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# *Dependence and Mistrust: North Korea's Relations with Moscow and the Evolution of Juche*

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## DEPENDENCE AND MISTRUST: NORTH KOREA'S RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW AND THE EVOLUTION OF *JUCHE*

At this time of rapid change in North Korean foreign policy, as Pyongyang and Washington move in fits and starts toward normalizing relations, it is particularly worthwhile to examine the historical evolution of the DPRK's approach to foreign relations. For although North Korea's isolation and suspiciousness are often viewed as basically static national characteristics, an examination of the country's history reveals that the *juche* idea has, in fact, been a constantly changing product of events and circumstances. From its origin as a simple anti-Japanese slogan, to its transformation into a rallying cry for anti-hegemonism, to a full-fledged nationalist ideology, and finally to an all-encompassing worldview, the *juche* idea was formed gradually through experience of relations with other countries. At the same time, its various incarnations shaped North Korea's international relations.

To use the language of general systems theory, North Korea's worldview, like that of other countries, has been created through feedback loops. Perceptions conditioned by previous experience shaped the interpretation of present circumstances. Resulting actions either reinforced previous perceptions (negative feedback), or prompted an alteration in the view (positive feedback.) A systems view thus sees causation as a function of relationships rather than of persons or institutions. Such a view can be useful in analyzing North Korean foreign relations because it highlights both the multiple possibilities that exist in the present situation and the continuing importance of mental constructs created by the past.

This paper will discuss one component in the evolution of North Korea's foreign relations—its relationship with the Soviet Union—as a driving force in the creation and transformation of *juche*. It will argue that Pyongyang's most important relationship contributed two key strands to the development of its distinctive approach to foreign relations. First, after creating pronounced economic dependence for North Korea, Moscow repeatedly taught the DPRK leadership that they could not rely on their closest ally and patron to retain their position in power or to accomplish their fundamental revolutionary goals. Second, the constraints governing Soviet relations with the DPRK, particularly the U.S. presence in South Korea and the perceived threat from China after 1960, guaranteed Pyongyang economic and military support with few attendant restrictions. This unusual combination encouraged the development of an alleged "self-reliance" marked by extreme oppression at home, constant demand for economic support from allies, and reckless actions internationally. Since the viability of this *juche* formula depended on Moscow's constraints regarding North Korea, the "new thinking" of Mikhail Gorbachev's government brought the collapse of the system of support that underpinned *juche*. This paper will discuss the evolution of these two strands during six periods in the development of Soviet/North Korean relations: the Soviet occupation and the formation of the DPRK, 1945-48; the decision for war and near defeat, 1949-50; the wartime alliance, 1950-53; the anti-Kim opposition movement of 1956; the search for nuclear capacity in the early 1960s and the provocations of 1968; and Moscow's abandonment of Pyongyang in favor of Seoul, 1986-91.

### THE SOVIET OCCUPATION AND THE CREATION OF THE DPRK, 1945-1948

The story begins in 1941, when the young Communist guerilla Kim Il Sung and a small number of compatriots crossed into Soviet territory from their base in Manchuria to escape capture by Japanese police. Soviet authorities gave them refuge and inducted them into the Red Army, organizing them as the 88<sup>th</sup> Special Independent Ambush Brigade based near the Siberian city of Khabarovsk. They remained there until they were repatriated in September 1945, following the Red Army's defeat of Japanese forces in Korea.

During this initial period of contact between the future North Korean leadership and their Soviet protectors, the basic dilemma underlying subsequent relations was already in place. The Korean partisans, like their comrades elsewhere in the world, viewed the Soviet Union as the bulwark of the revolution, an indispensable guide and support for its eventual global triumph. They thus naturally deferred to their Soviet superiors, trusting that the cause of liberating their homeland from

Japanese rule and capitalist oppression would be accomplished through the victory of the Red Army. The Soviet leadership, however, had thoroughly subordinated the Korean national cause to the immediate and pressing goal of avoiding a Japanese attack on the USSR. Thus, while the Red Army provided refuge for the Korean partisans, Moscow's goal was not to prepare them to serve as future political leaders for liberated Korea, but simply to use them to gather intelligence on the formidable Japanese forces in Manchuria.

Moscow's intense fear of a Japanese attack was, in fact, well-founded. Throughout the 1930s Tokyo had seriously considered adding resource-rich Siberia to its empire, a prospect it abandoned only after the Red Army soundly defeated Japan's vaunted Kwantung Army on the Mongolian/Manchurian border in 1939.<sup>1</sup> Earlier, Japan had made use of the allied intervention during the Russian civil war of 1918 to send a large contingent of 73,000 troops to Siberia, and had continued its occupation of most of Eastern Siberia long after the conclusion of World War I, withdrawing its forces in 1922 only under pressure from the United States.<sup>2</sup> Stalin thus reasonably feared that the desperate struggle against Germany begun in June 1941 would tempt Japan to reconsider an invasion of the Soviet Far East.

Determined to avoid fighting a two-front war, Stalin was in a weak bargaining position in discussions with his American allies over the postwar political settlement for the Far East. With no troops in the field, the Soviet leader could only secure his postwar borders by concluding favorable agreements with the Americans, who not only were the dominant military force fighting the Japanese but also had much firmer territorial and political aims in the region than they had in Europe. In this situation, Stalin was restrained in his demands for compensation for eventual entry into the war against Japan. He asked only for return of territory Russia lost to Japan in the war of 1904/05: the Kurile Islands, Southern Sakhalin Island, and the Russian-built railway and ports in Manchuria. Once those gains were won, Stalin bargained hard with the Nationalist government of China to maintain Soviet control over a nominally independent Outer Mongolia, which was essential for guaranteeing access to transportation lines to Soviet territory in the Far East.

Stalin made no demands at all regarding Korea, since Russian policy pre-1904 had been to seek a balance of power on the peninsula, which afforded no clear precedent for a settlement. Thus, far from attempting to ensure that a Communist government would come to power in liberated Korea, the Soviet leader simply agreed to President Roosevelt's vaguely defined proposal for a four power trusteeship, confirming only that the USSR would not be threatened by the stationing of U.S. troops on the peninsula. The Soviet government did not make plans to undermine the trusteeship agreement by setting up a puppet government in Seoul, since such action could endanger the territorial gains it had achieved at Yalta that provided the first line of protection against a resurgent Japan.

For Moscow, the question of Korea's political future was part of the larger issue of securing the USSR against a future attack from Japan. The goal was to exclude Japan from the peninsula in order to ensure that it would not serve as a staging ground for future aggression against the USSR. Of course, the surest way to accomplish this goal would be to place a communist-controlled government in power in Seoul, the strategy the Soviets employed in Eastern Europe. Korean Communists aware of events in Europe probably expected the USSR to follow a similar course in Korea. However, Moscow's fear of provoking an American backlash prevented it from devising an approach that would guarantee the establishment of a friendly government in Korea through the agreed-upon trusteeship.<sup>3</sup> For the same reason, Soviet military officials at the Potsdam conference in July 1945 refrained from taking steps to ensure that the peninsula would be occupied by the Red Army. Instead, they first gave the Americans an opportunity to move troops into Korea before agreeing to Washington's plan to place the peninsula in the Soviet zone for ground operations.

Once Japanese forces collapsed with unexpected speed before the Red Army's advance, Moscow became bolder, but its new assertiveness was directed toward gaining a Soviet occupation zone in Japan, rather than the lesser priority of establishing a communist government in Korea. Thus, when Stalin received the draft of the U.S. order governing the surrender of Japanese troops throughout the Pacific theater, he accepted without comment the sudden American proposal to divide Korea into two occupation zones. Rather than object to this sharp departure from the agreement worked out the previous month at Potsdam,

Stalin placed all his bargaining chips on proposing that the northern half of Hokkaido be included in the area to be occupied by Soviet troops.

For Kim Il Sung and his compatriots in the 88<sup>th</sup> Special Brigade who were brought to Korea in September, Soviet strategic priorities created a bewildering situation. The eager revolutionaries were denied access to Seoul as the country's political activists gathered there to create a new government. Moreover, Soviet authorities in the northern zone had refused to recognize the leftist government that had been established in Seoul on September 6 with the support of the Korean Communist Party. Nor had Moscow intervened to force the U.S. to recognize the Korean People's Republic, since such action could weaken Soviet chances to secure an occupation zone in Japan.

The young Kim Il Sung and his fellow partisans were surely not privy to Moscow's reasoning regarding Korea and most likely accepted Soviet actions as reflecting a revolutionary strategy of which they had not yet been apprised. Their trust in their patron may have been challenged, however, by their discovery that Moscow claimed the bulk of northern Korea's economic resources as compensation for its weeklong war against Japan. As the Red Army entered Korea, units armed with detailed catalogs of Japanese-owned property prepared by the Soviet consulate in Seoul<sup>4</sup> quickly dismantled and shipped to the USSR a significant portion of the economic assets of their zone. Industrial complexes in South Hamgyong Province and North Hamgyong Province were especially hard hit, as were steel plants and textile mills in the Hamhung area and dock facilities in Wonsan, Hungnam, and Chongju. Stocks of coal and fertilizer, along with transformers, generators, and turbines from electrical power plants along the Yalu were shipped to Soviet territory or stored for future shipment.<sup>5</sup> This stripping of northern Korea's industrial plant ceased in late November, when it was replaced by a plan to extract compensation in the form of future industrial production.<sup>6</sup> The returned partisans may have justified the confiscation of Korea's resources as necessary to secure the survival of the Soviet Union, and calculated that these losses would be offset by future assistance from the USSR. However, the damage to Korea caused by this expropriation was impossible to ignore and may well have raised the first doubts about their trust in their Soviet protector.

Whatever misgivings Kim Il Sung may have had, the political settlement the Soviets and Americans reached in Moscow in December 1945 placed him in an extraordinarily conflicted position, as it elevated him to political power while dividing the country. At the Moscow Foreign Ministers' meeting convened to resolve this and other issues, the Soviets concluded that it was politically inexpedient to oppose the establishment of a unified government for Korea since, as before, they feared such action could rupture relations with the U.S. and thereby endanger the territorial gains made at Yalta. However, a non-communist, American-supported government for Korea would inevitably pose the risk that the peninsula would be used as a bridgehead for a Japanese attack on the Soviet Union, since, in Moscow's view, the U.S. could not be trusted to exclude Japan from the peninsula. The Soviets thus believed it was of utmost importance that the government of Korea be "friendly" to the USSR,<sup>7</sup> even though the four-power trusteeship Stalin had agreed to at Yalta would be unlikely to produce such an outcome. Moscow's solution to this dilemma was to propose a complicated procedure that would provide a mechanism for blocking the creation of an unfriendly government in Seoul while maintaining the appearance of cooperation with the United States. In other words, absent the unlikely prospect that the Americans would accept a leftist government for Korea, Moscow would perpetuate the division of the country, keeping control over its zone as a buffer against attack from Japan.

As events developed, the Soviets accomplished this goal at the expense of humiliating the Communist party organization in the South. Once the announcement of the Moscow agreement on trusteeship was greeted with universal opprobrium in southern Korea, Soviet authorities instructed the Communist Party to voice support for the decision,<sup>8</sup> then insisted that only those who supported the Moscow decision, i.e. Communists, were eligible to be consulted by the Joint Soviet/American Commission that would be formed to create a provisional government. By holding to this position over the next four months, Moscow prevented the creation of a potentially "unfriendly" government for a unified Korea while protecting itself politically by posing as the defender of the agreement reached with the Americans.

Along with the political disaster of the division of Korea, the Moscow agreement left the northern half in a state of profound

economic dependence on the Soviet Union. Having been cut off from economic interaction with the rest of Korea, Japan, and China, and having had all reserves of currency and gold seized by the Red Army, the northern part of Korea could only obtain or sell goods from the USSR, with the exception of the very limited trade the Soviets allowed with Hong Kong and two Manchurian ports. Furthermore, as its trade was designed to meet the needs of the Soviet economy, Moscow, for the most part, traded manufactured goods for Korean raw materials. During the first quarter of 1950, for example, North Korea sent the Soviet Union copper, lead, zinc, cadmium, bismuth, tantalum concentrate, berrium concentrate, calcium carbide, acetylene, caustic soda, lead oxide, zinc oxide, methanol, ammonia sulfide, granulated abrasives, Bickford cording, capsules, ammonia, raw silk, soap, talcum, ground and lump barite, cement, crystal graphite, gold, silver, platinum, electrical energy, furs, ammonia nitrate, ferro-tungsten, ferro-molybdenum, ferro-silicium, six types of steel, cast iron, rice, and starch.<sup>9</sup> The terms of trade were tilted in Moscow's favor because it set its ruble valuation of the materials traded administratively rather than by their market value.

It is not known when the North Korean leadership began to resent the terms of their economic relationship with the Soviet Union, but we do know that soon after the DPRK was established, Kim Il Sung complained to the Soviet ambassador about the disadvantageous prices set by the two "joint-share societies" Moscow established for oil refining and sea transport. In principle, these organizations were formed with equal contributions by Pyongyang and Moscow, and each side would receive half of the profits. In practice, however, the Soviet share consisted of the Koreans' own assets which were assigned to Moscow as compensation for Soviet expenses incurred in restoring the country's industrial enterprises. Moreover, the profits of the societies were determined by the prices Soviet agencies set for oil products and ocean shipping, which were artificially high.<sup>10</sup>

Whatever Kim Il Sung's resentment of Soviet economic exploitation was, however, he also understood that North Korea's economic dependence on Moscow brought considerable benefits. Integration into the Soviet economic system, however dysfunctional this proved in the long run, initially provided a reliable source of material goods and the technical and managerial expertise needed to recover from Japan's wartime depredations. Such expertise was initially in very short supply in northern Korea since nearly all persons with higher-level technical training or managerial skills had fled to the American zone. The Korean leadership in the North thus depended on Soviet advisers to rebuild and administer the economy. They also relied on the USSR to quickly educate a new generation of economic managers and technicians. As Kim Il Sung constructed a socialist state in northern Korea, he repeatedly and persistently asked Soviet authorities for permission to send workers to the Soviet Union for training in every branch of the economy.<sup>11</sup> The financial arrangements for this education may have been onerous, but Moscow nonetheless fulfilled Kim Il Sung's requests, providing essential support to the fledgling North Korean state.

In contrast to his chafing at North Korea's economic dependence, during his first years in power, Kim Il Sung appears to have accepted his political dependence on his Soviet patron as proper and natural. As he declared to Soviet advisers in January 1950, he was "a Communist, a disciplined person, and for him, the order of Comrade Stalin is law."<sup>12</sup> While it is tempting, in light of Kim's later evolution, to interpret such a declaration as purely pro-forma, all evidence suggests that at this point, Kim's profession of unquestioned loyalty was sincere. Like other Communist leaders of the time, Kim Il Sung regarded Stalin as the ultimate source of revolutionary leadership and the existence of the Soviet Union as the ultimate guarantor of a global revolutionary victory. A man of Kim's modest background, limited accomplishments, and soaring ambition must have regarded the opportunity to be tutored in statecraft by the supreme master and his representatives as incalculably good fortune.

Moreover, in the tightly hierarchical, extraordinarily centralized political structure of the Soviet world under Stalin, it would have seemed proper to North Korean officials that they had little ability to act without the approval of Soviet officials in Moscow or Soviet advisers monitoring the North Korean administrative apparatus.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the Soviet apparatus, issues one would expect to be resolved at lower levels were, in fact, handled directly by Stalin and some ten or twelve persons at the top. For example, Kim Il Sung's request in July 1949 for the Soviet Union to send specialists to staff a new factory for



producing cattle vaccine was sent by the Soviet ambassador in Pyongyang directly to Stalin, with copies sent to his top twelve foreign policy advisers. Kim's request later that month for Moscow to send three engineers who could operate a Japanese-built water control system went through the same channels.<sup>14</sup> In August 1949 Foreign Minister Vyshinsky handled the disbursement of Hungarian forints to a North Korean delegation attending a Festival of Youth in Budapest.<sup>15</sup> That same month Foreign Minister Vyshinsky wrote to M.S. Suslov, Head of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and editor-in-chief of the party's leading newspaper, *Pravda*, to ask his agreement regarding the request of the DPRK embassy in Moscow to allow the embassy's third secretary to study French at a foreign language night school.<sup>16</sup> In November 1949 V. Grigorian, head of the Central Committee's Foreign Policy Commission sent to Suslov the request from the All-Union Society for Cultural Ties with Foreign Countries to allow the venerable Korean Communist Ho Hon, then in Moscow for medical treatment, to visit Moscow State University and the Lenin Library.<sup>17</sup>

## THE DECISION FOR WAR AND NEAR DEFEAT, 1949-1950

The clearest evidence that Kim Il Sung accepted his political subordination to Moscow during the prewar years is his uncomplaining deference to Stalin regarding the accomplishment of his primary goal—unifying Korea under revolutionary rule. As I have detailed elsewhere, Kim first raised the issue of a military campaign against the South in talks with Stalin during a visit to Moscow in March 1949, made to conclude the DPRK's first bilateral agreement with the USSR. Stalin immediately rejected Kim's request on the grounds that the U.S. would regard an attack on the South as a violation of its 1945 agreement with the USSR about the division of Korea, and would consequently be likely to intervene. Moreover, the Soviet leader regarded the question as not yet topical since American armed forces were still in South Korea. Kim Il Sung asked whether this meant there was no chance to reunify Korea in the near future, explaining that “our people are very anxious to be together again to cast off the yoke of the reactionary regime and their American masters.” The cautious Soviet leader instructed his Korean protégé, “If the adversary has aggressive intentions, then sooner or later it will start the aggression. In response to the attack you will have a good opportunity to launch a counterattack. Then your move will be understood and supported by everyone.”<sup>18</sup>

After U.S. troops withdrew from Korea in the summer of 1949, Kim again appealed to Stalin to consider his request. This time the Soviet leader was willing to discuss it, particularly because he feared that the U.S. troop withdrawal was designed to unleash ROK forces for an attack on North Korea, which could result in loss of this important buffer against Japanese aggression against the Soviet Union. However, after due deliberation, the Soviet leadership concluded in September that circumstances were still not favorable for an attack on the South.<sup>19</sup>

In January 1950, spurred by the establishment of the People's Republic of China three months earlier, Kim Il Sung fervently entreated the Soviet ambassador to Pyongyang to convey his request to meet with Stalin to press his case for permission to complete the revolution in Korea. This time Stalin gave his consent and Kim Il Sung and DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Hon-yong traveled to Moscow to plan the offensive together with Soviet military advisers. Stalin based his approval primarily on accurate intelligence that the United States had adopted a new policy for the Far East that ruled out military intervention on the Asian mainland. This report led the Soviet leader to conclude that the U.S. would not intervene on behalf of its Korean client following an attack by the DPRK. While Kim Il Sung confidently asserted that the Americans would not have time to intervene because the war would be won in a matter of days, Stalin nonetheless remained worried that the action in Korea could embroil the Soviet Union in war with the United States. Knowing that the USSR was not economically prepared for such a war, he made it clear to Kim Il Sung that the Soviet Union would, under no circumstances, send its troops to his assistance. If Kim were to need reinforcements, he would have to rely on China.<sup>20</sup>

To prepare for such a contingency, Stalin required Kim Il Sung to gain Mao Zedong's approval before the campaign could proceed. This stipulation offended the North Korean leader, but he nonetheless traveled to Beijing and relayed Stalin's instructions to Mao along with proud assurances that Chinese assistance would not be necessary. Mao gave the required approval and pledged Chinese assistance, but condescendingly warned the North Korean leader to avoid a protracted war.<sup>21</sup>

With Chinese approval secured, the necessary Soviet weapons and supplies arrived in the DPRK along with Soviet generals assigned to plan and oversee the operation.<sup>22</sup>

The first weeks of the war brought Kim Il Sung to new heights of prestige vis-à-vis the Soviets. In late August 1950, with UN and ROK forces confined behind a defensive line above the port of Pusan, Stalin informed Kim that the Central Committee saluted him and his friends “for the great liberation struggle of the Korean people, which comrade Kim Il Sung is conducting with brilliant success.” The Soviet leader also reassured Kim Il Sung in a fatherly manner that he “should not be embarrassed” by setbacks in the war against the interventionists. “In such a war continuous successes do not occur. The Russians also did not have continuous successes during the Civil War, and even less so during the war with Germany.” In what must have been an immensely gratifying assessment, Stalin asserted that “Korea has now become the most popular country in the world and has turned into the banner for the movement in Asia for liberation from the imperialist yoke. The armies of all enslaved peoples will now learn from the Korean People’s Army the art of bringing decisive blows to the Americans and any other imperialists.” Finally, Stalin exhorted the Korean leader not to “forget that Korea is not alone now, that it has allies who are helping it and will continue to help it.”<sup>23</sup>

Only a month later, however, Stalin’s assurances of help proved hollow, leading to the first serious break in Kim Il Sung’s trust in his Soviet mentor and patron. After the successful amphibious landing of UN forces at Inchon on September 15, the Korean People’s Army rapidly disintegrated. Within two weeks, the DPRK faced imminent defeat as UN forces occupied Pyongyang and moved rapidly northward. Under these dire circumstances, Kim Il Sung turned to Stalin for assistance, even though the Soviet leader had clearly stipulated before the war that North Korea would have to turn to China should it need reinforcements. Kim Il Sung clearly wanted to avoid Chinese intervention, perhaps because of his experience of denigration by the Chinese comrades during the fighting in Manchuria in the 1930s, as well as the long history of Chinese interference in Korea. For whatever reasons, he refused to accept the aid Mao Zedong had offered as soon as the U.S. intervened and had also refused to allow the KPA to share military intelligence with Chinese representatives.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the desperate straits of the Koreans, the Soviet leader was unwilling to revise the terms of his initial agreement. Instead, he instructed Kim to address his request for reinforcements to China. The North Korean leader complied, but the PRC did not immediately dispatch the troops it had already massed along the border. Instead, as UN forces continued their rapid advance into DPRK territory, Mao Zedong’s government deliberated for nearly two weeks over whether it was advisable, after all, for the PRC to intervene in Korea. Finally, on 12 October Mao informed Stalin that the Chinese could not send troops to Korea, whereupon the Soviet leader, still determined at all costs to avoid military conflict with the Americans, ordered Kim Il Sung to evacuate his remaining forces from Korean territory.<sup>25</sup> In Stalin’s view, if Soviet intervention were the only means of saving the DPRK, the North Korean state would have to be sacrificed.

Stalin’s evacuation instruction, relayed by Ambassador Shtykov, caught Kim Il Sung and Pak Hon-yong by surprise. Kim Il Sung stated that “it was very hard for them, but since there is such advice they will fulfill it.” Kim asked Shtykov to read the practical recommendations, ordered Pak to write them down, and asked for Soviet assistance in developing measures to implement the evacuation.<sup>26</sup> The following day the Chinese leadership changed their mind and informed Stalin that they would send troops to Korea after all. Stalin promptly cancelled the evacuation order, writing to Kim Il Sung that he was “glad that the final and favorable decision for Korea has been made at last.” He instructed Kim “to resolve concrete questions regarding the entry of the Chinese troops jointly with the Chinese comrades” and informed him that “the armaments required for the Chinese troops will be delivered from the USSR.”<sup>27</sup>

The relief the Koreans felt upon reading this news must surely have been great, but for Kim Il Sung, the realization that his Soviet mentor and protector was willing to surrender the DPRK to the American imperialists rather than risk engaging them directly, predictably brought a profound change in his relationship to the Soviet leader. An early indication of this alteration is the rhetoric Kim employed when he addressed a Plenum of the Korean Workers Party in December 1950, his first speech since the war began. The elaborate peons to Comrade Stalin, Glorious Leader of Worldwide Revolution, Sun of Mankind,



etc., and to the great Soviet Union, Fatherland of Revolution, etc., that had filled each paragraph of every speech Kim had delivered since his return to Korea in 1945 were abruptly gone, replaced by the barest, unadorned mention of the Soviet leader and the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup>

## **KIM IL SUNG AND ALLIED WAR STRATEGY**

While Stalin's evacuation order undermined Kim Il Sung's faith in Soviet protection, the entry of Chinese troops brought him personal humiliation, as well as loss of control over his country and over the outcome of the war. The commander of the Chinese Volunteers, Peng Dehuai, made no secret of his contempt for Kim Il Sung's military abilities, publicly humiliating him on many occasions. Moreover, with Chinese forces assuming the bulk of the fighting, Peng naturally insisted on establishing a joint command in order to coordinate military action with the remaining North Korean units. Kim resisted such a move for several weeks, capitulating only after Stalin directly endorsed the Chinese plan. The establishment of a unified command required the North Koreans to turn over control of DPRK highways, railroads, ports, and airports to Chinese officers, along with communications, food storage, and even mobilization of manpower. Moreover, against strong objections from the North Koreans, in January 1951 the Chinese insisted on halting the advance near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in order to regroup, instead of pursuing the retreating UN forces further south. Stalin again resolved the dispute in support of the Chinese view.<sup>29</sup> The ultimate outcome of this decision was that the spring offensive of 1951 marked the end of the southward advance. In Kim Il Sung's perspective, therefore, while Chinese troops and Soviet supplies and expertise saved the DPRK from extinction, their assistance simultaneously prevented Korean Communists from achieving their primary goal of bringing revolutionary victory to the southern half of their country.

When the spring offensive of 1951 not only failed to push UN forces further south, but also brought very heavy Chinese and North Korean casualties, the Chinese command proposed that the allies open talks for a negotiated end to the war. Kim Il Sung was reluctant to abandon hope for a total victory. However, after personal intervention by Stalin, the North Korean leader agreed to open armistice negotiations in order to forestall an enemy offensive for a few months and give time to reinforce the Chinese/North Korean position in preparation for a new assault in the fall. In the end, however, by fall 1951, both sides had sufficiently fortified their positions that further advance on the ground became impossible.<sup>30</sup>

With the war now a stalemate, the armistice negotiations became the frontline of the struggle, which further diminished the North Korean voice. As of fall of 1951, Stalin insisted that the Chinese and North Koreans maintain a hard line in the negotiations on the grounds that the Americans had a greater need to reach an agreement. Since the war no longer endangered the Soviet border, Stalin apparently considered the conflict advantageous to Moscow. The war tied down American forces, rendering the U.S. less likely to engage in military action in Europe. It drained American economic resources and exacerbated tensions between Washington and its principal allies. Moreover, continuing the war provided the Soviet Union with a superb opportunity to gather intelligence on U.S. military technology and organization and to inflame anti-American sentiment throughout Europe and Asia.

For the North Korean leadership, however, the advantages the war brought the Soviet Union hardly outweighed the extraordinary damage the DPRK suffered from the continuous bombing by the U.S. Air Force. The level of physical destruction and loss of life from the bombing was so high that Kim Il Sung began to press his allies to reach an armistice agreement in early 1952. Kim's attempts at persuasion were unsuccessful, but by the fall of that year the Chinese leadership had become more amenable to a negotiated settlement. Stalin, however, remained determined to continue the war. In talks with Zhou Enlai in August and September, the aged, ailing Soviet leader dismissed Kim Il Sung's appeals for an armistice with the notable comment that the North Koreans "have lost nothing but their casualties."<sup>31</sup>

While Moscow, and to a lesser extent Beijing, pressed North Korea to continue the war for gains that would accrue to their own countries, they provided the DPRK little protection against U.S. bombing. At the time Chinese forces intervened, the PRC had not yet built an air force. Beijing thus insisted that Soviet pilots and anti-aircraft ground crews provide cover for

troops entering Korea. The Soviet leader did so, attempting to disguise Soviet planes and pilots as North Korean. However, to prevent disclosure of their presence through enemy capture of a downed pilot, Stalin sharply limited the scope of activity of Soviet air force units. He tasked them with protecting the vital hydroelectric plant at Suiho and the Yalu River bridges across which Soviet supplies and Chinese troops entered Korea, and with training Chinese pilots to take their place as quickly as possible. He expressly forbade them to fly over enemy-held territory or over the sea, which sharply limited their ability to pursue American aircraft.

Over the course of the war, the Soviet Air Force contribution was substantial, totaling approximately 70,000 pilots, technicians, and gunners. These highly skilled airmen accomplished their missions, which were vitally important to continuing the war, but they did not protect the bulk of DPRK territory from American bombers, which had nearly uncontested access to the skies over North Korea. The result was an extraordinary level of physical and human destruction in the DPRK. Virtually the entire infrastructure of the country was destroyed and between 8 and 16 percent of the population was killed.<sup>32</sup>

Stalin's sudden death on 5 March 1953 finally freed the North Koreans and Chinese to reach an armistice. The collective leadership that nervously took power in Moscow feared that a post-Stalin government would be unable to retain its empire in Eastern Europe and perhaps even its power at home. They consequently took immediate action to consolidate their resources by ending the war in Korea. Only two weeks after Stalin's death, Moscow dispatched letters to Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung outlining statements to be made by Kim, Peng Dehuai, the government of the People's Republic of China, and the Soviet delegation to the United Nations, indicating their willingness to resolve the outstanding issues in order to reach an armistice agreement.<sup>33</sup>

While the North Koreans eagerly embraced the Soviet decision to end the war, Moscow's action was accompanied by a decision that was politically damaging to the DPRK. In April 1953 the new Soviet leadership abruptly changed course regarding the massive international campaign the allies had jointly waged since early 1952 accusing the United States of using biological weapons in Korea. This effort had had substantial success in turning European public opinion against the American war in Korea and in mobilizing support for North Korea in the East European countries of the Soviet bloc. The allegations of biological weapons use were also an important element of domestic mobilization in North Korea. However, despite the prominence of the issue and its importance to Pyongyang, the post-Stalin leadership feared that the allegations would prove politically damaging to Soviet political interests if their falseness were revealed, and hence instructed the Chinese and North Koreans immediately to cease advancing these claims.

For the North Korean leadership, the war of 1950-53 brought the most painful lessons in the danger of subordination to more powerful allies. Their ability to fulfill their solemn duty to their homeland depended on decisions by Moscow and Beijing that were based on calculations of Soviet and Chinese national interests. Kim Il Sung and his comrades could not initiate a military campaign for reunification on their own, nor could they be assured that, once begun, such an effort would be carried to completion. Moreover, they could not ultimately count on allied support to guarantee the continued existence of the DPRK. The Korean War thus called into question the core belief of Korean Communists that national salvation would come through revolution as part of the worldwide communist movement led by the Soviet Union. In its place came a conviction that Korea's salvation could only be entrusted to Koreans, even while fraternal allies would be used as sources of economic and military aid.

## **POSTWAR RECONSTRUCTION AND THE POLITICAL CRISIS OF 1956**

Kim Il Sung wasted no time presenting his post-war demands to Moscow for assistance in rebuilding the shattered North Korean state. In September 1953, just two months after the armistice was signed, Kim led a large delegation to the Soviet capital. With U.S. forces remaining in South Korea and the Soviets having invested considerable economic and political capital in supporting the DPRK, the North Koreans had little difficulty securing an agreement for massive aid totaling one

billion rubles.

The DPRK also successfully appealed to the Soviet bloc countries of Eastern Europe. During the war, the ferocity of the U.S. bombing had created a degree of solidarity among the people of the recently established Soviet bloc, who found common cause in aiding their egregiously suffering Korean comrades. Consequently, even though the European communist states were still struggling to recover from World War II, they had mobilized their populations to send supplies and medical teams to Korea. As the war ended with only an armistice and U.S. forces remained in South Korea, the DPRK now occupied the front line against American imperialism and thus claimed a right to economic support from all fraternal states. The Europeans were taken aback by the Koreans' sense of entitlement, but they nonetheless fulfilled Pyongyang's extensive requests as best they could.<sup>34</sup>

According to Soviet reports, over the course of the DPRK's Three Year Plan of 1954-56, grants from Soviet bloc countries provided 75 percent of all capital investments, while aid and credits from these allies financed 77.6 percent of imports and 24.6 percent of the state budget.<sup>35</sup> Soviet bloc aid was clearly indispensable to the DPRK's reconstruction and the North Korean leadership pursued this assistance with a confidence it did not possess before the war. At the same time, within months of the armistice, Kim Il Sung gained greater scope for political autonomy as the leadership position in Moscow was seized by the far less formidable Nikita Khrushchev, who had neither the stature nor the inclination to enforce Stalin-era discipline.

Kim Il Sung's new sense of independence was severely tested in 1956, in a crisis that shattered whatever trust he had retained in his Soviet patron after the multiple traumas of the war.<sup>36</sup> In February 1956, at the 20th Party Congress in Moscow, Khrushchev launched a campaign to correct what he viewed as the most harmful legacies of the Stalin era. He instructed all Communist parties worldwide to eliminate Stalinist-style "cult of personality" of the leader, to pursue a policy of peaceful co-existence with the capitalist world, and to shift economic resources from heavy industry to consumer goods.

Each of Khrushchev's mandated policy changes clearly posed a serious threat to Kim Il Sung. The North Korean leader had built one of the most elaborate personality cults in the communist world and regarded this system as essential to preserving his hold on power. If the North Koreans were to adopt peaceful co-existence with the U.S. and the ROK, they would sacrifice their primary goal of eventual victory over South Korea. If Pyongyang shifted resources away from heavy industry, it would diminish its ability both to defend itself against renewed attack from the U.S. and to resume its campaign against the South.

To avoid these harmful consequences, the newly confident Kim Il Sung simply ignored Khrushchev's new policy directives. The problem was not so easily solved, however, since some members of the Korean Workers' Party delegation who had attended the 20th Party Congress and were dissatisfied with the authoritarian and idiosyncratic nature of Kim Il Sung's leadership were eager to embrace the new Soviet line. Emboldened by Khrushchev's new policy to believe they could challenge Kim Il Sung's direction, they sought the help of Soviet embassy officials to plan a strategy to force the KWP to adopt Moscow's new line. While Kim toured Soviet bloc countries in the summer of 1956 to secure pledges of continued economic aid, the Soviet embassy in Pyongyang served as the headquarters for the anti-Kim opposition movement.

The opposition decided to force the issue at the party's Plenum scheduled for August. Their goal was not to unseat Kim Il Sung, necessarily, but rather to compel him through a Plenum vote to adopt the new Soviet line. However, Kim's supporters were warned in advance of their opponents' plans, and mobilized sufficient votes to defeat their measures and expel their leaders from the party.

The active role the Soviet embassy played in this political challenge must have been unsettling enough for Kim Il Sung, but the following month, the Soviets and Chinese intervened directly to force Kim to accept Moscow's new policy, publicly humiliating the North Korean leader. The results of North Korea's August Plenum created a scandal throughout the Communist world, prompting Moscow to dispatch two of its highest-ranking officials to Beijing to work out a plan for

dealing with Kim Il Sung's insubordination. Boris Ponomarev, head of the Central Committee Department of Liaison with Foreign Communist Parties, and Anastas Mikoyan, who had just played a central role in removing from power Matyas Rakosi, the Stalinist-style leader of Hungary, discussed the situation with the PRC leadership. North Korea's two strongest allies decided to send two persons to Pyongyang: Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai, who, as commander of Chinese forces during the Korean War had publicly humiliated Kim Il Sung and openly favored Pak Il-yu for the leadership position.

Arriving just days after the August plenum, Mikoyan and Peng demonstrated to Kim Il Sung with devastating effectiveness that he remained subject to the political decisions of his patrons. The Soviet and Chinese representatives forced the North Korean leader to convene a new party Plenum, at which he was compelled to make public self-criticism, revoke the decisions of the August Plenum, and reinstate the purged opposition leaders.

In the aftermath of this humiliation, Kim Il Sung was unexpectedly saved by a remarkable turn of events in Europe. In October, an uprising broke out in Hungary, sparked by Khrushchev's liberalization, which threatened Moscow's hold on its East European empire. Urged to act by Mao Zedong, who feared the repercussions in Asia from Hungary's rebellion, Khrushchev sent the Red Army to Budapest to put down the uprising with force. With the Soviets and Chinese thus distracted and the wisdom of Khrushchev's reforms called into question, Kim was able to reinstate the policy lines adopted by the August Plenum, re-expell the opposition leaders, and eliminate all mention of his September humiliation.

The crisis of 1956 brought a profound change in Kim Il Sung's attitude toward the Soviet Union. As he revealed in conversations with like-minded Albanian colleagues five years later, Kim viewed the events of 1956 as a "conspiracy to destroy the party from inside," leveling the most serious possible charge against his Soviet and Chinese comrades. Kim described the failure of his domestic opponents as having been due to the "unity of the people," a reference to the importance he placed on the extensive purges of the pro-Chinese and pro-Soviet factions within the KWP that he conducted in the aftermath of 1956.<sup>37</sup>

The timing of the 1956 crisis was fortuitous for Kim Il Sung, since it was followed by a growing estrangement between Moscow and Beijing that enabled the North Korean leader to intensify his pursuit of political autonomy without losing essential economic support from the Soviet Union. As is well-known, the Sino-Soviet dispute prompted both powers to tolerate Kim Il Sung's heterodoxy lest they drive him into the rival camp. Kim consequently managed, by the end of the decade, to remove one of the key levers of Soviet political control in the DPRK. He expelled from the country the Soviet citizens of Korean nationality whom Moscow had dispatched to North Korea in the late 1940s to occupy key posts in the new state and to fill the shortage of trained manpower. He also purged the KWP faction that was aligned with China. Moscow and Beijing not only tolerated these offensive acts, but they formalized their continued support of the DPRK with treaties of Friendship and Mutual Assistance signed in 1961.

The early 1960s, therefore, marked a significant increase in Kim Il Sung's power in his dealings with his original patron and mentor. However, since he faced American military forces across the border and economic fragility at home, Kim understood that the DPRK could neither survive nor bring revolution to the South apart from the success of the international communist movement as a whole. *Juche*, therefore, would not literally mean national self-reliance, since a break with the Soviet Union would be economically and militarily suicidal. Instead, Kim Il Sung sought to strengthen his autonomy and guarantee his survival by taking on the role of communist statesman, urging other beleaguered parties to find a way to mend fences with Moscow for the sake of the larger revolutionary victory.

Thus, in the fall of 1961, Kim Il Sung counseled a visiting official of the Albanian party, Myftiu Manush, to follow his example in dealing with Tirana's serious falling out with Moscow. Speaking of his 1956 crisis, Kim told Manush that the year after those events he had gone to a party meeting in Moscow and had taken part in the meeting "without uttering a word about the divergences that existed. [...] When I spoke in the meeting of the parties, everyone trained their ears waiting to hear me talk about the divergences, but I did not speak like Gomulka did and did not touch that topic. So the Soviets and the others had nothing to say or to latch on to."<sup>38</sup>

Kim Il Sung advised Manush that party unity, i.e. strict domestic control, was the key to success. As long as the Albanians “command full unity, there is no reason for you to be afraid. You should talk to them [the Soviets] with courage.” Revealing a new pragmatism as well as confidence, Kim urged the Albanians to take the initiative to resolve the dispute “because the Soviets, due to their prestige and the claim of being the larger country, will not take the initiative first. In these conditions, one should operate tactfully.”<sup>39</sup>

Most importantly, Kim Il Sung reminded his Albanian colleague of the fundamental reality that neither state could survive on its own. Therefore, they both had to deal with whatever situation existed in Moscow. “Whether we love Khrushchev or not, he is the one with the power at the moment. We must also keep in mind that he is not separated from the CC [Central Committee] that chose him and this is the CC that is at the helm of the CP [Communist Party] of the SU [Soviet Union]. It is not in our hands to topple him. He is what we have to deal with and there is no one else to talk to. Whether we want to or not, we have to tip our hat to him. The others can also do nothing against him, because he holds the power.”<sup>40</sup>

Revealing that by 1961 the North Korean leader had achieved a sense of political security vis-à-vis Moscow, Kim Il Sung reminded his Albanian colleague that Khrushchev wanted to remove Albania’s leader, Enver Hoxha, from power, but could not, “just like he cannot remove me from power. I hold the power here and whoever rises up against me, I will cut his head off and take measures against him.”<sup>41</sup>

## THE SEARCH FOR NUCLEAR CAPABILITY AND THE PROVOCATIONS OF 1968

By the early 1960s, Kim Il Sung’s new political confidence and deep mistrust of the Soviet Union led him to attempt to secure the DPRK’s survival by developing North Korea’s own nuclear deterrent. A year after the conclusion of security treaties with Beijing and Moscow, North Korean officials began to prepare the ground for requesting Soviet assistance in acquiring a DPRK nuclear capacity. In August 1962 Foreign Minister Pak Song Ch’ol rejected Moscow’s call for support for a new non-proliferation proposal, arguing to the Soviet ambassador that the U.S. might have first sold nuclear weapons expertise to the Federal Republic of Germany before it called for a treaty that would prevent the Soviet Union from doing the same thing with its allies. Pak cited an AP report speculating that China is developing nuclear capability, and asked:

Why, indeed, wouldn’t the Chinese comrades work on this? The Americans hold on to Taiwan, South Korea, and South Vietnam, blackmail the peoples with their nuclear weapons, and with their help, rule on these continents and do not intend to leave. Their possession of nuclear weapons, and the lack thereof in our hands, objectively helps them, therefore, to eternalize their rule. They have a large stockpile and we are forbidden even to think about the manufacture of nuclear weapons? I think that in such case the advantage will be on the Americans’ side.<sup>42</sup>

Soviet capitulation in the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 strengthened Kim Il Sung’s determination to acquire his own nuclear capability. He began to allow a surprisingly broad range of officials to press the case for North Korean nuclear weapons. In April 1963, a KPA colonel boldly replied to the Czechoslovak ambassador, who had insisted that the Soviet Union still protects the interests of the socialist countries, “that he knows that the Soviet Union has powerful missiles, that probably these missiles are also stationed in the Far East, but it would be better and quieter if the Soviet Union gave such missiles to the DPRK and to the Chinese.”<sup>43</sup> DPRK officials also asked East Germans “whether they could obtain any information about nuclear weapons and atomic industry from German universities and research institutes.”<sup>44</sup>

The Soviets were wary of North Korea’s nuclear initiatives. They particularly feared that North Korean nuclear capabilities would be shared with China, which, in their view, now posed a security threat even greater than that of Japan. Nonetheless, Moscow declined to withdraw its uranium specialists from the DPRK, as it had done from China, fearing that such a move would drive the North Koreans into Beijing’s camp. Moreover, the Soviets proceeded with constructing a nuclear research facility at Yongbyon and continued training Koreans at their main nuclear research center in the Soviet Union.<sup>45</sup> This assistance naturally encouraged the North Koreans in their hope for national nuclear capability. In October 1963, for



example, a Korean engineer boldly declared to his Soviet counterpart that it would cost much less to build nuclear weapons in the DPRK than in other countries, since “if we tell our workers...that we are taking up such a task, they will agree to work free of charge for several years.”<sup>46</sup>

By the late 1960s, Kim Il Sung’s success in protecting his rule from Soviet intervention while retaining Moscow’s economic and technological aid had created an unrealistic confidence that he could similarly succeed in extending his rule over South Korea. Soviet response to the resulting provocations of January 1968 set the parameters the relationship maintained for the following two decades.

Moscow had reacted coolly to the North Koreans’ enthusiastic statements in the early 1960s about the prospects for reunification,<sup>47</sup> but after Khrushchev’s ouster in 1964, which amounted to an admission by his successors of the Soviet leader’s mistakes, Kim Il Sung began to press the case more forcefully. When the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Andrei Kosygin traveled to Pyongyang in February 1965 to reestablish good relations with Pyongyang after the chill that had followed the Sino-Soviet split, Kim Il Sung placed him on the defensive regarding Moscow’s record of fighting imperialism, and hence of supporting Korean reunification.<sup>48</sup>

Since another war with the United States was clearly to be avoided, Kim Il Sung’s hope for reunification lay in the prospect for an uprising among the South Korean population that would overthrow the American-backed government in Seoul. Foreign Minister Pak Song Ch’ol thus assured Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in May 1966 that the Korean Workers’ Party intended “to achieve unification of the country peacefully, on a democratic basis, relying on the Korean people to make the American imperialists get out of South Korea. The struggle of the South Korean population itself plays a very important role in this regard.”<sup>49</sup>

At the same time, as Bernd Schaefer argues, the Cultural Revolution in China emboldened Kim Il Sung to believe that he could seize the mantle of leader of the communist movement in Asia from the distracted and discredited Mao. Acting Vietnamese Ambassador to Pyongyang, Hoang Muoi, reported in May 1967:

Our President Ho Chi Minh is already very old and will die soon. Whatever happens to Mao Zedong, his role as a world leader is nearing its end. [The Mongolian leader] Tsendenbal has a very weak personality. Kim Il Sung is relatively young and has a strong personality. The Korean leadership is pursuing a long-term strategy to propagate Kim Il Sung as the leader of the Asian people. They are assuming Kim might become the strongest personality of the revolutionary movement in Asia within ten to fifteen years.<sup>50</sup>

In order to take up this role, however, Kim Il Sung would have to match the revolutionary performance of the Vietnamese party, which was difficult to do while avoiding war with the U.S. The solution was to mount a spectacular action, disguised as a South Korean partisan attack, timed to coincide with the Tet offensive of January 1968. Commandos were sent to the presidential residence in Seoul to assassinate the ROK president, which supposedly would spark a popular uprising and a military coup, after which the new leaders in Seoul would ask Pyongyang for military support.

The complete failure of North Korea’s poorly disguised attack on the Blue House created an acute need to manufacture an American aggression to cover Pyongyang’s culpability for this disastrous “adventurism.” Thus, the hapless USS *Pueblo* was quickly seized, without consulting the Soviets in advance.<sup>51</sup> Moscow was naturally alarmed by the seizure of the American intelligence ship, correctly predicting repercussions against the USSR. However, since the Johnson administration, assuming the action to be part of a broader Soviet advance, responded with military mobilization aimed against the USSR as well as the DPRK, the Soviet leadership felt compelled to support Pyongyang publicly.<sup>52</sup>

As Khrushchev’s successor Leonid Brezhnev explained to a Plenum of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in April “Washington’s reaction was fierce, rude and aggressive.”

The government of the USA made accusations and threats addressed to the DPRK; considerable naval forces



and air forces were deployed near North Korea's shores, including the flag carrier of the 7<sup>th</sup> fleet, the atomic aircraft carrier *Enterprise*. Calls for the bombardment of Korean ports, forced return of the *Pueblo* etc. were heard in the USA. The Americans clearly counted on forcing the DPRK's retreat before the cannon barrels of their ships. In addition, President Johnson used this incident to further increase military preparations and heat up military hysteria on the international scale. New categories of reserves were mobilized into the army in the USA, demonstrative measures were taken to increase military preparedness in Europe. Under these circumstances, the CC CPSU and the Soviet government found it necessary to voice public support for the DPRK, a socialist country, with which we are moreover tied by a treaty of friendship and mutual help. We did it, supporting the right of the DPRK to defend its security and censuring the aggressive behavior of the USA.

Besides this, the Politburo and the Soviet government considered it useful to exert direct pressure on the leadership of the USA to lessen its urge and desire to inflame provocations in the immediate proximity of the borders of the USSR and in relation to countries allied with us. In this connection, a decision was made to send a communication to President Johnson on behalf of the Soviet government. The 3 February letter to Johnson drew attention to the fact that the USA is conducting a concentration of military fleet and aviation on an unprecedented scale in the immediate proximity of the Far Eastern regions of the Soviet Union. The American President was told that 'in our actions we must take into consideration what is happening near our borders and what touches on the interests of the security of the Soviet Union.' At the same time, it was stressed that efforts to act with regard to the DPRK by means of threats and pressure can only lead to a dead end and to further complications fraught with far-reaching consequences.<sup>53</sup>

At the same time, we took certain measures to increase the military preparedness of the Soviet military forces in the Far East in order to protect the country in case of complications and to let the Americans understand that we are not joking, but are approaching this matter seriously. The measures that were adopted worked. On 6 February, Johnson sent a reply in which he tried to explain the amassing of American military forces in the Sea of Japan by referring to militant statements and actions of the DPRK and assured us that 'prompt settlement [of the crisis] serves our common interests.' The President's message said in the end that he "gave an order to stop any further amassing of naval and air forces at the present time" and decreed that they would pull out one of the aircraft carriers with accompanying vessels from the region of the incident. Indeed, the aircraft carrier *Enterprise* was pulled away from the DPRK's shores.

American misperception of Moscow's role thus saved Kim Il Sung from U.S. retaliation, but Soviet protection came at the cost of intervention in the handling of the crisis. Brezhnev reported, "We insistently advised the Korean comrades, with whom we maintained systematic contact throughout this period, to show reserve, not to give the Americans an excuse for widening provocations, to settle the incident by political means." Once the U.S. agreed to talks with the DPRK regarding the *Pueblo*, the Soviets advised Kim Il Sung that North Korea could end the incident by deporting the ship's crew "without suffering any harm and even gaining political advantage."

Kim Il Sung did not feel obliged to accept Moscow's recommendation, however. As he was not yet ready to defuse the crisis, apparently wishing to use it both for domestic mobilization and to reinforce Soviet obligations to the DPRK, he retained the American crew, ordered key institutions and industries in Pyongyang to be evacuated, and instituted full military mobilization of the population.

Kim Il Sung overplayed his hand, however, when he attempted to invoke the DPRK security treaty with the USSR. On 31 January the North Korean leader sent a letter to Kosygin claiming that "Johnson's clique could at any time engage in a military adventure in Korea." American policy, Kim declared, "is a rude challenge to the DPRK and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, who are bound together by allied relations according to the treaty of friendship, cooperation, and mutual help between the DPRK and the USSR," and is "a serious threat to the security of all socialist countries and to peace in the entire world." Kim pointedly expressed confidence that "in case of the creation of a state of war in Korea as a result of a military attack by the American imperialists, the Soviet government and the fraternal Soviet people will fight with us against the aggressors..." Kim ended by suggesting that if such a situation materialized, the Soviets should "provide us without delay

military and other aid and support, and mobilize all means available.”

Kim Il Sung’s transparent attempt at drawing the Soviets into his “adventurism” was more than Brezhnev would countenance. As he put it to the Plenum, at this point, “matters took a serious turn.” Bypassing the more respectful party-to-party communication channels, the Soviet leader sent an official government communication asking Kim Il Sung to come to Moscow “for a comprehensive exchange of opinions regarding the situation which has emerged.” The Politburo, Brezhnev explained to the Party Plenum, had concluded that the “time had come to state our attitude clearly to the Korean comrades” regarding their “intention to bind the Soviet Union somehow, using the existence of the treaty between the USSR and the DPRK to involve us in supporting plans of the Korean friends which we knew nothing about.”

In a remarkable display of independence, Kim refused Brezhnev’s summons, explaining only that circumstances did not permit him to leave the country. In his place he sent Deputy Premier and Minister of Defense Kim Ch’ang Bong. In a long discussion on February 26, Brezhnev informed Kim Ch’ang Bong that the Soviets were “against taking the matter towards unleashing a war, though we fully understand the desire of the DPRK to strengthen its own defense, which we actively support.” The Soviet leader expressed concern about the implication of Pyongyang’s evacuation and noted that Moscow had no information from the Koreans “regarding their talks with the Americans, or the aims that these talks pursue.”

Brezhnev emphasized to Kim Ch’ang Bong that Moscow was unwilling to allow its treaty with the DPRK to drag the Soviet Union into war with the United States, a message that apparently had the desired effect. As Brezhnev reported to the Plenum, after the discussions with Kim Ch’ang Bong, the DPRK Foreign Ministry published a statement stressing its commitment to preserving peace in Korea. The Koreans also began informing the Soviet ambassador of the progress of their talks with the Americans and made it known that they were willing to exchange the crew of the *Pueblo* for North Koreans arrested in the ROK.

Moreover, on March 1 Kim Il Sung asked the Soviet ambassador to pass along to Moscow “his gratitude for the conversation with Kim Ch’ang Bong, for the sincere exposition of the opinion of the CC CPSU [Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union].” At the same time Kim Il Sung assured the Soviets that “the evacuation activities conducted in Pyongyang did not have an emergency character, that measures had been taken to stop panicky rumors, and that corrections were being made to the DPRK press statements.” In conclusion, Kim Il Sung declared that the North Koreans “have no intention of raising military hysteria.” At a meeting with Soviet officials in Pyongyang at the beginning of March, Kim reinforced this message by declaring that “war is not a question of tomorrow.”

The Soviet leadership was thus able to exert a restraining influence on Kim Il Sung, even while Kim did not feel obliged to follow all of Moscow’s recommendations. As evidence of the latter, the North Korean leader soon ceased providing the Soviets with timely reports on the crisis. Moreover, Kim Il Sung boldly attempted to exploit the event to extract even more aid from his Soviet patron. On May 6, the new North Korean ambassador to Moscow, Chon Tu-hwan, asserted to Kosygin that after the *Pueblo* incident, “the situation in the Korean peninsula region had become rather tense, the US and the South Koreans are resorting to blackmail and provocations, they are hastily preparing for a new war.” Holding to the fiction that the Blue House raid was the work of a strong partisan movement in the South, Chon declared that the people of South Korea, “inspired by the successes of the DPRK, are conducting an energetic military struggle against the puppet regime of Park Chung Hee. In the beginning of this year, a group of South Korean guerrillas undertook an attempt to attack the residence of Park Chung Hee.” Chon also invoked the Japanese bogeyman, declaring that “Japanese militarists contribute to the heightening of tensions on the peninsula... Japanese militarists are preparing plans for war against the DPRK.”

Coming to the pitch line, Chon affirmed that “the position of the DPRK government on the question of peaceful unification of the country remains unchanged. However, in light of the increasing danger of war, the DPRK is facing the task of defending the gains of socialism. That is why construction in the country is proceeding simultaneously in the economic and military fields.” Ignoring the enormous aid the DPRK had received from the fraternal countries, Chon declared that North Korea’s successes “are the result of the wise leadership of the party and the consistent implementation of the spirit of

independence and self-reliance (*juche*)...However, in the metallurgic industry, because of the shortage of coke, certain difficulties have emerged.” Thus, “considering the tense conditions in Korea and Asia, the government of the DPRK is striving to develop and strengthen cooperation between the DPRK and the USSR.”

Before he would discuss supplying coke, however, Kosygin wanted to ensure that the North Koreans would again provide the Soviet Union with adequate information on the developing crisis. Refusing to commit to specific economic aid until the reporting issue was resolved, Kosygin promised only to consider sending Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers, V.N. Novikov, to Pyongyang. He also asked Chon to tell Kim Il Sung “that we remember talks with him in the Soviet Union, when questions of Soviet-Korean and inter-party relations were frankly discussed,” and “stressed that the spirit of frankness remains the main thing in Soviet-Korean relations.”<sup>54</sup>

Novikov did, in fact, go to Pyongyang later that month, an opportunity Kim Il Sung exploited to make a direct appeal for additional economic aid. In a meeting on May 31, he claimed again that the DPRK’s failure to fulfill its economic plan was a consequence of the shortfall in deliveries of coke and coal from China, as well as of insufficient precipitation over the winter. After declaring that the DPRK would exchange no delegations with the PRC, he turned to the *Pueblo* issue, pointedly noting that the South Koreans had exploited the incident to receive major military aid from the U.S., including modern fighter jets. A Soviet embassy officer, Zvetkov, deflected this line of discussion by pointing out Pyongyang’s responsibility for this development, noting that “one should not overlook the fact that the events in Seoul, which occurred before the *Pueblo* incident, would also have constituted a major reason for the U.S. to concede to South Korean pressure for the delivery of modern weapons and equipment.”<sup>55</sup>

Undeterred, Kim Il Sung asked for acceleration in the construction of the second thermo-electric power plant in Pukchang, delivery of 20,000 tons of aluminum, construction of an aluminum plant, and additional deliveries of copper wire. Finally, to reinforce his turn away from China, as well as his vulnerability to American attack, Kim asked for permission to use an air route for special flights by members of the party leadership or the government that would fly straight from the DPRK into Soviet territory. Kim explained that “in this way, any contact with Chinese territory or flight over the open sea would be avoided....A forced landing might happen on flights over Chinese territory and insults by Red Guards might occur. The flight route over the sea would be dangerous, especially after the *Pueblo* incident...We do not fear death, but we have to live in order to finish the revolution.”<sup>56</sup>

Soviet/North Korean interaction during the crises created by Pyongyang’s twin provocations of 1968 thus reveals that Kim Il Sung had, by this time, established a considerable degree of political autonomy within the Soviet bloc. Moscow was able to exercise a certain level of influence over Pyongyang, at least with regard to actions that might have negative repercussions for the Soviet Union. However, in light of the threat from China, the Soviets did not attempt to intervene with anywhere near the force they had used in 1956, and Kim Il Sung apparently understood that Moscow’s constraint gave him far greater freedom to act. At the same time, the DPRK remained dependent on the Soviet Union for diplomatic and military backing, as well as economic assistance. North Koreans demanded aid from Moscow with remarkable boldness. While the amount of assistance waxed and waned over the next two decades, Moscow nonetheless continued to provide North Korea’s essential security while asking little in return. North Korea’s relations with the Soviet Union thus made it possible for Kim Il Sung to transform the *juche* idea into a full-blown nationalist ideology. At the same time, however, his confidence in the DPRK’s special position of entitlement poorly equipped him to respond effectively to the dramatic changes soon to be unleashed by Mikhail Gorbachev.

## **MOSCOW’S ABANDONMENT OF PYONGYANG IN FAVOR OF SEOUL, 1986-91**

By the time Gorbachev rose to power in Moscow in 1985, South Korea’s striking economic success had begun to raise doubts in the Soviet leadership about the wisdom of its unwavering support of the DPRK. Consequently, in January 1986, despite Pyongyang’s intense lobbying on the issue, Gorbachev decided that the Soviet Union would not boycott the Olympic

Games to be held in Seoul in 1988, nor would its East European allies.<sup>57</sup> In May, the Politburo followed with an official acknowledgement that South Korea “was becoming a factor [in the] global, military-strategic balance” and as a consequence, resolved to increase trade and cultural contacts with the ROK.<sup>58</sup>

Gorbachev’s “new thinking” toward East Asia unveiled in July 1986 called for bold measures to transform the strategic and economic environment in Asia, including creating a collective security system for the region and eliminating nuclear weapons. The Soviet leader hoped somehow to maintain the status quo with North Korea while advancing these new initiatives, and thus took pains to placate Kim Il Sung. When the North Korean leader came to Moscow in October of that year to present new requests for economic and military aid and obtain assurances that the Soviet Union would continue to support Pyongyang’s position toward Seoul, Gorbachev listened politely to Kim’s unconvincing reports of a “big movement” in favor of socialism among the South Korean people. As he later explained, “North Korea was seen as a privileged ally, close to us through the socialist family group and the treaties of mutual friendship and protection. For this reason, we fulfilled virtually all of Pyongyang’s wishes for weapons deliveries and economic help.” Indeed, following Kim’s visit, the Soviet Union provided North Korea with large quantities of advanced weapons systems, including SAM-5 missiles, early warning radar systems, and MiG 29 and SU-25 fighters. Moreover, despite rapidly growing trade and cultural exchanges between the USSR and the ROK, Gorbachev flatly declared to Kim Il Sung that “the Soviet Union won’t engage with them.”<sup>59</sup>

Given the heightened insecurity in Pyongyang created by the shifting balance of power, Gorbachev’s assurances prompted Kim Il Sung to over-play his hand, as he had in 1968. Having failed to persuade his allies to boycott the Seoul Olympics, he decided in October 1987 to dissuade international visitors from attending the games by planting a bomb on a South Korean commercial airliner, killing all 115 persons onboard. This terrorist act could hardly have been further from Gorbachev’s strategy in the region and therefore prompted Moscow to intervene to ensure that North Korea would not commit additional atrocities.<sup>60</sup>

As the Olympics approached, Moscow intensified its efforts to lure investment from South Korea and Japan by announcing in April 1988, its intention to create a Special Economic Zone in the Far East. South Korean business conglomerates responded aggressively. Samsung, Lucky-Gold Star, and Daewoo participated in the Leningrad Electronics Show in May and rapidly increased exports to the Soviet Union and East European countries, mainly in the form of consumer electronics, machinery, and construction technology. Throughout 1988, South Korean businessmen made nearly 4,000 trips to the Soviet bloc, ten times the number of the previous year. A new ocean route was established from Nakhodka to Pusan to facilitate export of Soviet raw materials to the ROK.<sup>61</sup>

As Pyongyang feared, Seoul accompanied its economic presence with pressure on Moscow to establish diplomatic relations. With the Soviet economy dangerously under-performing, Gorbachev’s government was receptive to such a shift, as his key foreign policy advisers concluded that the Soviet Union could no longer afford to continue making concessions to North Korea, either financially or diplomatically. As foreign policy advisers Georgii Shakhnazarov and Anatolii Cherniaev argued in a September 30 memorandum, the Soviets’ “almost unflinching readiness” to meet the demands of “militant regimes” for weapons harmed Soviet relations with the West because the use of these weapons by such countries was “in the eyes of the world community identified...with our intentions in this or that region...Why should our supply [of weapons] satisfy the ambitions of...leaders [of such regimes] and in fact sanction the policies of, for example, Kim Il Sung or Mengistu, which run contrary to common sense and their own interests, not to mention our global interests?”<sup>62</sup> Anatolii Cherniaev pressed this argument in another memorandum, on December 13, concluding that open friendship with people like Kim Il Sung was inconsistent with Soviet efforts to improve its standing in the international community and would undermine *perestroika*, both diplomatically and economically.<sup>63</sup>

By late 1988, reconsideration of Soviet support for North Korea was accompanied by acceleration of “new thinking” toward Seoul. A policy paper prepared for Alexander Yakovlev, the new Central Committee Secretary in charge of international questions, bluntly criticized Moscow’s traditional approach of “unequivocally orienting itself towards our friends in the

DPRK, adjusting our policy to their dogmatic line, frequently contrary to our own long-term interests.” As long as the Soviet Union remains at odds with South Korea, “this dynamically developing country, it is more difficult to push forward our initiatives concerning the Asia-Pacific region.” The paper concluded that “due to political, military-strategic, and current economic reasons, it is a ripe and necessary time to turn from demonstratively ignoring South Korea to accepting the *de facto* existing realities. Soviet policy must not be an assistant to the policy of the DPRK.”<sup>64</sup>

The Politburo adopted the above recommendations without dissent in November, although Gorbachev noted the need to move cautiously in making such a significant shift.<sup>65</sup> Shakhnazarov urged Gorbachev, however, to disregard Pyongyang’s complaints about increased contacts with South Korea.

The way we have it is: every time when Pyongyang sounds an angry “warning” we begin assuring them that everything will be as it was and we don’t have any serious intentions of having contacts with South Korea. In reality, we are now talking precisely about the intention of acting in that direction, which is entirely in accordance with the interests of the Soviet Union, and generally speaking, will contribute to a favorable development of events in Asia. Why should we mollify Kim Il Sung and assure him that we will not change anything? Wouldn’t it be more correct and honest to say directly that further implementation of this line is unreasonable, that everything had shifted in the world, and one should look for new approaches to the settling of the situation also on the Korean peninsula; otherwise, if we do not show initiative here, the West will win.<sup>66</sup>

The following month the South Koreans advanced their cause by informing Moscow that they would favorably consider the Soviet request for a \$300 million commercial loan and would study a possible \$40 million project to build a trade center in the Soviet Far East. In light of this development, Gorbachev instructed Shevardnadze to stop in Pyongyang on his way to Japan to attempt to mollify Kim Il Sung. The foreign minister assured Kim that Moscow’s growing ties with South Korea would not negatively affect its relations with Pyongyang, but the North Koreans were not persuaded. Foreign Minister Kim Yong Nam sharply criticized Soviet actions, prompting an indignant Shevardnadze to declare “I am a communist, and I give you my word as a party member: the USSR leadership does not have any intention and will not establish diplomatic relations with South Korea.”<sup>67</sup>

Despite Shevardnadze’s protestations, Moscow began taking steps to do precisely that. Trade and academic exchanges between the Soviet Union and South Korea increased rapidly in early 1989. Increasingly concerned, the North Koreans pressed Gorbachev to visit the DPRK during his forthcoming trip to Beijing in May, hoping thereby to derail Soviet/ROK rapprochement. Pyongyang’s efforts failed, however, because Gorbachev feared that his reputation as a reformer would be tarnished by a trip to Pyongyang.<sup>68</sup>

The Soviet leader nonetheless hesitated to establish diplomatic relations with Seoul, hoping somehow to reap economic benefits from ties with South Korea, along with political advantages from reduced tension on the peninsula, without disrupting Moscow’s long-standing ties to the DPRK. Thus, even as he moved boldly to solidify Sino-Soviet rapprochement during his trip to Beijing in May, he equivocated on Korea. The Soviet leader reportedly told Li Peng, “Kim Il Sung and the North Korean leadership are probably afraid that we can go from trade contacts to political ties with South Korea. This, however, is out of the question. We are not going to agree on cross-recognition. At least for today, this is not our policy.”<sup>69</sup>

Following his trip to Beijing, Gorbachev continued to resist taking the inevitable step regarding Seoul. The Soviet apparatus, however, became bolder in criticizing Moscow’s relationship to Pyongyang. Radio Moscow reported that Soviet specialists had concluded that the extensive aid the USSR had provided North Korea since 1948 had not been effective. The solution, in its view, was for North Korea to “accept individual accountability.”<sup>70</sup> Foreign policy advisers Brutents and Cherniaev pointed out to Gorbachev that their step-by-step approach to normalization of relations with Seoul was not bringing the desired results, either politically or economically. “In fact, we are taking step after step towards recognition of South Korea, without obtaining in exchange any substantial advantages.” They recommended instead, immediate recognition of Seoul in exchange for South Korean guarantees of large-scale economic projects in the Soviet Union. As for the DPRK, Gorbachev’s



advisers argued unrealistically that Kim Il Sung would not cause too many problems, as long as Moscow remained “fairly loyal to the North Korean regime.”<sup>71</sup>

In May 1990, the issue came to a head. Having received new reports of the dire straits of Soviet finances and an invitation from the South Korean President, Roh Tae Woo, for Foreign Policy Adviser Anatoly Dobrynin to visit Seoul, Gorbachev bluntly informed Dobrynin, “we need some money.” He instructed Dobrynin to accept the invitation to Seoul and to use the occasion to explore a major loan from the South Korean government. Gorbachev also agreed to meet Roh secretly during his forthcoming trip to San Francisco, a step he would take without informing his Foreign Ministry.<sup>72</sup>

During the brief meeting with Roh in Gorbachev’s hotel suite in San Francisco, the two leaders discussed a South Korean loan and Seoul’s reciprocal request for Soviet help in bringing about inter-Korean rapprochement.<sup>73</sup> Roh followed the San Francisco meeting with a personal message to Gorbachev proposing an official meeting of the foreign ministers of the two countries. While it delayed taking that step, the Soviet leadership nonetheless resolved to establish diplomatic relations with Seoul as of 1 January 1991. Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, who had been a voice of restraint over the issue, nobly volunteered for the unenviable task of traveling to Pyongyang to break the news to Kim Il Sung.

Shevardnadze’s meetings in Pyongyang in September were predictably dramatic. The foreign minister attempted to persuade his counterpart, Kim Yong Nam, that establishment of relations with Seoul would benefit the DPRK since it would enable the Soviets to more effectively press the North Korean position on issues such as withdrawal of US troops from South Korea. He also declared that the 1961 treaty of mutual defense and assistance would remain in force.

After the private meeting between the two foreign ministers, the delegations assembled across a long conference table. Kim Yong Nam initially stated that he was not prepared to respond to Shevardnadze’s message, but after an aide entered the room and handed him a message, he pulled out a lengthy memorandum that had been prepared for the occasion and began to read. Alarmed by the collapse of fraternal governments throughout Eastern Europe, the North Korean leadership rejected Shevardnadze’s argument and, in desperation, threatened retaliation against the Soviet Union. The memorandum asserted that recognition of Seoul would contribute to the permanent division of Korea, and would embolden South Korea to attempt to absorb North Korea, following the German model. Since Soviet recognition of the ROK would destroy the basis for its 1961 treaty with the DPRK, Pyongyang would feel free to act on its own, without consulting Moscow, and would feel free to build its own nuclear weapons. The DPRK would also feel free to extend diplomatic recognition to Soviet republics that were agitating for independence from Moscow.

Kim Yong Nam warned Shevardnadze that North Korea would not follow in the footsteps of its Eastern European allies. “The USSR actively inspired *perestroika* politics in the GDR, as a result of which the situation changed sharply and she was annexed by the FRG.” Kim concluded with an accurate prediction that, “the situation in Korea will not turn out the way the USA and South Korea want it, and it will not develop the way you expect.”<sup>74</sup>

Shevardnadze responded most forcefully to the threat to develop nuclear weapons, arguing that such a step would seriously harm Pyongyang’s relations with the international community and would force the Soviet Union to respond. Kim Yong Nam angrily rejected Shevardnadze’s position, informing him that it would be “very difficult” for him to see Kim Il Sung. A shaken Shevardnadze immediately left Pyongyang, several hours ahead of schedule.

North Korean threats backfired. Shevardnadze had planned to use the occasion of the meeting of the UN General Assembly later that month to announce jointly with the South Korean foreign minister that the USSR and ROK would establish diplomatic relations as of 1 January 1991. However, when ROK Foreign Minister Choi Ho Joong requested that he move up the date, Shevardnadze abruptly changed it to 30 September 1990, reportedly saying under his breath, “That will take care of our friends.”<sup>75</sup>

*Nodong Sinmun* denounced the news from New York under the headline “Diplomatic Relations Sold and Bought with



Dollars.” The newspaper declared that “the Soviet Union today is not the Soviet Union of past days when it adhered to socialist internationalism, but it has degenerated into a state of a certain other character. . . . The Soviet Union sold off the dignity and honor of a socialist power and the interests and faith of an ally for \$2.3 billion.”<sup>76</sup>

North Korea’s charge that Soviet bargaining with Seoul was undignified had more than a little validity. In January 1991, increasingly desperate for cash, Gorbachev shocked the South Koreans by sending Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Rogachev to Seoul before the agreed-upon start date for negotiations to deliver a letter asking for \$5 billion in aid, including \$2 billion in an immediate cash loan. After intense bargaining, the ROK agreed to provide \$1 billion in cash and negotiate the remainder of the aid program later that month. The agreement subsequently concluded provided another \$1.5 billion in loans to Moscow to finance imports of Korean consumer goods and industrial raw materials and \$500 million to finance plants and other capital goods. Since Seoul had to borrow to provide this \$3 billion in aid and justified the deal to a skeptical public by claiming benefits to national security, South Korean officials made it clear to the Soviets that the aid would have to be accompanied by cessation of Soviet military aid to North Korea. Consequently, in 1991, Moscow’s military support to the DPRK, which had guaranteed the country’s security since its inception, abruptly evaporated.<sup>77</sup>

## CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY

This brief survey of the evolution of North Korea’s relations with the Soviet Union suggests that the distinctive characteristics of the DPRK’s approach to foreign relations did not simply arise from the theoretical bent or personal peculiarities of Kim Il Sung and his associates. Instead, the *juche* system was created over time through the interplay of Kim Il Sung’s goals and character with his concrete experience of relations with his allies, most importantly, with the Soviet Union. The profound mistrust and fear that underlie *juche* and the dangerous freedom to engage in reckless provocations it provided have left a difficult legacy. As Pyongyang searches for new means to ensure the DPRK’s survival and prosperity in a radically altered environment, it is hampered by a deeply entrenched tendency toward hyper-suspiciousness of outsiders’ intentions, combined with little experience operating according to the norms of the non-communist, developed world.

For the United States, the legacy of North Korean/Soviet relations means that as the U.S. moves toward normalization of relations with Pyongyang and establishment of a permanent peace regime on the peninsula, it must take steps to build trust and economic security alongside progress toward denuclearization. Given North Korea’s history, pursuing the latter in the absence of the former is unlikely to succeed. It will take time and perseverance to overcome the legacy of the past, but the U.S. can draw encouragement from awareness that the DPRK’s present condition is the result of a particular set of circumstances. As the U.S. joins other states in creating sharply different circumstances on the peninsula, it can make it possible for North Korean foreign policy to take a new, mutually beneficial direction.

<sup>1</sup> For an exhaustive account of the battle at Nomonhan, see Alvin D. Coox, *Nomonhan: Japan Against Russia, 1939* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> For accounts of the Japanese intervention in Siberia, see John A. White, *The Siberian Intervention* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950) and John J. Stephan, *The Russian Far East, A History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994): 126-140.

<sup>3</sup> Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation [hereafter AVPRF], Fond 0430, Opis 2, Delo 18, Papka 5, Listy 18-30.

<sup>4</sup> In 1942, the Soviet consulate in Seoul began sending reports to Moscow on Korean economic resources that could be claimed as “enemy property.” These reports included, for example, a survey submitted in July entitled, “The Economy of Korea and the Most Important Measures of the Japanese Government in Korea in 1941-42,” which noted that all private industry on the peninsula had been mobilized for the war effort under the strict supervision of the Japanese governor general and the General Staff of the Japanese-run Korean Army. AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opis 1, Delo 10, Papka 1, Listy 3-8. Another report on the development of industry in Korea identified the names of Japanese firms involved in Korea and the percentage of capital in Korean industry that was Japanese. AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opis 1, Delo 10, Papka 1, Listy 24-37.

<sup>5</sup> Russian records of the confiscations have not yet been released. The information cited is from U.S. Army Intelligence reports cited in Hak K. Paik, “North Korean State Formation, 1945-1950,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Pennsylvania, 1993): 558-567.

<sup>6</sup> Erik van Ree, *Socialism in One Zone: Stalin’s Policy in Korea, 1945-1947* (Oxford, New York, Munich: Berg Publishers, 1989): 119.

- <sup>7</sup> Jacob Malik, "On the Question of a Single Government for Korea," 10 December 1945, AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opus 1, Delo 15, Papka 1, Listy 18-21.
- <sup>8</sup> Russian State Archive of Social and Political History [hereafter RGASPI], Fond 17, Opus 128, Delo 205, Listy 2-4.
- <sup>9</sup> Report "External Trade of the DPRK in the First Quarter of 1950." AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opus 6, Delo 49, Papka 22, Listy 22-27.
- <sup>10</sup> Report from Shtykov to Vyshinsky September 1949. AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opus 5, Delo 32, Inv. 250, Papka 13, Listy 44-45.
- <sup>11</sup> A major portion of the voluminous records on Korea for the pre-Korean War years in the archive of the Russian Foreign Ministry consists of Kim Il Sung's requests to send groups of individuals to various educational institutions around the USSR and the arrangements worked out to fulfill these requests.
- <sup>12</sup> Ciphred telegram from Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK, Terentii F. Shtykov, to Foreign Minister of the USSR, A. Ia. Vyshinsky, 19 January 1950. AVPRF, Fond 059a, Opus 5a, Delo 3, Papka 11, Listy 87-91.
- <sup>13</sup> For confirmation of this assumption see FBIS-EAS-90-250, 28 December 1950, "Yu Song-chol's Testimony Part 11," pp. 13-14.
- <sup>14</sup> AVPRF, Fond 1 DVO, Opus 9, Delo 7, Papka 8.
- <sup>15</sup> AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opus 5, Delo 21, Inv. 162, Papka 12, List 5.
- <sup>16</sup> RGASPI, Fond 17, Opus 137, Delo 143, List 3.
- <sup>17</sup> RGASPI, Fond 17, Opus 137, Delo 143, Listy 102, 103.
- <sup>18</sup> Conversation between Stalin and the governmental delegation of the DPRK headed by the Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of the DPRK, Kim Il Sung, 7 March 1949. Cited in Evgenii P. Bajanov and Natalia Bajanova, "The Korean Conflict, 1950-1953: The Most Mysterious War of the 20th Century," unpublished manuscript.
- <sup>19</sup> For documentation of the decision-making process, see Kathryn Weathersby, "To Attack or Not to Attack?: Stalin, Kim Il Sung and the Prelude to War," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 5 (1995): 1-9.
- <sup>20</sup> For documentation, see K. Weathersby, "Should We Fear This?: Stalin and the Danger of War with America," Working Paper No. 39, Cold War International History Project (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Institute for Scholars, July 2002)
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> Telegram from Shtykov to Stalin, 29 May 1950, Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, Cited in Bajanov and Bajanova, p. 57.
- <sup>23</sup> Telegram from Fyn-Si [Stalin] to Kim Il Sung (via Shtykov), 28 August 1950, Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, Fond 45, Opus 1, Delo 347, Listy 5-6, 10-11.
- <sup>24</sup> See Shen Zhihua, "Sino-North Korean Conflict and its Resolution during the Korean War," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 14/15 (Winter 2003/Spring 2004): 9-24.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.118. Citing ciphred telegram from Shtykov to Fyn Si (Stalin), 14 October 1950.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199. Citing ciphred telegram from Fyn Si (Stalin) to Kim Il Sung, 14 October 1950.
- <sup>28</sup> Russian language texts of Kim Il Sung's speeches from 1945-1950 are found in the files of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History.
- <sup>29</sup> Shen Zhihua, "Sino-North Korean Conflict and its Resolution during the Korean War," pp. 9-24.
- <sup>30</sup> See K. Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance* (Washington and Stanford: Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Stanford University Press, 1998): 90-116.
- <sup>31</sup> Transcripts of conversations between Stalin and Zhou Enlai held 20 August 1952, 3 September 1952, and 19 September 1952, Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, Fond 45, Opus 1, Delo 329, Listy 54-72, 75-87, and Delo 343, Listy 97-103. *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 6-7 (Winter 1995/1996): 5-20.
- <sup>32</sup> For estimates of the damage and casualties, see B.C. Koh, "The War's Impact on the Korean Peninsula," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 2:1 (1993): 57-76.
- <sup>33</sup> See K. Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," pp. 90-116.
- <sup>34</sup> For a discussion of the East German reaction to the scale of the North Korean requests, see Bernd Schaefer, "Weathering the Sino-Soviet Conflict: The GDR and North Korea, 1949-1989," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 14/15 (Winter 2003/Spring 2004): 9-24. For a detailed examination of the rebuilding of the city of Hamhung by the GDR, see Rudiger Frank, *Die DDR und Nordkorea: Der Wiederaufbau der Stadt Hamhung von 1954-1962* (Aachen: Shaker, 1996). For a discussion of Hungarian assistance to the DPRK, see Karoly Fendler, "Economic Assistance and Loans from Socialist Countries to North Korea in the Postwar Years, 1953-1963," *Asien*, No. 42, January 1992 (Hamburg).
- <sup>35</sup> Erik van Ree, "The Limits of *Juche*: North Korea's Dependence on Soviet Industrial Aid, 1953-76," *The Journal of Communist Studies* Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 1989): 57-58.
- <sup>36</sup> The following discussion of the 1956 crisis is based on Andrei Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea, The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002); Nobuo Shimotomai, "Pyongyang in 1956," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 16 (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 455-463; James F. Person, "'We Need Help from Outside': The North Korean Opposition Movement of 1956," Working Paper No. 52, *The Cold War International History Project* (August 2006); and James F. Person, "New Evidence on North Korea in 1956," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 16 (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 447-454.
- <sup>37</sup> For documentation see K. Weathersby, "DPRK Relations with the Soviet Union and China, 1950-1972," Report on the International Workshop on Foreign Relations of the Two Koreas during the Cold War Era, 11 May 2006, Seoul, Korea, published by the Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Kyungnam University and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* "Account of the reception of the delegation of our party by comrade Kim Il Sung and the talks that took place in this meeting between him and com. Manush" 10 October 1961. Albanian State Archive.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Conversation between Soviet Ambassador in North Korea, Vasily Moskovsky, and North Korean Foreign Minister, Pak Song Ch'ol, 24 August 1962. AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opus 18, Papka 93, Delo 5, Listy 22-23. Cited in Balazs Szalontai and Sergei Radchenko, "North Korea's Efforts to Acquire

Nuclear Technology and Nuclear Weapons: Evidence from Russian and Hungarian Archives,” Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 53 (August 2006): 33.

<sup>43</sup> Conversation between Soviet Ambassador in North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and Czechoslovak Ambassador Moravec. 15 April 1963. AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opis 19, Papka 97, Delo 4, List 140. Cited in Balazs Szalontai and Sergei Radchenko, “North Korea’s Efforts to Acquire Nuclear Technology and Nuclear Weapons: Evidence from Russian and Hungarian Archives,” p. 36.

<sup>44</sup> Conversation between Soviet Ambassador in North Korea, Vasily Moskovsky, and the German Ambassador, 26 August 1963. AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opis 19, Papka 97, Delo 5, List 93. Cited in Balazs Szalontai and Sergei Radchenko, “North Korea’s Efforts to Acquire Nuclear Technology and Nuclear Weapons: Evidence from Russian and Hungarian Archives,” p. 37.

<sup>45</sup> For information on this assistance, see James Clay Moltz and Alexandre Y. Mansourov (eds.), *The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia* (New York & London: Routledge, 2000): 15-26.

<sup>46</sup> Conversation between Soviet Ambassador in North Korea, Vasily Moskovsky, and Soviet specialists in North Korea, 16 October 1963. AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opis 19, Papka 97, Delo 5, List 185. Cited in Balazs Szalontai and Sergei Radchenko, “North Korea’s Efforts to Acquire Nuclear Technology and Nuclear Weapons: Evidence from Russian and Hungarian Archives,” p. 39.

<sup>47</sup> Memorandum of Conversation with Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK, Comrade V.P. Moskovsky, 26 February 1964. Archive of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Collection 02/1, File 56, Archival Unit 60, Information 2, 1964. Translated by Vojtech Mastny.

<sup>48</sup> Memorandum of Conversation with USSR Ambassador to the DPRK, Comrade V.P. Moskovsky, concerning the negotiations between a Soviet delegation, led by Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Kosygin, and the KWP leadership, which took place on 16 February 1965 at the USSR embassy in the DPRK. Archive of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Collection 02/1, File 96, Archival Unit 101, Information 13, 1962-66. Translated by Vojtech Mastny.

<sup>49</sup> Record of Conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK, Comrade Pak Song-ch’ol, 9 April 1966. From the diary of A.A.Gromyko. AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opis 22, Papka 107, Delo 4, Listy 1-5) Translated by Sergey Radchenko.

<sup>50</sup> Bernd Schaefer, “North Korean ‘Adventurism’ and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-72,” Working Paper No. 44, Cold War International History Project (October 2004): 10-11.

<sup>51</sup> Informational Report of the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK on 24 January 1968, 9:00-9:40 p.m., for the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of all Socialist Countries accredited to the DPRK. MFAA, C 1023/73. Translated by Karen Riechert for the Cold War International History Project.

<sup>52</sup> For a detailed history of the American side of the *Pueblo* incident, see Mitchell B. Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident: A Spy Ship and the Failure of American Foreign Policy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002). For a discussion of the implication of Russian documents on the incident, see Mitchell B. Lerner, “A Dangerous Miscalculation: New Evidence from Communist-Bloc Archives about North Korea and the Crisis of 1968,” *Journal of Cold War History*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Winter 2004): 3-21.

<sup>53</sup> The following discussion of the 1968 crisis is taken from Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev’s lengthy speech at the April CC CPSU Plenum. “On the current problems of the international situation and on the struggle of the CPSU for the unity of the international communist movement,” 9 April 1968. Russian State Archive of Recent History (RGANI), Fond 2, Opis 3, Delo 95, Listy 50-58. Cited in Sergey S. Radchenko, “The Soviet Union and the North Korean Seizure of the USS *Pueblo*: Evidence from Russian Archives,” Working Paper No. 47, Cold War International History Project.

<sup>54</sup> Record of Conversation between Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR A.N.Kosygin and Ambassador of the DPRK in Moscow, Chon Tu-hwan, 6 May 1968. AVPRF, Fond 102, Opis 28, Papka 25, Delo 2. Cited in Sergey S. Radchenko, “The Soviet Union and the North Korean Seizure of the USS *Pueblo*: Evidence from Russian Archives.”

<sup>55</sup> Memorandum of a Conversation with the First Secretary of the USSR Embassy in the DPRK, Comrade Zvetkov, and Comrade Jarck, on 26 July 1968 between 14:30 and 16:15 in the USSR embassy, 29 July 1968. Ministry for Foreign Relations of the German Democratic Republic. MFAA, G-A 320. Translated by Karen Riechert for the Cold War International History Project.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas, A Contemporary History* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997): 182.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>59</sup> Sergey S. Radchenko, “Building Bridges, Burning Bridges: Soviet Moves in Korea, 1988-1991,” Report on the International Workshop on Foreign Relations of the Two Koreas during the Cold War Era, 11 May 2006, Seoul, Korea, published by the Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Kyungnam University and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, citing Vadim Medvedev, *Raspad: Kak On Nazreal v Mirovoi Sisteme Sotsializma* (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnaya Otnosheniia, 1994): 325; Oberdorfer, pp. 158-160.

<sup>60</sup> Oberdorfer, p. 186.

<sup>61</sup> Dae-Ho Byun, *North Korea’s Foreign Policy: The Juche Ideology and the Challenge of Gorbachev’s New Thinking* (Research Center for Peace and Unification of Korea: Seoul, 1991): 207-208.

<sup>62</sup> Sergey Radchenko, “Building Bridges...” quoting Anatolii Cherniaev, *Shest Let s Gorbachevym: po dnevnikovym zapisiyam* (Moskva: Progress Publishers, 1993): 259-60.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

<sup>64</sup> Radchenko, “Building Bridges...” quote from Vladimir Li, *Rossia i Koreia v Geopolitike Evrazijskogo Vostoka (XX vek)* (Moskva: Nauchnaia Kniga, 2000): 235.

<sup>65</sup> Radchenko, “Building Bridges...” citing documents from the Gorbachev Foundation archive; Oberdorfer, pp. 198-199.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Oberdorfer, pp. 203, 204.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

<sup>69</sup> Evgenii Bazhanov, “Soviet Policy toward South Korea under Gorbachev,” in Il Yung Chung, ed., *Korea and Russia: Toward the 21st Century* (Seoul: Sejong Institute, 1992): 98.

<sup>70</sup> Byun, *North Korea’s Foreign Policy*, p. 223.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>72</sup> Oberdorfer, pp. 208-209.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 211-212.

<sup>74</sup> Oberdorfer, pp. 214-216; Radchenko, citing Aleksandr Kapto, *Na Perekrestkakh Zhizni: Politicheskie Memuary* (Moskva: Sotsialno-Politicheskii Zhurnal, 1996): 432-36.

<sup>75</sup> Oberdorfer, p. 217.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226-228.