Forced Migration of Koreans to Sakhalin and ~~their~~Their Repatriation

Choi KG~~G~~i-young

Choi KG~~G~~i-young (Choe, Gi-yeong) is Professor of Korean History at Sogang University. He received his Ph.D. in Korean History from Sogang University in 1989. His publications include *Daehan jeguk sigi sinmun yeongu* (A Study of Newspapers in the Period of the Great Han Empire) (1991) and *Hanguk geundae gyemong sasang yeongu* (A Study of Enlightenment Thought in Modern Korea) (2003). E-mail: skychoi@sogang.ac.kr.

- This study was supported by the Korea Research Foundation's 2002 research grant (KRF-2002-073-AM1014).

Abstract

Imperial Japan mobilized Korean people as soldiers, workers, and comfort women after the start of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937. Approximately 150,000 Koreans were forcibly conscripted to work as coal miners in Sakhalin from the second half of the 1930s until liberation in 1945, after which 43,000 remained, detained in Sakhalin because of the Japanese government's irresponsible actions, combined with the Soviet interest in securing a cheap labor force. Only a small number who were married to Japanese women were able to return in the 1950s.

The civilian-led repatriation movement that began in the late 1950s did not bear fruit, due to the indifference of Japan and the Soviet Union. In the 1970s, the Japanese government began to show interest in the issue of the Sakhalin Koreans on a humanitarian level, but avoided taking any responsibility. The South Korean government could not afford to pay attention to the issue for economic reasons, while the North Korean government approached it from the standpoint of maintaining their regime. The Soviet government assumed a passive, lukewarm attitude toward the matter only after post-war reconstruction had reached a certain level. In this sense, the problem of the Sakhalin Koreans can be ~~best explained~~~~best explained~~ best explained vis-à-vis the dynamic relations among South and North Korea, the Soviet Union, and Japan during the Cold War.

The repatriation movement was transformed from a civilian-led to a government-led one during the second half of the 1980s. Japanese politicians and the Soviet perestroika policy provided the necessary momentum required to resolve the problem. After the first group of repatriates finally set foot in their homeland around 1990, the stream of returnees never stopped.

Keywords: forced mobilization, repatriation movement, Koreans in Sakhalin, Korean migration of Sakhalin

Introduction

Sakhalin Island is located east of the Okhotsk Sea, off the coast of Russia's Maritime Province, and northern Hokkaido, Japan. Its Japanese name is Karafuto. The climate and environment of Sakhalin is not very hospitable, but the mining industry is quite developed, utilizing rich natural resources such as timber, forestry, petroleum, and coal. About 1,000 Koreans, most of whom are over 70 years of age, live there. Most came to Sakhalin as the result of recruitment or forced relocation under a mining development drive during the Japanese colonial rule~~era~~ between the second half of the 1930s and the 1940s. At the time of Korea's liberation in 1945, about 43,000 Koreans resided there.

Upon ~~the~~ liberation, the Koreans in Sakhalin had high hopes of returning home. ~~But~~However, their hopes were crushed by the Japanese government's irresponsible actions and the border closure by the Soviet Union. They were left to survive alone, deserted on Sakhalin. Despite their best efforts, only a small fraction of the survivors made it home over approximately forty years since ~~the~~ liberation.

Five countries—Japan, the Soviet Union, the United States, North Korea, and South Korea—were involved in the problem of the Koreans in Sakhalin, but all of them had overlooked the matter for a long time. A clue to solving the problem emerged with the Soviet Union's policy of *perestroika* in the second half of the 1980s. Currently, about 1,300 Koreans have repatriated to Korea. Study of the Koreans in Sakhalin has been done mostly in Japan. In Korea, little attention has been paid to this issue in historical circles. This paper merely presents a summary of the existing body of research on the Sakhalin Koreans.[1]

1. Two Japanese books, also translated into Korean, that discuss the history of the Koreans in Sakhalin proved quite useful: Onuma Yasuaki (1992); and Committee of Diet Members on the Problem of the Sakhalin Koreans in Japan(~~의원간담회를 어떻게 해야 할 지 잘 모르겠습니다~~) (1994). Onuma's book presents an overview of the history of the Sakhalin Koreans, while the book by the Diet ~~member~~~~assembs~~lymen~~'s~~ committee contains extensive information and data on the problem of the Sakhalin Koreans. I also refer to the following publications written in Korea: Jang Min-gu (1976); Ministry of Justice (1986); Yi and Jeon (1993); and Kwon (1996).

Migration of Koreans to Sakhalin before Liberation

Relocation of Koreans to Sakhalin

Sakhalin was an uninhabited wasteland until the seventeenth century. Once it was discovered to possess rich natural resources, both Japan and Russia claimed the island. Japan based its claims on the fact that Ainu immigrants from Hokkaido ~~were~~ already lived~~living~~ there and relocated Japanese fishermen along the southern coast, while Russia increased its number of residents by exiling prisoners there. The two countries even had bouts of violent clashes in the early nineteenth century. The Treaty of Shimoda made between Russia and Japan in February 1855 stipulated that nationals from both countries could live there. Then, under the Treaty of St. Petersburg in May 1875, Japan ceded Sakhalin to Russia in exchange for the Kuril Islands. But after winning the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan occupied the southern part of Sakhalin below lat. 50^{o} N. At first, Sakhalin was desirable for its strategic location, but after the war with Russia, Japan felt the need to utilize its rich resources to develop Hokkaido for national defense and growth. Thus, several industries boomed on the island, particularly, fishing, farming, forestry, paper~~ and~~ pulp making, and mining.

Records of Koreans in Sakhalin are found in a Russian report stating that 13 Korean households migrated to the coast of the Novgorod Channel and Posiet in 1863, and 308 Koreans in 60 households settled in Posiet in 1864. After the abolishment of serfdom in February 1861, the Russian government encouraged the settlement of both Russians and foreigners in Sakhalin. Korean settlement did not seem totally unrelated to the government action to provide incentives to new settlers. Continuous settlement of Koreans in Sakhalin was~~is~~ confirmed in the report of Russia's first population survey conducted in 1897, as well as Anton Chekhov's novel *Ostrov sakhalin* (*The Island: A Journey to Sakhalin*). According to the survey report, Koreans began to live on Sakhalin in 1~~,~~890, along with the Ainu, Giriyak, and Japanese inhabitants, with 67 of its population of 28,000 comprised of Koreans, most of whom engaged in fishing.

Upon winning the war with Russia in 1905, Japan obtained control of southern Sakhalin below lat. 50° N. In addition, Japan established a Residency-General in Korea in 1906 then annexed the Korean peninsula itself in August 1910. In this condition, Korean fire-field farmers and some political exiles moved to Alexandrovsky in northern Sakhalin. They organized a mutual assistance society and purchased land, building a Korean village (New Korea Village) consisting of 25 households. As Japan invaded Siberia and occupied northern Sakhalin in April 1920, the Korean political exiles living there left for the Maritime Province. As a result, no national independence movement was organized in Sakhalin. Korean migration to northern Sakhalin via Russia continued from 1910 until the second half of the 1930s, and the number of migrants was on the increase.[2] However, in September 1937, the Soviet government relocated Koreans living in northern Sakhalin to Central Asia against their will, just like those in Siberia.

Among the Koreans who lived in Sakhalin from 1863 to the 1900s, some were brought like prisoners through forced relocations, while a larger number of themppeople came by their own free will. Meanwhile, Koreans voluntarily chose to relocate to Sakhalin from the 1900s to the 1930s in order to ~~find a new life free from Japanese occupation~~seek a way to make a living, rather than be taken away by force to Russia or Japan.

Forced Migration of Koreans during Japanese Occupation

As Sakhalin was divided into north and south along the lat. 50° N under the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905, the Japanese government established the Office of Sakhalin in April 1907 and relocated Japanese people to the island. ~~But~~However, the relocation project did not grow in large scale because the port facilities linking Sakhalin and Japan were underdeveloped and the high wages of Sakhalin workers did not allow for much profit. ~~Japanese~~~~Japan's~~Japan's attitude towards Sakhalin became more aggressive with the invasion of Manchuria in 1931. To meet the increased demand for labor in coalmines, Japan recruited its own people to work as miners in Sakhalin. As for foreigners, about 1,000 Koreans were living in southern Sakhalin in 1920, but the

2. Refer to Yi J. H. (1997); Kim M. (2000); and Yi S. H. (2004, 6-10).

number increased to 6,000 in 1934. Upon Japan's proclamation of the National General Mobilization Law in 1938 and the outbreak of World War II, the demand for labor grew even larger, with the Japanese government wanting to fill the shortage with human resources from Korea.

The Japanese government tried to mobilize the colonized Koreans to work in Sakhalin through “recruitment,” “government-led arrangements,” and “forced labor draft.” First, Japan decided on an administrative measure to recruit Korean workers in September 1939. The measure provided Japanese entrepreneurs suffering from labor shortages the authority to recruit Korean workers. The procedure worked like this: employers applied to the Japanese government for permission to receive workers. The government then assigned the employers Korean counties and townships where they could recruit workers. According to the quota set by county offices, they hired the desired number of workers through township offices and judicial branch offices. Such was the system of labor exploitation through the collaboration of the Japanese government and entrepreneurs.

Despite the forced conscription of laborers in 1939, Japan suffered a greater labor shortage as the Pacific War grew to full scale. The Government-General in Korea established the Korean Workers' Association in June 1941 in order to recruit Korean workers to work in Japan, while the Japanese government took legal measures regarding the utilization of Korean workers in February 1942. Through this series of measures, the government took an active role in the recruitment of Korean workers. This indicates that Koreans were under pressure from the government to work for Japan, regardless of individual will.

The National Requisition Ordinance was applied to Korea beginning in September 1944. In Japan, it was already in practice from 1938. Since Japanese losses on the battleground had become more serious with the escalation of the war, it was difficult to secure a sufficient number of draftees in Japan alone. The government felt the need to expand the draft system outside of Japan, a policy that had been held as a last resort out of concern for possible resistance in the colonies. In Korea, forced conscription began in September 1944, a measure that replaced the voluntary

recruitment that had been nominally maintained until then.[3]

Under this measure, many men from colonized Korea were sent to Japan and Sakhalin to work. The exact number of people sent to Sakhalin is unknown, but it is estimated at around 150,000. In 1944, when Japan was losing the war, about 100,000 of them were sent to Hokkaido and Kyushu as coal miners. The number of Koreans claimed to have lived~~living~~ in Sakhalin at the time of liberation differs ~~from~~ according to ~~scholar to scholar, as well as from one research institute to another~~each researcher or research institute, but it is estimated at 43,000.[4] Most of these Koreans worked in coalmines. The many accidents in the mines indicate that their working conditions were very poor. They were forced to work 10 to 12 hours a day in hazardous conditions, in addition to suffering discrimination from the Japanese in general. Their wages were meager compared to the Japanese, and they were even forced to save a significant portion of their wages—a policy devised as a way of preventing them from running away. After the expiration of their contract, they were often forced to extend it against their will. Suffering severe suppression and discrimination, they found their only consolation in the hopes of one day returning home. Of course, this suffering was not limited to Koreans in Sakhalin; those who were forcibly sent to Japan suffered the same, but the suffering of the Sakhalin Koreans was particularly acute, given its poor working conditions and inhospitable climate.

Most of these people hailed from the southern part of the Korean peninsula. Japan developed its military industry in the northern part of Korea, so northerners were used in those factories. By contrast, Sakhalin mines were manned by people from the southern region of the peninsula. Northerners working in Sakhalin are known to have more likely moved there through Siberia or Vladivostok rather than through forced conscription. The ratio of male to female workers was 7 to 3.[5]

Sakhalin Koreans Unable to Repatriate after Liberation

3. For detailed information, see Kim M. (1995, 2000).
4. On the number of Koreans who moved to Sakhalin, see Onuma (1992, 7-9); and Yi S. H. (2002). Researchers disagree on how many Koreans were conscripted as laborers and how many were left behind; the figures vary greatly. Some estimate that approximately 70,000 were conscripted for labor and 23,500 remained in Sakhalin.

Sakhalin Koreans Unable to Repatriate

Japan was defeated in World War II and accepted the conditions of the Potsdam Declaration, which was signed by Allied Forces on 15 August 1945. The Japanese government rushed to bring Japanese people living abroad back to their homeland and to repatriate people from its colonies back to their homelands. Allied Forces assisted the Japanese government in this action, feeling it was necessary for stabilizing the country. In the relatively early stages, repatriation was actively pursued in places occupied by the Allied Powers, but this was not the case in Soviet-occupied regions. The General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (hereafter referred to as GHQ) began to review the issue of repatriation from Soviet-occupied regions in September 1945 and made a request the following month for the Soviet Union to provide information about the areas they occupied. ~~But~~~~Nevertheless,~~But the Soviet Union did not express much interest in the issue, in light of their need for a postwar reconstruction labor force.

The first action the Soviet military government took after taking over Sakhalin was to ask residents to return to work and increase production, especially of coal. Having suffered over 20 million casualties in World War II and with its economy in shambles, it regarded the civilians and prisoners of war in Sakhalin as indispensable resources for postwar reconstruction. Although figures vary between reports, the population of Sakhalin at the time of Korea's liberation reached 450,000, a figure that included Japanese soldiers. About 100,000 of them ~~escaped to Hokkaido via emergency evacuation(긴급소개란 무슨 뜻입니까?) and clandestine voyages~~ were evacuated or smuggled themselves into Hokkaido from August 1945 to March 1946, while 290,000 Japanese and 43,000 Koreans remained on Sakhalin.[6]

The Soviet Union was in ~~dire straits~~a crisis and needed to restore the lost labor force by any means in order to rebuild their vast homeland, which had been devastated by the war. The Japanese and Koreans in Sakhalin were precious resources to them.

5. Yi J. H. (1997, 277-278) and Yi S. H. (2002, 217).
6. Kim M. (2000, 226-232).

Therefore, the Soviet military government tried to defer the signing of a repatriation agreement with the Allied Forces as long as possible. Immediately after entering Sakhalin, the Soviets closed down the Soya Strait, which lies between Hokkaido and Sakhalin, and began checking the nationalities of the residents to facilitate the utilization of Koreans as a labor force. Based on a stipulation contained in Article 8 of the Law on Citizenship of the USSR, which read "anyone residing within Soviet territory that is not a citizen of the Soviet Union in accordance with this law and does not have proof of his/her relation to another country is considered devoid of any nationality," all Sakhalin Koreans were treated as stateless.[7] This was just one manifestation of how strongly determined the Soviet Union was to ban the repatriation of Koreans in Sakhalin.

At the end of February 1946, the Soviet Union notified the GHQ of its will to repatriate the Japanese in North Korea, with negotiations having begun in May. Although little progress was made, the Soviet Union informed the GHQ in September 1946 that it was willing to start sending back the Japanese in Soviet-occupied Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands in October. After talks in October and November, the Soviet Union and the GHQ signed the US-Soviet Agreement on the Repatriation of the Japanese in the Soviet-controlled Areas on 19 December. In the agreement, the subjects of repatriation were designated as Japanese prisoners of war and Japanese citizens. There was also a provision that 10,000 Koreans who had been born and lived in North Korea above the 38th parallel would be repatriated from Japan to North Korea. In any case, the Sakhalin Koreans were omitted as subjects of repatriation. They had to be recognized as Japanese citizens in order to go home, but the Japanese government made no effort to include them as subjects of repatriation, claiming they had lost their Japanese nationality in accordance with the Cairo Declaration.

Contradictory to its own claim, the Japanese government maintained that Koreans and Japanese would not lose their Japanese nationality until the San Francisco Peace Treaty went into effect.[8] Their prewar legal status was supposed to have been maintained until the signing of the treaty, according to the conventional interpretation of international law, such that Sakhalin Koreans should have been considered Japanese

7. Yi S. H. (2002, 225).
8. Yi S. H. (2002, 221-222).

citizens until the signing.[9] ~~But~~However, the Japanese government used the treaty for its own interests and excluded from repatriation those Koreans they had hired or forcibly conscripted, citing their non-citizenship status. As a matter of fact, neither the Soviet Union, which was intent on securing a labor force, nor the United States, which displayed no genuine interest in the repatriation of Koreans, can evade this responsibility. ~~But~~~~Nevertheless,~~But more fundamentally, ~~it was the Japanese government's negligence that~~the Japanese government's negligence left the Sakhalin Koreans to be detained by the Soviet Union, without any hope of going home.

The repatriation of the Japanese in Sakhalin was carried out from December 1946 to July 1949, with about 293,000 people returning home. There were no Koreans among them. Perhaps some made it back disguised as Japanese, but 43,000 Koreans left behind had to live out their remaining days in despair, not knowing whether they could ever return to their homeland.

Koreans in Sakhalin

As the repatriation of the Japanese worsened the labor shortage and delayed the rebuilding of Sakhalin, the Soviet government placed people from outside Sakhalin into its work force. Over 180,000 people were relocated to Sakhalin from the mainland, and 20,891 North Koreans (26,065 including their families) were brought there between 1946 and 1949. North Korea sent its people to Sakhalin as contract workers, as well as to the Maritime Province and the Kamchatka peninsula, all at the Soviet Union's request.[10]

About 90 percent of the 43,000 Koreans who were forced to move to Sakhalin came from the southern part of the Korean peninsula and, of these, 70 percent originated from the Gyeongsang-do region. Therefore, should they be repatriated, most wanted to go to South Korea. But as their dream of repatriation steadily faded, North Korea established a consulate in Sakhalin and encouraged Koreans there to obtain North Korean nationality. Meanwhile, the Soviet government implemented residence

9. For details as to why they were unable to return home, see Onuma (1992, 21-38).
10. National Folk Museum of Korea (2001, 74-75); Yi S. H. (2002, 225); and Yi J. H. (1997, 275).

registration and spurred the Koreans to obtain either Soviet or North Korean nationality. Consequently, about 10,000 (25% of the total population) Sakhalin Koreans became Soviet citizens, about 28,000 (65 percent) obtained North Korean citizenship, and 4,300 (10 percent) remained without a nationality. The North Korean strategy proved very persuasive, particularly because they had no other hope of going home. Presumably pressured by the Soviet Union to choose either Soviet or North Korean citizenship in the process of residence registration conducted after 1946, many chose North Korea over the Soviet Union, as it was at least a nation sharing the same ethnicity with them. Besides, they most likely would have considered the possibility of going to South Korea in the event of national reunification, combined with the practical consideration of the disadvantages they would suffer if they remained without a nationality.[11]

The Japanese government repatriated the Sakhalin Japanese during a period of two years and eight months from December 1946 to July 1949. However, some did not make it home, including prisoners sentenced by the Soviet military government, technicians possessing skills coveted by the Soviets, and Japanese women married to Korean men. Their repatriation was made possible by the Hatoyama cabinet in October 1956, with the normalization of Soviet Union-Japan relations. A total of 2,345 Japanese returned in seven groups from August 1957 to September 1959. This time once again, Japan omitted Koreans from repatriation, citing the citizenship issue and showing no sense of responsibility. Notably, though, Korean men married to Japanese women and their families were recognized this time as Japanese citizens and returned to Japan. Altogether, they numbered 700.

The repatriation of Korean men married to Japanese women was quite exceptional. According to prewar Japanese law, Japanese women who repatriated in the 1950s did not have Japanese citizenship in legal terms. In the prewar-era family registry system, Japan had both a domestic register and a foreign one. If a Japanese woman married a foreigner, she was listed in the foreign registry. Therefore, if she married a Korean man, she was recorded in the foreign registry and was not considered a Japanese citizen. However, the Japanese government bent the rules and brought them and their families home because of the women's Japanese "blood", not out of any

11. Yi J. H. (1997, 288-289); and Jo (2002, 193-194).

concern for Koreans.[12]

Although some Korean men returned to Japan, most Koreans could not leave Sakhalin. They labored as fishermen and coal miners, as well as timber and paper factory workers. There were many restrictions on the types of jobs they could perform. ~~finding their~~~~the jobs they could choose~~. Those without nationalities were discriminated against all the way up through higher levels of schooling and in the wages they received as workers~~ they received as workers~~. The discrimination and restrictions decreased between 1956 and 1964, but still existed nonetheless. Despite the Soviet government's regulations, Sakhalin Koreans operated schools, newspaper publications, broadcasting, and arts groups in order to maintain Korean culture.[13]

The Repatriation Movement

The Repatriation Movement from Liberation to the 1960s

The issue of the Sakhalin Koreans began to be discussed immediately after Korea's liberation, and then received heavy attention at least three times before the Korea War broke out in 1950. The first instance began when eighteen Korean coal miners filed a petition to the GHQ in December 1945. They had been transferred to mines in mainland Japan in 1944, when the war had been going unfavorably for Japan. When the war ended, they found themselves unable to contact their families in Sakhalin. Realizing the situation Koreans were facing in Sakhalin, the GHQ accepted their pleas to be reunited, and requested the repatriation of their families from the Soviet representative of the Allied Council for Japan in March 1946. The Soviet Union dismissed the request, and the matter did not draw any further consideration.

In October 1947, the Society to Achieve the Early Repatriation of the Sakhalin Koreans, a civil organization based in Seoul, pleaded with General McArthur to discuss the matter with the Soviet Union. Thinking that it could not be overlooked anymore, the

12. Onuma (1992, 41-49).
13. Yi J. H. (1997, 292).

GHQ had plans to make a strong request to the Soviet Union. ~~But~~However, the United States Army Military Government in Korea (hereafter referred to as USAMJIK) had a different opinion. The USAMJIK reported to the GHQ that the economic condition of Korea was so bad, with 1.5 million Koreans coming home from Japan after the war, that the repatriation of Sakhalin Koreans would only make matters worse. Therefore, the GHQ only posed a few formal questions to the Soviet government. When the Soviet government continued to ignore these questions, the GHQ took no further action thereafter.

The matter of the Koreans in Sakhalin was revisited from April to June 1949 through a plea made by the Korean Delegation to Japan. By then, about 290,000 Japanese had come home from Sakhalin, while no Koreans were repatriated, due to Japan's claim that they were not Japanese citizens. As a strategy for dealing with the gridlock, the fledgling Korean government asked the GHQ to act as a mediator for negotiations with the Soviet Union, with which it had not yet established diplomatic relations. The GHQ responded to the request by saying that Korea should discuss the matter with the Soviet Union through mediation by a third country that had diplomatic relations with both countries.[14] This was the same as declaring that the GHQ would not be involved in the matter of the Sakhalin Koreans.

With the breakout of the Korean War in June 1950, the matter of the Sakhalin Koreans failed to capture the attention of the GHQ, Korea, or Japan. ~~But~~Nevertheless, the repatriation issue surrounding the Japanese remaining in Sakhalin was not forgotten. As Japan and the Soviet Union normalized relations in October 1956, Japan rushed to bring home the Japanese in Sakhalin, and a total of 2,345 Japanese returned to their homeland over two years starting from August 1957. As already mentioned, Korean men married to Japanese women came with them as well. On 6 February 1959, Bak No-hak and some twenty others who returned from Sakhalin created the Headquarters of the Federation of Repatriates from Sakhalin (later renamed the Society of Korean Repatriates from Sakhalin, and then, the Society of Korean Residents in Japan Repatriating from Sakhalin). Spurred by their activities, representatives of the Socialist Party brought up the issue of improving the living conditions of Korean repatriates from

14. Committee of Diet Members on the Problem of the Sakhalin Koreans (1994, 453-464); Onuma (1992, 28-38).

Sakhalin to the Diet of Japan, but within the atmosphere of strong discrimination against Koreans in Japan, the Japanese government maintained the line that it had nothing to do with it.

Despite the high level of discrimination against Koreans, Bak No-hak and his group led the repatriation movement by scraping together support from the South Korean government and the pro-Seoul Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan). Receiving their petitions to address the matter at the government level, the Korean government requested the cooperation of its Japanese counterpart for the first time in 1959. However, the Japanese government could not afford to give much attention to the matter at the time and responded without much interest. Bak and others joined Mindan and received financial support from it, while also retaining contacts with Japanese assemblymen by using Mindan's networks.[15]

Civilian-led Repatriation Movement after the Normalization of Korea-Japan Relations

The ROK-Japan Basic Relations Treaty was signed in June 1965. With the increased exchange between the two countries, the repatriation movement, that had until then been confined to Japan, began to spread. The Society to Promote the Repatriation of Koreans Detained in Sakhalin was formed in Korea in December 1970. The Society, which was formed by the families of the Sakhalin Koreans, collaborated with the repatriation movement in Japan.[16] When a list of Koreans remaining in Sakhalin was made in 1966, 6,924 people in 1,744 households were known to be holding out hope of coming home. Bak No-hak and his group repeatedly raised the issue of the Sakhalin Koreans to Japanese assemblymen, and Korean representatives also asked Japanese assemblymen to help resolve the issue. Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei said in the report to the Diet in July 1972 that the government should approach the matter from a humanitarian perspective, the Sakhalin Koreans should be repatriated to South Korea via Japan, and South Korea should pay all the expenses. This was a sign of his lack of interest in the matter as well as of Japan's evasion of responsibility for the results of its

15. Onuma (1992, 41-51; 57-59).
16. Committee of Diet Members on the Problem of the Sakhalin Koreans (1994, 721); Onuma (1992, 83-84).

own policies, seeming to treat it as somebody else's problem. In fact, this was the core of Japan's policy towards the Sakhalin Koreans in the 1970s.[17] Still, during that time, some Koreans made it home from Sakhalin on several occasions.

Tanaka visited the Soviet Union in October 1973 and talked with the Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Leonid Breznev. During his visit, he strongly urged the Soviet Union to resolve the repatriation issue of the Sakhalin Koreans. Tanaka had been repeatedly asked by Japanese and Korean representatives for a resolution to the proliferation of the repatriation movement. ~~But~~However, the Soviet Union had no choice but to ignore this request, due to opposition from North Korea. North Korea issued a statement strongly criticizing Japan's demand for repatriation of the Sakhalin Koreans in the *Rodong sinmun* right after these talks between Japan and the Soviet Union.[18] Until the 1980s, North Korea regarded South Korea as a mere puppet regime of the United States. It opposed repatriation, thinking that if most of the Sakhalin Koreans went to South Korea, its own legitimacy could be damaged; the Soviet Union did feel some pressure from North Korea's reaction.

Bak No-hak and others acutely felt the limitations of the repatriation movement based on their relationship with Japanese assemblymen, established via the interpersonal networks of Mindan, and tried to find a new strategy to turn it around. Through connections with Mihara Rei~~(full name을 부탁드립니다)~~, a central figure in various social movements at the time, the repatriation movement spurred the participation of many women, resulting in the creation of women's organizations. In cooperation with Korean organizations, they publicly sent a questionnaire regarding the treatment of Sakhalin Koreans to all Japanese political parties in May 1974. The parties' responses contained no concrete answers. Realizing this issue could not be resolved through that legislative body, they contacted Japanese lawyers and formed a committee to file lawsuits on behalf of the Sakhalin Koreans in May 1975. After receiving legal affidavits authorizing the delegation of lawsuits from the Sakhalin Koreans wanting to go home, twenty-one lawyers (including Takaki Kenichi~~(full name을 부탁드립니다)~~) filed a "lawsuit to repatriate people remaining in Sakhalin" with the Civil Suit Division

17. Onuma (1992, 92-94).
18. Jo (2002, 192-195).

3 of the Tokyo Regional Court on 1 December 1975. They tried to capture the attention of the ~~general public~~general public through advertisements and movies, while attempting to persuade the assemblymen to direct the Japanese government's attention to the Sakhalin issue. As a result of these activities, they obtained 2,000 travel certificates from the government in August 1975. ~~But~~However, this proved to be a merely nominal move by the Japanese government without sincere intentions, as the Soviet government withheld travel permission, claiming this was a matter between the Soviet Union and North Korea. The lawsuits stirred up controversy, due in part to the Korean government's arrest and torture of then-political dissident Kim Dae-jung on trumped up conspiracy charges in 1980~~(이 부분의 번역이 타당한지 확인해주시기 바랍니다). The attention on the lawsuits grew worse because of a conspiracy of Kim Dae-joong`s rebellion and a split in the movement camp.~~ Moreover, the Sakhalin issue received less attention, as Japan-Soviet relations had reached its worst point since the establishment of bilateral relations.[19] The trials continued for almost 15 years, until they were dropped in June 1989.

Shift from a Civilian-led to a Government-led Movement

After November 1981, some Sakhalin Koreans made temporary visits to their homeland on several occasions for family reunions. The repatriation movement, which had been sluggish for several years, obtained a new impetus with the creation of "People Thinking of Japan's Responsibility for Asia in the Postwar Era" in April 1983, represented by Onuma Yasuaki. The goal of the organization was to improve Japan's relations with other Asian countries by taking responsibility for issues originating from colonial rule that were still relevant in the post-war era, including the repatriation of Sakhalin Koreans. They engaged in many activities, including holding an international symposium on the repatriation of Sakhalin Koreans in 1984. Their efforts continued even after Japan-Soviet relations soured following the shooting down of a Korean Airline passenger plane in September 1983.[20]

A new turning point for the repatriation movement was reached when Japanese

19. Onuma (1992, 111-137).

politicians began expressing an active interest in the subject. The Committee of Diet Members on the Problem of Koreans in Sakhalin was formed in July 1987, and approximately 170 Japanese members in the House of Representatives and the House of Councilors joined it. The committee intended to examine the status of Koreans remaining in Sakhalin and effect their repatriation and the reunion of separated families.[21] A delegation of representatives visited Moscow and Sakhalin in order to negotiate for a resolution of the long-standing issue. After 1987, 50 Koreans in Sakhalin went to Japan as temporary visitors to meet their families from Korea. It would not be difficult to say that the Soviet *perestroika* policy had a significant influence on this. Their homecoming and permanent repatriation to Korea was finally realized in 1988. In 1989, around 60 people visited Korea in two sessions. The next year, 1,700 made temporary trips to Korea for family reunions. The number of permanent returnees numbered 24 in 1989 and 30 in 1990. The civilian-led repatriation movement had grown to include governments and the Red Cross. This was attested to by the fact that the Japanese government allotted a special budget to resolve the issue of the Sakhalin Koreans, and the governments of Korea and Japan, along with the Korean Red Cross and Japanese Red Cross, were directly involved in the process of repatriation. In February 1991, the Japanese government approved the rights of the Sakhalin Koreans to request compensation.

It appears that the Korean government did not have any specific policy towards the Sakhalin Koreans until the 1980s. If a civilian or a non-governmental organization filed a petition, the government's response was that it had already asked the Japanese government for cooperation, with the Japanese government then sidestepping the issue through negotiations with the Soviet Union.[22] This was because the Korean government could not afford to take an apparent interest in the Sakhalin Koreans and because of differing perspectives between Korea and Japan. The Korean government made strategic use of the existence of the Sakhalin Koreans for a considerable ~~period of time~~period of time. Having neither the capacity nor the will to ~~actively~~ resolve the matter, the government approached it as a tool for system maintenance. Once assisted

20. Onuma (1992, 143-171).
21. Committee of Diet Members on the Problem of the Sakhalin Koreans (1994, 588-589).
22. Onuma (1992, 57-71).

by the growth of the Korean economy, the involvement of Japanese assemblymen, and the Soviet *perestroika* policy in the second half of the 1980s, the Korean government finally gave proper consideration to the issue of the Sakhalin Koreans, albeit belatedly.

Korean-Soviet relations improved, thanks to the atmosphere of international reconciliation after the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988 and the establishment of Korea's diplomatic channels with Eastern Europe. The two countries established normal diplomatic relations in October 1990. The Korean government pushed for the return of the Sakhalin Koreans with the ultimate goal of permanent repatriation to Korea, while insisting that the expenses incurred for their return be borne by Japan. Meanwhile, the Japanese government insisted that the Sakhalin residents would go to Korea, but that the financial burden should come from the Korean government. Neither country ~~seemed to~~seemed to want to assume any responsibility, and both maintained a lukewarm attitude towards the issue. In August 1993, the Hosokawa Morihiro cabinet was formed in Japan. At the Korea-Japan summit talks held in Gyeongju in November 1993, Korean President Kim Young-sam and Japanese Prime Minister Hosokawa promised to increase their support for the return of the Sakhalin Koreans. Thereafter, working-level meetings were held between Korea and Japan, as were diplomatic negotiations between Korea and Russia, and Japan and Russia. Thanks to all these efforts, the permanent repatriation of the Sakhalin Koreans was realized at last.[23]

Conclusion

Imperial Japan mobilized Korean people as soldiers, workers, and comfort women after the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937. Approximately 150,000 Koreans were forcibly conscripted to work as coal miners in Sakhalin from the second half of the 1930s until liberation in 1945, after which 43,000 remained, detained in Sakhalin because of the Japanese government's irresponsible actions, combined with the Soviet interest in securing a cheap labor force. Only a small number who were married to Japanese women were able to return in the 1950s.

23. Kang (2001).

Due to the indifference of Japan and the Soviet Union, the civilian-led repatriation movement that began in the late 1950s did not bear fruit. In the 1970s, the Japanese government began to show interest in the issue of the Sakhalin Koreans on a humanitarian level, but avoided taking any responsibility. The South Korean government could not afford to pay attention to the issue for economic reasons, while the North Korean government approached it from the standpoint of maintaining their regime. The Soviet government maintained a passive, lukewarm attitude toward the matter after postwar reconstruction had reached a certain level. In this sense, the problem of the Sakhalin Koreans can be best explained vis-à-vis the dynamic relations between the two Koreas, the Soviet Union, and Japan during the Cold War.

The repatriation movement was transformed from a civilian to a government-led one during the second half of the 1980s. The actions of Japanese politicians, along with the Soviet *perestroika* policy, provided the necessary momentum required to resolve the problem. ~~After~~ ~~From the time~~From the time ~~–~~the first group finally set foot in their homeland for family reunions around 1990, the stream of homecomings continued. With it, the number of permanent settlers increased as well.

As of the end of 2000, 1,352 Sakhalin Koreans have returned. They live in government-funded group quarters and settlement villages located in Seoul, Chuncheon, Incheon, Ansan, and Goryeong,~~,~~ especially a~~A~~round 920 of them live in Ansan. ~~and are over 70 years of age.~~ Some even went back to Sakhalin,~~,~~ as ~~they,~~ most of them~~whom~~ were over 70 years old~~,~~ and~~were~~ unable to adjust to life in South Korea. Now, the Sakhalin Koreans repatriation movement should~~must~~ focus on ~~the problems they are now facing~~ their lives after having returned home.

REFERENCES

Committee of Diet Members on the Problem of the Sakhalin Koreans in Japan ~~(~~サハリン残留韓國・朝鮮人問題議員懇談會~~)~~, ed. 1994.『サハリン残留韓國・朝鮮人問題と日本の政治』(The Problems of the Sakhalin Koreans and Japanese Politics). Translated by the Asiatic Research Institute (Korea University) under the title

Sahallin jallyu hanguk joseonin munje-wa ilbon-ui jeongchi (Seoul: Korea University Press, 1994).

Jang, Min-gu, ed. 1976. *Sahallin-eseo on pyeonji* (Letters from Sakhalin). Seoul: Korean Broadcasting System.

Jo, Jeong-nam. 2002. "Bukhan-ui sahallin hanin jeongchaek" (North Korea's Policy towards Sakhalin Koreans). *Minjok yeongu* (Study of Ethnology) 8.

Kang, Jeong-ha. 2001. "Sahallin jallyu hanin-ui yeonggu gwiguk-eul dulleossan han-il-reo gyoseop gwajeong yeongu" (A Study of the Negotiatory Process Concerning the Permanent Repatriation of Sakhalin Koreans). Master's thesis, Hallym University.

Kim, Min-yeong. 1995. *Ilje-ui joseonin nodongnyeok sutal yeongu* (A Study of the Exploitation of Korean Laborers by the Japanese during Colonial Rule). Seoul: Hanul.

———. 2000. "Sahallin hanin-ui iju-wa nodong: 1939-1945" (The Sakhalin Koreans' Relocation and Labor : 1939-1945). *Gukje jiyeok yeongu* (Journal of International Area Studies) 4.1.

Kwon, Hui-yeong. 1996. *Segye-ui hanminjok* (Koreans in the World). Seoul: Ministry of Unification.

Ministry of Justice, Republic of Korea. 1986. *Sahallin gyopo-ui hyeonhwang-gwa beopjeok jiwi* (The Current Situation of the Sakhalin Koreans and their Legal Status). Seoul: Ministry of Justice.

National Folk Museum of Korea. 2001. *Reosia sahallin yeonhaeju hanin dongpo-ui saenghwal munhwa* (The Culture of Daily Life of Koreans in Sakhalin and the Maritime Province, Russia). Seoul: National Folk Museum of Korea.

Onuma, Yasuaki (大沼保昭). 1992. 『サハリン棄民: 戦後責任の点景』 (The Historical Background of Those Responsible for the Abandoned People in Sakhalin after World War II). Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha(맞는 표기입니까?). Translated by Yi Jung-won under the title *Sahallin-e beoryeojin saramdeul* (Seoul: Cheonggye Research Institute, 1993).

Yi, Gwang-gyu, and Jeon Gyeong-su. 1993. *Jaeso hanin* (Koreans in the Soviet Union).

Seoul: Jipmoondang.

Yi, Jeong-hui. 1997. "Reosia sahallinju hanin-ui siltae yeongu" (A Study on the Status of Koreans in Sakhalin, Russia). *Yeongnam jeongchi hakhoebo* (Bulletin of the Yeongnam Political Science Association) 7.

Yi, Seong-hwan. 2002. "Sahallin hanin munje-e gwanhan seoronjeok gochal" (Introductory Notes on the Problem of the Sakhalin Koreans). *Gukjehak nonchong* (Collection of Papers on International Studies) 7.

Yi, Sun-hyeong. 2004. *Sahallin gwihwanja* (Repatriates from Sakhalin). Seoul: Seoul National University Press.