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Koreans have suffered a tragic fate under communism in the 20th century. After the Bolsheviks seized power, Korean farms in Russia's Far East were destroyed. Under Stalin, in 1937, all Koreans in the Far East were deported to Kazakhstan and Middle Asia as "Chinese spies." Somehow, Koreans in the USSR have rebounded from these disasters and many have even become prosperous in spite of the Soviet system. After World War II, North Koreans sent workers to special work zones in the USSR under conditions of extreme hardship. Many of those who tried to escape were sentenced to death by North Korea. In North Korea people are bombarded with the philosophy of ju chey, which is their dictator's view of national self-reliance. Only the pure loyal followers of Kim II Sung are able to join the privileged class of yanbyans. Most people's passports are stamped with "unfit origin." The cultural deformations in the DPRK are too deep to expect any gradual reforms as in Eastern Europe.

Soviet Koreans

History disposes of the fortunes of various nations in different ways. The historical fate of Koreans in the 20th century has been particularly tragic. First, there was the colonial domination of Korea by Japan for 35 years, then came the split of Korea due to the empire-building ambitions of the USSR and the USA and their geopolitical strategies in the Far East. As a result, the Koreans, similar to Jews, Germans, Armenians, and many others, turned out to be divided, exiled, and without national wholeness. After World War II, Korea was divided into two parts, the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the South and the People’s Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the North. In addition, there are many ethnic Koreans who have been scattered throughout the Soviet Union, China, and other parts of the world.

In the first part of this article, I will describe the state of Soviet Koreans as I have come to understand through my own
research and involvement. By will of fate, Soviet Koreans have been involved in the gigantic historical adventure known as "the building of socialism." I will begin with some general comments about Soviet national policy and then turn to historical data about Koreans in the Soviet Union.

Before Mr. Gorbachev came to power in 1985, the general situation in national and ethnic relations seemed to be calm in the USSR, even though there were groups of so-called dissidents who were fighting for the restoration of national cultures and the independence of specific republics of the USSR. Rapid mass independence movements on a national level started in 1986 in Alma-Ata and by 1990 led to a declaration of independence in the Baltic republics. It was quite unexpected both for communists in power and for foreign spectators. A false impression was created that perestroika was the reason for this process. Really, only that small amount of freedom and democracy turned out to be enough to bring national consciousness suppressed by communist totalitarianism out into the open. In the communist mire, a real national storm had suddenly started.

Due to the dynamics of glasnost, the nationality factor was brought into the scene of Soviet political history. Therefore, glasnost has been felt with special intensity in non-Russian regions of the USSR, where social, economic, cultural, and ecological issues are all related to the fight for restoration of national traditions, local symbols, and the establishment of local languages. Obligations, and new political structures formed. It is becoming absolutely clear that the USSR is not "a federation of free nations," but an empire divided quite awkwardly. The "great historical unity of the Soviet people," a cliche invented by ideologists of the Central Committee of the CPSU, does not exist.

The Soviet empire is the last of the great European empires which collapsed during the 20th century. It seems that a similar fate may face the...
Soviet Union as with the European empires. However, the Soviet Union is quite peculiar. It resembles the empires of the Hapsburgs and the Ottoman Empire because it is a conglomeration of territories held together by means of administration and military power. However, it differs in that the Russians comprise the majority of the population. There is a hidden paradox: the Russians do not enjoy economic prosperity as a result of their imaginary colonies. The poverty of villages in Central Russia can easily be compared to that of remote nations. The difference is that this is not a Russian Empire but a communist empire; it is not ruled by a royal family but dominated by a political party which has usurped the power of the state. This can help explain some of the anomalies and contradictions of multinational unity. These anomalies have grown up in part spontaneously and in part intentionally. They are a result of the Bolshevik coup d’etat of 1917.

"Friendship of nations" is the main thesis of Soviet national policy. It is well known that friendship implies knowledge, understanding, and respect. "Soviet friendship" divides the nationalities into two parts; statistics are kept on some of them, while the other part results from the "statistics of friendship." The list of the latter is quite long; Germans, Greeks, Romans, many nationalities of the Caucasus, as well as Koreans.

At the markets of Dnepropetrovsk, Rostov-na-Donu, Bukhara, and Tashkent, one will inevitably find Koreans selling vegetables and greens. They are known for the best onions, which are necessary for many national meals of the Russian, Ukrainian, and Uzbek cuisine. It seems that the fate of the Koreans in the communist empire has been similar to the onions, quite bitter. Here, then, are a few words about their history.

On the territory of the Russian state in the littoral in the Far East, Koreans appeared in great numbers in the 1860’s after the drastic famine in Manchuria. The governors of the Russian czars in the Far Eastern coastal areas were not interested in “Asian elements,” and they tolerated the refugees as an exception, with the intention to send them back. Merciful Cossacks who came to the region from Lake Baikal and Western Siberia, and some of the peasant settlers from the Volga who had traveled to the region via Suez and Singapore, allowed the Koreans to inhabit their territories. The benefits turned out to be quite great. The virgin soil of the Far East could not be turned by a plough, but required digging by hand with spade and mattock. Koreans ploughed thousands of hectares in this way and stayed on as skillful cultivators. They seemed complacent and were respected by
everyone: by the governors for their labor and their peaceful character, by the peasants for their assistance, and by the clergymen for their inclination to join the Orthodox Church. Even the professional thieves liked the Koreans, because they were easy to rob, keeping all treasures under their pillow.

Gradually the Koreans started to found their own villages and to inhabit quarters in the cities of Ussurijsk, Vladivostok, and Khabarovsk. Construction of the East Chinese road, which was the greatest project of the 19th century in that area, employing 200,000 workers, the war between Russia and Japan at the turn of the 20th century, and an expanded infrastructure in the Russian State led to an increased demand for agricultural products in the region, particularly for vegetables grown by the Koreans. Many Korean families grew rich quite quickly and began buying American machines and sending their children to colleges in Japan, China, and Hawaii.

Civil war in the Far East, which broke out after the Bolsheviks seized power, caused the destruction of Korean farms. Many people fled to Korea or Manchuria. However, by the mid-1920's, the situation stabilized and the Bolsheviks suddenly acknowledged the Koreans as one of the nationalities in the USSR. Korean schools began to appear. Active Koreans who accepted the communist ideology entered the University of Working People of the East in Moscow. The Korean section of the Russian Communist Party was established. A newspaper in Korean was established and several books on propaganda issues were published. Party officials were astonished by a peculiar trait of the Koreans; they were listening to Bolshevik agitators attentively and calmly, but then they proceeded to go out and act according to their own mind. At this time, the mid-1920's, rice-growing agricultural communes were established in Middle Asia and in Altay. The commune of Novaya Koreya (New Korea) was growing rice which was completely unknown to Siberia. A period of quiet and relative well-being followed for several years. What were the reasons for this?

As is well known, Lenin's ideology saw the main powers of history in classes, not nations. According to his viewpoint, nationalities would disappear together with states as the proletariat created an international unity among people. However, in the short run, Lenin found it expedient to exploit national sentiments in his fight against the czarist regime, and afterward, the "Whites," in our history the traditional opponents of the Bolsheviks who were "Reds," in the Civil War. Therefore, the Bolsheviks,
even before the events of 1917, had declared the slogan of national self-determination, as if supporting the independence of other states in the empire of Russia. For a while after seizing power, they acted according to this slogan. Many non-Russians united behind the Reds, helped them consolidate their power in Russia, and for a short time enjoyed various forms of independence. However, after the Bolsheviks were firmly in control, they began to annihilate their opponents, and their ambitions for empire became evident. The idea of national separatism was no longer tolerated. It was viewed as an obstacle to the achievement of attaining “proletarian internationalism.”

By the early 1920's, the Reds had established their control over the former territories of Czarist Russia, except for Poland and Finland, which managed to keep their independence. We can talk about the USSR in the sense of empire unity as early as 1922. Since that time, the way to “proletarian internationalism” was theoretically open. Practically, however, the “world revolution” of which Lenin dreamed was late in coming, and the communists in power could not grant their non-Russian vassals the promised internationalism, neither “proletarian” nor in any other form. What became real was an inclusion of all nationalities into a type of international Soviet mixture in which the Russians dominated demographically, linguistically, and administratively. The so-called “Russification” of the empire was begun, and later became a cherished idea for Stalin. We have inherited the results of this communist policy, and its impact on nationalities such as the Koreans.

During the Soviet-Chinese conflict in 1929, the skirmish at the East Chinese railroad caused repercussions among Koreans. A small number of intellectuals, along with Chinese, Nanyan, and Buryatian intellectuals, were sent to the gulag. The culmination of Korean repression came in 1937, when, with the Soviet-Japanese conflict in Mongolia in the background,
all the Koreans living in the Far East were deported to Kazakhstan and Middle Asia. They were transported on the Trans-Siberian Railroad in September and October 1937, and they found little relief for settling in new places. Officials of the NKVD, the predecessor of the KGB, explained to curious people along the way that they were escorting Chinese spies to Germany. Thus, one of the crimes of the communist authorities against the Korean people, and others as well, was forcible deportation. The aim of the policy was evident: the regime was using all means to strengthen its hegemony of the center and the weakening of national autonomy.

In the Far East, the local political structures were influenced by Koreans in office and Koreans were also entering the national nomenklatura. The NKVD, of course, spied on the cadre everywhere. Even though they were under the control of Moscow, Stalin proclaimed the “bourgeois nationalism” of the Korean cadre and repressed them all. Russians were declared the “elder brothers” in the “family” of nations of the USSR. Some “Russian imperialistic” version of history was worked out for schools, including national ones, where teaching was conducted in national languages. In 1932, when the passport system was established, nationality was necessarily indicated. This column exists in Soviet passports to the present day. With the nationality of everyone fixed administratively, the possibility of education and career can be influenced. On the one hand, Stalin’s regime tried to establish a family of nations around the “elder brother,” but, on the other hand, it led to national discrimination with significant results for everyday life. The policy of deportation of minorities before the Second World War had disastrous results for minorities. In the case of Koreans and other small minorities, the whole population was relocated. But, in the case of large groups such as the Ukrainians and Baltic peoples, the national and cultural elite were deported and some of them were shot.

During the Patriotic War, Koreans and Germans were not enlisted in the Army, rather they were sent to labor camps with conditions identical to those in the gulag. Those who survived the camps were returned after the war to their former places and placed under special supervision. Many Koreans stayed in Middle Asia and returned to their traditional activities of rice and vegetable farming. Some were able to return to the Far East after the 1950’s when special prohibitions were abolished.

Who are the Koreans and what is their life like? Soviet citizens do not know. Official data about them are nearly nonexistent, publication of articles
in newspapers or scientific journals is also practically nonexistent. Five volumes of the history of Kazakhstan devote one fourth of a page to Koreans, and this is more than the space allocated to Germans, who are the third most populous people in Kazakhstan, after the Russians and the Kazakhs. In Southern Kazakhstan, the villages where Koreans live together with Germans deported from the Volga and the Caucasus stand out significantly. These villages are clean and neat, whereas others look impoverished, as in the Middle Ages. In these villages, there are signs of relative well-being, compared with general Soviet standards. Many mixed marriages are registered. Korean women are considered good and faithful wives. The children born of mixed marriages are often registered as Russians, so Stalin’s passport system still influences daily life.

The Koreans who live on Sakhalin Island have their own particular fate. In 1945, when the Soviet Army entered the southern part of the island, Japanese and other Asians who lived there since ancient times were deported. Exceptions were made for Koreans, who were allowed to stay. Now they comprise 7 percent of the population of the island and they are literally feeding the island. The vegetable market in Yuzhne-Sakhalinsk is maybe the richest in the country. Here one can see many varieties of tomatoes, the relict berry of Sakhalin, *ko!ovka*, specially cooked ferns, and potatoes, in quantities large enough to feed the entire island. On the island, Koreans are generally involved in agriculture and small trade. They cannot join the crews of fishing ships because the authorities fear they would flee to Japan or South Korea.

The Korean community on Sakhalin Island has established little social organization. The Association of Sakhalin Koreans only exists nominally, with its activities controlled by the authorities. I would like to mention a certain group of Koreans who come from mixed marriages with Japanese. They are noted for an underlying aristocratism and a conscious attempt to distance themselves from Soviet Koreans. They still call Sakhalin *Taykhova* (Sunny Valley), and the port of Kholmsk *Maokai*. They are using all means to keep a Japanese presence on the island: tree alleys in parks and holy Tori Gates. It is difficult to keep these memories of Japanese culture because the authorities, as if under the slogan of reconstruction, have eliminated nearly all traces of Japanese influence. They intended to destroy the most beautiful building, the museum of local lore and residence of the Japanese general governor. The regional committee of the CPSU has already torn
away the garden surrounding this building and put there an ugly box-like house for party officials. Today people hope that the nationalization of party property begun in Russia will soon end and the property will be returned to Sakhalin, thus ending such illegal seizure by the CPSU.

Koreans on this closed island are living peacefully and quietly. They rise early and work laboriously in gardens, in fields, picking crabs, harvesting seaweed, and finding amber which they sell to Moscow brokers at a good price. Among Soviet Koreans, there is a special cult of merchandise produced in South Korea and Japan, such as radios, electronic items, clothing, and literature. The value system of the Soviet Koreans has undergone great change, as is happening in other Soviet nations. The majority of them have never adopted communist ideology seriously, and now, in the epoch of perestroika, Soviet Koreans have oriented quickly to the new situation. Many of them have found relatives in the Republic of Korea or in Japan, and in OVIRS (the KGB-controlled department which issues visas) of Tashkent, Alma-Ata, and Yuzhno-Sakhalinisk. So a weak brook of Korean emigration has joined the huge stream of Germans, Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Uygurs, and others leaving the USSR. The Koreans on the island, as in other places in the USSR, live quietly, following the ethical principles of Confucianism, and not making a fuss when some of them do not receive visas from the authorities. They do not seek political asylum and they do not send claims of human rights infringements to the United Nations.

Without doubt, the foundation of the All-Union Association of Soviet Koreans, with the constituting congress held in mid-May 1990, will turn out to be a significant event. It is the first social organization in the USSR which can represent the interests of 450,000 Soviet Koreans. It came
into existence because of the new political processes initiated in the USSR in the last few years. The effectiveness of this organization will depend, in part, on the new political structures being formed in the USSR, on the influence of communists in these structures, and on the level of national autonomy achieved. All of these issues are being discussed diffusely at the various All-Union and republican congresses and conferences.

There are a great number of life-important questions put before the association, the most difficult one being that of forming Korean autonomy, with local national self-governing authorities. One problem is that Koreans are separated and dispersed among several different territories, with the majority living in the Far East, Middle Asia, and the Ukraine. Another matter is the professional interests of Koreans. In the cities there are Korean scientists, culture workers, journalists, and administrators who have distinguished themselves throughout the country. Four Koreans have been elected to the People’s Deputies of the USSR, and two of them became members of the Supreme Council. However, these people do not represent the Koreans in remote agricultural villages. Lately, a Mr. V. Choi, Korean by nationality, was running for election as chairman of the Supreme Council of Russia, and he was representing the interests of the Far East region as a whole. Finally, we especially note the fate of the Korean language among Soviet Koreans. Only a few representatives of the older generation can slightly use the Korean language. Everywhere, Russian has become the common language of Koreans.

The contradictions in Soviet national policy have accumulated for decades. Nominally, the USSR was considered, and is considered, to be a federal state with a significant level of autonomy for the republics. Actually, its administrative structure was centralized to an extreme extent, with not only military and foreign policy, but also economic authority monopolized in Moscow. Russia was nominally one of seven, then one of 15 republics. However, it contains about 90 percent of the land and 70 percent of the population. This fact alone was enough for Russia to dominate others, irrespective of its intentions. I might add that it was not the Russians, but the CPSU which never acknowledged the principle of federalism. After power was seized and placed in the hands of the Central Committee in Moscow, national parties, until recently, were purely regional organizations.

During 72 years of communist government, our country has been reduced to complete cultural, economic, and moral degradation. Leaders in the
Koreans under communism

Kremlin have now been forced to acknowledge that the USSR is on the edge of destruction, and naturally social unity has come to life on the basis of national aspirations. To our regret, the negative attitude of nations to the communist regime is sometimes addressed to the Russian people, who are not guilty but victims of the communist regime. The occurrence is called "Russophobia" and it causes us great anxiety. The authorities are trying to impede the processes of national separation which are occurring by using the Army and KGB as brakes. The threat of a turn of the whole state machine to the right, with the use of repressive force by authorities, is quite real, and such an action might be accomplished under the banner of Russian nationalism, using pseudopatriotic slogans in the name of the Russian people.

Generally, I am quite pessimistic as to the ability of Soviet authorities to solve our problems with necessary tact. We only have to look at the awkward treatment of Lithuania. It is quite clear that there is no exit from the crises in the USSR except by transforming the totalitarian empire into a federation of sovereign national states. In its turn, the vast multinational Russia will reorganize through autonomous formations on principally new democratic conditions. In this case, national minorities in the USSR, namely, the Soviet Koreans, might look for basic changes to improve their life conditions.

North Koreans Working in the USSR

All the above described events and facts referred to Soviet Koreans, citizens of the USSR. However, there are a number of regions in the USSR, for example, the Khabarovsky and Amurskaya (Amur River) region, where the native population is quite low and foreign workers from North Korea are imported. Migration of labor power is a common occurrence in the world. I will not go into the details of the theory, I will only tell you that this "cooperation" is not accompanied by a high level of economic integration, but by the weakness and irrationality of economic systems both in the USSR and in the DPRK. I can add that the prestige of temporary work in the USSR under contract is lowering rapidly among the workers of many Asian countries, particularly Vietnamese, because of the emptying of our internal market and the decline of the ruble's purchasing power.

North Koreans are living in the USSR, in 15 special zones, in barracks and dugouts, sleeping on plank beds, and working 16 hours a day. In the morning roll call, in ceremonial prayer, they promise to "Comrade Kim..."
Il-Sung" to fulfill and exceed the daily work quota. The main work activity is timber cutting, although each of the special zones is a partially self-supporting commune with other economic activities. In the 1970's and the early 1980's, there were attempts to use Koreans in coal mining and in fishing, but this practice soon stopped for several reasons. The common diet of these Koreans consists of cabbage, seaweed, salted sea fish, and, sometimes, but seldom, bread. The Koreans grow cabbage on the fields torn away from the forest (taiga). The climate varies little and the workers wear the same clothes throughout the year: a quilted jacket, tarpaulin soldier boots, uniform trousers, shirt, a shapka hat for winter, and a peaked hat for summer. This is exactly the same as that worn by Soviet prisoners. The color of all the clothes is blue. Hills all around the camps are decorated with slogans glorifying “the great leader” and “beloved manager,” and cursing “American imperialism.” A badge with the face of the leader is an integral ornament of all North Koreans living abroad. For front rank workers this badge is a large red enamel medal and for others one of smaller diameter. The badges are marked with numbers and the loss of them is almost cause for death.

In the 1970's, the North Koreans sometimes intentionally conflicted with natives of the USSR in order to get prosecuted and sent to a Soviet prison. After serving their term, under the laws of “friendship among the nations,” they could leave and earn a steady living in the country. When Korean security agents administering the camps came to realize what was happening, they asked the Soviets to return the prisoners to North Korea. The Criminal Code in North Korea is the most strict in the world. In the Criminal Code of Russia, 32 offenses are grounds for capital punishment, but in the DPRK one half of the Criminal Code violations are cause for the death penalty. Therefore, most North Korean laborers are now afraid of coming into contact with the native population. Some trusted Koreans are selling vodka called tyongyang-sul, an alcoholic liquor made of ginseng and snake vodka pem-sul, aphrodisiacs, Japanese jeans, cameras, and even contraceptives. Illegally, the Koreans dredge for gold at the rivers. The Soviet KGB has a great deal of work to do in the regions where the North Koreans live—special departments were established for this purpose. Officials in the KGB complain that they have trouble with the interpreters and with the formation of a spying net among the North Koreans. The principle of “proletarian internationalism” is not helping collaboration between the KGB and the
North Korean security service. In fact, it is difficult to enter the zones, which are like miniature states with their own administration, and it is impossible to send an informant there.

North Koreans cut wood in places where Soviet loggers never dream of working: in the taiga on steep-hill slopes. They saw arched trees not of the highest quality, which nobody in the USSR wants to process and make round logs to sell abroad. Koreans remove the branches and put logs on loading platforms. The technical means are supplied by the Soviet side. Everything else, labor, food, and clothing, comes from Korea, while 55 percent of the lumber goes to the Soviet Union and 45 percent to North Korea. It sometimes happens that North Koreans steal Soviet technology, disassembling machines like tractors and hiding the parts among the logs. When preparing to go home, Koreans buy whatever is left in the poor village shops: medicine, tools, soap, bicycles, and household items. Now, because of shortages throughout the USSR, Soviet authorities are trying to put up obstacles to these spending sprees which empty shops and frustrate established distribution norms.

A North Korean worker stays for three years, while administrative officials stay for five years. They are then replaced by other North Koreans. At present, there are about 30,000 of these Koreans in USSR. They receive up to 500 rubles per month, but only 20 percent is actually given to them (1 ruble = $1.61 in January 1989). The rest is sent to the Bank of Korea in won to the special family account (1 won = $.97 in January 1989). The right to use this money is strictly limited. It is, therefore, not surprising that profiteering has become a secondary source of income. The Korean workers earn money by mushroom and berry gathering and are paid by Soviet office very low wages in comparison with market prices. The gathering is well organized: usually

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on Sunday, they put on clean shirts and go to the taiga in formations, carrying buckets and cans, accompanied by political commissars, and fighting back mosquitoes. Inevitably, during the operation, they sing songs about Kim Il-Sung. They say this method rapidly increases effectiveness.

Life in North Korea

Now let’s mentally cross the border of the USSR in the Far East and move to the northern part of the Korean peninsula to the DPRK, where under the leadership of the Labor Party (KWP) the ju che society was built on the foundations of socialism. We will not see any big difference from the labor communes in the USSR, because they are small copies of this society. Western observers who are now allowed into Pyongyang more often are given similar accounts, only varying in detail. According to their estimates, the prospects for North Korea are quite poor. I visited North Korea many times and would like to say that the processes which go on there are not simple. Irrespective of a negative attitude toward the development of their republic, which I share (I have to force myself to call it a “republic”!), I would avoid using the word “crisis” to characterize their situation. I live in the USSR and know what a crisis is when the state is destroyed in front of your eyes, when internal contradictions explode nationality issues, when ideology is not accepted, and when people do not appreciate their government. Nothing of this kind is to be seen in the DPRK. To the contrary, there is unity, solidarity of the population in their belief. This unity is reached by something similar to religious fanaticism. The government might arbitrarily use these feelings to mobilize people for senseless or adventurous actions. Naturally, this worries us.

It is senseless to prove that the economy of the DPRK has been in a state of stagnation for many years, although such study is difficult because information is scarce and official statistics are unreliable. We may estimate the state of their economy with respect to world norms. However, the DPRK is an isolated nation establishing its own norms and not allowing comparison to any other society. Thus, when you stay there you enter a surrealistic world of ju che society.

By the DPRK’s own method of classification for their stage in the building of socialism, the republic is now at the final stage of the transitional period, which must be crowned by “the full victory of socialism.” Ambitious and unfulfillable plans of economic development are accepted, the growth
of production becoming more and more an end in itself. Economic voluntarism has disastrous consequences. The contradiction between the political and ideological interests of the ruling leaders and the objective needs of social development, the interests of the Korean nation, is intensifying. The most visible manifestations of this contradiction can be seen in the social sphere, and the strategy of development itself, chosen by the clan of the Kims and the party and state apparatus surrounding them. They propose the transfer of expenses unavoidable because of the ju cheization of economics to the sphere of social relations. As a consequence, economics has priority over all social needs—savings over consumption, long-run purposes at the expense of the present. To the observer, the most vital problem is the necessity to improve the drastically low living standards of the people.

Military expenses of the DPRK absorb at least one third of the budget, significantly more than the official 15 to 17 percent figure. This is certainly more than is actually needed to provide normal national security. In the country, the “spirit of military time” is artificially supported, “espionage mania” is present, and nearly all people receive military training from early childhood. Therefore, a social militarization is created. This social climate is approved by the leadership as far as it supports their clan interests. At the same time, the population is brainwashed with ideas of asceticism and appeals for moderation in consumption “in the name of the revolution.” These words mask the strict economic discipline in all fields. The rhetoric of a “military threat” from outside has long been used as a tactic to gain support from the population for this asceticism.

Similar to any communist country, all the national documents, such as the Constitution of the DPRK, are ornamented with clamorous slogans proclaiming that the “highest principle of the activity of the state is the steadfast increase of material and cultural life of the people.” In reality, their reference points for development contain ideological and political jargon devised to create international prestige. There is talk about the unity of Korea based on initiatives from the DPRK, and the ideal of ju che as a standard for all countries of the Third World. The internal goal is the transformation of the society on the basis of the ju che teaching, yet externally it is promoted as an achieved goal.

All these contradictions can be traced to the nature of the state authority, represented by the dictatorship of the Kim clan and the party structure of
the DPRK. The election system, formalistic to the extreme, does not give any opportunity to people to influence the system or its policies. The structure of economic management, which is a vicious arm of the political structure in principle, cannot work for the benefit of the people. This shows up in analyses of the budget and investment policies. We only need to look at the recent Festival of Youth, held in 1988. There were adventurous building of palaces for the president all over the country and the publishing and distribution of books of the “great leader” all over the world. And so on. It is not necessary to justify socially these expenses, in this system, not to mention the direct injury they inflict on the people mentally and emotionally.

Let us look at the example of the educational system, a key field in social policy. This system is used as an instrument of state indoctrination of students in the “spirit of ju che.” Children and youth are subjected to extreme ideological pressure. Some of the potential successes of this process are annihilated by the quality and contents of the education. The level of information available to students and the list of accessible books in the social sciences is extremely limited. There is a poor standard of professional training of specialists for modern tasks. As a result, the whole country has a low quality labor force.

There is a curious combination of two trends: on the one hand, the “intellectualization” of society which operates on the principle that all people are ideologically on par with the intellectuals, and, on the other hand, the goal of the “transformation of the society on the pattern of the working class.” The primitive phraseology hides the quite practical aim of social strategy, namely, to homogenize society, to “rally around the great leader,” and to underscore the absence of class struggle. Real intellectuals

While social primitivism and xenophobia seem to be characteristics of any communist society, the DPRK manifests especially curious forms. People are not paid on the basis of labor, but they are given a kind of “pocket money.” This pocket money is not given as an emergency measure, as it may be called in the USSR, but as a great benefit, “the care of the leader.”
in the country are few. Since the 1950's, Kim II Sung gained power by annihilating his opponents in the new dictatorship. He was especially suspicious of intellectuals. Even now they are considered to be the carriers of "old consciousness," an obstacle for the "revolutionization of society." These "survivals" of the past are placed in "camps of labor re-education" near the Chinese border in the northwestern region. These camps have "re-educated" about 150,000 people.

While social primitivism and xenophobia seem to be characteristics of any communist society, the DPRK manifests especially curious forms. For example, there is a distribution of consumer goods not according to people's labor. People are not paid on the basis of labor, but they are given a kind of "pocket money." This pocket money is not given as an emergency measure, as it may be called in the USSR, but as a great benefit, "the care of the leader." This process is highly politicized and used in conjunction with the tasks of ideological indoctrination. The condition of equal distribution is idealized and thus is not considered a transitional policy. Thus, the unification of the population is accomplished not only in uniform income, but also in personal consumption.

I would like to emphasize that the North Korean regime, through this quasi-communist social structure, has managed to accomplish significantly its purposes of internal stability, ideological doctrine, and the maintenance of a cult of the Kim family. Society, for the most part, has been impregnated with the spirit of primitive "communal collectivism" and with the belief that their leader and the KWP Party are infallible. The policy of total equalization has led to a leveling of difference between social groups and social strata. The existence and consciousness of each person are determined not by a social group but by being a member of the ju che society.

At the same time, there exists a deep social stratification which almost resembles a caste system. There are some similarities to the historical Lee dynasty. The new privileged class of yanbyans consists of members of the KWP, its size being about 3,500,000. These people are the bureaucrats of the very huge state management system, party functionaries, and high-ranking officers of the Army and State Security. Membership in the party is a springboard for flight up the social hierarchy. The key criterion for entering this system is the standpoint of the regime. The caste distinguishes itself from the masses, and prevents extraneous social elements from entering it. The most important principles of life for the caste are its permanent
demonstration of "devotion to the leader" and reconfirmation of "loyalty to the party." The members of the caste exercise special privileges in consumption, health care, and education. Marriages of the children are arranged with care within the caste.

The major part of the population is of "unfit origin" (senbun nappun saram), which is stamped in their personal files. They comprise a caste of pariahs in the society, being petty bourgeois by origin. Professional choice is limited to them, access to prestigious colleges closed, and they cannot become members of the party.

I would like to conclude this discussion of a ju che society with the following observation. In its development, which is far from the beaten track of other nations, the social, political, moral, and cultural deformations are too deep to expect that democratic reforms could proceed smoothly. The social elements which would struggle against such changes are pronounced and possess overwhelming power and authority. The optimal scenario of parliamentary change along the lines of East Germany and Czechoslovakia is hardly possible here. I think it is hardly possible in the USSR, where many seeds of democracy have already sprouted. I would be glad if I am mistaken in this judgment, but I believe that the end of the present situation in the DPRK will be connected with dramatic events.