

Internationalist Culture in North Korea, 1945-1950

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In the period from 1945-1950, North Korean elites were indeed oriented toward the Soviet Union, but they also followed developments in Asia with a sophistication that is too rarely acknowledged in histories. This article uses North Korean foreign affairs publications, political cartoons, and captured government documents from the Korean War to argue that during the “liberation” period prior to June 25, 1950, the North Korean people were attuned to world politics and developments in Northeast Asia in particular. Case studies are made of North Korean perceptions of U.S.-occupied Japan and the Chinese civil war. The paper is intended to clear the way for more objective discussion of the historical stereotype of the DPRK as a state perpetually mired in isolation.

Keywords: internationalism, propaganda, foreign relations, Sino-North Korean relations

Introduction

North Korea’s estrangement from the United States, combined with its unusual interpretation of socialism, has exercised a strong influence upon perceptions of the state as one hopelessly isolated from the international community. North Korea’s isolationism has been variously attributed to the forces of Korean tradition, Japanese colonialism, the trauma of the Korean War, de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union, and the collapse of global communism (Cumings 2004; Person 2008; Lankov 2005; Shapiro Zacek 1998; Scobell 2004; Kim 2007). And, although showing slight signs of opening up in recent years, North Korea largely remains on the periphery of the international system (McCormack 2006:487-511).

Yet was the DPRK always isolated? In regard to this question, it is of value to examine the period from 1945-1950, an era of construction when the cornerstones of North Korean national identity were laid. North Korean media and personal encounters with neighboring states in this period demonstrate that North Korea in fact engaged and interpreted the globe with some regularity and enthusiasm. In the aftermath of liberation in 1945, North Koreans remained conscious of developments not only in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but also in Japan and China. This article examines North Korea's encounters with, and perceptions of, its neighbors and the world at large, arguing for consideration of internationalization as a significant component of North Korean state construction and early national identity formation.

To the extent that scholars *do* depict North Korea as an internationally-oriented state after 1945, analysts tend to focus on the Soviet Union as the foremost sculptor of North Korean institutions and outlook. Although not wrapped in the same State Department terminology used in the late 1940s (Muccio 1948; *Newsweek*, March 11, 1946:49-50) scholars with Russian or Eastern European expertise such as Andrei Lankov or Balázs Szalontai similarly attribute North Korean state formation wholly to the Soviet Union. Although noting some of the DPRK's "local specifics," Lankov refers to the DPRK as hardly different from the Eastern satellite states (Lankov 2005:7-9). Szalontai, using trade-related data, goes further to assert that North Korea was an isolated state even within the Soviet bloc (with the obvious exception of Soviet Russia) (Szalontai 2004:87).

Images of Soviet power were of course prevalent after 1945, but in reality these perceptions coexisted with, and were often overshadowed by, Korean images of Northeast Asia (Miller 2006; H. Kim 2006). Lankov, accordingly, could not help but concede that a more Sino-centric narrative could one day challenge his own Soviet-oriented interpretation of early North Korean history (Lankov 2005: x-xi). Indeed, several scholars have already picked up on the Chinese theme to argue against Soviet dominance, notably Bruce Cumings. These discussions, however, have been limited in scope and have primarily advanced interpretations which involve the military connection between North Korea and China (Kim, forthcoming; D. Kim 2006:103-14; Westad 2003:318-22; Chen 1994:106-13; Cumings 1990: chapter 11). This article suggests an outline of human and cultural contacts that existed between North Korea and its Asian neighbors, and attempts to answer Lankov's call for new interpretations of the DPRK's history that delve into the social, cultural, and intellectual realms (Lankov 2005:6). This research shows how the increasingly successful commu-

nist revolution in China played a significant role in shaping North Korean views of East Asia, and peninsular affairs, both because of people-to-people contacts with China and media coverage of events there. In the same period, North Korean views of Japan underwent substantial change, extending well beyond reflexive nationalism in the postwar years. While the narrative of wartime anti-Japanese resistance grew substantially after 1945, North Koreans also expressed a desire to see communist revolution prevail in postwar Japan. Finally, previously neglected publications by, and rare documents about, the DPRK Foreign Ministry's young personnel indicate that North Korea's internationalization in its early years was more comprehensive than is often admitted.

Documentation on North Korea's international outlook in the period is plentiful. This is particularly true in the materials captured by the United States during Kim Il Sung's "temporary strategic retreat" in autumn 1950 and the correspondingly brief U.S. occupation of the North (National Archives and Records Administration, RG242; DPRK History Institute 1989:7; Ra 2005:521-46; U.S. Department of State 1950:835-7). Although several researchers have tapped into these documents and lent sinew to studies of North Korean society during the seminal years of the Cold War, the sheer expansiveness of the documents prevents any single scholar from exploiting the entire richness of the archive (Armstrong 2003). Host to an abundance of cultural artifacts, the captured documents depict the rapid spread of internationalism in North Korea. While the materials are also weighted with clear depictions of Soviet power in North Korea, they do show that North Korea's internationalism rivaled, and placed limits upon, Soviet influence. Combined with other documents, such as those produced by the Soviet military government in North Korea from 1945-1948, North Korea's internationalism becomes even more apparent, revealing that even the Soviet Union was keen to pander to North Korea's international interests. Using the perspectives available in the captured documents, Russian archival sources, and Chinese and Korean documents and scholarship, this article aims to bring to the fore new aspects of North Korean culture in the years after liberation from Japan.

Finally, why focus on the period of 1945-1950? What did it mean for North Korea to take an "internationalist approach" during this pre-war period? Viewing this period as one of national identity construction, our research shows that reflexive nationalism was not perhaps as strong as some would imagine it to be prior to the Korean War. Studying the period prior to the Korean War indicates that, for the elite at least, the absence of wartime pressures allowed for

more outward-looking tendencies among North Korean citizens. Examination of the period prior to 1950 also allows for a look at North Korea prior to the exponential growth of the suffocating personality cult. Most importantly, understanding this period lays the foundation for further studies of North Korean attitudes toward, and entanglement with, China in the period of closest cultural contact with the PRC — the years from 1953 to 1958, which collectively remain one of the least-researched areas of North Korean history. Moreover, the study occupies a time frame wherein East Asia itself was changing with great rapidity, and North Korean perspectives on these changes deserve to be examined. It is hoped that future research might explore relations with North Korea from the Chinese and Japanese perspectives, as this would aid in revising the historiography from those perspectives as well. This period is indeed crucial in explaining North Korea's conception of its role within East Asia as well as on the international stage.

Looking Elsewhere: Sources of Information

Who were the North Korean intelligentsia, and from which sources of information did they assemble their perspectives on global politics after 1945? Biographies of North Korean Foreign Ministry personnel reveal cadre with backgrounds of exile in Manchuria, or, more often, study in Japan. A smaller number appear to have been raised and educated wholly in Korea (Personal histories of staff members in the Western European Section of the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NARA, RG 242, SA2005, 8/15, July 18 1947). Leonid Petrov argues that young North Korean scholars in particular were striving to reconcile their burgeoning Korean nationalism with more traditionally Marxist ideas of internationalism (Petrov 2006:102-4; Myers 1994). Similarly, for Foreign Ministry cadre and other educated elites, ideologies may have been nationalistic, but their experiences had been international. The North Korean intelligentsia's international focus was transformed in the wake of Japan's defeat when Korea was flooded with returning colonial elites from abroad and intellectuals migrating from the South (Armstrong 2003:167). These individuals were at the forefront of the struggle between nationalistic currents and North Korea's interest in, and need for aid from, the socialist allies in Asia and Europe. These men and women, particularly those in the Foreign Ministry, would find ways in the period prior to Kim Il Sung's famous 1955 declaration of self-reliance, or

juche, to reach out to the world beyond North Korea's borders.

At the disposal of literate North Koreans were two or three papers published by the Communist (subsequently the Workers') Party, radio from both Koreas, and word of mouth from the various streams of Japanese and Koreans flowing into and out of Korea. It can be seen that for the literate classes and those who aspired to North Korean elite status, political magazines were among the best sources of foreign news. *Tongsin* and *Buk Joseon Tongsin* (*Information* and *North Korea Information*, respectively) were widely available digests of global news. Although much of the material was derivative of Soviet TASS news agency dispatches, these publications were regular sights on newsstands and staples in regime-sponsored "reading rooms" in 1947 (*Tongsin*, 1947; *Buk Tongsin*, 1947). In the early months of communist rule, alternate newspapers were published for North Korean readers in cities like Sinuiju (H. Kim 2006). Even after divergent publications were shut down or absorbed by the communist regime, both the Soviets and Kim Il Sung criticized instances of excessive latitude taken by North Korean newspapers, making somewhat liberal interpretations of world events more likely (Grafov 1945). North Korean citizens also attuned themselves to international ideas through daily radio programs which gave listeners passing knowledge of world history, culture, and politics (Strong

Figure 1 Chang Pacha, "Celebrating North Korea's 'August 15,'" *Joseon*, September 1947, n.p.



1949:13). Koreans in border areas had even greater access to information not sponsored by the North Koreans or the Soviets. Additionally, almost 100,000 Chinese resided in North Korea as conduits for news from China (Yonbyon Munhwa, 1948 and 1949; Armstrong 2003:172; List of Resident Chinese in Uiju-gun, Pyongan Pukto, NARA RG242, SA2005, 9/1). Repatriates from Japan, traders along the Chinese border, Korean laborers in the Soviet-occupied port city of Dalian, and ever-present foreign missionaries all brought the world into North Korea after 1945. Using the available sources, it is possible to better understand popular North Korean views of the international community.

The Koreans in the foreground of the image read a *Rodong Simmun* newspaper headlined “International News,” showing how propaganda was intended to stimulate both national and international consciousness (Inmin, August 25, 1948). Interestingly, North Korean celebrations of the liberation anniversary of August 15 made no attempt to distance Korea from its ostensible international adversaries; rather, independence spurred North Korea to embrace an internationalism that overflowed the brotherhood of socialism. In every panel of Figure 1, the national flag (which ultimately represented the Republic of Korea, but before 1948 was used by both Koreas) is situated among the flags of many other nations, depicting North Korea’s value to and place within the pantheon of nations. Of particular interest is the inclusion of the Republic of China and the United States, both represented by national flags and archetypal citizens, in the Allied countries (Ko 2007). The cartoon’s portrayal of a physical monument centering upon international socialist allies was literal, reflecting the emphasis of monuments constructed in Pyongyang in the liberation period (Lee 2007:155).

The emphasis on non-Asian allies would have been understood by members of the European section of the DPRK’s nascent Foreign Ministry. Yi Anghyok (李昂赫 / 이양혁), a nineteen-year old and one of the youngest applicants to the Foreign Ministry in 1948, had rapidly aimed himself at the study of Europe in order to serve contacts with North Korea’s new proletarian brother states. A native of Hamhung, Korea, he had stayed in his hometown for the duration of the Pacific War and appeared to have gone to Pyongyang for the very first time only on May 5, 1947, to take up his post with the Foreign Ministry. Hamhung was a major center and the administrative center of South Hamgyong province, and Yi had been able to study Hungarian via an intensive six-month study course in the fall of 1945 and spring of 1946. He ended up teaching the language at the same institution a few months later. His parents were merchants, and he

himself had done trade before and after the war.¹ Applicants like Yi were engaged in the study of Europe in a way that was no longer filtered through Japanese colonial perspectives. Yi's file certainly confirms Charles Armstrong's assertions of the primacy in youth in the government appointments during the "North Korean revolution," but it also shows the extent to which the youth could rapidly serve as instruments of internationalization toward the West. It is also worth noting that Soviet knowledge, libraries, translations, and so on, functioned as a world-view or aperture through which smaller "satellite states" could gain greater understanding of one another, as suggested in the work of Balaczs Szlaontai. If Yi in fact survived the Korean War and grew to the age of thirty in his hometown of Hamhung, his European-oriented internationalism would have been valuable as a means of guiding the hundreds of East German engineers who arrived in that city after 1953 to aid in restoring North Korea's industrial capacity (Schaefer 2004; Frank 1996).

Viewing Japan

While the above depiction of August 15 was teeming with personifications of foreign nations, the country defeated on August 15 remained omitted from the tableaux. Japan was never far removed from the Korean psyche after 1945. In the years from 1945-1950, North Korea engaged in a full panoply of rhetoric—visual, written, and musical—to solidify the state's anti-Japanese identity (Cathcart 2008a: 97-8). The Soviet Union certainly grasped the potency of anti-Japanese sentiment as an implement in its occupation of Korea. Postwar radio broadcasts by Red Army propagandists reminded Koreans of Japan's exploitation of Korea, while others emphasized the cleansing of Japanese influence via Soviet instituted reforms (Red Army 1945b, 1945c). The use of anti-Japanese sentiment was a critical means used by the Soviets in introducing their rule to the Korean people, validated by pointing to American continuities in using Japanese administration in the southern zone of occupation. But North Korea's interest in Japan extended beyond cleansing the peninsula of Japanese style

1. Although the records are not clear on this point, it is quite likely that as a sixteen year old son, he was probably working for his parent's business. He would have been listed as a small capitalist but for his "student" status (Personal History of Yi Anghyok, Cadre Bureau of North Korean Foreign Ministry, NARA, RG 242, SA 2005, 8/15.2, file no. 2).

Figure 2 NARA, RG242, SA2008, 9/28, *Tiger*,



Pyongyang: Manhwa Magazine Co, January 31, 1948.

institutions and celebrating Korea’s independence struggle. Rather, North Korea’s globalized outlook sought to find allies within Japanese society and to transform Japan’s political and social systems (Morris-Suzuki 2007; Eiji 2002).

Figure 2 is a fine example of the Pyongyang regime’s drive to turn North Korean attention toward Japan, stimulating nationalism by channeling anti-Japanese sentiment and recollections of the horrors of Japanese rule.

The text accompanying the cartoon quotes a statement made at a conference by a “San Francisco university professor” asserting that the United States “should make Japan rearm completely and assert control over Joseon [North Korea] in the United Nations.” Readers of the caption were urged to see the remarks “not as a professor’s address but [as] a leading imperialist’s audacity.” The policies of the United States in Japan were linked explicitly to American foreign policy toward North Korea.

Japan’s aggressive past was remembered in other forms outside comic art, leaving the more literate individuals written and published research to mull over. Japanese war crimes, including those occurring far outside the reaches of the Korean Peninsula, were a popular topic for study groups. North Koreans paid particular attention to war crimes trials held in Tokyo. However, smaller series of trials in the Philippines, Singapore, China, Saigon, and Australia also drew

the interest of Korean readers and augmented discussions of the future of Japanese militarism (Pamphlet on International Military Trials in Asia, NARA RG 242, SA 2008, 8/17, 1949). North Koreans' interest in war crimes later extended to Soviet trials of Japanese involved with bacteriological weapons and highlighted the inhumane aspects of such weapons that had been used by Japan just across their northern border (and perhaps even influencing their own bacteriological weapons claims which they would levy upon the United States during the Korean War). The results and aftermath of these trials led Koreans to speculate whether Japan would fundamentally change its behavior, or revert back to old ways. Chongryon, or Korean residents in Japan, played an important role in adding depth to this issue, agitating as they were for greater justice and equality in the US-administered legal system in Japan (Joseon chungang yeon-gam 1949:365-7). Developments in Japan were frequently filtered back to North Korea through perspectives on legal action to bring about change. Knowledge of the U.S. occupation of Japan was driven home in various ways.

One of the most tangible forms of contact with postwar Japanese society was through the Japanese who remained in North Korea after 1945. The Soviet Red Army inherited administration of 2,300,000 Japanese north of the 38th parallel in 1945, and repatriation of this large group, totaling nearly one-fifth of the total population of the people in the Soviet occupation zone, was not entirely rapid (Red Army 1945a). Some Japanese stayed on as technicians in North Korean factories, a need particularly embraced by the Soviets with regard to coal production (Red Army 1945b). Given that small numbers of Japanese across the border in China would join the Chinese Communist Party, and even work as professors at the Korean-dominated Yanbian University after 1950, it seems logical that at least a handful of Japanese intellectuals and technicians had ongoing contacts within the Korean Workers Party. Work by North Korean students in East Germany would later acknowledge in friendly fashion the aid rendered to the North Korean revolution by Japanese technicians who were well-disposed toward socialism (Cathcart 2008b).

While North Korean media remained vigilant toward a resurgence of Japanese militarism, stories and cartoons about Japan also encouraged revolution and expressed support for Japanese communists. Dissatisfaction with the United States' unilateral occupation of Japan led to a changed mode of anti-Japanese sentiment, particularly after the establishment of the DPRK in 1948 (Joseon chungang yeon-gam 1949:166). Revolution was posed as the solution to Japan's aggressive tendencies (Deverall 1952). Charles Armstrong describes a

Figure 3 NARA, RG242, SA2007, 10/19, *Hwasal*



Pyongyang: Korean Cartoon Publishing House, February 15, 1949.

scene of jubilation in Chongjin in the immediate aftermath of liberation when workers crowded the city’s docks to demonstrate in favor of communist revolution in Japan (Armstrong 2003:64). The dialectic in North Korean propaganda between an aggressive and hopelessly revanchist Japan (aided by the evil Americans) and the powerful and friendly group of Japanese-Korean proletariat can be seen in the selected images. One particular North Korean periodical, *The Arrow* (*Hwasal*), attracted attention to the United States’ occupation of Japan with much vigor and resentment. Figure 3 displays this well.

Demanding retribution for Japanese war criminals, to the right of the worker’s waist, the text reads: “Overthrow American Imperialism’s Emperor System.” Not all Japanese were enemies to the Korean people, however, as indicated by the daunting red worker. The worker represents the “Japanese Communist Party.”² The two men on chains, marked “Yoshida” (in tuxedo, on

the right, the Japanese Prime Minister) and a policeman, are groveling in fear at the power of the Japanese left. The remainder of the text in the cartoon reads “Red Flag” and “Increase the Power of Japanese Democracy” (Hwasal, 1949:15). To North Koreans, the presence of a Communist Party in Japan remained potent in that it suggested that a return to Japanese militarism could be stopped with the help of revolutionary Japanese comrades.³ Beneath even the most gruesome anti-Japanese imagery, there lay a clear assumption that revamping Japan’s political hierarchy was an absolute necessity. The perception of American laxity toward Japanese conservatism, in this respect, stimulated Party artists to fervently attack Japan’s perceived return to wartime principles, while at the same time promoting positive views of the Japanese left.

North Korean Foreign Ministry personnel files indicate some of the intense experiences had by cadre earlier in Japan itself. Kim Sangjae (金尚洁), like many Koreans of his generation, had deep experience with Japan. He differed, however, in that he had engaged in a somewhat elite Japanese education. In Japan, he had studied both Japanese and English (he also spoke Chinese, although he had never been to Manchuria). Even Foreign Ministry cadre who had grown up and were educated in Manchuria had taken a year to study in Japan during the war; Hwang Wangkyon (黄王均) was one such individual whose experiences in Japan surely stayed with him through his time after 1945 on the fringes of the battlefields of China’s civil war. Another Foreign Ministry candidate, surnamed Su, had spent eighteen months in a middle school in Tokyo, returning to his native city of Chongjin. Su may well have been one of those workers that Armstrong described on the docks after the war demonstrating for Japanese revolution, for he proudly listed himself as having organized an autonomous *poandae* in August and September of 1945 (Personnel Files, Cadre Bureau of North Korean Foreign Ministry, NARA RG 242, SA 2005, 8/15.2, file no. 8).

2. The blue pencil on the face of the Japanese communist likely indicates the distaste of American censors or U.S.-employed South Koreans who helped the U.S. analyze the magazines soon after their capture by the U.S. Army during the Korean War.

3. See Shin 2000. For an example of cultural exchange between North Korea and the Japanese Communist Party, see RG 242, General Headquarters, Far East Command, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (hereafter, ATIS), *Enemy Documents: Korean Operations*, No. 16, Item no. 39, *We Accuse the Yoshida Government*. This book was printed by the Communist Party of Japan in English in 1949, although it was shipped off to Korea at some point and recovered by U.S. forces in November of 1950.

Perceptions of China in the Period of Civil War

The convergence of the Chinese civil war with the building of the North Korean state has never been adequately explained. Recent and emerging scholarship chronicles how the DPRK government committed material resources, provided a solid rear area to the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP), and eventually arranged for the return of Korean soldiers fighting in China (Kim, forthcoming; D. Kim 2006; Westad 2003:318-22; Chen 1994:106-13; Cumings 1990: chapter 11). This section of the article seeks to illustrate the type of awareness present in North Korean media about the situation in China, and to show a few of the human contacts between the two countries in the period under study. The Chinese civil war was a topic that received much attention from organizations and study groups and thorough analysis for interested readers. While the Soviets were seen as Korea's great partner in preventing a Japanese revival, another growing continental communist party could also be instrumental in the task. The CCP victories and consolidation of Northeast China in 1948 played a significant role in securing North Korea's domestic and international outlook. China's civil war - and the reluctance of the U.S. to intervene in the conflict - greatly bolstered Kim Il Sung's confidence. Much was to be learned and cultivated from the CCP during the DPRK's formative years in state socialism. North Koreans could study how Mao and his generals had defeated Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists, consolidated power throughout the country, and other topics that could be applied to North Korea's intentions to communize South Korea (File Concerning Establishment of Chinese People's Republic, NARA RG242, SA2009, 1/107, 1950). The Chinese Civil War was an increasingly attractive topic to publish for government organs and publication houses, who were eager to publish news coming from the front and to denigrate the Guomindang, Chiang Kai-shek, and, when possible, the United States (File on the Situation in China, NARA RG242, SA2005, 2/50, 1949).

Joseon chungang yeon-gam (Yearbook of Korea 1949) is an excellent means by which to gauge official North Korean views of China. Published in Pyongyang, the text is a long compendium of sources that includes up-to-date information and news about the entire globe, including the Arabian Peninsula, South Asia, and South and North America. While the document reveals that North Korean descriptions of the Chinese Civil War were detailed and critical, it also clarifies the limits of public discourse on problems in China (*Joseon chungang yeon-gam* 1949:278-81). The Korean Workers' Party, following CCP

rather than the more moderate Soviet precedent, ascribed responsibility for the Chinese civil war purely to the Guomindang (Joseon chungang yeon-gam 1949:279). In an early speech, Kim stated as much: “In Asia too, the Chiang Kai-shek clique of China, at the instigation of the American reactionaries, triggered off civil war against the democratic forces, with the result that even now, over one year after the Second World War ended, the Chinese people are suffering from the war” (Kim 1946a:429-30). North Korean writing about U.S. support of the Guomindang always put the term “aid” (支援) in quotation marks, casting aspersions upon American motives (Joseon chungang yeon-gam 1949:290). The military stages of the war were followed carefully in North Korea and compiled in a year-by-year analysis which highlighted action in Andong, China’s twin city to the Yalu River border town of Sinuiju (Joseon chungang yeon-gam 1949:298).

North Korean editors paid particular attention to Guomindang treaties with the USSR in 1945 (Joseon chungang yeon-gam 1949:281-3). The meticulous care taken in describing these treaties might have reflected the DPRK’s own impending and ever-present need to negotiate in similar fashion with the Soviet Union. It follows that the North Koreans would have been very curious about what the Russians were asking for in China, as demands of Beijing might be indicative of the Soviet endgame in Korea. Would it be sufficient, for instance, to cede the railroads and a few ports to the Soviets? Korea had to do neither, for the Soviets had already extracted their pound of flesh from the Chinese; the leased harbor at Lüshun obviated any drive for permanent Soviet privileges in such attractive harbors as Wonson or Chongjin (Shen 2000:44-68).

While treaties being negotiated for China were of interest, North Korean readers also received detailed analysis of certain sectors of Chinese society. North Korean writers paid close attention to domestic political developments on the Chinese mainland, and were especially well attuned to the various student movements in Chinese cities. North Korean compilers analyzed the reasons behind the January 26, 1946 student protests in Chongqing as originating in a protest due to a “lack of peace” (Joseon chungang yeon-gam 1949:292). Coverage of these protests is doubly surprising because the January 1946 demonstrations presaged a massive anti-Soviet uprising by Chinese students in February 1946, protests which themselves had drawn inspiration from the abortive Sinuiju student demonstrations in November 1945 (Cathcart and Kraus 2008). While the North Korean compilers did not note the anti-Soviet origin of the Chinese student demonstrations, they did indicate the spread of the subse-

quent student demonstrations in Chinese Nantong and Hangzhou on March 18, and June 13, 1946, respectively. Unrest on Chinese university campuses was again analyzed by North Korean observers with the Christmas 1946 “Shen Chong Incident” in Beijing, in which an American Marine raped a Beijing University student and sparked a wave of anti-U.S. protests (Joseon chungang yeon-gam 1949:293). The Shen Chong case reinforced North Korean propaganda about lascivious American troops in South Korea, but anti-American movements did not necessarily form the core of North Korean coverage of Chinese student demonstrations. In October 1947, as the new school year was beginning in North Korea, *North Korea Information* printed a long essay on the Chinese student movement in Shanghai by Chinese author Wang Ping (1947). Flanked by essays on foreign wars and moves by the U.S. to sign a peace treaty with Japan, Wang’s essay delved deeply into the Chinese student milieu. The author quoted student slogans (e.g., Oppose Hunger! Oppose Civil War!), described the scope of the movement, and critiqued the Guomindang’s Ministry of Education for its “reactionary” policies. Perhaps the publication of such essays in 1947 indicated a more liberal frame of reference than we otherwise assume for North Korean media - after all, student demonstrations had marred communist rule in November 1945 and March 1946 in Sinuiju and Hamhung, respectively, and opposition to “civil war” in the Korean context could be taken as a treasonous declaration against the need to reunify the peninsula.

The Chinese student movements crested in 1948, and North Korean researchers dutifully conveyed the course of the “Oppose the American Revival of Japan” movement to the North Korean audience. Here the “reverse course” undertaken by the United States in Japan came full circle: a Chinese student movement opposing Japan was used to reinforce North Korean nationalism and highlight the anti-Japanese imperative. On the other hand, given the elite audiences for which the *Yearbook* was intended, it is possible that news about this movement was intended to galvanize the North Korean leadership to warn of the dangers of complicity with Japan or to demonstrate the efficacy of stimulating similar demonstrations in South Korea (Joseon chungang yeon-gam 1949:293).

The North Korean bureaucracy also appeared to have a nuanced understanding of the various third-party forces in China in early 1949, forces which had in themselves exercised a particular leverage over Chinese politics at the time (Lutze 2007). The discussion in the *Yearbook* included several of the various third-parties such as the Democratic League (*Minzhu Tongmeng*) and the China Youth Party (*Zhongguo Qingnian Dang*). The prominent leftist writer and politi-

cal intellectual Guo Muoro was listed as the foremost independent voice.⁴ As the Korean Workers' Party sought to absorb the shrinking middle of the political spectrum, the Chinese example was a salient one.

North Korean representations of Mao Zedong were multiple, especially after 1948. Mao's writings from 1948 were quoted at length in some sources (*Joseon chungang yeon-gam* 1949:285). And full essays by Mao found a place in the North Korean marketplace: Like those of Kim Il Sung, pamphlets of Mao Zedong's translated works circulated throughout Pyongyang and the rest of North Korea (RG242, SA2005, 2/68, 1949). Some of these documents arrived along with Chinese migrants fleeing from the civil war in Manchuria into North Korean border areas (Kim 2002). However, it appears that in his public addresses, Kim Il Sung rarely referred to Mao directly or by name, preferring to draw attention to the amorphous if victorious "Chinese people" (Kim 1950:5).

The life experiences of certain North Korean government personnel also fostered stronger ties between the CCP and North Korea. Not only did the "Yanan Koreans" Kim Tubong and Mu Chong assume important positions in North Korea's cultural bureaucracy, but the North Korean Foreign Ministry at this time was also heavily staffed with persons with deep ties to China and the CCP. Much of the staff working in the Foreign Ministry's Division for Asian Affairs had been educated in northeast China, particularly in Jilin province and in Changchun, and many of these men had remained in the region beyond the date of Japanese capitulation to assist the CCP. While not acting on official orders from the North Korean leadership to support the CCP, the actions of these individuals ultimately did tend to benefit official Sino-North Korean relations.

One man in particular, Kim Huadong, exemplifies the strong ties between Northeast China and the North Korean Foreign Ministry. Having been born in Manchuria in 1927, Kim remained in the puppet state of Manchukuo as a student until 1941 and then spent a year in Tokyo perfecting his Japanese. When Kim returned to Jilin province in 1942, he worked for a Japanese public security office until the end of the war in 1945. After liberation, Kim worked in China as part of the second "Great Democratic Alliance of Koreans in China" (在中[国]朝鲜人民主大同盟). He then appeared to link up with the Chinese Communist Party's nascent administration in Northeast China, working successively in polit-

4. *Joseon chungang yeon-gam* 1949:285. Guo would later chair China's mass mobilization efforts to aid the North during the Korean War.

ical work and land reform until June 6, 1946 (Yanbian Lishi Yanjiusuo 1988:76, 79, 87, 89-96). After a two-week sojourn through eastern Manchuria, Kim Huadong reached Korea for the first time on June 20, 1946. Kim next appeared in Pyongyang on April 3, 1947, taking up a post in the North Korean Foreign Ministry's East Asia Section Committee. He was 20 years old at the time of his appointment (Personnel File for Kim Huadong, Cadre Bureau of North Korean Foreign Ministry, RG 242, SA 2005, 8/15.1, file no. 1, 1949). For Kim, and the many other personnel who had come of age in China, his history of cooperation with the CCP certainly extended into his days at the Foreign Ministry and helped to foster closer ties between the DPRK and the Chinese. Kim's individual experience is reflected at the macro level as well, in ties between Kim Il Sung and the Chinese provincial leader Zhou Baozhong (Yanbian Lishi Yanjiusuo 1988:1, 21, 60, 82-3, 94, 98). The experience of both North Korean high officials and minor functionaries indicates the especially significant role played by China in shaping North Korea's consciousness of foreign lands.

Cooperation between the Chinese Communist Party and North Korea was more widespread in the late 1940s than has previously been acknowledged. Contacts occurred at the provincial and local levels, and it was not uncommon for representatives of Kim Il Sung to meet with CCP cadre in Northeast China to discuss issues of concern to both nations. In May of 1947, for example, Kim Il Sung sent a representative to Dalian, the Soviet occupied port in Manchuria, to discuss military affairs with Gao Chung Min, Governor of Andong Province.⁵ With the civil war in full force in Manchuria, Kim Il Sung was keen on gathering reports and staying afloat with information, supporting the Chinese Communist forces and providing them with a safe rear area. Perhaps news reports about China were intended to soften any potential criticism for Kim Il Sung's activities outside of North Korea's boundaries. The public in northern provinces was quietly mobilized to help the CCP in the civil war.

This cooperation was not made public at the time, but in terms of printed propaganda, the pro-CCP theme was very clear to the North Korean populace. As in Figure 4, the shrinking territory of Chiang Kai-shek and the Guomindang gave North Korean audiences reason to celebrate.

5. Gao also happened to be the Commander of Chinese troops who had sought refuge in Sinuiju in late 1945 (Central Intelligence Agency 1947).

Figure 4 NARA, RG242, SA2007, 10/19, *Hwasal*, Issue 7,



Pyongyang: Korean Cartoon Publishing House, February 15, 1949, p.12.

Embracing the success of the Chinese Communist Party in China’s civil war, Koreans could monitor the cities turned “red” in North China, and build in excitement for the certain coming victories for the Chinese People’s Liberation Army in the southern cities of Wuhan, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Kowloon. Having been deconstructed in various editorials and magazine pieces, Chiang Kai-shek is depicted in Figure 4 as an unrepentant “War Criminal,” the noose around his neck predicting his coming demise. Ironically, the caricature of a weak, effeminate, and corrupt Chiang Kai-shek had first been popularized in Korea in the colonial period by Japanese cartoonists in stylish magazines like *Osaka Puck* (Rei 1999).

Chiang Kai-shek’s image is further punctured in Figure 5, with a depiction of the Chinese leader fleeing peace negotiations laden with loot (U.S. dollars, no less). The message in the North Korean context was quite clear: the supposed

Figure 5 NARA, RG242, SA2007, 10/19, *Hwasal*, Issue 7,



Pyongyang: Korean Cartoon Publishing House, February 15, 1949, p.12.

Figure 6 NARA, RG242, SA2006, 5/24, *Tiger*,



Pyongyang: Nodong Sinmun, November 30, 1949.

quest for peace by American puppets was inherently absurd and indicative of the untrustworthy nature of the sponsoring parties. To reinforce the irony surrounding Chiang’s assumed belligerence, the cartoon balloons around the leader all read “Peace,” linking him further to Syngman Rhee.⁶ Chiang Kai-shek’s aggressive tendencies are satirized further in Figure 6, a cartoon copied from the car-

6. In fact, the two men would meet in May 1950 in preparation for the visit of U.S. envoy Allan Dulles.

toonist Hua Junwu, the foremost Chinese Communist cartoonist working in Manchuria at the time (Cathcart 2005: Chapter Two). Chiang is seen moving toward “civil war,” and the cartoon clearly means to show Chiang’s responsibility for that conflict.

The publication of cartoons by Hua Junwu in Pyongyang indicates a high level of cultural transfer between North Korea and Chinese publication centers like Harbin. Cultural transfers took place elsewhere along the border, particularly between Yanbian, China and North Hamgyong province in Korea, where data and reports from women’s organizations exchanged hands (Brief History of Women’s Emancipation, NARA RG242, SA2009, 3/92, 1949). Kim Il Sung himself was ardently in favor of cultural transfers across the border, or at least for increased North Korean propaganda flowing throughout northeast China. As Kim noted:

We should organize a propaganda system abroad and increase propaganda for other countries. Geographically and politically Korea occupies a strategic position in the East. We neighbor such large countries as the Soviet Union and China, and many Eastern nations watch us with great interest. We should inform the Soviets, the Chinese, peoples of other countries, and the oppressed nations throughout the world about past and present Korean life, our goals today, and our plans for the future. We should try to establish relations of friendship and cooperation with the countries in the democratic camp and win sympathy and support from progressive mankind all over the world.

Because of deficiencies in our propaganda work abroad, even the people in northeast China, just across the river, do not have adequate information about the situation in north Korea. We must eliminate this lag immediately. (Kim 1946b: 208-9)

Cultural transfers would accelerate vastly in the coming Korean War, though not in the manner envisioned by Kim. A wave of North Korean refugees would enter Northeast China, bringing stories, skills, and legal troubles (PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive Doc. #118-00343-02). But the embattled North Korean state would send numerous cultural delegations into China, spreading the gospel of Sino-Korean proletarian brotherhood and cementing the notion that North Korea’s Asian allies were both valued and validated in the eyes of the

North Korean people (PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive 1953: Doc. #106-00037-02).

Conclusion

Relying on North Korean documentation and associated Russian, Chinese, and South Korean sources, this research has endeavored to adopt a more nuanced view of culture and international relations in North Korea, depicting complex cultural and international influences present in the DPRK. While an overwhelming amount of Soviet art, literature, and news flooded North Korea in this period, Soviet works were rivaled in significance by news coming from the front lines of the Chinese Civil War and by celebrations of anti-Japanese nationalism. In order to validate their presence, the Soviet Union even made efforts to recognize and tap into Korean interest in international matters and for friendship with Northeast Asian states in particular. It is much too simple to attribute North Korean state formation entirely to the Soviet Union.

Ultimately, however, North Korea's internationalism was short lived. Events unfolding within North Korea and the whole Communist bloc in the mid and late 1950s would come to have a tremendous impact upon North Korea's internationalism. Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956 and the beginning of severe factional struggles led Kim Il Sung to rethink previous approaches to cultural life in North Korea (Lankov 2005: chapters 9 and 10). Kim Il Sung's strong disapproval of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union hearkened a return to cultural nationalism and an insular attitude toward foreign culture (Szalontai 2006:40-1; Person 2006; Person 2008). North Korea would severely limit the flow of international influence and, with a few periodic exceptions, would limit international contacts as well.

Yet prior to this, internationalization was a key component to North Korea's socialist nation building. Witnessing the communist revolution prevail in China and, meanwhile, posing a socialist solution to Japan's aggressive tendencies helped pave the way for DPRK's own transition to socialism. Furthermore, North Korea's place among fellow and friendly Communist states and parties strengthened both the DPRK's internal and external security and legitimacy. Communism was increasingly seen as the appropriate system for a war-torn East Asia, and North Korea perceived itself as following the right path. North Korean elites and citizens alike could easily draw parallels between Korea's internation-

al neighbors, many of whom had personal experience in these nations, and Korea's own destiny. By allowing the experiences of other nations to enter into the DPRK, the North Korean leadership was able to encourage support for their own directives (Cumings 1995-1996:369-71). This research also allows for discussion of the extent to which North Korean "internationalism" was really regional in nature in the period under study. It is worth recalling that the DPRK's increasingly close relations with Eastern European states such as the German Democratic Republic only really blossomed in the latter stages of the Korean War, making allies in East Asia all the more indispensable.

Much work still remains to be done on North Korea in the East Asian and international contexts in the period under study. As scholars delve into the available resources and with the opening of more world archives — including those of the Eastern Bloc and further holdings from the PRC Foreign Ministry's bounty — further progress can be made on this issue. However, only when North Korea itself opens up and warming trends expand further might scholars have a chance to read the internal documents in Pyongyang itself. Tapping into the archives of one country alone and singling out the Soviet Union as the sole sculptor of North Korea has been wholly inadequate to answer our most serious queries about the DPRK.

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