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## ARTICLES



# “For a More Perfect Communist Revolution”: The Rise of the SKWP and the Twilight of “Unitary Socialism”

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## Introduction

In stark contrast to meticulous efforts to understand the Korean War as a conflict that involved both halves of the peninsula, very little has been discussed about the complexities of Communist activism in southern Korea. My central thesis is that the roots of the Korean War can be found in southern Korea as an anti-Rightist civil war with the rise of the Southern Korean Workers’ Party (*Nahm Jo-suhn Noh-dong Dahng*, hereafter shortened as SKWP), the largest Communist organization in southern Korea before the war, especially through the leadership of the party’s fervent Communist leader Pak Hŏnyŏng. In making this argument, I will also suggest that the civil war symbolized a failure of the non-ideological centrist politician Yŏ Un-hyong to realize a unitary non-partisan Korea.

Pak, the son of an impoverished farmer and a widow, was active in the Korean Communist movement during the 1920s and was an outspoken critic of Japanese imperialism. By 1946, contrary to American suspicion that Pak’s control of the SKWP was evidence of the Communists “being under complete Russian control,” Pak already had a lengthy résumé as a seasoned theorist and a revolutionary.<sup>1</sup> Seizing the leadership of a Communist party had always been Pak’s ambition, and as he personally believed, his destiny.<sup>2</sup> A precocious polyglot and an avid reader of Marxist theory who called *Capital* his “Bible,” Pak had built an extensive and deep knowledge of Marxism such that he won all the top honors

as a student at the University for Toilers of the East.<sup>3</sup> Pak's reputation was such that Stalin personally met and praised him as the "most respectable and reliable comrade to complete Korean national liberation."<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, Pak was no stranger to party politics, since he had tasted success in unifying the Left in the 1920s. His official founding of the original Korean Communist Party (*Jo-suhn Gong-sahn Dahng*, hereafter noted as JCP) in 1925 was a milestone, for it rapidly eliminated Communist factionalism by absorbing the Shanghai and Ikurtsk clans which had been warring against each other from 1919 to 1920.<sup>5</sup> He became the founder of the first official Communist party in the Korean peninsula, the SKWP, and securing the JCP's revival in September 1945 was a welcome sign for Pak because it was an auspicious opportunity to reclaim his former glory as the foremost representative of Korean Communism.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, just a year later, he would become the principal leader of the southern Communist movement after Korea's liberation.<sup>7</sup>

As he led the southern Communists, Pak cultivated a strong desire to monopolize his control over the entire Korean Communist network by completing a "more perfect Communist revolution."<sup>8</sup> Pak calculated that once the SKWP finished the revolution with north Korea's military assistance, he would also seize the northern leadership for himself and become the undisputed ruler of the Korean peninsula.<sup>9</sup> His ambitions would ironically betray him when his activities in southern Korea were used against him as evidence of treason against Kim Il-sung, eventually leading to Pak's execution in 1955.<sup>10</sup>

Like Pak, Yō was the son of a disgraced noble family and spent an impoverished childhood in Yahng-pyoung, Seoul. However, unlike Pak who was shy and very bookish, Yō was outgoing, fond of laughter and was a daring social progressive who liberated his family's slaves by burning property documents.<sup>11</sup> Yō held a firm belief in a literally egalitarian Democracy which would respect every individual as a human being and grant them equal rights to political and social participation regardless of gender, class, and wealth. As a Christian, Yō strongly believed that egalitarianism was the basis for good politics, which for Yō meant granting equal rights and equal respectability to all people regardless of their social class.<sup>12</sup> However, unlike Pak, Yō did not have a penchant for Marxism and was not a Communist and favored using diplomacy to achieve independence. After an illustrious career as a Korean representative to the Versailles Conference and as a renowned independence fighter in Beijing during the 1910s, Yō joined the original JCP in 1921 because he believed that the party was institutionally "ready to deliver a truly egalitarian socialism" to Koreans.<sup>13</sup>

Although Yō had served the Korean Provisional Government until 1919, he was disgusted with the government's perversion into a Rightist hotbed under the influence of members such as Syngman Rhee and Kim Goo rather than functioning as a unifier of the Korean people. Disgusted, Yō left for Manchuria, where he would spend the 1930s contacting and funding independence activists in China, eventually returning to Korea on the eve of her liberation.<sup>14</sup> In short,

both men were seasoned politicians by the late 1940s and were respectively instrumental in preparing the institutional and ideological groundwork for Korean unification. A clash between these two men in their quest for Korea's unification from the autumn of 1945 ended with Pak's victory when Yŏ was assassinated in the summer of 1947 at the hands of a hot-headed teenage Right-wing extremist.<sup>15</sup> This article will trace the events leading up to Pak's victory and show how that victory became a seed for a major war in the peninsula.

### Methodology

As Jack Chen (2010) aptly points out, history is always prone to have many gaps, and the goal of writing history, especially hidden and secret history, is to widen the horizon of what can be reliably known—the “epistemological condition” of historiography.<sup>16</sup> Following Chen's cue, I will fill these lacunae on the SKWP and more broadly on 1946-1947 by closely examining the *Official Documents of the Southern Korean Workers' Party (ODSKWP)*—a two-volume collection of previously unpublicized official documents from the largest Communist organization in southern Korea during the late 1940s.<sup>17</sup>

I will examine this period from a history-of-ideas perspective, looking at the flow of political history through the SKWP's rhetoric.<sup>18</sup> I will argue that looking at the 1946-1947 moment in the history of the Korean War from the SKWP's perspective offers an important ideational origin to the Korean War. The SKWP intensely battled against the Rightists to realize Communist political supremacy in southern Korea, and by extension, in the Korean peninsula. In attempting to thoroughly Communize itself and southern Korea, the SKWP was simultaneously responsible for completely eradicating Yŏ's “Unitary Socialism”—an ideology which embraced a humanistic form of Democracy devoted to nurturing a universally egalitarian spirit of respect for a person as a human being, instead of focusing on Democracy's value within the Cold War as a bulwark against Communism—thereby erasing all possibilities for a non-ideological unification. This simultaneous process explains an important ideational origin of the Korean War as a civil war because the war directly inherited the *leitmotif* of a Manichean battle between the Left and the Right which the SKWP willingly engaged in to assure Communist supremacy in the south. Only four years later, the SKWP's plan would serve as an explosive prelude to a massive war which sought to Communize the entire peninsula.<sup>19</sup>

By focusing on a largely neglected and almost forgotten chapter in the history of the Korean War, I will demonstrate why the SKWP must not be overshadowed by the familiarity of the Korean War as a primarily military conflict—a “familiarity” which neither fully constitutes nor guarantees the reliability of all facts the war.<sup>20</sup> If a secret, bold execution of stratagem is an essential ingredient to ensure a definitive upper hand in fighting an actual war, so is an ideational-political preparedness to create a political environment to guarantee the upper hand.<sup>21</sup> I will argue that the war began in the south from the SKWP's plot to

completely destroy the possibility of a peaceful non-ideological unification—a loophole which Kim Il-sung later exploited to the extreme by sending soldiers south *en masse*. The SKWP thoroughly Communized itself and consolidated the Left to meticulously prepare for an effective implementation of a “more perfect Communist revolution” against Rightists.<sup>22</sup>

Although the SKWP initially wanted only to *punish* the anti-nationalist Rightists, Pak Hönyōng’s interpretation of “punishment” as a chance to transform the party into a Communist hub quickly created an ideological divide between the American military government, himself, and Yō. That divide quickly established the party’s existential objective. Using Pak’s swift crisis-management skills and his acute sense for political outmaneuvering, the SKWP went on a wild roller-coaster ride to foremost establish a firm Communist presence in the south and to eradicate “Unitary Socialism” because it was a major obstacle to realizing the former. The party launched an anti-imperialist and anti-American tirade, formulated Pak’s personality cult, and established “Communist exceptionalism”—a proclamation confirming that the JCP was the sole representative of the southern Left and the leading vanguard in a violent struggle against the Right. It also identified with Pyong-yang’s Communism by supporting its land reforms. Even as the party got itself embroiled in an internal minting scandal, Pak continued to emphasize Communist supremacy such that, by the end of 1946, when the JCP renamed itself into the SKWP, there was no ally within the Left who could encourage Yō to continue his efforts to realize a non-ideological unification between south and north Korea.

After defeating Yō, Pak closed in to stab the final dagger into the heart of “Unitary Socialism” through the Pyong-yang Lobby. Pak secured a “Two-to-One Deal,” in which he agreed to found the SKWP to establish a two-to-one superiority of the Communists in the peninsula over the Rightists, a decision which Pak finalized shortly after witnessing the Rightists’ and the American military government’s suppression of two major labor strikes. In retrospect, this quest succeeded due to Yō’s lack of tact and political acumen, failure to appreciate the value of time, and lack of organizational control. Although Yō desperately struggled to realize “Unitary Socialism” even by disbanding his own Korean Social Party and surviving Pak’s ruthless interrogation, Yō ultimately had no reliable allies to help him pursue “Unitary Socialism.” Unfortunately, Yō would pay with his life for his mistakes a year later.

By contrast, the SKWP’s survival and rise through *this very tumultuous order of events* ultimately secured the party’s legitimacy as the sole partner to help what Pyong-yang still believes to be a postponed mission to Communize Korea. With no effective mechanism to ensure a peaceful and non-ideological unification and having secured a two-to-one superiority over the Rightists by the end of 1946, Pyong-yang was *free* to choose whatever it wanted to do with the Rightists, ultimately sending bayonets down to the south on June 25, 1950. Thus, the two end-results of this meticulous quest—the death of “Unitary Socialism” and the

fulfillment of the “Two-to-One Deal”—show how the SKWP’s rise is a major ideational origin of a war whose scar of Left-Right conflict still remains visibly manifest through the intra-peninsular tension across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Korea’s deep painful cut across her belly reminds her that the SKWP’s ghost has yet to disappear.

This paper traces the early history of the SKWP—September 1945-January 1946. I will examine how the formation of Pak’s personality cult and support for north Korea assured the coming of a fading twilight for Yō’s “Unitary Socialism” within the SKWP to allow the party’s full adoption of a rigid and exclusionary Communist ideology. Yō’s untimely exit from the SKWP and the eventual demise of non-ideological unity, from January 1946 to July 1947—the topic of the second paper—set the stage for the arrival of a highly Manichean ambience in which the south Korean political arena would permit only two contestants—anti-Communism and Communism. The explosion of war on June 25, 1950 was neither a surprise nor an aberration. Rather, it was a dynamite whose fuse the SKWP had already lit as it struggled against Rightists and expelled “Unitary Socialism” to prepare a groundwork for Communist dominance of the southern Left.

### **In Search of a “Virtuous Victory”(September 2, 1945)**

As the sun sprayed its last thin rays of heat on September 2, 1945, the Jo-suhn Communist Party celebrated from its headquarters in central Seoul the “successful conclusion of the final congregation of fervent agitators,” which effectively “secured its foothold in southern Korea.”<sup>23</sup> The intense fervor for Communism had materialized such that three of the largest Left-wing parties in Korea—the Jo-suhn Communist Party, the People’s Party, and the Southern Korean New Citizens’ Party—united together to reconsolidate Socialist and Communist members throughout the peninsula. The Leftists were no longer merely an anti-Rightist clan; they were now a firmly established political organization. Although it was a “pity that the supreme representative of the labor organizations was absent,” the party’s founding was “most fortuitous” because “Japanese imperialists were still adamantly refusing to retreat” and the Soviet Union was expected to offer “support to securing the independence and liberty” of the Korean people.<sup>24</sup> Unification was essential because it was the only means to prevent Left-Right polarization from consuming the party and Korean peninsula. Yet, polarization was not an entirely negative outcome but a double-edged sword. On one hand, it would “strengthen the counterrevolutionary forces and severely disarm the Left,” thereby forcing a genuine people’s revolution to “lose considerable steam.”<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, it would “infinitely delay a true unification of the people,” outcomes that would spell “despair for the entire Korean people.”<sup>26</sup> Hence, it was precisely because of the polarization’s existence that national unification had the potential to become both a private and a public good—the ultimate panacea that would salvage both the party and the people.



Privately, national unification would ensure the party's political survival by catapulting party members as the true nationalists. This reputation, in turn, would also publicly ensure that the party's political legitimacy increase as the party of the Korean people.

Yet, the manifesto was not entirely accurate; instead of declaring that the party "secured a foothold," the manifesto should have stated that the party was "experiencing a revival." In the late 1920s, there was a short-lived attempt to unite "fervent agitators" and put an end to intra-Communist factionalism. Leftists who were dissatisfied with the extremism of choosing either Communism or anti-Communism desired to found a nationalist Communistic Democracy. Hence, they convened together in 1927 to found the New Middle Party (*Shin-gahn-hoe*). The NMP was an exhaustive effort to coalesce an already severely fragmented Leftist movement that showed almost no sign of recuperation. As with most middle-of-the-road parties, the NMP found itself torn apart over the very problem it sought to cure: the question of whether the Right or the Left must assume leadership over the NMP.

The failure to answer the question of who would assume leadership forced the NMP to pay a heavy price: a total fragmentation of the Korean Communist Movement. The Soviets, impatient with a seemingly endless factionalism between the Left and the Right within the NMP, began to criticize the party as an organization filled with "Nationalist reactionaries" who could not be trusted to carry out an orthodox Communist revolution. It was not long before the Soviets decided to drive the final nail into the NMP's coffin by ordering its disintegration, under the rationale that an all-out struggle against Nationalist reactionaries was inevitable because as a Soviet report observed, Japanese imperialism

promised the nationalist reactionary bourgeoisie political autonomy by bribing them, and now, with the bourgeoisie's assistance, is intent on building a new bulwark against new tides of revolution. Nationalist reactionary bourgeoisie, the *Josuhn Daily*, the *East Asian Daily* and members of the Heavenly Way (Chuhn-doh Kyo) are aghast at the intensification of the revolutionary tide in Korea, China, India, and the construction of Socialism in the Soviet Union, that they consider Jiang Jieshi and his Nationalists as supreme models. These Korean reactionaries are fully cooperating with the Japanese and distributing malicious propaganda against the Soviets. The NMP (*Shin-gahn-hoe*) is likewise a *Nationalist reactionary organization*—a fact the party kindly proved through its direction of student protest movements, labor demonstrations, and pursuit of a "sabotaging strategy" during the commencement of these events.<sup>27</sup>

The document, known as "The September Thesis," clearly reflected the Soviet Union's deep concern over the contamination of the NMP by an overwhelmingly Rightist political ambience in Korea. Moreover, the Soviets found the sweeping tides of revolution which had erupted across Asia distasteful. It was

an environment which the Soviets considered sufficient to excite and agitate the NMP to a reckless activism. In the Soviets' view, the revolutionary fervor in Asia not only invited a strong anti-Communist sentiment from the Right; it also signaled the NMP's own volition to abandon the Soviets' method of organizational activism in favor of a fervent revolutionary activism, whose objective was to instigate social discontent and use it to expand the Left's ideological sphere of influence to Korea. The NMP's decision to do so was an affront for the Soviets. The move ignored the orthodox Marxist-Leninist principle of "from the masses, to the masses, from the masses," by truncating the principle to two stages—"to the masses, from the masses," discarding the first stage in orthodox Communism.

Therefore, in the Soviets' eyes, the NMP was committing a serious case of blaspheme, and as expected from the Manichean world-view of an international Communist struggle, the Soviets interpreted the prime motive behind the NMP's decision as an urge to quickly join the Right-wing forces across Asia and challenge Soviet dominance in the Communist world. Furthermore, because orthodox Marxism required the elimination of all nationalist sentiments, the fact that the NMP's factionalism ensued from Nationalist-Communist disagreements greatly disturbed the Soviets and invited their suspicion that the NMP would sooner or later stab Moscow on the back. In other words, the internationalization of nationalism would not only pervert orthodox Marxism by radically altering the theoretically ideal order behind the popularization of Communism, but would also invite undesirable political factions whose ambition could be to dethrone the Soviets from the center to claim it for themselves, leaving the Communist world in a debacle of ceaseless factionalism.

Yet, NMP could not endure the immense heat of the conflict and quickly crumbled—an inadvertent victim of a minor squabble over which ideology is better for its own sake, which prevented the party from becoming a unifying center of the Left for the common good of pursuing political stability in a firm unity of strength. In essence, the NMP's ambiguity and lack of strength to firmly solidify a Leftist union stemmed precisely from the party's inability to decide whether its primary allegiance lay in preserving Korean nationalism or in supporting the Soviet Union as the unquestioned premier of the Communist camp. With the arrival of the Great Depression in Korea, the 1930s marked the Dark Age of the Korean Communist movement, with many Korean Communists migrating to Japan in search of work, where they would be victimized by the vicious cycle of job instability and low wages.<sup>28</sup>

Fortunately, September 2, 1945 not only offered the perfect timing to do away with polarization's potentially alarming outcomes and focus on nurturing the positive ones but also ended the Korean Diaspora to Japan, presenting an opportunity to begin a renaissance of the Korean Communist movement. The party considered the conclusion of the Second World War as an opportune moment to finish a revolution of national liberation that had already commenced seven years ago through the "great underground struggles against Japanese imperialism."<sup>29</sup>

As Pak Hōnyōng, a fervent Communist and one of the party's original founders, put it, establishing the party offered a "golden opportunity for a more perfect Communist revolution," in which every Korean ought to partake in the completion of "a great revolution to overthrow imperialism and the bourgeoisie."<sup>30</sup> Pak even argued that the party would serve as the vanguard of that commitment, vowing to "fight to the end for a true Bolshevik revolution."<sup>31</sup> The repeated use of the word "revolution" importantly suggests that national liberation was a form of and analogous to class liberation and vice-versa—a situation in which the former and the latter mutually had, to borrow Immanuel Wallerstein's (1987) apt phrase, an "ideological and a political relationship."<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, the Communist revolution would be "perfected" when the ideological consolidation of the Left and the Right would politically eradicate two of the worst agents of oppression that could endanger the making of a harmonious nation—imperialism and its collaborators, who, under the guise of ethnically being Korean, kept their wealth and used it to *extend* imperialism by liberally brandishing economic power to torture the working class. In short, the party was essentially declaring its *raison d'être*—the liberation of Korean workers and, to a larger extent, the Korean nation from that infamous history of oppression.<sup>33</sup>

Seventeen days later, with the moderate politician Yō Unhyōng's agreement, the party finalized its decision to unite the Left and the Right. Unity was necessary during a most fortuitous time when "Americans were finally disarming the Japanese," providing an opportunity to "permanently expulse the Japanese from the peninsula."<sup>34</sup> The consolidation of the Left would ideally produce a powerful Communist union, which in turn had a more explicit aim of "protecting the political, economic, and social interests of the peasantry, the intelligentsia, and laborers."<sup>35</sup> Fulfilling this aim was necessary, for although the Second World War had ended with the "victory of internationalism over a myopic nationalism," Korea had failed to play an important role in securing that victory.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the party was aware that most peasants and workers had hastily formed numerous "organizations" of varying shades of radicalism without being united under a singular leadership on the eve of national liberation. Therefore, the party's inaugural speech, aimed at rhetorically and realistically justifying the establishment of a Communist party, was an effort to ensure that the Korean people also tasted a "virtuous victory" by "ousting the propertied classes and the bourgeoisie who had collaborated with the Japanese."<sup>37</sup> Doing so would present Koreans with a "moment to enlighten themselves about the need to realize a genuine Communist revolution with their own hands."<sup>38</sup> The party was, in effect, declaring itself as a godsend to the Korean people, presenting three vital gifts that would definitively grant them true national liberation—the taste of victory after over three decades of bitter defeat at the hands of imperialism, the empowerment of the Korean people as sovereigns of their own homeland, and finally, the realization of a more humanistic society where workers claimed control over their rightful property rather than workers degenerating into property of the bourgeoisie.<sup>39</sup> Only the gifts

of such enlightenment would liberate workers who had suffered from harsh labor conditions and met the dreadful fate of being bullet-bearers as they exchanged their lives fighting for the Japanese for very meager wages while working on the Pacific front.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, Pak and Yō had really founded the party out of great disappointment with corrupt Korean politics. Instead of recognizing the urgency of rooting out imperialism and pro-Japanese collaborators, Right-wing and pro-Japanese politicians and financiers such as Syng-man Rhee and Kim Sung-soo (the founder of the first modern textile factory in Korea and later the founder of Korea University) clearly symbolized how decadently corrupt and immoral Korean politics had become. In Pak's view, these Rightists' main organ, the Democratic Party of Korea (DPK), founded by Conservative elites educated in Europe and the United States, had an overly simplistic outlook, merely opposing for opposition's sake. Their main slogan, "we oppose all of those who do not recognize the sole legitimacy of the Provisional Government as the only official government of all Korea," was especially distasteful for Pak.<sup>41</sup> To him, it was a clear sign that they had learned to live "unhistorically" rather too soon, as if they had forgotten Nietzsche's emphasis on the need to forget history too literally, as though they could afford to ignore the fact that Korea was under Japanese colonial rule for over three decades.<sup>42</sup> Pak expressed this sentiment in a rather non-philosophical fashion, emphasizing how the Right-wing faction in the Provisional Government failed to divorce Korean nationalism from pro-Japanese collaboration. In an essay titled, "Dr. Rhee and the Resurgence of Fascism," Pak argued that a notorious Right-wing favoritism within the Korean provisional government under Rhee's influence was most noticeable through his support of formerly pro-Japanese financiers and Conservative media such as Kim Sung-soo and the *Jo-suhn Daily*. In addition to the DPK's alliance with these groups, Pak heavily criticized its "unprincipled solution to unification" which emphasized "covering up the past for the sake of unity,"<sup>43</sup> because Pak believed that the "solution" was a great betrayal to the Korean people who had sacrificed their blood to earn their freedom. Rhee's attempt to pardon such national traitors was a direct abandonment of national honor and respect toward those who sacrificed themselves to restore it.

Pak argued that if Rhee continued to pardon pro-Japanese collaborators, fascism would surely "regain its strength" through Rhee's "willful betrayal of Democracy and freedom."<sup>44</sup> By rebranding themselves immorally as nationalistic anti-Communist Democrats, Rightists were "slowing historical progress" and were busy turning "national traitors into counterrevolutionaries" under a dubious pursuit of an "unprincipled unity" of the nation.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Pak argued that Rhee's inclusion of pro-Japanese billionaires in the Democratic Reconstruction Council was akin to inviting "war criminals" and would serve as a "clear barometer" of Rhee's "irresponsible approach to uniting the nation."<sup>46</sup> Pak was essentially arguing that if the Rhee faction tried to render "Pro-Democracy"

synonymous with “nationalist” while gathering a Rightist clan that had little remorse for its pro-Japanese past, the Rhee faction was deliberately tarnishing the blessed reality of a liberated Korea—the most “un-Korean” sin that could ever be committed against Koreans who had suffered for over three decades under a harsh and savage colonial regime.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, the long-awaited arrival of national liberation on August 15 and the party’s official founding shortly after were prime opportunities to complete the grand mission of removing pro-Japanese collaborators and realizing true independence of, by, and for the Korean people. The party’s deliberately alienating emphasis of the Rhee faction as a group of sycophantic national traitors also had the indirect effect of publicly advertising itself as the only rational and truly Korean party of the Korean people. By rendering nationalism as an ethical rationale for exercising governmentality—providing a structural order to its logic—the party was arguing that its anti-imperialist nationalism resonated with the Korean people, and that resonance was the ultimate source of the party’s legitimacy as a spiritual guide of the masses.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, only a government which could defend Korean patriotism had the right to govern Koreans as a Korean authority and was morally better than an institutionally “Democratic” government which protected Koreans who were physically Korean but spiritually Japanese.

Yet, that a traitorous group of Koreans was ruling in the name of “Democracy” meant Korea had to first seek experience and expertise from countries properly practicing institutional Democracy. Passion for independence had to be tamed by the rationality of defining and practicing good governance. What this “taming” really meant was that Koreans had to temporarily depend on the nations who had successfully defeated Japanese Fascism—China, Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States—to “restore the dignity of a fully independent people through the installation of Democratic governance.”<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, because Japanese imperialism unfortunately bred “opportunists” and “completely destroyed the foundations” of the Korean economy, it was imperative that the trusteeship be approved “with utmost haste.”<sup>50</sup> By using the word “foundations,” the party effectively prescribed a functional necessity to supporting trusteeship as the ultimate path to political and economic reconstruction of Korea to enhance the general welfare of the Korean people.

In effect, “trusteeship” was another synonym for patriotism, and the party was trying hard to prove that point as clearly as possible.<sup>51</sup> After all, the Americans were already in Korea to “receive the surrender of Japanese forces” and “rehabilitate Korea for Koreans to enjoy life under a more Democratic rule.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, the party hoped that its anti-Rightist and nationalist sentiments would catapult it as the representative of the Korean people—a position it would rigorously defend once it mastered the practice of Democracy through the trusteeship. It would only take a month for the ideological divide between the American military government, Pak, and Yō to clearly emerge.

### **The Great Ideological Divide and the Significance of September 2, 1945**

In spite of its good will to become a voice of the people, the party still invited much suspicion from the American military government. American officials were wary of Communists trying to ferment a people's revolution against American imperialism, which would make achieving an airtight security nearly impossible and, in turn, inspire the Soviets to intervene on the Korean Communists' behalf. Therefore, the Americans had very little incentive to let complete national liberation be a euphemism for southern Korea's transformation into a Communist base. John Reed Hodge (1893-1963), head of the American military government, fully shared the American officials' view. Hodge inherited from his deeply Conservative family and his very rough climb to the top of the military bureaucracy a typical Conservative Manichean perception of the world as a contest between good and evil. Despite being, as Cumings describes, a "sincere, honest, and unpretentious man" with a sterling reputation as "Patton of the Pacific,"<sup>53</sup> Hodge was also a mental captive of his military career. His success in protecting Democracy and the United States from Nazism simply told him that the only thing that had changed in the Korean peninsula was the opponent—Communism. This is probably why, as Ahn Jae-sung (2009), a former southern Left-wing activist and a biographer of Pak, has argued, it was not difficult for Hodge to perceive southern Korea "merely as a base for anti-Communistic operations."<sup>54</sup>

However, Hodge's anti-Communism was also deeply racist. Due to his lack of any prior experience with working in Asia, Hodge easily succumbed to the influence of Orientalism, adhering firmly to the belief that Koreans were lazy, unreliable, and inefficient. It was no different from leading English and French Orientalists and politicians who, as Edward Said (1991) pointed out, assumed that the Orient is "child-like, irrational, and different" while the Occident is "rational, virtuous, mature, and normal."<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Hodge was intent on reducing the Korean to what Said described as "a human flatness, removed from its complex humanity,"<sup>56</sup> as if to suggest that only Americans were capable of understanding the Korean while the Korean himself or herself could not do the same. The United States already had a tradition of reflecting a similar sentiment through the Roosevelt Corollary, "Dollar diplomacy" in the Caribbean, and "benevolent assimilation" in the Philippines.<sup>57</sup> The only difference with Korea was that, due to Soviet presence, benevolent assimilation had to be toned down to benevolent tutelage, focused on preparing the Koreans adequately to contain the spread of Communism. "Containing" did not just mean preventing the spread of Communism. It also implied demonstrating American prowess to Koreans and threatening the Communists by accusing them of suspending Democratic order, and, in a larger sense, jeopardizing national security against Soviet presence in northern Korea.

By doing so, Hodge hoped to advertise Democracy's higher pragmatic value over Communism in southern Korea and force Communist stalwart Pak Hōnyōng to abandon his plan to use the JCP as a base for anti-American operations. This

would ensure that no significant local Korean threat was posed against American influence in the peninsula while Americans focused on “developing Korean self-government and amicable relations with the Soviets.”<sup>58</sup> As for the spoilage resulting from whatever conflict that may ensue, Hodge knew that he could always use the Right-wing Rhee faction to clean it up. Without getting their own hands dirty, the Americans could maintain and promote a pure image of themselves as liberators and pacifiers, not as hypocritically undemocratic imperialists and breeders of factionalism.<sup>59</sup> On October 27, 1945, intending to lecture Pak about the impropriety of his Communist stance, Hodge ordered his staff to escort Pak to the Military Government’s headquarters for a meeting. Hodge carefully concealed his Orientalism by relabeling it “national security” and warned Pak that the right to enjoy freedom did not imply the right to usurp it in libertine fashion by vowing to punish political opponents.

Furthermore, if Pak was thinking about creating a “Communist paradise,” Hodge warned that Pak had to quickly abandon that idea because it was just a euphemism for an utter destruction of civil order; civility could exist only from a solid guarantee of freedom of expression.<sup>60</sup> Since the party sought to deny and destroy that freedom, Hodge argued that the party was a “grave threat to maintaining a Democratic peace.”<sup>61</sup> Communists would be unable to govern according to the people’s will because the party would be interested only in imposing its own plans on the Korean public if “stubborn ideologues” like Pak continued to lead it.<sup>62</sup> However, Pak did not care what Hodge had to offer because he saw through Hodge’s anti-Communist wrapping and could not conceal his intense dislike of Hodge’s condescending manner of speech. Pak sharply retorted that the party wanted only to exterminate imperialism and national traitors, and that Americans, having defeated Japanese Fascism, ought to be Korea’s allies, not enemies. Should the Americans attempt to sabotage the Communists’ plan, Pak warned, there was a natural and moral duty to “fight unwelcome occupiers to the end.”<sup>63</sup> If the Americans ignored his warning, the party had no choice but to consider “Americans as despicable substitutes of Japanese imperialists.”<sup>64</sup> Hodge, who had prepared “freedom” as his keyword to silence Pak, ended up replying nothing to Pak who had prepared “nationalism” and “anti-Fascism” in response, arguing that these were values which Democracy could also accept if it was a political system desiring to reflect the will of a people long oppressed under harsh imperial rule.<sup>65</sup> In short, Hodge’s first and only debate with Pak had ended in defeat.

Although he lost the oral boxing match with Pak, it would only take two months for Hodge to finally decide on remaining faithful to his original position from the debate with Pak. The Moscow Conference had ended without definitively promising anything.<sup>66</sup> Hodge was dismayed by the highly unsatisfying decision that Korea be placed under a joint American-Soviet trusteeship for five years, because the Americans had entered Korea harboring a paradoxical objective that yielded no space for any joint cooperation between the Americans and

Soviets. The American military government wished to implement “Democracy” which in principle upheld the open participation of all parties in Korea, but actually accepted only Rightists because of their staunch anti-Communism. With Pak’s flat refusal to cooperate in finding a solution to this perplexing problem, Hodge now confronted the issue of finding reliable political consultants in Korea. It was going to be extremely difficult, for it meant finding a reliable Korean partner in a country where Rightists were numerous but had very few nationalist credentials to win the Korean public’s approval, and Leftists were few in number but fiercely devoted to an ideology that could possibly invite Soviet intervention at the worst.<sup>67</sup>

As much as the American military government had its own reasons to agonize over the question of how to relieve itself from this dilemma, Yŏ Unhyŏng also had a good reason to be increasingly frustrated with Pak and Hodge’s uncooperative attitudes. Yŏ thought both Pak and Hodge were deluded; meaningless bickering about whether one form of “Democracy” was better than another would offer nothing but mutual hatred. Incorporation and harmony were more necessary than accusations of national treason against the Right, for Pak’s strategy of attacking the Rhee faction with anti-imperialist rhetoric would invite more unnecessary animosity from the Right. Furthermore, with the Americans essentially possessing actual administrative and military control, Yŏ believed that the only realistic solution for the Left was to work toward uniting with the Right to form a joint coalition and work toward restoring Korean self-government.

A more fundamental reason behind Yŏ’s consideration of Right-Left cooperation as the only plausible solution was his discomfort with the conception of Right-Left antagonism itself. Although he, like Pak, desired the expulsion of pro-Japanese collaborators and had established the Alliance for National Reconstruction in 1944 to promote a “great union” of the Korean people, Yŏ was by no means a strict Leftist, or, like Pak was, an orthodox Communist.<sup>68</sup> However, Yŏ did share Pak’s animosity toward the Rightists. He was especially annoyed with the Rightist insistence on the label *Dae-han* (Great Korea), derived from the Korean Empire (*Dae-han Je-gook* in Korean), which he felt was historically inappropriate because it was “inauspicious for a country to name itself after an empire ransacked by Japanese imperialists.”<sup>69</sup> “United Korea” (*Tong-il Josuhn*) was a more favorable term because “Korea was a country that Koreans had long ruled as Koreans with perfect historical autonomy.”<sup>70</sup> The phrase “historical autonomy” shows that Yŏ believed that a country’s people had to collectively uphold what sociologist Craig Calhoun (1993) calls the “sanctity of historical nationalism,” which is rooted in a country’s traditional name, to truly declare themselves as independent and autonomous.<sup>71</sup> History, as a non-ideological and collective creation borne from diverse activities and decisions of a national people, was *the primary basis for establishing* national sovereignty.

The major problem for Yŏ was that the JCP was the only organization in the Leftist camp which could enable Yŏ to continue his search for this conception



of “History,” but Pak was not interested in helping Yō. Instead of allowing Yō to concentrate on fighting the Japanese under a unified banner of the Left, Pak seemed interested only in Communist indoctrination until the party had to close down because the Japanese police arrested Lee Dong-hwi, the JCP’s head of treasury, and most officials for embezzling the party’s funds.<sup>72</sup> An immensely disappointed Yō had no choice but to walk out. Yō then went to Taiwan in 1924, where he was briefly a member of the Blue Shirts Society under the leadership of Jiang Jieshi, but he soon became disillusioned with the harshly Manichean conception of Jiang’s anti-Communism. After hearing news of the Shanghai Massacre in 1927, a furious and frustrated Yō walked out of the Blue Shirts Society a year later.<sup>73</sup>

However, as Aldous Huxley (1962) once remarked, “the more original a mind is, the more inclined it is to solitude.”<sup>74</sup> Yō left all three parties because of the myopic Left-Right antagonism he saw in these organizations. That divide was just incompatible with his unique and sophisticated neutral approach to Korean unification—“unitary Socialism”—what Cumings has called “a mixture of Christianity, Wilsonian Democracy, and Socialism.”<sup>75</sup> Yet, “Unitary Socialism” was not merely an amalgamation of diverse ideologies; it was an integrative philosophy which sought to neutrally unite both Left and Right, encouraging both sides to mutually cooperate under the banners of “humanism” and “egalitarianism,” best shown in Yō’s poem “Zhuxi’s Joke for a Visitor. (1943).” Yō delivers the idea concisely and clearly with his superb command of the lyricism and philosophical succinctness of classical Chinese poetry:

人我人，我不喜 (people I people, I am not happy)  
 人我不人，我不怒 (People I not people, I am not angry)  
 我人，人我不人，我人 (I people, people I not human, I, human)  
 我不人，人我人，我不人 (I am not human, people I human, I am not human)  
 欲知我 人不人，(Wish to know me, people not human)  
 我人，我不人 人之人不人 (I am human, I am not human, people’s  
 human not human)  
 人我不人欲怒知之 (people I am not human, learn to be angry from knowing)<sup>76</sup>

Yō translated as follows:

Even if people call me human, it is no cause for me to be happy;  
 Though some may say I am not human, it is no cause for me to express fury.  
 If I am human, though others may say I am not so, I am still human.  
 If I am not human, even if people may say that I am, I am still not human.  
 To know whether I am a human myself, first know whether those who call me  
 ‘human’ or ‘not human’ are themselves human.<sup>77</sup>

At first glance, the meaningless repetition of “people-I-people-I” gives the impression that Yō wrote a jocular poem as a lingual experiment on how many

sentences one could create with just “I” and “people” (this character can also be translated as “human,” depending on contextual usage). However, since Yō’s poem is written in classical Chinese and consists of a simple repetition of just a few characters, the poem requires a grammatical transliteration of “people” into “human” to make the delivery of the philosophical message of humanism smooth. Moreover, Yō’s more frequent use of the Chinese character “人” is an important feature of the poem because it is the frequency which compels the reader of the poem to translate the character as a plural “human” rather than as a singular noun, “person.” The frequency of “人” is the *modus operandi* to convince the reader that human beings deserve respect because they are communal rather than individualistic beings.<sup>78</sup> Put differently, the essence of the poem’s philosophical depth lies in its flexible contextual interpretation of “人.” By rendering a word’s frequency in appearance as the ultimate measure of its importance, the poem succinctly and elaborately captures the centrality of the human and the sanctity of respecting individuality. In other words, the character’s most frequent appearance demonstrates how strongly “Unitary Socialism” prized a healthy mutual respect for individuality as the cornerstone for political and social harmony.

Thus, the status of “人” as the pivot of the poem’s meaning proves the character’s irreplaceable nature; likewise, “Unitary Socialism” sought to integrate both the Left and the Right because Yō firmly believed that humanism cannot be replaced by a greed for political power, for the latter only promotes needless conflict and survives by destroying the former. “Unitary Socialism” also understood humanism as the condition of establishing the individual as an independent self-perceptive being, for, as the poem suggests, the idea of being capable of becoming a human being rests not on the judgment of others but that of one’s very own. The final line complements the third line and reveals the respect “Unitary Socialism” had for the Christian precept, “Do unto others as others would do unto you.”<sup>79</sup> Holistically, “Unitary Socialism” favored non-ideological unity because people can become human only when they are masters of their own character and learn the wisdom of treating others as they would themselves. It was “Unitary” because Yō believed that humanity is fundamentally communitarian under the simple but important truth that all were entitled to have mutual respect for being human beings. It was “Socialist” because Yō rejected the Manichean construct of the Cold War which sought to split the world into two extremist camps. Instead of antagonism, Yō favored a centrist incorporation of Democratic elections and a Socialist program of a state-led equitable redistribution of land which did not merely serve to emphasize class antagonism and conflict but one which would promote harmonious and communal and societal economic growth because this was genuine progress which would be welcomed by peasants and businessmen alike.

Yō rejected both Communism and Capitalism because both inherently accepted a hierarchical and vertically unequal promotion of economic growth by emphasizing the exceptionally privileged statuses of Capitalists and Communists

as the primary and sole engineers of exclusionary political cultures. Yŏ believed in a humanist and centrist political culture whose flexibility could encourage the coexistence of all ideologies in a common political arena, all united under the goal of providing maximum economic and political security for every citizen. Such egalitarian humanism is most pronounced in the last two lines, for they suggest that the universe does not revolve around an individual but revolves with people as its axis. The very last line most notably proves this, for it emphasizes how the best leader is one who is able to understand that the condition of being human compels politicians to be equal, not superior to the people—an echo of Confucius on the art of good governance: “In ruling a state of a thousand chariots, one is reverent in the handling of affairs and shows himself to be trustworthy. One is economical in expenditures, loves the people, and uses them only at the proper season.”<sup>80</sup>

Just as Confucius emphasized the importance of a politician being the prime servant of the public good, Yŏ’s “Unitary Socialism” stressed that performing political duties is not a privilege or a power, but a non-ideological service to enhance the betterment of society as a whole. Only with this perception can politicians truly declare themselves to be human beings. Yŏ believed that government whose central value is humanism existed purely for the service of the people; as soon as it abandoned that sacred principle, a politician was but a member of a private clique embroiled in an immoral collusion for power. Thus, it was natural for Yŏ to be uncomfortable about Pak’s perverse use of Communism and the party only to counter the Rightists rather than to use it as a legitimate forum to debate about Korea’s future and to love the Korean people as Koreans—the only road for politicians to be proper human beings. This eclectic and non-ideological humanism was the basis for “Unitary Socialism,” since Yŏ wanted to harmonize Socialists, Democrats, and Communists toward realizing a truly non-ideological unification of the Korean peninsula. Hence, “Unitary Socialism” is Socialist in being a middle-of-the-road ideology and unitary in trying to unite the Left and Right. The facts mentioned thus far explain why Conservative political scientists such as James Jong-soo Lee are wrong to contradictorily and erroneously assert that Yŏ was “popular with American officials *despite* being pro-Soviet,”<sup>81</sup> an egregiously incorrect and heavily ideological interpretation of a man about whom further research is much desired.

Yŏ was frustrated with the Americans because they refused to understand this message, perceiving “Unitary Socialism” as a philosophy completely at odds with Washington’s anti-Communism. For American officials keen on containing Soviet influence in Korea, such a middle-of-the-road approach was not only unhelpful but also irrelevant. In the face of a constantly high risk of Soviet invasion, cooperating with Yŏ seemed to be a dangerous bet, for the Americans could not get any answers from the man about how Communism must be confronted. The Soviets were busy establishing “people’s parties” and “Democratic societies” all over northern Korea, which forced Hodge to recommend a revision

of Washington's original strategy of "benign supervision" with a heavily ideologically colored objective of ensuring a "thoroughly Democratic government in Korea."<sup>82</sup> From the Americans' perspective, "Unitary Socialism" was not only incompatible with the ideological crisis in the peninsula but also a direct obstacle to maintaining stability under Rightist dominance. Even though the Moscow Conference had separately established southern Korea as an American zone, a lack of a formal government in southern Korea other than a "provisional government" meant that Washington's interest in forming a joint commission with Moscow was highly necessary to curb any possibility of strengthening the Communist movement in southern Korea. Hence, what mattered foremost for Americans was assuring the victory of an electoral Democracy against a Soviet-inspired authoritarian "democracy of the proletariat" centered on a personality cult without losing a single soldier. American military government officials prized the fulfillment of this objective such that they considered "Unitary Socialism" to have critically misunderstood Democrat-Communist bipolarity, calling the ideology the ideal of an "opportunist with no political backing."<sup>83</sup>

Thus, for Hodge and his associates, Yŏ was a chicken's rib—they were keeping him as their "important" ally only to prevent the Communists from taking over southern Korea, but that was also the precise reason because of which Yŏ was so dispensable.<sup>84</sup> For men like Hodge who had spent most of their lives on the battlefield constantly fighting on rough terrain *against* enemies, stability did not allow for a freedom of thought whose core value was *for* ideological reconciliation; stability could only promise peace which sought to exclude those who dreamed of anything close to Socialism or Communism. There was no such thing as a "family" of ideologies. One could always be against Communism, but one could never respect or accept it as a companion or a family member of Democracy—a dictum which Hodge later proved by declaring war against the SKWP in December, which in turn led the JCP and Yŏ to intensify their opposition to trusteeship.<sup>85</sup> The real tragedy was the sheer lack of American understanding of "Unitary Socialism" which forced, as Bruce Cumings (2004) points out, Yŏ to be "a man for many seasons," but not for the Manichean world of Communism or Democracy with nothing in between—one that still haunts the Korean peninsula.<sup>86</sup>

In retrospect, Hodge, Pak, and Yŏ's philosophical portraits reveal that September 2, 1945 was a major defeat for Pak and Yŏ. Under Pak and Yŏ's leadership, the JCP rose in indignation against the Conservative DPK's pardoning of pro-Japanese collaborators, believing that Korea's true national liberation was only complete when the sinners were thoroughly punished in the name of the people—peasants and workers. Yet, the JCP had arisen also out of disappointment, for Hodge confirmed for the Leftists that Americans needed anti-Communist Democratic allies rather than Nationalists. More specifically, Hodge confirmed the validity of the party's anger by authorizing the pardon and inclusion of Japanese collaborators who continued with their careers in the Korean National

Police and the National Assembly. The Americans had instituted a highly ideological Democracy whose sole objective was opposing Communism, completely devoid of nationalism. In doing so, they had betrayed Pak, preventing him from punishing the DPK's un-Korean sin of rebranding Japanese collaborators as patriotic Democrats. However, Hodge and Pak had also frustrated Yō because they refused to understand the importance of achieving a humanist, non-ideological unity of Koreans under the banner of "Unitary Socialism." 1945 drew to a close with a Rightist and American victory over the SKWP, for they had succeeded in fulfilling their chief goal of creating politics without a heart or soul. In their eyes, political expediency trumped historical and popular legitimacy, blurring the line between a Democrat and a Japanese collaborator, making it impossible to tell the two apart. Nevertheless, the party believed that it *could* and did not take long to demonstrate this by intensifying its pro-Soviet support for the trusteeship and consolidating Pak's personality cult.

### **"Without the Party, There Would be No Independence:" The Rise of Pak's Personality Cult**

Despite its defeat on September 2, 1945, the JCP refused to acknowledge that it had suffered one, publishing a panegyric denouncing Hodge's "hypocritical and perverse 'Democracy.'" It was hypocritical and perverse because although the Rhee faction was Right-wing and "pro-Democracy" in terms of ideological inclination, it was also merely an imperial tool of the Americans to govern Leftists whom the Americans considered threatening to their authority. If imperialism is, as Edward Said (1994) put it, "the practice of a dominant metropolitan center ruling a distant territory," the SKWP perceived Hodge's "Democracy" as a form of imperialism because the American-Rightist "coordinative administration" was nothing more than an extended chapter of Korea's bitter history of colonial subjugation.<sup>87</sup> Inviting a trusteeship to govern the peninsula was a humiliating repetition of Japanese imperialism because inviting the United States—a geographically and culturally distant nation—to "rule" the peninsula only served to reinforce Korea's inability for self-government. Should such a "major tragedy" befall Korea, Koreans incurred the risk of repeating "35 years of shame, guilt, and sadness." Americans had to be "resisted at all costs" because passivity would only lead to "exchanging one imperialist for another."<sup>88</sup> This would forestall "genuine progress" and prevent Koreans from becoming a "world-historical people."<sup>89</sup>

The key to understanding the panegyric's anti-imperialist discourse lies in the notion of "exchange," for it reflects the party's consciousness about what the sociologist Johan Galtung (1971) has described as a "structural theory of imperialism."<sup>90</sup> It is not only geographical distance that creates alienation between two nations with an imperial relationship. Imperialism is a direct negation of Marxist historical materialism, creating a vertically stratified distinction of a core nation and a peripheral nation which easily transforms the relationship between two nations into that between a dominant bourgeoisie and an oppressed

proletariat. Korea had already experienced this relationship with Japan and there was no need to repeat it with the United States. Thus, Pak believed that opposing trusteeship was the party's ultimate means to protect its ideological roots and by extension, prevent the repetition of Galtungian imperialism in Korean history. From the party's perspective, its fear of the trusteeship's degradation into a tool for the American occupation to extend, rather than end, imperialism was not unfounded. Beyond the hated prospect of indefinitely suspending the delivery of national liberation to peasants and workers due to intense American and Rightist opposition, Pak saw little difference between the American military government and Japanese imperial rule. Indeed, the former was expected to unfold much worse than the latter because the United States' attempt to introduce Democracy was, as Pak put it, a scheme to turn the Pacific Ocean into an "American lake."<sup>91</sup>

However, the generally belligerent anti-Americanism that Pak had forced upon the JCP must not be understood purely as a fear of repeating an unwanted historical chapter. Ideology allows for an active rejection and regulation of history by presenting the ideological world as the embodiment of the good life.<sup>92</sup> By combining anti-Rightist and anti-American rhetoric to make Rightists and Americans' stances identical, Pak and his followers made sure that their powerful appeal of nationalism emphasized the moral superiority of the Party's Communism over the Rightists' feigned "Democracy." To borrow the anthropologist James Scott's (1985) argument about material interests, if Pak's desire to prove such moral superiority is a materialized interest—one that requires gaining comparative positional advantage over adversaries—then such "positionality" is also a prize in itself, earned through an intense political struggle.<sup>93</sup> To acquire positionality, however, one must first fundamentally clarify one's position; Pak decided to cement his reputation as an orthodox Communist. Hence, on January 5, during an interview with the *New York Times*, Pak supported extending Soviet trusteeship over Korea, just to delineate his opinion as different from the Rightists without elaborating on its implications. Yet, the American reporter who conducted the interview was a staunch follower of Hodge's anti-Communism and unjustifiably refashioned "support" as though Pak was calling for Korea's transformation into a Soviet satellite. Unsurprisingly, the Rightists easily caught and exploited the bait, defaming Pak as a "turncoat" willing to Russify Korea.<sup>94</sup> "Turncoat" importantly reflected the Rightists' wish that their protest of the trusteeship's "colonial" aspect of transferring sovereignty to a foreign power would solidify their supremacy in southern Korea.

However, the Rightists had underestimated Pak's pride as a Communist. Shortly after the fiasco with the reporter from *The New York Times*, Pak published a biting rebuttal to the Rightists, arguing that accepting trusteeship was not a mistake, but a "necessary strategy for the eternal destruction of Fascism." Opposing trusteeship was the real disgrace, for it exposed an ugly truth. The Rightists and landholding classes were merely hiding behind a thin curtain of "Democracy," naively wishing that it would completely conceal their shameful

past as collaborators of Japanese Fascist imperialism. Their conflation of “Democracy” with “anti-Communism” was nothing more than a camouflage to conceal their grave crime as “country-sellers” and to feign blindness and deafness to their despicably sin-stained souls. Pak’s endorsement of the trusteeship was important because it directly countered the Rightists’ charge that the Lee faction was a group of country-sellers by arguing that accepting trusteeship was not repeating a shameful history of foreign domination. On the contrary, the trusteeship was a panacea to eternally throw imperialism into the garbage can of history.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, Pak sought to salvage his reputation as a nationalistic Communist against the Rightists’ accusation based on incorrect information and to show that supporting the trusteeship was necessary to prevent the Americans from reintroducing imperialism into a country which had already suffered enough from it.<sup>96</sup> Thus, supporting trusteeship had a dual function of being a strategy for the party’s political survival in a hostile environment and of emphasizing Communism’s uniqueness that distinguished it from Rightists’ and Americans’ un-nationalistic “Democracy.”

An imminent American monopoly on dictating the trusteeship’s terms following the Soviets’ softened stance toward using the Korean peninsula only to secure supplies of coal and electricity further convinced Pak and his followers to qualify their support of the trusteeship.<sup>97</sup> More specifically, they perceived the trusteeship’s plan to divide the peninsula into Democratic and Communist spheres as an American plot to colonize Korea, and identified the American military government as the prime culprit behind the division. Barely a week after the Soviets ceded a firm foothold in Korea to the Americans, Pak severely criticized the “mysterious intentions” of Lieutenant Hodge and the American military government to “stir up disorder and confusion.”<sup>98</sup> Hodge was responsible for conflating “Democratic Koreans” with “patriotic Koreans” when most of the Rightists in Korea did not understand the importance of eliminating Fascism.<sup>99</sup> Since Hodge was a “demagogue who was bent on promoting conflict and division among the Korean people,” it was pompous for the American military government to be claiming that it was promoting genuine “Democracy.”<sup>100</sup> If anything, Hodge was eager to oust as many Leftists as possible from an ideally Rightist-led political order. Thus, it was this exclusionary nature of Hodge’s “Democracy” which also made it dangerous in Party members’ eyes—there was no concept of the “people,” much less of “protection” for the public interest when the “public” was constituted mostly of peasants and farmers. Proper Democracy was always about serving such an underprivileged majority to enhance the general public welfare. Without a proper understanding of the exact composition of the “people,” the Americans seemed unqualified to rule Korea in the name of “Democracy.”<sup>101</sup>

By emphasizing “people,” Pak was essentially arguing that defining “Democracy” was a competition between what the sociologist Susan Eckstein (1990) has termed “Substantive versus Formal Democracy.” The former emphasizes the maintenance of public welfare by guaranteeing consistent means of

livelihood for the people, and the latter merely functions as “Democracy” by holding elections in which politicians “buy” votes from the poor in exchange for offering select services.<sup>102</sup> The party chose the former over the latter because they believed that “Democracy” could only be Democracy if it provided and guaranteed consistent means of livelihood of the people; Pak thought that the Americans were too Manichean, concentrating on building a “Democratic veneer” to justify Rightist hegemony while crushing organizational opposition from the Left. More precisely, the main problem with the Americans’ desiring a representative government as an emblem of Democracy was that the approach was too eager to link a particular institutional format with the essence of a political system such that American officials did not care much about who operated a government, filling it with men who had served the Japanese based on the singular reason of having more expertise. From the Leftists’ perspective, such an action was nothing more than encouraging historical amnesia in the name of political efficiency—a decision that only invited more suspicion that the Americans were interested in making the DPK a private servant of the American military government rather than a public servant of the Korean people. In doing so, Hodge was introducing anarchy through a libertine use of the Korean military police to arrest anyone without a warrant. Such an unprincipled use of authority was doing much harm to Korean society by pushing it into unnecessary chaos and disorder. Hence, Pak wished to demonstrate to the Americans what order and discipline precisely were. To do so, Pak knew that he had to convince the party to solidify its commitment to promoting a strictly Communist political culture within its own ranks.

Thus, Pak chose to balance his anti-Americanism with Communism by equating pro-trusteeship with a pro-Soviet attitude. In comparison with his earlier opposition to the trusteehip, Pak praised the Soviet agreement to the Moscow Conference’s trusteehip as “the most progressive decision ever made for the Korean people,” allowing Koreans to “develop a true people’s Democracy.”<sup>103</sup> Pak now quickly reconfigured “pro-trusteeship” into a pro-Soviet sentiment and intensely blamed the Rightists for “purposely distorting” such a “noble intention” and for manipulating the masses to continue a “false struggle against anti-imperialism.”<sup>104</sup> The real sin that the Rightist “lackeys” of Japanese imperialism had committed against the Korean people was a blind worship of Fascism, and the trusteehip would serve “the most righteous cause of completely uprooting” it.<sup>105</sup> In other words, placing Koreans under trusteehip was not subjecting the country to foreign domination, but an opportunity for them to learn the correct path to Democracy. Supporting the trusteehip was, in the party’s judgment, the ultimate corrective that would ensure that a thoroughly moral politics would be practiced with the sound mind of rejecting the shameful past of Japanese colonial rule, which would in turn allow for the emergence of a sound body politic in which every Korean would prosper and enjoy liberty—the fulfillment of the people’s will, and hence, of Democracy.<sup>106</sup> By blurring the identity of “supporting trusteehip” between a symbol of nationalism and a symbol of a pro-Soviet



attitude, the party sought to demonstrate its commitment to the liberation of the workers and peasantry to promote itself as a group of genuinely patriotic Koreans. Yet, the party simultaneously wanted to promote itself as a nationalistic group, to monopolize political legitimacy among the people and exclude the Rightists as much as possible from claiming their share. In just a few days, the party would choose the rise of Pak's personality cult to interpret patriotism as a complex form of nationalism. The party's more important task of becoming a unique Communist organization, which required centralized leadership and the primacy of Communism over nationalism, would eclipse the party's image as a group of patriotic Koreans.<sup>107</sup>

Once the party finished advertising its patriotism and nationalism, members quickly realized that a personality cult was also a key ingredient for the party to further distinguish itself as a pro-Soviet and Communist organization. As Robert Tucker (1979) argues, a personality cult enables a leader to catch two birds with one stone, hunting heretics and establishing political solidarity among party members through indoctrination—functions which Pak needed to precisely identify any intra-party subversives and to indoctrinate pseudo-Leftists into Pak's unquestionable authority.<sup>108</sup> Less than two weeks after the general meeting, the party's propaganda staff summoned all members and demanded that they pledge to consider all those who criticized Pak as “counterrevolutionaries who fail to grasp the true meaning of a revolution.”<sup>109</sup> Any detractors willing to make snide remarks about Pak were “ignoramuses” unaware of how “rigorously Comrade Pak toiled to build the party.”<sup>110</sup> It was only under Pak's leadership that the party could “cruise toward a determinate victory of Bolshevism.”<sup>111</sup> Those slandering Pak were merely former collaborators of the Japanese opportunistically branding and selling their anti-Communism as “patriotism.”<sup>112</sup> Such people were doing themselves a major disservice by “foolishly adding a crime to their criminal records” and had to realize themselves that “unfavorable consequences” will befall on them.<sup>113</sup>

The party wasted no time in identifying the “fools” demanding that “General Hodge and his evil pro-Japanese cronies” assume “full responsibility” for the highly unequal distribution of land, which resulted in a mere 3.3% of the entire population owning over half of Korean farmland. By invoking the existence of such “fools” as a just cause to establish a personality cult, the party was advertising Communism as an ideology ready to exercise *effectively* concentrated power to deliver justice to the peasantry. In contrast to the Rightists' conception of “Democracy,” which only safeguarded the interests of decadent landlords, the SKWP was arguing that Communism was superior because, in addition to being nationalistic, it respected fairness and equity as principal ethics of public welfare. Therefore, the party believed that it alone had the moral legitimacy to assert itself as the institutional representative of the Korean people.<sup>114</sup>

Morality and political power, however, never bind perfectly well together. If a person pursues the latter to an absolute degree, morality can be relegated in favor

of self-interest. To ensure that the peasantry's support of the party and himself be intelligible, Pak was signaling through the party's demand for absolute allegiance to his personality cult that a party member's verbal support of Communism was no longer enough because that alone did not prove the existence of a party's member's spiritual devotion to the ideology. A strong leadership accompanied by charisma and theoretical expertise was desirable to translate Communism into a systemic practice in a generally hostile region. Furthermore, as Dae-sook Suh and Bruce Cumings have poignantly pointed out, individuals with a near perfect balance between revolutionary education and experience such as Pak were pure rarities in Korea. Very few so-called Leftist leaders had a firm grasp of orthodox Marxist-Leninism. Most members joined the Communist party's cause because of its anti-imperialistic appeal, not because they perfectly grasped the concept of bourgeois capitalist exploitation. Thus, despite welcoming "anyone well aware of the urgency in achieving the Korean people's complete independence" in principle, the party's selection of the theoretically and politically experienced Pak as its leader was a natural choice expressing its strong determination to succeed in that translation.<sup>115</sup> The evolution of a political symbiosis between Pak and the party into an organic unity had fully become a permanent feature of SKWP's political culture.

Yet, as Max Weber (2015) pointed out, "politics is made with the head, not with other parts of the body, nor the soul,"<sup>116</sup> and many party members believed that intellectual superiority was the key to seize political leadership. The party's choice of Pak more importantly meant that "awareness" specifically was an unquestioned acceptance of Nationalism as strictly as a Communist promise which had to permanently remain as such. The party's determination to "cruise toward a Bolshevik victory" directly makes this nature of "awareness" very clear, since the "victory" was a conscious echo of the party's existential objective—to "fight to the end for a true Bolshevik revolution."<sup>117</sup> Of course, the party well knew that the time was not ripe to declare this objective outright, for the Rightists could gang up with the Americans anytime to hunt down party members. Yet, to engrave this objective deeply within every member's mind while also making sure to externally signal to the Americans and Rightists that the party had the urge to become Communist, the party had to secretly select a leader who was theoretically orthodox and mentally devoted to the objective as though it were a creed without publicizing the choice of leadership to enemies. To apply philosopher John Kultgen's (1973) argument, the SKWP well understood that the art of publicity always involves an intentional concealment of private motives. More precisely, the party understood that the distinction between public and private presupposes the publicity in principle of all in the perceptual world and the publicity in fact of barriers. Publicity entails intentionality on part of the private perceiver.<sup>118</sup> Consequently, what is publicized fundamentally advertises what is externally observable while making sure to knowingly conceal what is intentional as much as possible.

Nevertheless, building a political apparatus, like painting, is an art, for while the former is not as beautiful as the latter, the former and the latter both express a desire of individuals to record the reactions of their personality to the world they live in. Put differently, art becomes inseparable from the desire and objectives of its creator. No matter how suitable Pak was as a leader in the eyes of the party members, qualification is only a necessary condition demonstrating fitness to perform a vocation. One must have a firm objective that guarantees superb vocational conduct—the sufficient condition which defines the value of the qualification. For Pak, that objective was prohibiting Yŏ from ever entering the party again. If Yŏ saw the possibility of reconciliation in the Right, Pak considered Yŏ’s “moderation” as a euphemism for procrastination and a disguise to pose as a pseudo-Communist. For Pak, who fundamentally understood a revolution as a process of workers subjugating the bourgeoisie, Yŏ’s effort to unify the Left and Right was a complete anathema, because Pak feared that it might result in the workers eternally being the pawns of bourgeois capitalists and prevent the realization of Marxist historical materialism in practice. Pak also believed that Yŏ, as a “member of the landholding class,” was trying to establish a “quasi-Democratic order dominated by the bourgeoisie.”<sup>119</sup> Thus, from Pak’s perspective, Yŏ was a perplexing enigma—a hypocritical member of the bourgeoisie who supported a mysteriously eclectic socialism while feigning political neutrality to conceal such hypocrisy and ultimately “eat the party from inside-out.”<sup>120</sup> Thus, in Pak’s view, a harmonious relationship with Yŏ was highly detrimental to preserving the party’s internal solidarity.

It was not only such ambiguity that annoyed Pak. When a person hates someone, it is not simply a dislike of character or whatever can be physically seen; a deeper hatred of an individual is essentially a hatred of the person’s philosophy, for the mind is what gives life to character. Pak wanted to prohibit Yŏ from rejoining the party because in addition to Yŏ’s supposed bourgeois origin, Pak feared that Yŏ’s Christian aspect of “Unitary Socialism” would theoretically pollute orthodox Communism. For Pak, Christianity was but “a golden ticket to oppress workers” because it “protected a lord’s property in the Medieval age and that of the capitalist in a capitalist society.”<sup>121</sup> Put differently, Pak believed that no matter how much time would progress, the livelihood of workers was sure to deteriorate, for Christianity was breeding the same hackneyed sense of elitism and forced the bourgeoisie to be addicted to capital production and hence, more exploitation of labor. It was crucial that workers quickly “overthrow those lazy landlords and be masters of their own lives.”<sup>122</sup>

Furthermore, since imperialism was a product of a perverse addiction to an unrestrained accumulation of capital, Pak believed that Christianity was a servant of bourgeois toadyism, whose history in Korea originated from the March First Movement, during which many Western missionaries had either cooperated with or were indifferent toward Japanese imperial rule.<sup>123</sup> Pak’s hatred of Christianity, however, was bi-layered. It was not merely in opposition to imperialism, but was

also evidence of how dedicated Pak was *to* Communism such that Pak would have even grimaced at Karl Marx's (1848; 1978) explanation of Christianity's service to Socialism:

“Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a Socialist tinge. Has not Christianity declaimed against private property, against marriage, and against the State? Has it not preached in the place of these, charity and poverty, celibacy and mortification of the flesh, monastic life, and Mother Church? Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat.”<sup>124</sup>

For Marx, the Christianization of Socialism is a religious conversion allowing Socialism to evolve into a major panacea against a hierarchical society. Alternatively, because the customs against which Christianity practices abstinence are exactly the same list of bourgeois elements from which Socialism also abstains, the former does not harm or kill the latter; rather the two mix together to mockingly celebrate the aristocrat's delusion—the belief in the persistence of a feudal order. By contrast, Pak would have favored Communism's complete *eradication* of Christianity. Pak would have shuddered at Marx's argument. Christian Socialism did not deserve the respect that Christians have toward holy water; the heart-burning aristocrat will just have to accept his fate and confess to the world the sin of believing in a pro-imperialist religion. Since Japan had morally poisoned herself by perverting Christianity into an agent of imperialism, preaching it to illegally occupy the lands of another, Pak would have argued that Christianity in practice is theoretically incompatible with Communism. Instead, for Pak it was an impure dross with which the priest can do *nothing* to calm down the aristocrat's heart-burn. Christianity must not and cannot have any positive influence on Socialist or Communist movements because of its dangerous potential to be perversely politicized as a cultural lackey of imperialism.

Ultimately, the party's promotion of Pak's personality cult and Pak's hatred of Yŏ converged together to mask a selfish desire to indulge in the SKWP's narcissism that it solely had the authority to determine southern Korea's future. As an article in the *Liberation Daily* had put it, “without the SKWP, there would be no independence,” and this self-aggrandizement would be the “foundational cornerstone” to engineer a “true revolution for a complete ideological unification in the name of Lenin and Stalin.”<sup>125</sup> Thus, national independence had to be “complete” not only for the sake of the people's liberation, but also because the party could launch a “new war against counterrevolutionaries” without having to worry about unnecessary foreign interference.<sup>126</sup>

Put differently, the party was caught between the urge to maintain its authenticity as an orthodox Marxist group by reserving no place for nationalism in Communist thought and an urge to become a devoted follower of Pyongyang where nationalistic Communism became the ultimate norm. The allure

of successfully translating principles into practicable policies—the hallmark of activism—was so appealing to Pak because if the party successfully consolidated under Communism, he could dream of reviving the truly orthodox JCP that had closed down two decades before.<sup>127</sup> Hence, Pak’s rise to cult status also confirmed that the party had perverted Nationalism into a hypnotized captive of Communism. It would be a condition which the Spring of 1946 would confirm to be immutable as the party treaded along a rocky road to consolidate its Communist identity by urging “Unitary Socialism” to walk the gallows. With Pak making the party’s Communist culture highly visible, leaving no room for “Unitary Socialism” in the party’s ideology, Yŏ had no clear reason to stay in the party. Thus, Yŏ, not wishing to take part in this immoral mutation of the party, walked out of the SKWP’s headquarters on January 22, 1946.<sup>128</sup>

Yŏ’s exit from the JCP symbolized the confirmation of non-ideological unity as a Utopian ideal. Caught between the two extremes of the American military government’s anti-Communism and the Pak-inspired Communists’ relentless drive to establish a personality cult, “Unitary Socialism” and its emphasis on a humanist and centrist platform of Korean unification by and for Koreans had fallen on deaf ears. It would receive a death sentence with Yŏ’s sudden and mysterious assassination in the Summer of 1947. Second, Yŏ’s eternal banishment from the JCP effectively meant that the Communists had strengthened to such an extent that the idea of the southern Left was now increasingly susceptible to becoming a synonym for Communism. With Yŏ’s neutrality and ambivalence toward the Manichean construct of the Cold War absent, the Communists were free to experiment on the possibility of reviving the prospect for Communist supremacy in southern Korea and finish uniting the highly disorganized southern Left during the early 1920s. In other words, the JCP was closer to not only securing its own revival, but also that of the Korean Communist movement, which would in turn become a genuine source of political legitimacy with which the JCP could seize the leadership of southern Communists, and potentially, the northerners.

However, the fulfillment of these two objectives would prove to be an illusionary success, for the most undesirable but also inevitable outcome was that an all-out war against the Rightists and the American military government was the only solution for the JCP to truly seize the reins of power in southern Korea solely in its own hands. The bloody struggle that would ensue over the next two short but volatile years would mark the prelude to unleashing the JCP’s greatest sin toward the Korean people—an incessant Left-Right conflict which would produce an unfinished war, whose haunting and torn echoes would continue to whisper uncertainty and distrust in both sides of the Korean peninsula.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> “Telegram from General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Secretary of State,” Telegram 2-2446, *FRUS*, 1946, Vol. VIII, 640.

<sup>2</sup> Ahn Jae-sung, *Pak Hōnyōng: A Biography* (Seoul: Shil-chuhn Publishing, 2009), 43.

<sup>3</sup> Ahn, *Pak Hōnyōng: A Biography*, 45

<sup>4</sup> Ahn, *Pak Hōnyōng: A Biography*, 45. Thanks to his rich and deep theoretical knowledge, Pak also made a lot of friends as a student in the University for Toilers of the East—an anomaly for a man who was an extreme introvert. Among those friends was Ho Chi Minh. The two were close friends throughout Pak’s lifetime. On a state visit to Hanoi, Pak presented Ho with *Mok Min Shim Suh (On a Proper Mindset for Good Governance)*, the *magnum opus* of Jung Yahk-yong (1762-1836), who is considered the greatest political theorist and sociologist of the Jo-suhn Dynasty. Ho treasured the book, signed “friend” in Chinese on the front cover in Pak’s own script, his entire life. Ho’s copy is preserved at Hanoi’s Museum of National History. On this anecdote, see Ahn, *Pak Hōnyōng: A Biography*, 45.

<sup>5</sup> The Shanghai and Ikurtsk clans had themselves combined numerous factions under the Go-ryuh Communist Party in 1921, but the old factional belligerence was still very much alive between the Shanghai and Ikurtsk clans such that it did not take long for both sides to fight amongst themselves until the GCP disintegrated in 1922. For details regarding the factional struggle, see Dae-Sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement, 1918-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 20-52.

<sup>6</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Seoul: Yuhk-sa Bi-pyung (History and Criticism), 2003), 83.

<sup>7</sup> The South Korean Workers’ Party, “Against Those Who Oppose Pak Hon-yong,” in Kim Nahm-shik ed., *Original Documents of the Southern Korean Workers’ Party (ODSKWP)* (Seoul: Dol-beh-gae Publishing, 1984), 22.

<sup>8</sup> Southern Korean Workers’ Party, “Report on the Fervent Agitators’ Congregation,” *ODSKWP*, Vol. 1, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ahn, *Pak Hōnyōng: A Biography*, 323.

<sup>10</sup> Ahn, *Pak Hōnyōng: A Biography*, 653.

<sup>11</sup> Kim Sahn-woong, *Mong-yang Yō Un-hyounge: A Biography of a Progressive Nationalist* (Seoul: Chae-ryun Publishing, 2015), 30.

<sup>12</sup> Kim, *Mong-yang Yō Un-hyounge*, 31

<sup>13</sup> Kim, *Mong-yang Yō Un-hyounge*, 32

<sup>14</sup> Kim, *Mong-yang Yō Un-hyounge*, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 2: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (Seoul: Yuhk-sa Bi-pyung, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Jack W. Chen, “Blank Spaces and Secret Histories: Questions of Historiographic Epistemology in Medieval China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69.4 (November 2010), 1071.

<sup>17</sup> Kim, *Official Documents of the Southern Korean Workers’ Party*, Vols. I and II and Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005), 263. Kim Nahm-shik (1925-2005) was a temporary member of the SKWP. He was also a researcher on the history of Korean Communism and North Korea who defected from Pyoung-yang in 1984 and released secret Communist documents for research purposes in South Korea. Previously banned by both Seoul and Pyoung-yang throughout the 1970s and 1980s, these volumes contain top secret meeting minutes, manifestos, and other important documents from the Southern Korean Workers’ Party. The documents were not censored; Nahm just published everything he had. They are also available in digitized form from Korea University’s Asia Center (2010).

<sup>18</sup> I hope to relate the SKWP’s conceptualized thoughts to structural changes in the Korean political environment. On this point, see Melvin Richter, “*Begriffsgeschichte* and the History of Ideas,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48.2 (April-June 1987), 248.

<sup>19</sup> My central focus is the Party's *internal* politics, for the whole process was largely a contest between Pak Hōnyōng, the Rightists, and Yō Un-hyōng.

<sup>20</sup> On familiarity's negative influence on memory, see A. K. Rogers, "The Logic of Memory," *The Philosophical Review* 31.3 (May 1922), 284.

<sup>21</sup> Karl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (Penguin Classics, 1983), 275-276.

<sup>22</sup> "Report on the Progress of the Fervent Agitators' Congregation," September 2, 1945 in *Official Documents of the Southern Korean Workers' Party*, Vol. 1, 2, ed. Kim Nahm-shik.

<sup>23</sup> "Report on the Progress of the Fervent Agitators' Congregation," September 2, 1945, ODSKWP.

<sup>24</sup> Idem.

<sup>25</sup> Idem.

<sup>26</sup> Idem.

<sup>27</sup> Hisanori Youichi, "The September Thesis of the Communist International," *Primary Sources on the Communist International* Vol. 5 (Tokyo: Otsuki Library, 1978), 472.

<sup>28</sup> "The Background of the Communists and the Southern Korean Workers' Party—The Disintegration of the New Middle Party," in *A Handbook for Research in Korean Studies—The Modern Era and North Korea*, eds. Lee Jong-suhk, Kim Dong-choon, and Kim Suhng-Bo et al, (Seoul: Yuhk-sa Bi-pyuhng (History and Criticism), 2008).

<sup>29</sup> "Report on the Progress of the Fervent Agitators' Congregation," September 2, 1945, ODSKWP 1.4.

<sup>30</sup> Idem.

<sup>31</sup> "The Party and the Precepts of Bolshevism," September 2, 1945, ODSKWP 1.22.

<sup>32</sup> Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins, and Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Liberation of Class Struggle?" *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 10.3 (Winter 1987), 403-404.

<sup>33</sup> Although August 15, 1945 is still celebrated as Liberation Day in southern and northern Korea, September 2, 1945 ought to be the genuine Liberation Day, for no deal is ever complete until a national seal is stamped. The historian Herbert P. Bix has argued that the main reason for Japan's delay in acknowledging surrender is because of a two-week conflict between Hirohito and Japanese military leaders who supported the continuation of the war effort in the Pacific front. For a detailed discussion on this point, see Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (Perennial Classics, 2001), 487-532.

<sup>34</sup> Pak Hōnyōng and Yō Unhyōng, "The Korean Workers' Party is Finally United," September 19, 1945, ODSKWP 1.5.

<sup>35</sup> Pak and Yō, "The Korean Workers' Party is Finally United," September 19, 1945, ODSKWP 1.6.

<sup>36</sup> Idem.

<sup>37</sup> Idem.

<sup>38</sup> Idem.

<sup>39</sup> Pak and Yō, "The Korean Workers' Party is Finally United," September 19, 1945, ODSKWP 1.6-7. On the scattered peasant and workers' organizations in 1945, see Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 1, 78-79.

<sup>40</sup> On this topic, see Brandon Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy: Koreans in Japan's War, 1937-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013). For a detailed analysis of Japanese colonial rule in the eyes of Korean workers, see Ken C. Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble: Korean Workers in Interwar Japan* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009). On the state of workers and peasant organizations in August 1945, see Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 77-78.

<sup>41</sup> For detailed study of the southern Korean Right and the DPK, see Hahn Bae-ho, *A Theory of Modern Korean Politics* (Seoul: Oh-reum Publishing, 2001) and Shim Jee-yuhn, *A Study of the Democratic Party of Korea* (Seoul: Pull-bit ("Grass-light") Publishing, 1982).

<sup>42</sup> I am using Nietzsche's sense of "forgetting" to illustrate the kind of sentiment Pak was expressing. Pak never read Nietzsche, and so this allusion must only be read as my attempt to provide clarity about his thinking. For the idea about living "unhistorically," see Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the*

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

<sup>43</sup> Ahn, *Pak Hōnyōng*, 259.

<sup>44</sup> Pak Hōnyōng, "Dr. Lee and the Resurgence of Fascism," March 27, 1945, ODSKWP 1.77.

<sup>45</sup> Pak, "Dr. Lee and the Resurgence of Fascism," 77-78.

<sup>46</sup> Pak Hōnyōng, "Dr. Lee and the Central Commission," March 7, 1945, ODSKWP 1.50-53.

<sup>47</sup> Pak Hōnyōng, "Dr. Lee and the National Reconstruction Fund," March 10, 1945, ODSKWP 1.60-61.

<sup>48</sup> If the core of governmentality rests on maintaining the "structural order of things" for the sake of political efficacy, then by declaring that nationalism be the yardstick for determining political rationality, the Party was *compartmentalizing* nationalism into an instrument for governmentality. I am using this particular aspect of governmentality to advance my argument, not the idea in its entirety. For Foucault's original idea, see Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Graham Burchell, Coline Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87-104.

<sup>49</sup> "The Moscow Conference and Its Decision on Korea," March 28, 1945, ODSKWP 1.79.

<sup>50</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>51</sup> *Idem.* The SKWP's interpretation of "pro-trusteeship" as a patriotic stance draws direct contrast with the Rightist brand. Although Rightists were unified in equating "pro-trusteeship" with "pro-Americanism," there was little ideological unity among the Right when it came to explaining why the equation was necessary. For people such as Syng-man Rhee, the equation was an urge to combine anti-Communism and the ideal of a fully independent Korea, whereas for people who were once pro-Japanese collaborators such as Song Jin-woo, the equation was merely a convenient tool to refashion themselves as having the same mindset as people like Rhee and therefore qualified to join the Rightist majority. On this point, see Sang-yong Choi, "Trusteeship and the Korean Cold War," in *Korea Under the American Military Government, 1945-1948*, ed. Bonnie Oh (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2002), 16-17.

<sup>52</sup> John Reed Hodge, "Letter to the Korean People," September 2, 1945 adapted from Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. I, 448.

<sup>53</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War: A History*, 109-110.

<sup>54</sup> Ahn, *Pak Hōnyōng*, 295.

<sup>55</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 40 and 150.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>57</sup> For accounts of American "Dollar diplomacy" in the Caribbean, see Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U. S. Imperial Rule* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005); Scott Nearing and Joseph Freeman, *Dollar Diplomacy: A Study of American Imperialism* (New York: B. W. Huesch and Viking Press, 1925) and Emily S. Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005). On American colonization of the Philippines, see Paul A. Kramer, *Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina and London, England, 2006) and Alfred McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: America, the Philippines, and the Rise of the American Security State* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

<sup>58</sup> "Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Political Adviser in Korea," April 5, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, Vol. VIII: The Far East, Korea, 657; John Lewis Gaddis, "Containment and the Logic of Strategy," *The National Interest* 10 (Winter 1987/88), 27-38.

<sup>59</sup> The Americans would later reveal their hypocrisy by constructing the Representative Democratic Council to better manage the Rightists. See Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. I, 234.

<sup>60</sup> Ahn, *Pak Hōnyōng*, 297.

<sup>61</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>62</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>63</sup> *Idem.*



<sup>64</sup> Ahn, *Pak Hōnyōng*, 298.

<sup>65</sup> Idem.

<sup>66</sup> James Jongsoo Lee, *The Partition of Korea after World War II: A Global History* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2006), 86. See also 69-91 for further analysis on the Moscow Conference's outcome. The problem of which country would dictate the terms of the trusteeship would occupy American and Soviet political thinking on Korea until 1948. On this point, see Hakjoon Kim, "The American Military Government in South Korea, 1945-1948: Its Formation, Policies, and Legacies," *Asian Perspective* 12.1 (Spring-Summer 1988), 66-75.

<sup>67</sup> Ahn, *Pak Hōnyōng*, 142.

<sup>68</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War* Vol. I, 79.

<sup>69</sup> Kim Sahm-woong, *Mong-yang Yō Un-hyōng: A Biography of a Progressive Nationalist* (Seoul: Chaeryun Publishing, 2015), 172.

<sup>70</sup> Kim, *Mong-yang Yō Un-hyōng*, 172. Yō referred to the Japanese-led establishment of the Korean Empire (1907), which began a *de jure* Japanese colonial rule of Korea.

<sup>71</sup> Craig Calhoun, "Nationalism and Ethnicity," *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993), 225.

<sup>72</sup> Kim, *Mong-yang Yō Un-hyōng*, 177.

<sup>73</sup> Kim, *Mong-yang Yō Un-hyōng*, 178.

<sup>74</sup> Aldous Huxley, "Video Interview with Aldous Huxley," Berkeley, CA, 1962.

<sup>75</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 191.

<sup>76</sup> Yō Un-hyōng, "Zhuxi's Joke for a Visitor," (1943) in Lee Ki-hyoung, *Yō Un-hyōng: A Biography* (Seoul: Silcheon Publishing, 2004), 317.

<sup>77</sup> Yō, "Zhuxi's Joke for a Visitor," 317.

<sup>78</sup> I am suggesting that Yō's nonsensical poem is only outwardly humorous to maximize the impact of delivering the deeper philosophy of humanism. The origins of this philosophy can be traced back to 1908, when Yō liberated his slaves by burning government documents that legalized slavery. See Kim, *Mong-yang Yō Un-hyōng*, 62-64.

<sup>79</sup> Matthew 7:12.

<sup>80</sup> Confucius, *The Analects* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 22.

<sup>81</sup> See Lee, *The Partition of Korea after World War II*, 102. Italics are my emphasis.

<sup>82</sup> "Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State," January 23, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII*, 616.

<sup>83</sup> "Telegram from the Political Adviser in Korea (Bennington) to the Secretary of State," January 22, 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII*, 614.

<sup>84</sup> A "chicken's rib" refers to an object which brings no great profit or advantage but is equally not worth entirely discarding because of its future potential. The phrase comes from Luo Guanzhong and Moss Roberts ed., *The Three Kingdoms* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2008). The uniqueness of this view is apparent if we compare it with Kyu-shik Kim, a moderate. Kim was known for his staunch opposition to a separate southern Korean government, but Kim was closer to a Rightist, distancing himself from even moderate Leftists like Yō. This moderate stance made the Americans feel more comfortable dealing with Kim rather than Yō or Pak. On Kim Kyushik, see Lee, *The Partition of Korea after World War II*, 101-102, 148-151 and Bonnie C. Oh, "Kim Kyu-shik and the Coalition Effort," in *Korea Under American Military Government*, ed. Bonnie Oh (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2002), 103-122. For a general discussion of the American military government's policies toward Korean moderates, see Sang-sook Jeon, "U. S. Korean Policy and the Moderates During the U.S. Military Government Era," in *Korea Under American Military Government*, 79-102.

Bruce Cumings, *North Korea: Another Country* (New York: The New Press, 2004), ix; Tae-shik Jung (KCP Member), "Statement of Opposition to Trusteeship," *Seoul Shin-moon* (Seoul Newspaper), December 29, 1945 and Yō Unhyōng, "Statement of Opposition to Trusteeship," *Jayu Shinmoon* (*Free Newspaper*), December 30, 1945. Adapted from Sang-yong Choi, "Trusteeship Debate and the Korean Cold War," in *Korea Under American Military Government*, 20.

<sup>85</sup> Idem.

<sup>86</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 471-472.

<sup>87</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 9; "Lieutenant Hodge and 'Democracy,'" January 15, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.97.

<sup>88</sup> Idem.

<sup>89</sup> Idem.

<sup>90</sup> Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research* 8.2 (June 1971), 92-93.

<sup>91</sup> Ahn, *Pak Hōnyōng*, 249.

<sup>92</sup> John Gerring, "Ideology: A Definitional Analysis," *Political Research Quarterly* 50.4 (December 1997), 972.

<sup>93</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Struggle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 193-194.

<sup>94</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 224.

<sup>95</sup> It is important to note how strikingly similar the SKWP's urgency in doing away with imperialism was with Leon Trotsky's in his original use of the phrase. For a detailed discussion of the background to this famous phrase, see Bertrand M. Patenaude, *Stalin's Nemesis: The Exile and Murder of Leon Trotsky* (London: Faber, 2009), 193-194, 252.

<sup>96</sup> Pak, "Fascism and the Trusteeship," January 5, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.88.

<sup>97</sup> John Reed Hodge, "Letter to General Chistiakov," January 9, 1946, in "Secret Telegram from Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to the Secretary of State," January 12, 1946. *FRUS*, Vol. VIII: Korea, 608-609.

<sup>98</sup> Pak, "Fascism and the Trusteeship," January 5, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.91.

<sup>99</sup> Pak, "Fascism and the Trusteeship," January 5, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.93.

<sup>100</sup> Idem.

<sup>101</sup> Anonymous, "Lieutenant Hodge and 'Democracy,'" January 15, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.86-87.

<sup>102</sup> Susan Eckstein, "Formal versus Substantive Democracy: Poor People's Politics in Mexico City," *Mexican Studies* 6.2 (Summer 1990), 226-227.

<sup>103</sup> Pak Hōnyōng, "Let's Support the Decision of the Moscow Conference," January 16, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.97.

<sup>104</sup> "Against Those Who Criticize Comrade Pak's Leadership," January 17, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.103.

<sup>105</sup> "Against Those Who Criticize Comrade Pak's Leadership," January 17, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.104.

<sup>106</sup> Pak Hōnyōng, "Let's Support the Decision of the Moscow Conference," January 16, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.97-98.

<sup>107</sup> On the theoretical relationship between patriotism and nationalism, see Daniel Druckman, "Nationalism, Patriotism, and Group Loyalty," *Mershon International Studies Review* 38.1 (April 1994), 47-49.

<sup>108</sup> Robert C. Tucker, "The Rise of Stalin's Personality Cult," *American Historical Review* 84.2 (April 1979), 352.

<sup>109</sup> "Against Those Who Criticize Comrade Pak's Leadership," January 17, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.103.

<sup>110</sup> Idem.

<sup>111</sup> "Against Those Who Criticize Comrade Pak's Leadership," January 17, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.103.

<sup>112</sup> Idem.

<sup>113</sup> Idem.

<sup>114</sup> "Against Those Who Criticize Comrade Pak's Leadership," *ODSKWP* 1.103-104.

<sup>115</sup> "The Party and the Precepts of Bolshevism," September 1945, *ODSKWP* 1.22; see Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement*, 121-122 and Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War* Vol. I, 85-86.

<sup>116</sup> Max Weber, *Rationalism and Modern Society* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2015), 181.

<sup>117</sup> "Against Those Who Criticize Comrade Pak's Leadership," *ODSKWP* 1.104; "The Party and the Precepts of Bolshevism," September 1945, *ODSKWP* 1.22.

<sup>118</sup> John Kultgen, "Intentionality and the Publicity of the Perceptual World," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 33.4 (June 1973), 509.

<sup>119</sup> Pak Byung-yup, *Record of Secret Rendezvous between Kim Il-sung, Pak Hŏnyŏng, and Yŏ Un-hyŏng* (Seoul: Sun-in Publishing, 2010), 95 (noted as *RSR*). This collection of first-hand accounts is highly valuable for its balanced insights on the political discussions between the three men mentioned in the title during the SKWP's existence. Pak Byung-yup was the First Secretary of the SKWP and had intricate and deep knowledge of the Party's internal affairs. He was also intimate with all three men whose names appear on the title of the book and often accompanied Pak and Yŏ on their visits to Pyongyang.

<sup>120</sup> Pak, *RSR*, 95. My thinking about vocational qualification and purpose was influenced by Michael Ehaut, "The Role and Use of Vocational Qualification," *National Institute of Economic Review* 178 (October 2001), 94.

<sup>121</sup> Pak Hŏnyŏng, "An Historical Inquiry on the Genuine Nature of Christianity," *Enlightenment*, November 1925, adapted from Ahn, *Pak Hŏnyŏng*, 109.

<sup>122</sup> Pak, "An Historical Inquiry on the Genuine Nature of Christianity," 109.

<sup>123</sup> Idem. On Western missionaries' cooperation with the Japanese, see Donald N. Clark, "'Surely God Will Work out Their Salvation: Protestant Missionaries in the March First Movement,'" *Korean Studies* 13 (1989), 42-43, 47-48.

<sup>124</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," (1848) in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York and London, England: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978), 492.

<sup>125</sup> "The Party and the Precepts of Bolshevism," September 1945, *ODSKWP* 1. 23-24; the same points were repeated in "On Principles for Uniting the People," January 29, 1946, *ODSKWP* 1.112-113.

<sup>126</sup> "The Party and the Precepts of Bolshevism," September 1945, *ODSKWP* 1.24.

<sup>127</sup> Ahn, *Pak Hŏnyŏng*, 103-104.

<sup>128</sup> "Telegram from the Political Advisor in Korea (Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State," *FRUS*, Vol. VIII: Korea, 614. It is not exactly certain under what circumstances Yŏ walked out of the SKWP, for there is no collection of Yŏ's private documents to verify much of the thinking behind his decisions and political activities. Hence, I am only able to speculate that Pak's increasing Communization of the SKWP's culture made Yŏ realize that he no longer had any hope of practicing "Unitary Socialism."