his quickly create this "public" within his own party. Pak knew that he could conveniently disguise that desire as the party's obvious collective disagreement with the Rightists' opposition to the trusteeship, while emphasizing the party's political solidarity. Pak also knew that he needed a scapegoat to blame and complain about the party's delay in adopting Communism without giving the impression that the delay was due to any fault or weakness of the party. The use of "we" was also Pak's deliberate rhetorical insurance to ensure that he could externally and internally advertise how firm his authority as party leader really was to Rightists who would still mistakenly believe that their refusal to accept the Communists' demands was synonymous with the total loss of purpose and disintegration for the CCP. If there was any source of threat to the party's solidarity, it necessarily had to be an external one. Thus, the use of "we" was Pak's strategy to distance the Leftists as far away from the Rightists to show that the former was never willing to cooperate with the latter who grossly conflated the meaning of "pro" and "anti" as well as a policy with a governmental system. In the party's eyes, the Rightists simply did not have any clear ideology that could solidly stand its own ground but were heavily dependent on a forced antagonism which the Rightists had applied the label "ideology" for a supposedly systematic polish.

4. Conclusion

This chapter showed that Pak's motivation to launch a personality cult was not merely confined to cementing his desire to complete his vision of orthodox Communism by establishing an object of unquestioned respect and adulation within the CCP, but also stemmed from his hatred of Korean Christians. Pak's personal resentment against Korean Christians stemmed from two sources—his incarceration due to pro-Japanese collaborators' reports to the Japanese police and his knowledge of the the March First Independence Movement's poor understanding of Wilsonianism and consequent lack of careful planning. In Pak's eyes, what made the movement a more glaring failure was that most of the intellectuals

and Christian leaders who had publicized themselves as ardent nationalists had quickly forfeited that image and instead concentrated on promoting the glory of sacrificing for the Japanese imperialism. In addition to his urge to realize an orthodox Communist regime, Pak needed the personality cult to amass a centralized authority with which he could have the power to direct the party's struggle against the Right as a struggle against these pro-Japanese collaborators. The expulsion of Yŏ Un-hyŏng is important because it not only symbolizes Pak's detestation of Yŏ's Christian-based humanistic "Unitary Socialism," but also because the expulsion presented an opportunity for Pak to fully Communize the CCP without facing any major opposition within the southern Left. With the assurance of Yŏ's absence in the party, the CCP was putting its first step toward a full identification of itself as a Communist party.

This chapter also showed that such assurance provided the basis for Pak Hŏn-yŏng's plan to found a pan-Leftist union under Communist leadership, which he called the Democratic Nationalist Front (DNF). The DNF was on one hand, an attempt to expand the Communists' influence across the southern Left by taking advantage of the Leftists' frustration with what they perceived as the Provisional Government's lack of national or international legitimacy. On the other hand, Pak wished to create an organization which could bureaucratically and materially serve as a formidable counterweight against the southern Right. To that end, Pak not only included Communists from the south but also those from the north, especially through the absorption of the Independence League. This particular maneuver bore the full intention of advertising the DNF as a genuinely pan-Korean Left-wing union, for it was in theory, an organization representing a regional balance in representation. However, Pak's decision to subjugate the DNF merely as a department of the CCP was a critical mistake, for he had inadvertently admitted that the DNF only existed as a means to aggrandize and expand the CCP's power over other Left-wing organizations, devoid of any real commitment to advancing or defining Communism with Korean characteristics.

Despite this critical flaw, the DNF was still a crucial advantage for Pak, since he could now concentrate on distancing the Leftists further away from the Rightists and make that intention fully known by equating class liberation with national liberation. Pak believed that this equation was possible because the latter was a matter of individual passion whose intensity could grow further with a collective mobilization of proletariats who shared that passion. Moreover, by encouraging the southern Left's separation from the Rightists, Pak started to display his strong belief in making the equation by announcing his pro-trusteeship stance as that of the DNF. This artificial union was, with respect to his original intent to strengthen the CCP's influence, Pak's tool to strengthen the authority of his personality cult and Pak firmly believed that south Korea's political ambience—the Legislative Council's increasing unpopularity among the Left and exit of even moderates from the Council—posed some hope for Pak that he could rapidly expand his "public" within the CCP to solidify the personality cult's authority.

Yet, the significance of Pak's expulsion of Yŏ and the creation of the DNF extends beyond the elimination of "Unitary Socialism" and an attempt to expand Communists' influence over the southern Left. Yŏ's walkout from the party was essentially a defeat of a desire for a restoration of Korea's full sovereignty under the condition that both the Americans and Soviets were only staying in the peninsula as allies, not as occupiers. The CCP's exploitation of that defeat by quickly transforming it into a fervent support for the trusteeship would exacerbate ideological polarization in the Korean peninsula due to north Korea's unexpected announcement on its completement of land reforms. An examination of the ideological significance behind Yŏ's walkout from the CCP through a consideration of Yŏ's vision for restoring Korean sovereignty and the CCP's support of north Korea's land reforms will be topics of the next chapter.

Chapter 8

The Importance of Stopping Short of the Urge to Plead and Then Purging Away the Need: Yŏ Un-hyŏng's House Analogy and the CCP's Support of North Korea's Land Reforms⁶³⁷

"Expect nothing. Live frugally
On surprise.
Become a stranger
To need of pity
Or, if compassion be freely
Given out
Take only enough
Stop short of urge to plead
Then purge away the need.
Wish for nothing larger
Than your own small heart
Or greater than a star;
Tame wild disappointment
With caress unmoved and cold.."
Alice Walker, "Before You Knew You Owned It"⁶³⁸

1. Yŏ Un-hyŏng's "House Analogy" as an Interpretation of the First American-Soviet Joint Commission and the Expulsion of "Unitary Socialism" From the CCP

Shortly after Yŏ's walkout from the CCP, the Americans and Soviets decided to resume negotiations in April by announcing the opening of the first American-Soviet Joint Commission. This announcement signified that the Rightists could not expect any direct support from the Americans because there was little incentive for Americans to provoke the Soviets and at the worst, permanently close all negotiations before even one can begin. Since the Joint Commission was by nature a collaborative effort between Americans and Soviets to find an optimum path for Korean independence, the Americans could not overtly condone the Rightists' opposition to the trusteeship and mutate negotiations into an ideological wrestling match.

Pak Hŏn-yŏng exploited this weakness almost immediately. In an essay addressing the

⁶³⁷ After the northern land reforms were announced on March 1946, land reform became an extremely important political issue that produced clearly divided public opinion in south Korea as well. In this project, I only focus on the SKWP's response, but to better assess the land reforms' overall importance, see Yu In-ho, "Haepang Hu T'ochi Kaehyŏkŭi Sŏngkyŏk," (The Character of Land Reform after Liberation) in Song Kŏn-ho et al. ed., *Haepang Chŏnhusaŭi Insik (Interpreting Korean History Before and After Liberation)*, Vol. 1 (Seoul, south Korea: Han-kil (One Road) Publishing, 1979), 371-448.

⁶³⁸ Alice Walker, "Expect Nothing," from Alice Walker, *Anything We Love Can Be Saved: A Writer's Activism* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 90.

DPK, Pak questioned whether the Rightists really thought that they were different from the Communists. Although the DPK announced a general program which rhetorically endorsed a liberal agenda—granting suffrage to "citizens aged 15 and above," "legalization of a standard eight-hour workday, "confiscation of all properties of pro-Japanese collaborators" and "nationalization of all major banks and industries"—there was no mention of how or when these policies will be implemented.⁶³⁹ In short, the DPK's program had a Leftist veneer but one which was unclear about whether the program was a genuine expression of the DPK's own understanding of nationalism or a strategy of appeasement towards the CCP. The ambiguity was present because the program did not mention whether the policies would be rigorously enforced by Korean legislators or through American supervision, and whether Leftists would be able to participate in enforcing the policies.

Hence, the program's lack of clarity in both its ends and means was its chief weakness, and the CCP did not hesitate to exploit it. To emphasize the implausibility and vagueness of the Rightists' position, the party decided to launch a massive tirade to teach them how, as proper Koreans, they ought to learn the virtue of first having correct thought to produce correct actions. In the party's view, the fundamental thought that the Right ought to have had was that all ideologies owe their origins to a clear perception of the present as a result of the past. The main problem with the Right was that they did not understand that rejecting trusteeship was a symptom of historical dementia. The Rightists wrongly conflated nationalism with anti-trusteeship because they forgot that nationalism could only arise within a people who could claim their land as their own and fight against imperialists willing to steal it. Nationalism, as another article published three days later put it, "arose from sacrificing blood."⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁹ "Minchuŭiwŏn Imsi Chŏngch'aek Taekang," (Democratic Senators Announce Blueprint of Policies for the Provisional Government) March 17, 1946. *IDFTYSL*, 49-50.

⁶⁴⁰ "Piminchuchŏk Pupkwa 'Minchuŭiwŏn'tŭlŭi Ch'aekim," (Undemocratic Laws and the Responsibility of the Democratic Assemblymen) March 17, 1946. *ODSKWP*, Vol. 1, 151.

Unfortunately, the Rightists were "like vampires" because they twisted the meaning "sacrifice" into excessive offerings of blood, concocting nationalism and anti-Communism imported from American ideologues to force the Koreans to "fight one another for blood to beget more blood."⁶⁴¹ In contrast with January, the CCP now equated "anti-trusteeship" with being a vampire, a gross form of traitorous and parasitic inhumanity which could only sustain itself by selling off the lives of fellow countrymen, or worse, the entire country. Through the usage of such metaphorical extremity, the party expressed its clear intent to present *supporting trusteeeship and the party itself* as the only ethical and humane political choice available for the Korean people because supporting them was the only means of preserving national sovereignty and existence. Such usage, in turn, demonstrates how ideology can be neatly packaged with morality to produce the ultimate political strategy of advertising the party as the only humane and just option available in Korean politics, thereby emphasizing its centrality to the health and life of the Korean nation.

However, because vampires can unpredictably and capriciously turn even a trusted human being into one of their own kin, the invocation of "vampires" also suggests the party's determination to prevent all possible suspects within and without from actually turning into traitors and destroying the infrastructural integrity of the party. In this sense, the equation of "pro-trusteeship" and "vampire" can also be interpreted as a warning that anyone who supported the trusteeeship was a counter-revolutionary aiming to subvert the party and by extension, the Pak personality cult. Given that it was in the party's interest to present Communism as the most humane ideology, "vampire" represents Pak and his clique's desire to expulse and banish detested and inhumane opponents who sought to kill the humanity of the party by poisoning it with their subversive ideas. Hence, Pak's supporters were sternly

⁶⁴¹ "Undemocratic Laws and the Responsibility of the 'Democratic Assemblymen,'" March 17, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 152.

warning both members of the party and the Rightists that whoever made derogatory remarks about class liberation were to be punished and that "anti-Communism" was a euphemism for "sub-human."

The extremism of the position becomes more noticeable if we compare it with Yō Unhyōng's optimistic view that the Americans and the Soviets would eventually leave Korea when either of them realizes that they genuinely care and love Korea as a brotherly member of the international community. A group of reporters inquired about Yō's opinion on the possibility of an early exit from either the Americans and the Soviets once Koreans swiftly decide on either firmly supporting or opposing the trusteeship. In a country where the Manichean world of virulent anti-Communism in the south pitted against an equally virulent Communism in the north, Yō was surely the most esoteric and odd presence even in the eyes of the most novice reporter. One reporter, anxious to not lose his chance to hear from the lone voice of non-ideological unity, excitedly blurted out, "Mr. Lyuh [sic], what is your view of the unfolding scheme for Korea based on your observations about the Moscow Conference [sic]?"

Yō thought for a moment and quietly inquired, "Do you know Sun Yat-sen?"

"Yes," the reporter answered, half confidently, half quizzically. "Wasn't he a Communist?"

"No," Yō corrected the reporter. "Sun was a revolutionary devoted to driving imperialism out of China and was extremely flexible in his approach to realizing that objective, and I aspire to be like him. At this time, Korea has two guests, one in the living room (*anpang*) and the other in the reception room (*sarangpang*). There is no need to curry favor with or display displeasure or rage toward either, because they are all our liberators. Once Koreans properly thank and pay their respects to the Americans and the Soviets, I am confident that they know the ethic of bowing their heads in reply and honorably leaving in due time, for I believe that they understand the wisdom of King Solomon. Two women with a baby were quarreling over the question of who was the baby's rightful mother. Solomon mediated by drawing a sharp

knife and attempted to stab the baby. The baby's mother scrambled forward in great alarm and snatched the baby out of Solomon's arms. We shall have to wait and see who is going to be Solomon for Korea, and I am sure that both the Soviets and Americans will want to have the honor."⁶⁴²

In other words, as the American military government observed, Yŏ was "a man of personal charm, with a gift for disarming phrases."⁶⁴³ Yŏ's reply to the reporter revealed both his commitment to non-ideological pacifism and his devotion to Christianity—a hallmark of just how flexible "Unitary Socialism" was such that it defied any rigid exclusionary compartmentalization as Democracy and Communism sought to do against each other. Like Sun, Yŏ wished to implement Democracy without the ideological undertone of intensely opposing Communism for its own sake. Democracy was to be Democracy alone, and this independence was the genuine value of Democracy for Korea, since it was a country that had just been liberated from imperialism. From this perspective, Yŏ was suggesting that before Koreans learn to choose between Democracy and Communism, they had to learn how to become independent, and to this end, whatever ideology which best generated the opportunity for Koreans to realize their own autonomy with their own hands was the best Korean ideology.

Another powerful imagery in this interview is the analogical linkage between the ideological climate in the Korean peninsula and the composition of a traditional Korean house. Unlike the Western concept of a "home," in which the living room, bedrooms, and bathrooms are separate domains united together as an amalgamation of individual cubicles, a traditional Korean house does not usually have a rigid or permanent spatial distinction between the *sa-rang-pang* and the *an-pang* if there was no guest in the house. Put differently, the absence of

⁶⁴² Yi Ki-hyŏng, *Yŏ Un-hyŏng: A Biography*, 447-448.

⁶⁴³ Public Information Bureau of the United States Military Government of Korea, "Political Trends, No. 25" March 17, 1946. RG 554, Box 5.

any guests united the two rooms together into one living room, which functionally was the "house" itself. The existence of a guest created a hierarchy between the *an-pang* and the *sarang-pang* such that the latter had significance as a reception room. What can be inferred from the analogy to a traditional Korean house is Yŏ's conception of the "solution" to unification: the immediate departure of all foreigners, American and Soviet occupiers alike. The departure of both powers was something the Koreans would graciously thank, not only for the Americans' and Soviets' respect for Korean independence, but also because the idea of permanent ownership over the real "house" of united Korea could only be realized if Koreans were masters of their own house. "Korea for Koreans" was not a demand or a request; it was a natural and logical matter of course that Koreans managed their own house to legally prove the rightful ownership of sovereignty with and in their own hands.

A deeper examination of the house analogy reveals the essence of "Unitary Socialism" itself. On the surface, the analogy demonstrates Yŏ's attachment to his classical education in the ancient Chinese literary tradition, for analogical thinking was a common practice and skill in applying precepts in the classics to everyday life. It also potentially demonstrates his wit and sophistication, which were the primary sources of his appeal to Americans. However, Yŏ was not a flamboyant person, and he was delivering a politically charged and important message to Koreans and their occupiers. The identification of the Americans as occupiers of the living room and Soviets as occupiers of the less important guest room suggests Yŏ's perception of the world order in the 1940s and the clear difference in Yŏ's understanding of Washington and Moscow's political importance to Korea's search for a true liberation. The fact that Americans occupied the living room represents Yŏ's acknowledgement that the Americans were in control of the Korean government's central management, defeating remnants of Japanese imperialism and Fascism in Korea.

By contrast, the Soviets were occupying the guest room, which was much smaller,

reflecting the actual demographics of north Korea compared to south Korea. What is obviously inferable from the comparison is that Yŏ considered restoring Korean control over political affairs in southern Korea was more urgent and important than using the American military government as a bulwark against Communism because he sensed that the intensity of oppression and chaos in southern Korea was ever increasing despite the Americans' continued occupation. In other words, the more quickly Americans and Soviets considered exiting Korea, the better it was for the Koreans' future because the comparative magnitude of Left-Right disorder endangered the existence of political stability and prohibited Koreans from thinking independently for themselves. The earlier the foreign occupants left, the more quickly Koreans would be able to liberate themselves from flunkeyism. This was why, as Yŏ himself later expressed with unabashed forthrightness, "hello" had to proceed to "thank you" and then conclude with a quick "good bye" when Koreans paid proper courtesy to the Americans and Soviets.⁶⁴⁴

Nevertheless, Yŏ's courteous gesture toward both powers did not necessarily mean that he considered their departures to have the same degree of significance or forfeited his proclivity towards the southern Left. Despite Yŏ's generic comment about kindly asking both the Americans and Soviets to leave Korea, it is not difficult to surmise from the analogy and Yŏ's support of "Unitary Socialism" that Yŏ had a slightly stronger wish for the Americans' rather than the Soviets' departure. The *an-pang* is not only larger than the *sarang-pang*, but the former is more than a room; it is effectively the living quarters of an entire family, the ultimate foundation of a household's necessary activities for life. The latter can flexibly be any auxiliary room which is not essential to performing the functions of the former. In other words,

⁶⁴⁴ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Saeroun Chosŏn Kŏnsŏlŭi Witaehan Kil," (The Great Path to Reconstructing a New Korea) *Chosŏn Weekly*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (October 22, 1945), 7. See also Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Konkukkwa Chongchimunhwa," (Reconstruction and Political Culture) *Creating Culture*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (December, 1945), 6.

the very fact that the Americans were occupying the *an-pang* was in Yō's mind, actually a direct affront to the pride and sovereignty of the Korean people, more so than the Soviets who were just occupying the guest-room, which largely performed the auxiliary function of just literally entertaining guests. Thus, Yō was implicitly blaming the Americans for obstructing the realization of his ideal. From Yō's perspective, the Americans had mostly done deeds which hardly earned any Korean public support, the most egregious being the pragmatic yet liberal employment of pro-Japanese collaborators before Korean resentment over a long Japanese colonial rule could be smothered down, if not completely disappear. Yet, the Americans still displayed what Koreans generally consider as a suggestively pompous and uncustomarily rude disposition to occupy the *an-pang* before obtaining the owner's approval, the Soviets' occupation as a guest's occupation was relatively mild because he was confident that his Left-of-Center views would ally more closely and benignly with the Soviets due to his sympathy for Democratic Socialism.

It is this particularly Leftist bent which increases the mystification of "Unitary Socialism," for although the thought rejected an ideologically Manichean world, it simultaneously espoused a predilection for an ultimate means to actualize the non-ideological world to be found in Socialism or Social Democracy. In other words, the subtlety of Yō's analogy lay in not only in its frank wish for a harmonious co-exit of the Americans and Soviets, but also its clandestine concealment of Yō's private wish to found unity on Left-wing terms rather than on Right-wing terms by using his belief in non-ideological unity as a slight veneer. The concealment does not mean that he was not serious about non-ideological unification, but he found the execution of the goal more probable through the formation of a pan-Leftist union. Once this Leftist unity was firmly in place, Yō was implicitly reflecting his strong confidence in the people's will to graciously bid farewell to Americans and to the Soviets. True independence would come under the Left's leadership rather than the Right such that the Left

would neutralize or more realistically silence the Right and install Democracy with a clear Socialist orientation. Thus, Yŏ was also euphemistically forecasting his vision of a perfect restoration of order based on Leftist terms rather than the Right once all foreign forces had completed their exit from Korean soil.

Perhaps it is Yŏ's pragmatic nationalism and its inability to decide upon a hierarchy between Socialism and nationalism within "Unitary Socialism" which really caught Pak's attention, ire, and alarm over the rise of a potentially powerful rival. The longer Pak exercised patience with Yŏ to form a clear order within "Unitary Socialism," the longer Pak would have to wait until he could declare Communism as the only legitimate ideology of the CCP. Hence, Yŏ's exit from the CCP gave Pak the confidence that his uncompromising resolve and fiercely unforgiving authoritarian style of leadership was the only certain trump card he could draw against the more charismatic Yŏ.

In this vein, Pak's solidification of the party's commitment to "Communist exceptionalism" is also a proof of how crucial it was for Pak to oust Yŏ from the party as soon as possible. With the elimination of any middle-of-the-road and vague pseudo-philosophers conniving to ruin his master plan for Communist domination, Pak had eagerly seized his chance to make Communist indoctrination complete and final. Most importantly, with Pak at the helm of the party's operations, orthodox Communism and its pervasiveness in the party's bureaucratic culture was thereby theoretically secure and immune to any serious challenges from non-Marxists who were trying to sacrilege orthodoxy and pollute a pristine Communist order. The creation of the Democratic Nationalist Front was Pak's manifest expression of an urge to make the CCP and south Korean Communism become synonymous with Pak himself.⁶⁴⁵ All Pak needed now was confidence in actually validating the exceptionalism by showing concrete evidence of his full commitment to exercising Communism as a policy.

⁶⁴⁵ Cho Han-sŏng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 97.

To his surprise, P'yŏngyang would promptly confirm that validity for him through the northern land reforms in March. Barely two months after he had haphazardly engraved an inkling of a personality cult within the minds of many party members, most of whom were still quizzically trying to understand what a personality cult was, and most importantly, why Pak had to assume the role. Pak would face the momentous decision of permanently aligning with the Leftist camp and the most challenging task of making sure that most, if not all, party members were ready to set sail to a political world in which everything seemed foreign, even the decision to accept Pak's personality cult itself—a decision whose implications even Pak himself was very uncertain about.

2. North Korea's Announcement of the Land Reforms and the Consolidation of a Communist Political Culture in the CCP

The previous section examined Yŏ Un-hyŏng's "house analogy" as a "Unitary Socialist" interpretation of the trusteeship and suggested that Pak may have been annoyed with the nebulosity of "Unitary Socialism" rooted in its slightly pro-Soviet yet nevertheless fully committed resolve to see all foreign forces leave Korea immediately. Pak's expulsion of Yŏ assured the elimination of any rhetoric supporting non-ideological unification and provided an opportunity for Pak to establish a dominantly Communist political culture within the CCP. However, the mere existence of an opportunity means very little if neither the means to seize it nor the environment in which the means can be found is not favorable to the individual who wishes to seize the opportunity. South Korea's political ambience was not ripe enough for Pak to initiate the cult.

Despite Pak Hŏn-yŏng's success in formulating a theoretical "Communist exceptionalism," March was largely a month of fear, doubt, and skepticism for most CCP members. Although the Americans and Soviets announced their common interest to "establish and perpetuate freedom of speech, assembly, and religion," "allow political leaders of all

Democratic parties to enjoy the same opportunities," and finally, to "entertain the views held by most of the truly Democratic Koreans," they all became empty promises after the Soviets asserted that "it would be out of the question to consult with all parties who had intentionally and systematically opposed the Moscow Decision as well as those who were now opposing it."⁶⁴⁶ The American delegation rejected the Soviets' demand, citing the demand's incompatibility with Democracy's fundamental right to freedom of expression. With both sides locking horns together and the Soviets obstinately refusing to cede their position on excluding all forms of opposition, the Americans promptly called off the meeting, desiring to hold another one soon. By late April, the third meeting between the Americans and the Soviets broke down without any progress in negotiations, with each side only confirming the immutability of their original positions.⁶⁴⁷ The Americans' and Soviets' master plan of establishing a provisional government based on a joint consensus between political parties and social organizations followed by a signing of the trusteeship in the presence of a representative of the provisional government (if a provisional government was effectively in place, then there would be no need for the trusteeship) had ended in failure.⁶⁴⁸

The repeated postponements of the American-Soviet negotiations caused much anxiety and incensed anger in the Korean press, which interpreted the chief obstacle as an excessive and a pompous Soviet disrespect for Korean sovereignty and autonomy. Nationalist papers were especially upset with what they perceived as the Soviets' abuse of their privileged status as one of Korea's liberators. Rather than concentrating on performing auxiliary services to genuinely help Korea develop, the Soviets were condescendingly trying to educate Koreans

⁶⁴⁶ "Statements of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. Delegations on the Joint American-Soviet Commission," in Tewksbury ed., *Source Materials on Korean Politics and Ideologies*, Vol. 2, 75.

⁶⁴⁷ "Statements of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. Delegations on the Joint American-Soviet Commission," in Tewksbury ed., *Source Materials on Korean Politics and Ideologies*, Vol. 2, 75-76. See also "Secret Telegram from the Acting Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic Officers," April 25, 1946. *FRUS*, 1946, Vol. 8, 662.

⁶⁴⁸ "Notes on Minutes of Political Sub-Commission Meeting," March 30, 1946. RG 554, Box 293: U.S.-U.S.S.R. Joint Commission Subject Files, 1945-1947. See also Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 225.

and imbue a sense of indebtedness and slavish gratitude that bordered dangerously on mutating into Korea's subservience and flunkeyism. An article from the *Taedong (Great Unity)*

Sinmun expressed this resentment pithily without mincing any words:

"If you[Soviets] truly aim to establish a Korean democratic government following the principles of self-determination, leave everything to us. We have a very long and glorious history. Do not force us to be indebted to you. We know what we must do when we are favored by others. We are not educated to be forced to blindly thank others."⁶⁴⁹

In addition to the Soviets' potential abuse of the prolonged negotiations as a chance to hold Korea as a hostage, the big consequential problem was that south Korea was engulfed in a sea of violence whose waves refused to die down, rendering the American and Soviet promises of Democratic freedoms into true luxuries. As Bruce Cumings argues, the rise of People's Committees throughout many southern Korean provinces was for many American officials a perplexing phenomenon displaying a multitude of political forms from a "designation applied to some faction in every town," to a representative body for "roughnecks" or "the only political party with no radical expressions."⁶⁵⁰

Yet, the Americans would soon be demystified, as the seemingly apparent disunity in form belied the strength in the unity of a deeply concentrate animosity. The People's Committees jointly reflected the newspaper article's sentiment through direct action, scuffling and resisting American attempts to mow down the insurgency.⁶⁵¹ Angry Leftists' screams of resistance against the Korean National Police continued to pour throughout provinces which had already witnessed numerous hideous blood-baths. To make things worse, the Rightists created the extremist and militant Federation of Korean Trade Unions, which cooperated with the American Military Government to destroy as many Leftist workers' unions as possible. It was only a labor organization in name and a full-fledged anti-Communist organization aimed at intensifying the struggle against the southern Left rather than a representative of workers.

⁶⁴⁹ *Taedong Sinmun*, "St'ikop' Changkun eke Ponaenŭn Sasŏl," (Editorial to General Shtykov) G-2 Periodic Report No. 366, March 27, 1946. RG 554, Box 5.

⁶⁵⁰ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 298-304 and Cumings, *The Korean War: A History*, 116.

⁶⁵¹ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, chapter 9.

As a concluding remark, Syngman Rhee warned that anyone recommending that an alliance with Communists is necessary is akin to recommending that one "work with someone who set fire on one's house" and peace "cannot be established unless the arsonist mends his ways and so long as he insists on maintaining his creed, there can be no prospect for a peaceful life."⁶⁵² Faced with such an immense crisis, and the Soviets offering no response on how to deal with Japanese property in south Korea the CCP desperately wished to know if Communism was an ideal worth defending with their lives.⁶⁵³

Fortunately for Pak, an answer to the CCP's skepticism came shortly after Kim Il-sung's rise to the chairmanship of the North Korean People's Political Committee through an election Kim later praised as "the greatest step ever taken for the advancement of Korean Democracy." P'yŏng-yang successfully completed its land reforms on March 5, which, for the CCP, was a firm piece of evidence to continue its support for supporting north Korea and continue their anti-Right-wing struggle to realize Communist hegemony in the Korean peninsula.⁶⁵⁴ The program required an immediate seizure of all lands formerly under Japanese ownership, national traitors who collaborated with them, and finally escapees to southern Korea. These lands were then distributed to and cultivated by farmers with no additional costs. All debts of employees and farmers who borrowed lands from owners whose lands will be seized, will

⁶⁵² "Yi Sŭng-man, Kongsanchuŭichatŭl eke Kaksŏng Ch'okku," (Syngman Rhee Urges Communists to Reform Their Ways) *Tonga Ilpo*, March 6, 1946. *PSMKH*, Vol. 2.

⁶⁵³ For a detailed discussion of American counter-insurgency operations in the provinces, see Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, chapter 9. On the Conservative and militant origin and purpose of the FKTU, see Hagen Koo, "The State, Minchung, and the Working Class in South Korea," in Hagen Koo ed., *State and Society in Contemporary Korea* (Ithaca, New York, and London, England: Cornell University Press, 1993), 135. On the Soviets' failure to provide a response to land reforms in south Korea, see "Secret and Urgent Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Political Adviser in Korea (Benninghoff)," March 5, 1946. *FRUS*, 1946, Vol. 8, 646.

⁶⁵⁴ Kim Il-sung, "Ch'oe-kŭnŭi Sŏnkŏ e taehan Poko," (A Report on Recent Elections) April 10, 1947 (P'yŏngyang: North Korean Workers' Party Publishing House, 1947) in RG 242: Foreign Records Seized by the U.S. Military, Entry No. NM-44 299-H: Korean Language Pamphlets Captured in P'yŏngyang [SA 2009] [1946-1950]; 05/1953-01/1958, Box 683. See also *Tonga Ilpo*, "Kim Il-sungul Wiwŏnchanguro han Pukchosŏn Iminchŏngch'iwiwŏnhoe Sŏllip," North Korean People's Political Committee Established with Kim Il-sung as Chairman," *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Document No. 332. RG 554, Box 5.

become invalid.⁶⁵⁵ In addition, the People's Central Committee was expected to directly administer the seized lands, excluding those cultivated by individual farmers. Most importantly, in an effort to harshly and literally adhere to the Marxian dictum, "religion is the opium of the masses," Kim Il-sung ordered all church and private properties "occupying above 12.5 acres" to be seized and distributed.⁶⁵⁶

As a result of this measure, most of the north Korean bourgeoisie barely possessed any property, for in accordance with what one anonymous pamphlet declared, the construction of a "new Democracy," the land reform was an pro-state infrastructural reform of the north Korean economy. Although farmers and merchants were "allowed to own private land and merchandise as means of production," major industries such as banking and mining were subject to the direct management of the state.⁶⁵⁷ Finally, although the "pursuit of profit was still acceptable," it was limited to the right of workers, because "not only has the proportion of individual wealth decreased from that of the past," but "the state deems it necessary to protect proletarians from the avarice of the bourgeoisie to the best of its ability."⁶⁵⁸

In other words, the "new Democracy" focused on destabilizing the bourgeoisie's traditional sources of income through nationalization of industries while allowing workers to protect their wages by subjecting their labor-value under the state's immediate control. Such destabilization meant that the state was responsible for exchanging the identities of workers

⁶⁵⁵ *Chayu Sinmun*, "Pukchosŏn Nongŏppŏp Chechŏng," (North Korean Agricultural Law Legislated) March 12, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, Document No. 352, RG 59, Box 5.

⁶⁵⁶ *Chayu Sinmun*, "North Korean Agricultural Law Legislated," March 12, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, Document No. 352, RG 59, Box 5. See also "T'ochi Kaehyŏk Kangryŏng," (Decree on Land Reform) March 5, 1946. *PSMKH*, Vol. 13, 572-575; "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon) to the Secretary of State," March 19, 1946. *FRUS*, 1946, Vol. 8, 650; Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 76-80. See also Chŏng-sik Lee, "Land Reform, Collectivization, and the Peasants in North Korea," *China Quarterly*, No.14 (April-June, 1963), 65-81 for a more detailed discussion on the northern implementation of the land reforms.

⁶⁵⁷ *Chayu Sinmun*, "North Korean Agricultural Law Legislated," March 12, 1946. *HUSAFIK*, G-2 Report, Document No. 352, RG 59, Box 5.

⁶⁵⁸ Anonymous, "Saeroun Hyongt'aeüi Minchuchuüi," (A New Form of Democracy" 3. RG 242, Entry No. NM-44, 299-G: Korean Language Publications, Government, and Other Records Captured in P'yŏngyang [SA 2009] [1947-1950] : 05/1953-01/1958. Box 662.

and the bourgeoisie in favor of the former, forcing the latter to forfeit all rights of private ownership and subjecting them to impoverishment. Therefore, to escape poverty and to express a deep frustration and resentment toward the coercive and unprincipled seizure of private property, nearly 60,000 north Koreans crossed the 38th Parallel to find new sources to build their fortunes or to escape the totalitarianism of north Korean society.⁶⁵⁹

From Kim's perspective, this mass exodus was greatly welcome because it was decisive proof that the land reforms were successful in eradicating almost all traces of the bourgeois order. This eradication, as Kim later argued in a speech to the People's Central Committee, "proved that the land reforms served as a beacon for all Asian peoples who were under imperial subjugation," and enabled the peasant to be an "independent builder of his future and destiny" through a "complete liberation from the shackles of bourgeois serfdom."⁶⁶⁰ In other words, Kim believed that the land reforms granted sufficient ideological legitimacy for him to transition from leader of a Communist party to a more consolidated Communist *state* by concentrating on reconstructing a society in which formerly landless peasants and workers as the only legal representatives of "the people" could become the sole owners of the means and ends of production.

Furthermore, by assuring that only Communists and his closest aides supported and maintained the regime, the land reforms became Kim's insurance policy to confirm a sustainable longevity of his regime by "assuring the complete unity of north Korea's nationalist front."⁶⁶¹ In other words, the reforms gave a Marxist veneer of a proletarian

⁶⁵⁹ "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 188," March 29, 1946. RG 554, Box 5: United States Forces in Korea: G-2 Periodic Reports, 1946, 1948. See also Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2005).

⁶⁶⁰ Kim Il-sung, *Tangŭi Ŏpchŏk e taehan Chonghapchŏk Poko* (A Holistic Report on the Achievements of the Party) (P'yŏngyang, north Korea: Propaganda Department of the North Korean Workers' Party Central Headquarters, undated), 44. RG 242, Entry No. NM-44, 299-F: Korean Language Records Captured at Seoul and P'yŏngyang [SA 2008] [1945-1950]; 08/1952-01/1958, Box 640.

⁶⁶¹ Kim Il-sung, "T'ochi Kaehyŏkŭi Sŏngkwa Poko" (A Report on the Land Reform's Achievements) in Kim Il-sung, *Chosŏn Inmin Minchuchuŭi Konghwakuk Suripŭro kanŭn Kil* (The Path to Establishing the Democratic

supremacy over the bourgeoisie, provided a venue through which north Korea could communicate with other Asian states suffering from imperialism, and served as a political filter for Kim to easily congregate nationalist Communists. These measures holistically secured internal and external legitimacy to Kim Il-sung as a creator of a genuine Communist state while also helping him maintain a firm and consolidated the cornerstones of north Korean corporatism by drawing his private political clique closer to the core circle of power.

Moreover, as Pak Mun-kyu (1906-?), a Kyōng-sōng Imperial University (now Seoul National University)-trained economist and sociologist who was a central cadre of the SKWP argued, the institution of the land reforms was not only economically beneficial as a groundwork for a "robust industrial growth," but also imbued a "deep sense of pride and confidence" in farmers about the prospect of "owning individual land and growing produce that one could claim solely as one's own."⁶⁶² In Pak's view, this phenomenon constituted two forms of liberation—a liberation from "the oppressive oligopoly of the landlords and a liberation of the farmer's autonomous and enlightened spirit that recognized the necessity of "speaking and struggling for individual interests" after suffering under 35 years of "grotesquely tyrannical Japanese rule."⁶⁶³

Since the land reform was a promise of class liberation and national liberation which formed the basis for the liberation of the farmer's self-consciousness, Pak Mun-kyu went so far as to praise the reforms as the "gates of paradise for the free farmer" who could now become the "hero of the countryside" rather than consider the "countryside as a fief for the landlord."⁶⁶⁴ By encouraging the farmer's private ownership of land, north Korea had opened

People's Republic of Korea (P'yōngyang, north Korea: Democratic Korea Press, 1947), 26. RG 242, Entry No. NM-44, 299-C: Korean Language Publications and Records Captured in P'yōngyang [SA 2005] [1946-1950]; 01/1952-01/1958, Box 74.

⁶⁶² Pak Mun-kyu, "Chosōnūi T'ochi Munchae e Taehayō," (An Essay on Korea's Land Problem) *PSMKH*, Vol. 13, 340.

⁶⁶³ Pak Mun-kyu, "An Essay on Korea's Land Problem," *PSMKH*, Vol. 13, 341.

⁶⁶⁴ Pak Mun-kyu, "An Essay on Korea's Land Problem," *PSMKH*, Vol. 13, 341.

a "path to a new order of social division" that transcended the "highly artificial and formalistic liberation from feudalism."⁶⁶⁵ The new social order was one that broke the "seemingly eternal" separation of people who "possessed not only land but the means of production" from farmers who only "nominally possessed land to have the maximization of their productivity enslaved by the former."⁶⁶⁶

Of course, land reform could, in principle, be realized either from above or below. In the case of the former, the landlord would gradually lead the entire society toward capitalism and inspire the farmer to follow through by adopting private lands. In the case of the latter, the process is sped up and more radicalized, for the farmer participates as a social revolutionary to publicly demand societal reform and directly coerce the landlord by becoming the leader of social reform. However, because the Korean royalty and later, the Japanese, found the landlords useful in maintaining social stratification to preserve their respective forms of authority, land reforms aimed at enhancing the farmer's socio-political condition never commenced.⁶⁶⁷ Instead, the landlords willingly became the state's instruments to maintain the status quo, continuing to exert a "parasitic existence" by maintaining their social power vis-a-vis their wealth as the state in turn, used the landlords' cooperation to discourage the farmer's independent growth and introduction into the capitalist system.⁶⁶⁸

Hence, Pak argued that land reform was a necessary measure for social reform since it not only "created divergent identities of the landlord and the farmer" but also separated the "means of production" from the monopoly of the landlord and strengthened the "social respectability" of the farmer as the new owner of the means of production.⁶⁶⁹ In other words, Pak was arguing that land reform was not merely a policy aimed at restructuring the economic

⁶⁶⁵ Pak Mun-kyu, "An Essay on Korea's Land Problem," *PSMKH, Vol. 13*, 342.

⁶⁶⁶ Pak Mun-kyu, "An Essay on Korea's Land Problem," *PSMKH, Vol. 13*, 342.

⁶⁶⁷ Pak Mun-kyu, "An Essay on Korea's Land Problem," *PSMKH, Vol. 13*, 342.

⁶⁶⁸ Pak Mun-kyu, "An Essay on Korea's Land Problem," *PSMKH, Vol. 13*, 342.

⁶⁶⁹ Pak Mun-kyu, "An Essay on Korea's Land Problem," *PSMKH, Vol. 13*, 342.

landscape according to Communism, but a holistic societal process of empowering the farmer such that it created a classless society in which the farmer became the sole master in handling the means of production and claiming the produce as his or her exclusive property. The erasure of social stratification through privatization would ensure the complete liberation of the farmer from the shackles of feudalism.

Yet, not everyone was convinced about a rosy future for the land reforms. In Chŏng-sik (1907-?), a fellow Marxist economist, was not as optimistic and celebratory about the land reforms' efficacy in erasing vestiges of Japanese imperialism. He pointed out that the gap between the rich and the poor had "mostly persisted throughout and after Japanese colonial rule."⁶⁷⁰ He argued that the continuation of this economic divide was due to Korea's reluctance about simultaneously implementing technological reforms as well as redistribution of land. The urgency of addressing technological inferiority in agricultural production was best represented by the fact that nothing changed much since "shovels and rakes remained in use before and during Japanese colonialism."⁶⁷¹ Korea's inability to implement or negligence of technical renovation was the core obstacle to forestalling the realization of increased labor productivity. In addition, In argued that intense social stratification which had divided the landlords from the farmers translated into a geographical distance between the two classes such that "about half of the farming population does not have the faintest idea of who manages the lands farmers had cultivated, substituted by some vague and generic notion of 'bourgeoisie.'"⁶⁷² Put differently, this ignorance meant that the landlords had their fair share in claiming that they too reserved the right to privately own some land, and therefore, In cautioned that restricting the redistribution of land as an exclusive policy to protect peasants and farmers was anathemic to a literal pursuit of economic equity.

⁶⁷⁰ In Chŏng-sik, "Chosŏnŭi T'ochi Munchae," (Korea's Land Problem) *PSMKH*, Vol. 13, 346.

⁶⁷¹ In Chŏng-sik, "Korea's Land Problem," *PSMKH*, Vol. 13, 346.

⁶⁷² In Chŏng-sik, "Korea's Land Problem," *PSMKH*, Vol. 13, 347.

Rather, if the historical-materialist objective of the land reforms was to overthrow feudalism, In argued that a rapid development of agrarian production facilities through industrialization was necessary to transcend the "currently rudimentary reliance on the handicraft-based agrarian economy and allow for the introduction of mass production to naturally empower both the bourgeois landlords and the peasantry."⁶⁷³ In other words, if Pak Mun-kyu focused on the primary ideological merit of overthrowing feudalism as a historical mutation from Japanese colonial rule, In Chŏng-sik took a more practical, even capitalistic, and realist perspective that the land reform's practical value lay in overthrowing all infrastructural vestiges of feudalism, which included the need to transcend a reliance on primitive methods of agrarian perspective.

Instead of waxing theoretical and ideological about land distribution, In was urging that north Korea had to measure the success of land reform based on real and tangible changes in economic growth and make the measurement become an end in itself. In was less orthodox than Pak by arguing that a mutually cooperative growth between the peasantry and landlords, rather than the former's overthrow of the latter, was more realistically desirable in the long run. Indeed, for all the merits of societal reform that won Pak Mun-kyu's praise, north Korea would later prove herself to be not so progressive enough to eliminate Confucianism entirely from its social fabric because while the Law on Gender Equality announced in July would endorse institutional equality among politburo members, and protected women from forced marriages, prostitution, polygamy, and from being sold as concubines, the domestic sphere still enforced a rigid sexual stratification, which expected women to attend to domestic chores and caring for their children while men became the primary breadwinners for their families.⁶⁷⁴ In's critique was more realistic than that of Pak Mun-kyu because In understood that land

⁶⁷³ In Chŏng-sik, *Korea's Land Problem*, PSMKH, Vol. 13, 348.

⁶⁷⁴ Kang Jin-woong, "Political Uses of Confucianism in Korea," *The Journal of Korean Studies* (1979-), Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 2011), 68-69.

reforms strictly dealt with materialistic socio-economic relations and could not encompass culture into the realm of the political. While the elimination of economic stratification between two echelons of society could lead to social equality between the proletarians and the bourgeoisie, land reforms did not provide a clear answer to whether Confucianism was a relic of feudalism, and how or why it had to be so.

However practical In's recommendations are, his critique of technological inferiority as the prime cause behind noth Korea's stagnant economic growth rather than Japanese imperial rule and his emphasis on a communal alliance between peasants and landlords to maximize economic growth must be taken with a grain of salt. Although the NKWP later concurred with In that mechanization of agriculture through the adoption of "tractors and other heavy machinery" was "an urgent priority that had to either required the state's direct distribution or communal promotion at the village level to allow the state and farmers to both produce reasonable profits,"⁶⁷⁵ In's motive in making his proposals was primarily in redressing, or potentially erasing a dark chapter of his life. In was trying to implicitly dismiss his own past as a member of the land-holding class and as a pro-Japanese collaborator, working as a propagandist for the *Yamato-Juku*, a pro-Japanese Communist organization. In had penned many essays supporting Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere, arguing that the more ethnically diverse the Japanese Empire became, the more benefits Koreans would enjoy as imperial subjects or possibly as equals to Japanese citizens.

Thus, it was in In's interest to de-emphasize Japanese imperialism as an environmental factor for Korea's stagnation and to suggest cooperation between landlords and peasants as a means to protect the bourgeoisie and himself by suggesting that there was no reason for

⁶⁷⁵ Puk Chosŏn Rotongtang (North Korean Workers' Party), *T'ochi Kaehyŏkkwa Nongŏp Chaechŏng e taehan Chŏnmang (Land Reforms and Predictions on the Development of Agrarian Finances)* (P'yŏngyang, north Korea: North Korean Workers' Party Press, 1948), 89-93. RG 242, Entry No. NM-44 299-H: Korean Language Pamphlets Captured in P'yŏng-yang [SA 2009] [1946-1950]; 05/1953-01/1958, Box 683.

conflict between the classes as long as they were harmonious. This suggestion was a convenient method to camouflage himself as a nationalist academic who truly cared about Korea's economic progress because he could concentrate on what needed to be added to the economy rather than eliminated. In probably knew too well that had he focused on the latter, he himself, as a pro-Japanese collaborator would be at the top of Kim Il-sung's list. In other words, In's decision to deliberately focus his analysis on internal factors to diagnose Korea's economic underdevelopment and his emphasis on mutual cooperation between landlords and peasants to achieve rapid economic growth was a strategic political camouflage to blend in with Communist rhetoric—a personally and realistically necessary measure intended to conceal his dark past as a notorious national traitor.⁶⁷⁶

Ultimately, north Korea's Propaganda Department officially endorsed a compromised view incorporating Pak Mun-kyu's analysis and that of In Chŏng-sik. It announced that the land reform's fundamental purpose was to "completely uproot feudalism" but redistribution was not going to be done unconditionally but given "utmost priority to farmers who had the will to work the land from which he shall reap what he eats"—a literal adaptation of Lenin's classic Biblical argument, "he who does not work shall not eat."⁶⁷⁷ This announcement suggested that "land reforms" did not mean a libertine distribution of free land to even those who had no will to produce anything off a plot of land, but that the reform was based on a meritocracy which would associate productivity with the strength of an individual's patriotism

⁶⁷⁶ For a more thorough biography of In Chŏng-sik, see Kim In-tŏk, "Kongsantang Iponchipuwa Kim Ch'ŏn-hae," (The Japanese Branch of the Chosŏn Communist Party and Kim Ch'ŏn-hae) in *Hankuk Hyŏndaesawa Sahoechuŭi (Modern Korean History and Socialism)* (Seoul, south Korea: Yŏksa Pip'yŏng) (History and Criticism), 2000) and Paek Ki-hwan, Song Kŏn-ho and Im Hŏn-yŏng ed., *Haepang Hu Hankuksa e taehan Insik (Perspectives on Korea's Post-Liberation History)*, Vol. 3 (Seoul, south Korea: Han-kil Publishing Company, 2006), 315.

⁶⁷⁷ Propaganda Department of the Northern Korean Workers' Party, *T'ochi Kaehyŏk e kwanhan Punsŏkchŏk Koch'al (An Analytical Commentary on the Land Reform)* (P'yŏngyang, north Korea: Propaganda Department of the Northern Korean Workers' Party, undated), 14-15. RG 242, Entry No. NM-44, 299-AP: Korean Language Records Captured in the Kwang-ju Area and Other Locations in Korea [SA 2013] [1946-1953]: 10/1956-01/1958, Box 1252.

and devotion to accelerating economic development. Such a measure would not only facilitate rapid economic development by providing state-owned land as incentives but would also serve as a convenient policing mechanism to determine who had genuine nationalistic passion for the Communist state and who did not.

In essence, the primary objectives of north Korea's land reform were to realize a quick and efficient increase in economic growth and simultaneously purify Korea's colonial past by eliminating the bourgeoisie and pro-Japanese collaborators, but the status of being a peasant was insufficient to guarantee the possession of private land; one had to earn the right to own land through the will and ability to benefit the state by maximizing their potential productivity.

Yet, however supreme and absolute the northern Communists were, the state's compromise in justifying the land reforms did not imply the adoption of an impeccable policy. Both Pak and In committed the mistake of not bothering to examine whether the land reforms were truly in agreement with orthodox Communism. The land reforms, for all their utility in punishing the bourgeoisie and pro-Japanese collaborators, were also criminal against orthodox Marxism because the land reforms showed P'yŏng-yang's autonomous will to define an oxymoronic "nationalistic Marxism." More precisely, the reforms were oxymoronic because they were anti-Marxist in rejecting Marxism's flawed assumption that it could attempt, as Marxist theorist Shlomo Avineri (1991) has argued, "to reduce all phenomena—including the cultural aspects of nationalism—to socio-economic causes and to deny nationalism and culture in general an autonomous status in the scheme of human things."⁶⁷⁸

Thus, Kim was a semi-Marxist for rejecting religion while also committing an "unorthodox crime" of combining theoretical Communism and historical nationalism to maximize Communism's realistic function of overcoming a hated relic of imperialism—

⁶⁷⁸ Shlomo Avineri, "Marxism and Nationalism," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 26, No. 3/4 (September, 1991), 649.

bourgeoisie capitalism. However, the rejection is nothing surprising, unusual or irrational, because the northern regime, as a direct ideological response to Japanese imperialism, also naturally had to find its historical legitimacy in its ability to resist imperialism, especially given Korea's vicarious position of being caught in between two great powers—China and Japan. Korea had maintained its independence with fierce resistance and valor for centuries and the resilience of Korean nationalism was the core source of vitality and unity which defined a "Korean exceptionalism" against its neighbors. Hence, north Korea wanted to maintain the tapestry of historical consciousness and Korean nationalism as the foundational ideology of the north Korean state such that along with the glorification of what Bruce Cumings (1982-1983) has termed, "a corporatist state," in which a dynastic succession from father to son was characteristically unique to the north Korean state, with Korean nationalism always functioning as the essential glue that holds the Communist leadership and the semi-state together.⁶⁷⁹

With regard to north Korea's "nationalistic Marxism," the land reforms' genuine importance for the CCP was that it interpreted supporting them as a practical means to express that it identified with P'yŏng-yang's emphasis on nationalism and anti-imperialism and wished to confirm solidarity with P'yŏngyang. The party supported land reforms because they convincingly demonstrated how the northern Koreans secured the marriage of theoretical commitment to Communism (overthrowing the bourgeoisie) and a popular nationalist sentiment (overthrowing Japanese collaborators). The party's *Haepang Ilpo* (*Liberation Daily*) proudly parroted P'yŏngyang's celebration of the land reforms, praising that they were "welcome signs" of progress because the land reforms completed the expulsion of all pro-Japanese elements. The completion, in turn, was a beacon of hope for southern Korea,

⁶⁷⁹ See Bruce Cumings, "Corporatism in North Korea," *Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 4 (1982-1983), 269-294. See also Charles Armstrong, "Familism, Socialism, and Political Religion in North Korea," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 383-394.

promising the continuation of "a relentless and an all-out" effort to eliminate Japanese imperialism and to construct a "people's politics" in which "people" exclusively meant the peasantry. The land reforms were "products of the people's autonomous will," and confirmed that the party could maintain its faith in the trusteeship.⁶⁸⁰

However, *Hae-pang Il-po's* language was not entirely propagandistic, because the NKWP knew that land reform was a problem about which debate was already something of a historical tradition. As historian Charles Armstrong points out, the north Korean land reforms aspired to be a direct heir to the Chosŏn Dynasty's *Kyunchŏn*, or "equal-field" system, based on the philosophy that an equal distribution of land was the foundational root of an ideal state. Furthermore, the return to an ideal of a dynasty during which Korean nationalism maintained a solid unity before the unexpected and unpleasant intrusion of imperialism reflected north Korea's urge to rekindle a pristine and pure form of Korean ethno-nationalism, which would be married with the ideal form of Confucian governance which justified equal distribution of land.⁶⁸¹ The northern vision of Korean nationalism was not only about reinstating ethnic purity through the solidarity of patriotic Koreans, but also about correctly inheriting and developing a historical tradition of a Confucian model of governance which would elevate and preserve the status of the Great Leader to that of a benevolent and grand Chosŏn monarch.

3. Conclusion

This chapter examined Pak's decision to form the Democratic Nationalist Front as an effort to create a firmly binding intra-Leftist alliance. Pak's motivation arose from two major sources: the Right-wing Democratic Party of Korea's decision to form the CDIIK as a pan-Rightist and pseudo-"Unitary Socialist" union and secondly, the founding of the Independence

⁶⁸⁰ Chosŏn Communist Party, "Pukchosŏn T'ochi Kaehyŏk Wanchŏn Chichi Kyŏlŭi," (We Fully Support the North Korean Land Reforms) April 28, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 187. Pak originally distributed this article to all party members in mid-March.

⁶⁸¹ Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 191.

League, a group of north Korean Communists who had served with the People's Liberation Army and had relocated to south Korea after liberation. The DNF's primary intention was to oppose a Right-wing dominance of the south Korean political landscape while also appealing to north Korea that the DNF was a legitimate Communist organization. However, despite the immediate effect of giving the impression that the CCP had really expanded its power over the entire southern Left, it was still a very problematic organization lacking a clear sense of political direction and a clear intent behind incorporating the Independence League, other than trying to advertise to the northerners that it was a "pan-Korean" party because it had both southern and northern members.

This chapter also examined Yŏ Un-hyŏng's "house analogy" as a mirror of "Unitary Socialism." I argued that while Yŏ acknowledged both the Soviets and Americans as Korea's liberators, he did not conceal his proclivity for the Soviets by depicting them as occupying the living room, whereas the Americans occupied the guest-room. This proclivity demonstrates that "Unitary Socialism" was neutral in describing the nature of its end-goal of national unification, but was unabashedly Leftist in its choice of means to achieve that end. However, for the southern Left, the negotiations' stalemate was an immense frustration and the conclusion of the northern land reforms assured the CCP that its choice for a pro-north stance would be final.

Finally, this chapter showed that the CCP's optimism in choosing a pro-north stance was at least from the CCP's perspective, seemingly justified. North Korea's land reforms were a double reformation, for on one hand, they restored justice by cleaning out a hated relic of the past. The seizure of Japanese and bourgeois properties meant that the NKWP had, in theory, made an attempt to imbue a deep sense of pride in the peasantry for simultaneously realizing national and class liberation. In making these two forms of liberation synonymous, the NKWP had also secured a rationale for enjoying mass support, which would be the basis for the

NKWP's claim of being a party of the masses. Thus, despite entertaining checkered support from people like In Chǒng-sik who had been pro-Japanese, the NKWP's package of national-class liberation was a strategic move—albeit a symbol of Kim Il-sung's semi-Marxist stance due to his rejection of religion and acceptance of an unorthodox "nationalistic Communism—to secure the creation of a vanguard upon which the NKWP would enjoy a supposedly firm base of public support. On the other hand, the land reforms, in proclaiming equal distribution as their foremost principle, reformed the party's perception of Democracy. Unlike the Americans who conceived of a representative council as an institutional basis for a formal procedural "Democracy," the northern Koreans focused on a simple and somewhat crudely literal "rule by the people" through a return of power to the public such that every peasant and laborer exercised control over themselves and the bourgeoisie.

I would argue that by fervently supporting the economic land reforms, Pak was urging the party to self-consciously develop a strong desire to identify P'yŏngyang's economic system—Communism—as the party's own political goal. Yet, ironically, Pak was also supporting P'yŏngyang's success in implementing Communism for a major non-economic motive: to take, albeit silently, two huge steps closer to enhancing and protecting his chances to elevate his socio-political status by becoming Kim Il-sung's sole right-hand man. First, it could increase P'yŏngyang's favorable perception of Pak's performance, which would ease his making connections with the leadership. Although Yŏ was busy in P'yŏngyang criticizing how wrong-headed Pak was in directing the CCP, as long as Pak strongly endorsed P'yŏngyang's policies, Pak knew that Kim would be uncomfortable about forfeiting Pak's cooperation toward increasing Communist control in the peninsula. Furthermore, with Yŏ Un-hong voluntarily walking out from the party in late April and Kim Il-sung suspecting Yŏ's exit as an American conspiracy, a clear consensus on land reform would allow Pak and his supporters to form a closer bond with P'yŏngyang by isolating opposition and strengthen the supremacy of

Communist leadership in the Leftist alliance.

However, to Pak's dismay, he would not be able to see the consensus because he would encounter a sudden and an unexpected failure to procure sufficient funds for a nearly bankrupt CCP due to the outbreak of a minting scandal. Little did Pak know that the shadow of his party's financial failure would loom large enough to force him hurriedly vow a permanent expulsion of Yō from the CCP and make "Unitary Socialism" face its twilight. The next chapter will examine how the outbreak of the May Counterfeiting Scandal assured the party's permanent financial collapse and the coming of the twilight of "Unitary Socialism."

Chapter 9

Spinning a Web between Two Dusty Pine Trees: The Counterfeiting Scandal and the Twilight of "Unitary Socialism"

"..Bring water with you if you come to live here—
Cold tinkling cisterns, or else wells so deep
That one looks down to Ganges or Himalayas.
Yes, and bring mountains with you, white, moon-bearing,
Mountains of ice. You will have need of these
Profundities and peaks of wet and cold.

Bring also, in a cage of wire or osier,
Birds of a golden color, who will sing
Of leaves that do not wither, watery fruits
That heavily hang on long melodious boughs
In the blue-silver forests of deep valleys.

I have now been here—how many years? Years unnumbered.
My hands grow claw-like. My eyes are large and starved.
I brought no bird with me, I have no cistern
Where I might find the moon, or river, or snow.
Some day, for lack of these, I'll spin a web
Between two dusty pine-tree tops, and hang there
Face downward, like a spider, blown as lightly
As ghost of leaf. Crows will caw about me.
Morning and evening I shall drink the dew."⁶⁸²
-Conrad Aiken, "Exile" (1953)-

1. A Skeptical Pak Critique, the Minting Scandal, and Pak Hŏn-yŏng's Firm Resolve to Force Yŏ Un-hyŏng to "Walk the Gallows" (May, 1946)

The previous chapter discussed Yŏ Un-hyŏng's "house analogy" to critically show that Yo 's exit from the CCP meant that the CCP had abandoned Yo's hope of seeing both the Soviets and the Americans leave Korea in peace, albeit a hope that harbored a stronger desire to see the Americans' departure. The CCP's abandonment of that hope meant that the party was free to express a more ardent desire to become P'yŏngyang's leading partner. However, as I will show in this chapter, the party could not exercise this freedom because there was on one hand, a major internal skepticism that Pak was supporting the land reforms to increase his own power. On the other hand, the outbreak of a minting scandal whose aftermath not only signaled the beginning of the CCP's irrecoverable financial collapse, but also its total isolation

⁶⁸² Conrad Aiken, "Exile" in Conrad Aiken, *Selected Poems* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 44.

from the global Communist movement and north Korea due to the American military government total shutdown of the entire Leftist press in south Korea.

Policies are like roses. A policy may look beautiful upon a cursory glance, but upon close examination, even the most perfect policies have thorns embedded within, making any policies become targets of intense criticism. Likewise, Pak Hŏn-yŏng's fervent support of the land reforms could not escape confronting doubtful skepticism within the CCP. Without any visual proof of the land reform's success, did the party's support and participation in these struggles alone demonstrate that Pak and his followers understood the importance of history deeply enough themselves? In the eyes of moderate party members, the answer was a clear "no"; the party's self-aggrandizement seemed excessive and premature. Pak and his followers had not properly solved the problem of whether anti-imperialism or Communism was the *raison d'être* of the party. If the latter was what the party had in mind—realizing Communist supremacy—then the party had to be humble before the noble truth that no theoretical or political problem could be more important than a concretely unsolved historical problem, for the latter includes and guides the former towards the common interest of ushering societal and national progress.

Nevertheless, for Pak, supporting the land reforms was still a pragmatic choice because it was a convenient method to assure that Yŏ Un-hyŏng was still imprisoned within the CCP. Yŏ was heavily dependent on the Communists for organizational support, and his brother's exit from the CCP made Yŏ extremely vulnerable to Pak's future manipulation. Although Pak Hŏn-yŏng had allied with moderate opponents such as Paek Nam-un's New Citizens' Party, Paek's party was the smallest of the three Left-wing parties, was virtually a follower of Yŏ's Korean People's Party and had little political autonomy of its own—a shrimp which would have its back burst during a battle of whales. Yŏ's faction could swallow it up any time

without flexing a muscle.⁶⁸³ The success of the northern land reforms was therefore a welcoming sign for Pak since it showed how to practice Communism systematically and practically that Yŏ's "Unitary Socialism" was politically out of sync with the reform's clear intentions, which would give Pak a significant edge in the competition to become the most loyal ally to P'yŏngyang.

However, Pak knew that future success in implementing the policy in the south and realizing the region's Communization could not be guaranteed without an effective centralization of political authority; the relationship between centricity, reciprocity, and redistribution is such that centricity "will meet halfway" the needs of the latter two. As Polanyi explained, centricity ensures that

"As long as social organization runs in its ruts, no individual economic motives need come into play; no shirking of personal effort need to be feared... the idea of profit is barred; higgling and haggling is decried..*the economic system is in effect, a mere function of social organization.*"⁶⁸⁴

If Polanyi is right, then Communization, as an economic policy derived from a party's decision-making process, is a mere function of social mobilization. Since the party's energy is primarily occupied with Communization as a measure to prohibit a desire for profit among party members, Communism is no longer a label for an economic system describing distribution of wealth each according to their needs, but a social structure ensuring a communal ownership of what was formerly private property. Since the social structure and the economic system is rendered synonymous and congruous, the ultimate measure of an economic policy's success is dependent on its capability to inspire mass societal support from ordinary citizens for elite politicians. Furthermore, since political power is essential to

⁶⁸³ All the political circumstances described can be found in Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 69. A "shrimp whose back is burst during a battle of whales" (*Korae ssaum e sae-u tung T'ochinta*) is a Korean proverb describing a situation in which a person who has no connections to an ongoing feud between two people gets unexpectedly involved in the feud themselves, only to suffer from the feud's consequences him or herself.

⁶⁸⁴ Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 51-52. Italics are my emphasis. Of course, I am only invoking the general textual wisdom contained in the italicized part. Polanyi was concerned with post-World War II political economy in Europe, and I do not wish to suggest that there is any contextual congruence between his topic and mine.

maximize the capability's efficacy, it may also be argued that the economic system is also a mere function of political organization. Accordingly, Pak knew that land reforms would only have meaning if they succeeded in winning the Korean peasantry's hearts and minds; to realize that end, the reforms' success would function as a catalyst to help the party concentrate on socially mobilizing the peasantry toward the classic and larger Communist objective of overthrowing the Korean bourgeoisie who had turned in lackeys for the American imperialists. The more passionately the CCP would advertise the success of the land reforms and the need to repeat it in the south, the more willingly workers and peasants would become CCP members, cementing the CCP's reputation as a genuine comrade of the people.

For the CCP, a drastic increase in membership would send P'yŏng-yang the ideal signal that the CCP was ready to implement land reforms in the south. Once the CCP finished indoctrinating new members into die-hard Communists, that Yŏ would have no place in the party would be apparent. If Pak could assure that his rival was completely out of power, he could dream of even becoming Kim's right-hand man if he wanted to settle in the north.⁶⁸⁵ From Pak's perspective, the dream certainly must have initially seemed plausible, for ousting Yŏ would increase both the party's and his reputation as P'yŏng-yang's most trustworthy and legitimate partner by proving that the CCP was a thoroughly Communist organization. However, an anti-Pak critique and a unexpected minting scandal in May of 1946 would tell Pak Hŏn-yŏng that there is no royal road to seizing political power, forcing him to more harshly and definitively swear to make all opponents, including Yŏ, "walk the gallows."

By mid-April, a considerable anti-Pak sentiment surfaced within the CCP, bearing the full intention of exposing the party's lack of substantive commitment to an efficacious

⁶⁸⁵ Pak Hŏn-yŏng actually fulfilled, albeit briefly, his third and most important expectation in his lifetime. He moved to the north after the end of the Korean War and became Chairman of the Great People's Congress in 1954. However, he did not get to savor his glory for too long, and died a lonely death in front of a firing squad as a victim of Kim Il-sung's fanatical purge of "subversive opponents" barely a year later. See An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 559-595.

Communism which practically reflected Korea's need to overcome her colonial past. As Paek Nam-un (1894-1979), the former leader of the New Citizens' Party who was now the CCP's chief economist, argued in an essay published in an April issue of *Hae-pang Il-po*, earning supremacy did not mean surpassing or overpowering rivals, but simply solving the greatest problem confronting the Korean people—Korea's painful legacy of colonial subjugation. A blind pursuit of Communism as an "international fad" would be akin to "forfeiting political autonomy" and inviting the "resurgence of Fascism."⁶⁸⁶ Even if one defended Democracy with "the most mellifluous combination of rhetorical flourish and political tact," Paek argued that any ideology which "did not bother to hear and incorporate the demands of the people" was akin to "smuggling Fascism and engaging in political deception."⁶⁸⁷

Paek was defending his ideal of a "politics of responsibility" which did not waste its energy comparing one ideology's superiority over another but a politics devoted to maximizing the quality of public welfare. To that end, employing a flexible and an eclectic approach was necessary, blending an accurate understanding of national conditions and accommodating world historical trends of economic development.⁶⁸⁸ An all-out war against the bourgeoisie in the name of conducting land reforms would be an "unprincipled action," for it forgets how some of the bourgeoisie had their "heart and soul resting with the nation," and fought for Korean independence.⁶⁸⁹ Just as the "French Revolution had its landlords and peasants, Korea's landlords were also simultaneously participating in a revolutionary moment

⁶⁸⁶ Paek Nam-un, "Chosŏn Minchokŭi Chinro," (The Future of the Korean People) April 15, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 11*, 40-41. Born in Koch'ang, North Chŏlla province, Paek was a Marxist-heterodox economist, educator, and politician. An economics professor at Yŏn-hee College (now Yŏn-se University) during his stint in southern Korea, Paek was a leading theorist of anti-imperialism and socialism. In addition to being a leading critic of Pak Hŏn-yŏng within the Southern Korean Workers' Party, Paek was also a member of Kim Tu-pong's New People's Party and the Nationalist Front in 1946. In north Korea, where he relocated after the end of the Korean War, Paek served as the first Minister of Education and Chairman of the Great People's Council from the early 1970s until his death.

⁶⁸⁷ Paek Nam-un, "The Future of the Korean People," April 15, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 11*, 40-41.

⁶⁸⁸ Paek Nam-un, "The Future of the Korean People," April 15, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 11*, 42.

⁶⁸⁹ Paek Nam-un, "The Future of the Korean People," April 15, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 11*, 42.

of their own, however late that moment had come."⁶⁹⁰

In other words, while Paek acknowledged that international Communism had the right to provide instruction from a world-historical viewpoint, its degree of application had to be adjusted to accommodate for national economic and social conditions. Korean landlords were products of Korea's economic system and had to be dealt with according to Korea's historical conditions rather than blindly relying on non-Korean examples for theoretical support. Paek was essentially questioning whether Pak Hŏn-yŏng's objective in supporting land reforms in southern Korea was to make farmers economically better off or to consolidate his own power as a sect leader, launching an indiscriminate witch-hunt for the bourgeoisie by considering them as anti-Communist heretics.

Paek argued that a clear answer to the conundrum was to practice what he called an "amalgamative new Democracy," featuring a combination of a "Democratic economy" and "Democratic governance."⁶⁹¹ Paek argued that the two forms of Democracy were compatible and unitary because insofar as economic policies ought to address improving the livelihood of the people, a political system which allowed for a free expression of that demand was necessary to allow for a more "thorough comprehension of the needs' content."⁶⁹² An excessive attention to bureaucratic formalities and accumulation of power for its own sake was anti-Democratic because it served "no beneficial purpose for the public good," which was also why one ought to "refrain from blindly relying on or borrowing foreign examples or practices."⁶⁹³ Instead, Korea had to pursue a blend of nationalist democracy which did not merely treat the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie as a means to implement "liberal Democracy" or treat the dictatorship of the proletariat as an end, but a democracy focused on promptly

⁶⁹⁰ Paek Nam-un, "The Future of the Korean People," April 15, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 11*, 42.

⁶⁹¹ Paek Nam-un, "The Future of the Korean People." April 15, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 11*, 42.

⁶⁹² Paek Nam-un, "The Future of the Korean People." April 15, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 11*, 42.

⁶⁹³ Paek Nam-un, "The Future of the Korean People." April 15, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 11*, 42.

realizing Korea's autonomy and independence.⁶⁹⁴

Paek was subject to harsh criticism from the CCP for failing to provide a concrete and substantive elaboration of what his "Democracy" would systematically guarantee, with some going so far as to accuse him of displaying "reactionary complaints, vapid sophistry, and unconstructive attempts to dismantle Pak's leadership."⁶⁹⁵ In other words, the CCP was arguing that Paek's main theoretical flaw was his failure to explain how his version of "Democracy" was different from Western Europe's liberal Democracy or the Soviet Union's redressing of Communism as "people's Democracy." Paek's attempt to amalgamate both forms of Democracy did not specify which form had primacy over the other; the CCP believed that should Paek be suggesting that Korea must adopt more from the Western European model, Paek was abusing his neutral stance as a decoy to conceal his favoritism for the Rightists' vision of Democracy, and possibly worse, attempting an intellectual coup against Pak by creating unnecessary confusion and doubt about Pak's leadership. However, the CCP's critique failed to appreciate the fact that while Paek was anxious to establish an independent government run by and for Koreans, the ongoing discussions between the Americans and Soviets made it difficult to realize that ideal any time soon. Therefore, Paek was choosing the more realistic option of awakening Communists to repent their commitment to stunting the growth of Democracy in Korea by maintaining a myopic focus on nurturing Paek's personality cult without pondering why it was necessary for Communism.⁶⁹⁶

Paek was, to use philosopher Thomas Nagel's (1987) term, suspicious of Pak's "common standpoint" that made his stance on a nationalist Communism acceptable to every CCP

⁶⁹⁴ Paek Nam-un, "The Future of the Korean People," April 15, 1946. *PSMKH*, Vol. 11, 43.

⁶⁹⁵ Examples of such criticism include Yi Ki-su, "Paek Nam-unüi Chuchangtül e taehan Panpak," (Opposing Paek Nam-un's Arguments) *Sinsekye (New World)* (magazine) June, 1946 and Kim Nam-ch'un, "Paek Nam-unüi Chosönminchoküi Chinro taehan Pip'yöng," (A Critique of Paek Nam-un's 'The Future of the Korean People,') *Chosön Inminpo (Korean People's Newspaper)*, May 9-14, 1946.

⁶⁹⁶ "Chwapa naeüi punchaengkwa 'T'onghapchök Sinminchuchuüi' Yiron," (Internal Factionalism within the Left and the Theory of 'Amalgamative New Democracy,') in Sö Chung-sök ed., *A Study of Modern Korean Nationalism*, Vol. 2.

member. Paek's criticism, stemming from his concept of an "amalgamative new Democracy," was directed toward Pak Hŏn-yŏng's mutative use of the personality cult, which was by implication, an old and hackneyed Democracy which did not share the fundamental concerns of Paek's vision. Pak's "Democracy" was not fresh or original because it directly and uncritically borrowed the personality cult from the Soviet Union and his excessive focus on maintaining orthodoxy prohibited him from devoting critical attention to the more essential problem of listening to the people's demands. Furthermore, because Pak was focusing too much on rhetorical expressions of policies rather than worrying about how to actually implement them, his regime was drifting further away from the Korean public's interest.

Paek was arguing that Pak's emphasis on orthodoxy had ironically made his regime more unorthodox because it detached nationalist and public concerns despite claiming that the CCP was committed to anti-imperialism and the people's welfare. Paek was also challenging Pak's political legitimacy by implicitly questioning whether Pak was instituting the personality cult because he wanted to amass power for himself or because he was engaging in a flunkeyism of blindly following the Soviet Union. Holistically, Paek was probing on Pak's questionable credential as a pure Communist dedicated to the people and whether Pak was earnestly dedicated to finding the correct political system for Korea's needs—the very foundation of his legitimacy as the leader of the CCP.⁶⁹⁷

In a similar fashion, Cho Pong-am of the DNF criticized Pak for making the organization "too conspicuously dictatorial such that it was impossible for the masses to autonomously pursue their ends."⁶⁹⁸ Furthermore, Cho criticized that Pak's concentration on consolidating a

⁶⁹⁷ Thomas Nagel, "Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Summer, 1987), 218.

⁶⁹⁸ Cho Pong-am, "Chonkyŏngghanŭn Pak Tongmu eke," (To the Respectable Comrade Pak) *Hansŏng Ilpo* (*Seoul Daily*), May 7-9, 1946. Adapted from Lee and Scalapino, *A History of the Korean Communist Movement*, Vol. 2, 373. Cho's comment on the personality cult was actually an implicit criticism of Kim Il-sung's personality cult, and a month after announcing the letter to Pak, Cho would completely sever ties with Kim Il-sung. For Cho's declaration of his resignation from the Kim regime, see Cho's "Statement Confirming My Exit from the

personality cult and affirming a total Communist dominance had exposed the critical fact that the "DNF was a principal organ of the CCP and led to an irresponsibly maladroit support for the Moscow Conference, allowing non-indoctrinated masses liable to the enemy's control."⁶⁹⁹

By pointing out how imperfect Pak's policies were, Paek and Cho's acute critiques were incisive reminders to Pak that politics could be like an endless series of intersecting and overlapping staircases. Each step one takes to climb up could unexpectedly be another step to go down a staircase, but one cannot guarantee to which direction the next staircase will lead. On some days, success may naturally seem greater than failure; on others, failure teaches more than success, for it guides people to derive the enlightening truth that if what goes up must come down, what came down surely can find its way up again, and the human will has the power to correct what had been wrong—only under the assumption that a person has the determination to respect this will.⁷⁰⁰ Thus, Paek and Cho were warning that politics as a way of life often inevitably confronts this relativity, and Pak's clan was trying to dig the party's grave by foolishly ignoring this maxim. Had Pak treaded each step with care by convincing Communism's appeal before concentrating on amassing as many members as possible, he could have avoided exposing all his cards and reduced the likelihood of a highly unfavorable direct confrontation with the American military government.

Indeed, Paek and Cho's warnings proved to be prescient as the Moscow Conference failed yet again to produce meaningful results since its first session's negligible outcome. By April, the Americans and Soviets had begun debating about the substantially important issue of how to organize the Korean political scene while observing an ideological balance of power. Yet, American flexibility fiercely clashed with Soviet rigidity over how to adequately deal with

(Northern) Communist Party," *Tonga Ilpo*, June 26, 1946. Adapted from Lee and Scalapino, *Communism in Korea*, Vol. 2 (Berkeley, California, and London, England: University of California Press, 1972), 374.

⁶⁹⁹ Cho Pong-am, "To the Respectable Comrade Pak," *Hansŏng Ilpo*, May 7-9, 1946. Adapted from Lee and Scalapino, *Communism in Korea*, Vol. 2, 373.

⁷⁰⁰ For this theory of relativity, see Max C. Escher's "Relativity." (1953)

possible opposition to the Moscow Conference. In contrast to the more pluralistic American requirement that all political parties register with the credentials of their designated representatives, the Soviets barred the registration of parties which opposed the Moscow Decision.⁷⁰¹ They argued that a meaningful dialogue with the United States could only commence once Americans displayed the same attitude as the Soviets.

The Soviets further suggested signing a joint communiqué which would state that Korean participants to the conference may only be allowed "from the membership of the party or organization, who have not compromised themselves by actively voicing their opposition against the Moscow Decision and against the Allies."⁷⁰² Participants had to pledge their firm adherence to the terms of the original document from December 1945 to facilitate the Joint Commission's smooth administration of Korea. In accordance with this standard, the Soviets recommended that 46 Leftist organizations with more than 10,000 be exclusively allowed to partake as observers of the conference.⁷⁰³ In other words, the Soviets conceived the conference as a means to extract the Americans' agreement to the preservation of individual spheres of influence in southern Korea, which would not only ensure that the Soviets controlled the northern and southern Communists but also thereby confirm the superiority of Soviet influence over the Korean peninsula.

The Soviets believed that the Americans could easily accept this demand because the American military government only had to reflect on the fact that the Americans would not tolerate any opposition to their own agenda. The Soviets were simply trying to "naturally" do

⁷⁰¹ "Minutes from the First Meeting of the Sub-commission of the American-Soviet Joint Committee, " April 19, 1946. RG 554, Box 293: United States Army Forces in Korea(USAFIK)—U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission on Korea: Subject Files, 1945-1947: Daily Radio Reports to News Conferences.

⁷⁰² "Communiqué on the Moscow Decision," April 17, 1946," from *U.S.-U.S.S.R. Joint Commission, Report of the United States Delegation*, August 20, 1947, 53-54. RG 554, Box 294: United States Army Forces in Korea(USAFIK)—U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission on Korea: Subject Files, 1945-1947: Report of the United States Delegation. See also "Secret Circular Telegram from the Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic Officers," April 11, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 659. See also Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 265.

⁷⁰³ "Conversation between General Arnold and General Shtykov," April 29, 1946. RG 554, Box 293.

the same.⁷⁰⁴ However, the Americans were wary of Soviet intentions and refused the Soviets' demand, responding that freedom of expression and freedom of press were important values for Democracy. Therefore, the Americans would not require "Democratic parties or social organizations' declarations of support for the Moscow Decision" as a condition for consultation.⁷⁰⁵ The American delegation also argued that accepting the Soviets' demand was akin to "negating the broad consultation principle in terms of Korean participation at the Moscow Conference and encourage unjust discrimination among factions in Korean politics."⁷⁰⁶ In short, the Americans clearly articulated that they were well aware that making concessions to the Soviets would allow the Soviets screen candidates to ensure a Communist majority and give the impression that the Americans had bowed to Soviet pressure. There was no telling when the Soviets would make more unreasonable demands, and the Americans wanted to prevent becoming the victims of a diplomatic snowballing effect.

Moreover, the Americans believed that implementing the Soviets' measure would only prevent Korean political parties from achieving a unitary consensus through a joint American and Soviet consultation and turn the Conference into an exclusive ideological club, exacerbating the already egregious ideological divide and introduce more unnecessary discord and conflict in southern Korea. Hence, in addition to concentrating on smothering a highly agitated Korean public by pressing the Soviets to omit "trusteeship" from the communiqué, the Americans clearly articulated the desire to protect their vision of Democracy by arguing that the freedom to express anything included the right to unconditionally silent, for consultation with Koreans on Korean problems had the sole function of assisting the

⁷⁰⁴ "Conversation between General Arnold and General Shtykov." April 29, 1946. RG 554, Box 293.

⁷⁰⁵ "Exhibit No. 11, April 9, 1946," from *U.S.-U.S.S.R. Joint Commission, Report of the United States Delegation*, August 20, 1947, 49. RG 554, Box 294.

⁷⁰⁶ "Transcript of Meeting between General Arnold and General Shtykov," in *U.S.-U.S.S.R. Joint Commission, Report of the United States Delegation*, August 20, 1947, 23. RG 554, Box 294.

Americans and Soviets to provide accurate counsel to solve Korea's problems.⁷⁰⁷ By making these demands, the Americans were demanding that, as advisers to the Korean people, the Americans and Soviets ought to seek means to unify the Koreans rather than promote divisional conflict and to do the latter was a betrayal of the fundamental purpose for which the original Moscow Communiqué was agreed between the two allies.

Unfortunately, the tension-ridden stalemate did not bog down quickly as the Soviets persistently held their ground. The Soviets dismissed freedom of the press, berating it as a symptom deriving from the American conception of the press as a "money-motivated institution."⁷⁰⁸ By contrast, the Soviet delegation emphasized that the press was used to speak with only the most crucial classes which constitute the public—workers and peasants. Soviets "cannot be guided by American Democracy and do not propose to guide Korea by Soviet democracy."⁷⁰⁹ In other words, the Soviets stubbornly interpreted any sign of Soviet concession to American demands as political subjugation to capitalism and American democracy. To prevent such a distasteful phenomenon, the Soviets were keen on protecting their predominantly Leftist vision of democracy which concentrated on excluding undesirable Rightists. The Soviet delegation indignantly adhered to their original stance, warning that there were "Koreans who wished to get along without the United States and the Soviet Union who were dangerous for the future of the peninsula."⁷¹⁰

Therefore, for the sake of parity between the fact that the American military government was occupying Korea and the fact that the Soviet Union was also a liberator of Korea, the Soviet delegation explicitly stated that it wished to see the "Korean government be more loyal to the Soviet Union" because the Soviet people sacrificed much in wars against Germany and

⁷⁰⁷ "Secret and Urgent Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon) to the Secretary of State," Seoul, undated. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 660. See also "Telegram from Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to the Secretary of State," Seoul, undated. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 665 and 667.

⁷⁰⁸ "Conversation between General Arnold and General Shtykov," April 29, 1946. RG, 554, Box 293.

⁷⁰⁹ "Conversation between General Arnold and General Shtykov," April 29, 1946. RG, 554, Box 293.

⁷¹⁰ "Conversation between General Arnold and General Shtykov," April 29, 1946. RG, 554, Box 293.

Japan and were therefore entitled to prevent "people inimical to Soviet interests from participating in the conference."⁷¹¹ In other words, the Soviets' final comment confirmed that the article from *Taedong Sinmun* had some prescience. The Soviets had revealed that they were keen on interpreting the administration of Korea as a reparatory measure to compensate for their losses during the Second World War and really considered Korea only as a backwater satellite state subject to arbitrary Soviet commands and interests.⁷¹² In the end, unable to find a satisfactory compromise within a dense thicket of diametrically opposed views, the meeting concluded in an indecisive deadlock; both parties only managed to agree on dividing the role of chairing the next meeting of the Joint Commission between them, with the Soviets chairing the meeting at Seoul and the Americans chairing the meeting at P'yŏng-yang.⁷¹³

Paek's warning about Pak's need to rank his priorities especially became an omen of immense trouble. For Pak Hŏn-yŏng, May was a disappointing and anxiety-ridden month. Another American-Soviet joint commission, held on May 2 to negotiate the terms of trusteeship ended in failure, resulting in an indefinite recess just four days later. The Americans and Soviets made a final attempt to arrive at some reasonable compromise on the question of proportional or equal representation between the Left and the Right, but only ended in a stalemate. The Americans laid out the "plural representation" thesis once more, arguing that because religious groups and Right-wing groups constituted the majority of the population, they ought to win more representation at the Conference and proposed a 3 to 19 ratio between Leftists and Rightists. From the Americans' perspective, this proposal was sound, since there were 39 political parties and 386 social organizations including farmers'

⁷¹¹ "Transcript of Meeting between General Arnold and General Shtykov," in *U.S.-U.S.S.R. Joint Commission, Report of the United States Delegation*, August 20, 1947, 48. RG 554, Box 294.

⁷¹² "Telegram from the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State," November 12, 1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1122.

⁷¹³ "Transcript of Meeting between General Arnold and General Shtykov," in *U.S.-U.S.S.R. Joint Commission, Report of the United States Delegation*, August 20, 1947, 48. RG 554, Box 294.

unions, business, and civic organizations in contrast to the Soviet-occupied northern Korea, which had 3 political parties and 35 social organizations.⁷¹⁴ Clearly, if the Soviets truly cared about Korea's economic welfare, it was logical for them to supersede acute ideological differences and accept this proposal, for the Americans believed that encouraging political diversity was a crucial force behind maintaining a healthy Democracy.

However, the Soviets immediately rejected the proposal and offered a "class-based proportional balance" theory of representation in which the workers and peasants constituted the majority over the bourgeoisie. The Soviets argued that their calculation was reasonable because it accounted for more people than the Americans, who were only considering about 5% of the entire Korean population. A genuine solution which reflected the socio-economic reality of Korea, the Soviets argued, could only arise if the Americans included workers and peasants into the original calculation and adjusted their original estimate to a 13 to 17 ratio between the Right and the Left.⁷¹⁵ In short, the Americans and Soviets were engaging in what would be an inconclusive struggle over the true meaning of "popular representation" with the former adopting a numerical definition and the latter countering with a societal definition.

The American military government thought that the Soviet proposal seemed nothing more than a strategy to delay or sabotage the negotiations rather than a sincere offer to revise the American plan out of any serious appreciation for realizing a genuine Democracy in Korea. A frustrated and tired Hodge later blamed the "Russians' arbitrary interpretation of the Moscow Agreement" as the primary cause for the recess and advised Koreans to "keep cool, calm heads and behavior to speed the wheels of progress to re-establishing the Korean nation."⁷¹⁶ Yet, in reality, this announcement was a veneer to hide the Americans' greatest

⁷¹⁴ George M. McCune, *Korea Today* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1950), 65.

⁷¹⁵ "Sub-commission Meeting No. 1 of the American-Soviet Joint Commission," May 2, 1946. RG 554, Box 293.

⁷¹⁶ "Statement of Lieutenant General John Reed Hodge," May 9, 1946. RG 554, Box 1: United States Forces in Korea Commandant's Office—General Correspondence, 1943-1946.

dilemma from the Korean public: either risk abandoning the most loyal Right-wing factions by adhering to the Soviets' demands or face the dreaded prospect of intensifying tensions between P'yŏngyang-Seoul and Moscow-Washington relations by eternally terminating all negotiations with the Soviets through a steadfast insistence on the Americans' interpretation of "Democracy."⁷¹⁷

Indeed, across the streets of south Korea, extreme Leftists under the CCP's encouragement exploited this very dilemma by pressuring the Americans to assume the first risk. The CCP blasted its usual anti-DPK panegyric, arguing that the postponement of the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference was a "nefarious scheme of Syngman Rhee to extend his hold on power with his dirty pro-Japanese cronies."⁷¹⁸ The party also criticized Kim Ku for being an "emotionless pawn of the United States," portraying the postponement as "another example of Kim's unprincipled pro-Americanism smothered only by his lukewarm and taciturn agreement to follow American instructions."⁷¹⁹ The party, unable to control its impassioned gibberish, even argued that the Korean people must "rise up and use the current interregnum as an opportunity to ardently support Kim Il-sung and the inevitable founding of the People's Republic."⁷²⁰

In short, the CCP interpreted the conference's postponement as an acknowledgement of a power vacuum, a conclusive evidence of the Americans' and Rightists' failure to realize Democracy, and as a moment for the Korean people to bolster their support for the Communists. The party was adopting the opposite view from that of Hodge; the Soviets were infallible and if there was any sign of sabotaging the conference, it had to necessarily arise

⁷¹⁷ Kim Sŏng-sik ed., *Chosŏn Yŏnkam: 1948 (Korean Yearbook: 1948)* (Seoul, south Korea: Chosŏn Media Company, 1947), 136.

⁷¹⁸ Chosŏn Communist Party, "A Statement on the Moscow Conference's Recess," in *A Collection of Statements and Writings on the American-Soviet Joint Commission*, 40.

⁷¹⁹ Chosŏn Communist Party, "A Statement on the Moscow Conference's Recess," in *A Collection of Statements and Writings on the American-Soviet Joint Commission*, 41.

⁷²⁰ Chosŏn Communist Party, "A Statement on the Moscow Conference's Recess," in *A Collection of Statements and Writings on the American-Soviet Joint Commission*, 42.

from the Right because the CCP could see nothing but a greed for eternal power in condoners of pro-Japanese collaborators such as Syngman Rhee and colorless but clandestinely conservative politicians such as Kim Ku.

Yet, Hodge knew that the Americans and Soviets had spent all their time playing a poker game with no cards but pure bluffing, careful not to let one version of "Democracy" dominate and erase traces of another.⁷²¹ More accurately, the main issue that put the Americans and Soviets at loggerheads against each other was a rather fundamental one: the proper distribution of seats for the Korean Provisional Government. The Soviets, having no intention to relinquish what seemed to be an opportune chance to expand its influence, adamantly proposed that anyone who had opposed the decision from the Moscow Conference must be "permanently excluded."⁷²² Hodge and his American allies refused the Soviets' demand with equal steadfastness, arguing that it was "fundamentally contradictory against the genuine spirit of Democracy, which knows no discrimination based on the direction of any ideology or creed."⁷²³ Agreeing to such exclusionism was akin to agreeing that all opponents of the trusteeship would be barred from all political activities, which was "against the universal creed of respecting the freedom of expression."⁷²⁴ Hence, accordingly, all parties from the Left and the Right were entitled to establish and participate in a multi-coalition government, such that the plurality of voices as a principle in itself speaks for Democracy's essence, which lies in the respect for freedom of opinion, thought, and movement.

⁷²¹ "John Reed Hodge's Letter to Charles P. Goforth," February 8, 1947. RG 554, Box 2: United States Forces in Korea Commandant's Office. General Correspondence, 1947. See also "Secret Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State," April 2, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6: The Far East*, 625.

⁷²² "Secret Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State," April 2, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6*, 625.

⁷²³ John Reed Hodge, "Miso Kongtong Wiwŏnhoe Mukihyuhoe e taehan Hodge Chungchangŭi T'ŭkpyŏl Songmyong," (Special Statement on the Joint American-Soviet Commission's Indefinite Recess) May 9, 1946, *IDFTYSL*, 55.

⁷²⁴ Hodge, "Special Statement on the Joint American-Soviet Commission's Indefinite Recess," May 9, 1946, *IDFTYSL*, 55; Leland M. Goodrich, *Korea: A Study of U.S. Policy in the United Nations* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1956), 19.

Fundamentally, the struggle between the Soviets and the Americans was a clash between the *realpolitik* of considering the political climate of a given time such that Democracy's liberal character ensued not from the internal composition of voices which described Democracy's inner essence, but the externally informed flexibility of adapting to the "will of the people," or the balance of power suitable for a specific political end. From the Soviets' point of view, the more quickly they could confirm that Communists occupied the main seats in the Provisional Government, the more easily Moscow would be able to coerce the Communists into making Korea become a Soviet satellite, which could easily serve as proof of political superiority over the United States without shooting a single bullet.

In short, the clash about democracy was not between one kind of democracy and another, but between interpretations of the origins of Democracy's two key internal-structural features—its ability to be liberally flexible to shifting political climates based on its functional value of opposing a certain position in itself, or its internal structural ability to liberally embrace all view points to entertain plurality. For the Americans and Soviets, the focus was on rendering Democracy's such features as its eternal nature and make that nature unwaver against any opposing ideology and thereby *preserve* the eternal nature as the essence of Democracy. In short, rather than give the Soviets a chance to accuse the Americans of evading their commitments or to needlessly "procrastinate by making embarrassing counterproposals," the Americans chose to maintain a gridlock until the Soviets acquiesced to implementing the American version of Democracy.⁷²⁵

To make things worse, Pak and Yō's relationship plunged to rock-bottom with the outbreak of what would be known as a "counterfeiting scandal," which strengthened Pak's resolve to severely punish Communist members displaying unprincipled and unruly behavior. In early

⁷²⁵ "Telegram from the Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Moscow," April 5, 1947. *FRUS*, 1947, Vol. 6, 629.

May, the Korean National Police raided a money printing station in central Seoul and discovered in its basement three million Yen in counterfeit bank notes.⁷²⁶ Since September 1945, the CCP had taken over a bank which the Japanese had established to extract capital with interest from poor peasants. The party then used the building as its headquarters to print counterfeit bills and engage in money laundering to stabilize their finances and increase their arsenal of weaponry. For six months, the party, with the help of college students it illegally employed, had printed millions of bills even under the risk of immediate exposure and arrest by the Korean police.⁷²⁷ From the party's perspective, printing additional supplies of counterfeit money was not a matter of choice but of necessity, for the disintegration of the original CCP had led to a severe shortage of funds which could not match the rapidity with which the party was receiving additional members. Hence, from a practical standpoint, the scandal was anatomically the financial cure for the party's blocked arteries, kindling the party's last hope to prepare an economic breathing space by supplying itself with quick cash to institutionally sustain itself.

However, the other, albeit less certain impact which the party had secretly hoped to see was a complete collapse of south Korea's market economy. A rapid surge in the money supply lowers interest rates, which means that banks could not acquire adequate returns. Hence, from a bank's perspective, it becomes necessary to reduce the amount of money used in public spending to meet the bank's own needs. This decision runs a greater risk of slowing down economic production, since suppliers have no incentive to continue producing for a constantly dwindling demand. Thus, the overall amount of national revenue would fall due to low spending and low collection of taxes. Since the supply of necessary public goods is low, ordinary citizens cannot procure daily necessities and the overall quality of life would

⁷²⁶ Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement*, 310.

⁷²⁷ J. W. Kermode to the Far East Department, "Monthly Report on Korea, May, 1946," July 18, 1946. Robert Jarman ed., *Korea: Economic and Political Reports*, Vol. 10, 62.

deteriorate. As the cycle continues to repeat itself numerous over time, the national economy would go down the cliff, eventually leading to its total collapse.

Hence, the Communists were keen on making the southern market become Erysichthonian, eating itself from inside-out of a desperation and frustration with its inability to meet the demands of a highly dissatisfied public. The two intentions were also simultaneously reinforcing, since the faster the party could print out its own money supply, the faster the second indirect consequence would follow. In essence, the May Minting Scandal was a hasty and makeshift scheme designed to salvage the party's dire financial strait while draining out that of south Korea. Hence, the unexpectedly early arrest of the CCP cadres not only meant that that the south Korean police had divulged a Communist plot to drive south Korea's economy over a cliff. The police had also cut the CCP's major financial lifeline and prevented the party from sustaining efforts to advertise its competence in maintaining a momentum for a "more perfect Communist revolution, a lifeline which the party would never succeed in resuscitating until its dissolution in 1948.

2. An Assessment of the Counterfeiting Scandal and Its Impact on the CCP

The unexpected raid of the Korean police effectively isolated the party from all internal and external sources of funding as it could neither autonomously nor rely on foreign Communist parties to fund its operations. Yet, as much it was obvious that the party had committed a grave crime, the CCP could not afford to directly admit it because the party neither had a reliable witness to prove its innocence nor had any accomplice which could act as a scapegoat, and the party found a thorough denial of any involvement in the planning or execution of the scandal as its ultimate advantage. The party strongly denied the counterfeiting charge, but the police accused the party of “clandestinely preparing funds to finance its internal operations”

and for "plotting to sabotage southern Korea's economy."⁷²⁸ Yi Ch'ang-sŏn, a banker suspected of being a Communist sympathizer, Yi Kwan-sul, the party's Finance Manager, and Kwŏn O-chik, a low-ranking party member, were immediately arrested.⁷²⁹ Yi was sentenced to life imprisonment without parole, while the other two received temporary imprisonment. A few days after the police revealed that almost 9,000 to 11,000 Yen were counterfeited in colonial Japanese bank notes, American officials closed down most medium and small Left-wing newspaper companies, citing security concerns.⁷³⁰

Korean Police Commissioner Chang T'aek-sang harshly criticized the scandal as a "grave shame to the Korean people, a most nefarious plot which employed innocent students, which earned a deep and ubiquitous ire from every Korean soul."⁷³¹ For the sake of cleansing Korea of her shame, Chang vowed to ardently suppress and prevent all future acts of terrorism against any individual or organization.⁷³² Thus, the minting scandal was not just a financial crime or a private transgression of the law but a potentially severe act of violence which could jeopardize not only the lives of innocent Korean citizens but greatly tarnish the reputation of Korea into a land where incessant cases of terrorism constantly threatened the preservation of public peace and order.

As political scientist Herbert Alexander (1969) correctly observes, communication serves two major functions in politics: electing people to public offices and exercising control over "the direction and activity of government, and the incorporation of opinion and advice on the

⁷²⁸ Special Agent, CIC to United States Army Forces Korea Headquarters, Counterintelligence, Corps, Korea, APO 235, File No. 8-20, "Memorandum for General Hodge on Communist Ties with Counterfeiting," May 10, 1946. RG 554, Box 16: United States Army Forces in Korea (USAFIK) Adjutant General—General Correspondence (Decimal Files), 1945-1949—Financial Statements to Civil Matters.

⁷²⁹ "Memorandum for General Hodge on Communist Ties with Counterfeiting," May 10, 1946. RG 554, Box 16.

⁷³⁰ *The Communist Party of South Korea: Part 1*, 20 in "Secret Report from the Office of the Economic Adviser Headquarters XXIV Corps, Seoul, Korea, APO 235 to Secretary of State. September 28, 1946. RG 59, Decimal File 895.00/09-2846. Box 7388. See also An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 350-351.

⁷³¹ "Chang T'aek-sang, Chŏngp'ansa Sakŏn e taehan Sŏngmyŏng Palp'yo," (Chang T'aek-sang's Statement on the May Counterfeiting Scandal) July 29, 1946. *Tonga Ilpo. PSMKH, Vol. 2.*

⁷³² "Chang T'aek-sang's Statement on the Counterfeiting Scandal," July 29, 1946. *Tonga Ilpo. PSMKH, Vol. 2.*

proper exercise of policies." ⁷³³ The scandal was detrimental to the party because it resulted in the loss of communication's second function, preventing the CCP from finalizing its operations against the American military government and to modify the party's relational field of information with the northerners, whereupon the CCP would have swiftly received instructions about future proceedings.⁷³⁴ The scandal did not just result in the imprisonment of many CCP members, and as an American observer noted, a "considerable loss of prestige,"⁷³⁵ but more fatally, a crucial source of information about domestic politics and global socialist movements.

The scandal also severely curtailed the influence of Left-wing media in southern Korea. The American military government banned the publication of south Korean newspapers such as the *Tae-Tong Press* for "inflaming the public mind with falsehoods, encouraging criminal acts and abusing and libeling foreign powers" and restricted foreign newspapers such as the British *Independent* from delivering news about Europe and the Soviet Union to southern Korea.⁷³⁶ In essence, the Americans were trying to display their commitment to an impartial control of the media, which would not only enhance the maintenance of public order but also by preventing excessive anti-Soviet sentiments from exacerbating Korean public opinion about the Moscow Conference, deliver a clear message to the Soviets that the Americans were still interested in the negotiations.⁷³⁷

The total shutdown of the Korean Leftist press—a phenomenon which would last until

⁷³³ Herbert E. Alexander, "Communications and Politics: The Media and the Message," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Spring, 1969), 255. See also Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer, 1982), 787.

⁷³⁴ Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 787.

⁷³⁵ "Secret Priority Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," Seoul, June 16, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 705; "Secret Priority Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," September 14, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 737.

⁷³⁶ "Statement of General Hodge on Suspending the *Taedong Press*," May 14, 1946. RG 554, Box 1: United States Army Forces in Korea—Commandant's Office: General Correspondence, 1943-1946. See also McCune, *Korea Today*, 86.

⁷³⁷ "Restricted Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon) to the Secretary of State," May 22, 1946. *FRUS, Vol. 8*, 684.

the end of the Korean War—was especially fatal to the CCP.⁷³⁸ The party effectively lost the ultimate means to gather information about P'yŏngyang's policies, which could serve as the yardstick to determine the legitimacy of the CCP's operations. Implementing future operations would be a complete gamble, since the CCP had lost Pak's leadership as a symbol of Communist edification. More specifically, without their reliance on Pak's supposed expertise, certainty about whether the southern Leftists' projected trajectory of revolution was faithful to the basics of a genuine Communist revolution or any certainty about the predicted consequences of continuing to drift without any sense of direction. Moreover, there was a considerable drop in confidence, for along with the loss of a major capacity to communicate with domestic and international political trends, it was unclear whether the party could surmount the growing pressure and crisis of imminent defeat and become masters of its own destiny. In short, the party had lost self-esteem, networks of knowledge about its political environment, and ultimately its faith in whether it could afford to play dice with a situation gone wildly out of its control.⁷³⁹

In addition, with the Korean National Police becoming ever more alert to capture and arrest all suspected Leftists on sight, many Leftists, especially members of the UNF, fled to northKorea. This decision was fatal for the DNF, since a nearly absolute dearth of Leftists remaining in the organization meant that the DNF could no longer function to live up to the its fundamental purpose of acting as the main counterweight to the Right-wing DPK. This failure, in turn, meant that the minting scandal had completely crushed the CCP's ambition to centralize all power within the Left solely for itself. With counterrevolutionaries possibly lurking around every corner of southern Korea and even within the party, a limited access to

⁷³⁸ Youm Kyu-ho, "Press Freedom under Constraints: The Case of South Korea," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 8 (August, 1986), 869-870.

⁷³⁹ Robert C. Tucker, "Personality and Political Leadership," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (Autumn, 1977), 392.

outside information left the Communists wondering whether they should strike first or whether they would be subject to an unexpected and ferocious counterrevolutionary coup. What made things worse is that this incredibility was so great that the party was not able to calm down its agitation, torn between anger and nervousness.

While some members harshly criticized the "deceptive and foxy demeanor" of the Americans, others were more reserved, anxiously voicing the need for "a brand new strategy to counter a storm that is about to come."⁷⁴⁰ However, panic and fear were generally common among party members out of a deep concern that the Leftist movement would be quickly fragmented and worse, give more opportunities for the Americans to crack down on the party for causing unnecessary socio-political confusion. Panic and fear quickly mushroomed into desperation that the party's life could unexpectedly be cut short—a potentially severe blow to the strength of the Leftists in the peninsula.⁷⁴¹ Furthermore, as political scientist Paul J. Quirk (1998) argues, a scandal fundamentally has the devastating potential to "destroy useful careers, disrupt proper governance, and invite cynicism and alienation."⁷⁴² Accordingly, Pak Hŏn-yŏng was especially suspicious of the possibility that Yŏ Un-hyŏng might use the scandal to gather Pak's detractors and turn the party's public opinion against him. Should that happen, Yŏ could seize the chance to robustly push "Unitary Socialism" as the party's main agenda, which in turn, might translate into Yŏ's replacement of Pak as Kim Il-sung's most trusted ally. Pak and the party were thereby thrust into a blindfolded cat-and-mouse game, no longer certain about its own policies or the genuine intentions and identities of its enemies. It had lost a critical means to follow first rule of the art of war: know yourself and your enemies to win every battle.

⁷⁴⁰ An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 350-354.

⁷⁴¹ An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 354.

⁷⁴² Paul J. Quirk, "Coping with the Politics of Scandal," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Fall, 1998), 898; Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 66-68.

Fortunately for Pak, Yŏ *did not* get a chance to dominate him; rather, Pak had seized a critical chance to drive Yŏ to a corner. Since the scandal served as a sharp alarm for Pak to re-examine the loyalty of party members, it would be inauspicious for Yŏ to suggest any effort for non-ideological reconciliation, especially considering the grim reality that Yŏ no longer had any allies in the party. His last major ally was his younger brother Un-hong, who had left the party in April, expressing disgust at Pak's authoritarian leadership and frustration with his brother's inability to challenge it.⁷⁴³ Ultimately, the chaos ensuing from the police's round-up of the counterfeiters was a clear warning that Pak would concentrate on rooting out non-Communist suspects from making trouble in the future. The scandal and its ramifications seemed to reflect the destiny of Yŏ's "Unitary Socialism"—a wet seed drying away in an ideologically hot and blind country.⁷⁴⁴

Retrospectively, Yŏ's loss was Pak's joy; the internal disorder that the scandal had created was merely being repeated outside, confirming that Yŏ's pacifist approach was too nebulous to promise a firm political consolidation of the party. Furthermore, the arrests and a bombing aimed to assassinate Yŏ who was leaving a school courtyard after delivering a speech commemorating the Allies' victory in World War II gave Pak full confidence that his commitment to Communism was morally correct compared with Rightist "Democracy," which only seemed synonymous with a virulent hatred of the Left.⁷⁴⁵ The rest of May offered nothing but an endless cycle of chaos—one that would go on well into late autumn. When the Korean National Police made hundreds of arrests, the Leftists tried to fight back, only to meet a devastating retaliatory shower of bullets. Democracy was nowhere to be seen, senselessly

⁷⁴³ J. W. Kermode to the Far Eastern Department, "Monthly Report on Korea, May, 1946," July 18, 1946. Robert Jarman ed., *Korea: Political and Economic Reports, Vol. 10*, 61-62. It is also possible that the Americans encouraged Yŏ Un-hong's walkout because they wanted to preserve Yŏ Un-hyŏng's independence from the Communists and use him as a buffer against the Communists. See Chŏng-sik Lee, *Life of Kim Kyu-sik*, 143 and *HUSAFIK, Part 2*, Chapter 2, 98 and 103-104.

⁷⁴⁴ Kim, *Mongyang Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 282.

⁷⁴⁵ Cho yŏng-kŏn, "Yŏ Un-hyŏng kŭriko 6.15 Sŏnŏnŭi Sitae," (Yŏ Un-hyŏng and the Era of the June 15th Declaration) in Yi Su-sŏng and Chŏng-sik Lee et al. eds., *Discussing Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 95.

butchered by the knives and guns of crazed mobs; mayhem and chaos ruled supreme like cold tyrants, as the streets were ceaselessly covered with bullets and blood.⁷⁴⁶

As if to reflect the ambience on the streets, Pak's mood also took a violent turn. If Pak only had anathema toward "Unitary Socialism" in the Fall of 1945, by the Spring of 1946, antipathy had mutated into a desire for complete expulsion. Yŏ's repeated obstinate insistence that a true Socialist party had to incorporate members from both the Right and the Left finally sapped the last remaining inch of patience within Pak. In a secret speech aimed at blaming Yŏ's loyalists, Pak expressed his frustration with their "naïve assumption" that supporting P'yŏngyang's policies was "practicing Communism."⁷⁴⁷ On the contrary, the party was supporting "the people's will," as such policies "gave happiness to the people."⁷⁴⁸ Providing happiness was "the essence of Democracy" and a firm dedication to crushing "counterrevolutionaries" was the only way to realize Democracy in southern Korea, where farmers, despite being the majority, have "most of their aspirations for prosperity completely ignored."⁷⁴⁹ Therefore, supporting P'yŏngyang's Communism was a "moral gesture born purely out of the heart" to enhance the peasants' livelihood, thereby fulfilling the majority's will and upholding Democracy. Pak also did not forget to taunt Yŏ, warning that all who opposed following P'yŏngyang would have to "walk the gallows" along with pro-Japanese collaborators.⁷⁵⁰

Put differently, happiness was a product of destruction rather than creation, of political exclusion rather than integration. This ironic production of happiness was politically very expedient for Pak because it allowed him to skillfully disguise his personal allegiance to P'yŏng-yang into a public virtue. In a Humean sense, Pak understood that creating a virtue

⁷⁴⁶ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 1, 249-252.

⁷⁴⁷ "Minchuchūiwa T'ochi Kaehyŏk," (Democracy and Land Reform) May 14, 1946. *ODSKWP*, Vol. 1, 210-211.

⁷⁴⁸ "Democracy and Land Reform." May 14, 1946. *ODSKWP*, Vol. 1, 210-211.

⁷⁴⁹ "Democracy and Land Reform," May 14, 1946. *ODSKWP*, Vol. 1, 211-212.

⁷⁵⁰ "Democracy and Land Reform," May 14, 1946. *ODSKWP*, Vol. 1, 212-213.

requires sympathy, which in turn translates into political collusion, which transforms into political allegiance.⁷⁵¹ The equation of "democracy" with "happiness" strongly reflects Pak's effort to rebrand and buttress a Leftist and humanist "democracy" with morality to win *sympathy* from the people while also criticizing the Rightists' anti-humanist vision. Pak was thereby also *colluding* with P'yŏng-yang's practice of "democracy" by emulating its strategy of shunning the Rightists and championing the peasantry as the only legitimate representatives of the people, for he was emphasizing that it was only their happiness that ascribed "Democracy" significance. Finally, by emphasizing the "Demo" part of the ideology to woo farmers who were in the majority, Pak believed that the peasantry's popular support would translate into Communism's moral victory in the south. Once this was confirmed, Yŏ's "Unitary Socialism" would become ineffective, solidifying Pak's *allegiance* to P'yŏngyang.

Put differently, by ascribing such a Humean connection between "democracy" and "happiness" to the "people's will," Pak was also facilitating Communism as a tool to identify *all* non-Communists as un-Democratic enemies of the Korean people. Supporting P'yŏngyang's policies was a moral gesture from the heart because by eliminating these enemies, it would allow peasants to realize their humanity by pursuing a natural desire for prosperity. Since the desire to be rich fundamentally resides within self-consciousness, the humanity of supporting northern policies arose from its public ability to communalize an private awareness of selfhood in every peasant. Supporting Communism was therefore not only necessary but a *natural* condition to liberate the peasant into a proper human being. Pak's emphasis on the party's such clarity in supporting Communism was also probably a deliberate attempt to highlight how unambiguous it was compared with Yŏ's "Unitary Socialism" and those who worshipped a very nebulous pacifist unification that neither had any direction or

⁷⁵¹ Rachel Cohon, "The Shackles of Virtue: Hume on Allegiance to Government," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (October, 2001), 409.

program. Hence, Pak's implicit message to Yǒ was "clarify your position or leave politics for good." Yet, Pak had unwittingly committed a sin by rejecting Marx's recommendation that the Communist party had to be a pure political institution dedicated to indoctrinating and publicizing its own agenda without eliminating opposing views. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx had argued:

"The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties; they have no interests separate and apart from the proletariat as a whole; they do not set up any sectarian principles by their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement."⁷⁵²

In other words, Yǒ's eternal expulsion from the CCP was a concrete evidence of how the chief leader of the southern Communists had unwittingly violated the most fundamental principles of a Communist party. By pressuring Yǒ into announcing his resignation and subsequent banishment, Pak had used Communism to maximize his private power and encourage opposition against Yǒ's "deviance" from the Communist line, which would later become a coercive measure to pressure Yǒ into unwillingly accepting the Five Principles. In doing so, Pak violated Marx's second principle, for, instead of defending the rights of workers—the ultimate common good of the Left—Pak revealed his separate interest of cancelling out his main rival's bid for power, thereby encouraging unnecessary factionalism within Yǒ's own party and thereby rendering unity a more difficult task to achieve. Although Pak Hǒn-yǒng nominally emerged as the victor in the struggle against Yǒ, Pak had fragmented the Left by engaging in a quest for sectarian supremacy, since the CCP had failed to truly unite the other Leftist parties through their harmonious agreement and acknowledgement of Pak's personality cult. Finally, because Pak's violation of Marx's second principle stemmed from the sectarian greed of obtaining political supremacy over a much detested rival, Pak had perverted the party's commitment to the proletarian movement by directing its attention to the more petty business of strengthening the personality cult for its

⁷⁵² Karl Marx, "The Communist Manifesto," in *Essential Writings of Karl Marx*, 173.

own sake, distracting the party from upholding its original creed of being the vanguard of a real proletarian revolution. Factionalism had drained the energy and attention required for the party to demonstrate a full-fledged commitment to professionalism and theoretical orthodoxy.

3. Conclusion

May 1946 was a crisis-ridden month for the CCP. On one hand, moderates such as Paek Nam-un sharply criticized the CCP as nothing more than Pak Hŏn-yŏng's private instrument to amass unchallenged power because the party did not conceive of learned policies which directly addressed Korea's immediate need to overcome its tragic history under Japanese colonial rule. Paek criticized that Pak's obsession with amassing personal power not only led the party astray from addressing, let alone solve this urgent problem, but also did not justify or guarantee the success of a genuine Communist revolution. Paek warned that if the party did not prioritize solving the problem, it would be isolated from much needed guidance which could cost dearly as the party's total ruin.

It did not take long for Paek's critique to become a prophecy. The negotiations in Moscow produced no remarkable results as the Americans and Soviets continued to bitterly disagree about the essence of Democracy, especially on the issue of guaranteeing freedom of the press and on the issue of Korean representation in future sessions of the conference. The stalemate meant that the CCP could not decide from whom it should receive authorization for the party's future operations, since the north Koreans did not possess sufficient knowledge of south Korea to guarantee the accuracy of the operations, and because the Soviets would be preoccupied with the Americans in an indefinitely long diplomatic tug-of-war. Moreover, as south Korea increasingly became a restless hotbed for anti-American activism, the American military government and Korean police were intent on arresting anyone suspected of stirring insurrection or sedition.

Although Pak Hŏn-yŏng pretended to maintain a calm composure amidst the turmoil by

strongly encouraging all CCP members to endorse and support north Korea's land reforms, his own confidence in his leadership was pushed to a ledge because the unexpected outbreak of the minting scandal produced three undesirable outcomes for the CCP. First, the Korean police's raid in the printing stations effectively cut off the party's financial supply line. With the main seat of government and central financial institutions mostly in the hands of Syngman Rhee and his allies, the CCP had to resort to counterfeiting to continue financing its resistance against the Right. However, the CCP believed that this risk was still worth incurring not solely for its own financial sustainability but because it hoped to disrupt the natural cycle of capital in the south Korean market and eventually bring its economy's collapse. In short, when the Korean police finally uncovered the minting scandal and arrested principal CCP members, it did not only cut the party's financial lifeline but also saved the south Korean economy from a potentially severe recession.

Second, the American military government's shutdown of most major Left-wing presses in southern Korea not only demonstrated to the southern Left that the Right was willing to sacrifice freedom of expression if it should jeopardize political security, but also, more importantly, blocked the CCP's access to information about the global Socialist and Communist movements. As it had been argued earlier, with the Soviets busy bickering with the Americans and the north Koreans not making any significant comments on Pak's activities, Pak needed a yardstick to compare his performance with an international standard. The shutdown of Left-wing newspapers not only prohibited Pak from making the comparison but also ensured that the CCP would forever be in a shadow of uncertainty whose weight the party would never be able to shoulder off until the outbreak of the Korean War.

Finally, the May counterfeiting scandal confirmed the folly of Pak's shallow attempt to erect an imitational Communist party which had no theoretical depth and only had the personality cult to give the CCP an undeserved veneer as a pseudo-Communist organization.

Pak's ambition to become an unquestioned leader had overshadowed his commitment to Communism such that Yŏ Un-hyŏng would permanently exit from the party's headquarters. Pak's shift in concentration from building a genuine Communist party to amassing dictatorial party had only clearly proven that any vestige of the CCP's resolve to complete a "more perfect Communist revolution" was completely gone and non-existent. In this sense, the minting scandal served as a warning to Pak about his avarice for power, an excess of which would eventually kill his passion to realizing Communist supremacy in the Korean peninsula.

The counterfeiting scandal also proved that time would not always allow Pak to have everything fall under his sway, forcing him to repent for his sins by confronting two arduous challenges. Pak would have to engage in two decisive battles with Yŏ before P'yŏng-yang ultimately agreed with Pak's message and recognized Pak as its ultimate partner—a war between the Five, Eight, and Seven Principles and the fateful September Lobby. Unfortunately, Yŏ would not have time to fully enjoy watching Pak suffer through the punishment, for instead of succumbing to the pressure, Pak would emerge victorious in the September Lobby. Ironically, it would be Yŏ who would fall victim to Pak's successful ploy of distancing Yŏ from Kim Il-sung through his anti-Yŏ tirade in P'yŏngyang. The twilight of "Unitary Socialism" was ominously and clearly imminent.

The next two chapters will show that would only take four months before Yo would get two major signals: The southern Right's internal debate about the need for a separate southern government, the war of principles between Pak, the southern Right, and Yŏ, and finally, the translation of the war of principles into a physical war of blood and mayhem through the outbreak of the September and October labor strikes.

Chapter 10

The Storm Lulls Off, Then Redoubles: A War of Principles, the Defeat of the Seven Principles, and an Emerging Twilight of "Unitary Socialism"

"Along the sea-wall, a steady sloshing of the swell,
The waves not yet high, but even,
Coming closer and closer upon each other;
A fine fume of rain driving in from the sea,
Riddling the sand, like a wide spray of buckshot,
The wind from the sea and the wind from the mountain contending,
Flicking the foam from the whitecaps straight upward into the darkness.
The storm lulls off, then redoubles,
Bending the trees half-way down to the ground,
Shaking loose the last wizened oranges in the orchard,
Flattening the limber carnations.
...
A spider eases himself down from a swaying light-bulb,
Running over the coverlet, down under the iron bedstead.
The bulb goes on and off, weakly.
Water roars into the cistern.."
Theodore Rhoetke, "The Storm"⁷⁵³

1. The Stirrings of an Idea for a Separate Southern Government and a War of Principles Between Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Yŏ Un-hyŏng

In mid-July, Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Yŏ Un-hyŏng heard a news that was unbearably frustrating as the summer heat—the hottest and the most difficult summer that Koreans had ever experienced in forty years, with many dying in hunger and succumbing to a peninsula-wide cholera outbreak.⁷⁵⁴ The forty-second round of negotiations between the Americans and Soviets on whether to adopt a multi-party Democracy which would incorporate all parties in Korea or one which would exclude pro-Japanese collaborators had ended without reaching any lucid conclusion.⁷⁵⁵ Both had been playing an illusionary poker game, unwilling to reveal their cards, only engaging in bluffing as they stubbornly refused to cede the ultimate authority to each other on defining "representative Democracy." Meanwhile, Hodge struggled to reason

⁷⁵³ Theodore Rhoetke, "The Storm," in Edward Hirsch ed., *Theodore Rhoetke: Selected Poems* (New York: Library of America, 2005), 113-114.

⁷⁵⁴ Ch'a Nam-hee, *Chŏhangkwa Sunŏngŭi Yŏksachŏngch'ihak: Nongŏpkwa Mikunchŏngki Nongŏp Chŏngchaek kwa Nongmin (A Historical Political Science of Resistance and Passivity: The American Military Government's Agricultural Policy and the Peasant in Korea)* (Seoul, south Korea: Ehwa Women's University Press, 1997), 139.

⁷⁵⁵ "Secret Priority Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State, July 14, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6*, 700-701.

with the Soviet delegation, but they ignored his requests to resume negotiations.⁷⁵⁶ Unable to reach a clear consensus on the issue, the trusteeship negotiations were postponed until next July.⁷⁵⁷ The negotiations' postponement was a major warning sign for the party because it did not take long to translate into the Americans' unwillingness to stop their oppression of the Left, whose intensity, as Pak put it, "surpassed that of medieval witch-hunts."⁷⁵⁸

Yet, as philosopher Hannah Arendt (1973) argues, violence is inherently an instrument needing guidance in justifying the end it pursues. This dependence clearly proves that violence alone does not represent the essence of anything, and the ongoing hunt for Leftists reflected Arendt's point.⁷⁵⁹ The American military government faced a dilemma. On one hand, despite the risk that using violence against Communists could generate a dangerous Arendtian nihilism toward violence, the Americans could not erase its fear that Communists were still lurking in southern Korea and that the Soviets were sending spies to encourage the Communists. On the other hand, the American military government and supportive Provisional Government officials such as Kim Ku did not want to give any impression that either the Americans or the Rightists would use this fear to accelerate the ideological polarization of the Korean peninsula.

Indeed, as Hodge promised in an official announcement to the Korean public, he "still had faith that Mr. Lyuh [sic] and his allies would diligently cooperate with other Korean leaders under the spirit of the Four Freedoms."⁷⁶⁰ Given a "greatly relieving political environment" in which "Koreans are increasingly becoming interested in political parties and debate," Hodge

⁷⁵⁶ "Letter from John R. Hodge to I. M. Chistiakov," May 9, 1946, *U.S.-U.S.S.R. Joint Commission Report of the United States Delegation*, 62, RG 554, Box 294; "Letter from John R. Hodge to I. M. Chistiakov," June 15, 1946. *Report of the United States Delegation*, 63, RG 554, Box 294.

⁷⁵⁷ "Letter from John R. Hodge to I.M. Chistiakov," July 12, 1946. *Report of the United States Delegation*, 64, RG 554, Box 294.

⁷⁵⁸ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 80-81.

⁷⁵⁹ Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harvest Books, 1973), 51.

⁷⁶⁰ "Chwa-u Hapchak Ch'uchinwiwŏnhoeüi e kwanhan Hodge Chungchangüi Sŏngmyŏng," (Lieutenant Hodge's Announcement on the Formation of the Committee for the Left-Right Alliance's Meeting) June 30, 1946. *IDFTYSL*, 59.

announced that "he had a firm conviction in Mr. Lyuh [sic]'s ability to work with moderates" to alleviate the Korean public's "frustration with incessant factionalism."⁷⁶¹ Hodge's confidence stemmed from the fact that Kim Ku had echoed a similar message to the Korean people in early June, reminding them that there was "no inkling of any political prejudice" in his heart, that "all ideological notions of Left, Right, traitor, and patriot were labels of questionable value."⁷⁶² In other words, on the surface, both men were rhetorically urging for an immediate ideological reconciliation to quickly reach an agreeable consensus on a united government devoid of any ideological disagreements.

While Hodge was correct in understanding the Four Freedoms to be democratic, he had mistakenly omitted the necessity of first educating Koreans about Democratic procedures and concentrated too much on emphasizing democracy's expedient value as a bulwark against Communism. Without bothering to consider the fact that south Korea had yet to implement a Democratic election or understand the necessity of having a separation of powers, Hodge substituted anti-Communism for democracy as though the "Four Freedoms" already had the status of being a metonym for democracy. Hodge forgot that the power of political rhetoric can only stem from a well-prepared political reality; the converse can never hold. Hodge made a mistake of relying solely on the speech's internationalist spirit without paying sufficient attention to south Korea's local context of having yet to fully institutionalize Democracy. Geopolitical preparedness was more urgent for Hodge than institutional preparedness; the urgency of preventing the spread of Communism might have convinced Hodge that the rhetorical aspects of the Four Freedoms were not very important. Instead, he believed in the sincerity of the Freedoms' singular commitment to making the world safe for democracy, regardless of whether it had to be democracy for itself or be an anti-Communitic

⁷⁶¹ "Lieutenant-General Hodge's Special Announcement on the Meeting to Promote the Left-Right Alliance," June 30, 1946. *IDFTYSL*, 59.

⁷⁶² Kim Ku, "Kukmin e Koham," (A Plea to the People) June 4, 1946. *IDFTYSL*, 60.

democracy that had to defeat Communism.

Similarly, Kim Ku's idea of "unification" was more closely aligned with Syngman Rhee's idea of "pragmatic integration"—a belief that organizing the state was far more important than addressing nationalist sentiments because independence was, in both men's minds, the ability to establish an independent and sovereign government. This shared sentiment explains why Kim Ku called for the "unity of all people," including "pro-Japanese collaborators, Marxists, Socialists, and Communists" because Kim believed that "ideological affinity" was a nihilistic concept. Hence, he questioned, "what is the Left and the Right? Why do they matter, for as long as Koreans are of one mind and one soul, yearning for complete independence, the ultimate goal is for all Koreans to construct a beautiful country."⁷⁶³ In short, Kim Ku was arguing that national reconstruction was an ideal more noble and ethically superior to the question of whether one was a Communist or not.

However, despite the flowery language and seemingly heartfelt rhetoric, Kim's view was not original or supportive of "Unitary Socialism," but an echo of Syngman Rhee's wish for a separate government in south Korea because Kim, by urging the union of incompatible groups such as pro-Japanese collaborators and Leftists, was no different than Rhee in his consideration of southern Korea's unification as an expedient to consolidate Right-wing dominance. Indeed, in a very short public statement delivered in June, Syngman Rhee had already made it clear that if the United Nations should officially endorse separate elections in south Korea, he would wholeheartedly comply because, with the Moscow Conference in recess for an indefinite period, there was no longer any firm guarantee of political stability unless a government was founded for the proper restoration of order.⁷⁶⁴ In addition, as the

⁷⁶³ Kim Ku, "A Plea to the People," *IDFTYSL*, 60-61.

⁷⁶⁴ "Yi Sŭngman, Namhanmanŭi Tantok Chŏngpu Suripŭi Piryosŏng Sŏnŏn," (Syngman Rhee's Declaration on the Need to Establish a Separate Government in South Korea) (Chŏng-ŭp Declaration) June 3, 1946. *IDFTYSL*, 56.

DPK announced through an official statement, the Right believed that the "fundamental cause for the division of the people was because of the American and Soviet partition of Korea and because the Communists were still desiring the implementation of the trusteeship."⁷⁶⁵ The DPK urged the Leftists to refrain from labeling "thousands of northern refugees as pro-Japanese collaborators" because such an attitude was "inappropriate for a conscientious Korean."⁷⁶⁶

In short, Right-wing leaders were arguing that the implementation of the United Nations' decision was a necessary expedient to ensure a rapid founding of Korea's political stability because it would not only eliminate a power vacuum in south Korea very soon but also, by showing the world that Koreans were capable of holding a Democratic election, demonstrate that Korea's partition was a foreign-made tragedy. These two reasons explained why the U.N.'s decision was the "most appropriate, for it is the only path to responding clearly and swiftly to global public opinion."⁷⁶⁷ To that end, compliance with "all instructions, including those from the military of Communist China was encouraged," although as a fervent anti-Communist, Rhee could never trust any Communist, Korean or foreign.⁷⁶⁸

Yet, for most DPK members, a separate election was also necessary to whitewash the Rightists' ominous history of collaboration with the Japanese. Although the DPK was faulting the Leftists for their supposed logical error of engaging in unfounded generalization, the DPK was also redressing the limit of that generalization—the existence of specific exceptions—to its own advantage. By appealing to the fact that the Rightists' most trusted candidate was not

⁷⁶⁵ Hanmintang (Democratic Party of Korea), "Chwaik Kyeyölli Namchosön Tantok Chöngpu Suripsöl Pinan e Panpak Söngmyöng," (Statement of Rebuttal against the Leftist Critique on the Idea of a Separate Southern Government) *Chosön Ilpo*, June 8, 1946. *TRKAHD, Vol. 2.*

⁷⁶⁶ Democratic Party of Korea, "Statement of Rebuttal against the Leftist Critique on the Idea of a Separate Southern Government," *Chosön Ilpo*, June 8, 1946. *TRKAHD, Vol. 2.*

⁷⁶⁷ "Syngman Rhee's Declaration on the Need to Establish a Separate Government in Southern Korea," June 3, 1946. *IDFTYSL*, 56.

⁷⁶⁸ "Syngman Rhee's Declaration on the Need to Establish a Separate Government in Southern Korea," June 3, 1946. *IDFTYSL*, 56.

a pro-Japanese collaborator, the Rightists hoped to use Rhee's obsession with perfection as a tool to encourage the Korean public to forget the DPK's tarnished image as an apologist for imperialism and replace it with a more pristine image as a bastion of Democracy. Rhee's speech, in appealing for this replacement, had exposed the most critically vulnerable aspect of his personality—the inability to trust anyone, even himself. His support for separate elections was not just in accordance with anti-Communism but more specifically in tandem with Rhee's two perfectionist assumptions about the term "separate." On one hand, it signified his wish to perfectly exclude all centrist politicians such as Yŏ Un-hyŏng because Rhee believed that they had merely derailed from the Rightists and consequently, on the other hand, the derailment became a rationale for Rhee to argue that the DPK was the sole and perfect legitimate representative of the people because it alone would be the rightful representative of Democracy. These two definitions of "separate" coexisted because Rhee could not accept the possibility that anyone could disagree with him.

Furthermore, while Rhee was not senile, he was always suspicious not only about his political enemies but also his closest aides, lest the latter would garner too much popularity and try to replace him as President and render themselves intelligible from the former.⁷⁶⁹ Such a personality explains why Rhee considered holding separate elections as a necessary measure to extend his power by planting "little Rhees" as his aides and granting ministerial jobs to his closest supporters within the DPK, but never allowing them to mistake these rewards as chances for those supporters to become potential rivals for power. Even An Chae-hong, a moderate politician with close ties to the DPK, offered the following caricature of Rhee:

⁷⁶⁹ Horace Allen, *Korea and Syngman Rhee* (Seoul, south Korea: Communal Media Publishing, 1961), 258. Police Commissioner Chang T'aek-sang even criticized that Rhee had "no concept of a Minister or Secretary" which made his regime "worse than a monarchy, which does restrict a libertine exercise of authority." Chang T'aek-sang's quote from "T'uchaengŭl wihan Uriŭi Sŏnŏn," (Our Manifesto for a Struggle) *Sin T'aeyang (New Sun) (Magazine)*, May 1957, 49.

"While there is no doubt that Rhee was a great senior patriot, he harbored a natural penchant to become an autocrat or a dictator, producing an awkwardness and inability to foster mutual communication; he had an unmistakable and a disturbing degree of partiality in determining trustworthiness in people and tarnished the morally upright and just with seemingly endless slurs and slander. He often harbored multiple emotions while executing a single task, and excluded people for whom he had the deepest scorn and hatred, but included all sorts of private reasons for predilection toward certain forms of what he deemed as a "likeable" countenance. Finally, he was fond of delusions, most notably of the mistaken belief that if the people should become rambunctious and rowdy, it was a sign that the public was faithfully following him."⁷⁷⁰

The idea of holding separate elections was an ideal outcome that some American State Department officials who wanted a "reasonable and respectable government" which was "democratic, friendly to the U.S., and not dependent on Korea's major neighbors" desired since late 1945.⁷⁷¹ They understood that Korea had long been a "distinct nation with high living standards judged by Asiatic and Middle Eastern standards," and that Koreans would not welcome "foreign tutelage to attain an alien standard of nationhood."⁷⁷² To return Korean sovereignty under Korean control however, the State Department wanted Kim Ku and the DPK to form a "governing commission within the military government" such that the American military government would still be the de facto head of the Korean government with significant veto power and the right to select the head of a south Korean state.⁷⁷³ In short, the Americans desired to practice a containment policy against potential Soviet expansion which also paid sufficient attention to Koreans' nationalist desire to have an independent national government.

Moreover, the American military government understood that an independent form of Korean government was ideal and possible because although the traditional monarchical system was "feudal and corrupt," the system was still "best disposed toward foreign interests

⁷⁷⁰ An Chae-hong, "Minchok, Kukka, kŭriko Taet'ongryŏng," (The People, the State, and the President) in An Chae-hong Sŏnchip Kanhaeng Wiwŏnhoe (The Committee for the Publication of the Writings of An Chae-hong) ed., *Minse An Chae-hong Sŏnchip (The Selected Writings of An Chae-hong)*, Vol. 2 (Seoul, south Korea: Knowledge Industry Publishing, 1999), 286-287. See also Cho Han-sŏng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 197.

⁷⁷¹ "Memorandum from Assistant Secretary of State McCloy to Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson," November 13, 1945, *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1123; Colonel Bonesteel, Memorandum of Conversation Written for General Lincoln, December 4, 1945 in War Department, RG 165: Army Staff, Plans and Operations Division, ABC Decimal File, Box No. 31, Section 17-A, quoted in Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 186.

⁷⁷² "Telegram from the Acting Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon) to the Secretary of State," November 20, 1945, *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1131.

⁷⁷³ "Telegram from the Acting Political Adviser (Langdon) in Korea to the Secretary of State," November 20, 1945, *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1132.

and their protection." Hence, the American military government had to make every effort to establish a south Korean government which inherited and evolved from this tradition to ensure that the Koreans could have a sense of historical continuity in terms of governance while also securing an American presence in the peninsula with respect to continuing such a tradition.⁷⁷⁴ When a new Korean government also acquires the full capacity to defend itself through the organization and training of its own military and navy, the American military government was confident that the establishment of a south Korean government would be an ideal solution to curb the growing polarization in the peninsula. The solution would not only literally represent a balance between Korean nationalism and the American internationalist aim of curbing the growth of Soviet influence in the peninsula, but also pay respect to the deep and long tradition of ethnic homogeneity which had been an immense source of pride for Koreans on both sides of the 38th Parallel.⁷⁷⁵

The establishment of a separate south Korean government was also favorable for Rhee because it was a simple but an effective expedient with which he could engage in clientele politics and concentrate power for himself through a makeshift democracy which only reflected the nature of electoral procedures but not his penchant for favoritism. The elections were also a convenient method to hide his distaste for populism and direct communication with anyone, while presenting himself as an exceptionally moral man who had legitimately earned the trust of the people, thereby concealing his ambition to keep power only for himself and his desire to keep his rivals away from the reins of power as long as possible. Most importantly, his election to the south Korean presidency could conceal the fact that while he was very comfortable with the idea of engaging in factionalism, he could feign innocence and pretend that he was a deeply principled man who earnestly desired an impartial and fair

⁷⁷⁴ "Telegram from the Acting Political Adviser (Langdon) in Korea to the Secretary of State," November 20, 1945, *FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6*, 1132.

⁷⁷⁵ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 186.

observation of Democracy as an international norm.

Rhee conceived of a stable government for south Korea as necessary not because he sincerely cared to find a definite solution to unification, but because that measure was useful for displaying courtesy to the international standard of one government for one people. Rhee was also blatantly stating his view that ideological purity had a higher priority over national unity, and that ideological solidarity, rather than nationalism, must be enforced if international law demanded it to be standard practice. Such a view would later prove to be an omen for Rhee's virulent anti-Communism, or more precisely, anti-Leftism, whose severe intensity would later be manifest through the imposition of martial law and enactment of the National Security Law after the outbreak of the Yŏ-su and Sun-ch'ŏn Rebellion in October 1948—a legacy which still haunts south Korea.⁷⁷⁶ Furthermore, the Rightists were looking to the Americans as a scapegoat to assign the responsibility of the division and using the appeal of "the northerners are our brethren" rhetoric as an effort to demonstrate that anti-Communism was just as ethno-nationalistic as Korean Communism, thereby suggesting that the two ideologies were equals when it came to addressing the problem of nationalist credentials.⁷⁷⁷

Thus, by the summer of 1946, he already had some inkling of an idea about how he would handle the imminent storm of ideological extremism that would characterize the Cold War. Rather than smother the tempest into a gentle breeze, he planned to augment the tempest's intensity by placing national unity below the adherence of international law. Likewise, while Kim Ku's speech cannot be said to exactly reflect this sentiment verbatim, it is also difficult to argue that Kim's view of the Left was in any way radically different from that of Rhee. In fact, it was nearly similar because Kim's speech revealed how unity would emerge from the

⁷⁷⁶ *Korea Chungang Daily*, "Report Shows Extent of Plan for Martial Law," July 21-22, 2018, 1 and "Ex-Defense Minister Ordered Martial Law Plan," July 26, 2018, 1-2.

⁷⁷⁷ Democratic Party of Korea, "Statement of Rebuttal against the Leftist Critique on the Idea of a Separate Southern Government," *Chosŏn Ilpo*, June 8, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 2.

established fact that Leftists were already different, and their difference was an obstacle to overcome rather than accept or incorporate.

Yet, Rhee and the DPK, unlike Kim Ku, were slightly opportunistic. They were supporting the founding of a separate government to the extent of ironically betraying their ideal of the anti-Communist and conscientious Korean, dropping their pro-American stance and blurring the distinction between north and south Korean citizens for this particular occasion even though they were usually deeply wed to such a distinction when addressing the problem of how to approach the north Korean state. It was such duplicity which frustrated Kim Ku such that he would renounce all cooperative ties with Syngman Rhee and the DPK, citing "unavoidable differences" about unification and Democracy, which could "stir up trouble" and get Kim unnecessarily involved in Rhee's "dirty politics."⁷⁷⁸ The DPK's lack of a clear and steadfast commitment to a solid ideology and a weak resolve to prioritize Korean unification over ideological proclivities alienated even its once most loyal ally such that Kim's refusal to collaborate with Rhee would leave a permanent fracture within the Right.

Nevertheless, the difference just mentioned is only a difference of degree, not of kind. From a rhetorical standpoint, the speech seems highly reminiscent of Yŏ Un-hyŏng's "Unitary Socialism" because of its rejection of ideological division and schism. However, Kim's sense of integration was contradictory because of important issues which he deliberately did not address. For example, there was no explanation for why even pro-Japanese collaborators must be considered as comrades of the Marxists, when Kim must have surely known that the latter had spent all their lives fighting against the former. Furthermore, Kim did not explain why he was so suddenly forgiving and calm to the pro-Japanese collaborators when, throughout much of the 1920s and 1930s, he was the leader of the Society of Righteous Fervor, directing the

⁷⁷⁸ "Record of Conversation between Kim Ku and Chinese Nationalist Minister Liu Yuwan," July 11, 1948. History and Public Policy Digital Archive Program and the Syngman Rhee Institute (Seoul, south Korea). <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119630>

assassination of important governor-generals and military leaders in Japan's Army and Navy.⁷⁷⁹

Most importantly, Kim's speech did not address how unification going to be achieved and what Kim's role would be to assure that governmental power would be satisfactorily proportioned among these diverse groups who had opposing views and interests. These unaddressed questions in this speech reveal Kim's ambiguous stance in siding with Rhee's vision of pardoning pro-Japanese collaborators for the sake of bureaucratic efficiency. It also, as historian Bruce Cumings rightly criticizes, reveals Kim's propensity for opportunism and capriciousness. If Kim was a genuine non-ideologue who really fathomed about the deep meaning of political unity, he would not have, under his conscience of serving as the leader of a major patriotic society, ignored Leftist sentiments. Yet, here he was, in this speech, proposing unity along the lines which moderate Leftists like Yō had seen through Kim's dishonesty and opportunistic nature—Korea's greatest nationalist leader who was also a supporter of dividing a once-united nation's government for the sake of preserving Right-wing supremacy.⁷⁸⁰

With the advent of an intensified Left-Right conflict, the speech is undeniable evidence of how much this secretive aspect of Kim's character had been so self-consciously revealed. Kim would later cooperate with Hodge in hunting down Communists and Socialists by condoning or supporting extreme Right-wing groups such as the KDYL and the White Clothes' Society.⁷⁸¹ In short, Kim's chief weakness was that although he was committed to not cooperating with Syngman Rhee after Rhee's announcement on the establishment of a separate government, Kim was ambivalent about being unable to decide where his allegiance

⁷⁷⁹ Kim Sam-ung, *Paekpōm Kim Ku P'yōngchōn (Paekpom Kim Ku: A Biography)* (Seoul, south Korea: Sitaeŭi Ch'ang Ch'ulp'ansa (The Window of Our Age Publishing Company), 2014), chapter 8.

⁷⁸⁰ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 2*, 497.

⁷⁸¹ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 2*, 200-201.

clearly lay as he wavered between his primary identity as a nationalist and his alter ego as an anti-Communist.

Indeed, "Democracy" may not always be Democratic if it is too responsive to the external political conditions of which it also is a part. As economist Frederick Hayek (1944) correctly argued, Democratic control prevents an arbitrary exercise of power, but Democracy itself, insofar as it is liable to arbitrary redefinition, does not guarantee it. More specifically, if "Democracy" merely becomes a label of an ideology rivaling or opposing another ideology, Democracy may *substantively* not be so Democratic since it will concentrate on the absence of totalitarianism as its main advantage to merely explain why it is better than another ideology.⁷⁸² Whatever Hodge's motives were for invoking the Four Freedoms, the urgency of pushing forward an anti-Communist agenda was clearly imprinted within the minds of most pro-Hodge officials in the American military government.

Even though Kim Ku and Yŏ Un-hyŏng agreed to officially endorse the Left-Right alliance in early July in respect for "mutual peace and the need to accumulate all sources of national prowess to achieve political unity and autonomy and for self-determination as promised by the Cairo Declaration," the Americans were still deeply distrustful about the efficacy and influence of the agreement, especially since Syngman Rhee was not present at the meeting to celebrate the alliance.⁷⁸³ Realizing that they needed an ideologically neutral mediator to permanently end the Left-Right conflict while also maintaining Rightist supremacy, Americans changed their previously negative view of Yŏ and believed that drawing the charismatic orator to their side would definitively fulfill both of the desired objectives.⁷⁸⁴

Therefore, a desperate but resolute Hodge called Yŏ many times to the military

⁷⁸² Frederick A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 71.

⁷⁸³ "Chwa-u Hapchak Wiwŏnhoeŭi Kongsik Taep'yoka Sŏnch'ultoem," (Official Representative of the Left-Right Alliance is Chosen) July 5, 1946, in Chŏng Si-u ed., *The Left-Right Alliance and Independence* (Seoul, south Korea: Kyŏngsŏngsamŭi Publishing, 1946), 237.

⁷⁸⁴ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 156.

government's headquarters convert him into a Rightist. Unfortunately for Hodge, his final effort at reconciliation on July 17 through a meeting between Yŏ and General Dwight E. Beach disappointingly produced empty promises of unification without any concrete details. The Americans displayed frustration and impatience while lecturing to Yŏ that the American Military Government was not very lenient toward failed negotiations, and that Yŏ had to make every effort to turn Pak into a pro-Rightist politician. The American officials' icy eyes seemed to monitor Yŏ's every gesture and word as though Yŏ was more of a prisoner under custody than a negotiator. As a report later explained, the lukewarm response given that night clearly reflected the Americans' deep suspicion that Yŏ "simply lacked moral courage or was too deeply involved with the Communists."⁷⁸⁵

The statement reveals that the Americans had no idea what to do about Yŏ because they themselves were reflecting their *own* illness of "lacking moral courage" to admit that Americans were also responsible for creating the diametric divide between Rightist and Leftist, ally and foe. In other words, the Americans believed that "Unitary Socialism" was too utopian. It, as Karl Mannheim would explain, seemed incapable of correctly diagnosing the existing structure of Korean society. It was only "a direction of action, turning its back to everything that could shake its belief in changing things or paralyze its desire for change."⁷⁸⁶ Rather than concretely suggesting a revision or an additional reform to any existing political system, Yŏ's sense of a "middle" seemed to be more interested in destroying the Manichean world order which the Americans themselves constructed in Korea and which became the mainstay of American-Rightist hegemony in southern Korea.⁷⁸⁷

Thus, it was unsurprising that American officials perceived "Unitary Socialism" as a

⁷⁸⁵ "The Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon) to the Secretary of State," August, 2, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 723.

⁷⁸⁶ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 36.

⁷⁸⁷ "24th Corps G-2 Summary, October 1946." Adapted from Lee and Scalapino, *A History of the Korean Communist Movement*, Vol. 2, 366.

nebulous yet formidable ally of Communism, or in a more extreme sense, a carbon copy of Communism. The American military government was a victim of anti-Communism, the very disease it had spread, because the statement implies that to have moral courage is to not be involved with Communism. This equation not only represented the American military government's refusal to acknowledge the moral courage of uniting the people on non-ideological grounds but also a refusal to abandon their Manichean mentality of creating an enemy out of Communism.

2. An Assassination Attempt and the Announcement of the Five Principles

Disappointed that the Americans merely confirmed that relations had crossed a river of no return, Yō walked out of the military government's headquarters, tired and frustrated. Despite the warm night, he felt cold and abandoned. He was walking to meet an acquaintance to deliver news about the meeting's outcome. He slouched through the muddy road, his feet feeling as though they were two anvils. Suddenly, several hooded men jumped out from nowhere, blind-folded his eyes, and tied his legs together. The men beat Yō nearly to death and shoved him down a cragged hill. He was later informed that one of the men had left a white identification card which read "KDYL Chairman Kim Tu-han" while fleeing from the scene.⁷⁸⁸ Although the incident quickly became, as one British observer put it, a "manna for the Korean press" that invited suspicions ranging from a "fabrication" to the more accurate explanation of an "arranged kidnapping by dissident Leftists who wished to embarrass the

⁷⁸⁸ Born as the only son of independence fighter and anarchist Kim Chwa-Chin (1889-1930), Kim Tu-han (1918-1972) was a self-proclaimed "independence fighter on the streets" as a gang-leader fighting against Japanese *yakuza* in south Korea. A fervent and banefully ignorant Right-wing extremist, Kim was chairman of the extreme Rightist Korean Democratic Youth League, which ferociously hunted down Leftists on behalf of Syngman Rhee. He was briefly a protégé of Yōm Tong-Chin and cooperated with the White Clothes Society. It is rumored that Kim was also involved in the assassination of Song Chin-u. On the activities of the Right-wing extremist terrorist organization White Clothes Society, see Pak Myōng-lim, *Hankuk Chōnchaengūi Palpalkwa Kiwōn (The Outbreak and Origins of the Korean War)*, Vol. 2 (Seoul, south Korea: Na-nam Publishing, 1996), 157; *T'erentii F. St'ikopūi Ilki (Diary of Terentii F. Shtykov)* (Kwachōn, south Korea: National Institute of Korean History, 2004), 5 and Sim Chi-yōn ed., *Song Namhōn Hoekorok (Memoirs of Song Nam-hōn)* (Seoul, south Korea: Han-ul Publishing, 2000), 21.

police and sow discord among the Left and Right," the assassination attempt did not break Yŏ and Paek Nam-un's resolve to proceed with the Left-Right alliance.⁷⁸⁹

Nevertheless, the attempt did deepen Yŏ's distrust of both the DPK and Pak Hŏn-yŏng, making him wonder whether the DPK was "seriously committed to the alliance or deceiving the public by forcing people to play a guessing game about its genuine intent."⁷⁹⁰ Pak was equally suspicious in Yŏ's eyes because the incident validated Tennessee Williams's adage that distrust is the only effective weapon against potential betrayal. Yŏ could believe nothing and trust no one. Pak's henchmen or a Rightist might be lurking around every street corner to claim his life at any time. Yŏ immediately realized how vulnerable his position was compared to that in January and how few choices he had left. Returning to the CCP under Pak's leadership would be dishonorable, since it would be a definite sign that Yŏ had forfeited his ambition and succumbed to Leftists. Should that happen, he would be subject to more suspicion from the Americans who no longer trusted him. Yŏ became very uneasy about entering People's Party headquarters. Too many furtive glances at his desk and the increasing number of requests to be dismissed early soon forced Yŏ to grow suspicious of his closest friend as well. The Pak in Yŏ's imagination had proven hallucinatory and disappeared. Pak was now a far more strategically cunning man; he had already planted so many spies in Yŏ's office, watching Yŏ's every move and hearing every word from his lips. Many workers came to Yŏ's desk and asked for permission to leave the office early. Most said that they were ill or had family emergencies, but the excuses all became too much of a routine to be plausible. He even saw some workers head toward Pak's house, but did not dare ask his employees where they were going. Pak was just too powerful and meticulous; after spies, Pak could send

⁷⁸⁹ [F 14379/199/23] J. W. Kermode, "Monthly Report on Korea for July 1946," October 2, 1946. Jarman ed., *Korea: Political and Economic Reports, Vol. 10*, 72.

⁷⁹⁰ "Inmintangŭi Yŏ Un-hyŏngkwa Sinmintangŭi Paek Nam-un, Chwa-u Hapchak e Maechinhal kŏtsira Kyŏlŭi," (Yŏ Un-hyŏng of the People's Party and Paek Nam-un of the New Citizens' Party Vow to Rentlessly Pursue the Left-Right Alliance) *Seoul Sinmun*, July 21, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 2*.

assassins, lest Yŏ found out the truth.

Yŏ was in a major dilemma. As a last resort, he could continue leading the fledgling People's Party, but there was no telling when Pak might have planted spies. If so, the party would be nothing more than the CCP's puppet and a tool for Pak's surveillance. However, abandoning the party leadership was also undesirable, because it would leave Yŏ with no party and reduce him to a politically homeless man. That would be committing political suicide and unexpectedly doing Pak a favor, because once the last independently functioning Leftist party was gone, Pak's Communization of the entire southern Left would only be a matter of time. Thus, July was a frustrating month for Yŏ, who was sidelined and forced to sit on a cushion full of needles.⁷⁹¹

Desperate to ensure that he will not be politically absorbed by Pak and to have a speck of hope to salvage "Unitary Socialism," Yŏ reached out to Paek Nam-un once again, planning to visit the CCP headquarters with Paek to coax Pak into rescinding his plan of turning the Leftist coalition into a Communist-controlled one-party apparatus. Yŏ trusted Paek because they both shared the belief that the antagonism between the Left and the Right was fundamentally flawed, for all patriotic Koreans regardless of ideological orientation had, like Pak and Yŏ, steadfastly devoted themselves for the liberation of the Korean people.

However, at the back of his mind, Yŏ wished that he did not have to coax Pak at all. Yŏ wanted to believe that Pak still shared this passion, and refused to heed to philosopher V. N. Volosinov's (1973) adage that "any current truth must inevitably sound like the greatest lie."⁷⁹² Although Yŏ was fourteen years senior to Pak, they had spent a long time as friends, even as brothers. It was Yŏ who first introduced Pak to Marxism and Communism; Yŏ had also

⁷⁹¹ A "cushion full of needles" describes a situation in which a person is tormented by the reality of being powerless against an unwanted but definite outcome.

⁷⁹² V. N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), 23.

served as an interlocutor for students Pak had selected to pursue further education in the Soviet Union. In return, Pak always sent top secret information in letters addressed to Yŏ, aiding Yŏ in planning his anti-Japanese operations in China.⁷⁹³ Yŏ even assumed priestly duties during Pak's first marriage, delivering many encouraging words in a sermon to genuinely congratulate Pak, despite Pak's insistence that a Christian blessing was unnecessary. If Pak still had inklings of these memories and treasured their friendship, Yŏ hoped that Pak would easily agree with his creed that realizing a united, non-ideological Korea for Koreans was the most patriotic ideal worth realizing to get out of the maelstrom of the Cold War as soon as possible.⁷⁹⁴

Unfortunately, Yŏ's plan failed before it could even commence; Yŏ was too naive, believing that a long friendship was an insurance for an eternal maintenance of a consistent personality. As philosopher Victoria McGeer (1996) argues, an individual's privileged access to the mind of another person does not guarantee a principled understanding of psychological differences between one mind and another. Unstudied utterances are not disclosures of a mind, but the mind's "updating" process to reflect a totally new personality. What is presumed to be a "normal" or "accustomed" image of an individual within another person's mind can easily change in an instant through the individual's actions which implicitly but clearly demonstrate to the other person that the old image is no longer reliable or even valid.⁷⁹⁵ Far from remaining as an understanding friend, Pak was now a man who embodied Zarathustra's prophecy that great indebtedness does not make people thankful and if a small kindness is not

⁷⁹³ Kim chun-yŏp and Pak Ch'ang-sŏn, *Hankuk Kongsanchu'i Untongsa (A History of the Korean Communist Movement, Vol. 2)* (Seoul, south Korea: Ch'ŏng-kye Research Center, 1989), 356-362.

⁷⁹⁴ For Yŏ's plan and his wish to rekindle his friendship with Pak, see An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 279-285.

⁷⁹⁵ Victoria McGeer, "Is 'Self-Knowledge' an Empirical Problem?: Renegotiating the Space for Philosophical Explanation," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 93, Issue 10 (October, 1996), 514

forgotten, it would become a gnawing worm.⁷⁹⁶

When Pak found out that Yŏ visited P'yŏngyang for the fourth time on July 27, Pak quickly replied in action that he would not calmly tolerate such slander for long. In Yŏ's absence, Pak deliberately announced under Yŏ's name five principles to unite the party. Clearly intending to make sure that no traces of "Unitary Socialism" existed within the party and to strongly assert the party's belief in orthodox Communism, Pak especially emphasized that every Leftist had to "unquestionably support the Moscow decision," that the Rhee Administration release "all political prisoners" all lands must be redistributed equally without charge; all "Fascists, pro-Japanese elements, and counterrevolutionaries must be thoroughly exterminated to bar them eternally from functioning as human beings in daily life"; "all attempts by the American military government to establish a legislating body had to be opposed, since it was highly desirable that governmental authority be completely transferred to the People's government."⁷⁹⁷ Pak inserted a final condition demanding that "none of the policies, agreements, or referenda decided by the party's headquarters be subject to any opposition or reconsideration, so as to affirm the party's sacrosanct authority as the highest governing body of the southern Left."⁷⁹⁸ The Five Principles embodied all the core demands of the CCP's anti-Rightist tirade since September, 1945—a fully committed support of the Moscow Decision, the exclusion of pro-Japanese collaborators, Fascists, including Syngman Rhee from all governmental posts in southern Korea, and no interference of any kind from the American military government until the consolidation of the south under Communist rule, and a complete acknowledgement of the party's exceptional and unchallengeable authority to lead the Left however it wished.

⁷⁹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 68.

⁷⁹⁷ "G-2 Weekly Summary No. 46," July 21-July 28, 1946, adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 6.

⁷⁹⁸ "G-2 Weekly Summary No. 46," July 21-July 28, 1946, adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 6. For the quotes, see Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 158. On the incident in July, see *RSR*, 192.

The Five Principles aroused much controversy throughout Korea because they also confirmed the ever increasing distance between the Left and the Right. Pak had displayed his militaristic Communism outright, and thereby announced that the CCP's chief objective was the total subjugation of both the Left and the Right under his own and P'yŏng-yang's authority. The Americans especially furiously blasted Pak's tactics of clandestinely threatening rivals and coercing them to agree only on his terms. The American military government criticized that Pak had performed a "blatant act of betrayal," and had "breached the faith of others by unilaterally announcing the Principles without advance notice."⁷⁹⁹ In other words, what was most insidious about the Five Principles was its embodiment of a fiercely independent and radical devotion to orthodox Communism and violence as a means to rapidly realize it in southern Korea.

Most importantly, the Five Principles nullified all efforts to achieve a Left-Right alliance through the sixth principle, for it was effectively urging every Leftist to swear allegiance to the CCP as the only legislative organ for the southern Left, from which it is clear that Pak's main political objective in drafting the Five Principles was to obliterate any possibility for the Left-Right alliance to meaningfully function to achieve a unified coalition. Indeed, when Wŏn Se-hm, a representative of the Left-Right Alliance Commission protested that Pak's act was "illegal," Pak perfidiously retorted that Wŏn had no authority to make such a judgment because Pak himself was not a member of the Commission. In other words, as the American military government accurately put it, Pak could gleefully watch the "unjust and rapid disintegration of the Commission with unapologetic satisfaction," which effectively summarizes the true purpose of the Five Principles—to destroy the last bureaucratic bastion of non-ideological unification so as to make way for an uncompromising and unchallenged

⁷⁹⁹ "G-2 Weekly Report No. 46," July 21-July 28, 1946, adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 6.

independence of the CCP to continue pursuing its Communist extremism.⁸⁰⁰

The political impact and Pak's intent behind the Five Principles' controversy were such that it aroused a heated debate in south Korea and deep reservation about Pak's reliability in north Korea. According to a survey conducted by the Korean Media Association, the majority of respondents were either ambivalent or outright critical of the CCP's extremist demands, blaming the 38th Parallel for "dividing our blood and lives Left and Right," and urging the "Left and the Right to quickly abandon their masks and their greed for political power."⁸⁰¹ Some extreme Right-wing groups, such as the Southwest Youth Association argued that the Eight Principles had "ceded a lot of the Right's demands while the Left's Five Principles made no effort to remedy the divisive situation and were merely conditions aimed at resisting the Right."⁸⁰² Emboldened by the strong conservative tide, the DPK went so far as to suggest that the "attempt to unify as the SKWP was but a facade to conceal sins from its Communist past."⁸⁰³ The DPK eagerly capitalized on the generally anti-Communist societal ambience; most south Koreans opposed the Five Principles, considering them as "representative evidence revealing the onerous colors of the Left to sell the peninsula over to Communism and add more jeopardy and misery to Koreans' lives."⁸⁰⁴

In short, Pak Hŏn-yŏng's expectation that he could stir up popular resentment against the DPK and increase the CCP's legitimacy proved inaccurate and unfounded, as the south Korean public was largely ambivalent or adamantly opposed to the extremism and

⁸⁰⁰ "G-2 Weekly Report No. 46," July 21-July 28, 1946, adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 6..

⁸⁰¹ Hankukŏnronhyŏphoe (Korean Media Association), "Yŏron Chosa: Uikŭi 8 Wŏnch'ikkwa Chwaikŭi 5 Wŏnch'ikŭl Ottoke Saengkakhasipnikka?" (Public Opinion Poll: What do you Think About the Right's Eight Principles and the Left's Five Principles for the Left-Right Alliance?) *Tonga Ilpo*, August 6, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

⁸⁰² Korean Media Association, "Public Opinion Poll: What do you Think About the Right's Eight Principles and the Left's Five Principles for the Left-Right Alliance?" August 6, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

⁸⁰³ Hanmintang (Democratic Party of Korea), "Chwaik Samtang Haptangkwa Chwa-u Hapchak tŭnge taehan tamhwa Palp'yo," (Statement on the Union of Three Leftist Parties and the Left-Right Alliance) *Tonga Ilpo*, August 10, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

⁸⁰⁴ Korean Media Association, "Public Opinion Poll: What do you Think About the Right's Eight Principles and the Left's Five Principles for the Left-Right Alliance?" *Tonga Ilpo*, August 6, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

inflexibility of the Five Principles, especially with regard to their blatantly pro-Communist design. Pak's miscalculation was borne from his neglect of the fundamental truth that there is no such thing as a genuine uniformity in most public opinion polls, for conducting a poll is in itself a politically motivated attempt to create an insidious propaganda to ensure that there are no opinions critical toward the state. What the public believes as a general consensus can often be the product of public control over media such as radios, movies, or magazines, which is essentially synonymous with the state's control.⁸⁰⁵ The homogenization of identity between the state and the public is essentially a collaborative effort to ensure that disagreement with the majority's viewpoint only gets the right to exist but never to eclipse opinions favorable to the state.⁸⁰⁶

Despite Pak's failure to mobilize south Korean popular sentiment in support of the CCP, the south Korean poll still proved to be significant, for it produced a resounding echo in north Korea, which displayed a rare agreement with the south Korean public's sentiment, for even Kim Il-sung was shocked by what he perceived as "a most shocking sign of refusal to see an inkling of peace in the Korean peninsula."⁸⁰⁷ Kim Il-sung's response was unsurprising, because Pak had not informed or discussed with him about revealing the ambition of Communist supremacy outright. Furthermore, when Kim Il-sung officially founded the Northern Korean Workers' Party in late August, he undoubtedly declared that he had won Yŏ Un-hyŏng's auspices during the process.⁸⁰⁸ In other words, it is possible to infer that Kim had more credibility in Yŏ rather than Pak; it is more likely that Kim had more frequent and extensive contact with Yŏ throughout August. Finally, Kim was expressing alarm at the possibility that Pak's extremist language in announcing the Five Principles could invite the

⁸⁰⁵ Edward L. Bernays, *Crystalizing Public Opinion* (New York: Boni and Liverlight Publishing, 1923;1926; 1927), 69.

⁸⁰⁶ Bernays, *Crystalizing Public Opinion*, 70.

⁸⁰⁷ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 158.

⁸⁰⁸ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 158. See also Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 291.

commencement of a highly unfavorable all-out war against the American military government. Should the Americans choose to cooperate with the Rightists and plan to subvert Communist operations in the south, they might in the near future try to overthrow the northern regime by force. Thus, the Five Principles forced Pak to be in a political limbo, not only increasing the Rightists' animosity toward Pak, but also influencing P'yŏng-yang to have reservations about voicing fervent support for a Communist program, especially when the political climate in the south was increasingly unfavorable for the party. .

However, the Five Principles' real significance turned out to be their creation of what I call a "political butterfly effect."⁸⁰⁹ Kim's shock at Pak's announcement unexpectedly translated into panic for the Rightists and Yŏ, since they were both in danger of losing their political positions. If the Rightists were to really punish "pro-Japanese elements and Fascists," the Rightists would lose critical inflows of financial aid and support from the Korean National Police, since they were dependent on magnates and officials such as Kim Sŏng-su and Chang T'aek-sang. Most critically, the inclusion of the demand for an equal distribution of land irrespective of class background was practically trying to force-feed Communism down everyone's throats, blocking the CCP's ears to opinions from the Center-Right or Center-Left. If the CCP adopted the Five Principles, it would also mean a huge defeat for Yŏ, since a Leftist-dominated government especially under Pak's command would not welcome any ideological solidarity in the name of national reunification. Yŏ Un-hyŏng's desperation was such that he consistently pressured the American military government to "steadfastly and swiftly deal with Pak"—a euphemistic request for an assassination.⁸¹⁰ Yŏ was thereby hinting that the Americans had to choose between the certainty of what could be the Five Principles'

⁸⁰⁹ My thinking was inspired by Edward Lorenz's classic, *The Essence of Chaos* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington, 1994).

⁸¹⁰ "24th Corps G-2 Summary, October, 1946." Adapted from Lee and Scalapino, *The Korean Communist Movement*, Vol. 2, 366.

fatal sabotage of Korea's national unification or the certainty of kindling the hope for unification by eliminating Pak. Unification was far too noble of an ideal for Yŏ that he was willing to sacrifice a life-long friendship for the greater good of letting Koreans live harmoniously as Koreans.

Most devastatingly, Pak was intent on completely committing to his vision of a "perfect Communist revolution" such that he arbitrarily penned a manifesto declaring the formation of a coalition of the Korean People's Party, Paek Nam-un's New Citizens' Party, and the CCP. Although critics within the Left such as the Independent Labor Party urged the CCP to focus on a "purification of the party for and by genuine Communists because the Left-Right alliance was a defunct political option," Pak coldly refused, issuing an icy unrelenting warning to "absolutely repulse all attempts to obstruct the realization of the alliance and vowed to eliminate all suspected counterrevolutionaries."⁸¹¹ In essence, Pak was declaring that a complete rejuvenation through a rapid increment of political power by means of an absorptive union within the Left was more desirable than internal renovation. Strength came in numbers, not through the bland delivery of a nebulous conception of moral rectitude or indoctrination.

Having silenced internal opposition, Pak unabashedly revealed his ambition to facilitate a north-south alliance of Communists by emphasizing that the coalition was an attempt to "consolidate and strengthen the Democratic forces in north Korea."⁸¹² At a time when "reactionary forces are trying to destroy the paths to world peace set by the three-power cooperation of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States, and are attempting to take the world and the human race into a new war," the party was to be a godsend,

⁸¹¹ "Tongnip Nonongtangŭi Yu Rim, Samtang Haptang e taehae Haptangpota Ch'ŏngtang Kangcho," (Yu Rim of the Independent Labor Party Emphasizes Internal Purification Rather than the Three-Party Alliance) *Chosŏn Ilpo*, August 4, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3; "Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Samtang Haptang Munchae e taehae Kichahoekyŏn," (Pak Hŏn-yŏng's Press Conference on the Problem of the Three-Party Alliance," *Seoul Sinmun*, August 9, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

⁸¹² Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "The Coalition of Three Democratic Political Parties in South Korea," August 6, 1946 in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 499.

"championing the struggle for a true Democratic independence."⁸¹³ Pak argued that the only certain method to achieve this goal was to "liquidate remaining vestiges of feudalism" and completely mop up all "dreg collaborative forces of Japanese imperialism."⁸¹⁴ Since the urgency of the political situation required immediate action, the coalition was not merely a product of rhetoric or a "mechanical organization," but "a live organization for practical struggle."⁸¹⁵

The essence of the coalition's practical purpose was manifest, for it would "establish the basis of Korean national unification," "be a great bulwark against all reactionary forces," and finally, "be the vanguard standing at the head of the struggle."⁸¹⁶ These features would become the fundamental base for "a people's political regime by the people, which all our nationals were longing for to make forceful and valiant progress."⁸¹⁷ However, to achieve this goal, Pak urged that "several members in the CCP who had fallen under the spell of Trotskyism and bureaucratic mannerism" were threatening to break the party's internal solidarity.⁸¹⁸

Hence, the Five Principles symbolized Pak Hŏn-yŏng's desire to not only counter the DPK's will to establish a separate anti-Communist southern regime. They also officially announced that the CCP's ultimate goal was to unite with the northern Communists and that insofar as the struggle to achieve this goal would continue, so would the coalition's persistent commitment to political activism to demonstrate that the coalition had a pragmatic and

⁸¹³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "The Coalition of Three Democratic Political Parties in South Korea," August 6, 1946. Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 499.

⁸¹⁴ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "The Coalition of Three Democratic Political Parties in South Korea," August 6, 1946 in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 500.

⁸¹⁵ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "The Coalition of Three Democratic Political Parties in South Korea," August 6, 1946. Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 500.

⁸¹⁶ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "The Coalition of Three Democratic Political Parties in South Korea," August 6, 1946. Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 500.

⁸¹⁷ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "The Coalition of Three Democratic Political Parties in South Korea," August 6, 1946. Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 500.

⁸¹⁸ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "The Coalition of Three Democratic Political Parties in South Korea," August 6, 1946 in Dae-sook Suh ed., *Documents of Korean Communism*, 501-502.

functional purpose to integrate the Communists under a unified leadership. In addition, by defining the means of struggle against the Rightists strictly as the liquidation of feudalism and the expulsion of reactionaries, Pak was also clearly noting that the coalition's political character would aspire to truly be Communist and not allow any detractors or opponents such as Yŏ from bureaucratically petrifying and vitiating the CCP through some nebulous centrist program which failed to convince anyone. Finally, the manifesto was important because Pak laid out the substantive essence for the coalition to evolve the meaning of integration to national unification, a bastion against Rightists, and finally, a leader of the Korean workers. The provision of these functions was also necessary because Pak was arguing that a united and more vigorous CCP would not merely be a follower of the north, but its autonomous emulator in the south by exercising extensive control in independently chartering the CCP's own path to perfectly performing the three functions.

However, emboldened by his confidence in the freedom to present his programs, Pak went further by unabashedly exposing a major facet of his desire to realize a "more perfect Communist revolution"—the completion of a Decalcomania land reform in south Korea. On August 15, 1946, the CCP published an article in the *In-min Il-po* (*People's Daily*), which called for "an immediate implementation of the north's land reforms."⁸¹⁹ However, in contrast to the demand for land reforms in March, in which only the policy itself won ardent support, barely five months later, implementation of land reforms became synonymous with joining forces with north Korea. As the article explained, the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference had to "resume on the earliest possible date," and land reforms "had to be implemented with utmost urgency," for which the "struggle must permanently continue."⁸²⁰ It was for the rapid

⁸¹⁹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Namchosŏnmanüi T'ochika Piryohata," (The South Needs Its Own Land) *Inmin Ilpo*, August 15, 1946. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 3.

⁸²⁰ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "The South Needs Its Own Land," *Inmin Ilpo*, August 15, 1946. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 3.

conclusion of land reforms that "the three Leftist parties had to be quickly united and promote a "genuine unity between Left and Right exclusively under the Five Principles," because "such was the only way to ensure an impeccable notion of a genuine political independence."⁸²¹

This statement pithily summarized the essence of the CCP's supremacy within the southern Left by clinging to the old belief in the CCP's exceptionalism and its political identification with northern Communism. The statement was also making sure that this singularity possessed what philosopher Gilles Deleuze (2003) called a "process of auto-unification, always mobile and displaced to the extent that a paradoxical element traverses across a series and makes them resonate."⁸²² In other words, so long as the CCP was able to maintain a signal of goodwill and a commitment to a strong alliance, Pak believed that it was acceptable to conceal his real ambition of changing the design of the alliance to allow the CCP to maintain its supremacy in the south by absorbing the northern Communists.

Finally, from Pak's perspective, he had chosen an opportune moment to announce his statement because the statement had definitively concluded an internal fiasco surrounding the issue of a pan-Leftist merger. On August 3, Pak Hŏn-yŏng had received a message from the Korean People's Party which suggested a "strengthened and cooperative democratic alliance to fulfill Korea's autonomous independence and construction of a democratic state under one party rather than three individual parties."⁸²³ Nevertheless, contentment is an illusion, for even the most airtight alliance always has an inherent tension within itself, since the mind, upon desiring advantages it currently does not possess, is bound to look onto another which

⁸²¹ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "The South Needs Its Own Land," *Inmin Ilpo*, August 15, 1946. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 3.

⁸²² Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (London, England: Continuum, 2003), 103.

⁸²³ *Chŏsŏn Inminpo*, "Inmintang, Chwaik Haptang Chean," (The Korean People's Party Suggests a Leftist Alliance) August 5, 1946. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 248.

does with the most bitter jealousy, resent, malice, and hatred.⁸²⁴

Although Pak had succeeded in absorbing the Chang-an faction, there was still a considerable amount of discontent and opposition within the CCP. Party members who disputed Pak's leadership under the label of the "Anti-Cadre faction" had declared themselves as representatives of the CCP without Pak's authorization and often protested against Pak Hŏn-yŏng's "authoritarian leadership and his excessive reliance on client-based politics" which naturally created a party bureaucracy that exclusively revolved around Pak. The "Anti-Cadre faction" criticized that this corrupt culture mutated the party into Pak's personal club rather than an official Communist organization.⁸²⁵ In response, Pak had issued a manifesto declaring "an absolute rejection of all attempts and opinions to sabotage and disrupt the political merger of the Leftists" and erased the names of all members associated with the "Anti-Cadre Faction" from the CCP roster.⁸²⁶ In short, Pak's Five Principles signaled the fall of the final curtain to silence the show of any excessively unnecessarily rambunctious opposition to the CCP's supremacy within the southern Left.

3. The Defeat of the Seven Principles and the Twilight of "Unitary Socialism"

The previous section examined the war of principles between Yŏ Un-hyŏng and Pak Hŏn-yŏng through a comparison of each man's vision for land reform with an emphasis on Pak Hŏn-yŏng's relentless and unforgiving demand for a total confiscation of pro-Japanese collaborators' and the bourgeoisie's lands. It also showed that Pak's eagerness behind promoting the Five Principles was largely due to his desire to solidify "Communist exceptionalism" within the southern Left to prohibit moderates such as Yŏ Un-hyŏng from

⁸²⁴ Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, 71-72.

⁸²⁵ CCP, "Chwaik Haptang e taehae Tangnae Tongchitŭl eke Koham," (An Appeal to Comrades in the Party on the Leftist Alliance) August 9, 1946. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 249.

⁸²⁶ "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," August 24, 1946. *FRUS*, 1946, Vol. 8, 730.

ever attempting a political resurgence within the CCP. Finally, the previous section also showed that Pak was eager to completely crush all opposition within the CCP by clearly designating the Five Principles as the party's official statement thereby announcing that a hard-line commitment to Communism was the party's unquestionable ideological stance.

With regard to the final point of the previous section, Pak's statement had also clarified the ultimate purpose of the pan-Leftist merger: an eventual unity with the NKWP. Just ten days after Pak had confirmed his support for uniting with the northern Communists, the northerners responded by formally founding the NKWP through a merger with Paek Nam-un's New Citizens' Party and electing many pro-Kim elements to major political posts. Having assured that most of his supporters would be in control of north Korea for several decades and with virtually no effective opposition in the north after anti-Communist northerners relocated to the south, Kim confirmed that a northern-led Communist program would be the singular model under which the CCP would operate as the NKWP's junior partner.⁸²⁷ North Korea did not take long to implement land reforms because the NKWP seized almost 90% of farmland formerly under Japanese control and distributed it to farmers who constituted nearly 70% of the northern population. Hence, even though agriculture contributed less than 50% of the entire Gross Domestic Product of the Korean peninsula, north Korea still found it convenient to justify its decision to nationalize all agrarian lands based on a populist rhetoric emphasizing that the reforms did not negatively affect much of the northern population and instead enriched them.⁸²⁸

This immediate result prompted Kim Il-sung to aggrandize north Korea's economic and ideological superiority over south Korea. As Kim later emphasized in his speech reflecting on

⁸²⁷ Kim Chu-hyŏn, "Pukchosŏn Notongtangŭi T'ansaeng," (The Birth of the North Korean Workers' Party) *The Worker*, Vol. 1, 35-48. adapted from Lee and Scalapino, *The Korean Communist Movement*, Vol. 2, 453-455.

⁸²⁸ According to Chong-sik Lee and Robert Scalapino, from 1945-1947, southern Korea saw a 22% increase in its population after almost 800,000 northerners disgruntled with Communism relocated to the south. See Lee and Scalapino, *The Korean Communist Movement*, Vol. 2, 446.

the NKWP, the southern Left had yet to enjoy the "slightest elementary democratic rights" because the Americans were "arresting, imprisoning, and murdering a large number of Communist party members and banning *Haepang Ilpo*."⁸²⁹ Kim went on to criticize the May Minting Scandal as a "fabrication" and the arrests of major figures involved as a "farcical trial designed to isolate the Communist Party."⁸³⁰ Finally, Kim argued that land reforms remained incomplete in south Korea and the only changes worth noting were the transfer of land from "Japanese landlords to Korean squires and the replacement of the Japanese Oriental Development Company to the New Company of American Imperialism."⁸³¹

In essence, Kim was blaming the absence of a Communist political party on the continuation of imperialism, which was a collaborative scheme conceived through a mutual cooperation between American officials and Rightists. In this vein, Kim believed that the Minting Scandal was but a grossly extended arm of an American plot to torture Communists, intentionally conceived by Rightists to drive the Left into a corner and wish for their "isolation," which could at the extreme, mean total banishment and disintegration. The stagnation of land reforms was not an unsurprising outcome of this cooperation, which in Kim's view, was a result of the Americans inheriting what historian Bruce Cumings has termed, "Japanese developmental colonialism" and transforming it into an anti-Communist imperialism designed to specifically silence and oppress the southern Left.⁸³²

Thus, the coincidental compatibility between the CCP's desire to implement north Korea's land reforms in the south and the rapid institutional stability in north Korea provided Pak with

⁸²⁹ Kim Il-sung, "On the Establishment of the Northern Korean Workers' Party and the Question of Founding the Southern Korean Workers' Party," in *The Selected Works of Kim Il-sung, Vol. 1* (P'yŏngyang, north Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1971), 106.

⁸³⁰ Kim Il-sung, "On the Establishment of the Northern Korean Workers' Party and the Question of Founding the Southern Korean Workers' Party," *The Selected Works of Kim Il-sung, Vol. 1*, 113.

⁸³¹ Kim Il-sung, "On the Establishment of the Northern Korean Workers' Party and the Question of Founding the Southern Korean Workers' Party," *The Selected Works of Kim Il-sung, Vol. 1*, 117.

⁸³² Kim Il-sung, "On the Establishment of the Northern Korean Workers' Party and the Question of Founding the Southern Korean Workers' Party," *The Selected Works of Kim Il-sung, Vol. 1*, 119. See also Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 162-174.

a sufficient rationale for supporting a political alliance with the NKWP. Pak was confirming his desire for a decalcomania political relationship between the NKWP and the CCP by reinforcing three key ideas that explained the party's essence and allowed the party to "auto-unify" with the NKWP despite the party's emphasis of itself as a singular Communist leader in the south. First, the CCP could afford to render this "exceptionalism" as a connective political force because, and assuming that the NKWP also had a similar conception of "exceptionalism," the "exceptionalism" could traverse and resonate with the NKWP. It was from such confidence that the CCP envisioned itself as an extension of the NKWP, and all of south Korea as part of north Korea. Second, the CCP wished that trusteeship could extend to south Korea so that the Confucian-themed northern land reforms could be used to turn south Korea into another north Korea, such that no pro-Japanese collaborator would eternally be able to own land, much like the political situation in the north, where most bourgeois elements were executed for pro-Japanese collaboration and had their lands confiscated by the state.

In essence, the land reforms, given their success in performing their intended anti-imperialistic function of punishing pro-Japanese collaborators, gave hope to the CCP that the reforms could and had to be implemented across the south, thereby presenting a commonality which could resonate between the CCP and the NKWP, thereby strengthening the Communist connection.

Finally, the northern land reforms strengthened Pak's confidence in adopting the Five Principles and in his belief that he had decisively won the battle against Yŏ for the control of the south. Pak's primary incentive behind writing this article was probably the sheer clarity with which he could confirm a decisive victory over Yŏ. Although Kim still respected Yŏ's efforts, such an outcome would convince Kim that Yŏ had completely lost his political finesse. Hence, the article was the last nail in the coffin for Yŏ because the Five Principles clearly promised nothing for anyone besides the Communists, and in effect, was a manifesto

demanding the foundation of a Korea led by Communists alone. It would not take long for Yŏ to face the dreaded defeat of the Seven Principles, which effectively marked the twilight of "Unitary Socialism," since Kim Il-sung would ultimately reject Yŏ's insistence on a redistribution of land based on financial need and approve of Pak Hŏn-yŏng's support for the northern land reforms.

However, an aspiration for "exceptionalism" inevitably invites jealousy, suspicion, and indignation because the mind cannot stand being subjugated unless it subjugates another or at least is put on an equal footing. To counter Pak's aggressive and uncompromising attitude and to justify the necessity of maintaining an alliance with the American military government, the DPK quickly published its Eight Principles barely a week after Pak had published his Five Principles. The Rightists took Pak head on, explicitly promising a "liberal Democracy completely excluding Leftists" under the supervision of the American military government.⁸³³ The Eight Principles also promised freedom for the press and of expression and proclaimed that a full legislative assembly would be established to "promote the Korean public's clear understanding of Democratic principles."⁸³⁴ Yet, the Eight Principles did not radically challenge the Five Principles, because like Pak, the Rightists included no clause promising unity with the Leftists or the realization of a unified peninsula, only mentioning that Korea would be monitored by the American military government "until an appropriate time for independence" came.⁸³⁵ Instead, the Eight Principles merely affirmed that the Rightists' desire to maintain the translation of ideological difference into a permanent governmental separation with the Communists.

Although he well knew that he no longer possessed any political strength to challenge Pak,

⁸³³ Hanmintang (Democratic Party of Korea), "Tang T'onghap P'al Wŏnch'ik," (Eight Principles on Uniting the Parties) September 3, 1946, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 226.

⁸³⁴ Democratic Party of Korea, "Eight Principles on Uniting the Parties," September 3, 1946, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 226.

⁸³⁵ Democratic Party of Korea, "Eight Principles on Uniting the Parties," September 3, 1946, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 227.

Yŏ refused to back down without a fight. From his perspective, the fundamental problem with both proposals was that phrases such as "thoroughly exterminate" or "completely excluding" were definitely showing that both Pak and the Rightists did not understand that political radicalism, when taken to the extreme, is a form of nihilism. I am arguing that radicalism intrinsically becomes immersed with itself such that there is no room for mutual understanding with any opposing views and is blinded by a desire to affirm an unchallenged dominance. However, what makes radicalism especially dangerous is that once it becomes engulfed by that desire, there is no other motivation to propel the idea forward. The idea becomes its own captive.⁸³⁶ Furthermore, Yŏ firmly believed that implementing and abiding by the Five and Eight Principles were all detrimental to the prospect of a united Korean peninsula, for the two diametrically opposed programs only confirmed the long distance between the CCP and the Right; the same distance that kept growing farther with every drop of blood spilt on the streets of Seoul had only increased, with black ink replacing blood.

To put a brake to this potential tragedy, Yŏ criticized Pak's announcement of a "document which had not won agreement from anyone in the People's Party" as an act of a "highly coercive tyrant who had impulsively decided to ally with the northern Communist Party without any official consent."⁸³⁷ Hence, Pak's announcement was "a betrayal of good faith and political conscience," and the People's Party had "no choice but to declare the announcement unlawful, null and void."⁸³⁸ Incensed and tired with the endless Communist-DPK brouhaha over the alliance, Yŏ proposed a mediated seven-point version to prevent what he called an "ostentatious and a mechanically artificial union which placed personal greed for

⁸³⁶ My thinking developed from William Clarke, "The Political Defects of Old Radicalism," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (March, 1899), 69-86.

⁸³⁷ "Inmintang, 5 Wŏnch'ik e taehan Sŏngmyŏng Palp'yo," (The People's Party Issues a Statement about the Five Principles) September 6, 1946. *Tongnip Sinmun (Independent Newspaper)*. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 256.

⁸³⁸ "The People's Party Issues a Statement about the Five Principles," September 6, 1946. *Tongnip Sinmun*. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 257.

power over the people's interests."⁸³⁹

Unlike the intensely ideologically colored Five and Eight Principles, the Seven Principles importantly reflected the essentials of "Unitary Socialism" at its pure best—fervently nationalist, integrative, and thoroughly politically neutral. The Seven Principles were Yŏ's last trump card to preserve and more hopefully publicize the necessity of his neutral and moral approach to political unification. The Seven Principles deliberately sought to balance Pak's and the Rightists' demands. To satisfy the Rightist demand for electoral Democracy, Yŏ urged the "unity of Left and Right in forming a Democratic provisional government" and "the release of all political prisoners illegally imprisoned by the Rightists."⁸⁴⁰ To appease Pak and the CCP, Yŏ called for the "resumption of the American-Soviet Joint Administrative Council," the guarantee of complete freedom of expression and the right to assembly, regardless of ideological orientation," and "redistribution of land to the peasantry free of charge and nationalization of industries."⁸⁴¹

In short, the ideologically balanced Seven Principles clearly reflected Yŏ's urge to put a stop to the Rightists' and Americans' witch-hunt for Communists as well as Pak's overly domineering and dictatorial control of the CCP. Unfortunately, Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Seven Principles did not smother down the heated controversy surrounding the question of whether the Left-Right Alliance was successful, with answers ranging from an optimistic "it is possible," neutral or ambivalent responses such as "not sure" and "ambiguity is disappointing"

⁸³⁹ "Yŏ Un-hyŏng, Samtanghaptangkwa Tangmyŏng Munchetŭl e taehan Sŏngmyŏng Palp'yo," (Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Statement on the Union of the Three Parties and Its Immediate Problems) October 4, 1946. *Chosŏn Ilpo*, *PSMKH*, Vol. 3.

⁸⁴⁰ Yŏ Un-hyŏng and Kim Kyu-sik, "Tang T'onghapŭl wihan Ch'iltae Wŏnch'ik," (Seven Principles on Uniting the Parties) October 8, 1946 in Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 187. The first draft was already completed in mid-September.

⁸⁴¹ Yŏ Un-hyŏng and Kim Kyu-sik, "Seven Principles on Uniting the Parties, October 8, 1946 in Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 188.

to an extremely negative "we completely reject it."⁸⁴² Yet, the diversity of responses had no intrinsic value, for it was merely a natural reflection of the Korean political climate's inability to digest Yō's commitment to a centrist-Socialist program.

Yet, what is more essential is that Yō's decision to mention land redistribution was not just a rhetorical device to appease Pak Hōn-yōng, but a clear representation of how Yō wanted to realize a non-ideological politics suited for Korea's reality as a post-liberation state. A societal redistribution of land at no cost was the principal feature of the Seven Principles that best represented the socialist nature of "Unitary Socialism," or Yō's uncompromising commitment to what he called a "balanced redistribution of land."⁸⁴³ Peasants who were unable to till their land would receive assistance from the state, while the wealthy would be left to their own devices. Put differently, while Yō agreed with Pak to "swiftly punish all pro-Japanese elements," because they had promoted Korea's stagnation as a feudal society, he rejected Marxist materialism and did not endorse Pak's proposal to distribute land gratis to every citizen in Korea.⁸⁴⁴ Unlike Pak, Yō believed that distributing land had to be a practice of welfare economics, providing more to the poor and less to the rich. Only by doing so could the Left at least dream of reconciling with the Right. Furthermore, Pak's fourth principle was clear evidence for Yō's intense dislike of Pak's extremism. Yō did not believe that anyone who opposed the Communist line was a "counterrevolutionary," and not all landholders who briefly cooperated with the Japanese were naturally "pro-Japanese." As a populist, Yō could

⁸⁴² "Hapchakūn Kanūnghata," (The Alliance is Possible) Chae-Mi Kōchu Hanin Hyōphoe (The Association of Koreans Residing in the United States) October 10, 1946; "Morūketta," (Not Sure) Tongnip Kukhoe Ch'uchin Wiwōnhoe (The Committee for an Independent National Assembly), October 10, 1946, "Mohohami Silmangsūrōpta," (Ambiguity is Disappointing") Hanmintang (Democratic Party of Korea), October 10, 1946, and "Urinūn Ch'il Wōnch'ikūl Wanchōnhi Kōpuhanta," (We Completely Reject the Seven Principles) Imsi Kungmin Ūihoe (The Interim People's Congress), October 10, 1946, in Chōng Si-u ed., *Chwa-u Hapchakkwa Tongnip (The Left-Right Alliance and Independence)*, 247-250.

⁸⁴³ Pak Pyōng-yōp, *RSR*, 189.

⁸⁴⁴ "Sōul Chipang Pōpwōn Kumsaūi Yōngūicha Yō Un-hyōng Simmun," (Interrogation of the Suspect Yō Un-hyōng by Public Prosecutor of Seoul Local Court) August 6, 1929 in *Mongyang Yo Un-hyōng Chōnchip (The Collected Works of Mongyang Yō Un-hyōng)*, Vol. 1 (Seoul, south Korea: Han-ul Publishing, 1991), 544.

not engage in such black-or-white thinking and abandon his creed that the ultimate task of politicians was to ensure that every citizen had the right and ability to "put rice on their tables."⁸⁴⁵

However, Yŏ firmly believed that if one had the sufficient financial ability to do so, it was morally just for that person to relinquish the right to financial compensation based on his or her moral conscience. Thus, he rejected Pak's proposal to carry out the policy without financial compensation. Instead, he favored what he called "distribution according to need," which would be determined by one's ability to cultivate land. Yŏ essentially interpreted the distribution of land as a policy of privatization.⁸⁴⁶ In other words, Yŏ thought that Pak's scheme for land reforms *literally* forgot the important qualifier to Marx's famous dictum, "to each according to his needs"—to each according to his *ability*. This qualifier is important for it explains why Yŏ specifically disagreed with Pak that all pro-Japanese elements had to be eliminated. While Yŏ agreed with Pak that all land which had been under pro-Japanese landholders' ownership be returned to their rightful owners, he favored what I would call "socialism with capitalistic characteristics."

Beyond the obvious fact that Yŏ wanted to put an end to Pak's infatuation with Communist dogmatism through the Seven Principles, Yŏ's opposition to Communism is also a notable feature of the Seven Principles. Whereas Marx used "to each according to his needs" to justify the state's dominance in land distribution, Yŏ thought that Communistic state-led land distribution was too inflexible and inept to address Korea's urgency in having a stable economy. Peasants and workers, who formed the majority of the public, needed land but redistribution was meaningless if there was no genuine market to which these social groups could sell their produce and skills. Therefore, to construct a vibrant market which could

⁸⁴⁵ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 189.

⁸⁴⁶ Yŏ Un-hyŏng and Kim Kyu-sik, "Seven Principles on Uniting the Parties," Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 179.

liberate and incorporate peasants and laborers in building a truly comprehensive national economy, Yŏ believed, albeit grudgingly and contradictorily to his passionate nationalism, that Korea needed support from financiers *regardless* of whether they had collaborated with the Japanese.⁸⁴⁷ Wealthy tycoons had no need for governmental support, for they already controlled the mainstream flow of capital. Hence, it was necessary to ally with them to receive enough funding to revive national industries, raise the employment rate, and thereby recuperate an extremely sluggish economy.

This idea, while a very foreign to many Koreans in the 1940s, already had a successful precedent in Sweden, where social Democracy was and still is firmly established to serve as a genuine middle ground between Democracy and economic Socialism. It is an eclectic mixture of nationalization, or state ownership of industries, and socialization, which political scientist Timothy Tilton (1987) defines as "a more diffusive process of societal control tha allows for a wider range of forms of ownership," including privatization.⁸⁴⁸ "Unitary Socialism" shared many similarities with what Ernst Wigforss, the father of Swedish Socialism, envisioned to promote a balance between democratic political procedures such as elections, and a fully operating national social welfare system. Wigforss believed that inherited wealth was incompatible with social Democracy because it created a sense of "economic servitude," preventing people from autonomously and actively seeking jobs to build the economy as its masters.⁸⁴⁹ The principal objective behind realizing economic equality was not to make

⁸⁴⁷ Yŏ Un-hyŏng and Kim Kyu-sik, "Seven Principles on Uniting the Parties," Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 179. Yŏ and Kim both harbored a deep hatred toward Pak Hŏn-yŏng, which fostered their cooperation, although Yŏ would part ways with Kim as well because Yŏ became frustrated with Kim's ambivalent and opaque neutralism. For a general discussion of the historical background to the rise of entrepreneurs such as Kim Sŏng-su, see Carter J. Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: The Ko-ch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945* (Seattle and London, England: Washington University Press, 1991; 2003). Kim Sŏng-su was also the founder of Posŏng College, which later became Korea University.

⁸⁴⁸ Timothy A. Tilton, "Why Don't the Swedish Social Democrats Nationalize Industry?" *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 2, Rethinking the Welfare State (Spring, 1987), 143.

⁸⁴⁹ Devin Joshi and Neha Navlakha, "Social Democracy in Sweden," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 45, No. 7 (November 20-26, 2010), 73.

everyone, rich and poor, to become equal in financial standing but providing everyone with an equal opportunity to share the freedom, authority, and security necessary to fulfill personal development. This approach was necessary because a core principle of social Democracy is that a sufficiency in both resources and social rights is necessary to guarantee maximum human freedom, which requires a "deepening" of Democracy through the holistic participation of society in making public decisions.⁸⁵⁰

Yō's vision of social democracy was similar to that of Wigforss because he not only had these ideas but also believed, like Wigforss, that the state had to intervene on the laborers' behalf to help nurture the freedom of the worker. This would motivate the worker to consciously control the economy as much as the bourgeoisie, which as Wigforss himself put it, "increases freedom in the economic realm in the same way that universal and equal suffrage did in the political realm."⁸⁵¹ Economic equality and political equality were not mutually exclusive but mutually constitutive and reinforcing because they stemmed from the same principle that individual freedom can only be measured by itself and the two forms of equality are merely disparate means to help an individual maximize his or her singular freedom. Furthermore, like Wigforss, Yō believed that the best kind of Democracy was a purely populist variety, one that was built from the bottom by the people's own hands. A "Democracy" which only borrowed the name of the people and only functioned as an affected means of governance rather than as an end of serving the interests of the people was not a

⁸⁵⁰ Joshi and Navlakha, "Social Democracy in Sweden," 73. For an analysis of the relationship between resources, social rights, and human freedom, see Thomas Meyer and Lewis Hinchman, *The Theory of Social Democracy* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2007). For further elaboration on the idea of "deepening Democracy," see Eric S. Einhorn and John Logue, *Modern Welfare States: Scandinavian Politics and Policy in the Global Age* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003).

⁸⁵¹ Timothy A. Tilton, "A Swedish Road to Socialism: Ernst Wigforss and the Ideological Foundations of Swedish Social Democracy," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (June, 1979), 508 and 510. Wigforss's quote is from his *Vision och Verklighet* (Stockholm, Sweden: Prisma, 1967), 125, adapted from Tilton, "A Swedish Road to Socialism," 512.

genuine Democracy. Instead, it was a democracy wearing a mask of Fascism.⁸⁵² In short, Yŏ's vision of "Unitary Socialism," while unique to the Korean context, was not illogical because it already had a successful populist merger of economic and socio-political Democracy as a precedent in Swedish social Democracy.

The major difference between Wigforss' and Yŏ's visions was the critical role of nationalism in Yŏ's thought. Unlike Wigforss, who concentrated on the systematic capacity of social democracy, Yŏ focused more on the human agency to properly comprehend nationalism not as a sentiment but as an ethical code for a proper realization of an egalitarian welfare state. More specifically, if Wigforss was concerned with finding an ideological equilibrium between Socialism and democracy by mixing equitable economic redistribution with democracy, Yŏ was more concerned with finding a political environment which would be hospitable for nationalism as the core principle in differentiating Korea's strategies for economic recuperation based on socialist redistribution of land and popular political representation based on Democratic elections. Yŏ understood that nationalism was not merely a feeling, but a principle informed by historical conditions and Korea's immediate concern had to be an effective reconstruction of her economy and politics savagely tattered by Japanese colonial imperialism.

Nationalism was, in this sense, a pragmatic program designed to solve a nation's historical ills and was not a merely fanciful feeling. Feelings are willow leaves to which reality would act as a wild wind, swaying them to and fro relentlessly against their will; nationalism was an instrument of rationality, dedicated impartially and strictly to answering the ultimate question, "What is best for the political and economic advancement of a people?" In making this distinction, it can be argued that Yŏ believed in political scientist Hans Kohn's

⁸⁵² Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Inmintangŭi Sinnyŏm," (The Convictions of the People's Party) December 7, 1945. *Chosŏn Inminpo*. Adapted from Yi Su-sŏng and Paek Nak-ch'ŏng et. al eds., *Discussing Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 351.

(1939) argument that a true nationalist should be a realist, willing to fulfill the people's will even at the cost of negotiating with those who lived in the shade of comfort as national traitors but who also possessed money which would lighten up the faces of the poor and rich alike.⁸⁵³ Economic strengthening was the essential means to which non-ideological integration would be an ultimate end. Yō was essentially impatient about how Pak, as a dedicated Marxist in theory and action, could pragmatically ignore this fact. An elevation of living standards was a goal worth pursuing by all means necessary to make sure that peasants and the workers could look forward to a stable future—an active and effective promotion of public welfare. In fact, Marx himself allowed some breathing space for Communism to balance its orthodox emphasis on the dictatorship of the proletariat with the need to foster industrial development by limiting the scope of nationalization:

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e. of the producers organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible. Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old mode of production. These measures will of course be different in different countries."⁸⁵⁴

Accordingly, while the proletariat's ultimate objective in claiming political supremacy may be universal—to wrest the ownership of all capital and modes of production from the bourgeoisie—the means by which this is to be realized necessarily would feature variations across the world because such measures would realistically have to specifically respond to given conditions of a national economy to approximate the realization of the proletariat's ultimate goal. To that end, Marx provided ten guidelines, all subject to selective adaptation based on discrete judgments informed by national economic conditions:

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all rights of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.

⁸⁵³ Hans Kohn, "The Nature of Nationalism," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 33, No. 6 (December, 1939), 1001.

⁸⁵⁴ Karl Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, 54; Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, 205.

5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.

6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state.

7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.

8. Equal liability to all labor. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.

9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country.

10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's labor in factories. Combination of education with industrial production.⁸⁵⁵

As political theorist Shlomo Avineri points out, Marx called for the nationalization of land, but not of industry because Marx understood that if means of production were wrested away from the productive classes without warning, the state might find itself in constant chaos and economic instability. Private industry could exist until the state deems it necessary for the private sector to transition to nationalization. Thus, the state did not have to worry about exercising autonomy solely in terms of realizing nationalization immediately through its unilateral, and from the perspective of formerly capitalist industrialists, dictatorial and whimsical design, because the state still had control over economic conditions—for example, through progressive taxation and abolition of inheritance—which would convince and encourage the private sector to choose nationalization for its own pragmatic survival.⁸⁵⁶

Put differently, Yō's recommendation of sparing pro-Japanese industrialists within the northern system only for the sake of furthering the growth of industrial capital was still acceptable under orthodox Marxism, and insofar as Yō and Kim Il-sung shared a firm belief in nationalism being the guiding principle to subject Communism to an authentic north Korean interpretation, Yō was expressing his confidence that Kim Il-sung could have some humane heart left within him to allow for such flexibility while maintaining the centrality of the state. Furthermore, because Marx was himself cognizant that his recommended changes would occur within capitalism, not radically without, Yō's recommendation was merely encouraging a balance between an idealistic nationalism which focused on eliminating pro-

⁸⁵⁵ Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, 53-54; Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, 206.

⁸⁵⁶ Avineri, *The Political and Social Thought of Karl Marx*, 206.

Japanese collaborators and a pragmatic economic nationalism which was attentive to the equally important task of realizing rapid industrial and economic growth. In other words, Yŏ was confident in imbuing socialist flexibility within Kim Il-sung's nationalist-Communism because Yŏ was only encouraging changes acceptable within the boundaries of maximizing Korean nationalism, the common denominator between "Unitary Socialism" and Kim's Communism.

However, as a report by the American military government accurately assessed, Yŏ failed to emerge victorious in the September Lobby because his vision was "too rosy for its own good."⁸⁵⁷ For most fervently anti-Communistic Right-wing groups such as the DPK, Yŏ's plan to nationalize industries and allow the Korean government to redistribute land to the peasantry was unrealistic because it did not have a "sound comprehension of economic equity," for there was no answer to how citizens in urban areas would cope with life's daily necessities if every inch of arable land was under a farmer's control.⁸⁵⁸ In addition, the DPK questioned how the plan would even be economically feasible, since redistribution would require revenue to help farmers become financially secure enough to begin their own businesses. If the plan was implemented, where and how would Korea be able to prepare a sufficient amount of national capital to encourage the growth of other industries? In other words, the DPK was uncomfortable with what seemed to be Yŏ's blind affinity to the nationalization of land and industries such that there were no insurance mechanisms which had the prescience to prepare Korea for future economic growth. This unprincipled idealism was the very reason behind the DPK's refusal to "uncritically uphold all outcomes from the Left-Right alliance because a truly neutral and holistic compromise can only come after the

⁸⁵⁷ "G-2 Weekly Summary, No. 56, September 26-October 6, 1946," *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 6.

⁸⁵⁸ "G-2 Weekly Summary, No. 56, September 26-October 6, 1946." *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 6.

establishment of an independent government."⁸⁵⁹

Thus, the DPK and other Rightists were opposed to Yŏ's insistence that a government ought to transparently reflect the ideological color of the policies first before one can speak of genuine political unity. Instead, Rightists believed that political unity could only commence from a clear symbol of political stability, and therefore Yŏ's policies had to be reversed in their order of implementation. A unified government was the only legal and Democratic authority over all policies because they would necessarily be derived from a unified consensus. Simply put, Yŏ and the Rightists disagreed on the essence of nationalism. Yŏ believed that "nationalism" was fundamentally about the ability of a nation to implement policies that reflected a people's will and interests, while the Right believed that nationalism's essence was rooted in a country's ability to first implement infrastructural stability to demonstrate political unity, from which policies would be the product, not the cause of political unity.

Political inflexibility among American officials stemming from the vagueness of "Unitary Socialism" was another major formidable hurdle to implement Yŏ's Socialist program. While Yŏ later told American officials that was the only truly vile Communist while Kim Kyu-sik and Kim Il-sung were "genuinely patriotic Koreans who only wanted to see a swift exit of the American and Soviet soldiers," the Americans believed that "Kim Il-sung was nothing without the Soviets..merely a north Korean crony of Moscow."⁸⁶⁰ In addition, the Americans still had trouble fathoming Yŏ's sincerity, or in their view, insincerity about his commitment to "Unitary Socialism," because his rhetoric "sounded like that of a political opportunist" and his visits to the north were merely to "liberally pursue his political agenda" and "to escape from

⁸⁵⁹ "Hanmintangŭi Sasang e taehan Sŏngmyŏng," (Democratic Party of Korea's Statement on Its Ideology) October 12, 1946. *Tonga Ilpo*. PSMKH, Vol. 3.

⁸⁶⁰ "G-2 Weekly Summary, No. 56, September 26-October 6, 1946," *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 6.

Pak's pressure and interference."⁸⁶¹

Therefore, the American military government produced a conclusion which failed to lift the cloud of mystique from Yō, stating that despite his faults, "his support for the Left-Right alliance and the legislative council are positive assets for the military government."⁸⁶² Furthermore, even withstanding his "capricious disposition," Yō was "wildly popular among the people, the Right, and the Left," which made Yō an "invaluable mediator for the military government."⁸⁶³ Yet, the military government could only make a wishful futuristic prediction, stating a hope that "when Korea becomes united, Yō and Kim Kyu-sik would cooperate well with each other to build a prosperous and stable country."⁸⁶⁴ Of course, the report did not know how much Yō hated Kim's ambiguous neutrality and its lack of precise direction—about which the same could be said about Kim's perception of Yō, regardless of the fact that Yō had already clearly expressed his discomfort with Kim's blueprint for the Legislative Assembly. More precisely, the Americans failed to distinguish between Yō's neutrality, which was focused on finding a literally mediatory middle between the two polarized extremes of Communism or anti-Communism and Kim's neutrally indifferent attitude toward ideology in general.

In contrast to Yō's search for a balanced Democracy which incorporated Leftist and Rightist demands, Kim Kyu-sik was more interested in assimilating Leftists' physical participation into a Rightist-led organizational setting and therefore had comparatively little interest in letting the Leftists have an equal say in policymaking as the Rightists. In other words, for Kim, "Democracy" fundamentally had a Right-wing connotation which implicitly

⁸⁶¹ "G-2 Weekly Summary, No. 56, September 26-October 6, 1946," *The Complete Works of Pak Hōn-yōng*, Vol. 6.

⁸⁶² "G-2 Weekly Summary, No. 56, September 26-October 6, 1946," *The Complete Works of Pak Hōn-yōng*, Vol. 6.

⁸⁶³ "G-2 Weekly Summary, No. 56, September 26-October 6, 1946," *The Complete Works of Pak Hōn-yōng*, Vol. 6.

⁸⁶⁴ "G-2 Weekly Summary, No. 56, September 26-October 6, 1946," *The Complete Works of Pak Hōn-yōng*, Vol. 6.

did not allow for any Leftist attempt to transform or usurp it by means of implementing an explicitly Socialist program. Thus, the military government's willful negligence to make the distinction confirmed that it too was no genuine ally of Yŏ. The Americans were only chiefly interested in using his commitment to non-ideological unity to stabilize the Korean situation while maintaining a suspicious eye to the north's possible intention of Communizing the south. The American military government's report only maintained American suspicions about the north and left no room to entertain any possibility for a genuinely non-ideological solution to the Left-Right skirmish. In the end, it was an increasingly frustrated Yŏ who suffered genuine defeat in the "war of principles," critically failing to place a brake to the seemingly endless Rightist-CCP antagonism. Since Yŏ had already been abandoned by the CCP, the Americans' suspicion and lukewarm commitment to accepting his vision meant that Yŏ's downfall as a political pariah of both the Left and Right was now sealed.

4. Conclusion

Twilight is a vague existence, hanging between dusk and sunset. One could, as Nietzsche did, celebrate a positive death of blind idolatry by declaring that Christianity is the "metaphysics of the hangman"—a solemn and sharp call for the liberation of humankind from the tyranny of an excessively and infectiously moral theology.⁸⁶⁵ Yet, twilight could also be a moment of hopelessness—an impending feeling that one's ideal is slowly, but surely, fading away. For Yŏ, the disappointing summer of 1946 saw a negative twilight of "Unitary Socialism" and was a frustrating and miserably lonesome one. If the meeting with the Americans and the assassination attempt in July had exposed the Rightists' clear and extreme rejection of "Unitary Socialism," the "war of principles" and Yŏ's failed quest for "distribution according to need" only confirmed the ever-growing and irreconcilable ideological distance between the two men due to Pak's extreme passion for Communism. Yŏ painfully realized

⁸⁶⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (Indiana, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 36.

that both the Americans and his most trusted friend had completely ignored "Unitary Socialism" by misunderstanding it and even deliberately wishing its complete extermination.

To make things worse, Yŏ had failed to reconcile with Pak and resuscitate a hope to found a truly moderate Leftist alliance, helplessly watching Pak teeter toward an uncompromising and extremist Communism by unilaterally announcing the Five Principles. Unfortunately, with the Seven Principles merely confirming Pak and Yŏ's disagreement over equal distribution and distribution according to need, and Kim Kyu-sik and the American military government more interested in building a bureaucratic Democracy in which a Left-wing minority would sufficiently serve as evidence of ideological diversity, Yŏ's last hope to mediate reconciliation lay with Kim Il-sung. Yet to Yŏ's dismay, the misfortunes of July and August would prove to be only the tip of an iceberg filled with more troubles than rewards. For Yŏ, the autumn of 1946 would be harsh, cold, and dismal. In addition to the September Lobby, in which Kim Il-sung would betray Yŏ by cooperating with Pak to render "Unitary Socialism" into a lonely sandcastle standing before tall waves, the conclusion of the "Two-to-One Deal," which envisioned a northern and southern Communist alliance to overwhelm the Right with superior force and the outbreak of two major "small civil wars"—the September and October Labor Strikes—would completely sap out the strength of "Unitary Socialism" to rage against the dying of its light in south Korea.

Chapter 11

The Conclusion of the "Two-to-One Deal" and the Outbreak of the September and October Labor Strikes

"The Idols of the Tribe have their foundation in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men. For it is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of things. On the contrary, all perceptions as well of the sense as of the mind are according to the measure of the individual and not according to the measure of the universe. And the human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolors the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it..

There are also Idols formed by the intercourse and association of men with each other, which I call Idols of the Market Place, on account of the commerce and consort of men there. For it is by discourse that men associate, and words are imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar. And therefore the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding. Nor do the definitions or explanations wherewith in some things learned men are wont to guard and defend themselves, by any means set the matter right. But words plainly force and overrule the understanding, and throw all into confusion, and lead men away into numberless empty controversies and idle fancies."⁸⁶⁶

-Francis Bacon, "The Four Idols" (1620)-

1. The Conclusion of the "Two-to-One Deal"

While the Americans and the Soviets were busy scuffling over the appropriate date to reschedule a meeting about the proper form of "Democracy" for Korea in Moscow, P'yŏng-yang transformed into a frantic lobbying warzone for Yŏ Un-hyŏng and Pak Hŏn-yŏng. For two months, both men had visited P'yŏngyang fifteen times, each lobbying the P'yŏng-yang leadership about how just their respective positions were compared with each other. Yŏ frequently complained that Pak was "the most irresponsible man ever known" and accused Pak of distorting unification into a "private scheme to be a dictator."⁸⁶⁷

Yŏ also complained again about Pak's "unreasonable" support of an equal redistribution of land, as it did not really address how desperately poor most peasants were in southern Korea. If class liberation was truly one of Pak's goals, then the party's overly propagandistic support of violence against pro-Japanese collaborators and landlords was outright wrong-headed, for without any substantive promises about how peasants would be rewarded with class liberation, violence would beget nothing but more unnecessary violence. Moreover, without any concrete

⁸⁶⁶ Francis Bacon, "The Four Idols," *Novum Organum* (1620).

⁸⁶⁷ These points were already echoed in Kim Il-sung, "Inmintang Tangsu Yŏ Un-hyŏngkwaŭi Hoetam," (Meeting with KPP President Yŏ Un-hyŏng) February 11, 1946. See Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 117-118.

promise of peace and no rationale behind why Koreans had to be divided into landlords and peasants, there was no justification behind the CCP's belief that the possession of anti-imperialist sentiment had to be the *only* criterion to verify whether one had genuine patriotism.⁸⁶⁸

As philosopher Stephen Nathanson (1988) has argued, patriotism has the capacity to be "moderate," or to be restricted within the bounds of humane ethical judgments. Thus, patriotism can be rationally restrained by morality from becoming an extremist passion. Accordingly, I would argue that Yŏ's questions reflected his distaste for Pak's ignorance of Nathansonian "moderate patriotism."⁸⁶⁹ Yŏ believed that patriotism must not be perverted into a line for dividing the just and the unjust; it should be a circle, morally uniting both the rich and the poor under the sole motivation of working toward the progress of Korea as Koreans. Furthermore, Pak's Manichean outlook was economically unsound. If the Korean people should remain eternally divided into peasants and workers against the bourgeoisie, division of labor and specialization, essential for reviving the country's main industries, would not be realized. In such a case, it would be impossible for anyone to be materially happy because no one would willingly contribute to raising the public's standard of living out of the suspicion that one class is going to take advantage of another class's labor.

By making this remark, Yŏ intended to cast Pak as a hypocrite feigning a fervent support of the peasantry in words but not following up with actions. To emphasize this hypocrisy further and increase his chances of winning a Weberian legal authority to guide the CCP to unification with P'yŏngyang, Yŏ advertised his innocence, reminding Kim that he was a "pure and honest man" who sincerely wished for reconciliation between the Left and the Right.⁸⁷⁰ A Left-Right alliance was necessary solely for the "complete unification of the Korean people,"

⁸⁶⁸ Kim Il-sung, "Meeting with KPP President Yŏ Un-hyŏng," February 11, 1946. Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 119-120.

⁸⁶⁹ Stephen Nathanson, "In Defense of 'Moderate Patriotism,'" *Ethics*, Vol. 99, No. 3 (April, 1988), 539.

⁸⁷⁰ Kim Il-sung, "Meeting with KPP President Yŏ Un-hyŏng," February 11, 1946. Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 120.

and all other ideological ambitions had to be discarded.⁸⁷¹ The tirade reveals that Yŏ was in an emotionally mixed bag. What lay underneath this anti-Pak complaint were Yŏ's deep frustration with the postponement of his ultimate vision of non-ideological unification and Yŏ's hope that Kim, unlike Pak, shared his belief in a harmonious and cooperative relationship between Communism and "Unitary Socialism."

However, Pak did not take such slander lightly. He unleashed an even more vehement and damning anti-Yŏ tirade, warning Kim Il-sung not to be "misled or deceived" by Yŏ's "nebulous plans."⁸⁷² When Kim Il-sung asked him to abide by Yŏ's wish to reconcile with the Right, Pak flatly refused, arguing that Kim "simply did not know how devious" Yŏ was as a human being. Pak complained that Yŏ was "a natural-born propagandist who liked to stir up confusion, was thoroughly pro-American," and had so much "blue blood as a snotty landholder" that he probably favored a "bourgeois Democracy."⁸⁷³ Pak was, in effect, trying to dismantle the divide between Weberian charismatic authority and legal authority. Since Pak already had charismatic authority, he sought to also earn the latter by exploiting the nebulous nature of "Unitary Socialism." To that end, he was expressing his frustration with that nebulous nature itself so that Kim would share that frustration and acknowledge an inevitable transfer of power from Yŏ to Pak.

Hence, the September Lobby was essentially an important rhetorical wrestling match between Pak and Yŏ to win as much Weberian sources of legitimacy from P'yŏng-yang as possible. The more weaknesses each man found about his opponent, the more likely it was for Kim to be their ally. Winning Kim's support would assure two important advantages: a full recognition of the legitimacy of each man's ambition and a firm consolidation of power within the CCP under a single authority. In such a winner-takes-all situation, it is not surprising that

⁸⁷¹ Kim Il-sung, "Meeting with KPP President Yŏ Un-hyŏng," February 11, 1946. Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 120.

⁸⁷² Kim Il-sung, "Meeting with KPP President Yŏ Un-hyŏng," February 11, 1946. Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 120.

⁸⁷³ Kim Il-sung, "Meeting with KPP President Yŏ Un-hyŏng," February 11, 1946. Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 120.

currying favor with Kim was the prime calculation that occupied Pak and Yŏ's heads throughout September.⁸⁷⁴

After a strenuous and long September, Pak ultimately emerged victorious. Yŏ had made the fatal error of wasting his time, only bombarding P'yŏngyang with personal critiques of Pak instead of offering his own vision or plans for unification. Hence, Kim felt uncomfortable after Yŏ's tirade because when Kim met Pak, he had a firm assurance that Pak clearly understood Kim's scheme—to unify Korea such that the ratio between Left and Right became two to one. This is why, despite concurring with Yŏ's opinion that unification had to be peaceful and be a goal in itself, Kim was largely silent throughout the meeting with Yŏ. Tired of Pak and Yŏ's seemingly endless struggle against each other to pull Kim to their side in the tug-of-war for political legitimacy, Kim decided to snap the rope into two by coaxing Yŏ into cooperating with Pak. The more Yŏ pleaded with Kim to severely reprimand Pak, the more ambivalent Kim's response became, repeatedly answering that he would "consider it with deliberation."⁸⁷⁵ This lukewarm response was undeniable evidence of how loose Yŏ's grip on power had become in the tug-of-war for the party leadership. Feeling "an immense amount of betrayal and distrust," an exhausted and a disappointed Yŏ said nothing; the meeting ended in a silence cold enough to freeze the warm summer night.⁸⁷⁶ Yŏ later complained to a Soviet representative in the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference:

"I felt deeply humiliated by Pak's manipulative behavior. Paek Nam-un even jeered that Pak had politically raped me. I stood aside Pak in protest, determined to show that nothing could be achieved without my assistance. Pak remained unperturbed and chose Yi Chu-ha, Pak himself, and me for the leadership of the CCP. I instantly knew that as long as I remained an inferior to these men, I would be further manipulated."⁸⁷⁷

In short, the September Lobby was more than a slugfest of character defamation; it was the

⁸⁷⁴ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 75.

⁸⁷⁵ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Nanŭn Pukchosŏnkwa Pak Hŏn-yŏngŭroput'o Paesinkwa Pulsinŭl Nŭkkinta," (I Sense Betrayal and Distrust from the North and Pak Hŏn-yŏng) (undated) Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 192.

⁸⁷⁶ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "I Sense Betrayal and Distrust from the North and Pak Hŏn-yŏng," (undated) Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 192.

⁸⁷⁷ "Romanenko's Report on Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Visit to Northern Korea," in The Council for the Publication of National History ed., *The Shtykov Diaries, 1946-1948* (Seoul, south Korea: Council for the Publication of National History, 2004), 175. See also Yi Su-sŏng, Paek Nak-ch'ong, Chŏng-sik Lee eds., *Discussing Yŏ Un-hyŏng*, 36.

final contest between Pak and Yŏ to determine who was genuinely winning P'yŏng-yang's trust as Kim's most reliable ally. The lobby was the pivotal conclusion of Pak and Yŏ's ever-growing antagonism. Kim had definitively tipped the balance of power to Pak and affirmed that Yŏ would have to eternally uphold Pak as his superior until the end of Yŏ's political career as long as Yŏ remained as a member of the CCP—a fate Yŏ could never accept.

Pak made sure to capitalize on the lobby's significance as much as possible by directly suggesting to Kim Il-sung a plan for Communist domination of the Korean peninsula. In the middle of September, Pak held a series of secret meetings with Kim about the prospect of a Communist revolution in the peninsula. The most notable agreement which emerged from the meetings was the "Two-to-One Deal." Kim told Pak that the disorganized hullabaloo over the Five, Seven, and Eight Principles was all due to the absence of a clear strategy to consolidate power in the party. Since Kim believed the "war of principles" showed that reconciliation between Pak and Yŏ was "nearly impossible," the ultimate mission of the CCP was to strengthen itself into "the major Leftist representative."⁸⁷⁸

Only by doing so could the ratio between Leftists and Rightists become two to one, enabling the Leftists assume a "formidable presence" and "annihilate" the latter with "full force."⁸⁷⁹ Kim offered strong encouragement, firmly assuring Pak that there "was absolutely no reason to fear the Americans" once Pak succeeded in establishing "the most formidable Communist force in the south."⁸⁸⁰ P'yŏng-yang would cautiously monitor and assess the situation in the south and be careful not to "provoke any unnecessary military clashes," but it would equally not hesitate to use that option if confrontation had to "inevitably become bloody" due to "unexpected circumstances."⁸⁸¹ A two-to-one ratio would assure the

⁸⁷⁸ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 182.

⁸⁷⁹ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 182.

⁸⁸⁰ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 182.

⁸⁸¹ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 182.

Communists' "formidable presence," for it would fundamentally guarantee numerical superiority, which could potentially mean more human resources to build a military.⁸⁸²

Although the "Two-to-One Deal" did not specify which branch—north or south—would lead the partnership, it clearly shows P'yŏngyang's blueprint for launching the terrible war that would commence three years later because it unequivocally endorses an eventual union between the NKWP and CCP under the common goal of driving the Rhee Administration into subjugation. In an Althusserian sense, the "Two-to-One Deal" established, from P'yŏng-yang's perspective, a positively non-historical ideology of the war. The goal of the "Two-to-One Deal" was to later provide for north Korea an unending structure and form of the war—finishing a Communist nationalist liberation through the structural establishment of a Communist numerical superiority over the Rightists—a structure which north Korea would translate during the initial stage of the Korean War as an overwhelming display of thorough strategic and technical preparation.⁸⁸³

With Americans already having a firm institutional foothold in southern Korea and superiority in weaponry, and the Soviets ready to exit the peninsula at any moment, regrouping the Communist forces to assume numerical superiority at least over the Rightists was realistically the only insurance policy that P'yŏngyang could prepare. If the CCP would uphold their part of the deal, P'yŏngyang could counter American influence by pressuring the Rightists with quantitatively superior Communist pressure. In other words, the CCP-NKWP partnership meant that north Korea had secured ample time to focus on consolidating Kim's personality cult and recuperating her economy in preparation for a potential war with south Korea. The CCP's operations functioned as a smokescreen, diverting the Americans' attention

⁸⁸² Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 182.

⁸⁸³ This explains why an ideology has no history, for if ideologies exert a continuing presence by having no distinction between past and present, then the Korean War, by having the "Two-to-One Deal" as an ideology, has no history, for the war has now become a seemingly unending "non-historical"—omni-historical—reality. It still indefinitely waits for peaceful unification to be its conclusion. See Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (London, England, and New York: Verso, 2014), 175.

away from north Korea by forcing them to concentrate and drain their resources and energy while battling the southern Left.

Pak had much to gain from the agreement as well. On one hand, the assurance of "absolutely no reason to fear the Americans" served as a definitive conclusion to the fierce P'yŏng-yang lobby. By winning Kim's consent to carry forth with the "Two-to-One Deal", Pak could now be assured that Kim and the P'yŏngyang leadership would no longer drift toward Yŏ's neutral stance. More specifically, by earning Kim's solid trust, Pak could enjoy the indirect effect of becoming a silent but major threat to his political rivals in P'yŏngyang. Although there were formidable opponents in P'yŏngyang's military leadership such as ChoiYong-kŏn, Pak well knew that the best key to survival—the limbo between annihilating or being annihilated with full force—was information. As a person who had spent most of his life and political career in Seoul, Pak was, in comparison with his other northern colleagues, arguably the sole operative who had a bird's-eye view of the political situation in southern Korea. Francis Bacon's adage, "knowledge is power" had literally proven its worth. He could use his knowledge of southern Korean affairs to become Kim's closest protégé and the "Two-to-One Deal" confirmed the rise of Pak Hŏn-yŏng as the most powerful confidant of Kim.

On the other hand, the "Two-to-One Deal" further solidified Pak's hold on the CCP leadership and assured the party's increased influence in Korean politics. Before the deal, the party was just one of many Leftist groups to be hunted down mercilessly by the Korean National Police and American authorities—two colossal allies of the Right. Now, with P'yŏngyang's promise to firmly support Pak's plan to establish a firm Communist base in southern Korea, the CCP had a firm reason to carry out its ambition to unite the southern Left. Since Yŏ Un-hyŏng and Paek Nam-un no longer had any significant power to challenge his dominance, Pak could look forward to claiming himself as an undisputed bigwig, if not the supreme leader, of the Left in the Korean peninsula. Most importantly, the Korean People

Party's fragmentation and the outbreak and rapid failure of workers' strikes in September and October would confirm a near-total defeat of "Unitary Socialism" and accelerate Pak's plan to reincarnate the old CCP into a new SKWP.

2. The Korean People's Party's Political Fragmentation and the September and October Labor Strikes (September-October, 1946)

Analyzing political history is essentially analyzing interactions between the oppressor and the oppressed and how a hierarchy between these two historical identities shaped the course of human events into tragedies which are still worth recollecting in the form of History. The historical narrative thus far has assumed the existence of a hierarchy between the American military government and the CCP, and most of the interactions have featured the American military government trying to impose supremacy over the Communists. However, interpreting power relations only in terms of repression poses several critical problems. First, it is rather too obvious that repression is the primary weapon of a superior historical actor for whom self-preservation is the main objective. If a historical event is interpreted with only this objective in mind, then historical analysis risks being too bland, for it will only be tasked with interpreting reproductive functions which only have a one-dimensional purpose. Such interpretation must also take into account immediate results and consequences of the repression to allow for a full assessment of the magnitude and gravity of the repression as a societal conflict between the oppressor and oppressed.

Furthermore, insofar as the main analytical prism remains the perspective of the superior institution, the origins and development of a repressed power can easily be dismissed in favor of the former. Finally, there is a risk of interpreting power as only consisting of the ability to enforce law and to coerce opposition to bend to a superior institution's demands. In short, defining power only as a repressive force renders interpretations of power to center just on its production of violence at the expense of a more holistic consideration about circumstantial

causes which explain the rationale and logic behind the use of power. Through an examination of the agency of the repressed, we can not only measure how the superior institution exercised coercion and legal enforcement, but also why the superior institution had to often transgress the boundaries of legality and completely oppress a resisting force. The degree of oppression can never be justified by the motivation for oppression through such an analysis, but the historian can still deliver an objective account by demonstrating a causal relationship between the two elements and avoid the three problems by providing a bi-dimensional analysis of power.⁸⁸⁴

By the beginning of September 1946, no two political careers could have ever looked so different as to clearly distinguish between political ascendancy and descendancy. Even though political unity within the Left was far from complete due to unresolved debates over the primacy of nationalism over Communism and whether the CCP had to truly adhere to Pak's emphasis on orthodox Communism, the divide between success and failure nevertheless was clear enough.⁸⁸⁵ While Pak had succeeded in politically disabling "Unitary Socialism" by nearly eliminating any possibility for Yŏ's return to the party, Yŏ was on the verge of permanently terminating his career in politics and his struggle to realize a non-ideological peninsula.

In addition to his bitter defeat in the September Lobby, Yŏ's political career was nearly about to jump off the cliff; his KPP headquarters became poisoned by factionalism. Upon returning to Seoul after his meeting with Kim, Yŏ opened a general session to discuss the prospects for a Leftist alliance. To his dismay, a feud had already spread uncontrollably among members even before any earnest debate could commence. On one hand, there was the

⁸⁸⁴ Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 791.

⁸⁸⁵ "Secret Report from the Office of the Economic Adviser Headquarters XXIV Corps, Seoul, Korea, APO 235 to Secretary of State"—*The Communist Party in South Korea: Part 1*, 8. September 28, 1946. RG 59, Decimal File 895.00/09-2846, Box 7388.

"Group of 31," represented by Yŏ himself, which yearned for a partnership with the Right and opposed any extremist Leftism from ruining that prospect. On the other hand, the opposition, calling themselves the "Group of 47," had no wish to let Yŏ independently hold the reins of power any longer. In favoring an immediate and unconditional merger with the Communists, this group shamelessly declared itself as Pak's ally and offered no compromise or regret in willingly betraying "Unitary Socialism."⁸⁸⁶ The deeper the KPP was embroiled in a confused and pointless internal struggle, the more it resembled the *Titanic* without any lifeboats, sinking slowly but inevitably into the cold waters of oblivion and neglect.

What was most unfortunate is that unlike the actual *Titanic*, the KPP did not sink because it *accidentally* hit an iceberg. Even as they were sinking, neither the Group of 31 nor the Group of 47 had the urge to swim or find wooden planks and helping hands to prevent themselves from drowning. To make things worse, Yŏ would quickly learn that the CCP was the core of the whirlpool that forced him to abandon ship. By early September, the Commission for the Alliance of the Three Parties officially ratified Pak Hŏn-yŏng's Five Principles. Although the complete draft contained eight principles and had the guise of combining Yŏ's Seven Principles, the second principle from the ratified draft formally confirmed Yŏ's defeat because it stipulated that for the "ultimate purpose of founding an autonomous and Democratic people's republic, all sources of power will be permanently transferred to the People's Republic [north Korea]."⁸⁸⁷ Furthermore, the third principle endorsed north Korea's land reforms by proclaiming that "all lands formerly under the ownership of pro-Japanese

⁸⁸⁶ "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," August 24, 1946. *FRUS*, 1946, Vol. 8, 730. See also Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 297.

⁸⁸⁷ "Chwaik Samtang Haptong Chunpi Wiwŏnhoe Yŏnsŏk Hoeüi esŏ T'ongkwatoen Haptangkyŏlehŏngsŏ mit Namnotang Kangryŏng," (The Commission for Preparing the Alliance of the Three Parties' Official Statement on the Unification of the Parities and Adoption of the CCP (SKWP)'s Principles)" September 4, 1946, *IDFTYSL*, 63-64.

landlords will be eternally transferred to the state for redistribution free of charge."⁸⁸⁸ In short, the Commission had effectively declared Pak the ultimate victor in the struggle against Yŏ, and confirmed that the unity of the Left was necessary for the sake of supporting and implementing the realization of Communism's supremacy through the promotion of the north's policies in south Korea.

In other words, as psychologist Kelly Oliver explains, Yŏ felt immense shame—the result of being unable to maintain social relations with people around an individual, a "destruction of the self in acute self-denigration" that greatly hinges on others' negative perceptions and evaluations, which is why support and acceptance within the social, or in Yŏ's case, acceptance of "Unitary Socialism" into the mainstream of Leftist ideological circles was essential.⁸⁸⁹ However, with the KPP in shambles, Yŏ instinctively knew that any chance of redemption from his shame was now completely gone. Yŏ could only sigh with relief that as a politically homeless man, he avoided being embroiled in two of the biggest and tumultuous workers' protests in modern Korean history—the Autumn Harvest Uprising of September and the October labor strike.

Nevertheless, Yŏ was deeply saddened by the fact that the coming of an end to his personal career would likely translate into a permanence of a most unfortunate situation—the "inability to enjoy in harmony the greatest joy of national liberation because of slight ideological conflicts and minor differences in political opinion."⁸⁹⁰ Therefore, Yŏ conceived his resignation as an effort to follow the masses as "an old soldier heaving along his worn

⁸⁸⁸ "The Commission for the Alliance of the Three Parties' Official Statement on the Unification of the Parities and Adoption of the CCP's Principles," September 4, 1946, *IDFTYSL*, 64.

⁸⁸⁹ Oliver, *Colonization of Psychic Space*, 114-115.

⁸⁹⁰ "Yŏ Un-hyŏng, Inmintang Tangsu Saimkwa Samtang Haptang Munchae tŭng e taehae Onkŭp," (Yŏ Un-hyŏng Discusses His Resignation from the Chairmanship of the Korean People's Party and the Unity of the Three Leftist Parties) August 23, 1946. *Seoul Sinmun*. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

pike."⁸⁹¹ With these words, Yō promptly resigned from the chairmanship of the KPP a month later, his mind filled with "unspeakable sadness and hollowness" due to a failure to prevent a "forced merger executed without the slightest regard for the KPP's authority and stature," which was why, despite the fact that the "people have been liberated," he himself had yet to "enjoy such a luxury."⁸⁹²

Hence, Yō believed that his resignation was a "final effort to be responsible for the greatest tragedy that has befallen on the Korean people—incessant political disharmony."⁸⁹³ Even though stalwart anti-Communists such as Syngman Rhee admitted that unity among the Left would be "highly beneficial for the Korean people despite its potential to halt operations to obliterate Communists, delay the nationalists' efforts to restore national sovereignty, and leave the ability of the Communists to unify among themselves very questionable,"⁸⁹⁴ Leftist unity was now only a nebulous ideal. It was devoid of any solution to concretize as an effective political strategy to overcome the Cold War's ideological Manicheanism.

According to philosopher Isaiah Berlin's (1971) classic distinction between "positive" liberty and "negative" liberty, the former refers to the ability to answer the question, "What, or who is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?" It is the acquirement of complete self-realization—a condition worth pursuing independent from any constraints.⁸⁹⁵ However, alternatively, this means that being positively free is not actually *enjoying* freedom. Freedom does not produce anything valuable

⁸⁹¹ "Yō Un-hyōng Discusses His Resignation from the Chairmanship of the Korean People's Party and the Unity of the Three Leftist Parties," August 23, 1946. *Seoul Sinmun. TRKAHD, Vol. 3*. See also Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 314.

⁸⁹² Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 298. See also *Seoul Sin-mun*, "Yō Un-hyōng Discusses His Resignation from the Chairmanship of the Korean People's Party and the Unity of the Three Leftist Parties," August 23, 1946. *TRKAHD, Vol. 3*; "Inmintang, Yō Un-hyōng Satōe Sūngin," (Korean People's Party Accepts Yō Un-hyōng's Resignation) September 21, 1946. *Chosŏn Ilpo. TRKAHD, Vol. 3*.

⁸⁹³ "Yō Un-hyōng Discusses His Resignation from the Chairmanship of the Korean People's Party and the Unity of the Three Leftist Parties," August 23, 1946. *Seoul Sinmun. TRKAHD, Vol. 3*.

⁸⁹⁴ "Chwa-u Hapchakkwa Ippōpūiwon e taehan Yi Sūngmanūi Tamhwa Palp'yo," (Syngman Rhee's Statement on the Left-Right Alliance and the Legislative Assembly)" October 14, 1946. *Seoul Sinmun. TRKAHD, Vol. 3*.

⁸⁹⁵ Eric Nelson, "Liberty: One Concept Too Many?" *Political Theory*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (February, 2005), 60.

by merely possessing it. Freedom is valuable for what it can achieve by its own accord, which is another way of saying that freedom is only valuable insofar as it is a means to achieve an end. Since freedom's positiveness is inversely related with how much one actually enjoys being free as an actual state or condition, having "positive liberty" alone is not sufficient to declare that one has attained genuine liberty.⁸⁹⁶ By contrast, "negative liberty" is the ability to address the question, "What is the area within which the subject is or should be left to do or be what one is able to do or be, without reference to other persons?"⁸⁹⁷ Unlike "positive liberty," "negative liberty" is more concerned with liberating liberty from elements which seek to imprison and restrict it, neutral to outcomes and devoted to the removal of impediments that prevent the blossoming of liberty.⁸⁹⁸ Thus, it follows that what is called "liberty" is an amalgamative and mutually reinforcing relationship between "positive" and "negative" liberty such that there is no hierarchy between these two concepts. One cannot claim to be genuinely enjoying liberty unless one is able to flexibly utilize both forms of liberty and is conscious of possessing them.

Using Berlin's concepts, I would argue that Yō's decision to permanently abandon a stable base to continue his political career meant that he had forfeited the "positive liberty" of exercising sufficient autonomy to charter his independent route to realizing "Unitary Socialism." More specifically, Pak Hōn-yōng's constant surveillance of Yō's movements effectively meant that Yō could no longer be the master of his own ideological design or political agenda to allow him to physically promote any kind of political change that was distasteful for Pak. Simultaneously, Yō had forfeited the "negative liberty" of performing his "positive liberty" not only due to Pak's constant pressure but also the ambience of the Cold

⁸⁹⁶ Theodore L. Putternam, "Berlin's Two Concepts of Liberty: A Reassessment and Revision," *Polity*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (July, 2006), 418.

⁸⁹⁷ Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (London, England, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 121-122.

⁸⁹⁸ Nelson, "Liberty: One Concept Too Many?" 65.

War, which could not digest the seemingly vague and ambiguous non-ideological unification. Thus, Yŏ was not only a politically homeless man, but he was completely devoid of all Berlinian liberty, literally degenerating into a vegetative political vagabond. The vegetative state was in turn a product of Yŏ's captivity within the snare of Pak's symbolism as an extreme Communist and the inflexible political ambience of ideological polarization which could not digest the possibility of an non-ideological world.

By contrast, Yŏ's absence presented the CCP with an opportunity to experiment on the possibility of launching an all-out aggressive display of force against the Rightists, which in turn, meant that the CCP was about to enter a genuine test to physically prove its worth as a legitimate Marxist-Leninist organization. According to orthodox Marxist-Leninism, the highest and most ideal form of political struggle is one waged through extreme violence, but the real challenge confronting a Communist party is to select an appropriate form of struggle which would inflict maximum damage on opponents while the party efficiently fulfills its intention behind waging violence. To that end, a party can choose from three types of struggle: a political struggle, which aims to wrest power away from an establishment and found a new order, an economic struggle, which aims to protect workers' economic interests and alleviate workers' working conditions, and finally, an ideological struggle, which aims to pervasively indoctrinate and rationalize Communism. However, the most important point that strengthens the interrelated character between the three forms of struggle is the flexible adaptability of each individual strategy to correctly assess and respond to a given situation.⁸⁹⁹

Simultaneously, because Communism's highest objective is to encourage and realize an incumbent individual or group's surrender of authority, the answer to the question of which strategy is most suitable for a swift completion of a Communist dominance remains open and vague. Circumstantial suitability of any of the three strategies is determined by the responses

⁸⁹⁹ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 235; *RRSKWP*, 277.

of an opponent. Yet, the vagueness only pertains to the question of timing; if it is solely the objective of a Communist revolution which ought to determine the kind of strategy to be used, a complete usurpation of an opponent's power is the most ideal, as it would ensure that there would be no recurring challenges or any similar instances arising in the future. To that end, Lenin believed that the proletariat must assume the leadership of a Communist revolution because the bourgeoisie was representative of the monarchist order and dangerously harbored the propensity to desert the revolution anytime. The proletariats were charged with "paralyzing the inevitable inconsistency of the bourgeoisie," such that the quest for social Democracy had to adopt violence as its method and the dictatorship of the proletariat as the ultimate goal.⁹⁰⁰ The latter point was especially important, for, as Lenin himself explained in *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (1989):

"The proletariat must carry out to the end of the democratic revolution, and in this, unite to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyze the instability of the bourgeoisie."⁹⁰¹

Hence, if a Communist revolution is to be an insurance policy against any future disturbances from a potentially powerful opponent, then it becomes necessary to select a struggle which would effectively pulverize the foundations of bourgeois resistance against a Communist revolution by uniting with the peasantry and thereby making sure that the revolution reaches its desired objective of rendering the bourgeoisie incapable of planning and executing any substantive plan to recuperate themselves and reclaim power. The ideal outcome of such a struggle was a "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry."⁹⁰² The objective of a Communist revolution is to create an entirely different order by absolutely demolishing the establishment to make sure that the establishment never recuperates ever again. In other words, even though there is much room for adaptive

⁹⁰⁰ V. I. Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (New York: International Publishing, 1989), 85.

⁹⁰¹ Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, 85.

⁹⁰² Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 235.

flexibility among the three strategies, the core objective that unites the three most cohesively and is therefore hierarchically at the top of the pyramid is a political struggle because it is the most certain form of struggle which would not only destroy the old bourgeoisie but make the destruction permanent through the founding of an unchallengeable dictatorship of the very classes which overthrew the bourgeoisie.⁹⁰³

From the CCP's perspective, a political struggle was the most realistic option because negotiations with the American military government and the Rhee Administration and failed to gain any substantial promises or agreements from the Rightists. Resuming negotiations while still harboring deep animosity would only worsen relations and reconfirm the stalemate. On the other hand, a swift surrender would be akin to political suicide, because it would not only be a betrayal of the CCP's original vow from September 2, 1945 to punish all pro-Japanese collaborators, but also render the CCP's political status into that of a lone island with no clear land with which it could attach itself. Proposing an alliance with the NKWP under the CCP's leadership was unrealistic, for the party had not really produced any convincing results for the northerners to trust the CCP as a reliable partner in the quest for Communist supremacy. Furthermore, by late July, Pak's defeat to Kim Il-sung in the bid for the NKWP leadership was sealed, since the Soviets distrusted Pak's past involvement in intense factionalism during the 1920s.

Most importantly, compared to the Soviets' familiarity with Kim, the Soviets had virtually no reliable information about Pak, given that he was a largely obscure figure in north Korea.⁹⁰⁴ The CCP's role had largely been a dependent supporter of the north's propaganda, and the party was well aware that unless it took care of the southern Rightists with their own

⁹⁰³ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 277; Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, 72.

⁹⁰⁴ F. I. Shabshina and Kim Myōng-ho trans., *Sikminchi Chosōn eso (In Korea Under Colonial Rule)* (Seoul, south Korea: Han-ul Publishing, 1996), 333-334; *Chosōn Inmin Minchuchūi Konghwakuk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)*, Vol. 1 (Seoul, south Korea: *Chungang Ilpo*, 1992), 237 and 326-330.

hands, at worst, it could mean the termination of the Communist partnership. The end of the partnership could mean that it would just be a matter of time before the Americans and the Rightists would combine forces to obliterate the CCP. Thus, the only pragmatic path to ensure the CCP's survival was to conceive of a radical tactic which would only ensure one thing: a maximization of damage nearly akin to a full-fledged assault which might coerce the Right into indefinitely suspending armed clashes. This would not only buy time and save the party's already meager human resources, but more ideally conceal the critical weakness itself.

Therefore, since July 1946, the CCP had concentrated on devising a brand new strategy to effectively counter, if not obliterate, the Rightists and the American Military Government. Although the CCP knew very well that they did not stand a chance in terms of firepower, the party knew that cowering up before even attempting to initiate a struggle would be more egregious than directly attacking the Americans and Rightists, for it would be akin to inviting the enemy to liberally strike the CCP as they wished until the party would rapidly disintegrate. Hence, to prevent the impending disaster as effectively and as swiftly as possible, the party decided to launch a "counter-responsive strategy" against them. The main strength of the "counter-responsive strategy" was the supposed effect of delivering a major surprise and shock to the Rightists and the American military government due to the strategy's daring simplicity and ferocity. The party decided to "rally laborers and deliberately excite the American beast to encourage an all-out assault on the imperialists."⁹⁰⁵ To that end, the party believed that a more robust and systematic preparation of an organized mass-based struggle would best deliver the party's objectives.

Hence, the CCP ignored Syngman Rhee's call to "halt all malicious operations and repent for their sins through ideological conversion by abandoning their unprincipled loyalty to a reckless extremism and devote their hearts and minds singularly toward achieving total

⁹⁰⁵ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 277.

independence."⁹⁰⁶ Rhee's statement only confirmed his anti-Communist stance from his earlier criticism of Shtykov, with the only difference being the usage of "conversion" to hide his real wish for a rapid disintegration of the Left. Although Rhee had tried a milder form of appeasement earlier by emphasizing that a "genuinely pan-ideological alliance was necessary to promote Democracy," the general program to achieve that end essentially suggested that the Leftists had to follow the Rightists' leadership or had no other choice.⁹⁰⁷ Rhee argued that land reforms would "only be initiated after the founding of the Provisional Government."⁹⁰⁸ However, Rhee believed that only a Leftist alliance with the Right would "greatly propel the unification of the people," for which he was ready to grant "full and unwavering support."⁹⁰⁹ Indeed, he had made his urge to form a Rightist-centric alliance very clear by arguing that there could only be an "alliance with the American military government, even though we will not wait passively for the Americans to transfer governmental authority to Koreans whenever they fancied."⁹¹⁰ In short, Rhee was arguing that the southern Left had no independent future unless it came under the DPK's leadership. The southern Left could find no sanctuary in south Korea unless they showed their patriotism for south Korea by cooperating with the Right and the American military government in founding a Right-wing-dominated government.

Nevertheless, instead of stressing immediate independence, Rhee strangely compromised his patriotic flair with his pro-American stance by arguing that only when Koreans "earnestly prove their capability for self-government to Americans will Koreans be able to win their

⁹⁰⁶ Syngman Rhee, "Kongsanpanñ Taeohara," (Communists, Repent for Your Sins) September 30, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 10, 76.*

⁹⁰⁷ Syngman Rhee, "Communists, Repent for Your Sins," September 30, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 10, 76.*

⁹⁰⁸ Syngman Rhee, "Communists, Repent for Your Sins," September 30, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 10, 76.*

⁹⁰⁹ Syngman Rhee, "Chinchōnghān Hapchakūl," (Toward a Genuine Ideological Alliance) September 14, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 10, 77.*

⁹¹⁰ Syngman Rhee, "Kyetanul Palpa Wanchōnchachuchōngpuro," (Let Us Build a Perfectly Autonomous Government Step by Step) September 21, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 10, 78.*

long-awaited independence."⁹¹¹ He elaborated that a "gradual transition from military to civilian government" will win "global respect and adulation," that the Americans' bureaucratic organization of the military government over the past year would "greatly enhance mutual cordiality between Korea and the United States," and finally, the Americans would only play an "auxiliary advisory role during the political transition, thereby doing little harm to Korea's political sovereignty."⁹¹² Constructing a properly functioning Democracy was crucial because failure would mean that "the cruel fate of civil war from which China is tremendously suffering could also befall on Koreans if Communists continue to deceive the innocent public by spewing lies about granting nebulous privileges to peasants and laborers."⁹¹³

In essence, Rhee was telling the Leftists to quickly surrender so it would be comfortable and easy for the Rightists to lead the alliance on their own terms by preserving the Provisional Government as the superstructure. Furthermore, since Rhee believed that political independence would strangely arrive in the form of active Korean public demand accompanied by a passive appeasement strategy of demonstrating the capacity to the military government, the old Leftist-military government conflict would still retain its vigor, its roots firmly in place. The American military government would continue advising "Koreans," or more specifically go on listening only to Rightist demands ensuing from the DPK while surveilling Leftist activities. It was not clear how the two strategies could mesh together to produce an optimum outcome that could satisfy both the Left and the Right or whether the two strategies even had a logical relationship between each other. Finally, because Rhee explicitly stated that the ultimate purpose behind constructing Democracy was to establish a bulwark against a Communist-inspired civil war which would only deceive peasants and

⁹¹¹ Syngman Rhee, "Let Us Build a Perfectly Autonomous Government Step by Step," September 21, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 10, 79.*

⁹¹² Syngman Rhee, "Let Us Build a Perfectly Autonomous Government Step by Step," September 21, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 10, 79.*

⁹¹³ Syngman Rhee, "Chŏnminchok Taechung eke Kohanora," (A Plea to the Korean Public) September 28, 1946. *PSMKH, Vol. 10, 81.*

workers through promises of an illusionary Communist paradise, Rhee was clarifying that he would not allow any Communists in his administration. The Leftists would naturally have little, or more realistically, no influence whatsoever within Rhee's government; "alliance" was from the Leftists' perspective, a euphemism for absorption by the Rightists or political suicide.

Hence, for the next three months, the CCP's branches busily recruited workers, spread propaganda, deliver speeches to arouse anti-Rightist and American sentiment in laborers' hearts—a task which resulted in providing the CCP with 100,000 workers protesting against American imperialism on behalf of the CCP in Tae-ku alone. Furthermore, the CCP made sure to take preliminary measures before the planned strikes to achieve the maximum desired effect of subjugating the Right to the workers. First, the CCP instructed laborers to only make demands specific to their working conditions such as a higher wage, better working conditions and a regular perquisite of extra bags of rice every month to feed workers' families.⁹¹⁴ In addition, the CCP instructed the laborers to demand the immediate release of all Communist prisoners wrongly under police custody and finally, the regular enforcement of a standard eight-hour workday. To systematize and regularize these measures, the workers' critically demanded the legalization of a standard labor law "potentially enshrined in the Constitution" to make sure that there was a clear sense of a binding and an eternal contract between the workers and the state.⁹¹⁵

In other words, the workers sought to elevate their status from mere employees of private companies to national forces of production enjoying the right to protection because they were directly responsible for the nation's economic health. The worker therefore not only had the right to be respected of his or her human rights as an individual, but had the right to ensure that the state operated responsibly for the workers' interests as much as the workers' had done

⁹¹⁴ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 278.

⁹¹⁵ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 278-279.

so without demanding anything from the state for a long time. The mutuality of a social contract or a public insurance between the state and the worker had to be recognized permanently.

Ironically, excitement has the dangerous capacity to rob anyone of the ability to reason clearly about the appropriate boundaries of rational behavior and often requires the imposition of unexpected pressure to coerce people into abandon preconceived plans. On September 6, Hodge ordered the discontinuation of Leftist papers such as *The People's Daily*, *Modern Daily*, and *Central Newspaper* for violating several press laws. This was followed a day later by an official notice calling for Pak Hŏn-yŏng's immediate arrest.⁹¹⁶ The CCP, wishing to prevent these unexpected incidents from ruining the strikes even before they could commence and to better demands increased in number and in specificity, launched what it called a "new tactic" against the American military government. After diagnosing that "soft vocal criticism was obsolete in bringing about radical changes," the CCP argued that it had to "overtly engage in violence as a measure of self-defense and for an effective counterattack."⁹¹⁷ Terrorism could only be prevented with terrorism and blood had to be paid with blood. In short, the CCP believed that passive resistance through petitions, debates and manifestos had long fallen to deaf ears. The only way to make itself heard was by attempting to make the same amount of noise and disruption to draw the Americans' attention to the fact that the CCP was fiercely resilient against all forms of violence. After a long time of victimization, it was the CCP's turn

⁹¹⁶ *Chosŏn Ilpo*, "Chwaik Sinmun, Ŏnronpŏp Wipanŏro Chŏngkan," (Leftist Papers are Suspended for Violating Press Laws) September 7, 1946. *Kuknaewoe Ilchi (National and Foreign Daily Newspaper Collection)* (P'yŏngyang, north Korea: Minchu Chosŏnsa (Democratic Korea), 1949), 75 and 76. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 237.

⁹¹⁷ Kim Nam-sik, *Namnotang Ch'ongpipan (A Comprehensive Critique of the South Korean Workers' Party)* (Seoul, south Korea: Koryŏ Taehakkyo Asia Munche Yŏnkuso (Korea University Center for the Study of Asian Problems), 2010), 46.

to pay back the Americans the violence that they were due.⁹¹⁸

Under the leadership of the Southern Korean Labor Strike Association, which was organized by the All Workers' Council (*Chŏn-p'yŏng*), the labor department of the CCP, the striking workers issued a manifesto. The workers demanded 640 grams of rice per laborer and 480 grams for families; a raise in monthly wages; legal protection against arbitrary layoffs and the implementation of a public labor law to protect workers' rights.⁹¹⁹ In addition, workers argued that Korea's railways, constructed with "every ounce of a Korean's honest sweat," was on the verge of being "cursed by the American imperialists' libertine and indiscriminate use, which disrespected the sovereignty of the Korean people."⁹²⁰ Therefore, the strikes had a "nationalist mission of realizing the homeland's Democratization and independence by struggling against the "inhumane tyranny" of the bourgeois employers' attempt to lay off workers without notice, which "jeopardized the livelihood and survival of 20 million people."⁹²¹ In other words, the workers publicized what initially was a private grievance about low wages by appealing to familial and nationalist values, which muddled the distinction between the worker's right to protest as a social and a political right, by veering closer to the latter. The CCP had encouraged a camouflage of the September strike as a struggle for workers' rights and a nationalist protest against the supposed tyranny of the bourgeoisie and imperialism to conceal the CCP's real intention to counter "U.S. efforts at a semblance of economic order" by rendering the hierarchy between striking for labor rights

⁹¹⁸ "Letter from A. F. Whitney, President of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes," December 13, 1946 and Byrnes's reply to Whitney. RG 554, Box 16. Kim Nam-sik, *A Comprehensive Critique of the Southern Korean Workers' Party*, 46.

⁹¹⁹ Kongpopu (Korean Public Press Administration Office), *Hyŏndaesawa Kongsanchu'i (Modern History and Communism)* (Seoul, south Korea: 1946), 148. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 238.

⁹²⁰ *National and Foreign Daily Newspaper Collection*, 77. Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 238.

⁹²¹ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 279-280.

and delivering the party's propaganda intelligible.⁹²²

However, the certainty of this strategy's failure was almost inevitable because the strategy was irrational, driven by only the CCP's blind desire for revenging their failure in September without sufficient strength or means necessary to execute that revenge. Irrationality is not merely an absence of reason but based on an erroneous assessment of information—a poison for the body and mind to act before one can even afford time to be strategically selective in choosing one's moves.⁹²³ This error arises because people are unable to calculate the consequences of their actions due to the critical fact that they might not have a full conviction about why they are performing certain actions over others and how their chosen method is indeed the best option.⁹²⁴ The greatest pitfall of the so-called “new tactic” was that the purpose of the strike was kept so secretive to the extent that while a generic understanding of the tactic's goals lay in the minds of Pak and his aides, the means to publicize the actual implementation of those goals were never concretely announced to laborers who were in charge of carrying them out.

If a sender and a receiver of a message hold different views, the receiver welcomes ambiguity since the ambiguity is a sign of the sender's openness to differing views. However, if the receiver already identifies with the views of a sender, then the message must be explicitly stated to directly confirm the identification.⁹²⁵ In other words, the SKWP forgot that clarity must accompany a presumed congruence between leaders' and followers' thoughts to assure a smooth delivery in communication. Consequently, laborers mistakenly began to

⁹²² John Z. Williams, Division of Japanese Affairs, "Memorandum of Conversation with Major General A. V. Arnold," October 9, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8*, 741.

⁹²³ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 42.

⁹²⁴ Herbert A. Simon, "Rationality in Political Behavior," *Political Psychology, Vol. 16, No. 1, Special Issue: Political Economy and Political Psychology* (March, 1995), 46-47.

⁹²⁵ Hong-yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Case Study* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, England: University of California Press, 1980), 56. For a closer examination of this idea, see B. J. Fine, "Conclusion Drawing, Communication Credibility," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (March, 1959), 63-73.

believe that they were truly members of the CCP. They clandestinely mixed in with ordinary, famished citizens, and instigated mayhem by committing grotesque forms of violence. Reasons for committing violence, however, often had little relevance to the strike's original cause of protesting against the American military government and the Rightists, which added more chaos and mayhem to an already confusing heap of commotion. For example, some workers, along with angry mobs, stormed the Tae-ku Police Station, raided the armory, and proceeded to randomly kill police officers, most of whom had served under the Japanese.⁹²⁶ Other workers were caught in a frenzied passion of resentment toward pro-Japanese collaborators and proceeded to shoot and beat up officers, arsoning armories in police stations, or even going to the extreme of murdering family members of police officers.⁹²⁷

The participants quickly forgot about the original purpose of the strikes the more they converged toward absolute mayhem. Security of food and livelihood became more important than translating a single quote from Marx into action. In Wae-kwan, North Kyōng-sang Province, where people were especially upset about the constantly capricious and exorbitant demand for rice and grain from government officials, grievance over leading harsh lives was a more practical cause for rebellion than the grandiose and nebulous call for a "more perfect Communist revolution." Workers teamed up with angry mobs which totaled at 2,000 and ransacked the main police station, killing four police officers in the process. The workers and mobs were so overcome with uncontrollable rage and anger that they ended up brutally axing Police Chief Chang Sōk-han's face and body, killing him instantly.⁹²⁸

Anti-Americanism was so fresh and raw in citizens' minds that conversing even a few words with American soldiers or disrupting pro-Communist rallies instantly marked people

⁹²⁶ An Chae-sōng, *Pak Hōn-yōng: A Biography*, 380.

⁹²⁷ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 285-286.

⁹²⁸ "G-2 Weekly Summary, No. 57." Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 280.

for death. In Kwang-ju, a high school student was brutally stoned to death after he exchanged greetings with several American soldiers. In Ham-p'yŏng, police officers were violently harassed after a mob, incensed by highly sensational propagandists, began to shout pro-Communist and anti-imperialist slogans while stoning and lynching the officers, leaving dozens of officers and protesters dead.⁹²⁹ Similar acts of violence continued to erupt across south Korea until November 11, with protesters pillaging many police stations and destroying telephone poles, eventually paralyzing communications across the region.⁹³⁰ In short, prolonged economic hardship coupled with regional authorities' incompetence or refusal to solve that problem were more direct causes for agitation than a desire to wax theoretical about a reality which seemed very distant and foreign to the question of whether a bourgeoisie-proletarian conflict could materialize into Communist supremacy. Punishing pro-Japanese collaborators and corrupt officials and putting grains on the table were more urgent than fighting for an esoteric ideology.

Of course, the police did not always endure such victimization and retaliated with a more intensely vicious ferocity, often spreading the flames of violence to the countryside. Consequently, many peasants who joined the strikes out of the hope that they could "beat the pulp out of a Jap[sic]" actually ended up being scapegoats of a violence whose origins or development had very little to relate or contribute with their bucolic lives. One farmer bluntly recollected how life was a living hell, enduring an endlessly spinning wheel of violence which did not seem to stop:

"It was October 2 or 3 when I went up the mountains with my parents. A group of about 50 men from the village, including the elderly, had congregated with much agitation and excitement on their faces. One youth donning a western suit stood up and orated, 'The People's Committee has taken over Dae-goo and the police has been disarmed. Let us use this moment to punish the pro-Japanese lackeys and make a world in which there

⁹²⁹ "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 381." Adapted from Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 281. For a more comprehensive discussion about the magnitude of the October Labor Strikes, see Chŏng Hae-ku, *Siwŏl Inminhangchaeng Yŏnku (A Study of the People's Resistance of October)* (Seoul, south Korea: Yŏl-um Publishing, 1988).

⁹³⁰ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 287.

would be no abrupt and unwanted discharge of our precious rice!' The people then got quickly won over by the fiery rhetoric and proceeded to pillage and sack the county office. The office officials and police had already fled, unable to withstand the villagers' anger. The villagers proceeded to destroy the prefect's house, as he was a pro-Japanese collaborator, and many harbored deep animosity and resentment toward him. In addition to his fortune, they burned his genealogical chart and his entire house. The people returned elated and victorious. There were celebrations all throughout the night.

Unfortunately, vengeance arrived in a more fierce fashion. The prefect had contacted the police, who promptly and exactingly balanced the scale of violence. Many died as they fled the police by jumping over creeks; a youth was shot to death in the process. Peasants who participated in the October Strike were summarily hunted down for the unfounded charge of providing rice to the strikers, while the police ironically engaged in larceny and theft of grains and rice themselves. There were many peasants who were broke soon after the strike. It was a horrible age to live in, one that gives me shivers down my spine and goosebumps whenever I reminisce about that terrible year."⁹³¹

In short, the October labor strikes failed because they did not evolve into a coherent social movement. Participants, aside from a commonly shared strong anti-Japanese sentiment, lacked a conscious volition, a commitment to a concrete set of aims or beliefs which could sustain the public appeal of the movement, and finally, because it had no charismatic leader within the movement to encourage the strikes' growth into a genuine mass movement.⁹³² Emotion ruled over logic; the heart ruled over the head.

Mayhem and chaos ruled so supreme throughout October and November that the original form of the laborers' protests as strikes demanding higher wages and better distribution of rice was quickly forgotten. Instead, it was replaced with vicious violence launched out of intense abhorrence for the Rightists and American military government, with both sides engaging in retaliatory violence as a swift response. Indeed, when factories, post offices, and railways all decided to join the strike during the last week of September, the strikes caused much harm than good for the public, as it suspended the delivery of south Korea's electricity supply and operation of mass communication systems. Furthermore, the CCP had mistakenly ordered even the Publications' Department, which was responsible for informing workers' of situations outside their vicinity, to launch its own strike. Consequently, when groups which lacked in numbers reached out to the Publications' Department to coordinate support from ordinary

⁹³¹ Yi Mok-u, "Siwöl Ilil Taeku Hangchaeng," (The October 1 Tae-ku Uprising) *Setae (Generations)*, October, 1965, 230-231.

⁹³² Paul Wilkinson, *Social Movements* (London, England: Pall Mall, 1971), 27.

citizens, the groups were unable to receive any cooperation.⁹³³

The strikes were indeed a form of violence, for they resisted against the involvement of adversaries—the Right and the American military government—and resulted in sixty civilians and strikers and a hundred policemen killed.⁹³⁴ The strikes also initially pointed to a bad harvest as a clear motivation for displaying grievances and demands for better working conditions. However, the strikes failed to materialize into a revolution because they did not instigate the breakdown of the traditionally *Yang-ban* dominated agrarian economic order and was not properly socialized to maximize public appeal.⁹³⁵ More precisely, they did not enjoy a broad popular support strong enough to entirely displace the American military government and because they did not take place when there was a prolonged economic and social development halted briefly by a sharp reversal of such prosperity.⁹³⁶ Economic development during Japanese rule had concentrated on fueling the rise of a handful of industrialists and was never broadly conceived to encourage a natural transformation of the agrarian population into members of the bourgeoisie. While it may be true that Korean industrialization saw dramatic and rapid growth, industrialization is not a metonym for the economy and the Japanese practiced colonial underdevelopment, nurturing pro-Japanese Korean industrialists while stunting and prohibiting the autonomous growth of a native Korean upper class.

Even the peasantry who were introduced to urban industrialization in the 1930s were not allowed to participate in the new market by their own volition but forceably mobilized as fluid human capital, easily dispensed by the Japanese war machine during the Second World

⁹³³ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 239.

⁹³⁴ Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement*, 310.

⁹³⁵ On the conditions for fermenting political violence, see Robert C. Williamson, "Toward a Theory of Political Violence: The Case of Rural Colombia," *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (March, 1965), 38-39.

⁹³⁶ On the definition of a revolution, see James C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (February, 1962), 6.

War as "bullet bearers," or sacrificial victims in the Japanese military.⁹³⁷ Given the fact that a majority of the Korean population engaged in traditional farming well into the 1940s and that Japanese rule had stunted the general growth of the manufacturing industry. Korea served mainly as an import market for Japan's finished cotton goods, with the exception of the rice production industry, whose growth the Japanese encouraged to meet a falling supply against a rising demand for rice in Japan—there was no drastic reversal of public fortune to inspire a radical dismantlement of Korea's social fabric.⁹³⁸ In other words, the strikes were too parochial in their conception of interest, unable to generate mass public appeal by directing the peasantry's discontent toward an evolution into an urge to revamp the colonial economic structure which had been predicated upon the inequality between the peasant and industrialist.

Furthermore, the strikes represented a failure of Korean Communism. While the peasantry was right to be upset with price hikes in foodstuffs, they lacked the theoretical training and rigor to understand the precise objective for which they were waging the strikes. The marriage between anti-imperialistic nationalism and the proletarian cause to realize better working conditions according to orthodox Marxist theory was solely Pak's conception, and the prohibition of any challenges within the CCP to his authority made it impossible for workers unacquainted with Marxism to clearly know which element of the marriage had to have higher priority. The sheer lack of direction, objectives, and coordination in waging the strikes was also arguably inevitable because the CCP did not have much interest in defending workers' rights as a goal in itself but abused the strikes as demonstrations of the CCP's "new

⁹³⁷ On the linkage between colonialism and Korean industrialism, see Meredith Woo-Cumings, *Race to the Swift: State and Finance in Korean Industrialization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). See also P. W. Kuznets's review of the book in *Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 8 (1992), 229-232. On "colonial underdevelopment," see Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 175-176.

⁹³⁸ Suh Sang-chul, *Growth and Structural Changes in the Korean Economy, 1910-1945* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1978), 95-112. Aside from the rice market, Korea was not an important market from which Japan could import, since production technology qualitatively lagged behind that of Japan. On this point, see Mitsuhiro Kimura, "The Economics of Japanese Imperialism in Korea, 1910-1939," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 48, No. 3 (August, 1995), 555-574.

tactic" and as a means to vehemently display dissatisfaction and resilience against the American military government and the DPK. Thus, there was little that the strikers could practically gain from the strikes to enhance their welfare.

The nihilism of the fiasco, which ended with a staggering 11,624 workers being arrested, was no better represented than through the immediate spoils of violence—immense infrastructural and financial damages.⁹³⁹ In Yŏng-ch'ŏn, North Kyŏng-sang Province, nearly 1,200 houses were pillaged or severely damaged; electricity and water supplies were severely depleted such that on October 3, just one day into the rebellion, property damage amounted to a staggering 10 billion Wŏn, or about \$6 billion, if the 1946 Dollar-Won exchange rate is applied.⁹⁴⁰ These forms of exorbitant violence continued well into November, when miners also allied with angry citizens in Mu-an County, disconnecting bridges and subverting American military jeeps to display their intense hatred, pelting rocks, stones, and even bullets from guns they stole in the local armories.⁹⁴¹ The strikes' most unfortunate and inhumane feature was that workers neither bothered to impose an internal threshold and identifiable limits to their violence nor prevent violence from having absolute criteria or quantitative estimates.⁹⁴² Such laxity even caused occupational moral amnesia among those for whom dispassionate and neutral performance of public service was the utmost virtue.

The unruly nature of the frenzy was such that it was not only contagious among workers and mobs, but even doctors whose main responsibility was to look after the wounded, police officers and workers alike. Doctors from the Tae-ku Doctors' Association "refused to treat officers who were murdering innocent civilians" and demanded that the police stop their

⁹³⁹ Song Kwang-sung (Ph.D. Dissertation), *The Impact of U.S. Military Occupation (1945-1949) on Korean Liberation, Democratization, and Unification* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1989), 136.

⁹⁴⁰ In July 1945, the U.S. Military Government issued Order No. 309, which fixed the Dollar-Won exchange rate at \$1=15 Won. This rate applied throughout 1946 and until 1947, when the rate was readjusted to control inflation.

⁹⁴¹ USAFIK, "G-2 Weekly Summary, No. 61," *G-2 Weekly Summary, Vol. 2* (Kangwŏn-do Ch'unch'ŏn-si : Hallim University Research Center for the Study of Asian Cultures, 1990).

⁹⁴² Etienne Balibar, *Violence and Civility: On the Limits of Political Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 129.

indiscriminate spray of bullets."⁹⁴³ Upon announcing this declaration, the doctors completely forgot about their primary duty of saving people's lives and the transformation from disciplined providers of public service to libertine and disorderly rebels was thereby complete. These phenomena show how ideologically destitute the CCP was because the CCP's external followers reflected the party members' common ignorance of traditional Marxist philosophy and tactics. This ignorance explains why the strikes easily became unruly fiascos, with extremely agitated laborers demanding higher wages and better working conditions also calling for the overthrow of the American military government. Extremism met extremism, as bullets of the Korean National Police sunk into the flesh of the demonstrators, drunk with blood and yet thirsty for more, ultimately crushing both protests mercilessly. The result of the bloody clashes between workers and the police was appalling and gruesomely tragic, with much of the blood oozing from workers rather than the police or American soldiers.

The American military government quickly identified Pak Hŏn-yŏng as the primary agitator and organizer of the September and October strikes and issued an order for his immediate arrest, upon which Pak promptly fled from Seoul and went into hiding.⁹⁴⁴ The American authorities argued that the All-Korean Labor Union (*chŏnp'yŏng*) was the mastermind behind the strikes. More specifically, the sheer chaos which ensued during the progression of the labor strikes was not actually a mark of failure, but "a highly calculative maneuver by Pak to corner his opponents and consolidate his dictatorship within the party."⁹⁴⁵ Pak's deliberate demonstration of overwhelming force which nearly equaled in ferocity to that of the Americans was a "consideration which took into account not only the incrementally exacerbating economic crisis," but also political considerations such as "the Left-Right

⁹⁴³ USAFIK, "G-2 Weekly Summary, No. 61," *G-2 Weekly Summary*, Vol. 2.

⁹⁴⁴ An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 380.

⁹⁴⁵ "G-2 Weekly Summary No. 58," October 13-October 20, 1946. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 6.

alliance, the northern model of revolution, the establishment of the legislative council, and finally, the order for the arrest of all Communist leaders, including Pak Hŏn-yŏng."⁹⁴⁶ In short, the Americans understood that Pak's resortion to force was borne from an instinctual urge to survive—a deep sense of desperation stemming from an unstable market economy in the south, his personal desire to satisfy P'yŏngyang, and the rapid confirmation of the southern Communists and the southern Right's relationship akin to one between a fly and a Venus fly trap.

The most surprising fact for the Americans, however, was the sheer simplicity behind the mechanism which brought the strike as a single conclusion to all of these complex circumstantial calculations—the politics of power. The Americans were most taken aback at how complacent even moderates within the CCP were, such that even though they had initially resisted against Pak's order to participate in the strike, they soon "complied with utmost intensity, unwavering in their pledge and commitment to supporting the strike and the party, shouting the provocative slogan, 'Once a Communist, forever a Communist,'" vowing to carry out the strike regardless of its consequences.⁹⁴⁷ In short, while it was unsurprising that the CCP failed to achieve its objective of pressuring the Americans and Rightists to make concessions, the Americans were clearly taken aback that Pak had prepared a multi-dimensional strategy which also sought to effectively use the strike as a highly intimidating internal policing mechanism against the CCP to make sure that his personality cult remained intact. Most importantly, the Americans found a highly vulnerable Pak trying to salvage not only the party's waning political fortunes but also those of his own, which were in jeopardy of disappearing altogether if the strike failed to deliver its goals.

⁹⁴⁶ "G-2 Weekly Summary Report No. 58," October 13-October 20, 1946. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 6.

⁹⁴⁷ "G-2 Weekly Summary Report No. 58," October 13-October 20, 1946. Adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng*, Vol. 6.

It did not take long for the Americans to realize that the vulnerability would further linger in Pak's mind. Without any specified clarity in defining a revolution's goal other than holding a contest of power between proletariats and the bourgeoisie, a general strike can never become political, since it has not emeshed its goals within the specific social structure the strike wishes to change.⁹⁴⁸ Consequently, the eventual clarity with which the September strike did come to an abrupt end as a massive debacle, was from Pak's point of view, deeply unsettling. The September strike's failure only increased his anxiety and nervousness over the dimming prospect of continuing his political career in the north. Hence, on October 1, Pak and the CCP were simultaneously sharing a deep sense of urgency and despair. Anxious to cling onto the nihilistic hope that it could pull off a last-minute victory against the Right, Pak urged the party to continue agitating workers by making them demand an increase in wages, regular distributions of extra rations of rice, and the unrealistic prospect of being unaffected by "all cases of dismissal from work and reduction of the work force."⁹⁴⁹ The north Kyōng-sang chapter of the CCP organized a thousand women and children and instructed them to insitgate a commotion. This was followed by five hundred workers joining the commotion later that afternoon. During the process, one worker was accidentally shot and killed by the police, who thought he was about to throw a bomb. It was at this moment that the party made the most critical mistake which forced the conflict to mushroom beyond control and led to more bloodshed and mayhem. Instead of ordering a retreat, the party made a big ruckus about the worker's death, praising him as a Communist martyr, which rallied thousands of citizens and workers to Seoul's Central Square. The ensuing chaos led to more bullets sprayed onto the crowd, injuring hundreds and killing several more workers before the brouhaha died down at

⁹⁴⁸ Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, 151.

⁹⁴⁹ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 280.

5 o'clock that evening.⁹⁵⁰

However, instead of recuperating from the brouhaha, the CCP made another critical error by redressing the victim of the shooting into a generic and impulsive hatred of the police and ordered strikers and protesters to congregate again the next day. Encouraged by the Kyōngsang and Taeku branches of the CCP, mobs of workers, farmers, and citizens proceeded to invade the Taeku Police Station, opened cells, stole weapons from the armories, and destroyed communication systems. The increasingly agitated mobs then roamed around Tae-gu's streets, indiscriminately murdering police officers and their family members.⁹⁵¹ Although American soldiers arrived and soon restored order, several workers managed to evade capture and continued their rampage in cities such as Sōngchu, Ch'ilkok, and Yōngch'ōn, where security and surveillance were relatively weak. Havoc and chaos were prevalent throughout November as violence spread to eighteen counties in Kyōngsang Province and 73 cities across south Korea.⁹⁵² In short, as Cumings argues, the general scale of the financial damage wreaked by the strikes was gargantuan. Families of the bourgeoisie and landholding classes were slaughtered, many police stations were pillaged and ransacked, and communications were practically malfunctioned throughout the nation, and transportation was nearly non-existent due to protesters blocking roads and cutting railroad tracks.⁹⁵³

As if the infrastructural dysfunction was not enough, the police exacerbated the situation by firing indiscriminately into crowds of protesters. The gross abuse of authority fueled the workers' ire and propensity for violence without offering any negotiations, thereby enflaming the gross passions which wildly erupted in no time. Thus, the general debacle was a true tragedy because neither the public nor the central government wished to assume responsibility

⁹⁵⁰ *RRLC*, 246 and 278; *Haepang Hu 20 Nyōn (20 Years After Liberation)* (Seoul, south Korea: He-mang (Hope) Publishing, 1965), 164 and 169.

⁹⁵¹ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 243.

⁹⁵² Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 243.

⁹⁵³ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, chapter 10.

and only sought to heighten tensions in the interest of their own respective cliques. The complete absence of negotiations—a situation relished by both the CCP and the Rightists—led to the bitter tragedy of wounding workers' bodies and minds and left nothing healed, either physically or psychologically.⁹⁵⁴

Although anti-Americanism and anti-imperialism set the tone of the civil unrest, the impoverished condition of the agrarian production was a more direct cause for the September and October labor strikes. They are collectively known as the Autumn Harvest Uprisings because both events occurred during the critical months in which the success or failure of autumn harvests determined the qualitative and quantitative condition of Korea's already chronic food shortage. The situation in late 1946 was especially egregious, compounded by the American military government's refusal to aid the Korean government in the latter's effort to assure the Korean public that the state was effectively and efficiently distributing foodstuffs to the majority of the urban and rural populations. Instead since February, the American military government had ordered a general confiscation of rice and other crops, despite the fact that a farming family could only procure 81 liters to feed all of its members.⁹⁵⁵

Furthermore, while the American military government tried to reinforce order and stability by imposing a price ceiling as low as 38 Won per liter of rice in Chŏn-nam and Kyŏng-puk provinces, the ceiling effectively meant that people could buy almost nothing else to nutritionally supplement their diets because all other staple grains rose two or threefold.⁹⁵⁶ In other words, the rigor with which the American military government tried to enforce discipline could not qualitatively correspond with the austerity of inflation. Bureaucratic rationality found itself impotent against the irrationality of a primary force of the market.

⁹⁵⁴ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 368-371; Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 285-289.

⁹⁵⁵ Chŏng Yŏng-Chin, *P'okpungŭi Siwŏl (Stormy October)* (Seoul, south Korea: Han-kil Publishing, 1990), 303.

⁹⁵⁶ Sin Pok-ryong, *The Politics of Separation of the Korean Peninsula, 1943-1953* (Seoul, south Korea: Jimoondang International, 2008), 488.

However, the most devastating reality to which the Rhee Administration barely devoted any serious attention was that very few peasants were willing, let alone, had an incentive to work for long hours. Wages were chronically low, and many workers and peasants had grown restless over months of experiencing a stagnant wage ceiling which employers were stubbornly refusing to raise. Meanwhile, as the conflict between workers and managers escalated, so too did prices, although at a more deadly pace. Many people could not afford even the most basic daily staples, especially rice, because of an ever worsening inflation whose furious pace refused to slow down. By the end of November, a bag of rice was five times more expensive than it had been a month earlier.⁹⁵⁷ In short, the September and October labor strikes ended in failure due to the CCP's tactical miscalculations, a lack of discipline coupled with unruly violence, and finally, due to the inability of everyone involved in the debacle to provide any clear answers to an already dire economic situation on the verge of total collapse.

3. Conclusion

This chapter showed that the controversy over the Five Principles was such that it not only featured a fierce smearing campaign from both Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Yŏ Un-hyŏng, but also that Pak abused his victory in the September Lobby to unleash an insurgency against the Rightists and the American military government. Throughout September and October, violence ruled supreme in most streets and neighborhoods, with laborers holding numerous demonstrations against the Rhee Administration and the American Military Government, which, in the farmers' and peasants' view, did not care about alleviating the welfare of the Korean people.

Instead, as a report by an investigation team from the UNF revealed, the military government was more interested in "indiscriminately rounding up all protesters and killing them in cold blood" without bothering to listen to their demands. In addition, because the

⁹⁵⁷ McCune, *Korea Today*, 104.

military government was lukewarm about equally distributing foodstuffs, peasants and urban citizens faced chronic food shortages, often leading to "frequent deaths by starvation."⁹⁵⁸ Faced with such a dire situation, there were many peasants and laborers attracted to Communism because they abhorred the abysmal and hopeless reality confronting them and believed that Communism, with its emphasis on equal distribution of wealth, was a feasibly realistic solution to problems about which the American military government and the south Korean national police would not take any responsibility.

However, the general fiasco on Seoul's streets sent a very different message to the CCP. Fundamentally, the greatest frustration for the party was that even after a year of tumultuous change, even at the cost of changing its tactics in dramatic fashion by sending women to the very front of the protests for emotive appeals, the party failed to win any concessions from the Rightists or the American military government. Of course, the party did enjoy its portion of success, since the politically most advantageous strategy for the CCP was Pak's decision to expulse Yō and to solidify its Communist identity. Yet, the biggest failure from the two labor strikes was that there was no drastic increase in the number of dedicated official members to help the CCP sustain the intensity of discontent. Too many workers had joined the strikes out of pure excitement about the prospect of leading a "revolution" whose content was largely unknowable, and were probably too easily swept away by the unruly fervor of the large crowd without knowing what was exactly going on. Indeed, as Yō Un-hyōng and Kim Kyu-sik later commented on the strikes, although the strikes erupted out of the Korean public's discontent over disruptive policies of the American military government, it was fundamentally the abuse

⁹⁵⁸ "Minchuchuūi Minchok Chonsōn Yōngnam Sakōn Chosatani Lerch Kunchōng Changkwan eke Chech'ulhan Chosapokosō Ilpu," (Excerpt from Report of the Investigative Team from the United Nationalist Front to Minister Lerch on the Violence from the Recent Labor Strikes in Yōngnam) November 1, 1946. *IDFTYSL*, 69-70.

of the CCP's so-called 'new tactic' which was "the real culprit behind the debacle."⁹⁵⁹ In short, if there was any goal behind launching the strikes, it was to prove the irreconcilability between the Left and the Right as expressed through the Five Principles.⁹⁶⁰

Yet, even this goal was non-existent in the eyes of the participants because the biggest blunder in the planning of the strikes was that the CCP had concealed its critical weakness of having none of what sociologist Charles Perrow (1961) calls "official goals" by attempting to redress the workers' demands during the strikes as the party's "operative goals." "Official goals" express the general goals of an organization. They are vague and obsolete because they do not address decisions to implement alternative ways of achieving the goals and do not account for the possibility of multiple goals members within the organization might pursue without authorization. Operative goals, by contrast, clarify the ends sought through the pursuit of an organization's actual goals, thereby identifying the genuine purpose of an organization's activities.⁹⁶¹ Revealing too much of the former incurs creating too much secrecy for the organization's members and makes them confused about the latter. Revealing too much of the latter exposes the organization to the critical risk of leaking too much information to its potential enemies, which could be dangerous to the organization if its enemies are more resourceful and well-prepared. The CCP had forgotten to deliberate on and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of revealing a certain set of goals and deliberate on whether educating the participants about the purpose of the strikes—to realize a more perfect Communist revolution—was akin to delivering an official goal or an operative one.

Moreover, the CCP forgot that social mobilization has to be a process which promises the erosion of an old economic, political, or social order. Insofar as indicators for a successful

⁹⁵⁹ Yŏ and Kim's opinions are adapted from Chŏn Hyŏn-su, "Siwŏl Ilil Chŏhang Untong: Chwa-uik Taech'i esŏ Ch'inil Kyŏngch'al e taehan Chŏhangkkachi," (The October First Resistance Movement: From Left-Right Confrontation to Resistance against Pro-Japanese Police) *Sin Tonga (New East Asia)*, March, 2006, 7.

⁹⁶⁰ Cho Han-sŏng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 47-48.

⁹⁶¹ Charles Perrow, "The Analysis of Goals in Complex Organizations," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (December, 1961), 855.

mobilization are visible, they must have some correlation and interchangeability such that complexities in social change must necessarily be reflected and influential in ushering political change. Social mobilization must have qualitative political change as its main objective.⁹⁶² Of course, given the abstruse nature of Marxist philosophy, Pak's followers could have thought that there would be little or no popular appeal if they droned on and on about how great Marx was. Nevertheless, it was their crucial mistake to be swept away by the excitement of having many people join the strikes at the expense of checking their eligibility to join based on sufficient comprehension of the party's objectives. The next chapter will briefly evaluate the September and October labor strikes as signs of the CCP's institutional fragility and then proceed to consider the aftermath of the strikes—the founding of the SKWP and the fragmentation of the Korean People's Party—which pushed the Korean peninsula into the eye of the Cold War's maelstrom.

⁹⁶² Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (September, 1961), 494, 495, and 498.

Chapter 12

The Haunting Call for a "More Perfect Communist Revolution" and Korea's Unfinished Dream of Re-unification: An Evaluation of the September and October Labor Strikes, the Founding of the SKWP, and the Fragmentation of Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Korean People's Party

In the greenest of our valleys
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace—
Radiant palace—reared its head.
In the monarch Thought's dominion,
It stood there!
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair!

...
But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch's high estate;
(Ah, let us mourn!—for never morrow
Shall dawn upon him, desolate!)
And round about his home the glory
That blushed and bloomed
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

And travellers, now, within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms that move fantastically
To a discordant melody;
While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out forever,
And laugh—but smile no more.
-Edgar Allan Poe, "The Haunted Palace" (1839)⁹⁶³

1. An Evaluation of the September and October Labor Strikes Based on an Analysis of the CCP's Motives, Strategies to Launch the CCP's Insurrection, and the Lessons of the September and October Labor Strikes for the CCP

The previous chapter examined the September and October labor strikes and argued that the sacrifice of substance over form in planning the strikes led to their disastrous failure. However, the debacles reveal a more important truth about the party's vulnerability. Although the CCP was clearly a good dozen steps ahead of other Left-wing rivals, the big problem was that the party did not have sufficient political legitimacy and support because it had never practiced what it had preached on paper before. When must a real Communist revolution

⁹⁶³ Edgar Allan Poe, "The Haunted Palace" in W. H. Auden and Norman Holmes Pearson eds., *Poets of the English Language* (New York City, New York: Viking Press, 1950).

commence? Is the leader going to be some Messiah, or just a normal, mortal human being? If it surely must be the latter, what is the basis for trusting the leader out of all other candidates? Pak's haphazard planning of the strikes was borne out of an evident disregard for these questions, and therefore, the only real experimentalist phase of the "more perfect Communist revolution" ended in a disastrous failure even before the CCP had any chance to witness substantive progress. However, the more important facts about the labor strikes are not those related to the actual implementation of the labor strikes; it does not take excessively meticulous archival research to argue for the simple fact that the two events were very costly for the party because it had gambled against the odds of defeating a more formidable Right-wing force—the Korean national police. The most dangerous thing about the opponent was that even though it adopted the term "national," they were fundamentally the most well-armed paramilitary branch of the Right-wing. The southern Communists understood them as lackeys of the Rhee Administration trying to always stir up unnecessary charges and attacks, both physical and psychological, against the party. With the Rightists possessing superior numbers and firepower, there was no telling when a total defeat would be imminent. Therefore, from the party's perspective, it desperately needed an exit strategy to avoid the dreaded outcome, if not completely overturn the tables by countering the Rightists' firepower with direct military confrontation, which, the Rightists must have surely considered.

Ultimately, the party chose direct military confrontation with the Rightists because the party had to choose between the certainty of becoming arrested by the police or the uncertainty of not knowing when the arrests would be made. However, it did not take long for the party to realize that it had made a regretful choice. The October labor strike particularly taught the CCP that even a chaotic battle whose only purpose is seemingly to bring disorder and mayhem requires a scientific approach of knowing first the capabilities of the enemy and

then use measures produced through reason and experience.⁹⁶⁴ The Rightists and the southern Left clashed violently, throwing vehement and venomous critiques against one another. Student organizations from both the Left and the Right furiously pelted stones, blocks of cement, and other hazardous debris at one another, resulting in dozens of casualties. The fiasco worsened when the police intervened to prevent the spread of violence which took the lives of several pedestrians. As activists from both the Left and Right continued resist arrests, the police started firing into the confused and agitated crowd protests. In the end, both sides achieved nothing but left meaningless and numerous pools of blood. Most importantly, because the strikes were crushed within such a short span of time, the CCP incurred the greatest loss, for the strikes' failure had only confirmed the superiority of the Rightists' political and military position against the Left and had blocked a crucial means for the CCP to prove to the north that it was capable of launching a convincing precursor to a genuine Communist revolution.

In other words, while passion and fervor were abundant, there was very little the party could do about the severe material and technological deficit which confirmed that the translation of ideals into reality through immediate and impulsive violence would not open the golden road to prove Aeschylus' adage, "through suffering comes wisdom" correct any time soon. Without adequate preparation, suffering would only reinforce the stupidity of ignoring the fact that overturning defeat with a miraculously opportune victory would be akin to expecting a real transformation of water into wine. By the end of an unspeakably violent October, the only reminders of horror were an immense amount of blood, 120 million Won worth of damages to civilian property, 110 million to the police, and 16 million to public

⁹⁶⁴ Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, 141-142.

officials.⁹⁶⁵ In short, southern Korea suffered a major population and financial drainage which only exacerbated an impoverished economy suffering from massive inflation and a dysfunctional politics unable to cope with the major social malady.

Nevertheless, two critical questions arise: why was the CCP in a hurry to carry out two strikes consecutively in such a short amount of time? With most of the workers inadequately armed to fight against the Rightists, why did the party still decide to directly confront the south Korean police? The party could not have ignored or been unaware of their financial and technological inferiority against the Rightists. After all, with the American military government effectively performing political and socio-economic administration on behalf of the Rhee Administration, it was obvious that an underground organization could not possibly eke out a significant victory to force the Americans to forfeit their occupation of southern Korea. Furthermore, unlike the founding of the CCP, which won northern recognition and approval, the strikes enjoyed no such coordination or any material or strategic assistance from P'yŏngyang. Thus, realistically, the party must have surely known that any attempt to directly subvert the Rhee Administration would mean a total defeat or a political suicide. Indeed, the September and October strikes would not only see Rhee establish an intensely rigid and violent anti-Communist security state by founding paramilitary organizations and a National Assembly with a Right-wing majority. Such intense anti-Communism would meet its equally rigid counterpart in the north Korean constitution, thereby permanently preventing "Unitary Socialism" from pursuing non-ideological unification.

The most convincing reason behind launching the reckless labor strikes was to silence all remaining voices of opposition within the party by creating a reasonably prolonged ordeal as a source of distraction for intra-Left rivals. Although the Chang-an faction had been

⁹⁶⁵ *Tonga Ilpo* and *Seoul Sinmun*, October 31, 1946. Adapted from Sin Pok-ryong, *The Politics of Separation in the Korean Peninsula*, 496.

completely destroyed by the time of the party's founding, their anti-Pak sentiment was not. Indeed, because the founding of the party itself was not a natural consequence of Pak's faction accruing absolute power, there were still members from the Chang-an faction and moderates who were very upset and angry at Pak's perversion of orthodox Communism into an instrument to advance his private interests and influence over the Leftist camp. Moreover, the party was deeply infected with chronic defeatism, after repeated failures to form a Left-Right alliance and the breakdown of the American-Soviet Joint Commission. Hence, for the sake of solidifying the CCP's leadership, Pak and his allies were anxious to unleash the strikes unexpectedly to surprise anti-Pak factions to demonstrate that the CCP was serious about assuming leadership not only for power's sake but for the prestige of becoming a genuine vanguard for the working class. In other words, the September and October strikes were in the CCP's view, necessary measures to ensure the total silence of any opposition that would derail the party's attention from organizing active Communist operations which would cement its reputation as the leader of southern Communism.

On the other hand, there was also the urgency of dealing with external enemies, especially the Rightists and the American military government. Surely, without a doubt, the party was well aware that there was no actual chance of claiming a military victory against these enemies, since the party did not have a formally instituted militia to engage effectively in direct combat. However, simultaneously, the party saw no point in displaying any sign of weakness or cowardice against enemies who had yet to appreciate the party's true prowess. Even though the party had to carry out operations clandestinely underground, location was never such a critical weakness for the party to underestimate the content of its political objectives and operations. The September and October strikes were clear ways to demonstrate this point, and ideally engrave within the hearts of the south Korean police and Hodge's allies that the CCP would never surrender or accept political suicide as long as it could still move in

the shadows of violent protests such as the strikes. By giving the impression that the workers' congregation and explosive violence were all seemingly uncalculated and unforeseen, the party wanted to send not only the same message to the Rightists and the American military government as it did to anti-Pak factions, but also demonstrate that the Left had always kept its political agenda very much alive and if the Rightists and the Americans took them lightly simply based on the majority-minority calculus, they would pay the price of immense disorder, chaos, and mayhem. These incidents could snowball into an ugly war-zone, with both Rightists and Leftists shedding considerable blood and experiencing much sacrifice to affirm the supremacy of their respective ideologies. In other words, the party was demonstrating through the strikes that it was motivation, will, determination, and organized planning which would strategically determine a definitive victory, not the crude and simplistic calculus of numerical superiority.⁹⁶⁶

Finally, and most importantly, the CCP had secretly wished for a massive success in the form of bringing the Rightists to the negotiation table from a position of superiority to demonstrate to north Korea that the CCP had the full capacity to really launch a "perfect Communist revolution." Since the CCP was aware that an alliance with north Korea would cut the numerical deficit in strength, if not guarantee parity with the Rightists, the party had hoped to advertise its strength to the north to convince P'yŏng-yang that an alliance would produce the promising result of a complete surrender from the Rightists. Of course, this did not mean that there was no secret calculation involved in defining the terms of the partnership. If the southern Leftists were successful in negotiating with the Rightists, they had hoped to present the result as evidence of political superiority over the northern counterparts and demand that P'yŏngyang join the partnership as a junior, rather than a senior. Put differently,

⁹⁶⁶ Pak Il-wŏn, *Namnotangŭi Chochikkwa Chŏnsul (The Organization and Strategies of the South Korean Workers' Party)* (Seoul, south Korea: Se-kye Publishing, 1984), 29. Pak Il-wŏn, a low-ranking SKWP member, was murdered shortly after publishing the original manuscript in 1947.

the party envisioned the labor strikes as a clear method to overturn what would so naturally seem like a sure result of cementing P'yŏngyang's position as the CCP's instructor. By challenging that position, the CCP was attempting to reinterpret both P'yŏng-yang's legitimacy as a Communist comrade and as a leader because the CCP was confident about its activism as a sign of true originality.⁹⁶⁷ Thus, a hidden calculation the CCP had about a potentially inevitable rupture in the balance of power against the NKWP was an important subjective and primal desire to reserve absolute power all for itself, forcing the CCP to go so far as to engage in a gamble that almost resembled a Russian Roulette if it failed.

In other words, with regard to the implicit gains from the occurrence of the September and October and labor strikes in an unprecedented scale and operating with an unusual schedule, the CCP wanted to deliver the message that the southern Left was still potent enough to send a chill down the Rightists' spines if they underestimated the southern Left for being a politically minor presence in the National Assembly. Although the CCP was numerically overwhelmed, it was still very confident about the high degree of solidarity it commanded over the workers stemming from their unwavering support for Pak Hŏn-yŏng's charisma and the CCP's ideology that translated the charisma into wild popularity.

Fundamentally, the strikes had delivered a crucial psychological blow to Yŏ Un-hyŏng, for the labor strikes were critical evidence of the party's refusal to entertain any middle-of-the-road or neutral strategies because all party members had genuinely sworn their loyalty to Pak. This was perhaps the most important reason why Pak remained unperturbed despite his failure to realize a swift and certain coordination with the north to realize his ideal Communist revolution. Yŏ was now essentially powerless and although the September and October uprisings had failed, the failure resulted in what I call a "Goldilocks' *realpolitik*," producing an outcome neither too good nor too bad. Although Pak's speech encouraging workers'

⁹⁶⁷ Pak Il-wŏn, *The Organization and Strategies of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 30.

militancy in Tae-ku against the American military government had limited impact, the uprisings had exposed the political, economic, and social failures of the American military government, ended the people's committees, and thereby made the Left more vulnerable to disorganization, and given an upper-hand to the Rightists and the Korean National Police.⁹⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the CCP had still miserably failed to convince moderate Leftist leaders such as Yŏ Un-hyŏng and Paek Nam-un that Pak's personality cult had definitively settled the problem of establishing a singular hierarchy with Pak at the center because even party members themselves found the idea distasteful. One CCP bureaucrat named Kang Chin had vehemently opposed Pak's plan to attack the Tae-chŏn Police Station, calling the plan "a reckless abandonment of both the party's purpose and principles as a proper Communist party in service of the people."⁹⁶⁹ Kang's disagreement with Pak was significant because it not only exposed internal dissatisfaction about the perversion of the CCP into Pak's personal club but also a great schism within the CCP between Social Democrats and die-hard Communists and confirmed that Pak's personality cult was no stable insurance of absolute allegiance within the southern Left. Kang Chin would physically demonstrate the extent of his disagreement with Pak Hŏn-yŏng by eventually exiting from the CCP and entering into negotiations with Paek Nam-un and Yŏ Un-hyŏng to establish the Social Democratic Party to counterbalance and hopefully, even overthrow the CCP's dominance within the Leftist camp.⁹⁷⁰

In other words, despite its "success" in being the first Communist-inspired south Korean insurrection against the Rightists and its "success" in exerting further pressure on Pak's main political rival, the strike ultimately fell far short of becoming a model for anything close to a

⁹⁶⁸ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 93. For the outcome of the uprising, see Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1*, 246.

⁹⁶⁹ "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 373," November 5, 1946, adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 6*.

⁹⁷⁰ "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 373," November 5, 1946," adapted from *The Complete Works of Pak Hŏn-yŏng, Vol. 6*.

"more perfect Communist revolution." The October strike's genuine failure was that it directly exposed the near-absence of any sense of political unity within the Left, a weakness that could only haphazardly and effervescently covered up by the heat and frenzy of violence which consumed the passions of all party members. The strike's abrupt failure also symbolizes the utterly impulsive and highly disorganized planning, which is also evidence of how little time Pak had to meticulously and cautiously plan the details in executing the strike against a far more well-prepared American military government.

Indeed, as Hodge criticized, the "instigators were guilty of exaggerating all circumstances, spreading nefarious lies, influencing the Korean people to ferment a rebellion."⁹⁷¹ Such lies were notorious for "enticing the masses to overthrow a disciplined government by irresponsibly claiming that everything could be provided to everyone gratis as if this was ever possible."⁹⁷² Unsurprisingly, Hodge argued, such a haphazard and misinformed rebellion "accomplishes no end except to cause great hardships and danger to many Koreans, to endanger the food and fuel supply of cities, to further embitter one part of the Korean people against another when true harmony is needed and to discredit south Korea in the eyes of great nations."⁹⁷³ In short, Hodge was arguing that the October Strike was a nihilistic act of violence that disrupted the societal protection of the public good by introducing unnecessary material destitution as well as disharmony and loss of international reliability and respectability for Koreans.

Hodge concluded by arguing that a "just cause for a labor strike is not a warrant for the

⁹⁷¹ "Hodge, Sotongkwa P'aōp e taehan t'ūkpyōl Sōngmyōng Palp'yo," (Hodge Issues a Special Statement on the Commotion and the Strike) *Tonga Ilpo*, October 15-16, 1946. *TRKAHD, Vol. 3.*

⁹⁷² "Hodge Issues a Special Statement on the Commotion and the Strike," *Tonga Ilpo*, October 15-16, 1946. *TRKAHD, Vol. 3.*

⁹⁷³ "Statement on the October Labor Strike," (undated) RG 554, Box 311: United States Army Forces in Korea, U.S. Army Office of the Military Government: Public Relations Files, 1947-1948—Statements and Press Releases.

existence of a commotion, and nor can it be an excuse to ferment one."⁹⁷⁴ Such illegal actions, which amounted to destruction and murder, were "criminal actions on all faces of the earth and applied to Korea as well."⁹⁷⁵ A libertine ignorance toward the unruly status quo was dangerous because "the current extremist distortions and propagandas are breeding unhappiness, fear, hatred, and unrest among Koreans that, if continued, can only end in a bloody purge of brother against brother and neighbor against neighbor."⁹⁷⁶ Therefore, in accordance with a universal respect for law and order it was morally appropriate for Koreans to "stop the criminal defamation of the fair name of Korea, to stop this criminal murder of your law-abiding citizens, and to stop the dangerous flow of lies that mislead honest people."⁹⁷⁷ In other words, a restoration of civil order was necessary because the October labor strike featured universally recognized gross violations on human dignity and because any further attempt to politicize the labor strike by encouraging deeper polarization would only result in senseless fratricide, bring shame on Korea by introducing murder, deception, and most gravely, a generic moral hazard as public norms.

Put differently, Hodge was giving an implicit diagnosis of the strike's failure. The nature of an end does not necessarily have to be a reflection of that of the means, especially if the former is not consummate with the radicalism of the latter such that the latter perverted the former to the extent of losing its original nature. Should the perversion happen, Hodge was warning that Korea would lose not only internally lose order and stability but externally lose face in front of world opinion because along with violence came an uncontrollable deluge of lies used to both maintain the violence but deceptively hide its criminality. Hodge believed that the October labor strike failed because the violence used to wage the strike overwhelmed

⁹⁷⁴ "Statement on the October Labor Strike," (undated). RG 554, Box 311.

⁹⁷⁵ "Hodge Issues a Special Statement on the Commotion and the Strike," *Tonga Ilpo*, October 15-16, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

⁹⁷⁶ "Hodge Issues a Special Statement on the Commotion and the Strike," *Tonga Ilpo*, October 15-16, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

⁹⁷⁷ "Statement by Lieutenant General John R. Hodge," October 23, 1946. RG 554, Box 311.

the intent of the strike such that violence clouded every important issue at stake for the strikers, ultimately producing nothing but propagandistic lies to serve as the violence's lifeline. Consequently, there was no possibility for the strike to develop into a "rightful resistance," since the strikes did not commence near the boundaries of an authorized channel, did not employ or influence the rhetoric of the political establishment by invoking the rhetoric of the more powerful DPK, and finally, did not create or exploit divisions within the DPK by innovatively using laws or policies or Rightist values.

Moreover, the CCP made no guarantee of protection for the strikers, and did not have effective legal support from either the moderate Leftists or the Rightists to legitimize the party's discontent against the state while respecting the state's legal norms—an opportunity to offer what political scientist Kevin O' Brien (1996) calls "a critique within the hegemony."⁹⁷⁸ Instead, a confusing mixture of deception and unrestrained violence robbed the strikers of any room to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the police and the American military government which could have prevented violence from sprawling out of control. With respect to the chaos and mayhem, the American military government believed that an effective prevention of violence was necessary not only for its own sake. It was also necessary to avoid the outbreak of an unnecessary civil war which will reward no one but hurt everyone by inviting intense negative emotions which would divide brothers, families, and neighbors apart. In short, the October labor strike had to be stopped at all costs because it not only allowed for an unrestricted monopoly of violence which created an extreme dearth of communication and negotiation, but also because the violence, if left unchecked, could introduce the highly unwanted misery of an unnecessary civil war.

Thus, the September and October labor strikes were products of a severe internal disunity

⁹⁷⁸ Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (October, 1996), 33 and 35.

and a critical absence of any concrete plans or preparations against a far more militarily superior foe, which was inevitable, given that Pak had not even taken effective care of an intra-party factionalism which had been neglected since the very day the CCP was re-established. In addition, the strike was destined to fail because of its illegitimacy stemming from the absence of any realistic plans or schemes to guarantee a genuine security of livelihood for the masses, thereby ironically becoming a populist rebellion without any tangible rewards that could warrant the label "populist." Hence, the October strike's failure stemmed from the party's chronic illness of intense factionalism, for which the failure to find a cure for a very long time took its toll by leaving Pak with no time to meticulously conceive of strategic and systematic plans.

Nevertheless, the September and October labor strikes presented two important lessons for the CCP. First, they prepared a blueprint for what Pak Hŏn-yŏng called "a new tactic." The labor strikes proved that the CCP had to adopt a new tactic of launching a full-fledged assault against the Americans and Rightists by autonomously mobilizing all guerrilla units and attempting to approximate to some level of technical parity with the enemy. While the simplistic decision of going for broke against an enemy who clearly possessed superior firepower might seem akin to calling for a political suicide, it was nevertheless a very realistic solution, for the CCP well understood that waiting for the enemy to launch an attack was not a feasible solution to overcome the CCP's technical and financial inferiority. By exposing the failures of the Americans' social and economic policies, the strikes achieved a "glorious" victory of delivering the clear message to the Rightists that they were blindly dependent on the brute force of an unreliable and irresponsible ally.⁹⁷⁹

Pak believed that this failure would warn all opposing factions within the CCP as well, for waging a similar revolution would serve as concrete evidence that the people were mostly

⁹⁷⁹ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 95.

supportive of the party leadership. Pak excitedly informed Kim Il-sung that he could now expulse all opposing factions under the "grave charge of delaying the unification of the party," confirming his complete control of the party bureaucracy.⁹⁸⁰ Thus, the struggle served as a stern warning of Leftist revolutionary potential to the Rightists and was also an accelerating catalyst for consolidating Pak's unchallenged and permanent control of the CCP which Pak believed would further solidify P'yöngyang's trust.

Second, the uprising confirmed that the Rhee faction was clearly changing anti-Communism from an Ideological State Apparatus to a Repressive State Apparatus, which, as Althusser puts it, "functions in overwhelmingly preponderant fashion on repression, while functioning secondarily on ideology."⁹⁸¹ For Pak, the uprising had exposed that the Korean National Police was the cog of this wheel of perverse transformation and maintenance of a gross hierarchy. The police were penultimate national traitors, for they were shamelessly murdering Koreans without being aware that their very weakness came from the source of their power—collaboration with imperialism. The police had merely borrowed the hands of one imperialist power for those of another to spray bullets in the name of "security" at their fellow citizens.

Unfortunately, for the Rightists, this violence incurred a high cost. The police had exposed the Rightists' fear of being overpowered by the Left, for, as Hannah Arendt astutely points out, violence appears when power is in jeopardy, but it is only power that disappears. Yet, it is also simultaneously true that when violence is absent, power dominates, and once the police's wrath came to an end, the party had a clear goal to achieve while taking the reins of power back in its hands: to "reeducate" these poor students of history by punishing collaborators of

⁹⁸⁰ Pak Pyöng-yöp, *RSR*, 95.

⁹⁸¹ Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 85-87. It is a shift because ideology becomes secondary to repression both in theory and according to the historical reality of Korean politics during this time. The Korean National Police did not exercise a Foucauldian disciplinary action, because while it was not a triumphant power, the action was not modest or restrained by any calculations. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 170.

Japanese imperialism and encourage the redistribution land to help the underprivileged lead humane lives—an act representing true patriotism and championing "Democracy for the people."⁹⁸² Pak believed that his decision to resist the police by using direct force was justified because he had fought for the defense of peasants' and workers' rights by attempting to overthrow the Right-wing establishment. Although he was not successful in replacing the Right with the CCP, he still believed that a first-hand experience of the Rightists' raw power was a good barometer to determine that he would need the assistance of the northerners, a realization which Pak hoped to be rewarded with an alliance between the southern and northern Communists.

Thus, although the great upheavals of September and October ended in failure, they, as a litmus test to determine southern Korea's political climate, were successful in definitively exposing the adamancy of the Right in its refusal to reconcile with the Left. The upheavals gave Pak confidence that he was ready to "rebuild another house in which one may be lodged while one's work is in progress" with the northerners in case a house gets demolished.⁹⁸³ However, Pak knew that he had to compensate for the failure to create a massive insurrection because the "Two-to-One deal" was ironically facing an immediate collapse because of the original proposer's critical lack of preparation. If Pak did not want that liability to overwhelm his enthusiasm for a "more perfect Communist revolution," he had to quickly find an exit strategy; time was fast approaching for the CCP to undesirably but inevitably draw its last trump card: uniting the Left and assuring the party's complete evolution into a thoroughly Communist organization.

2. Pak Hŏn-yŏng's Kidnapping of Yŏ Un-hyŏng and the Official Transformation of the CCP into the SKWP (October-November, 1946)

After the end of fiascos in September and October, the CCP, like Pak himself, was

⁹⁸² Arendt, *On Violence*, 56.

⁹⁸³ René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 21.

content with its belief that it had led peasants and workers in a righteous struggle, but the chronic problem of a lack of organized unity had prevented the party from gaining an upper hand over the Americans or the Rightists. More precisely, because there was no historical precedent for any formal political unity within the Left, even the question of how to establish a consensus on building a proper coalition either just among the Left or with the Right was still suspended and subject to a heated debate within the CCP's ranks. While some party members favored a general reconciliation with the Right under the common goal of overthrowing imperialism, for Pak, that option was out of the question; he had already fulfilled his vow to eternally ostracize Yŏ from the leadership.

However, that Yŏ had consistently tried to assert his presence to P'yŏng-yang posed a dilemma for Pak. Inviting Yŏ back to the party was out of the question, for Yŏ would surely rekindle his desire to realize "Unitary Socialism," and the bitter rivalry would then resume full circle again. Pak did not wish to relinquish his hard-earned power so easily. Yet, simultaneously, Pak had no wish to end his antipathy toward the Americans or the Rhee faction, for doing so would be capitulating to Yŏ's wish to reconcile with the Rightists and dishonoring the party's commitment to Communism. Murdering Yŏ with Pak's own hands was equally undesirable, for jealousy is a sentiment of passive human beings; as a pro-active leader, Pak knew that he had to preserve his sanity and dignity by nurturing jealousy as a thirst to obtain whatever looks most desirable, deploying means which would enable him to push Yŏ aside and just render him incapable of obtaining any influential position in the party.⁹⁸⁴

Killing Yŏ was especially not only inhumane but also a reckless and foolish strategy, for it could send out the wrong signal to Kim Il-sung that Pak was an untrustworthy and a cold-hearted man who could easily succumb to the temptation for vain-glory and betray a close

⁹⁸⁴ Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, 158.

friend to curry favor with power. In the worst scenario, Kim might, out of strong distrust in Pak's excessively tactical mindset, urge him to call off the entire southern operation, and execute Pak out of the suspicion that he had betrayed P'yŏng-yang.⁹⁸⁵ Moreover, considering how popular Yŏ was with the Korean masses and even among some officials in the American military government, murdering Yŏ could inadvertently send a wrong signal to these groups that the CCP desired to be public enemy number one despite being inadequately prepared to confront them, a move which could be akin to self-destruction. With supplies and manpower already at a great disadvantage, Pak could not afford to unnecessarily make Yŏ into a martyr and create more enemies than he already had.

Running out of ideas on what to do with Yŏ, an extremely frustrated Pak chose to secretly kidnap Yŏ and harshly interrogate him. On October 8, Pak imprisoned Yŏ in the former's private residence and interrogated Yŏ relentlessly throughout the night, but did not get any convincing answers. The exact exchanges between Pak and Yŏ are unknown, but it is highly likely that Yŏ was forced to admit that he had drafted "Seven Principles for Uniting the Party." The document was irksome for Pak, especially because of the seventh principle, since it promised the administration of free elections, which gave Pak the impression that Yŏ had decided to side with the Rightists and was collaborating with the American military government. Pak threatened Yŏ that there would be "consequences" if Yŏ attempted to "sell the party to the Americans," and sent him home long past midnight.⁹⁸⁶

It is possible that Yŏ remained silent, which still would have suggested to Pak that Yŏ had confirmed his guilt about going to P'yŏng-yang—a truth he probably could not avoid or deny. However, even if Yŏ had been silent, it still meant that he was unable to express anger toward Pak, which would confirm his anxiety and fear about further retaliation based on future

⁹⁸⁵ The worst possible scenario is actually what happened to Pak in 1955. For details on Pak's execution, see An Chae-sŏng, *Pak Hŏn-yŏng: A Biography*, 359-395.

⁹⁸⁶ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 186-187.

attempts to defy and challenge Pak. In other words, as sociologist Edwin Driver (1968) would put it, Yǒ was in an "anomic situation" strongly desiring cognitive clarity and emotional relief but also rendering silence as nothing more than a tactic to delay an obvious affirmation of political subjugation to Pak.⁹⁸⁷ Whatever Yǒ's actions may have been during the interrogation, the most conspicuous purpose behind Pak's interrogation of Yǒ was to confirm and emphasize the permanence of what sociologist Linda Molm (1990) calls "structural power." Pak succeeded in demonstrating that Yǒ's power imbalance against Pak was greater than the converse relationship, the latter of which, in Pak's eyes, did not exist. This was because since the relative power imbalance was unequal, average power, or the absolute strength of power Pak and Yǒ exercised upon each other, could never attain an equilibrium.⁹⁸⁸

Furthermore, because Yǒ had already acknowledged the impossibility of realizing the equilibrium by walking out of the party in January 1946, the interrogation was not merely Pak's final warning against Yǒ not to visit the CCP ever again. Rather, with Americans and Rightists already mounting overwhelming pressure on the Left, Pak did not wish to waste time harming Yǒ because he could not afford to let the Rightists use such a mistake to draw public opinion against him and even worse, lose the trust and support he had built within the CCP. Thus, Pak desperately wanted to quickly make sure that Yǒ understood the futility of recuperating himself by finding allies within the Communist-dominated Left. In short, the interrogation confirmed that Yǒ was deficient against Pak in every conceivable aspect, even their initial bases, in exercising effective political bargaining power.⁹⁸⁹

However, Pak's decision seems pointless if its objective was to merely coerce Yǒ into pledging not to "play the Americans' game." Such coercion could only demonstrate that Pak

⁹⁸⁷ Edwin D. Driver, "Confessions and the Social Psychology of Coercion," *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 82, No. 1 (November, 1968), 57-58.

⁹⁸⁸ Linda D. Molm, "Structure, Action, and Outcomes: The Dynamics of Power in Social Exchange," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (June, 1990), 429.

⁹⁸⁹ Molm, "Structure, Action, and Outcomes," 429.

had overpowered Yŏ or had the ability to monitor and manipulate Yŏ—a point which he had already proven with the expulsion of Yŏ from the CCP.⁹⁹⁰ The chief objective of coercion is to restrict or prohibit an individual's right to freedom and to impose costs upon an opponent's resistance, but is complicated by the absence or existence of common interests.⁹⁹¹ In the former case, the interrogated person has no obligation or motive to give the responses the interrogator wants to hear because the interrogated knows that he or she will obtain few or no benefits from doing so. However, in the latter case, the interrogator is burdened by the possibility that there might be some area of compromise and therefore cannot interrogate to the extent to which the interrogated individual wishes to completely sever ties.⁹⁹² Pak could not completely liberate himself from this dilemma and could not press on further with the interrogation. Yŏ was both an exile from the CCP but also a former friend, and although Pak assumed that Yŏ had more of the former identity than the latter, it did not mean that the latter was completely extinguished. In short, Yŏ's dual identity tested the "weight" of Pak's power—its value and domain of influence—against the importance of the information he could extract about Yŏ's activities in P'yŏngyang.⁹⁹³

Pak had to choose between the uncertainty of whether he could extract a satisfactory amount of information about Yŏ's meeting with Kim Il-sung to plan his next moves and the certainty of losing a friend who still had the possibility to swear allegiance to the Communists and be a potentially useful informant in the future. The most fundamental private connection between individuals had imposed a complex calculation on the interrogator about the

⁹⁹⁰ I am using power in R.H. Tawney's sense of the word: "the capacity to modify the conduct of others in the manner which one desires." See Tawney, *Equality*, 230. Also see Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 138.

⁹⁹¹ Cheney C. Ryan, "The Normative Concept of Coercion," *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 89, No. 36 (October, 1980), 496.

⁹⁹² Tae-hee Whang, Elena V. McLean, and Douglas W. Kuberski, "Coercion, Information, and the Success of Sanction Threats," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (January 2013), 68. See also Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960), 11.

⁹⁹³ Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, "Decisions and Non-decisions: An Analytical Framework," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (September, 1963), 635.

futuristic public utility as a party informant of the interrogated. Even if Pak was tempted to adopt a minimal calculation of only considering Yŏ as an exile because it simplifies evaluation and reduces cognitive strain, Pak probably knew that time spent merely to fulfill this objective would be a sunk cost. It was already clear that the balance of force between the Communists and the Rightists was highly negative.⁹⁹⁴ Despite being far too committed to the Left-Right Alliance to "slacken or discontinue" his efforts at non-ideological unification, Yŏ neither had a formidable political party nor great popularity among Communist members to attempt such a thing.⁹⁹⁵

Although Yŏ cooperated with Paek Nam-un in early October to merge the KPP with Paek's New Citizens' Party to form the Social Labor Party with a meager 100,000 followers, it was only a party in name, an insignificant effort to futilely extend Yŏ's fledgling political career. Even though its official manifesto contained a mix of Democratic and Socialist principles such as founding a "people's republic based on Democratic elections under the control of the people," or "the total eradication of semi-feudal possession of land for the rapid development of industry and the state's direct monitoring of foreign trade," these principles were mere rhetoric when compared with the fact that the SLP consisted entirely of anti-CCP members who had no wish to replicate the CCP's policies and become relegated as another branch of the CCP.⁹⁹⁶ In other words, the SLP existed solely for the purpose of opposing the CCP's dominance and had very little to offer in terms of radically differentiating itself from its parent organization. The CCP could always choose to absorb it, as the CCP had done with other

⁹⁹⁴ Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice," *Science*, New Series, Vol. 211, No. 4481 (January 30, 1981), 456-457.

⁹⁹⁵ "Secret Priority Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," Seoul, August 2, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. 8, 722*.

⁹⁹⁶ North Korea would hear of the party's formal founding in November. See Kim Il-sung, "Namchosŏnŭi Sahoerotongtang e Taehayŏ," (On the Social Labor Party in South Korea) November 16, 1946 in *Pukhan Kwallyŏn Saryo (Historical Materials Relating to North Korea)*, Vol. 30 (Kwach'ŏn, south Korea: National Institute of Korean History, 1988), 48-49. See also "Sarotang (Sahoe Notongtang)ŭi Taetu," (The Emergence of the Social Labor Party) in Sŏ Chung-sŏk, *A Study of Nationalist Movements in Modern Korean History*, Vol. 2.

Leftist parties. It is also unlikely that Pak kidnapped Yŏ merely to question the content of the Seven Principles, since Yŏ had published them in one of the party's newspapers; Pak could always get a copy if he wanted one.

Yŏ's intense critique of Pak Hŏn-yŏng during the P'yŏng-yang Lobby in September is the most likely explanation for the kidnapping, since it occurred barely less than a month after the lobby. To silence what one does not like to hear, one can resort to coercion, which is, as philosopher John Dewey (1916) puts it, a "middle place between power as energy and power as violence," and is necessarily a means to an end.⁹⁹⁷ Yet, a more important question is: what kind of coercion is desirable? Pak Hŏn-yŏng's answer to this question was combining interrogation and psychological torture, for they do not merely inflict wounds; the combination forces a subject to remember them, and be haunted by the fear of that memory itself. The memory becomes an inerasable stigma which evolves into a phobia. Pak was probably more interested in letting such Foucauldian "pain of the idea of pain" punish Yŏ and eternally prevent him from visiting P'yŏngyang ever again.⁹⁹⁸

Pak's impatience with Yŏ's effort to unite the Left and the Right had finally reached its limit, and he had been continuously suspicious about Yŏ's absence from party meetings all throughout September, thinking that Yŏ had gone to P'yŏngyang to persuade Kim Il-sung to sabotage Pak's plans to "paint the entire peninsula red."⁹⁹⁹ Indeed, his hunch was extremely accurate. Three days before the kidnapping, Pak had visited P'yŏngyang, where Kim Il-sung told him of Yŏ's opposition to his proposal to indiscriminately punish all pro-Japanese financiers and Yŏ's scheme for distributing land according to need.¹⁰⁰⁰ Since it was clear that Yŏ was intent on sabotaging Pak's attempts to advertise the Five Principles and by extension,

⁹⁹⁷ John Dewey, "Force and Coercion," *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (April, 1916), 361-362.

⁹⁹⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 94-95.

⁹⁹⁹ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 190.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Pak Pyŏng-yŏp, *RSR*, 191.

convince Kim Il-sung to withdraw his support for Pak, Pak must have wanted to threaten Yŏ by coercing him to not get any friendlier with Kim reveal what he had told Kim Il-sung and forfeit the Seven Principles.¹⁰⁰¹ In doing so, Pak was desperately trying to extinguish Yŏ's enthusiasm about visiting P'yŏngyang, and to convince Yŏ that his loss in the struggle to unite the CCP under "Unitary Socialism" was sufficient proof that Yŏ had fallen from Kim's favor.

Conversely, it can also be interpreted that Yŏ's obstinate refusal to admit this defeat even after his expulsion from the CCP was a great source of alarm and discomfort for Pak. From Pak's perspective, Yŏ seemed determined to do anything to prevent the Five Principles from solidly confirming the party's Communist identity, even casting them as utterly pointless and even dangerous. In addition, although the September Lobby had assured Pak's victory, Pak was still wary of the possibility that Kim could change his mind and accept Yŏ's recommendation to coax Pak into smothering the Five Principles' extremist language. Should Kim become more favorable toward Yŏ, Pak would lose his chance to become Kim's right hand man. In addition, if Yŏ, who was moderately better received from both the Left and the Right, would continue his tirade against Pak with Rightists, the Rightists could ally with Yŏ and use their numerical superiority to further diminish Pak's influence and isolate him in the south. Should this happen, Pak would become more vulnerable in the south, which P'yŏngyang might interpret as a sign that Pak was possibly not sincere or fully dedicated to the cause for a "more perfect Communist revolution." Thus, tired of such undesirable scenarios toying with his mind, Pak must have sincerely wished to end his conflict with Yŏ even by kidnapping him, if that ensured Yŏ's politically vegetative state—an inability to pose any significant challenges to Pak's affairs.

Anxious to definitively thwart Yŏ and the Rightists' challenges to the Five Principles, Pak

¹⁰⁰¹ "Secret Priority Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," November 1, 1946. *FRUS*, Vol. 8, 755.

furiously lashed out an intense tirade against both of them, ignoring Paek Nam-un's emphasis on the three-party alliance as an "important task whose objective is to amalgamate Korea's autonomous national prowess."¹⁰⁰² In an article written for the *Hae-pang Il-po* on October 26, he harshly criticized proponents of a harmonious unity between the Left and the Right, calling it the "greatest betrayal" to the Korean people. Such people were a "bunch of nation-sellers" who were intent on using reconciliation as an indulgence to hide their sins. Such an act would only "dupe the people," and was befitting for "cowards" who were afraid of the Left's "valiant and belligerent spirit" to wage a "continuous revolution to eliminate national traitors."¹⁰⁰³ What made these "cowards" worse was that they were also big liars. "Democracy" represented solely by a "legislative council" was nothing but a façade to hide the truth that they were "puppets of the Americans."¹⁰⁰⁴ Pak saw no basis for these people to claim that they were operating "a forum for full and free discussion of Korean problems and foster free expression by the people as a place for the public meeting of the minds of patriotic Koreans who are interested in their nation"¹⁰⁰⁵ when the Legislative Assembly was dominated only by Rightists making decisions in the name of Korean citizens but essentially undemocratically rubber-stamping decisions favorable for the American military government.

Pak was essentially arguing that the decisions had no passion, no humanity, and no aim of completely liberating the nation from such hypocritical Rightists; they would never spiritually resonate with the truly Korean people—peasants and workers. Hence, Koreans were not obliged to follow orders from these "despicable Koreans posing as lackeys of the

¹⁰⁰² "Samtang Haptong, Chwaik, kŭriko Uik e taehan Paek Nam-unŭi Kichahoekyŏn," (Paek Nam-un's Press Conference on the Three-Party Alliance, the Left and the Right) *Seoul Sinmun*, October 6, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

¹⁰⁰³ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Ch'il Wŏnch'ik Pip'an," (Critique of the Seven Principles) October 26, 1946. *ODSKWP*, Vol. 1, 332-333.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Critique of the Seven Principles," October 26, 1946. *ODSKWP*, Vol. 1, 333-334.

¹⁰⁰⁵ "Statement by Lieutenant General John R. Hodge," October 6, 1946. RG 554, Box 311.

foreigners."¹⁰⁰⁶ Pak was certain that the Rightists were intent on being traitors to Korea, for the proposal to combine the Left into a more "Democratic" union was a "huge sinister plot" to convert the Left into "a bunch of counterrevolutionaries."¹⁰⁰⁷ Pak was determined to fixate every Rightist as a national traitor as long as they were content with offering assistance to the American military government, which in Pak's eyes, bordered on subservience.

Thus, in Pak's view, Paek's emphasis on the alliance as an effort to autonomously amalgamate national prowess was unconvincing and unfeasible because the Right was unlikely to repent for their gravest crime of neglecting Korea's historical reality of an incomplete anti-imperialist revolution, juggling the word "independence" like a jester while having no sincere desire to know what the word really meant. Furthermore, Pak was frustrated that the Rightists' attitude had barely changed since September 1945, still adamantly clinging to the belief that an alliance with the Americans was the magic ingredient to somehow concoct anti-Communism with Democracy and render the former synonymous with the latter. In Pak's view, the Rightists were poor students of Aeschylus's aphorism, "through suffering comes wisdom." They were a group of sly opportunists who pretended to be patriots even though they never demonstrated an inch of it, merely currying favor with whoever was beneficial for the Rightists' maintenance of power.

Put differently, Pak was also implicitly expressing his frustration at Yŏ's attempt to unite the moral Leftists with such despicable opportunists. He must have been perplexed about why Yŏ could not understand the necessity of punishing the Rightists' cowardliness based on a simple comprehension of a grave crisis: the Left's political lifeline was on the verge of meeting a violent end. Conflict and chaos kept pouring forth incessantly like a wild cataract as the Americans and the Korean National Police once again launched a ruthless "find all, catch

¹⁰⁰⁶ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Critique of the Seven Principles," October 26, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 335.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Pak Hŏn-yŏng, "Critique of the Seven Principles," October 26, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 335. The "Legislative Council" refers to the Representative Democratic Council that Americans established to monitor Rightists.

or kill all" campaign against the Leftists across southern Korea, burning down whole villages, even massacring children in the process.¹⁰⁰⁸

Yet, Pak knew that a crisis is a symbiotic relationship between danger and opportunity such that a danger has the capacity to morph into an opportunity and vice-versa. To make the best use of this relationship, it is always important to grasp *only* the particular moment in which danger morphs into opportunity.¹⁰⁰⁹ After seeing no end to the arrests of Leftists, it took less than a month for Pak and his collaborators to decide that a complete institutional separation from the Americans and the Rightists was the only road to survival, for the past conduct of the Conservatives only demonstrated that they were intent on killing Communists on sight. A complete unification of Leftists under one family institution was the only path available to continue the struggle for a "more perfect Communist revolution." On November 16, even the NKWP endorsed a total unification of the southern Left under Pak Hŏn-yŏng's leadership:

"The NKWP acknowledges that the political path under the leadership of comrade Pak Hŏn-yŏng is the most appropriate and absolutely supports it. Rightist counter-revolutionaries who founded the Social Labor Party is a grave crime for it is akin to assisting the enemy's counter-revolutionaries' policies. We fully support the formation of the Southern Korean Workers' Party under comrade Pak's leadership and confirm that we have no common objective to share with the Social Labor Party."¹⁰¹⁰

In effect, the NKWP had pledged to recognize Pak Hŏn-yŏng as the only Communist leader in southern Korea and to permanently sever ties with Yŏ Un-hyŏng and the SLP. A full partnership with an orthodox Communist was more beneficial for concentrating all power to his regime and was declaring that he had forfeited any inkling of trust with the vision of "Unitary Socialism." Although a partnership with Yŏ would have symbolized a harmonious unity between the southern and northern Left through a common pursuit of reuniting Korea

¹⁰⁰⁸ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 1, 356-380.

¹⁰⁰⁹ "Crisis" in Chinese characters literally denote this composite nature because "危機" literally means "opportunities amid dangerous situations."

¹⁰¹⁰ Pukchosŏn Notongtang Chungang Wiwŏnhoe (Central Commission of the NKWP), "Namchosŏn Notongtang Kongsik Sŭngin," (Official Endorsement of the South Korean Workers' Party) November 16, 1946. Adapted from Ha Sŏng-su, *Namnotangsa (A History of the South Korean Workers' Party)*, 118.

under nationalism, Kim Il-sung's decision to side with Pak Hŏn-yŏng ultimately meant that Kim chose ideological security over camaraderie and maximum authority over stability and peace in the Korean peninsula. Alternatively, the NKWP's declaration prioritized the completion of the "Two-to-One Deal" because it was useful for the northerners to strike the south with ease by depending on numerical superiority over the Rightists. Thus, Pak Hŏn-yŏng, eagerly wishing to realize the southern Left's institutional unity, ignored Yŏ Un-hyŏng's final plea to include the SLP in the Leftist alliance; on November 23, 1946, under Pak's watchful eye, a day-long session produced the final draft of a resolution to establish a single, unified Communist organization.¹⁰¹¹

The resolution proclaimed that institutional unification was "highly necessary," for "Fascists, under the guise of supporting American-led Democracy," were still intent on "jeopardizing the people's livelihood."¹⁰¹² A Leftist unity was not only a political expedient to maintain a balance of power against the Right, but a necessary step to realize justice—"crushing counterrevolutionaries to establish a genuinely Democratic front."¹⁰¹³ To that end, the SKWP promised to "completely liberate Korea from vestiges of Japanese imperialistic feudalism by implementing free distribution of land to the peasantry and nationalization of financial centers, communications, and fisheries."¹⁰¹⁴ It also promised "equal political, economic, and social rights to women as they are conferred to men," thereby projecting a hint of the SKWP's feigned commitment to social justice.¹⁰¹⁵

Hence, with regard to the manifesto's emphasis on "Leftist unity," unity assigned justice a moral character and force that were synonymous with political legitimacy, because only those who sacrificed their sweat and blood were truly patriotic Koreans."Crushing

¹⁰¹¹ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 309.

¹⁰¹² "Namchosŏnnotongtangŭl Palchokhamyŏ," (Launching the South Korean Workers' Party) November 23, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 342.

¹⁰¹³ "Launching the South Korean Workers' Party," November 23, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 342.

¹⁰¹⁴ "Launching the South Korean Workers' Party," November 23, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 342.

¹⁰¹⁵ "Launching the South Korean Workers' Party," November 23, 1946. *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 342.

counterrevolutionaries" to protect the "livelihood of the people" was therefore, a rite of passage for a dedicated nationalist. The SKWP would then become not merely a junior partner of the north's Communists but catapult into the workers' singular and largest political party for the construction of Democracy.¹⁰¹⁶ To construct a bureaucratic apparatus which could be consummate with that ambition, the SKWP adopted a classic Communist bureaucratic model, consisting of a Central Commission led by 11 senior cadres and "departments" of labor, agriculture, youth groups, and women's organizations. There were also "cells" which were responsible for carrying out the party's objectives and missions during times of crisis and for the use of spies called "proxies" who would be in charge of espionage missions against the Rightists. Of course, at the center was Pak Hŏn-yŏng himself as the supreme leader whose cult was by now unchallengeable, even though Pak was mostly occupied with meeting Kim Il-sung and reporting conditions in the south. Since the SKWP was well cognizant of its precarious existence due to American and Rightist pressure, it did not forget to prepare a dependable source of finance through the establishment of the Korean Cooperative Unions' League. This organization would smuggle goods to and from north Korea, leaving the SKWP with a considerable amount of cash until the party's fall in 1948.¹⁰¹⁷

In short, the SKWP's founding meant that the southern Leftists acquired a direct channel of communication with north Korea to speed up logistical preparations for what they hoped would be a successful Communist overthrow of the southern Right. Although the SKWP, in being exclusively Communist had betrayed its original populist creed from the autumn of 1945, the southern Leftists were, at least in theory, prepared for coordinative action and cooperation with the north by establishing the fundamental operational cornerstones of a

¹⁰¹⁶ "Launching the South Korean Workers' Party," November 23, 1946; *Chosŏn Ilpo*, "Namchosŏnnotongtang Kyŏltangtaehoe Kaech'oe," (The South Korean Workers' Party Launches Its Inaugural Ceremony) November 24, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

¹⁰¹⁷ Kim Nam-sik, *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 381.

quasi-orthodox Communist party.¹⁰¹⁸

In other words, the full institutional preparedness signified the SKWP's readiness to merge with the NKWP as a junior partner, and for north Korea, the "Two-to-One" deal was effectively a manifesto confirming the SKWP's oath to an eternal non-cooperation and separation from the Rightists and the Americans. Not wishing to degenerate into the same "liars and sinister plotters" as the Rightists and to avoid being victimized by the American authorities' Communist witch-hunt, the SKWP's resolve to eternally ally with Communism and P'yŏng-yang was now final. Instead of slinging empty barrages of taunts and threats, the manifesto was a product of Pak's realization that the party had no choice but to institutionally divorce itself from the Rightists by exclusively dedicating itself to the promotion of Communism and, from Pak's perspective, fulfilling his part in the "Two-to-One Deal." Furthermore, with regard to the emphasis on redistribution of land and nationalization, the SKWP was consolidating its resolve to expand the north Koreans' land reform and nationalization policies because the SKWP believed that a "more perfect Communist revolution" meant a total Communist control over all of Korea through a full implementation of a Communist socio-economic infrastructure.

However, the manifesto was not merely embodying Pak's consciousness of his diplomatic obligation to fulfill his pact with P'yŏng-yang; it also laid the groundwork for two different ambitions, despite the fact that they could have met premature deaths due to a grenade thrown during the inaugural ceremony.¹⁰¹⁹ First, the manifesto confirmed the revival of the old CCP and ripened the prospects of Pak's ambition to be *the* Korean Communist leader by actualizing the renaissance of the CCP. Pak could now look forward to rekindling prospects for a return to his glory by using his anti-imperialistic and nationalist credentials to appeal to the masses as

¹⁰¹⁸ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 312; *A Study of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 381.

¹⁰¹⁹ "Namnotang Kyŏltangtaehoe e Suryut'an T'uch'ŏk," (A Grenade is Thrown at the SKWP's Inaugural Ceremony) *Seoul Sinmun*, November 26, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

he had done back in the 1920s. The CCP's resuscitation into the SKWP was a golden ticket for Pak to experiment on the populist potential of orthodox Communism and perhaps accelerate his rise to power once again. Second, Pak had, from his perspective, succeeded in keeping his promise with Kim Il-sung from the September Lobby and wished to fulfill his part of the agreement by eternally disbanding the Social Labor Party. With most of the small Leftist parties, including major figures such as Yŏ Un-hyŏng and Paek Nam-un effectively under Pak's leadership, there were indeed two Communist parties pitted against one central Rightist force. The "Two-to-One Deal" was no longer a nebulous theoretical blueprint, but a potentially workable plan in which the scenario of the Left overpowering the Right might be realized if Pak provided strategic advice for implementing an orthodox Communist system while Kim took care of the military front. With the Deal but only one step away from fulfillment, it was unsurprising that many SKWP members started furiously demanding the "complete disintegration of the Social Labor Party and its detestable cronies."¹⁰²⁰

It did not take long for the SKWP to get what it yearned. Just after the conclusion of the inaugural ceremony, the Social Labor Party, under Yŏ Un-hyŏng's name, had submitted a request for a permanent merger with the SKWP. Until November, the SLP was rapidly losing funds due to the American military government and the Rightists' collaborative scheme to financially topple the SLP, which prompted many members to declare withdrawal from the party ranks.¹⁰²¹ However, the more important reason was because the SLP had finally realized that it was merely a lonely and helpless island against a rapidly expanding Pangea-like SKWP, which seemed ready to absorb anyone standing in its way. The SLP's decision to "avoid a further fragmentation of the Left by placing power in the wrong hands" and bow down to the pressure of a forced merger" was significant because, it forced Yŏ Un-hyŏng to

¹⁰²⁰ *HUSAFIK, Part 2, Chapter 2, 103-104; Hoag, American Military Government in Korea, 438.*

¹⁰²¹ *HUSAFIK, Part 2, Chapter 2, 103-104; Hoag, American Military Government in Korea, 438.*

concede that the merger had completely "dismantled the Left-Right Alliance," nullifying Yŏ and Paek Nam-un's effort to make a last stand.¹⁰²²

Most importantly, Yŏ's statement once again demonstrated the party's resilience and urge to push forward in its struggle for political survival. Although the SKWP had lost a considerable amount of influence and strength from its repeated conflicts with the Rightists and the American military government, the party was still a lawfully recognized organization. Furthermore, in the minds of many citizens who had to endure through the horror of the September and October labor strikes, the SKWP was more reliable and lucid in its resolve to resist the Americans than the SLP, whose ambiguous middle-of-the-road approach to non-ideological unity did not seem to provide an adequate drive to avenge the public's resentment toward the American military government.¹⁰²³ Thus, through his main rival's concession of his final defeat and the public's still unwavering and strong support, Pak Hŏn-yŏng had effectively achieved a genuine union of all Leftist forces in south Korea and confirmed that orthodox Communism would become the undisputed and unchallenged identity of the southern Left.

In addition, Pak had finished concretely solidifying his position as the potentially second most powerful man in northern Korea. Since the manifesto had thereby realized the "Two-to-One Deal" by institutionally establishing the Communists' political superiority over the Rightists, Pak had ample reason to expect that he would be able to help Kim Il-sung complete a more perfect Communist revolution. If the revolution should become successful, the theoretically orthodox and more genuinely Communist Pak could even surpass Kim Il-sung in

¹⁰²² "Yŏ Un-hyŏng, Chwa-u Hapchakkwa Chwaik Haptang Munche e taehan Sŏngmyŏng Palp'yo," (Yŏ Un-hyŏng Issues a Statement about the Left-Right Alliance and the Problem of the Left's Merger) *Chosŏn Ilpo*, November 13, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3; "Sarotang, Yŏ Un-hyŏng Myŏngŭiro Namnotang e Haptong Yoch'ŏng Message Chŏntal," (Social Labor Party Makes a Request to Merge with the SKWP Under Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Name) *Tonga Ilpo*, November 24, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3.

¹⁰²³ Yi Il-chae, "Haepang Hu Chŏn Pyŏngŭi Hwaltongkwa Taekuŭi Kerilla," (The *Chŏnp'yŏng's* Activities and Guerrillas in Tae-ku after Liberation) *Yŏksa Pip'yŏng (History and Criticism)*, (Summer, 1990) 381-383.

terms of reputation and become the undisputed Communist leader of all Korea by advertising his success in south Korea as a success of the Korean laborers and the peasantry while also promising the replication of the southern revolution in the north. The merger thereby assured that Pak had a permanent institutional base to exercise supreme power in the south, which in turn, translated into Pak's appointment as Kim Il-sung's undisputed right-hand man. In short, by ushering the SKWP's birth, Pak had rekindled the hope of clinching his ambition to become a leader of a united Communist movement, which was postponed twenty years ago due to intense internal factionalism. November 23, 1946 was to become a historical moment for Pak to translate the goal into reality.

From a strategic viewpoint, the southern Communists now had a better chance to realize their ambition of what I would call a "Gramscian hegemony," in which the SKWP would unite with its northern counterpart to reshape the political landscape for Communist supremacy. The union would allow the Communists to achieve ideological hegemony by becoming the dominant class that unites the people around Communism. Once this hegemony is realized the party expected Communism to be a societally cherished ideology, delivering the liberation of peasants and workers as the popular-national will and erase the false claim of a Rightist "Democracy." Korea's Communization would then be complete, establishing Communism as a hegemonic interest manifest in individual and collective life, winning popular support from the peasants and workers for Communist supremacy.¹⁰²⁴ Hence, November 23, 1946 was important for the southern Left since it confirmed a long awaited institutional unity for the southern Left and a strengthened consolidation of a Durkheimian organic solidarity.

However, the same date confirmed a permanent institutional demise of "Unitary

¹⁰²⁴ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 53, 181-182, 260, 328; J. Woolcock, "Politics, Ideology, and Hegemony in Gramsci's Theory," *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (September, 1985), 205-207.

Socialism" and along with it, a definitive end to Yŏ's experiment and quest to realize a genuine Left-Right alliance committed to revitalizing a nationalistic and Social Democratic Korea. Yŏ's eternal exit from the SKWP and its subsequent transition, or more accurately, political renaissance as the SKWP did not just mean the permanence of Communist supremacy within the southern Left. Dominance can only exist under the necessary condition of a complete absence of robust opposition, and therefore, Yŏ's expulsion from the SKWP confirmed the defeat of "Unitary Socialism" as a highly positive and ideal but very nebulous plan for unification. The best and most lovable politician of the Korean people had confidence in what he wanted to achieve, but lacked enough conviction to concretely address how he would realize his ideal and overrun the passionate intensity of Pak's faction.

Although Yŏ enjoyed far greater popularity among the public and was arguably the best in cultivating a strong charisma and a sense for displaying a composed public charm, he had failed to capitalize on this advantage by demonstrating a strong conviction of clarity about implementing "Unitary Socialism."¹⁰²⁵ While the idea itself might have been morally superior to the blind Manicheanism of the Right-Left antagonism, Yŏ erred in being unable to have enough passion or political support to carry out his program with a concrete objective. Such nebulousness quickly translated to a rapid loss of time for Yŏ and, ultimately, the loss of an opportunity to complete a serious experiment with a non-ideological and centrist Korea.

By contrast, Pak Hŏn-yŏng emerged as the ultimate victor because he had everything which Yŏ lacked. His conviction about the necessity and even inevitability of Communist supremacy offered much clarity for his followers, who replied to his call by heaping praise and demonstrating their loyalty to Communism and the SKWP by founding a personality cult

¹⁰²⁵ A public opinion poll conducted by the *Tonga Ilpo* on August 13, 1946 showed that 70% favored a "mix of populism and Socialism," a reference to Yŏ Un-hyŏng's centrist platform. See "Kunchŏngch'ŏng Yŏronkuk, (Public Relations Division of the American Military Government) "Chosŏn Kungmini Ōton Chongryuŭi Chongpurŭl Yomanganŭnchi Yŏronŭl Chosa," (A Public Opinion Poll on the Question, 'What Kind of Government Do You Desire to See?') *Tonga Ilpo*, August 13, 1946. *TRAKHD*, Vol. 3.

around Pak, which, after Yō's assassination, fully blossomed into a formal Communist party. For southern Communists, the Chosŏn Communist Party, the Korean Labor Party, and the Korean Socialist Party had merged together into the SKWP and solidly prepared a strong foothold for a potential Communization of the entire peninsula. For Pak, it was a moment of triumph, since he could declare "mission accomplished" to P'yŏngyang and expect a considerable compensation from P'yŏngyang in the form of a stable partnership.

With the two largest Communist parties in the peninsula directly eyeing the Rightists, Pak thought that he could now expect the Communists to become the superior force in Korea once the SKWP received military assistance to subdue national traitors. Pak could also envision fulfilling his personal dream of becoming a "Great Leader of the People" when he returned to P'yŏngyang. In short, Pak had now secured everything in south Korea to prepare for a Communist revolution—wealth, power, and national notoriety to the Rightists. Most importantly, the founding of the SKWP assured P'yŏngyang's authorities that Pak's reputation as a supposedly orthodox Communist who had achieved the ideally perfect marriage between ideology and reality while pursuing Communist supremacy was now somewhat believable, if not entirely trustworthy. Yet, in refashioning itself as an exclusively Communist organization devoid of any centrist ideology, the party was also ironically a sinner. It invoked a "spiritual" devotion to the Pak's personality cult, only to misuse Communism as a tool to crush the Right rather than to seriously pursue Communism as an extensive political system like the north Koreans. The SKWP's alignment with P'yŏngyang and the party's extremism signaled the beginning of the death of Korea's national unity; Pak had ensured peaceful non-ideological unity's "non-Democratic" expulsion, reinforcing the party's Communist identity through a mutative evolution of Communism as a perverse metonym for the Left.

With regard to such extremism, I would argue that November 23, 1946 also confirmed that non-ideological centrism was merely an unworkable ideal against the sheer prowess of

Communism. The merger of all Leftist organizations, or the synonymization of the "Left" with "Communism" represented the cruel and raw power of *realpolitik*. The merger was a strategic cornerstone to realize Pak's personal ambition to tell Koreans that Communism was the only legitimate ideology of the south Korean Left and a stop-sign in front of Yō's eyes to tell him that his vision of "Unitary Socialism" had effectively disappeared. For all the rhetoric about searching for the Communist *spiritus mundi* of the supremacy of Communism, the SKWP had betrayed a sense of camaraderie among the Left for a common goal of expanding Communism's influence in Korea by maximizing the SKWP's own power instead. The haphazard and forced unity of the Left by a party whose interest no longer rested in pursuing Communism for Communism's sake but for raw power had replaced "Unitary Socialism"—a vision with clarity and purity toward the idea of achieving non-ideological unity of the Korean peninsula.

The replacement not only meant a devastating defeat for "Unitary Socialism" but also signified that Pak had betrayed Communism's theoretical idealism, deceived party members, and most importantly, himself, for he was no longer in southern Korea personally leading a struggle to realize national liberation but in northern Korea basking in the glory of being Kim Il-sung's right-hand man. Thus, what existed as the SKWP on November 23 was nothing but a Yeatian sphinx—a body of party members whose knowledge of Communism was negligible or even nonexistent and the head of a leader who was pitiless about his best friend and comrade's death but was also aloof and "blank" about any sense of a genuine *raison d' être* for the party. The party's founding was thus, a troubling sight for Korean politics, for it marked the victory of a highly strategic, cold, and *institutional* political unity over a much needed abandonment of private ideological passions in favor of a purely nationalistic independence and non-ideological unity of the Korean people.

Most importantly, the "Two-to-One Deal" was now complete. With Communist

superiority in the peninsula assured and political neutrality rendered into an ineffective option for national unification, P'yŏngyang was free to do whatever it wished with southern Korea. Such liberty and Pak's fulfillment of his part of the deal revealed the real weakness of Korean politics—a persistent lack of clarity in principles whose principal aim was to conceive of an esoteric ideology first before considering Korea's societal reality.

Such principles had to first be oriented towards increasing transparency in a party's bureaucracy, which could help political parties organize themselves quickly and efficiently so that they could have sufficient time to fully comprehend Korea's reality and shape their ideologies from that comprehension. As Sin Ho, a commentator on the Korean political scene of 1946, noted, the SKWP's eclipse of all the Leftist parties was a tragedy because while "everyone blabbered about the "proletariat," no one realized that they cannot become an independent class because they only constituted 4 % of the entire population barely two years ago."¹⁰²⁶ Moreover, the proletarians in Korea had been referred to as such because they were tasked not with overthrowing Korea's national capitalists but with overcoming a political situation introduced by foreigners, doing away with feudal elements, and forming a nationalistic alliance with the bourgeoisie."¹⁰²⁷ In other words, Sin thought that the goal of a Korean Communist movement was not to breed antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat but to unite the two classes to encourage a cooperative reconstruction of the Korean state based on a common interest in promoting Korean nationalism and sovereignty.¹⁰²⁸

The neglect of this important national task and excessive concentration on promoting political correctness and ideological superiority led to "dozens of parties pursue political

¹⁰²⁶ Sin Ho, *Chŏngch'i Sasang Pip'ankwa Sinpanghyang (A Critique of Political Ideologies and Their New Directions)* (Seoul, south Korea: Yŏn-kŏn Publishing, 1949) in *PSMKH, Vol. 10*, 529.

¹⁰²⁷ Sin Ho, *A Critique of Political Ideologies and Their New Directions* in *PSMKH, Vol. 10*, 528

¹⁰²⁸ Sin Ho, *A Critique of Political Ideologies and Their New Directions* in *PSMKH, Vol. 10*, 529.

dominance close to insanity."¹⁰²⁹ Although the Communists, DPK members, and moderates such as Yŏ Un-hyŏng had competed for the support of the proletariat, all three parties were illegitimate in their claim to be champions of the underclass because none of them bothered to explain why emerging victorious in contentions with Syngman Rhee's "One People Principle"—one commonly-held ideology for one nation's people—would guarantee the fulfillment of the Communist promise for the proletariat's liberation from the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, even when these ideologies did contend with each other, the object of contention was never explicitly clear because the ideologies were too busy advertising their own individual superiority over their respective opponents that there was virtually no unitary consensus to deliver in terms of the ideologies' internal content which could promote real progress for the masses. Such a lack of focus was at the root of the Communist infiltration of the Korean People's Republic. This problem led to the contagious disease of discoloring even the so-called "moderates" and middle-roaders because they were literally "stuck in the middle," urging all political parties to unite under the creed of national unity regardless of ideological differences.¹⁰³⁰

Yet, politicians such as Yŏ had to constantly struggle with the nebulousness of their positions because they could not confidently declare what their priority was—liberating the working class or unifying the nation. The failure to make a choice between the two options fed into the larger problem of finding out their ultimate purpose, which led to such extreme cases as Yŏ completely losing his political foothold by the time of the SKWP's founding. The suggestion for a joint coalition among the Leftist parties was therefore a fraudulent deal meant to conceal the fact that the CCP merely wanted to expand its influence. By suggesting this deal, the CCP could also enjoy the implicit advantage of "stunting the growth of its main

¹⁰²⁹ Sin Ho, *A Critique of Political Ideologies and Their New Directions in PSMKH*, Vol. 10, 527.

¹⁰³⁰ Sin Ho, *A Critique of Political Ideologies and Their New Directions in PSMKH*, Vol. 10, 526 and 530.

rivals"—the precise reason behind selecting the People's Party and the New Citizens' Party as targets for the absorptive alliance.¹⁰³¹

In short, Sin was arguing that Yŏ was too naive to believe that the CCP's suggestion for an alliance had any genuine ethical or nationalistic considerations which were compatible with "Unitary Socialism." Yŏ's banishment from the CCP was not solely a product of Pak's personal hatred of Yŏ, but had the much larger objective of paralyzing the operations of the CCP's rivals to enable a swift and brutally efficient Communist-dominated absorption of the Left. The alliance was not so much a fortuitous victory for Pak Hŏn-yŏng but a defeat for "Unitary Socialism" stemming from Yŏ's inability to have a sufficient amount of tact to read the conniving and deceptive mind of Pak Hŏn-yŏng's ambition to realize a synonymous relationship between "Communism" and "Leftism."

Sin's diagnosis proved to be a prophecy in southern Korea because Yŏ's resolve to continue the struggle against Pak was completely absent. Yŏ made one last desperate attempt to find an exit from his tormenting nihilism—eternal retirement from politics. Powerless amidst a rapidly crumbling order and stability within the SLP ranks, Yŏ's fate was sealed in late November, when the SLP sharply criticized the Left-Right alliance:

"The Left-Right alliance was originally arbitrarily forged with non-Democratic or reactionary groups and denoted a compromise between Pak Hŏn-yŏng and Syngman Rhee..the Five Principles was merely a scape goat to help Rightists absolve themselves from the charge that they were making conspiracies behind our backs; only the talks between Lyuh and Kim Kyu-sik remained..the alliance originally was an organization without any doctrines and could not contribute to Democracy. Rather, the alliance played a role for the anti-Democratic movement by providing justifications for the birth of a separate legislative assembly in southern Korea. The SLP bears no responsibility over the alliance since it had not manifested any clear ideas for the alliance. However, we have now reached the time when we have to clearly oppose this alliance, eliminating any ambiguous standpoints."¹⁰³²

The SLP was disoriented with the sheer lack of purpose behind Yŏ's fixation with realizing the Left-Right alliance because it critically lacked a concrete ideology and was vulnerable to external manipulation without producing any noticeable results. Furthermore, the SLP argued

¹⁰³¹ Sin Ho, *A Critique of Political Ideologies and Their New Directions in PSMKH*, Vol. 10, 536.

¹⁰³² *Seoul Sinmun*, November 23, 1946. Quoted in Sin Pok-ryong, *The Politics of Separation of the Korean Peninsula*, 460.

that the alliance mocked Democracy because it failed to prevent the appearance of a separate legislative apparatus, which in the SLP's eyes, was synonymous with an attempt to found a new government to legalize the partition of Korea. Overwhelmed by the mounting pressure of these continued unsatisfactory outcomes and frustration over its inability to salvage the Left-Right alliance according to its brand of neutrality, the SLP had decided that it had seen enough and had urged Yŏ to forfeit a plan filled with too much idealism and insufficient pragmatism to end the sorry state of the SLP as a helpless buffer zone between the Left and Right.

By early December, unable to overcome his shock with the SLP's betrayal of the Left-Right alliance, a bitter and lethargic Yŏ decided to conclude his official career as a politician by abdicating from the SLP leadership. On December 4, Yŏ gave a speech announcing his permanent resignation from the chairmanship. He declared that "it was due to a disgraceful and ignoble irresponsibility of failing to unite the Left," and because the "fragmentation occurred so suddenly and unexpectedly, there was practically nothing" he could possibly do to "kindle the slightest hope for the resurrection of a strong and unitary Left."¹⁰³³ Hence, with "absolutely nothing further to lament, regret, or reminisce" about his stint as SLP chairman, he "would dutifully resign as a man would when he knows when time has called for his due."¹⁰³⁴ In short, Yŏ was acknowledging that the limitation inherent in a politician as an individual human being was too burdensome to handle the gargantuan task of winning the hearts and minds of the Leftists, whose ideological shapes and colors were so unpredictably varied and diverse that the only thing certain was that disorganization would exacerbate further. Thus, to avoid being a prime witness and culprit to that despicable tragedy, Yŏ was

¹⁰³³ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Chwa-u Hapchakwiwonhoe Chwachŭk Taep'yo Yŏ Un-hyŏngŭi Chaki Pip'ansŏ," (Left-wing Representative of the Left-Right Alliance Commission Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Self-Criticism) December 4, 1946, *IDFTYSL*, 70.

¹⁰³⁴ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Self Criticism," December 4, 1946, *IDFTYSL*, 71.

choosing to blindfold himself to the disaster as quickly as he could manage. Most importantly, he had terminated his quest to realize "Unitary Socialism" with his own hands. Regardless of what happened in the future, "Unitary Socialism" as its creator had envisioned, was thereby prematurely summoned to its grave.

Yŏ displayed much hope about the American military government, for "the officials have done a marvelous service to the Korean people in providing what was a most urgent and invaluable education in the principles of Democratic government."¹⁰³⁵ However, this was not to suggest that Yŏ had reservations about the Americans' conduct toward the Soviets. In a communiqué issued shortly after his resignation speech, Yŏ delivered what effectively was a list of essential conditions necessary for the proper exercise of "Unitary Socialism." First, he urged that because the Moscow Conference's decision was responsible for "exacerbating schism and infighting among the Korean people," the decision to implement a trusteeship—the core cause behind the mayhem—"had to be nullified and rescinded as soon as possible."¹⁰³⁶ In addition, because Korea was a non-participatory state in the Second World War, the Americans and the Soviets had "better exit Korea in the earliest date conceivable, in the most concrete fashion of a complete military withdrawal."¹⁰³⁷ Finally, should the two conditions not be fulfilled within a reasonable amount of time, Yŏ stressed that "all Koreans must unite in support of Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee to ascertain that Korea will be able to defend her demands and her national sovereignty to her death."¹⁰³⁸

In essence, Yŏ was expressing the desperate hope that even if he had failed to implement "Unitary Socialism," his dedication to that ideal was genuine such that he wished to realize the creed even if it required an alignment with politicians who did not share the same vision.

¹⁰³⁵ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Self Criticism," December 4, 1946, *IDFTYSL*, 72.

¹⁰³⁶ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Self Criticism," December 4, 1946, *IDFTYSL*, 72.

¹⁰³⁷ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Self Criticism," December 4, 1946, *IDFTYSL*, 72.

¹⁰³⁸ Yŏ Un-hyŏng, "Self Criticism," December 4, 1946, *IDFTYSL*, 72.

The first demand echoes the Rightist sentiment of having an independent government, while the second principle echoes the Leftist sentiment of nationalist independence as a condition of having absolutely no foreign occupation. The final demand encapsulates both of the previous demands, showing that his faith in the Korean people to support their own national government remained unwavering because the foreign presence in Korea was not only unwelcome but also unnecessarily trampling the dignity of Korea as an independent nation, since it resembled a continuation of imperialism. Nationalism, rather than ideology, had to be the ultimate glue that held the Korean people together, and the final demand can be interpreted as a statement expressing the sanctity and gravity of this very message, which Yō undoubtedly believed Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee would uphold.

Unfortunately, little did Yō know that his exit from politics would quickly translate into the rise of a rigidly anti-Communist south Korean security state and his sudden death on a humid summer afternoon, preventing him from verifying whether Kim and Rhee were trustworthy or unsuitable to carry out the final demand.

3. Conclusion

This chapter offered a diagnosis of the September and October labor strikes as a reflection of the CCP's institutional weakness. The strikes' failure was already predictable by the sheer deficiency in preparation and technological inferiority compared with the south Korean police and the American military government, but this chapter showed that the real weakness was in the utter lack of coordination and direction in planning and defining the strikes' purpose. Although the party wanted to demonstrate its authority by mobilizing all members to devote themselves to launching an insurgency against the Right-wing establishment and make it negotiate from a position of inferiority, the gross violence and unprincipled debacle and chaos the strikes unleashed did much harm to societal order and discipline which, if further exacerbated, could have been a major national tragedy.

Moreover, even though the strikes led to Pak's conviction about adopting the "new tactic" of directly confronting the Right with arms because it successfully exposed the raw power and inhumanity of the Right's violent extremism, the "new tactic" achieved nothing much beyond this exposure. It was this very limitation which caused a very impatient Pak to kidnap Yŏ Un-hyŏng. Although the content of the interrogation is not known, Pak was probably keen to ascertain that Yŏ was not an informant to the Americans or a close partner to the north Koreans. To especially affirm the former, Pak forcedly earned his agreement to sever all ties with the American military government, while also threatening Yŏ Un-hyŏng to never challenge Pak as the undisputed leader of the south Korean Communist movement or as Kim Il-sung's right-hand man.

The actual content of the interrogation, while unknown and unverifiable, was not as important as the interrogation's immediate outcome: Yŏ Un-hyŏng's retirement from politics shortly after his last political party in his lifetime, the Social Labor Party, disbanded itself. This event was important because it occurred not long after the founding of the Southern Korean Workers' Party. The SKWP was on one hand, a fulfillment of Pak Hŏn-yŏng's ambition to permanently unite the southern Left after decades of factionalist struggles, but on the other hand, marked the victory of Pak's emphasis on organizational solidarity and a clear relabeling of the "Left" as "Communists" over "Unitary Socialism" which lacked both of these qualities. It was such clarity which also sealed Pak's victory over Yŏ in the September Lobby, as the confirmation of a southern Communist solidarity meant the completion of the "Two-to-One Deal," in which the northern Communists would unite with their southern counterparts and overwhelm the Right with superior numbers and force. In short, the southern Left was ready to unite with the northerners in the quest for a "more perfect Communist revolution"; the official and institutional rise of the SKWP marked the death of a promising and major yet unorganized centrist force in Korean politics.

Given the significance of the SKWP's founding, the SLP's disintegration was devastating for Yŏ and to a great extent, south Korean politics, because it symbolized the total fragmentation of the Left-Right alliance, Yŏ Un-hyŏng's political career, and his idealistic aspiration for non-ideological unification. The most critical cause for Yŏ's failure to revive his political base through a union with the moderate Paek Nam-un's New Citizens' Party was the chronic lack of clarity in defining "Unitary Socialism." This problem was, in a sense, pre-ordained because Yŏ did not devote sufficient time for himself to seriously systematize the thought. The emphasis on achieving non-ideological unification, while well-meant in its ultimate purpose of getting rid of the Cold War's shadow in the Korean peninsula, suffered from the absence of a concrete means. Yŏ had waited for too long for the means to appear, for without a concrete understanding of his own ideology, he had expected others around him—the Americans, Rightists, and moderates—to understand the ideology for him. Yŏ's retirement was a sign of exhaustion about his own frustrated attempts to programmatize his idealistic vision. In short, although it was the southern Communists who had expelled him from their party, Yŏ had failed to make a convincing case for his political revival because he could not define what he was trying to unify, and just relied on nationalism as the sole reason for why Koreans had to unite and abandon ideological ties.

However, the rise of the SKWP was not a simple or happy one for the southern Left because it rapidly invited a more intense and ferocious reply from the southern Right, which not only sought to contain the southern Left, but if necessary and possible, obliterate and crush it definitively. The southern Right's preparations to achieve this objective—the establishment of south Korea's national assembly and the subsequent rise of the south Korean anti-Communist security state—and how these developments put the last nail in the coffin of "Unitary Socialism" will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 13

A Tide Too Full of Steam and Foam: The Formation of the National Legislative Assembly, the Rise of the South Korean Anti-Communist Security State, and the Death of "Unitary Socialism"

"Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar."¹⁰³⁹
-Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Crossing the Bar" (1889)

1. "A Political Institution No Different Than a Rightist Den": The Establishment of a Dysfunctional National Legislative Assembly as a Failure of Korean Moderatism

The Spring of 1947 was a highly cluttered season for Korean politics. Although Kim Kyu-sik, the Chairman of the Legislative Assembly, had succeeded in overseeing the first few sessions, he had yet to perfectly form a stable government because there was no firm political base for Korean moderates to assist Kim in impartially arbitrating a Right-wing majority. To Kim Kyu-sik's great disappointment, Yŏ Un-hyŏng had quickly declined Kim's invitation to join the Legislative Assembly, choosing instead to cooperate closely with the Left-Right Alliance.¹⁰⁴⁰ Yŏ's refusal was a thorny problem for Kim because as Yŏ later complained to an American military government official, it symbolized how thoroughly Rightist the Legislative

¹⁰³⁹ Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Crossing the Bar," in *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁴⁰ American Delegation, U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission, Seoul, Korea, "Tab B-Dissolution of Coalition Committee (undated)," RG 554, Box 310: United States Army Forces in Korea: U.S. Army Office of Military Government—Korean Political and Legal Matters, 1944-1948: South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly to "White Paper"(and Related Materials).

Assembly was and Kim "despite making headway, had so little courage" to entertain a wide spectrum of views.¹⁰⁴¹ In short, Yŏ was expressing an uncomfortable certainty that Kim's centrism was like that of Paek Nam-un, highly adaptive like a chameleon to its surroundings, but whose flexibility bordered dangerously on indecisiveness and an inability to concretely systematize a unitary Democracy. In Yŏ's eyes, Kim lacked the courage to show that genuine Democracy had to operate like a hall of mirrors—a multi-dimensionality which initially confuses an unacquainted adventurer but which also reflects all possible angles to eventually reveal a single, but accurate exit or solution.

Indeed, Yŏ's real reason for declining Kim's offer—the existence of a gross "imbalance in the political composition of the Legislative Assembly"—even won the military government's sympathy.¹⁰⁴² Although the assembly was conceived to encourage the "formation of a real middle-of-the-road party and to replace Rightists with members of the Left-Right Alliance," the realism of prioritizing anti-Communism overruled the idealism of realizing an ideological equilibrium.¹⁰⁴³ Even though Syngman Rhee had resigned from party politics, he had ensured that his shadow was deep and long enough to make a lasting imprint on an undemocratic election. Out of 939 candidates competing for 200 seats in the Legislative Assembly—terms in office were to indefinitely continue "until the Provisional Government of United Korea was established"¹⁰⁴⁴—over a quarter of the candidates were either pro-Rhee supporters or had served in the American military government.¹⁰⁴⁵ When the elections were over, half of the

¹⁰⁴¹ Leonard M. Bertsch, 1st Lieutenant, C. M. P., "Memorandum for General Brown," February 18, 1947. RG 554, Box 310.

¹⁰⁴² John Weckerling, Chairman of the Legislative Liaison Committee, Seoul, Korea, "Memorandum for Commanding General, USAFIK, and Commanding General, USAMGIK—Proceedings of Interim Legislative Assembly during February 10-15 1947, 2. February 17, 1947. RG 554, Box 310.

¹⁰⁴³ "Paper Prepared by Major General Albert E. Brown," February 4, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6*, 608.

¹⁰⁴⁴ McCune, *Korea Today*, 83.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Sin Pok-ryong, *The Politics of Separation of the Korean Peninsula*, 229.

seats were under the DPK and Rightists' control.¹⁰⁴⁶ In such a scenario, there was no guarantee that the People's Party would be adequately represented, let alone have chances to oppose the Right.¹⁰⁴⁷ Thus, it is not surprising that Yŏ had a deep suspicion that the Legislative Assembly was only made by and for the DPK and its Right-wing supporters.

Indeed, as a member of the New Citizens' Party criticized, a Rightist dominance of the Legislative Assembly was an "unsurprising outcome, for it had always been Syngman Rhee and Kim Ku's scheme to extend their hold on power" and the establishment of a Legislative Assembly only served to make that will be apparently clear to the Korean people "who had long been deceived by the false aurora of patriotism and nationalism that Kim and Rhee displayed as publicity stunts."¹⁰⁴⁸ Although Kim and Rhee "harped patriotic slogans with their mouths," the reality "reflected the opposite" because the Legislative Assembly was "filled with officials who had sold Chosŏn to the Japanese and pro-Japanese collaborators who drank the blood of Koreans without any remorse."¹⁰⁴⁹ Hence, the Legislative Assembly was nothing more than a "euphemism for a private club run under Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee's names."¹⁰⁵⁰ It was a "reality that was clearly distant and antagonistic to the public will for a truly nationalistic government," and therefore, using "every means within the power of

¹⁰⁴⁶ [F 7341/511/81] Telegram from Crowther to Bevin, "Pre-Election Situation in Korea," May 24, 1948 in *Korea: Economic and Political Reports, Vol. 10*, 337; Choi Sang-ryong, *The American Military Government and Korean Nationalism* (Seoul, south Korea: Na-nam Publishing Company, 1988), 263. Voters were also asked to write down candidates' names to ensure that illiterates were excluded.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Leonard M. Bertsch, 1st Lieutenant, C. M. P., "Memorandum for General Brown," February 18, 1947. " See also "27th Session of the Legislative Assembly," March 10, 1947. RG 554, Box 310 and "Confidential Memorandum from Crowther to Bevin," May 24, 1948. Robert Jarman ed., *Korea: Political and Economic Reports, Vol. 10*, 337.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Choi Ch'ang-ik, "Ippŏp Ŭiwŏnŭi Pantongchŏk Sŏngkyŏke kwanhayŏ," (On the Counter-revolutionary Nature of the Legislative Assembly) in The Northern Korean Labor Day Memorial Preparatory Commission ed., *The True Identities of Fascists and Counter-revolutionaries* (Seoul, south Korea: Constructive Publishing Company, 1947), 34. RG 242, NM-44, 299-F: Korean Language Records Captured at Seoul and P'yŏng-yang [SA 2008] [1945-1950]; 08/1952-01/1958, Box 629.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Choi Ch'ang-ik, "On the Counter-revolutionary Nature of the Legislative Assembly," in *The True Identities of Fascists and Counter-revolutionaries*, 34.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Choi Ch'ang-ik, "On the Counter-revolutionary Nature of the Legislative Assembly," in *The True Identities of Fascists and Counter-revolutionaries*, 35.

the people," the Legislative Assembly "had to be overthrown as soon as possible."¹⁰⁵¹

In short, even in the eyes of moderate politicians, the Legislative Assembly had no right to declare itself as a genuine representative of the Korean people because it was occupied by politicians who had willingly sold Korea to imperialism for their own comfort and bureaucratic advancement. The Legislative Assembly represented little more than the Rightists' attempt to continue and honor this disgraceful legacy by maintaining an institution which only allowed a pro-Japanese and Rightist majority. The member of the New Citizens' Party was arguing that Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee had already deceived the people by invoking nationalism but did not follow through with corresponding actions to demonstrate their sincere dedication to that sacred ideal, the only realistic solution to establish Democracy in Korea was to directly demonstrate the people's will by overthrowing a Rightist and exclusionary club which did not respect patriotism or nationalism as public values.

To make things worse, Kim Kyu-sik had inadvertently proved Yō's disappointment with his inflexibility to be correct. Although the Legislative Assembly tried hard to fill its remaining five seats, it was quite an ordeal, since a the majority of elected members, as one report put it, "returned to their homes," a euphemism denoting an outright refusal to join the Legislative Assembly in favor of assuming more minor but ideologically less stressful positions such as provincial governorships or withdrawing due to ill health.¹⁰⁵² Even when the last vacant seat was finally filled in, Yō Un-hyōng's criticism of Kim Kyu-sik was still valid. It was occupied by one of Kim's protégés Kim Wōn-yōng, a Boston University graduate who had been active in the Hawai'i newspaper business for many years and was a self-proclaimed steadfast moderate—an ardent fan of Kim who favored neither the Left nor the

¹⁰⁵¹ Choi Ch'ang-ik, "On the Counter-revolutionary Nature of the Legislative Assembly," in *The True Identities of Fascists and Counter-revolutionaries*, 36-37.

¹⁰⁵² John Weckerling, Chairman of the Legislative Liaison Committee, Seoul, Korea, "Memorandum for Commanding General, USAFIK, and Commanding General, USAMGIK—Proceedings of Interim Legislative Assembly during February 10-15 1947, 3. February 17, 1947. RG 554, Box 310.

Right.¹⁰⁵³

In essence, Kim Kyu-sik's decision to include Kim Wŏn-yŏng gave an impression that despite Kim's good intention to attempt at molding a politically moderate assembly, he himself was no different from any Right-wing or Left-wing politician in choosing to engage in partisan politics. Kim Kyu-sik forgot that the law is a composite instrument of power with the trinity of the power to interpret, apply and set limits according to the interests of the prime legislator or of those who would benefit the most from the law's enactment.¹⁰⁵⁴ A law can mediate class relations to favor political incumbents or the public by imposing restrictions on the power of the incumbents, but a law cannot simultaneously satisfy both sides and is difficult to change if it originally chooses to favor those in power.¹⁰⁵⁵

Although Kim Kyu-sik had a grand ambition of unifying Korean politics under the banner of a moderate and non-ideological government, the Legislative Assembly proved to be nothing more than a stamp confirming the very limitation of his own vision. "Moderate" could only be a synonym for being "non-radical" or what Yŏ really meant by Kim lacking courage—a spineless indifference to the identity of the majority, guilty of stunting the Democratic Representative Council's growth into a genuinely Democratic institution entertaining diverse views.¹⁰⁵⁶ Indeed, the vegetative state of the Democratic Representative Council as a "bastard institution" and "a caricature of Democracy meant to only appease the American military" persisted for another year, with the UNTCOK refusing to give it "full

¹⁰⁵³ "Memorandum from Legislative Liaison Committee, Seoul, Korea, for Commanding General, USAFIK, and Commanding General, USAMGIK—Proceedings of Interim Legislative Assembly during February 24-March 1. March 4, 1947. See also "Biographical Sketch of Kim Wŏn-yŏng," Memorandum from Robert A. Kinney (Department of State) to General Weckerling," March 1, 1947. RG 554, Box 310.

¹⁰⁵⁴ E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 264.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, Massachusetts and London, England: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1978), 103.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Cho Han-sŏng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 281.

consultative powers or a face."¹⁰⁵⁷ In short, as one north Korean pamphlet put it in rather crude language, Kim Kyu-sik had exposed that the Rightists' "real intention behind opposing the Seven principles and proposing the unruly Eight Principles" was to merely set up "a political institution no different than a Rightist den."¹⁰⁵⁸

However, the real victor to claim the spoils was the SKWP because Kim Kyu-sik's failed experiment with political diversity only meant that Kim did not have robust ideas or practical programs to effectively challenge or destroy the Left. Furthermore, with Yŏ Un-hyŏng rejecting the Legislative Assembly as his political base and now completely unable to recuperate his influence within the SKWP, the party found no reason to conceal its joy about the prospect of liberally displaying its Communistic agenda. In a sense, the rapid decline in Yŏ's influence had already been somewhat predetermined, since the Communists found it easy to manipulate his partial sympathy with their causes, the factional split of the SLP, and his constant fear of surveillance by the Communists since the summer of 1946. Reflecting on these developments, I would argue that Yŏ had unwittingly done a service for the Communists by voluntarily deciding to abandon his last chance for a genuine political resurrection. With the last obstacle out of their way, the Communists could concentrate on rekindling their hope of maintaining a balance of power by consolidating their base in the south and continuing to cooperate with P'yŏngyang.¹⁰⁵⁹

Of course, there still remained one inconclusive factor which could potentially jeopardize the cooperation—Yŏ had not entirely given up, for he had rescinded his promise in December

¹⁰⁵⁷ "Secret Priority Telegram from Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to the Secretary of State," June 20, 1948. *FRUS, 1948, Vol. 6: The Far East and Australasia*, 1220; Anonymous, "Namchosŏnŭi Ippŏp Ŭiwŏni Mikunchŏngŭl Kanghwasikiko Palchŏnsikinta," (The Southern Legislative Assembly Strengthens and Improves the American Military Government) 9. RG 242, Entry No. NM-44, 299-G: Korean Language Publication, Government, and Other Records Captured in P'yŏng-yang[SA 2009] [1947-1950]; 05/1953-01/1958, Box 670.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Anonymous, "The Southern Legislative Assembly Strengthens and Improves the American Military Government," 17. RG 242, Entry No. NM-44, 299-G: Korean Language Publication, Government, and Other Records Captured in P'yŏngyang[SA 2009] [1947-1950]; 05/1953-01/1958, Box 670.

¹⁰⁵⁹ American Delegation, U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission, Seoul Korea, "Political Summary—February 14 to April 4, 1947," RG 554, Box 310.

1946 to retire from politics and was still trying hard to found a new party which could realize "Unitary Socialism." However, the SLP's rapid disintegration and its subsequent absorptive union with the SKWP and Paek Nam-un's refusal to formulate an alliance rendered a full recuperation of his political career nearly impossible.¹⁰⁶⁰ Despite his support for the trusteeship through his critique of the anti-trusteeship movement as a move that would "intensify isolation from the international community, division of the people, and postponement of independence,"¹⁰⁶¹ Yŏ's effort was by now insignificant, a mere attempt to avoid the sting of what the Korean media termed "the syringe of the SKWP."¹⁰⁶² With the Rhee Administration and consequently, former pro-Japanese politicians, still in power, there was very little progress in bridging the divergent views of the Left and the Right. Rightists under the leadership of the DPK were expanding the anti-trusteeship and pro-Syngman Rhee campaign to the provinces since January 1947, which seemed to "intensify the actual animosity of the extreme Right and Left" by the eve of the March First Independence Movement celebrations.¹⁰⁶³

Despite a persistent Rightist call for separate elections, its prospects remained uncertain, for Korea's fate as either a divided or united country had yet again been postponed because the Americans and Soviets still failed to reach a suitable compromise.¹⁰⁶⁴ Moreover, even if there was a conclusion to the American-Soviet negotiations, the DPK had yet to form a fully

¹⁰⁶⁰ Confidential Telegram from the American Embassy in Seoul to Secretary of State, "Political Summary for March," April 14, 1947. RG 59, Decimal File 895.00/4-1447, Box 7388; American Delegation, U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission, Seoul, Korea, "Political Summary—February 14 to April 4, 1947," 2. RG 554, Box 310.

¹⁰⁶¹ "Yŏ Un-hyŏng, Pant'akuntongkwa Minchŏn Kanghwa tŭng e taehae Tamhwa," (Yŏ Un-hyŏng's Statement on the Anti-Trusteeship Movement and the Strengthening of the Democratic Nationalist Front) *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun (Capital and Countryside Newspaper)*, January 27, 1947. *TRKAHD, Vol. 4.*

¹⁰⁶² "Yŏ Un-hyŏng, Sintang Kyŏlsŏng wihae Inmintangchaekŏnwiwŏnhoe Haesan," (Yŏ Un-hyŏng Disadjourns the Council for the Reconstruction of the People's Party to Found a New Party) *Tonga Ilpo*, March 13, 1947. *TRKAHD, Vol. 4.*

¹⁰⁶³ "Political Summary for February," Priority Telegram from American Embassy in Seoul to Secretary of State, March 10, 1947. RG 59, Decimal File 895.00/3-1047, Box 7388. See also Cho Han-sŏng, *Three Years After Liberation*, 127.

¹⁰⁶⁴ This round of negotiations would break down on February 28, 1947. See *U.S.-U.S.S.R. Joint Commission, Report of the United States Delegation*, 80. RG 554, Box 294.

functioning government which had popular legitimacy. South Korea had a Legislative Assembly which was not subject to any vetoing power from the American military government and could enact "important political, economic, and social reforms pending the establishment of the provisional government."¹⁰⁶⁵ Yet, the Legislative Assembly was only independent insofar as there was no obstacle to realizing an independent and sovereign Korea and was not a "government within itself or a governing body of south Korea."¹⁰⁶⁶ In other words, despite the fact that the Legislative Assembly symbolized the beginning of the military government's "Koreanization policy" to calm south Koreans' anxiety over the prospect of being "sacrificed as a pawn in the international game,"¹⁰⁶⁷ south Korea was not ready for separate elections because the peninsula's political identity as a Democracy or a Communist regime was not clarified yet.¹⁰⁶⁸

Furthermore, the Legislative Assembly was not a legitimate representative of Korean sovereignty because it did not exercise political supremacy over a fixed territory or had won formal international recognition of liberation. It had yet to enjoy *de facto* sovereignty—a combination of internal supremacy and external independence.¹⁰⁶⁹ Furthermore, in contiguity with the SLP's vow to banish any of its party members who agreed to join the Legislative Assembly and the party's subsequent disintegration following Paek Nam-un's resignation soon after that of Yŏ Un-hyŏng, founding a truly multi-party Democratic coalition under Rightist dominance was virtually impossible.¹⁰⁷⁰ By March 1, the SLP had eternally

¹⁰⁶⁵ "Confidential Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," January 4, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6, 597.*

¹⁰⁶⁶ "Confidential Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State." January 4, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6, 597.*

¹⁰⁶⁷ John R. Hodge, "Telegram to the War Department," January 17, 1947. WDSCA 014 Korea (November 1, 1946-January 31, 1947), Section 5, RG 165: Records of the U.S. Army Civil Affairs Section.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Matray, "Development Delayed," 39.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Press Conference on March 27, 1947 General Archer L. Lerch on the Legislative Assembly. RG 554, Box 2: United States Forces in Korea Commandant's Office. See also Michael Ross Fowler and Julie Marie Bunck, "What Constitutes the Sovereign State?" *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (October, 1996), 383.

¹⁰⁷⁰ "Sinmintang Wiwŏnchang Paek Nam-un, Chŏngkye Ŭtoe Sŏngmyŏng," (New Citizens' Party Chairman Paek Nam-un Announces His Retirement From Politics) *Tonglip Sinpo*, December 8, 1946; "Ippŏpŭiwŏn

evaporated from the Korean political scene, under the majority opinion that "disintegration was inevitable for the end of factionalism and for the greater good of the Left's communal development."¹⁰⁷¹

Reflecting on the development of an anti-Communist security state in the south, the SLP's permanent disintegration importantly marked two failures in Korean politics. On one hand, it meant that Yŏ had permanently lost a secure political base from which he could continue struggling against the SKWP. Although he had urged Hodge two months earlier to continue watching Pak Hŏn-yŏng closely because "his last efforts were a complete failure and he is seeking to recoup," Yŏ himself only had a complete failure in his hands and very little prospect for recuperation, his efforts to politically unify the Left having "ended in a cloud of smoke."¹⁰⁷² "Unitary Socialism" and the dream to approximate an implementation of a Korean Social Democracy had thereby come to a dead end. On the other hand, the Rightists, who had failed to integrate the Left in February had also failed to integrate the moderates, thereby tarnishing the pluralistic essence of a genuinely democratic Legislative Assembly. In short, while it was true that Koreans were able to exercise more influence and autonomy over their internal problems, in the eyes of many American officials, ownership of legislative powers alone was insufficient for Korea to declare as having a sovereign government since she had yet to enjoy a full separation of powers and the establishment of a Korean provisional government was still conditioned upon the still pending American and Soviet agreement on the terms of the Moscow Decision.

Kwansŏn Ŭiwŏn Sŏnchŏng e taehae Che Tanch'e Ŭisa P'yomyŏng," (The Social Labor Party Decides to Banish Members Who Accept Positions within the Legislative Assembly) *Tonga Ilpo*, December 10, 1946. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 3. See also Sim Chi-yŏn, *A Study of the People's Party*, 147.

¹⁰⁷¹ "Sarotang Haech'e Kyŏlchŏng, Yŏssi Chungsimuro Sintang Ch'angtang," (Social Labor Party Agrees to Dissolve Itself, Forms a New Party under Mr. Yŏ's Leadership) *Tonga Ilpo*, March 1, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 4. See also Sim Chi-yŏn, *A Study of the People's Party*, 153.

¹⁰⁷² John R. Hodge, "Memo for Record on Conversation with Yŏ Un-hyŏng," January 20, 1947. RG 554, Box 2: United States Forces in Korea Commandant's Office. General Correspondence. See also Inclosure 3 to Dispatch 38 (Secret) from Office of the Political Adviser to the Secretary of State, August 6, 1947, "Yŏ's Letter to an Unidentified Friend," February 17, 1947. RG 59, Decimal File 895.00/8-647, Box 7388.

However, the Rightists' failure to integrate moderates did not perturb Syngman Rhee, who was still adamantly chasing the chimera of a completely unitary government in south Korea which would represent the entire Korean peninsula. Rhee insisted that Korea could no longer "wait indefinitely without a government and let Great Powers take advantage of her or turn her into another Philippines," the latter referring to the fact that Huk rebels were constantly threatening Manila's stability even though the Americans were supporting the Philippines Constabulary—a phenomenon some Filipinos considered an extension of American colonial rule.¹⁰⁷³ As if that was not enough, Rhee pleaded the American Congress to "immediately grant south Korea independence in a time when much of the Near East is surrendering to Communism," Korea would be "disillusioned by a highly probable failure to establish Democracy and with American designs on the peninsula."¹⁰⁷⁴ On the other hand, the Committee for Left-Right Alliance argued that the American military government only existed to assist Korea in "stabilizing her internal security and economy," and continued to pressure the Rhee Administration to forfeit its plan to establish a separate south Korean government, which would only feed more alienation into the minds of Koreans."¹⁰⁷⁵

In other words, ever since Rhee had first mentioned the possibility of a separate government in the south, the "ethnic unity or ideology" debate over its interpretation—whether it was a scheme to permanently divide Korea or a bulwark against Communism had yet to even have its own grave for seven months, constantly lingering as a ghost posing too many questions and no answers. Rhee's ultimate choice of prizing ideology and Korea's

¹⁰⁷³ "Minchoktongilch'ongponpu, *Washington Post*chi e kechetoen Yi Sŭngmanŭi Ŭikyŏn Palp'yo," (The Headquarters for the National Unification Movement Announces Syngman Rhee's Opinion Reported in the *Washington Post*) *Chosŏn Ilpo*, March 14, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 4. On the Huk Rebellion, see McCoy, *Policing America's Empire*, 374-379.

¹⁰⁷⁴ "Yi Sŭng-man, Namhanŭl Chŭksi Tongnipsikyŏtallako Mŭiŭhoe e Yoku," (Syngman Rhee Demands U.S. Congress to Immediately Grant Korea Her Independence) *Chosŏn Ilpo*, March 21, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 4.

¹⁰⁷⁵ "Syngman Rhee Demands U.S. Congress to Immediately Grant Korea Her Independence," *Chosŏn Ilpo*, March 21, 1947; "Chwa-u Hapchakwi Sŏnchonpu, Tanchŏngsuripsŏlkwa P'aŏpsakŏn e kwanhan Tamhwa Palp'yo," (The Committee for Left-Right Alliance Announces a Statement on the Rumor about a Separate Government in South Korea and the Labor Strikes) *Seoul Sinmun*, March 27, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 4.

transformation as a anti-Communist security state by the Spring of 1947 through the founding of the Legislative Assembly and the south Korean police's crackdown of the March First celebrations would confirm the arrival of a twilight for Unitary Socialism, preventing the dream of non-ideological unification from enjoying its morning sun and plummeting it to a dark abyss of no return.

2."I Have Yet to Enjoy Freedom from Fear": The Suppression of the March First Celebrations and the Assassination of Yŏ Un-hyŏng

Monotony can invite a deep frustration with the ubiquity of the mundane and ordinary, and either because of the ubiquity or mundane, or a combination of both, has the rare characteristic of instilling a desire to inject something fresh and new, regardless of its merit or demerit to enhancing the public good. It inspires a deep sense of frustration which can explode into violence, whose explosiveness can either proportionally grow with the monotony or even surpass it. The SKWP could no longer stand the incessant cacophony over the frustrating debate over whether to found a singular or unitary government in Korea and decided to explode its impatience and irritation with the seemingly insensitive cycle of violence and repression devoid of any ideological or rational purpose. Thus, it decided to demonstrate its dissatisfaction with the status quo by organizing mass rallies across southern Korea since March 1, 1947 to commemorate the 28th anniversary of the March First Independence Movement. However, the event could not escape the inevitable fate of being a fiasco, since Right-wing organizations were also holding their commemorative events in honor of the same independence movement. The Leftists started marching toward the South Gate in central Seoul, shouting anti-American and anti-imperialist slogans.¹⁰⁷⁶

As if to emphasize the nationalist character of their rhetoric and of the historically important day which they chose, the southern Leftists made sure that the main issues of

¹⁰⁷⁶ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 321.

protest remained nearly identical as those from the moment the SKWP was originally founded. Peasants and laborers continued to demand "the complete resignation of all pro-Japanese collaborators" and the Rhee Administration's swift disintegration as a clear sign of responsibility behind this "utterly unacceptable national calamity."¹⁰⁷⁷ In response, Rightists pelted rocks and other debris. The debacle ensued until the police intervened violently, firing blanks to the crowd for five hours until the crowd dispersed with pockets of intense bloodshed and struggle.¹⁰⁷⁸ The Korean National Police later reported that "several unidentified assailants fired at Right-wing student demonstrators and shots ensued from the SKWP's headquarters," which were evident signs that "the Left had deliberately targeted the Rightists by using the Rightists' challenge as a signal."¹⁰⁷⁹ In short, the police believed that the weight of maintaining order was largely an inconvenience ensuing primarily from Leftist, especially SKWP agitations such that there was little Rightist involvement.

However, the obvious result of many casualties should not be the sole basis with which the event's importance must be measured. The SKWP deliberately chose March 1 for the protests because it wanted to demonstrate its "unrelenting support for the Moscow Conference's decision."¹⁰⁸⁰ The party believed that consistent support for the decision would promise the establishment of a Democratic government and the total transfer of all authority to a People's government which would allow south Korea to enjoy the benefits of Democratic reforms as they are practiced in north Korea. It was for this "noble end" that the party was "willing to continue a necessarily eternal struggle," whose rewards would be "complete freedom and Democratic independence."¹⁰⁸¹ In other words, the SKWP believed in the total

¹⁰⁷⁷ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 322.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 322-323.

¹⁰⁷⁹ "Chang T'aek-sang, Sam Il Ch'öl Ch'ungtol Sakön Chosa Kyölkwa Palp'yo," (Chang T'aek-sang Reports on Investigative Findings on the Clash During the March First Celebrations) *Kyöngnyang Sinmun*, March 13, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 4.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 324.

¹⁰⁸¹ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 325.

utility of extreme violence because the Autumn Harvest Uprising had confirmed that negotiating with the American military government was out of the question unless the SKWP completely surrendered. Since that option was distasteful for many pro-Pak hardliners, it was necessary to clearly express an unshakable will to continue its experiment with defining a Communistic Democracy, whose realization could translate into Soviet material assistance and military occupation. The availability of such resources, in turn, would mean a possible continuation of the SKWP's struggle, whose success was crucial for Pak if he wanted to build some reputation among the Soviet authorities and turn the tables against Kim Il-sung to clinch the Communist leadership.¹⁰⁸²

Moreover, the SKWP's unwavering support for the Moscow Decision suggests that the party still believed that the realization of a Communist takeover of the entire peninsula still had sufficient feasibility for which even violence can be legitimized by equating ignorance of morality with a consistent attachment of morality. The absence of morality in action was paradoxically the political rationale for its "continuity" through an invocation of nationalism as psychological morality such that the latter justified the human mind's choice to ignore the former. In other words, the existence of that choice defined the continuation of morality. However, the critical flaw of the message is that there was no explanation for the substance of what that continuity actually is. More concretely, there was no explanation for why the dependency on Soviet expertise is not a dependency on imperialism, which fundamentally contradicts the SKWP's explicit expression of a desire to realize "complete freedom and Democratic independence," because there was no mention of what the object is from which the complete freedom and Democratic independence had to be won. Even if it was due to the American occupation that such freedom and independence achieved any meaningful purpose,

¹⁰⁸² Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il-sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945-1960* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 20.

the party did not explicitly explain why Soviet occupation was going to be a better alternative or whether it would really deliver the promises of the Moscow Conference's decision at all.

Yet, the most crucial legacy of the March First Movement celebrations was that controversy about what new negotiations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was not growing old, but had rejuvenated by producing more acerbic debates between the Right and the Left, with some mixed voices struggling to find unequivocal positions. Unlike the original debate, in which there was a rather clear divide between Leftist and Rightist positions, the new debate saw a slight fragmentation within the Right, as the new variable of how to interpret the establishment of a separate government in south Korea. Compared with his rigid anti-Communist stance from two years earlier, John Hodge now favored a centrist position, expressing hope for the Soviets' "prompt cooperation based on the fundamental understanding that Americans constituted the United States as did any country's citizens," and that the United States was not aiming to "rule the entire world but to make a better world."¹⁰⁸³

The main obstacle behind realizing this noble intention, according to Hodge, was lingual ambiguity with regard to how the discussants of the Moscow Conference described the status of Korea. Hodge believed that the trusteeship's capacity to allow foreign powers to rule Korea for five years "gave the impression that it was trying to stifle Koreans' desire for independence."¹⁰⁸⁴ The seemingly endless conflict between Left and Right was "understandable" because the term "trusteeship" was translated as "protectorate," forcing many Koreans to remember "Japanese designs on the peninsula," and thereby harbor the uneasy feeling that American plans on the peninsula would be no different from Japanese colonial rule. Such was the "fundamental reason why we[Americans] are not witnessing much

¹⁰⁸³ "Hodge, Sint'akanūn Chosōninūi Kalmang e Paech'itoentakō Ŏnmyōng," (Hodge Explains that Trusteeship is Antithetical with Korea's Desire for Independence) *Chosōn Ilpo*, March 7, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 4.

¹⁰⁸⁴ "Hodge Explains that Trusteeship is Antithetical to Korea's Desire for Independence," *Chosōn Ilpo*, March 7, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 4.

substantial progress in Democratizing and unifying Korea."¹⁰⁸⁵ In short, Hodge admitted that the Americans and Soviets were responsible for delaying the realization of Korea's genuine independence because of the two powers' prolonged disagreement over the exact substantive definition of "trusteeship." The uncertainty of reaching an agreement between the Americans and Soviets was translating into a certainty of encouraging a violent and an incessant ideological conflict in the Korean peninsula.

The American diagnosis proved to be accurate by May, for the Rightists and even moderates were slowly but clearly beginning to express their exasperation and annoyance with being a jester to the American and Soviet determine the tune of "liberation" while Koreans did not even have the right to choose its notes or instruments and claim national liberation as a product of Korean self-determination. Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee worked arduously to "mobilize all Rightist groups to stage anti-trusteeship demonstrations, so that the Rightists may excommunicate themselves from consultation" with the Commission. Kim and Rhee were calculating that boycotting the Commission would coerce the Americans into choosing an unfavorable option of allying with the extreme Left," if not a Communist provisional government."¹⁰⁸⁶ This strategy of promoting emotive politics intended to draw out an erratic mixture of "coercive sympathy" from the Americans to the Rightists' cause by relying on the assumption that the Americans would never abort their war on Communism.¹⁰⁸⁷

However the Rightists' proclivity to sway like a pendulum between desiring representation in the Joint Commission and fearing reprisals from Kim and Rhee did little to break Hodge's

¹⁰⁸⁵ "Hodge Explains that Trusteeship is Compatible with Korea's Desire for Independence," *Chosŏn Ilpo*, March 7, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 4.

¹⁰⁸⁶ "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," May 18, 1947. *FRUS*, 1947, Vol. 6, 645.

¹⁰⁸⁷ "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," May 18, 1947. *FRUS*, 1947, Vol. 6, 645.

commitment to seeing a unitary government in Korea.¹⁰⁸⁸ Although the DPK criticized that Hodge was a "Communist or a pro-Communist intending to sell Koreans into Communism through the operation of the Joint Commission," the criticism was an inaccurate depiction of Hodge's real commitment to a unitary government in Korea.¹⁰⁸⁹ His resolve was such that he would "not entertain any inkling of possibility for a separate government in south Korea," for that would be a "betrayal of America's promise to make Korea a free and unified country and would produce a disconcerting outcome of dividing Koreans into citizens of two nations."¹⁰⁹⁰

This vow was significant because it marked a radical shift in Hodge's Conservatism from an exclusionary anti-Communism which did not accept harmony between Left and Right to a Democracy which could embrace all Koreans by granting universal liberties. This stance was also notable because it marked a clear break from former allies in the DPK who were eager to establish the Provisional Government as the sole representative of the Korean people because it purportedly embodied the "will of most national leaders" or because "punishing pro-Japanese collaborators as pro-Nazis were punished in France might ferment public resentment since it was up to the Allies who had truly liberated Korea to handle pro-Japanese collaborators."¹⁰⁹¹

Thus, from the DPK's perspective, the ideal of exerting nationalism *in extremis* by indiscriminately punishing all pro-Japanese collaborators had to be tamed by the pragmatic consideration of assisting the Allies to perform necessary policies to reconstruct Korea. In

¹⁰⁸⁸ "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," May 18, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6*, 645.

¹⁰⁸⁹ "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," May 21, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6*, 647.

¹⁰⁹⁰ "Hodge, Namchosŏn Tanchŏngsurip Pantae Sŏngmyŏng," (Hodge States Opposition to a Separate Government in South Korea) *Tonga Ilpo*, March 6, 1947. *TRKAHD, Vol. 4*.

¹⁰⁹¹ "Kim Ku tŭng, Brown Sochangkwā Imchŏngsŭngin e kwanhae Ŭikyŏnkyohwan," (Kim Ku and Company Exchange Views with Lieutenant Brown on Authorizing the Provisional Government," *Chosŏn Ilpo*, March 9, 1947. *TRKAHD, Vol. 4*; "Hankukminchutang, Moskpa 4Sang Hoeŭi esoŭi Chosŏnmunchae tŭng e taehae Tamhwa Palp'yo," (Democratic Party of Korea's Statement on the Korea Problem in the Moscow Four Ministers' Conference) *Tonga Ilpo*, March 8, 1947. *TRKAHD, Vol. 4*.

other words, a historically insensitive usage of terminology was responsible for rekindling Koreans' fear of colonial rule, which prevented Koreans from viewing the progressive American intention to establish Korea as an epitome of an independent Democracy in East Asia while preserving the longevity of Korea's ethnic unity. Compared with the DPK's stance, Hodge's view was more progressive because unlike the DPK, which redressed its reluctance to punish pro-Japanese collaborators as a unique service of the Allies, Hodge was willing to unify Korean public opinion and concentrated on defining Democracy as a means to facilitate consensus rather than a label for a faction's individualistic and parochial agenda.

The grand irony behind all the chaotic bloodshed and debates surrounding the resumption of the Moscow Conference was that neither the Right nor the SKWP learned anything significant after the Moscow Conference did commence in April. Syngman Rhee continued to propagandize that supporting trusteeship was akin to supporting Communism; the DPK even resorted to employing "wild-eyed Rightist youth groups" such as the notorious Northwest Youth Corps—a group of anti-Communist north Korean refugees who engaged in "bold terrorism" to amplify the voice of anti-trusteeship protests.¹⁰⁹² The Northwest Youth Corps soon became Rhee's unofficial spies and satraps, infiltrating into police units and the army, even going so far as to have lieutenants and captains personally assigned to train and direct the Corps' harassment and murder of suspected, but often unconfirmed, Leftist targets.¹⁰⁹³ The individual who had been theoretically bestowed by public consent to care utmost for the security and peace of his country had deliberately demolished, with full intent and consciousness of the unruly violence that would surely follow, the border between public and

¹⁰⁹² USAFIK, "G-2 Periodic Report No. 1005," December 6, 1948. Adapted from Adapted from the National Committee for the Investigation of Truth About the Je-ju April Third Incident (NCITAJATI), *The Je-ju April 3 Incident Investigation Report* (2003), 337.

¹⁰⁹³ "Telegram from the General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Secretary of State," July 9, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6*, 696 and USAFIK, G-2 Periodic Report No. 1005, December 6, 1948. NCITAJATI, *The Je-ju April 3 Incident Investigation Report*, 337. On the Northwest Youth Corps, see Sŏn-u Chi-sŏng, *Hankuk Ch'ongnyon Untongŭi Yoksa (A History of the Korean Youth Movement)* (Seoul, south Korea: Kŭm-mun Publishing, 1973), 762 and Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 2*, 200.

private, order and mayhem, discipline and disruption. Power was now paralyzed in terms of its official moral function, overtaken by the viciousness of its degree and magnitude in its use.

Yet, Rhee had overlooked his own miscalculation of not informing who to specifically target, as the label "anti-Communism" bore the risk of encouraging the Northwest Youth Corps to target anyone disagreeing with anti-Communism rather than just those who had pro-Communist sympathies. In other words, the strategy was unintentionally destined to backfire because it directly reflected Rhee's ignorance of the possibility that there might be centrists who opposed any kind of extremism; Rhee's decision to deploy the Youths ironically annoyed many of the moderate Rightists who soon left the DPK and further prohibited Rhee from having a stable mandate with which he could issue a strong appeal for unity. Thus, Rhee's decision to strengthen his commitment to anti-Communism actually led to a further weakening of his political legitimacy and dimmed prospects for ideological cohesion, especially after the loss of Kim Ku as the final magnet to attract moderates into the DPK. Rhee had thereby exposed himself to the vulnerability of establishing an "unrecognized government" and with it, as Douglas MacArthur put it, a "definite decline of American prestige," putting both political stability and the fundamental international alliance which sustained it in jeopardy.¹⁰⁹⁴

However, despite noticing their opponent's pitfall, the SKWP did not know how to properly exploit Rhee's blunder and transform it to its own advantage. Although the southern Communists claimed to "offer history's finest civil liberties and Democratic window dressing" by posing as "well-trained and ardent salesmen," the Communists could not actually sell, let alone advertise any of their "goods" because they willfully chose to be stagnant in being

¹⁰⁹⁴ "Telegram from the General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Secretary of State," July 9, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6*, 696

content with bloating the size of their party.¹⁰⁹⁵ Instead of contemplating on a new strategy or improving its military capacity to quickly defeat as many Rightists and show that they were not promising Shangri-La but actual social change, the SKWP still hung on to the delusional faith that numerical superiority was the only key to victory. Since the SKWP had about 60,000 members at the time, the party thought that a "multiply by five" movement—members started recruiting new members by propagandizing that the SKWP would "clinch the final victory"—would promote the party's exponential corporeal growth.

This calculation was aimed at overwhelming the Rightists and the NKWP in terms of size, but the plan was too simplistic such that it had omitted the crucial fact that the SKWP had not genuinely completed unifying the Left because the SKWP was accustomed to interpreting "elimination of rivals" as "unification."¹⁰⁹⁶ To make things worse, the SKWP's efforts to increase its political leverage against its opponents did not work out as well as the party had hoped, and its preparation for the "final victory" was once again postponed as the Moscow Conference failed to deliver a clear conclusion. Although the party celebrated its modest success of increasing party membership by rejoicing over the prospect of "adopting 'Democratic People's Republic of Korea' as the official title of a new Communist state and criticizing the police as "remnants of Japanese colonial rule" who had to be dealt along with a comprehensive program for land reform and nationalization of industries," the party's jubilation over its quantitative improvement without any major qualitative advancements was not only unfounded but also very ephemeral as negotiations between Americans and Soviets broke down once again on July 15, 1947.¹⁰⁹⁷ In short, the SKWP confronted its own

¹⁰⁹⁵ "Secret and Priority Telegram from the General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Secretary of State," July 2, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6*, 683.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ha Söng-su, *A History of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 105 and 107.

¹⁰⁹⁷ "Secret Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Jacobs) to the Secretary of State," July 14, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6*, 701; "Chöngch'i Ch'echerül Inminwiwönhoe, Naraüi Kongsik Myöngch'ingül Chosön Inminminchuüi Konghwakuküro Pakkucha," (Change the Political System into a People's Commission and the

reflection as a second-rate Communist institution in Korea, trapped between its own folly of leaving the unification of the southern Left incomplete and a frustrating absence of any definitive conclusion to the Moscow Conference, the latter of which prevented the SKWP from having legitimacy to carry out any of its future plans because neither Moscow nor P'yŏngyang were ready to authorize them.

Moreover, as Syngman Rhee intensified his propaganda to render "trusteeship" synonymous with Communism and Soviet control, chicanery and power struggles between the Right and the Left reached their peak, with increased attacks on police and retaliatory actions by extreme underground Rightist groups, leading to the death of the Pu-san Police Chief and members of a Leftist group were violently harassed by Rightist thugs.¹⁰⁹⁸ Some Rightists even resorted to "increasingly bold terrorism," which may "translate into an attempt to set up an unrecognized government."¹⁰⁹⁹ The SKWP was embroiled in the chaos as well until early July, unable to realize its failure to incorporate the SLP as a mistake.¹¹⁰⁰ In short, the Rightists and Leftists engaged in a bitter struggle to expand their political bases quantitatively rather than qualitatively without paying much attention to devising methods to achieve genuine solidarity either within their respective groups or through a joint union between the Right and the Left.

An even bigger tragedy broke out to finally inform that the SKWP had been encouraging a dangerously Manichean world which would guarantee neither freedom nor independence as a unified country and people. The tragedy came unexpectedly and rather too suddenly on July 19, 1947. The clock had just struck one. Two bullets whistled through the humid air of a

Official Title of the Country into 'The Democratic People's Republic of Korea,') *Inminŭi T'uchaeng (The People's Struggle)*, June 19, 1947. See also Lee and Scalapino, *Communism in Korea: The Society*, 389.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Telegram from American Embassy in Seoul to the Secretary of State, "Memo from Comgen USAFIK to State Department," July 12, 1947. CINCFE NR ZPOL 893. RG 59, Decimal File 895.00/7-1247, Box 7388.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Secret Telegram from American Embassy in Tokyo to Secretary of State, "General Hodge's Message on Political Turmoil in Korea," July 10, 1947. RG 59, Decimal File 895.00/7-1047, Box 7388.

¹¹⁰⁰ Secret Telegram from American Embassy in Tokyo to Secretary of State, "Conditions in Korea," July 2, 1947. RG 59, Decimal File 895.00/7-247, Box 7388.

blisteringly hot and sultry July summer afternoon to end Pak and Yō's uncomfortable and turbulent rivalry in a staccato; "Unitary Socialism" met a premature and tragic death. When Yō's motorcade slowly made a curve at Rotary Road in central Seoul, a black truck suddenly pulled up in front of Yō's car and blocked the road. As Yō's driver angrily yelled at the truck to clear the way, Han chi-kūn, a teenage assassin and member of the Northwest Youth Corps, pulled out a handgun and fired two shots through the motorcade's window. A shot hit Yō on his neck, while the other hit squarely in his heart.¹¹⁰¹ One of Yō's bodyguards quickly pursued the murderer, who was clambering over a wall. As the bodyguard tried to climb up the wall, a policeman who had accompanied the bodyguard suddenly grabbed him by the feet and pulled him down.¹¹⁰² Yō managed to weakly whisper his unfulfilled dream of "*T'ong-il Chosŏn*" (Unified Korea) with his last fading breath. Although he had managed to miraculously survive eleven assassination attempts, Yō could not extend that miracle to withstand the twelfth attempt.¹¹⁰³

News of Yō's assassination quickly spread across southern Korea and produced very disparate responses, directly reflecting the polarization of south Korean politics. In contrast to the largely silent and solemn Rightist leaders such as Kim Ku, who left behind his past animosity toward Yō and displayed his sincere condolences, the Leftist camp was torn between grief and volatile fury; even die-hard pro-Pak members in the SKWP were agitated, some infuriated by the Rhee Administration's ambivalence and even neglect and suspecting the Americans' ability to maintain legal discipline in Korea.¹¹⁰⁴ A police booth was near the crime scene, but no one had made any attempt to contact the police and Police Commissioner

¹¹⁰¹ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 335.

¹¹⁰² "Confidential Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," July 19, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6*, 709.

¹¹⁰³ Yō's house was blown up by a bomb on March 17, 1947, which destroyed "three sides of the house, and tearing bits of the closet apart." See "Yō Un-hyōngŭi Chipi P'okp'atoem," (Yō Un-hyōng's House is Rocked by an Explosion Due to Bombing) *Tonga Ilpo*, March 17, 1947. *TRKAHD, Vol. 4*.

¹¹⁰⁴ "Confidential and Urgent Telegram from the Acting Secretary of State to the Acting Political Adviser in Korea" December 11, 1947. *FRUS, 1947, Vol. 6*, 876.

Chang T'aek-Sang had abruptly closed the case by determining it "inconclusive due to a severe lack of reliable evidence," a judgment which later earned the ire of Yō Un-hyōng's daughter Yōn-ku, who called Chang "a cold-blooded and bastardly murderer."¹¹⁰⁵ The capture of Yō's suspected murderer Han Chi-kūn did little to abate the tension and resentment, as Han remained mostly silent throughout his arrest and execution, refusing to reveal the name or names of his sponsors.¹¹⁰⁶ In short, the police had not only deliberately clouded the circumstances surrounding the identity of Yō's assassin and forfeited their primary duty to impartially arrest all criminals, but had also made themselves captives of the suspicion that they were colluding with Syngman Rhee to aid the escape of a wanted murderer, if not plan the actual murder itself.

Others such as Hodge and the DPK offered bi-polar assessments that very much reflected the Manichean construct of the Cold War, an ambience which Yō sought to destroy but ironically ended up destroying him. Hodge conceived of Yō's death as a "witness of Korea's sorrowful reality itself," a country in which "many people are united with a strong thirst for independence but a thirst that is betrayed by politicians who "are falsely patriotic and too savvy about various roads to power such that they do not hesitate to engage in clandestine scheming and deception to drive patriotic and innocent citizens into more unnecessary confusion and chaos."¹¹⁰⁷ Such extreme "miscomprehension of reality and propaganda were instilling discomfort and fear into the hearts of many," which did "little good but cultivate more fear, detestation, and anxiety," which if continued, "would produce the sinful and bloody tragedy of fratricide, and even feature neighbors murdering neighbors."¹¹⁰⁸

¹¹⁰⁵ Yi Ki-hyōng, *Yō Un-hyōng: A Biography*, 483.

¹¹⁰⁶ "Telegram from American Embassy in Seoul to the Secretary of State," July 25, 1947. RG 59, Decimal File 895.00/7-2547, Box 7388.

¹¹⁰⁷ "Yō Un-hyōng P'isal e taehan Hodge Sōngmyōngsō," (Hodge's Statement on Yō Un-hyōng's Assassination) *Seoul Sinmun*, July 24, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 5.

¹¹⁰⁸ "Hodge's Statement on Yō Un-hyōng's Assassination," *Seoul Sinmun*, July 24, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 5.

Hodge was suggesting that Yŏ's death was a symbolic death of a man who had worked so hard to prevent south Korea from falling deeper into the political maelstrom of the Cold War. Yŏ's death was also the tragic outcome of intense propaganda warfare between the southern Right and Left which needlessly stirred more confusion and hatred amongst the Korean people, allowing themselves to be agitated and misled into bitter factionalism that prevented the union of all patriotic Koreans in support of their national aims. Hence, Hodge perceived Yŏ's assassination as a warning to the Korean people that they ought to cease displaying animosity and replace it with unity and tolerance among Koreans to prevent a senseless civil war and work towards accurately quickly actualizing Yŏ's message of non-ideological unification.¹¹⁰⁹ In short, Hodge believed that Yŏ's sudden assassination was a major example of how the Cold War's extremism polluted Korean politics such that ideological interests had primacy over harmonious national unity. Hodge was arguing that a persistent addiction to power and factionalism was responsible not only for Yŏ's assassination, but had the dangerous potential to make that addiction contagious across the peninsula, which could eventually poison every Korean's mind to favor belligerence foremost.

Hodge's eulogy proved to be an accurate portrait and diagnosis of south Korean politics because there were conservatives who were not liberated from the political calculus of the Cold War to leave a quantum of condolence for the death of a committed patriot and nationalist. Several DPK members issued a statement about a week after Yŏ's death, criticizing the Communists' demand to trace Yŏ's murderer among the Rightists, as though "the Communists were deliberately keen on assigning the responsibility of the assassination solely to the Right."¹¹¹⁰ Such an action was nothing more than a decoy to "ferment societal

¹¹⁰⁹ "Message from Lieutenant General John R. Hodge Upon the Occasion of Mr. Yŏ's Funeral," August 3, 1947. RG 554, Box 311.

¹¹¹⁰ "Hanmintang, Kukuktaech'aekwiwŏnhoeŭi Yŏ Un-hyŏng Ch'ampyŏn Ch'ŏ ngryakhwa Pinan Sŏngmyŏngsŏ Palp'yo," (DPK Members Blast the Committee for Searching Solutions to National Salvation's Attempt to

hatred toward the DPK and appeal to the American and Soviet representatives."¹¹¹¹ In sharp contrast to Hodge's attempt to use Yŏ's assassination as a holistic and diagnostic metaphor to evaluate Korean socio-political culture, the DPK had interpreted the SKWP's demand as a desire to launch a witch-hunt against the Right instead of sending a eulogy at the loss of a grand chance for national unification. In doing so, the DPK inadvertently proved to be a prototype embodying Hodge's warning about being poisoned by a blind thirst for power and factional interests such that some people were keen on slandering and smearing opponents instead of sending a deep condolence to the champion of non-ideological unification.

However, what is more interesting is the sheer contrast in the SKWP's responses and that of Pak Hŏn-yŏng. The SKWP, now temporarily under the moderate Hŏ Hŏn's control after Pak's relocation to the north following Yŏ's assassination, issued a seven-point statement demanding the immediate resumption of investigations concerning Yŏ's assassination. The statement unabashedly reaffirmed the SKWP's original position against the Rightists, calling for a "swift punishment, and if necessary, execution of all traitorous elements within the Rhee Administration," including an official apology from the Police Commissioner for his "blatantly and crassly ideologically motivated suspension of moral integrity and public service."¹¹¹² Finally, most SKWP members demanded a prompt and thorough investigation to "apprehend the culprit with utmost haste and establish justice for the baneful crime."¹¹¹³ By contrast, Pak, upon hearing the news of Yŏ's death, quickly mixed a false sadness with a genuine celebration for the party's opportunity to finally politically unite with P'yŏng-yang's leaders. Even as he feigned his condolences to "our great anti-imperialist comrade's death," Pak was already keenly aware of how emotions were paupers in front of power. Pak did not

Politicize Yŏ's Assassination) July 30, 1947. *Tonga Ilpo*. TRKAHD, Vol. 5.

¹¹¹¹ "DPK Members Blast the Committee for Searching Solutions to National Salvation's Attempt to Politicize Yŏ's Assassination," *Tonga Ilpo*, July 30, 1947. TRKAHD, Vol. 5.

¹¹¹² Yi Ki-hyŏng, *Yŏ Un-hyŏng: A Biography*, 351.

¹¹¹³ Yi Ki-hyŏng, *Yŏ Un-hyŏng: A Biography*, 351.

waste his chance to explicitly express the party's belligerently pro-Communist sentiment in the guise of morally revenging for his friend's unexpected tragedy. Indeed, he frankly declared that the CCP would "completely avenge" Yō's death by considering it as a wake-up call for a "more perfect Communist revolution," upon which the SKWP vowed to "defeat all adversaries by founding the People's Republic."¹¹¹⁴

What was particularly cruel about the elegy was Pak's unabashed sarcasm in his feigned sorrow that oddly tried to conceal glee but yet could not. It was with such malicious and vague emotional duplicity which Pak had the party announce the most deliberately un-Yō fashion of waging the revolution, vowing to "crush all counterrevolutionaries and pro-Japanese collaborators to death in the name of the people."¹¹¹⁵ The elegy was essentially the SKWP's mockingly anti-Yō manifesto. Although the words written on paper lamented the "passing of our great comrade Yō," the brief elegiac words' real message was closer to "ignorance is bliss." The words were only shallowly written as a publicity stunt, hastily and imperfectly shadowed by fervent praises of the trusteeship and the employment of the oxymoronic pledge to establish a "People's Republic" to punish Yō's enemies was nothing more than a firm pledge of allegiance to the NKWP and a blatant expression of betrayal to Yō's creed of realizing a harmonious coexistence among all ideologies.¹¹¹⁶ Instead of throwing a rose to sincerely commemorate Yō's death, the party had thrown a tulip with one hand as if to coldly mock at Yō's naïve dream of achieving an ideologically neutral unification of the Korean people.

The party had poisoned Yō's ideal by overdosing itself with Communism *in extremis*, leaving no room for peaceful unification. "Unitary Socialism" had unexpectedly suffered two

¹¹¹⁴ Yi Ki-hyōng, *Yō Un-hyōng: A Biography*, 351; "Pantongŭl Punsoaehako Misokongwiwa Nararŭl Chukŭmŭrossŏ Sasuhacha," (Crush the Counter-revolutionaries and Defend the Joint American-Soviet Commission to Death to Salvage the Nation," July 20, 1947, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 388.

¹¹¹⁵ "Crush the Counter-revolutionaries," July 20, 1947, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 388.

¹¹¹⁶ "Crush the Counter-revolutionaries," July 20, 1947, *ODSKWP, Vol. 1*, 389. See also Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 337.

simultaneous deaths: Yō's physical death by an assassin's bullet and a spiritual death of his lifelong dream of non-ideological unification by the solidification of a Manichean political culture which accepted no middle ground. In a letter composed just a day before the assassination, Yō clearly expressed his fear about the American military government and Rightists' disingenuous attempts to whitewash their history of employing and collaborating with pro-Japanese Koreans and a deep anxiety about how the death of "Unitary Socialism" might leave Koreans as slaves of fear and mistrust among themselves:

"If the Soviets are displaying outright favoritism toward extreme Left-wing elements, here in south Korea, the Americans are opting to go in the opposite direction. People who are neither pro-Left nor extremely pro-Right are indiscriminately branded "Communists" and are severely obstructed from carrying out their intended activities.

President Roosevelt, in a speech to Congress delivered on January 6, 1941, said that the world must provide four basic freedoms for humanity: freedom of press, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

I have yet to enjoy freedom from fear. I am still tormented by men who camouflaged themselves as members of the National Police under the American military government to conceal their pasts as pro-Japanese collaborators."¹¹¹⁷

Conversely, Pak Hōn-yōng could now look forward to realizing the "Two-to-One Deal" and fulfill his ambition of establishing Korea as a Communist haven even if it had to pay the price of waging an extremist, one-sided, and unnecessarily violent unification of the peninsula. Hence, despite the fact that the American military government had permanently listed him as a wanted man-at-large for "constantly placing the American military in jeopardy with his propaganda,"¹¹¹⁸ Pak quickly seized the moment to replace "Unitary Socialism" with Communism. He fully unleashed his frustration toward Yō by forcedly relegating the death of "Unitary Socialism" merely into a cause to justify his own ambition of Communist supremacy.¹¹¹⁹ Pak was implicitly telling Yō that achieving political success requires no human heart or emotions but pure tactics and cunning which could even bury an old and deep

¹¹¹⁷ "Letter of Mr. Lyuh W. H. to Mr. Kim Y. J., President of Korean Affairs Institute," July 18, 1947, 12G 332. Adapted from Cho Yōng-kōn, "The Age of the Declaration of June 15th and Yō Un-hyōng," in Yi Su-sōng and Paek Nak-ch'ōng et al. eds., *Discussing Yō Un-hyōng*, 87-88.

¹¹¹⁸ "Lerch, Pak Hōn-yōng Ch'ep'o Munche tūng e taehae Kichahoekyōn," (Lerch's Press Conference on the Problem of Arresting Pak Hōn-yōng, *Seoul Sinmun*, March 14, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 4.

¹¹¹⁹ Pak Il-wōn, *The Organization and Strategies of the South Korean Workers' Party*, 95

friendship with much ease.

Therefore, even an old friendship, merely being an emotional product, could be disposable like an old piece of paper in a garbage can, if doing so guarantees the realization of one's ideal, or in Pak's case, a very firm philosophical conviction. The false elegy which moved no one in the CCP was a manifesto that completely shattered any possibility of "Unitary Socialism," just as a glass filled with ice would shatter on a cold winter day. Yō Un-hyōng and "Unitary Socialism" were, physically and spiritually, dead. However, rejoicement was a luxury for Pak. Although he had permanently eliminated his archenemy, and after Yō's death, briefly enjoyed popularity among the Korean public which American officials believed would be the basis for Pak to claim the Presidency,¹¹²⁰ Pak went into hiding for the next two months, evading American officials, Rightists, and suspected pro-Japanese collaborators, finally relocating himself to north Korea. He would continue to indirectly plan and order SKWP operations through the exchange of secret letters, constantly changing his residence between Hae-ju and P'yōng-yang until 1949, when he would be appointed as north Korea's Foreign minister—a post he kept until his death by a firing squad in 1955.¹¹²¹

Philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1993), in his highly popular essay, *The Fox and the Hedgehog*, argues that a crafty person, like a fox, understands many things, while a steadfast and principled person, like a hedgehog, may lack quick calculation but ultimately knows one big thing. Berlin implicitly favors the hedgehog, because it is a reflection of Berlin himself: a deep philosopher who understands that the ultimate wisdom of life is to know that an individual must have patience, resolve, and resilience to mark the most definitive imprint in life. However, the versatility which characterizes a fox might not always be ideal, for hubris can always creep in as a secret ink to smudge the purity of the mind. A fox may be quick in

¹¹²⁰ "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 485, March 21, 1947" in Sō Chung-sōk, *A Study of Korean Nationalist Movements, Vol. 1* (Seoul, south Korea: Yōk-sa Pi-p'yōng-sa (History and Criticism), 2004), 532.

¹¹²¹ An Chae-sōng, *Pak Hōn-yōng: A Biography*, 594-595.

calculation, but it is a victim of its own intelligence, failing to recognize that the wisdom of living a slowly progressing life is precisely in being more organized. Foxes do understand the importance of planning, but they do so in a more quantitative rather than qualitative fashion. The fox ends up having too many plans that he does not have the time to understand which one has matured into the best option.¹¹²²

The long ten months from September 1946 to July 1947 demonstrated that Pak was a hedgehog who had a superior understanding of political clarity than Yŏ did. With a mind for quick thinking, meticulous planning, and an instinctual acumen for political opportunities, Pak had long understood the one big thing he created the SKWP for: the Communization of Korea—his life's ultimate ambition. He was perceptive about the vagueness of "Unitary Socialism" and exploited that as much as possible, capturing opportunities to slander Yŏ's character and taking steps closer to realizing Pak's vision of Communist supremacy in Korea. Thus, Pak could surely afford to ingeniously mix a fake respect for Yŏ and simultaneously mock him in the elegy because he understood that clarity and rapidity in perceptiveness provide the essential measures of faith in an idea. If Communizing southern Korea was that golden ticket, Pak could put politics before partnership and stain friendship with concealed and feigned emotions. He was a man like quartz, having a mind cold and piercingly sharp like the stone's edges.

However, Berlin would have been surprised to find that Pak fits into neither category, because Pak perversely *acted* like a fox while ultimately *thinking* like a hedgehog. Like a fox, he knew how to use anti-imperialist and anti-American rhetoric to morally justify the necessity of the SKWP's existence as the principal vanguard of the Korean people. Pak also did not forget that a mixture of nationalist and pro-P'yŏng-yang rhetoric was necessary for

¹¹²² Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (Chicago, Illinois: Elephant Paperbacks, 1993), 3-4.

demonstrating to northern Koreans the SKWP's legitimacy as *the* partner to P'yŏng-yang. However, most importantly, like a hedgehog, he knew that all of these tactics had a single objective: to completely prevent Yŏ Un-hyŏng from interfering with the party's policies and to assure that "Unitary Socialism" would not be a bulwark against the coming of a "more perfect Communist revolution." Pak's greatest sin was his deliberate ignorance of the need to exercise temperance toward his passions, aspiring to become both a fox and a hedgehog until the intense firepower from the American military government and the Rightists had to eventually tell him that a person can only endeavor to be of one type or end up being neither, impaired by the stupor from pursuing one's passions in excess.

By contrast, for Yŏ, clarity was like a mosquito's bite—noticeable yet too quick to vanish. Yŏ Un-hyŏng, who did not have Pak's almost ferocious resilience in pursuing a political goal, was constantly put on the defensive, unable to fight back. Although Yŏ understood the need to unite the Left and the Right through "Unitary Socialism," he lacked a sufficient arsenal of tact and political acumen. Yŏ simply lacked effective control over the SLP, helplessly watching its internal schism explode and his employees betray him, ultimately siding with Pak. This error proved fatal, as it left him with no powerful allies to help him realize "Unitary Socialism" in a more concrete fashion. Most importantly, Yŏ did not treat time like gold. Instead of persuading Kim Il-sung and the P'yŏng-yang leadership to help him prevent Pak's radicalism from derailing the Right-Left alliance, his tirade against Pak's personality made P'yŏng-yang very reluctant and even suspicious about Yŏ's plans. As a result, although he never relinquished his vision for "Unitary Socialism," even at the risk of narrowly escaping an assassination attempt and enduring a sleepless night of Pak's interrogation, Yŏ ended up losing virtually everything. He lost P'yŏng-yang's support for "Unitary Socialism," his political party, and most importantly, on July 19, 1947, along with "Unitary Socialism," his own life. Non-ideological unification was well-meant in its intent of erasing ideology, but was,

like anti-Communism and Communism—the very ideas it wanted to erase—undecided about how it could sustain its existential meaning once the comparison to its adversaries was gone. Like anti-Communism and Communism, "Unitary Socialism" drowned in the nectar of comparative superiority such that it reserved no time to measure the depth of its own ego.

The tragic demise of "Unitary Socialism" and the SKWP's rise as P'yŏng-yang's sole partner in the quest for a "more perfect Communist revolution" were not accidental. They resulted from Pak's meticulously strategic and organizational scheme to consolidate Communist power in southern Korea and drive Yŏ into absolute political isolation in preparation for what it expected to be a full Communization of the Korean peninsula. From the moment Yŏ walked out of the party in January 1946 until the founding of the SKWP ten months later, Pak had continuously cornered the man who was once his friend but who died as a sworn opponent. Although Pak and Yŏ were initially united in their dislike of Syngman Rhee and the pro-Japanese collaborators, Pak could not ignore the intense passion for Communism boiling inside him. To transform that passion into an ideal of creating the Korean peninsula into a Communist paradise, Pak willingly went on a wild roller-coaster ride to kill "Unitary Socialism" and lay the groundwork for that ideal. He theoretically established Communism's separation from the Rightists, built a personality cult, found solid confidence in Communism as a policy by supporting P'yŏngyang's land reforms, survived an intra-party scandal, a tiresome lobby which produced the ultimate agreement to establish a united Communist front between Pak and Kim Il-sung, and had witnessed the failure of two major workers' strikes before defeating "Unitary Socialism." Pak and the SKWP were able to survive this maelstrom, all thanks to Pak's meticulous use of strategic and propagandistic rhetoric and acutely instinctive political outmaneuvering.

Having affirmed first Yŏ's exit from the CCP and then his sudden death, the CCP was undeterred from formally establishing itself as the official representative of Communism in

southern Korea and realize its *raison d' être*: the complete elimination of any possibility for a peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula. More specifically, by mixing a moral rhetoric of punishing pro-Japanese collaborators and the bourgeoisie with nationalism to liberate the peasantry and combine all Leftist parties for the sole goal of eliminating all opposition, the SKWP was instrumental in creating an environment in which "Left" became synonymous with "Communism"—a critical ambience to prepare for what both the party and P'yŏng-yang wished—a full Communist takeover of Korea. "Unitary Socialism" would soon turn as cold as a corpse, quickly forgotten in the frenzy of a short but extremely hot war to realize that wish. Of course, the SKWP's founding itself did not completely realize a "more perfect Communist revolution." Yet, the SKWP's complete Communization of itself, erasure of "Unitary Socialism," procurement of legitimacy as P'yŏng-yang's sole partner through a heated contest with Rightists, and Yŏ's political exclusion and eventual assassination laid a *blueprint* for that revolution, making the peninsula forget about non-ideological unity. The party not only consolidated the Left in the south, but made sure that the ideational wind of Communist revolution blew from the south to the north, for the SKWP succeeded in creating the ultimate condition for which the Korean War would become inevitable: a two-to-one superiority of Communist forces in Korea.

It was through the party's fulfillment of this lethal objective that peace became, to use Nietzsche's terms, actively suppressed and a fleeting existence, "inanimate" in Seoul and P'yŏng-yang's consciousness, as food does during the process of digestion.¹¹²³ The Korean War was a Korean conflict because it ideationally originated with the SKWP and was militarily initiated by northern Koreans, unleashing the real-life horror of June 25, 1950. By planning the complete elimination of "Unitary Socialism" as early as 1946 through a cunning

¹¹²³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Indianapolis, Indiana, and London, England: Hackett Publishing, 1998), 35.

mixture of strategic rhetoric and political calculation, the SKWP was responsible for orchestrating the foundations of a nightmare that would haunt southern Korea barely four years later.

Sadly, the nightmare refuses to disappear as Korea tosses and turns, haunted by an unfinished dream of unification. Korea still waits, hopefully and anxiously for an answer; she is waiting for an *ubermensch* of a Pacifist and a Non-ideological Unifier to apply the ointment of "Unitary Socialism" on her old scar she got from a war that P'yŏng-yang waged to realize a "more perfect Communist revolution."¹¹²⁴ The next section will examine how the southern Communists tried to exploit the absence of "Unitary Socialism" by launching its final desperate insurrection against the Right-wing establishment, only to meet a crushing defeat, one from which the SKWP would never fully recover.

3."An anti-patriotic attempt to Turn the Country into a Hunting Dog of Soviet Russia":The August 15 Commotion and the Ratification of the North Korean Constitution

However great an individual may have been to leave his mark on the pages of a history book, the frenzy of ideological politics may so easily eclipse the individual's fame, especially if the individual was ill-suited with the political climate of his time. Shortly after Yŏ's death the SKWP increasingly and more explicitly voiced its support for the Moscow Conference's decision. By this time, the fifth round of negotiations had concluded satisfactorily for both Americans and Soviets, who mutually agreed to continue overseeing and respecting their separate spheres of influence. In a celebratory response to this news, many social and political organizations rose like wildfire across northern and southern Korea in support of the original Moscow decision. Many civil Communist activist groups echoed the SKWP's sentiments: "Korea must necessarily and inevitably become a people's republic," "the Provisional Government must exclusively be comprised of patriots and only patriots," "the leader of the

¹¹²⁴ For the concept of *ubermensch*, see *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 36.

Provisional Government must be an individual who draws and commands all attention and respect from the people," and finally, the Provisional Government, like its northern counterpart, must be wholeheartedly committed to "performing extensive land reforms for the sake of ensuring a Democratic and highly patriotic society from which a new Korea must arise."¹¹²⁵

Since these slogans differed very little from the SKWP's original emphasis on nationalism and land reforms, it is unsurprising that the SKWP only had to add more uncompromising and extremely unrelenting language to bolster the already strong degree of commitment of the masses to the cause of Communist supremacy. The extremity is noteworthy in that unlike the original commitment to generically eliminating Rightists, the SKWP became more emboldened than ever to specifically point Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee as the "prime culprits who made Korean independence such an arduous task and a formidable ordeal," which meant that there was no other choice but to defend a Soviet-inspired independence through the administration of a trusteeship "with our lives."¹¹²⁶

Nevertheless, there was a thorny issue that constantly bothered the SKWP: it was not exactly clear as to when a conclusion to the entire Moscow Conference would appear, for after five meetings between the Americans and the Soviets, any meaningful compromise seemed so distant and impossible to realize any time soon. Naturally, it is unsurprising that the SKWP grew increasingly edgy and nervous about the prospects of a Soviet victory in the negotiations. Hence, on July 27, 1947, the SKWP convened every citizen it could find on the streets of Seoul, Inch'ŏn, Pu-san and 12 other cities and staged a mass rally—ranging anywhere between 35,000 to 100,000 people—to show that the SKWP's pro-trusteeship position was legitimate because it had won legitimacy from the public. Although there were

¹¹²⁵ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 340-342.

¹¹²⁶ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 342-344.

several horrendous clashes between the crowds and the police who had intervened to disperse and prevent unwanted accidents, the party succeeded in delivering its unwavering support of the Moscow Conference's decision for a trusteeship.¹¹²⁷ With large cities such as Tae-chŏn enthusiastically responding to the SKWP's call, the party succeeded in displaying the impression that it was "Democratic" in being able to quickly act according to the "public" will to support the trusteeship at all costs.¹¹²⁸

However, the July 27 commotion was a failure precisely because the SKWP could only manage to convey that it was a "Democratic" institution and did not have a chance to ferment the commotion into a bigger crisis of a magnitude on par with the October labor strikes. Korea was swept in a maelstrom of confusion and chaos as the Left and Right continued to commit acts of terrorism against each other, and the SKWP could not avoid becoming swallowed by the whirlpool of endless blood. The party's success from July 27 soon met a gruesome parity of brutal violence from the DPK. Throughout August, extreme Rightist organizations responded by unleashing terrorism across various provinces, during which 50 extreme Rightist youths raided Wa-ri Village in North Chŏlla Province and laid arson to and murdered dozens of houses and people after being frustrated in their attempt at a complete "ideological conversion" of the villagers.¹¹²⁹ This incident became a fuse to a series of ugly clashes between Leftist villagers and the Right-wing extremist groups across neighboring provinces, demonstrating that the Cold War's bi-polarity had become a contagious Moebius Syndrome for Korean politics, rendering the Left and Right incapable of showing facial

¹¹²⁷ The exact number of protesters is hard to determine, as the SKWP exaggerated that 600,000 people convened, whereas American military government officials estimated about 35,000. See *The People's Struggle*, July 31, 1947 and "G-2 Report No. 4," July 28, 1947 from "Illegal and Legal Forms of Struggle" in Yi Chong-suk, Kim Tong-ch'un, and Kim Sŏng-po et al., eds., *A Handbook for Research in Korean Studies—The Modern Era and North Korea*.

¹¹²⁸ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 345.

¹¹²⁹ *Tonglip Sinpo*, July 5, 1947. See also "Left-Right Antagonism and Terrorism," in Yi Chong-sŏk, Kim Tong-chun, and Kim Sŏng-po et al., eds., *A Handbook for Research in Korean Studies—The Modern Era and North Korea*.

expressions other than intense hatred and ignominy toward each other.

In response, the party launched an even larger congregation on August 15 to commemorate Korea's liberation from Japanese rule. The party deliberately chose August 15 because it wished to blur the distinction between being passionate about Communism and nationalism, ideally combining them into a holistic idea, which enabled them to appeal to not only Communists but to the people in general. Most critically, because supporting the Moscow Conference was actually supporting the Soviet Union and opposing America, which, in the eyes of the SKWP, was a country which represented imperialism, the party believed that the cause would blend well with the symbolic importance of August 15 as National Liberation Day. In this context, the party hoped that Communism would receive widespread approval as the catalyst for a new phase of national liberation against a more formidable opponent than Japan.¹¹³⁰

As the congregation got increasingly agitated by the fervently pro-Communist ambience, there were ugly riots which met the Police's swift suppression—the DPK called it "an usually vile plot to destroy Korean independence and exterminate the Korean people" and Seoul Police Chief Chang T'aek-sang called it "an anti-patriotic attempt to sell the Korean nation and to turn the country into a hunting dog of Soviet Russia."¹¹³¹ According to a police report issued after the arrests of 32 leaders of the riots, the congregation was just the facade of an even larger mayhem. The SKWP, under Pak Hŏn-yŏng's secret orders, had planned to "burn every police box on sight, kill every policeman and Rightist by fire, and destroy every office

¹¹³⁰ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 345.

¹¹³¹ "Hanmintangkwa Ch'ongnyontang, Chwaikŭi P'oktongummosakon Pinan Songmyong Palp'yo," (Democratic Party of Korea and Youth Party Criticize the Left's Plot for Riot) *Tonga Ilpo*, October 15, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 5. See also Chang T'aek-sang, "Detailed Report based on Facts Relative to the Attempted Riot of August 15, 1947 by the South Korean Workers' Party," October 20, 1947. *TRKAHD*, Vol. 5; "Telegram from the American Consulate General to the Secretary of State," October 20, 1947. RG 59, Decimal File 895.00/10-2047, Box 7388.

of the largest companies in Korea."¹¹³² In other words, the August 15 commotion, if properly executed, would have replicated the chaos of the labor strikes and seen much of southern Korea in turmoil.

Fortunately, most of the 32 leaders had, except for one Choi Pyŏng-kyu, who was responsible for laying arson to three police stations before fleeing to P'yŏng-yang, only contributed financially toward the preliminary organization of the congregation.¹¹³³ The police had thereby aborted a major plan to watch south Korea burn, or possibly, as an article in *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun* put it, to make America's international standpoint unfavorable by causing confusion in south Korea and intentionally setting up a united dictatorial government of one class by turning its favor to a certain country by trying to eliminate Right-wing groups and to help realize Soviet aspirations in the Joint Commission.¹¹³⁴

Kyŏnghyang Sinmun's article may be guilty of exaggerating the SKWP's prescience in calculating the intended impact of the riots. However, despite the fact that the riots depreciated the original value of August 15 the SKWP hoped to imbue on the Korean mind, the SKWP nevertheless succeeded in demonstrating that it too had the power to autonomously command and even control public support at a considerable if not balanced, degree with that of the Rightists. By physically attempting to demonstrate the "Democratic" character of its position and popularity, the SKWP was effectively utilizing what I call the "privatization of mass consciousness" and the "massification of private interest," thereby rendering the two indistinguishable by mixing an individual voice into the crowd to make the two identical.

¹¹³² Headquarters of the Office of the Assistant Director for the First Police Zone Chief of the Metropolitan Police to Cho Pyŏng-ok, Director of the Department of Police, "Detailed Report Based on Facts Relative to the Attempted Riot of August 15, 1947 by the Southern Korean Workers' Party," October 13, 1947. RG 554, Box 311.

¹¹³³ Headquarters of the Office of the Assistant Director for the First Police Zone Chief of the Metropolitan Police to Cho Pyŏng-ok, Director of the Department of Police "Detailed Report Based on Facts Relative to the Attempted Riot of August 15, 1947 by the Southern Korean Workers' Party," October 13, 1947. RG 554, Box 311.

¹¹³⁴ "*Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, October 14, 1947," in *History of the United States Armed Forces in Korea*, G-2 Document No. 928. RG 554, Box 311.

Politics does not merely have the defeat of an opponent as its sole strategic objective, but is also an art of navigating through irreconcilable differences with one's opponents, often without compromising anything. Pak chose violence as his ultimate method of advertising the SKWP's resilience and resolve to oppose Rightist dominance because he wanted to permanently demonstrate his disagreement with the non-ideological and in his view, extremely vague and aloof "Unitary Socialism."

The commotion in the south did not take long to hear a major echo in the north, where an auspicious development for the SKWP's prospects of securing a tight partnership with the NKWP was underway. Upon hearing the U.N.'s decision to enforce a trusteeship and establish the Korea Commission, the northerners made haste to draft a separate constitution and properly found an independent government. Although the north had supported the protests of March, the fact that the Americans and the Soviets were still at loggerheads over the problem of maintaining a balanced representation of Rightists and Leftists until September convinced the northerners that separation with the south was inevitable. After all, even if there could be a unitary government after a single general election, the southerners, like the Americans, would oppose the northern and Soviet proposal for equal representation because with a population more than twice that of north Korea, south Koreans would surely want to maintain numerical superiority in the National Assembly. Should this happen, the northerners would have no chance of reflecting any of their views.¹¹³⁵

Hence, the northerners' explicit announcement of their desire to found a national constitution was most significant, for it was undoubtedly expressing a will to formally declare a unique political identity and structure for north Korea, which became the foundation for the division of the Korean peninsula into two semi-states. On October 28, 1947, the northerners

¹¹³⁵ "Priority Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea to the Secretary of State," September 3, 1947. *FRUS*, 1947, Vol. 6, 778.

had completed what would be the first draft of north Korea's constitution, which confirmed that the "fundamental political character of the republic is socialist," that "all lands will be distributed equally to the peasantry without charge" and that "every instance of pro-Japanese collaboration will be dealt proportionately with the severity of the wound inflicted on the bodies and hearts of the Korean people."¹¹³⁶ In effect, the constitution was confirming the separation and distinctiveness of north Korea from south Korea as a *state* even without the completion of unification either of the Communists or the entire nation, going so far as to identify the economic and ethno-political character of Socialism as an egalitarian and anti-imperialist philosophy, values directly responding to tasks which remained incomplete in south Korea. The first draft was, in this sense, the first attempt to define the boundaries of political difference which would later give further concrete meaning to the 38th Parallel drawn two years earlier.

The founding of a constitution was also a milestone event for both the SKWP and NKWP. For the SKWP, the document provided and defined the essential objective of the chaotic clashes between the police and the public on March 1, 1947. What was merely a huge commotion that began from the SKWP's private expression of radical and fervent support for the Moscow Conference could now enjoy far greater legitimacy with the hope that the NKWP would invite the SKWP in establishing a separate northern government. Should that happen, the SKWP could look forward to becoming the unchallenged and undisputed partner of the NKWP, which would guarantee an opportunity for the SKWP to catapult its rank from being a leader of a small coalition of Leftist parties in just half of Korea, to being the most influential Communist party in all Korea, under the premise that the north shared the SKWP's ambition to Communize the peninsula. Even if the SKWP should not win the reins of supreme

¹¹³⁶ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 364-365.

leadership, there would at least be the assurance of security in knowing that the SKWP would not face any considerable opposition in north Korea as it did in the south, because the northerners had already assured a Communist monopoly in their own sphere of influence. Since many SKWP members were loyal followers of Pak, they did not doubt that Kim Il-sung would wholeheartedly assign Pak to a position of considerable merit and influence, which would guarantee the SKWP's longevity in the northern system.

In short, the March First commotion, despite meeting a swift and brutal end, was a positive sign for the SKWP. The event marked the SKWP's continued display of its urge to increase its appeal as the single legitimate partner to the north and dream of an ambition to become a permanently influential voice in the north. From the SKWP's perspective, the north Korean constitution solidified the realization of that prospect as the most powerful legal document to secure the party's chance of having a sizeable chunk of power in the north. Thus, in retrospect, the extremity of the violence used to ignite the March 1 commotion demonstrates that the SKWP considered hosting the event as a worthy investment that would solidify the north's trust in the SKWP's achievements and strengthen the partnership.

By contrast, the ratification of the northern constitution was a clear vote of confidence in north Korea that a new age of two semi-states in Korea had thereby arrived. The constitution affirmed that sovereignty was undoubtedly in the hands of the Korean people, and was a "real constitution" which sought to protect the rights of the people in a comprehensive and systematic manner, which individual laws could not dare promise because they previously lacked a strong justification for absolute enforcement by the state. In addition, the constitution decisively terminated all forms of conflict and tension in the north because the stipulated laws had the binding power to coerce all social and political organizations to unite under a single identity as chief propagandists of the ruling regime and promote a "correct and thorough analytical propaganda of the constitution's supreme merits in providing for a stable and

efficient mode of governance."¹¹³⁷

In short, the northern constitution did not just mark the birth of north Korea.¹¹³⁸ It was a theoretically mutual boon for both the SKWP and NKWP, a catalyst for a union among the two parties for the ultimate purpose of strengthening the Communist camp against what the Communists perceived as a traitorous and disingenuous group of Rightists. In the Communists' eyes, Rightist "Democracy" was nothing more than a euphemism for accepting pro-Japanese collaborators who had no common interest with the people in building a morally responsible government that reflected on Korea's historical condition as a post-liberation country. Yet, simultaneously, the constitution's silence on the exact nature of the NKWP-SKWP partnership would prove to be problematic, as the NKWP, while perceiving and acknowledging the usefulness of the SKWP in conducting southern operations on the former's behalf, also wished to limit the SKWP to performing only that specific role.

However, considering the repeated debacles that the SKWP went through before hearing north Korea's adoption of a constitution, the northern constitution was also the first strike of the SKWP's death-knell. Although the party would boast that it had over 500,000 members by the Spring of 1948, the party was worn out by the Rightists' endless persecution, and the SKWP's chances of maintaining an independent existence were completely gone.¹¹³⁹ To make things worse, the SKWP, still under Pak Hŏn-yŏng's influence, was never aware of the north's such scheme, one which the ambitious Pak would never accept as a man accustomed to being called "leader" throughout much of his career. The next two years would feature the north's meticulous moves to assure that Pak would never usurp Kim Il-sung's authority, and the SKWP's continuing solitary struggle against the Rightists. The SKWP's last two years—

¹¹³⁷ Kim Nam-sik, *RRSKWP*, 366-368.

¹¹³⁸ Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il-sung*, 47.

¹¹³⁹ [F 6388/511/81] Telegram from Consul-General Kermode to Bevin, "Political Parties in South Korea," May 3, 1948 in Robert Jarman ed., *Korea: Political and Economic Reports, Vol. 10*, 334.

1948 and 1949—would be spent strenuously wriggling through this binary trap; the next two chapters will tell the beginning of the end to the SKWP's lonesome, tragic, and nebulous quest for a more perfect Communism, which quickly turned out to be a chimera as the SKWP spilled more blood over clashes with the south Korean police in a horrible massacre, a struggle against separate elections in the south, and an unexpected mutiny from a south Korean regiment for which the SKWP had to begrudgingly assume responsibility without having done anything to prompt it.

4. Conclusion

This chapter examined the rise of south Korea's Legislative Assembly and its role in originating south Korea's anti-Communist security state. Although the Assembly was, on the surface, the Rhee administration's attempt to attain international political legitimacy by showing that south Korea was capable of building Democratic institutions, that aspiration quickly proved to be illusionary after moderate Kim Kyu-sik's failure to acquire a stable coalition from both the Right and the Left. The fundamental cause of the failure was Kim's ambiguity, which frustrated both the majority Right-wing DPK and Left-wing leaders such as Yō Un-hyōng. Kim was slow to decide whether a Right-wing majority or a Left-wing majority would guarantee political stability. Kim's bow to the DPK's pressure, expressed through Kim's support of his protege, the DPK's clinch of the majority within the Assembly and his seemingly incessant oscillation between the Right and the Left eventually led Yō Un-hyōng to mark him as completely unreliable. The greater problem with Kim's unreliability was that instability within the Assembly was rapidly translating into chaotic violence and mayhem outside on the streets. Syngman Rhee interpreted the DPK majority as an assurance that he was free to impose an anti-Communist security state by encouraging the growth of anti-Communist paramilitary groups. However, Rhee's failure to clearly identify an existential goal for the paramilitary groups introduced more confusion and bloodshed than political

stability.

Despite the Americans' acknowledgement of their failure to reach an agreement with the Soviets on the precise meaning of "trusteeship" as a major cause for incessant violence between the southern Left and Right, the acknowledgement did not have a similar echo from the southern Right. Instead, confusion reached its peak when the SKWP, desperate to show something of substance to north Korea, wrecklessly engaged in a final showdown with the south Korean Right. What began benignly as a commemoration of the March First Movement mutated into yet another highly chaotic clash between protesters against the Rhee administration who demanded an immediate punishment of pro-Japanese collaborators and the Korean National Police. The clash produced nothing for the SKWP except a bitter reminder of the Rightists' logistical and technical superiority, ending with the party's crushing defeat on March 1, 1947. Although the party tried to camouflage its attempt to instigate an insurrection, the south Korean police's swift and brutal crackdown extinguished the party's last hope for a "more perfect Communist revolution"—a cause which the party would reaffirm to have been completely lost five months later through another disastrous Communist protest rally. However, the loss of the SKWP's hope was not only borne out of the party's mistakes, but the result of two unexpected external circumstances which the party could not foresee. On one hand, the sudden assassination of Yŏ Un-hyŏng at the hands of a Right-wing extremist meant the eternal death of "Unitary Socialism." Although Pak delivered an elegy, he was secretly rejoicing, for he was free to further strengthen his personality cult and perhaps win north Korea's endorsement as P'yŏng-yang's sole partner.

However, on the other hand, the loss of Yŏ Un-hyŏng as a pivot between south and north Korea meant that Pak's "Communist revolution," even if it was completed, was on the verge of losing its meaning and purpose because north Korea was now also free to assert its superiority over the southern Left and take control of southern affairs. The loss of a "middle

ground" not only erased the possibility of uniting the Korean Left as a nationalistic force, but was also a raw reminder to Pak that the problem of establishing a clear hierarchy between the southern and northern Communists was still left unresolved, making a considerably weaker Pak increasingly vulnerable to north Korea's control. Indeed, north Korea's announcement of its preliminary constitution was an implicit demand that Pak Hŏn-yŏng capitulate to Kim Il-sung. The founding of the northern constitution served as a prelude to a critical moment when the SKWP-NKWP relationship slowly turned into that rare juncture when dusk meets sunset—the time between dog and wolf. It would be a moment when the master sensed that his most trusted dog would turn into a snarling and cunning wolf to sink its teeth into him, leaving him no choice but to put it to an eternal sleep making sure that the SKWP never woke up again.

In short, the conditions under which the north Koreans could launch a full-scale war were now prepared. The south Koreans had established a government, but it was a government which had its origins as an exclusively Right-wing institution aimed at thwarting the introduction of any Left-wing elements. Yŏ Un-hyŏng's untimely death was an unfortunate tragedy, but the political death of “Unitary Socialism” had already been secure in the early months of 1946; the SKWP had done its job of eliminating "Unitary Socialism" on behalf of the north Koreans by expelling Yŏ from their headquarters. Yŏ's assassination marked a permanent spiritual death of non-ideological and centrist politics, allowing north Korea to freely exploit the gap by exacerbating the Manichean contest between Communism and what P'yŏngyang considered a pseudo-Democracy.

The ambers of war which would arise two years later would mark the beginnings of north Korea's attempt to take over what were formerly the SKWP's reins in directing the “more perfect Communist revolution.” The SKWP was the second largest partner to the north Koreans only in name; defeated and tattered after long and ultimately fruitless years to

subvert the Right-wing establishment, the SKWP in north Korean eyes would become nothing more than one of Kim Il-sung's many petty rivals. Once Kim Il-sung would set his mind on defeating Pak Hŏn-yŏng to assure that there was no extra-familial successor to his regime, what would prove to be more important than the infamy of June 25, 1950 is that the 38th Parallel would remain as a deep and seemingly indelible cut across the Korean peninsula—a haunting legacy of a call for a "more perfect Communist revolution" and the death of "Unitary Socialism."

Conclusion

"..There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'"
-Robert Frost, "Mending Wall" (1914; 1979)¹¹⁴⁰

June 27, 1950. A trembling but jubilant Syngman Rhee went up to the podium. After a disastrous and failed campaign to reclaim Ŭi-chŏng-pu from north Korea's occupation, Rhee needed to calm and win south Korean minds to at least hope for a precarious preservation of his regime. Therefore, Rhee unabashedly announced that "our brave [south Korean] soldiers are pushing the enemy back and will certainly deliver delightful news," and to assure that his fervent anti-Communism remained resilient and plausible as a bulwark against potential treason, he did not forget to warn that any Communists who wished to mend their own ways ought to "step up and undergo immediate ideological conversion, for they will pay a heavy price should they not comply."¹¹⁴¹ To prevent the recurrence of internal disorder and chaos in

¹¹⁴⁰ Robert Frost, "Mending Wall," in *The Poetry of Robert Frost: The Collected Poems, Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1979), 33.

¹¹⁴¹ Syngman Rhee, "Kukmin Yŏrŏpun, Ansimhasipsiyo," *My Dear Citizens, Rest Assured*," Daily Report, No. 125, Korea, June 28, 1950, RG 263: Records of the Central Intelligence Agency: Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports, 1941-1959, Box 330. There are allegations that Rhee tried to go into exile to Japan, but given the urgency of the war's unpredictable circumstances, such a scenario is not likely. For a discussion of Rhee's supposed plan to relocate to Japan, see "Telegram from the Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State," June 27, 1950. *FRUS 1950, Vol. 7: Korea*, 176.

the future, Rhee argued that it was a duty of every south Korean to "educate them [Communists] to become proper citizens."¹¹⁴² Ironically, just a few hours after displaying such a firm resolve, Rhee would completely forget about his bravado. Even though north Korean soldiers had yet to enter Tae-ku, Rhee would become the first refugee of the Korean War, fleeing from Seoul to Pusan and, as historian Pak Myŏng-lim (2002) puts it, "forfeiting thirty-two hours of his authority as President."¹¹⁴³

Whatever the motives Rhee might have had for delivering the speech, he had critically erred by grossing falsifying an undeniably bitter truth: within the very crowd he had addressed as "brave" and "courageous" hid various southern masterminds of the Korean civil war—DPK members, the south Korean military and police, the Northwest Youth Corps, and finally, a handful of former members of the SKWP—who had stirred up much commotion and violence which had erupted into a massive civil war between the southern Left and the southern Right. North Korea's invasion, however alarming and surprising it must have been for Rhee, was the largest waterfall ensuing from a cataract which the SKWP had already unleashed nearly five years ago. The party initially began as an organization principally aimed at regrouping the Korean Communist movement which had been fragmented for two decades due to Japanese oppression and internal factionalism. However, once the southern Left's unification was formally established on September 2, 1945, the party was prepared to show its fangs to what it considered the most hated groups in south Korea after liberation from 35 years of Japanese colonial rule.

Even though Pak Hŏn-yŏng's hope of clinching the supreme leadership of the Korean Communist movement would be dashed very early with the establishment of the northern

¹¹⁴² Syngman Rhee, "My Dear Citizens, Rest Assured." Daily Report, No. 125, Korea, June 28, 1950, RG 263, Box 330.

¹¹⁴³ Pak Myŏng-lim, *Hankuk, 1950 Nyŏn: Chŏnchaengkwa P'yŏnghwa (Korea, 1950: War and Peace)* (Seoul, south Korea: Na-Nam Publishing, 2002), 172-173.

branch of the Communist party as the official headquarters of the movement a month later, the union was an important achievement for the SKWP. On one hand, it marked the revival of the Chosŏn Communist Party and put an end to over two decades of fierce and intense rivalry with the Ko-ryŏ Communist Party, pulling the Korean Communist movement out of its Dark Age—two decades of intra-Leftist factionalism, a massacre in Alexeyevsk, and a Communist Diaspora to Japan, where many took menial jobs and became victims of a vicious cycle of "virtual pauperism." On the other hand, the amalgamation put down the last major challenge from Trotskyism in Korea from a pseudo-Communist organization named the "Chang-an Faction" and enabled the SKWP to become the undisputed interpreter of "orthodox Communism" as one that strictly adhered to the Marxist-Leninist line. The Chang-an faction's contention against Pak Hŏn-yŏng's leadership was based on what the faction believed to be Pak's rash decision to launch a Communist revolution without sufficient institutional preparation in the form of a permanent and legal political party endorsed by the Korean people. Yet, ironically, the Chang-an faction was guilty of the very crimes it accused Pak of committing, for it had no major infrastructural preparations ready itself to be referred to as a Communist party. Pak Hŏn-yŏng's capitalization on this critical weakness effectively ended the last major factional challenge from engulfing the SKWP and prevented it from being sent back to its own grave. The fall of the Chang-an faction marked the death-knell of "pseudo-Communism" in Korea and assured the foundations for Pak Hŏn-yŏng's rise as the undisputed leader of a rejuvenated Korean Communist movement.

However, the real pressing challenges and threats to the SKWP's dominance came from outside the party. In addition to the urgent problem of revitalizing the economy and reorganizing Korea's political structure, there were two central and linked problems which burdened south Korean politics: the punishment of pro-Japanese collaborators and the appropriate redistribution of land. These problems were incredibly controversial and pressing

issues such that the SKWP did not hesitate to showcase its *raison d' être* by clashing directly with the American military government. What began as a seemingly modest attempt to reason with the Americans through an earnest dialogue quickly broke down as John Reed Hodge demanded the immediate disintegration of the Chosŏn Communist Party, the predecessor to the SKWP. In response, Pak Hŏn-yŏng, the leader of the CCP, lost his patience and declared that the Communist cause was thoroughly nationalist, since it concentrated on punishing pro-Japanese collaborators and restoring justice by distributing land to the poor and underprivileged. The first round of negotiations ended in a dubious battle filled with distrust and intense animosity.

1946 saw the arrival of a more intense conflict with the commencement of the American-Soviet negotiations at the Moscow Conference. Although the primary objective of the conference was to decide on the appropriate moment for Korea's full independence, a clear disagreement between the two sides on the issue of how the two powers would prepare Korea for liberation forestalled the conference for a long time without a conclusion. Amidst the anticipation, expectation and frustration over the conference's proceedings, the *Tong-a Il-po*, a conservative newspaper, initially lit the flames of a heated and controversial debate about the exact meaning of "trusteeship." Deliberately wishing to publicize its anti-Communism, the *Tonga Ilpo* even compromised a newspaper's commitment to purely factual reporting by publishing a highly sensationalist and false report that the Americans wished to see Korea's liberation in five years, but the Soviets wanted forty. Critically missing access to the exact information that the two powers' positions were precisely the converse of what the newspaper had claimed, the Korean public soon became engulfed in a heated debate over whether opposing or supporting trusteeship was the genuine path to realizing liberation.

It was in this setting that the CCP began to mix its anti-Japanese and pro-Soviet sentiment to intensify its contention for supremacy against the Right, represented by people such as

Song Chin-u, Syngman Rhee, and Kim Ku—people who had collaborated with the Japanese, were pro-American, or anti-Communists. Since the CCP was well aware that Pak Hŏn-yŏng had left his confrontation with John Hodge unfinished, the party considered the inconclusive nature of the Moscow Conference as a prime opportunity to continue their anti-Rightist tirade, severely criticizing the Right for their checkered past as appeasers of Japanese colonial rule and then American occupation of Korea. The southern Communists also disputed the meaning of populism and Democracy by arguing that they were the only true representatives of the people since they understood the urgency of implementing a fair distribution of land while the Rightists could not afford to directly implement it because most of the politicians were formerly rich landholders. Thus, the commencement of the Moscow Conference and the Soviets' announcement of their intent to place Korea under a trusteeship, was, from the CCP's perspective, a prime opportunity to consolidate its rhetorical strategy against the Right. The antagonism between the two camps intensified after north Korea completed its land reform in May 1946. The northern land reforms served as an important catalyst for the CCP to seriously consider a rigid and firm consolidation of power over all of the Leftist parties. To that end, the party launched a personality cult around Pak and assured that there were no challengers by simply identifying any individual who dared to oppose or disagree with Pak Hŏn-yŏng's seizure of supreme authority as an enemy of the CCP.

The radicalization of the CCP's drive for power brought about two important consequences. First, the decision to implement the personality cult ensured a total erasure of any effort to experiment on the possibility of founding a non-ideological and a unitary Korean state. Although Yŏ Un-hyŏng tried to defy the CCP's warning and advertised the feasibility of "Unitary Socialism," the idea's emphasis on non-ideological unity for Korea as a country of and for Koreans alienated the southern Right, Left, and the American military government. Trapped between the extremism of supporting anti-Communism or completely eradicating

Communism, Yō could not find any substantive support in southern Korea for his vision of founding a united Korea just based on the simple but important fact that Korea existed for Koreans and therefore, they had the sole right to decide their own fate.

However, the establishment of the personality cult also blocked Yō's voice from entering mainstream Korean politics. The American military government wished to enhance bureaucratic efficiency by hiring pro-Japanese collaborators, the Right-wing Democratic Party of Korea emphasizing its fervent anti-Communism, and the Communists angrily demanded the dismissal of all suspected pro-Japanese collaborators from administrative positions. With the Americans, the southern Left, and the southern Right focusing on advertising their respective ideologies as the most ideal program to carve out the "correct" future for Korea, any attempt to search for a non-ideological middle-ground based on an appeal to historical nationalism seemed anachronistic, unrealistic, and even unprincipled. "Unitary Socialism" seemed to be a desolate island aloof about the tempest of ideological Manicheanism which was sweeping across Korea and the world.

Yō's failure to convince his fellow compatriots and the American military government was also largely rooted in his excessively progressive idealism. Although "Korea established by and for Koreans" was a reasonable demand given the urgency of restoring Korean national sovereignty and revitalizing a national economy torn apart by decades of colonial exploitation, there was no concrete force to actually implement the demand into a systematic program. The fundamental dilemma Yō struggled to address and ultimately failed was whether he would identify himself foremost as a nationalist or a Socialist. Focusing too much on cultivating the former identity incurred the risk of rendering him intelligible from the Left or the Right since he could not clearly distinguish what made him different from them aside from the commonality of rooting out Japanese imperialism. However, it was also impossible to emphasize himself as a Socialist because no one in Korea, including the American military

government, could clearly understand what Yŏ wanted by carving a path which rejected anti-Communism and Communism altogether. "Unitary Socialism" was a progressive ideology which rejected the Right-wing's adoption of *Taehan* as the new name for "Korea" due to *Taehan*'s association with a disgraceful Japanese takeover of the Korean royal house, and eventually, the peninsula itself. "Unitary Socialism" was an amalgamative ideology which sought to incorporate Democratic elections with a Socialist emphasis on prioritizing the impoverished in distributing land, but its critical weakness was that it could not address how it would achieve both at the same time when Korea was caught in the maelstrom of a highly polarized international political order.

Conversely, Yŏ's indecisiveness, which would eventually force him to exit from the CCP in January 1946, was Pak Hŏn-yŏng's advantage. Having finished cultivating a solid personality cult by the Spring of 1946, Pak fully displayed his ambition to expand Communist presence in southern Korea by proposing the formation of the Democratic Nationalist Front. The United Nationalist Front was on the surface, a strategy conceived to strengthen the solidarity among the southern Left in the face of an ever-growing power of the Right-wing establishment. However, in consideration of the political conditions and environment in which the DNF was conceived, the DNF's real purpose was to permanently isolate Yŏ Un-hyŏng such that he could find no reliable ally in any political camp because Pak Hŏn-yŏng was deeply annoyed with the ambiguity of "Unitary Socialism." Although Yŏ was convinced that the Americans and Soviets had to honorably leave Korea after helping her secure her independence and political stability, Yŏ believed that it was the Americans who were occupying the center of south Korean administration who had to more rapidly leave than the Soviets for Korea to swiftly win back her genuine political autonomy.

Despite their common identity as foreigners and chief political advisers to Korea, Yŏ's predilection for the Americans' earlier departure than that of the Soviets was a testament to

the ambiguity inherent in "Unitary Socialism," for, as Yō's "house analogy" demonstrated, he could not explain why the Americans had to leave earlier than the Soviets. This inability was rooted in the inherent ambiguity of the amalgamative nature of "Unitary Socialism; the amalgamative nature was a sign that Yō's political neutrality could be interpreted as his uncertainty about whether "Unitary Socialism" was more devoted to achieving Korean historical national unity or promoting Socialism. In other words, Yō's exit from the CCP in January was a boon for Pak Hōn-yōng; the elimination of a nebulous expression of political neutrality meant that Pak was free to experiment on the potential of his personality cult as a prime tool to maximize his own political power and legitimacy within the CCP.

However, Pak's personality cult was not only borne from his expulsion of "Unitary Socialism" from the CCP. The Pak personality cult was borne from a desire to reflect Marx's anti-Christian sentiment and Pak's desire to promote an accelerated Communization of the CCP's political culture. Pak believed that by ousting "Unitary Socialism," he could not only eliminate Yō's ambiguous non-ideological sentiment from obstructing the Communization of the CCP but also demonstrate to north Korea that the CCP genuinely wished to fully ally with the northern Communists. Moreover, as chapter 7 demonstrated, Yō's exit from the CCP was also a sign of Yō's recognition that he had dug a grave for his political career, since the ambiguity of "Unitary Socialism" had annoyed not only the Right but the presumably trustworthy southern Left.

Beyond Pak's personal anti-Christian bias as a motivation to establish the personality cult, the political ambience of the Korean peninsula sent signs that Pak's choice to establish a personality cult seemed justified. The northern land reforms were already complete by March 1946, which gave Pak full confidence that the northern land reform was clear evidence of success for a distinctive Korean nationalistic Communism and supporting the reform would earn his legitimacy as Kim Il-sung's right-hand man. Hence, maintaining a permanent

personality cult was important to express a permanent support of the northerners' decision. Furthermore, the Right-wing establishment was having difficulty attracting moderates to join in their effort to found a separate government, such that Yŏ Un-hyŏng permanently severed ties with Syngman Rhee by announcing his withdrawal from the National Legislative Assembly. The Soviets and the Americans, after over a year of inconclusive negotiations, were frustrated and tired by their failure to precisely define "Democracy." Given the disorganized and uncertain prospects of achieving Korean unification or a clear roadmap for a stable political system, Pak decided to clearly secure Yŏ's political death by uniting all Leftist members under his leadership. The adoption of "Communist exceptionalism," which emphasized that all dissenters from Pak's endorsement of anti-imperialist Communism were sworn enemies of the CCP, was complete with the DNF as the institutional backbone of the CCP. Considering all of these unfavorable political developments for "Unitary Socialism," Yŏ's exit from the CCP was also, as chapter 8 showed, a permanent burial of Yŏ's wish to see both the Soviets and Americans leave in the honor of being guests to a Korean house that Koreans owned and managed in their own right as an independent people.

However, it was not entirely a matter of smooth sailing for Pak Hŏn-yŏng. In addition to being grilled by moderate Leftists such as Kim Wŏn-pong that Pak was merely trying to abuse the UNF as an instrument to amass dictatorial power, Pak was still uncertain about his relationship with northern Korea. Although he had won Kim Il-sung's endorsement to lead the revival of the CCP in southern Korea, Pak could not help but feel that he was receiving orders from a man who lacked the intellectual capacity to properly lead a Communist regime. However, by May 1946, the tables had turned against Pak who had nothing to show as proof that he was being successful in expanding Communist influence in the south, while the northerners had completed the land reform. The news of the reforms' completion must have seemed as a golden opportunity for Pak to demonstrate his loyalty to the north—a loyalty

which he desperately tried to show by making every CCP member swear their allegiance to Communism and by using this allegiance to warn Rightists of the southern Communists' desire to permanently become a separate political force with no possibility of reconciliation. The allegiance also told Yŏ Un-hyŏng that there was no place for him in the CCP. The land reforms provided a much-needed sense of direction for Pak—a firm and unwavering anti-Right-wing and anti-Yŏ stance—who feared losing it after the American Soviet negotiations had broken down again in April. In other words, the northern land reforms solidified the CCP's vow to fully commit itself to Communism and ascertain that Yŏ's desire to see the Americans and Soviets leave with honor after guiding Korea to establishing her own government would never materialize. The land reforms inadvertently accelerated the defeat of "Unitary Socialism" by confirming that the southern Left would be synonymous with Communism and would not welcome any moderate approach to unification.

Nevertheless, assurance of stability does not guarantee the possession of it especially if an imbalance of power is favorable to an overwhelming opposition. Pak still had to deal with the Rightists who enjoyed strong backing from the American military government, and Yŏ was still busy trying to conceive of an alliance with moderates, trying to rekindle some hope for realizing "Unitary Socialism." Thus, Pak's only realistic choice was to pay a visit to P'yŏngyang in September after a long summer of battles against anti-Communists in the south. Moreover, Pak was in desperate need of north Korea's official promise to continue its financial and military support of the CCP. Although Pak had narrowly escaped a police raid of a printing station which had exposed several CCP cadres engaged in the illegal printing of counterfeit notes in May 1946, the American military not only suspended major Left-wing papers and forced the CCP to not only be unexpectedly isolated from the global Communist movement but also run out of funds.

The May Counterfeiting Scandal, despite ending with the arrest of a counterfeiting ring,

was an event with a much larger message than its actual proportion. The scandal resulted in a definitive and permanent financial paralysis of the CCP, a condition from which the party would never be able to fully recover and carry out the southern Left's scheme of realizing a "more perfect Communist revolution." Hence, when Pak visited north Korea in September, he did not just visit north Korea to seek a political sanctuary. The CCP's financial collapse from the scandal forced Pak to seek Kim's authorization on the feasibility of carrying out a "more perfect Communist revolution," eternally placing Pak in an inferior position against Kim Il-sung.

The September Lobby confirmed Pak's strong reliance on Kim's guidance for continuing operations in the south. Since Yŏ had not relinquished his hope of non-ideological unification and was planning to receive Kim Il-sung's help in realizing it, Pak had to ascertain that the Pak-Kim partnership was still solid. Moreover, when he learned that Yŏ had defamed his character, Pak responded in kind, inadvertently put into an unwanted confrontation with his main Left-wing rival for one last time. The September Lobby had two starkly contrasting meanings for Korean politics. On one hand, Pak Hŏn-yŏng secured the "Two-to-One Deal" with Kim Il-sung, which prepared the groundwork for the CCP's plot to overrun the southern Right with north Korea's military intervention. Should Pak be successful in harassing the American military government and the Rightists and give sufficient confidence for north Korea to intervene on the CCP's behalf, Pak could actually hope that a Communist revolution to completely overthrow the Rightists would be a success.

On the other hand, the completion of the "Two-to-One Deal" meant that even Kim Il-sung had expressed more faith in Pak's vision rather than "Unitary Socialism." Yŏ Un-hyŏng gave his best elaboration of "Unitary Socialism" to convince the northern leadership that a non-ideological unity was necessary for the general betterment of the Korean people. Yŏ Un-hyŏng envisioned a mixture of a Democratic electoral politics and a Socialist economic policy

which would focus on nationalizing most of agricultural lands, which would then be distributed to poor peasants, farmers, and workers at the expense of the rich and pro-Japanese landlords. Yŏ believed that such a two-track amalgamation of political Democracy and economic Socialism would ensure stability for institutional democracy while allowing for a flexible adoption of economic planning which would reflect "Socialism with Korean characteristics" by using the state's capacity to direct land distribution in favor of the poor while penalizing pro-Japanese collaborators in conjunction with a political culture which would emphasize Korean nationalism. Yŏ expected that an appeal to political and economic nationalism while preserving his proclivity for the Left would ensure that Kim Il-sung would be attracted to a moderate form of Socialism. Should this scenario be realized, Yŏ also thought that he could gain a considerable leverage against Pak Hŏn-yŏng and obstruct, if not demolish Pak's plan to dominate the southern Left.

Ultimately, Yŏ's hope was a lost cause as Pak would emerge victorious in the September Lobby, which confirmed that a concrete promise was superior to pure idealism, however qualitatively better the latter may seem over the former. Pak's excitement about securing the "Two to One Deal" was so great that Yŏ had no time to recuperate his extremely weak political standing in southern Korea. Pak had already planned a labor strike which erupted across southern Korea in September and October. What began in the city of Tae-ku as a small-scale protest against low wages and poor working conditions soon exploded into an anti-American and pro-Communist rally with the introduction of several CCP members who quickly acted as hidden but primary organizers of the two labor strikes. The CCP politicized the workers' resentment by blaming the American military government and the Right-wing establishment, and the strikes quickly lost their primary economic purpose of actualizing a rise in real wages and became a convocation for radical pro-Communist militancy.

However, sustaining the violence became increasingly difficult for the CCP as the political

developments which initially seemed to favor the labor strikes backfired due to their prolonged inconclusiveness. While the Americans and the Soviets still could not decide on a satisfactory outcome, the Rightists, under the leadership of Syngman Rhee rapidly prepared for the founding of a separate southern government. Soon after declaring his desire to hold separate elections in southern Korea, Rhee instituted the Northwest Youth Corps, a group of northern anti-Communists who ruthlessly hunted down any supposed, but not substantially confirmed, opponent of the Right-wing regime. Using a mixture of anti-Communist rhetoric, extreme coercion, and violence, the Rhee regime used the October labor strike as an excuse to found an autocratic police state which increasingly intensified the Left-Right clash as the leitmotif of the Korean War.

By doing so, the Rightists proved that the outbreak of major Leftist insurrections such as the September and October labor strikes were colossal failures because the insurrections exposed the ironic nihilism of the CCP's "support" for the Soviet Union. On one hand, the CCP failed to answer what supporting the trusteeship would really produce. Even if it could produce anything at all, neither the leaders who orchestrated the insurrections nor workers and peasants who participated in them cared to answer the question of how a Communization of the entire Korean peninsula would be appropriate responses demonstrating the essence of the support.

In addition, the CCP could not escape the charge that it had planned a reckless uprising, for, regardless of the sincerity with which the CCP really wished to wage it, the party gravely underestimated the prowess of its chief enemy, the technologically superior south Korean National Police and the American military government. Instead, it concentrated rather too excessively on recruiting theoretically ill-informed and impassionate laborers and peasants who barely knew who Karl Marx was to understand why they had to wage a rebellion against the Right-wing establishment rather than a revolution for workers' rights. On the other hand,

precisely because of this vagueness, the October labor strike became a nihilistic movement, initially espousing a dramatic increase in wages, but soon mutating into a mass rally for the SKWP's cause, with barely any participant truly understanding why they were participating and what they had to really fight for based on their own judgment. The most important truth that emerged from the debacle of October was that no Korean, SKWP member or otherwise, truly grasped what Communism was and that it was Korea's duty to adapt foreign principles to Korean realities rather than the converse to assure any success.

Yet, the failure of the September and October labor strikes was not a complete debacle, since it provided a firmer resolve for Pak to consolidate the Communists under a more formal structure. After obtaining Yō's promise that he would never challenge his authority again, Pak proceeded with the official founding of the SKWP as the direct successor to the old Chosŏn Communist Party from the 1920s. The CCP's revival as the SKWP marked an important transition in the history of the Korean Communist movement, for it was a direct expression of Pak's urge to definitively end a tumultuous period of intense factionalism within the southern Left and imbue a strong sense of unity. The SKWP's founding confirmed an eternal political death of "Unitary Socialism," for Yō Un-hyŏng would no longer have a stable political institution from which he could form a coalition to realize his ideal of non-ideological unity. Finally, the SKWP's founding confirmed Pak's completion of the "Two-to-One Deal" ensured that Pak would be Kim Il-sung's sole partner in the quest for "a more perfect Communist revolution" and reaffirmed Pak's superiority from the September Lobby. "Unitary Socialism" had become a lost cause swept away by the tempest of an ever worsening an already Manichean political culture in southern Korea.

Perhaps the greatest benefactor from the chaos in southern Korea was north Korea. Unlike the SKWP, which was but a faction among many fighting for maximum power, north Korea quickly got rid of any possibility for decentralization by instituting the land reforms in March

1946 and a Kim Il-sung personality cult by August. Moreover, because Kim Il-sung had already confirmed his superior position in the partnership with Pak Hŏn-yŏng throughout Pak's preparation, there was no need to carry out any further unnecessary power struggles.

The announcement of a north Korean constitution, which came simultaneously with the establishment of the Kim Il-sung personality cult not only confirmed the SKWP's complete subjugation to the NKWP's authority, but was also a hard nail in the coffin and a permanent death sentence for the SKWP. When the October labor strike failed, the northerners pretended to remain perturbed, but in reality, the outcome helped cement Kim Il-sung's hold on power, since he could now use the SKWP's failure in the strike as a legitimate reason to brand its challenge to his power as one coming from counter-revolutionaries. Moreover, since the SKWP's failure translated into the success for the Rightists' suppression, Kim Il-sung also found a convenient reason to militarily intervene in southern Korea: to finish the SKWP's unfulfilled "more perfect Communist revolution" with his own hands and thereby become the undisputed Communist ruler of the Korean peninsula.

Moreover, the formation of a highly dysfunctional Legislative Assembly, which quickly became an exclusive club for Right-wing politicians and served to cement Syngman Rhee's power in the south. Although the DPK initially feigned the establishment of the Legislative Assembly as a modest effort to unite the southern Right and Left, the horrors of the Autumn Harvest Uprisings quickly convinced Syngman Rhee to permanently sever all ties with the southern Leftists and establish an authoritarian security state whose only functional ideology was anti-Communism. The DPK's encouragement of extreme and indiscriminate Right-wing violence knew no regional boundaries as ferocious terrorism wreaked terror and fear in the hearts of many innocent civilians who were more concerned about putting food on their plates than reading a page of *Capital*. The southern insurrection had inadvertently exacerbated an already Manichean political ambience in south Korea by inviting the rise of a vicious and

suppressive security state which used torture, extortion, and weapons to eternally silence anyone suspected of having the slightest sympathy toward Communism. The harder the southern Left tried to exert its sphere of influence, the harder the Rightists sought to trample that influence using maximum violence, providing the motif of a civil war that would erupt into Korea's greatest national tragedy only a few years later.

The failed outburst of Pak Hŏn-yŏng's last struggle to ferment a southern insurrection on March 1, 1947 and an equally disastrous attempt to salvage a chance for "a more perfect Communist revolution" that followed it saw the pinnacle of the DPK's violent suppression of the southern Left and drained the last inch of patience in Kim Il-sung. Any delay in preparing a separate north Korean constitution could result in prolonged instability in north Korea, which the southerners could exploit as a critical weakness. In short, the establishment of the Legislative Assembly embodied Syngman Rhee's desire to permanently sever ties with north Korea and maintain his commitment to a separate anti-Communist police state, while for Kim Il-sung, Pak Hŏn-yŏng's failure to generate anything significant from the March 1 1947 greatly depreciated Pak's utility and credibility as a trustworthy comrade to carry out a "more perfect Communist revolution."

Furthermore, since Pak's failure to expand the March 1 celebrations as a major Communist insurrection was largely due to the south Korean police's ruthless oppression and rapid arrests of SKWP cadres, the March 1 celebrations turned out to be the DPK's ultimate warning that its struggle with the SKWP would unconditionally end with the SKWP's institutional dissolution if the SKWP chose to continue its resistance. The March 1 celebrations also ascertained that Kim Il-sung could not solely depend on Pak to finish "a more perfect Communist revolution." Finally, Yŏ's unexpected assassination at the hands of a Right-wing extremist confirmed the permanent death of "Unitary Socialism," eternally erased any possibility for Yŏ Un-hyŏng to make a political comeback. With the Rightists and Leftists

from both sides of the peninsula refusing to give up their creeds, the coming of an extreme ideological polarization in the Korean peninsula was inevitable, leaving no room for any non-ideological or centrist attempts to unify the peninsula. Although the SKWP feigned its sadness for Yō's untimely death by avowing to crush all counterrevolutionaries, it was an elegy uttered without any tears and was actually a declaration that there was no longer a Korea for which "Unitary Socialism" would be her savior.

With regard to such developments in southern Korea, the foundation of the north Korean regime was Kim Il-sung's gesture to counter the Legislative Assembly and confirm the emergence of two separate regimes in the Korean peninsula. The south Korean police's repression of the March 1 celebrations suggested the need to found a strong and equally authoritarian state in north Korea; Kim Il-sung expressed his recognition of this need through the announcement of a separate northern constitution, and the installment of the Kim personality cult was, in retrospect, an expression of Kim Il-sung's urge that he would exercise zero tolerance against any form of opposition or subversion. The formation of the north Korean state was not only a warning that the northern Communists had the foundational capacity to strike south Korea, but also a warning to the SKWP that, due to Pak's constant failure to deliver success in south Korea, the southern Communists were no longer reliable partners but were in danger of being marked as Kim's opponents should Pak aspire to assume the same role in north Korea as he had in south Korea.

In essence, from whichever angle one observes the southern origins of the Korean War, it is apparent that a discussion of the SKWP is indispensable to understanding the chaotic explosion of a southern civil war between the southern Left and the southern Right. The SKWP was not only responsible for reuniting a deeply fragmented southern Left, but was also responsible for brandishing that newly found power to crush the first and last attempt at non-ideological unity and to also inspire north Korea, albeit showing poor comprehension of

"supporting trusteeship" and mediocre organizational tactics stemming from a gross underestimation of the principal enemy's strength. This underestimation critically took its toll by inviting the Syngman Rhee Administration's use of intense anti-Communist policing, which not only sought to corner the SKWP but also terrorize anyone suspected of participating or sympathizing with the Communists. The south Korean security state's employment of extreme Right-wing groups and political terrorism not only originated an anti-Communist police state in south Korea but also exacerbated the Manichean character of Cold War by encouraging south Korea to adopt and extensively practice anti-Communism as its state ideology.

In other words, the SKWP's core contribution to the origination of the Korean War was that both its strengths and weaknesses became critical sources of information and power for north Korea and south Korea. The party's militancy provided P'yŏng-yang with a rationale to invade south Korea—the completion of a "more perfect Communist revolution" using overwhelming force. Yet, the party's overconfidence about its militancy would later provide for the north Korean regime an unexpected justification to isolate and brand Pak Hŏn-yŏng and his clique as traitors to north Korea, thereby rendering the north Korean state bereft of any lasting vestiges of orthodox Communism. For south Korea, the SKWP's existence itself represented the introduction of a pervasive anti-Communist security state, enforced through the founding of a Rightist-majority Legislative Assembly and a pervasive network of extreme Right-wing paramilitary groups which cooperated with the south Korean government to not only hunt down Communists but to instill a deep fear in every citizen that the slightest hint of assistance or sympathy to the Communists would increase the hostility and militancy of the south Korean security state.

Hence, the SKWP was a key factor in ushering the arrival of an extreme Manichean political culture which pitted Communism and anti-Communism, an animosity deep enough

to firmly plant the seed of Korea's major ideological civil war. In short, the rise of the SKWP not only marked the beginning of Korea's largest tragedy which split her into two semi-states but also ensured that there was no possibility for "Unitary Socialism" to firmly stand its ground and realize its vision of a non-ideological unification of the Korean peninsula through the invocation of Korea's historical nationalism. The fiasco the party went through to realize the latter saw the rise of a massive police state in south Korea, and the formation of a totalitarian pseudo-Communist state in north Korea which excised all the theoretical complexity from Communism but only gave birth to a personality cult.

The Korean War began as a civil war in south Korea because the SKWP's ambition to become the most powerful Communist party in the Korean peninsula clashed directly with non-ideological unity, virulent anti-Communism, and inadvertently, Kim Il-sung's ambition to become the undisputed leader of north Korea. The SKWP's attempt to win all of these battles by securing a costly victory over "Unitary Socialism" at the expense of the SKWP's own survival in a political arena with a Right-wing majority ultimately initiated a gory civil war in southern Korea. When northerners invaded south Korea on June 25, 1950, it was not a sudden Communist agitation about which south Korea had no information as an innocent victim. Rather, the northerners were merely extending and attempting to complete a "more perfect Communist revolution" for which their southern counterparts had already raised the curtain long before the whiffs of gunpowder in the humid summer air had arrived from the north. Ironically, the southerners were too focused on raising the curtain itself that they forgot to understand how to obtain the exact form of the "more perfect Communist revolution" they were looking for, leaving both the southern and northerners confused about how to make the "revolution" become "perfect" or be truly "Communist." The terror which the north Koreans unleashed on June 25, 1950 was a violent yet failed effort to haphazardly complete a nebulous "more perfect Communist revolution" on the SKWP's behalf. The northerners failed to

understand what they wanted to build as "Communism" in south Korea after a revolution whose ending they so eagerly wanted to see but could not because they were trying to complete a revolution whose origins and development were not entirely familiar to the north Koreans. The winds of the Communist revolution, however incomplete and imperfect they may have been, were blowing from south to north five years before the Korean War. June 25, 1950 was not the beginning of *a sudden and an unexpected* north Korean invasion of south Korea. It was a *clear* extension of a south Korean-based civil war between the southern Left and the southern Right, in which the southern Left's erasure of "Unitary Socialism" and the southern Right's establishment of an anti-Communist security state had already plunged Korea deep into the eye of the Cold War's maelstrom.

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