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Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era

**Soviet–DPRK Relations and the
Roots of North Korean Despotism,
1953–1964**

Balazs Szalontai

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Series Preface

[TK]

Preface

The despotic nature of the North Korean regime is common knowledge. Accounts of its repressive policies and leadership cult abound both in scholarly literature and journalistic reports. However, relatively few attempts have been made to explain the extraordinary persistence of despotism in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)—a phenomenon that set Kim Il Sung's dictatorship apart from most post-1953 communist regimes—although the characteristics of North Korea's peculiar political system still produce a decisive effect on Pyongyang's foreign and economic policies. Foreign observers often regarded the diplomatic and military actions taken by the DPRK merely as manifestations of the lunacy of a tyrant blinded by communist ideology and propelled by an insatiable lust for power and adulation. The real situation seems to have been much more complex, however. A simplified interpretation may hinder efforts to comprehend past or current North Korean actions or to craft adequate responses.

Most scholars frame North Korean despotism as predestined by the 1945 Soviet invasion or by Korean political traditions. These factors undoubtedly played an important role in the development of the North Korean regime, but it should be kept in mind that most Soviet-occupied countries underwent at least a limited de-Stalinization under Khrushchev, while the South Korean dictatorships headed by Syngman Rhee, Park Chung Hee, and Chun Doo Hwan, in spite of their repressive policies, never reached the degree of political and ideological monolithism that Kim Il-sung achieved. It is thus useful to analyze the DPRK in a comparative perspective in order to grasp its peculiarities.

This book deals with North Korean domestic and foreign policies from 1953 to 1964, a crucial period in the evolution of the Kim Il Sung regime. The first date marks the end of both the Korean War and the Stalin era. The postwar economic reconstruction of the DPRK was closely interlocked with Kim's efforts to create a self-reliant economy, eliminate his opponents, real or potential, unite

Korea under his rule, and impress upon the other communist countries, particularly the Soviet Union and China, the reality of North Korea's sovereignty. These steps frequently clashed with the policies pursued by the Soviet leadership, and the process of de-Stalinization further aggravated the tension. The intensity of Soviet–DPRK conflict peaked in 1964, followed by a gradual, but partial, reconciliation.

Over the entire history of Soviet–North Korean relations, the DPRK was the most substantially exposed to Soviet ideas proposing political and cultural liberalization from 1953 to 1964. During these eleven years, the nature of the Soviet–North Korean relationship changed once and for all, and the differences between Eastern Europe and the DPRK became even greater. A close examination of that era is thus essential if we wish to understand how and why the North Korean dictatorship fended off external and internal initiatives aimed at changing its political and economic structure. In fact, in the 1990s, Pyongyang often resorted to the same tactics vis-à-vis the United States and South Korea that it had effectively used against the Kremlin in the 1950s and 1960s. After the downfall of Khrushchev in 1964, Moscow usually put a good face on Kim Il Sung's domestic and foreign policies so as not to push Pyongyang toward Beijing. Intraparty conflicts continued in the post-1964 years, but the leaders Kim purged in 1967–1969 were not as closely associated with a foreign country as those eliminated during the Khrushchev years—the so-called Soviet and Yan'an factions.

Since North Korean history has been shrouded in secrecy to an unusual degree, my account of these events is more detailed than it might otherwise have been. Proceeding chronologically, I attempt to analyze the relationship among political, military, economic, and cultural issues, and to compare the measures taken by Korean Workers' Party (KWP) leaders with the contemporaneous policies of other communist regimes. Rather than comparing the North Korean purges of 1957–1959 with the Soviet Great Terror or with the Chinese Cultural Revolution, I emphasize the historical context of events in order to study how Kim Il Sung reacted to the political and economic challenges that affected, by and large, the entire "communist camp," and the extent to which his reactions differed from the steps taken by his Chinese, North Vietnamese, and East European comrades. Since North Korean internal and economic policies were more closely intertwined with Soviet and Chinese actions than with contemporary South Korean ones, a chronological description is less compatible with a comparison between the DPRK and the Republic of Korea (ROK) than with a comparison of the DPRK with various communist countries. Still, I found it necessary to compare the North and South Korean political and economic systems in the conclusion of my book.

The book describes the genesis and evolution of the North Korean regime, the methods it used to control the population and keep foreign powers at arm's length, the ideas motivating Kim's economic and unification policies, and the living conditions of ordinary North Korean citizens. I was particularly interested in the relationship between the rulers and the ruled, including the effect that the regime's steps produced on the population's livelihood, reactions of various social groups to these measures, and the leadership's attempts to re-examine and correct its own policies. For instance, North Korean intellectuals, students, and workers, at least in the decades that I studied, seem not to have been as "brainwashed" as a number of foreign observers believed.

Another subject of central importance is the nature of Soviet–DPRK relationship: the sources of Soviet–North Korean conflicts, Kim's ability to withstand Soviet pressure, and Soviet views on the policies of the KWP leadership. I argue that we should neither under- nor over-estimate the tension that existed between Moscow and Pyongyang. In the 1953–1964 period, Soviet–North Korean relations were never truly friendly, but the DPRK, unlike Albania, did not break with the Kremlin once and for all. I also conclude that while in most cases North Korean policies were more rigid and repressive than the contemporaneous measures of the East European, North Vietnamese, and Chinese regimes, it would be an error to assume that Kim Il Sung proved completely incapable of being more moderate than other Communist dictatorships. On certain occasions, Pyongyang was more flexible than Beijing, Tirana, or even Hanoi, although it consistently failed to initiate a political liberalization comparable to Soviet and East European de-Stalinization or the post-Mao reforms in China.

A Note on Sources

This book is based mainly on documents available in the Hungarian National Archives. These include records of conversations among Hungarian, North Korean, and Chinese Communist leaders, as well as reports, memoranda, and studies prepared by officials of the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Trade, and the Ministry of Education. Diplomats accredited to North Korea, North Vietnam, China, and Albania comprised the principal sources of information for the Hungarian leadership on these countries, aside from their consultations with the Kremlin. The diplomats' reports make up the majority of the 1945–1964 documents declassified by the Foreign Ministry, and, unlike other archival documents, they pay considerable attention to issues of internal politics. As a consequence, such reports are much more frequently referred to in the book than any other type of primary source.

The Hungarian diplomats who worked in the DPRK in the 1953–1964 period proved quite well-informed. To be sure, their access to highly confidential information was relatively limited if compared to that of their Soviet or Chinese counterparts. The Soviet Embassy provided them with news about recent developments in Soviet–North Korean relations, and therefore their reports invariably reflected the official Soviet view of the events in question. Nonetheless, the Hungarians often matched their Soviet colleagues in acquiring information about post-1958 North Korean internal politics. Moreover, most of the Russian and Chinese documents from this period are still unavailable for research, and North Korean archives are hermetically closed. The documents to be found in the archives of Hungary (and other East European countries) are therefore particularly valuable.

The special worth of these documents lies, above all, in the deep insight that the authors often provide into the mentality, ideas, and intentions of the KWP leadership. Western and South Korean analysts, who had to depend on official North Korean publications and the occasional accounts of defectors, were in a less favorable position in that respect than the communist diplomats, who regularly communicated with both higher- and lower-level KWP officials, and sometimes could read secret intraparty brochures as well. Certain American and South Korean scholars, influenced by the atmosphere of the Cold War, regarded the behavior of KWP leaders as inherently irrational, an approach that hindered deeper understanding of Pyongyang’s motivations.

The “fraternal” diplomats also meticulously described how their embassies were treated by the DPRK Foreign Ministry. From 1953 on, they frequently made mention of tension and veiled North Korean hostility, revealing that Pyongyang was much less subservient to its aid donors than Western analysts usually assumed. Since neither the North Korean nor the Soviet press covered these conflicts before the outbreak of the Sino–Soviet debate, in most cases they were not noticed by noncommunist observers. These reports also paid greater attention to the various economic “corrections” carried out by the regime than most Western authors did, and therefore are particularly valuable for research on de-Stalinization.

The Hungarian reports do not, however, provide sufficient information about every subject related to North Korean foreign and domestic policies. For instance, in the pre-1962 period, the Hungarian diplomats rarely questioned the correctness and necessity of the party purges Kim Il Sung carried out, and they certainly knew much less about them than their Soviet colleagues, who, for their part, did not keep the Hungarians informed about that issue. By and large, Hungarian reports did not describe this or that North Korean politician as a

member of a political group unless the leadership officially declared the person in question a “factionalist.”

The regime did its best to isolate the diplomatic corps from the population, and the East European embassies were less able to withstand its restrictive measures than their Soviet and Chinese counterparts. In addition, only a handful of Hungarians spoke Korean. From 1957 on, a few Hungarian-sponsored students arrived in the DPRK, but the majority of the Hungarian diplomats accredited to the country had not dealt with Korean issues until the Foreign Ministry sent them to Pyongyang. Worse still, those who arrived there in the Stalin era basically lacked analytical skills, and uncritically repeated the statements made by North Korean officials. However, in 1954 the situation began to improve, and analysis gradually replaced propaganda in the embassy’s reports.

Certain Western and South Korean scholars, such as Robert A. Scalapino, Lee Chong-sik, Dae-Sook Suh, and Adrian Buzo, consider the North Korean regime, at least in the 1945–1956 period, a Soviet satellite not different from the East European dictatorships, and describe it as an imitation of Soviet Stalinism. Others, most notably Bruce Cumings, Charles Armstrong, and Brian Myers, emphasize that the dictatorship was firmly rooted in Korean political and cultural traditions, and pay great attention to the differences between Soviet and North Korean intellectual and political life. Both approaches compare North Korean policies with Chinese Communist measures, but the second lays a greater emphasis on similarities between Kimism and Maoism than the first does. However, a systematic comparison between North Korea and the East European regimes (particularly Albania) is sorely lacking, and only a handful of scholars compared the DPRK with North Vietnam.

My aim is to create a synthesis of the achievements of the two schools, rather than favor one at the expense of the other. Concerning the character of the North Korean dictatorship, its relationship with the Soviet Union, and its similarity to Chinese Communism, it is the second interpretation that I find more convincing. While it has not yet been proven that Kim Il Sung’s regime was consciously modeled on the precolonial “Hermit Kingdom,” the pronounced nationalist disposition of the KWP leadership calls into question the correctness of any explanation that lays undue emphasis on the role of foreign models. In addition, in the post-1953 period the regime, as noted previously, was much more able to defend its sovereignty vis-à-vis the Kremlin than were most East European dictatorships. At the same time, it is necessary to point out that Scalapino, Lee, and Suh, unlike most representatives of the other school, meticulously described the factions that made up the North Korean leadership, and paid great attention to the purges carried out by Kim Il Sung. Since Hungarian

diplomatic reports did not analyze these intraparty conflicts in depth, I found their works as indispensable as the books of Cumings and Armstrong.

In reality, both the gradual evolution of the North Korean political system and the special geographical position of the DPRK limit the applicability of those interpretations that either overstate or downplay Soviet influence. On the one hand, as early as 1948–1950, Kim Il Sung was able to take steps that Stalin prevented his East European counterparts from taking, and his freedom to maneuver further increased during the 1954–1956 period. On the other hand, in the mid-1950s the Soviets could still meddle in North Korean economic policies, and as late as 1959, the Soviet Embassy managed to force the North Korean press to publish articles about Khrushchev's visit in the United States. It was only in the post-1964 period that the Soviets, having faced open and often provocative North Korean defiance in the last years of the Khrushchev era, found it advisable to refrain from making any comment to KWP leaders regarding North Korean internal policies.

North Korea, a country liberated by the neighboring USSR, was more exposed to direct Soviet influence than Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea, but due to its proximity to the People's Republic of China, it considerably differed from the East European countries as well. As a consequence of the Korean War and Kim's purges, the character of the dictatorship underwent significant changes between 1946 and 1969, and the influence of the USSR declined. A synthesis-oriented analysis thus provides a more adequate description of that complexity than an approach that tends to neglect the achievements of any of the scholars enumerated above.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN TEXT

APL	Albanian Labor Party
BCP	Bulgarian Communist Party
CC	Central Committee
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DP	Democratic Party (South Korea)
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)
FTU	Federation of Trade Unions
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
GLF	Great Leap Forward (China)
GMD	Guomindang (China)
ICP	Indochinese Communist Party
KCP	Korean Communist Party
KCP-NKB	Korean Communist Party-North Korea Bureau
KDP	Korean Democratic Party
KPA	Korean People's Army (North Korea)
KWP	Korean Workers' Party
MPR	Mongolian People's Republic
MPRP	Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party
NA	National Assembly (South Korea)
NKWP	North Korean Workers' Party
NLF	National Liberation Front (South Vietnam)
PC	People's Committee
PLA	People's Liberation Army (China)
PRA	People's Republic of Albania
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRK	People's Republic of Korea
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
ROKA	Republic of Korea Army
RWP	Romanian Workers' Party
RYL	Revolutionary Youth League (Vietnam)
SC	Standing Committee
SKWP	South Korean Workers' Party
SPA	Supreme People's Assembly (North Korea)
UP	Union of Painters
VWP	Vietnamese Workers' Party
WU	Writers' Union

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN SOURCES

AA	Administrative Documents, Albania
ATS	Top Secret Documents, Albania
CA	Administrative Documents, China
CTS	Top Secret Documents, China
KA	Administrative Documents, Korea
KTS	Top Secret Documents, Korea
STS	Top Secret Documents, Soviet Union
VA	Administrative Documents, Vietnam
VTs	Top Secret Documents, Vietnam

Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era

1. Historical Background

By 1953, the North Korean regime had been in power for over seven years, a period long enough to lay the foundations of Kim Il Sung's personal dictatorship. Certain principal characteristics of the North Korean political system became apparent in these years, and Korea's pre-1945 past also produced a strong effect on the formation of the regime. Thus, extending the analysis to the pre-1953 period is necessary to understand developments that took place in 1953 to 1964. Drawing distinctions among the precolonial epoch, colonial era, and the first stage of the Communist regime is also important, since these periods did not play an equally crucial role in the emergence of North Korean despotism.

The Transformation of Traditional Korea

It is all too tempting to draw a parallel between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and precolonial Korea. Western journalists routinely call North Korea a new "Hermit Kingdom," and some scholars, most notably Cumings,¹ strongly emphasize that both the Yi dynasty (1392–1910) and Kim Il Sung's regime pursued an isolationist foreign policy and laid great stress on ideological orthodoxy. The rigid social stratification characteristic of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Korea, the purge of neo-Confucian scholars in 1498–1545, and the state's attempts to control and restrict commerce indeed bore a resemblance to the North Korean political system.² Moreover, it is far from unlikely that Kim Il Sung considered his regime the successor of the old Korean kingdom in the same way that Mao found precedents for contemporaneous events in China's dynastic past.

Still, the heritage of the "Hermit Kingdom" did not necessarily influence the birth of North Korean despotism as directly as one might assume. While a post-1945 Korean ruler was indeed able to draw inspiration from the precolonial

past of his country (and Kim probably did), he was by no means bound by it. As a preliminary remark, I would like to highlight the fact that the Tokugawa Shogunate was almost as isolationist and xenophobic as the Yi kings, yet this tradition did not prevent Japan from becoming the first Asian country that underwent a successful “Westernization” process.

Another more elaborate comparison between the Yi dynasty and the Vietnamese Nguyen dynasty (1802–1945) may prevent us from regarding certain deficiencies of the old Korean political system, such as factional squabbles, social upheavals, and the government’s reluctance to introduce Western-style reforms, as phenomena peculiar to Korea that would provide the historian with a sufficient explanation for the specific features of the DPRK. After all, these deficiencies often existed in Vietnam as well. Moreover, in the last third of the nineteenth century, it was Korea, rather than Vietnam, that took the lead in the field of Westernization. Thus, the rigidity of the present North Korean regime, which stands in such a striking contrast with the reforms implemented in post-1986 Vietnam, does not simply reflect an age-old, unbroken tradition of Korean inflexibility and Vietnamese adaptability. In my view, in the nineteenth century the two countries stood a more or less equally good chance of adapting to their international environment, and the present differences between them are rooted primarily in twentieth-century historical developments, rather than earlier ones.

Political strife and socioeconomic crisis did exist in traditional Korea. Groups of the landed bureaucracy that constituted the elite under the Yi dynasty bitterly fought each other in 1659–1724, 1801–1864, and other periods. The members of the defeated groups often lost their land and social status. Due to growing socioeconomic problems, several uprisings took place in the nineteenth century.⁴ It should be kept in mind, however, that political disintegration was not less serious in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Vietnam. The rivalry of the Trinh and Nguyen families, which manifested itself in large-scale armed conflicts in the 1600s, led to partitioning of the country. Decades of continual warfare, combined with rising taxes, placed a great burden on the population, which resulted in numerous peasant uprisings between 1730 and 1770. The so-called Tay Son Rebellion (1771–1802) finally ended the rule of both families. Although in 1802, Nguyen Anh managed to restore the Nguyen dynasty and unify the country, peasant unrest went on.⁵ In sum, the pre-modern Korean scene was far from encouraging, but it should not be singled out for criticism.

This is not to deny that the traditional Korean and Vietnamese political and socioeconomic systems did differ from each other in several respects. For example, social stratification was more rigid in Korea than in Vietnam or China. While class distinctions had become partly blurred by the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries, as many landlord-bureaucrats (*yangban*) fell victim to factional struggles and some commoners rose to social prominence, the system of status-based discrimination persisted until the late nineteenth century (or even longer).⁶ The Yi dynasty showed much less interest in foreign trade than its predecessor, the Koryo dynasty (918–1392). In the field of international economic relations, from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century, Korea was “the least commercial of the East Asian nations.” The Seoul court did its best to avoid any contact with Europeans.⁷ This stood in marked contrast with the contemporaneous Vietnamese situation. The Nguyen dynasty “definitely desired trade with Europeans, provided it could manage such trade on its own terms,” and Vietnamese junks regularly visited other Southeast Asian countries. Nguyen Anh’s victory over the Tay Son leaders was considerably facilitated by the assistance of European military advisers.⁸

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to overemphasize Vietnamese commercial interest and underestimate Korean trade activity. After all, Vietnam could hardly afford to shun foreign trade. In any case, “an indigenous merchant class as important as the one in China failed to develop in Vietnam.” While Vietnamese commerce was dominated by local Chinese merchants, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Korean merchants were quite active in internal trade. Wonsan, Kangkyong, and Masan became commercial cities, and there existed a substantial trade between regional market areas.⁹

Upon adopting a somewhat dialectical view, it can be argued that certain elements of the Korean political and social system, such as the much-criticized factional strife and status-based discrimination, may have played a dual role in the country’s development. While they did produce a negative effect on society, they could also further its transformation. Namely, persons belonging to lower classes or defeated factions were often quite receptive to new ideas that challenged the neo-Confucian worldview and social order. The so-called *Silhak* school, a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century school of thought advocating economic and administrative reforms, was initiated by *yangban* debarred from public office. In the eighteenth century, the first Catholic converts were recruited from “the oppressed and the *yangban* of the long-defeated Southern faction.”¹⁰ Late in the nineteenth century, it was also the rural commoners and merchants who made up the majority of Protestant believers, for missionaries stressed that all children of God were equal.¹¹ In other words, the armor of the Korean neo-Confucian political and socioeconomic system was not as impenetrable as it appeared, and the excesses of the ruling elite could actually undermine the system itself.

Both Korean and Vietnamese Christians underwent periods of government persecution in the nineteenth century, and in the mid-1800s both the Seoul and

the Hue courts were highly inclined to regard Western influence as pernicious. Despite such suspicion of Westerners, sooner or later both countries had to accept the inevitability of modernization. At first the Vietnamese emperors, particularly Minh Mang, showed a much greater interest in European technology than their Korean contemporaries did. For example, while the Vietnamese court had purchased three steamships by 1840, Korea bought her first steamships as late as 1886.¹² Vietnam's lead proved quite ephemeral, however, and a few decades later the roles were reversed.

Partly due to Japanese influence and pressure, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century the Korean government decided to introduce some much-needed reform measures. In the 1880s, a group of Korean students were sent to Japan. The Korean government and American missionaries set up a few modern schools, which trained the children of commoners as well. In the wake of the 1894 Tonghak uprising, a modern cabinet was established. The new regime abolished the traditional examination system and class distinctions, revised legal codes, and created modern courts. Late in the 1890s, a few Korean entrepreneurs began to establish factories, the initiative having been taken by the government in the 1880s. Foreign firms obtained contracts to build railways and other elements of a modern infrastructure. Thus, Seoul became "the first city in East Asia to have electricity, trolley cars, a water system, telephone, and telegraph all at the same time."¹³

In contrast, no comparable development took place in the last decades of independent Vietnam. Although in the mid-nineteenth century some Vietnamese intellectuals did stress the importance of modernization, the emperors and the ruling elite did not heed their advice.¹⁴ The nationalist Dong Du Movement, which sent Vietnamese students to Japan with the aim of providing them with modern education, began in 1905, that is, twenty years after the French conquest of the country. Traditional examinations were abolished in Tonkin and Annam as late as 1915 and 1918, respectively.¹⁵ In sum, the inflexibility and isolationism of traditional Korea should not be overemphasized when describing the process of modernization in this country.

The Impact of Colonialism and the Birth of the Korean Communist Movement

The era of Japanese colonialism seems to have played a more decisive role in the birth of a specifically North Korean variant of communism than the heritage of traditional Korea. Still, it is necessary to draw a distinction between various periods of Japanese rule. In the 1920s, the political, economic, and cultural situation in Japanese-ruled Korea was not much worse than in French-

ruled Vietnam, and Korean entrepreneurs actually proved more dynamic than their Vietnamese counterparts. At that time, Korean intellectual life was neither strictly regulated nor forcibly isolated from Western influences, which explains how the decade of the 1920s could become “a true Renaissance of Korean literature.”¹⁶ It was the period of military domination in Japan that made late colonial Korean development fundamentally different from the contemporaneous Vietnamese situation, and thus it constituted a major turning point in modern Korean history. Its stress on rapid industrialization created a base for later North Korean industrial development, but its policy of uncompromising repression and assimilation generated a xenophobic nationalism among many Koreans. At the same time, the invincibility of the Japanese overlords resulted in widespread political passivity and collaboration, which in turn induced die-hard nationalists like Kim Il Sung to distrust a significant part of the Korean population.

Japanese rule in Korea was composed of three main stages: the initial period (1905–1918), the era of “cultural policy” (1919–1930), and the “critical times” (1931–1945). In the first stage, the Japanese suppressed all Korean newspapers and magazines, closed down many mission and private schools, took over a large amount of land, and made efforts to prevent Koreans from establishing new commercial and industrial enterprises. These harsh measures resulted in mass protests in March 1919. Having suppressed the protests with a great deal of brutality, the colonial authorities also felt compelled to soften their rule to a certain extent. For instance, barriers to entrepreneurial activity among Koreans were substantially reduced. As a consequence, in industries that the Japanese did not yet dominate, such as production of socks, cotton-knit underwear, and rubber shoes, thousands of small Korean firms emerged in the 1920s.¹⁷ While these companies did not manage to become as powerful as their Japanese counterparts, one should keep in mind that the upper and middle classes of colonial Vietnamese society, made up of landlords, merchants, and professionals, did not include industrialists of any kind.¹⁸

The 1920s brought positive changes in the cultural sphere as well. The Japanese consented to the publication of a few Korean newspapers and magazines, although the latter were subjected to a rather strict censorship. Up to 1937, the colonial authorities allowed considerable freedom in intellectual circles, unless the latter directly criticized their rule.¹⁹ In fact, the development of modern Korean literature proved remarkably dynamic in the first decades of the twentieth century. Inspired by European literary forms, Korean authors began to write “new novels,” symbolist poems, and naturalist stories as early as 1906 to 1925, predating the emergence of a modern Vietnamese literature.²⁰ Thousands of Koreans studied in Japan, many of whom adopted democratic

and leftist ideas under the influence of Japanese liberal, anarchist, and communist intellectuals.²¹

Taking advantage of the temporary relaxation of Japanese administrative control, in the 1920s a great number of Korean nationalist groups existed, both at home and abroad. They represented various ideological currents, from the far left to the far right. At first, the differences between leftists and rightists did not seem unbridgeable. After all, some of the early Korean socialists, such as Yi Tong-hwi and Yo Un-hyong, were well-known Christian evangelists. The nationalist organizations Sin'ganhoe and Kunuhoe, established in 1927–1928, included both leftists and rightists. Unfortunately for the nationalist movement (and for independent Korea), this cooperation did not last long. Instead, it rapidly gave way to a polarization between left and right. This conflict was to produce a lasting and highly adverse effect on Korean political developments. As Cumings put it, “the Left-Right conflicts of the late 1940s had their genesis two decades earlier.”²²

Anxious to offset Japanese economic dominance and further the modernization of Korean society, moderate and rightist Korean nationalists strove for the creation of independent “national capital,” but by doing so they supported Korean entrepreneurs, rather than their Korean employees. No matter how logical this priority seemed from their perspective, its implementation was anything but risk-free in a conflict-ridden society like the Korean one. From the nineteenth century on, social tension was very intense in Korea, and colonial rule further aggravated it. To mention but a few examples, tenants constituted 35.1 and 52.8 percent of farm families in 1914 and 1932, respectively, and the average tenant had to pay as much as 50 percent to 60 percent of his harvest to the landlord. Hardly any laws existed to protect Korean workers employed in Japanese-owned factories; “worker’s conditions in Korean-owned factories were certainly no better, and may have been worse.”²³

These social cleavages often prevented middle-class noncommunist nationalists who intended to take advantage of the new economic opportunities from recruiting followers from the lower classes. For instance, strikes affected the Kyongsong Textile Company as well, regardless of the fact that its owner was a noted cultural nationalist. While Cho Man-sik’s Korean Products Promotion Society became a mass movement that spread rapidly in the northern part of the country where both Christianity and Ch’ondogyo (a strongly nationalistic local religion) were strong, “it lost ground to communism” in the south.²⁴

The communists’ attack on religion also contributed to the division of the nationalist movement. Protestants played a very active role in the development of Korean nationalism, which stood in sharp contrast with the role of Catholics in Vietnam. Although the number of Catholic believers, many of whom were

peasants, exceeded one million in northern Vietnam alone, the church was closely associated with French rule, and it generally adopted a rigidly conservative stance. Modern Vietnamese nationalists were usually of a secular disposition, which facilitated the spread of communist ideas. In contrast, atheistic propaganda alienated Yo Un-hyong and others from communism.²⁵

Since this chapter is focused on the origins of the North Korean communist regime, special attention is focused on the emergence of the Korean communist movement. After all, many of the individuals who took control of the North Korean ship of state in 1945–1946 had begun to sail on the stormy waters of Korean politics barely a decade after the very first Korean communist organizations came into existence, and thus their life was strongly influenced by this early stage of communist activity.

From the beginning, the development of the Korean communist movement was closely intertwined with that of the Soviet, Chinese, and Japanese communist parties. After all, tens and hundreds of thousands of Koreans lived in the Soviet Far East, Manchuria, and Japan, having left Korea before or during Japanese rule. Some Korean nationalists and leftists, such as Yi Tong-hwi, established contacts with the Bolsheviks as early as 1919. The first two Korean communist organizations (Yi Tong-hwi's Shanghai-based Korean Communist Party and the so-called Irkutsk group) feuded a lot with each other. Both groups had become largely inactive by 1923, although some of their members, like Pak Hon-yong, would later play major roles in the history of the Korean communist movement. Pak Hon-yong, Pak Chong-ae, O Ki-sop, and others received training in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, and then returned to Korea.

From the early 1920s on, Marxist ideas gained a foothold among Korean students in Japan, such as Kim Ch'an and Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik. In 1925 to 1928, four attempts were made at establishing a communist party in Korea, but the Japanese police eventually suppressed each organization. In 1928, the disappointed Comintern dissolved the factionalism-ridden Korean Communist Party (KCP). While the domestic wing of the movement thus ceased to exist as a formal structure, communist activity—capitalizing on the grievances of students, workers, and peasants—went on. It was in North and South Hamgyong, two northeastern provinces that remained relatively inaccessible for the Japanese authorities, where the Red Peasant Unions became the most influential.²⁶

All in all, Korean communists were in a less favorable position than their Vietnamese comrades. To mention a crucial difference, the Vietnamese communists could count on the support of the powerful French communist party,²⁷ whereas the Japanese Communist Party failed to gain a large following, and it remained illegal until 1945. Due to the effectiveness of Japanese repression,

many Korean nationalists and communists left Korea in the post-1905 period in order to set up organizations abroad, primarily in the United States and China. For instance, in 1919 a group of nationalists created the Provisional Government of Korea in Shanghai, electing Syngman Rhee, who lived in the United States at that time, as its head. The Provisional Government of Korea, a powerless institution anyway, was at least as much weakened by internecine conflicts as the KCP.²⁸

The Korean communists living in China did not constitute a homogeneous group either. While Kim Tu-bong had been a member of Yi Tong-hwi's KCP, others, such as Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik and Kim Ch'ang-man, moved to China as late as the 1930s. In 1937, the Korean National Revolutionary Party, founded in Nanjing in 1935, divided into a rightist and a leftist wing. The leftist group, known as the Korean National Front, was headed by Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik and others. Having established contacts with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) at Mao's famous revolutionary base in Yan'an, in 1941–1942 the Korean National Front united with Korean communists who had been active in North China. The Korean communists who spent substantial time in Yan'an included Mu Chong (a veteran of the Long March, who had left Korea for China in 1923), Pak Il-u, and Kim Ch'ang-man.²⁹

Finally, there were Korean communists carrying out armed struggle against the Japanese in Manchuria (a region occupied by Tokyo in 1931) and the neighboring areas of the two Hamgyongs. They also operated under the direction of the CCP, but since a substantial part of the Manchurian population was composed of Koreans, they had a following of their own. While the methods and ideas of the CCP strongly influenced the Korean guerrillas, the relationship between Chinese and Korean communists did not always prove harmonious. In the mid-1930s, Sino–Korean relations degenerated so severely that a substantial number of Koreans, accused of collaboration with the Japanese, were expelled from the CCP. Even though this incident was eventually settled by the CCP leadership, it probably produced a lasting effect on the psyche of more than a few Korean communists.³⁰

Of the Korean communist guerrilla leaders active in Manchuria in the 1930s, Kim Song-ju (better known by his alias Kim Il Sung) deserves mention, as do Ch'oe Yong-gon, and Kim Il. They managed to establish contacts with Hamgyong-based communists such as Pak Kum-ch'ol, and established the so-called Kapsan Operations Committee. While Kim Il Sung undoubtedly became one of the more successful guerrilla leaders, his group never included more than three hundred fighters, and it failed to create a base area comparable to Yan'an. His followers were largely of peasant origin with little formal education, who fought a particularly ruthless foe, had no contact with the West,

received little or no support from the Soviet Union, and sometimes faced the hostility of the CCP—conditions which reinforced their intense (and narrow-minded) nationalism. Of the various methods of political struggle, they were familiar with armed struggle alone.³¹ Their conflict-centered mentality would strongly influence the nature of the North Korean dictatorship. As a North Korean technical expert put it, “Kim Il Sung compares every issue to a front-line battle, that is, we always face some enemy to be defeated (in the case of production, nature is the enemy).”³²

In sum, neither the home-based nor the emigrant Korean communist groups could weaken Tokyo’s hold over the Korean population to a considerable extent, no matter how persistently they fought. Nor did they manage to avoid factional bickering. Still, the “teething troubles” of the Korean Communist movement should not be overstressed or regarded as a Korean peculiarity. Factionalism and geographical division was not absent in the early history of the Vietnamese communist party either. The Vietnamese political émigré communities in France and China traditionally differed from each other in several respects. In the late 1920s, a clash occurred between the older and younger members of Nguyen Ai Quoc’s Revolutionary Youth League, the older generation having been influenced by the Guomindang and the CCP and the younger by West European leftist movements. Soon several squabbling communist groups existed in Vietnam. Comintern interventions, such as the return of Soviet-trained “internationalist” leaders who doggedly opposed Nguyen Ai Quoc’s nationalist stance, made the situation even more tense. Needless to say, it was only the French authorities who benefited from these quarrels.³³

Like the Japanese police, the French Sureté proved very effective in infiltrating nationalist and communist organizations, and French methods of repression were not always milder than Japanese ones. For instance, the French killed at least 2,000 people during the suppression of the 1930 Nghe-Tinh uprisings. One may add that occasionally both Korean and Vietnamese nationalists (e.g., Kim Ku’s Korean Independence Party and the Vietnamese Nationalist Party) attempted to fight the colonial system by terrorist means. That is, there were substantial similarities between the Korean and the Vietnamese situation.³⁴

This is not to overlook the fact that considerable differences between colonial Korea and Vietnam existed, which became particularly pronounced in the last phase of Japanese rule. While both Cochinchina and Korea had to export rice at the expense of local consumption, and the economic life of both countries was controlled by foreign settlers and companies, the number of Japanese settlers far surpassed that of French *colons*. While in 1931 the total number of European civilian residents in Vietnam stood at 13,400, in 1944 there were

as many as 119,442 Japanese rural households in Korea.³⁵ This clearly demonstrated both the strength of Japan's hold over Korea, and Tokyo's determination to make the "Land of Morning Calm" an inseparable part of its empire. Correctly or incorrectly, rice imports from Korea were considered essential for the food supply of the Japanese urban population, and thus their perceived importance for the metropolitan country greatly exceeded that of Vietnamese exports.

Another major difference between Japanese and French colonial policies was observed in industrial progress. After occupying Manchuria, Japan—increasingly dominated by the military—embarked on a program of rapid industrialization in Korea. This process was particularly dynamic in the northern part of the country, an area rich in raw materials and hydroelectric power.³⁶ "By the early 1940s, agricultural and industrial production were nearly at par (both providing some 40% of the national production); and by 1943, heavy industry provided nearly half of the total industrial production," Kohli notes. In 1943, approximately 1.3 million workers were employed in manufacturing, construction, and mining. In contrast, in colonial Vietnam the number of workers employed in mining, manufacturing, and commerce never exceeded 140,000.³⁷ Following liberation, the industrial capacity left behind by the Japanese certainly facilitated the modernization of both North and South Korea, which considerably outstripped the development of North and South Vietnam.

Nevertheless, Koreans had good reason to regard this colonial modernization as a forced march. As Cumings³⁸ points out, "[M]any Koreans became workers against their will, either through actual conscription or through loss of land and status degradation. . . [A]fter the liberation, they returned to their homes hoping to reclaim lost status, and no doubt bearing deep grievances." Of the Koreans brought to Japan for fixed terms of work, as many as 60,000 died in the 1939–1945 period because of harsh labor conditions.³⁹

Moreover, in a political sense, the 1931–1945 period constituted the darkest phase of Japanese rule. Military rule at home led to the intensification of repression in Korea, too. The police force grew from 20,777 in 1922 to over 60,000 in 1941. The extent of Japanese administrative control over Korean society may be gauged from the fact that in 1937 there were 52,270 Japanese officials in Korea, whereas the number of French officials working in Vietnam stood at 3,000.⁴⁰ In 1937, the Japanese dissolved all agrarian and labor unions, and they did their best to enroll Koreans in pro-Japanese mass organizations. In 1938–1939, Korean language education was abolished at all schools, and Koreans had to adopt Japanese names. The colonial authorities suppressed most Korean newspapers and magazines, and arrested those Christians who refused to attend Shinto ceremonies.⁴¹

This all-out assimilation policy had no counterpart in French-ruled Vietnam. Although cultural assimilation was an official doctrine of French colonialism as well, the educational system of colonial Vietnam never became extensive enough for such an experiment. When Governor-General Albert Sarraut attempted to make the study of French universal at the primary school level, the project had to be abandoned because of the lack of funds.⁴² Thus, Vietnamese national identity was not threatened in a way comparable to the Korean case.

Even though the Japanese assimilation policy proved less successful than intended, it thoroughly shocked Korean public opinion. As North Korean writers told the Hungarian diplomats accredited to the DPRK, the “Japanese language was the most dangerous helper of the expansion of Japanese imperialism.” Namely, Korean schoolchildren “perfectly learned Japanese as early as the first school year, and the conquerors did their best to infect them with their propaganda. [The] Korean language also absorbed countless Japanese words.”⁴³ This traumatic experience explains why nationalism became so intense in both North and South Korea after liberation, and why the regime of Kim Il Sung was so inclined to pursue a cultural policy based on purification, “national solipsism” (a term coined by Cumings⁴⁴), and isolationism.

The problem of collaboration, an issue that still haunts South Korean political and intellectual life, also merits attention. As early as the first phase of colonial rule, and particularly in the later decades, the Japanese sought, and often succeeded, to ally themselves with Korean landowners, incorporating them into local governance and protecting their interests against tenants. As Juhn notes, “the merchants’ tradition of accommodation and subservience was continued under Japanese rule.”⁴⁵ Actually, Korean entrepreneurs of commoner origin, who could have become a “national bourgeoisie,” were particularly inclined to cooperate with the Japanese. Of the middle and upper strata, it was the “landlord-entrepreneurs” who were relatively most willing to support the nationalist movement. This had much in common with the Vietnamese situation. The nascent Vietnamese bourgeoisie also seems to have been rather apolitical, whereas many smaller village landlords kept nationalistic traditions alive.⁴⁶

In 1932, the Japanese launched the “Rural Revitalization Campaign,” which, although it did not change rural social structure, managed to reinforce direct contact between the colonial authorities and the Korean peasantry by initiating leadership-training programs for young peasants, helping tenants in the purchase of land, and creating corporatist organizations. In the 1940s, more and more Koreans could find employment in the colonial bureaucracy, but since their advancement was closely intertwined with the darkest stage of Japanese rule, they became a despised minority.⁴⁷ From 1937 on, prominent Koreans

could hardly avoid public collaboration with the Japanese, and thus the social elites that could have played a decisive role in a negotiated decolonialization process became thoroughly discredited. In a social environment that was conflict ridden anyway, this narrow-minded Japanese policy inevitably created a highly explosive situation after independence.

Nor were leftist groups spared by the poisonous effects of colonial control. The police systematically tortured political prisoners so as to make them renounce their ideas, and then involved them in the persecution of their comrades. "Most of those imprisoned found it difficult to convince their allies that they had not been broken," and later Kim Il Sung frequently managed to discredit "domestic" communists by accusing them of having cooperated with the police. This stood in sharp contrast with the situation in Vietnam, where the communists held in French prisons successfully converted many of their inmates. Moreover, the problem of suspected collaboration was not confined to Korea proper. Korean guerrillas in Manchuria faced not only Japanese troops but also Korean soldiers and militiamen. Since Tokyo actively promoted Korean emigration to Manchuria, local Chinese often regarded Koreans as agents of Japanese colonialism. By 1941, the Japanese had basically stamped out the Korean guerrilla movement in Manchuria, compelling Kim Il Sung and some other guerrillas (but by no means all of them) to move to the Soviet Union, where they received military training.⁴⁸

Despite decades of struggle, Korean rightists and communists failed to achieve either a negotiated decolonization or a decisive victory over the colonial regime. It was the Soviet and American occupation of Korea, not an indigenous movement, that finally put an end to Japanese rule in 1945. This resulted in Korean nationalists becoming embittered and frustrated. Moreover, the relatively high number of collaborators and the absence of active resistance in the 1937–1945 period probably made Kim Il Sung think that colonial rule had corrupted Korean society, and thus a thorough purification was needed. While he did draw a distinction between prominent collaborators and low-ranking employees of the colonial administration, in his eyes the only people who were completely above suspicion had never succumbed to the Japanese. This view naturally induced him to overrate the role played by the Manchurian guerrillas.

Vietnamese society in general and the Vietnamese communist movement in particular had rather different experiences between 1936 and 1945. Under the French Popular Front governments (1936–1938), the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) successfully cooperated with "a number of bourgeois and petit bourgeois elements" in Tonkin and northern Annam, taking advantage of the temporary liberalization of the political situation. True, these achievements were

soon offset by the wave of repression that followed the outbreak of WW II and the abortive communist uprisings of 1940. In fact, in 1941 the party “was in complete disarray, its members dead, incarcerated, demoralized, or surviving precariously in the forests and swamps.”⁴⁹ Still, French control over Vietnam greatly weakened in 1941 to 1945. Following the Japanese occupation of Indochina, the French administration made substantial concessions to the Vietnamese population in order to ensure its loyalty. The youth movement launched by the French enabled the Vietnamese to create legal mass organizations, whose leadership gradually slipped from the hands of the colonial regime and drifted toward the communist-led but highly inclusive Viet Minh Front.⁵⁰

The Viet Minh, a patriotic organization created by Nguyen Ai Quoc (henceforth Ho Chi Minh) in 1941, established guerrilla bases in Tonkin. In 1945, the Japanese toppled the French administration, and since they soon lost the war, a power vacuum came into existence. Taking advantage of this interregnum, the Viet Minh managed to extend its influence to most parts of the country before the return of the colonial overlords, and the power and popularity it achieved made it capable of resisting the French successfully in subsequent years. These feats of the Vietnamese communists sharply differed from the failures of their Korean comrades. Thus, 1945 constituted another major turning point in modern Korean history. The Korean communists lacked the experience of overcoming colonial rule by relying principally on the support of the population, and the Soviet invasion that liberated their country resulted in the violation of Korean sovereignty once again. As a consequence, Kim Il-sung was inclined to distrust both Koreans who had lived under Japanese rule and his new Soviet allies.

Emergence of the North Korean Communist Regime

Following liberation, the Korean communists soon embarked on setting up a regime in the northern part of Korea. Due to the strong Soviet political, economic, and military presence, in most cases their early actions, while they did have a Korean touch, were not fundamentally different from contemporaneous measures taken by this or that Eastern bloc government. On the other hand, the Soviets did not necessarily insist on uniformity, and they often took local circumstances into consideration. Thus, the various aspects of the North Korean situation frequently had more in common with the peculiarities of a certain East European regime than with any uniform “East European pattern.”

North Korea bore a resemblance to East Germany in its postponement of collectivization for the sake of national unification, to Bulgaria in the absence

of Soviet troops, to Albania in its dependence on foreign expertise, and so on. In any case, Soviet influence was not equally intense in every sphere, and North Korean methods were also influenced by the style of CCP policies from the beginning. Finally, the situation in which the North Korean Communist leaders found themselves had much in common with the difficulties that the Viet Minh had to cope with, since both Pyongyang and Hanoi had to solve the knotty problems of decolonization. In sum, North Korean developments did not constitute a case entirely different from Eastern Europe, China, or Vietnam, but they were not completely similar to any of the latter.

The sudden collapse of Japanese rule in 1945 resulted in the immediate resurgence of nationalist and popular movements in Korea. Such activity manifested itself principally in the creation of People's Committees (PCs) all over the country, which culminated in the establishment of the People's Republic of Korea and a coalition government headed by the moderate leftist Yo Un-hyong in Seoul. Pak Hon-yong also reactivated the Communist Party. However, the arrival of Soviet and American occupation forces prevented Koreans from a political takeover comparable to the Vietnamese August Revolution. On the basis of a Soviet-U.S. agreement concluded in Potsdam, the Soviet advance into Korea stopped at the 38th parallel. Soon afterward, the Soviet military authorities sealed off their occupation zone from the U.S.-held southern region so as to maintain control over its physical resources, which disrupted economic contacts between North and South.⁵¹

For its part, the American occupation command outlawed the People's Republic of Korea and the PCs. Since leftists, including communists, played an important role in the creation of these institutions, these American actions were strongly welcomed by the rightist Korean Democratic Party (KDP). The KDP had good reason to do so, since in general it represented the interests of landowners and businessmen who had been closely associated with colonial rule. Some of the rightist Korean nationalists who returned from emigration at the end of 1945, such as Rhee and Yi Pom-sok, showed readiness to cooperate with the KDP and the Americans against the left, although this trilateral relationship was by no means free of tension.⁵²

In the meantime, the Soviet military authorities established contacts with the "domestic" North Korean communists, often at the expense of cooperation with noncommunist nationalists. Kim Il Sung, Ch'oe Yong-gon, Kim Il, and other former Manchurian guerrillas, who had spent the 1941-1945 period in the USSR, also arrived in Korea in the wake of the Soviet occupation. Anxious to make their administration efficient, the Soviets sent numerous Soviet Koreans (i.e., Soviet citizens of Korean origin) to northern Korea in order to provide the military authorities and the Korean communists with interpreters

and trained officials. Finally, Mao Zedong also sent some prominent Yan'an Koreans to northern Korea, possibly with the aim of gaining a foothold there.⁵³ In October 1945, the North Korean Bureau (NKB) of the Korean Communist Party came into existence in Pyongyang, and in December, the Soviet-supported Kim Il Sung was “elected” as its chair. The Seoul-based official KCP leadership, headed by Pak Hon-yong, had no real control over the KCP-NKB.⁵⁴ Thus, the seeds of the subsequent division and political polarization of Korea were sown as early as the first months following the end of Japanese rule.

Unlike the Americans, the Soviet occupation command did not outlaw the PCs in its zone. This attitude stood in sharp contrast with Soviet actions in East Germany, where the spontaneously created anti-Nazi committees were quickly dissolved.⁵⁵ On the other hand, that contrast did not necessarily indicate a general difference between Moscow's Korean and East European policies, for the Hungarian counterparts of the PCs, known as National Committees, also played an important role in local administration until the 1945 democratic elections.⁵⁶ So, it was the rapid and near-complete purge of pro-Japanese officials in 1945–1946, rather than the activity of the PCs, that should be considered a North Korean peculiarity. This process reflected the intense popular hatred for the assimilationist policies that the collaborators had helped to carry out in the last phase of colonial domination.⁵⁷ The Chinese and North Vietnamese communist regimes, as well as the Soviet-controlled East European administrations, did not pursue such a radical policy in the first period of their rule.⁵⁸

No matter how far-reaching it was, the North Korean purge proved less violent than the repressive measures that the Viet Minh (or the Yugoslav, Bulgarian, and Albanian communist guerrillas) took in the wake of liberation. For instance, of the real or supposed Vietnamese collaborators arrested in August and September 1945, as many as “several thousand[s] . . . failed to survive abductions of this kind.”⁵⁹ This difference probably resulted from the fact that the presence of a Soviet military administration, combined with the absence of a local communist guerrilla force, prevented North Korean communists from carrying out Yugoslav-style massacres, and it made such actions rather unnecessary anyway.

Similar to the steps they took in Germany, Hungary, and some other East European countries, the Soviet military authorities made efforts to curb the radicalism of the “domestic” Korean communists in order not to exacerbate political tension. In September 1945, Stalin ordered the Soviet occupation command and the Korean communists not to introduce any social reform other than the reduction of land rents for the time being.⁶⁰ In fact, in October rents were reduced to 30 percent of the crop, a step in tune with the proposals of the

short-lived People's Republic of Korea.⁶¹ While this measure was not peculiar to North Korea, it had more in common with Asian communist policies than with the "East European pattern." Namely, the land reform campaigns launched by the CCP and the North Vietnamese regime also included a stage of rent reductions, whereas the post-1945 East European agrarian reforms did not.⁶² That is, the North Korean rent reductions, even though their enactment occurred within a framework explicitly delineated by the Soviet dictator, reflected substantial local (and possibly Chinese) influence as well.

The moderate character of early Soviet occupation policies also manifested itself in that it was the noncommunist Cho Man-sik who became the head of North Korea's first quasi-government in November 1945. Still, certain actions of the Soviet authorities and the Korean communists indicated a very weak commitment to democratic rules. Although communists constituted only a minority in most of the provincial PCs in the wake of liberation, the Soviets demanded that half of the membership of the PCs be composed of communists. From October on, the Soviets nominated former guerrillas, like Kim Ch'aek and Ch'oe Yong-gon, as leaders of the new police force, which thus became an instrument of communist policies—a development typical of the East European countries. Of the numerous newly created noncommunist parties, only Cho Man-sik's Korean Democratic Party and the Ch'ondogyo Young Friends Party (CYP) were given a green light by the Soviets.⁶³ As early as 3 November 1945, the various youth leagues held a meeting aimed at merging them into a single organization (this goal was achieved in January 1946), while similar events took place in Hungary only three years later.⁶⁴

The predatory behavior of the Soviet troops (rape, removal of machinery, and requisition of grain) also caused unrest, which became particularly intense after the so-called Moscow Agreement. The decision of the Allies to put Korea under a five-year trusteeship before full independence was extremely unpopular among Koreans, and since the Soviets compelled the reluctant Korean communists to support the agreement, the latter "created an irreversible split between left and right." Noncommunist nationalists, such as Cho Man-sik, vehemently opposed the idea of trusteeship; early in 1946 the Soviet authorities cracked down on them. Purged of their independent-minded leaders, the KDP and the CYP soon became subordinated to the Communist Party.⁶⁵

The conflict over trusteeship induced the Soviets and the North Korean communists to implement radical social reforms that in 1945 they had considered premature. Apart from economic reasons, they probably concluded that it was no longer necessary to please middle-class nationalists. They also had to offset the unpopularity caused by the Moscow Agreement and the actions of the Soviet troops. Actually, the land reform carried out in March 1946 was

not just a way to improve the livelihood of the peasants, but also a method aimed at weakening the socioeconomic basis of the noncommunist opposition. Because the majority of North Korean Christians, who formed the backbone of the KDP, belonged to the middle or upper classes, the uncompensated confiscation of their lands hit them hard. The land reform also broke many kinship networks by confiscating lands held by lineages and relocating some families of dominant lineages.⁶⁶ The dissatisfaction of the upper and middle classes led to student protests, massive emigration, and a few terrorist actions. Both the losers and the beneficiaries of the land reform constituted large segments of North Korean society. To mention but a few statistics, more than 100,000 people fled to South Korea from March through May, whereas well over 600,000 households received land for free.⁶⁷ The regime, by and large, managed to isolate its opposition.

The land reform seems to have reflected various political influences. Not even the Soviet bureaucracies were of the same mind with regard to this issue. The concept of land distribution without compensation to former owners and free to new landholders was proposed by General Shtykov (one of the top Soviet policymakers in North Korea) and the Korean communist leadership, whereas the Soviet Foreign Ministry suggested that peasants should pay for the land they received. In any case, it would be mistaken to contrast the North Korean land reform with some “East European pattern,” since there were considerable differences between the East European countries as well. While East German landowners, like their North Korean counterparts, failed to receive any compensation whatsoever, Polish and Hungarian ones were given at least some compensation for their lost land.⁶⁸ In contrast with the Polish and East German agrarian reforms, but quite similar to the treatment of the Hungarian Catholic Church, the North Korean regime thoroughly confiscated the lands owned by religious organizations. Unlike East European land reforms, in North Korea the distribution of land was intertwined with “anti-traitor” meetings. Once again, these meetings had much in common with CCP practices, although the North Korean process proved far less violent than the North Vietnamese and Chinese land reform campaigns.⁶⁹

Like the East German, Czechoslovak, Polish, Bulgarian, Chinese, and North Vietnamese leaders who retained some ineffective noncommunist parties in order to demonstrate the inclusive nature of their regimes, the North Korean Communist leadership did not eliminate the KDP and the CYFP after the 1946 crackdown. This by no means meant that they enjoyed any autonomy.⁷⁰ In this respect, the North Korean authorities were hardly more intolerant or impatient than their Vietnamese comrades: by mid-1946, the Viet Minh’s security service “made it impossible for independent political activity to continue even in

Hanoi.”⁷¹ Still, by Eastern European standards the process of creating a monolithic regime capped with a personality cult was quite rapid in North Korea, particularly if one takes into consideration that there had not been either a formal government structure or a united communist party there until February and August 1946, respectively.

Apart from the CYFP, the Korean political scene lacked a mass-based, non-communist peasant party comparable to the powerful Polish, Czechoslovak, Hungarian, Romanian, and Bulgarian agrarian parties, and an influential social democratic movement did not exist either. In this sense, the North Korean social environment resembled China and North Vietnam more than Eastern Europe. These circumstances probably facilitated the dynamic expansion of communist party membership.

In August, the KCP-NKB and the group of Yan'an Koreans, known as the New People's Party and headed by Kim Tu-bong, merged into the North Korean Workers' Party (NKWP). Between August 1946 and August 1947, the NKWP's membership increased from 366,000 to 680,000, and it rose to 800,000 by early 1949. Since in 1949 to 1951 the membership of the Czechoslovak, Hungarian, and Romanian communist parties stood at 1.5 million, 880,000, and 800,000, respectively, the NKWP had proportionately fewer members than the first two parties, but considerably more than the Romanian Workers Party. There was a higher percentage of workers in the NKWP than in the CCP, but a higher proportion of peasants than in the East European parties. Up to 1951, the party leadership did its best to raise the percentage of workers to 23 percent to 25 percent. In comparison with their Chinese comrades, the North Korean membership was relatively educated. In 1947, two-thirds of NKWP members were literate, whereas in 1951 as many as 90 percent of CCP members and 40 percent of district party secretaries could not read and write.⁷²

While the North Korean regime was not necessarily more inclusive than its East European and Chinese counterparts, it did lay a quite singular stress on political control from the very beginning. In 1946, only party members gained admission to Kim Il Sung University, and even the janitorial staff employed there had to possess a party card.⁷³

Early Soviet–North Korean Relations and the Peculiarities of Kim Il-sung's Dictatorship

The composition of the North Korean Communist leadership was more unique than the party's early actions. That is, it did not include a group that was characteristic of every Soviet-dominated East European regime except the Albanian dictatorship—namely, leadership by a team of “Muscovites.” “Muscovites”

(e.g., Rákosi and Gerő in Hungary; Bierut, Berman, and Minc in Poland; Gottwald in Czechoslovakia; Ulbricht and Pieck in the GDR; Pauker and Luka in Romania; Dimitrov and Chervenkov in Bulgaria) were high-ranking communist leaders who had spent WW II in the USSR rather than in a resistance movement at home. Their career was closely intertwined with the development of the Comintern. Some of them resided in the Soviet Union at the time of the Great Terror, but managed to survive it or went so far as to participate in the purges. In other words, their pre-1945 advancement was largely based on their contacts with the Soviet party and security organs (Chervenkov, Bierut, and Gerő were heavily involved in cooperating with the NKVD, predecessor of the KGB), and in certain cases they established patron–client relationships with top Soviet leaders.⁷⁴

In contrast, the Korean communists who returned to North Korea from the USSR in the wake of liberation seem to have been largely outside this web of interparty contacts. When Kim Il Sung and the other Manchurian guerrillas moved to the USSR, Moscow treated their group as a military unit subordinated to the Far Eastern forces of the Red Army and not as foreign party cadres to be integrated into the Comintern apparatus. Kim’s rise to prominence was supported by the Soviet occupation command, rather than the Soviet party organs or the foreign ministry. While the Soviet Koreans did play a role comparable to that of the “Muscovites,” they had little to do with the Comintern. Having been medium-level cadres and schoolteachers in the USSR, their principal advantage was their administrative experience and their knowledge of both Russian and Korean.⁷⁵ The absence of a North Korean “Muscovite” group resulted primarily from the fact that almost all Korean Comintern officials who resided in the USSR in 1937–1938 perished in Stalin’s Great Terror, which was accompanied by the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Koreans from the Soviet Far East to Central Asia.⁷⁶ Thus, the interparty character of Soviet–North Korean relations seems to have been less significant than was the case in Eastern Europe.

To be sure, the Kremlin did its best to maintain a hold over North Korea, which benefited Kim Il Sung. For Stalin, Kim’s military training under Soviet commanders made him more reliable than Pak Hon-yong, whose reluctance to support the Moscow Agreement also angered the Soviet dictator.⁷⁷ In the 1945–1948 period, numerous “domestic” communists, such as O Ki-sop and Chang Si-u, were harshly criticized and even demoted by Kim Il Sung and the Soviet Koreans.⁷⁸ In fact, in the Soviet-dominated East European countries, Stalin usually preferred “Muscovites” like Ulbricht, Gottwald, Dimitrov, and Rákosi, to party leaders who had spent WW II at home and who were therefore considered less trustworthy. Gheorghiu-Dej proved an exception, but his

rise to the supreme leadership of the Romanian party was facilitated by the fact that he accused the former general secretary, a “domestic” communist named Fóris, of having been a police informant.⁷⁹

“For the Soviet authorities Kim Il Sung was the ideal man to be chosen as the North Korean party leader,” Ree points out. “On the one hand, he had a real nationalist partisan history; he was a Korean and not a Soviet citizen. On the other hand, he was a returnee from the USSR, with a career in the Red Army.”⁸⁰ It is quite certain that Kim would not have been able to become North Korea’s supreme leader as early as 1945–1946 without Soviet support. Both the Yan’an group and the “domestic” communist movement included several leaders (e.g., Mu Chong, Kim Tu-bong, and Pak Hon-yong) whose political experience, military expertise, or cultural level surpassed that of Kim Il Sung and his guerrillas.⁸¹ While the guerrillas, including older men like Ch’oe Yong-gon, accepted Kim as their head as early as mid-1945⁸², other party leaders probably resented his quick advancement.

Actually, nowhere in Eastern Europe save Tito’s Yugoslavia did a leadership cult emerge as rapidly as in North Korea. In 1946, the dictatorship named the country’s first and henceforth most prestigious university for Kim Il Sung, and in 1947, it set up schools for the orphans of revolutionary martyrs in Man’gyongdae, Kim’s home village. In contrast, the Hungarian leader Rákosi, although hardly an opponent of personality cult, did not take similar measures. Only in 1951 did the Hungarian leadership decide to name the newly established University of Miskolc, whose importance was not comparable to Kim Il Sung University, for Rákosi.⁸³ Apart from the pictures of foreign communist leaders, such as Stalin, Lenin, and Marx, the North Korean authorities usually displayed only Kim’s portraits on festive occasions—a quite unique practice, since at that time the East European, Chinese, North Vietnamese, and Mongolian regimes displayed the pictures of several top leaders (e.g., the portraits of Rákosi, Gerő, Révai, and Farkas in Hungary).⁸⁴ Moreover, in the Soviet Union Stalin’s cult was also accompanied by the cult of other leaders, such as Molotov’s.⁸⁵ Thus, Kim Il Sung’s cult should not be considered a mere copy of the Stalinist leadership cult.

Despite his dynamically growing cult, Kim had not yet become a ruler of absolute power. Nor was the North Korean top leadership monolithic in this period. Kim’s guerrillas, whom he could safely rely on, constituted only a minority among the NKWP leaders. In 1946, the Political Committee was composed of Kim Il Sung, Kim Tu-bong, Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik, Ho Ka-i (the most prominent Soviet Korean), and Chu Yong-ha, a “domestic” communist. In 1948, Political Committee and Central Committee seats were still relatively evenly divided between these groups.⁸⁶

On the other hand, neither the “domestic” communists nor the Soviet Koreans formed a stable faction comparable to Kim Il Sung’s guerrillas. For instance, two important Soviet Korean leaders, Pak Ch’ang-ok and Ho Ka-i, were hardly on good terms with each other. The Soviet Koreans “did not have the common experience of working or fighting together for many years as a team.”⁸⁷ The rather heterogeneous character of the NKWP leadership, reinforced by the Soviet Koreans’ inclination to isolate themselves from their social environment, would enable Kim to play off his (real or potential) opponents against each other. “Having led very different existences before 1945, the members of the various factions were virtual strangers, and tensions between them were unavoidable,” Lankov points out.⁸⁸

This situation considerably differed from the composition of the post-1941 Vietnamese party leadership. The failure of the 1940 uprisings resulted in the elimination of most southern ICP leaders, who had returned from the Soviet Union and “complied closely with whatever line Moscow espoused.” Following their disappearance, the new party leadership became, at least temporarily, relatively homogenous. Its members, such as Ho Chi Minh, Truong Chinh, Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Le Duan, had begun their political activities in the Revolutionary Youth League (RYL) or in another leftist nationalist organization, the Tan Viet. They had known each other for a substantial period of time. Most of them came from Tonkin and Annam, and “their formative political experiences had been in Vietnam or southern China.” While they did not hesitate to purge the last remaining “internationalist-oriented” leaders, including Tran Van Giau, in 1946, for over a decade they got on more or less well with each other.⁸⁹ Ho Chi Minh, thanks to his various experiences in France, China, and the Soviet Union, had a broader perspective than Kim Il Sung, which may have contributed to his flexibility.

Kim and his guerrillas, whose political formative phase had not been closely interlocked with Soviet and Comintern policies, were probably less loyal to the Kremlin than the East European “Moscovites.” After all, they were die-hard nationalists. Kim’s position may have been reinforced by the fact that the Soviet Koreans had not been prominent leaders before 1945, and thus they probably had no informal contacts with top Soviet leaders who could have supported them in the same way as Molotov temporarily protected Pauker. Other circumstances also suggest that the DPRK was not as organically integrated into the “Soviet bloc” as the East European countries. In 1948, after the establishment of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the USSR withdrew its troops from North Korea. Anxious not to hinder Korean unification, the Soviet Union did not sign a mutual defense pact with Pyongyang.⁹⁰

Still, in the early years of the DPRK, Kim Il Sung could not afford to defy

the Kremlin openly. After its liberation, North Korea was cut off from its traditional economic partners (Japan, South Korea, and Manchuria), and thus it had to rely on imports from the USSR. In 1946–1948, the Soviet share of North Korean exports and imports constantly exceeded 90 percent, a proportion much higher than those typical of the East European countries. The Kremlin certainly wanted to shape the course of North Korean industrialization, and it often pressed the DPRK for valuable raw materials, such as lead and monazite. This is not to overlook the fact that Kim Il Sung's interest in the development of the machine tool industry (or capital goods sector in general)—which he seems to have regarded as an essential element of an independent economy—became obvious as early as 1946–1948. Although investments in capital goods comprised a rather low percentage of industrial investments, they grew rapidly, whereas the proportion dedicated to mining or metallurgy remained more or less constant or even declined.⁹¹

While the equipment and technical experts that the Soviet Union sent to the DPRK did facilitate North Korean industrialization, Kim Il Sung may have regarded Soviet economic assistance as insufficient. On 29 April 1950, the DPRK foreign minister told Hungarian envoy Sándor Simics that the absence of trained cadres constituted a serious problem. He went on to explain that there were only six engineers, four of them Soviets, in a large chemical plant that had once employed hundreds of Japanese technicians and engineers. There was not a single engineer in the construction industry, while the railroad had two engineers altogether. Of course, North Korean political prejudices also played a role in these difficulties. When Simics visited a food processing factory in Pyongyang, the director (a former worker) told him that “the old specialists had been expelled from the factory because of their pernicious activity, and thus they [the managers] had to train new technical experts.”⁹²

The backwardness of the North Korean economy could either retard the adoption of certain Soviet institutions or necessitate an inordinate dependency on Soviet expertise. In 1953–1954, work cards and Stakhanovism were still unknown to most North Korean workers. The DPRK's agricultural tax system seemed far less complex than its Hungarian counterpart, and the circulation of the country's newspapers remained a fraction of East European equivalents.⁹³ Due to small number of North Korean writers, translated Soviet works constituted the largest share of the books published in 1955. Because of deficiencies in the country's motion picture industry, as late as 1957 some 60 percent of the films shown in local theaters were of Soviet origin, whereas the proportion of North Korean films did not exceed 10 percent.⁹⁴

Such a situation in itself had little to do with the “imposed” or “indigenous” character of a communist regime. Paradoxically, the Albanian dictatorship,

the only regime in Moscow's East European satellites in whose establishment the Soviets did not play a major role, was more dependent on Soviet know-how than any other "people's democracy." As a Hungarian diplomat reported from Tirana in 1947, "there are few original Albanian literary works, the published books are largely translations from Russian and Serbian." In 1952, Albanian theaters showed mostly Soviet films.⁹⁵ This over-reliance on Soviet expertise reflected, above all, Albania's backwardness, rather than her political subservience.

In certain spheres of North Korean life, the influence of Soviet models (and the rejection of Korean traditions) was more intense than in others. "English was discontinued and replaced by Russian for entrance to Kim Il Sung University in 1949," Armstrong points out.⁹⁶ As late as 1956, North Korean higher education still lacked adequate textbooks, and one of the solutions proposed by the authorities was placing greater emphasis on learning Russian so as to enable students to use Soviet textbooks until the publication of Korean ones was possible.⁹⁷ In 1945, the new administration prohibited acupuncture and several other traditional healing practices, some of which were indeed harmful.⁹⁸ Thanks to the reform of the marriage law, the number of divorces initiated by mistreated wives rose quickly in the first decade of the regime. (In the mid-1950s, however, Kim Il Sung began to discourage divorce.)⁹⁹ These latter reforms also reveal that Soviet (i.e., European) influence sometimes proved quite beneficial, since the Confucian traditions of Korean society did hinder, say, the emancipation of women, to a substantial extent.

In other spheres, Soviet influence gained ground at a slower pace. Until 1956, the format of North Korean newspapers differed from European counterparts. Sentences were written vertically instead of horizontally, and it was the last page that served as front page.¹⁰⁰ As the Hungarians noted in 1954, the authorities did not reckon the beginning of a person's life from his birth (as is the case in Europe), but from his conception; that is, a person born ten years before was officially registered as eleven years old.¹⁰¹ Traditional customs and lifestyles often remained more or less unchanged. For instance, many young men who joined the army after the outbreak of the Korean War signed their enlistment statement with their own blood.¹⁰² When a decorated Korean People's Army (KPA) soldier wrote a letter to Rákosi in order to express the gratitude of the Korean people for the assistance that Hungary had given to the war-torn DPRK, he addressed the Hungarian leader as "the son of Stalin, the elder brother of Kim Il Sung, our dear uncle." This style had much more in common with Confucianism than with Marxism-Leninism.¹⁰³

Understandably, everyday material culture did not undergo drastic changes either. By and large, the furniture of urban homes remained confined to a mat,

a small round table, and bedding, the Hungarians reported in the mid-1950s. People sat on the floor while eating, and clothes were hung on a nail driven into the wall. The overwhelming majority of buildings, even newly built, modern ones, had under-floor heating (*ondol*), and people usually slept on the paper-covered floor. Most women still wore long, traditional dresses.¹⁰⁴ Much to the chagrin of the Czechoslovakian ambassador and an Argentine communist visitor, as late as 1962–1963, the North Korean regime still tolerated “backward customs.” Women should not carry either baskets on their heads or children on their backs, the modernization-minded foreign comrades lectured the North Koreans. Needless to say, such ethnocentric comments evoked righteous indignation.¹⁰⁵

Ironically, the DPRK’s dependency on foreign (primarily Soviet) expertise partly resulted from Kim Il Sung’s nationalist stance. For instance, in the wake of liberation, the Korean language was drastically purged of loan words of Japanese origin, but the substitution of the omitted terms would not have been possible without the borrowing of new foreign words—this time from Chinese. Of the words included in a Korean-Russian dictionary published in 1951, over 40 percent were of Chinese origin, which many people did not understand.¹⁰⁶ Due to Kim Il Sung’s isolationist tendencies, in 1945–1953, North Korean scholars did not receive any Western scientific journals, and therefore they had to rely on Soviet ones alone.¹⁰⁷ This shortsighted policy was not merely an echo of Stalinist regulations, for in these years Soviet scientists were allowed to read certain Western publications, albeit in heavily censored form.

Soviet influence also manifested itself in the legal sphere. The North Korean legal code was largely based on Soviet models. In this respect, there was a significant difference between the DPRK and China, since the PRC had no comprehensive penal code until 1979. Thanks to Soviet guidance, in its first phase the North Korean dictatorship did not prefer administrative methods to formal trials as blatantly as the Chinese regime, which organized mass campaigns in order to crack down on its (real and alleged) opponents.

Still, CCP methods seem to have influenced the policies of the NKWP leadership to a significant extent, particularly after 1950. As described before, the North Korean agrarian reform bore a resemblance to the Chinese land reform campaign. In 1955, the North Korean penal system had a lot in common with its Chinese, Soviet, and East European counterparts, without being a copy of any of them. While internment camps held mostly political prisoners for whose detention there was no fixed term, people sent to the “reform through labor” camps received sentences of up to one year, and received a low wage based on their performance. These camps thus proved different from the Soviet labor camps, and the Chinese *laogai*, whose prisoners were given fixed,

usually medium- or long-term, sentences. People held in Chinese “reform through labor” camps (*laojiao*) received a small wage, but they had not been actually sentenced. North Korean internment camps, however, were remarkably similar to Hungarian ones.¹⁰⁸

Chinese influence was rather obvious in North Korean military tactics, and Maoism seems to have produced a considerable effect on the development of North Korean political ideology and terminology well before 1950. Certain characteristics of the North Korean newspapers, such as the low number of articles dealing with cultural issues and sports, were similar to the Chinese press, whereas the Hungarian diplomats found them quite odd. In any case, North Korean participation in the Chinese civil war surely reinforced the contacts between the Korean and Chinese communist parties. From 1946 on, Kim Il Sung supplied the CCP with various forms of assistance, and in 1947–1948, he sent tens of thousands of Korean soldiers to China to fight against the Guomindang (GMD).¹⁰⁹ The CCP’s triumph may have played a role in the 1949 establishment of ninety-six state-financed schools by Pyongyang, where the language of education was Chinese for the Chinese minority.¹¹⁰

Despite these cases of Sino–North Korean cooperation, in the first phase of Kim’s dictatorship Chinese influence was not as intense in the DPRK as in North Vietnam. As the Hungarian chargé d’affaires to Hanoi reported in March 1955, the Vietnamese Workers’ Party (VWP) leaders regarded China, rather than the Soviet Union, as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam’s (DRV) principal model, adviser, and supporter.¹¹¹ This was hardly the case in pre-1950 North Korea. It is noteworthy that North Korean institutions were less similar to Chinese ones than their Vietnamese counterparts. For instance, the North Korean Youth League, like the East European Communist youth organizations, had a unitary structure. In contrast, the PRC and the DRV created two youth leagues, one for devout communists and another for sympathizers.¹¹² Before 1950, the CCP had not yet become so influential in East Asia (and elsewhere) as to provide Pyongyang with a counterweight against Moscow. It was Kim Il Sung’s fateful decision to start a war in the Korean peninsula that would alter this situation more dramatically than either he or Mao or Stalin expected.

The Political Consequences of the Korean War

Mao’s victory in 1949 greatly emboldened Kim Il Sung. After all, it meant that the world’s most populous country had come under communist rule, and the United States proved incapable of preventing the humiliating defeat of her chief Asian ally. In addition, the CCP had been cooperating with Korean communists for a long time, and therefore its takeover provided Pyongyang with

a new friendly neighbor. Thus, it is hardly surprising that in January 1950, Kim told two Soviet advisers that “now, when China is completing its liberation, the liberation of the Korean people in the south is next in line.”¹¹³

In Kim Il Sung’s mind, the liberation of South Korea was tantamount to the extension of the northern political system to the southern part of the country. This was easier to say than to achieve. The encouraging upsurge of South Korean communist political and trade union activity that followed the end of Japanese rule did not last long. Having been repressed first by the American military administration and then by Korean police and rightist paramilitary groups, the left could not block the establishment of Syngman Rhee’s right-wing dictatorship nor the proclamation of a separate South Korean republic. This was a disappointing setback, all the more so since in 1945–1946, the southern wing of the KCP (known as South Korean Workers’ Party from 1946 on) had an incomparably broader social basis than the communist organizations in the western zones of Europe’s divided countries. Neither the West German nor the Austrian communists could mobilize such a high number of workers, peasants, intellectuals, teachers, and students as the SKWP, yet that social support eventually proved insufficient to overcome the combined forces of the American occupation command and the South Korean right.

This failure stood in a sharp contrast with the Viet Minh’s glorious victory over the French and the Bao Dai regime. This difference was to play a decisive role in post-1950 North Korean developments, and therefore it is worth studying. The SKWP’s political and military defeat seems to have been caused by various factors. First of all, the party did not manage to create a “national front” comparable to the anti-French Viet Minh coalition. Even if the paths of Korean communists and noncommunists had not diverged as early as the interwar era, the sudden disappearance of the Japanese overlords as well as the Soviet–American division of the country resulted in the absence of a common enemy against which Koreans of various political persuasions could have fought together. No matter how displeased the South Korean rightists were by certain U.S. actions, they still preferred the Americans to the Soviets, whereas for the SKWP, the main enemy was the American occupation command, not the Soviet troops in the North. As a consequence, polarization between left and right became more intense in post-1945 South Korea than in Vietnam.

Since the SKWP had to base its program on social, rather than national, issues, it could not get as much support from the middle strata as the Viet Minh, whose followers included not only peasants, workers, intellectuals, and students, but also many artisans and nationalist landlords. Regarding the party as a threat to their socioeconomic interests, South Korean landowners and the greater part of the middle classes were quite hostile to it. In any case, the elitist Bao Dai

regime lacked the kind of powerful mass organizations (above all, youth leagues) that the Korean right managed to set up in the wake of liberation.¹¹⁴

Regional factors also mattered. While the SKWP did have a large following in the Kyongsang and Cholla provinces, in other rural areas, like the Ch'ungch'ong provinces, it remained relatively weak. With the exception of Kangwon, the leftist-oriented South Korean regions were far from the DPRK, which greatly hindered external assistance. In contrast, in Vietnam the non-communist organizations, rather than the Viet Minh, suffered from geographic isolation. While the strength of the mass-based noncommunist groups (the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects as well as the Catholics) remained confined to certain areas, the Viet Minh found supporters in every major region (Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina), even among some ethnic minorities. Taking advantage of the jungles and mountains of Laos and Cambodia, the Vietnamese communists managed to maintain more or less permanent communication and cooperation between their regional forces.¹¹⁵

The tactical mistakes of the South Korean communist guerrillas may have also contributed to their setbacks, for in 1949 they attacked military headquarters and administrative centers instead of avoiding major clashes with the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army. Such bold attacks cost the guerrillas many lives, yet failed to yield the expected results. But even if the guerrillas had decided to wage a protracted war instead, they would not have necessarily benefited from it. Namely, the Korean climate and terrain (above all, the harsh winters) proved much more favorable for counterinsurgency campaigns than the conditions in Vietnam. Snow and the absence of thick foliage greatly facilitated the military's efforts to detect and encircle guerrillas, who could not move as freely in the winter as in the summer.¹¹⁶

As the military machine of the Rhee regime rolled on and on, many prominent SKWP leaders, including Pak Hon-yong and Yi Sung-yop, had to flee to North Korea, where they received important posts. For instance, Pak Hon-yong became deputy premier and foreign minister. In 1949, the northern and southern wings of the party merged into the Korean Workers' Party (KWP).¹¹⁷ This defeat was certainly a great shock to the Korean communist leaders, but it did not discourage them. Having failed to achieve unification "from below," now they decided to resort to military means.

Before moving to the subject of the Korean War, it is worthwhile to point out that unification plans influenced North Korean policies from the beginning. Some of the conspicuous differences between the DPRK and Moscow's European satellites were probably rooted in Pyongyang's efforts to create an image attractive for the southern population. For instance, North Korea, in a sharp contrast with Eastern Europe, did not undergo agricultural cooperativization

in the Stalin era. Having done their best to popularize their land reform in the South, the NKWP leaders seem to have recognized that a northern collectivization drive would greatly reduce the reform's appeal in the ROK. In 1952, Chang Si-u told the Hungarians that the government had resolved to postpone collectivization until unification in order not to alienate potential (North and South Korean) supporters.¹¹⁸ Another phenomenon of this kind was that the 1948 purge of O Ki-sop and other "domestic" communist leaders did not culminate in an East European-style show trial. Such a trial might have produced a negative effect on Southern public opinion, and thus avoiding it was advisable.

This approach should not be regarded as uniquely North Korean. The political repertoire of the East German and North Vietnamese communist regimes also included the avoidance or temporary postponement of certain unpopular domestic measures for the sake of national unification. The East German case is particularly illuminating, because it reveals both the importance of the unification issue and Stalin's tactical flexibility. Had the Soviet dictator instructed Ulbricht to stage a show trial, the East German leader, in all probability, would have followed the example of Hoxha, Chervenkov, Rákosi, Gheorghiu-Dej, and Gottwald all too enthusiastically. Since there was no such trial in the GDR, it seems obvious that Stalin did not want to hold one. Significantly, Stalin had not sanctioned the collectivization of East German agriculture until April 1952 (i.e., until the eventual failure of his unification plans), even though most other East European regimes had started to force peasants into cooperatives at least three years earlier.¹¹⁹ Thus, North Korea's divergence from the pattern followed by the majority of the East European satellites seems to have enjoyed Moscow's blessing.

Since Pyongyang's superficial moderation failed to yield any tangible result, and the Southern leftist opposition did not manage to destabilize the Rhee regime, from March 1949 on Kim Il Sung repeatedly asked for Stalin's permission to launch a military attack on South Korea. In a sense, Kim's plan merely mirrored the intentions of Rhee and some other South Korean leaders, who wanted to invade the North in order to unify the country under their own rule. The various manifestations of South Korean belligerence, such as provoking border incidents, seriously worried both Moscow and Washington. Rhee's bellicosity proved fatally counterproductive, for it induced the United States to keep her military assistance to the ROK Army within strict limits, and at the same time enhanced Kim Il Sung's bargaining position in his negotiations with Stalin. While Washington firmly refused to support an offensive against the DPRK, the Soviet dictator, who at first also opposed any aggressive North Korean move, finally gave his consent to the invasion of South Korea.¹²⁰

Stalin's decision is certainly worth analyzing, since it is not likely that he would have let any of his East European client states attack, say, Yugoslavia or West Germany. It may be assumed that he drew a distinction between the USSR's European and Asian security zones. Significantly, a 1949 Soviet–North Korean agreement stipulated that the stationing of a Soviet naval unit at the port of Ch'ongjin was to be only temporary, and in the same year Stalin ordered the dismantling of the base. Similarly, in 1950, he assured Mao that the Soviet Union would eventually withdraw its troops from Port Arthur. That is, Stalin did not insist on a Soviet military presence in this region in the same way as he did in Eastern Europe. Another possible motivation was that the Soviet dictator, encouraged by the CCP's victory, may have concluded that the United States was more reluctant to get involved in an Asian military conflict than in a European one, and henceforth the risks of a North Korean invasion were relatively limited.¹²¹ If he thought so, he made a fateful miscalculation, which would affect Korea for decades after his death.

The Korean War played a particularly decisive role in the evolution of the North Korean dictatorship, producing a strong effect on its domestic and foreign policies. First of all, the setbacks the KPA suffered in the fall of 1950 as well as the subsequent occupation of the DPRK by American and South Korean forces resulted in the sudden intensification of North Korean political repression. At the third plenum of the KWP Central Committee (CC), held in December 1950, Kim Il Sung blamed the military defeats on his subordinates, relieving a number of high-ranking officers of their positions and expelling them from the party. Unlike the 1948 demotion of “domestic” communist leaders, this purge affected several groups of party leaders at the same time. Of the people caught up in that political maelstrom, Kim Il and Yim Ch'un-ch'u belonged to the Kapsan faction, Mu Chong and Kim Han-jung to the Yan'an group, Kim Yol to the Soviet faction, and Ho Song-t'aek and Pak Kwang-hui to the “domestic” group.¹²²

Not content with striking the top levels of the party, the plenum also launched a campaign against ordinary KWP members who had behaved passively under enemy occupation. As a consequence, as many as 500,000 party members were disciplined in 1950–1951.¹²³ While it is tempting to explain this extensive purge solely with Kim Il Sung's scapegoating tactics or with Ho Ka-i's dogmatic views, its roots were probably more complex. Namely, these punitive acts may have been at least partly inspired by a letter sent to Soviet Ambassador Shtykov, approved by the Soviet Politburo on 27 September, which “contained devastating criticism of the North Korean military leadership and Soviet military advisers.”¹²⁴

The KWP leaders also embarked on persecuting collaborators, and in this

process they frequently used methods borrowed from the Chinese communists. While it may have been wiser to prefer reconciliation to reprisals, the problem of collaboration was by no means an invented one. The regime's earlier policies, such as high agricultural taxes, conscription of labor, and discrimination in favor of state plants, had generated considerable resentment among peasants and private entrepreneurs by 1950. During the short period of occupation, the regime's opponents often took the opportunity to create political and armed organizations, avenge themselves on the government's sympathizers, and cooperate with American and ROKA troops.¹²⁵

When the dictatorship re-established its control over the population, it launched a three-month campaign against the "agents of the enemy," executing real or supposed collaborators and seizing their property. Like in the PRC, these so-called trials were held in the presence of the entire village population. As Pak Ch'ang-ok told the "fraternal" diplomats in October 1952, some high- and middle-level officials had interpreted the term "collaborator" in the most liberal sense of the word, applying it even to those who repaired roads on the orders of the occupying forces.¹²⁶

In fact, the KWP leaders had to realize, willy-nilly, that the purge had gone too far, since the number of "unwilling collaborators" proved very high. "The policy of the Party should not be aimed at isolating this considerable mass," Pak Ch'ang-ok stated. "This was the people itself, which, under the circumstances of occupation, often could do nothing but serve the enemy." Thereupon, a new campaign was launched in order to correct the previous "leftist deviations," and draw a distinction between more and less prominent collaborators. The dictatorship set up "people's courts," which "re-educated" the small fry by confining them to their homes for two to six months. This form of punishment, which was similar to the North Vietnamese practice of *bao vay*, seems to have been inspired by CCP methods.¹²⁷ More serious cases were handed over to the regular courts.¹²⁸

The leadership also reinstated most of the military officers who had been demoted at the end of 1950. At the fourth CC plenum, held in November 1951, Kim Il Sung condemned the large-scale expulsion of party members. True to his style, he blamed the "excesses" on Ho Ka-i, his chief Soviet Korean rival. Following the plenum, approximately 30 percent of the expelled members were readmitted, and the regime stepped up the recruitment of peasants into the party. While in the pre-1950 period there had not been more than two or three KWP members in a village, at the end of 1952 their number stood at eight or nine.¹²⁹

The November 1951 plenum was not the only case when Kim Il Sung at-

tempted to shift the responsibility for certain unpopular measures on to his subordinates. In February 1952, at a time when many peasants were starving and the regime had to ask for emergency grain shipments from the USSR and China, Kim made a speech that sharply criticized middle- and low-level cadres for having carried out government directives in an oppressive way. More concretely, he blamed them for the dictatorship's harsh agricultural policy, like the enforced production of cotton and the requisition of grain. The regime organized mass meetings, at which Kim's speech was read out so as to highlight the difference between the dictator's benevolence and the tyrannical methods of the local officials. Local cadres, in turn, often tried not to read out those parts of the speech which were applicable to them, but to no avail.¹³⁰

Even though the KWP leaders eventually re-examined the 1951 purge, the trauma of the war and the occupation was not to be overcome easily. War experiences strongly polarized North Korean society. On the one hand, a high percentage of the population actively participated in the war on the government's side or had strong grievances against the South Korean and American forces. From this time on, the regime's social policies gave preference to ex-soldiers, war orphans, and families whose members were killed during the war.¹³¹ The repressive actions of the occupying troops, the American air raids, and Rhee's nullification of the North Korean land reform must have alienated many northerners from the South Korean government and its foreign backers.¹³² On 21 August 1950, the Soviet ambassador to Beijing told his Hungarian counterpart that KPA soldiers, who were infuriated by the U.S. air raids that had killed many civilians, often killed American prisoners of war (POWs), no matter how definitively the high command prohibited such actions.¹³³

On the other hand, another substantial part of the population became classified as unreliable. The dictatorship was inclined to treat the people who had somehow come under the enemy's control as potential collaborators, even if it did not purge them in the same way as it had done in 1951. For instance, those persons who neither fled before the occupiers nor participated in guerrilla actions against them were regarded as not completely trustworthy. Once branded unreliable, people found it extremely difficult to get rid of such wartime stigmas. It is quite revealing that in 1964 a part of the former prisoners of war (POWs) still belonged to the so-called "hostile classes." Moreover, the regime frequently held citizens responsible for the wartime behavior of their relatives. In 1963, Kim Il Sung told the Soviet ambassador that in a certain border area there were many families whose heads had fled to the South. These families, the dictator admitted, had suffered systematic discrimination at the hands of the authorities.¹³⁴ Since in 1950, the U.S. and South Korean troops occupied

the largest part of the DPRK, and as many as 658,000 people moved to South Korea between late 1950 and early 1951,¹³⁵ the number of potential suspects must have been quite high.

This distrustful attitude was by no means a North Korean peculiarity. To mention but a few examples, the Japanese military regime regarded Japanese soldiers who fell into the enemy's hands as traitors, and Stalin's dictatorship sent 23 percent of former Soviet POWs and Nazi-deported civilians into "re-construction battalions" or to the gulag.¹³⁶ The otherwise relatively flexible North Vietnamese regime was no exception either. In 1958, the VWP cadres told the Hungarians that the population of the newly liberated regions, unlike the people who had lived in the Viet Minh's base areas, lacked a strong "class consciousness."¹³⁷

In addition to reinforcing Kim Il Sung's purifying zeal, the war induced the North Korean government to put an end to the somewhat moderate policies that it had pursued until 1950. As discussed later, in 1953–1954 the leadership organized a big show trial and embarked on the collectivization of agriculture. While in the pre-war period, the regime had tolerated the existence of a seminary, in post-1953 North Korea there were neither organized Christian churches nor ordained priests.¹³⁸ In contrast, the North Vietnamese dictatorship did not try to eliminate the Catholic Church in a similar way. It did crack down on certain independent-minded priests, but in 1958 VWP cadres told the Hungarian diplomats that "the shortage of priests greatly hinders [the authorities] in taking tough measures."¹³⁹ Since a large number of North Vietnamese Catholics, unlike North Korean Christians, were peasants, Hanoi's relative moderation may have been, at least partly, "class based." In addition, in these years the DRV still found alienating South Vietnamese public opinion to be unadvisable, whereas after the Korean War, Pyongyang had nothing to lose by pursuing hard-line domestic policies.

The Korean War influenced the DPRK's foreign relations as well. Following the Inch'on landing, Stalin's unwillingness to get involved in the conflict directly necessitated a Chinese intervention, which in turn led to the weakening of Soviet influence in North Korea. This does not necessarily mean that Kim played off China against the USSR as early as the pre-1957 period. Instead, it could be said that Moscow, anxious to limit its Korean commitment, induced Beijing to shoulder a very significant part of the Korean burden. In return for Chinese assistance, the Kremlin began to refrain from dominating Pyongyang's policies to the same extent as it had done in the pre-war period. These developments did not always suit Kim Il Sung, since Stalin, understandably, gave preference to China over the DPRK. For instance, early in 1951, Peng Dehuai, the commander-in-chief of the Chinese forces in Korea,

halted his advance into South Korea in order to avoid a possible defeat. Although both Kim and Soviet Ambassador Lazarev disagreed with this decision, the Soviet dictator admitted that Peng was right, and recalled Lazarev.¹⁴⁰

Moreover, Kim obviously resented that Chinese military assistance, like the Soviet liberation of the country in 1945, was accompanied by the violation of North Korean sovereignty. Despite the establishment of a Sino–North Korean joint military command, “for all practical purposes the CPV [Chinese People’s Volunteers] headquarters was in charge.”¹⁴¹ In fact, the North Korean dictator seems to have suspected Pak Il-u, a prominent Yan’an Korean who was the deputy political commissar of the joint command, of conspiring with Peng against him.¹⁴² “After the armistice talks began in July 1951, Peng and the other Chinese commanders found it necessary to continue to put North Korea’s railway transportation system under the Chinese Volunteers’ military control, but Kim Il Sung endeavored to resume Pyongyang’s direct control of the railway system,” Chen Jian notes. In mid-1953, the Chinese were still willing to postpone the armistice, whereas Kim wanted to put an end to the war as soon as possible.¹⁴³

Kim Il Sung had good reason to have a grudge against the Soviets as well. After all, in October 1950, Stalin advised him to prepare for total evacuation, and later he strongly curtailed Soviet military assistance to the DPRK and China in order not to provoke a conflict with the United States.¹⁴⁴ As a consequence, U.S. air raids laid waste to North Korea’s towns and villages. In all probability, the war reinforced Kim’s determination to lessen the DPRK’s dependence on the two communist giants. He actually managed to strengthen his position during the war. In 1950, Mu Chong was purged for good, and in 1951 the dictator successfully undermined Ho Ka-i’s position. Since these steps were intertwined with measures that Moscow and Beijing probably regarded as necessary (in 1950 the Soviets sharply criticized the KPA leadership), the USSR and PRC may have tolerated the removal of these two men, even though these personal changes certainly facilitated Kim’s efforts to achieve absolute power.

In the last analysis, one may conclude that in 1945–1949, the North Korean communist regime was not much more repressive than its Vietnamese counterpart, and in some respects its methods even seem to have been milder. While the heterogeneous composition of the NKWP leadership—a characteristic different from the Vietnamese situation—did foreshadow serious intraparty conflicts, the 1948 purge of O Ki-sop, like the removal of Tran Van Giau in Vietnam, did not result in his imprisonment or execution. What eventually reinforced the differences between the two regimes was, first and foremost, the defeat of the SKWP and the outcome of the Korean War. The war seems

to have been the third major turning point in North Korean history, the first two having been Japanese military rule and the Soviet occupation.

Of course, this is not to overlook that certain ominous signs appeared as early as the first years of the regime, indicating that its relative moderation may have been merely temporary. The nearly all-encompassing purge of former officials in 1945–1946, the prevention of scholars from reading any Western scientific publications, the leadership's insistence on party membership for all university students, and the absolute dominance of Kim Il Sung's cult were, by and large, uniquely North Korean phenomena, which did not result simply from the adoption of Soviet Stalinism. Although in this era the North Korean dictatorship did not diverge from the Soviet model to the same extent as it would later do, it was not just a copy of the Soviet system. These similarities and differences between the two regimes reveal a lot about the nature of pre-1953 Soviet–North Korean relations. During Stalin's lifetime, the North Korean leader could not afford to defy the Kremlin openly, but the Soviet dictator did not necessarily prevent him from achieving his aims.

2. Arisen from Ashes

From the North Korean perspective, the armistice signed in Panmunjom, rather than Stalin's death, could be considered the most important event of 1953. In fact, the former was not necessarily a consequence of the latter, although most authors are inclined to explain the end of the war with the death of the Soviet tyrant. In addition, the reconstruction of the war-torn DPRK may have played a more important role in the development of Soviet–North Korean relations in the 1953–1954 period than Soviet de-Stalinization did. Still, Kim Il Sung could not ignore the latter either. It is quite unlikely that he was pleased by the gradual political liberalization in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. On the contrary, in 1954 Hungarian diplomats began to pick up occasional indications of Soviet–DPRK disagreements. While such tension may have existed under Stalin as well, it is important to note that in 1953–1954, Kim Il Sung proved particularly unwilling to take any measure that could have implied the curtailment of his authority.

From War to Purge

“Stalin’s death on March 5, 1953, resulted in a radical change in the Soviet approach to the Korean War,” Weathersby states. “Despite the great uncertainty and anxiety within which the new collective leadership operated, it nonetheless moved immediately to bring an end to the war in Korea.”¹ Stalin’s successors were undoubtedly more ready to pursue a peaceful foreign policy than the late dictator had been.² Nevertheless, the fact that at year-end 1952, the policies of the North Korean regime (and its foreign backers) underwent certain changes—that may have indicated preparations for an armistice—should not be overlooked. If this hypothesis is correct, then the death of Stalin played a less crucial role in the end of the Korean War than most analysts believe.

For one thing, late in 1952 the KWP leaders took various measures related

to economic reconstruction and administrative reorganization. On 2 November 1952, the Hungarian envoy extraordinary Károly Pásztor met the North Korean minister of heavy industry and his Soviet adviser. The Soviet official told him that Moscow had decided to build factories in North Korea in order to resuscitate industrial production. The East European countries were also required to participate in the reconstruction of the DPRK, he stressed. Having read the list of machines Pyongyang wanted to get from Budapest, Pásztor immediately pointed out that such sophisticated equipment was badly needed in Hungary as well.³ To put these plans into proper context, it should be kept in mind that due to intense American bombing, in late 1952, North Korean power generation was almost negligible. This would have rendered wartime operation of these factories rather difficult.⁴

Until 1952, Pyongyang had exchanged goods only with the USSR and China, and since the volume of this trade proved quite low, such transactions were carried out by the Ministry of Internal Trade. However, at the end of 1952, the North Korean government set up the Ministry of Foreign Trade, which indicated that commerce with various foreign countries was likely to increase in the near future.⁵ The Hungarian diplomats also observed a few other sudden changes that strangely coincided with the aforesaid measures. For example, on 22 December, the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) issued a decree that abolished districts, and thus transformed the four-tiered administrative structure inherited from Japanese rule (provinces, counties, districts, and villages) into a three-tiered one. The regime also introduced salaries for rural officials, who had hitherto performed their duties without pay.⁶ Anti-aircraft artillery was rare in the DPRK a few months before, the Hungarian chargé d'affaires wrote on 17 January 1953 (she probably did not take the units concentrated along the lines of communication into consideration). In contrast, early in 1953 one could see anti-aircraft guns everywhere on the hills and mountains, even in the courtyard of the Ministry of Culture and Propaganda. According to Hungarian diplomat Zsigmond Csuka, this dramatic improvement of air defense had begun at the end of 1952.⁷

Although these steps were not necessarily incompatible with wartime efforts, it is quite conspicuous that Pyongyang and the Soviets had not taken them in the first two years of the war. While it is plausible to claim (as both Cumings and Weathersby do⁸) that in 1950–1952 Stalin had wanted to tie down and bloody American forces in a peripheral conflict, in the second half of 1952, Beijing and Pyongyang, exhausted by the prolonged struggle, may have convinced Stalin of the necessity of raising the cost to the United States of sustaining the war. The sudden improvement of North Korean air defense may have been motivated by the desire to induce Washington to seek an armistice.

Of course, one can also consider it merely a reaction to the recent intensification of U.S. air raids, but American bombers had wrought terrible havoc on the DPRK as early as 1950.⁹

As Weathersby notes, during the Stalin-Zhou talks that took place between 20 August and 19 September, “the Chinese leaders were . . . more eager to reach an armistice settlement than they had been in July.”¹⁰ While Mao considered the conclusion of such an agreement less pressing than Kim Il Sung, their disagreement was not necessarily a fundamental one. While Beijing could easily afford to wait for a few more months, Kim rightly complained that “the continuation of the war is not advantageous because the daily losses are greater than the number of POWs whose return is being discussed.”¹¹ Stalin seems to have intended to play for time, but finally he may have consented to an armistice.

Significantly, on 1 January 1953, a Mongolian government delegation arrived in the DPRK. This visit, whose principal purpose remained unknown to the Hungarian diplomats, made the North Korean leaders unusually cheerful. They drank a lot at the receptions, which had not been the case during the previous visits of foreign delegations. The “Korean comrades” expected some favorable event to occur, the Hungarian chargé d’affaires concluded.¹² A possible explanation of this peculiar North Korean reaction is that the Mongolians played the role of messenger between Moscow and Pyongyang, and their visit was somehow related to Soviet preparations for an armistice.

Contemporary North Korean internal politics is also worth analyzing. Late in 1952, the KWP leadership seems to have decided to launch a campaign against the SKWP faction. On 19 November, the DPRK Foreign Ministry emphatically told the Hungarian diplomats not to visit any person without the ministry’s previous consent.¹³ At the Fifth Plenum of the KWP CC, held on 15–18 December, Kim Il Sung launched an attack on “factional elements,” that is, the communists of South Korean origin.¹⁴ On 26 January, Pak Hon-yong was interrupted and corrected by his Soviet Korean deputy, Yi Tong-gon, in the presence of “fraternal” diplomats, indicating the former’s coming demotion. On 7 February, Pak still participated in the celebrations of the fifth anniversary of the KPA’s establishment, but in the second half of the month (or in March) Kim Il Sung had him arrested.¹⁵

The dictator’s repressive measures were by no means confined to the removal of Pak Hon-yong, and they had actually started before Pak’s downfall. A number of high-ranking leaders of South Korean origin, such as CC Secretary Yi Sung-yop, Deputy Minister of Culture and Propaganda Cho Il-myong, and Yi Won-jo, were detained as “American spies.” In January and February, the purge swept various ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Trade (hitherto headed by Chang Si-u), the Foreign Ministry (Deputy Minister Chu

Yong-ha and Ku Chae-su, the head of the European Department, were declared “hostile elements” and “factionalists”), and the Ministry of Health. In the spring, the KWP leadership extended it to the Youth League. The League’s chair, Kim Uk-chin, would be replaced as late as September, which showed how long the purge lasted. Nor did the repressive measures spare the Federation of Trade Unions. In January, several FTU leaders, such as Yi T’ae-u (the head of the Organizational Department), had to practice self-criticism. Actually, the party meetings aimed at “assessing” the political loyalty of the membership quickly became an all-encompassing phenomenon.¹⁶

Why did Kim Il Sung launch such an extensive purge in a period when North Korea waged a particularly destructive war? Gills and Wada believe that the Southerners were liquidated because of their opposition to the armistice settlement that Kim Il Sung wished to reach. Pak Hon-yong, they claim, “remained willing to fight until a victorious end of the war.”¹⁷ This is quite probable, indeed. The South Korean Communist movement, badly mauled by that time, had to pin all its hopes on the North Korean and Chinese armies. Facing annihilation, it could not afford to lose their support. The Hungarian diplomats did note that the “factionalists” had allegedly accused the North Korean leadership of not striving hard for the liberation of South Korea. “It is said that this opinion constituted the basic idea of the factionalists’ thoughts,” a diplomat named János Papp reported on 21 March.¹⁸ The conflict that occurred between Pak Hon-yong and Yi Tong-gon in the presence of the “fraternal” diplomats also seems to have been related to that problem. Pak delivered a lecture for the diplomats, and when he emphasized that one could expect a large-scale offensive, rather than negotiations, of the Eisenhower administration, Yi cut him short.¹⁹

The mysterious death of Ho Ka-i also deserves attention. Pásztor met several KWP leaders, including Yi Tong-gon and Ho Ka-i, on 4 April and 9 May. With the exception of Ho Ka-i, all of them were very optimistic. The armistice would be signed before long, they stressed. In contrast, Ho Ka-i kept saying that “one cannot expect any good to come of the negotiations” and “no one can know what will happen later in Panmunjom.” Since such an openly dissenting opinion was a highly unusual phenomenon among KWP leaders and cadres, it may be assumed that Ho’s pessimistic statements were motivated by his disagreement with the idea of an armistice.²⁰ Having been criticized by Kim Il Sung for alleged “mistakes,” in July 1953 he committed suicide in suspicious circumstances. At the sixth CC plenum, held on 6–9 August, Pak Chong-ae declared him “a traitor of the party, the government, and the people.”²¹

Commenting on Pak Hon-yong’s downfall, Wada states that “the arrest of the number two man of the North Korean state and party amidst the war was possible only with the orders or consent of Stalin. And this meant also that

Stalin did not wish to continue the war.”²² In fact, the purge, and particularly the subsequent show trial of Yi Sung-yop and other SKWP leaders, seems to have been organized with the assistance of Soviet, or at least Soviet-trained, security officers. In 1949–1952, similar show trials had been held in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, with the extensive involvement of Soviet security “advisers.” Lim Un claims that Soviet Koreans, such as Pak Ch’ang-ok, played a prominent role in the attacks the KWP leadership launched on the southern faction and Ho Ka-i.²³ What is clear is that the purge indeed reinforced the positions of the Soviet Koreans to some extent. After all, Pak Hon-yong’s temporary successor was Yi Tong-gon, who would be replaced by Nam Il, another member of the Soviet faction. A third Soviet Korean, Pang Hak-se, headed the Ministry of the Interior during the purges. Significantly, he got this post late in 1952, when the campaign started. The head of the party’s Organizational Department, Pak Yong-bin, also belonged to the Soviet faction.²⁴ Without their active participation, it would have been quite difficult to carry out the purge.

In the last analysis, one may conclude that the decision to end the Korean War was made by Moscow and Beijing as early as 1952, but, as MacDonald and Weathersby point out, the death of the Soviet tyrant accelerated the process of disengagement to a substantial extent.²⁵ These events can also be put into a larger context. Late in 1952, there were several signs of a coming change in Soviet policies, of which the Korean armistice preparations constituted but one. “Assessments that it was only after March 1953 that the [Soviet] press began to talk emphatically about ‘collective leadership’ were at the very least misleading,” Gorlitzki notes. While such propaganda did constitute a crucial part of the efforts that the new Soviet leaders made to legitimize their rule and discredit the dead dictator, it was partly rooted in the so-called party revivalist campaign that had preceded the Nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) late in 1952. Several important shifts within the party bureaucracy, which are routinely attributed to de-Stalinization by scholars, actually occurred in the last months of Stalin’s life, rather than after his death.²⁶

On 27 July, North Korea and China signed an armistice with the United States in Panmunjom. Three days later, Yi Sung-yop and eleven other high-ranking officials of South Korean origin were officially indicted for “high treason.” Their Soviet-type show trial took place on 3–6 August, and resulted in the execution of Yi Sung-yop, Cho Il-myong, Yim Hwa, Sol Chong-sik, and six other defendants.²⁷ The number of those who had been expelled from the KWP for “factional activity” did not exceed four hundred, Pak Yong-bin assured the Hungarian diplomats, for most “factionalists” were allowed to remain in the

party. Deprived of their positions, they would be subjected to “re-education” until they mended their ways.²⁸

While it is possible that Kim Il Sung, anxious not to repeat the mistake he had made in 1950–1951, did refrain from the mass expulsion of party members, Pak Yong-bin probably understated the severity of the purge. This much is certain: The dictatorship’s repressive measures spared neither the central nor the local party organs. In Hoeryong county, a Hungarian report written on 30 April states, several party organizations were forced to admit that as many as 30 percent of their newly affiliated members had joined the party “solely with the aim of doing damage within it.” The regime also criticized the party committees of, for example, Musan, Wonsan, and Ch’ongjin.²⁹ Throughout 1953, the KDP and the CYFP were subjected to purges, partly because a number of their members had gone over to the United States and South Korean forces in the Korean War.³⁰

The intelligentsia was hit particularly hard by the purge. As Scalapino and Lee point out, persons of South Korean origin constituted a very substantial part of the intellectual elite of the DPRK.³¹ Yim Hwa, previously vice chair of the Writers’ Union, and Sol Chong-sik, the chief DPRK interpreter at the 1951 armistice talks, were persons of broad-based knowledge and North Korea’s best-known poets. For instance, Yim Hwa read the works of numerous foreign authors, including the poems of the Hungarian poet Petőfi, in Japanese, Russian, and English translation, while Sol Chong-sik translated Shakespeare into Korean.

Composer Kim Sung-nam had also lived in the southern part of the country until 1948. Once considerably influenced by Bartók’s music, he passed for one of the country’s greatest living composers, but this did not prevent the KWP leadership from declaring him a “factionalist.” The same happened to Yi Kyong-p’al, a talented singer with the North Korean Opera. A Hungarian diplomat named Papp, although he did not question the veracity of the political charges that the leadership brought against Yi, disagreed with the regime’s propaganda that depicted the latter as a third-rate singer. “In my opinion, he was a first-rate singer,” Papp declared. The purge had become so extensive, he wrote on 11 March, that the center of the Writers’ Union essentially ceased to operate. “Of the writers we know, no one save Comrades Han Sol-ya and Sol Chong-sik has remained in the Writers’ Union,” he pointed out.³²

At the First Congress of Writers and Artists, held on 26–27 September, Han Sol-ya and a few other participants attacked the former secretary of the Writers’ Union, a writer named Yi T’ae-jun, accusing him of having been a protégé of Yim Hwa. Having been subjected to similar condemnation as early as spring 1951, Yi once again practiced a modicum of self-criticism, which his oppo-

nents found insufficient. In 1953, however, he got off with the “temporary suspension” of his WU membership, and friends who had deserted him were allowed to remain in the WU.

Interestingly enough, the congress also led to the further emergence of North Korean cultural nationalism (a process already reinforced by wartime patriotic propaganda³³). Han Sol-ya accused Kim Sung-nam of having neglected the traditions of classical Korean music and promoted the West European style instead. Koreans were bound to study classical Korean art, and the artists should paint pictures about the heroes of the Korean War in classical style, a painter named So Nam declared. The director of the Museum of Pyongyang, he went on, had neglected traditional Korean art, and therefore collecting classical art treasures should be a priority. Actually, in the second half of 1953 the regime did publish a significant number of classical literary works, such as the *Tale of Ch'unhyang*, the *Tale of Shim Ch'ong*, poetry and prose anthologies, and a collection of ancient proverbs.³⁴

As a Hungarian diplomat put it, “the masses did not understand” why Yi Sung-yop and the other Southern leaders had been arrested. Having concluded that the previous party meetings failed to produce the required effect on the population, on 4 June the CC resolved to launch a forty-day campaign in order to convince the population of the guilt of the accused. The regime’s propaganda kept stressing that the purge was not directed exclusively against southerners. It pointed out that Hong Myong-hui, another southern politician, had remained deputy premier after the downfall of Pak Hon-yong. One may add that the purge’s victims also included non-southerners, such as “domestic” communists of northern origin. For instance, Chu Yong-ha and Chang Si-u belonged to the latter group. Anxious to portray Kim as a benevolent ruler, Pak Yong-bin informed the Hungarians that Chu Yong-ha, having been demoted to the head of a small poultry farm, began to mend his ways, whereupon Kim Il Sung appointed him a professor of the Pedagogical Institute.³⁵

Such claims rang quite hollow, for the biased nature of the 1952–1953 replacements was all too obvious. In fact, the communists of South Korean origin had received unfair treatment in the DPRK as early as the first year of the Korean War, which reveals that their liquidation did not result solely from their (real or alleged) opposition to the armistice. “With the exception of known leaders, South Korean party members are treated here as non-members,” the Hungarian chargé d’affaires wrote in May 1951. “They must ask again for their admission as if they were new members. With references, and so on. Even if the person in question was a registered guerrilla.”³⁶ Many South Koreans, having moved to the North, were given jobs not comparable to their former positions. For example, certain college graduates had to work as translators.³⁷

Moreover, North and South Korean communist writers fiercely quarreled over the issue of standard language. While the first group intended to base standard Korean on the Pyongyang dialect, the second favored the Seoul dialect. This debate had become so embittered, the Hungarian diplomats noted, that Southern writers were most unwilling to accept any novel written by a Northern author as a literary work, and vice versa.³⁸

The purge of the Southern group constituted an important milestone in the development of the North Korean regime. This was the first occasion when Kim Il Sung eliminated a whole faction of the leadership, destroying it once and for all. Worse still, the second-class status of Southerners became a permanent phenomenon. On 13 May 1959, the dictator told a Hungarian delegation that there were approximately 100,000 Southerners in the DPRK. "At present they receive [re-]education," Kim added.³⁹ In 1964, persons of South Korean origin, similarly to former merchants and collaborationists, still belonged to social categories that the regime considered "unreliable."⁴⁰ Had the South Korean communist movement survived the repressive policies of Syngman Rhee, Kim Il Sung may have treated its leaders in a more flexible way so as to facilitate national unification, but after its eventual failure he seems to have concluded that the Southern faction had lost its *raison d'être*.

Significantly, the North Vietnamese leadership, which could count on a powerful communist movement in South Vietnam, pursued a markedly different policy in the post-1954 era. Those South Vietnamese party members who had moved to the North received, by and large, preferential treatment in the DRV. Many Southerners received high positions, even if they lacked the necessary qualifications. In June 1957, as many as 70 percent of the cadres employed in the Foreign Ministry were of Southern origin. If the Hungarian diplomats pointed out that many offices were overstaffed because of the generous treatment of Southerners, the cadres merely replied that "these are southern comrades, we must take care of them."⁴¹

In addition to the purge of Southerners, another wave of repression occurred in the DPRK in the wake of the armistice. Namely, the regime launched a campaign in order to hunt down the intelligence agents and anti-communist guerrillas that the U.S. and South Korean forces had dropped behind North Korean lines during the war. On 28 July, Interior Minister Pang Hak-se issued a decree that promised amnesty to those who would give themselves up but also offered rewards (from 3 to 30,000 won) to persons who assisted the authorities in the apprehension of spies. To provide "patriotic" citizens with additional economic incentives, the denouncer received the personal property and real estate of the denounee. Since the regime had established unpaid self-defense and security forces in every village, this decree must have led to numerous abuses of au-

thority. At the Sixth Plenum of the KWP CC, even Kim Il Sung found it necessary to criticize such abuses. In the “recently liberated” areas, he stated, “local organs” often seized the property of persons whose relatives had fled to South Korea.

In the summer, the SPA issued a decree that seems to have been patterned after the Soviet amnesty of March 1953. Amnesty was provided for certain categories of prisoners, including people who had received sentences of up to three years’ imprisonment or forced labor, but did not apply to political prisoners. Cadres alleged that those spies and guerrillas who had given themselves up received jobs from the authorities, a claim that is difficult to verify. In any case, such persons remained under constant surveillance, regardless of whether they obtained employment. In 1953–1954, the police often checked the identity of travelers. Registration on arrival was strict, and arrests were fairly frequent.⁴² Due to the combination of amnesty promises and repressive acts (a method also used by the North Vietnamese authorities⁴³), the dictatorship managed to re-establish its control over the entire population.

“Havoc Beyond Description”

The Sixth Plenum sanctioned the previous purges by expelling Chu Yong-ha, Chang Si-u, Pak Hon-yong, Kwon O-jik, and others from the party. The leadership also discussed questions of economic reconstruction.⁴⁴ As Kim Il Sung put it, “the havoc wrought by the war upon our national economy is beyond description.”⁴⁵ He had every reason to say that. The postwar economic recovery required almost superhuman efforts from North Korean citizens, and it also required large-scale foreign assistance.

North Korea undeniably suffered extremely serious human and material losses during the Korean War. The population declined from 9.622 million in 1949 to 8.491 million in 1953, of which males dropped from 4.782 million to 3.982 million.⁴⁶ A very high percentage of men between eighteen to twenty-six years of age had died in the war, the Hungarian diplomats reported. This indicates, first and foremost, serious military losses. These men’s places were filled by women and young people. The number of women workers rose by 320 percent between December 1951 and June 1954. In mid-1954, women constituted some 46, 28, and 23 percent of workers in light, chemical, and heavy industry, respectively, while in the agricultural sector, women accounted for over 70 percent of the labor force. “It is a common scene that a young girl of 12–13 is operating sophisticated machines,” a Hungarian diplomat observed. Most ticket inspectors were fourteen- to fifteen-year-old girls.

Young people were compelled to interrupt their studies, and suffered a lot

from health problems. The occurrence of tuberculosis among teenagers was four to five times higher in the DPRK than in Hungary. During the war, neither the North Korean nor the foreign hospitals treated civilian patients. At the end of 1953, a KPA physician estimated the number of tuberculosis-infected soldiers, most of whom had been demobilized, at 250,000. That data included only the serious cases. "In the last six months of the war, more people died of tuberculosis than on the front," another Korean physician lamented. At the time, the KPA had only five tuberculosis specialists. Of the foreign medical institutions, only the Hungarian hospital could effectively treat such patients.⁴⁷

While men fit for military service suffered disproportionately great losses, the civilian population also experienced terrible hardship during the Korean War. As early as 1950, American air raids claimed a high number of lives, and by 1952 practically every town in North Korea had been entirely leveled. For instance, in Ch'ongjin, an important industrial center, some 95 percent of the factories, 90 percent of buildings, 35 percent of bridges, and 25 percent of water pipes were destroyed. In 1950, the occupying U.S. and South Korean forces often demolished entire villages so as to smoke out a few snipers, and at the end of the year they razed many settlements, such as Hungnam, along their withdrawal route. In March 1952, the Soviet ambassador told the Hungarian envoy extraordinary Pásztor that famine conditions existed in certain areas of North Korea. "The Korean comrades do not want to speak about that," he added. In May, Pak Hon-yong eventually told the "fraternal" diplomats that some 27 percent of the rural population was starving. Food shipments from the USSR and China temporarily alleviated the situation, but in May 1953, American air attacks destroyed the DPRK's main irrigation dams. Since these raids occurred less than three months before the armistice, their military necessity was rather questionable, and in any case they hit the civilian population particularly hard.⁴⁸

People tried to survive the bombings by moving into caves and tunnels, and creating underground offices, factories, schools, and hospitals. Even certain high-ranking leaders, such as Pak Ch'ang-ok, fell seriously ill because of the constant need to remain underground, and had to spend some time in the Soviet Union in order to get adequate medical treatment.⁴⁹ In 1953, North Korea's per capita income was only 55 percent of the 1949 figure, whereas in South Korea, the decline in real per capita GNP did not exceed 10 percent.⁵⁰ In mid-1952, the U.S. Air Force bombed the DPRK's power generation facilities, whereupon industrial production came to a near-complete standstill. Metallurgical and chemical industry output decreased by 90 and 78 percent, respectively.⁵¹ At the time of the armistice, no more than 30 percent of locomotives, 35 percent of freight cars, 10 percent of railroad cars, and 15 percent of ships

were still operable.⁵² The rather indiscriminate nature of American air raids may be gauged from the fact that by July 1951, approximately four-fifths of primary and secondary schools had been destroyed.⁵³

Economic reconstruction therefore proved an uphill task. In the last year of the war, only a few branches of mining and light industry remained capable of substantial production. For instance, pedal sewing machines were not affected by the absence of electricity, and lead mines also kept producing during the war in order to satisfy both domestic and Soviet demand.⁵⁴ In the first months of 1954, modern industrial production was still confined to the manufacturing of components, and did not involve whole plants, only certain sections. While some machines that had been transported to China survived the war, the destruction of factory buildings considerably hindered resumption of factory production. In turn, the shortage of building materials made the reconstruction of factories very difficult. Brickyards were also destroyed by the bombings, and when they finally began to operate again, their products were of poor quality. Thus, the cement sent by the PRC facilitated the rebuilding of towns to a great extent.⁵⁵

Taking advantage of its extensive control over the society, the regime mobilized the entire population for reconstruction work. Economic reconstruction was given preference to almost every other consideration, even military service.⁵⁶ KPA troops played an important role in reconstruction. For instance, at the end of 1953, Hungarian diplomats visited a metallurgical plant in Songnim, which was being rebuilt by 4,500 civilian workers and 3,000 soldiers.⁵⁷ Peasants had to assist factory workers in rubble clearance, and officials were involved in street repairs. In Pyongyang, the repair of Stalin Avenue was done by the employees of 150 offices who worked there in the evenings. In Wonsan, every worker had to perform three hours of “voluntary work” per day.⁵⁸ Schools and community centers were rebuilt by Youth League members and schoolchildren.⁵⁹

Despite the strenuous efforts of the North Korean population, the rapid reconstruction of the DPRK would not have been possible without the assistance of the “fraternal” countries. As noted before, the outlines of that multinational aid project seem to have been drawn as early as November 1952. On 10–29 September 1953, a DPRK delegation headed by Kim Il Sung visited the Soviet Union in order to ask for economic aid. Moscow canceled over half of Pyongyang’s debts, and postponed the repayment of the remaining part. It also undertook to give the DPRK nonrepayable assistance worth 1 billion old rubles. A total of 600,000 rubles were to be given to North Korea in the form of various goods and facilities, while the rest was to be spent on planning, equipping, and reconstruction of plants and factories. The latter included the

metallurgical plants in Ch'ongjin, Songjin, and Namp'o, chemical works in Hungnam, a hydroelectric power plant in Sup'ung, a cement factory in Madong, and a textile factory in Pyongyang. Moscow also undertook the electrification of the Yangdok-Ch'ongsong railroad line, reconstruction of the Namp'o harbor, construction of the central Radio Pyongyang broadcast facility, and ran a hospital in the capital. North Korea was to receive fishing boats, buses, agricultural machinery, chemical fertilizer, scientific literature, and consumer goods from the USSR.⁶⁰

The Soviet technical experts working in the country received the same salaries from Pyongyang as did their Korean counterparts. Since the advisers would have found such compensation insufficient, they were also paid by the Soviet Embassy. In the last analysis, they earned four times as much as their North Korean colleagues. They received yuan as well, which enabled them to purchase goods in a shop reserved for foreigners.⁶¹

On 12–27 November, Kim Il Sung visited the PRC, and signed a similar agreement with the Chinese government. Beijing canceled the North Korean debt that had accumulated since the beginning of the Korean War, and undertook to provide Pyongyang with aid worth 8 trillion old yuan (800 million new yuan). In 1954, the DPRK received 3 trillion yuan, of which material and financial assistance constituted 76.14 and 23.86 percent, respectively. China assisted North Korea in the reconstruction of certain plants, including a glass factory in Namp'o and an ironware factory.

People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops stationed in the country helped labor-poor North Korea. For example, Chinese soldiers were primarily responsible for reconstructing the Foreign Ministry and the National Bank buildings, and repairing the railroads, bridges, and roads ruined by the war. In 1954, a total of 295 Chinese engineers and technical experts went to the DPRK in order to assist the North Koreans in the planning and building of factories, while as many as 2,963 Korean workers traveled to China for a year in order to gain practical experiences. Beijing sent Pyongyang various machines, fishing boats, locomotives, freight cars, building materials, and cotton. In the mid-1950s, China was the most important source of consumer goods for the DPRK. KPA soldiers wore Chinese-made clothing, and Chinese-made suits, tracksuits, shirts, socks, underclothes, sneakers, aluminum utensils, and toiletries were widely available in the North Korean shops and department stores.⁶²

At the end of 1953, the North Korean government signed similar aid agreements with the East European countries and Mongolia. Czechoslovakia undertook to construct, among others, machine-tool factories in Huich'on and Unsan, and an automobile factory in Tokch'on. East Germany was to build a printing press, a diesel engine factory, and a blast furnace.⁶³ The Polish gov-

ernment committed itself to establishing locomotive and freight-car repair stations in Wonsan and Pyongyang, and assisted the DPRK in the mechanization and electrification of three mines. Hungary was to construct a machine-tool factory, a scale-making factory, and a paint factory in Kusong, Pyongyang, and Pongun, respectively. Romania undertook to give North Korea aid worth 65 million rubles in the form of a cement factory, a pharmaceutical works, fishing boats, and machines. Bulgaria's commitment for 1954–1955 amounted to 20 million rubles. Sofia was to send the DPRK textiles and plate glass, and equip a brickyard and a lumberyard. In the 1954–1956 period, the East European countries gave the DPRK a total of 1.134 billion rubles. Even the Mongolian government, which itself badly needed foreign economic aid, had to contribute to the reconstruction of North Korea. Lacking everything but livestock, Ulan Bator sent 10,000 horses to Pyongyang.⁶⁴

Disagreements over Aid

The aid obtained from “fraternal” countries enabled the North Korean regime to improve living standards to a certain extent. Government decree 191, issued on 28 November, earmarked 100 million won in 1954 for providing the population of Kangwon province, which had suffered particularly serious damages in the Korean War, with draft animals, textiles, shoes, cotton, coal, and utensils at low prices. In 1954, Kangwon was to be given more medicines than the other provinces.⁶⁵ Government decree 200, issued on 18 December and patterned after the resolutions of the September 1953 CPSU CC plenum, canceled the pre-1953 debts of the peasantry, and abolished compulsory meat deliveries. Until that time, all peasants, including those who lacked animals, had been forced to deliver meat to the state. Consequently, the decree proved quite popular.⁶⁶

This does not mean that Kim Il Sung was willing to make really substantive economic concessions. At the Sixth Plenum of the KWP CC, North Korean leaders argued a lot with each other about the economic and social policy that the regime should pursue. A few leaders (their identity remained unknown to the Hungarian diplomats) proposed the abolition of rationing and a wage increase, while others preferred the increase of rations to a wage hike. A third group demanded a price cut on the grounds that the expected growth of industrial and agricultural production would provide consumers with a sufficient amount of goods, and thus inflation was not likely. The question of technical norms also became a bone of contention. The CC eventually resolved to keep rationing, which it wanted to offset by cutting the price of some consumer goods. The price of cotton cloth and shoes decreased from 17 percent

to 20 percent and from 54 percent to 57 percent, respectively. Following discussions with trade union leaders, early in 1954 the government introduced higher technical norms in order to raise productivity. Emphasizing its intention to compensate workers for this measure, on 1 April the regime increased wages by 25 percent on average. Nonetheless, in August 1954 prices were still too high relative to wages.⁶⁷

It is quite probable that the aforesaid measures were at least partially inspired by the “New Courses” that the East European regimes had introduced in mid-1953. Czechoslovakia and East Germany experienced large-scale worker protests in May and June, which demonstrated the importance of raising living standards, and thus reinforced the Kremlin’s commitment to a reform policy. For instance, in the wake of the East German uprising, the Soviet government dropped its reparations demand and handed back to the GDR thirty-three factories. In October, the East German regime cut the price of food products, a measure facilitated by a Soviet decision to deliver 231 million rubles of food and raw materials on credit in 1953.⁶⁸ During 1953, most East European dictatorships made some efforts to re-examine the economic policies that they had hitherto pursued.

Of course, the problems they had to cope with were quite different from North Korean ones. The woes of the East European economies resulted, by and large, from excessive emphasis on industrialization, a difficulty that was by no means typical of war-torn North Korea. Still, the East European “New Courses” seem to have produced at least a limited effect on the policies of the KWP leadership. North Korean trade union leaders told Csuka that the Sixth Plenum had taken “the experiences of the people’s democracies” into account when it resolved to improve the workers’ living conditions. Early in 1954, North Korean planners discussed the targets of the DPRK’s next economic plan with some forty Soviet colleagues, and they also “considered the mistakes which had been made in this field in the people’s democracies.”⁶⁹

In other respects, however, Soviet and North Korean economic conceptions and objectives proved quite different. The USSR and the East European countries were interested first and foremost in importing nonferrous metals, such as gold, silver, copper, lead, cobalt, zinc, cadmium, and wolfram, from the DPRK. North Korea’s three-year plan (1954–1956), passed by the SPA on 20–23 April 1954, indeed laid great emphasis on the development of the mining sector so as to increase exports.⁷⁰ Ores constituted an estimated 81.8 percent of North Korean exports in 1953. Three years later, ores accounted for 54.2 percent, while iron, steel, and nonferrous metals, 30.9 percent of exports.⁷¹ As described previously, the bulk of Soviet aid went to the chemical industry, nonferrous metallurgical works, power generation, and iron smelting. “The

Russian assistance did not emphasize the rehabilitation and construction of machine-building factories,” Okonogi notes.⁷² The more developed East European countries assisted North Korea in constructing a few machine works.

This means that the economic aid that the USSR gave to Pyongyang considerably differed from the assistance given to the PRC. Chinese industrialization received greater support from Moscow. For instance, as early as 1951, the Soviets favored the development of the machine tool industry in China.⁷³ In 1952, Stalin assured Zhou Enlai that the USSR would help the PRC in the construction of airplane, tank, and car factories.⁷⁴ It is noteworthy that no factories of this type were to be built by the Soviets in the DPRK. In May 1953, the Soviet and Chinese governments concluded an agreement that Moscow “would provide technology and complete sets of equipment to build up to 91 projects pertinent to China’s defense industry.”⁷⁵ While the advantages enjoyed by China were partly offset by the fact that the Kremlin did not cancel Beijing’s debt in the same way as it remitted Pyongyang’s, the Soviets still seem to have shown preference for the PRC over the DPRK. This may have irritated Kim Il Sung, since North Korea inherited a relatively developed industry from Japanese rule, and thus the establishment of new industries would not have been as difficult there as in North Vietnam, Mongolia, and Albania.

Soviet leaders, both during and after Stalin, adopted a rather conservative policy with regard to the industrialization of their aid-dependent allies. Namely, the less industrialized a “fraternal” country was at the time of communist takeover, the less willing the Soviets were to provide sophisticated factories and heavy industry. Due to its already-existent industrial potential, the DPRK actually had a better bargaining position than underdeveloped Albania and Mongolia, where the Soviet-built factories mostly belonged to the category of light industry.⁷⁶ Still, in North Korea, the Soviets largely confined their assistance to the reconstruction of those industries that had been concentrated in the northern part of Japanese-ruled Korea. Their disinterest in the creation of a more diversified industrial structure probably made Kim Il Sung think that the Kremlin intended to keep his country economically dependent on the USSR.

This is not to deny that the nature of Soviet–North Korean economic relations underwent considerable improvement after 1953, mainly because of the destruction that the DPRK endured during the Korean War. Significantly, in 1949, Stalin told Kim Il Sung that the USSR took 1 percent of the credit given to countries that still had not recovered from WW II, and 2 percent of the credit received by countries that had already recovered from the war.⁷⁷ Fortunately for Pyongyang, Stalin’s successors went a step further. Henceforth, the DPRK—similar to Albania and North Vietnam—received not just credit and loans but also aid, and the Soviet Union did not necessarily insist on mutuality while

making economic deals with Pyongyang. The fact that the Kremlin assumed an obligation to such a small country greatly boosted the self-confidence of the KWP leaders, who felt that North Korea was entitled to preferential treatment.

While Kim Il Sung could not control the Soviet aid program to any significant extent, he more or less managed to get his own way while negotiating with the East European regimes. By and large, it was the North Koreans, rather than the East Europeans, who selected the plants to be built. Pyongyang's aid donors often had their doubts about the rationality of these decisions, but they usually played along. Commenting that the North Koreans had asked Hungary for a scale-making factory, in July 1955 the Hungarian ambassador told his Soviet counterpart that "they should have something to be weighed first, and scales only after that."⁷⁸ In December 1956, Czechoslovakian Counselor Macuch, while talking to a Hungarian colleague, related "how senselessly industry has been developed in the DPRK. . . . [W]hat is most characteristic of this is that the Hungarians and the Czechoslovaks are building plants of completely similar type and capacity in Kusong and Huich'on, respectively, even though the DPRK's demand for the machines produced there could be abundantly met by just one such factory."⁷⁹ When the Poles prepared to build a plant for the repair of freight cars, the North Koreans asked them to construct a factory large enough to meet the demands of a united Korea. Warsaw, however, finally persuaded them to abandon the idea.⁸⁰

Similarly, the North Korean leadership designated the places where the plants were to be built. On 30 January 1954, a Hungarian named Widder was told by some high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Heavy Industry that the government wanted to construct the new factories in areas far from the coasts. The cadres went on to explain that the industrial centers created by the Japanese in Korea (e.g., Hungnam, Ch'ongjin, and Namp'o) were too close to the sea and too far from the mines. Attacked by air force and naval gunfire, they suffered enormous damage in the Korean War. This is why the KWP leadership decided to construct the new factories in mountainous areas where it was easy to hide the machines in tunnels in event of war.⁸¹ In fact, the plants that Czechoslovakia and Hungary built in Huich'on, Unsan, Tokch'on, and Kusong met these requirements.⁸²

In brief, Pyongyang dealt with the East European countries in a way that considerably differed from the Soviet–North Korean relationship. This bore a resemblance to contemporary Chinese economic policies. In 1955, China did its best to increase her trade with the Soviet Union and the Asian noncommunist countries, but cut back exports to the East European "people's democracies" so as to retain more agricultural products for domestic consumption. She also often imported the goods that she needed from capitalist countries, rather than

from Eastern Europe.⁸³ Another remarkable phenomenon is that in 1953–1957, the geographic distribution of Chinese industry underwent a change similar to the one that occurred in North Korea in the wake of the Korean War. Namely, the CCP leadership concluded that the overconcentration of industry in coastal and northeastern areas was strategically dangerous, and decided to build the new plants close to sources of raw materials.⁸⁴ Actually, Kim Il Sung may have drawn inspiration from Beijing’s economic policies.

As early as August 1953, Kim stressed the importance of developing heavy industry, paying particular attention to capital goods.⁸⁵ During the aforesaid conversation between Widder and Ministry of Heavy Industry officials, the latter also told Hungarian diplomats that Pyongyang sought to prioritize production of machine tools.⁸⁶ In fact, in 1954–1955, as much as 80 percent of industrial investment went to heavy industry. In other words, this branch accounted for 38 percent of total investment. This percentage was almost identical to the one achieved in the East European countries in 1948 to 1952 (or in China in 1953 to 1957), which revealed how strongly North Korean industrialization was influenced by the example of other communist regimes.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to think that Kim Il Sung’s insistence on the development of machine tools resulted solely from a blind imitation of the Stalinist economic model. Under the Japanese, this branch of industry remained quite insignificant, particularly in comparison with the fairly well-developed chemical industry. In 1940, chemicals accounted for only 2.4 percent of total industrial production; 72 percent of Korean chemical output was located in the South. The Japanese failed to construct an agricultural machinery factory, and the equipment used in Korean mines and metallurgical plants was imported from Japan.⁸⁸ Determined to alter the peripheral nature of the economy and create a basis for a defense industry, Kim gave preference to the development of machine building capabilities over investments in metallurgy and mining. Of mining and metallurgy, he favored branches that supplied machine and chemical plants with much-needed raw materials. As early as 1956, Czechoslovakian Counselor Macuch disapprovingly noted that “the Korean leaders are thinking of long-range plans for exporting machines . . . to the Southeast Asian countries in the future.” In his opinion, such an idea was patently unfeasible.

While Kim Il Sung certainly preferred the export of manufactured goods to the selling of raw materials, his main goal was the creation of a self-reliant national economy. In some cases, this priority manifested itself in rather unexpected forms. For instance, the textile industry was hardly the flagship of the Stalinist industrialization model, yet Pyongyang paid great attention to its development on the grounds that in the colonial era, textile factories had been

concentrated in the South.⁸⁹ These autarkic conceptions were at variance with Moscow's proposals. Other phenomena indicated that the relationship between Pyongyang and its aid donors was not as harmonious as official declarations suggested. For instance, the DPRK authorities in charge of allocating building materials usually gave preference to plants constructed entirely by the North Koreans over factories built with the assistance of "fraternal" countries. They seem to have thought that the aid donors should provide the latter projects with building materials as well, the Hungarian diplomats concluded.⁹⁰

Kim Il Sung's interest in the rapid modernization of the DPRK was partly motivated by his desire of overtaking South Korea. While in 1954–1957, the North Korean leadership focused its attention on domestic problems, it also bore the issue of unification in mind. For example, on 23 March 1954, Foreign Minister Nam Il told the Hungarian envoy extraordinary Pásztor that while the Americans helped Seoul to expand the ROK Army, they might withdraw their own troops from South Korea by 1956.⁹¹ This statement seems to have been deduced from the fact that the United States intended to replace a portion of its ground troops with South Korean divisions in order to reduce military expenditures, but it proved too optimistic. A complete U.S. troop withdrawal from the ROK remained out of the question, not only in the mid-1950s, but in the next fifty years as well.⁹²

In fact, the Soviets did not share Pyongyang's optimism. On 10 March, Pásztor met Soviet Ambassador Suzdalev, and they agreed on that with regard to Korea, one could not expect any great result from the coming Geneva conference. Suzdalev stressed that a general referendum and the establishment of an all-Korean National Assembly would be unfavorable to North Korea. Since the population of the ROK was twice that of the DPRK, the bills of the Northern deputies would not be carried by the Southern-dominated legislature. Worse still, Seoul would make attempts to dismantle the northern political and economic system. "I could imagine a solution," Suzdalev said, "that would include the unification of Korea and the establishment of a unified government to be fully entrusted with the guidance of Korea's foreign and domestic policies, but North Korea would exist as a dominion within united Korea, her socialist achievements . . . guaranteed by the Great Powers."⁹³ While Suzdalev's pessimistic assessment of the Korean situation was undoubtedly justified, he failed to explain how one could talk the capitalist great powers into signing an agreement that would guarantee the "socialist achievements" of the same regime that Washington had attempted to topple less than four years ago.

Moscow's distrust of South Korean intentions was shared by Beijing. On 17 May 1954, Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Wu Xiuquan told the Hungarian ambassador to Beijing, András Szobek, that a United Nations-supervised

referendum would “give up North Korea to the Americans.”⁹⁴ This opinion was by no means unfounded. Seoul and Washington did want to take advantage of South Korea’s larger population. Insisting that “representation in the all-Korean legislature shall be proportionate to the population of the whole of Korea,” they denounced the idea of equal representation “a Communist scheme . . . designed to destroy the authority of the government of the ROK and to replace it by a Communist government.” Going a step further, they went on to demand that only the South Korean constitution should remain in force after unification.⁹⁵ In plain English, Seoul required the North Korean leadership to admit its own illegitimacy and step down. Not too surprisingly, this proposal, which was made largely for propaganda purposes, did not elicit a positive reaction from the communist states. Since neither Kim Il Sung nor Syngman Rhee wanted to dismantle his political system for the sake of national unification, and both had every reason to distrust the other; the Geneva talks predictably ended in failure.

In mid-June, Pyongyang issued a mobilization order that applied to all men in the eighteen to twenty-four age group who were neither students nor demobilized persons.⁹⁶ This step was motivated by the gradual withdrawal of Chinese troops from the DPRK (by July, eight of the nineteen PLA armies stationed in North Korea had left the country), as well as Seoul’s military buildup. The Southern buildup, in turn, resulted from the partial withdrawal of American troops from the ROK.⁹⁷ That is, military developments in the two Koreas proved remarkably similar. While both Beijing and Washington wanted to reduce their military presence in the Korean peninsula, the ongoing rivalry between Pyongyang and Seoul prevented their Korean allies from following suit. Still, neither the CCP nor the KWP leaders regarded the situation as particularly critical. In spring 1954, Wu Xiuquan told Szobek that “one should not take Syngman Rhee’s threats seriously, [as] these are the outbursts of an insane man.” Wu went on to say that Rhee was unable to provoke a war without American support, and the United States was obviously unwilling to assist him in such a venture.⁹⁸ On 3 July, Nam Il also told the recently appointed Hungarian ambassador, Pál Szarvas, that he considered a South Korean attack unlikely for the time being.⁹⁹

In the wake of a fratricidal war that profoundly discredited the Northern leadership in Southern eyes and failed to yield any positive result for the DPRK, Pyongyang found it difficult to devise a new unification plan, and its post-1953 tactics toward the South did not necessarily please the Soviets. As early as mid-1954, Szarvas noted that his Soviet colleagues criticized certain North Korean actions that were related to unification policy. For instance, in the summer the war-torn DPRK offered economic aid to the ROK, a proposal

that Suzdalev and Szarvas rightly described as irresponsible. Pyongyang then concluded that it was pointless to make any approach to South Korea, and kept silent for months. While Suzdalev admitted that Rhee's inflexibility constituted a great obstacle, he seems to have disapproved of the passive attitude of the KWP leadership.¹⁰⁰

On September 9, Szarvas was told by Soviet diplomats that the Soviet embassy regarded the data that the North Koreans published about the South Korean situation as unreliable. Since the Soviets subscribed to several Southern newspapers, they were able to verify the information provided by Pyongyang.¹⁰¹ On 11 November, Szarvas met East German Ambassador Richard Fischer, who complained of the uncooperativeness of the North Korean Foreign Ministry. While he provided the latter with a lot of documents on the issue of German unification, the North Koreans failed to give him anything about South Korea and Japan in return.¹⁰²

“They Would Like to Curtail the Activity of the Whole Diplomatic Corps”

These disagreements coincided with the intensification of North Korean efforts aimed at controlling the diplomatic corps. Actually, Pyongyang had been inclined to restrict the activity of the “fraternal” diplomats as early as 1950. In spring 1950, diplomats at the recently established Hungarian legation found the North Korean Foreign Ministry anything but cooperative. “They received every request completely uncomprehendingly, and whenever possible they dragged out their completion until the requests became out of date,” Hungarian envoy Sándor Simics complained. While the Soviet ambassador to Beijing often provided his Hungarian counterpart with confidential information about the Korean War, the secret-sensitive North Korean authorities went so far as to prevent the Hungarians from acquiring photos about wartime events, even though the very same pictures were widely displayed in the capital. On the other hand, in the Stalin era Pyongyang had to make exceptions for the Soviet and Chinese embassies. Having described his difficulties with the Foreign Ministry, Simics was quick to point out that the relationship between the North Koreans and the Soviet embassy was “of an entirely different nature.”¹⁰³

In the mid-1950s, the North Korean regime laid more and more stress on state sovereignty. Following the armistice, the North Korean security organs became entitled to subject PLA soldiers to identity checks.¹⁰⁴ Pyongyang also did its best to keep the “fraternal” embassies at arm's length, and it was less and less willing to make exceptions for the communist great powers. As the East German ambassador remarked on 11 November 1954, “even the Soviet

Embassy's work is not as smooth here as in the other people's democracies."¹⁰⁵ Hungarian Ambassador Szarvas summed up the situation that he faced in the second half of 1954 in the following words: "They would like to curtail the operation and activity of the whole diplomatic corps and keep its operation under a rather strict control." He went on to expound that

in recent times the F[oreign] M[inistry] sends its representative, who participates in the conversation from beginning to end, to each meeting. . . . They frequently keep delaying meetings and certain programs for weeks instead of organizing them. The ones which are more important for us are arranged only after a long time, while the less important ones are organized rather quickly. As a rule [the Foreign Ministry] wants to ensure that we do not maintain any personal contacts with the state organs of greater importance but . . . submit questions, to which they reply weeks later, not infrequently months later, in writing and, of course, in Korean.¹⁰⁶

In fall 1954, the Foreign Ministry began to replace the embassies' Korean employees very frequently so as to prevent them from becoming loyal to their foreign employers. On 21 October, Szarvas discussed this problem with Suzdalev, who told him that "one may raise the issue of . . . the Korean employees in the Foreign M[inistry], but in any case they will reply that the replacement of the employees occurred for political reasons."¹⁰⁷ The authorities knew well that the embassies were neither willing nor able to verify the unspecified charges that the Foreign Ministry's Cadre Department brought against the dismissed employees.

Pyongyang also reinforced its sovereignty by downplaying the interparty aspects of its relationship with other communist regimes. "It is customary in Korea that they speak little about the party in the presence of foreigners," Szarvas reported on 6 December.¹⁰⁸ As noted before, such secret mongering had been particularly intense during the 1952–1953 party purge. In those months, the Foreign Ministry systematically hampered Hungarian diplomats' communication with the Academy of Sciences and meeting the officials of ministries and mass organizations. "I daresay that the isolation of the Legation is greater than in the West, those who would like to visit us are subjected to an identity check and taken to task," Csuka complained in a report written on 22 December 1953.¹⁰⁹

It is worth comparing these North Korean practices with the methods of other communist regimes. They certainly bore a resemblance to the situation that Milovan Djilas found in Stalin's USSR in 1948. The Yugoslav delegation that he headed had to contact every institution through the medium of the

Soviet Foreign Ministry or the CPSU CC.¹¹⁰ The Communist ambassadors accredited to the USSR rarely received confidential information from the Soviet government. At a reception held on 1 May 1955, Polish Ambassador Lewiński bitingly remarked that whenever he wanted to get information about Soviet internal politics, he had to go to Warsaw. Thereupon, Kaganovich promised to keep the “fraternal” ambassadors informed of what was happening in the Soviet Union.¹¹¹

Beijing also held the diplomatic corps on a short leash. On 8 April 1952, Hungarian Ambassador Emánuel Safrankó reported that the communist embassies, with the exception of the Soviet embassy, did not get off-the-record information from the Chinese authorities. He noted, “One cannot inquire even about the data of the budget or the plan targets.”¹¹² Due to protests by the “fraternal” embassies, in spring 1956 the CCP leadership began to provide them with confidential information, but the ambassadors were still rarely received by high-ranking Foreign Ministry officials, such as deputy ministers and assistant undersecretaries. A meeting with Zhou Enlai passed for a particularly rare occurrence.¹¹³

By way of contrast, it should be pointed out that the North Vietnamese regime treated the diplomatic corps in a much different way. While the East European embassies were not entitled to inquire about Hanoi’s military expenditures,¹¹⁴ confidential political information was frequently available for them. For instance, on 25 November 1955, Deputy Premier Nguyen Duy Trinh provided the Hungarians with highly classified data about the number of recently expelled party members and the social composition of the VWP membership.¹¹⁵ The Hungarian embassy found the Vietnamese cadres extremely helpful, talkative, and sociable.¹¹⁶ High-ranking North Vietnamese officials often paid informal visits to the embassy so as to discuss various issues.¹¹⁷ In my opinion, this striking difference between North Korean and North Vietnamese behavior was, at least partly, rooted in the fact that the DRV’s sovereignty had not been violated by another communist state. Consequently, Hanoi, unlike Pyongyang, had relatively little reason to distrust the “fraternal” diplomats.

While the DRV authorities may have placed less emphasis on protocol than their East European comrades, an East German attaché, Glückauf rightly emphasized that the relationship between the DPRK Foreign Ministry and the diplomatic corps was not as good “as it should be between people’s democracies.”¹¹⁸ Of the East European regimes, it was probably only the Albanian dictatorship that treated the “fraternal” diplomats in a way comparable to North Korean practices. While in 1949 the Hungarians described the Albanian cadres as quite helpful, they also noted that it was not possible to establish contacts

with officials without the mediation of the Foreign Ministry's Protocol Department. As early as 1950, the embassy reported that Tirana "distrusted" the "fraternal" diplomats, and in 1952–1956 it complained of the behavior of the Albanian authorities with increasing frequency.¹¹⁹

Whenever the "fraternal" embassies sent a note to the Albanian Foreign Ministry, they had to wait for weeks or even months for a reply. The Diplomatic Corps Supply Office demanded disproportionately high sums for its services, and arbitrarily constrained the activity of the embassies' Albanian employees.¹²⁰ On 1 January 1956, Tirana tripled the rent of the buildings used by the diplomatic corps, even though its diplomats in Beijing or East Berlin were not required to pay any rent whatsoever.¹²¹ Some of these actions seem to have reflected Hoxha's dissatisfaction with the Soviet Union's new foreign policy. Actually, the Albanian dictator had good reason to loathe the measures taken by Stalin's successors. Soviet aid to Albania fell by about 45 percent in 1954, and Moscow began to make overtures to Tirana's main enemy, Yugoslavia.¹²²

The uncooperative attitude of the North Korean authorities may have been related not only to Pyongyang's wish to impress upon the "fraternal" countries the reality of the DPRK's sovereignty, but also to Kim Il Sung's dislike for Soviet and East European de-Stalinization. "The Korean comrades—I mean the comrades in the party—are a bit afraid of maintaining relations with the members of the foreign diplomatic corps," Hungarian Ambassador Szarvas wrote on 18 December 1954.

They are afraid and reserved. This is also noticeable on the occasion of receptions. . . . [T]he leaders of the Korean Workers' Party show a certain reluctance to adopt the experiences of the parties of the fraternal countries. I think these problems would crop up in the course of such a conversation. In my view, they would like to avoid responding to the problems, and for this reason they prefer not to maintain relations, although in my judgement, the time has already come to adopt a different point of view in a few questions, particularly in the issue of the methods of the party leadership. What I have in mind is primarily the issue of personality cult and . . . the methods of agitation and education. In my opinion, by now, one year after the armistice, the situation has become ripe for making changes at least on these issues, similarly to the other fraternal countries.¹²³

As early as mid-1953, Kim became aware of that Soviet de-Stalinization might undermine the authority of the local communist leaders. In June, the Hungarian

dictator Rákosi, having been subjected to severe criticism by the Kremlin, had to yield the premiership to Imre Nagy, a committed reformer. Although he still remained first secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party, his demotion seems to have made Pyongyang nervous.¹²⁴ In any case, Kim Il Sung did not follow the example of his East European colleagues who had to pay lip service to the principle of "collective leadership." "In one respect I cannot see any change," an executive of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry pointed out in January 1954. "This is the *personality cult*" (emphasis in original). The cult of Kim Il Sung, he went on, was increasing, rather than decreasing.¹²⁵

In 1953–1954, East European "little Stalins" who had held several posts were compelled to renounce one of their positions. While Chervenkov and Gheorghiu-Dej, the Bulgarian and Romanian dictators, decided to retain the premiership, Hoxha and the Polish leader Bierut kept the post of first secretary. Interestingly enough, the Mongolian leadership also underwent such changes after Stalin's death. In 1954, Tsedenbal was replaced as first secretary but he continued as premier.¹²⁶ In marked contrast to these developments, Kim Il Sung failed to relinquish either the post of CC chair or that of premier. Thus, in this crucial respect the DPRK clearly diverged from the East European pattern.

This is not to deny that certain characteristics of the North Korean political system still had more in common with Eastern Europe than with China and North Vietnam. Apart from Kim Il Sung, high-ranking leaders of the North Korean party apparatus, such as Pak Kum-ch'ol (a vice chair of the CC in 1956), Yi Hyo-sun (head of the CC Cadre Department), Yim Hae (chair of the Central Control Commission), and Han Sang-du (head of the Organizational Department), did not hold comparable state positions simultaneously. In contrast, CCP and VWP leaders usually occupied important posts both in the party and state apparatus. "This differs from the division of labor used in the Soviet Union," the Hungarian chargé d'affaires to Beijing noted in April 1955. "Comrade Mao Zedong also highlighted that difference in a conversation he had with Comrade Szobek last year."¹²⁷

Measures aimed at maintaining Kim Il Sung's one-man rule and keeping the Soviets at arm's length ran parallel with Pyongyang's efforts to speed up the pace of economic reconstruction. This combination was expected, since the dictator regarded both his undisputed authority and his autarkic economic policy as important guarantees of North Korean political independence. On 26 August 1954, three North Korean trade union leaders gave the Hungarian ambassador an inkling of Kim's ambitions by telling him that the government intended to fulfill the three-year plan in two and a half years.¹²⁸

While such ambitious goals were typical of North Korean economic planning throughout the DPRK's existence, in the mid-1950s Kim had a particularly

good reason to resuscitate the country's economy as soon as possible. Soviet and Chinese aid was to come to an end in 1956–1957, that is, before North Korean production could have substituted for it. This might result in economic recession in 1957, a worried Hungarian diplomat named László Keresztes pointed out. He went on to predict, quite correctly, that Pyongyang would eventually ask for credit in order to fill the gap.¹²⁹ Replacing aid by imports alone would not have been possible without a dramatic improvement of North Korean export performance, and this was unlikely to occur in the near future. On 6 August 1954, the minister of foreign trade told Szarvas that due to wartime destruction, North Korean exports would remain quite insignificant until the end of the three-year plan. As long as the factories remained idle, the DPRK could sell little more than ores, and even ore exports were hindered by various factors. Because of high transportation costs, it was uneconomical to export ores to faraway countries like Hungary, and in any case North Korean ore concentrators had also been destroyed in the war.¹³⁰

Despite his understandable motives, the excessive emphasis that Kim laid on the reactivation of industrial production was eventually a drawback to economic development. First, the regime's obsession with the reconstruction of factories led to the neglect of infrastructure (a mistake routinely made by Stalinist planners in Eastern Europe and elsewhere). For instance, the three-year plan did not include the construction of paved roads, no matter how often the trucks and buses broke down on the dirt roads.¹³¹ Nor did Kim consider the development of power generation as important as that of manufacturing. This disinterest was somewhat excusable, since in 1954 electric current was in abundance in the DPRK, and it seemed that one had nothing to be afraid of a possible shortage of electricity.¹³² However, in the long run the insufficient attention the dictator paid to power generation would seriously hinder the growth of manufacturing as well.

Worse still, the country lacked the skilled labor necessary for such rapid industrialization. For instance, of the 7,500 persons employed at the Songnim metallurgical plant in 1953, only 300 were skilled workers. Of course, the DPRK was still better provided with qualified local personnel than Albania, whose most important industrial center, Kucove, had no Albanian engineers or technicians in 1950. Nonetheless, the supply of technical intelligentsia could by no means be regarded as adequate. The transfer of "skilled cadres" from chemical factories to heavy industry failed to solve this problem, and the training of new technicians did not keep pace with the growth of the manufacturing sector.¹³³

Had the government waited until North Koreans learned the necessary technical expertise, results would have been more satisfactory. Hungarian professors

highlighted the talent and extraordinary diligence of their Korean students, virtues that were fairly typical of Chinese and North Vietnamese students as well.¹³⁴ Soviet technical experts assisting the North Koreans in the building of a meat-processing plant in Pyongyang held their Soviet-trained Korean colleagues in high regard for their inventive proposals. Unfortunately, this plant also reflected miscalculations that were characteristic of North Korean economic planning. Since animal husbandry was anything but significant in the DPRK, the plant's capacity proved disproportionately large.¹³⁵

Capital accumulation for reconstruction and modernization constituted another serious challenge, since the economic aid provided by the "fraternal" countries covered only a part of Pyongyang's expenses, and postwar North Korean income levels were depressingly low. To cope with this problem, the KWP leaders resorted to methods that were neither popular nor particularly original and imaginative. Namely, industrialization was to be financed, at least partly, by the exploitation of the rural sector, which in turn "necessitated" collectivization.¹³⁶ No longer hindered by military and political considerations, in August 1953, Kim Il Sung announced the beginning of agricultural collectivization.¹³⁷ Due to the regime's new rural policies, a serious conflict between the state and the peasantry was bound to occur in the near future.

Tension was not absent among the top leaders either. In Okonogi's opinion, certain KWP leaders had their doubts about the feasibility of the autarkic model proposed by Kim Il Sung, and they attempted to raise their voice against his policies.¹³⁸ In light of the debates that occurred at the CC plenum held in August 1953 (and in 1955–1956), this interpretation seems correct. The KWP leaders most critical of Kim's actions were probably Minister of Finance Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, Pak Ch'ang-ok (chair of the State Planning Commission), and Minister of Light Industry Pak Ui-wan. Significantly, all of them controlled institutions that were directly affected by the dictator's economic policies. Similar to Kim Il and Chong Il-yong, each was appointed deputy premier at a CC plenum held in March 1954. Pak Yong-bin and Kim Ch'ang-man, a Soviet and a Yan'an Korean, respectively, became members of the Political Committee at the same plenum.¹³⁹

While these prestigious positions possibly emboldened Kim's critics to challenge his authority, they also exposed them to danger. The more influential an opponent became, the more necessary it was to get rid of him, Kim Il Sung professed. Since the growing influence of his rivals was not accompanied by any weakening of his authority, Kim Il Sung could easily strike back if he felt that it was necessary to give them a lesson. In case of conflict, he could also take advantage of the fact that the gains of his potential opponents were at least

partly offset by the simultaneous advancement of several Kim loyalists, most notably Kim Il, Chong Il-yong, and Kim Ch'ang-man.

In sum, Kim Il Sung's autarkic economic policy placed a heavy burden on the society and made a Soviet–North Korean clash quite likely, yet it could not be as successful as the dictator hoped. On the contrary, the more Kim insisted on the acceleration of economic growth, the more difficult it became to attain his objectives. While his dissatisfaction with Soviet economic priorities was quite understandable, the strategy he proposed was hardly a better alternative. Actually, some of his colleagues did not remain unaware of the problematic aspects of Kim's conception. The increasing tension among KWP leaders foreshadowed new intraparty conflicts, and Pyongyang's hostility toward the diplomatic corps did not bode well either.

3. Crisis and Confrontation

On 30 July 1954, Soviet Counselor Filatov assured Hungarian diplomats Keresztes and Csuka that the DPRK would certainly fulfill its three-year plan, which he described as “absolutely realistic.”¹ Within half a year, however, the policies of the KWP leadership plunged the country into a serious food crisis that would result in intense intraparty conflicts and a major confrontation between Kim Il Sung and at least one of the communist great powers. While some consequences of these events (e.g., Kim’s famous “*chuch’e* speech” of 28 December 1955) were covered in the secondary literature long ago, the fact that the dictatorship’s domestic, foreign, economic, and cultural policies were closely interrelated has largely remained hidden.

“It Is Impossible to Get Rice in the Villages”

Due to various political and military considerations, the North Korean regime did not launch a collectivization drive in the first seven years of its existence. In mid-1953, the KWP leaders eventually decided to do so, but until October 1954, they pursued a relatively cautious rural policy. In April 1954, the total number of agricultural cooperatives stood at 800, and in September it still did not exceed 1,000. Shortly afterward, government decree 133 exempted North Hamgyong, a province badly hit by natural disasters, from compulsory deliveries for 1954, and promised to provide it with aid. A commission headed by Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik was set up so as to improve living conditions in the stricken region by distributing 65,000 metric tons of rice to the peasants as well as wadded clothes to those who sought work in industry.²

The November plenum of the KWP CC brought a sudden change in Pyongyang’s agricultural policies, which may have been connected with the simultaneous dismissal of Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik from the post of finance minister.³ The party leadership resolved to speed up collectivization on the grounds that the

1954 harvest had been good enough to render such a rapid development possible. Kim Il boastfully declared that 3 million metric tons of grain had been harvested, in accordance with the 1954 plan. This was far from true, however, and the consequences of speeded-up collectivization and forced grain deliveries would soon make themselves felt. As early as January 1955, a campaign was launched to “persuade” industrial workers to renounce one daily ration card per month in favor of the areas where food shortages were particularly serious. By spring, rice would completely disappear from the free market and the villages.⁴

How could this have happened? First of all, the productivity of North Korean agriculture remained very low in the mid-1950s. Agricultural techniques were quite primitive. For instance, peasants used wooden plows or spades for plowing. Due to the scarcity and high price of draft animals (most individual peasants could not afford to buy a cow, as it cost some 70,000 to 80,000 won), the plows were often pulled by the peasants themselves. “It is a quite common scene that 6–8 women are dragging the plow in the knee-deep water of the rice stubble,” a Hungarian diplomat noted. Hoeing was particularly slow and back-breaking work with the short-handled Korean implements, and weeding was done by hand. These conditions made North Korean agriculture extremely labor intensive, and thus the rural labor shortage created by the Korean War and by the regime’s ambitious postwar urban reconstruction and industrialization projects hit farmers very hard. Approximately 70 percent to 80 percent of the agricultural workforce was composed of women and children.⁵

Adverse weather compounded these problems in 1954. Uneven distribution of rainfall is typical of the North Korean climate, and in the northernmost provinces average annual rainfall rarely exceeds 500 mm.⁶ In summer 1954, the rainy season was shorter and colder than usual, and sunny weather was rare in the autumn. As a consequence, the rice crop suffered particularly serious damage. In the northern part of the DPRK, frequently the rice crop did not ripen at all, while elsewhere it ripened almost three weeks later than usual. In North Hamgyong, the harvest was so poor that peasants lacked even the seed grain necessary for the next planting. In these areas, as much as 70 percent to 100 percent of the crop fell victim to the vagaries of weather. Fortunately, the southwestern provinces, which constituted the country’s “rice basket,” were not hit as hard as the northern, eastern, and central regions.⁷

The regime was certainly aware of the gravity of the situation. The measures that Pyongyang took on behalf of North Hamgyong in October showed that at least some KWP leaders made attempts to alleviate the peasantry’s plight. However, the failure of the 1954 harvest inspired other reactions as well. Kim Il Sung’s urban-first economic strategy heavily relied on agricultural taxes and

compulsory grain deliveries, and in the dictator's mind, a decline in the food-supply of the urban population was more serious than a rural food crisis. Since the peasants produced less rice than expected, a larger percentage of the crop was to be squeezed out of them in order not to significantly reduce urban rations. As Soviet Counselor A. M. Petrov said on 12 April 1955,

On the basis of the embellished and false reports, the crop was estimated at 3 million metric tons. . . . In effect, . . . the crop had been just 2.3 million metric tons. Nevertheless, it is possible that this figure is not correct either. As a consequence, in many places they took as much as 50 percent of the poor crop, instead of the 23–27 percent tax in kind enacted by law, from the peasantry by brute force. Thus the peasantry was left with barely any grain reserve. Moreover, plan targets for compulsory deliveries, set on the basis of the high estimates, were also exaggerated.⁸

The poor harvest also had an immediate effect on the regime's policies concerning private commerce. Government decree 21, issued on 21 October, prohibited private grain trade so as to stamp out "speculation."⁹ Commenting on that decree, on 30 October high-ranking officials of the Directorate for Grain Procurement openly told a Hungarian diplomat named Keresztes that since the 1954 harvest had been poorer than the previous one, "this resolution plays a serious role in the food-supply of the urban population."¹⁰

Not too surprisingly, the dictatorship's new policies failed to solve the crisis. On the contrary, they aggravated it. Around that time a daily rice ration, based on a price of 5 won per kilogram, was 500 to 800 grams for a state employee, and 300 grams for each member of his family. Thus, rations alone would not have been sufficient to feed the urban population, but before the crisis the price of rice had not exceeded 40 won per kilogram in state shops, and private traders also sold it for 40 to 50 won. By and large, these prices were not unaffordably high for urban consumers, and the supply of rice more or less met their needs.

What Kim Il Sung achieved with his tougher grain policy was that both the supply of rice and the purchasing power of urban citizens underwent a rapid and considerable decline in the winter of 1954–1955. This decrease resulted from various factors. For one thing, the regime, anxious to guarantee rationing, decided to curtail the sale of rice in state shops. Combined with the suppression of private grain trade, this step created a food shortage, which in turn led to a price increase on the black market. Since in late February 1955 a kilogram of rice cost as much as 400 won on the black market, rice had become increasingly unavailable and unaffordable for the average worker, who earned

only 1,000 to 1,500 won per month.¹¹ As if this had not been bad enough, forced collectivization further aggravated the food shortages. By the end of 1954, the total number of type II and type III cooperatives had surpassed 9,000—an enormous increase since October. These coops included more than one-fifth of all peasant households. Early in 1955, the juggernaut of collectivization still rolled on, and the further the state's tentacles reached, the more peasants lost their interest in production.¹²

As early as January 1955, rice started to disappear from state shops and the free market,¹³ and by the spring the situation became really grave. “It is impossible to get rice in the villages,” Keresztes reported on 10 May 1955. Conditions were worst, as expected, in North Hamgyong. A substantial number of people (particularly women and the aged) felt compelled to leave the province and head for the south in search of food. There were many cases of people literally starving to death on the way. Between early April and mid-May, about twenty dying or dead persons were taken to the Hungarian-run hospital in Sariwon, where the autopsies diagnosed death from starvation. While most of the victims were people from the hardest-hit northern region, they also included a few Sariwon residents, which indicated that the famine did not spare the southwestern province of North Hwanghae either. Villagers had to gather grass and wild plants to substitute for grain.¹⁴ Even around the capital, children and adults alike busily gathered buds and leaves on Moran Hill.¹⁵

Needless to say, such plants could not make up for the missing grain. On the contrary, a lot of people were taken to the Polish hospital in Hamhung with symptoms of poisoning caused by the consumption of grass.¹⁶ Unable to provide food for their customers, many small restaurants closed down. The number of beggars, most of whom were children, increased rapidly, and so did the incidence of larceny and robbery. The food crisis affected the overwhelming majority of the population in some way or another, but large families and people not employed in the state sector (e.g., street vendors) suffered even more than others. State employees' family members received a ration of only 300 grams of rice per day, which was far from adequate for an adult. Since most could not afford to buy additional food on the black market, the breadwinners had to share their own rations.¹⁷

In the light of the severity of the 1955 food crisis, it is quite peculiar that scholars have paid so little attention to it. Standard works like Nam's *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, Lee's *The Korean Workers' Party*, Okonogi's “North Korean Communism,” and Suh's *Kim Il Sung* do not even make mention of it, while Scalapino and Lee cover these events in the following few sentences: “Serious food shortages continued through 1954 and 1955, a fact not admitted by the government until the end of 1956. . . . [F]or the average citizen,

living conditions were extremely bad; there were serious food shortages, while most other necessities were inadequate in amount and very poor in quality.”¹⁸ The quoted description fits almost any communist country in the mid-1950s, but upon comparison of the DPRK and China, the particular gravity of the North Korean situation becomes more evident.

In autumn 1953, the CCP leaders also faced a grain crisis because of a poor summer harvest, and their first reaction to the problem did not differ much from that of the North Korean dictatorship. Namely, they accelerated the pace of collectivization, and launched a campaign to procure more grain at state-set prices. As a consequence, several areas were hit by famine, and peasant riots became quite widespread. By January 1955, the Chinese leadership had realized the seriousness of the situation, and decided to slacken the pace of collectivization in order to create incentives for the peasantry to produce.¹⁹ Thus, the course of events was remarkably similar in the two countries. I may even go so far as to suggest that the resolutions adopted at the November 1954 KWP CC plenum drew inspiration from the policies pursued by the CCP in 1953–1954.

Still, the Chinese grain crisis did not affect urban consumers to the same extent as in the DPRK. In Chinese cities, the system of nonrationed food supply continued to function, and thus food prices were incomparably lower than in North Korea. For instance, on 1 October 1954, a kilogram of rice cost 5,600 yuan in Beijing. Since a worker earned as much as 380,000 to 700,000 yuan per month, this price was not intolerably high for most of the urban population.²⁰

How to explain this difference? First and foremost, China’s grain output had by 1952 reached the peaks of the pre-1937 years, and then it stagnated, rather than declined, in 1953 and 1954.²¹ In contrast, North Korea’s 1953 grain output was barely 76 percent of the 1949 level (corn output had decreased by 40 percent),²² and a further considerable decline took place in 1954. Thus, the agricultural sector of war-torn North Korea proved simply unable to bear the burden the regime placed on it, whereas the Chinese government managed to squeeze enough grain out of the peasantry to meet the demands of the urban population.

Second, compulsory deliveries and agricultural taxes may have been lower in China than in the DPRK. Officially, agricultural taxes constituted some 18.2 to 18.7 percent, and 23 percent to 27 percent of the average crop in the PRC and North Korea, respectively.²³ Although in 1954 the Chinese authorities also severely curtailed the activity of private merchants, at the same time they created commercial contacts between areas far from each other, while private trade had often been of a more local nature.²⁴ In sum, in the early and mid-1950s, Chinese urban consumers were in a better situation than their North Korean

counterparts. Certain members of the KWP leadership, particularly the Yan'an Koreans, were possibly aware of that contrast, and if they were, this may have made them even more critical of Kim Il Sung's economic policies.

Clashes at the CC Plenum

It is not known whether the slackening pace of Chinese collectivization in the first months of 1955 produced any effect on North Korean policies. Most probably, it was the gravity of the North Korean situation, rather than the Chinese example, that convinced the KWP leaders of the necessity of reconsidering the decisions made last November. They finally made up their minds to carry out some "corrections," but the process of re-examination proved slow and painful.

On 12 February, the government issued a decree that introduced a fixed tax in kind for coop members instead of the previous system of taxation that took a certain percentage of the crop. Since an increase in production would not lead to a similar increase in taxation, the change provided certain incentives for coop members. For individual peasants, however, the old system of taxation remained in force, indicating the regime's intention to press on with collectivization.²⁵ Government decree 24, issued on 5 March, once more prohibited private grain trade, with rather negative results. The price of rice kept rising, and it soon reached 400 to 460 won per kilogram on the black market. As was its custom, the KWP leadership resorted to repressive measures in order to cope with that problem. In Pyongyang, two people were publicly executed for "speculation." This action was unlikely to improve either living standards or public sentiment.²⁶ Fortunately, the regime took more constructive steps as well. Having purchased grain from the Soviet Union and China, it halted compulsory deliveries, gave back 100,000 metric tons of rice to the peasantry as a loan, and distributed it in the hardest-hit regions. Still, this amount of grain was insufficient to alleviate the plight of the rural population.²⁷

Interestingly enough, hard-line policies toward individual peasants and "speculators" did not necessarily coincide with similar measures in other spheres. Namely, conditions in cultural life underwent a certain improvement early in 1955. In January, the regime's control over painters loosened a bit. Individual initiatives became more frequent than before, and many artists returned to the traditional Korean style of painting.²⁸ In February, *Novaia Korea* wrote an essay expressing appreciation of painter Ch'a Cha-do, an outstanding representative of the "old school."²⁹

On 16 February, the Central Committee of the Federation of Trade Unions held its fourth plenum. The plenum pointed out that the trade unions had paid insufficient attention to workers' everyday problems, and subordinated the

issue of living standards to that of production. As high-ranking trade union officials told Hungarian diplomats, “they received serious criticism from the workers at the plenum.” Anxious to demonstrate its commitment to the raising of living standards, the FTU CC introduced paid vacation and terminated a few restrictive wartime regulations. Once again, the “corrections” were accompanied by punitive actions. Of the three deputy chairmen of the FTU leadership, two lost their positions, possibly because the regime needed scapegoats on to whom it could shift responsibility.³⁰

To sum up, the beneficiaries of the regime’s early “corrections” were mostly intellectuals, state employees, and cooperative farmers, that is, social strata who had already enjoyed a relatively privileged position. In contrast, private entrepreneurs and individual peasants, whom the food crisis hit particularly hard, received harsh treatment, rather than assistance, from the government.

On 1–4 April, the KWP CC held a plenum that several scholars consider a turning point in the policies of the Kim Il Sung regime. Scalapino and Lee state that Kim, having launched an attack on the “Soviet and Yenan factions” at the plenum, decided to reconsider his agricultural policies.³¹ This interpretation, although it roughly corresponds to the facts, does not tell the whole story. True, the plenum did reveal that the 1954 harvest had actually been a poor one. The leadership accused the “bureaucrats” of falsifying the data. The CC resolved to increase investments in the rural sector, and scaled down the agricultural targets for 1955. Behind closed doors, the KWP leaders went so far as to admit that the overwhelming majority of the population was dissatisfied with the economic situation.³²

It is important to point out, however, that the leader held responsible for the grain crisis was Kim Il, one of Kim Il Sung’s staunchest supporters. Both Kim Il Sung and Pak Ch’ang-ok criticized him for the overoptimistic report he had made at the November CC plenum, and he would keep a low profile for at least two months. Pak Ch’ang-ok’s main speech dealt with the problem of economic crimes, foreshadowing a mass campaign aimed at persuading “errant” workers to confess their crimes and omissions. The plenum also purged several high-ranking political and military leaders: Pak Il-u (an old foe of Kim Il Sung), General Pang Ho-san (then chair of the Military Academy), and an unnamed CC member of South Korean origin.³³ Since both Pak Il-u and Pang Ho-san belonged to the Yan’an faction, and no high-ranking Soviet Korean lost his position that time, the April plenum cannot simply be depicted as a confrontation between Kim Il Sung’s group and the “foreign” factions. Pak Ch’ang-ok’s active role at the plenum and Kim Il’s temporary eclipse also refute this interpretation. Thus, it is more likely that Kim Il Sung made use of the rivalry

that existed between the Soviet and Yan'an groups (a factor emphasized by Lankov³⁴).

The speeches that Kim Il Sung made on 1 April were carefully analyzed by Chong-sik Lee. While the first speech dealt with class education, the second called for the elimination of "bureaucratism" in order to forge a bond between the party and the people: "Many of the high-level personnel were conceited and performed their work in a formalistic way or just skimmed on it, sticking to their own subjective views." Kim emphasized that "the entire party should study the theory and principles of Marxism-Leninism *by linking them with the specific realities of Korea*" (emphasis in the original), and criticized those party members who mechanically copied the policies "of other countries."³⁵ Scalapino and Lee explain that manifestation of the dictator's "new" nationalism in the following manner: "He had survived the war and its aftermath; he had overcome key rivals within the Party. He could now begin to assert his own authority."³⁶

While this is undoubtedly true, it is worth putting the speeches in question into the context of the 1955 economic crisis. As noted previously, the leadership blamed the "bureaucracy" for the food shortages, and Kim's second speech was essentially motivated by the desire to find scapegoats. Regarding the first speech, it is noticeable that Kim Il Sung made it at a time when the North Korean leadership had to swallow its pride and appeal to Moscow and Beijing for emergency aid. Between 6 April and 11, grain shipments began to arrive from China and the Soviet Union. The PRC sent 15,000 metric tons of grain in the first half of that month.³⁷

Most probably, the dictator played on Korean nationalism in order to conceal the fact that he had been compelled to beat a temporary retreat. His economic policies had gone wrong, and the DPRK became more dependent on Soviet and Chinese goodwill than ever. Such a setback could have undermined his authority, reinforced the influence of his rivals, and weakened his bargaining position vis-à-vis Moscow and Beijing. By the purge of Pak Il-u and Pang Ho-san, Kim Il Sung showed to everyone that he had events firmly under control. Appeals to nationalism, he hoped, would offset the loss of prestige that the regime had suffered as a consequence of its economic blunders and its dependency on emergency grain shipments.

Since North Korean agricultural policies proved less successful than contemporary Soviet or Chinese ones, Kim Il Sung's domestic and foreign critics could have made, or actually made, comparisons unfavorable to the DPRK, proposing more flexible methods on the basis of foreign experiences. He was determined to prevent any such development. Significantly, the provincial and

city party committees as well as the leaders of mass organizations began to discuss resolutions on class education and bureaucratism as early as the second half of April. In contrast, the reports and discussions of the plenum, which revealed both the gravity of the economic situation and the leadership's responsibility, were kept from rank-and-file party members.³⁸

In any case, one can hardly underestimate the importance of these manifestations of Korean nationalism. They actually preceded, not followed, comparable Chinese policies—a fact hitherto overlooked by scholars. While early in 1955 traditional Korean painting made a temporary reappearance in the DPRK, the (similarly temporary) “rehabilitation” of traditional Chinese painting would take place in the PRC as late as the summer of 1956.³⁹ In December 1955, CCP propagandists still characterized the teachings of Confucius as thoroughly reactionary, and it happened only four months later that Chinese leaders, such as the deputy foreign minister, acknowledged his merits.⁴⁰ In other words, it seems that in 1955, China's increasing independence from the USSR played a less decisive role in the emergence of North Korean nationalism than one may assume.

“The Personality Cult Is a Primary Factor in Every Mistake”

While Kim Il Sung managed to preserve his authority, the North Korean population had less reason to be satisfied with the results of the April plenum. Despite the leadership's new initiatives, the economic situation failed to improve. On the contrary, the food crisis worsened in the second half of April. As if this had not been bad enough, the government launched an all-out attack on private commerce. The taxes the authorities imposed on small merchants, street vendors, and craftsmen were so intolerably high that many of them closed their shops. Before these measures, private shops had many more customers than state shops. Considering that the majority of the population could not afford the goods sold in the private shops (e.g., textiles of Chinese, Soviet, and Japanese origin, Chinese-made toiletries, and Soviet-made wristwatches and cameras), the fact that they were still much more popular than state shops tells a lot about the inefficiency of the government's trade network.⁴¹

Not too surprisingly, the campaign against private merchants only made things worse. As Nam points out, contemporary Chinese policies proved more flexible. In his opinion, the Yan'an faction “suggested paying compensation to those merchants who voluntarily joined the cooperatives.”⁴² This interpretation seems to square with the facts, for on occasion the economic measures the DPRK authorities applied to the country's Chinese minority were different from the ones they used with regard to Koreans. For instance, by mid-1955, all

Korean restaurants in Pyongyang had been taken over by the state, but local Chinese were still allowed to run private restaurants.⁴³

In the meantime, the economic situation had become so grave that even the notoriously secret-mongering KWP leadership felt compelled to admit the existence of difficulties. On 26 April, *Nodong Sinmun* published an editorial that, for the first time, mentioned the food crisis. Apart from this admission, the article's stance was by no means apologetic or self-critical. On the contrary, its author essentially shifted the responsibility onto the starving population itself by warning readers to be sparing with food and instructing them to gather bark and grass. For some KWP leaders, even this half-hearted admission must have been too bold, since half an hour after publication, the paper was withdrawn from circulation.⁴⁴ Press control, however, could not solve the country's economic problems, nor could it keep them from Pyongyang's increasingly critical aid donors. By this time, the Soviets had lost their patience, and they decided to intervene.

Soviet and East European diplomats became aware of the unfavorable side of Kim Il Sung's economic policy as early as late 1954. On 22 October, a Hungarian diplomat named Keresztes reported that prohibition of the private grain trade reduced the peasantry's interest in production,⁴⁵ and on 23 November, Ioan Tatu, the Romanian ambassador, questioned the rationality of rapid collectivization. Such a policy, he thought, might alienate the South Korean peasantry and petty bourgeoisie from the DPRK.⁴⁶ In a report written on 24 February 1955, Keresztes highlighted the government's responsibility for the country's economic woes, and described how the North Korean press covered up the food crisis.⁴⁷ Since the pre-1953 reports of the Hungarian legation rarely, if ever, expressed disagreement with North Korean domestic policies, the critical tone of these documents is revealing, not only about the gravity of the DPRK's problems but also about the beneficial effect that de-Stalinization had produced on the thinking of Hungarian diplomats.

It seems that the critical views of the East European diplomats were partly shared by Kim Il Sung's domestic rivals, and on occasion the latter actually tried to raise such issues in the presence of "fraternal" diplomats. On 21 March, Hungarian Ambassador Szarvas had Deputy Premier Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, Minister of Labor Kim Won-bong, and other North Korean officials for dinner. Ch'oe, the sole guest who was talkative during the dinner, asked Szarvas whether he considered the pace of North Korean reconstruction too rapid. Since the overwhelming majority of the KWP cadres with whom the Hungarians had to deal habitually painted the DPRK's economic development in rosy colors, this question was a most unusual one, and in all probability indicated Ch'oe's disagreement with Kim Il Sung's policies. If Ch'oe expected support from the

Hungarian ambassador, he must have found Szarvas' reply quite cautious. Still, both Ch'oe and Szarvas emphasized the problems of the construction materials industry.⁴⁸

This conversation was by no means an isolated case. On 12 April, Soviet Counselor Petrov informed Keresztes about that Soviet diplomats often met "Korean comrades" (i.e., Soviet Koreans) without other North Korean cadres being present. These events confirm that Kim Il Sung's fear of an alliance between his intraparty critics and the "fraternal" diplomats was hardly unfounded. The speeches he made on 1 April were addressed to these people.

In the abovementioned conversation with Keresztes, Petrov did not mince words:

[I]t is a serious error that *Comrade Kim Il Sung is surrounded by bootlickers and careerists* [emphasis in original]. . . . Whatever is said by the leader, they accept it without any dispute. Thus the mistakes are not revealed openly, only in private and belatedly. No one has ever been held responsible for them. *The personality cult has not changed at all, and it is a primary and decisive factor in every mistake* [emphasis in original]. They do not even speak about this question. *In many respects their plans are not realistic but exaggerated* [emphasis in the original]. For instance, the grain crop target for 1955 was 4 million metric tons, which was almost double as much as the 1954 crop had been. They wanted to achieve it without any particular investment. When they were reminded of that, they have gradually lowered the plan target, and now it is 2.7 million, which is more or less realistic.⁴⁹

In May and June 1955, Kim Il Sung and Foreign Minister Nam Il spent substantial time in Moscow, and they must have had some difficult moments during the negotiations with the Soviet leaders. In this period Soviet Ambassador Suzdalev was replaced by Vasily Ivanovich Ivanov, and Szarvas suspected that Moscow had found Suzdalev too sympathetic to the North Korean regime.⁵⁰

The visit began rather inauspiciously for the North Korean delegation. On 1 May, the Soviet leadership had lunch with Kim and Nam Il, as well as all communist ambassadors and chargés d'affaires in the Kremlin palace. In his toast, Khrushchev pointed out that the CPSU and the Soviet government had proven themselves to be able to govern the USSR without Stalin's instructions. Stalin, he went on, had distinguished himself in the struggle against Trotskyites but committed certain errors in his latter years, errors that the new Soviet leadership intended to correct. "We have already released many persons," Khrushchev declared, "and we did even more than that, we reinstated them in positions

comparable to their former jobs. We are carrying on with that.”⁵¹ Thus, Khrushchev’s attack on Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU was not as unexpected for Kim Il Sung as Scalapino and Lee suggest.⁵²

On 29 July, Szarvas paid a visit to the new Soviet ambassador, and Ivanov’s comments on the North Korean situation threw some light on the views of top Soviet leaders. This time, the economic problems of the DPRK were put into an international context:

[T]he DPRK should have devoted very great care to the improvement of the population’s material conditions. The [North and South Korean] populations are equally familiar with the South and North Korean economic situation, since the borders are not hermetically sealed. North Korea should have an attraction for South Korea so as to demonstrate the superiority of the people’s democratic system over the capitalist one.

Much to Szarvas’s surprise, Ivanov also questioned the veracity of the propaganda that depicted South Korea as a living hell. While he did not deny that there were indeed serious social inequalities in South Korea, he also stressed that the ROK “received large quantities of chemical fertilizer and many consumer goods from the USA, which improved the conditions of the population to a certain extent.”⁵³ Both Ivanov and Szarvas criticized North Korea’s over-emphasis on the development of heavy industry.

North Korea badly needed Soviet and Chinese grain shipments, which made it possible for the Kremlin to bring leverage to bear on Pyongyang. In April and May, the DPRK received 45,000 metric tons of grain, and by 6 June, the Soviet Union and the PRC had sent 24,000 metric tons of flour and 130,000 metric tons of agricultural products, respectively. In return, the North Korean leadership had to bite the bullet and cancel some of the measures the Soviets believed were responsible for the economic crisis.

Government decree 58, issued on 21 June, rescinded the decree that banned the private grain trade. From July 1 on, coop members and individual peasants were allowed to market their grain without restriction. As a consequence, urban markets received more grain, vegetables, and fruit than before, and prices began to decrease. By mid-August, the price of rice had dropped to 190 to 200 won per kilogram. Government decree 57, issued on 28 June, increased investments in the agricultural sector. The regime decided to spend an extra 1 billion won on the construction of irrigation systems by the end of 1955, and the production of chemical fertilizer was also to be increased by 25,000 metric tons by 1956. In addition, the decree reduced agricultural taxes, and canceled last year’s debts in kind for poor peasants and the relatives of soldiers.

The regime also permitted small private merchants to resume their activity, a measure welcomed by the Soviet ambassador. In spite of the beneficial effect of these “corrections,” the prices of agricultural products remained rather high for most consumers. For instance, a kilogram of apples cost 160 to 180 won, while the price of pork was as much as 600 won per kilogram. Only employees of the “fraternal” embassies and high-ranking cadres could afford fruit or meat.⁵⁴

The weather in summer 1955 proved more clement than in 1954. Government decree 57 sent demobilized soldiers to the rural sector, and on 4 July, the leadership mobilized most officials for a two-week period of agricultural and reconstruction work. They helped peasants to harvest grain and construct irrigation systems. As Szarvas noted, this time the regime made much more strenuous efforts to overcome the rural labor shortage than the previous year. Assistance was indeed badly needed, since in many places people had to eat grass and leaves as late as mid-June.⁵⁵ Apart from improving the situation of the rural sector, the KWP leaders made a few, largely symbolic, concessions to urban consumers as well. Government decree 66, issued on 20 July, cut the retail prices of some three hundred products (textiles, matches, rubber shoes, stationery, and so on) by 11 percent to 66 percent. Since the decree did not apply to foodstuffs and imported goods, its importance should not be overestimated. After all, imported products comprised a very substantial percentage of available goods. Government decree 71, issued on 13 August, reduced workers’ personal taxes by 30 percent, and the celebration of 15 August was less luxurious than it had been in 1954.⁵⁶

One may assume that Kim Il Sung had finally ceased to oppose de-Stalinization, and introduced a “New Course” comparable to the policies that the East European regimes carried out in the 1953–1956 period. The similarities between his “corrections” and East European economic policy changes seemingly justify such a conclusion, but the developments that took place in the political sphere contradict it. While in East Europe the Soviets managed to undermine the authority of certain Stalinist leaders (e.g., Rákosi) whom they considered to be noncompliant, the North Korean “corrections” were not accompanied by any personnel changes unfavorable to the dictator. On the contrary, on 1 August, Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik was replaced as minister of state control by Yi Hyo-sun, a Kim loyalist.⁵⁷ Thus, the North Korean population could not associate the positive changes with any other leader, and the problems had been blamed on Kim’s opponents. If they felt pressured by Moscow, Gheorghiu-Dej and Hoxha also resorted to such tactics in the mid-1950s.⁵⁸

Nor had the North Korean leadership become particularly compliant. On 29 July, Ivanov told Szarvas that “the mistakes made by the Korean comrades

should be raised in the presence of the top leaders, and in certain issues, the opinion of the whole diplomatic corps should be made known so as to ensure that the [Korean] comrades do not consider these comments as lecturing and ordering but notice the sincere helpfulness that inspired them.” Szarvas noted in his report, “Our attitude will facilitate their [the Soviets’] situation if they take sides or give advice to the Korean comrades.” However, he also made clear that he did not intend to poke his nose into the internal affairs of the DPRK just because the Soviets had asked him to do so. He knew by experience how “sensitive” the North Koreans were.⁵⁹ The very fact that Ivanov found it necessary to ask for Szarvas’s help refutes the claim that in the mid-1950s “the North Korean government . . . displayed all of the manifestations of a true Soviet satellite, an Asian Bulgaria.”⁶⁰ One can hardly imagine the Soviet ambassador to Sofia asking his Hungarian counterpart to assist him in putting pressure on Chervenkov or Zhivkov.

This is not to deny that in this period North Korean foreign policy was at least partly in harmony with Soviet diplomacy.⁶¹ On 19 August, Szarvas reported that the officials of the North Korean Foreign Ministry became more ready to inform the diplomatic corps about issues of foreign policy than it had been the case in 1954. On 25 February, the DPRK expressed its willingness to improve its relations with Japan, a move that coincided with similar Soviet initiatives. From 17 May on, several Japanese delegations arrived in North Korea, and in October Pyongyang signed commercial agreements with a few Japanese firms. From the Japanese perspective, these deals were purely economic ones. Tokyo was certainly interested in the DPRK’s raw materials, but not in political cooperation. In contrast, Kim Il Sung’s aims were more complex. For one thing, the North Koreans badly needed spare parts for the great number of Japanese-made machines they still possessed. In addition, Pyongyang attempted to cultivate a split between Japan and South Korea by making Tokyo less interested in dealing exclusively with the ROK. Needless to say, Seoul did its best to obstruct Japanese–North Korean negotiations.⁶²

The DPRK also took a few steps aimed at demonstrating her commitment to “peaceful coexistence.” For instance, the muster of troops during the celebration of 15 August was not particularly conspicuous, and the jet planes that Pyongyang had recently obtained from the USSR did not participate in it. Following Khrushchev’s visit in Belgrade, North Korean diplomats made some approaches to Yugoslavia. Still, these changes remained quite superficial. A debate between a Hungarian Foreign Ministry official and a North Korean counselor named Mun Chae-su revealed a lot about Pyongyang’s real attitude. On 9 August, Mun flatly told his Hungarian colleague that since the South Korean government kept committing provocative acts against the North, the

DPRK did not see any reason for toning down its anti-American propaganda. Nor did North Korea's "new approach" yield any tangible result with regard to Yugoslavia. In fact, Pyongyang failed to establish any contact with Belgrade throughout the Khrushchev period.⁶³

The extent of North Korean hostility to Yugoslavia becomes even more evident if the fact that both China and North Vietnam followed the Soviet example more closely is taken into consideration. For example, in 1955 the DRV contacted the Yugoslav embassies in Beijing and Moscow. On 29 November, Ho Chi Minh sent a telegram of congratulation to Tito, and in 1957, he had pleasant conversations with the Yugoslav leader in Belgrade.⁶⁴ Significantly, even Hoxha, Tito's arch-enemy, was compelled by the Kremlin to resume diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia at the end of 1953.⁶⁵ This demonstrates quite clearly how unique Kim Il Sung's position was at that time. Pyongyang's unchanging hostility toward Belgrade may have resulted from Tito's behavior during the Korean War. Afraid of a potential Soviet attack on their country, in 1950 the Yugoslavs publicly criticized North Korea for invading the ROK.⁶⁶ Pyongyang neither forgot nor forgave that "sin." In October 1965, Deputy Premier Kim Kwang-hyop told a Hungarian party delegation that "we have no contact with Yugoslavia at all," for "in 1950 they branded us aggressors."⁶⁷

While the North Korean leaders showed little willingness to yield to the Soviets, they did their best to make Moscow more responsive to their claims. In contrast with the Hungarian events of 1953, Kim Il Sung's compliance with Soviet economic demands was not a unilateral concession. The USSR, as mentioned before, equipped the North Korean air force with turboprop bombers. After all, the frequent conflicts along the demilitarized zone were by no means initiated exclusively by the North, and in July 1955, the South Korean military chiefs of staff threatened to attack the DPRK unless the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, which included Czechoslovakian and Polish representatives, was dissolved.⁶⁸ Thus, Moscow supposedly regarded Pyongyang's concern about its security as more or less justified.

In addition to military assistance, on 8 September the USSR and the DPRK concluded an agreement that gave the joint Soviet-Korean airline named Sokav to Pyongyang. The Soviet-Korean sea-transport and oil-refining companies were similarly liquidated in 1955.⁶⁹ These agreements were patterned on the ones the Kremlin had concluded with other "fraternal" countries in the previous year. For instance, in 1954, the Soviets began to dissolve the joint companies in Romania and Bulgaria, and handed over the Lüshun naval base and the Soviet shares in the joint companies in Xinjiang and Manchuria to the PRC.⁷⁰ That is, Kim Il Sung could also benefit from de-Stalinization. Khrushchev's attempts to disassociate himself from Stalin's "big-power chau-

vinism” often increased the autonomy of the local communist leaders, and the more independent-minded dictators, like Kim, did not hesitate to turn the changing conditions to their advantage.

Kim Il Sung Takes the Offensive

As noted before, the economic “corrections” of mid-1955 were not accompanied by any political liberalization. On the contrary, Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik lost the post of minister of state control. This was just the beginning. In September 1955, Kim Il Sung made a new move in order to reinforce his position. Anxious to reward his supporters, he proposed the promotion of Ch’oe Yong-gon, one of the most influential members of the Kapsan faction. This initiative met with stiff resistance from Pak Ch’ang-ok, Pak Yong-bin, and some other Soviet Koreans, who had blocked a similar attempt as early as before the April plenum. The influence of the Soviet faction was also demonstrated by the fact that most of the party leaders who were demoted by Kim in the first half of 1955 belonged to the Yan’an group.

Certain Soviet Koreans, including Pak Ch’ang-ok and Pak Yong-bin, had come under the influence of Soviet de-Stalinization, and they began to criticize the personality cult around Kim Il Sung. Since the dictator ordered the collection of information critical of Pak Ch’ang-ok as early as August,⁷¹ it seems that this time he intended to confront the Soviet faction in order to punish it for the role it may have played in the Soviet intervention in May. In reality, the conflict went beyond the bounds of a factional struggle. It also involved both communist great powers, albeit in a rather indirect way.

On 1 December, several reshufflings took place in the government, but most of these merely replaced one Kim loyalist with another. The worst was yet to come. At a CC plenum held on 2 and 3 December, Yim Hae, chair of the CC Central Control Commission and a follower of Kim Il Sung, launched a bitter attack on Pak Il-u (who had been expelled from the party in April) and Kim Yol, a Soviet Korean CC member. Yim accused Kim Yol of having abused his position as boss of Hwanghae province and neglected the living standards of the local population. He went on to claim that Pak Il-u had been lenient toward “reactionary elements” during the Korean War, criticized the system of agricultural taxation, promoted the interests of the Yan’an group, and—worst of all—castigated the leaders in power. Ingeniously enough, Yim also attempted to depict Pak as an enemy of the Soviet Koreans.

In any case, the charges were carefully prepared. Yim avoided direct confrontation with the external patrons of the accused by stressing that Kim Yol and Pak Il-u, unlike Pak Hon-yong, had not been “spies.” As a matter of fact,

it would have been quite difficult for the Soviets to intervene in Kim Yol's behalf, for he was charged with having raped more than thirty women in Hwanghae alone. To sum up, Kim Il Sung intended to isolate his victims from any potential protector, and he did succeed. Kim Yol was expelled from the party, and the plenum ordered his arrest.⁷²

The plenum also dealt with agricultural issues. While Lankov notes this phenomenon, he does not provide an explanation for it. Actually, it is worth analyzing the plenum's resolution on the further development of the rural sector. It criticized cadres who had "failed to understand that one could not reconstruct agriculture, which had been terribly damaged during the war, without large investments. They neglected agricultural investments, paid little attention to the improvement of the peasantry's living conditions, and . . . on the basis of the exaggerated statistical data of the past, they drew up a production plan that did not correspond to the facts."

The KWP leadership decided to increase agricultural investments by 3.2 billion won at the expense of the development of heavy industry, and the subsequent slowdown in the construction of certain industrial projects showed that they meant business. Agricultural taxes in kind were to be reduced in the three following years by 100,000 metric tons per annum. The resolution condemned the recruitment of industrial labor at the expense of agriculture, and called on cadres to assist individual peasants as well, for the number of the latter "is still high, and it will remain high for a long time." The pace of collectivization had indeed slowed down a bit since the April plenum. At the end of December, the number of cooperatives stood at 12,132 (encompassing 49 percent of all peasant households). In addition, the session the SPA held in December reduced the personal taxes of private merchants.⁷³

These measures were perfectly in line with the policies proposed by the CPSU leadership six months ago, and thus their adoption may seem inconsistent with the attack that Kim Il Sung was about to launch on the Soviet Koreans. However, it is quite probable that the dictator intended (and succeeded) to prevent Soviet criticism of the coming purge by emphasizing his commitment to the principles of the "New Course." Since the economic crisis had provided a good opportunity for the Soviets to meddle in the internal affairs of the DPRK, Kim was determined not to repeat this error. In any case, the government's renewed emphasis on the improvement of living standards was likely to isolate the Soviet Korean victims of Kim's campaign from the population.

At this plenum, and also at an extended session of the CC Presidium that was held on December 27–28, Kim Il Sung openly criticized the most prominent Soviet Koreans, namely, Pak Ch'ang-ok, Pak Yong-bin, Ki Sok-pok, Chon Tong-hyok, and Chong Yul. These "factionalists," the dictator charged, had

thoroughly Sovietized North Korean cultural life, neglected Korean traditions, and adopted a permissive attitude toward “reactionary bourgeois ideology.” “It is not quite clear why literature policy was chosen as a pretext for attacking the Soviet faction,” Lankov notes, pointing out that many of the accused had nothing to do with cultural policy.⁷⁴ Still, it seems that this choice was a rather ingenious one. While the Soviets, as aid donors, could easily bring leverage to bear on the DPRK in the field of economic policy, cultural issues were considered a domestic matter, and thus they may have been less vulnerable to Soviet intervention.

In addition, Kim Il Sung may have used cultural policy as a counterweight to measures taken in other spheres. In 1954, he did his best to have his own way in economic development, and in return he temporarily turned a blind eye to the “Sovietization” of North Korean cultural life. On the basis of their own observations, the Hungarian diplomats emphasized that “in 1954 they [the KWP leaders] inflexibly abandoned the progressive traditions of the past. . . . In the field of art they abandoned the classical Korean tendency, which had serious traditions and immense achievements, and, without any experience, they began to develop the socialist realist tendency.”⁷⁵

In the following year, Kim had to beat a retreat in the field of economic policy, and by way of compensation he may have concentrated on cultural life. As indicated before, the “rehabilitation” of traditional Korean painting began as early as the first months of 1955. An art exhibition that coincided with the December campaign against the Soviet faction was dominated by landscapes that had nothing to do with politics. Conspicuously, only one portrait of Kim Il Sung was exhibited on this occasion. In the last quarter of the year, a collection of classical Korean dramas appeared on the book market.⁷⁶ Since in 1955 Kim Il Sung’s repressive actions against his intraparty opponents were accompanied by the partial reversal of the unpopular cultural policies of 1954, the intellectuals not directly affected by the purges may have sympathized with the dictator’s nationalist campaign. In other words, the economic and cultural measures that Kim Il Sung took in December (and earlier) constituted a “fake de-Stalinization,” which reflected Kim’s intention to deprive his opponents of any domestic or foreign support. In any case, the initial stage of the purge was carefully concealed from the general public.⁷⁷

In January 1956, the lower-level party organizations also became involved in the campaign against the Soviet Koreans, and in mid-February, *Nodong Sinmun* and other newspapers joined the chorus. Still, Kim Il Sung began to tone down the campaign as early as the end of January.⁷⁸ After all, he had already achieved his aim. In December 1955, three Kim loyalists (Ch’oe Yong-gon, Pak Kum-ch’ol, and Yim Hae) were appointed vice chairs to CC Secretary Pak

Chong-ae, and on 25 December, the editor of *Novaia Korea*, an outspoken Soviet Korean, lost his position and party card. On 18 January, the KWP CC expelled Pak Ch'ang-ok and Pak Yong-bin from the Politburo. Pak Yong-bin and Ki Sok-pok lost their seats in the CC, Chong Yul was dismissed from the post of deputy minister of culture and propaganda, and Pak Ch'ang-ok had to resign as the chair of the State Planning Committee.

This time it was the most prominent members of the Soviet faction whom Kim Il Sung attacked, men whose power considerably exceeded the influence that Pak Il-u, Pang Ho-san, and Kim Yol had in 1955. Ironically, they still had to consider themselves lucky, since the punishments they had to endure were actually not the worst of that the dictator was capable of inflicting on his rivals. Namely, on 15–17 December 1955—more than two years after the show trial of Yi Sung-yop and other SKWP leaders—a special court tried Pak Hon-yong and sentenced him to death. His execution made all too clear how ruthless and unforgiving Kim Il Sung could be if he faced any opposition.⁷⁹

These events ran counter to the general trend of East European de-Stalinization. This is not to deny that the East European “little Stalins” were also quite reluctant to soften their “well-tried” repressive methods. For instance, in April 1955, Hoxha promptly sent Jakova and Spahiu, two CC members who dared to criticize him, to an internment camp.⁸⁰ In Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania, former party leaders Patrascanu and Koffler, having been arrested in 1948, were executed as late as April 1954. The last Czechoslovakian show trial took place in November 1954.⁸¹

Nevertheless, in 1954–1955, every East European dictatorship except the Albanian regime had to begin to release political prisoners, a process that sometimes involved the rehabilitation of certain victims. Even hard-line leaders like Dej and Novotny were compelled to follow the Soviet path in this respect.⁸² In Bulgaria, over 10,000 people had been released from the concentration camps by the summer of 1955.⁸³ In September 1955, the Romanian dictatorship pardoned most of those political prisoners who had received sentences of up to 10 years imprisonment⁸⁴—a measure the KWP leadership would not take until August 1960.⁸⁵ Rehabilitation of the unjustly persecuted remained out of the question in North Korea. At the end of 1955, Keresztes noted that “they do not speak about internment camps, but . . . there are several large internment camps in the country.” A high percentage of the prisoners held there were of South Korean origin.⁸⁶ Apart from Albania, only the three Asian communist regimes established after WW II that did not fall into line with the new Soviet idea of rehabilitation.⁸⁷ This hardly confirms statements that depict North Korea as another Bulgaria.

Quite paradoxically, the reports of the Hungarian diplomats usually approved of the 1955 purges. Both the demotion of Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik on 1 August, and the appointment of the three vice chairs in December were interpreted as steps toward collective leadership. Neither the diplomats in Pyongyang nor their superiors in Budapest questioned the veracity of the charges that Kim Il Sung and his henchmen brought against Pak Il-u, Pak Ch'ang-ok, and Pak Hon-yong.⁸⁸ It is less probable that the Soviet diplomats were similarly fooled, but, as Lankov points out, the Soviet Embassy refused the appeals of the Soviet Koreans. Even Petrov, the counselor so critical of Pyongyang's economic blunders, stated that "Soviet Koreans who have committed offenses cannot cover [their faults] by going to the Soviet Union."⁸⁹

This passivity may have resulted from the fact that the Kremlin considered the Soviet Koreans useful informants and allies whenever Soviet and North Korean interests clashed, but did not want to rely on them in periods when Kim Il Sung seemed more or less cooperative. In any case, one of the characteristics of East European de-Stalinization was the gradual replacement of Moscovite dictators by domestic communists. While in 1952 most regimes had been headed by Moscovites like Gottwald, Bierut, Rákosi, and Chervenkov, as early as 1957, every East European country save Ulbricht's GDR was ruled by "domestic" communist leaders. Continued favoritism of "alien" factions, the Kremlin may have thought, would breed nationalist resentment that might destabilize its satellites. Thus, the Soviet Koreans went against the tide, whereas Kim Il Sung, who regarded them as agents of a foreign power unless they supported him wholeheartedly, could take advantage of the situation. De-Stalinization, which the North Korean dictator viewed as a threat to his position, cast suspicion on the reform-oriented members of the Soviet and Yan'an factions, and at the same time it made them more and more vulnerable.

Still, both the Soviets and the Chinese seem to have understood that Kim Il Sung tried to reduce their influence on North Korean policies. Since the dictator chose culture as a pretext for attacking his opponents, their response was also of a cultural character. In the last three months of 1955, simultaneously with the tug-of-war between Kim and the Soviet faction, both the Soviets and the Chinese dramatically stepped up their propaganda in the DPRK. On 30 September, a huge Chinese photography exhibition opened in Pyongyang, followed by an even more impressive Soviet exhibition. In addition, the Chinese organized an art exhibition with as many as 882 works of art in the clubroom of the Ministry of Transport. Lots of new Soviet and Chinese films were shown in the Pyongyang cinemas, and bookshops bulged with Soviet and Chinese books.⁹⁰ Most probably, Moscow and Beijing wished to uphold their prestige

in North Korea without directly confronting Kim Il Sung who, at the moment, appeared quite cooperative in the field of economic policy. If this was really the case, Kim's tactic proved successful.

Chinese reactions to the North Korean economic and political crisis are much harder to uncover than Soviet ones, and thus I was not able to describe them parallel to the analysis of the Soviet intervention of May 1955. The Chinese diplomats accredited to the DPRK never criticized North Korean policies in the presence of their Hungarian colleagues, no matter whether they approved of them or not. To be sure, Beijing was all too aware of the gravity of the food crisis. On 29 June, during a conversation with Soviet and Hungarian diplomats, the first secretary of the Chinese Embassy noted that the food supply situation was very serious.⁹¹ As indicated before, in spring 1955, the PRC sent emergency grain shipments to North Korea. As Pyongyang's other major aid donor, China was presumably as unwilling to throw its money down the drain as was the USSR, and reckless North Korean economic policies could have undermined the aid programs of both countries. Moreover, the purges and demotions of April and August affected, above all, the Yan'an faction. That is, it was not only the Soviet Union whose Korean clients came under fire in 1955. In any case, Kim's nationalist campaign was directed against all types of foreign influence. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that in this period Soviet and Chinese interests in the DPRK did not necessarily clash with each other.

Although Kim Il Sung's tactic of not attacking the Soviet and the Yan'an faction at the same time may have played an important role in his success, in the mid-1950s, he could not play off China against the USSR as easily as he would do in the 1960s. Significantly, the Soviet diplomats who harshly criticized North Korean policies (e.g., Petrov and First Secretary I. S. Biakov) often praised the correctness of Chinese measures.⁹² These commendations were not necessarily motivated by opportunism. The North Korean and Chinese authorities seem to have treated the European diplomats and advisers somewhat differently, and it was the North Koreans whose pride, touchiness, and smoldering nationalism that made any cooperation rather difficult. On 10 October 1955, the East German ambassador, who had previously spent substantial time in the PRC, told a Hungarian diplomat that in the DPRK "the situation was completely different from that in China. . . . [T]he Korean comrades, whatever comes up, say yes to everything, including tasks of which they certainly know that they cannot carry them out. In his opinion, friends could safely speak among themselves about the difficulties and shortcomings that naturally exist after such a destructive war. In his view, China is much ahead [of North Korea] in this respect too, people are much more frank and open there."⁹³

In the last analysis, the following observations are appropriate. First, the

Soviet intervention in North Korea's economic policies refutes the claim that in 1955 "Kim's new nationalism was the product . . . of internal, not international, considerations, namely, his growing concern about the power and the policies of the Soviet and Yenan factions."⁹⁴

Second, these events clearly contradict Okonogi's interpretation of the 1954–1955 period. Okonogi states that "there is no doubt that the fall of Malenkov and the rise of Khrushchev, who placed priority on heavy industry, enhanced Kim's position in the domestic politics of North Korea."⁹⁵ However, Moscow's reaction to the North Korean crisis was rooted in "the specific realities of Korea," and Soviet power struggles played little or no role in it. Biakov made this clear on 29 June 1955. No matter how much he emphasized that "the development of heavy industry has again come to the front" in the USSR, he sharply criticized the economic policies of the North Korean regime.⁹⁶ In the months following Malenkov's downfall, Soviet attitude toward Kim Il Sung's policies became more, rather than less, critical. Nor did the wrangling within the Soviet leadership influence North Korean factional squabbles as directly as Okonogi assumes.

Finally, Soviet meddling in North Korean economic policies in itself does not prove that the DPRK was just "an Asian Bulgaria." After all, in 1953 and 1954, the Kremlin repeatedly intervened in Chinese economic policy, since the Soviet leaders regarded the targets of Beijing's first five-year plan as quite exaggerated. Due to their pressure, the Chinese government indeed scaled down certain industrial targets. The CCP leadership blamed the planning "mistakes" on Minister of Finance Bo Yibo, relieving him of his post in September 1953.⁹⁷

During the Soviet–North Korean confrontation of 1955, the Kremlin was most interested in economic issues. The Soviets presumably understood that, as Petrov put it, "the personality cult . . . is a primary and decisive factor in every mistake," yet they did not force political reforms down Kim's throat—a major difference between the DPRK and Eastern Europe. Whether they would have been able to prevent the 1955 purges or not, they turned a blind eye to them. Such an attitude certainly contributed to the decline of Soviet influence in North Korea. As long as a regime's Politburo and CC were packed by men ready to take sides with Moscow against the local dictator, the Soviets did not find it difficult to topple a leader that they considered noncompliant.⁹⁸ In contrast, a hard-line dictator who enjoyed the support of most Politburo and CC members was a tough nut to crack. Significantly, most of the communist leaders who successfully defied the Kremlin (Tito, Mao, Hoxha, Kim Il Sung, Gheorghiu-Dej, and Le Duan) ruled fairly repressive regimes at the time of their clashes with Moscow.

The loss that the Soviets suffered because of their permissive approach to

Kim's purges appears even greater if the meager nature of economic concessions that the North Korean dictator made to Moscow are taken into consideration. For instance, in 1955 agricultural investments constituted 10.5 percent of all investments. While this proportion did surpass the 6.4 percent the rural sector had received in 1954, it did not indicate a major retreat in the field of industrialization.⁹⁹ Namely, industrial investments had actually increased from 10729 billion won in 1954 to 15.075 billion in 1955, and the extra investments in agricultural development were made mainly at the expense of transport, communication, education, culture, and public facilities.¹⁰⁰ In sum, Kim Il Sung had weathered the storm without a serious setback, and this triumph would help him to survive the Twentieth Congress as well.

4. A Challenge to the Leader

While North Korean leaders had become aware of the gradual liberalization of Soviet and East European policies well before the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, the congress, and particularly Khrushchev's "secret speech," certainly worried Kim Il Sung. He had good reason to be anxious, for his intra-party opponents did attempt to take advantage of the changing international situation, and they even could appeal to Moscow and Beijing for help. The dictator, however, managed to overcome the crisis. While several East European leaders, such as Rákosi and Gerő in Hungary, lost their posts in 1956 due to Soviet interventions or popular uprisings, Kim outsmarted both his foreign and domestic critics. In addition to his personal skills and the control he had over the party and state organs, he could rely on several other factors: the miscalculations of his opponents, the passivity of the North Korean population, and the shock the Hungarian revolution gave to the "Communist camp." His victory reinforced the DPRK's sovereignty vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and China, but prevented North Korean society from enjoying the benefits of de-Stalinization.

Coping with the Twentieth Congress

Early in 1956, Kim Il Sung's campaign against the Soviet Koreans was still in full swing. On 18 January, the KWP CC issued a resolution titled, "On Further Strengthening the Struggle against Reactionary Bourgeois Ideology in Literature and Arts." It harshly condemned the activity of Pak Ch'ang-ok, Pak Yongbin, Ki Sok-pok, Chon Tong-hyok, Chong Yul, and Yi T'ae-jun, and described their chief opponent, Han Sol-ya, as a faithful follower of the party line.¹ On 23–24 January, Han made a speech at an "enthusiasts' conference," celebrating his victory over his Soviet Korean rivals.² Press attacks on certain Soviet

Koreans continued until the first week of March, but their intensity had been decreasing since mid-February. While one should keep in mind that Kim Il Sung had begun to “tone down” the campaign as early as the end of January, it is quite reasonable to claim (as Lankov does) that the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, held in February 14–25, played a role in that the purge came to an “abrupt end.”³ In any case, by that time the dictator had largely achieved his objective. His Soviet Korean rivals were on the defensive, presumably terrified by the execution of Pak Hon-yong, and thus he could afford to halt the campaign.

The KWP delegation to the Twentieth Congress was headed by Ch’oe Yong-gon, since Kim Il Sung decided not to go.⁴ His absence demonstrated once again that in certain respects the DPRK had more in common with China and North Vietnam than with the less independent communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe and Mongolia. Of the East European leaders, even the known opponents of de-Stalinization, like Hoxha, Rákosi, and Gheorghiu-Dej, felt it necessary to participate in the congress. So did Tsedenbal, the head of the Mongolian regime. In contrast, neither Mao nor Ho Chi Minh was present.

While Kim’s absence did not necessarily indicate his dissatisfaction with Soviet de-Stalinization, North Korean reactions to the Twentieth Congress were hardly enthusiastic. At a CC session held on 20 March, Ch’oe Yong-gon informed the leadership about his recent experiences in Moscow. Kim Il Sung also took the floor in the following debate. Significantly, the North Korean press did not publish Kim’s speech, and made only brief references to the one made by Ch’oe. While in early April *Nodong Sinmun* and other papers did carry a few articles that criticized the “personality cult,” these were, without exception, translations of Soviet and Chinese publications. They should be regarded as symbolic gestures aimed at preventing Soviet criticism, rather than the expression of any domestic liberalization. North Korean journalists were not allowed, let alone encouraged, to join the international chorus of “Stalin-bashing.” The North Korean press, with its usual parochialism, summed up the resolutions of the Twentieth Congress in the following words: “capitalism set off the Korean War, which led to the division of the country. The 20th Congress will facilitate the unification of the country.” The concrete measures taken against the “personality cult” proved quite insignificant and superficial. For instance, the last two copies of *Inmin Choson* (an illustrated magazine with a largely foreign readership) were withdrawn from circulation, because they had published several large pictures of Stalin and Kim Il Sung.⁵

The KWP leaders, while paying lip service to Moscow’s new party line, obviously wanted to prevent the North Korean population from getting information about Soviet de-Stalinization. In early April, the provincial party con-

ferences and the various local party organizations discussed the resolutions of the Twentieth Congress and their application to the North Korean situation. These discussions were organized and controlled by party cadres who had much better access to the related documents than rank-and-file members. On some occasions the authorities went so far as to attempt to use the Soviet resolutions for the justification of Pyongyang's hard-line policies. For instance, the party organs of Sariwon emphasized the importance of party loyalty, pointing out that a few months before, several local officials had been publicly tried for "serious moral and economic crimes."

North Korean workers received only scant information about the congress through official channels. Due to strict censorship, reading newspapers did not enable workers to grasp the importance of the events that had recently taken place in Moscow. Enterprise managers acted as if the main message of the Twentieth Congress was that workers should raise their productivity and reduce manufacturing costs. Following the "initiative" of a Hungnam chemical combine, a number of factories "pledged" to fulfill the three-year plan ahead of schedule. These steps were hardly in line with the Kremlin's emphasis on the improvement of living standards.⁶ On the other hand, the party elite and some intellectuals proved quite well-informed. In these circles, the problem of "personality cult" was widely discussed, although the "majority of those involved in these discussions preferred not to express a definite position."⁷ In the light of the recent campaign against the Soviet Koreans, they had good reason to be cautious.

The Third Congress of the KWP, held on 23–29 April, indicated that the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU made Kim Il Sung feel uneasy, but failed to discourage him from proceeding on his own way. On 3 March, Hungarian diplomats reported that the Third Congress would tighten up party rules in order to strengthen party discipline and eradicate "factionalism."⁸ During the congress, the North Korean organizers hermetically isolated the foreign delegates and ambassadors from the domestic participants so as to prevent the former from spreading "subversive" ideas. The Soviet and East European diplomats had expected the congress to deal with the issue of "personality cult," but to no avail. To the chagrin of Soviet Ambassador Ivanov, the leadership stuck to the policy of rapid industrialization and economic autarky, barely laying any emphasis on the raising of living standards. "It is not the development of industry that is objectionable," the Hungarian chargé d'affaires noted, "but the disproportionateness that prevails in it." Since Pyongyang had failed to prospect for new sources of raw materials and open up new mines, the local mining industry could not meet the demand of the rapidly developing processing industries, no matter how rich the DPRK was in raw materials.

To be sure, this criticism was partly motivated by self-interest. For instance, Ivanov stressed how little North Korean leaders had spoken about economic cooperation between the “fraternal” countries. Nevertheless, the critical comments were well-founded enough not to be regarded merely as a manifestation of Soviet and East European selfishness. It is noteworthy that the Hungarian chargé d’affaires welcomed Pyongyang’s efforts to develop chemical industry, metallurgy and certain branches of machine tools, for, as he pointed out, these industries did not lack the necessary bases for development.⁹

The election of a new Politburo and CC at the Third Congress enabled Kim Il Sung to increase the representation of the Kapsan faction in the top leadership. Of the eleven members of the new Politburo (renamed as Standing Committee), only two (Kim Tu-bong and Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik) harbored critical views with regard to Kim Il Sung’s policies. The dictator also managed to more than double the number of former guerrillas in the CC.¹⁰ Still, he was cautious; for instance, Pak Ch’ang-ok, while dropped from fifth position on the CC, still held the seventh position. In May, he was appointed machine-building industry minister.¹¹ As Suh points out, “many Soviet–Koreans still remained in high party posts. . . . Many members of the Yanan group whose revolutionary activities had been ridiculed by Kim in the past were reelected to the Central Committee, and even a few former supporters of Pak Hon-yong, such as Ho Song-t’aek and Pak Mun-gyu, who were criticized by Kim, were reelected to the Central Committee.”¹²

Kim’s apparent moderateness may have resulted from the situation created by the Twentieth Congress, and it revealed his tactical skills. He reinforced his position at the expense of the Soviet and Yan’an groups, yet at the same time he appeared relatively generous. Certain other resolutions of the congress also proved quite pragmatic. For example, the leadership decided to increase the number of scholars and graduates sent to the USSR on post-graduate scholarships. The translation of foreign scientific literature was to be intensified.¹³ These measures, however, did not offset the growing emphasis that Kim Il Sung laid on cultural nationalism.

Following the campaign against the Soviet faction, Pyongyang took numerous steps aimed at the “Koreanization” and “de-Sovietization” of its cultural life. At the end of 1955, the local branches of the Korean Society for International Cultural Exchange—a major vehicle of Soviet propaganda—were closed down. In February 1956, the air time of the Korean-language programs of Radio Moscow was cut by half—a measure probably also motivated by the leadership’s intention to keep the ideas of the Twentieth Congress from the North Korean population. In the spring, the CC “ordered the end of all per-

formances of Soviet plays in Korean theaters,” and the teaching of Russian underwent a noticeable decline.¹⁴

The vacuum thus created was to be filled by Korean culture, not merely by the works of modern North Korean authors but also by carefully selected elements of traditional Korean culture. The Third Congress resolved to publish important historical and geographical works written by classical Korean authors and to pay more attention to archaeological and ethnographic research. This interest in Korea’s cultural heritage was particularly manifest in the speech that Kim Ch’ang-man, then vice chair of the KWPPCC and minister of education, made at the Third Congress. He launched a vitriolic attack on North Korean higher education. History graduates, Kim alleged, were more familiar with the history of ancient Greece than with that of medieval Korea, and some artists preferred West European music to Korean folk songs. Certain people, he claimed, made statements like “I wonder what magnificent literary works the Koreans [could possibly] have?”¹⁵

The education minister certainly referred to Soviet influence, but he was cautious enough to do it indirectly. At that time, it was still quite advisable to mention “ancient Greece” instead of “Russia” or the “USSR.” On the other hand, it would be quite misleading to believe that the nationalism professed by Kim Ch’ang-man and Kim Il Sung was directed solely against Sovietization and Russification. In 1956, only two noncommunist films (an Indian feature film and a Japanese documentary) were shown in the DPRK, and only a very narrow circle of officials and intellectuals could see them. North Korean cinemas, unlike East European ones, did not show “progressive” Italian and French movies. In this respect, Kim Il Sung’s dictatorship outdid even the Hoxha regime, for in 1956, Albanian Labor Party (APL) leaders permitted Albanian moviegoers to watch a few Western feature-length films.¹⁶

One of the more peculiar victims of North Korean cultural xenophobia was Esperanto, an artificial language that had been invented late in the nineteenth century and found adherents in many countries, including China, Japan and Korea. The Korean branch of the Esperantist movement, although it had been closely associated with the interwar Korean nationalist movement, was not allowed to re-emerge in the DPRK. This intolerant North Korean stance stood in a sharp contrast with Hanoi’s more flexible attitude. In 1957, the North Vietnamese Ministry of Education actually launched a campaign to popularize Esperanto. Vietnamese Esperantists were permitted to correspond with Western colleagues, and a DRV youth delegation sent to Moscow was composed entirely of Esperantists. The movement, having been persecuted in the Stalin era, slowly reappeared in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as well.¹⁷ These

various phenomena revealed that Kim Il Sung and Kim Ch'ang-man were hardly interested in European culture. Their Korea-centric cultural policy, while it certainly diminished Soviet influence, also isolated North Korea from Europe as such. Out went the bath water, baby and all.

This is not to deny that Hungarian (and supposedly Soviet) reactions to the process of "Koreanization" sometimes revealed a substantial lack of empathy. In mid-1956, the North Korean Ministry of Health legalized traditional Korean healing practices, such as acupuncture, which had been prohibited in 1945. It also banned autopsies unless the relatives gave their consent, or the Interior Ministry found them necessary. These measures, which showed that the regime had become more tolerant of traditional Korean customs, met with the indignation of the newly appointed Hungarian ambassador, Károly Práth. Ignorant of the healing power of acupuncture, he considered it a barbarous and harmful practice not different from the truly questionable methods of certain Korean shamans. Práth intended to "warn the Korean comrades" against tolerating traditional medicine, but the Czechoslovakian ambassador talked him out of it by pointing out that even the highest-ranking North Korean leaders believed in the curative effect of acupuncture.¹⁸

That episode also demonstrated the limited significance of the reforms that Kim Il Sung was willing to implement in the wake of the Twentieth Congress. The KWP leadership did initiate certain "corrections," but these remained relatively superficial and by no means weakened the regime's hold over the population. For instance, on 15 April, the government cut the prices of textbooks by 20 percent to 50 percent, and on 30 April, it increased rice rations. On 1 June, Pyongyang declared that it would reduce KPA manpower by 80,000 by 31 August. This decision may have been motivated not only by Moscow's emphasis on "peaceful co-existence," but also by the DPRK's serious labor shortage. In the same month, the estate tax was abolished by the Presidium of the SPA.¹⁹

These measures showed that the spirit of the Twentieth Congress did not produce a substantial effect on the domestic and foreign policies of the North Korean regime. While nationalist tendencies did intensify, political liberalization failed to take place. In contrast, the Chinese leaders, having overcome their initial hesitation, were less reluctant to follow Khrushchev's example. While most of their reform initiatives were of a social, economic, or cultural—rather than political—nature, they seem to have been more far-reaching than contemporaneous North Korean "corrections." In any case, the verbal criticism of previous party policies proved bolder and more extensive in the PRC than in the DPRK.

For instance, Mao Zedong's speech on the "Ten Great Relationships," made on 25 April, placed a substantial emphasis on the improvement of the peasants'

living standards. The authorities started to encourage the children of “bourgeois” families to apply for admission to the universities.²⁰ On 6 June, Minister of Education Mao Dun told two Hungarian diplomats that since the earlier campaigns had failed to “re-educate” the “old” intelligentsia, the CCP leaders decided to organize free cultural and scientific debates in order to win the support of these intellectuals.²¹ The government resolved not to increase agricultural taxes in the following few years. Having neglected animal husbandry, orchards, and rural cottage industries in previous years, now it decided to foster their development.²² The first conference of the Shanghai CCP organization, held on 11–26 July, concluded that due to the earlier policies of the local party committee, there was a serious urban housing shortage, and workers’ living standard had declined between 1953 and 1956.²³

A telling example of the changing Chinese political atmosphere was that security precautions aimed at protecting high-ranking cadres were greatly relaxed.²⁴ These changes affected Chinese diplomacy as well, for in June, the PRC adopted a conciliatory attitude toward Taiwan.²⁵ However, the Chinese leaders, unlike their Soviet and East European counterparts, did not release or rehabilitate a significant number of political prisoners. This crucial difference revealed that what Mao had in mind was not a real de-Stalinization. Thus, CCP policies were of a controversial character, which would considerably influence Beijing’s reactions to the North Korean events in 1956–1957.

Despite its unwillingness to initiate any major reform, the KWP leadership did not neglect entirely the issue of living standards. Since foreign aid played a crucial role in North Korean economic reconstruction, it was obvious that improving living standards would also necessitate foreign assistance. Unfortunately, the DPRK had already used up the bulk of Soviet and Chinese aid by the end of 1955. As mentioned earlier, in 1953 Beijing provided 800 million yuan in grants to Pyongyang. In 1954–1955, North Korea received 550 million yuan, and thus it expected to receive only 200 and 50 million yuan in 1956 and 1957, respectively. Moreover, the percentage of consumer goods was to decline rapidly from early 1956 on. Similarly, Soviet and East European aid was expected to be quite insignificant in 1957.²⁶

The KWP leadership, however, concluded that the DPRK would need aid for another three years. Therefore, on 1 June a North Korean government delegation led by Kim Il Sung left for the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Mongolia to request further economic aid. The North Koreans seem to have been aware of the Kremlin’s disapproval of their heavy industry-centered economic policy. Prior to the departure of the delegation, Nam Il told the Romanian ambassador that they would ask for consumer goods (bread, meat, textiles, shoes, and so on) instead of technical assistance.²⁷

This North Korean decision was a wise one, for the Soviet diplomats accredited to the DPRK had made similar proposals as early as 1955. Statements by these diplomats in the following months may throw some light on the opinion of the top CPSU leaders as well. On 17 August 1956, Soviet Counselor Shesterikov bluntly declared that the “Korean comrades,” unwilling to pay heed to Soviet advice, had built many factories of no use. While the Americans invested heavily in the South Korean economy, the northern leaders, Shesterikov said, had paid inadequate attention to the improvement of living standards.²⁸

The fact that Shesterikov (and previously Soviet Ambassador Ivanov) went so far as to make an unfavorable comparison with the South Korean situation revealed how critical the Kremlin was of Kim Il Sung, since Moscow had no reason to praise the implacably anti-communist dictatorship of Syngman Rhee. Shesterikov’s statement also demonstrated that Moscow’s attitude to the DPRK was strongly influenced by the ongoing political, economic, and military competition between the two superpowers. In all probability, the CPSU leadership felt that any serious North Korean setback might discredit Pyongyang’s “fraternal” patrons as well. While this factor usually induced the Kremlin to assist its North Korean ally with money, in some cases it actually reinforced Soviet criticism of North Korean blunders.

Needless to say, Soviet disagreement with Pyongyang’s autarkic tendencies continued to play a prominent role in such criticism. On 3 October, Ivanov told Hungarian Ambassador Práth that the North Korean leadership had previously insisted on producing sewing machines, bicycles, and watches, although the DPRK could have imported such products as part of the aid it received. North Korean-made consumer goods were of poor quality, yet their prices were too high for the vast majority.²⁹ Here it is important to note that contrary to widely held assumptions,³⁰ Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik and Pak Ch’ang-ok, as well as the Soviets, had proposed imports, rather than local production, of consumer goods.³¹

The visit of the North Korean delegation lasted from 1 June to 19 July, and it proved relatively successful. In addition to a loan of 170 million old rubles, Moscow granted 300 million rubles in aid to the DPRK, canceled a debt of 570 million, and postponed repayment of the remaining debt of 362 million. The Soviets provided bulldozers, tractors, cars, steel, cotton, textiles, rice, sugar, and other goods to North Korea. The East German government had originally intended to build a diesel engine factory in the DPRK, but the North Korean delegation asked it to send consumer goods worth 54 million rubles instead. Czechoslovakia similarly sent consumer goods worth 40 to 50 million rubles, and postponed the repayment of credits. Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary

granted 30 million, 25 million, and 15 million rubles in aid, respectively, and even poor and underdeveloped Mongolia and Albania made contributions.³²

Interestingly enough, on this occasion China did not give any further aid to North Korea. Having recently agreed to provide 800 million yuan in aid to North Vietnam, the CCP leadership may have concluded that the PRC, still suffering from the strains of the Socialist High Tide (a collectivization campaign launched late in 1955), could not afford to support Hanoi and Pyongyang at the same time. Actually, in August 1955, the Hungarian diplomats accredited to the PRC noted that Beijing found it difficult to send as much consumer goods to the DRV as the North Vietnamese wished, because China similarly faced a shortage of consumer goods and she also had to provide the DPRK with such products.³³

Apart from such economic factors, Beijing may also have had some other reasons not to give economic assistance to Pyongyang at this time. Namely, certain facts indicate that in these years a sort of division of labor existed between the Soviet Union and the PRC. It is quite conspicuous that in 1955, Hanoi received twice as much economic aid from Beijing as it obtained from Moscow,³⁴ whereas in 1956, Pyongyang had to rely solely on the Soviet Union and her satellites. Ang Cheng Guan claims that in 1955–1956, “a gentleman’s agreement initiated by the Russians was apparently reached in secret between the two countries whereby Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Malaya, and Vietnam would be in the Chinese sphere of operations.”³⁵ In fact, in April 1955, the Soviet ambassador to Hanoi did tell a Hungarian diplomat that “the USSR ceded the guidance of the Asian peoples’ struggle for independence to China.”³⁶

In light of the delegation’s goals, the amount of aid North Korea received in 1956 contradicts Suh’s claim that Kim Il Sung “came back virtually empty-handed.”³⁷ Although the Soviet leaders may have criticized Kim’s policies during the negotiations,³⁸ in the end they seem to have met most of his requests. In contrast, in certain East European countries the Kremlin simply unseated the “little Stalins” considered not compliant enough. In April 1956, Premier Chervenkov, hitherto the supreme leader of Bulgaria, was replaced by First Secretary Todor Zhivkov, who enjoyed the support of Khrushchev.³⁹ In July, Anastas Mikoyan visited Budapest in order to instruct Rákosi, who had attempted to crack down on his domestic critics, to resign from his position. Rákosi was promptly expelled from the Politburo and the CC, and he effectively went into exile in the Soviet Union for the rest of his life.

While the Soviets supported Kim Il Sung quite reluctantly, and repeatedly interfered in his policies, they did not attempt to replace him. Actually, it is

doubtful whether such an attempt would have succeeded in the mid-1950s. As noted in Chapter 2, Kim, unlike his East European counterparts, had not yielded any of his posts to another leader, and thus a potential alternative power center could not come into existence within the top leadership.⁴⁰ This crucial difference between North Korea and Eastern Europe effectively sealed the fate of KWP leaders who dared to criticize Kim Il Sung at the famous August CC plenum.

“Whose Party Is This?”

As Lankov points out, Kim’s prolonged absence from the country probably encouraged his intraparty opponents to organize a conspiracy against him. In addition, the dictator’s visit to the USSR provided them with a good opportunity to appeal to the Kremlin for help. One of them, a Yan’an Korean called Yi Sang-cho, was DPRK ambassador to Moscow, and thus he may have been able to influence Moscow’s policies toward Pyongyang to some extent. On 16 June, Yi met a high-ranking Soviet diplomat, and informed him of the cult around Kim Il Sung and the repressive measures taken by the latter. The CPSU leadership, he suggested, should put pressure on the dictator during his stay in Moscow in order to facilitate political liberalization in North Korea.

At the end of July, following Kim’s return from abroad, several members of the intraparty opposition (Yi P’il-gyu, Pak Ch’ang-ok, Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik, Kim Sung-hwa, and Yun Kong-hum) visited the Soviet Embassy, and told the Soviet diplomats that they intended to remove Kim Il Sung and some of his lieutenants at the next plenum of the KWP CC. They wished to secure the support, or at least the neutrality, of the Kremlin, but the embassy adopted a wait-and-see attitude.⁴¹ The passivity of the Soviet diplomats revealed the complexity of the Soviet–DPRK relationship. Namely, Soviet criticism of Kim’s policies did not lead automatically to cooperation with his domestic rivals, a phenomenon that is worth studying.

For one thing, the Soviets, as Ivanov’s 1955 conversation with Szarvas demonstrated, found it increasingly risky to intervene directly in North Korean internal politics. Moreover, from a Soviet perspective, the conspiracy of Kim’s opponents—particularly after mid-August—may have appeared quite ill-timed, since at that time the dictator made several steps that probably pleased the Kremlin. On 2 August, the government delegation informed the KWP CC about the results of Kim Il Sung’s visit to the USSR and Eastern Europe. The “proposals” made by the Soviet leaders seem to have produced some effect on Pyongyang’s policies, for on 11 August, the government announced that on 1 November, it would raise the wages of workers, technicians, and officials by

some 35 percent. It also promised to cut the prices of certain consumer goods on 1 September.⁴² On 20 August, Ivanov told Práth that lately the cult of Kim Il Sung had considerably decreased. The wage increase also met with his approval.⁴³ As it had happened at the end of 1955, Kim's apparent cooperation reduced the Soviets' interest in supporting his critics. Still, this time the dictator could not purge his challengers as easily as he had done it in the winter of 1955–1956.

The conspiracy of Kim Il Sung's opponents, which culminated in their open attack on the dictator's policies at the CC plenum on 30–31 August, was a desperate attempt to turn the tide, rather than a serious challenge to Kim's rule. To begin with, Kim's critics failed to recruit supporters outside the Yan'an and Soviet groups. Of the conspirators, Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, Yun Kong-hum, Yi P'il-gyu, So Hui, Kim Kang, and Yi Sang-cho were Yan'an Koreans. The nominal leader of the Yan'an faction, Kim Tu-bong, seems to have sympathized with the dissidents, but he did not play an active role in the conspiracy. Of the Soviet Koreans, it was Pak Ch'ang-ok, Kim Sung-hwa, and Pak Ui-wan who were willing to risk a confrontation with the dictator.⁴⁴ That is, neither the members of the Kapsan group nor the remaining leaders of South Korean origin were inclined to take sides with the dissidents, who had little to offer them, compared to Kim Il Sung. In addition, several influential Soviet and Yan'an Koreans (Nam Il, Pang Hak-se, and Kim Ch'ang-man) proved loyal to the dictator.

To make matters worse, Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik characterized Japanese-trained intellectuals like Chong Il-yong and the new intelligentsia created by Pyongyang as reactionaries and boors, respectively.⁴⁵ Since Kim Il Sung cultivated contacts with both groups in order to promote industrialization and offset the expertise of the Soviet and Yan'an Koreans,⁴⁶ Ch'oe had good reason to criticize them. By doing so, however, he became even more isolated.

Due to the characteristics of the North Korean political environment, most participants of the plenum probably regarded the conflict between Kim Il Sung and his critics as a squabble between elite groups of different origins, rather than a confrontation between Stalinism and anti-Stalinism. The dissidents had little chance in such a factional conflict. The cohesion of the Kapsan group certainly exceeded that of the Soviet and Yan'an factions. Those leaders whose influence originated principally from their unswerving loyalty to the dictator, such as Chong Chun-t'aek and Chong Il-yong, also felt little inclination to turn against their patron. In addition, as Scalapino and Lee note, "the Soviet and Yan'an factions could have only slight appeal to a young, postwar generation of North Koreans."⁴⁷

This means that the group of Kim Il Sung's supporters was capable of

expanding, but the Soviet and Yan'an factions were not. While the members of the Kapsan faction did not join other power centers, some of the Soviet and Yan'an Koreans did. That is, the factions existing within the KWP leadership belonged to at least two different types, and those that included the dissidents of August 1956 were by nature less viable than Kim's group. Of course, the most important source of the viability of Kim's group was its association with the regime's supreme authority, for the dictator could reward his followers (and punish his opponents) much more effectively than any other person in the North Korean leadership. Soviet and Yan'an Koreans who took sides with him against Pak Ch'ang-ok and Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik were probably motivated not only by a belief in the correctness of Kim's standpoint, but also by opportunistic considerations.

Even if the opponents of Kim Il Sung had not remained politically isolated, their position in the leadership would have been weak. Following the Third Congress, they were hopelessly outnumbered in the Standing Committee (SC) and the CC. Of the eleven SC members, nine (Kim Il Sung, Ch'oe Yong-gon, Pak Chong-ae, Kim Il, Pak Kum-ch'ol, Yim Hae, Chong Il-yong, Kim Kwang-hyop, and Nam Il) categorically opposed their plans. Of the top twenty members of the CC, only five (Kim Tu-bong, Pak Ch'ang-ok, Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, Pak Ui-wan, and So Hui) belonged to the opposition.⁴⁸

It is worth focusing some attention on the allocation of government positions as well. Significantly, as early as mid-1955—that is, before Kim Il Sung's campaign against the Soviet faction—most ministerial posts of crucial importance were held by Kim loyalists such as Pang Hak-se (Interior), Ch'oe Yong-gon (Defense), Nam Il (Foreign Affairs), Yi Chu-yon (Finance), Chong Il-yong (Metallurgical Industry), Chong Chun-t'aek (Chemical Industry), Yi Chong-ok (Light Industry), and Kim Il (Agriculture). In contrast, Kim Sung-hwa was Minister of Construction and Yun Kong-hum Minister of Commerce.⁴⁹ In 1956, So Hui and Kim Kang held the posts of chair of the Federation of Trade Unions and deputy minister of propaganda, respectively, while Yi P'il-gyu had been deputy minister of the interior.⁵⁰

Thus, Kim Il Sung's critics, despite their high party rank, had become marginalized to a considerable extent as early as mid-1955, and the events of winter 1955–1956 further weakened their influence. The unprecedented cooperation between the Soviet and Yan'an Koreans may have resulted from the realization of the gravity of the situation, for Pak Ch'ang-ok and Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik had not been on good terms before mid-1956. The opposition's marginal status enabled the dictator to depict the dissidents as egoistic position-seekers eager to redistribute ministerial posts, and discouraged other leaders

from supporting them. Most CC members probably thought that Kim's rivals had no chance whatsoever, and did not want to risk their political careers by joining them.

To be sure, the critical comments Kim's opponents made at the August plenum and before were by no means unfounded. In the light of the events covered in Chapters 2 and 3, one may conclude that the dissidents paid sufficient attention to the major problems with which the DPRK had to cope in the mid-1950s. Castigating the persistence of the Kim Il Sung cult, they pointed out how little the KWP leadership had done in the field of de-Stalinization since the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. They seem to have realized that the reforms the dictator had implemented after his return from abroad were merely tactical and temporary ones.

The opposition also emphasized that the government should have devoted greater care to improving living standards. Had the leadership pursued wiser policies, Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik charged, the country would not have been in such a grave situation. Taking Kim Il Sung's responsibility for the 1955 famine into consideration, this accusation was anything but unjustified. Finally, the dissidents criticized Kim's attempts to depict his rather small guerrilla unit as the "vanguard" of the pre-1945 Korean communist movement (the dictator, as Cumings notes, had made such attempts as early as 1946–1949⁵¹). They went on to declare that the Korean communists who had fought in China actually played a more important role in the struggle for national liberation. Although this latter statement was not necessarily baseless and unfair, it certainly reflected the biases of the Yan'an faction, and thus it may have reinforced the critics' isolation.⁵²

Kim Il Sung's opponents may have made some tactical mistakes. Pak Ch'ang-ok allegedly wanted to read an excessively long, eighty-page speech to describe the errors made by the KWP leadership. When Kim told him to shorten it to twenty pages, Pak asked the participants of the plenum whether the KWP was the party of the Korean workers or that of Kim Il Sung. "If it is the party of the Korean workers," he declared, "I consider it my duty to read the whole speech; if it is not, I will not say anything."⁵³ The dictator, on his part, skillfully countered some of the charges Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik had brought against him. He enumerated the achievements of his recent visit to the USSR and Eastern Europe, and promised further economic reforms. The plenum actually resolved to reduce agricultural taxes. Although its resolutions made it clear that private entrepreneurs and merchants would be eventually forced into cooperatives, for the time being the government promised to provide economic incentives for these groups. The leadership decided to postpone the construction

of a few large-scale industrial projects and increase investments in housing construction.⁵⁴ These steps demonstrated Kim Il Sung's tactical flexibility and his eagerness to take the wind out of the opposition's sails.

In the last analysis, however, it should be pointed out that it was brute force, rather than political astuteness, that enabled Kim Il Sung to get the upper hand over Pak Ch'ang-ok and Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik. The dictator got wind of their plan well in advance, and delayed the plenum for a month in order to secure the support of most CC members in the meantime. As a consequence, Kim's critics got little opportunity to speak at the plenum. Whenever they attempted to speak, their words "were met with organized obstruction such as whistling and disturbances."⁵⁵ Instead of providing them with additional political support, the plenum promptly expelled Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, Pak Ch'ang-ok, and Yun Kong-hum from the CC and the party. Seeing the writing on the wall, So Hui, Kim Kang, Yi P'il-gyu, and Yun Kong-hum found it advisable to escape to China.⁵⁶ In the light of the fate of the SKWP faction, they had every reason not to wait until the next stage of Kim Il Sung's punitive measures.

"The Koreans Ought To Be Brought Down a Peg or Two"

It was not particularly difficult for Kim Il Sung to purge his opponents, but his repressive measures provoked a joint Soviet–Chinese political intervention. This coordinated action of the two communist great powers confirmed that in this period neither the USSR nor the PRC found it advisable to make a major decision with regard to the DPRK without consulting the other. It also revealed that in mid-1956, Sino–Soviet relations were still relatively harmonious. In any case, common dissatisfaction with Pyongyang's policies seems to have facilitated the arrangement of this joint intervention. Most probably, both Moscow and Beijing interpreted the purge as a manifestation of North Korean nationalism and willfulness. According to the memoirs of Hoxha, who visited the DPRK and China in the fall of 1956, at that time a Soviet leader, Boris Ponomarev, told him that "things are not going very well with the Koreans. They have become very stuck-up and ought to be brought down a peg or two."⁵⁷ In 1955, Kim had skillfully exploited the rivalry between the Yan'an and Soviet Koreans, and his purges usually did not affect the two groups simultaneously. In contrast, in August 1956, he clamped down on both factions, and this act of repression, which ran counter to the new trend in Soviet and Chinese policies, could not pass unnoticed.

As early as 7 September, when Hoxha arrived in Pyongyang, considerable tension was perceptible in Sino–North Korean relations. Commenting on the escape of a few dissidents to the PRC, Kim Il Sung complained of Beijing's

attitude: “[W]e wrote to the Chinese leadership to send them back to us without fail. . . . The Chinese comrades did not send them back. They have them there to this day.” From the way that the North Korean dictator was speaking, Hoxha “sensed a certain hesitation and uncertainty that were overwhelming him.”⁵⁸

Kim Il Sung had good reason to be anxious, for Mikoyan, the head of the Soviet delegation to the Eighth Congress of the CCP, was sent to Pyongyang in order to put pressure on the KWP leadership. Since he had been the very same person who removed Rákosi in July, Kim may have expected the worst. Moreover, Mikoyan was accompanied by Peng Dehuai, who had hardly been on good terms with the North Korean dictator during the Korean War. It is quite likely that Beijing selected Peng for this mission primarily because of his familiarity with Korean issues, and possibly also because of his willingness to adopt a tough attitude vis-à-vis Kim Il Sung. Mikoyan and Peng participated in the CC plenum held on 23 September, and due to their intervention, the purged leaders were readmitted to the CC. The dissidents were naturally pleased by these developments, but the Soviets and the Chinese were content with restoring the status quo ante, and did not undermine the dictator’s power base in any other sense.⁵⁹ It was the purge, not Kim Il Sung’s rule as such, that they disapproved of.

Chinese participation seems to have played a crucial role in the success of this interparty intervention, since the Kremlin was not always capable of bringing stubborn Stalinist dictators to heel. In April 1956, at the special conference of the Tirana party organization, a group of Albanian party leaders (Panajot Plaku, Dalli Ndreu, Liri Gega, and Petro Buli) criticized Hoxha much in the same way as Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik and Pak Ch’ang-ok would condemn Kim’s policies in August. Although Khrushchev probably sympathized with the dissidents, he proved unable to protect them from the wrath of Hoxha. Most of those who had dared to oppose him at the Tirana meeting were imprisoned or interned. On the eve of the Third Congress of the APL, on 25 May to 3 June, the Soviet leader sent Petr Pospelov and Mikhail Suslov to Tirana for the purpose of persuading the Albanian dictator to rehabilitate Koci Xoxe, the most prominent victim of the Albanian show trials. Hoxha, however, flatly refused to do so.⁶⁰ Had Moscow not joined forces with Beijing, Kim Il Sung may have gotten away with the purge of Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik and Pak Ch’ang-ok.

Judging from the support that the CCP leadership gave to the Kremlin in the course of the North Korean political crisis in the summer and early fall of 1956, Mao, unlike Kim and Hoxha, did not consider Soviet de-Stalinization a threat.⁶¹ As indicated before, Beijing, in contrast with Pyongyang, was relatively willing to initiate reforms in the wake of the Twentieth Congress. Chinese

interest in promoting more flexible domestic and foreign policies manifested itself in contemporaneous Sino–Vietnamese and Sino–Albanian relations as well. Visiting the DRV in April 1956, Deputy Premier Chen Yun persuaded the VWP leaders not to promote the development of heavy industry at the expense of light industry and agriculture.⁶² Hoxha also stressed in his memoirs that in September 1956, Mao attempted to convince him that Stalin had made mistakes in relations with the CCP and Yugoslavia.⁶³ Thus, Peng Dehuai's visit to the DPRK seems to have constituted an integral part of the policy that Beijing pursued in these months.

The Sino–DPRK clash of September 1956 partly refutes the statement that “from the time of the Twentieth Party Congress, Kim Il-sung and his government . . . looked increasingly to Peking for guidance.”⁶⁴ Actually, in 1956, Kim Il Sung was hardly pleased by the policies of the Chinese leadership. In addition to the conflict over the purge of Kim's rivals, Pyongyang had another reason to be wary of Chinese intentions. In that year, Beijing laid claim to certain North Korean border areas, most notably to the area of Mount Paektu, on the grounds that a substantial Chinese minority lived there.⁶⁵ This claim may have been a part of a larger Chinese scheme that was to affect Mongolia as well. It is noteworthy that in April 1956, Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai told Mikoyan that Soviet support for the independent status of Mongolia should be regarded as “one of Stalin's mistakes,” for the Chinese people “consider Mongolia . . . a part of their territory.”⁶⁶

Nonetheless, the joint Soviet–Chinese intervention did not produce a long-lasting and deep effect on North Korean domestic policies. On 3 October, Ivanov told Hungarian Ambassador Práth that the North Korean leaders had finally begun to re-examine their economic policies, but it was not easy to eliminate various deficiencies. The Soviet ambassador went on to stress that it was not only the East European embassies that the North Korean Foreign Ministry failed to provide with adequate information. Pyongyang, he pointed out, frequently cold-shouldered the Soviet Embassy as well.⁶⁷

The Second Congress of the North Korean Writers' Union, held on 14–16 October, also showed that the recent intervention failed to significantly affect KWP leaders. Although the speakers admitted that contemporary North Korean literary works often proved simplistic and authors were overburdened with bureaucratic tasks, they reiterated that the writers purged in the 1952–1955 period had been “hostile elements” who attempted to depoliticize literature. In the presence of Soviet, Chinese, East European, and Japanese guests, Han Sol-ya once again described the executed Yim Hwa as an “American agent.” Such talk was by no means compatible with the spirit of the Twentieth Congress. The speakers of the WU congress paid lip service to the changing inter-

national situation by criticizing “schematism” and “dogmatism,” but “naturalism” and “cosmopolitanism,” two pet hates of Stalin’s cultural policy, received similar condemnation.⁶⁸

While the WU congress did stimulate some intellectual debates, these seem to have been less free than the ones that had taken place in China in mid-1956. Still, the topics of the North Korean and Chinese debates often proved quite similar. For instance, a North Korean critic named An Ham-gwang tried to improve the reputation of pre-1945 Korean leftist literature by insisting on that the “main” elements of socialist realism had appeared in the works of certain authors as early as the 1920s, while other writers discussed whether Korean poems were based on rhythm or not. At that time, Chinese intellectuals also debated a lot the compatibility of European and Chinese literary and musical traditions, and many of them emphasized that numerous classical Chinese writers had not been as “anti-realist” as dogmatist communist critics declared.⁶⁹

In the light of the superficiality of the “corrections” carried out between April and October, the role that the Hungarian revolution played in the failure of North Korean de-Stalinization should not be overestimated.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the events that took place in Hungary between 23 October and 10 November by no means facilitated North Korean political liberalization. The revolution and the sudden collapse of the Hungarian communist regime stunned the KWP leaders. In the view of Práth, who discussed the issue with Nam Il several times, they were at a loss to understand the causes of the uprising. Seoul’s reactions to the Hungarian events must have also contributed to Pyongyang’s anxiety. Certain high-ranking officials of the South Korean Ministry of Defense declared that a similar revolt was bound to occur in the DPRK, and they allegedly made preparations for a military intervention in case such an uprising took place in the North.⁷¹ Kim Il Sung did not think lightly of that potential threat. In Kusong and elsewhere, factory building came to an abrupt halt as the authorities, without having notified the foreign technical advisers of their decision, hastily reassigned workers to the construction of underground manufacturing plants.⁷²

The first North Koreans whose life was negatively affected by the Hungarian crisis were the students that Pyongyang had sent to the European communist countries. Following the revolution, the KWP leadership began to suspect these students, and probably not without reason. Of the North Koreans studying in Hungary, at least one (or maybe three) took the opportunity to emigrate to the West during the revolution. This may have played a role in the regime’s hurriedly summoning most of the students home. (A total of 109 students were allowed to remain in Hungary, for they were close to the completion of their studies.) In fact, the North Korean authorities told the Hungarian diplomats

that they had ordered the students home so as to “protect them from the contagion of the counter-revolution.” The intensity of North Korean distrust and suspicion can be gauged from that at the end of 1956, the DPRK recalled most students from the other “fraternal” countries as well, regardless of the fact that several of these countries were firmly under the control of the local communist regimes. This North Korean action inspires the observer to draw a parallel between the DPRK and Albania, for Tirana similarly summoned the majority of its students home from Hungary after the “counter-revolution.” In contrast, neither Beijing nor Hanoi resorted to similar measures at that time.⁷³

Kim Il Sung, although alarmed by the Hungarian revolution, took advantage of it. He demonstrated his reliability, and thus countered Soviet criticism of his policies, by offering economic aid to the newly installed Kádár regime as early as 12 November. North Korea indeed gave Hungary 100,000 square meters of plate glass, 10,000 metric tons of cement, and 10 metric tons of tobacco. At Práth’s request, the North Korean authorities took measures to prevent Hungarian physicians from working in the DPRK, some of whom sympathized with the revolution.⁷⁴

Ironically, Pyongyang’s eagerness to show its ideological reliability was not always welcomed by the Hungarian diplomats, whose way of thinking was affected by the three-year process of de-Stalinization. On 30 January, the North Korean Foreign Ministry informed the Hungarian Embassy about that the Koreans studying in Hungary had gained precious information about Western involvement in the “counter-revolution.” For instance, a North Korean student had allegedly observed that on 27 October 1956, the Austrian minister of the interior personally gave two truckloads of arms to a band of “counter-revolutionaries” in the Hungarian city of Sopron. A Hungarian diplomat politely expressed his doubts about the veracity of that statement, but the North Koreans stuck to their guns.

This debate revealed a rather considerable difference between Hungarian and North Korean viewpoints. While the Hungarian diplomats tacitly acknowledged that the “leftist errors” committed by Rákosi had been at least partly responsible for the mass revolts, KWP leaders seem to have explained the sudden collapse of the Hungarian regime by pointing to the inconsistent policies pursued in 1953–1956 by Budapest and de-Stalinization as such. On 2 February, Deputy Minister of Agriculture Yi Yong-sok told a Hungarian diplomat that the Hungarian leadership had made “serious mistakes” during the collectivization of agriculture. Namely, it failed to lay sufficient emphasis on ideological work and in 1953–1956, it “smashed” the newly established cooperatives (i.e., it let peasants leave the coops if they wished to do so).⁷⁵

Kim Il Sung’s stability-centered reaction to the Hungarian revolution also

manifested itself in contemporaneous North Korean internal policies. The dictator did his best to prevent the North Korean population from following the Hungarian example. A CC plenum held in December resolved to mobilize students and intellectuals for physical work in order to forestall any “disturbances,” which preceded a similar CCP measure by almost a year.⁷⁶ Demonstrating its firmness, in mid-December the dictatorship staged a show trial of several alleged U.S. spies “sent to develop a Hungarian-type revolt to be coupled with an American invasion.”⁷⁷ These repressive actions were certainly highly effective. The DPRK did not experience intellectual and popular protests comparable to the ones that rocked several East European countries (above all, the GDR, Poland, and Hungary) in 1953 and 1956, respectively. However, it would be misleading to assume that dissatisfaction with the dictatorship’s policies did not exist. The various strata of North Korean society did have serious grievances, which deserve careful analysis, if one intends to understand why the regime of Kim Il Sung, unlike some of its East European counterparts, remained stable in 1956.

Deprivation and Discontent

The analysis of North Korean socioeconomic conditions may begin with a description of the intelligentsia, for in the mid-1950s, intellectuals were in the forefront of political criticism in almost every East European “people’s democracy”, even in those countries (Romania, Bulgaria, and the Slovakian part of Czechoslovakia) where the communist regimes, by and large, did not face serious mass protests.

The various groups that comprised the North Korean intelligentsia considerably differed from each other in origin, social status, and material well-being. For example, senior professors at the Kim Ch’aek College of Technology earned 8,000 won a month, that is, a salary comparable to that of government ministers. (In fact, the professors’ clothing was superior to that of the highest-ranking state officials.) Associate professors and lecturers earned 6,000 and 3,500 to 4,500 won, respectively. In contrast, high school teachers earned merely 1,000 to 2,500 won a month. Their clothing often looked miserable if compared to that of their students, and they had to participate in reconstruction work throughout the summer without receiving compensation. As a consequence, their profession was hardly popular. Despite intense propaganda, very few students intended to become teachers.⁷⁸ Engineers and technicians made 1,000 to 4,000 won a month, while the salary of physicians was as low as 1,000 to 2,000 won.⁷⁹

Many highly qualified North Korean artists also led a life of poverty. In April

1955, a talented painter of South Korean origin, who received a subsidy of 2,000 won per month, told Hungarian diplomats that she had to pay rent of 2,000 won a month, although the small room where she lived was wholly unsuitable for painting. She expected to receive 72,000 won for a large work that the Union of Painters (UP) had commissioned, but working on this painting was very time consuming. She was further constrained by a directive that prohibited her from accepting any other commissions until she completed the Union's job. In January 1956, a sculptor of distinction, who was very familiar with West European art, told a Hungarian diplomat that he had no hope of getting an atelier of his own, and therefore he was hardly able to work in winter. Although he had recently made a large statue of Kim Il Sung, he still had to live in a small single-room apartment together with his wife and four children. Generally speaking, scarcity of customers and art supplies rendered the life of artists quite difficult. In 1955, only 2,000 to 3,000 paintings and 200 to 300 statues were made in North Korea.⁸⁰

Worse still, penury was coupled with political and administrative constraints on intellectual life. In addition to literature and art, the development of natural sciences was also seriously hampered, no matter how indispensable such scientists were for the rapid modernization that Kim Il Sung wanted to carry out. As an example, consider a conversation that took place between the head of the chemical branch of the North Korean Academy of Sciences and the Hungarian chargé d'affaires Csuka on 21 December 1953. The Korean scholar asked Csuka to send them American and West German chemistry journals, "should there be the slightest chance of it," for the Academy had not received any Western scientific journals since 1945.⁸¹ Taking into consideration that the DPRK had inherited a relatively well-developed chemical industry from Japanese rule, the absence of such literature must have been quite detrimental.

This shortsighted policy of dogmatic isolationism produced a similarly negative effect on literary activity. In sharp contrast with Eastern Europe, in 1945–1954, North Korean publishing houses did not publish any European classics, not even Russian ones. According to a report by the Hungarian Embassy in 1954, "They do not know the great French and English realist writers, a novel of Balzac or Maupassant can be read in Japanese translation at the most. . . . Plays of Shakespeare or Moliere are not staged in Korean theaters." The first "Western" literary works (*Tales* by Andersen and a novel written by the American communist author Howard Fast) appeared on the North Korean book market as late as 1955. Works of Gorky, Turgenev, Pushkin, Lermontov, and Chekhov were not published until 1956.⁸²

"Guidedness is very extensive in most branches of art, the creative imagination of the artist is strongly constrained and bound," the Hungarian diplo-

mats complained in their report on the events of 1954.⁸³ Painters had to fulfill annual plans, their work being periodically checked and, if “necessary,” corrected by the Union of Painters. Concerning paint, canvas, and other materials, they were wholly dependent on the UP. The larger a picture was, the more the UP paid for it. Cliques within the UP leadership made the situation even worse. The artists that the Hungarian Embassy had invited to its receptions often failed to get the invitations because UP leaders, instead of delivering the latter, kept them for themselves. Much to the diplomats’ surprise, it frequently occurred that the person who appeared at a reception with an invitation card in his hand was not the one they had invited. The embassy gave three copies of a valuable book of art to the Union of Painters, the Union of Sculptors, and the aforesaid painter of South Korean origin. A UP leader named Chong Kwang-ch’ol, however, took the third copy away from the painter, keeping it for himself.⁸⁴

Encouraged by the cultural liberalization that took place in other communist countries, in 1956 certain writers and artists attempted to protest against political constraints. During literary debates, Han Hyo, an intellectual of South Korean origin, declared that “only society is qualified to judge literary works.” Paek Sok and Yi Sung-yong stated that juvenile literature, if written for children of kindergarten age, should not deal with class education. Animal fables, they thought, would be more appropriate.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, their efforts to improve the conditions of North Korean cultural life were in vain. The sole result of their statements was a series of punitive measures against all critically thinking intellectuals.

Apart from the intelligentsia, the regime was particularly suspicious of students in the wake of the Hungarian revolution. The Hungarian diplomats noted that early in 1957, the leadership mobilized all young people in the country for the planting of trees in order to tie them up with work and “increase its political activity.”⁸⁶ Since students had played an important role in protest movements both in Japanese-ruled Korea and in post-1953 Eastern Europe, the dictatorship had every reason to keep an eye on them.

In any case, students’ living conditions were not good enough to guarantee their political loyalty. In the first half of 1956, the number of university and college students stood at about 20,000 in the DPRK. At the Kim Il Sung University, 80 percent of the students received a stipend, and three-fourths of them lived in dormitories, while at Kim Ch’aek College of Technology the percentages in question was 70 percent and 50 percent, respectively, in the second half of 1954. In addition to the basic stipend of 500 won per month, students were given clothes and other allowances. A war orphan, for instance, received 750 won a month. A student’s stipend increased every year, and excellent students

received a basic stipend of 625 won. The highest dormitory fees amounted to 400 won a month.⁸⁷

As late as 1959, the dormitory of the prestigious Kim Il Sung University still lacked water closets. There was a single faucet on each floor, and students' rooms lacked wardrobes.⁸⁸ The Hungarian diplomats noted in June 1953 that at the same university the equipment of the chemical and physical laboratories, recently obtained from the Soviet Union, was no better than that of a Hungarian high school. Lecture rooms even lacked chalk.⁸⁹ Generally speaking, the clothes worn by students were the same as workers' clothing. Apart from reading and sports, there were few recreational opportunities or facilities for young people. Even these forms of entertainment were problematic. Malnutrition hindered sports activities by many. Press runs of books published in North Korea were quite small. Moreover, in 1955, Pyongyang had only one library.⁹⁰

Students who studied in the USSR and Eastern Europe, due to their widened perspective, seemed to be more inclined to political dissent.⁹¹ As early as February 1954, the Hungarian Foreign Ministry noted that the North Korean Embassy had recently called the students' attention to the importance of political "vigilance," because some students got in touch with "undesirable elements" in Hungary.⁹² Early in 1956, the DPRK counselor to Budapest told the Hungarian Foreign Ministry that certain students had attempted to emigrate to the West.⁹³ In mid-1957, an official of Kim Il Sung University stated that of the students who had been recalled from Hungary at the end of 1956, a significant minority still sympathized with the Hungarian "counter-revolution."⁹⁴ In March 1957, two returned students visited Hungarian Ambassador Práth. They bitterly complained of the conditions in the dormitory where they lived. For instance, a bed was shared by two students, and food proved much worse than in Hungary. Some students, they said, refused to study Marxism-Leninism. Práth concluded that the Hungarian authorities had obviously spoiled the North Korean students.⁹⁵

Workers also had good reason to be dissatisfied with their living conditions. In 1955, workers employed in heavy and light industry earned 1,200 to 1,500 and 1,000 to 1,200 won per month, respectively, while the wages of miners stood at 5,000 to 8,000 won. Persons employed in commerce and public health made merely 600 to 800 won a month. In contrast, the price of a meter of linen was 300 won, that of a pair of boots 4,400 won, while coats and rubber shoes cost 1,000 to 2,700 and 500 to 800 won, respectively. As noted previously, the price of a kilogram of apples equaled a tenth of a worker's monthly wage, although North Korea was famous for its apple orchards. Apart from rice, workers received little else as rations.⁹⁶ Since wages proved very low in comparison with prices, in Pyongyang the supply of consumer goods—both in

state shops and on the free market—exceeded demand. Thus, shops apparently bulged with imported goods such as silk, children's clothing, shoes, toiletries, and tobacco. People frequently browsed in the shops and department stores but rarely bought anything.⁹⁷

Working conditions often proved rather harsh. Hungarian diplomats who visited an underground plant in Kusong early in 1954 noticed that the workers hollowing out the hard granite rock were mostly women and teenagers.⁹⁸ In December 1954, a Hungarian diplomat named Keresztes pointed out that he had hardly seen any safety equipment in the glass factory he visited in Namp'o.⁹⁹ Accidents were particularly common in the electrical industry. While new factories were provided with some safety equipment, older plants continued operating without such equipment.¹⁰⁰ At the end of 1953, Hungarian physicians examined 200 workers, most of whom were under age twenty, in a factory in Huich'on. Since 90 percent of the examined workers suffered from acute tuberculosis, the physicians told the factory director that further work in the underground plant would certainly be detrimental to their health. The director, however, replied that the workers would remain at their workplaces, for the three-year plan had to be fulfilled at all costs.¹⁰¹

People covered by the North Korean social security system were (theoretically) entitled to free medical care, while dependents paid 40 percent of the price of medicines. Sick-time payments amounted to 60 percent to 80 percent of wages. Every woman was entitled to a maternity grant of 500 won, no matter whether she was employed or not. Worker's disability insurance, however, was provided only in cases of 100-percent disability, and allowances for the disabled person's family did not exist.¹⁰² In any case, in September 1954, there was just one physician for every 20,000 to 30,000 inhabitants. The total number of hospital beds stood at 5,000 to 6,000.¹⁰³ Similar to the pre-1953 Soviet situation, it was not the Federation of Trade Unions (FTU) but the Ministry of Labor that dealt with social security issues, and operated the few existing facilities for vacationing workers. Keresztes disapproved of that practice, because it deprived trade unions of activities useful in generating popularity.¹⁰⁴

Workers indeed seem not to have held their trade unions in high esteem. At the sixth CC plenum, held in 1953, certain North Korean leaders told Kim Il Sung that the introduction of higher technical norms would alienate workers from the regime. Kim, however, stuck to his guns. While the raising of norms was accompanied by a wage increase, the latter proved quite insufficient.¹⁰⁵ As noted before, the Fourth Plenum of the FTU CC stressed that trade unions had subordinated the issue of living standards to that of production, which, understandably, caused dissatisfaction among workers. Workers, an FTU cadre declared in February 1955, had patiently endured wartime hardships, but it was

high time to improve their living conditions.¹⁰⁶ Despite these promises, trade unions continued to prioritize the dictatorship's interests vis-à-vis the workers. They were effectively forced into doing so, for labor rights were severely curtailed by the government. For instance, in the summer of 1953, the SPA Presidium passed a decree that prohibited state employees and coop members from changing jobs at their own discretion. People who changed jobs without their employers' permission or being late for work several times faced a sentence of forced labor of 6 to 12 and 2 to 3 months, respectively.¹⁰⁷

As described in Chapter 3, the dictatorship's economic policies hit the rural population particularly hard. Consequently, peasant discontent had become quite intense by early 1955. "Public feeling rapidly deteriorated," Soviet Counselor Petrov noted on 12 April. "In the countryside, *one could already hear strongly dissenting voices* among the peasantry. Hostile elements took advantage of the public feeling, and intrigued. In addition, a number of suicides occurred" (emphasis in the original).¹⁰⁸ On 20 May, Petrov reiterated that the policy of compulsory deliveries had "brought discredit on the party's authority in the eyes of the peasantry."¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, the regime's rural policies were not completely inflexible. In May 1955, high-ranking party officials told Keresztes that there was no need to launch a campaign against "kulaks," for rich peasants were few in number and weak in influence. Ironically enough, it was Keresztes, rather than the KWP cadres, who seemed to have believed that the "kulak question" did exist in North Korea. As he put it, "we have heard of that there is a lot of speculation . . . in the villages, which is evidently caused, above all, by the kulaks."¹¹⁰ One may also point out that in 1954–1955, Beijing, unlike Pyongyang, strongly emphasized that the struggle against "kulaks" was of great importance.¹¹¹

Due to the rural labor shortage created by the Korean War and by the regime's urban projects, women, children, and old people who constituted three-fourths of the agricultural workforce in the mid-1950s badly needed mutual assistance. This probably facilitated the regime's efforts to collectivize agriculture.¹¹² The dictatorship's control over the villages was reinforced by that in the mid-1950s, rural party organizations were often headed by the oldest, most thoughtful male members of the village communities.¹¹³ In spite of this combination of traditional and KWP authority, younger peasants showed more willingness to join coops than their parents. For this reason, the North Korean Youth League, like its Soviet, Chinese, and North Vietnamese counterparts, played a crucial role in the collectivization of agriculture.¹¹⁴ This is not to claim that the rural youth was particularly fond of its living conditions. In a speech made on 21 January 1957, Kim Il Sung admitted that young people did their best to leave the villages in order to get work in offices and factories.¹¹⁵

To be sure, the havoc wrought by the Korean War played a decisive role in that the great majority of the population were impoverished. As the Hungarian diplomats pointed out in 1954, the disproportion between wages and prices had arisen during the war.¹¹⁶ In reality, low living standards were characteristic of both Koreas throughout the 1950s. For instance, in the spring of 1960, many South Korean peasants “ran out of food stocks and began foraging in the mountains” in the same way as their northern counterparts had done in 1955–1956.¹¹⁷ Still, the economic policies that the Kim Il Sung regime pursued in 1954–1956 certainly aggravated the situation. North Korean citizens, thoroughly exhausted by the three-year-long war, probably expected an improvement of living conditions, rather than further hardships, from the government after the armistice, and they may have felt quite disappointed during and after the food crisis of 1955.

A comparison with Eastern Europe may enable us to explain why the discontent of the various North Korean social groups failed to lead to open protests. In 1953–1956, it was only the East German, Polish, and Hungarian regimes that were in danger of being overthrown by mass revolts. By and large, the Romanian, Bulgarian, Albanian, and Czechoslovakian dictatorships remained stable in these years. That is, oppression did not necessarily result in mass protests in Eastern Europe either.

Significantly, all three East European countries where the situation became particularly grave had faced a serious leadership crisis after the death of Stalin. Soviet political interventions undermined the authority of the East German and Hungarian “little Stalins,” encouraging their intraparty rivals. Following Bierut’s death, some of his successors voluntarily decided to liberalize the regime. In June 1953, the East German government suddenly made substantial concessions to intellectuals, peasants, and private entrepreneurs (workers constituted a notable exception, which induced them to protest against the dictatorship). Characteristically, the article that announced the “New Course” began with the following sentences: “The leadership admits that a number of mistakes have been made in the past by the SED [the party] and the government of the German Democratic Republic. One consequence of this was that many people have left our republic.”¹¹⁸ In Poland and Hungary, censorship considerably loosened in 1953–1956, and the purges carried out under Stalin received official condemnation. These events facilitated the burgeoning of intellectual criticism, demoralized party cadres, and thus cleared the ground for participants in the mass protests.

In contrast, “in none of the stable countries was the blame for bad conditions publicly laid at the door of the Party as a whole or of leaders actually continuing in power.”¹¹⁹ The conflicts that took place within the Albanian and

Romanian top leadership echelons in 1955–1956 were particularly similar to the August plenum of the KWP CC, both in their causes and in their outcome. As noted before, at a CC session held in April 1955, Albanian party leaders Jakova and Spahiu condemned the Stalinist policies pursued by Hoxha. In addition, they disapproved of the dictator's efforts to inflate the importance of the so-called Korce group (the faction Hoxha had joined in 1936) at the expense of another pre-1939 party faction, the Shkoder group. Both were promptly sent to an internment camp.¹²⁰ In April 1956, Plaku and other leaders also attempted to criticize Hoxha's policies, but the dictator quickly suppressed their protest.

Hoxha's Romanian colleague, Gheorghiu-Dej, also managed to weather the storms of 1956. At a CC plenum held on 23–25 March, two RWP leaders, Miron Constantinescu and Iosif Chisinevski, called upon a reluctant Dej to adopt the policies of the Twentieth Congress. This alliance between the dictator's two critics was at least as unexpected as the cooperation of Pak Ch'ang-ok and Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, since, as Tismaneanu points out, they attacked Dej "for very different reasons." Their proposals met with a firm refusal, since the majority of CC members sided with the dictator.¹²¹ Predictably, this setback produced a detrimental effect on the career of Constantinescu and Chisinevski, although they fared better than their North Korean and Albanian counterparts.

The North Korean, Albanian, and Romanian political crises demonstrated that the new Soviet line, if represented only by a minority of party leaders and doggedly opposed by the "little Stalins," could not take root in the smaller communist countries unless Moscow directly interfered in the latter's affairs. While in, say, Hungary, the Kremlin was able to appoint or remove a leader at will, more or less irrespective of the number of his supporters, in certain other countries, namely China, the DRV, and Albania, it was not. Interestingly enough, the DPRK, although established with extensive Soviet involvement, seems to have been closer to the second type of regime. Significantly, the joint Soviet–Chinese intervention in behalf of Pak Ch'ang-ok and Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik did not result in the demotion of any Kim loyalist, let alone Kim Il Sung. Although the success of the intervention showed that the North Korean dictatorship was possibly more vulnerable to external pressure than its Albanian counterpart, the visit of Mikoyan and Peng failed to produce a long-lasting effect on North Korean domestic policies. Since no East European dictator adopted de-Stalinization unless it was imposed on him by Moscow, the gradual diminishing of Soviet control over North Korean party affairs seems to have played a crucial role in the failure of political liberalization in the DPRK.

In fact, Kim Il Sung, although he made some economic concessions, proved most unwilling to introduce political reforms. The dictatorship's control over

the population remained tight throughout 1956, discouraging people from voicing their opinions. While in Hungary and Poland the conflicts among the top leaders had become widely known by 1956, this was not the case in the DPRK. Unlike Gomulka and Imre Nagy, Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, and Pak Ch'ang-ok could never reach a wider audience. Neither the reports and discussions of the April 1955 CC plenum nor the debates of the August 1956 plenum were published in the North Korean press, which did its best to hush up Soviet de-Stalinization as well.¹²² The fact that the news blackout imposed by Kim was less effective than intended does not modify this picture to a considerable extent.¹²³

By and large, the regime seemed invincible. The temporary economic reforms of 1955–1956 were implemented in the name of Kim Il Sung, and the population could not associate them with any other leader. On the contrary, they were often accompanied by party purges. Kim's high-ranking critics belonged to the Soviet and Yan'an groups, which limited the number of their potential followers and contributed to their isolation. Significantly, it was the dictator, rather than his rivals, who profited from the feeble “thaw” North Korean cultural life experienced in 1955–1956. While the translation of certain European classics also started in these years, the principal characteristic of the changes was the intensification of cultural nationalism.

This nationalistic cultural policy was not entirely successful, since certain “domestic” Korean intellectuals, like Han Hyo, were as critical of the constraints on cultural life as their Soviet and Yan'an Korean counterparts.¹²⁴ Still, these measures probably enabled Kim Il Sung to gain the sympathy of some intellectuals. They also discredited his high-ranking opponents, whom the dictator held responsible for the unpopular cultural policies of 1954. That is, intraparty criticism and popular discontent usually failed to reinforce each other. Isolation of the intelligentsia from the masses, a problem apparent as early as the colonial era, further hindered the emergence of an opposition.¹²⁵ As mentioned before, workers knew much less about Soviet de-Stalinization than intellectuals. Churches, which could have become a potential basis of protest, ceased to exist in an organized form in post-1953 North Korea. Although in 1959, Kim Il Sung admitted that the number of believers still stood at 200,000, the places of worship destroyed in the Korean War were not rebuilt.¹²⁶

In the last analysis, it should be emphasized that the political situation which existed in North Korea in the wake of the Twentieth Congress did not encourage the population to express its discontent, and the regime did not feel the need of considerable reforms. The KWP leaders' reluctance to soften their rule and the population's passivity seem to have had relatively little to do with Asian traditions. At that time, the Albanian, Romanian, and Czechoslovakian dictatorships also did their best to avoid far-reaching political liberalization,

whereas in 1956–1957, the North Vietnamese leaders radically re-examined the land reform they had carried out in 1953–1956, and released as many as 23,748 political prisoners. Inspired by these changes, many intellectuals and students openly criticized the regime's policies. This criticism peaked in November 1956, when an anti-government demonstration took place in the Catholic village of Quynh Luu.¹²⁷

In all probability, it was the self-destructive character of the land reform campaign that convinced the North Vietnamese leadership of the necessity of political liberalization. In the course of the purge that accompanied the campaign, approximately 80,000 and 50,000 members were expelled from the party and the Youth League, respectively, and nearly 80 percent of the village and district party committees were dissolved. Since the regime had a much weaker basis in the urban centers than in the countryside, the purge that shattered rural party organizations undermined the dictatorship's stability to such an extent that the VWP leaders felt compelled to rehabilitate tens of thousands of victims.¹²⁸

Significantly, at the end of 1951, Kim Il Sung had also been capable of condemning "leftist deviations." As described before, approximately three-fifths of KWP members were disciplined in 1950–1951, and the dictatorship could by no means afford to pursue such self-destructive policies in the midst of a war. Following the fourth CC plenum, many expelled party members were readmitted. In contrast, in 1956, Kim Il Sung was not in such a grave situation, and thus he did not feel that any political reforms were needed. On the contrary, he seems to have considered Soviet de-Stalinization as a source of destabilization and disorder.

5. Ch'ollima and Repression

In the late 1950s, Kim Il Sung broke the influence of the Soviet and Yan'an factions once and for all, thus preventing Moscow and Beijing from playing off his fellow CC members against him. Nationalism became more and more manifest in the regime's economic and cultural policies, foreshadowing Pyongyang's renewed interest in the unification of Korea. Still, Kim proved wise enough not to provoke the communist giants unnecessarily. The repressive measures he took were carefully timed. Following the purge of the "Malenkov group" in the USSR and the abrupt end of the Hundred Flowers campaign in China, neither Khrushchev nor Mao could accuse the North Korean dictator of violating the principle of "collective leadership." The so-called Ch'ollima Movement also coincided with similar efforts of the Soviet, Chinese, and East European regimes to accelerate economic growth. Thus, Kim Il Sung managed to achieve his aims without laying himself open to Soviet criticism. The CCP leaders, on their part, ceased to support Khrushchev's reform policies after the Hungarian revolution. This shift considerably facilitated Sino-North Korean reconciliation.

Pyongyang Regains the Initiative

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Kim Il Sung, no matter how much he was shocked by the unexpected and unprecedented political crisis in Hungary, did his best to take advantage of it. His efforts to reinforce the regime's hold over the population were facilitated by the fact that the Hungarian revolution gave rise to repressive policies in the entire "communist camp" at the end of 1956, although it did not put an end to the process of Soviet de-Stalinization. The Chinese Hundred Flowers campaign "was in a state of suspension" in January and February 1957, and the press suddenly began to criticize "rightist revisionism."¹ At the end of 1956, the North Vietnamese regime suppressed the literary journal

Nhan Van, which had published a number of articles critical of government policies since March. According to Hungarian diplomats, *Nhan Van*'s disagreement with the Soviet intervention in Hungary was considered the last straw by the VWP leadership.²

Kim Il Sung also took the opportunity to make preparations for a new party purge. In the 1953–1956 period, KWP members had had only temporary party cards. In December 1956, the dictatorship began to replace the latter by permanent ones—a convenient way to re-examine the political record of every party member. On 14 February 1957, Kim Tu-bong made a speech that condemned the “factional activity” of Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik and Pak Ch’ang-ok. Since in August 1956 he had sympathized with the “conspirators,” his declaration revealed that Kim Il Sung was again in control of North Korean internal politics.³

Nonetheless, the dictator did not rely solely on repressive measures. Similar to the purge of December 1955, the political tightening-up was accompanied by efforts aimed at enhancing the regime’s popularity and reassuring Moscow. At an art exhibition held in the last two months of 1956, there were many fewer portraits of Kim Il Sung than at a previous exhibition in January of that year. At the December CC plenum, the KWP leadership resolved to oblige ministers, CC members, and other high-ranking officials to spend half a month every year in agricultural cooperatives or industrial centers in order to keep in touch with the population. While the style of this measure was quite similar to CCP methods, it should be kept in mind that the Chinese leaders did not pass a comparable resolution until February 1958, and thus Pyongyang did not merely copy Chinese policies. From December 1956 on, Kim Il Sung and the other KWP leaders—unlike Stalin but similarly to Khrushchev—often toured the country and provided “on-the-spot guidance.” Reform-minded Hungarian diplomats welcomed this change, for they hoped that it would enable the government to notice and correct errors. In October 1957, Práth also stated that living standards had noticeably increased since the last months of 1956. He emphasized that one could no longer see barefooted people in the streets of Pyongyang, since everybody wore rubber shoes.⁴

This combination of repressive measures and economic concessions was not a North Korean peculiarity either. For instance, the Albanian dictatorship, while putting its armed forces on alert, cut the prices of certain consumer goods and raised wages late in 1956. As the Hungarian ambassador to Tirana noted, every East European regime implemented comparable policies in the wake of the Hungarian revolution.⁵

The Hungarian upheaval may have induced the CPSU leadership to seek reconciliation with Kim Il Sung, who was eager to point out that the “counter-revolution” had resulted from the neglect of “intraparty vigilance.” The North

Korean leadership constantly emphasized the importance of such “vigilance” so as to justify its repressive policies. In addition, the decisions made at the December 1956 KWP CC plenum were probably welcomed by the Soviets. After all, the plenum resolved to increase investments in agriculture and light industry in order to raise living standards. In March 1957, a Soviet delegation arrived in North Korea to discuss how to scale down certain industrial targets. In any case, early in 1957 the Kremlin took measures somewhat similar to the concessions that it had made to Pyongyang in September 1955. Namely, in February, Moscow handed over the equipment of the joint-stock company Sovexportfilm to the North Koreans, and summoned home most of its physicians and technical experts. The Soviets also renamed the advisers remaining in the DPRK as consultants in order to highlight that their proposals were not binding on the North Koreans.⁶

These concessions reinforced Pyongyang’s sovereignty vis-à-vis Moscow but did not indicate a genuine rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the DPRK. Significantly, Soviet press attaché Rozanov told a Hungarian diplomat that the Soviets considered the term “consultant” quite useful, for it prevented the North Koreans from blaming every setback on the Soviet advisers. He went on to say that the system of consultants would be probably introduced in every “people’s democracy” where Soviet advisers worked. (This decision seems to have been motivated by Khrushchev’s desire to disassociate himself from Stalin’s “big-power chauvinism,” a desire reinforced by the upheavals in Poland and Hungary.)⁷ In other words, North Korea seems to have preceded most other communist countries in this respect. For instance, Moscow would recall its technical experts from China as late as 1960.

Actually, the recalling of Soviet experts from the PRC may illuminate the background of the departure of the Soviet advisers from the DPRK. Since the former action was certainly a retaliatory one, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the latter was motivated, at least partly, by similar Soviet intentions. In brief, Moscow probably wanted to punish Kim for his previous lack of cooperation. Of course, it is also possible to explain the departure of the Soviet experts with a North Korean request for such a step, but this seems less likely, since in the fall of 1958 the KWP leadership did its best to prolong the stay of the foreign specialists.⁸

Early in 1957, the Hungarian Embassy noted that the North Korean authorities had recently started to criticize the arrogant behavior of certain foreign advisers, and told a Hungarian engineer, with whom the Korean colleagues were not satisfied, not to prolong his stay.⁹ Still, these factors hardly necessitated such a drastic cut in the number of Soviet advisers. The reason may have been that Moscow found criticism of its advisers hard to bear. It is noteworthy

that on 31 July 1958, Khrushchev told Mao that since the Chinese had criticized the work of some Soviet experts, “we wrote to you with a request to recall all the specialists.” Anxious not to lose this source of external assistance, Mao stressed that “I am talking about individual cases, not about the recall of all of them.” The Chinese leader asked, “Perhaps we should change all the advisers into specialists?”¹⁰ In light of this debate, it can be assumed that the recall of Soviet experts from the DPRK was initiated by the Soviets, rather than the North Koreans.

North Korean internal policies also reflected veiled tension between Pyongyang and the Kremlin. As described before, the Soviet–Chinese intervention of September 1956 did not undermine Kim Il Sung’s power, let alone deprive him of any of his lieutenants. Its sole major result, the readmission of Pak Ch’ang-ok and Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik to the KWP CC, proved quite superficial and ephemeral, since the two dissidents failed to regain their former influence. Pak, who had been deputy premier and minister of engineering industry until the August plenum, became a simple factory director. Worse still, in July 1957, the KWP Standing Committee held a session that resolved to carry out a party purge. In late July, the leadership indeed launched a campaign in order to check the loyalty of party members.¹¹ This campaign, the fifth major party purge since 1948, was to become one of the most extensive waves of repression that the North Korean population ever had to endure.

Judging from the timing of the purge, Kim Il Sung’s action was strongly influenced by recent events in the Soviet Union and China. Attacked by Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and others at a presidium meeting on 18–22 June, Khrushchev successfully appealed to the CPSU CC, and expelled his most vocal opponents from the leadership. The purge was officially announced on 4 July. Chinese internal politics also underwent a sudden turn in this period. On 9 June, an editorial in *Renmin Ribao* announced the reversal of the Hundred Flowers Movement, foreshadowing the repressive “Anti-Rightist Movement.”¹² In all probability, these Soviet and Chinese moves encouraged the North Korean dictator. Pyongyang publicly approved the purge that Khrushchev had carried out. “The time has come to get rid of those pernicious elements who could slander the activities and leaders of the party with impunity,” the KWP leaders stated, drawing a parallel between the Soviet “factionalists” and the group headed by Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik and Pak Ch’ang-ok. These pro-Soviet gestures served for the justification of Kim’s own policies.¹³

The purge that Kim Il Sung launched in July became quite extensive by 1957. Following the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) elections on 27 August, Kim Kwang-hyop, a former guerrilla, was appointed minister of defense, while his predecessor, Ch’oe Yong-gon, replaced Kim Tu-bong as chair of the

SPA. Although Kim Tu-bong had become completely powerless by that time, the dictator let him keep his seat in the SC in order to keep up appearances. Pak Ch'ang-ok, whom Kim probably considered a more determined foe, was less fortunate. In September, he lost his job in the factory he had headed since the end of 1956. On 4 October, a Hungarian diplomat reported that the first secretary of the Polish Embassy had recently informed him about Pak's coming arrest. In the fall, the basic and district organizations of the party held meetings and conferences everywhere in the country. In the course of the meetings held at the Academy of Sciences and Kim Il Sung University, several academics lost their party cards. They had allegedly sympathized with the dissidents of August 1956 or merely disagreed with certain policies of the regime. General Kim Ung, a Yan'an Korean and one of the KPA's most brilliant commanders, was replaced, deprived of his rank, and supposedly arrested.¹⁴

While Kim Il Sung could (and did) take advantage of the recent shift in Soviet and Chinese internal policies, the purges carried out by Khrushchev and the CCP leaders did not result in an immediate rapprochement between North Korea and the communist great powers. Actually, friction continued until the fall of 1957. In August, Pyongyang invited foreign teacher deputations to spend their holidays in the DPRK. The German Democratic Republic (GDR), Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Mongolia did send such deputations, but the Soviets and the Chinese were conspicuous by their absence. While the Soviet Embassy pretended ignorance, the North Koreans told the Hungarian diplomats that these deputations were absent because no Korean orphan had ever been either in the USSR or the PRC. (In reality, as many as 25,000 Korean orphans resided in China in February 1953.)¹⁵

Considering that almost every "people's democracy" sent a deputation, one may conclude that Kim Il Sung's conflict with Moscow and Beijing did not necessarily affect Pyongyang's relations with the other communist governments. While the Kremlin did not call on its satellites to condemn the KWP leadership, Kim seems to have attempted to win the friendship of the smaller communist countries. For instance, all costs of the aforesaid teacher deputations were met by the North Koreans. In 1957, Hungarian Ambassador Práth stressed that Pyongyang appeared much more cooperative compared to 1956. Among others, Práth had several long and amicable conversations with Kim, and the dictator repeatedly asked him what he thought of North Korean domestic politics. The KWP leaders also asked Práth about the situation in Hungary, and often provided him with information about Korean issues.¹⁶

In fall 1957, Kim Il Sung finally reached a sort of *modus vivendi* with Moscow and Beijing. Significantly, on 7 October, a Soviet teacher deputation arrived in the DPRK at the invitation of the North Korean Ministry of Education

and Culture.¹⁷ On 15 October, the new Soviet ambassador, A. M. Puzanov, told Práth that Kim Il had recently visited Moscow in order to discuss the targets of North Korea's first five-year plan (1957–1961) with the head of the Soviet State Planning Office.¹⁸ In November, an international communist conference was held in Moscow to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution. On that occasion, Mao had a conversation with the North Korean dictator, and apologized for the intervention of September 1956.¹⁹

The improvement of Soviet–DPRK and Sino–North Korean relations gave a further push to the purge that was going on in the DPRK. On 17–19 October, the KWP CC held a plenum that discussed the activities of Yi Sang-cho, former ambassador to Moscow, who had asked the Soviets to put pressure on Kim Il Sung. Wisely enough, Yi decided not to return home after the August plenum. Since he kept criticizing Kim in the presence of North Korean students, the plenum expelled him from the party, and demanded his extradition. The Soviets refused this demand, but they presumably told Yi to keep silent. The Chinese were similarly unwilling to hand So Hui and the other North Korean refugees over to the DPRK authorities.²⁰ The refugees continued to trouble Pyongyang's relations with its big neighbors, but it became less and less important. “Both you and we have Koreans who fled from Kim Il Sung,” Khrushchev told Mao on 2 October 1959. “But this does not give us ground to spoil relations with Kim Il Sung, and we remain good friends.”²¹

The CC plenum held in October 1957 also discussed the problems that had cropped up in the building industry. The KWP leaders harshly criticized the slow pace of construction. In fact, they had good reason to show great concern about this issue, since the post-1953 development of North Korean construction industry was far from satisfactory. On 3 October 1956, Práth told Ivanov that due to the shortage of cement and bricks, the construction of several factories was falling behind plan targets. Instead of insisting on the production of machine tools, the North Koreans should have built more cement factories, the Hungarian ambassador said.²² The October plenum pointed out that due to the shortage of machines and prefabricated parts, North Korean building projects required three to five times as much labor than in the industrialized communist countries. Since the DPRK faced a serious labor shortage, the pace of construction remained quite slow.²³

Reluctant to increase investments in the building industry at the expense of machine-building and other pet projects, the KWP leaders urged the construction of prefabricated buildings so as to reduce costs. They harshly castigated those cadres and technicians who had their doubts about the feasibility of rapidly adopting such advanced methods. Since Kim Sung-hwa and Pak Ui-wan had been minister of construction and chair of the State Construction Com-

mission, respectively, the debate over methods of construction quickly degenerated into a political purge that resulted in the dismissal of several high-ranking officials in the institutions that they had headed, which affected the Bureau of the Building Materials Industry as well.²⁴ Actually, the problems of construction industry may have been merely a pretext to remove supporters of Pak Ui-wan and Kim Sung-hwa.

On 11–12 November, the North Korean Writers' Union held its Second Plenum, which also heralded the intensification of the party purge. The plenum's resolution condemned writers who disliked being sent to factories and villages. These persons, the WU leaders hypocritically complained, "regarded [these directives] as . . . arbitrary administrative measures taken by the [Party] Center." The WU leadership also subjected a number of newly written literary works to criticism. The unfortunate authors were, among others, Hwang Kon and Han Myong-ch'on. They got off relatively easy, for their alleged mistakes were merely stylistic ones.

In contrast, the writers and poets who had dared to ask for a more flexible cultural policy paid dearly for their courage. Making a veiled reference to critical Polish writers, the plenum disapprovingly noted that certain East European authors had gone so far as to question the values of "socialist realism" and to demand creative freedom. Such subversive ideas, the resolution went on, also cropped up in the DPRK, represented by Han Hyo, Yi Sung-yong, Paek Sok, and Won Chin-gwang. For instance, Won was of the opinion that literary works should satisfy the demands of all sorts of readers. Worse still, a few writers, such as Hong Sun-ch'ol, Han Hyo, An Ham-gwang, and Pak Yim, allegedly cultivated contacts with So Hui, Kim Kang, and other "factional elements" (in Hong's case, this charge was almost certainly false). Anxious to stamp out any kind of intellectual dissidence, the plenum expelled Hong from the WU, and sharply reprimanded the other "subversive" intellectuals.²⁵

Remarkably, the cleavage between Kim Il Sung's favorites (above all, Han Sol-ya and Yi Ki-yong) and the "dissidents" was not necessarily identical with the one that separated Soviet and Yan'an Koreans from "domestic" communists. Nor were these conflicts rooted solely in the factional squabbles of the pre-1953 period. For example, Hong Sun-ch'ol, An Ham-gwang, and Han Hyo belonged to the group of "domestic" Korean authors. Moreover, Hong and Han had once been close associates of Han Sol-ya. As early as 1945, Han Hyo took sides with Han Sol-ya against Yim Hwa and Kim Nam-ch'on. In the early years of the North Korean regime, Hong played an important role in the literary faction headed by Han Sol-ya and Yi Ki-yong, and in 1953, Han Sol-ya, "his close friend and fellow Hamgyong-native," helped him to become secretary of the WU. The criticism to which Han and Hong were subjected in 1957 appears

even more peculiar if we add the case of Ch'oe Myong-ik, whose works the 1957 plenum praised, and who had been a “bourgeois” author in 1945 and remained factionally unaligned in subsequent years.²⁶ That is, one should not overemphasize the importance of traditional factional boundaries. The condemnation of Hong Sun-ch'ol, Han Hyo, and An Ham-gwang revealed that Kim Il Sung's new purge would not affect the Soviet and Yan'an groups alone.

Unlike the 1955–1956 purges, the repressive measures that the regime imposed at the end of 1957 coincided with a new attack on private entrepreneurs. Government decree 102, issued in November, prohibited private grain trading after 1 December. While the Hungarian Embassy approved of that step, several diplomats accredited to the DPRK commented unfavorably on it, recalling the economic crisis of 1955. In any case, the decree produced an immediate effect on the life of private entrepreneurs. In a few weeks, approximately a thousand merchants and vendors joined cooperatives. In fact, they had no options, for only state employees and cooperative members received a rice ration.²⁷ With the exception of rice, the regime abolished rationing. This step resulted in a decline in the purchasing power of the population, and the authorities seem to have tried to alleviate its negative consequences to some extent. Wages were raised by 43 percent in 1957, and again by 10 percent in January 1958. Still, that increase proved insufficient to offset the simultaneous increase in living costs. At the end of the year a worker earned 3,500 to 4,000 won a month, whereas a woolen dress cost as much as 40,000–45,000 won. Only party and state cadres wore winter coats and leather shoes. Some 90 percent of the population could only afford rubber shoes.²⁸

On 3–6 March 1958, the KWP held its first National Conference. One of the conference's main functions was to sanction the dictator's earlier repressive acts. It did so by expelling Pak Ch'ang-ok, Pak Ui-wan, Kim Sung-hwa, Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, Kim Tu-bong, Pak Hun-il (another Yan'an Korean), O Ki-sop, and over a dozen other high-ranking cadres from the party. In contrast with the purge carried out in the previous September, this time the leadership made no attempt at concealing the punitive measures taken against Kim Tu-bong. His downfall indicated that Kim Il Sung no longer felt constrained by the potential disapproval of Beijing and Moscow. The conference also dismissed Yi Chu-yon from the post of chair of the CC Central Control Commission, and replaced the four other members of the commission (one of the new members would be Yi Tong-gon, a Soviet Korean). Following the conference, a CC plenum resolved to establish a special party committee in the KPA in order to reinforce the KWP's control over the armed forces.²⁹ Since a substantial number of Yan'an Koreans, such as Wang Yon and Chang P'yong-san, had held

high military ranks, the purges of 1957–1959 deprived the KPA of many qualified officers.³⁰

Crushed by the Hooves of Ch'ollima

Another major topic discussed at the party conference was the first five-year plan. The importance of this issue for the KWP leadership may be gauged from the fact that on 17 March Kim Il Sung went so far as to ask personally the assembled communist ambassadors to assist the DPRK in fulfilling the plan.³¹ In fact, the KWP leadership did its best to speed up economic development, once again subordinating the population's interests to the realization of extremely ambitious ideas. No matter how hard North Korean citizens had worked in the last five years, Kim seems to have thought that they should work even more intensely.

At the end of the summer, the CC called upon the population to fulfill the five-year plan ahead of schedule, and launched a mass campaign against “conservatism” and “technological backwardness” in order to achieve this object. This campaign, known as the Ch'ollima Movement (named for a legendary flying horse), was based on the massive use of “voluntary work.” Factory workers plastered the newly built prefabricated houses at night, since the planners of the Ministry of Construction did not allocate financial resources for plastering. All officials and students were sent to the villages for at least three to four weeks, sometimes even for one to two months, in order to help peasants gather in the crops. Local office and factory workers had to participate in the construction of irrigation systems, while housewives and schoolchildren were involved in road construction. Officials took turns at spending two to three weeks doing manual labor. Following a CC plenum held in September 1958, several ministries, such as the Ministry of Metallurgy and Engineering, resolved to transfer some 50 percent of their employees to direct production so as to alleviate the labor shortage, and thus increase industrial production. In September 1959, Hungarian diplomats visited a hydroelectric power station, and saw about five hundred women working in the knee-deep water. They learned that the wives of the workers employed there had “pledged” to clean the power plant of rubble.³²

Generally speaking, at the end of 1958, people had to do four to five hours of unpaid work every day, in addition to the eight-hour workday. Not counting the daily collective reading of newspapers, political meetings were held several times every week. As a consequence, officials usually went home as late as 10 P.M. On top of all this, the pace of the Ch'ollima Movement became

faster and faster. At a workers' congress on 13–26 September, Kim Il Sung declared that the five-year plan should be fulfilled in less than three and a half years. Factories “pledged” to double their 1958 output in 1959. Instead of installing new machines, they intended to increase production by introducing new methods and eliminating idle capacity.³³

In comparison to even more ambitious plans, doubling output in a year was actually a relatively modest promise. For instance, the agricultural cooperative of Kongch'ong village went so far as to “pledge” to produce 41 metric tons of rice and 10.8 metric tons of corn in 1959. Given that the village had harvested 4.5 metric tons of rice and 2.3 metric tons of corn per hectare in 1957, one wonders how the coop leaders intended to keep this promise. Kongch'ong was by no means an isolated case. At that time, most coops and state farms made similar wildly enthusiastic pledges, although, as a Hungarian diplomat named Gábor Dobozi pointed out on 30 January 1959, these aims were far beyond their capabilities.³⁴

The overly ambitious targets and “human wave” tactics of the Ch'ollima Movement bore a clear resemblance to the characteristics of the Chinese Great Leap Forward (GLF). On 20 November 1958, Kim Il Sung declared that the DPRK would catch up with Japan in 1959 in per capita output—an idea strikingly similar to Mao's slogan “Catch Up With and Outstrip Britain in 15 Years.”³⁵ Some North Korean practices were certainly inspired by Chinese methods. For instance, a KWP CC plenum held in June 1958 resolved to develop local industries so as to facilitate improved utilization of local resources. By September 1959, more than a thousand new small enterprises had been established in the provinces. As a consequence, the output of local industries reached 41 percent of consumer goods production and 27.5 percent of total industrial production. Similar to Chinese decentralization, these plants usually made consumer goods, although each province had to build a big steel foundry and a cement factory as well.³⁶ “Following the Chinese example, there is mushrooming growth of small local furnaces and cement kilns in the DPRK,” Dobozi noted on 10 November 1958. Agricultural co-ops and state farms were “encouraged” to construct small thermal power stations, which used cornstalks as fuel instead of coal.³⁷

The KWP leadership seems to have considered decentralization quite advantageous. First, in August and September 1958, a number of large factories began to operate, which placed a heavy burden on the current electricity supply and necessitated drastic cuts. Anxious to cope with this problem, the regime decided to build big hydroelectric power plants and numerous small power stations. While large-scale energy projects were extremely costly and time consuming, the rapid construction of small power stations and enterprises

apparently enabled the government to raise industrial production without overloading the electrical power grid.³⁸ Second, local industries employed many housewives and young people, and thus contributed to industrialization without aggravating the serious shortage of adult male workers. Third, local production of consumer goods enabled the government to increase investments in centrally managed heavy industry (a factor also emphasized by Joseph S. Chung). The provinces shouldered the burden of local industrialization. Instead of supporting them, Pyongyang skimmed off their revenues. The contribution of local industries to total state revenue increased from 9.2 percent in 1958 to 16.5 percent in 1959.³⁹

In sum, the regime wanted to develop both heavy and light industry without a major increase in investment. The Ch'ollima Movement required enormous effort by all strata of the hard-pressed society, but barely raised the living standards of the population.

To be sure, the dictatorship did take a few measures in order to improve living conditions. Government decree 95, issued on 14 August 1958, gave state employees, co-op members, students, and pensioners a premium equivalent to a monthly pay. Government decree 97, issued on 21 August, granted 200 million won in aid to war-torn Kangwon province for the construction of 500 classrooms, and pledged to give its inhabitants 1 million meters of fabric free of charge. The regime promised to build 20,000 apartments for the peasants of the province by the end of the five-year plan. During the allocation of apartments, preference was given to the relatives of those “patriots” who had died in the war.⁴⁰ On 14 August, the government cut the prices of seventy goods (sugar, alcoholic drinks, textiles, shoes, and so on) by 20.9 percent on average. The prices of several basic foodstuffs, such as rice, flour, and bread, remained stable, however, and Dobozi had good reason to report that the price reduction was “a political, rather than economic, issue.”⁴¹ Finally, in November, Pyongyang resolved to raise wages by some 40 percent on 1 January 1959.⁴²

Despite these steps, living standards improved only marginally. In mid-1959, skilled workers and technicians were entitled to a ration of 800 grams of cereal (half rice and half wheat) per day. Miners, employees, and children received 1,000, 700, and 350 to 400 grams, respectively.⁴³ To put these data in context, in 1946–1947, workers, officials, and their children had received 700, 500, and 400 grams,⁴⁴ respectively, while early in 1954, rations averaged 600 grams.⁴⁵ In other words, in 1959 North Korean citizens were not fed much better than in the wake of liberation or right after the Korean War. Significantly, contemporaneous North Vietnamese rations were not considerably lower than North Korean ones, although the DPRK's economic potential far surpassed that of the DRV. In 1959, North Vietnamese workers and officials received

600 to 1,000 and 500 grams of cereal, respectively, while children and students received 330 to 500 grams.⁴⁶

In all probability, the negative effects of the Ch'ollima Movement offset the wage increases and price cuts listed above. Peasants were once again forced to generate financial resources for industrialization. Due to the construction of irrigation systems and farm buildings, in 1958 the percentage of revenue that agricultural cooperatives had to retain as savings had risen to 30 percent, while the income of coop members declined. The household plots of coop members did not exceed 50 to 150 square meters, which inhibited the production of fodder. In any case, peasants were prohibited from keeping cattle, horses, sheep, and sows on these plots. Instead, the state exhorted them to raise piglets, rabbits, chicken, and dogs.⁴⁷ In 1958–1959, the regime equalized income and distribution within co-ops. Predictably, this measure caused much discontent among peasants.⁴⁸

As the local cadres worked hard to squeeze as much work and money out of the peasants as possible, rural taxpayers did their best to slip out of their grip by moving to the cities. This migration had various negative socioeconomic consequences, and in many cases failed to significantly improve the migrants' living standards. It further aggravated the rural labor shortage, while urban authorities were often incapable of providing the growing population with foodstuffs and housing.⁴⁹ Even if someone were lucky enough to get a new flat, he was not necessarily satisfied with it. The newly built five- and six-story prefabricated buildings, which had neither elevators nor the underfloor heating typical of Korean homes, were anything but popular. In such houses, as many as ten to twelve families had to share a lavatory.⁵⁰ As early as year-end 1958, foreign technical advisers and diplomats observed that workers and officials, exhausted by the Ch'ollima Movement, did their best to wriggle out of "voluntary work," and the productivity of such work had undergone a steep decline. "Voluntary work, which recurs more and more frequently, has become very burdensome for workers," Dobozi reported on 4 June 1959, "but they do not dare to speak about that." Political meetings met with near-complete indifference.⁵¹

Worse still, the achievements of the Ch'ollima Movement were not necessarily comparable to the population's efforts—a phenomenon overlooked by some authors.⁵² On the surface, these difficulties were not always visible. After all, in 1958, North Korean industry finally started to manufacture tractors, lorries, excavators, motorcycles, mechanical looms, cars, generators, and dozens of other machines, many of which were not produced in South Korea. Still, Pyongyang's overemphasis on the rapid development of machine tools caused various problems. Kim Il Sung's pet project required more technicians

and skilled workers than mining, metallurgy, and the chemical industry, and the shortage of skilled labor proved an insuperable obstacle.⁵³ As indicated before, many students recalled from abroad in 1956 had not yet completed their studies yet. Since their experiences in Hungary and elsewhere made several students critical of North Korean conditions, in 1957–1958 many former students were neither allowed to correspond with foreigners nor appointed to positions commensurate with of their qualifications.⁵⁴ Those who could participate in production often lacked practical experience. “The general qualification of the technicians currently available is well below the average,” a Hungarian diplomat noted on 18 July 1958.⁵⁵

As a consequence, newly built factories often made products of poor quality. As Chong Il-yong admitted in 1958, nearly every iron casting thus far produced was defective. The KWP leaders, fully aware of the difficulties but preferring quantity to quality, pressed on with mass production anyway.⁵⁶ Instead of accepting their responsibility for such technical problems, they shifted it on their hapless subjects. Accidents, which occurred quite frequently, were blamed on “sabotage.” While some workers, exhausted by the Ch’ollima Movement, may have indeed damaged machines in order to reduce the speed of work, a large part of the accidents must have resulted from inadequate qualifications of workers and technicians. The dictatorship, eager to expand the scope of the purge that had been going on since 1957, was more inclined to resort to repressive measures than to slacken the pace of industrialization. For instance, in the machine tool factory that the Hungarians were building in Kusong, several engineers were arrested for “sabotage” in 1958–1959. One of them, a certain Chong Chu-bo, seems to have committed suicide in custody.⁵⁷

In fact, political repression dramatically intensified in late 1958. The security service detained a lot of alleged “spies,” “saboteurs,” and “anti-party elements.” The Hungarians, who may have underrated the extent of the purges, estimated the number of arrests at several hundred.⁵⁸ Some of the detained were accused of having collaborated with the American and South Korean troops in 1950, while others were declared to be spies dropped behind North Korean lines in the post-1953 period. Since recently disclosed South Korean sources attest that the regime of Syngman Rhee did keep sending thousands of agents to the North throughout the 1950s, of whom very few managed to avoid the dragnet of the northern security service, some of the charges must have been valid enough. Still, the spy hunt also affected a lot of high-ranking officials who did not belong to the category of real collaborators. These functionaries included, among others, CC department heads Ko Hui-man, Kang Dok-il, and Hyon Gyong-min; deputy interior ministers Pak In-ik and Kim Sang-ho; deputy culture and education minister An Mak; Ch’oe Gyong-hak, a high-ranking

official of the Ministry of Defense; and Kim Kwang-ho, chair of the Committee of Housing and Construction.⁵⁹

These cadres fell from grace solely because either they or their relatives had remained in the areas occupied by the enemy in 1950 instead of fleeing before the oncoming American troops. The purge of such officials seems to have been a systematic policy, although in certain cases the victims' wartime behavior may have been just a pretext for their removal. Some of the replaced cadres were not tried, but "merely" dispatched to do physical labor. In addition to these measures, at the end of 1958 the dictatorship held a public trial in each province so as to "set an example." The courts usually meted out death sentences, and executions were also carried out in public. In a few cases, the incited audience went so far as to beat the victims unconscious.⁶⁰

While the spy hunt received wide coverage in the press, the purge of "factionalists" and "anti-party elements" did not. Whenever the Hungarian diplomats inquired after the replaced cadres, the North Korean officials dodged the question. This did not mean that the purge was kept from party members as well. In fact, the KWP leaders involved the entire party membership in the screening process. Party members assembled in groups had to practice both criticism and self-criticism. If a person proved unable to name two witnesses testifying that he had not taken a part in any anti-regime activity since the outbreak of the Korean War, his self-criticism would not be accepted. Since one was prohibited from naming relatives, friends, or acquaintances as his witnesses, the psychological pressure thus created became extremely intense.

It must have been very difficult to find someone bold enough to testify that a person whom he did not know closely, had *never* made any political "mistake" in the last eight years, not even in the chaos and turmoil of the Korean War. After all, if the authorities later concluded that the person in question was an "unreliable element," this would discredit his witnesses as well. While the number of formal expulsions seems not to have been very high,⁶¹ the nature of the purge certainly filled each KWP member with fear and a sense of insecurity. The second stage of the campaign took place in mid-1959. Groups of workers and officials had to criticize the persons who had been "revealed" during the previous investigations. Although most participants had not played any role in the selection of the victims, their speeches were used as "evidence" in the subsequent trials and executions.⁶² Ensuring that everyone became, at least to some extent, responsible for the regime's repressive acts, this practice sowed mutual fear, distrust, and enmity among North Korean citizens.

In February 1959, the interpreter for *Pravda's* correspondent to Pyongyang escaped to South Korea. This triggered a purge in the Foreign Ministry, or at least provided the top party leadership with a convenient pretext. The leaders

of the ministerial secretariat, the Protocol Department, the Press Department, and several other departments lost their positions by the end of March.⁶³ In May, an official told Dobozi that in recent months almost every departmental head and deputy departmental head had been replaced in the ministry. The occasional explanations the North Korean cadres gave to the Hungarian diplomats about these dismissals were quite varied, but in some cases they probably contained at least a part of the truth. For instance, Deputy Foreign Minister Ho Kuk-bong was depicted as a dangerous advocate of the “personality cult,” since he had allegedly intended to name villages and plants for persons. (He may have proposed not only Kim Il Sung’s name but other names as well.) Yi Chong-wang, a former counselor of the North Korean Embassy to Budapest, was sacked from the Foreign Ministry because of his reluctance to accept the hagiographical description of Kim Il Sung’s guerrilla struggles. The same happened to Mun Chae-su, hitherto a counselor in Beijing, who had “overrated Chinese methods, and undervalued and criticized Korean methods.”⁶⁴

The purges did not spare the KWP’s satellite parties either. Hong Ki-hwang and Kim Tal-hyon, the chairs of the KDP and the CYFP, respectively, were replaced in late 1958. In addition, thirteen SPA deputies lost their mandates in February 1959.⁶⁵ Those politicians who had once headed the Working People’s Party, the People’s Republican Party, the Popular Alliance, and other minor parties, such as Yi Yong, Kim Won-bong, Song Chu-sik, Han Chi-song, and Na Sung-gyu, suffered the same fate. The dictatorship also charged certain leaders of the Council for the Peaceful Unification of the Fatherland (e.g., Cho So-ang, Yun Ki-sop, and Om Hang-sop) with spying for Pyongyang’s enemies. Several of these people, including Han Chi-song, paid with their lives for the “crimes” they had allegedly committed.⁶⁶

The Shadow of China

The methods of these purges, like public executions, the relatively low number of expulsions, and the enforced participation of the entire party membership, had more in common with Maoist practices than with Soviet Stalinism. The repressive measures adopted by the North Korean dictatorship in 1957 to 1959 bore an obvious resemblance to the Chinese Anti-Rightist Movement. In fact, in some respects the scope of the North Korean purges even exceeded that of the Anti-Rightist Movement, which indicates that by 1958, Kim’s campaign against the Soviet and Yan’an groups had evolved into an all-out attack on any potential source of opposition. In the second half of 1958, the KWP leadership systematically purged the provincial party committees and PCs, replacing most of their chairmen. Chinese provincial institutions were not purged so

extensively, although in late 1957 and early 1958, the CCP leadership also dismissed “one provincial first secretary, four governors, ten vice-governors, and eighteen members of the standing committees of provincial Party committees.”⁶⁷ Another difference was that the North Korean press covered the purges much less extensively than the Chinese papers. This may have resulted from the fact that the North Korean purges were not preceded by a Hundred Flowers movement to be offset by a similarly intense “anti-rightist” press campaign.

“Satellite parties” came under fire not only in the DPRK but also in China and the DRV.⁶⁸ For example, in 1958, the North Vietnamese leaders decided to replace a few dissident leaders of the Democratic Party. Nevertheless, the contemporaneous North Vietnamese political situation was considerably different from that of China and North Korea. For instance, the purge of the Democratic Party was not accompanied by large-scale repressive measures against the VWP membership. Since the regime had barely recovered from the shock of the 1955–1956 purge, the Hanoi leaders had good reason not to launch a new attack on their party organs.⁶⁹

Both the North Korean and the Chinese regime found it convenient to resort to extensive punitive measures in order to overcome any obstacle to the Ch'ollima Movement and the GLF. In 1958, the North Korean dictatorship replaced a number of factory directors and the first secretaries of numerous factory party committees. The majority of these officials had headed enterprises that failed to fulfill the ambitious plan targets set by Pyongyang. Debates over construction in the capital and development of internal trade led to further purges. The cadres who had been outvoted in these disputes were routinely branded “anti-party elements.”⁷⁰ Following Peng Dehuai's criticism of the GLF at the Lushan Conference in August 1959, Mao launched a new campaign against “rightists” that affected over three million people.⁷¹

Despite these similarities between Chinese and North Korean internal and economic policies, the KWP leaders, like the die-hard nationalists that they were, were by no means eager to admit that Beijing's steps had ever produced any effect on their decisions. Blatantly disregarding the facts, Pyongyang insisted that the Ch'ollima Movement had actually been launched as early as December 1956, that is, more than a year before the GLF.⁷² “If the Korean comrades borrow some experience from the fraternal countries, they are loath to speak about it,” a Soviet diplomat named Yulin observed on 16 December 1959. He went on to say that when Moscow had pointed out that the KWP resolution on the development of local industries was patterned after a Chinese party decision, the North Koreans declared that “this is not a Chinese experience, we carry it out on the basis of our own ideas.”⁷³

While such claims rang all too hollow, Kim Il Sung did not adopt Chinese

methods indiscriminately. On 2 September 1958, he told Hungarian Ambassador Práth that labor-short North Korea, unlike China, could not rely on handicrafts in the production of consumer goods. Since Pyongyang was compelled to mechanize this branch of the industry, the KWP leadership had another good reason to step up the manufacturing of machine tools.⁷⁴ Nor did the DPRK copy the Chinese people's communes. Although the regime had amalgamated the country's 16,032 agricultural cooperatives into 3,843 larger co-ops by November 1958, the latter's size still remained much smaller than that of the Chinese communes.⁷⁵ On 15 March 1961, Czechoslovakian Ambassador Kousek told Práth that the KWP leaders had "planned to establish two people's communes, etc., but they soon realized the negative [effects] of this, and gave it up."⁷⁶

The main reason for Pyongyang's adoption of CCP methods seems to have been that Kim Il Sung "became convinced that Chinese innovations would 'work'—would enable North Korea to solve her own economic problems."⁷⁷ In any case, the mass mobilization tactics typical of the Ch'ollima Movement were hardly unprecedented in the DPRK. For instance, North Korean officials had to do some physical labor as early as the mid-1950s. The gradual withdrawal of Chinese troops, completed by October 1958,⁷⁸ aggravated the country's perennial labor shortage, and thus induced the KWP leaders to involve more and more people in production and construction.⁷⁹

The international environment also should be taken into consideration. In 1958–1959, the DPRK by no means stood alone in emulating the policies of the CCP. In this period, many foreign communist leaders, Asians and Europeans alike, felt that the GLF was a shining success, rather than a path to catastrophe. "Articles propagating Chinese agricultural achievements and experiences are strikingly numerous" in the North Vietnamese press, a Hungarian diplomat reported on 6 November 1958. He went on to say that the VWP leaders had recently mobilized cadres and students for physical work, and even ministers and deputy ministers participated in manual labor.⁸⁰

In these years, Moscow's East European satellites also drew inspiration from the GLF. For instance, in November 1958, the Albanian CC passed a resolution that compelled officials, including ministers, to do physical work.⁸¹ Actually, in 1958–1959, every East European leadership modified its plan targets upward to a considerable extent. Zhivkov, the Bulgarian dictator, went so far as to speak about a "leap" at a CC session held in November 1958.⁸² This raised eyebrows in the Kremlin. On 1 September 1959, a Soviet diplomat told a Hungarian colleague accredited to the USSR that "Bulgaria had been precipitate in the socialist reorganization of agriculture. They adopted the organizational forms of the Chinese communes in an ill-advised and quick way."⁸³

Chinese influence was not absent in cultural policies either. In 1958, Beijing launched a campaign that called on, and frequently compelled, peasants to write as many songs, poems, and short stories as possible.⁸⁴ Due to the mass recruitment of amateur writers, the membership of the Chinese Writers' Union jumped from 889 in 1957 to about 200,000 in 1958, and the number of amateur authors reached 4 million in Sichuan alone.⁸⁵ Similarly, on 23 May 1958, North Korean cultural tsar Han Sol-ya told the communist ambassadors that it was high time to recruit writers of worker and peasant origin.⁸⁶ By March 1961, nearly 1.25 million amateurs had joined literary and art circles in the DPRK.⁸⁷ In April 1959, the East German dictator Ulbricht also encouraged manual laborers to write about their experiences, and he sent writers to the factories in order to describe the life of workers.⁸⁸

In sum, the KWP leadership's adoption of Chinese methods was neither a unique case nor a clear manifestation of a North Korean desire to play off the PRC against the USSR. This is not to deny that interstate relations between Beijing and Pyongyang noticeably improved in these years, both in the economic and the military field. In 1957 and 1958, China gave the DPRK 38.2 million and 9 million rubles in credit, respectively, and pledged to build new factories.⁸⁹ The volume of Sino-DPRK trade began to rise dramatically. While in the mid-1950s, the value of goods exchanged by the two countries had barely exceeded one-tenth of the total volume of North Korean foreign trade, the latter accounted for 27.3 percent in 1957 and to 33 percent in 1958. In 1959, the value of North Korean exports to the PRC and the USSR stood at 52 million and 46 million rubles, respectively, although China's lead was only a temporary one.⁹⁰

The Chinese government also assisted North Korea in improving her defense capability. In 1958, the PRC gave twelve torpedo boats to the DPRK, and from 1958 to the early 1960s China provided hundreds of MiG-15 and MiG-17 fighter planes, as well as some Il-28 light bombers.⁹¹ Such military hardware contributions partly offset the withdrawal of PLA forces from the DPRK. On 5 February 1958, the North Korean government officially requested the removal of "all foreign troops from Korea." Later that month, Zhou Enlai visited the DPRK, and he arrived at an agreement with the KWP leadership about the complete withdrawal of Chinese troops from North Korea.⁹² This act was certainly a major step toward North Korea realizing full sovereignty, and Kim, in all probability, welcomed it.

Nevertheless, Sino-North Korean relations were still troubled by the case of the dissident Yan'an Koreans, like So Hui, who had sought refuge in the PRC. When a Chinese delegation headed by Guo Moruo arrived in the DPRK

on 30 September, it was given a cold reception, and the farewell speeches also proved very formal.⁹³ The CCP leaders, although they remained unwilling to extradite the dissidents, seem to have made every effort to establish conciliation with Kim Il Sung. When he visited the PRC on 21–28 November and 2–10 December,⁹⁴ the Chinese went so far as to tell him that the assistance that the CCP had received from Kim's guerrillas in the 1930s was far greater than the help Beijing gave to the DPRK during the Korean War. The Chinese crowds assembled to welcome the North Korean delegation even sang a song about Kim Il Sung in Korean.⁹⁵ The first open conflicts between Mao and Khrushchev, which took place in July and August, probably enhanced Chinese willingness to placate the North Korean dictator. In any case, the method adopted by the CCP leaders was ingenious enough. These eulogies were highly likely to please Kim, who never heard such flattering words from the Soviets.

Ironically, tiny North Korea was much less eager to praise her giant neighbor. "The Korean leaders do not appreciate sufficiently the help China gave to them during the Korean War and after the war," a Hungarian diplomat named Dobozi stated on 7 November 1958. He went on to point out that the speeches made by the KWP leadership hardly referred to the assistance North Korea had gotten from China.⁹⁶ North Korean nationalism indeed became more intense than ever during the Ch'ollima Movement. Cadres were extremely proud of North Korea's economic achievements. Party propaganda systematically downplayed the role that the "fraternal" countries played in the modernization of the DPRK. Certain high-ranking KWP officials boasted that North Korea would catch up with Czechoslovakia, the most industrialized country of the Soviet bloc, by 1960 or even by 1959. The achievements of the other "people's democracies" were withheld from the population. Private individuals could not subscribe to any foreign paper or magazine, and the newsreels sent by the "fraternal" countries frequently failed to pass the censor. If cadres made comparisons between the DPRK and the other "people's democracies," these were often quite unfavorable to Eastern Europe. This attitude irritated foreign technical advisers, preventing them from establishing friendly contacts with their Korean colleagues.⁹⁷

This is not to claim that the conflicts between North Koreans and foreign advisers were provoked exclusively by the former. As early as December 1950, the Hungarian Embassy to Beijing reported that two members of the Hungarian medical team in Korea were notorious drunkards, while two others treated Koreans rudely and contemptuously.⁹⁸ In 1960, the Hungarian Embassy to Pyongyang wrote a rather critical report about the party secretary in charge of the Hungarian specialists working in Kusong. "It is a sad fact," the diplomats

noted, “that he is a person who, if he is in a state of drunkenness, is inclined to throttle the Korean comrades . . . [H]e incessantly asserts, even in a state of intoxication, that he represents the party.”⁹⁹

Nationalism also influenced North Korean cultural policy. To the chagrin of the diplomatic corps, in 1957 hardly any foreign plays, operas, or musical compositions were performed in the DPRK. In 1958, however, Deputy Culture Minister An Mak, a prominent writer and a critic of narrow-minded nationalism, temporarily revitalized cultural life. He managed to establish good contacts with the diplomats accredited to North Korea, and therefore the Polish ambassador heard with regret that he had been replaced at year-end 1958. An Mak's downfall affected his family as well. His wife, the talented ballerina and choreographer Ch'oe Sung-hui, lost her seat in the SPA. The couple, who had largely controlled theatrical life in North Korea, was purged on the pretext that the ballet “Pak Hyon-chon” that they had staged lacked sufficient revolutionary optimism. However, the real reason of their removal may have been An Mak's disagreement with the isolationist and rigid cultural policies that the KWP leadership intended to pursue. In any case, in spring 1959 certain choreographers and ballet dancers proved courageous enough to declare that if furnaces (imitating the Ch'ollima Movement's backyard steelworks) were placed on stage, ballet would be inevitably degraded. The *Ch'ollima* ballet was a piece of propaganda aimed at glorifying the “successes” of the Ch'ollima Movement. Their protests were in vain, and the authorities “successfully” staged *Ch'ollima*. Musicians were instructed to favor traditional Korean instruments over European ones.¹⁰⁰

Sports competitions were no exception. Since North Korean referees blatantly favored Korean players, every visiting team left the DPRK discontentedly. In 1959, the trainers that the Soviet government had sent to Pyongyang constantly argued with their North Korean colleagues, who required Korean athletes to catch up with the records of the Soviet sportsmen as soon as possible but failed to provide them with adequate food. If the Soviets asked the Korean coaches to provide their athletes with a more nutritious diet and give them some sugar, they were told not to meddle in the internal affairs of the DPRK. The Soviet trainers kept emphasizing the importance of sugar, whereupon the Korean coaches did give a large amount of sugar to the athletes, but without any tea or coffee in which they could have dissolved it. Whenever the Soviet trainers complained of the questionable methods of their North Korean colleagues, both Ambassador Puzanov and superiors in Moscow instructed them to be patient, so as not to rock the boat of Soviet–North Korean friendship.¹⁰¹

Puzanov's instructions indicated an improvement of relations between Pyongyang and the Kremlin. Indeed, in 1958, the Hungarian diplomats did not

make mention of Soviet–North Korean squabbles as frequently as in 1955 through 1957. This rapprochement considerably influenced North Korean internal politics. By and large, the Soviets tolerated the purge that Kim Il Sung had launched in mid-1957, but at the same time they indirectly facilitated the escape of certain dissidents. On 16 December 1957, Pyongyang and Moscow signed an agreement that forbade dual citizenship, and thus reinforced North Korean sovereignty. In concrete terms, it meant that Soviet Koreans who wished to keep their posts in the DPRK had to relinquish their Soviet citizenship.

Since such a decision left a person entirely at the mercy of the North Korean authorities, it is hardly surprising that many Soviet Koreans, having observed the persecution of their leaders, opted for Soviet citizenship, and emigrated to the USSR.¹⁰² As noted by Lankov, in some cases, the North Korean authorities “encouraged” the Soviet Koreans to leave for the USSR.¹⁰³ In a sense, this solution suited everybody. The Soviet Koreans found a place where they were safe from the claws of the North Korean security service, Kim Il Sung got rid of his potential opponents without the risk of annoying the Kremlin, and the CPSU leadership was not compelled to turn a blind eye to the imprisonment or execution of its former Korean clients.

Other less well-known targets of the purge proved less fortunate. The Soviets were by no means interested in saving more than a relatively small number of people, and their Hungarian colleagues were not too critical of the purge either. While the Hungarian Embassy admitted that the North Korean authorities “may have committed some excesses,” it stressed that “the security organs did good work in arresting spies and subversives. . . . It was necessary to take harsher measures against spies and counter-revolutionary elements, since last year [1958] very serious acts of sabotage occurred in the important plants and mines.”¹⁰⁴ Anxious to guarantee the consent of the “fraternal” diplomats, the North Koreans invited the Hungarian experts employed in Kusong to a public trial staged in December 1958. Chief interpreter Hong Ki-t’ae stated that the arrested saboteurs had confessed—presumably under torture—that they wanted to assassinate the Hungarian specialists.¹⁰⁵

Paradoxically, on a few occasions complaints made by “fraternal” diplomats and experts against certain North Korean practices accelerated the purges. In mid-1958, the Soviets pointed out that many machines contributed by the “fraternal” countries were idle, whereupon the KWP leadership promptly replaced two deputy ministers in the Engineering Industry Ministry.¹⁰⁶ Around that time, the slow pace of the construction of the Kusong machine tool factory led to debates between the Hungarian specialists and the North Koreans. The Hungarians failed to deliver certain facilities on time, but they managed to put the blame for the delay on the Koreans by emphasizing that the Korean technicians

had not received additional vocational training in Hungary. They should have thought twice before scapegoating their hapless Korean colleagues. More interested in sniffing out “unreliable elements” than in improving the qualification of technicians, the North Korean authorities instructed the public prosecutor’s office to launch an investigation, accusing the Korean engineers of sabotage.¹⁰⁷

No matter how willing the embassies were to tolerate the purges, they were also affected by them. Similar to measures taken in 1954, the North Korean Foreign Ministry called on the Hungarian Embassy to dismiss several of its Korean employees, including two Russian interpreters, two stokers, a janitor, and a cleaner, whom the authorities accused of “political unreliability.” Having removed these people on inconceivable pretexts, the North Koreans flatly refused to replace them with people who had spent time in Hungary. In a few cases, Ambassador Práth personally intervened in behalf of the employees to be discharged, but to no avail. Worse still, certain Korean employees of the embassy kept a close watch on the Hungarian diplomats and their North Korean visitors, and they even tapped the diplomats’ telephones.¹⁰⁸ Despite such problems, Práth told Budapest that “in view of the circumstances here and the national pride of the Korean comrades, I would not consider sensible to speak openly with the Korean Embassy over there about the aforesaid issues.”¹⁰⁹

While the “fraternal” countries rarely, if ever, reciprocated Pyongyang’s restrictive measures, they did refuse to fulfill a few North Korean “requests.” As mentioned previously, on 1 January 1959, the government raised wages by some 40 percent. Since the salaries of the Koreans employed by the diplomatic corps were much higher than average North Korean wages, the embassies could not afford to implement the same wage increase. They grudgingly raised the salaries of their employees to some extent, but they did their best to cut expenses. They did so in a way that did not particularly suit the North Koreans. Namely, the Soviet and Czechoslovakian embassies reduced the number of their Korean domestics, and the Chinese Embassy went so far as to dismiss all Korean employees.¹¹⁰

In the last analysis, and in contrast with the situation in 1955–1956, in 1958–1959 Kim Il Sung did not need to offset his purges with economic concessions in order to please Moscow and isolate his victims from the population. In fact, the wave of repression that swept the country coincided with the Ch’ollima Movement, a campaign even more ambitious than the three-year plan. These events revealed how unrestrained Kim’s power had become by 1958.

In reality, both political terror and forced industrialization were cornerstones of Kim’s strategy, a policy designed with the aim of reducing Pyongyang’s economic dependence on the communist great powers and of depriving them of

their potential clients and informants. The purges essentially eliminated the Soviet and Yan'an factions, and the Ch'ollima Movement reinforced the autarkic tendencies so characteristic of Pyongyang's economic policies. North Korean energy policies constituted a good example for this economic nationalism. Anxious to reduce the DPRK's dependence on the coal and oil imported from China and the Soviet Union, a KWP CC plenum held in September 1958 passed a resolution on construction of electric furnaces in order to take advantage of North Korea's rich supply of electrical energy. In August 1959, the government resolved to substitute anthracite for oil and coal used in making coke in transportation and metallurgy, although using anthracite as truck fuel resulted in frequent engine breakdown.¹¹¹

In light of the nationalist motivation of Kim's actions, it appears quite paradoxical that he could easily justify them by referring to the steps taken by the other "fraternal" countries. Actually, neither the Ch'ollima Movement nor the purges were completely out of tune with contemporary East European policies. In the late 1950s, every East European dictatorship embarked on ambitious development plans, and repression began to intensify everywhere in the communist camp, even in those countries whose leaders were relatively moderate. For instance, in June 1958, the Kádár regime executed Imre Nagy and several other leaders of the 1956 revolution. Between October 1957 and May 1958, the Polish Communist Party was subjected to a purge that resulted in the expulsion of over 15 percent of its members.¹¹²

While Kim Il Sung's repressive practices seem to have been much harsher than the measures taken by the East European regimes, under the circumstances he could achieve his aims quite easily, since Soviet criticism was much less likely to occur than it had been the case in 1955–1956. This was, however, the last occasion that the policies pursued by the various communist countries were in such conformity with each other. The widening Sino–Soviet rift would soon affect the Soviet bloc and on Soviet–North Korean relations. In fact, Beijing began to woo the North Korean dictator as early as 1958. In fall 1958, Guo Moruo declared that "China can learn a lot from the Korean people,"¹¹³ a phrase Deng Xiaoping would reiterate at the fourth congress of the KWP.

6. Breezes of Reform

While Kim Il Sung obviously disagreed with Soviet de-Stalinization, he did prove capable of implementing certain reforms of his own free will. Pyongyang thus managed to avoid an economic catastrophe comparable to the disaster caused by the Great Leap Forward. The KWP leaders reacted to South Korea's April Revolution more flexibly than it is usually assumed, and they initially attempted not to take sides in the Sino-Soviet conflict. In 1960, Kim Il Sung even seems to have preferred Soviet diplomatic methods to Chinese ones. On the other hand, the events that took place in South Korea and the communist camp also reinforced Pyongyang's isolationism and cultural nationalism. The economic reforms introduced in 1959–1961 remained rather superficial, and the temporary halt that occurred in the persecution of potential opponents fell short of a real political liberalization.

“They Already Speak About the Mistakes”

Early in 1959, one could not yet expect that the North Korean regime would re-examine its policies in the near future. At that time, Kim Il Sung still clung to his ambitious economic plans, which occasionally caused conflicts with the Soviets and other communist countries. At the National Congress of Agricultural Cooperatives, held in January 1959, the dictator declared that grain production had to reach 7 million metric tons in a few years. Since North Korea's grain crop had totaled only 2.4 million tons in 1944, rice output would have to increase from 3 metric tons per hectare to 10 to 15 tons in two to three years in order to fulfill that plan.¹ Such goals were likely to “necessitate” the continued use of the methods characteristic of the Ch'ollima Movement. Hungarian diplomat Dobozi thought that the regime would probably eliminate the household plots of the peasantry by the end of 1959, a scheme he heartily disagreed with.²

Dobozi's critical view on North Korean economic policies was shared by the top Soviet leadership. Following the Twenty-first Congress of the CPSU, held from 27 January to 5 February, Khrushchev discussed the DPRK's first five-year plan with Kim Il Sung in Moscow. As a Soviet diplomat named Yulin put it,

Comrade Khrushchev did not agree with this plan, and made clear that these plans were not realistic, because they lacked an economic base. One could not base such a huge plan only on the dynamism and enthusiasm of the workers, Comrade Khrushchev said. He censured the Korean comrades for taking no account of the possibility of cooperation with the other fraternal countries, and for wanting to produce everything by themselves. . . . Comrade Khrushchev's opinion was disregarded, and Kim Il Sung maintained that they were able to fulfill the plan. Khrushchev told him that they [the Soviet leaders] also wished to fulfill their Seven-year Plan in five years, but if that was not possible, one had to acknowledge it.³

Khrushchev's critical comments were undoubtedly well-founded. For instance, the North Koreans planned to construct two synthetic fiber factories with a combined annual capacity of 50,000 metric tons, whereas such important producers like the Netherlands and Belgium had manufactured 43,000 and 28,000 metric tons of synthetic fiber, respectively, in 1958.⁴

Nevertheless, these comments also reflected Soviet economic priorities, which renders their objectivity somewhat suspect. The stress that Khrushchev laid on international economic cooperation revealed that the Soviet leadership intended to shape the course of the DPRK's economic development. The Kremlin wanted to supply Siberia with canned food, fruit, and vegetables imported from North Korea.⁵ The value of North Korean food exports indeed increased sixteen-fold between 1956 and 1959, while that of imported food only tripled.⁶ Moscow's insistence on North Korean food exports certainly caused resentment in Pyongyang.⁷ Since the USSR and the East European countries had to import nonferrous metals from the DPRK in order to meet the demand of their industries, the Kremlin repeatedly told Pyongyang not to develop machine tools at the expense of the mining industry. Thus, the KWP leaders had good reason to think that Soviet criticism of their policies was motivated by self-interest.

The aforesaid debate between Khrushchev and Kim did not prevent them from signing an agreement about Soviet technical assistance on 15 March, the amount of which was as high as 500 million old rubles. Moscow undertook construction of a thermopower station and four factories, while Pyongyang was

to repay that assistance by exporting goods to the USSR.⁸ “The Soviet government, though it was aware of the inappropriate economic policy [pursued by Kim Il Sung], decided to help the DPRK with everything,” Yulin stated. “They follow the principle that if they [the North Koreans] want to solve the problems by themselves, they should realize the mistakes on the basis of their own experiences.”⁹ In fact, the KWP leadership began to re-examine its economic policies as early as the spring of 1959, although the process of re-evaluation proved quite slow.

The first public signs of a change appeared in April. At a provincial party meeting held in this month, Kim Il Sung declared that one should involve “useful elements” of the pre-1945 intelligentsia in the modernization of the country, rather than slight and alienate them.¹⁰ Since such discrimination was probably quite widespread during the all-encompassing purge that swept the DPRK in the previous year, this statement implied the emergence of a new approach. Declarations of this kind became more numerous in May. On 24 May, an official of the North Korean Foreign Ministry told Dobozi that in the months past the quality of construction had noticeably improved. On the orders of Kim Il Sung, he stated, the building of single-room flats had come to an end, and the new flats were composed of two rooms. At an extended session of the CC Presidium, held on 4–5 May, the KWP leaders concluded that due to the problems which had cropped up in the production of iron and steel, the five-year plan could not be fulfilled by 15 August 1959. True, the new deadline they appointed—31 December—did not prove realistic either, but the resolution indicated that Kim was becoming aware of the growing economic difficulties.¹¹

The existing literature on the DPRK usually notes that the regime declared 1960 a “buffer year.” It is less well-known that the birth of this conception predated 1960 by at least eight months. On 8 May, Kim Il Sung told a Hungarian party and government delegation headed by Ferenc Münnich that the KWP leadership wanted to designate 1960 as a “buffer year,” because the last three years had been very exhausting for the workers.¹² In the same month, Pyongyang asked the Kremlin to postpone loan repayments. Since most foreign aid programs were to be completed in 1959–1960, the construction of new factories, envisaged in the country’s next economic plan, precluded any large-scale credit repayment. The North Korean leaders also emphasized that they intended to raise the living standards of the population. Moscow did consent to a four-year postponement, which proved more than that the North Koreans had asked for.¹³ Actually, it is not impossible that the new North Korean stress on the increasing of living standards was partly motivated by the view that such a guideline would please Khrushchev, and thus facilitate Pyongyang’s efforts to get further economic assistance from the USSR.

The re-examination of previous policies became more and more concrete and far-reaching. In May, Kim Il Sung summoned Hyon P'il-hun, then editor-in-chief of *Nodong Sinmun*, and subjected him to a barrage of criticism. The press should assist the regime in the correction of deficiencies instead of exaggerating the country's achievements, Kim thundered. Some articles had boasted of that North Korea was already building communism, a claim the dictator described as irresponsible.¹⁴ At an extended plenum held in June, the CC declared the improvement of living standards, including the development of animal husbandry, the most important task of 1960.¹⁵

Soon afterward the provincial party committees also held extended sessions. Kim, who participated in several of these plenums, launched a fierce attack on "bureaucratism." The style of this criticism resembled the language and conceptions of Chinese communist political thought, which the dictator had thoroughly internalized in the 1930s and during the Korean War. He condemned those officials who had resorted to "commandism" and behaved arrogantly while dealing with the population. The press admitted that due to such practices, "the relationship between the government organs and the masses has worsened" in the recent period. An editorial of *Nodong Sinmun*, published on 4 July, stated that "we have reached a new stage in the construction of socialism," and thus it was time to change the working methods of officials. Commenting on cadres who neglected the problems of workers, the press even declared that "those laws which are harmful to the workers should not be put into effect automatically." Certain local leaders, *Nodong Sinmun* pointed out, had doctored statistics in order to report the fulfillment of plan targets to their superiors. For instance, the data about the last crop turned out to be embellished.¹⁶

Such admissions constituted a quite rare phenomenon in the North Korean media, both before or after 1959. Dobozi was eager to comment on this new development. "In contrast with the previous situation, they already speak about the mistakes," he reported. However, the fact that the condemnation of bureaucratic malpractices was directed almost exclusively against the People's Committees must be taken into consideration. By and large, it spared party committees,¹⁷ which indicated that Kim did not have real political liberalization in mind. Since party committees were more influential than PCs, any criticism that remained confined to the latter would inevitably become quite superficial.

The campaign against "bureaucratism" seems to have been motivated by Kim's desire of blaming the lower-level cadres for the hardships the population had to endure. Directing his attacks against the PCs, he could give himself out to be a benevolent ruler without endangering the regime's stability. The criticism of the PCs probably constituted an integral part of the dictatorship's efforts to strengthen party organs at the expense of the state apparatus. In

August, the KWP leadership abolished the Ministry of State Control. In October, the cadre departments were similar abolished, and the party committees operating in the ministries took over personnel affairs. On the other hand, these measures also revealed that the intraparty situation finally started to consolidate. The all-embracing party purge launched in 1957 indeed came to an end in 1959. Thus, the official admission of “mistakes,” no matter how selective it was, should not be underestimated.¹⁸

On 20 July, Yi Chong-ok, then deputy chair of the KWP CC, informed the communist ambassadors about North Korea’s current economic problems, highlighting the role that misguided previous policies had played in the creation of these difficulties. The DPRK would fulfill its first five-year plan by the end of the year, Yi declared. Since the leadership designated 1960 as a “buffer year” so as to let workers recover their strength, the second five-year plan would begin in 1961. Because the production of cement, coal, iron, steel, and electric power, as well as the development of mining industry, lagged behind, the economy could not meet the demands of the overdeveloped metallurgical industry. Rapid industrialization had necessitated the export of various much-needed goods at the expense of domestic consumption, Yi pointed out. As a consequence, workers complained of the shortage of clothing, food, furnishings, and housing. In 1960, he stressed, the government would slacken the pace of industrialization and reduce industrial investments in order to solve the problems of transport, coal mining, power generation, and food supply.¹⁹

Commenting on Yi’s speech, the ambassadors unanimously noted that they had never heard “such a frank, bold, and critical account” from any North Korean leader. Still, the new approach of the KWP leadership failed to improve Soviet–North Korean relations to a great extent. Quite the contrary, in the coming months new conflicts took place between Pyongyang and Moscow, this time over a problem that had lain dormant for years. Kim Il Sung raised the issue of Korean unification.

“We Will Unite Korea Next Year”

As discussed in Chapter 2, the war-torn DPRK offered economic assistance to the ROK as early as 1954. This proposal, which the Soviet and Hungarian ambassadors rightly called irresponsible, earned only mockery in the South. Despite that failure, in the 1955–1958 period, Pyongyang had repeatedly appealed to Seoul for an economic and cultural exchange. The North Korean leaders even proposed a mutual troop reduction and the conclusion of a nonaggression pact between the DPRK and the ROK, but to no avail. As Hak-Joon Kim notes, “all the proposals were rejected by the ROK.”²⁰

Actually, it is unlikely that Kim Il Sung had hopes of eliciting a favorable response from Syngman Rhee. Even if Rhee had not been a diehard anticommunist as early as 1945, the North Korean attack in 1950 would have made him one. No matter how softly Pyongyang spoke in the mid-1950s, the peaceful tone of its public statements could not erase the terrible memories of the war in the South, just as the North did not forget the bitter experience of U.S. bombing and U.S.–South Korean occupation. Thus, the aforesaid declarations must have served primarily propaganda purposes. They were aimed at contrasting the cooperative approach of the northern government with the militant statements made by Rhee and other South Korean leaders who occasionally still spoke about a “March to the North.” Another possible motivation was to pay lip service to Khrushchev’s policy of “peaceful co-existence” without making any actual concessions to Seoul and Washington.

Still, Pyongyang’s interest in South Korean issues seems to have increased in 1958–1959. On 23 May 1958, Han Sol-ya declared that the DPRK’s cultural policy had hitherto neglected South Korean literature. It had been wrong to assume that South Korean literature was merely a tool of imperialism, North Korea’s cultural tsar stated, for there were also several progressive writers in the South, persons who deserved Pyongyang’s support.²¹ In May 1959, Kim Il Sung told Hyon P’il-hun that the articles the North Korean press published about the ROK should analyze the negative characteristics of the South Korean situation instead of simply condemning them.²² At that time, the CC resolved to establish a few experimental “communist colleges” in order to train cadres of South Korean origin. These institutions did not serve only educational and economic purposes. They also selected cadres “suitable for leading the party and the democratic organs in South Korea after unification.”²³

Since at that time the Rhee regime still seemed to be firmly in the saddle, Pyongyang’s preparations for establishing a communist administration in the South appeared quite strange, but the practical nature of these measures indicated that Kim took the issue rather seriously. Apart from nationalist motives, the dictator’s renewed interest in unification may also have had some economic reasons. On 11 November, Romanian Ambassador Dimitru Olteanu told his Hungarian counterpart Práth that national unification was crucial for both North and South Korea. North Korean industrial products, because of their poor quality, were not suitable for export, and thus the North badly needed the industrially underdeveloped South as a captive market.²⁴

At a cocktail party Práth gave on 20 August, Deputy Premier Yi Chu-yon openly confronted Soviet Chargé d’Affaires Pelishenko with the issue of Korean unification: “In Comrade Pelishenko’s opinion, when will North and South Korea unite?” “The question obviously . . . took Comrade Pelishenko

by surprise,” a Hungarian diplomat named Karsai noted. The Soviet chargé d’affaires eventually gave the following answer:

[T]he peaceful unification of Korea would take place in a historically short time. . . . [I]t would not unite today, tomorrow, next year or in a few years but rather in the course of the worldwide triumph of the socialist idea. The existence of the socialist world system led by the Soviet Union, the rapid expansion of popular movements of [national] liberation in South-east Asia, Africa and the Latin American states, and the unprecedented anti-war mood and desire for peace of the world’s peoples were all facts which made possible the worldwide triumph of the socialist idea in a historically short time, Comrade Pelishenko stressed.²⁵

Yi failed to comment on Pelishenko’s reply. In all probability, he felt that Moscow did not care at all about Korean unification. The North Korean leaders “may harbor an idea that the division of Korea was caused by the Soviet Union, and thus its unification also depends solely on it,” Karsai concluded.²⁶

The post-Stalin Soviet leadership indeed preferred the maintenance of status quo in Korea to a risky confrontation. This Soviet approach had much in common with that of the United States, for Washington also did its best to prevent Rhee from provoking a new war between North and South.²⁷ Competition with the United States induced the Kremlin to give Pyongyang economic and military support, but the Soviet leaders were contented with protecting the “socialist achievements” (a term used by Soviet Ambassador Suzdalev) of the DPRK. Following the Korean War, and also in the late 1950s, Moscow repeatedly proposed to Pyongyang to keep Korean People’s Army (KPA) numbers at 250,000 (as opposed to the 720,000 of the ROK Army) on the grounds that the troops the Kremlin stationed in the Soviet Far East constituted a greater force than that, and Soviet units would protect the DPRK against any aggression.²⁸

If one viewed the “socialist camp” as a coherent supranational unit, this military logic made sense, but from the perspective of the nation-state it appeared merely as a manifestation of Soviet domination over smaller communist countries. Kim Il Sung, like the narrow-minded nationalist he was, must have regarded that approach as inimical to the national interests of the DPRK.

Significantly, in June 1959, the dictator replaced Foreign Minister Nam Il and Deputy Foreign Minister Pak Kil-yon, two of the few Soviet Korean leaders who had survived the purges of 1955 to 1958. While the former could keep his seat in the Politburo, the latter soon left for the USSR. Nam Il was succeeded by Pak Song-ch’ol, a one-time comrade in arms of Kim. Czechoslovakian Ambassador Kohousek concluded that Nam Il’s replacement indicated the

emergence of a political faction that intended to pursue a more nationalistic foreign policy. In fact, Kim Il Sung had summoned Nam Il before his dismissal, and severely criticized his work. The foreign minister, Kim claimed, had subordinated the foreign policy of the DPRK to the wishes of the Soviet Embassy. Still, the dictator was careful enough to tell a Soviet leader, Andrei Kirilenko, that Nam Il might be promoted to premier a bit later.²⁹ He was indeed appointed deputy premier, and remained, at least formally, in the top leadership until his accidental death in the 1970s. Kim Il Sung probably kept him as a symbol of Pyongyang's continued willingness to maintain good relations with her big northern neighbor.

Adding insult to injury, on 15–27 September, Khrushchev visited the United States, the chief protector of South Korea, in order to facilitate Soviet–American rapprochement. Pyongyang's reaction to that event was “highly favorable,” Chin O. Chung claims. “*Nodong Shinmun* reported the activities of Khrushchev in the United States comprehensively.”³⁰ This interpretation does not correspond to the facts. On 16 December, a Soviet diplomat named Yulin told Dobozi, a Hungarian colleague, that “while the world's press devoted whole pages to the reports which dealt with Comrade Khrushchev's visit to America, the Korean press published nothing, or just very short news . . . , about it. It was only the intervention of the [Soviet] Embassy that ensured that subsequently the Korean press dealt appropriately with the visit.”³¹

Kim Il Sung certainly considered the Soviet Union an unreliable ally. Having gone to the United States first, instead of the PRC, Khrushchev also enraged the CCP leaders with whom he met on 2 October.³² Three days before Khrushchev left for the United States, the DPRK had sided with China with regard to the Sino–Indian border dispute. Since that statement followed a Soviet declaration of neutrality in this matter,³³ it may have been a veiled expression of Kim's dissatisfaction with Moscow's foreign policy, for at that time the DPRK had little reason to be hostile toward New Delhi. As late as 31 August, North Korean ambassador to Budapest, Hong Tong-ch'ol, had emphasized that Pyongyang's relations with India were improving. He also stated that North Korea intended to carry on with this policy.³⁴ On top of it all, Kim Il Sung soon had another reason to feel slighted. Having visited the United States, Khrushchev did not go to the DPRK.

Kim's concern about Pyongyang's international prestige explained both his eagerness to invite the Soviet leader to the DPRK and his anger about the cancellation of the visit. The KWP leaders, Hungarian Ambassador Práth reported in January 1959, felt particularly aggrieved if any “fraternal” country failed to accept their invitation to, say, the National Congress of Cooperatives.³⁵ In February, Khrushchev allegedly promised Kim Il Sung that he would visit the

DPRK that fall. The North Koreans took that for granted. Although Soviet Ambassador Puzanov kept repeating that he did not know when Khrushchev would come, they were busily preparing for the visit from the summer on. Even the ministers' wives had to participate in the campaign aimed at tidying up the streets and houses of Pyongyang. Anxious not to offend their high-ranking guest, the authorities went so far as to remove a Stalin relief from the Liberation Monument. From 28 September on, the mobilized youth rehearsed the parade every day, since the KWP leaders expected Khrushchev to arrive in October.³⁶

They soon suffered a bitter disappointment. On the occasion of his afore-said visit in the PRC, Khrushchev told Kim Il Sung that he would not go to the DPRK after all. On 2 October, Puzanov told the Polish ambassador that such a visit "would not accord with the statement Comrade Khrushchev made in the United States, namely, that we should lay stress upon those things which bring us closer to each other, rather than the ones which divide us."³⁷ In light of the fact that the Soviet leader proved quite willing to visit several small East European communist countries (including even tiny Albania with which he had hardly been on good terms since 1955), his reluctance to go to North Korea must have been based on a rather strong dissatisfaction with Kim Il Sung's domestic and foreign policies.

Khrushchev's unexpected decision left the indignant KWP leaders with the awkward task of turning the celebration into a non-event. Among others, they had to tell the workers, who had spent a lot of time cleaning factories and repairing roads, that their efforts were futile. The Soviet Embassy did not make it easier for them. Soviet diplomats told their Hungarian colleagues that "[t]hey have only themselves to blame if they were offended by that"; "as they make their bed so they must lie on it"; "they must realize that in the present international situation Comrade Khrushchev's visit to Korea would further increase, rather than ease, the tension"; and "at least they have tidied up many places."³⁸

Having been offended by the Soviet leader, Kim Il Sung turned his attention to the issue of Korean unification with a vengeance. The SPA passed a resolution that declared the Korean question the most important problem in the world. On 28 October, an official of the DPRK Embassy in Budapest informed a Hungarian colleague about a statement recently made by the head of the Foreign Ministry's South Korean desk. The KWP CC, the department head said, "regards the situation as ripe for the unification of the country" (emphasis in the original). They "are considering accomplishing it in the '60s," the North Korean official declared.³⁹

This optimistic statement was by no means an isolated one. On 10 December, the North Korean head of the Sino-North Korean Armistice Commission

had a conversation with Dobozi at a dinner party organized by the East German Embassy. The KPA general, “obviously in a state of intoxication,” complained of the constant U.S. “provocations” in the area of Panmunjom, a claim later disputed by the Polish member of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission. The general went on to say that North Korea would soon put an end to such provocations, for they “would unite Korea next year.”⁴⁰ On 4 February 1960, Paek Chong-won, the third secretary of the DPRK Embassy in Budapest, told the Hungarian Foreign Ministry that the party leadership was of the opinion that due to various factors, it was possible to unite Korea in the coming years. Among other things, he called the Hungarians’ attention to the increasing tension between South Korea and Japan.⁴¹

Was the North Korean leaders’ optimism completely unreasonable? At first sight it appears that it was, since Washington still stationed troops in South Korea. At the eighty-eighth session of the Armistice Commission, held in 1958, the U.S. side declared that the withdrawal of Chinese troops from the DPRK would not be succeeded by the removal of U.S. troops from South Korea.⁴² Moreover, in January 1958, the United States deployed nuclear cannons and nuclear-tipped Honest John missiles in the ROK. While Seoul gradually reduced ROKA manpower, it enhanced its air force.⁴³

Thus, the North Korean leaders seem to have been emboldened by economic and political, rather than military, developments. Significantly, on 8 May 1959, Kim Il Sung told the Hungarian delegation headed by Münnich that by 1958, the DPRK had become “strong enough” to receive the Koreans willing to leave Japan.⁴⁴ The rapid development of North Korean industry probably made the KWP leaders think that the DPRK would soon overtake the ROK in every respect. Indeed, in 1958, the South Korean economy entered a period of stagnation, which stood in a sharp contrast with the 5 percent per annum rate of economic growth that had characterized the 1953–1957 period. U.S. aid flows began to decline in 1958, and it looked as if the ROK would be unable to survive without the U.S. economic life jackets. Exports stagnated throughout the 1953–1960 period, while imports grew.⁴⁵ In contrast, in 1959, the value of North Korean exports surpassed the 1953 level by 271 percent, even though this growth also failed to keep pace with that of imports.⁴⁶

Moreover, Kim Il Sung probably believed that the dictatorship of the aging Syngman Rhee would soon crumble. This much is certain: in 1959, the leaders of the Democratic Party (DP), the main opposition party in the South, felt that “power was lying just around the corner, waiting for them to pick it up.”⁴⁷ Actually, in the 1958 National Assembly (NA) election, which proved as fraudulent as the previous ones, the DP managed to obtain as much as 34.2 percent of the popular vote, whereas in 1954 it had won only 7.9 percent of the votes.⁴⁸

The party now held one-third of the seats in the NA, enough to prevent Rhee from remaining in power through constitutional amendment.⁴⁹ These developments did not weaken the dictatorship to any great extent, since the NA had much less actual influence under Rhee than the police or the military. Still, the opposition gradually undermined Rhee's power.

One of the events that seem to have emboldened Pyongyang was the large-scale return of Koreans from Japan in 1959–1960. On 13 August 1959, the North Korean Red Cross and its Japanese counterpart concluded an agreement in Calcutta about the issue of repatriation.⁵⁰ Despite intense South Korean propaganda, thousands decided to repatriate to the DPRK, rather than the ROK. Thus, the North scored a spectacular propaganda victory over the South, and it could boast of the superiority and attractiveness of its system. On 4 February 1960, Paek Chong-won told the Hungarian Foreign Ministry that the Rhee regime had suffered a loss of prestige, since it failed to prevent the repatriation of Koreans to the North. As a consequence, he noted, Rhee had replaced his foreign minister.⁵¹

The Soviets also got involved in the issue of repatriation. Most unusually, Kim T'ae-hui, then a counselor of the North Korean Foreign Ministry, officially appealed to the "fraternal" countries for help. The North Korean Red Cross signed an agreement with a Soviet shipping company in order to bring home the repatriates, while China and Mongolia made financial contributions.⁵² As a Soviet diplomat named Yulin put it,

from 13th December on, a state of emergency was declared in South Korea, and the navy was put on alert in case there would not be any other way to prevent the arrival of the repatriates' ship in North Korea. The captain of the first ship declared before sailing that if the ship were attacked, they would regard it as an attack on the flag of the Red Cross and also as an attack on the Soviet flag. According to the *Seoul T'ongyang* news agency, on 14th December the American commander of the UN troops stationed in South Korea gave an order that prohibited the UN soldiers stationed in South Korea from participating in any action directed against the repatriates. He also instructed the South Korean Minister of Defense to take similar measures with regard to the South Korean army.⁵³

Although Moscow played a substantial role in the repatriation of Koreans, the main goals of Soviet diplomacy did not accord with those of North Korean foreign policy. Khrushchev's preoccupation with the German question implied a comparatively neglectful approach to Far Eastern problems. In essence, he required North Korea to support his policies with regard to Germany, but he

refused to commit himself to the cause of Korean unification. On 1 July 1960, the Czechoslovakian ambassador told Práth that “both China and Korea are so much occupied with their ‘own’ international issues [Taiwan and South Korea, respectively] that it is difficult and awkward for them to accept the German question as the central problem of international life.”⁵⁴

The declarations of the international communist conferences held in Moscow in 1957 and 1960 indeed highlighted the “special situation” of the GDR. The Ulbricht regime, similar to the North Korean leadership, considered itself entitled to preferential treatment in terms of economic relations and other issues.⁵⁵ This led to a conflict of interests between Pyongyang and East Berlin. On 14 January 1960, GDR Ambassador Kurt Schneidewind told Práth that an East German government delegation headed by Heinrich Rau would soon arrive in the DPRK in order to “make the leading Korean comrades understand that today the main threat to peace is not in the Far East but . . . in West Germany.” That is, Pyongyang should not press for a quick solution of the Korean problem.⁵⁶

As the East German press attaché Reuter pointed out, the KWP leaders found the official Soviet view quite incomprehensible: “If it is American imperialism that leads international reaction, why does West German militarism constitute the principal menace of war?”⁵⁷ Since Khrushchev did not hesitate to resort to ultimatums and threats in order to solve the German question,⁵⁸ one may conclude that in 1959–1960 the different priorities of Soviet and North Korean foreign policy played a more important role in Soviet–DPRK friction than the conflict between Soviet “peaceful coexistence” and North Korean belligerence.

Cautious Corrections

Interestingly enough, the increasing tension between Moscow and Pyongyang did not induce Kim Il Sung to put an end to the reforms that he had begun to implement in the spring of 1959. Quite the contrary, the regime halted the export of rice, oilseed, and other agricultural products in order to retain them for domestic consumption. In 1959, North Korean exports to the USSR, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland were expected to amount to 64, 8.8, 7.2, and 5.6 million rubles, respectively. Pyongyang’s actual exports amounted to 46, 5.7, 5.2, and 4.25 million rubles instead. (Significantly, exports to the PRC were not affected by these measures.) That policy led to a foreign trade deficit, whereupon the DPRK drastically cut back its imports so as to restore the balance of trade. At the end of 1959, several East European trade delegations arrived in the DPRK. Although the autarky-minded North Koreans had originally

intended to halve the volume of their imports, they finally yielded a bit to East European pressure. Food exports decreased by 32 percent in 1960, whereas the import of food and agricultural products grew 3.4 and 1.8 times, respectively.⁵⁹

These changes were closely related to a clash of interests that took place between the North Korean Ministry of Engineering and the Ministry of Foreign Trade. Since the requirements of industry hindered the export of raw materials, and also necessitated substantial imports, the DPRK ran the risk of a trade deficit.⁶⁰ At the end of 1959, the Ministry of Foreign Trade seems to have gotten the upper hand over industry. Exports grew from 116.17 million rubles in 1959 to 123.23 million in 1960, while imports decreased from 143.7 million rubles to 89.84 million.⁶¹ The targets of the first five-year plan had been exaggerated, Soviet Ambassador Puzanov told a Hungarian diplomat in February 1960, and thus Pyongyang was simply incapable of meeting its trade obligations. Every “fraternal” country should pay due regard to the difficulties the DPRK had to cope with so as to help the Korean comrades to correct their mistakes, the Soviet Ambassador stressed. He admitted, however, that the Soviets were still haggling with the North Korean trade delegation that had arrived in Moscow in early December.⁶²

The North Korean leaders indeed seem to have been determined to “correct their mistakes.” On 10 December, Yi Chong-ok informed the diplomatic corps about the December plenum of the KWP CC. The plenum had thoroughly re-examined the regime’s economic policies, he noted. Since the targets of the 1959 plan were exaggerated, productivity rose only marginally. Its increase did not surpass 3.5 percent and 3 percent in industry and construction, respectively. The economic growth that the regime managed to achieve resulted primarily from the recruitment of more and more workers, something that the labor-short DPRK could hardly afford. Industrialization and construction deprived agriculture of labor, because the authorities neglected the development of the rural sector. As a consequence, Yi emphasized, agricultural production had declined in 1959. Since peasants were compelled to grow industrial crops at all costs, a significant portion of the nation’s cornfields lay fallow. Economic problems were accompanied by social ones. Due to the sudden influx of peasants into the cities, the authorities could not provide the swollen urban population with foodstuffs and housing, whereupon a “tense atmosphere” had developed.⁶³

The December plenum had concluded, Yi stated, that it was high time to mechanize agriculture in order to raise the living standard of peasants, which had hitherto remained much lower than that of industrial workers. In 1960, the agricultural sector would receive as many as 4,000 tractors and 1,500 trucks, and the state would allocate considerable financial resources for the construc-

tion of schools and hospitals. In addition, the regime decided to take advantage of household plots instead of eliminating them. The leadership resolved to make particularly large investments in mining in order to raise export revenues and provide industry with coal. It had been a “great mistake,” Yi Chong-ok pointed out, for planners to have ignored the opinion of the experts. Taking into consideration that one of the central elements of the Ch’ollima Movement had been to subordinate the advice of technical experts to mass mobilization, this admission was particularly noteworthy.

While these observations and initiatives certainly looked promising, Yi’s other statements sounded somewhat ominous. Of the aforesaid 4,000 tractors, he declared, only 1,000 would be imported. That is, the regime clung to the autarkic tendencies so characteristic of North Korean industrialization. (In February, Khrushchev had attempted to dissuade Kim Il Sung from the production of tractors and trucks, but to no avail.⁶⁴) Peasants were obliged to raise two pigs and twenty to thirty rabbits per year on their household plots, although the plenum admitted that the shortage of fodder would make that very difficult. The KWP leadership instructed party members, who had already spent three to four hours per day studying ideological and professional publications, to devote every Saturday afternoon to study. In addition, Pyongyang reinforced the party committees’ control over the People’s Committees.⁶⁵

This emphasis on maintaining a tight hold over the population revealed that Kim Il Sung did not intend to liberalize his dictatorship. He was even less willing to consent to any curtailment of his own influence. As was his custom, the dictator blamed the aforesaid economic problems on one of his subordinates. The December plenum selected Metallurgical Industry Minister Han Sang-du for the role of scapegoat. Although Han could retain his position, he was sent to the party academy to study.⁶⁶ In sum, Kim Il Sung decided to let the population win some breathing space, but he did not sacrifice his principal goals, nor did the methods of the regime change to a substantial extent.

Another manifestation of Kim’s obsession with political and social control was that the reforms implemented early in 1960 included a re-centralization of industrial management, which further strengthened party organs at the expense of the state apparatus. In January, the KWP leadership abolished several ministries, such as the Machine-Building Ministry and the Coal Industry Ministry, and replaced them with the Heavy Industry Commission (headed by Yi Chong-ok) and the Light Industry Commission (headed by Chong Chun-t’aek). The government intended to transfer experts from the abolished ministries to the factories and the provincial economic committees, a high-ranking KWP official named Pak Yong-guk told the diplomatic corps on 10 February. In reply to a question, Pak declared that the aforesaid measures had been partly

patterned after certain Soviet policies, a statement that noticeably irritated Puzanov. Actually, both he and the Chinese ambassador left during Pak's lecture.⁶⁷

In February, Kim Il Sung visited several villages, such as Chongsan-ri, in the district of Kangso (South P'yongan province), and participated in the sessions of the local party committees. He concluded that the regime's previous policies, which he blamed on lower-level "bureaucrats," had neglected the cultivation of corn and lessened the peasants' interest in production. The country needed at least twice as many trained cadres in order to meet the requirements of the economy, Kim pointed out. He also found the standard of cadre training quite low.

Therefore, KWP leaders abolished the industrial, agricultural, and trade departments of the district party committees, dispatching the majority of their employees to the organizational departments and the villages. They resolved to send 4,000 agronomists and 1,000 veterinarians to the villages for two years. These people were to receive their former salaries during their stay in the countryside. Moreover, Pyongyang introduced a bonus system for the brigades that comprised the coops. If a brigade fulfilled the plan, its members would receive 10 percent of the crop in addition to the share that they were entitled to on the basis of their work units.⁶⁸ Workers in state farms were also allowed to keep produce in excess of the delivery quota. Early in 1960, the regime abolished the machine-tractor stations (MTS) of the state farms, dividing their equipment among the brigades. (In 1966, this reform would be extended to the cooperatives too.⁶⁹) The leadership named the new system of agricultural management the Chongsan-ri Method, a term that North Korean propagandists would use *ad nauseam* in the following decades.

The fact that the North Korean leadership decided to re-examine and correct its economic policies was quite unusual in itself, but the reader may be even more surprised by the fact that the measures that Kim took in 1960 bore a certain resemblance to Khrushchev's agricultural policies. After all, the two leaders were by no means fond of each other, and Khrushchev had severely offended Kim barely six months previously. Still, one should pay attention to certain aspects of contemporaneous Soviet rural policies. In the 1953–1958 period, the Soviet regime transferred over 20,000 technical specialists and party members from the cities to the villages, extending party organization into the *kolkhozy*. In 1958, the Kremlin abolished MTS and sold their equipment to the cooperatives.⁷⁰

While Hoxha, an ever-faithful follower of Stalin, harshly criticized Khrushchev for liquidating the MTS,⁷¹ Kim Il Sung eventually adopted that Soviet policy. In 1956–1958, Khrushchev abolished almost all industrial ministries and reinforced the power of republican and local party organs, a measure com-

parable to the ones Pyongyang took in 1959–1960.⁷² It should also be noted that Kim's "guidance tours," as stressed before, had much more in common with Khrushchev's leadership style than with that of Stalin. These phenomena contradict the claim that the North Korean dictator proved incapable of the "selective adoption of Stalinist traits. . . . [H]e did not know what to leave out, nor did he know how to leave it out."⁷³

Actually, the Soviets even took credit for the North Korean reforms. Commenting on the Kim–Khrushchev conversations and the December CC plenum, a Soviet diplomat named Yulin declared that "the talks were not unsuccessful, and certain changes are indeed noticeable." He was probably mistaken, however, for the KWP leaders seem to have decided for themselves. As Yulin himself put it:

the Korean comrades did not inform them [the Soviets] either about the measures they intended to take. [Similar to the Hungarians,] [t]hey also learn of their resolutions and plans only after these have become accomplished facts. Recently, all they could do was subsequently warn the Korean comrades that the elimination of boards in the ministries had not been appropriate. They still regard it as inappropriate, and they do not consider the explanation given by the Korean comrades acceptable, for the work of the boards was taken over by the ministries' party committees . . .

Yulin regarded the extension of the powers of the provincial, city, and district party committees as the curtailment of professional one-man management.⁷⁴

In the light of the debates that took place between Moscow and Pyongyang in 1959, it is quite unlikely that the reforms Kim Il Sung introduced in 1959–1960 were directly inspired by the Kremlin. After all, the North Korean leaders began to re-examine their economic policies in mid-1959, whereas most East European regimes, such as Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and the GDR, kept insisting on high growth rates until 1961–1962.⁷⁵ On the other hand, some North Korean policies may have been inspired by the measures that the Chinese leadership took in the spring of 1959. For instance, in May, Beijing reinstated the system of household plots so as to encourage animal husbandry, and "called on party first secretaries at various levels to make agriculture the focus of their work in May and June." The production teams and brigades that made up the people's communes were to keep the output above the set target. Having observed these developments, the KWP leadership may have realized that the Great Leap Forward went awry. As noted before, in the spring of 1959, Mun Chae-su lost his position because of his uncritical admiration of Chinese methods. When Mao turned against the reform experiment in August, Kim did

not follow his example. Angered by Peng Dehuai's criticism, the Chinese dictator would not re-evaluate the Great Leap Forward until December 1960, whereas Kim Il Sung carried on with his reform policy.⁷⁶

In sum, the December plenum and the subsequent changes in agricultural policy may have drawn inspiration from certain previous Chinese measures, but by that time the CCP leaders themselves had abandoned the policies in question, a decision that did not produce a noticeable effect on the steps taken by Pyongyang. In all probability, the North Korean leaders went their own way. As mentioned before, they did not consult Moscow either on their economic policies, even though they were probably inspired by Khrushchev's agricultural projects. In contrast, in 1959, the North Vietnamese leaders, having concluded that the targets of the 1960 plan were exaggerated, asked Soviet and Chinese economists to help with the redrafting of the plan.⁷⁷ Like the policies that Kim pursued in the late 1940s, the economic reform attempted in 1959–1960 seems to have been “a meld of Korean, Soviet, and Chinese experience, with much of the selection rooted in Korean political culture.”⁷⁸

Why did the dictator decide to re-examine his economic policies? First, the DPRK faced a serious food shortage. In March 1960, Soviet Ambassador Puzanov told his Hungarian counterpart that the food supply was far from sufficient. The Soviet diplomats who visited provincial towns saw queues everywhere. Significantly, Kim Il Sung, Kim Ch'ang-man, Pak Kum-ch'ol, and the other North Korean leaders spent much more time in the countryside than before, Puzanov noted.⁷⁹ Second, Pyongyang must have regarded the shortage of labor, both skilled and unskilled, as very grave. As early as the end of 1958, Kim asked Beijing to permit the Koreans living in the PRC to move to the DPRK, and by May 1959, approximately 60,000 Koreans had left China for North Korea. Since their immigration failed to solve the labor shortage problem, the KWP leadership began to press for the repatriation of Koreans from Japan. On 24 May 1959, an official of the Foreign Ministry told a Hungarian diplomat named Dobozi that the regime was aware of that a lot of the repatriates might be politically unreliable elements, but it still insisted on their return, because otherwise it would not have been possible to meet the manpower demands of the economy.⁸⁰

By August 1960, as many as 31,000 Koreans had left Japan for the DPRK. Pyongyang set a high value on the professional skills of the repatriates. The regime did its best to encourage the return of, say, industrial experts, shoemakers, tailors, and women's hairdressers, and ensured them a privileged position. They received “strikingly high” wages, and the authorities established special goods departments for them. Thus, the repatriates could purchase goods of good quality that were not available for ordinary citizens at low prices. Cre-

ating considerable resentment, the dictatorship removed a lot of people from their newly built housing in order to provide the repatriates, who were not required to pay for their housing and electricity, with comfortable apartments. In addition, in the cities the repatriates did not pay public transportation fares.⁸¹

While Scalapino and Lee correctly note that the repatriates, who found it difficult to adjust to the living conditions in the DPRK, “constituted a major headache for the government,” they overlooked other aspects of the situation.⁸² Repatriates frequently pointed out that entertainment opportunities in North Korea were much reduced compared to Japan, and they heartily disliked “voluntary work” and political meetings. On the other hand, work discipline, at least initially, was less binding on them than on ordinary citizens. Due to the privileges they enjoyed, repatriates were envied by the majority of the population. While party cadres tacitly acknowledged their special status, workers, troubled by endless shortages, did not like the repatriates very much. “The Korean workers particularly often say that if so many people return home, they also include a number of people who are not motivated by patriotism and the desire to work but by ‘other aims,’” Dobozi reported. Paradoxically, it was the otherwise ever-vigilant authorities that “stated over and over that it was possible that some subversive elements sneaked in, but ‘one must not look askance at every repatriate’ because of a few people.”⁸³

In fact, the KWP leadership felt compelled to relax certain discriminatory rules so as to provide the economy with experts. As mentioned before, in April 1959, Kim emphasized that one should not alienate the “old” intelligentsia. From mid-1959 on, the authorities permitted Hungarian-trained North Koreans to contact the Hungarian Embassy and request scientific literature. Many of them finally obtained jobs commensurate with their qualifications.⁸⁴ While the establishment of “communist colleges” was closely related to Pyongyang’s *Südpolitik*, it also served educational and economic purposes, because these institutions taught Southern-born people, who had hitherto been discriminated against, technical skills. Pyongyang certainly laid stress on the development of technical education. In the spring of 1959, the government set up “factory colleges” in a few factories in order to enable workers to continue their education, and in October it decided to replace three-year senior middle schools by technical and senior technical schools.⁸⁵ As an official of the Foreign Ministry told Dobozi in July 1960, the KWP leadership had resolved to compel every graduate of a primary school to learn a trade, although students were permitted make their own choice. Industrialization required so many skilled cadres that it was absolutely necessary to take such a measure, the official noted.⁸⁶

In the last analysis, one may conclude that both the Ch’ollima Movement

and the reforms enacted in 1959–1960 were probably rooted, at least partly, in North Korea's perennial labor shortage. While in 1958, Pyongyang had resorted to “human wave” tactics so as to overcome that obstacle, and denigrated specialists,⁸⁷ by mid-1959, the North Korean dictator, as opposed to Mao, seems to have realized how indispensable skilled labor was. Interestingly enough, North Korea, in spite of the similarities between the Ch’ollima Movement and the Great Leap Forward, eventually managed to avoid a catastrophe comparable to the disastrous famine that struck China in 1959–1960.

Whence this difference? First of all, the North Korean government imported a substantial amount of food in that period. In 1959, Pyongyang purchased at least 500,000 metric tons of grain, while in 1960 it imported 300,000 tons of grain, 50,000 tons of rice, and 10,000 tons of grain from the USSR, Burma, and Mongolia, respectively.⁸⁸ To be sure, in 1959, the value of agricultural exports still much exceeded that of agricultural imports. Food imports, however, did alleviate the situation, and Pyongyang halted grain exports in time. In contrast, Beijing exported 4.74 million tons of grain in 1959. “Even in 1960, when the country suffered a net population loss of ten million people, China’s net grain export still reached one million metric tons—enough to save the lives of four million people.” The Chinese leadership strove hard to “speed up grain exports to secure more foreign currency to repay debts to the Soviet Union and to purchase capital goods needed for industrialization.”⁸⁹

In this respect, the PRC was in a less favorable position than the DPRK, for in 1956–1959, Moscow canceled a substantial percentage of the North Korean debt, and postponed the repayment of the remaining part. On 29 September 1957, Zhou Enlai told Hungarian dictator Kádár that the credits China had received from the Soviet Union totaled 6.2 billion rubles. By the end of its first five-year plan, China had repaid approximately one-third of that amount. The CCP leadership intended to repay the bulk of the remaining debt during the second five-year plan, Zhou stated.⁹⁰

The different composition of North Korean and Chinese exports probably played an important role, in that Beijing failed to react to the looming agricultural crisis as quickly as Pyongyang did. In 1959 iron, steel, nonferrous metals, ores, and chemical products altogether made up 61 percent of North Korean exports, whereas the share of agricultural products, food, and beverages did not exceed 29 percent.⁹¹ Thus, Pyongyang was able to cut back its food exports without running the risk of a trade deficit. In the PRC, however, agricultural products constituted a much more important source of export revenue. On 29 September 1957, Zhou Enlai told Kádár that such products made up as much as 70 percent to 80 percent of Chinese exports.⁹² In 1959–1961, the Chinese, including Zhou himself, repeatedly complained of certain “fraternal”

countries, such as Czechoslovakia, which pressed China for agricultural products, and did not make allowances for the economic problems that Beijing had to cope with.⁹³

The CCP leaders were certainly not blameless either. Investment in Chinese industry rose from 7.24 billion yuan in 1957 to 17.3, 20.89, and 22.96 billion in 1958, 1959, and 1960, respectively.⁹⁴ This led to a quick increase of imports, which in turn necessitated considerable grain exports. In contrast, North Korean investments seem to have grown less dramatically in the period in question. In 1957, industrial investments stood at 15.701 billion won, whereas in 1958 they amounted to 18.574 billion.⁹⁵

Two additional problems deserve mention: the creation of people's communes and the curtailment of migration in the PRC. The establishment of the people's communes and the public mess halls led to a rapid increase in domestic consumption (a phenomenon highlighted by, among others, Dali L. Yang). Since peasants now ate twice as much grain as previously, the daily grain consumption of the rural population had increased by 200,000 metric tons, Zhou Enlai told a Hungarian party and government delegation on 29 April 1959.⁹⁶ Fortunately for North Korea, Kim Il Sung decided not to set up people's communes.

The emergency directive the CCP CC issued on 1 June 1959 may have further aggravated the situation. It called for reducing the urban population in order to curtail economic demand, and the authorities indeed sent millions of people back to the countryside, where the famine was much more serious than in the cities.⁹⁷ Significantly, the North Vietnamese leaders, who also faced a food crisis in 1960–1961, did not take similar measures. Pressed by collectivization and extremely high compulsory deliveries, peasants did their best to move to the cities. Consequently, the population of Hanoi grew by 300,000 in a year. Since urban authorities proved unable to provide the newcomers with housing and food, the VWP leaders became aware of the gravity of the situation. Instead of sending people back to the villages, in the spring of 1961 they re-examined their economic policies, and made various concessions to the peasantry.⁹⁸

The DPRK and the South Korean Revolution

While the reforms the KWP leadership enacted in 1959–1960 seem to have been motivated primarily by domestic factors, the events that took place in the ROK in the spring of 1960 probably produced a considerable effect on North Korean internal and economic policies, facilitating further “corrections.” As noted before, in the late 1950s cracks began to appear on the armor of the South

Korean dictatorship, and dissatisfaction with Rhee's corrupt and oppressive rule grew steadily. Following a particularly fraudulent election, from 28 February 1960 on a series of anti-government demonstrations, organized mainly by students, took place in Taegu, Masan, Seoul, and other South Korean cities. The protests eventually involved tens of thousands of people. Needless to say, Pyongyang followed these developments with great attention, and its analysis of the South Korean situation did not lack political acumen.

On 21 April, two days after the so-called "4-19 Revolt," a North Korean diplomat named Kim T'ae-hwa told the Hungarian Foreign Ministry that the KWP leadership did not regard the South Korean situation as ripe for an armed uprising, since neither the army nor the police supported the demonstrators. Still, the protests might lead to the downfall of Syngman Rhee, for "even the Americans are displeased with his brutal rule." Kim T'ae-hwa also anticipated Chang Myon's rise to prominence.⁹⁹ He was soon proven right. Since the United States indeed refused to support the repressive measures that the South Korean regime took against the demonstrators, on 27 April Rhee felt compelled to resign. The collapse of his twelve-year-long dictatorship created a radically new situation for both South and North Koreans, and Pyongyang, predictably, did its best to take advantage of it.

On 23 June, Paek Chong-won frankly told the Hungarian Foreign Ministry that "the leading elements of the South Korean mass demonstration of April were composed of students and the urban petty bourgeoisie. In essence, the workers and peasants did not voice their opinion." He admitted that the latter social strata did not constitute an organized force, because the great majority of industrial enterprises did not employ more than thirty workers, and "the main thrust of peasant discontent is directed against the landlords, rather than the government."¹⁰⁰ Ironically, the North Koreans seem to have somewhat underestimated the role that South Korean workers had played in the April Revolution. As Quee-Young Kim points out, "the urban participants . . . included not only students but also a substantial portion of the lower classes, especially the unemployed."¹⁰¹ Still, it was certainly the high school and university students who initiated the protests, and they were later joined by the intelligentsia and the middle classes. The demonstrations remained confined to the cities, for the South Korean rural population, both before and after the April Revolution, tended to vote for the incumbent administration.¹⁰²

Thus, Pyongyang's analysis about the South Korean political crisis was remarkably accurate if somewhat tarnished by ideological terms. Certain officials of the Foreign Ministry did know a lot about the political disposition, circulation, funds, and editorial staff of the major southern newspapers. For instance, they considered the editorial staff of *Kukje Sinmun* very talented. They also

stressed that *Han'guk Ilbo*, *Kyonghyang Sinmun*, and *Tonga Ilbo* had frequently published articles critical of the Rhee regime.¹⁰³ Such statements refute the claim that the KWP leaders were incapable of forming a true notion of the South Korean situation.

Encouraged by the downfall of Rhee, Pyongyang was anxious to make a good impression on South Korean public opinion. On 7 May, a North Korean counselor accredited to Moscow told a Hungarian diplomat that it was time to develop light industry in the DPRK, because the supply of consumer goods left much to be desired. He went on to say that one had to solve these problems in order to make the propaganda directed toward Seoul more effective, since some strata of the South Korean population were “deceived” by the abundance and cheapness of the consumer goods the United States exported to the ROK.¹⁰⁴ Aware of being regarded as Soviet puppets in South Korea, the KWP leaders reinforced nationalist propaganda. Following the April Revolution, northern music broadcasts hardly included any foreign musical compositions. That policy was also motivated by the desire of fostering nationalism and anti-Americanism in South Korea. As an employee of Radio Pyongyang told a Hungarian diplomat, the North did its best to offset the influence of Radio Seoul, which broadcast largely foreign music.¹⁰⁵

This time the regime even softened its internal policies a bit, at least on the surface. In the spring of 1960, the KWP CC passed a resolution “on the more intense implementation of the principle of the ‘policy of the mass line’ in party work.” While the resolution noted that a substantial part of the population, composed of former collaborators, persons related to people who had fled to the ROK, “petty bourgeois remnants,” and certain former prisoners of war, was unreliable, it called upon cadres to be cautious and patient. In fact, in the summer and early fall the regime did relax its discriminative rules a bit. “In order to improve public feeling, the earlier policy of relocating people from Pyongyang came to an end,” a Hungarian diplomat reported on 11 October. “In recent months . . . several non-party men or persons of class-alien origin (members of former noble and landowner families) were given leading professional positions, and an increased attention is turned to the appreciation of those representatives of the old bourgeois intelligentsia who are excellent in their profession.”¹⁰⁶ In light of the reforms that Kim Il Sung introduced in 1959 and early 1960, these measures may have been unrelated to the South Korean events. Still, their timing was conspicuous enough. The KWP leaders probably tried to relieve the South Korean population of its fears in order to facilitate national unification, a goal that reinforced their commitment to a reform policy.

In June, Kim Il Sung traveled to Moscow, and paid an incognito visit to

Khrushchev. He informed the Soviet leader about the policy he was pursuing vis-à-vis South Korea, whereupon Khrushchev, who approved of Pyongyang's flexibility, asked him whether the DPRK would be willing to suggest the establishment of a North–South confederation. This concept was similar to one proposed by the East German leadership to the West German government in 1957. Kim Il Sung immediately agreed with the idea. As Soviet Ambassador Puzanov put it, Moscow “did not press the issue any further, and the Korean comrades elaborated the proposals aimed at state federation entirely independently.” Kim’s visit was also successful in economic terms. Due to the talks the North Koreans had with Moscow and Beijing, the two countries once again canceled the DPRK’s debts. Anxious to outbid each other, they waived 1 billion rubles altogether. At a Presidium session held on 24 August, the dictator proudly declared that North Korea no longer had any foreign debt, a statement that did not correspond to the facts. Although Kim had good reason to expect that Czechoslovakia would also cancel a debt of 130 million rubles, the repayment of a significant part of the North Korean debt, which amounted to 140 million rubles, was merely postponed by the Kremlin.¹⁰⁷

Boosted by these favorable developments, North Korean self-confidence grew even more intensely than before. This sometimes irritated the diplomats accredited to Pyongyang. For instance, KWP cadres described Kim Il Sung as a person who had improved the theory of Marxism. When the dictator stated that it was political work that played the most important role in the increase of production, North Korean officials boasted that no one else, “not even the Soviets, . . . dared to make such a Marxist definition.” Commenting on the rapid economic development of the DPRK, a cadre haughtily declared, “It won’t be long before the Europeans come here to learn from us.” This time ordinary citizens also seem to have shared the cadres’ optimism. Since the first months of the year, the supply of consumer goods had noticeably improved. Shops had a larger choice of goods, whose quality proved better than before. The leadership resolved that the “voluntary work” citizens had to perform should not exceed a month per annum, and reduced the number of meetings, which enabled people to spend more time with their families. It looked as if the efforts the population had made in years past paid off.¹⁰⁸

The events that took place in the ROK must have contributed to Pyongyang’s increasing self-confidence. On 23 June, Paek Chong-won told the Hungarian Foreign Ministry that strikes had become increasingly frequent in the South, and more and more people pressed for punitive measures against the officials of the toppled dictatorship. While he noted that the caretaker government of Ho Chong was only a slight improvement on the Rhee regime, he also

pointed out that the new southern government “does not emphasize the military unification of the country any more.”¹⁰⁹

On 29 June, Deputy Foreign Minister Yu Chang-sik told Hungarian Ambassador Práth that there was a mushroom growth of new parties in the South. Each of these parties, he went on, represented various social strata. Although the Socialist Mass Party and the other new political organizations were essentially of a petty bourgeois character, they asked for the establishment of cultural and economic contacts between the DPRK and the ROK. The KWP leaders seem to have considerably overestimated the influence of the SMP and other leftist parties,¹¹⁰ but such ideological sympathies did not prevent them from evaluating the southern political situation more or less realistically. On 5 July, Paek Chong-won predicted that the Democratic Party would win the coming South Korean elections. He did not expect any far-reaching political changes from a DP victory. Pyongyang, he went on, did not provide public support to any of the “progressive” parties in order not to compromise it.¹¹¹ In any case, the KWP leadership accelerated the recruitment of Southern-born cadres. In July, the CC resolved to set up as many as twenty “communist colleges” in the 1960/1961 academic year.¹¹²

On July 29, the DP won the South Korean elections in a landslide, whereas the newly founded reformist parties secured only a handful of seats in the National Assembly. This may have embarrassed Pyongyang, for the DP vociferously disagreed with any sort of exchange with the North. In spite of this setback, on 14 August, Kim Il Sung decided to come forward with his confederation proposal. The dictator proposed to hold free all-Korean elections without any foreign interference. If Seoul considered that idea unacceptable, the two governments could establish a confederation based on the preservation of the current political systems, or at least a Joint Economic Committee. Although on 24 August South Korean Foreign Minister Chong Il Hyong declared that the newly formed government of Chang Myon would abandon the slogan of “March North and Unify!,” Seoul, by and large, proved unresponsive. Each proposal made by the DPRK, including the idea of cultural and economic cooperation, was turned down.¹¹³

Kim still did not give up. In November, Pyongyang reiterated its confederation proposal. The northern leaders spoke about the ROK in a very moderate tone, calling it by its official name. The KWP leadership offered large-scale economic aid to South Korea, and advised Seoul to carry out a land reform. The latter proposal was actually a quite inadequate one, for the land reform implemented by the Rhee regime had already increased the percentage of owner-operators from 14 percent to almost 75 percent and redistributed some three-fifths

of the total area of cultivated land. Nonetheless, it is worth noticing the character of the land reform proposed by the North Korean leadership. As Deputy Foreign Minister Kim T'ae-hui put it, "The DPRK's suggestion concerning carrying out the South Korean land reform (purchase by the state, distribution for free) is different from the land reform carried out in the DPRK."¹¹⁴

Interestingly enough, the aforesaid North Korean proposals bore a resemblance to the earlier unification policies of the North Vietnamese regime. The Eighth Plenum of the VWP CC, held on 13–20 August 1955, resolved to prefer the partial unification of Vietnam, such as the creation of a joint National Assembly, to an attempt to achieve complete unification on communist terms. The latter, they reasoned, might provoke a risky war between North and South. Therefore, Hanoi proposed the temporary preservation of both governments and a land reform accompanied by the financial compensation of Southern landowners. The VWP leaders told the diplomatic corps that the Southern land reform, as opposed to the one carried out in the DRV, would be patterned after East European, rather than Chinese, models. For instance, the Polish communist regime had also compensated the landowners whose land it distributed for free, whereas Beijing did not.¹¹⁵

That is, Kim Il Sung's proposals concerning the North–South confederation and the South Korean land reform had more in common with Soviet conceptions than with Chinese ones. This refutes the claim that in this period "the DPRK found much to agree with in the Chinese position, since increased independence [from the USSR] would mean independence to pursue its armed struggle against the South, while on this point, the Soviet position offered them little encouragement."¹¹⁶ In fact, in 1960 and early in 1961, the northern leaders seem to have been ready for a temporary "peaceful co-existence" with Seoul in case unification was delayed. On 26 August 1960, his successor, Yi Tong-gon, told the Hungarian Foreign Ministry that the North Korean leaders "did not press for their admission to the UN, but if a third state proposed the admission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea together with South Korea, they would not raise objections against it."¹¹⁷ In March 1961, Kim T'ae-hui told Práth that Pyongyang would agree with the admission of both Koreas to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a statement Paek Chong-won reiterated on 5 April.¹¹⁸ As late as 15 June, Paek still emphasized that the DPRK would eventually become a member of the United Nations.¹¹⁹

In the fall of 1961, one of the very first actions by the Mongolian delegation to the UN was to propose a resolution to seat both the DPRK and the ROK unconditionally.¹²⁰ This proposal may have been just a belated fulfillment of a previous North Korean request, rather than a reflection of the contemporaneous DPRK standpoint, but it seems to indicate that in 1960–1961 the KWP

leadership did ask a “third state” to raise this issue in the UN. Pyongyang’s acceptance of the admission of both Koreas to international organizations confirms that Kim Il Sung’s confederation proposal was not just a propaganda exercise. Since Beijing and Hanoi consistently rejected any similar suggestions concerning T’aipei and Saigon, respectively,¹²¹ one should not think lightly of the idea of simultaneous admission.

Balancing Between Moscow and Beijing

Unfortunately for both the North Korean population and the diplomats accredited to Pyongyang, the reform attempts and conciliatory gestures of the regime were partly offset by new restrictive measures. The Sino–Soviet conflict, which had become public in April 1960, cast a dark shadow over the North Korean scene. In July, Moscow recalled its specialists from China. Kim reacted almost immediately. On 2 August, the Foreign Ministry told the diplomatic corps that henceforth the soldiers guarding the embassies would prevent everybody, Koreans and foreigners alike, from entering an embassy unless the person worked there or had an appointment with the diplomats. In addition, a person might enter if an employee of the embassy, having answered the doorbell, was willing to let him in.

These measures affected primarily the East European embassies, because the Soviet and Chinese embassies had their own gatekeepers, which prevented the North Korean guards from halting visitors. Indeed, Soviet Ambassador Puzanov did not object to the new regulations, whereas the Czechoslovak, Polish, and Mongolian ambassadors often complained of them. The East German chargé d’affaires pointed out that in East Berlin, a city that lay much closer to the “enemy,” only those embassies were guarded by policemen which themselves asked for it. As Práth reported in February 1961, the guards immediately telephoned their superiors whenever a visitor or a diplomat entered or left the embassy. They subjected North Korean visitors to identity checks, and sometimes even drove them away. The dictatorship certainly intended to isolate the population from the “destabilizing” effects of the Sino–Soviet conflict. Similarly to previous cases, the Foreign Ministry frequently replaced the Koreans employed by the embassies.¹²²

A typical example of this behavior was mentioned by Bulgarian Ambassador Bogdanov, who had a conversation with his Hungarian counterpart on 25 November 1960. He told Práth that a “Korean comrade” had recently visited the Bulgarian Embassy, and intended to write a letter to the BCP CC in order to describe the “mistakes” made by the KWP leadership. Sofia should help the KWP to correct these mistakes, the dissident stressed. Authorized by the

secretary of the embassy to write the letter there, he was still writing it when a group of state security men, informed by the North Korean interpreter, came to the embassy, and pressed the secretary for the letter. Bogdanov told the visitor to leave the embassy, whereupon he told the secretary in broken Russian: "Look, now they'll arrest me, and they'll say I am anti-party!" He was indeed promptly arrested, and henceforth no other Korean dared to visit the embassy. The Bulgarian ambassador told Práth that it was only in Turkey where he had experienced such hostile behavior on the part of the authorities.¹²³ Taking into consideration that the Turkish authorities disliked the communist Bulgarian diplomats not merely on ideological grounds, but also because of a deeply rooted historical enmity between the two countries, this statement revealed quite a lot about North Korean practices.

Nationalist propaganda also constituted an integral part of the regime's isolationist policies, although the leadership, anxious to reassure the "fraternal" diplomats, attempted to make it appear merely as a method to influence South Korean public opinion. Since such propaganda often was of an intraparty character, this explanation was not entirely correct. In October 1960, the CC Presidium passed a resolution that criticized the indiscriminate and mechanical adoption of foreign experiences, and condemned "flunkeyism" (*sadaejui*). One should not kowtow to any foreign power, the leadership stated. In mid-November, an official of the party center delivered a lecture on "flunkeyism" for the party activists of a certain (unspecified) ministry. He declared that Ho Ka-i and Pak Ch'ang-ok had regarded anybody who had dared to criticize the quality of some Soviet product as "anti-Soviet." Pro-Chinese "flunkeyism" also cropped up during the Korean War, represented by Pak Il-u, Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, Yun Kong-hum, and others. In September 1956, Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai (the latter was described by the lecturer as a person of "imperialist disposition") had compelled the CC to readmit the "factionalists" it had recently expelled, but the "fraternal" parties later practiced self-criticism for their intervention.¹²⁴

Kim Il Sung also delivered lectures on the subject, condemning the indiscriminate translation of Soviet and East European textbooks. The dictator singled out a Hungarian work on horse breeding for criticism. It had been unnecessary to translate such a book, he stated, for there was no horse breeding in the DPRK. The KWP leaders resolved to replace the translated textbooks by new ones that would take Korean specificities into consideration. North Korean medical science, they charged, had neglected the anatomical differences between European and Korean patients, such as the shorter stature of the latter, and thus physicians often used inadequate equipment. Because it was Soviet, rather than Chinese, science that constituted the basis of North Korean scientific literature, these changes affected, first and foremost, Soviet-DPRK rela-

tions.¹²⁵ Still, the drive against *sadaejui* was directed against Chinese influence as well.

North Korean “even-handedness” clearly manifested itself at the Third Congress of the Romanian Workers’ Party, which took place in June 1960,¹²⁶ and also at the international Communist conference held in Moscow at the end of the year. As Janos Kádár, who headed the Hungarian delegation in Moscow, put it disparagingly, “In the course of the [Sino–Soviet and Soviet–Albanian] debate, the Korean delegation—albeit they spoke for an hour—completely evaded taking sides. [They did not take] either this side or that one.” In contrast, Hoxha launched a rude attack on Khrushchev, denouncing the Soviet leader as a revisionist whose pro-Tito stance had played a major role in the outbreak of the Hungarian “counter-revolution.”¹²⁷

Interestingly enough, in late November *Minju Choson*, the official newspaper of the government and the SPA, published an “unusually laudatory article” about Albania,¹²⁸ which seemingly contradicted the neutralism that characterized Kim Il Sung’s attitude in this phase of the Sino–Soviet debate. The dictator, however, may have drawn a distinction between the Sino–Soviet polemics and the Soviet–Albanian conflict. He probably regarded the pressure Moscow put on Tirana as a particularly alarming sign, for it reinforced his conviction that the Soviet Union intervened in the internal affairs of the small communist countries and subordinated the latter’s interests to their own (a factor emphasized by Buzo¹²⁹). Anxious to preserve his independence, Kim Il Sung disagreed with any attempt to ostracize Albania, a country quite similar to North Korea, but he did not want to clash with Khrushchev either. This attitude had a lot in common with that of the North Vietnamese leadership, but Hanoi reacted to the interparty squabbles in a more flexible and constructive way. In August 1960, the VWP CC made a proposal aimed at arranging the differences between the CPSU and the CCP, and later it again tried to act as a go-between.¹³⁰ Throughout 1960, the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry did its best to be of assistance to the “fraternal” embassies,¹³¹ which stood in sharp contrast with the behavior of the North Korean authorities.

Although Kim was hardly fond of Khrushchev, he had good reason not to give Beijing his full support at that time. In an economic sense, 1960 was the most disastrous year of the PRC since its proclamation, since the famine caused by the Great Leap Forward claimed at least ten million lives. The KWP leadership was certainly aware of China’s economic problems. As noted before, in 1960, Pyongyang purchased 300,000 metric tons of grain from the USSR, whereas China proved incapable of exporting grain to the DPRK.¹³² Due to the famine, by September 1961 approximately 30,000 ethnic Koreans had fled Manchuria, seeking refuge in the DPRK. (Ordinary North Korean citizens,

suffering from a shortage of food, often received them with little enthusiasm: “[A]s long as you lived well there, you did not come, and now, when the situation has become difficult, you run here,” people said.¹³³) In January 1961, Kim Il Sung told Puzanov that the DPRK “can also feel the Chinese difficulties, since there are delays in the delivery of coking coal, etc.”¹³⁴ On 5 February, a section head of the Foreign Ministry told a Hungarian diplomat that while in the DPRK the correct policies of the KWP had more or less solved agricultural problems, this was not the case in South Korea and China.¹³⁵ In fact, North Korean intraparty propaganda kept informed high-ranking and middle-level cadres about the economic blunders of the CCP leaders.¹³⁶

This critical evaluation of the Chinese situation was not confined to the North Koreans. On 15 November 1961, the Hungarian Ambassador to the DRV similarly reported that in the field of economic issues, “the prestige of the Chinese has fallen very low.” As he put it, “one could repeatedly hear even leading comrades say that it was no longer possible to explain the Chinese food shortage with poor weather alone.” The North Vietnamese complained a lot about Chinese-made machines, which often broke down. Beijing should re-examine whether it was worth making machines of the iron produced by the “people’s furnaces,” they grumbled.¹³⁷ Thus, it is quite understandable that when in October 1960 a Chinese delegation headed by He Long tried to win Pyongyang over to Beijing’s cause, the attempt ended in failure. Although on 13 October the PRC granted a long-term loan of 420 million rubles to North Korea, it was incapable of delivering the promised factories on schedule. The projects based on the 1957–1958 credit agreements were already affected by China’s economic difficulties, and in October 1961, the two countries had to conclude an agreement about the postponement of deliveries to 1967.¹³⁸

Even though the North Korean media did not publish anything critical of China, Kim’s reluctance to side with Mao possibly produced a negative effect on the relationship between the two countries. On 1 July 1960, Czechoslovakian Ambassador Kohousek told his Hungarian counterpart that lately Pyongyang had moved a bit closer to the Soviet standpoint, while Chinese influence in the DPRK was decreasing.¹³⁹ Early in 1961, a certain veiled tension appeared in Sino–North Korean relations. Both Kohousek and Práth noted that the Chinese ambassador had not attended the programs the North Korean Foreign Ministry organized for the diplomatic corps. “A Chinese general came recently to Panmunjom to pay his usual annual visit and was received by the heads of the Czechoslovakian and Polish delegations,” Kohousek remarked. “Contrary to previous custom, however, the head of the Korean delegation did not show up, nor did he meet the Chinese general later. The latter left very soon without any notice.”¹⁴⁰

Apart from the neutral stance that Kim Il Sung took in the Sino–Soviet debate, the CCP leaders may have disliked his new unification policy as well. Since the new South Korean government repudiated Rhee’s commitment to military unification, the prospect of a rapprochement between North and South temporarily convinced the North Korean dictator of the usefulness of Soviet diplomatic methods, and he eagerly adopted Khrushchev’s confederation plan. On 15 March 1961, Puzanov told Práth that the Kremlin had recently instructed the Soviet ambassadors accredited to neutral countries to propagate Pyongyang’s new proposals in these countries, and these efforts sometimes yielded positive results.¹⁴¹ In contrast, China, engaged in a permanent conflict with Taiwan, may have considered Kim’s flexibility toward Seoul, and particularly his acceptance of the admission of both Koreas to international organizations, as a dangerous precedent.

Ironically, the Kremlin, though it encouraged Pyongyang to be flexible toward Seoul, did not necessarily welcome the methods which Kim Il Sung used in his attempts to make a good impression on South Korean public opinion. This apparent paradox resulted from that in South Korea Kim was widely (and incorrectly) regarded as a Soviet stooge, whereas Moscow (more correctly) considered him a narrow-minded nationalist. If he tried to refute any of these negative images, he inevitably confirmed the other. In 1960, the dictator, with the South Korean audience in mind, concentrated on the demonstration of his independence from the USSR. Predictably, this raised eyebrows in the Kremlin.

For instance, Pyongyang did its best to hush up that it had received large-scale foreign aid. When Foreign Trade Deputy Minister Kim Chae-song visited Hungary in the summer of 1960 in order to ask for a new loan, the North Koreans requested that the Hungarian press not to cover his visit. At the November SPA session, the speakers commenting on the completion of the five-year plan barely made mention of the contribution of the “fraternal” countries. “The Soviet Union does not need constant expressions of gratitude for its help, but the Korean comrades are displaying too ‘modest’ a behavior concerning the assistance,” Puzanov complained. It was as clear as crystal, Kohousek pointed out, that North Korea had been unable to reach its achievements on its own, and thus such propaganda was unlikely to deceive the southern population. Moreover, if Seoul accepted the economic aid offered by Kim Il Sung, it was the “fraternal” countries which would have to pay the bill.¹⁴² The North Koreans, by and large, ignored the fiftieth anniversary of Tolstoy’s death, even though the Chinese paid attention to it. In January 1961, Práth told Pelishenko that North Korean journals hardly published anything about the cultural life of the “fraternal” countries, and theaters did not stage either classical Korean dramas or the works of foreign playwrights.¹⁴³

Another bone of contention was the modernization of the KPA. Although the new South Korean governments abandoned the militancy of Syngman Rhee, Washington kept equipping the U.S. forces stationed in the ROK with up-to-date military technology. From 1959 on, the U.S. Air Force had a squadron of nuclear-tipped Matador cruise missiles in South Korea.¹⁴⁴ Determined not to lag behind, Kim intended to publish a communiqué announcing that if the United States did not halt such deliveries, the government of the DPRK would ask the Soviet Union for comparable missiles. Had the North Koreans published that communiqué, Moscow would have been compelled either to fulfill their request or reveal its unwillingness to do so. Due to strong Soviet pressure, however, Pyongyang finally desisted from publishing the press release.¹⁴⁵ The Kremlin, on its part, undertook to provide the KPA with surface-to-air missiles—a good choice, since these weapons partly offset U.S. superiority in the air but they could not be used for offensive purposes.

It should also be recalled that the introduction of economic reforms and the adoption of Soviet diplomatic methods did not prevent Kim from purging his intraparty opponents, including high-ranking Soviet Koreans. In January 1960, the dictatorship secretly tried and executed Pak Ch'ang-ok, Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, and eighteen other leading “factionalists.”¹⁴⁶ On 12 November 1960, Interior Minister Pang Hak-se, one of the most influential members of the Soviet faction, was replaced by Sok San, a one-time comrade in arms of Kim Il Sung.¹⁴⁷ Apart from confirming Kim's determination to increase North Korea's independence from the communist great powers, these actions clearly demonstrated that the “corrections” initiated in 1959 hardly affected the political sphere and by no means curtailed the regime's repressive potential.

The Chances of Reform and Reconciliation

While North Korean economic “corrections” failed to soften the dictatorship's internal policies to a great extent, at the same time they remained more or less unaffected by the conflicts that took place in the political and diplomatic field. This suggests that in the North Korean system the economic, political and other spheres occasionally enjoyed a certain, although limited, autonomy. Another, and not necessarily contradictory, interpretation is that Kim Il Sung was anxious to counterbalance the measures taken in one sphere with steps taken in another field. In any case, at a Presidium session held on 24 August 1960, Kim emphasized that outstanding workers should be given bonuses instead of medals. The leadership also pointed out that the tours the party and state officials had made in the countryside often proved superficial, and resolved to re-examine that practice.¹⁴⁸ In the fall, the press published many articles about

the importance of providing material incentives for the members of agricultural coops. High-ranking officials of the Ministry of Agriculture told Hungarian diplomats that the equalization of distribution within cooperatives, occasionally accompanied by the creation of (Chinese-style) communal mess halls, had been counterproductive, and therefore the government put an end to such practices. It also cancelled a part of the cooperatives' debts.¹⁴⁹

Kim Il Sung played an active role in these "corrections." At a meeting held in the party center in October, he criticized autarkist economic policies and embellished statistics, and called for the development of mining industry so as to increase exports. (In 1961, the export of nonferrous metals indeed rose by 31 percent.¹⁵⁰) At another meeting, held on 8 November, the dictator expressed his satisfaction with regard to the economic situation, and told the chairs of the provincial party committees and PCs that it was time to lay the economic foundations of national unification. With the exception of the vynalon factory, rush jobs should be stopped in the construction industry, because no cultural institutions would be built in 1961.¹⁵¹ At the end of the year, the Light Industry Commission resolved to develop industrial design, a craft hitherto neglected in the DPRK.¹⁵² Pyongyang began to import small tractors, suitable for mountainous terrain, from Japan. In a lecture he delivered in Pongung in February 1961, Yi Chong-ok stated that it was indispensable to read Japanese articles written on soil conservation and the production of chemical fertilizers, for Japanese soil conditions were very similar to Korean ones.¹⁵³ In March, the DPRK ambassador to Prague declared that one should improve the quality of North Korean made consumer goods, because if the South Koreans visited the North, these products would hardly make a good impression on them.¹⁵⁴

In August 1960, celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the country's liberation, Pyongyang announced the release of all political prisoners who had received sentences of up to ten years' imprisonment, while those serving longer sentences would have their sentences reduced by one-third.¹⁵⁵ (On the tenth anniversary of the proclamation of the PRC, the Chinese leadership also amnestied 26,000 "rightists."¹⁵⁶) This gesture was probably motivated by the desire to improve the DPRK's image in South Korean eyes. Not long before the fourth congress of the KWP, held in September 1961, Kim went so far as to "rehabilitate" some low-ranking "factionalists" who "had meanwhile proven their party loyalty."¹⁵⁷ Still, a real political liberalization remained out of the question. Significantly, North Korean intellectuals were not encouraged to hold more or less free debates on certain scientific questions in the way their Chinese colleagues were in 1961.¹⁵⁸ In a speech made on 27 November 1960, Kim Il Sung told writers and artists that they should devote greater attention to the "Ch'ollima era" in which they lived. Culture should serve the purposes

of revolution, the dictator declared. As a consequence, the Chinese-style policy of dispatching writers to the countryside became more extensive than ever.¹⁵⁹

Paradoxically, sometimes even the regime's reform policies could result in purges. For instance, in September 1960, the KWP leaders condemned the actions of the Pyongyang party committee. Anxious to create "collectives," at the end of 1959, the committee had ordered the demolition of the fences of many houses, an idea the top leadership now found impractical. Of the four deputy chairs of the city party committee, as many as three (Yi Sang-p'il, Pak Won-gu, and Yi Song-hui) lost their positions. Pak Kum-ch'ol and Kim Yong-ju, whom Kim Il Sung had entrusted with the investigation, replaced the chairs of three district party committees as well. Blamed for the shortages of food and consumer goods, the heads of the trade and transport departments of the city council also fell victim to the purge.¹⁶⁰ Note too that while it was indeed high time to accelerate the development of light industry, this aim contradicted another goal of the regime, namely, the intention of letting the population win some breathing space. In May 1960, a North Korean technician told a Hungarian diplomat that the workers in the Pyongyang textile factory where he was employed had recently "pledged" to devote one Sunday per month to work "in order to support the struggle of the South Korean people."¹⁶¹

On 27 March 1961, Kim Il Sung delivered an unusually illuminating lecture at the party center "on some questions regarding proletarian dictatorship." This speech, which was recorded for top- and middle-level party officials, demonstrated the contradictory character of the reforms Kim implemented in 1959–1961. The dictator called attention to the country's "complicated situation":

Only about 0.5 percent [!] of the population has no relatives who live in the South, were collaborators of the Japanese or the Americans, or are elements of class-alien origin, etc. . . . In spite of its complicated composition, the 99.5 percent of the population cannot be regarded as enemies, for in this case the Ch'ollima Movement, etc., would be out of the question. . . . [T]he [sharp] edge of proletarian dictatorship is directed against the former collaborators of the Japanese and the Americans, the former landlords, capitalists, and kulaks. . . . Those who occupied various minor administrative posts, were members of the civil defense, etc., before liberation cannot be reckoned among the collaborators of the Japanese.

It must be taken into consideration that almost every Korean over 30 was compelled to work [under the Japanese] so as to make a living, and neither they nor their children can be qualified as "bad people" for that. It is the former high-ranking officials, provincial

etc. functionaries, confidential clerks, factory owners, police leaders, etc. who are regarded as friends of the Japanese.

Nor is the dictatorship directed against all religious people, only against the priests who collaborated with the USA. Religion is essentially a superstition, and the same holds true for Christianity, but the latter, due to its foreign origin, always remained foreign to the Korean people. . .

With regard to intra-party re-education, he pointed out that one had to look after those who had made mistakes, they had to be judged, or rehabilitated later, on the basis of their work. Within the party, the struggle may take two shapes: purge or re-education. Comrade Kim Il Sung considers the latter the more appropriate and progressive, even in those cases when some people kept their class background, etc. secret from the party but held their own in work. . . . [H]e emphasized that “if we were incapable of carrying out re-education work within the party, how could we re-educate and transform the masses?”, and “if we do not complete this work in the North, we will not be able to obtain results in the South.”¹⁶²

In fact, Kim Il Sung’s renewed interest in the re-education of the North Korean population was closely related to his unification policy. At a Presidium session on 6 February 1961, the leadership resolved to speed up re-education. Its intention was to re-educate all strata of the society save “counter-revolutionaries.” Re-education would also affect “passive elements” and persons of “bad origin,” a high-ranking KWP cadre named Pak Yong-guk told the communist ambassadors in March. A part of the Southern population felt uneasy about the consequences of unification, he went on. The South Korean journalists and tourists who visited Panmunjom frequently asked what would happen to them after unification. The successful re-education of North Korean society, Pak stressed, would influence the Southern population as well.¹⁶³

In a lecture delivered to the Communist ambassadors on 16 October, Kim Do-man, then head of the CC Department of Agitation and Propaganda, spoke even more explicitly. Since the KWP had one million members, there would be only one party member for every twenty-five citizens in a unified Korea, he pointed out. However, if the regime managed to re-educate the DPRK’s ten million inhabitants, then there would be just two “untransformed” persons for one “re-educated” citizen.¹⁶⁴ No doubt, Pyongyang’s ultimate aim was the establishment of a communist regime in South Korea. The “communist colleges” enrolled students from every major southern settlement, since the leadership wanted to ensure that “after the unification of the country, in all the centers,

cities, and larger villages of South Korea the party committees and People's Committees will be headed by cadres born there. These cadres . . . know local conditions, which will be of invaluable importance in the first period after unification."¹⁶⁵

In brief, Kim's unification policy was composed of seemingly incongruous elements. While overt repression did abate a bit in 1960–1961 in order not to alienate public opinion in the South, the dictator by no means intended to weaken his control over the population. On the contrary, he was determined to make his rule more stable than ever. Pyongyang proved quite willing to offer short-term concessions to Seoul so as to achieve its ultimate aims. Kim certainly regarded his proposals, such as the confederation plan and the simultaneous acceptance of both Koreas to international organizations, as strictly temporary solutions.

In spite of these facts, the Chang Myon government seems not to have been entirely accurate when it rejected Pyongyang's proposals for an economic and cultural exchange, declaring them "nothing but a propaganda maneuver aimed at infiltration and subversion."¹⁶⁶ At that time, the DPRK was not in a position to conquer the ROK by military means. To mention but one factor, in the post-1953 decade, the military capability of South Korea exceeded that of the North.¹⁶⁷ Nor is it probable that the DPRK intended to launch such an offensive during the twelve months after the April Revolution. While in the 1962–1964 period the regime made various, and rather visible, efforts to prepare the KPA and the civilian population for a war, it had not taken comparable measures in 1960–1961. As discussed later, the post-1961 turn toward a militant stance produced a strong effect on the foreign, internal, and economic policies of the country. These significant changes would not have been necessary if the earlier peaceful proposals had been merely propaganda exercises and if the DPRK had been prepared for a large-scale military confrontation as early as 1960–1961.

The "subversive" potential of northern propaganda should not be overestimated either. As noted before, the "progressive" parties suffered a disastrous defeat in the 1960 elections. On 13 May 1959, Kim himself told the Hungarian delegation headed by Münnich that there was no substantial illegal Communist activity in the ROK, a statement reiterated by GDR Ambassador Schneidewind and the DRV counselor to Moscow.¹⁶⁸ Of the various groups of South Korean society, it was principally the students and some trade unions (above all, the teachers' union) who demanded a North–South parley. That is, these forces constituted only a minority, albeit an active one.¹⁶⁹ Had Seoul established cultural and economic contacts with Pyongyang, North Korean propaganda, in all probability, would not have changed the political attitude of

businessmen, officials, Christians, and the majority of peasants to any considerable extent. As early as before the Korean War, the middle classes “were more inclined toward the right-wing political tradition.”¹⁷⁰

Thus, the South would not have run a grave risk if it had entered upon a dialogue with Pyongyang. A rapprochement, even a temporary and limited one, would have been more fruitful for both countries than the embittered conflict that characterized the 1962–1969 period. Since Seoul had no reason to believe that Washington would eventually compel Pyongyang and its allies to hold all-Korean elections under UN supervision, its inflexibility did not yield any results. Characteristically, the South Korean government turned down the North’s confederation proposal on the grounds that it “would place the north Korean regime on an equal footing with the ROK.” This approach was by no means more constructive than Pyongyang’s earlier (and later) insistence on being the sole legal representative of the Korean nation. In addition, the Southern leaders overlooked that by 1960, the Northern regime had become fairly independent from both Moscow and Beijing. They routinely called Kim Il Sung a Soviet puppet, no matter how convincingly he demonstrated the opposite tendency.¹⁷¹

On the other hand, it is understandable that the Chang Myon government, distrustful of the North Korean leadership, did not feel the need to establish contacts with Pyongyang. While the new Southern regime could distance itself from the hawkish policies of Syngman Rhee, the DPRK was still ruled by the man whom the majority of the South Korean population held responsible for the Korean War, which had come to an end barely seven years ago. As Koh points out, “what fueled anti-Communist . . . sentiment in the South was not only the widely held conviction that the North started a fratricidal war, . . . but also the North’s denial of its responsibility.”¹⁷² Since the outbreak of the war had been preceded by a North Korean appeal for joint North–South talks (an appeal many Southerners later regarded as “a smoke screen to hide war plans”),¹⁷³ the 1960 confederation proposal was met with suspicion and skepticism.

The older generations of the South Korean population were not just “immune” to communist propaganda but intensely hostile toward the DPRK. It was the young generations, especially the students, to whom the reunification issue primarily appealed. The importance of this generation gap may be gauged from the fact that certain young members of the conservative New Democratic Party proposed a North–South exchange, an idea rejected by the party’s older leaders.¹⁷⁴ Had the government tried to fulfill the demands of the students, it would have lost the support of the older generations. South Korean society was sharply divided between left and right, which resulted in bitter

conflicts. Both sides had legitimate arguments, but they proved incapable of reaching a compromise.

The instability of the Chang Myon government played an important role in that there was no rapprochement between North and South in 1960–1961. The Democratic Party suffered from factional infighting, and the economic situation steadily declined. In contrast, the students, who could take credit for the downfall of Rhee, constituted a powerful and organized force. As a consequence, “the DP . . . yielded to the students and agreed, among other things, to revise the constitution.”¹⁷⁵ Troubled by domestic problems, the Chang Myon government felt inferior vis-à-vis the North—not without good reason, since the South Korean turmoil certainly reinforced Kim Il Sung’s conviction that his system was superior to its Southern counterpart.¹⁷⁶ The economic development of the ROK, Chang Myon concluded, had to be speeded up so as to prepare for reunification: “[R]eunification with North Korea would be possible only when the economic prosperity of South Korea could make the North Korean people yearn to incorporate themselves into the South Korean system.” While a balance of forces may have facilitated a rapprochement, disparity impeded it, fostering renewed competition between Pyongyang and Seoul.

Last but not least, the South Korean government could not afford to lose the goodwill of the United States. Despite Senator Mansfield’s suggestion to neutralize Korea, the U.S. government, by and large, did not encourage Seoul to make approaches to Pyongyang.¹⁷⁷ Since Kim Il Sung made no secret of the fact that he intended to elbow the Americans out of the ROK, but actually tried to recruit followers in the South by launching a nationalistic, anti-U.S. propaganda campaign, any South Korean move aimed at improving relations with the North was highly likely to raise eyebrows in Washington. As Soviet Ambassador Puzanov pointed out in December 1960, “the [southern] intellectual and other circles are aware of that there are only U.S. goods in South Korea, and a possible anti-U.S. movement would lead to the cessation of U.S. supplies.”¹⁷⁸ Paradoxically, the emphasis Pyongyang laid on Korean nationalism complicated its relations both with South Korea and the Soviet Union. A Soviet–U.S. agreement on the neutralization of Korea might have untied this diplomatic Gordian knot, but this was unlikely to happen, and in any case the two Korean governments would have hardly welcomed such an intervention.

Analyzing the reforms that Kim implemented in 1959–1961, one may note that in this period, similar to the events of 1955, moderate and hard-line policies were jumbled together in a seemingly contradictory way. Efforts to raise living standards, narrow the scope of political persecution, reassure South Korean public opinion, and keep clear of the Sino–Soviet debate interwove with new conflicts with Moscow, a growing emphasis on ideological training, measures

aimed at reinforcing the regime's control over the population, and plans to create a communist system in the South. Due to its complexity, the policy that Kim pursued in the period in question cannot be adequately characterized with such simple categories like "Stalinism" or "Khrushchevism."

The dictator probably did not see any contradiction between his "softer" and "harder" measures, since none of them challenged his centrality and supremacy. For instance, the campaign aimed at curtailing the arrogance of cadres frequently referred to Kim's "exemplary modesty."¹⁷⁹ "Hard" measures, such as the curtailment of intellectual freedom, offset the effect of reforms in order to guarantee political stability and prevent the emergence of spontaneous criticism. Moreover, both "soft-line" and "hard-line" policies were integral parts of Pyongyang's reunification strategy. In the 1959–1961 period, the Sino–Soviet rift seems not to have influenced North Korean actions as considerably as the issue of national unification. In brief, Kim's foreign policy was essentially Korea-centric. Within the framework of his fervent nationalism, the dictator proved relatively pragmatic. In 1960, his foreign and economic policies were certainly more flexible than the ones pursued by Mao and Hoxha. Still, his commitment to a reform policy was not strong enough to survive the two crises of 1961: the military takeover in South Korea and the Twenty-second Congress of the CPSU.

7. Defying the Kremlin

Despite Kim Il Sung's initial efforts to stay clear of the Sino-Soviet conflict and his willingness to seek a rapprochement with the ROK, Soviet-North Korean friction was not absent in 1960-1961 either. In 1962-1964, this friction degenerated into an open confrontation unparalleled in the history of Soviet-DPRK relations. Pyongyang also began to prepare for a military offensive against Seoul, which would have implied an armed conflict with the United States as well. These developments put an end to the half-hearted "thaw" the dictator had initiated in 1959, although the KWP leaders occasionally still proved capable of re-examining their economic policies. Anxious to find an ally powerful enough to deter both the United States and the USSR, the North Koreans gradually moved towards Beijing, but Khrushchev misinterpreted the situation when he regarded them as Chinese pawns. The DPRK, unlike Albania, did not break with Moscow once and for all, for this would have left it entirely at the mercy of the other communist giant.

Pyongyang Welcomes Park's Coup

Early in 1961, Pyongyang still believed that the "peaceful" unification of the country was not impossible. After all, the South Korean political and social situation remained unstable, and the Southern economy did not show signs of recovery either. On 5 February, Kim Sun-yol, the deputy editor-in-chief of *Nodong Sinmun*, told a Hungarian diplomat that the U.S. troops might eventually leave the ROK, since, as he put it, "in the case of Egypt and Lebanon, there has already been a precedent for such a retreat of imperialism." Simultaneous anti-American actions in South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan might induce the United States to give up the ROK, although "history shows that revolutions and revolutionary movements rarely occur simultaneously in different countries." The ROK Army was certainly a "puppet army," but its soldiers, who

were mostly of peasant origin, might be influenced by the protest movements, and disagreements might take place within the officer corps as well. Had the army sided with the demonstrators in April 1960, Kim stated, “[T]here would not have been any problem.”¹

These expectations explain why Pyongyang reacted favorably to the coup of Park Chung Hee, which took place on 16 May. In the afternoon of the same day Kim T’ae-hui told the ambassadors that the military takeover was certainly a turn for the better, an opinion not shared by the audience.² Similar to several American observers, some North Korean leaders seem to have regarded Park, who had been arrested by the Rhee regime for the role he played in the 1948 Yosu rebellion, as a leftist.³ The initial policies of the new regime seemingly confirmed this view. The military authorities forced speculators to parade in the streets wearing signs with slogans such as “I am a parasite,” arrested prominent businessmen, and publicly burned foreign cigarettes.⁴

The North Koreans were also emboldened by the squabbles that broke out between the new South Korean leaders in the wake of the coup. On 9 June, Park forced Chang Do Young, the titular head of the military regime, to relinquish three of his five positions.⁵ Six days later Paek Chong-won told an official of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry that the southern situation was becoming more and more unstable. He described Park’s conflict with Chang as a clash of pro-Japanese and pro-American officers, and stated that many ROKA officers regarded Chang as a coward.⁶ Paek certainly overstressed the American training Chang had received. After all, Park also spent a year in the United States. Still, Paek was right in that the training Park received in wartime Japan produced a decisive effect on the development of his ideas. Chang, a one-time associate of Rhee and of Northwest Korean origin, was obviously not on good terms with Park, who hailed from Kyongsang province and had not been favored in promotion under Rhee.⁷

On 19 June, Paek Chong-won reiterated that the Southern regime was in a bleak situation. The South Korean military leaders, he went on, might react to their domestic problems by launching an attack on the North. Prepared for all emergencies, Pyongyang put the KPA on alert, Paek said. While North Korea did mobilize its armed forces that time, it is not certain whether these measures were of a defensive character. The Northern leaders may have intended to take advantage of the South Korean turmoil. Significantly, the Hungarian official whom Paek informed about the military preparations of the DPRK found it necessary to warn the “Korean comrades” against abandoning the idea of peaceful unification.⁸ On the other hand, one should keep in mind that Pyongyang had taken similar measures at the end of 1956 when Kim thought that Rhee, inspired by the Hungarian revolution, might attack the North.

In any case, Kim decided to ask for external support in order to make himself secure. As early as March 1961, the KWP CC, worried by the protests of certain communist embassies, instructed the press not to lay undue emphasis on the issue of *chuch'e*. One should not ignore the cultural and scientific achievements of the “fraternal” countries, the leadership declared. In March, the newspapers and journals hardly published any article on *chuch'e*, while in April, and particularly in May and June, the press stressed that the promotion of national culture was fully compatible with the adoption of “progressive” foreign experiences. On 24 May, *Nodong Sinmun* published an article by Han Sol-ya, which called for the studying of Soviet literature, and criticized both chauvinism and cosmopolitanism. As usual, the KWP leadership blamed the previous “excesses” on “local officials,” such as the editor-in-chief of the party’s literary journal.⁹

These developments were partly related to the visit of a Soviet delegation headed by Alexei Kosygin, then the First Vice-chair of the Soviet Council of Ministers. Since this visit was not related to a party congress or an important North Korean anniversary at which CPSU leaders routinely attended, it clearly demonstrated Moscow’s commitment to assist and protect the DPRK. Having arrived in the DPRK in June, Kosygin assured the North Koreans of the full support of the Kremlin in case Seoul resorted to “provocations.” For their part, the KWP leaders, anxious to get Soviet economic and military assistance, expressed their approval of the talks Khrushchev had with Kennedy in Vienna. Despite the North Koreans’ willingness to pay lip service to Moscow’s foreign policies, discord was not completely absent. In a private conversation, Deputy Premier Kim Il remarked that “Albania is a small country, one can forgive it,” while Kosygin, ever the technocrat, criticized certain North Korean economic policies. Having inspected several factories, he told Kim Il that the North Koreans should not have wasted time trying to invent everything by themselves. In some cases, he pointed out, the adoption of foreign patents would have been more economical.¹⁰ Since Kosygin probably had Soviet and East European patents in mind, the KWP leaders may have regarded his advice as yet another attempt to keep the DPRK dependent on “fraternal” know-how.

All in all, the Kosygin visit yielded highly positive results for the KWP leadership. On 29 June, a North Korean delegation headed by Kim Il Sung left for Moscow. As a consequence, on 7 and 11 July, the DPRK signed treaties of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance with the USSR and China, respectively. Interestingly enough, the copy of *Nodong Sinmun* that announced Kim’s coming visit to the Soviet Union carried an article that harshly criticized the foreword to the Soviet edition of a North Korean work entitled *The History*

of Korea.¹¹ This action was probably motivated by the desire of demonstrating that the DPRK was not a Soviet stooge.

At the Fourth Congress of the KWP, held on 11–18 September 1961, Kim Il Sung still clung to the neutral attitude he adopted with regard to the Sino–Soviet conflict, although Deng Xiaoping, who headed the Chinese delegation, explicitly appealed to Korean nationalism. “The Chinese leaders must learn from the Korean leaders,” he declared, calling Koreans a “mighty people of 30 million.” Deng’s statements stood in sharp contrast with the patronizing advice Kosygin had given to Pyongyang. They certainly pleased the North Koreans, who often quoted them in intraparty propaganda.¹² In general, the Chinese leaders proved much more tolerant of North Korean nationalism than their Soviet counterparts. One could hardly expect any CPSU leader to say publicly that the USSR might learn something from her satellites, let alone such a small and poor country as North Korea. It was quite revealing that on 16 December 1959, a Soviet diplomat named Yulin told a Hungarian colleague that “most of the mistakes noticeable in the DPRK are attributable to . . . the exaggerated national pride of *the Korean people*” (emphasis added).¹³ This Soviet arrogance obviously backfired, for it eventually contributed to reinforcing Chinese influence in North Korea.

It should also be noted that Beijing applied the same method to Albania, a country disdained by the leaders of the other European communist regimes. In a speech he made on October 10, 1961, Hoxha informed his audience of the respect the CCP leadership had for the APL leaders. Mao had stated that in certain respects even the Chinese party had to learn from the Albanians, the Albanian dictator declared.¹⁴ Of course, this is not to say that China always proved more lenient and flexible vis-à-vis the smaller communist states than the USSR. In 1965–1968, Beijing would react to the gradual “desertion” of its ideological allies (Cuba, the DPRK, and North Vietnam) at least as violently as the Soviets reacted to Albanian, Chinese, and North Korean criticism in 1960–1964.

As Buzo puts it, the Fourth Congress of the KWP was a “Congress of Victors.” The composition of the top leadership had not changed substantially since March 1959. In the meantime Ch’oe Hyon (an old guerrilla friend of Kim Il Sung) and Yi Chong-ok became members of the Presidium (henceforth Political Committee), whereas Yim Hae lost his membership. Yim was also dismissed from the foreign trade minister position. His replacement indicated that Pyongyang realized the negative aspects of its previous trade policies. Determined to cut back imports, in 1960 the regime failed to order spare parts to the machines it had gotten from the “fraternal” countries, which caused a lot of

problems. As was his custom, Kim Il Sung blamed these difficulties on one of his lieutenants.¹⁵ Apart from Nam Il, Kim Ch'ang-man, and a few other Kim loyalists, no Soviet or Yan'an Koreans remained in the CC. "Out of 57 new members, 25 were partisans and approximately 21 were newly recruited young cadres who had no former ties with any group," Suh notes. "Out of 50 candidate members. . . , only one, Yi Chi-ch'an, was a returning member."¹⁶ Moreover, the congress tightened up party rules once again, a resolution kept from the foreign delegations. Concepts like "intraparty democracy," "criticism from below," and "collective leadership" were omitted from the party constitution so as to strengthen Kim Il Sung's one-man rule.¹⁷

The congress also discussed the country's next economic plan. The seven-year plan (1961–1967) was possibly an attempt to place the DPRK on a par with the Soviet Union, which had recently initiated a seven-year plan (1959–1965). Its targets seem to have been slightly more moderate than the ones set in January 1959. For example, the congress resolved to increase the use of chemical fertilizer to 570 kilograms per hectare by 1967, whereas in 1959, Kim had declared that North Korean agriculture should get 800–1,000 kilograms of chemical fertilizer per hectare as early as 1963–1964.¹⁸ In any case, the plan was ambitious enough. Among other things, it set the production of electric locomotives, steam turbines, and oxygen generators as an aim. Contemporaneous North Korean technological standards hardly rendered that possible, since even the steel and firebrick that the DPRK produced for export proved of inferior quality. No matter how uneconomical the non-series production of sophisticated machines was, the KWP leadership made import substitution a matter of principle.¹⁹

In spite of this obsession with self-reliance, Soviet economic assistance still was to play an important role in the seven-year plan. For instance, Moscow agreed to provide credit worth 25 million rubles for the modernization of an iron ore concentrator in Musan. The development of North Korean heavy industry would not have been possible without Soviet technology, since in this field China lacked the necessary technological basis. The factories the PRC had built in the DPRK manufactured primarily textiles, paper, ball bearings, radios, light bulbs, bicycles, tires, and similar products.²⁰ These circumstances induced Pyongyang not to rely exclusively on Beijing.

In the fall of 1961, it appeared to the KWP leaders that the hopes they had attached to Park Chung Hee were justified. As recently disclosed South Korean sources attest, in September, the Southern regime initiated secret talks with Pyongyang. Anxious not to antagonize Seoul, Kim Il Sung instructed the press not to attack Park and the other South Korean leaders by name. In this period, the Northern newspapers rarely carried articles critical of the "military authori-

ties.” Pyongyang also disapproved of the Hungarian press’s focus on criticizing the South Korean regime, rather than the Americans.²¹ The North Koreans seem to have attempted to drive Seoul and Washington apart, but the military dictatorship, lacking legitimacy and badly needing U.S. economic cooperation, could not afford to break with the United States. As Clifford notes, “the Kennedy administration briefly withheld support for the new leaders,” and a North–South dialogue was unlikely to improve U.S.–South Korean relations.²² In all probability, Park’s decision to enter into talks with the KWP leadership was motivated by a desire to feel out North Korean intentions and objectives, rather than by a wish to cooperate with the North. As a consequence, the secret meetings of the Northern and Southern representatives remained fruitless, and Kim Il Sung eventually lost his patience.

The Hungarian diplomats became aware of Pyongyang’s changing attitude toward Seoul as early as 2 October. On that day Yu Chang-sik told the newly appointed Hungarian Ambassador, József Kovács, that Kim Il Sung had recently dropped the matter of North–South cooperation. Yu declared that “this Fascist government [of Park Chung Hee] has thrown in prison hundreds of thousands of South Korean patriots, whose only crime was that they had demonstrated for the establishment of contacts with North Korea,” and thus it was impossible to reach an agreement with it.²³ While the military dictatorship indeed imprisoned the leaders of the “progressive” parties for having advocated negotiations between Pyongyang and Seoul, the aforesaid figure proved wildly exaggerated. The regime arrested some 3,000-plus leftists in the wake of the coup, the majority of whom were released after a relatively short detention.²⁴

Yu Chang-sik’s propagandistic statement stood in marked contrast with the more or less accurate picture he and Paek Chong-won had painted of the April Revolution and the events that followed it. Pyongyang’s changing style reflected the growing militancy of the KWP leadership. When Park visited the United States in November and managed to obtain the support of President Kennedy, the Northern press began to criticize him by name.²⁵ Since this visit made it clear that the Southern junta was not about to re-examine Seoul’s long-standing alliance with Washington, Kim Il Sung predictably lost his temporary interest in the “peaceful co-existence” proposed by Khrushchev. That is, South Korean developments produced a considerable effect on Soviet–DPRK relations, both before and after Park’s coup.

“Peaceful Co-Existence Smells of Revisionism”

To make matters worse, in the fall of 1961, Soviet foreign and domestic policies took a turn that Kim Il Sung must have found anything but favorable. The

temporary lull in the Sino–Soviet debate that followed the international communist conference held in Moscow did not last long. At the Twenty-second Congress of the CPSU, held on 17–31 October, Khrushchev launched a new attack on Stalin and Hoxha. Inevitably, this step resulted in a conflict with the Chinese delegation as well.

All of this alarmed the North Korean dictator, but at first he seems to have tried to avoid an open confrontation with Moscow. During the Soviet–DPRK “month of friendship” (15 October–15 November), both sides stressed the importance of cooperation, and the North Korean leaders spoke about their economic problems much more frankly than in June.²⁶ In the last months of the year, North Korean theaters staged several foreign operas, including Russian ones.²⁷ Although at the end of October a new group of Albanian students arrived in the DPRK, North Korean students were told not to put questions to them about the Soviet–Albanian dispute.²⁸ On 25 November, the Albanian Ambassador organized a press conference in order to commemorate the liberation of Albania. Contrary to custom, the DPRK officials present did not clap their hands after his speech, and they kept quiet for ten minutes before asking him a few questions.²⁹ At a CC session held on 27 November, Kim expressed his disagreement with the removal of Stalin’s remains from Lenin’s mausoleum, but declared that the “Stalin issue” was the business of the CPSU, and forbade party members to discuss Stalinism and the “Albanian question.”³⁰ These actions indicated a cautious and relatively pragmatic North Korean reaction to the new challenge.

However, the intraparty conflict between Khrushchev and Hoxha soon assumed an interstate character. On 3 December, the Kremlin recalled all Soviet diplomats from Tirana. The severity of that action can be gauged from that up to this event there had been only one case when Moscow resorted to such an exceedingly harsh measure against a “fraternal” communist country, and this was Stalin’s break with Yugoslavia. It is hardly surprising that henceforth Kim Il Sung took the Soviet attack on Stalinism personally. As he put it at a CC plenum held in March 1962, “we must prepare for the contingency that the Soviet Union will cast us aside in the same way as it happened to Albania.”³¹ Statements made by CCP officials also confirm the importance of the “Albanian question.” In August 1962, the head of the International Department of the CCP told a Polish diplomat that before the Twenty-second Congress, there had been chances of concluding the Sino–Soviet dispute. “Why did the CPSU come forward with the Albanian problem?,” the departmental head asked. “Why did they tackle the question in such a way? This method is unacceptable, particularly with regard to a small party. . . . Albania was not a problem at all, why did they [the Soviets] come forward with that?”³²

Afraid of the “contagion” of de-Stalinization, Kim put an end to the feeble “thaw” of 1960–1961. On 10 December, Radio Pyongyang ceased to broadcast the Korean programs of Radio Moscow. The post office withheld copies of *Pravda* and *Kommunist* that dealt with the issue of Stalinism.³³ In February and March 1962, the dictatorship replaced a substantial number of middle-level party and state cadres, of whom many were dispatched to the mines or the countryside. These measures affected, first and foremost, the acquaintances of the Soviet and East European diplomats, but the wave of repression hit other potential dissidents as well. As an official confidently told the Hungarians, “political control has been tightened up with an iron hand in the last months.” Party committees regularly prepared reports about the mood of the population in order to find out what people knew about de-Stalinization and the “Albanian question.”³⁴

In March, the party’s literary journal launched a bitter attack on a comedy written by Kim Ch’ang-sok. Since the play made fun of the bureaucratic regulations that hindered, rather than facilitated, industrial production, it was declared a revisionist work influenced by “decadent European art.” The author attempted to refute these allegations, whereupon critics depicted him as an “anti-party element.” The campaign seems to have been motivated by the regime’s intention of intimidating the intelligentsia and preventing the spread of the ideas of the Twenty-second Congress.³⁵

In fact, Kim had good reason to worry about the effect the Twenty-second Congress might produce on North Korean public opinion. Despite the regime’s tight hold over the population and its enormous repressive potential, in the 1961–1963 period, dissenting voices were by no means nonexistent among the intelligentsia and the masses. This fact questions those claims that overemphasize the effectiveness of North Korean ideological “brainwashing.” Although in November 1961, the leadership of Kim Il Sung University prohibited students from discussing Stalinism and the “Albanian question,” at first the latter spoke a lot among themselves about these issues.³⁶ In March, a Soviet Korean told a Hungarian diplomat that “the Korean internal situation is rather delicate [*shchekotlivy*], a great number of people are thinking about the effect of the 22nd Congress . . . , but they [the KWP leaders] have shut everybody (including the F[oreign] M[inistry]) up, and this is why people keep still.”³⁷

Worse still, political restrictions were accompanied by price rises and a renewed emphasis on “voluntary work.” The price of potatoes, apples, and flour increased by 36 percent, 50 percent, and 111 percent, respectively. The regime ordered people to perform “voluntary” physical labor on the sixth day of the week. The food shortage, whose reality no amount of “brainwashing” could erase, resulted in increasing popular discontent. As an official confidently told

the Hungarians, “anonymous letters are sent to the Central Committee, and the issue was also discussed at the exclusive meetings of the party action committees. Women complain more and more frequently that there is nothing to buy.”³⁸

Significantly, some North Koreans dared to make critical comments on the regime’s policies as late as 1963. In December 1963, Deputy Premier Nam Il visited the construction site of a thermal power station being built with Soviet assistance. Although it had taken eighteen months to complete one-fifth of the first section of the power station, Nam Il, referring to a directive of Kim Il Sung, instructed the management to complete the remaining part of the first section in three months. Following the meeting, a North Korean engineer told a Soviet colleague, “Have you seen this comedy? Everybody knows it cannot be done, but no one dared to tell the truth!” The Soviet ambassador, who told this story to his Hungarian counterpart, added that due to the lack of safety equipment, “serious accidents were a common occurrence at the construction [of the power plant], and all the warnings of the Soviet experts were in vain. On the Koreans’ part these issues were dealt with in an irresponsible and thoughtless way.”³⁹

At least one North Korean official went so far as to criticize Kim Il Sung himself. In July 1962, the cadre in question told a Hungarian diplomat that although Comrade Kim Il Sung has good organizational skills, his general theoretical and economic learning is very scanty, he usually likes to do his work in a “military” way.

Kim Il Sung compares every issue to a front-line battle, that is, we always face some enemy to be defeated (in the case of production, nature is the enemy). For this reason, Comrade Kim Il Sung cannot study certain economic issues concretely and closely, he regards the embellished reports as true. . . . [W]henver it is announced to him that they wish to overfulfill the plan targets of the given factory or branch by so many percentages in the following plan period, he always takes this approvingly and contentedly. . . . [I]n the opinion of Kim Il Sung and the Party Center, the issue of political guidance is of single and exclusive importance in solving of any problem, that is, this slogan results in a disregard of professional considerations, and often in a disdain for the latter. Of course, this does not promote solving the issue of technical cadres, which is difficult in any case. The rise of careerists and people of that ilk, and the thrusting of the few technical experts into the background and their qualification as politically unreliable on fictitious charges, is

a common occurrence. At the same time, the Party Center and the central organs constantly send various teams of inspectors to each area or factory, there are often 5 or 6 different control teams in a place, who disturb the work there with their activity, undermine the authority of the local leaders, and so on.⁴⁰

Since the aforesaid repressive measures were rooted in Pyongyang's increasing hostility toward Moscow, they hit Soviet Koreans particularly hard. Early in 1962, there were still as many as 340 Soviet Koreans, including persons who had relinquished their Soviet citizenship, in the DPRK. Subjected to strict surveillance since the first months of that year, many of them did their best to move to the USSR.⁴¹ This time the DPRK authorities were very reluctant to give their consent to the emigration of the Soviet Koreans. In December 1961, Nam Il told his stepson, Vladimir Pak, to return to the Soviet Union under the pretext of medical treatment. It was hardly easy to arrange such a trip, but fortunately the wives of Nam Il and Kim Il were on good terms with each other. As a consequence, Kim Il instructed Foreign Minister Pak Song-ch'ol to let Vladimir Pak leave the country. He left for Moscow in April.⁴²

The restrictive measures taken by the regime affected the diplomatic corps as well. At the end of December, the Foreign Ministry told the embassies that from 1 January on, foreigners would be forbidden to visit the three southernmost provinces without a special permission. In January, the foreign students of Kim Il Sung University were called upon not to leave the university and the dormitory unless they intended to visit their embassies.⁴³ "Surveillance of foreigners has been greatly tightened up, they are often shadowed, and those Koreans who have contacts with the embassies here are particularly watched," the Hungarian Embassy reported on 5 April. "In early February, everywhere in the capital meetings were held in the institutions, enterprises, etc. in order to warn workers against having contacts with foreigners."⁴⁴ The dictatorship had good reason to isolate the population from the Europeans living in the DPRK, for ordinary North Korean citizens seem not to have shared the xenophobic attitude of the leadership, and thus they could have been influenced by the ideas of de-Stalinization. In May 1959, Kulaevsky, a Soviet correspondent to Pyongyang, told Karsai that while "leading Korean cadres" treated foreigners with suspicion, workers appreciated the assistance North Korea had received from Hungary, and they felt attracted to Hungarians.⁴⁵

As opposed to the 1960 campaign against *sadaejui*, this time Pyongyang's actions were directed only against the Soviet Union and the East European countries. On 27 December 1961, Paek Chong-won asked an assistant under-secretary of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry whether the policy of "peaceful

co-existence” had yielded any results for Hungary in 1961. Since there was a perceptible accent of criticism in his question, the Hungarian official found it necessary to emphasize that Hungary was not “hugsy-kissy with the capitalist countries.”⁴⁶ At the end of December, Kim Ch’ang-man told the party leaders of South Hamgyong province and Hamhung that “the leaders of the CPSU have adopted a revisionist point of view regarding peaceful co-existence, proletarian dictatorship, and so on.” While he disapproved of the openly anti-Soviet outbursts of Albanian propaganda, he also stressed that “the CPSU is not right in every respect either.”⁴⁷

The propaganda directed against the USSR and its allies included more and more concrete charges, and in some cases it was reinforced by economic and other reprisals. In January, *Kulloja* published an article which summed up the international events of 1961. It made absolutely no mention of the Twenty-second Congress, ignored the steps of Soviet foreign policy, and concentrated on the various anti-colonial liberation movements instead.⁴⁸ In the same month, the DPRK flatly refused to sell copper and salt to the GDR, although the latter badly needed these goods.⁴⁹ At the Institute of International Relations, certain subjects, such as the COMECON, the Common Market, and the Hungarian “counter-revolution,” were suddenly deleted from the list of examination questions. On 8 February, a teacher of the institute told a Hungarian student that the principle of peaceful coexistence was not applicable to the foreign policy of North Korea. Referring to articles published in *Nodong Sinmun* in March, other instructors pointed out that this principle “smells of revisionism,” because “imperialism must be eliminated from the face of the earth.”⁵⁰ From February on, intraparty lectures criticized the COMECON, and blamed the DPRK’s economic difficulties on the European communist countries. At a CC plenum held on 6–8 March, Kim Il Sung allegedly declared the Soviet leaders revisionists. As opposed to Chinese and Albanian propaganda, the North Korean press did not revile the CPSU leadership by name, but its attacks on “modern revisionism” were undoubtedly addressed to Moscow.⁵¹

Kim’s anti-Soviet steps were accompanied by the improvement of Sino-DPRK relations. On 5 January, a Chinese delegation headed by the foreign trade minister arrived in North Korea in order to sign a trade agreement for 1962.⁵² The number of Chinese visitors (mainly technicians and advisers) significantly increased after the Twenty-second Congress. The North Korean press paid particular attention to Chinese, Albanian, and Vietnamese news. On 15 April, the CCP leaders spectacularly celebrated Kim’s fiftieth birthday, calling him “the closest friend of the Chinese people.” This was followed by the visit of a Chinese delegation headed by Peng Zhen, which lasted from 23 April to 3 May. The North Korean authorities gave the delegation an extremely warm

welcome. In Hamhung, they assembled some 60,000 people in honor of the Chinese visitors, who were always to be seen in the company of high-ranking KWP leaders, such as Kim Il and Pak Kum-ch'ol. Doing his best to play upon the national pride of the North Korean leadership, Peng Zhen frequently praised the autarkist economic policy pursued by Pyongyang.⁵³ As noted before, the way Beijing praised Kim Il Sung and his economic goals noticeably differed from the critical or scornful statements made by CPSU leaders. Soviet unwillingness to participate in Kim's cult must have played a role in the gradual deterioration of Soviet–North Korean relations. Of the twelve films the DPRK sent to the USSR in 1961, Moscow showed only four. As a Soviet diplomat named Golosov put it on 18 January 1962, “one cannot show films based on the personality cult when there is a fight against the remnants of the personality cult in the USSR.”⁵⁴

Nonetheless, Golosov probably oversimplified the situation when he stated that the North Korean leaders “gravitate towards China.” Although in this period Kim Il Sung certainly preferred the PRC to the Soviet Union, his actions did not necessarily duplicate contemporary Chinese policies. One remarkable difference between the North Korean and the Chinese situation was that in the DPRK domestic and foreign policies seem to have been more closely interconnected than in the PRC. The wave of repression that swept North Korea in the first months of 1962 may have been more all-encompassing than the repressive measures the CCP leadership took at that time. True, in 1962–1964, Beijing also replaced a lot of high-ranking officials, including deputy ministers and departmental heads, whom it suspected of having a pro-Soviet disposition.⁵⁵ The CCP leaders, however, did not halt the process of political and economic “corrections,” which had begun late in 1960, after the Twenty-second Congress. At the end of 1961 and in the first half of 1962, they rehabilitated many “rightists,” tolerated a modicum of artistic creativity, condemned the previous persecution of specialists, and directed their “anti-revisionist” propaganda against foreign, rather than domestic, opponents.⁵⁶ The spring session of the Chinese National People's Assembly laid great stress on these issues. Significantly, the North Korean press, although it published the session's communiqué, omitted certain parts of the speech made by Zhou Enlai, namely, the sentences which called for the simultaneous realization of “centralism and democracy, discipline and liberty.”⁵⁷

Apart from Kim Il Sung's long-standing aversion to any sort of political liberalization, this difference between North Korean and Chinese policies may have resulted from that the crisis created by the Great Leap Forward proved much more serious than the economic difficulties Pyongyang had to cope with. The CCP leaders probably felt that they simply could not afford to discontinue

the process of “corrections,” no matter how much their pragmatic nature differed from the ultra-leftist ideological standpoint that Beijing adopted in the Sino–Soviet debate.

Secondly, in the period in question North Korean foreign policy also seemed more radical, at least in certain respects, than Chinese diplomacy. While in the first four months of 1962, the DPRK adopted an increasingly hostile attitude toward the Soviet Union, in February, Beijing toned down and then temporarily stopped its overt propaganda campaign against Moscow.⁵⁸ As Griffith observes, “from early spring to September 1962 . . . a significant détente in the Sino–Soviet dispute appeared to develop.”⁵⁹ The KWP leaders seem to have been quite slow to follow the Chinese example. In the opinion of a Hungarian diplomat, in April, Peng Zhen may have asked Pyongyang to be more flexible toward the Kremlin.⁶⁰ This is quite plausible, for Hoxha also restrained himself a bit in April. “One can assume that the violently anti-Soviet Albanians had ceased attacking Khrushchev by name . . . not on their own initiative but on the instigation of the Chinese,” Griffith notes.⁶¹

A third difference between the DPRK and the PRC was that the North Korean regime, unlike the Chinese authorities, did not display Stalin’s picture at that time. Pyongyang’s main street still bore the dictator’s name, but there was no other Stalin monument in the DPRK, and North Korean propaganda did not refer publicly to his works.⁶² Of course, this does not necessarily mean that the North Koreans were much more critical of Stalin’s personality cult and his purges than the CCP leaders. The absence or presence of Stalin pictures in a given country seems to have been influenced by various factors, of which ideological sympathy constituted but one. For instance, in 1961, one could still see big pictures of Stalin in the DRV, although the political style of the VWP leaders was less, rather than more, Stalinist than that of their comrades in Pyongyang.⁶³ The gradual removal of Stalin pictures in post-1953 North Korea was probably motivated both by Kim’s occasional attempts to please Khrushchev and his determination to make himself the sole and unrivaled ideological authority in the DPRK.

Other facts similarly suggest that one should not attribute excessive importance to the fact that Beijing displayed Stalin’s pictures, while Pyongyang did not. The steps that the North Korean regime took in the months following the Twenty-second Congress revealed that Kim Il Sung certainly took Khrushchev’s attack on Stalinism personally. In contrast, the CCP leaders seem to have raised the “Stalin issue” mainly for the purpose of propaganda. For instance, late in 1961 and early in 1962, the CCP leadership seems to have welcomed the criticism to which Tsend, the second secretary of the Mongolian communist party, subjected Tsedenbal even though these critical comments

were based on the resolutions of the Twenty-second Congress and accompanied by the condemnation of Stalin and Hoxha. Since Tsedenbal was by no means pro-Chinese, Beijing probably considered any attack on his authority a favorable development, no matter whether it was related to the criticism of Stalin or not.⁶⁴

The Mongolian events also showed that Kim Il Sung may have over-reacted when he regarded the Twenty-second Congress and the pressure Khrushchev put on Albania as a direct threat. Similar to Kim, Tsedenbal did his best to play down the Twenty-second Congress. Still, Moscow made no attempt at replacing him, which revealed that Khrushchev did not intend to apply his anti-Stalinist policy to each communist country, friendly and unfriendly alike, in an indiscriminate way. "The fraternal diplomats are in agreement on that the issue of the personality cult should be left alone here, since it would be directed against Comrade Tsedenbal himself," the Hungarian Ambassador to Ulaanbaatar reported in January 1962. "Despite his faults, Comrade Tsedenbal is faithfully pro-Soviet."⁶⁵

Due to the despotic nature of the North Korean regime, Soviet de-Stalinization touched Kim Il Sung on the raw, and he reacted much more aggressively to it than the less tyrannical VWP leadership. Here it should be mentioned that Ho Chi Minh made conscious attempts to appear uninterested in creating a cult around himself. On 19 May 1960, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, he prohibited the official celebration of the event, although the authorities did find ways to commemorate it.⁶⁶ To be sure, Hanoi's reaction to the Twenty-second Congress was not entirely dissimilar from that of Pyongyang. Among others, the North Vietnamese press did not cover the congress as extensively as the Soviet and East European diplomats wished. In the last days of the month, the VWP Politburo instructed the party membership not to discuss the "delicate" issues of the congress until the CC formed an opinion of them. On 8 November, all dailies ostentatiously celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the APL.⁶⁷

Nonetheless, the North Vietnamese authorities still did their best to fulfill the requests of the "fraternal" embassies. The diplomats noted that the cooperativeness of the officials had actually increased since the outbreak of the Soviet-Albanian conflict.⁶⁸ At the invitation of Hanoi, in January 1962, Soviet cosmonaut German Titov (whom the Chinese government failed to invite) visited the DRV, where he was given a reception due only to heads of state.⁶⁹ It happened only in 1963 that the North Vietnamese regime began to pursue policies comparable to the repressive measures that the North Korean dictatorship had taken early in 1962. For example, in April 1963, the leadership replaced Foreign Minister Ung Van Khiem, a vociferous critic of Beijing, with pro-Chinese

Xuan Thuy.⁷⁰ In July, Hanoi told the “fraternal” diplomats not to meet officials without the previous consent of the Foreign Ministry, and in August, it launched a campaign against Soviet cultural influence.⁷¹

Arming the Whole People

Beijing’s vociferous endorsement of the Asian “wars of national liberation” played an important role in that Kim drew toward China after the Twenty-second Congress. The CCP leadership emphasized that one could not achieve the unification of Vietnam and Korea through negotiations, and backed up its arguments with references to the repressive policies of the South Vietnamese and South Korean dictatorships.⁷² This approach appealed to Kim Il Sung, who had failed to reach an agreement with Seoul in 1960–1961. The conflict with Moscow by no means induced the dictator to adopt a defensive posture vis-à-vis the ROK. On the contrary, he behaved as if he had finally been given a free hand. Having been restrained by Khrushchev’s Europe-centric and détente-oriented foreign policies for years, he was eager to take advantage of the weakening of Soviet control over the DPRK and adopt a more militant attitude toward South Korea.

The deterioration of Soviet–DPRK relations was closely intertwined with a gradually sharpening conflict between Pyongyang and Seoul. As early as February 1962, the Fatherland United Democratic Front published aggressive statements with regard to South Korea. On 1 March, Kim Il also made a belligerent speech, which startled several East European diplomats.⁷³ Later in March, the head of the Foreign Ministry’s First Department told East German Chargé d’Affaires Stark that Pyongyang would liberate the South by military means, for “we cannot wait until the population of South Korea starves to death!” He stressed that the East German policy of “peaceful co-existence” was not applicable to Korea, and bitinglly remarked that “now the revisionist danger is close to us, the wind of revisionism is blowing toward us from all the four cardinal points, from South Korea, Japan, *and another direction*” (emphasis added).⁷⁴

The North Korean press ceased to use the term “peaceful unification,” and some cadres declared that “if India had the right to liberate Goa, the DPRK also has the right to liberate South Korea.”⁷⁵ On 6 April, Kim T’ae-hui told the communist ambassadors that the United States obviously wanted to start a new war in Korea. Several ambassadors had their doubts about Washington’s alleged aggressive intentions. They did not fail to notice that Kim T’ae-hui had supported his arguments only with the reports of a few news agencies. Puzanov,

however, was not worried about the militant declarations of the North Korean regime.⁷⁶

The Soviet ambassador, who was known for his hard-line views, probably underestimated the aggressiveness of the KWP leadership. In April, the slogan *chonmin mujanghwa* (arming the entire population), which scholars usually associate with the CC plenum held in December 1962, appeared in many places. While in the capital the regime tried not to attract the attention of the embassies, in the country such belligerent slogans were all the more conspicuous.⁷⁷ In the spring, the North Korean authorities began to curtail the activity of the Czechoslovakian and Polish members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in order to prevent them from keeping an eye on the measures that Pyongyang took along the DMZ.⁷⁸

In mid-1962, the employment of soldiers in construction more or less came to an end, indicating that the KPA was permanently put on alert.⁷⁹ At a secret meeting held on 19 June, the leadership resolved to develop defense industry. For instance, a large defense factory was to be built in Kanggye, near the Chinese border. Kim Il Sung seems to have intended not to place a too heavy burden on the population, for he declared that the other focal point of the 1963 economic plan would be agriculture, rather than heavy industry.⁸⁰ On 17 October, Kim told the Soviet ambassador that the KPA needed modern Soviet arms. The defense expenditures of the DPRK, he said, were proportionately the highest in the whole “communist camp.” Of the 500,000 troops, as many as 300,000 were constantly “in the trenches.”⁸¹ These facts contradict the widely held assumption that “it was in December of 1962 that Pyongyang turned to a significant military buildup programme.”⁸² They also refute the claim that the Cuban missile crisis played a decisive role in this military buildup.

The aforesaid belligerent steps clearly gave the lie to the peaceful proposals that Pyongyang made on 20–21 June. On this occasion, the SPA once again called upon the ROK to conclude a nonaggression pact with the DPRK, which would be accompanied by the mutual reduction of armed forces. It also revived the idea of peaceful unification.⁸³ These declarations may have been motivated, above all, by the leadership’s desire of placating the Kremlin, since in May, Kim, perhaps on the advice of the Chinese, had made some approaches to the USSR. Peculiarly enough, it was a medical problem that facilitated this rapprochement. Due to the nature of the North Korean regime, Kim Il Sung’s state of health became an important political factor. The dictator suffered from nephritis, and in October 1959, Zhou Enlai sent Chinese physicians to the DPRK in order to cure him. Traditional Chinese medicine, however, proved insufficient, and Kim Il Sung was finally compelled to ask for Moscow’s help.

In May 1962, two Soviet professors of medicine arrived in Pyongyang, and in their presence a North Korean surgeon successfully operated the high-ranking patient. Needless to say, the press failed to inform the public about the dictator's illness.⁸⁴

The success of the operation proved a good omen. The Kremlin, having recalled Puzanov in June, appointed a new ambassador, Vasily Petrovich Moskovsky. In August, Moskovsky told Hungarian Ambassador Kovács that before his departure for North Korea, Khrushchev had received him:

Comrade Khrushchev explained that, in his view, they had made a mistake when they applied *mechanically* [emphasis in the original] the criticism of Stalin's personality cult to the Korean Workers' Party too. It was a well-known characteristic of Stalin's working method that he did not set out for the provinces, he visited neither factories nor co-ops, he ran the country locking himself up in the center, so he had no contact with the masses. . . . This cannot be said of Kim Il Sung, though. The person in question regularly tours the country, inquires into the work of the factories and co-ops, and thus he has quite extensive contacts with the workers and the peasantry. Kim Il Sung has certain new conceptions too, and these may be illuminating for us as well. For instance, he holds a CC meeting on the spot in the country if that facilitates better understanding of the question of the day. . . . For instance, said Comrade Khrushchev, one can approve of the resolution passed by the CC last November on the reorganization of industrial management, disregarding a few errors. The district directorates established for agricultural management also must be regarded as positive.

It is also known, said Comrade Khrushchev, that in the policy of the KWP and the DPRK, one can usually observe a vacillation between the Soviet Union and China. If we do not strive to improve Soviet-Korean relations, these will obviously become weaker, and at the same time the Chinese connection will get stronger, we will make that possible for them, we will even push them directly toward China. Comrade Khrushchev instructed Comrade Moskovsky to do his best to improve relations between the CPSU CC and the KWP CC, and between the two governments.⁸⁵

Khrushchev's message visibly cheered Kim Il Sung, particularly because Moscow at last sent submarines and surface-to-air missiles to Pyongyang. For their part, the North Koreans became more willing to inform the Soviets about issues of internal politics and defense. On 11–19 September, an East German

party and government delegation visited the DPRK in order to celebrate the completion of the GDR's aid program. They were received by Kim Il Sung, who expressed his gratitude for East Berlin's generosity, and emphasized that Pyongyang did not intend to carry economic autarky to extremes. North Korea, he promised, would increase its exports to the USSR and Eastern Europe. Kim also admitted that the DPRK had failed to fulfill certain plan targets of crucial importance. Pyongyang was aware of that the withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea would take a long time, he added. "Kim Il-sung has not spoken so frankly with any fraternal delegation from Europe since the 22nd Congress," Kovács noted.⁸⁶

Despite these positive signs, neither the Soviets nor the North Koreans found it easy to get over the tension that had appeared in Soviet–North Korean relations late in 1961. The unpleasant memories of the Twenty-second Congress continued to haunt both sides. In October, the Albanian Embassy to Pyongyang spread a pamphlet that harshly criticized the Soviet leadership. On 16 October, Moskovsky made a complaint against this action with Pak Song-ch'ol, and when the latter consistently evaded the question, the ambassador expressed his dissatisfaction with Pak's attitude. Thereupon Kim Il Sung sent for Moskovsky, and told him that the Albanian ambassador would be called to account for the incident. The DPRK, he went on, was anxious to maintain good relations with both Beijing and Moscow, and therefore did not intend to take sides in the Sino–Soviet conflict. However, Moskovsky did not fail to notice the particular emphasis that the dictator laid on the closeness of Sino–North Korean relations. Kim also warned him against following the example of Ivanov, "who aspired to remove him [Kim Il Sung]. As a consequence, Ivanov went under, whereas he still heads the party."⁸⁷

As many scholars emphasize, the Cuban missile crisis resulted in a dramatic worsening of Soviet–DPRK relations.⁸⁸ In a speech made on 23 October, that is, a day after the outbreak of the crisis, Kim declared that no communist country had the right to impose its will on others, and the larger countries should treat the smaller ones as equals. The dictator probably referred to ostracizing Albania and China, but he may have also meant that the Kremlin had subordinated Havana's interests to its own, exposing Cuba to potential nuclear attack.⁸⁹ In any case, removal of the missiles by no means pleased Pyongyang. On 1 November, Castro made a television speech about the outcome of the crisis, whereupon the North Korean press at first published only those parts of the speech that referred to disagreements between Moscow and Havana. In the first half of November, Khrushchev was depicted as an "appeaser" at a meeting held in the Foreign Ministry. Stalin, the meeting concluded, would never have yielded under imperialist pressure.⁹⁰ In December, Yi Chu-yon visited Prague

on the occasion of a Czechoslovakian party congress. When the Czechoslovaks asked him what he thought of the Cuban missile crisis, Yi went down on his knees, and stated, “This is how Khrushchev besought Kennedy.”⁹¹

While these reactions were certainly rooted in Kim’s hard-line stance, the KWP leadership had good reason to think that Moscow had no consideration for smaller countries. For instance, the Kremlin strove hard to achieve the removal of U.S. bases from Turkey in exchange for the withdrawal of its missiles, but did not even attempt to raise the issue of the Guantánamo base and the economic embargo that strangled Cuba. “The Soviets seemed oblivious to Cuban sovereignty, even agreeing to an internationally sponsored inspection of the dismantling of the missiles on Cuban soil without first asking Cuba’s permission,” Brenner and Blight point out. Havana “correctly understood . . . that the Soviet Union was unwilling ultimately to put itself at risk to protect Cuba.”⁹² In January 1963, Ho Chi Minh told a Soviet delegation headed by Yuri Andropov that the outcome of the Caribbean crisis had given rise to dissatisfaction in North Vietnam, since the VWP leaders felt that the Kremlin left Cuba to its fate.⁹³

The “Caribbean hurricane” tore up the budding flowers of renewed Soviet–DPRK cooperation by the roots. The Soviet Embassy quickly learned that North Korean intraparty propaganda harshly criticized Soviet diplomacy. The secret bulletin of the Foreign Ministry often quoted those reports of Western news agencies that referred to the domestic problems and diplomatic blunders of the USSR and the East European regimes.⁹⁴ On 1 November, Yu Chang-sik told the diplomatic corps that henceforth foreigners were categorically prohibited from visiting Chagang province (where the regime had built defense factories) and the areas south of Sariwon and Wonsan. In actual practice, the Foreign Ministry made exceptions for the Chinese and Albanian diplomats.⁹⁵ In the last months of 1962, the regime stepped up its efforts to infiltrate the “fraternal” embassies. At the Hungarian Embassy, an interpreter named Kim Ch’ol directed such intelligence operations. Thanks to the assistance of Korean drivers and janitors, he kept an eye on the activity of the Hungarian diplomats, and often withheld or distorted the telephone messages they received.⁹⁶

Thus, it is hardly surprising that the Soviets were not particularly cooperative either. At the end of November, Deputy Premier Kim Kwang-hyop left for Moscow in order to request modern military aircraft, missiles, and submarines from the Kremlin. The visit, which lasted from 29 November to 5 December, ended in failure. The Soviets told Kim Kwang-hyop that they were willing to provide the KPA with such arms but would not sell them on credit. Having experienced how reluctant North Korea was to repay loans received from

“fraternal” countries, they insisted on immediate payment, a demand that the DPRK was unwilling (and perhaps unable) to fulfill.⁹⁷

Although Moscow’s refusal certainly hindered Kim Il Sung in attaining his objectives, it did not discourage him at all. On the contrary, it induced him to create a defense structure that was to be as self-reliant as possible. On 10–14 December, the CC held a plenum that led to the acceleration of the DPRK’s military buildup. Everybody had to construct socialism “with arms in the one hand and hammer and sickle in the other,” the plenum declared, adopting this slogan from the Albanian regime. In practical terms this meant that the KWP leadership resolved to arm the population, keep it in a state of mobilization, and establish a defense system in the whole country. Trenches and air-raid shelters were built throughout North Korea, particularly in the southernmost provinces where the government also extended and repaired the road network. The KPA established three-echelon fortifications in the southern mountains. By April 1963, air-raid warnings had become quite frequent.⁹⁸

Pyongyang seems to have underestimated the dangers of a nuclear war and overestimated the effectiveness of the aforesaid defense measures. Kim Il Sung told Soviet Ambassador Moskovsky that “the geographical conditions of the country [mountainous terrain] gave a certain advantage to them in case of an atomic war, because the mountains warded off the explosions to a substantial extent, and to wreak large-scale destruction in the country, many such bombs would be needed.”⁹⁹ On 23 May, a Hungarian diplomat named Garajszki visited the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum in Pyongyang, and had a conversation with the political officer who accompanied him. The latter stated that North Korea’s underground fortifications were able to withstand even the explosion of a hydrogen bomb, whereupon Garajszki pointed out that such explosions would destroy everything on the surface, and radioactive pollution would compel people to remain in the caves for a long time. The officer said that the government intended to stockpile supplies in the shelters, and the Americans could not devastate the entire country anyway. Two or three hydrogen bombs would be sufficient to destroy the whole of North Korea, Garajszki told him. “Comrade Kim Il Sung told us that we had won the first war by means of our rock-cavities, and we would also win the second one with their help,” the perplexed officer replied.¹⁰⁰

North Korea’s military preparations were not just of a defensive character. In fact, Pak Kum-ch’ol told Moskovsky that Pyongyang did not expect Park Chung Hee to launch an attack on the North, for the South Korean leaders were occupied in transforming their military dictatorship into a civilian one. The Southern economic situation was difficult, Pak Kum-ch’ol went on, “and it is

inconceivable under the circumstances that they will make serious preparations so as to pursue adventurist aims.” In the light of these observations, Moskovsky found it strange that the KWP leaders had resolved to arm the whole population.

One may assume that Kim wanted to swoop down on the South before it could completely recover from the economic and political crisis of the 1959–1961 period. Actually, Pak told Moskovsky that Pyongyang no longer attached hopes to the emergence of an intellectual and student opposition in South Korea. “Park Chung Hee has even succeeded in improving the country’s economic situation to a certain extent,” he complained. “In these circumstances one cannot negotiate with the Fascist dictatorship on peaceful unification.”¹⁰¹ South Korean exports, which had stagnated throughout the 1950s, indeed rose from \$31.8 million in 1960 to \$87 million in 1963.¹⁰² Pak’s observations suggest that the North Korean leaders, or at least some of them, were not blinded by their own propaganda but remained capable of evaluating the South Korean situation relatively objectively.

Apart from the gradual stabilization of Park’s dictatorship, the KWP leadership was most worried by the absence of a viable communist movement in the South. In a speech he made on 28 February 1963, Yi Hyo-sun declared that there was no revolutionary party in the ROK and thus one had to be created. When Cuban Ambassador Vigoa asked one of the DPRK deputy foreign ministers whether there existed any organized opposition to Park, the official became visibly embarrassed and did his best to dodge the question.¹⁰³

This situation stood in a sharp contrast with the one in South Vietnam. The dynamic growth of the South Vietnamese guerrilla movement may have made the KWP leaders envious, and Moscow occasionally even added fuel to the fire. “The Soviet people follow with great attention the South Vietnamese people, which fights for its freedom and wages a war against the American troops,” Khrushchev told the DPRK ambassador to Moscow in February 1964. “Why is there such a great silence in South Korea at the same time? Do the South Korean people perhaps expect democratic steps from the government, or have they already gotten tired of the struggle?” The hapless ambassador could only reply that the nuclear cannons the United States placed in the ROK discouraged the South Korean population from active resistance. Thereupon Khrushchev promptly pointed out that the nuclear cannons in question had already been removed from the ROK, and their presence would not produce a significant negative effect on South Korean political activity anyway.¹⁰⁴

On the other hand, the victories of the National Liberation Front (NLF) in South Vietnam probably emboldened Pyongyang. For instance, in January 1963, at Ap Bac, 350 lightly armed guerrillas inflicted heavy casualties on 2,000

South Vietnamese troops equipped with armored personnel carriers and helicopters, a success that shocked the American press.¹⁰⁵ The North Koreans actually cited the Vietnamese events as an example, the Czechoslovakian ambassador noted. Although the NLF had already liberated a considerable part of the country, Washington did not attempt to use nuclear weapons, Pyongyang pointed out. “Does anything support the assumption that the Americans would act otherwise in case of a South Korean war, then?,” the North Korean cadres asked rhetorically. “It is obvious that it has nothing to support it.”¹⁰⁶

“One Cannot Feed the People on Coal and Iron”

Pyongyang combined its military buildup with the temporary reduction of its economic plan targets, a fact usually overlooked by scholars. The CC plenum held in December 1962, designated 1963 as another “buffer year.” This idea had cropped up as early as June, and in September, Kim Il Sung told the East German delegation mentioned before that in 1963, the government would slacken the pace of industrialization. The increase of industrial production should not exceed 11 percent in 1963, the December plenum concluded. While this pace was still excessively rapid, one should keep in mind that the KWP leadership had originally planned a growth of 18 percent per annum. In 1963, there would not be economic targets comparable to the six “mountaintops” (plan targets of crucial importance) of 1962, Kim Il Sung decided.¹⁰⁷ This decision contradicts the claim that at the December plenum, the dictator “countermanded the original basic economic strategy under the first seven-year plan (1961–67)—recovery from the excesses of the Ch’ollima Movement and moderation of the ongoing drive for rapid, heavy industrialization—and reinstated the Ch’ollima policies of far-reaching economic and political mobilisation.”¹⁰⁸

The reduction of plan targets probably resulted from the regime’s rising military expenditures and the economic failures it had experienced in 1962. On 22 April 1963, Kim told Moskovsky that since the growth of the extractive industries had proven insufficient, the most important investments of 1963–1964 would be in mining, rather than manufacturing. Mechanization of agriculture had not made headway yet, he admitted, for some 75 percent of agricultural production was still done by hand. Therefore, the government resolved to send as many as 300,000 people back to the villages in 1963 in order to alleviate the rural labor shortage. The chairs of those party committees that directed the production of the large factories, Kim went on, had failed to meet their increased obligations, and thus they would be replaced. Pyongyang intended to create an economy completely independent from foreign countries, the dictator stressed.¹⁰⁹ That is, the KWP leaders were not unaware of the country’s economic problems,

but the methods they devised in order to deal with them remained narrow-minded enough to guarantee failure.

This contrast between the leadership's clear-sighted observations and its dogmatic reactions was particularly manifest with regard to consumer goods production and agriculture. By 1963, the shortage of food and consumer goods had become very serious in North Korea. Having visited the PRC and North Vietnam in April, Hungarian Ambassador Kovács noted that one could buy much more vegetables and fruit in the markets of Shanghai and Hanoi than in Pyongyang, where the authorities had declared the market-hall a "bourgeois relic" and closed it down long ago.¹¹⁰

While cotton fabric was more or less available in North Korean shops, woolen cloth was very expensive. A meter of imported woolen cloth cost 80 to 120 won, whereas workers earned only 40 to 60 won per month. North Korean-made print dresses usually lost their color after the first washing. The price of a shirt, a meter of silk, and a pair of shoes stood at 15 to 30, 20 to 25, and 10 to 35 won, respectively. That is, the serious disproportion between prices and wages had somewhat decreased since the mid-1950s, but the shortage of goods and the poor quality of products more or less offset these changes. With the exception of bicycles, pedal sewing machines, and small radio receivers, Korean customers could hardly purchase any durables. Moreover, the latter goods, which cost 160, 350, and 180 won, respectively, were allocated by the authorities (usually to outstanding workers). By and large, the quality of Chinese-made consumer goods surpassed that of their North Korean counterparts. Handicrafts had been traditionally more developed in China than in Japanese-ruled Korea, and this sector of the Chinese economy, as opposed to large-scale industry, quickly recovered from the crisis caused by the Great Leap Forward.¹¹¹

Actually, Pyongyang seems to have drawn inspiration from Beijing's example. In 1963–1964, a number of Chinese experts arrived in the DPRK so as to assist the North Koreans in developing handicrafts. The North Korean leadership obviously perceived the gravity of the situation. A KWPPC plenum held on 3–5 September 1963 resolved to increase the production of consumer goods, but the results were far from satisfactory. The resolution simply ordered all machine works and centrally managed industrial enterprises, including even some cement factories, to make consumer goods and other much-needed products in addition to their usual manufactures. For instance, a machine tool factory in Kusong had to produce electric irons, hoes, spades, and rakes as well. The dictatorship also compelled every neighborhood unit to mobilize housewives and elderly people for the local production of consumer goods. Needless to say, the quality of these products left much to be desired.¹¹²

Agricultural investments increased by 34 percent in 1963, and the Septem-

ber plenum also laid stress on agricultural issues, such as the development of animal husbandry. The leadership decided to let peasants market their surplus produces. Still, rural producers were rarely able to take advantage of Pyongyang's new policies, since the household plots of coop members did not exceed 100 square meters. Dog meat was the most commonly seen product in the peasant markets. Both poultry and pork proved scarce and expensive. For example, a kilogram of chicken and an egg cost 10 to 13 and 0.3 won, respectively.¹¹³ The plight of the rural population attracted the attention of the KWP leadership. In December 1963, Pak Song-ch'ol informed Soviet Ambassador Moskovsky about the problems of North Korean agriculture. Quite unusually, this time the foreign minister did not mince words:

The backwardness of the Korean villages is a particularly burning question for the time being. While urban workers get inexpensive flats, heating, lighting and clothing from the state, and enjoy what is provided by the theaters, cinemas and other cultural institutions, all this is absent in the villages. The Korean peasants work from daybreak until nightfall, they have to pay for everything given to the cooperatives. In addition, the villages pay taxes for the work done by the machine-tractor stations. They pay for the equipment necessary for the cooperatives, they pay taxes for the water needed for irrigation, and they also have a number of financial obligations to the state. The Korean villages are underdeveloped, there are no community centers or any similar institutions at their disposal. *At that time they adopted foreign experiences in the socialist development of the Korean agriculture. They have come to the conclusion that this policy did not work in their country, it must be changed* [emphasis in the original]. A substantial part of the cooperatives, particularly the cooperatives in the highlands, got into debt to the state. As a consequence of such a great difference between cities and villages, the peasants flee the villages, everybody wants to go to the cities, which is, of course, an intolerable situation, because, for one thing, they do not intend to swell the urban population, and secondly, the food for the country's population must be produced, one cannot feed the people on coal and iron. Practice also proved that resettlement from the cities does not work either. The more disciplined part of the people, the party members maybe remain [in the villages], but the resettled non-members return clandestinely to the cities.¹¹⁴

The KWP leadership had concluded, Pak Song-ch'ol stated, that it was time to create cultural institutions and improve living standards in the villages in

order to reduce migration to the towns. "The same system which exists in the cities must be established in the villages too," he went on. That is, the small huts owned by the peasants were to be replaced by modern, state-owned houses.¹¹⁵

At a CC plenum held on 25–27 February 1964, Kim Il Sung expanded on this conception. On the one hand, the construction of housing, irrigation systems, pumps, storehouses, cowsheds, and generating plants in the villages should be financed by the state. On the other hand, the property of the coops would be eventually transformed into state property. While Pak Song-ch'ol's criticism of the Stalinist economic model was certainly justified, the reforms that Kim Il Sung intended to introduce actually reinforced the omnipresence of the state. Similar to the reforms the dictatorship had implemented in 1959–1960, Kim's "Thesis on the Socialist Agrarian Question in Our Country" attempted to alleviate the plight of the population in a way that did not weaken the regime's control over the society.¹¹⁶

True, the dictator seems to have been willing to make some economic concessions. "The question was raised whether it was necessary . . . to achieve the planned production of 2.5 million metric tons of steel and 500 million meters of textile per year," Pak Song-ch'ol told Moskovsky. "It would be more sensible to limit steel production to 1 million tons and textile production to 300 million meters, and to invest the full amount of money saved this way in the villages." Such an idea stood in sharp contrast to Stalinist economic doctrines. Still, Kim's new agricultural policy did not change the North Korean grain procurement system, which prevented peasants from retaining more than 250 kilograms of grain per capita a year. The abolition of the agricultural in kind tax, carried out gradually in 1964–1966, mattered little, since as early as 1959 the tax in question had constituted less than 1 percent of state revenues. As the Hungarian diplomats pointed out, the gradual extension of direct state control to village life, such as the introduction of housing rentals, hardly encouraged coop members to produce more than necessary.¹¹⁷ As Pak Song-ch'ol admitted, in 1963 the dictatorship was still unable to maintain a complete control over society, a situation Kim probably regarded as highly irritating. As was his custom, he resorted to measures that combined restrictions with certain socio-economic concessions.

The excessive statism proposed by Kim's "Thesis" was a North Korean peculiarity, and it stood in a marked contrast with the temporary relaxation of state control over rural producers that occurred in the PRC in the course of the post-1960 "corrections." Nevertheless, the stress that the aforesaid KWP CC plenums laid on the development of agriculture bore a strong resemblance to contemporary Chinese economic policies, a similarity the Hungarian diplo-

mats were eager to note. In mid-1963, they pointed out, a high-ranking KWP delegation had spent two months in the PRC so as to study Chinese agricultural policies.¹¹⁸ Following the famine of 1959–1960, the CCP leadership emphasized that industry should serve, rather than exploit, agriculture. It partially diverted heavy industrial production into making fertilizers, pumping equipment, and agricultural implements.¹¹⁹

In the light of these steps, the resolutions of the September KWP CC plenum seem to have been inspired by Chinese measures. It can also be assumed that it was the CCP leadership which called the attention of its allies to the importance of agricultural development. Significantly, at a CC plenum held in June 1963, Hoxha made an astonishingly frank speech, describing the extreme backwardness of the Albanian villages. In the summer, the government instructed agronomists, engineers, and physicians to collect data on rural problems, and then it began to construct storehouses, shops, offices, cinemas, day nurseries, kindergartens, cow sheds, and generating plants in the villages. Investments in the rural sector substantially increased in 1963.¹²⁰ The similarity of the afore-said North Korean and Albanian events was considerable enough to preclude the possibility of sheer coincidence, and at that time both regimes maintained close contacts with Beijing. Both Pyongyang and Tirana faced serious food shortages in 1963, and the PRC was compelled to export 210,000 metric tons of grain (90,000 tons more than in 1962) to Albania.¹²¹

“You Have No Political Line of Your Own”

Indeed, Sino–North Korean relations kept improving throughout the 1962–1964 period. Since no East European country save Albania took sides with Beijing against Moscow, the CCP leaders were highly interested in not losing the support of the ruling Asian communist parties. Anxious to woo Kim Il Sung, they went so far as to yield some disputed border areas to Pyongyang, an action hardly typical of Soviet diplomacy. During secret negotiations over boundary issues, the Chinese government recognized the DPRK’s jurisdiction over three-fifths of Chonji Lake, four-fifths of the islands on the Tumen and Yalu rivers, and nine-tenths of the entry to the Yalu. “Indeed, the Chinese offered so many concessions to North Korea that local leaders in Jilin and Liaoning provinces protested,” Chae-Jin Lee remarks.¹²²

China’s generosity was not in vain. In December 1962, *Nodong Sinmun* began to publish some of the anti-Soviet articles carried by the Chinese press.¹²³ In summer 1963, Ch’oe Yong-gon visited the PRC. During the visit, which lasted from 5 June to 23 June, he accused the Kremlin of putting economic pressure on Pyongyang. The DPRK intended to develop economic contacts

with northeast China, Ch'oe stressed. On 19–29 June, a North Korean parliamentary delegation visited North Vietnam and tried to win the VWP leaders over to China's cause. Despite the recent worsening of Soviet–DRV relations, this North Korean diplomatic move was not entirely successful. While the delegates' speeches frequently referred to the Sino–Soviet conflict, the Vietnamese did not follow their example. In August, however, both the North Korean and the North Vietnamese press sharply criticized the nuclear test ban treaty signed by the United States, the USSR, and Britain. Tactlessly enough, Moscow stated that “only certain renegades detached from their people” supported Beijing in its opposition to the treaty, a declaration both Pyongyang and Hanoi regarded as an insult. On 14–28 September, Chinese President Liu Shaoqi visited the DPRK. In the fall of 1963, joint Sino–North Korean military exercises took place, and the North Korean government resolved to electrify the Pyongyang–Sinuiju railroad line so as to reinforce economic cooperation between the DPRK and the PRC. On 14 October, the two countries signed a protocol on commodity exchange for 1964.¹²⁴

Parallel to these developments, Soviet–North Korean relations reached their lowest point in 1963–1964. As early as January 1963, Shubnikov, the first secretary of the Soviet Embassy, called Kim Il Sung's “brain trust,” which included Hwang Chang-yop and Ch'oe Hak-song, a “political Gestapo.”¹²⁵ Pyongyang's intraparty propaganda outdid even Beijing in reviling Khrushchev, Soviet Ambassador Moskovsky told his Hungarian counterpart on 21 January.¹²⁶ On 4 April, Pak Song-ch'ol sent for the “fraternal” ambassadors. Soviet and Czechoslovakian technical experts had repeatedly hunted in prohibited areas, he alleged, and North Korean border guards were compelled to search for them with dogs. Angered by this accusation, Moskovsky met Pak the next day, and bitterly complained of the uncooperative behavior of the North Korean Foreign Ministry. Pak himself had not received him for more than three months, he pointed out, and the DPRK authorities frequently prevented Soviet and East European diplomats from visiting factories or going to the theater. Then, on 25 April, Kim Ch'ang-man instructed high-ranking cadres not to hinder the “fraternal” diplomats in such visits, but the respite did not last long.¹²⁷

The North Koreans certainly had reasons of their own to dislike the Soviets, but their growing hostility probably reflected Chinese inspiration as well. In May, Mao invited Kim Il Sung to China to discuss Sino–Soviet relations with him, and declared that the PRC was going to adopt an even more belligerent stance vis-à-vis the USSR.¹²⁸ Throughout the summer and fall of 1963, and particularly in 1964, the North Korean authorities systematically harassed the Soviet and East European embassies, delaying their mail and tapping their tele-

phones. For instance, in September 1964, a Hungarian diplomat discussed some issues over the phone with a Polish colleague. A few minutes after he had replaced the receiver, he was phoned by an unknown Korean who called upon him to tell what the conversation had been about, “for I did not understand completely what you said in Russian.” The authorities demanded fingerprints from the Soviet specialists working in the DPRK, and, as Khrushchev angrily announced at the plenum the CPSU CC held in December 1963, “made them fill out a form of seventy-two questions, in which they had to describe their circle of relatives and friends in detail, with addresses!” Children occasionally hurled invectives and stones at European diplomats, calling them “foreign dogs” and “Western dogs.”¹²⁹ It is worth putting these clashes, no matter how trivial or grotesque, into a wider comparative context. Incidents of this kind had occurred in Albania and China as early as 1960–1961, whereas the North Vietnamese regime refrained from resorting to such measures.¹³⁰

Another problem that cropped up in the DPRK considerably later than in Albania and the PRC was the question of mixed marriages. The Hoxha regime categorically prohibited marriages between Albanian and foreign citizens as early as 1952.¹³¹ Since this measure was accompanied by various, albeit veiled, hostile acts against the East European diplomats, it is not unreasonable to consider it a sign of xenophobia and political tension. In 1960, the CCP leadership strictly prohibited party and Youth League members from marrying foreigners. Nor did the North Vietnamese authorities welcome such marriages.¹³² In summer 1963, Pyongyang also launched a campaign against mixed marriages. Koreans who had husbands or wives of European origin were compelled to divorce their spouses and expelled from the capital. A Russian wife, left alone without means to support herself and her two children, defied the authorities’ order to remain in the provincial town where she lived, and attempted to get back to Pyongyang so as to ask for the assistance of the Soviet Embassy. Caught by North Korean policemen on the train, she was beaten unconscious but eventually allowed to continue her trip. The blatant xenophobia of North Korean officials shocked the Soviet and East European diplomats. The East German ambassador went so far as to describe the speech of a party cadre, who had called mixed marriages a “crime against the Korean race,” as “Goebbelsian.”¹³³

The Soviets did their best to pay Pyongyang back. Following their example, in 1963, the Hungarian Foreign Ministry took measures so as to curtail the activity of the DPRK Embassy to Budapest. North Korean diplomats were no longer received by high-ranking cadres, and the authorities prevented the embassy from distributing publications that contained attacks on “revisionism.”¹³⁴ In December 1963, Pyongyang requested approval of its new ambassador to Moscow. The Kremlin “intentionally did not react to the request for

two weeks, which made the Korean leaders rather nervous,” Moskovsky noted with satisfaction.¹³⁵

From 1963 on, punitive Soviet actions were backed up by economic sanctions. In 1964, the USSR considerably reduced the purchase of North Korean magnesite clinker, barite, and chinaware, refused to buy machine tools from the DPRK, and cut cotton exports. On 26 June, Yi Chu-yon complained of these steps, whereupon Moskovsky told him that “it is rather obvious that she [the USSR] purchases goods they can really make use of. . . As is well-known, they do not purchase Korean machine-tools, because the latter’s quality is inferior to that of the Soviet machines, and the Soviet Union has no need of museum pieces.”¹³⁶ Another bone of contention was North Korean logging operations in Soviet territory. In 1957 and 1961, Moscow and Pyongyang had signed agreements that authorized the DPRK to cut lumber free of charge, with its own workforce, in the Soviet Far East. As Soviet–North Korean conflicts became more and more intense, the North Korean loggers began to exploit the forests as much as they could, cutting down even the saplings. They also smuggled in Chinese propaganda material. In turn, in 1964, Moskovsky told Kim Yong-nam that “if this activity continues, the Soviet organs will be obliged to close the Korean consulate in Nakhodka and arrest certain persons.”¹³⁷

In some cases, these economic squabbles had direct, and even tragic, political consequences. When North Korean Minister of Foreign Trade Yi Il-gyong, a “domestic” communist who had studied in the USSR in the 1950s, failed to talk the Soviets into purchasing industrial products of poor quality instead of nonferrous metals, in April 1964 he was arrested, and then sentenced to death and hanged. The authorities also deported his wife and five children from the capital, and sent his two brothers to work in the mines.¹³⁸

Kim Il Sung’s belligerent foreign policy also gave rise to conflicts between Moscow and Pyongyang. In January 1964, Pak Song-ch’ol told East German Ambassador O. Becker that “certain people [i.e., Khrushchev] do not want to reveal the American imperialists,” and while the GDR strove for the peaceful unification of Germany, “we react sharply to every violation of the frontier by the South.” The North Korean leadership, he went on, had instructed the border guards to take retaliatory measures for even the slightest “provocations” in order to show their determination.¹³⁹ The Soviet leader was at least as dissatisfied with this militant attitude as the North Koreans were with his détente-oriented approach, particularly because he knew all too well that it was Pyongyang, not Seoul, that had started the Korean War in 1950. “I can assure you,” Khrushchev told the DPRK ambassador to Moscow in February 1964, “that if the North attacked South Korea again, it is more than probable that the Americans would put into action nuclear weapons too.”¹⁴⁰

Interestingly enough, Soviet–North Vietnamese conflicts remained less intense. Although in February 1964, Khrushchev bluntly told a DRV delegation led by Le Duan that he disagreed with Hanoi’s belligerent foreign policy, and refused to provide the NLF with modern arms,¹⁴¹ in 1962–1964, the Kremlin consistently fulfilled the requests of the North Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Trade so as to please the VWP leadership.¹⁴² The Soviets, who never enjoyed a predominant position in the DRV, seem to have understood that North Vietnam, a country with which the PRC had a common border but the USSR had not, could not afford to pursue an openly anti-Chinese policy.¹⁴³ In addition, they probably appreciated Hanoi’s refraining from provocative acts and Ho Chi Minh’s attempts to mediate between the communist great powers. In any case, the economic sanctions to which Khrushchev resorted with regard to the PRC, Albania, and North Korea proved counterproductive. Soviet punitive measures merely increased the hostility of Moscow’s ideological opponents, rather than compelling them to become more cooperative. As the Hungarian Embassy to Beijing reported, in August 1960 (i.e., right after the withdrawal of the Soviet specialists) the CCP leaders decided to involve the entire Chinese population in their anti-Soviet propaganda campaign.¹⁴⁴

“You have no political line of your own, it is the Chinese policy that the leaders of the KWP imitate and carry out,” Moskovsky told Yi Chu-yon on 26 June 1964.¹⁴⁵ He seems to have oversimplified the situation, however. In some respects, Kim Il Sung may have preferred the smaller, nationalistic, and usually hard-line communist states, such as the DRV, Cuba, Romania, and Albania, to the Asian colossus, for the former posed no threat to the DPRK. As a North Vietnamese diplomat accredited to North Korea put it in mid-1966, “the DPRK seeks small allies.”¹⁴⁶ The clearest manifestation of this approach was the triangular cooperation between Pyongyang, Hanoi, and Havana, which peaked in 1966–1968, and which was directed not only against the United States but, to a lesser extent, against the USSR and China as well.

To the surprise of the Hungarian diplomats, on 30 December 1962, the DPRK spectacularly, and rather unexpectedly, celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of the establishment of the People’s Republic of Romania. As early as January 1963, the North Korean press, whenever it listed the “fraternal” countries, ranked Romania between the DRV and Albania, that is, in a special place.¹⁴⁷ These steps were probably rooted in Kim’s respect for Gheorghiu-Dej’s growing nationalism. For instance, in the wake of a high-level COMECON meeting held in June 1962, Bucharest published a special statement expressing its critical views with regard to economic integration. At the end of the year, Romanian scholars attacked a book written by a Soviet historian who downplayed the role that the Romanian communist party had allegedly played

in the liberation of their country and gave the whole credit to the Soviet army instead.¹⁴⁸

Of course, Pyongyang's approaches to Bucharest were not entirely independent from Chinese diplomacy, for in the spring of 1963, the Romanian government made some friendly gestures toward Albania and China, a move certainly welcomed by Beijing.¹⁴⁹ Still, the conversations that took place between Kim Il Sung and Romanian Ambassador Bodnaras revealed that the North Korean dictator also had reasons of his own to seek the friendship of Gheorghiu-Dej. In July and August 1963, Kim received Bodnaras two times, giving him a warm welcome:

Kim Il Sung told Bodnaras that the relations between their countries were developing in a pleasing way, and they [the North Koreans] were seriously determined to widen these relations even further, in a multilateral form. They intended to increase the volume of trade between the two countries approximately *ten times* (emphasis in the original) as early as next year or the year after that. . . . [A] close cooperation should be established between the engineering industries of the two countries. It would be necessary for them primarily for two reasons: First, with Romanian assistance they could get new machines produced in the Soviet Union and the European socialist countries. Secondly, it is to be expected that as a consequence of the disagreements between the CPSU and the CCP, the Soviet Union will reduce the amount of machinery exported to the DPRK. . . . In Kim Il Sung's view, at present Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej is the sole party and state leader in Europe whom he (Kim Il Sung) can negotiate with as an equal partner. Therefore, he holds him and the other leaders of the Romanian party in great esteem.

Ambassador Bodnaras told Comrade Moskovsky that in the course of their conversation, *Kim Il Sung had criticized the Chinese leaders for the extremist tone they used in attacking the CPSU* [emphasis added]. As noted by the Romanian Ambassador, Kim Il Sung did not agree with the line of the CPSU either. The worsening of relations between the KWP and the CPSU began as early as 1956, with Mikoyan's visit to Korea. Mikoyan's role in the intra-party factional struggles had a negative impact on their relations with the Soviet leaders. Nevertheless, they had the factionalist Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik sentenced and executed; they may have acted otherwise if they had had the present perspective, Kim Il Sung said. In the

opinion of Romanian Ambassador Bodnaras, Kim Il Sung is a clever man, he pursues a sensible foreign and domestic policy, and he personally agrees with this policy.¹⁵⁰

A protocol on commodity exchange for 1964 did increase the volume of Romanian–North Korean trade by 44 percent, but the latter still failed to exceed 10 million rubles, whereas the volume of Soviet–North Korean trade had been as much as 147 million rubles in 1963.¹⁵¹ That is, economic cooperation between Bucharest and Pyongyang yielded rather meager results for both sides.

This problem was also characteristic of the DPRK's relations with Albania, North Vietnam, and Cuba. Apart from chrome ore, Albania had little to offer to North Korea, while the latter could not give credit to Tirana.¹⁵² The volume of DPRK–DRV trade was barely 4.7 million rubles in 1961, and of the 4,000 metric tons of steel Pyongyang exported to the DRV in 1963, Hanoi accepted merely 700 tons, since its quality proved very poor.¹⁵³ Since North Korea was hardly able to export the types of goods Havana intended to purchase, in 1962, Cuba sold only 35,000 metric tons of sugar to the DPRK, although Pyongyang had asked for 100,000 tons. The students the Cuban government had sent to North Korea had a low opinion of the quality of North Korean made machines. During the Cuban missile crisis, Pyongyang organized mass meetings in order to condemn Washington. Much to the surprise of the Cuban Ambassador, the speeches dealt mainly with the economic achievements of North Korea. Kim Ch'ang-man, however, told him that "the Cuban people do not know how intensely we are supporting Cuba."¹⁵⁴

While these failures revealed the contrast between the DPRK's boastful propaganda and its actual backwardness, one may also note that Kim Il Sung's policies did not lack the element of pragmatism. In March 1963, he gave his consent to the systematic translation of articles published in Soviet, American, and Japanese scientific journals.¹⁵⁵ When the Soviets began to cut their machinery exports to the DPRK, the North Koreans "gradually built up their economic relations with such noncommunist countries as Japan, West Germany, Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Austria" so as to purchase the kind of heavy industrial equipment China was unable to provide.¹⁵⁶ Since these countries were not interested in North Korean finished products, Pyongyang sold them nonferrous metals and other raw materials at the expense of its exports to the USSR and Eastern Europe.¹⁵⁷ Japanese–North Korean relations underwent a marked improvement in 1963. For instance, on 6–19 September, a Japanese parliamentary delegation composed of Socialist Party members visited the DPRK, where they were received by Kim Il Sung. In 1963, the volume of Japanese–North Korean trade rose to \$17 million, and by 1964 Japanese made

cars, delivery trucks, and dumpers had become quite numerous in Pyongyang. These developments were facilitated by a rapprochement between Beijing and Tokyo, but South Korean protests constituted a serious obstacle.¹⁵⁸

This pragmatism should be put into a wider international context, rather than considered a North Korean peculiarity. Significantly, Albania also strove to improve her relations with some noncommunist countries in the wake of its break with Moscow. As early as 1961, Rome began to give financial compensation to Tirana for the Italian occupation of 1939–1943, and the Albanian government did its best to conclude a long-term trade agreement with Italy.¹⁵⁹ In 1963, the Albanian Foreign Ministry had closer contacts with the Turkish, Italian, and French ambassadors than with the diplomats of the European communist countries.¹⁶⁰ These North Korean and Albanian moves probably enjoyed the support of the Chinese government, for Beijing was also compelled to diversify its foreign trade and increase its economic cooperation with “capitalist” countries after 1960.

Despite the various similarities between post-1953 North Korean and Albanian policies, Kim Il Sung and Hoxha eventually took different courses. The downfall of Khrushchev on 14 October 1964 proved a crucial turning point. Unlike Hoxha, who merely regarded this event as a proof of the correctness of its uncompromising ideological stance, Kim considered it an opportunity to open a new chapter in the history of Soviet–North Korean relations. While Soviet–Albanian relations remained hostile to the very last, in 1965, the KWP leadership consented to the reconciliation offered by Khrushchev’s successors. In light of the embittered debates that had occurred between Moscow and Pyongyang in 1962–1964, the Kremlin’s attempt to revive Soviet–North Korean cooperation was surprisingly successful, at least successful enough to induce the Chinese Red Guards to declare Kim Il Sung a pro-Soviet revisionist. Even though this book does not cover the post-Khrushchev period, it would be highly misleading to end the story at the peak of Soviet–DPRK confrontation and disregard that crucial difference between North Korean and Albanian foreign policies.

Whence this difference? First of all, Hoxha’s open confrontation with the Kremlin in 1960–1961 may have been rooted in his willingness to rely completely on the PRC. After all, in the pre-1960 period, Albania had never been mistreated by China. On the contrary, Beijing came to Tirana’s assistance in 1954 when the Soviet Union reduced its aid program by 45 percent. China presented Albania with a gift of \$2.5 million worth of commodities and a loan of \$12.5 million. “These new sources of aid helped in part to mitigate the adverse effect of the cutback in economic support from the European Communist states,” Pano points out.¹⁶¹ In 1960, when Moscow was initially reluctant to send grain

to Albania, China helped Tirana out with grain and hard currency.¹⁶² Thus, Hoxha had no serious reason to distrust Mao.

In contrast, pre-1962 North Korean relations with China had hardly been free from tension. The first conflicts occurred during the Korean War, partly over questions of military strategy and partly over the issue of North Korean sovereignty. In 1956–1957, Beijing joined forces with Moscow in putting pressure on Kim Il Sung. In 1960, when Pyongyang managed to purchase 300,000 metric tons of grain from the USSR, the PRC was incapable of exporting grain to the DPRK. Due to her geographical position, Albania had nothing to fear from China, whereas the North Koreans had to treat their mighty neighbor with caution.

Second, the APL leaders, who ruled a very underdeveloped country, probably placed less emphasis on economic self-reliance than Kim Il Sung did. As the Hungarian ambassador to Tirana remarked in October 1960, middle-level Albanian cadres had often stated that “even if every Albanian just folds his arms and idles around, the socialist camp is obliged to provide for Albania, since it is Albania who defends peace in the Balkans.” Soviet unwillingness to fulfill that “obligation” probably played a major role in Tirana’s break with Moscow. In 1959, Khrushchev told the Albanian leaders that it was time to look after themselves, a suggestion that must have angered Hoxha.¹⁶³ Thus, Tirana readily swapped one aid donor for the other. Kim Il Sung, however, could not do that so easily, since both North Korea’s relatively developed industry and the constant competition with the American and South Korean armed forces necessitated the continued import of advanced industrial and military technology from the USSR. In any case, North Korean economic nationalism proved quite incompatible with being dependent on a single aid donor.

Third, the Kremlin may have been a bit more patient with Pyongyang than with Tirana. In November 1964, Kosygin told Kim Il that in the course of the Sino–Soviet polemics, the Soviet press had been instructed not to attack the KWP by name. The CPSU leadership had not wanted to close the door to a settlement with the DPRK, the Soviet Premier declared.¹⁶⁴ In contrast, Moscow probably considered Hoxha’s disobedience an intolerable challenge that could have undermined the stability of its East European empire. After all, Khrushchev was personally affected by the provocative speech Hoxha made in Moscow in 1960. Since Kim Il Sung was cautious enough not to take such unforgivable actions, Soviet–DPRK disagreements may have constituted a less serious problem for the Kremlin than Soviet–Albanian ones.

In any case, the downfall of Khrushchev removed a potential obstacle of Soviet–DPRK reconciliation. Following a Chinese initiative, on 31 October, Kim Il Sung sent for the Soviet Ambassador, and told him that Pyongyang

intended to improve its relations with the USSR. On 4 November, a North Korean delegation headed by Kim Il left for Moscow so as to sign a protocol on commodity exchange for 1965.¹⁶⁵ Although the Soviet government refused to postpone the repayment of the credit the DPRK had received from the USSR, it proved willing to import a considerable quantity of magnesite clinker, chinaware, and other North Korean goods of poor quality. Thus, the Kremlin in essence gave aid to Pyongyang. For their part, the North Koreans told the Soviets that they did not demand higher prices for their goods, although in September 1964, *Nodong Sinmun* had accused the Kremlin of paying lower prices for North Korean goods than the international market price. By and large, Pyongyang obtained everything it asked for, including 10,000 metric tons of cotton, while in 1964, the Soviet Union had sold only 8,000 tons of cotton to the DPRK.¹⁶⁶

Another factor that eventually convinced the KWP leaders of the possibility and usefulness of a Soviet–North Korean rapprochement was that the USSR, worried by Washington’s direct military involvement in the Vietnam War, began to provide the DRV and the NLF with military aid. While as late as December 1964 the DPRK ambassador to Moscow openly ridiculed the Kremlin for the meager support it gave to “the South Vietnamese people,”¹⁶⁷ from 1965 on Pyongyang was less and less willing to give credence to those Chinese statements that accused the Soviet Union of collaborating with the United States against Hanoi.

Still, the nature of Soviet–North Korean relations changed once and for all in 1959–1961. Henceforth, the twists and turns of Soviet domestic policies would not produce such an effect on North Korean actions as had been the case until 1958. In 1953–1956, Kim Il Sung was already able to fend off de-Stalinization, but he still had to pay lip service to the CPSU leaders and introduce certain economic reforms that Moscow considered necessary. In 1959–1960, however, it was Kim Il Sung, rather than Khrushchev, who initiated the partial re-examination of North Korean economic policies. As a consequence, the dictator could also put an end to the reform experiment at will. It should be noted that the first wave of Soviet de-Stalinization was halted in 1957–1958, when the whole “communist camp” was swept by a wave of repression. In this period, Kim could get away with his repressive policies, and the time he gained in 1957–1959 enabled him to break the influence of the Soviet and Yan’an factions, thus preventing Moscow from playing off his fellow Politburo members against him.

Having gotten rid of Moscow’s political control, the dictator successfully resisted the second wave of Soviet de-Stalinization (1961–1964). Following the Twenty-second Congress, the differences between the North Korean regime

and its East European counterparts widened more than ever before. With the exception of Hoxha's Albania, the methods of the East European regimes softened at least to some extent. For instance, in Romania the number of political prisoners decreased from 16,327 in January 1962, to 9,333 in January 1963. Most of the remainder were released in 1964.¹⁶⁸ In Bulgaria, as Crampton notes, "the second outburst of destalinization induced . . . a marked relaxation of cultural controls. By 1965, previously 'untouchable' Western or dissident authors such as Solzhenitsyn, T.S. Eliot, Kafka, and Ionesco had appeared in Bulgarian translation, and amongst the many talented Bulgarian writers who benefited from this second and more far-reaching thaw were Anton Donchev, Nikolai Haitov, Georgi Markov, Radoi Ralin, and Nikola Lankov whose long narrative poem, *Spomenut (The Memory)* . . . touched on the sufferings of the purge victims."¹⁶⁹

In contrast, the North Korean dictatorship became increasingly repressive in the 1960s, and it is still unwilling to close down its labor camps and cease executing political opponents. Tragically, the DPRK achieved political independence at the expense of rejecting political liberalization.

8. The Matrix of North Korean Despotism

The absence of any substantial and irreversible political liberalization in post-1953 North Korea seems to be rooted in several causes. To understand this phenomenon, answers to the following are necessary: Why was (and is) the North Korean dictatorship so repressive? Why did the Kremlin fail to force de-Stalinization down Kim Il Sung's throat? Why has the KWP leadership failed to liberalize its rule of its own free will? The emergence and survival of North Korean despotism was not predestined by any single factor, whether by the implantation of foreign political models, persistence of pre-modern Korean political, social, and cultural traditions, or the tension created by national division and Cold War rivalry. While these factors did influence the decisions made by Kim Il Sung and his comrades, none of them determined every detail of North Korean policies.

Thus, it was a specific combination of various local and external circumstances that resulted in the birth of the DPRK's extremely closed political system. These circumstances include the peculiar nature of Japanese colonialism, the heterogeneity of the NKWP/KWP leadership, the effects of the Soviet occupation, the dual influence of Moscow and Beijing, the failure of the South Korean communist movement, and the fatal consequences of the Korean War. A leadership of a different composition, background, strength, or disposition may have reacted to these challenges in a different way. On the other hand, the absence of some of these problems could have moderated North Korean policies, at least to a certain extent. Moreover, both the Korean scene and the international situation underwent substantial changes between 1945 and 1964. In sum, the character of the North Korean political system was molded by dynamic interactions, rather than a static factor or factors. To mention but one issue, the South Korean, East German, and North Vietnamese dictatorships also came to power in divided countries, yet their reactions to this problem often proved dissimilar from those of the KWP leadership.

As a preliminary remark, I would like to point out that the word “despotism” I use with regard to Kim Il Sung’s rule is not aimed at underlining the supposedly “Oriental” nature of the North Korean political system. In my opinion, the theory of “Oriental despotism” is not particularly suitable for the analysis of twentieth-century East or Southeast Asian dictatorships. The substantial differences among the regimes headed by Hirohito, Jiang Jieshi, Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, Pol Pot, Sihanouk, and Ne Win seriously question the applicability of such a vague and general term. Actually, even the various South Korean dictators, such as Syngman Rhee and Park Chung Hee, differed from each other to a considerable extent, and therefore a conclusion based on the idea of “national character” is likely to overlook some important details.

Imported Despotism?

Kim Il Sung’s dictatorship was neither a completely unique case nor just a copy of some foreign model. It has been likened with various political systems, such as the Japanese military regime, Soviet Stalinism, and Mao’s despotism. For purposes of revealing the essence of the North Korean regime and finding an explanation for its particularly repressive character, it is necessary to subject these comparisons to careful analysis in order not to overstress either local traditions or foreign influences.

Such external influences were certainly present in post-1945 North Korea. In fact, I consider the imitation of foreign models, which was strongly motivated by the desire of modernization, a quite common phenomenon of post-colonial development, rather than an aberration. While a smooth de-colonization process tended to induce the post-colonial elites to continue emulating their former overlords, a traumatic one often resulted in the copying of new, revolutionary (Soviet or Chinese) models. The sudden removal of the “remnants of colonialism,” such as the institutions, technical intelligentsia, and culture associated with foreign rule, created a vacuum that could not be filled immediately on the basis of local economic and human resources. Moreover, a drastic break with the former metropolitan country could easily lead to economic and military dependence on a communist great power, which enabled the Soviets (or the Chinese) to influence the domestic policies of the new regime in various ways.

As an avowedly anti-colonialist regime, the DPRK certainly belonged to this second type of post-colonial states. Still, one should note that the NKWP leadership, for practical reasons, transformed the colonial administrative structure and educational system in a relatively gradual way. This inspires some authors, such as Armstrong and Kimura, to emphasize the continuity between

Japanese military rule and North Korean communism. After all, both regimes exercised strict state control over the production and marketing of agricultural products, and state planning played an important role in the rapid industrialization of Japanese-held Manchuria and Korea. The basis of North Korean industrial development was laid in 1931–1945, and the post-1945 administration could (and did) make use of the Japanese methods of wartime mobilization. The colonial authorities set up various mass organizations, like the Save the Nation Labor Corps and the Patriotic Neighborhood Association. The North Korean concept of “re-education” did bear a resemblance to the Japanese techniques of “thought reform,” and one may draw a parallel between Kim Il Sung’s cult and Japanese emperor worship.¹

Despite these similarities, it should be pointed out that the CCP, with which the Korean communist movement maintained a more intimate relationship than with the Japanese colonial regime, also took very similar measures. Korea, Japan, and China were equally influenced by certain East Asian cultural and political traditions, and thus it is often difficult to distinguish Japanese influence from Chinese inspiration. Furthermore, some of the policies described above cannot be regarded as peculiar to the Far East. For instance, not even the idea and practice of “re-education” remained confined to East and Southeast Asia. The Yugoslav and Romanian communist regimes as well as Metaxas’ rightwing dictatorship in Greece similarly intended to “re-educate” at least a part of their political prisoners.² In addition, Japanese emperor worship proved rather different from Kim Il Sung’s cult. The essentially passive, highly reclusive figure of the Japanese tenno had nothing to do with the hyperactivity of the North Korean dictator, who made comments on everything from industrial management to literature. Nor did the Japanese military regime subject its own organizations to frequent and extensive purges.

Other scholars, most notably Scalapino, Chong-sik Lee, and Buzo, consider the North Korean regime a mere imitation of Soviet Stalinism. In fact, the socio-economic and cultural transformation carried out by Kim Il Sung had more in common with communism (both Stalinism and Maoism) than with any other political system. Of these changes, one may mention as the near-complete elimination of private property, the preference given to workers and peasants over private entrepreneurs, the creation of social categories like “rich,” “middle,” and “poor” peasants, the collectivization of agriculture, and the enforcement of atheism. None of the radical and populist (but noncommunist) Third World dictators who expressed an interest in finding a “local” way to socialism went so far in extending state control over economic, social, and cultural life as Kim Il Sung did.³

Some North Korean measures that appear so odd that one is tempted to

consider them unique—such as the principle of collective responsibility and the persecution of a political opponent’s under-age children—were not as incompatible with Soviet Stalinism as one might think. For instance, a 1934 Soviet law stated that “members of the family who knew of the intentions of a ‘traitor to the homeland’ could be sentenced to prison camp for a period of two to five years, while those who did not know could be exiled for five years.”⁴ In 1935, the CPSU Politburo extended the death penalty to certain categories of “young criminals, from the age of 12 upward.”⁵

As described in Chapter 1, in 1945–1950, many North Korean institutions and steps reflected Soviet influence, and the 1953 trial of the SKWP leaders bore a much closer resemblance to the Soviet and East European show trials than to Chinese party purges. While the KWP leaders whom Kim Il Sung purged after 1953 were not tried in such a way, this change in itself did not necessarily indicate a divergence from the methods of Soviet Stalinism, since in the post-1945 era the Soviet dictator also preferred secret trials to public ones.⁶ Similar to Stalin but unlike Mao, Kim did not attempt to abolish military ranks or stripes, introduce an extremely egalitarian wage system, or close universities and schools. Nor did he experiment with the temporary subordination of the party and security organs to other institutions in the same way as Mao empowered peasant associations, poor peasant leagues,⁷ the Red Guards, and the military. In other words, both Stalin and Kim Il Sung were somewhat “conservative” (or, as Cumings put it, “top-downist”⁸) in comparison with Mao.⁹

Since purges constituted a major element of communist policies, it is worth comparing Soviet Stalinist and North Korean purges. Their dynamic was neither entirely different nor very similar. The destruction of the South Korean, Soviet, and Yan’an factions in 1952–1959 certainly resembled the first phase of Soviet purges, namely, the defeat of Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Bukharin in 1923–1929. Both dictators took advantage of the conflicts that occurred among these groups, playing off them against each other and isolating the victim next in line. Significantly, neither the anti-Stalin United Opposition nor the alliance of Pak Ch’ang-ok and Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik came into existence until it was already too late. Following this stage, a second wave of purges took place in the USSR and the DPRK in the 1930s and 1966–1969, respectively. Many leaders who had supported the dictators during the earlier intraparty struggles lost their positions (or even their lives) due to these repressive measures. Still, this similarity may be a bit misleading. What it primarily reflects is that the pre-1957 KWP leadership, unlike the North Vietnamese one, was as sharply divided between various, relatively well-defined factions as the Bolshevik Party had been in the mid-1920s.

In other respects, the replacement of “old” leaders by “new” ones seems to

have had a different logic in the two countries. Apart from his relatives, the persons Kim Il Sung trusted most were the Korean members of the so-called 88th Brigade (i.e., those Manchurian guerrillas who spent WW II in the Soviet Union with him), such as Ch'oe Yong-gon, Kim Il, Pak Song-ch'ol, Ch'oe Hyon, and O Chin-u. Very few of them were removed for good, and from 1970 on they constantly dominated the top party leadership. The next circle was made up of those men who had also been associated with the Manchurian guerrilla movement but did not belong to the 88th Brigade, like Pak Kum-ch'ol, Sok San, Kim Kwang-hyop, and Ho Bong-hak. They also enjoyed a privileged position, but a quite high number of them fell victim to the purges of 1967–1969.¹⁰ The third circle was made up of those Soviet, Yan'an, SKWP, and “domestic” leaders who took sides with Kim Il Sung against the leaders of their factions, such as Pang Hak-se, Nam Il, Kim Ch'ang-man, and Ha Ang-ch'on. Partly due to the twists and turns of North Korean foreign policy, their influence gradually declined after 1959, and some of them were even purged.

In the first years of Kim Il Sung's rule, former guerrillas constituted only a quite small minority of the party leadership. By 1956, they had become the strongest group, and in 1961, they already formed the majority. Still, the positions of former Brigade members were still relatively weak: of the twenty highest-ranking CC members, only three and five (including Kim himself) belonged to that group in 1956 and 1961, respectively. By 1970, the ex-guerrillas had become absolutely dominant, and of the top ten CC seats, as many as seven were occupied by former Brigade members and the eighth was held by Kim Yong-ju, the dictator's younger brother.¹¹ From that time on, Politburo purges noticeably abated: in 1994, when Kim Il Sung died, “it had been seventeen years since the purge of Vice President Kim Tong-gyu in October 1977—the last sudden, unexplained disappearance from public view of a senior cadre.”¹² That is, Kim Il Sung first reinforced the position of the ex-guerrillas at the expense of all other groups, and then ensured the dominance of former Brigade members over other guerrillas.¹³ Having achieved this aim, the dictator did not initiate any new large-scale shake-up. In addition, some leaders who lost their Politburo membership in the 1960s, such as Yim Ch'un-ch'u and Yi Chong-ok, were re-appointed in the 1970s.

The Soviet counterpart of the 88th Brigade was probably the “Stalinist kernel” (a term coined by Graeme Gill), namely, Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Mikoian, Andreev, and the basically powerless Kalinin. These men consistently supported Stalin at least from the mid-1920s on, and they managed to survive every purge the dictator carried out. With the exception of Kalinin (who died of illness), they actually outlived Stalin. However, the po-

sition of this group was quite different from that of the 88th Brigade. As previously discussed, Brigade members, with very few exceptions, occupied only relatively marginal positions in the first decade of Kim Il Sung's rule, and their obvious dominance began as late as twenty-five years after Kim had assumed the party's leadership. The men who constituted the "Stalinist kernel," however, had joined the Politburo as early as before July 1926. In other words, the Soviet purges that took place in the 1930s cannot be regarded as a prerequisite for placing this group in the top leadership.

The prominent victims of the pre-1970 North Korean purges usually belonged to groups that had come into existence before 1946. In contrast, many of the Soviet CC and Politburo members executed in 1937–1940 (e.g., Kosior, Postyshev, Rudzutak, Chubar, Eikhe, and Ezhov) had nothing to do with the groups Stalin had subdued in 1923–1929. On the contrary, they often played an active role in the struggle against these factions, and they owed their advancement entirely to the dictator. Still, they proved particularly vulnerable. Of the ten men who joined the Politburo between July 1926 and 1939, only two survived.¹⁴ An even more junior cohort of party leaders, namely, the CC members elected for the first time in 1934, was also hit hard. Of them, only 21 percent were re-elected in 1939. In the post-1945 era, Stalin began to take steps to undermine the positions of Molotov and Andreev, but his last purges also affected, either directly or indirectly, those men who had joined the top leadership after the Great Terror, such as Voznesensky and Beria. Thus, the potential of eventual consolidation seems to have been weaker in Stalin's USSR than in Kim Il-sung's North Korea.¹⁵ It should also be pointed out that Soviet Politburo members, if demoted by Stalin, were unable to regain their lost positions in the dictator's lifetime.

Certain other phenomena also indicated that the North Korean dictatorship was not merely a copy of the "Stalinist model." As described in Chapter 1, in the 1945–1949 period the regime took several measures that were more restrictive than contemporary East European (or even Soviet) policies. The country's sole university admitted only party members, scholars could not read any Western scientific journals, and Kim Il Sung's cult, not accompanied by the cult of other North Korean leaders, became very extensive as early as 1946–1947. In later decades, Kim Il Sung abandoned various measures the government had taken in the Stalin era. For instance, in the 1950s North Korea adopted the machine-tractor stations from the USSR, but abolished them in the 1960s. While at first there had been a Soviet-type one-man management system in North Korean factories, in 1961, the regime replaced it by the T'aean Work System, whose emphasis on direct party control resembled Chinese and North Vietnamese

methods, rather than Soviet ones. In the 1940s, Pyongyang banned acupuncture and encouraged divorce, but in the mid-1950s, it legalized the former and began to discourage the latter.

In addition, the social structure that had come into existence in North Korea by the 1970s proved more rigidly stratified and more immobile than Soviet society had been under Stalin. It was (and still is) composed of three major categories. The “core class,” the “basic masses,” and the “hostile classes” consisted of approximately 30 percent, 40 percent, and 30 percent of the population, respectively. Educational, social, and political advancement strongly depended on one’s social background, and few people could overcome such barriers.¹⁶ In contrast, in the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic only 3.5 to 3.9 percent of all potential voters were *lishentsy* (disenfranchised) in the 1920s and early 1930s.¹⁷ In contrast to North Korea, Stalin’s policies seem not to have been directed toward the establishment of an ossified caste system. On the one hand, social discrimination gradually abated. For instance, in December 1935 the Soviet regime abolished social criteria for entrance to higher education.¹⁸ On the other hand, one of the objectives of Stalin’s Great Terror was the physical liquidation of “ex-kulaks,” “former Tsarist officials,” “members of anti-Soviet parties,” “criminal elements,” and other “undesirables.”¹⁹

Finally, some scholars, particularly Cumings, emphasize the similarities between the North Korean regime and the Chinese communist political system. In fact, Pyongyang adopted Chinese-style measures as early as 1945–1951, for both the land reform and the punishment of collaborators bore a close resemblance to CCP policies. In the post-1957 era, when Kim Il Sung launched the Ch’ollima Movement and a large-scale purge, these similarities became even more noticeable. Anxious to subject their victims to intense social and psychological pressure, both the North Korean dictatorship and the CCP tried to involve the entire population in the persecution of political opponents. This is why they often resorted to special forms of punishment, such as public trials and executions, complete isolation from society through house arrest, and so on. Kim’s stress on “re-education” had much more in common with Chinese methods than with Soviet ones. In addition, Mao, like Kim Il Sung, let a few demoted party leaders, most notably Deng Xiaoping, regain their lost influence, whereas Stalin did not.

On some occasions, Kim adopted Chinese-style measures whose implementation actually preceded the introduction of comparable policies in the PRC. Among these cases, one may mention the mobilization of intellectuals and officials for physical work and the requiring of leaders to spend substantial time in the countryside. Furthermore, the sharp conflicts that occurred between Pyongyang and Beijing in 1966–1969 did not prevent the North Koreans from

clinging to certain Chinese-style policies. At the end of 1969 Minister of Public Security Kim Pyong-ha told his Soviet counterpart Shchelekov that it was a department of his ministry that sentenced first offenders, if they were common criminals, to two or three years of “re-education through labor.” Recidivists, serious political offenders, and “traitors” were publicly executed after a public “revolutionary trial” or sentenced to forced labor for life.²⁰

These phenomena showed that CCP influence in the DPRK was not necessarily a direct one, and Pyongyang did not simply imitate Beijing. Instead, it could be argued that in the 1930s, Kim and many other KWP leaders internalized the style and spirit of CCP policies, which produced a lasting effect on their mentality. In contrast, the influence of Soviet models seems to have been more direct and less permanent. In this sense, it is reasonable to claim, as Cumings does, that “Korean Communism . . . has learned most from China, while taking what it wants and doing what it must with regard to the Soviets.”²¹ Since Chinese political and cultural models had inspired Korean elites, including the yangban of traditional Korea and twentieth-century rightist nationalists like Yi Pom-sok,²² for over a millennium, such a development was anything but surprising.

Nonetheless, the North Korean political system was probably more rigid than its Chinese counterpart, which may also mean that wide swings were less characteristic of North Korean political and economic life than of Chinese politics. This is not to deny that in certain cases the KWP leaders behaved in a more moderate way than their Chinese comrades,²³ but there were at least as many, if not more, occasions when Pyongyang adopted a more inflexible stance than Beijing. For instance, the North Korean leaders proved less willing to implement domestic reforms in the wake of the Twentieth Congress than their Chinese colleagues. Pyongyang recalled its students from Hungary after the 1956 revolution, whereas Beijing did not. In contrast with the Chinese, the North Koreans failed to establish any contact with Belgrade in the Khrushchev era. While the Twenty-second Congress did not induce Beijing to interrupt the post-1960 process of “corrections,” it put an abrupt end to the feeble “thaw” which had occurred in the DPRK in 1959–1961. Even though the North Korean “caste system” seems to have been inspired by Chinese models,²⁴ the social strata the CCP leaders regarded as “hostile” constituted “only” 8–10 percent of the Chinese population in 1964,²⁵ whereas the comparable North Korean percentage eventually reached almost 30 percent.

A comparison between North Korea and North Vietnam may also illuminate the fact that the effects of CCP ideology and practice on North Korean development were not the sole source of Kim Il Sung’s despotism. In the 1950s, Chinese communist political influence was probably even more intense in the

DRV than in the DPRK, yet the VWP leaders usually, although by no means always, pursued more flexible internal policies than their North Korean comrades. Thus, North Korean inflexibility did not result simply from the imitation of CCP models. After all, the PRC underwent an impressive reform process after the death of Mao, while the DPRK did not.

Inherited Despotism?

As noted in Chapter 1, it is quite tempting to consider North Korea—a country forcibly isolated from the outside world and ruled by a clan of Kims—a direct successor of the “Hermit Kingdom,” nay, a regrettable relapse into the pre-modern pattern of Korean political and social life. Of the scholars specialized in North Korean history, it is Cumings and Armstrong who particularly emphasize the regime’s “Koreanness.” To be sure, the policies pursued by the first rulers of the Yi dynasty were in many respects fairly similar to the actions of Kim Il Sung. These kings did their best to establish a strictly centralized bureaucracy, made neo-Confucianism a dominant ideology, and liquidated their rivals quite ruthlessly. It is also true that the style of North Korean politics did become more and more traditionalist over the decades. Finally, the similarities between the North and South Korean dictatorships seem to confirm that Korean traditions did play a major role in the process of state formation in North Korea.

Nevertheless, a country’s cultural and political traditions are usually complex and varied. They include many potentialities and tendencies, which may be quite different from each other. Political systems generally represent only certain segments of this legacy, rather than local tradition or national character as such. Moreover, traditions often prove remarkably malleable. As Cumings put it, a one-sided emphasis on the static, authoritarian, and anti-commercial nature of Confucianism “would never explain the extraordinary commercial bustle of South Korea, the materialism and conspicuous consumption of new elites, or the determined struggles for democratization put up by Korean workers and students.”²⁶ This principle can be applied to the DPRK as well. The repressive character of the Kim Il Sung regime was certainly rooted in Korean history, but it should not be regarded as an inevitable outgrowth of pre-modern Korean political traditions.

Kim’s efforts to transform North Korean society were indeed frequently accompanied by steps aimed at the “Koreanization” of communist ideology and rhetoric. From the beginning, North Korean propagandists often resorted to pre-modern (particularly Confucian) images and metaphors in order to popularize Kim Il Sung, describing him as a filial son who carried on his father’s

patriotic legacy.²⁷ However, such adaptation to the social and cultural environment was hardly peculiar to the DPRK. A government that considers itself revolutionary cannot afford to lose contact with the masses, no matter how “backward” the latter may appear. For instance, the Bolsheviks’ skillful use of traditional peasant symbols and customs started as early as 1918. After an assassination attempt on Lenin, Bolshevik propaganda depicted the wounded leader as a martyr, a Christ-like figure. The embalming of his corpse was probably partly inspired by Russian Orthodox rites.²⁸ Later, Stalin “was garbed in the guise of the great figures of Russian history and state-building as Russian nationalism became a major symbolic prop for the system.”²⁹

The Kim Il Sung regime, known for its fervent nationalism, was particularly interested in gaining both revolutionary and historical legitimacy, and the stress it laid on the upholding of Korean traditions constituted an important part of its struggle against Soviet dominance. As described in Chapters 3 through 6, in the 1955–1960 period, North Korean cultural policies repeatedly gave preference to traditional Korean music and literature over European culture. Kim and several other KWP leaders certainly placed great trust in the healing power of traditional Korean and Chinese medicine, and they were very proud of Korea’s past achievements, such as Yi Sun-shin’s “turtle ships” and the invention of metal movable type. Unlike the Stalin cult, the present-day cult of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il includes numerous elements that clearly belong to the realm of supernatural phenomena.³⁰ The creators of these images possibly drew inspiration from shamanistic and other folk beliefs, although one cannot rule out Christian influences either.³¹ In 1993, Pyongyang went so far as to claim to have found the remains of King Tan’gun, the mythical founder of the Korean state. By showing that the cradle of Korean civilization had been in the North, rather than in the South, the North Korean leadership attempted to reinforce its historical legitimacy vis-à-vis Seoul.³²

Still, the North Korean dictatorship was by no means a captive of these traditions. On the contrary, tradition often became a mere tool of the regime. Some of the aforesaid examples clearly illustrate how the leadership manipulated Korean historical and cultural traditions in order to buttress its legitimacy. Significantly, North Korean historians were much less fond of Kija, another legendary founder of a Korean kingdom, than of Tan’gun, for Kija is said to have come from China.³³

Furthermore, Kim Il Sung’s interest in the upholding of Korean traditions had an ambivalent relationship with another major goal of his, namely, the rapid modernization of the DPRK. His nationalism was strongly influenced by “developmentalist” (above all, communist) conceptions. Paradoxically, the dictator praised Kim Ok-kyun’s 1884 coup attempt, although it had been

obviously inspired by the Japanese. Downplaying Tokyo's role, he emphasized Kim Ok-kyun's commitment to a reform program so as to show that pre-colonial Korea had not been as backward and sluggish as the Japanese (and the Soviets) claimed.³⁴ That is, Kim Il Sung's approach considerably differed from the more traditional nationalism of, say, Im Chong-guk, a South Korean historian who grouped "all those Korean reformers who ever had any contact with Japan into the single category of collaborators."³⁵

Interestingly enough, Pyongyang's efforts to keep the great powers at arm's length were not always intertwined with measures aimed at the preservation of Korean traditions. Nor did Kim deem every element of Korean cultural tradition equally valuable. For instance, in 1965, the regime began to popularize European-style dresses. By the 1970s, Western dress had largely replaced traditional dress in the big cities.³⁶ In 1956, the government legalized acupuncture but "westernized" the form of newspapers. In 1961, Radio Pyongyang broadcast solely Korean music, but theaters did not stage classical Korean dramas, only plays dealing with current issues. As a Hungarian diplomat reported in 1966, the cultivation of national traditions was particularly intense in the field of dancing, whereas Korean-style painting on silk and paper was no longer practiced.³⁷ Thus, it is logical to state, as Hunter does, that "one really cannot describe North Korea's communists as traditionalists or anti-traditionalist." The dictatorship, she concludes, upheld tradition if it served its purposes, but abandoned it if it did not.³⁸

Korea's pre-modern traditions did influence the development of the DPRK, but they did not predestine the Korean communist regime to become more monolithic, rigid, and oppressive than, say, its Vietnamese counterpart. As described in Chapter 1, the pre-colonial Korean social and political system was rigid enough, yet it eventually proved more adaptable than the Vietnamese one. In the 1920s, Korean society already included a group of industrialists, a stratum practically absent in colonial Vietnam. The adoption of European-style literary forms by Korean authors preceded, rather than followed, comparable developments in Vietnamese literature. That is, Korean inflexibility should not be considered a constant phenomenon. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, neither Korea nor Vietnam was inherently and persistently superior to the other in a political, economic, social, or cultural sense. In certain historical periods Korea seems to have overtaken Vietnam, while in others it was Vietnam that took the lead. Thus, Korea's pre-colonial past probably produced a less decisive effect on the emergence of North Korean despotism than one may assume.

For instance, the European-style political statues typical of contemporary North Korea (above all, the statues of Kim Il Sung) constitute an obvious break

with Korean artistic traditions, which favored obelisks and Buddha statues. As late as 1956 the Hungarian diplomats emphasized that there were only a few statues decorating North Korean squares, public buildings, or the latter's vestibules.³⁹ Confucian monuments (i.e., inscribed stone tablets) had been set up primarily for loyal subjects, filial sons, or faithful wives, rather than for rulers.⁴⁰ Nor did Confucian rulers name places and institutions for themselves or for political leaders in general. In Vietnam, it was only in the 1930s that "educated Vietnamese were converted to the Western approach, and were demanding that public places be named for Vietnamese luminaries rather than French admirals and governors-general."⁴¹

The various similarities between the North and South Korean political systems do show that the regimes that came into existence in the Korean peninsula after 1945 were at least partly rooted in the same past. However, it seems that the period most directly influencing them was the first half of the twentieth century, rather than the Choson era. For instance, the memory of Japanese colonial rule obviously fostered economic nationalism and autarkic trends both in the DPRK and in the ROK. In the 1950s, exports made up only a quite small fraction of the South Korean GNP, and "the inward-oriented nature of the Korean economy . . . was far greater than would have been expected for Korea's level of development."⁴² Similarly, in 1962, Hungarian diplomats noted that the volume of North Korean foreign trade remained less than one-fifth of that of Hungarian foreign trade, because Pyongyang preferred autarky to the development of exports.⁴³ Anxious to promote import substitution industrialization, both Rhee and Kim Il Sung did their best to get as much economic aid as possible, and both squabbled a lot with their aid donors over economic issues. Namely, both Soviet and U.S. advisers tried to dissuade their Korean partners from "excessive" industrialization.⁴⁴

While Park Chung Hee, unlike Rhee and Kim, strongly encouraged export-oriented industrialization, the dirigiste nature of his economic policies frequently bore a resemblance to communist methods. Thanks to the nationalization of the country's major banks and the establishment of government-controlled business associations, the dictator could easily give orders to big private companies. The Park regime strictly curtailed domestic consumption, prohibiting such "luxuries" as color television and neon lights. Post-1989 Polish politicians, having studied Park's military-style rural development program, decided not to copy it, since "Saemaul was too similar to the discredited Communist system."⁴⁵

Similarities between North and South also existed in the political sphere. In the wake of liberation, the bitter competition between rightists and leftists induced both sides to enroll more and more people in their organizations. This

recruitment drive was backed up by efforts to stress the organic unity of the Korean nation (a theory that ignored the different social and regional bases of the two political camps) and depict ideological opponents as “national traitors.” This sharp polarization, whose roots can be traced to the colonial era, was certainly more conducive to repressive and regulative policies than to flexible ones. Although in 1946 the left proved more successful in mass mobilization, the right also had a relatively large following, a fact that strongly influenced the character of post-1945 South Korean politics.

Unlike “classic” authoritarian dictatorships, the Rhee regime established several mass organizations, like youth leagues and government-controlled trade unions, in order to strengthen its hold over the population. The dictator did not hesitate to stage mass demonstrations when he wanted to put pressure on his domestic and foreign opponents, and he created a so-called National Guidance Alliance to “re-educate” communists. “The police . . . practiced a type of guilt-by-association in which one leftist in a family could subject all relatives to surveillance,” and students from “bad families” were discriminated against. In 1949, South Korean prisons, not counting “guidance camps,” held some 30,000 political prisoners, and the regime executed thousands, if not tens of thousands, in 1948–1953. Under Park, no mass executions occurred, but there was a deep penetration of society by the various security services. Both Rhee and Park were famous for their highly interventionist ruling style, which included the replacement of many high- and low-ranking officials.⁴⁶ In sum, the policies of repression, mass mobilization, “thought control,” economic nationalism, and state-driven development did have deep roots in post-1945 Korea. This probably facilitated Kim Il Sung’s efforts to achieve absolute power.

Nonetheless, the various South Korean dictatorships never became as monolithic as Kim’s regime. Rhee’s Liberal Party lacked any effective grass-roots organizations, and it did not dominate the political scene as completely as the KWP. For instance, the 1950 National Assembly (NA) election resulted in the defeat of many government candidates. In the 1954 and 1958 elections, the Liberal Party received 36.8 and 42.1 percent of the votes, respectively, a proportion far lower than the one typical of North Korean elections. Nor was Park’s Democratic Republican Party a monolithic organization. Its central command structure gradually weakened, and in the 1963, 1971, and 1973 elections, it gained only 37 percent, 49.1 percent, and 38.7 percent of the votes, respectively, while the strongest opposition party received 34.6 percent, 45.1 percent, and 32.5 percent, respectively.⁴⁷

Given that pre-1988 South Korean elections were more often rigged than not, and the NA remained a quite powerless body, these election results by no means attested to the democratic nature of the Rhee and Park regimes. Still,

they show that certain segments of the opposition (i.e., non-leftist groups) had at least some opportunity to present themselves as an alternative, which emboldened the critics of the dictatorships. Despite government censorship, a few newspapers, such as *Han'guk Ilbo* and *Tonga Ilbo*, kept castigating Rhee's policies. In March 1964, as many as 80,000 students demonstrated against the treaty Park Chung Hee wanted to conclude with Japan. While those writers who openly criticized the Park regime, such as Kim Chi-ha and Cho Tae-il, faced imprisonment and other forms of persecution, South Korean literary life was not as strictly regulated by the state as North Korean literature. For instance, the social criticism apparent in the works of Cho Se-hui, Hwang Sok-yong and Yi Ho-ch'ol would have been practically unthinkable in the DPRK.

This difference between North Korean monolithism and the less closed nature of the South Korean regimes did not reflect simply the contrast between "communist totalitarianism" and "capitalist authoritarianism." Certain East and Southeast Asian rightwing dictatorships, most notably Guomindang-ruled Taiwan and Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore, proved more closed, albeit not necessarily more oppressive, than the South Korean regimes. As T. J. S. George noted in 1974, "the 1963 election was the last significant attempt by opposition parties to challenge the PAP [the ruling party in Singapore] through constitutional means. After that the Lee techniques did not give anybody any chance. . . . In subsequent elections Lee would get embarrassing 99.9 per cent majorities and not a single opposition member would be seen in the Assembly."⁴⁸

In South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem's dictatorship also seems to have been more monolithic than the South Korean authoritarian regimes—an interesting contrast, since the North Vietnamese political system was generally more flexible than its North Korean counterpart. For instance, during a referendum held in 1955, 98.2 percent of the voters were said to have voted for Diem. Thanks to Diem's press laws, which ensured that a critical article could lead to the punishment of all persons involved (including printers, distributors, and newsboys), "all newspapers were by necessity pro-Diem" or faced elimination.⁴⁹

I would not go so far as to claim that South Korean authoritarian regimes were "preferable" to other rightwing Asian dictatorships, let alone "democratic." After all, the survival of a multiparty system in the ROK resulted, to a large extent, from American pressure, rather than from the democratic inclinations of Rhee and Park. Still, the aforesaid comparisons show that in the case of rightist dictatorships, Korea did not necessarily constitute a more despotic alternative than other Asian countries. In other words, Korean political traditions seem not to have included a particular inclination for the type of absolute control over the entire population that is so characteristic of the North Korean

regime. In fact, it is factionalism and instability, rather than discipline and stability, that one may regard as a permanent feature of Korean political parties (including the KCP), and one major motive behind Kim Il Sung's actions was a desire to eradicate this phenomenon.

The family-based politics characteristic of present-day North Korea—a striking difference between the DPRK and Stalin's USSR—is often considered a manifestation of Korean (or Asian) social traditions. “Presumably alien and un-Marxist to Western communists, this practice fits nicely with East Asian politics,” Cumings declares. “Taiwan, for example, with Chiang Kai-shek giving way to his son; Mao or Marcos trying to pass power onto a wife; any of the big South Korean conglomerates, about two-thirds of which are held within founding families.”⁵⁰ To be sure, Korean society traditionally accorded (and still accords) particularly great importance to blood relationships. In contemporary South Korea, the united lineages often get involved in political life, award scholarships and sponsor sports events for younger members, and issue publications about their history.⁵¹ Nor has North Korean family-based politics been confined to the relatives of Kim Il Sung. Following the purge that had hit the KPA officer corps in 1968–1969, about 40 percent of the North Koreans studying at Soviet military schools had to interrupt their studies on the grounds that they were children of replaced leaders.⁵²

It is also true that those communist (and other) dictatorships that faced strongly traditional societies at the time of their takeover were more susceptible to political nepotism than the ones that ruled highly modernized countries. North Korea, Albania, Romania, and Bulgaria can be compared with the GDR and Czechoslovakia. While a social structure based on extensive clan or tribal networks may facilitate such a policy, the predominance of the nuclear family usually hinders it.

On the other hand, a comparison between the DPRK and the ROK may make us aware of the danger of a hasty generalization. Even though in South Korea politics was in several respects more traditional than in the North,⁵³ no one of the South Korean dictatorships was ever dominated by a single family or clan. Of course, Rhee, with his European wife and adopted son, constituted a special case. Still, it is important to note that the men whom Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan appointed to the most important posts were usually persons who had been their classmates at the Military Academy (and preferably hailed from the same province), rather than their relatives. Under Roh Tae Woo, this pattern continued, although he also named two of his in-laws as ministers.⁵⁴ That is, the top-level policies of the South Korean military regimes were not as much family based as South Korean business activity. These examples

show that nepotism may not influence every social sphere to the same extent, which reveals the complexity of social traditions.

The differences among various forms of political nepotism should be noted. In certain dictatorships, usually in very closed, monolithic, and oppressive ones, nepotism meant, above all, the appointment of one's relatives to key positions in the party and state apparatus, the security services, and the military, and it could also include a hereditary succession of power. Kim Il Sung's DPRK obviously belonged to that type, and so did Hoxha's Albania, Ceausescu's Romania, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Assad's Syria, Jiang Jieshi's Taiwan, Diem's South Vietnam, Trujillo's Dominican Republic, and Somoza's Nicaragua.

In other regimes, however, the relatives of the top leaders were rarely given such important political posts, and the (rather substantial) benefits they gained through their family connections were mainly of an economic and material nature. These cases include, among others, Brezhnev's USSR, Deng Xiaoping's China, Tito's Yugoslavia, Chun Doo Hwan's South Korea, Suharto's Indonesia, and Sadat's Egypt. As Walker observed in 1986, "the striking feature of the privileged children of the Soviet leadership . . . is their reluctance to follow in their parents' footsteps and seek to climb the ranks of party power."⁵⁵ These varieties of nepotism show that a leader's wish to provide privileged treatment for his relatives did not always result in a "Kim Jong Il syndrome," and the latter phenomenon cannot be explained solely by emphasizing the importance that a traditional society accords to consanguinity.

In my opinion, the first type of political nepotism is usually a symptom of serious internal tension unless the regime in question is as devoid of any ideology as the highly personalized dictatorships of Trujillo and Somoza. Remarkably, a disproportionately large part of the Albanian, South Vietnamese, Taiwanese, Iraqi, and Syrian elites was recruited from a more or less isolated segment of the society (Tosks, Catholics, pro-GMD refugees from the mainland, Sunni Arabs, and Alawis, respectively). The upward mobility of other large groups (e.g., Ghegs, non-Catholics, local Taiwanese, Shi'is, and Kurds), which were distrusted by the regime, remained relatively limited. Needless to say, this situation created resentment against the ruling group, which in turn inspired the leadership to tighten its grip over the state machine by making use of family connections.

The Romanian case was somewhat different, but it still had much in common with the previous examples. Namely, Ceausescu, the youngest member of the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) Politburo in 1965, felt constrained by Gheorghiu-Dej's "old guard," and did his best to remove it. The men with whom he replaced Stoica, Maurer, and other potential rivals owed their

advancement almost entirely to Ceausescu. As a consequence, the dictator treated them as his subordinates, rather than as comrades in arms, which induced (and enabled) him to rely more and more on his relatives. The domestic situation also “necessitated” the reinforcement of his personal control over bureaucracy and society. Early in the 1970s, the dictator embarked on a program of rapid industrialization, a step that produced a negative effect on living standards, increased social tension, and thus generated political opposition.⁵⁶

In addition, it should be pointed out that in the Chinese and Vietnamese communist systems the temporary emergence of extensive political nepotism took place in the context of bitter internal conflict. It happened only during the Cultural Revolution that Mao’s wife, daughters, and nephew (Jiang Qing, Li Na, Li Min, and Mao Yuanxin) got important posts.⁵⁷ In 1976–1981, VWP leaders Le Duan and Le Duc Tho appointed their sons, brothers, and other relatives to a number of key security, administrative, military, and party positions. This move was preceded and accompanied by a series of purges, which, having begun as early as 1963, seems to have been triggered by intense intraparty debates over foreign and military policies.⁵⁸ Thus, it is quite likely that in North Korea the gradual emergence of family-based politics was also closely interwoven with, and at least partly motivated by, the factional squabbles and intraparty purges of 1945 to 1969. In other words, the “construction of socialism in one family” was neither an inevitable development nor a smooth process.

The similarities and differences between Kim’s DPRK, Hoxha’s Albania, and Ceausescu’s Romania are also revealing. Interestingly enough, Hoxha’s children, unlike Kim Jong Il and Nicu Ceausescu, did not play any major political role during their father’s life,⁵⁹ although in other respects the Hoxha regime proved at least as nepotistic as the dictatorships headed by Kim Il Sung and Ceausescu. To mention but one example, the wives of Hoxha, Shehu, Kapo, and some other Albanian leaders held seats in the APL CC.

The aforesaid differences between the three countries may have resulted from the fact that in 1954–1981, Hoxha did not dominate the Albanian political scene as completely as Kim Il Sung and Ceausescu did in the DPRK and Romania, respectively. Instead, the Albanian dictator governed his country as the head of a sort of “collective leadership,” the cohesion of which was quite substantial. In contrast with Kim, in 1954, Hoxha had to yield the premiership to Shehu, who would hold this post until his (violent) death in 1981. Kapo, the third most influential man in the Albanian leadership, enjoyed good personal relations with Hoxha’s family. Kapo and a Politburo member named Myftiu had fought in the same partisan brigade during WW II, and Myftiu was also

a protégé of Shehu for a time. Hazbiu, a relative of Shehu, remained Minister of the Interior from 1954 to 1980. Other relatives of Shehu and the relatives of Kapo and Myftiu were similarly appointed to key posts.⁶⁰

Due to these networks, Shehu's influence became greater than the power of any number two leader either in post-1951 North Korea or in post-1969 Romania. Significantly, in 1960, the Albanian regime displayed the pictures of both Hoxha and Shehu, while in the DPRK one could see only the pictures of Kim Il Sung. In sum, the other top Albanian leaders seem to have been influential enough to prevent Hoxha from gradually preparing one of his sons for the succession. Moreover, the dictator had good reason to trust them, since they consistently supported him during his confrontations with Moscow and Beijing.⁶¹

In contrast, the KWP leadership seems to have remained—at least potentially—divided until 1970, that is, even after the defeat of the SKWP, Soviet, and Yan'an factions. This factor enabled (and induced) Kim Il Sung to appoint Kim Yong-ju and Kim Jong Il to more and more important positions. Since this development was accompanied by the ascendancy of the former members of the 88th Brigade, the latter tended to accept it. On the other hand, many of the other ex-guerrillas and Kapsan men, whom the dictator probably trusted less than the first group and who may have (or could have) opposed his dynastic plans, fell victim to the 1967–1969 purges. In fact, the purges of 1952–1959 may have already provided Kim with an opportunity to place some of his relatives to the party and state apparatus. In 1954, Kim Yong-ju and Kim Chung-rin (a relative of the former) became officials of the CC apparatus, while Kang Hui-won, a maternal relative of the dictator, was named a deputy minister in 1958, and light industry minister in 1961.⁶² As early as 29 November 1961, nineteen-year-old Kim Jong Il was invited to a reception held by the Albanian Embassy. This invitation indicated his special status, all the more so since the group of North Korean guests included several high-ranking persons, such as two Politburo members and a few ministers.⁶³

By the time that his father had secured the dominance of former Brigade members over every other faction, Kim Jong Il was twenty-eight, that is, old enough to get involved in high politics. Born in 1950, Nicu Ceausescu began his political career in 1973, a few years before his father expelled the last members of Dej's "old guard" from the RWP leadership.⁶⁴ In contrast, Hoxha's sons, Ilir and Sokol, were only six and three, respectively, when Albania's aforesaid "collective leadership" came into existence. That is, their father could not appoint them to positions in that period when his power seems to have been the most unlimited, while later it was neither necessary nor possible.⁶⁵

Thus, one may conclude that no matter how much pre-modern traditions facilitated the emergence of political nepotism, it was the actual balance of power between the most influential leaders and political groups that eventually mattered. Even if a dictator was willing to pursue family-based domestic policies (Stalin, Tito, and Ho Chi Minh were not), he was not necessarily able to promote his relatives at the expense of other leaders.

In the last analysis, it seems that the North Korean regime's absolute control over the population, the dictatorship's inflexibility, and the creation of the "Kim dynasty" were not inevitable outgrowths of Korean traditions. On the other hand, certain persistent elements of Korean political culture, if they were combined with additional factors, could (and probably did) facilitate the emergence of North Korean despotism.⁶⁶ Thus, the role of local traditions should not be ruled out as categorically as certain authors do, such as Buzo.

Describing the faults of the yangban elite under the late Yi dynasty, Chongsik Lee highlights factional struggles, provincialism, and the attachment of more importance to personal relationships than to impersonal and institutional ones.⁶⁷ In this respect, the continuity between old and new Korea is quite striking. Surveys undertaken in the ROK in 1960, 1963, 1978, and 1985, showed that the ratio of personality identification votes greatly and permanently exceeded that of party and issue identification votes, even though the percentage of personality-based votes declined from 65.9 percent in 1963 to 46.4 percent in 1985.⁶⁸ As late as 2000, one-man rule was still typical of every major South Korean party, "with the head of each party enjoying absolute power over his party's affairs and calling the shots in its nomination process, which further reinforces his ironclad grip on the party."⁶⁹ Significantly, South Korean Christianity is also noted for "a focus on individual charismatic pastors more than on denominational ties." That is, "Protestant denominations tend to splinter and regroup around personalities."⁷⁰

This tendency seriously aggravated North Korean intraparty debates, made the cooperation of the various (N)KWP factions particularly difficult, enabled Kim to divide the camp of his real and potential opponents, and induced him to mistrust those leaders with whom he had not been in more or less permanent contact in the 1935–1945 period. Remarkably, ideological factors did not play a major role in the formation of these factions. Moreover, the deep roots of personality-based politics probably helped Kim in creating a personal dictatorship. In a one-party regime, the methods with which a leader controls his party inevitably affect state policies as well, particularly if state institutions are subordinated to party organs. In other words, it was the long and persistent tradition of sharp intraelite conflicts, rather than a tradition of absolute tyranny, that one should blame for the gradual establishment of North Korean despotism.

The Roots of Repression

In sum, one should not overstress either the impact of foreign models or the importance of Korea's authoritarian and isolationist traditions while seeking an explanation for the despotic character of the Kim Il Sung regime, although these factors did influence the formation of the DPRK. In my view, one of the principal causes of North Korean despotism was the intense and xenophobic nationalism professed by Kim Il Sung and the former Manchurian guerrillas. Rooted in the latter's personal experiences and reinforced by Japan's post-1937 assimilationist policy, this nationalism greatly influenced Pyongyang's actions toward both South Korea and the "communist camp." In turn, the goals the North Korean leadership pursued in the field of foreign policy produced a strong effect on its domestic policies. Furthermore, the excessive importance Kim Il Sung attached to direct participation in the armed revolutionary struggle against Japanese rule became a source of excessive elitism, for it led to the overvaluation of the ex-guerrillas at the expense of the rest of the population. The heterogeneity of the (N)KWP leadership proved another key element. Since many North Korean leaders were closely associated either with the CPSU or the CCP, factional clashes had an international dimension as well, which further aggravated intraparty debates.

One manifestation of Kim Il Sung's nationalism was his determination to unite Korea on his terms, no matter how. Apart from the DPRK, no communist country was really interested in an attack on the ROK, but Kim kept insisting on it until he finally got the green light from Stalin. Moreover, even the catastrophe resulting from the Korean War failed to discourage the dictator from pursuing openly confrontational policies vis-à-vis Seoul during the post-1961 decades, although these actions by no means pleased the Soviet Union. In other words, he laid a greater emphasis on Korean nationalism than on the common interests of the "Soviet bloc." North Korean diplomacy was permanently focused on the conflict with Seoul and Washington. Its obsession with inter-Korean competition usually overrode any other consideration, partly preventing the DPRK from following the example of Tito and Ceausescu who, while also doing their best to preserve their independence, usually tried to be on good terms with as many states as possible. Actually, Yugoslavia and Romania did not face a pro-Western rival regime comparable to the ROK, Taiwan, or South Vietnam, which greatly facilitated their efforts to broaden their contacts with the West.⁷¹

The ongoing military, political, and economic competition between the two Koreas, coupled with the memories of the guerrilla struggles and the Korean War, created a constant "wartime mentality" in the minds of the KWP leaders. This attitude greatly explains their unwillingness to seek compromise solutions

and their inclination to adopt a rigid stance during political debates. The effect that such memories produced on Kim's decisions may be illustrated by Pyongyang's decades-long hostility to Tito. Throughout the Khrushchev era, North Korea, alone among the communist countries, firmly refused to establish diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia on the grounds that "in 1950 they branded us aggressors."

Leaders of revolutionary regimes, if they felt threatened by foreign powers aimed at blocking their nationalist aspirations, often behaved in such a way, and thus Kim Il Sung's approach was not really exceptional. For instance, in 1965–1967, Hanoi rigidly rejected any proposal concerning a peaceful settlement in Vietnam if it proved in any sense different from its own program.⁷² During the Iraq-Iran war, the Khomeini regime, as a Hungarian journalist put it, "looked askance at every [state] that did not qualify Iraqi President Saddam Hussein as a Fascist murderer."⁷³ Nor did Syngman Rhee, another die-hard nationalist whose aggressive unification plans were frustrated by various foreign powers, express any interest in establishing contacts with countries that recognized the DPRK or in mollifying his anti-Japanese stance for the sake of post-1953 U.S.–Japanese–South Korean cooperation.

On the other hand, the centrality of the unification issue occasionally induced the KWP leaders as well as their North Vietnamese comrades to adopt a surprisingly flexible attitude. As described in Chapter 6, in 1960, Kim Il Sung, encouraged by the prospect of rapid and "peaceful" national unification, eagerly adopted Khrushchev's confederation proposal, although otherwise he was hardly fond of the Soviet leader. In 1965–1967, both Pyongyang and Hanoi maintained relatively cordial relations with Suharto's otherwise violently anti-communist dictatorship, since Djakarta's foreign policy gave preference to the DPRK and the DRV over the ROK and South Vietnam.⁷⁴

The Korean War and its outcome certainly shaped the course of North Korean development to a large extent. The war resulted in several waves of repression in 1950–1953, including the purge of the SKWP leadership—on the first occasion, Kim Il Sung liquidated an entire party faction. The havoc wrought by the war necessitated rapid economic reconstruction, an aim Kim seems to have considered more compatible with Stalinistic methods than with the "loosening of the screws." Pyongyang's post-1953 policies, such as forced industrialization, the massive use of "voluntary" work, the curtailment of consumption, and the implementation of pro-natalist measures, were strongly motivated by the drive for reconstruction. Kim Il Sung's insistence on a "forced march" was reinforced by the constant competition between Pyongyang and Seoul.

Overtaking the South proved an uphill task, since the population of the

DPRK was much smaller than that of the ROK. When a North Korean government delegation headed by Chang Si-u and Chin Pan-su visited Hungary in mid-1952, its members flatly told the Hungarians that the numerical superiority of the South Koreans constituted a serious problem,⁷⁵ a statement that Soviet Ambassador Suzdalev would reiterate in 1954. In December 1956, a Hungarian diplomat named József Füredi went further by pointing out that the DPRK was hardly able to follow the PRC's example in pursuing a conciliatory policy toward its capitalist counterpart. After all, the Chinese government, which faced only a small island, could easily offer "forgiveness" and call upon the exiled GMD leaders to return home. In contrast, any similar North Korean proposal to Rhee, who held sway over a greater part of the Korean population than Kim Il Sung did, would have been utterly unrealistic.⁷⁶

This difference in size and political importance played a decisive role in that the PRC eventually managed to achieve a rapprochement with Washington and isolate Taiwan, while North Korea had no hope of persuading the United States to abandon its increasingly prosperous South Korean ally in favor of the DPRK. Although Beijing's rejection of the "two Chinas" principle was at least as rigid as Pyongyang's opposition to a "two Koreas" policy (see the missile tests and amphibious exercises of 1995–1996), the PRC could, and did, cooperate with Washington in various other spheres (e.g., against the Soviet Union). North Korea, however, had little to offer to the United States in exchange for a reduced American commitment to Seoul. In other words, the DPRK's approach to the problem of national division was not necessarily more inflexible than that of the PRC, but it was certainly less compatible with the actual balance of forces.

Attempts to outproduce and outgun the ROK, like the post-1961 military buildup, produced a strongly negative effect on North Korean living standards, and the near-permanent tension provided the KWP leadership with a convenient pretext for ruling with an iron hand. Moreover, in the mid-1960s, the South Korean economy began to grow at a rapid pace, which further inspired Kim to speed up both industrial and military development. Unlike Hanoi, in the post-1949 era Pyongyang was unable to rely on a strong Southern communist movement that could have undermined the stability of the Seoul regimes, and thus it had to face the South and its American backers alone.

Actually, the suppression of the SKWP by the Rhee regime proved one of the most important turning points in North Korean history. Frustrated by the contrast between their strong nationalism and their inability to regain the party's former influence in South Korea, the KWP leaders did not follow the example of Park Chung Hee and the Soviet-dominated East German regime. Instead of accepting that rapid unification was not feasible, they increasingly resorted

to military, and eventually terrorist, methods.⁷⁷ Moreover, Kim Il Sung concluded that the SKWP faction had lost its *raison d'être*. As a consequence, communists of Southern origin faced permanent discrimination in the DPRK, a situation that stood in a sharp contrast with the privileged status and gradual political ascendancy of South Vietnamese communists in the DRV.

Such a permanent competition with a numerically stronger opponent would have strained North Korean resources anyway, but another aspect of Kim's nationalism, namely, his distrust of the communist great powers, made the situation even more complicated. Due to the experiences of the Korean War, he did not expect Moscow and Beijing to support him to the hilt, nor did he want to be dependent on their military protection to such an extent that would have curtailed his independence. The North Korean dictator therefore did his best to create a powerful state that would be self-sufficient in every sense. As described in Chapter 2, Kim laid great stress on economic autarky, a concept the Soviets heartily disagreed with. This policy was aimed at lessening Pyongyang's dependence on Moscow and Beijing, but it essentially failed to achieve that goal. Worse still, it demanded immense sacrifices from the hard-pressed North Korean population, and its enforcement "necessitated" the continued use of intense political repression.

In fact, Kim Il Sung probably regarded domestic despotism as a diplomatic asset. The dictatorship's tight control over the society enabled him to keep the "fraternal" countries at arm's length. The North Korean authorities limited the population's contacts with the communist embassies in order to prevent the latter from recruiting clients, confidants, and informants, and they were inclined to subject the diplomats to various forms of petty harassment. They also repeatedly replaced those cadres and technical experts who had been trained abroad—a policy that severely affected the North Korean intelligentsia. These steps, at least partly, resulted from Pyongyang's intention to preserve its sovereignty.

Both the DPRK and Albania, whose sovereignty had been violated by some "fraternal" country (the USSR, China, and Yugoslavia, respectively) in 1945–1953, took such isolationist and restrictive measures in 1950–1964. That is, both Pyongyang and Tirana resorted to methods of this kind already before Soviet de-Stalinization, although at first only with regard to the East European embassies. In contrast, the DRV, by and large, had not taken comparable steps vis-à-vis the "fraternal" embassies until 1963, possibly because it was not subjected to such a treatment that the North Koreans and the Albanians had to endure. The Vietnam War, however, induced the North Vietnamese government to lay greater stress on the preservation of its sovereignty. Hanoi began to curtail the activity of the communist diplomats, and did its best to isolate the

Chinese troops, which arrived in the DRV in 1965, from the local population.⁷⁸ These actions were accompanied by the intensification of domestic repression.

Yet another manifestation of Kim Il Sung's nationalism was the regime's cultural isolationism, which played an important role in the curtailment of intellectual freedom in North Korea. As noted before, in the 1945–1954 period the regime did not publish any “Western” literary works (not even Russian classics), and it prevented scholars from reading Western scientific journals. From 1956 on, various restrictions were applied to the literature and art of the “fraternal” countries as well, albeit later Kim Il Sung gave his consent to the translation of Western and Soviet scientific literature. Characteristically, in 1960–1963, the historical journal of the North Korean Academy of Sciences consistently failed to publish any article devoted to non-Korean subjects or written by a foreign author.⁷⁹

The strongly Korea-centric character of the DPRK's cultural policy seems to have been a reaction to the Japanese assault on Korean culture and national identity, an assault that had no counterpart in French-ruled Vietnam. After all, the idea of “cultural purism” proved quite popular in the ROK as well. Up to 1998 (!), the South Korean governments had categorically prohibited the import of films from Japan.⁸⁰ Neither North Vietnam nor pre-1973 Albania experienced such developments. Ho Chi Minh himself was an enthusiastic reader of Hugo and Michelet. The works of classical French writers like Balzac and Hugo continued to be taught in North Vietnamese schools, and a poet named Huy Can extensively referred to Whitman in a poem he wrote for a international cultural conference held in 1968.⁸¹ After Hoxha's break with Khrushchev, the import of French and Italian films increased, rather than decreased, in Albania, and in 1963, the Tirana Opera regularly staged *Traviata* and other classics. It was only the purge of 1973–1977 that resulted in a systematic campaign against Western culture as such.⁸²

In addition to Kim Il Sung's intense nationalism, the heterogeneous composition of the (N)KWP leadership seems to have been another important source of North Korean despotism. In the DPRK, intraparty debates often degenerated into purges, which led to the imprisonment or execution of many influential politicians. In the 1952–1959 period, these purges struck three rather identifiable groups: the SKWP leaders, the Soviet Koreans, and the Yan'an Koreans. The 1952–1953 wave of repression was directed against South Korean and, to a lesser extent, “domestic” communists. Early in 1955, Kim Il Sung cracked down on some members of the Yan'an group, and then late in that year he launched an attack on the Soviet faction. Finally, in 1956–1959, he purged both Soviet and Yan'an leaders. In contrast, no one of the Kapsan men was permanently removed in these years, although Kim Il suffered temporary eclipses

in 1950–1951 and 1955 (his demotions were probably initiated by Kim Il Sung's foreign or domestic critics, rather than by the dictator).

The dynamic of these purges shows that in the 1950s factional identity proved quite pronounced within the North Korean leadership, a factor that inhibited the generation of mutual trust and enabled Kim Il Sung to play off his rivals against each other. Since Kim's pre-1945 career had not been intertwined with that of the aforesaid politicians, he was inclined to distrust them, particularly because many of them had close contacts either with Moscow or Beijing. This situation had a lot in common with the Albanian case, for the Albanian communist movement had been extremely factionalized in the pre-1941 era, and the Albanian leadership executed three prominent communists as early as 1944.⁸³ These confrontations foreshadowed the frequent purges that were so typical of the Hoxha regime. The Albanian purges of 1948–1949, 1955–1956, 1960, and 1974–1975 were also strongly motivated by the intention of removing the clients of other communist countries, namely, Yugoslavia, the USSR, and China.

The contrast between the heterogeneity of the (N)KWP and APL leaderships on the one hand, and the relative initial homogeneity of the North Vietnamese elite on the other seemingly explains why the North Korean and Albanian regimes were more rigid and repressive than their North Vietnamese counterpart. This explanation, however, covers only a part of the truth. Serious intra-party tension was by no means absent in North Vietnam either. In the 1963–1980 period, a high number of VWP leaders, like Ung Van Khiem, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Hoang Van Hoan, gradually lost their seats in the Politburo and the CC due to clashes over foreign and military policy. This development was closely intertwined with the emergence of a group headed by Le Duan, Le Duc Tho, Pham Hung, and others. During the Vietnam War, the dictatorship imprisoned dozens of military officers for political reasons.⁸⁴ Still, North Vietnamese purges did not claim the lives of high-ranking party officials. In most cases, replaced VWP leaders were gradually deprived of their influence and given insignificant posts, whereas the victims of North Korean and Albanian purges usually went to prison, lost their lives, or “disappeared” for decades.

The aforesaid difference among North Korean, Albanian, and North Vietnamese methods can be explained by focusing on the crises and challenges that these parties had to cope with. Significantly, both the North Korean and the Albanian dictatorships faced extremely serious crises (the Korean War and the Stalin-Tito break, respectively) in an early stage of their development, crises that created irreconcilable conflicts of interests within the KWP and APL leaderships. While the 1948 purge of North Korean “domestic communists,”

triggered by problems of secondary importance, was not accompanied by intense violence, the purge that destroyed the SKWP faction was all the more brutal. During the 1952–1953 armistice negotiations, the interests of the North and South Korean communists proved so different from each other that a compromise was very difficult, if not impossible, to reach. Threatened by Yugoslav expansionism, Albania could not remain neutral in the debate between Tito and Stalin but had to take sides either with Belgrade or with Moscow. This situation precluded any compromise between Hoxha and Xoxe, the head of the pro-Yugoslav faction.

As a consequence, both intraparty conflicts resulted in the ruthless elimination of the losing groups. Since these factions had been quite sizable, their liquidation implied extensive repressive measures. Following these waves of repression, the KWP and APL leaders found it difficult to switch over to more flexible methods, for they feared that their real or potential opponents, if they were able to seize power, would resort to similarly brutal measures against them. As Biberaj put it, “Hoxha . . . and Shehu had shown no mercy for the innocent families and close relatives of former colleagues who had fallen in their disfavor. The question of what fate would befall his family [after his death] must have caused Hoxha great consternation.”⁸⁵ If the leaders did experience any kind of real challenge, it immediately added fuel to the fire of their suspicions. For instance, the stormy CC plenum of August 1956, and particularly the subsequent Sino–Soviet intervention, must have hardened Kim Il Sung’s stance vis-à-vis Pak Ch’ang-ok and Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik, reinforcing his will to carry out a thorough party purge.

In any case, the execution of intraparty opponents proved an irredeemable “error” that could not be “corrected” by those responsible for it in any credible way and thus it could not be admitted. Significantly, no executed victim of the Soviet and East European show trials was fully rehabilitated until the dictators who had played a central role in these judicial murders (Stalin, Dej, Rákosi, Novotny, and Chervenkov) were succeeded or replaced by other leaders.⁸⁶ This is why particular importance should be attached to a phenomenon described in Chapter 3, namely, to the fact that in North Korea, unlike most East European countries but similarly to Albania, no rehabilitation took place in 1954–1956.⁸⁷

The importance of the 1948 and 1950–1953 crises seems to be confirmed by the events that took place in the USSR and China. Remarkably, the purges that the CPSU and the CCP underwent in the 1920s and 1950s, respectively, were less violent than the Great Terror and the Cultural Revolution, the latter having been preceded by famines that claimed the lives of millions of people.

Stalin and Mao, primarily responsible for these catastrophes, probably felt that they could preserve their authority only by the intensification of intraparty repression.

In contrast, in the 1945–1962 period, the VWP leaders usually managed to find compromise solutions for the problems they had to cope with. North Vietnamese diplomacy certainly did its best to seek such solutions. Characteristically, in 1960, the DPRK tried to isolate herself from both the USSR and China, while the DRV attempted to please both sides. It was Le Duan's 1963 decision to "lean to the Chinese side" in the Sino–Soviet debate that set off a long series of purges. During the Vietnam War, Le Duan was still interested in maintaining a token presence of "pro-Soviet" and "pro-Chinese" cadres in the Politburo and the CC in order to reassure both Moscow and Beijing, whose assistance Hanoi could not afford to lose. Thus, in the mid-1960s, the regime's repressive acts affected primarily the lower-level followers of those leaders whom Le Duan kept as figureheads. Following the 1975 victory and the sharpening conflict with China, the need to keep these men in the top leadership ceased to exist. Probably this is why in 1976 an "unprecedented purge" took place in the VWP CC.⁸⁸ On the other hand, the tension generated by the war also lessened after 1975. This may have played a role in that some lower-level intraparty critics, who had been jailed in 1967, were released in 1976–1978.⁸⁹

Interestingly enough, the 1967 purge was followed by actions partly similar to the demands of the removed dissidents. Namely, Le Duan's critics had disagreed with the strategy of protracted war and with Hanoi's diplomatic inflexibility. The fact that early in 1968, Hanoi launched the Tet Offensive in order to shorten the war (and combined it with new diplomatic initiatives) suggests that in this case the conflicting viewpoints were less antagonistic than during the aforesaid North Korean and Albanian purges.⁹⁰

The relative availability of compromise solutions, coupled with the initial absence of rigidly separated factions in the Politburo, may have enabled the VWP leaders to devise comparatively less harsh methods for the suppression of intraparty opposition. The "subtle" demotion of Tran Van Giau, Nguyen Son,⁹¹ and Truong Chinh in 1946, 1949, and 1956, respectively set a precedent, which may have softened the regime's internal policies even on those occasions when intraparty divisions were more difficult to reconcile. Khrushchev's post-1953 policies constituted another precedent of this kind, for his decision not to execute or imprison Malenkov, Molotov, and other high-ranking opponents must have induced Brezhnev and Kosygin to depose him in a similarly bloodless way. In the last analysis, one may conclude that both the composition of a leadership and the availability (or unavailability) of compromise solutions played

an important role in the formation process of a communist regime. If a sharply divided party leadership faced a situation in which there was no room for compromise, the possibility of harsh repression proved to be rather high.

Apart from the scantiness of potential compromise solutions, Kim Il Sung's attitude hardly facilitated the reaching of compromises. While the purges that removed the SKWP, Soviet Korean, and Yan'an leaders were often triggered by debates over concrete and important problems, like the armistice and the 1955 famine, Kim may have eventually eliminated these groups anyway. Furthermore, his extreme unwillingness to practice any sort of self-criticism, combined with attempts to correct the "mistakes" made by the regime, ensured that whenever any problem occurred, Kim Il Sung began to hunt for scapegoats and replace party cadres. Of such cases, I mention the following: Kim's 1952 speech on rural problems, the CC plenums held in April and December 1955, the persecution of "saboteurs" in 1958, the 1959 campaign against "bureaucratism," the castigation of Han Sang-du for the economic difficulties in 1959, the purge of the Pyongyang party committee in 1960, the dismissal of Yim Hae in 1961, and the execution of Yi Il-gyong in 1964.⁹²

Actually, the despotic nature of the North Korean regime was not rooted solely in Kim Il Sung's nationalism and the heterogeneous composition of the KWP leadership. A third, less rational motivation, namely, the dictator's distrust of the North Korean population, should also be taken into consideration. In the 1960s, both Kim Il Sung and other high-ranking KWP cadres repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction with the mindset of the North Korean masses. As described in Chapter 6, in 1961, they stressed that the overwhelming majority of the population should be "re-educated." In March, Kim went so far as to point out that 99.5 percent of North Korean citizens had at least one "unreliable" relative. As the following quotations show, this statement was by no means an isolated one.

On 22 April 1963, the dictator told Moskovsky that "the youth that has grown up since liberation did not undergo class struggle, it did not participate in the revolutionary struggles, and [therefore] the party must use every effort to educate this generation in class spirit." By now, Kim went on, the South Korean population had been corrupted by bourgeois ideology for as many as forty years. Its re-education, however, would not be possible without the previous re-education of the DPRK's young generations.⁹³

In a speech he made on 7 November 1964, Kim declared that "we cannot make a revolution with young people who do not know [from experience] who a landlord or a capitalist is." In the KPA, only the officers above the rank of sergeant first class had ever experienced war, the more junior ones had not. Thus,

the composition of KPA cadres had already changed for the worse. “We must achieve the unification of the motherland before our cadres grow too old,” the dictator concluded.⁹⁴

On 7 May 1968, Minister of Public Security Sok San told a visiting Hungarian police colonel that in North Korea it was the young people who were the most susceptible to the contamination of imperialist subversion, for they yearned for more rest and recreation. Since one could not afford to fulfill these wishes, it was necessary to reinforce proletarian dictatorship in order to prevent imperialist infiltration.⁹⁵

Finally, on 6 December 1969, Kim Kwang-sop, the acting chair of the Commission for International Cultural Contacts, told Hungarian Ambassador Jenő Sebestyén that the North Korean leaders laid great stress on the permanent ideological education of workers and young people. “If we did not do that,” he declared, “the minds of the people would come under the influence of bourgeois ideology in any moment.”⁹⁶

Significantly, such statements were not made solely in periods of domestic or international tension. As noted before, North Korean leaders emphasized the necessity of an extensive “re-education” campaign as early as February and March 1961, that is, when the regime pursued relatively moderate internal policies and did its best to reassure South Korean public opinion. In other words, Kim Il Sung’s dissatisfaction with the mindset of the North Korean population seems to have been a quite constant factor, whereas the periodical waves of cautious liberalization (e.g., 1959–1961 and 1965–1966) and harsh repression (e.g., 1962–1964 and 1967–1969) were probably more superficial phenomena.⁹⁷

To be sure, Kim did draw a distinction between purge and “re-education,” and Pak Yong-guk also noted that the persons to be “re-educated” did not include “counter-revolutionaries.” That is, the dictator did not regard the majority of the population as outright enemies of the regime. Nevertheless, his persistent insistence on the “re-education” of the masses certainly indicated displeasure with the people he ruled, a displeasure that “justified” and “necessitated” the maintenance of rigorous political control over the population.

The emphasis that Kim laid on “re-education” had much in common with Maoist conceptions. So did the concept of “permanent revolution,” an idea that KWP leaders frequently propagated in 1965–1968. As they put it, the state of permanent revolution was incompatible with the “excessive” raising of living standards, for well-being would make people effeminate.⁹⁸ Both the North Korean and the CCP leaders stressed that the party membership had to undergo ceaseless self-criticism, and both Kim Il Sung and Mao believed in the “educative” effect of revolutionary and military struggle. In fact, in 1960, Mao even

told a shocked Ho Chi Minh that “it was a good thing that the reactionaries had used violence and killed people and that when Jiang Jieshi killed people, he was actually helping the Chinese revolution.”⁹⁹

On the other hand, Kim Il Sung’s mistrust of the young generations was not exactly a Maoist idea. While Mao also had his doubts about Chinese youth, he, by and large, believed in the political reliability of the generation educated entirely after 1949—a belief that inspired him to launch the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰⁰ In this respect, Kim’s way of thinking proved more paranoid than that of Mao. After all, the young people he distrusted were the “products” of the regime’s own educational system, who had been subjected to constant and intense ideological indoctrination throughout their studies and who had hardly been influenced by any alternative ideas.

True, Kim Il Sung’s mistrust of the party members who had lived under foreign occupation was not a unique phenomenon. For instance, Rákosi and Gerő—who also spent World War II in the USSR—regarded most Hungarian communists who had been imprisoned by the Horthy regime as potential informants and traitors.¹⁰¹ Still, the strong and permanent emphasis Kim Il Sung laid on the unreliability of youth and on the re-education of the entire population seems to have been a North Korean peculiarity.

The excessive importance that the North Korean dictator attached to direct participation in armed revolutionary struggle induced him to overrate the guerrillas at the expense of the rest of the population. This attitude in itself was not peculiar to the DPRK. For instance, under Honecker the East German Politburo was constantly dominated by men who had participated in the Spanish Civil War or in the domestic anti-Nazi resistance movement. As Krenz, Honecker’s successor, put it, “the older comrades had presented their power as a natural right after what they had suffered under fascism. . . . It meant that we, the younger ones, did not have the right to challenge them.”¹⁰² Similarly, imprisonment by the colonial authorities or participation in the armed struggle against the French and the Americans constituted a crucial qualification for rising to the top of the Vietnamese communist party: “It was considered that the more one had been put to the test, the more trustworthy one was.”¹⁰³ The other side of the coin was that in the views of the VWP leaders, the population of the newly liberated zones, unlike the people who had lived in the Viet Minh’s base areas, lacked a strong class consciousness.

However, in the North Korean context this approach had more negative consequences than in the DRV and the GDR. The number of Manchurian guerrillas who eventually returned to North Korea in 1945–1949, and survived the Korean War, proved relatively small, particularly upon taking into consideration the fact that Kim Il Sung drew a distinction between the members of the

88th Brigade and the other guerrillas. In Korea proper, there was no substantial anti-Japanese resistance in the last decade of colonial rule. In 1950, the American and South Korean forces managed to occupy most of the DPRK, which cast suspicion on a large segment of the population. On top of it all, in a political sense the war between the two Koreas effectively went on for decades after 1953, but it did not lead to large-scale armed struggle, let alone the emergence of a new South Korean guerrilla movement. This peculiar situation resulted in the permanent overvaluation of direct wartime experience in the minds of the KWP leaders, yet it did not enable to recruit new generations of battle-hardened men whom they might have considered reliable enough.

In my opinion, this perceived (or rather imagined) “scarcity” of trustworthy cadres played an important role in Kim Il Sung’s decision to install Kim Jong Il as his successor. Remarkably, several members of Kim Jong Il’s supreme National Defense Commission, such as Cho Myong-rok, Kim Il-ch’ol, and Chon Pyong-ho, were graduates of Man’gyongdae Revolutionary School, that is, they were relatives of “revolutionary martyrs.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, the North Korean party elite became substantially closed and increasingly hereditary, a factor that did not facilitate political liberalization.

In contrast, the Vietnamese communist party seized power after a long and successful guerrilla struggle, which enjoyed wide popular support both in North and South Vietnam, and thus it hardly suffered from a shortage of revolutionaries. Following the death of Le Duan, in 1986, the veteran leaders of the VWP (Truong Chinh, Le Duc Tho, and Pham Van Dong) voluntarily “retired,” a decision that prevented the emergence of a family-based regime. Many of their successors (e.g., Nguyen Van Linh, Vo Chi Cong, Vo Van Kiet, and Le Duc Anh) had been very active in the anti-American struggle in South Vietnam, and this is how they became the protégés of Le Duan and other top VWP leaders.¹⁰⁵ They were battle-hardened cadres, in whom the previous generation of party leaders could place trust and to whom the latter were willing to transfer power. As is well-known, this transfer of power was one of the key factors that paved the way for the Vietnamese reform program, the famous *doi moi*.

In the case of East Germany, it was probably the regime’s dependence on Moscow that forced it to introduce at least a modicum of liberalization. For instance, in 1956, in the wake of the Twentieth Congress, the East German leadership amnestied a substantial number of political prisoners, including members of non-Marxist parties, social democrats, and the communist victims of the 1949–1952 purges.¹⁰⁶ As discussed later, the DPRK’s growing independence from the USSR greatly facilitated Kim Il Sung’s efforts to preserve the despotic character of the North Korean political system.

The Decline of Soviet Influence in the DPRK

It is quite probable that if the post-Stalin Soviet leadership had not compelled the various East European dictators to implement reforms, the latter would not have initiated any meaningful political liberalization in the mid-1950s. For instance, in 1953, both Rákosi and Ulbricht stubbornly opposed the introduction of a “New Course.”¹⁰⁷ Despite such opposition, Moscow eventually managed to force de-Stalinization down the throats of most East European leaders (the sole real exception was Hoxha). Kim Il Sung, however, did not follow suit. Since the North Korean regime had been established with very considerable Soviet assistance, and Soviet influence remained substantial in the DPRK throughout the Stalin era, Pyongyang’s divergence from the East European pattern was a rather peculiar phenomenon. Kim’s successful defiance of Soviet de-Stalinization played a very important role in the failure of political liberalization in the DPRK, and therefore particular attention must be focused on the development of Soviet–North Korean relations.

To begin with, there were certain limits to Soviet control over North Korean affairs as early as the Stalin era. Actually, not even Stalin’s East European client dictators were completely deprived of autonomy. For instance, in 1952 a Soviet security adviser named Filatov attempted to unseat the Bulgarian interior minister, whereupon Chervenkov asked Moscow to recall Filatov, and the Kremlin fulfilled his request.¹⁰⁸ Kiselev, the Soviet ambassador to Budapest, was usually cold-shouldered by Rákosi, who did not want to discuss important aspects of Soviet–Hungarian relations with him, and preferred to negotiate solely with Stalin and the other top CPSU leaders.¹⁰⁹

The “special situation” of a country, such as its “front-line” status, could further increase a dictator’s freedom of action, since this might enable him to control the diplomatic corps or ask for preferential treatment. When in 1952, the Hungarian Envoy to Tirana reported that he had been shadowed by agents of the Albanian security service, his superiors told him to take Albania’s “special situation” into consideration.¹¹⁰ Whenever the North Korean authorities prevented people from visiting the “fraternal” embassies, dismissed the embassies’ Korean employees, or asked diplomats not to visit anybody without the previous consent of the Foreign Ministry, they referred to “security reasons,” that is, to the American threat. While in the Stalin era, Pyongyang had to resign itself to the privileges of the Soviet Embassy, it tried to compensate by controlling the East European embassies. Stalin, having drawn a distinction between Moscow’s Asian and European security zones, did not insist on a Soviet military presence in North Korea, and he eventually gave his consent to Kim Il Sung’s invasion plan. Kim could take advantage of these factors

without confronting the Kremlin directly, and he probably seized the opportunity to reinforce his own position.

Kim Il Sung's dominance over the other (N)KWP leaders may have facilitated these efforts. Since the North Korean leadership did not include any prestigious "Muscovite" comparable to, say, Gerō, Kim was perhaps more able to present himself as being irreplaceable than the East European "little Stalins." He could count on the loyalty of the former Manchurian guerrillas, and the Soviet Koreans did not constitute a really stable faction. In addition, Moscow, anxious to demonstrate the "patriotic" character of the North Korean regime, may have decided not to rely on the Soviet Koreans too openly. In sharp contrast with the East European situation, "there was not a single Soviet-Korean in Kim's first cabinet" in 1948, although the members of the Soviet faction held very important posts in the party apparatus.¹¹¹

In any case, Kim Il Sung did his best to overshadow his (real or potential) rivals. By and large, his cult was not accompanied by the cult of other North Korean leaders—a situation markedly different from contemporary Soviet, Chinese, and East European practices. Another noteworthy phenomenon was that the regime erected a statue of Kim Il Sung as early as December 1949. In 1955, the authorities put up two big Kim statues in Pyongyang and Man'gyongdae in 1955, of which the second one was three meters tall.¹¹² One should keep in mind that while larger-than-life statues of Stalin abounded both in the USSR and Eastern Europe, most East European dictators, such as Gottwald, Rákosi, and Ulbricht, had no comparable statues. In this respect the cult of Kim Il Sung outdid even that of Hoxha, for the large-scale Hoxha statues in Tirana, Gjirokaster, and Korce were constructed only after the dictator's death.¹¹³ Nor did Mao statues exist in China in the first decade of CCP rule.¹¹⁴

Thus, the erecting of Kim Il Sung statues seems to have been a rather unique practice, aimed at reinforcing the dictator's authority and possibly placing him on a par with Stalin. In contrast with the East European countries but similarly to the PRC, there was neither a statue of Stalin nor a city named after him in North Korea. Significantly, the Kim Il Sung statues erected in 1955 were made in a period when the dictator took steps to curtail Soviet influence in the DPRK. Certain other elements of the North Korean leadership cult, such as the establishment of schools for the orphans of revolutionary martyrs in Kim's home village as early as 1947, also diverged from the East European pattern.

This is not to deny that in the first years of the DPRK Pyongyang was less independent from the Kremlin than in the mid-1950s or later. For instance, the purges of 1950–1951 and 1952–1953 seem to have been carried out with Moscow's involvement,¹¹⁵ although they did strengthen Kim's power as well. In a telegram he sent to Mao on 1 October 1950, Stalin "placed all the blame for the

KPA's collapse and disintegration on North Korean military commanders" but "he was careful to avoid blaming Kim Il Sung personally."¹¹⁶ In contrast, the Soviets, in all probability, had no say in the 1955 and 1957–1959 purges.

The factors that played the most important role in the loosening of Soviet control over Pyongyang were probably the following ones: the Korean War, the growth of Chinese influence in Asia in general and in the DPRK in particular, Soviet de-Stalinization (above all, Khrushchev's attempts to disassociate himself from Stalin's heavy-handed treatment of smaller communist countries), and the wave of repression that swept the "communist camp" in 1957–1959.

These developments in themselves were not necessarily beneficial to Kim, and some of them actually endangered his rule. Still, the dictator, a skilled tactician, could also profit from them as long as he managed to conceal the anti-Soviet nature of his actions.

Stalin, who wanted to avoid direct Soviet involvement in the Korean War, induced China to shoulder a large part of the "Korean burden." The bilateral relationship between Moscow and Pyongyang was thus replaced by a Soviet–Chinese–North Korean triangle. While in the first stage of the war Stalin did his best to direct KPA operations, he then relinquished some of his authority on Korean issues to the Chinese leadership.¹¹⁷ That is, the wartime decrease of Soviet influence in the DPRK resulted from the Soviet dictator's own decisions. In light of the disastrous consequences of the 1950–1951 party purge, he may have agreed with Ho Ka-i's removal as well, although dismissal of the most prominent Soviet Korean undoubtedly contributed to the loosening of Soviet control over KWP affairs.¹¹⁸

In other words, the aforesaid steps seem to have been short-term gains for Stalin but long-term gains for Kim Il Sung. The fiercely nationalist and extremely ambitious North Korean dictator ultimately took advantage of these Soviet concessions in a way unexpected by those Soviet leaders who had brought him to power in 1945–1946 and who regarded him as "their man in Korea." One may also note that in Romania "it was precisely because of Dej's loyalty to Moscow that he was able to eclipse his 'Muscovite' rivals,"¹¹⁹ but the replacement of Pauker and Luca did play an important role in that Gheorghiu-Dej eventually proved capable of defying the Kremlin.

As a consequence of the war, the DPRK became a recipient of large-scale foreign aid. While in the pre-war era it had received primarily loans, now the "fraternal" countries provided it with massive nonrepayable assistance. This new relationship revealed Kim Il Sung's dependence on foreign goodwill, but it also meant that the communist great powers assumed an obligation to North Korea. Henceforth, both Moscow and Beijing often made substantial economic

concessions to Pyongyang, a situation that encouraged the KWP leaders. China's contribution to the aid program proved almost as substantial as that of the Soviet Union, which gradually created an equilibrium between Soviet and Chinese influence in the DPRK. Neither country could achieve a monopolistic control over North Korean affairs in the same way as the USSR had done in 1945–1949, and this increased Kim's freedom of maneuver.

However, one should not simply assume that in the mid-1950s Kim Il Sung courted Beijing's favor in order to lessen Soviet influence, since he seems to have tried to keep both communist giants at arm's length. Following the 1953 armistice, North Korean security organs became entitled to subject PLA soldiers to identity checks. The steps Pyongyang took in the fall of 1954 were aimed at controlling the entire diplomatic corps, including both the Soviet and the Chinese embassies. There was at least one known occasion (in September 1956) when Beijing joined with the Kremlin in putting pressure on Kim, and the Soviets and the Chinese may have cooperated with each other in 1955, too (see Chapter 3).

At the same time the new CPSU leadership's willingness to placate Mao may have encouraged the North Korean dictator, who sought to obtain similar concessions from Moscow. His first attempts to control the Soviet and Chinese embassies more or less coincided with Khrushchev's visit to Beijing in September–October 1954.¹²⁰ In any case, as early as 1955 the Soviets found it advisable to show respect for Pyongyang's "sensitiveness." For instance, Ivanov told Szarvas that "in certain issues, the opinion of the whole diplomatic corps should be made known so as to ensure that the [Korean] comrades do not consider these comments as lecturing and ordering." In addition, a substantial part of the Chinese troops stationed in the DPRK were withdrawn in 1954, which probably also boosted North Korean self-confidence.

Since Kim Il Sung probably regarded both his dominance over other KWP leaders and the regime's rigorous control over the population as useful means to withstand external pressure, his hostile reaction to Soviet de-Stalinization was quite predictable. In fact, Moscow's new line implied not just a more generous policy toward the smaller communist countries but also an effort to secure the control of Stalin's heirs over the Soviet Union's satellites. The CPSU leaders continued to play the role of the supreme arbiter: by undermining the power of the "little Stalins," replacing some of them, and taking advantage of intraparty rivalries, they sought to prevent the local dictators from resisting the new economic and foreign policies the Kremlin wanted to introduce. By mid-1954, every East European dictator holding several posts had been compelled to yield either the premiership or the post of First Secretary to another leader, and their Mongolian colleague, Tsedenbal, also followed suit.

In contrast, in the DPRK no “collective leadership” came into existence in the mid-1950s—a phenomenon of crucial importance. First of all, it indicated a growing difference between North Korea and the Soviet Union’s “classical” satellites. Apart from the DPRK, only China and North Vietnam, that is, those communist regimes that always managed to avoid total Soviet domination, diverged from the East European pattern with regard to the separation of party and state functions. Secondly, Kim Il Sung’s unshaken dominance prevented the emergence of an alternative power centre comparable to the position of Nagy or Gerő in Hungary or Zhivkov in Bulgaria. Significantly, those East European “little Stalins” who succeeded in appointing their devout supporters to the posts they had to renounce (e.g., Hoxha and Gheorghiu-Dej) did not lose their influence in 1956, whereas Rákosi and Chervenkov did.

Soviet control over a satellite regime was based, above all, on the loyalty of the men who held seats in the dictatorship’s Politburo and Central Committee, and dominated its party and security apparatus. The presence of Soviet divisions could also play an important role (their absence certainly played into the hands of Tito, Mao, Hoxha, and Kim Il Sung), but it may have been less essential. For example, the USSR did not station troops either in post-1947 Bulgaria or in pre-1968 Czechoslovakia, yet Chervenkov, Zhivkov, Gottwald, and Novotny belonged to Moscow’s most faithful supporters.¹²¹ Since it was the pro-Soviet top party officials who constituted the most important link between a country and the Kremlin, any communist leader who intended to loosen Moscow’s grip had to replace these men by his own clients. If he had become the undisputed chief of the party as early as before the first conflicts with the Soviets, so much the better.

Due to the purges carried out in 1937–1940 by Tito and the NKVD, by 1940 there had not remained either any considerable top-level opposition to Tito in the Yugoslav party or a group of “Muscovites” living in the Soviet Union.¹²² Nor did the post-1941 Albanian party leadership include a real “Muscovite” faction, since during WW II the Soviets entrusted the Yugoslav communists with the guidance and supervision of Albanian communist activities. Of the four prominent Soviet-trained Albanian communists, Kelmendi died in 1939, Fundo and Maleshova were purged as early as 1944–1946, and Tashko was expelled from the APL leadership in 1960.¹²³ By 1943, Mao Zedong had managed to deprive the so-called “Russian returned students” of their influence, and in 1946, the “internationalist-oriented” leaders of the Vietnamese communist party also suffered a decisive defeat in the intraparty squabbles.

In North Korea, the purges and reshufflings of 1952–1955 made Kim Il Sung’s position more or less unshakable. The liquidation of the SKWP leadership, accompanied by the dismissal of Minister of the Interior Pak Il-u late in

1952,¹²⁴ enabled the dictator to appoint Pang Hak-se and Nam Il, both of whom would take sides with him against Pak Ch'ang-ok, Minister of the Interior and Foreign Minister, respectively. As early as mid-1955 (i.e., before Kim Il Sung's direct attack on the Soviet faction), almost every important ministerial post was held by a Kim loyalist. By early 1956, the party apparatus (the Central Control Commission, Organizational Department, and Cadre Department), once dominated by Soviet Koreans, had come under the control of the dictator's supporters, like Yim Hae, Yi Hyo-sun, and Han Sang-du. Such a situation made any external political intervention quite difficult, for Kim Il Sung now enjoyed the support of the majority of the North Korean leadership. Characteristically, the Soviet–Chinese action of September 1956 did not result in the demotion of any Kim loyalist, let alone the dictator himself.

Thus, the personal changes of 1954–1955 played a decisive role in the decline of Soviet influence in the DPRK, yet the Kremlin, by and large, tolerated them. Although the Soviets did criticize North Korean policies in May 1955 (and probably in June 1956 as well), they seem to have been more interested in economic problems than in political ones. Their approach was not unreasonable, since the first wave of East European de-Stalinization (1953) also laid a greater stress on an economic “New Course” than on political rehabilitation, and the Soviets, as aid donors, certainly had a stake in the healthy development of the North Korean economy. Having succeeded in forcing Kim to re-examine his economic policies, the Kremlin turned a blind eye to the purge of the Soviet Koreans. Moscow actually made new economic concessions to Pyongyang in 1955–1956. The Soviet–DPRK joint companies were liquidated in the same way as their counterparts had been in China and Eastern Europe, which further reinforced North Korean sovereignty. In addition, in 1955, Kim Il Sung's purges did not affect the Soviet Koreans and the Yan'an faction simultaneously. This may have rendered a joint Sino–Soviet response more difficult, whereas a unilateral Soviet or Chinese action could have displeased the other great power.

The purge of 1957–1959, which led to the complete defeat of the Soviet and Yan'an groups, secured Pyongyang's political independence from Moscow once and for all. While the DPRK continued to be dependent on foreign economic and military assistance; henceforth, it usually managed to avoid Soviet interference in its domestic policies. Paradoxically, this purge, which was closely intertwined with autarkic economic policies and various manifestations of cultural nationalism, seems to have been made possible, at least partly, by external developments. Following the removal of the “Malenkov faction” and the suppression of the Hundred Flowers movement, neither the Soviet nor the Chinese leadership could accuse Kim Il Sung of violating the principle of

“collective leadership.” In fact, the entire “communist camp” underwent a wave of repression in 1957–1958, which “legitimized” the repressive measures taken by the North Korean dictatorship. By the time Khrushchev launched his second major attack on Stalinism, Kim Il Sung had already subdued his intraparty opponents.

In the last analysis, one should emphasize that the decline of Soviet influence in the DPRK was a gradual process. On the one hand, Kim Il Sung’s dictatorship was, in many respects, a “special case” as early as the Stalin era, which played an important role in that it ultimately became politically independent from the USSR. On the other hand, Kim had to take a step at a time if he wanted to loosen Moscow’s control over his country, for a premature action would have been counterproductive. It is reasonable to say that Korea’s geographical position, particularly its proximity to China, facilitated Kim’s efforts to curtail Soviet influence. While in the 1945–1948 period, North Korea was largely isolated from every country save the USSR (and thus strongly dependent on Soviet goodwill), in subsequent years Pyongyang established strong contacts with Beijing.

The example of Albania similarly demonstrates the importance of the international environment. In 1960, Hoxha could profit both from Mao’s willingness to offer help and from the fact that Albania had neither Soviet troops on her soil nor common borders with the Kremlin’s East European empire. Still, this factor should not be overstressed. In fact, the Albanian case is quite revealing in this sense as well. In 1956, Hoxha was not able to count on any foreign support, yet his control over the Albanian party leadership enabled him to defy Soviet de-Stalinization.

Finally, it should be noted that the importance of external factors was also confirmed by South Korean and Mongolian events. Both the South Korean authoritarian regime and the Mongolian communist dictatorship were highly dependent on the military, economic, and political support of a superpower, and therefore rather vulnerable to pressure from their “protectors.” Without the occasional political interventions of the various U.S. administrations, Park Chung Hee, in all probability, would not have been compelled (or willing) to hold elections in 1963, part company with his righthand man Kim Jong Pil in 1964, or release the abducted Kim Dae Jung in 1973. If the United States had adopted a more passive stance, this could have had a negative impact on the South Korean domestic scene. For instance, in 1972, Washington’s acquiescence greatly facilitated the establishment of the blatantly anti-democratic Yushin system.¹²⁵

The rule of Mongolian dictator Tsedenbal was considerably less repressive than that of Kim Il Sung. Under Tsedenbal, political opponents were usually

exiled to remote areas or, in some cases, imprisoned, but not executed. Since Tsedenbal's Stalinist predecessor, Choibalsan, had been responsible for tens of thousands of executions, the relative liberalization of the traditionally pro-Soviet Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) regime seems to have resulted from the influence of Soviet de-Stalinization. Significantly, in 1962 (i.e., right after the Twenty-second Congress) the Mongolian leaders rehabilitated several prominent persons who had been executed during the purges of the 1930s. Such a step would have been unthinkable in Kim Il Sung's North Korea.¹²⁶

"Corrections," North Korean Style

The DPRK, although often regarded as a Stalinist time capsule, did undergo changes in Kim Il Sung's lifetime. These changes revealed a central element of the dictator's rule, namely, his perfectionist attitude. Partly aware of the country's problems, he experimented with various (foreign and indigenous) methods in order to find optimal solutions and make the North Korean political and economic system as "perfect" as possible. On certain occasions, the KWP leadership seems to have realized that the dissatisfaction of a substantial part of the population necessitated some "corrections." Still, the measures subsequently adopted always fell short of real economic reform, much less political liberalization. While these "corrections" were more numerous than usually assumed, they remained much more superficial than the reforms enacted by Khrushchev and Deng Xiaoping.¹²⁷

Despite its powerful machinery of repression, the North Korean regime found it advisable to take popular discontent into consideration. Now and then, the KWP leadership admitted the existence of such discontent, using economic and social problems as explanations. At the April 1955 CC plenum, the leaders stated that the great majority of the population was dissatisfied with the economic situation. In July 1959, Yi Chong-ok told the "fraternal" diplomats that workers complained of food and housing shortages. In December 1963, Pak Song-ch'ol went so far as to say that due to the unpopular agricultural policies the regime had pursued, peasants did their best to flee to the cities. He even admitted that coercive methods were not always effective: "Practice also proved that resettlement from the cities does not work. . . . The more disciplined part of the people, the party members maybe remain [in the villages], but the resettled non-members return clandestinely to the cities."

Kim Il Sung seems to have considered the complaints motivated by low living standards more legitimate than the explicitly political ones. No matter how dissatisfied he might have been with the mind-set of the people he ruled, he

understood that (as he put it in 1961) “the 99.5 percent of the population cannot be regarded as enemies, for in this case the Ch’ollima Movement, etc. would be out of question.” This interpretation can be confirmed by the systematic analysis of the “corrective” measures that the KWP leaders took in the 1951–1964 period. Of these steps, the following cases are noteworthy:

- Re-examination of the 1950–1951 party purge (e.g., readmission of numerous expelled party members and reinstatement of most demoted KPA officers)
- Condemnation of the brutal methods used by cadres enforcing the government’s agricultural policies (February 1952)
- Condemnation of “abuses” with regard to the treatment of the people whose relatives had fled to South Korea (August 1953)
- Amnesty given to some categories of nonpolitical prisoners (the summer of 1953)
- Cancellation of rural debts and the abolition of meat deliveries (December 1953)
- Raise of wages (April 1954)
- Temporary halt of grain deliveries, return of 100,000 metric tons of rice to the peasantry as a loan, and partial “rehabilitation” of traditional Korean art (early in 1955)
- Reduction of agricultural taxes, and rescission of the decrees prohibiting private grain trade and curtailing private enterprise (June 1955)
- Increase in agricultural investments, and tax reduction for peasants and private merchants (December 1955)
- Legalization of traditional healing practices, reversal of “anti-national” cultural policies, abolition of estate tax, increase in wages and rice rations, and price cuts on a range of products (mid-1956)
- Wage increases and price cuts (1957, January and August 1958, January 1959)
- Improved quality of construction, critique of PCs’ “bureaucratism” and “commandism,” more tolerant treatment of Hungarian-trained technical experts, increased food imports, curtailment of food exports, transfer of agronomists and veterinarians to the villages, introduction of bonuses for coop brigades and outstanding workers, abolition of the machine-tractor stations (MTS) used by state farms, improvement in supply of consumer goods, abandonment of plans to liquidate coop members’ private plots, reduction in number of meetings, employment of certain “old” intellectuals, release of less prominent political prisoners, and “rehabilitation” of a few low-ranking “factionalists” (1959–1961)

Increased agricultural investments; construction of pumps, generating plants, and storehouses in the villages; increased consumer goods production, and greater urgency and focus on translation of foreign scientific literature (1963–1964).

The relatively large number of such steps confirms that the KWP leadership did pay attention to the hardships that average people coped with, and it made an effort not to lose contact with the masses. While a part of these “corrections,” most notably the measures taken in 1953, 1955, and 1963–1964, reflected external pressure or advice, Kim Il Sung certainly did his best to present himself as being a benevolent ruler. In several cases, such as in November 1951, February 1952, August 1953, and mid-1959, the dictator seemingly rose to the defense of the populace against tyrannical officials. Several of his rivals, such as Mu Chong, Ho Ka-i, and Kim Yol, were demoted or purged on the pretext that they had resorted to excessively harsh methods or abused their authority. From December 1956 on, Kim regularly toured the country so as to demonstrate his concern for the people’s livelihood, familiarity with local conditions, and control over the state apparatus. In crisis situations (e.g., during the food crisis of early 1960), such tours were numerous. While “corrections” were implemented in the name of the dictator (and thus people could not associate them with any other leader), problems were blamed on local cadres and Kim’s political opponents.

These methods probably played an important role in the North Korean regime’s ability to remain remarkably stable for decades. After all, it was only a quite small number of high- and middle-ranking officials and technical experts who knew Kim Il Sung well enough to become aware of the limits of his knowledge, such as his unfamiliarity with economic and technological issues. One may assume that the population’s affection for the dictator was partly genuine, for many ordinary citizens, like their counterparts in Stalin’s USSR or Mao’s China, may have blamed local cadres, rather than Kim Il Sung himself, for the regime’s unpopular policies. Still, official propaganda seems to have produced a stronger effect on cadres than on workers. For instance, isolationism and arrogant nationalism were probably more typical of the former than of the latter. Workers, exhausted by ceaseless labor and facing serious shortages of food and other goods, became increasingly apathetic.

Due to the regime’s apparent invincibility, the hostility generated by workers’ concern about their livelihood was often directed against groups regarded as competitors, rather than against the all-powerful state. For instance, ordinary North Koreans received the Koreans who had fled China in 1961 with little enthusiasm. Repatriates from Japan were widely disliked, and people

sometimes adopted the regime's methods in order to get rid of them. Namely, workers said that many repatriates were spies and subversives. Thus, ordinary citizens could also contribute to the atmosphere of pervasive fear and distrust that constituted the base of the North Korean dictatorship.¹²⁸

Analyzing the enumerated "corrective" measures, it becomes obvious that most of them affected only the economic sphere. Economic "corrections" were usually aimed either at alleviating the financial burden that the state's demands had placed on the population or at raising those state expenditures that could improve living standards. In other words, these steps reinforced, rather than questioned, the redistributive role of the state—a characteristic particularly visible in the case of the agricultural policies implemented in 1963–1964. While the KWP leadership occasionally did take measures that reduced state interventionism, these proved either strictly temporary (like the grudging toleration of private commerce in 1955–1956) or quite superficial. For example, in 1959, Kim, reversing his earlier policy, decided not to eliminate private plots, but plot size remained incomparably smaller than that of their Hungarian counterparts. Worse still, this concession was offset by a decree that obliged peasants to raise pigs and rabbits on these plots, regardless of whether they had enough fodder. That is, Kim Il Sung consistently preferred economic "corrections" that did not loosen the regime's control over society to those which did. Needless to say, this approach seriously limited the effectiveness of such measures.

One may explain the superficiality of these "corrections" with the "Stalinist" character of the North Korean regime. In fact, they did bear a certain resemblance to the policies that Stalin pursued in the mid-1930s. Among others, the production of consumer goods underwent an increase in the USSR in the so-called "three good years" (1934–1936). The 1935 kolkhoz charter legalized the private plots of kolkhozniki and provided women with maternity benefits.¹²⁹

Nonetheless, the differences between post-Stalin Soviet measures and Kim's "corrections" should not be overstressed. For instance, both Khrushchev and Kim abolished the MTS and transferred a number of agronomists to the villages. Moreover, the similarities between North Korean and post-1953 Soviet policies did not reflect merely Kim's tactical flexibility but also Khrushchev's ideological dogmatism. The Soviet leader made several attempts to expand the state farm sector at the expense of kolkhozy on the grounds that sovkhozy constituted a higher form of socialist agriculture,¹³⁰ and he tried to restrict the size of private plots. The relatively limited impact of his agricultural reforms may be gauged from that the rapid growth of Soviet agricultural production in 1953–1958 was based primarily on the expansion of planted area in the Virgin Lands, rather than on qualitative changes.¹³¹

Ironically, the utopian elements of the official CPSU program launched at the Twenty-second Congress, such as Khrushchev's vision of a full-fledged communist society, were surprisingly similar to certain North Korean concepts and practices. For instance, in December 1963, Moskovsky informed a stunned Pak Song-ch'ol of Khrushchev's latest grandiose plan. The Soviet government, he said, intended to achieve that all children "up to the 8th grade of primary school would live in day nurseries, kindergartens, and day-care centers, and all related expenses, clothing included, would be met by the state. Of course, the parents, if they wished [emphasis added], would be allowed to take their children home every evening or on Sundays."¹³² Fortunately for the Soviet population, Khrushchev was deposed before he put this idea into effect. Having more time and power than the Soviet leader, Kim Il Sung eventually set up six-day crèches for the children of high-ranking cadres, in which toddlers received basic political indoctrination and learned to dance warlike ballets with toy submachine guns on their shoulders.

Still, no matter how willing Khrushchev was to experiment with radical schemes, his "voluntarism" (overestimation of the impact that political leaders' willpower exerts on national development, and relative underestimation of material factors) and inclination for *kampaneishchina* (the launching of new campaigns)—which had much in common with Kim Il Sung's leadership style—seem to have been partly tempered by the political liberalization that he carried out. Post-Stalin Soviet society ceased to be completely at the mercy of the regime, as the demands that the state could make became, at least partly, regulated and limited. For instance, in 1956–1960, the Soviet regime liberalized labor law to a substantial extent, repealing the Stalinist edict that criminalized job changing and absenteeism.¹³³ In 1953, the CPSU leadership introduced a fixed working time for officials, and in 1960, it reduced the workday of laborers to 7 hours.

In contrast with Khrushchev's reforms, the North Korean "corrections" did not deprive the state of the "right" of requiring unpaid and overtime work of any citizen whenever the KWP leadership found it "necessary." In 1960, the regime merely reduced "voluntary work" to a month per annum, and even this rule was quickly abandoned when Kim Il Sung concluded that the government could not afford such limitation during a period of international tension.

The fact that the North Korean state still could make demands at will strongly influenced the nature of Kim Il Sung's "corrections." Government initiatives aimed at increasing the production of consumer goods often placed an additional burden on the hard-pressed North Korean society, rather than alleviating its situation. For example, to increase production, in 1960 the em-

ployees of a Pyongyang textile factory were compelled to devote one Sunday per month to work. In 1963, the KWP leadership simply ordered all machine works to make consumer goods in addition to their usual manufactures, and it also forced housewives and elderly people to participate in the production of such goods. Since this newly recruited workforce lacked both qualifications and motivation, the quality of the new products proved quite poor.

Another important difference between Khrushchev's reforms and Kim Il Sung's "corrections" was that while in the 1953–1964 era the Soviet government considerably raised agricultural producer prices (and thus the incomes of *kolkhozniki*),¹³⁴ the KWP leadership did not. Although the North Korean regime did increase agricultural investments in 1955 and 1963, these additional amounts were usually appropriated for the construction of irrigation systems and other facilities.

The list of the "corrections" the North Korean regime carried out in 1951–1964 clearly demonstrates Kim Il Sung's reluctance to make political concessions. Apart from the reversal of the 1950–1951 purge, the KWP leadership hardly practiced self-criticism for having resorted to political repression. Significantly, the "rehabilitation" of a few "factionalists," which occurred before the Fourth Congress of the KWP, was by no means a Soviet-style rehabilitation. Kim Il Sung merely declared that the persons in question who had "mended their ways" and ceased to be disloyal, should not be considered unreliable any longer. That is, it was the victims, rather than their persecutors, who were expected to practice self-criticism.

In any case, the removal of a political stigma was not necessarily intended to be indefinite. The re-employment of Hungarian-trained technical experts in 1959–1960 constituted a typical example of this type of insecurity. Since the regime badly needed their expertise, it decided to overlook their political past, but only temporarily. As later events showed, their status remained quite insecure. Many of them were replaced again in 1962, and then re-employed for the second time in 1965–1966. In 1953, Kim Il Sung criticized certain "abuses" with regard to the treatment of people whose relatives had emigrated to the ROK, but in 1958–1959, the dictatorship re-investigated the wartime behavior of the entire party membership. The political prisoners released in 1960 were merely amnestied, not rehabilitated, and their numbers did not include any long-term prisoners anyway.

If the KWP leadership admitted that certain previous policies had been excessively repressive, the "abuses" were routinely blamed on various scapegoats, particularly on local cadres (as in 1952, 1953, and 1959). In sum, the regime presented these meager political "corrections" as manifestations of Kim Il

Sung's benevolent, magnanimous, and forgiving leadership style, rather than as concessions made to the population. They were to reinforce, not to weaken, the centrality and supremacy of the dictator.

In 1951–1952 and 1960, Kim Il Sung seemed to have been the most willing to re-examine his previous repressive measures. In the first case, the “corrections” were inspired by the extremely serious military situation. The regime simply could not afford to discipline half a million party members in the midst of a war. Reversing the 1950–1951 party purge, the leadership readmitted some 30 percent of the expelled members. In addition, more than three-fifths of those who had been demoted to candidate member status or subjected to punishments were restored to their original status or released from these punishments.¹³⁵ In light of the dictatorship's usual inflexibility, these steps constituted a quite significant concession, but they did not lead to an irreversible political liberalization. On the contrary, the replacement of Ho Ka-i facilitated, rather than hindered, the establishment of Kim's one-man rule.

In the second case, the North Korean leaders, facing a serious shortage of skilled manpower, may have concluded that it was not only necessary but also possible to slacken the pace of industrialization a bit. It looked as if the DPRK was finally overtaking South Korea, a conclusion reinforced by the April Revolution. By postponing the repayment of Pyongyang's debt, the Soviets also facilitated the (rather marginal) improvement of North Korean living standards, whereas the blunders of the Great Leap Forward served as a warning for the DPRK. Nevertheless, this feeble “thaw” soon fell victim to Kim Il Sung's conflict with Moscow. In any case, the 1959–1960 “corrections” did not include any relaxation of the regime's control over literature, which indicated Kim Il Sung's reluctance to soften his rule.

In analyzing the absence of political liberalization in the DPRK, I highlight the role of five major factors: (1) the effect of domestic and external shocks, (2) Pyongyang's opportunities to request foreign assistance; (3) the composition of the KWP leadership; (4) the question of top-level political succession; and (5) Kim Il Sung's attitude toward the population.

Comparing the North Korean situation with the actions of communist leaders who initiated a process of liberalization of their own free will is worthwhile. Although the main chapters of this book made only a few references to Yugoslavia, Tito's dictatorship is included here as well. After all, Tito pursued very harsh policies in 1945–1949, yet his government eventually became one of the most flexible communist regimes.

Although the Soviet, Chinese, and Yugoslav paths to political liberalization are considerably different, all three seem to have been inspired by serious political, economic, and social problems. Stalin's last purges constituted a threat

to several of his closest associates, who therefore became personally interested in the re-examination of the “Doctors’ Plot” and other purges. The policies that the dictator pursued with regard to Korea and Yugoslavia were unsuccessful or even counterproductive. Economic performance left much to be desired. For instance, in 1953, Khrushchev admitted that in 1952, meat production was lower than in 1916. “During the final months of Stalin’s life,” Kramer points out, “senior officials in Moscow received a plethora of disconcerting reports” about the economic difficulties in the East European countries.¹³⁶

The situation that Mao’s successors faced in the mid-1970s was even more serious. Due to the Cultural Revolution, China had become isolated from most of the world, and its economy was in bad shape. The upheavals of 1966–1976 decimated the elite, disorganized the party and state apparatus, and the Red Guards were completely incapable of filling the gap created by the massive removal of trained administrators and technical experts. Beijing’s post-1960 agricultural policies also demonstrated the effect that domestic shocks produced on the decisions of the CCP leaders. Following the catastrophe caused by the Great Leap Forward, the regime consistently refrained from imposing excessively high taxes on the peasantry.¹³⁷

In Yugoslavia, the break with Stalin occurred at the worst possible moment. By 1948, Tito had already alienated Western countries by his ultraleftist foreign policies. After the USSR had imposed a blockade on trade with Yugoslavia, Belgrade’s foreign trade fell by over 50 percent. Anxious to demonstrate its ideological orthodoxy, and thus refute Soviet charges, in 1948–1949 the Yugoslav leadership accelerated collectivization. This move was bitterly resented by the peasants, who had constituted the main social basis of the partisan movement during WW II. Finally, the purge of “Cominformists,” although not unreasonable, deprived the party and the military forces of a large number of much-needed cadres.¹³⁸

The North Korean dictatorship also faced various crises and problems on several occasions. Among these cases, one may mention the Korean War, the 1955 food crisis, the difficulties caused by the Ch’ollima Movement, the negative effects of Pyongyang’s post-1961 military buildup, the economic slow-downs that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, and the post-1996 famine. Still, these events, while they did inspire the KWP leadership to take “corrective” measures, did not result in any significant political liberalization.

Whence this difference? First, the North Korean leaders may have thought that the availability of external economic and military assistance made any far-reaching domestic reform program unnecessary. As Ree points out, “there are actually very few communist leaders who have so often been saved by foreign support at decisive moments as Kim Il Sung.”¹³⁹ There have indeed been many

cases when Kim Il Sung, pressed by economic and other problems, successfully appealed to the “fraternal” countries for help. A few of many examples follow:

- Chinese military assistance during the Korean War
- Soviet and Chinese grain shipments during the 1952 famine
- Soviet, Chinese, and East European aid programs aimed at post-war reconstruction, accompanied by the partial cancellation of Pyongyang’s debts
- Soviet and Chinese grain shipments during the 1955 food crisis
- Soviet and East European economic aid (1956)
- Soviet postponement of North Korean debt repayment (1959)
- Soviet and Chinese cancellation of a large portion of Pyongyang’s foreign debt (1960)
- Soviet military aid (1962)

Soviet and Chinese postponement of North Korean debt repayment, and Soviet military aid (1965–1966)

Following the collapse of the “Soviet bloc,” the DPRK tried to deal with the ROK (and the United States) in the same way, and these efforts did not remain fruitless. In the 1989–1992 period, the balance of North–South trade “ran heavily in the North’s favour,” Buzo notes. Actually, some South Korean firms “found themselves under direct [ROK] government pressure to accept North Korean commodities and products despite quality problems.”¹⁴⁰ While the timing of the “corrections” enumerated before seems to indicate that they were often aimed at reassuring Pyongyang’s aid donors or even prescribed by the donors,¹⁴¹ the effect of foreign pressure usually proved limited. By and large, the “fraternal” countries made greater concessions than the North Korean regime.

The character of Soviet, Chinese, Yugoslav, and North Korean leaders also deserves attention. As noted before, under Stalin and Mao, economic shocks, such as the 1932–1933 famine and the catastrophe caused by the Great Leap Forward, did not lead to a substantial and irreversible political liberalization. On the contrary, Mao greatly resented the fact that he had to beat a temporary retreat in 1961–1962, and in the mid-1960s he did his best to make his position unshakable and purge his real or potential opponents. Thus, the death of these two tyrants seems to have been a prerequisite for a real reform program. In fact, the Soviet and Chinese reforms were partly rooted in the succession crises caused by the demise of Stalin and Mao. Both despots had failed to prepare the ground for a successor chosen well in advance, and thus their death created a power vacuum.

During the subsequent intraelite conflicts, both Khrushchev and Deng Xiaoping blamed the crimes and blunders of the previous era both on their rivals

and the late dictators (an approach certainly justified in the case of Deng, a former victim of the Cultural Revolution). That is, Khrushchev and Deng had good reason to regard the reform program not just as a necessity but also as a useful means to recruit supporters and get rid of their opponents. In other words, the reforms reinforced, rather than threatened, their authority. Due to the aforesaid power vacuum, the anti-reform politicians, like Molotov, Kaganovich, Jiang Qing, and Hua Guofeng, did not dominate the party and state apparatus as completely as Stalin and Mao had done, and this is why they were unable to thwart the plans of Khrushchev and Deng. In contrast, Kim Il Sung managed to prevent a succession crisis by designating Kim Jong Il as the future leader of North Korea as early as 1973, a step carefully prepared via a series of purges.

Yugoslavia constituted a different model. The Tito regime showed that in some special cases the reversal of hard-line policies could be efficiently carried out under the leadership of the same dictator who had been responsible for the previous “mistakes.” In other words, a top-level personnel change was not always a prerequisite for liberalization. It should be pointed out that in 1945–1949, the Yugoslav dictatorship was one of the most repressive East European communist regimes. Despite this inauspicious beginning, in 1950–1952, the Yugoslav leaders radically re-examined their ultraleftist political line.

Interestingly enough, the desire to please Western aid donors seems not to have played a crucial role in the implementation of domestic reforms.¹⁴² While the post-1949 rapprochement between Belgrade and Western countries certainly facilitated Yugoslav liberalization, it should be kept in mind that the U.S. government was quite willing to give Yugoslavia loans and aid without political strings attached. In any case, whenever Washington tried to control Belgrade’s actions, Tito reacted angrily. “The Yugoslavs, even when most concerned about a Soviet attack, had always refused to work with the Truman administration on anything other than their own terms”—a situation remarkably similar to the post-1957 Soviet–DPRK relationship. Significantly, the first Yugoslav reforms¹⁴³ were introduced before U.S. Secretary of State Acheson’s cautious advice to Yugoslav leaders to soften their rule.¹⁴⁴

In contrast, the Albanian dictatorship did not undergo significant liberalization until its collapse, although in the 1970s and 1980s it managed to improve its relations with Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and a few West European countries. Nor did the post-1964 Soviet–DPRK rapprochement or Pyongyang’s relatively good relationship with Deng’s China lead to a considerable relaxation of political control in North Korea. The domestic effect of these improved foreign contacts was confined to a few superficial “corrections” made in 1965–1966 and 1984–1986.

Following are two internal factors that facilitated the Yugoslav leadership's decision to liberalize its rule:

(1) The "errors" that Belgrade committed during the 1948–1949 collectivization drive did not result in a catastrophe comparable to the famines that had taken place in the Soviet Union and China in 1932–1933 and 1959–1960, respectively. Nor did the purge of "Cominformists" result in show trials and executions.¹⁴⁵ This made the relaxation of political control, the re-examination of earlier measures, and the admittance of "mistakes" less difficult in Yugoslavia than in the other two countries. After all, both Stalin and Mao had been strongly identified with the policies responsible for the crises in question. A serious re-evaluation of these policies would have thrown light on the central role they had played in committing the blunders, and thus threatened their authority. Here, a parallel can be drawn between the aforesaid catastrophes and the disaster caused by the Korean War, since Kim Il Sung was greatly responsible for the outbreak of the war.

Second, the Yugoslav leaders, having enjoyed considerable popular support during WW II, may have thought that a "loosening of the screws" would not endanger their rule, whereas their ultraleftist policies, particularly the collectivization drive, alienated many of their former followers.¹⁴⁶ Remarkably, in Kosovo, where the Albanian population had by no means sympathized with Tito's partisans, political repression remained intense even after 1950–1952.¹⁴⁷ At the time of the introduction of the reforms, the Yugoslav top leadership proved relatively homogenous, being composed of men who had joined Tito's inner circle during the 1937–1940 purges and who, by and large, trusted each other.

The examples of North Korea and Albania also seem to demonstrate the importance of a leadership's trust in (or mistrust of) the people it governed. As described before, Kim Il Sung was rather dissatisfied with the mind-set of the North Korean masses. In Albania, the supporters of the communist partisan movement were recruited primarily from the Southern Tosk group, while the Northern Ghegs, who constituted over half the population, tended to oppose the party. As a result, the communist takeover resulted in particularly harsh repressive actions in the Gheg-inhabited regions, and Ghegs continued to be underrepresented in the leadership. This situation reinforced mutual distrust and fear.

Taking everything into consideration, it can be concluded that the persist-

ence of hard-line methods in the DPRK resulted from that Kim was neither willing nor compelled to liberalize his regime. Paradoxically, he could usually count on external assistance (and actually badly needed it), yet he distrusted his aid donors, resented being dependent on their good will, and did his best to prevent them from establishing contacts with the North Korean population. When the regime faced some serious problems, Kim proved more capable of realizing the necessity of “corrections” than the boastfulness and unbounded optimism of North Korean propaganda would suggest, but his obsession with absolute control over the society was a straitjacket that inhibited the dictatorship from introducing far-reaching changes. The cases of Deng’s China and post-1986 Vietnam seem to suggest that while a dynamic reform program was by no means incompatible with a one-party system, a certain degree of political liberalization could considerably facilitate such reforms.

Summary

Despite the ubiquity and extravagance of Kim Il Sung’s cult, the North Korean political system should not be considered merely a personal or family dictatorship. Rooted in two powerful collectivist ideologies (nationalism and communism), it has been more able (and willing) to defy the political and military might of various great powers than certain sultanistic regimes that lacked a coherent ideology and long-term goals. North Korean leaders also proved less capricious and more calculating than, for example, Idi Amin or Bokassa. The methodical, gradual, and careful curtailment of Soviet influence in post-1953 North Korea, like the skillful exploitation of the shifts that occurred in Soviet policies and the avoidance of provoking an irreversible break, refutes the arguments of those who regard Pyongyang’s actions as inherently irrational and blindly aggressive.

Kim’s diplomatic sense also manifested itself on the occasion of the 1967–1968 clashes with Beijing. During these conflicts, the DPRK resisted Chinese pressure almost as firmly as it had defied the Kremlin in 1962–1964. At the same time, the North Korean dictator consistently refrained from steps that would have prevented a later reconciliation with China, although he must have felt strongly offended by the various provocative acts of the Red Guards.

Nor do Pyongyang’s efforts to develop atomic weapons, no matter how counterproductive and criticizable they are, testify that this country is ruled by a lunatic despot who may provoke a nuclear holocaust at any moment. The North Korean nuclear program is actually less, rather than more, irrational than, among others, the weapons of mass destruction projects initiated by the South African apartheid regime. Namely, South Africa’s potential opponents

lacked nuclear capability, and in the field of conventional forces Pretoria had an advantage over them. If Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il tried to blackmail the U.S. government by stressing that they were capable of any manner of irrational aggression unless the Americans fulfilled their demands, so did Syngman Rhee. Actually, hysterical outbursts were much more characteristic of Rhee than of Kim Il Sung's personal negotiating style.¹⁴⁸

A systematic, month-by-month analysis of the steps that Kim took in the 1953–1964 period shows that decisive changes in North Korean domestic and foreign policies were, in most cases, preceded by various preliminary actions. This preparation phase could last for months or even years. The KWP leaders often reacted very quickly to external developments that they regarded as important, favorable, or threatening, such as the Twentieth and Twenty-second Congresses of the CPSU, the purge of the “Malenkov group,” the withdrawal of Soviet advisers from China, the April Revolution, and Park Chung Hee's coup. However, they usually refrained from measures that would have revealed their real views and intentions prematurely, and thus could have been dangerous. For instance, Pak Ch'ang-ok was dismissed from his job as a factory director in June 1957, but his execution took place as late as January 1960. The KWP CC plenum of December 1962, which officially adopted a hawkish policy, had been preceded by months of intense military preparations.

The measures that Kim Il Sung simultaneously took in the political, economic, and cultural spheres seem to have been, at least on some occasions, carefully coordinated so as to either reinforce or offset each other's effects. For instance, the political reprisals of December 1955 were combined with some economic concessions. Apart from the 1950–1951 purge, Kim preferred to isolate his domestic rivals from each other, and rarely launched an attack on several influential groups simultaneously. That is, the dictator's political style revealed a calculating mind, rather than an imbalanced one, and he seems to have dealt with his (real or perceived) internal and external opponents in a relatively rational way.

Another manifestation of Kim Il Sung's relative pragmatism was the selective adoption of foreign models and Korean tradition. The regime frequently imitated Soviet and Chinese political, economic, and cultural practices, and it also did its best to make use of Korea's historical, social, and cultural heritage, but it hardly became a captive either of foreign or of local influences. Those foreign models or Korean traditions that did not suit Kim for some reason, including the one-man management system, the machine-tractor stations, divorce, or certain elements of classical Korean culture, were gradually abandoned.

The irrational component of North Korean politics lay in the definition of opponents and the evaluation of conflicts, rather than in the tactics used while

coping with them. Kim Il Sung's intense distrust of foreign powers and of the North Korean population resulted in an unusually high number of countries and local citizens considered at least potentially hostile or unreliable. This list included, among others, Pyongyang's communist allies, a very large segment of the KWP elite, and a considerable part of the populace. Without this overdeveloped security complex, the DPRK might have remained an isolated backwater hardly arousing any substantial external interest, and more or less willing to accept the supremacy of a "protective" great power, a sultanistic regime somewhat comparable to Stroessner's Paraguay, Somoza's Nicaragua, or Banda's Malawi.

Undeniably, the geographical location of Korea in general and that of the DPRK in particular played a major role in the birth of the North Korean approach to international relations. After all, few countries are so completely encircled by such powerful potential adversaries (the United States, Japan, South Korea, the USSR, and China) as North Korea is. Still, it was, first and foremost, Kim's strong nationalism that created an almost permanent, although not necessarily explicit, tension between the DPRK and its neighbors, including the "fraternal" communist countries. This attitude prevented Pyongyang from following the example of the post-1953 South Korean and East German regimes, which in essence accepted both the unfeasibility of rapid national unification and their extensive political dependence on the United States and the USSR, respectively. Characteristically, both Rhee and Park Chung Hee doggedly opposed the withdrawal of American troops from the ROK, whereas Kim, in all probability, welcomed the departure of Soviet and Chinese soldiers from the DPRK in 1948 and 1958, respectively.¹⁴⁹

The emphasis that Kim Il Sung laid on economic autarky was yet another manifestation of his nationalism. Autarkic tendencies had been quite typical of Stalinist economies, but they were increasingly at variance with the division of labor and regional specialization that the post-Stalin Soviet leaders tried to foster in the "communist camp." It is rather revealing that the Romanian regime headed by Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceausescu, which opposed such Soviet plans as vehemently as Kim did, was one of the most nationalistic of the East European dictatorships.

While restrictive trade policies and attempts to achieve economic self-sufficiency were widespread, and even normal, in periods of worldwide depression (such as in Europe, America, and Japan in the wake of the Great Depression), they were less common in a potentially open and favorable international economic environment. Boosted by the large industrial capacity that had been created in Korea in 1931–1945, Kim Il Sung's ideas of *charyok kaengsaeng* (regeneration through one's own efforts) and *charip kyongje*

(independent economy) seem to have been more radical than the usual peripheral and semiperipheral attempts at import substitution industrialization. Namely, North Korea tried to attain self-reliance in heavy industry, the textile industry, and agriculture almost simultaneously, and tended to neglect the traditional export sectors without developing new ones.

In reality, post-although the experience of colonial exploitation often induced the leaders of postcolonial countries to adopt economic nationalism, they rarely initiated policies of economic isolationism. The relatively rare cases of isolationist economic policies, such as Kim Il Sung's DPRK, nineteenth-century Paraguay under José Rodríguez de Francia, and Burma under Ne Win, usually indicated a traumatic de-colonization, perceived external threats, and the leaders' attachment to a radical socioeconomic and political vision.

Unlike the PRC and the DRV, the DPRK did not manage to overtake or isolate, let alone conquer, its increasingly powerful and prosperous anti-communist counterpart. Since the KWP leadership regarded any weakening of the country's international position as a threat, these failures reinforced the regime's paranoid inclinations. In fact, Kim Il Sung was rarely capable of thinking in terms of mutuality. Crisis and dependence on external assistance usually made the North Korean leaders, who were very anxious not to suffer a loss of prestige, touchy and sulky (as it happened in the mid-1950s), whereas successes induced them to become haughty and arrogant (as it was the case in 1958–1960).

If a great power attempted to put pressure on Kim Il Sung (as Khrushchev did in 1955–1957 and 1962–1964), this ultimately proved counterproductive, for such moves usually hardened the dictator's stance. On the other hand, the effects of economic concessions and other manifestations of Soviet goodwill were also quite limited. The positive North Korean reactions that they evoked were often only of a superficial and temporary nature, like the staging of foreign dramas and the reduction of *chuch'e* propaganda on those occasions when the DPRK tried to get Soviet assistance. While the regime did make some concessions to its aid donors and the North Korean population in a rather large number of cases, in one sphere it consistently refused to modify its practices. Throughout the Khrushchev era and subsequent decades, political liberalization remained out of the question in the DPRK.

It would not be fair to say that the policies of the North Korean regime were in every case more repressive than the comparable measures taken by other communist dictatorships. Although in general the Vietnamese communist leaders behaved more flexibly than their North Korean comrades, both the 1945 take-over by the Viet Minh and the North Vietnamese land reform campaign of 1955–1956 seem to have claimed more lives than the equivalent North Korean actions. Another important point is that the emergence of Kim Il Sung's isola-

tionist despotism was a gradual process facilitated by various and sometimes unexpected factors, rather than a development predestined by the legacy of the “Hermit Kingdom.” It is noteworthy, that in the 1880–1930 period, Korean society was more capable of modernization than Vietnamese society, and Korean intellectuals showed great interest in foreign ideas.

In my view, the “critical times” of the colonial era constituted the first major turning point in the history of the Korean communist movement. The policies pursued by the Japanese authorities in the post-1931 period put an end to any effective resistance in Korea proper, eliminated the Manchurian guerrilla movement, started the large-scale industrialization of Northern Korea, and—due to Tokyo’s attempt to eradicate Korean identity—reinforced Korean cultural nationalism.

The second turning point came with the Soviet occupation. Kim Il Sung would not have managed to become the supreme leader of North Korea so easily if Moscow had not backed him, support that was partly attributable to the absence of high-ranking “Muscovite” Korean communists. Despite this essential assistance, Kim—whose formative years had not been closely intertwined with the development of the Comintern—probably resented the Soviet violation of Korean sovereignty in 1945–1948, a feeling that later gave rise to tensions in Soviet–DPRK relations. He also distrusted the intensely factionalized (N)KWP leaders with whom he had to work.

The setbacks resulting from the suppression of the South Korean communist movement and the Korean War should be considered the third turning point. These failures strengthened the dictator’s distrust of his communist allies and of the North Korean population, resulted in the liquidation of the SKWP faction (a precedent-setting purge), and produced a long-lasting effect on the nature of DPRK–ROK competition. While the fact that as early as 1946–1949, Kim had created an almost unparalleled cult around himself did not bode well for the future, post-1950 North Korean repression seems to have been considerably harsher than that typical of the pre-war era.

Finally, Soviet de-Stalinization constituted the fourth major turning point. In these years Pyongyang achieved its political independence from the Kremlin, and thus prevented the Soviets from forcing political liberalization down Kim Il Sung’s throat in the same way as they managed to do in Eastern Europe.

Neither Kim Il Sung’s cult nor the replacement of other party leaders should be regarded as the central element of North Korean despotism, although they were undoubtedly important features. For instance, the post-1950 liberalization of the Yugoslav dictatorship was by no means incompatible with the increasingly extravagant cult of Tito. This cult included many elements that may look surprisingly familiar to DPRK watchers. Among others, the regime built

a museum to house the presents that Tito had received, compelled school-children to memorize the events of his life, provided him with thirty-plus official residences, and eventually eulogized “his slightest gestures and words . . . as historical events.”¹⁵⁰ One may also keep in mind that the leadership style of Khrushchev, who became the symbol of de-Stalinization, was anything but a good example of “collective leadership.” In addition to the purge of Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich, “of the thirteen supporters whom he had advanced to membership of the Party Presidium by 1958, only six remained in 1961.” At lower levels of Soviet administration, the situation was hardly better: “[I]n early 1960 two-thirds of RSFSR krai and obkom first secretaries who had acquired office in the mid-1950s had been removed.”¹⁵¹

Thus, I conclude that it was the severity of repression and the extensiveness of state control over society and cultural life that primarily distinguished Kim Il Sung’s despotism from the regimes of Tito and Khrushchev. These characteristics put the DPRK in the category to which hard-line dictatorships headed by Stalin, Mao, and Hoxha belonged. True, North Korean repression seems to have been somewhat curtailed in certain periods, like in 1945–1949, 1954–1956, and 1959–1961, either by Kim’s unification plans or by Soviet pressure. Still, the thorough penetration of society by party and state organs, the securing of his absolute dominance, and the eradication of any alternative thoughts always remained high-priority goals for the North Korean dictator.

Significantly, as early as 1946, Kim Il Sung named the country’s first university for himself, and saw to it that only party members became students or employees there. If one takes into consideration how heterogeneous the (N)KWP leadership was, it is quite striking (and revealing) that in the internal documents that the North Koreans circulated in 1950, “there is little if any reference to a communist tradition apart from that of Kim Il Sung.”¹⁵² Gross falsification of history indeed began early, for in 1948, the very first North Korean feature film announced, without any reference to the USSR, that it was Kim who had liberated Korea in 1945.¹⁵³

Due to this control-centered and distrust-motivated approach, the dictator tended to react to the crises that the DPRK faced in the post-1949 decades by further reinforcement of state power or at least the careful avoidance of steps that might have weakened the regime’s hold over the population. That is, both Kim’s attitude and these crises played a decisive role in the emergence of North Korean despotism.

In my opinion, the failure of political liberalization in the DPRK had relatively little to do with Korean cultural traditions. This is not to deny that the style and logic of North Korean politics was often distinctly Korean (or East Asian). The similarities among North Korean, Chinese, and North Vietnamese

ideological concepts, political terms, mobilization techniques, and diplomatic maneuvers revealed the common cultural roots of these three countries, distinguishing the DPRK from the People's Republic of Albania. Still, in other respects the rigid, despotic, and isolationist North Korean political system had more in common with Albania than with North Vietnam, although Korean cultural traditions had practically nothing to do with Albanian ones. Thus, the similarity of the North Korean and Albanian dictatorships seems to have been rooted in other factors, such as the heterogeneous character of the (N)KWP and APL leaderships; the impact of the "precedent-setting" purges that Hoxha and Kim Il Sung carried out in 1948–1949 and 1952–1953, respectively; the leaders' frustrated nationalist aspirations, and their distrust of a very substantial part of the populations that they ruled; and the regimes' early conflicts with other communist countries.

On the other hand, the differences between the DPRK and the DRV should not be taken out of their historical and political context. Pyongyang's apparently most irrational and most aggressive actions include the 1968 and 1983 assassination attempts against Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan, respectively; the 1968 plan to attack the U.S. Embassy in Seoul; the dispatch of comandos to South Korea; and the 1976 "axe killings incident." Instead of rushing to the conclusion that these acts reflected the peculiar nature of North Korean despotism, it is more productive to keep in mind that the Vietnamese communists were not much more hesitant to use terrorism as a political weapon than their North Korean comrades. For instance, in 1965, the National Liberation Front carried out a bomb attack against the American Embassy in Saigon, and it planned to assassinate South Vietnamese dictators Thieu and Ky during the Tet Offensive.¹⁵⁴

The essential difference between these Vietnamese and North Korean terrorist acts are found in the facts that while the former took place in the context of a "hot" war, the latter occurred in a period of nominal peace, and this is why they appeared more savage and irrational. This difference was rooted in the suppression of the South Korean communist movement, and in the disastrous outcome of the Korean War. While Hanoi's efforts to destabilize the Saigon regimes enjoyed considerable popular support in South Vietnam, the comandos Pyongyang sent to the ROK in the late 1960s operated, by and large, in a political vacuum.

Thus, the irrational component of Kim Il Sung's belligerent policies seems to have manifested itself primarily in his decades-long reluctance, or even inability, to accept that the DPRK, unlike the DRV, could not take the upper hand over its Southern rival. The brutal or eccentric methods that he resorted to were merely reflections of this approach. Characteristically, in 1962–1963—barely

ten years after the Korean War had come to an end—the KWP leaders started to prepare for a second round, hoping that their newly constructed fortifications were able to withstand even the explosions of hydrogen bombs. As it became increasingly clear that the South was overtaking the North in both economic and military strength, Kim started to build prestige projects, such as the utterly unprofitable Yugyong Hotel, in order to take at least a symbolic lead over Seoul.

In the final analysis, while the various shocks and crises that North Korea has undergone since the birth of the regime greatly contributed to the gradual hardening of the dictatorship's policies, these challenges in themselves did not determine the reactions of the KWP leadership. When they faced a crisis, some dictators initiated political liberalization, whereas others introduced further restrictions. It would be difficult to decide whether it was Kim Il Sung or Beria and Djilas who acted in a more surprising and unusual way. While Kim stubbornly refused to soften his rule, the other two politicians became dynamic reformers in spite of the fact that Beria had been the head of Stalin's murderous NKVD and Djilas had once belonged to the Yugoslav party's ultraleft faction.

In any case, it seems that the repressive character of the North Korean regime cannot be blamed on external factors alone. The crucial importance of internal factors also means that diplomatic, let alone military, pressure is not likely to achieve a far-reaching political liberalization in the DPRK, a state that achieved its political independence as early as the 1960s. While a *détente* between Pyongyang and Washington may facilitate such a process, a decisive change can come only from the North Korean leaders or from the North Korean people themselves. Time will show whether Kim Jong Il follows the example of Jiang Jingguo—who eventually prepared the ground for a democratic transition in Taiwan—or that of Jean-Claude Duvalier.

Notes

Notes to Chapter 1

1. Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 79, 88–90.
2. See, among others, Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 72–73.
3. Terrill, *Mao*, 295–296.
4. Han, *The History of Korea*, 301–304, 337–345.
5. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, 2–4, 57.
6. Han, *The History of Korea*, 312–315, 409, 422.
7. Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 81–82, 87–88.
8. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, 264–266.
9. Ibid., 30–32. See also Baek, “The Development of Local Markets,” 170–174.
10. Han, *The History of Korea*, 319–327.
11. Wells, *New God, New Nation*, 29–30; Lee, *Rural North Korea under Communism*, 108–112.
12. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, 281–286; Zo Ki-zun, “Korean Industry under the Japanese Colonial Rule,” in Chun, *Economic Life in Korea*, 152.
13. Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 132. See also Han, *The History of Korea*, 390, 418–427, 439–442, 454–457; An, “Socio-Economics of the Nationalist Movement,” 32–33.
14. Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, 316–321.
15. Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 335.
16. David R. McCann, “Modern Poetry and Literature,” in Koo and Nahm, *An Introduction to Korean Culture*, 456.
17. Zo Ki-zun, “Korean Industry under the Japanese Colonial Rule,” in Chun, *Economic Life in Korea*, 158–167.
18. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, 24–50.
19. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War I*, 30–38.
20. David R. McCann, “Modern Poetry and Literature,” in Koo and Nahm, *An Introduction to Korean Culture*, 455–457; Michael D. Shin, “Interior Landscapes: Yi Kwangsu's ‘The Heartless’ and the Origins of Modern Literature,” in Shin and Robinson, *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, 250–287; Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*, 104–111.
21. Lee, *The Korean Workers' Party*, 16–17; Wells, *New God, New Nation*, 93.
22. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War I*, 30–38.

23. Kohli, “Where Do High Growth Political Economies Come From?,” 1283–1284. See also Lee, *The Korean Workers’ Party*, 34–40; Wells, “The Rationale of Korean Economic Nationalism,” 827–859.

24. Wells, “The Rationale of Korean Economic Nationalism,” 827–859.

25. Ibid., 827–859; Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, 84–85.

26. Lee, *The Korean Workers’ Party*, 6–45.

27. Vu, *Die vietnamesische Gesellschaft im Wandel*, 328–333.

28. Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 134–155.

29. Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 43–47.

30. Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 32–38.

31. Kapsan is the name of a border area in northern Korea. This is why Kim Il-sung’s pre-1945 followers were later called the “Kapsan faction” by scholars. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War I*, 30–38; Lee, *The Korean Workers’ Party*, 60–72.

32. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, August 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 002304/1/RT/1962.

33. While most China émigrés came from Tonkin and Annam, the bulk of the expatriates living in France were of Cochinchinese and Tonkinese origin. The leftist Annamite Independence Party had a wider basis in Cochinchina than in the other two regions, whereas the RYL was led largely by men born in Annam and Tonkin. Duiker, *Sacred War*, 32–41; Huynh, *Vietnamese Communism*, 113–125, 174–177; Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution*, 71–72, 218–219, 228, 233–234.

34. Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 183–185; Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, 127.

35. El-Ghonemy, *The Political Economy of Rural Poverty*, 199–208; Jeon, *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie preobrazovaniia v Severnoi Koree*, 32; Le, *Le Viet-Nam*, 420–434; Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, 87–88.

36. In 1939–1940, the North’s share of the manufacturing of metals, chemicals, and ceramics was 89 percent, 83 percent, and 73 percent, respectively, whereas the South housed the greatest part of the textile and engineering industries. Later the Kim Il Sung regime would do its best to correct these regional imbalances and create a self-sufficient Northern economy. Haggard, Kang, and Moon, “Japanese Colonialism and Korean Development,” 872.

37. Kohli, “Where Do High Growth Political Economies Come From?,” 1282–1284; Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, VTS, 8. doboz, 25/f, 002891/1960.

38. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War I*, 277.

39. Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 47.

40. Actually, French officials still occupied a much higher percentage of positions than their British, Dutch, and American counterparts in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Kohli, “Where Do High Growth Political Economies Come From?,” 1273–1274; Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, 24–25.

41. Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 263–269.

42. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, 759–762.

43. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 7 January 1954, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 01226/1954.

44. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 305–316.

45. Juhn, “Nationalism and Korean Businessmen Under Japanese Colonial Rule,”

- 8–10. See also Kohli, “Where Do High Growth Political Economies Come From?,” 1277, 1283.
46. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, 24–50.
47. Gi-Wook Shin and Do-Hyun Han, “Colonial Corporatism: The Rural Revitalization Campaign, 1932–1940,” in Shin and Robinson, *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, 83–93.
48. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War I*, 30–38. See also Jones, *Manchuria since 1931*, 72–73; Lee, *The Korean Workers’ Party*, 71–72; Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, 314; Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 32–38, 84–93.
49. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, 377–400, 415–416.
50. Huynh, *Vietnamese Communism*, 245–249.
51. Weathersby, “Soviet Aims in Korea,” 8–12.
52. Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 192–216;
53. Goncharov et al., *Uncertain Partners*, 132–124; Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 116–122.
54. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 21–22.
55. Lee, *The Korean Workers’ Party*, 76–77; Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 258–259.
56. Gyarmati et al., *Magyar hétköznapiak*, 33–35.
57. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War I*, 393–396; Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 40–41.
58. Having taken over the municipal bureaucracy of Shanghai, at first the CCP let 95 percent of the GMD employees keep their jobs. In January 1955, the Vietnamese military commander of Hanoi told the Hungarian Chargé d’Affaires that most “old” policemen had been retained by the new authorities. In Hungary the complete dismissal of pre-1945 administrative officials took place only in 1949–1953, although approx. 70,000 of them had lost their jobs as early as 1946. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 3 February 1955, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/f, 004140/1955; White, *Policies of Chaos*, 54–55; Gyarmati, “A káderrendszer és a rendszer kádere,” 62; Gyarmati et al., *Magyar hétköznapiak*, 118–120.
59. Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 234–237, 518–519.
60. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe*, 21; Mark, “Revolution by Degrees,” 20–22, 31–33; Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 254–259; Ree, *Socialism in One Zone*, 95–101, 118–123.
61. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War I*, 393–396.
62. See, among others, Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam*, 39–43, 172–177.
63. Lee, *The Korean Workers’ Party*, 76–77; Ree, *Socialism in One Zone*, 113–114, 118–119.
64. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 7 October 1953, KA, 6. doboz, 12/a, 011216/1953.
65. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 62–63, 123–124. See also Weathersby, “Soviet Aims in Korea,” 16–17.
66. Lee, *Rural North Korea under Communism*, 85–91, 108–112.
67. Jeon, *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie preobrazovaniia v Severnoi Koree*, 56–60; Lee, *Rural North Korea under Communism*, 20–28.
68. McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow*, 15.

69. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 78–79, 130; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War I*, 414–417; Várkonyi, *Akié a föld . . .*, 38–40. Large-scale nationalization of industry also took place in 1946, but since this measure affected primarily Japanese-owned enterprises, it did not provoke opposition as strong as that in response to land reform.

70. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 317–319; Suda, *The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic*, 43–47.

71. Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 550–551.

72. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 22 October 1952, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 012603/1952; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 31 March 1951, CTS, 7. doboz, 5/c, 00465/1951; Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 108–110; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 301; Lee, *The Korean Workers' Party*, 80–81; Pünkösti, *Rákosi a csúcson*, 16–17; Suda, *The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic*, 43–47; Andrea R. Süle, “Románia politikátörténete 1944–1990,” in Hunya, *Románia 1944–1990*, 222.

73. In 1953, KWP members still constituted 80 percent of students. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 18 June 1953, KA, 10. doboz, 18/i, 001404/1953.

74. For instance, both Gerő and Pauker could count on the support of Molotov. Baráth, “Gerő Ernő politikai pályája,” 143; Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe*, 46–47; Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, 164–166; Paczkowski, *Fél évszázad Lengyelország történetéből*, 162–163, 414–415, 431.

75. Goncharov et al., *Uncertain Partners*, 132–134; Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 117–119; Ree, *Socialism in One Zone*, 146–148.

76. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 333.

77. Goncharov et al., *Uncertain Partners*, 132–134; Ree, *Socialism in One Zone*, 146–148.

78. Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 84–93.

79. Foris was secretly tried and executed in 1946. Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, 29–33, 151–153.

80. Ree, *Socialism in One Zone*, 118–123.

81. Lim, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, 293; Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 78, 84–93; Yang, *The North and South Korean Political Systems*, 362–363.

82. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 38.

83. Pünkösti, *Rákosi a csúcson*, 424.

84. *Ibid.*, 363.

85. Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia*, 169–173.

86. Yang, *The North and South Korean Political Systems*, 331–332, 339.

87. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 125. See also Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 20–23.

88. Lankov, “Kim Il Sung's Campaign against the Soviet Faction,” 44–46.

89. Huynh, *Vietnamese Communism*, 255–259.

90. Bajanov, “Assessing the Politics of the Korean War,” 54; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 345, 355–356.

91. For example, the Soviet share of Bulgarian exports and imports decreased from 95 percent and 80 percent, respectively, in 1945 to 52 percent and 58 percent, respectively, in 1948. In 1947, the USSR participated by only 4.9 percent in the Czechoslovakian foreign trade turnover, and ten years later its share stood at 31 percent. Cumings,

The Origins of the Korean War II, 151–152, 342–343; Jeon, *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie preobrazovaniia v Severnoi Koree*, 123, 127, 138–139; Lampe, *The Bulgarian Economy in the Twentieth Century*, 128–129; Suda, *The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic*, 54–58; Weathersby, “To Attack, or Not to Attack?,” 2, 9.

92. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 5 May 1950, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 00895/1950; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 19 June 1950, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 024434/1950.

93. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 14 September 1953, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 011219/1953; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 November 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 010968/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 December 1954, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 001132/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 April 1956, KA, 8. doboz, 15/b, 025/25/11–6/1956.

94. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 003133/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 May 1957, KA, 9. doboz, 18/f, 002756/1957.

95. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 3 June 1947, ATS, 1. doboz, 1/c, 261/pol/res/1947; Hungarian Legation to the PRA, Annual Report, 19 February 1953, ATS, 3. doboz, 5/a, 00503/1953.

96. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 172.

97. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 April 1956, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 025/25/4–5/1956.

98. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 11 September 1956, KTS, 2. doboz, 1/c, 007233/1/1956.

99. Lee, *Rural North Korea under Communism*, 85–91.

100. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002749/1957.

101. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 July 1954, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/d, 00868/1/1954.

102. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 7 October 1953, KA, 6. doboz, 12/a, 011216/1953.

103. Pünkösti, *Rákosi a csúcson*, 431.

104. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 September 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 5192/1/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 September 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca, 09430/1954.

105. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 May 1962, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 005132/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1963, KTS, 9. doboz, 11/f, 002970/1963.

106. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 7 January 1954, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 01226/1954.

107. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 22 December 1953, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 00303/1954.

108. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 December 1955, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 00603/1956; Gyarmati et al., *Magyar hétköznapiak*, 346–347; Jean-Louis Margolin, “China: A Long March into Night,” in Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism*, 498–500.

109. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 April 1956, KA, 8. doboz, 15/b, 025/25/11–6/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 19 March 1957, CTS, 7.

doboz, 5/c, 001528/1/1957; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 350–364; Goncharov et al., *Uncertain Partners*, 132–134; Myers, *Han Sorya*, 43.

110. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 27 October 1951, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 01939/1952.

111. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 4 March 1955, VTS, 3. doboz, 5/a, 004122/1955.

112. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 8 April 1952, CTS, 5. doboz, 5/a, 00875/1952; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 21 July 1955, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 007961/1955.

113. Weathersby, “To Attack, or Not to Attack?,” 8.

114. Huynh, *Vietnamese Communism*, 274–277; Shin, “Social Change, Political Elections, and the Middle Class in Korea,” 34–36; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 20 September 1957, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 002745/1/1957.

115. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War I*, 277–339.

116. Byong Moo Hwang, “North Korea’s Insurgency in Historical and Comparative Perspective,” in Scalapino and Kim, *Asian Communism*, 286–291; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 194–205, 238–288.

117. Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 84–93.

118. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 19 July 1952, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/bc, 001024/2/1952.

119. Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 127; Hodos, *Show Trials*, 122–123; Ostermann, “‘This Is Not a Politburo, But a Madhouse’,” 62.

120. Bajanov, “Assessing the Politics of the Korean War,” 54, 87; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 381–383.

121. The withdrawal of Soviet forces from Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia was an exception, rather than a rule. The Kremlin kept stationing troops in the GDR, Poland, Hungary, and Romania, and established a permanent naval base in Albania. “Stalin’s Conversations with Chinese Leaders,” 8; Weathersby, “‘Should We Fear This?’,” 3–11; Weathersby, “Soviet Aims in Korea,” 20–26.

122. Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 122–126.

123. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 June 1961, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/e, 003643/1/1961.

124. Bajanov, “Assessing the Politics of the Korean War,” 88.

125. Chung, *The North Korean Economy*, 17–20, 58–60; Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 831–832.

126. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 22 October 1952, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 012603/1952.

127. Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam*, 214.

128. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 22 October 1952, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 012603/1952.

129. Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 89–91; Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 456–457; Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 122–126.

130. Kim’s action bore a strong resemblance to Stalin’s famous article, “Dizzy with Success,” which blamed the “excesses” of collectivization on local cadres. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 22 October 1952, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 012603/1952.

131. Hunter, *Kim Il-song’s North Korea*, 99–106; Oh and Hassig, *North Korea Through the Looking Glass*, 133.

132. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 717–722.
133. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 23 August 1950, CTS, 10. doboz, 5/f, 001503/1950.
134. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 February 1963, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0012/RT/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 June 1964, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 004092/1964.
135. Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 87.
136. Nicolas Werth, “A State Against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union,” in Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism*, 230–231.
137. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 9 July 1958, VTS, 9. doboz, 27/a, 004887/1958.
138. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 27 October 1951, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 01939/1952; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 December 1954, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 001142/1955.
139. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 27 May 1958, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 004215/1958.
140. Lee, *China and Korea*, 28–32.
141. Ibid., 28–32. During the 1945–1948 Soviet occupation, the North Korean authorities had to provide the Soviet troops with food for free.
142. Lim, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, 155.
143. Jian Chen, “Re-reading Chinese Documents: A Post-Cold War Interpretation of the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula,” in Moon, Westad, and Kahng, *Ending the Cold War in Korea*, 185.
144. Weathersby, ““Should We Fear This?”,” 19–20.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Kathryn Weathersby, “Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War,” in Westad, *Brothers in Arms*, 108.
2. For instance, in 1953, the USSR renounced its territorial claims on Turkey, and re-established diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia, Israel, and Greece.
3. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 7 November 1952, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 002047/1/1952.
4. A parallel can be drawn between these North Korean developments and the 1968–1969 decision of the North Vietnamese leadership to ask the “fraternal” countries for new, modern factories, because at that time Hanoi expected the Vietnam War to come to an end before long.
5. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 August 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 25/b, 00479/1954.
6. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 19 May 1953, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca, 07108/1953.
7. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 17 January 1953, KTS, 8. doboz, 11/f, 00343/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 30 May 1953, KTS, 8. doboz, 11/f, 00343/3/1953.
8. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War II*, 454; Kathryn Weathersby, “Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War,” in Westad, *Brothers in Arms*, 109–110.

9. On the last stage of the air war in Korea, see MacDonald, *Korea*, 234–242.
10. Kathryn Weathersby, “Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War,” in Westad, *Brothers in Arms*, 104.
11. Haruki Wada, “East Asia and the Cold War: Reinterpreting Its Meaning in the New Millennium,” in Moon, Westad, and Kahng, *Ending the Cold War in Korea*, 79–82.
12. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 13 January 1953, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 00342/1953.
13. The Hungarian chargé d’affaires, who failed to perceive that these measures were aimed at isolating the victims of the coming campaign and keeping the purge secret, fully approved of the new regulations. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 25 November 1952, KA, 4. doboz, 5/e, 013952/1952.
14. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 439.
15. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 13 March 1953, KA, 5. doboz, 5/f, 04640/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1953, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 00808/1953.
16. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 3 March 1953, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 87/25/1–7/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 12 March 1953, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 04648/2/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 21 March 1953, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 00338/2/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 30 May 1953, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 04648/1/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 6 January 1954, KA, 6. doboz, 12/a, 01234/1954. See also Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 92; Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 440, 447.
17. Gills, “North Korea and the Crisis of Socialism,” 107–134; Haruki Wada, “East Asia and the Cold War: Reinterpreting Its Meaning in the New Millennium,” in Moon, Westad, and Kahng, *Ending the Cold War in Korea*, 78–79.
18. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 21 March 1953, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 00338/2/1953.
19. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1953, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 00808/1953.
20. In fact, in September 1949, Ho Ka-i, in contrast with Mao but similar to Pak Hon-yong, had emphasized that the South Korean population would welcome a northern invasion. His interest in South Korean affairs may be explained with the fact that Ho, as first secretary of the KWP, was responsible for party work both in the North and the South, and he established close contacts with the southern Communist leaders. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 146–147; Weathersby, “To Attack, or Not to Attack?,” 6–7.
21. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 31 May 1953, KA, 6. doboz, 11/f, 07101/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 19 August 1953, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 00338/7/1953. See also Lim, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, 216–217.
22. Haruki Wada, “East Asia and the Cold War: Reinterpreting Its Meaning in the New Millennium,” in Moon, Westad, and Kahng, *Ending the Cold War in Korea*, 84.
23. Lim, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, 199, 216.
24. One should add, however, that both Nam Il and Pang Hak-se took sides with Kim Il Sung against those members of the Soviet group who attempted to stand up against the dictator in 1955–1956. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 10 April

1953, KA, 5. doboz, 5/f, 0290/2/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Annual Report, 15 April 1954, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 00866/1954.

25. MacDonald, *Korea*, 176–182.

26. Gorlitzki, “Party Revivalism and the Death of Stalin,” 4–15.

27. Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 92–98; Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 130. Certain sources suggest that the executions may have been delayed for several months. “The [death] sentences have not been carried out yet,” a Hungarian diplomat reported on 1 December 1953. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 1 December 1953, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 01267/1/1953.

28. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Annual Report, 15 April 1954, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 00866/1954.

29. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 30 April 1953, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 04648/2/1953.

30. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Annual Report, 15 April 1954, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 00866/1954.

31. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 890.

32. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 28 May 1952, KA, 9. doboz, 18/c, 08092/1952; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Memorandum, 11 March 1953, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 00338/2/1953.

33. Key P. Yang and Chang-Boh Chee, “North Korean Educational System: 1945 to Present,” in Scalapino, *North Korea Today*, 127–135.

34. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 29 September 1953, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 011215/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 7 January 1954, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 01226/1954. See also Myers, *Han Sorya*, 85–86.

35. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 21 March 1953, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 00338/2/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Annual Report, 15 April 1954, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 00866/1954.

36. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 3 May 1951, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 001153/1951.

37. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 1 December 1953, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 001267/1/1953.

38. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 21 March 1953, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 00338/2/1953.

39. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 May 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 4/bc (no reference number)/1959.

40. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 June 1964, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 004092/1964.

41. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 3 May 1957, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 002743/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 24 June 1957, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 003853/1957.

42. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 19 April 1953, KA, 4. doboz, 5/cg, 04629/1/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 3 August 1953, KA, 4. doboz, 5/cg, 09461/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 7 December 1953, KA, 4. doboz, 5/cg, 04629/3/1953; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, January 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca (no reference number)/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 July 1954, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 001201/1954.

43. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 23 April 1955, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 006087/1955.

44. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 19 August 1953, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 00338/7/1953. See also Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 98–99; and Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 138–140.

45. Okonogi, “North Korean Communism: In Search of Its Prototype,” in Suh, *Korean Studies*, 179.

46. Eberstadt and Banister, *The Population of North Korea*, 32.

47. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 11 April 1953, KA, 12. doboz, 28/b, 00986/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 30 November 1953, KA, 12. doboz, 28/b, 002308/1953; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 September 1954, KA, 6. doboz, 12/a, 07280/3/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 September 1954, KA, 12. doboz, 28/b, 09445/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 9 February 1955, KA, 6. doboz, 12/a, 004063/1955.

48. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 21 March 1952, KTS, 8. doboz, 11/f, 00863/1952; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 27 May 1952, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 001258/1952; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 9 June 1952, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001255/1952.

49. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 5 December 1953, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca, 011220/1/1953. See also Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 706–707, 753–756; MacDonald, *Korea*, 208–211, 234–242, 259.

50. Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 131.

51. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 15 August 1952, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 001488/1952; Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 5/a, 001/114/2/1959.

52. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 July 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b (no reference number)/1954.

53. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 27 October 1951, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 01939/1952.

54. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 15 August 1952, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 001488/1952; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 10 February 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 02830/1954; Weathersby, “New Russian Documents on the Korean War,” 58.

55. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, January 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca (no reference number)/1954; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 17 April 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca (no reference number)/1954.

56. In the first year after the armistice, factory directors and offices were empowered to override the orders issued by the Mobilization Department of the KPA if they considered a draftee indispensable. Trying to cope with the serious shortage of adult male workers, they often took advantage of this decree in order to retain young employees. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 July 1954, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/d, 00868/1/1954.

57. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 15 December 1953, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 01204/1954.

58. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 5 October 1953, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca, 011220/1953; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, January 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca (no reference number)/1954.

59. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 7 October 1953, KA, 6. doboz, 12/a, 011216/1953; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 September 1957, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 004743/1/1957.

60. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 5 December 1953, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca, 011220/1/1953; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 January 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 25/j, 003122/1956. See also Fendler, “Economic Assistance and Loans from Socialist Countries to North Korea,” 39–51; and Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 138–140.

61. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 23 December 1953, KA, 5. doboz, 5/f, 01202/1954.

62. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 5 October 1953, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca, 011220/1953; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 5 December 1953, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca, 011220/1/1953; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 September 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 09431/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 September 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 5192/1/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 October 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 010932/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 October 1954, KA, 5. doboz, 5/f, 010973/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 January 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 25/j, 003122/1956.

63. Pyongyang would later ask East Berlin to modify these plans, however. In the end, the GDR played a major role in the reconstruction of Hamhung.

64. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, January 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca (no reference number)/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 January 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 004077/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 January 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 25/j, 003122/1956. See also Fendler, “Economic Assistance and Loans from Socialist Countries to North Korea,” 39–51, and Yoon T. Kuark, “North Korea’s Industrial Development During the Post-War Period,” in Scalapino, *North Korea Today*, 54–62.

65. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 8 December 1953, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca, 011220/2/1953.

66. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 3 January 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca, 01205/1954.

67. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 21 April 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 06765/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 September 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 5192/1/1954.

68. See Kramer, “The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle,” 9–54; McCauley, *The German Democratic Republic since 1945*, 69; McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow*, 56.

69. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 21 April 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 06765/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 July 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b (no reference number)/1954.

70. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 July 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b (no reference number)/1954.

71. Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P’yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962.

72. Okonogi, “North Korean Communism: In Search of Its Prototype,” in Suh, *Korean Studies*, 181.

73. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 30 November 1951, CTS, 10. doboz, 5/f, 00313/1952.

74. “Stalin’s Conversations with Chinese Leaders,” 11–16.

75. Shu Guang Zhang, “Sino–Soviet Economic Cooperation,” in Westad, *Brothers in Arms*, 201. Of course, one should also keep in mind that the development of engineering capabilities and heavy industry had begun in Japanese-occupied Northeast China as early as the 1930s, which was not the case in contemporaneous Korea. Jones, *Manchuria since 1931*, 162–164.

76. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 25 November 1960, ATS, 12. doboz, 27/d, 0068/RT/1961.

77. Weathersby, “To Attack, or Not to Attack?,” 5.

78. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008020/1955.

79. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 December 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001016/2/1957.

80. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 October 1958, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006456/1958.

81. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, 10 February 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 02830/1954. See also B. C. Koh, “The War’s Impact on the Korean Peninsula,” in Williams, *A Revolutionary War*, 252–253.

82. It may be added that while the aid the DPRK received from Moscow included the expenses of the North Koreans who studied in the Soviet Union at that time, the Hungarian government covered the students’ expenses in addition to its aid program. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 January 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 004077/1955.

83. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 21 January 1955, CTS, 10. doboz, 5/f, 003995/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 18 March 1955, CTS, 5. doboz, 5/a, 003989/1955.

84. Michael Freeberne, “The People’s Republic of China,” in East, Spate, and Fisher, *The Changing Map of Asia*, 398–400.

85. Okonogi, “North Korean Communism: In Search of Its Prototype,” in Suh, *Korean Studies*, 179–180.

86. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 10 February 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 02830/1954.

87. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe*, 79–80.; Okonogi, “North Korean Communism: In Search of Its Prototype,” in Suh, *Korean Studies*, 185–186; Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China*, 35.

88. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 10 February 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 02830/1954. See also Chung, *The North Korean Economy*, 58–60.

89. In 1939–1940, the North’s share of textile production did not exceed 17 percent. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 003133/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 December 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001016/2/1957; Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 5/a, 001/114/2/1959. See also Haggard, Kang, and Moon, “Japanese Colonialism and Korean Development,” 872. Still, most other branches of North Korean light industry, such as food processing, were neglected in 1954–1955.

90. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 26 February 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 004076/1955.

91. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 24 March 1954, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 00738/1/1954.

92. Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 67–69.
93. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 12 March 1954, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 00741/1954. The Geneva conference was held from 26 April to 21 July.
94. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 18 May 1954, CTS, 9. doboz, 5/e, 00731/5/1954.
95. Han, *The Problem of Korean Unification*, 139–144.
96. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 July 1954, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/d, 00868/1/1954. Beijing took a comparable measure only in the spring of 1955. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, 16 March 1955, CTS, 9. doboz, 5/d, 004039/1955.
97. Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 67–69.
98. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 1 April 1954, CTS, 13. doboz, 11/a, 00863/1954.
99. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 July 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/e, 08071/1954.
100. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 November 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca, 010976/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 November 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ba, 09427/1/1954.
101. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 11 September 1954, KA, 5. doboz, 5/f, 09446/1954.
102. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 November 1954, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001117/1955.
103. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 23 August 1950, CTS, 10. doboz, 5/f, 001503/1950; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 20 December 1950, KA, 4. doboz, 5/e, 01075/1951.
104. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 July 1954, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 001201/1954.
105. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 November 1954, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001117/1955.
106. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 26 February 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 004076/1955.
107. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 September 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/e, 010941/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 October 1954, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001567/1954.
108. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 December 1954, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 001131/1955.
109. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 22 December 1953, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 00303/1954.
110. Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, 163.
111. Hungarian Embassy to the USSR, Report, 7 May 1955, STS, 9. doboz, IV–138/1, 84, 005294/1955.
112. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Annual Report, 8 April 1952, CTS, 5. doboz, 5/a, 00875/1952.
113. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 9 May 1956, CTS, 6. doboz, 5/b, 005760/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 24 May 1956, CTS, 7. doboz, 5/c, 005813/1956.
114. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 31 January 1956, VTS, 7. doboz, 23/b, 003064/1956.

115. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 28 November 1955, VTS, 9. doboz, 27/d, 00426/1956.

116. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 5 March 1955, VTS, 1. doboz, 1/b, 004119/1955.

117. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 10 June 1955, VTS, 3. doboz, 5/b, 006561/1955.

118. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 June 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006950/1955.

119. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 22 April 1949, ATS, 1. doboz, 1/a, 573/1949; Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 12 April 1950, AA, 2. doboz, 4/a, 020414/1950.

120. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Annual Report, 15 March 1955, ATS, 3. doboz, 5/a, 004561/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 14 July 1955, ATS, 1. doboz, 1/c, 007506/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 6 January 1956, ATS, 6. doboz, 5/f, 00935/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 7 January 1956, ATS, 6. doboz, 5/f, 00939/1956.

121. In light of Tirana's later alliance with Beijing, it appears quite ironic that one of the embassies that criticized this Albanian measure with particular vehemence was the Chinese Embassy. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 7 January 1956, ATS, 6. doboz, 5/f, 00934/1956.

122. See, among others, Pano, *The People's Republic of Albania*, 111–116.

123. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 December 1954, KTS, 2. doboz, 2/b, 001118/1/1955.

124. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Memorandum, 5 August 1953, KA, 1. doboz, 1/b, 02199/2/1953.

125. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, January 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca (no reference number)/1954.

126. M. T. Haggard, "Mongolia. The First Communist State in Asia," in Scalapino, *The Communist Revolution in Asia*, 89.

127. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 26 February 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 004076/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 26 April 1955, CTS, 17. doboz, 27/a, 004044/2/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 9 January 1956, VTS, 9. doboz, 27/a, 003048/1956.

128. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 August 1954, KA, 5. doboz, 5/f, 09471/1954.

129. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 December 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 00608/1956.

130. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 August 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 25/b, 09479/1954.

131. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 February 1955, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/b, 004058/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 June 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 23/b, 006940/1955; Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 5/a, 001/114/2/1959.

132. For example, Pyongyang was completely illuminated at night, and uncontrolled consumption of electricity was fairly common. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 September 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 09480/1954.

133. Hungarian Legation to the PRA, Report, 14 April 1950, AA, 4. doboz, 5/c,

020406/1950; Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 15 December 1953, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 01204/1954; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 17 April 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca (no reference number)/1954.

134. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 16 April 1954, CTS, 10. doboz, 5/f, 00732/1954; Hungarian Ministry of Education, Memorandum, 13 August 1954, KA, 8. doboz, 17/d, 025/25/2–72/1954; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 22 October 1959, KTS, 10. doboz, 17/d, 006235/1959.

135. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 April 1956, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 004439/1956.

136. It is worth making a comparison with post-1961 South Korea. Of course, the dictatorship of Park Chung Hee did not introduce communist-style collectivization, but its industrialization drive was also based on foreign loans and a policy of extracting grain from the peasantry at below-market prices.

137. Chung, *The North Korean Economy*, 10–13.

138. Okonogi, “North Korean Communism: In Search of Its Prototype,” in Suh, *Korean Studies*, 181–183.

139. Ilpyong J. Kim, “The Judicial and Administrative Structure in North Korea,” in Scalapino, *North Korea Today*, 101–102; Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 138–140.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 3 August 1954, KA, 5. doboz, 5/f, 09464/1954.

2. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 October 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 08103/2/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 December 1954, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 001128/1955.

3. Okonogi, “North Korean Communism: In Search of Its Prototype,” in Suh, *Korean Studies*, 184, 187.

4. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 April 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006054/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 May 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006053/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 May 1955, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 006048/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 May 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 004066/1955.

5. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 May 1955, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 006049/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 August 1955, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 028/25/2–3/1955.

6. Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 5/a, 001/114/2/1959.

7. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 October 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 08103/2/1954.

8. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 April 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006054/1955.

9. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 October 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 08103/2/1954.

10. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 November 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 010968/1954.

11. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 February 1955, KTS, 10. doboz,

24/b, 004066/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 June 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 006940/1955.

12. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 26 February 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 004076/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 003133/1956.

13. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 February 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 004066/1955.

14. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 May 1955, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 006048/1955.

15. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008016/1955.

16. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 June 1955, KA, 12. doboz, 28/c, 006946/1955.

17. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 May 1955, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 006048/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 February 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 004066/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008016/1955.

18. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 533–536.

19. Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China*, 26–29.

20. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 2 November 1954, CA, 6. doboz, 5/c, 05236/1/1954.

21. Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China*, 23–24.

22. Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 5/a, 001/114/2/1959.

23. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 22 April 1954, CA, 17. doboz, 22/a, 05419/1954. Of course, actual taxes often exceeded these percentages in both countries.

24. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 2 November 1954, CA, 6. doboz, 5/c, 05236/1/1954.

25. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 February 1955, KTS, 1. doboz, 1/b, 004050/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 February 1955, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 004059/1955.

26. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 August 1955, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 008014/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 December 1955, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 00603/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008016/1955. The execution of “speculators” took place in the wake of the April CC plenum.

27. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 May 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006044/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 May 1955, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 006048/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 April 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006054/1955.

28. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 January 1955, KA, 9. doboz, 18/e, 025/25/1–31/1955.

29. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 February 1955, KTS, 1. doboz, 1/b, 004050/1955.

30. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 February 1955, KTS, 1. doboz, 1/b, 004050/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 February 1955, KTS,

12. doboz, 27/a, 004060/1955. This combination of economic concessions and political purges would be also characteristic of the April and December CC plenums.

31. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 497–503., 533–536.

32. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 May 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006044/1/1955.

33. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 May 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006044/1/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 December 1955, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 00603/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 May 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006053/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 May 1955, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 006063/1955. On the “confession movement,” see also Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 469–471. Since the purchasing power of wages remained very meager, the campaign did not make much headway, whereupon the regime resorted to increasingly severe punishments.

34. Lankov, “Kim Il Sung’s Campaign against the Soviet Faction,” 46.

35. Lee, *The Korean Workers’ Party*, 90–95; Okonogi, “North Korean Communism: In Search of Its Prototype,” in Suh, *Korean Studies*, 188–195.

36. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 497–503.

37. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 May 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006044/1/1955.

38. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 April 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006054/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 May 1955, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 006063/1955.

39. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 7 June 1956, CA, 12. doboz, 18/b, 005790/1956.

40. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 23 May 1956, CTS, 9. doboz, 5/e, 005774/1956.

41. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 May 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006044/1/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008016/1955.

42. Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 104.

43. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008016/1955.

44. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 May 1955, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 006048/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 May 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006053/1955.

45. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 October 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 08103/2/1954.

46. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 December 1954, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001117/1/1955.

47. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 February 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 004066/1955.

48. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 March 1955, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/bc, 004330/1955.

49. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 April 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006054/1955.

50. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 December 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 00608/1956.

51. Hungarian Embassy to the USSR, Report, 7 May 1955, STS, 9. doboz, IV–138/1, 84, 005294/1955.

52. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 546–558.

53. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008020/1955.

54. In 1955, North and South Korea used 125,000 and 800,000 metric tons of chemical fertilizer, respectively. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, August 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006044/3/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 003133/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 August 1955, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 008014/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 December 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001016/2/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008020/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008016/1955.

55. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, August 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006044/3/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 August 1955, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 008014/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 June 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006949/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 August 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 008030/1955.

56. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 October 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006044/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 003133/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008016/1955.

57. Ch'oe remained deputy premier, however. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 October 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006044/1955.

58. Andrea R. Süle, “Románia politikatörténete 1944–1990,” in Hunya, *Románia 1944–1990*, 227; Fejtő, *A History of the People's Democracies*, 50.

59. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008020/1955.

60. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 546–558.

61. On the other hand, this “harmony” implied certain constraints. For instance, the DPRK, unlike China and the DRV, could not participate in the Bandung conference of the nonaligned nations.

62. The PRC concluded such agreements with Japanese companies as early as June 1952 and October 1953. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002749/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 December 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/bf, 00591/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 August 1955, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 008012/1955. See also Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 546–558.

63. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 February 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 001668/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008020/1/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 February 1956, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 003109/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 August 1955, KA, 9. doboz, 18/e, 112/1955.

64. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 8 February 1956, VTS, 2. doboz, 5/a, 003065/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 9 September 1957, VTS, 3. doboz, 5/b, 004730/1957.

65. Pano, *The People's Republic of Albania*, 113.
66. Ridley, *Tito*, 305–306.
67. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 2 November 1965, KTS, 1965, 73. doboz, IV–130, 005834/1965.
68. Kim, *The Unification Policy of South and North Korea*, 167–171.
69. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 October 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006044/1955; Yoon T. Kuark, “North Korea’s Industrial Development during the Post-War Period,” in Scalapino, *North Korea Today*, 54–62.
70. Crampton, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*, 178; Montias, *Economic Development in Communist Rumania*, 50–52; Odd Arne Westad, “Introduction,” in Westad, *Brothers in Arms*, 15–16.
71. In January, Pak Ui-wan, a Soviet Korean known for his outspokenness, also lost his post as minister of light industry. Lankov, “Kim Il Sung’s Campaign against the Soviet Faction,” 47–49; Okonogi, “North Korean Communism: In Search of Its Prototype,” in Suh, *Korean Studies*, 187.
72. Actually, Kim Yol may have been arrested before the plenum. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 003133/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003127/1956.
73. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 003133/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 25 December 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 00609/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 December 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 00608/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003127/1956.
74. Lankov, “Kim Il Sung’s Campaign against the Soviet Faction,” 49–52; see also Lee, *The Korean Workers’ Party*, 95–98.
75. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 26 February 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 004076/1955.
76. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 December 1955, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 025/25/3–15/1955.
77. Lankov, “Kim Il Sung’s Campaign against the Soviet Faction,” 53.
78. *Ibid.*, 53–57.
79. *Ibid.*, 48–49, 53; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 003133/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 25 December 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 00609/1956.
80. Michael Schmidt-Neke, “Innenpolitik,” in Grothusen, *Albanien*, 64–73.
81. Hodos, *Show Trials*, 86–88, 100–101, 105–106.
82. Pelikán, *Pervertierte Justiz*, 132–135.
83. Crampton, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*, 178.
84. Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, 216–223.
85. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 564–565.
86. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 December 1955, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 00603/1956.
87. In 1954 the Kremlin tolerated the purge of CCP leaders Gao Gang and Rao Shushi, and the North Vietnamese “corrections” of 1956–1957 took place on Hanoi’s own initiative.
88. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 October 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a,

006044/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 25 December 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 00609/1956.

89. Lankov, “Kim Il Sung’s Campaign against the Soviet Faction,” 54.

90. Of course, this propaganda activity may have also reflected a competition between Moscow and Beijing for influence over North Korea. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 December 1955, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 025/25/3–15/1955.

91. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 July 1955, KA, 12. doboz, 28/c, 008024/1955.

92. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 May 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006053/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 July 1955, KA, 12. doboz, 28/c, 008024/1955.

93. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 October 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 009565/4/1955.

94. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 497–503.

95. Okonogi, “North Korean Communism: In Search of Its Prototype,” in Suh, *Korean Studies*, 187.

96. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 July 1955, KA, 12. doboz, 28/c, 008024/1955.

97. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 13 January 1954, CTS, 5. doboz, 5/a, 00561/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 18 March 1955, CTS, 5. doboz, 5/a, 003989/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 14 April 1953, CTS, 10. doboz, 5/f, 00956/1953; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 8 June 1953, CTS, 10. doboz, 5/f, 001275/1953.

98. See, for instance, the demotion and replacement of Rákosi and Ulbricht in 1953–1956 and 1971, respectively.

99. Kuark, “North Korea’s Agricultural Development during the Post-War Period,” in Scalapino, *North Korea Today*, 90–91.

100. Kuark, “North Korea’s Industrial Development during the Post-War Period,” in Scalapino, *North Korea Today*, 54–62. See also Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 June 1956, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 005735/1956.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003127/1956.

2. Myers, *Han Sorya*, 109–110.

3. Lankov, “Kim Il Sung’s Campaign against the Soviet Faction,” 56–58.

4. *Ibid.*, 58.

5. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 April 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 004436/1956. Actually, a substantial part of the Chinese articles in question were also reprints of Soviet ones.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Lankov, “Kim Il Sung’s Campaign against the Soviet Faction,” 58.

8. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 3 March 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003128/1956.

9. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 June 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003127/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS,

4. doboz, 5/a, 002749/1957. Only Deputy Premier Pak Ui-wan, a critic of Kim Il Sung, managed to inform the Soviet delegation on the North Korean situation. See Lankov, “Kim Il Sung’s Campaign against the Soviet Faction,” 59–60.
10. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 507–508; Yang, *The North and South Korean Political Systems*, 340, 348–349.
11. Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 108.
12. Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 147–154.
13. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 July 1956, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 007220/1956.
14. Lankov, “Kim Il Sung’s Campaign against the Soviet Faction,” 61–62.
15. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 July 1956, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 007220/1956.
16. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 May 1957, KA, 9. doboz, 18/f, 002756/1957.
17. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 20 July 1957, VTS, 3. doboz, 5/a, 003859/1957. See also Boulton, *Zamenhof*, 208–217; Lins, *La dangera lingvo*, 183–185.
18. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 11 September 1956, KTS, 2. doboz, 1/c, 007233/1/1956.
19. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002249/1957; Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 69.
20. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 8 June 1956, CTS, 7. doboz, 5/bc, 005769/1956.
21. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 7 June 1956, CA, 12. doboz, 18/b, 005790/1956.
22. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 24 July 1956, CA, 17. doboz, 22/a, 006713/1/1956.
23. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 5 September 1956, CTS, 17. doboz, 27/a, 006695/2/1956.
24. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 17 July 1956, CA, 17. doboz, 22/a, 006713/1956.
25. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 24 May 1956, CTS, 7. doboz, 5/c, 005813/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 16 August 1956, CTS, 13. doboz, 11/f, 006693/1956.
26. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 December 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 00608/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 January 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 25/j, 003122/1956.
27. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 June 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 25/j, 005594/1956.
28. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 September 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 007219/1956.
29. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 October 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 20440/1/1956.
30. See, among others, Okonogi, “North Korean Communism: In Search of Its Prototype,” in Suh, *Korean Studies*, 180–187.
31. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 April 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006054/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 October 1961, KA, 1. doboz, 1/c, 1/25/46–1/1961.

32. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 September 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 007219/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 October 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003128/1956. See also Yoon T. Kuark, “North Korea’s Industrial Development During the Post-War Period,” in Scalapino, *North Korea Today*, 54–62.

33. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 5 August 1955, CTS, 6. doboz, 5/b, 007986/1955.

34. Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 70–73.

35. Ang, *Vietnamese Communists’ Relations with China*, 12–16.

36. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 28 April 1955, VTS, 1. doboz, 1/b, 005996/1/1955.

37. Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 147–154.

38. Lim, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, 225.

39. Tchakarov, *The Second Floor*, 63–64.

40. Significantly, the successors of Chervenkov and Rákosi—Zhivkov and Gerő—had been the second most powerful leaders of Bulgaria and Hungary, respectively, persons whose pre-1944 political career had not been closely interlocked with that of the aforesaid dictators and who were therefore quite willing to turn against the latter or desert them. Baráth, “Gerő Ernő politikai pályája,” 22–23, 219–220, 379–382; Oren, *Revolution Administered*, 130–131.

41. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 156–162.

42. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002749/1957.

43. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 September 1956, KTS, 2. doboz, 1/c, 007233/2/1956.

44. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 October 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003128/1/1956. See also Lee, *The Korean Workers’ Party*, 99–100; Lim, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, 225–226; Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 112–113.

45. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 September 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 007232/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 October 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003128/1/1956.

46. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 337.

47. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 507–508.

48. Yang, *The North and South Korean Political Systems*, 340, 348–349.

49. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 26 February 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 004076/1955.

50. Lim, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, 226.

51. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 365–367.

52. The seriousness of the DPRK’s economic difficulties may be gauged from that on 18 May 1956, the first secretary of the Czechoslovakian Embassy stated that in the northern provinces people still subsisted on leaves and grass, even though the DPRK had already passed the worst phase of the 1955 food crisis. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 June 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 25/j, 005594/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 September 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 007232/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 October 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003128/1/1956.

53. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 October 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003128/1/1956.
54. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002749/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 October 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003128/1956.
55. Lim, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, 226. See also Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 164–165.
56. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002749/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 October 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003128/1956.
57. Hoxha, *The Khrushchevites*, 239.
58. Ibid., 237–238.
59. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 October 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003128/1/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 November 1960, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 002481/1961.
60. Logoreci, *The Albanians*, 119–123; Pano, *The People's Republic of Albania*, 117–119.
61. Chinese cooperativeness may have been enhanced by that in August 1956, “after months of haggling, the Soviet government signed an agreement to help build China’s nuclear industries and research facilities.” Lewis and Xue, *China Builds the Bomb*, 61–65.
62. Qiang, “Beijing and the Vietnam Conflict,” 234.
63. Hoxha, *The Khrushchevites*, 242–246.
64. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 546–558.
65. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 June 1969, KTS, 1969, 59. doboz, 002218/1/1969.
66. Radchenko, “The Soviets’ Best Friend in Asia,” 5.
67. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 October 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 002440/1/1956.
68. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 January 1957, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 00269/1957. See also Myers, *Han Sorya*, 112–114.
69. To put An’s statement into a proper context, one should add that it did not correspond to the facts at all, and in any case it was motivated by An’s intention to enhance the prestige of his literary faction at the expense of other groups. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002749/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 5 October 1956, CA, 13. doboz, 18/c, 0131/1956.
70. For instance, Lim Un claims that “the small spark of the Hungarian uprising was possibly sufficient to burn the buds of Korean democracy.” Lim, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, 231.
71. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002749/1957.
72. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 January 1958, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/bc, 00264/1/1958.
73. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 7 March 1958, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002247/1/1958; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 March 1957,

KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 001806/1957; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 9 June 1958, ATS, 1. doboz, 1/b, 006993/1958; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 22 October 1959, KTS, 10. doboz, 17/d, 006235/1959; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Protocole Department, Memorandum, 26 February 1960, KA, 1. doboz, 4/a, 163/1960.

74. Pyongyang followed Beijing's lead in assisting the Hungarian regime. On 6 November, Zhou Enlai sent a telegram to János Kádár, offering 30 million rubles in aid. Hanoi also granted 3 million rubles to Budapest on that occasion. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002749/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 7 March 1958, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002247/1/1958; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 3 December 1957, VTS, 5. doboz, 5/f, 00279/1958.

75. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 February 1957, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001034/1957.

76. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 May 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 4/bc (no reference number)/1959. On the Chinese situation, see Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, 240–241.

77. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 546–558.

78. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 November 1954, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 001138/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 June 1955, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 025/25/3–28/1955.

79. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 June 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 006940/1955.

80. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 January 1955, KA, 9. doboz, 18/e, 025/25/1–31/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 April 1955, KA, 9. doboz, 18/e, 006060/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 January 1956, KA, 9. doboz, 18/e, 0131/25–18/1956.

81. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 22 December 1953, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 00303/1954.

82. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 26 February 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 004076/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 003133/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002749/1957.

83. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 26 February 1955, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 004076/1955.

84. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 April 1955, KA, 9. doboz, 18/e, 006060/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 January 1956, KA, 9. doboz, 18/e, 0131/25–18/1956.

85. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 3 December 1957, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 00269/1958.

86. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 March 1957, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001812/1957.

87. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 November 1954, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 001138/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 April 1956, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 025/25/4–5/1956.

88. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 May 1959, KTS, 10. doboz, 17/d, 004527/1959.

89. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 18 June 1953, KA, 10. doboz, 18/i, 001404/1953.
90. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 9 February 1955, KA, 6. doboz, 12/a, 004063/1955.
91. This phenomenon was also highlighted by Scalapino and Lee. See Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 899–905.
92. The Hungarian cadres fully agreed with the embassy on that point. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 15 February 1954, KA, 8. doboz, 17/d, 0266/1954.
93. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 20 February 1956, KTS, 10. doboz, 17/d, 002317/1/1956.
94. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 July 1957, KA, 8. doboz, 17/d, 43/25–4/1957.
95. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 March 1957, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 001806/1957.
96. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 April 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006054/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 June 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 006940/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 August 1955, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 008016/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 July 1958, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 004882/1958.
97. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 September 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 5192/1/1954; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 September 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 09431/1954.
98. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 January 1954, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 00558/1954.
99. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 December 1954, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 001137/1955.
100. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 September 1954, KA, 12. doboz, 28/b, 09445/1954.
101. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 30 November 1953, KA, 12. doboz, 28/b, 002308/1953.
102. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 December 1954, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 001139/1955.
103. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 September 1954, KA, 12. doboz, 28/b, 09445/1954.
104. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 December 1954, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 001139; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 December 1954, KTS, 10. doboz, 24/b, 001132/1955.
105. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 April 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 006765/1954.
106. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 February 1955, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 004060/1955.
107. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 14 September 1953, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 011219/1953.
108. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 April 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006054/1955.
109. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 May 1955, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006053/1955.

110. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 May 1955, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 006047/1955. This flexible approach was also noted by Scalapino and Lee. See Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 1066–1079.

111. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Annual Report, 18 March 1955, CTS, 5. doboz, 5/a, 003989/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 14 April 1955, CA, 18. doboz, 22/d, 004719/1955.

112. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 July 1958, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 004882/1958.

113. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 December 1954, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 001131/1955. As Cumings notes, this combination of traditional and communist leadership had also been widespread in clan-based “leftist villages” in South Korea. See Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 248–249.

114. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 9 February 1955, KA, 6. doboz, 12/a, 004063/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 2 November 1955, CA, 18. doboz, 22/d, 004718/4/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 14 March 1962, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 004098/1962.

115. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 March 1957, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001812/1957.

116. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 September 1954, KA, 11. doboz, 24/b, 5192/1/1954.

117. Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 347.

118. McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow*, 50–56.

119. Kecskeméti, *The Unexpected Revolution*, 150.

120. Michael Schmidt-Neke, “Innenpolitik,” in Grothusen, *Albanien*, 64–73; Tönnies, *Sonderfall Albanien*, 491–492.

121. Vladimir Tismaneanu, “Gheorghiu-Dej and the Romanian Workers’ Party,” 15–18, 24–26.

122. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 October 1956, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 003128/1/1956.

123. For instance, on 3 October 1956, Práth told Ivanov that the Korean interpreters and drivers employed by the various embassies, and even students, widely discussed the recent visit of Mikoyan, whereas the Hungarian Embassy knew nothing about it. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 October 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 20440/1/1956.

124. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 3 December 1957, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 00269/1958.

125. Myers, *Han Sorya*, 43.

126. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 December 1954, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 001142/1955; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 May 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 4/bc (no reference number)/1959.

127. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 20 September 1957, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 002745/1/1957.

128. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 26 August 1956, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 007218/1956; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 20 September 1957, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 002745/1/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 10 July 1958, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 00286/2/1958; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 29 May

1957, VTS, 9. doboz, 27/d, 003858/1957. On the land reform campaign, the subsequent “corrections,” and the intellectual protests, see Boudarel, *Cent fleurs*, 167–251; Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam*, 167–268.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. Although the CCP leadership soon revitalized the campaign, that latter decision was probably motivated by the intention of revealing “hostile elements.” Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, 182.

2. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 18 November 1956, VA, 6. doboz, 18/d, 001014/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 20 September 1957, VA, 6. doboz, 18/d, 004731/1957.

3. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 March 1957, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001812/1957. On the reissuance of party cards, see also Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 114.

4. The CCP resolution in question required all CC members to spend four months a year in the countryside. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 28 May 1957, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002749/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 March 1957, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001812/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 August 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0066/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 October 1957, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 00262/1958; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 May 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 4/bc, (no reference number)/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 8 April 1958, CTS, 9. doboz, 5/e, 003133/1958. While Kim Il Sung’s “guidance tours” are often referred to in works written about the DPRK, scholars rarely compare them with Stalin’s leadership style.

5. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 10 January 1957, ATS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 00372/1957.

6. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 March 1957, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001812/1957; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1957, KTS, 12. doboz, 25/j, 001805/1957.

7. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1957, KTS, 12. doboz, 25/j, 001805/1957.

8. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 September 1958, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 004885/1/1958.

9. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 January 1957, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 001044/1/1957.

10. Zubok, “The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations,” 258–259.

11. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 October 1957, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/bc, 003870/2/1957.

12. Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, 204–205. In fact, the subsequent Anti-Rightist Movement seems to have been planned by the Chinese leadership well in advance. On May 25, Zhou Yang, then deputy head of the CCP Department of Agitation and Propaganda, told a Hungarian delegation that some Chinese cadres kept asking why the party leadership failed to crack down on subversive criticism. “This will also happen later,” he assured the Hungarians. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 4 June 1957, CTS, 8. doboz, 5/c, 002928/1957.

13. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 7 March 1958, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002247/1/1958. See also Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 114–115.

14. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 October 1957, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/bc, 003870/2/1957.

15. Hungarian Legation to the DPRK, Report, 2 March 1953, KA, 8. doboz, 17/d, 00195/2/1953; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Reports, 16 September 1957, and 10 October 1957, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 004743/1/1957.

16. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 7 March 1958, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002247/1/1958.

17. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 October 1957, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 004743/1/1957.

18. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 October 1957, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 00257/1958. Since Puzanov's predecessor, Ivanov, had maintained some contacts with Kim Il Sung's opponents, the North Koreans had him recalled shortly after the September 1956 CC plenum. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 October 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0081/RT/1962. See also Chung, *P'yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 14–16.

19. Lim, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, 231.

20. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 7 March 1958, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002247/1/1958; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 October 1957, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 00262/1958.

21. Zubok, "The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations," 266.

22. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 October 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 20440/1/1956.

23. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 October 1957, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 00262/1958.

24. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 October 1957, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 00262/1958; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 7 March 1958, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002247/1/1958.

25. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 3 December 1957, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 00269/1958. According to Tatiana Gabroussenko (personal communication) and others, the reasons of Hong's downfall were mostly personal ones. Namely, his behavior was widely disliked and despised by North Korean writers, and the WU leadership eventually found it advisable to get rid of him.

26. Myers, *Han Sorya*, 35–39, 49–50, 86.

27. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 December 1957, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 00254/1958.

28. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 7 March 1958, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002247/1/1958; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959.

29. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1958, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 00262/1/1958.

30. Lim, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, 229, 244–245.

31. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1958, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 00262/1/1958.

32. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 November 1958, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 006462/1958; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February

1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 October 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006032/1959.

33. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 November 1958, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 006462/1958; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959.

34. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 January 1959, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 001706/1/1959.

35. Yang, “Mao Zedong’s Ideological Influence on Pyongyang and Hanoi,” in Scalapino and Kim, *Asian Communism*, 50.

36. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 September 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 006035/1959. On Chinese decentralization, see, among others, Harding, *Organizing China*, 113, 168. One should keep in mind, however, that in 1958, the Soviet, Bulgarian, and East German regimes also carried out some type of industrial decentralization. Berend, *Gazdasági útkeresés*, 139.

37. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 November 1958, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 006463/1958.

38. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 November 1958, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 006463/1958.

39. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 September 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 006035/1959. See also Chung, *The North Korean Economy*, 68–69.

40. The population of Kangwon played a major role in the guerrilla resistance that the North Korean regime organized against American and ROK troops at the end of 1950. That is, social policy seems to have been influenced by political favoritism. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 August 1958, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 005459/1958; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 726–728.

41. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 August 1958, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 005462/1958.

42. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959.

43. Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 5/a, 001/114/2/1959.

44. Jeon, *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie preobrazovaniia v Severnoi Koree*, 86.

45. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 17 April 1954, KA, 4. doboz, 5/ca, (no reference number)/1954.

46. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 16 August 1960, VTS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 006406/1960.

47. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 January 1959, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 001706/1/1959. See also Chung, *The North Korean Economy*, 10–13.

48. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 October 1960, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 007680/1960.

49. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 December 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001710/1960.

50. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 January 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001694/1959.

51. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 June 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 004529/1959.

52. See, among others, Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 127–130.
53. Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 5/a, 001/114/2/1959.
54. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 3 June 1960, KTS, 2. doboz, 1/b, 004819/1960.
55. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 July 1958, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 004885/1958.
56. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 September 1958, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 004885/1/1958.
57. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 January 1959, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 001700/1959.
58. In 1960, Interior Minister Pang Hak-se told a Soviet diplomat that the security services had “revealed” approximately 100,000 “hostile and reactionary elements” between October 1958 and May 1959. However, he went on to say that the great majority of these persons were merely “re-educated.” I would like to thank Dr. Andrei N. Lankov for this piece of information. Some other authors believe that as many as 2,500 to 6,000 people were imprisoned or executed in 1958–1959. See, for instance, Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 833–835.
59. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959.
60. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959.
61. Between July 1957 and July 1958, “only” 4,000 persons had lost their party cards. I would like to thank Dr. Andrei N. Lankov for this piece of information.
62. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 June 1959, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 003047/1/1959.
63. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 March 1959, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 002821/1959.
64. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 May 1959, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 002818/1/1959.
65. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 March 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 002819/1959. See also Lankov, “The Demise of Non-Communist Parties in North Korea,” 122–124.
66. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 486–489.
67. Harding, *Organizing China*, 149.
68. Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, 205–206.
69. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 22 March 1962, VTS, 9. doboz, 27/a, 004097/1962.
70. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959.
71. Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China*, 51–52.
72. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 August 1959, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 003047/3/1959.
73. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 December 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001660/1960.

74. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 3 September 1958, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/bc, 00264/3/1958.
75. In North Korea, each village became a cooperative, whereas the CCP authorities often merged as many as 4,700 to 7,200 households into a single commune. Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962; Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China*, 36.
76. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 March 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0030/RT/1961.
77. Chung, *P'yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 35–45.
78. Ibid., 35–45.
79. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959.
80. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 6 November 1958, VA, 4. doboz, 15/b, 006471/1958.
81. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 10 February 1959, ATS, 11. doboz, 27/a, 001712/1959.
82. Bauer, *Tervgazdaság, beruházás, ciklusok*, 83–87, 154, 207, 230–231, 264–265.
83. Hungarian Embassy to the USSR, Report, 3 September 1959, STS, 9. doboz, IV–138/1, 84, 005516/1959.
84. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 9 May 1959, CA, 13. doboz, 18/b, 003703/1959.
85. Baracs, “*Virágozzék egy szál virág!*”, 61–62.
86. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 9 June 1958, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 002246/1/1958. See also Myers, *Han Sorya*, 116–117.
87. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 March 1961, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 2/25/11–1/1961.
88. McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow*, 149–150.
89. See Chung, *P'yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 28–30.
90. Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 5/a, 001/114/2/1959; Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962. Interestingly enough, the development of North Vietnamese foreign trade took a different course. While in the 1954–1958 period, the PRC's share of North Vietnamese exports and imports had far exceeded that of any other country, in 1959 Moscow overtook Beijing. That year, the Soviet and Chinese share of the DRV's foreign trade stood at 29.2 percent and 26.4 percent, respectively. In other words, Soviet and Chinese economic influence eventually reached a sort of equilibrium in both countries. Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, VTS, 8. doboz, 25/f, 002891/1960.
91. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 944–947; Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 70.
92. Chung, *P'yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 28–30, 35–45.
93. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 November 1958, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/i, 006450/1958.
94. Chung, *P'yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 28–30.
95. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 December 1958, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 00111/1/1959.

96. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 November 1958, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/i, 006450/1958.

97. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959.

98. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 12 December 1950, CA, 20. doboz, 28/c, 00138/1951.

99. Fortunately, no one was actually killed by the hard-drinking party secretary. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 August 1960, KA, 10. doboz, 18/g, 005775/2/1960.

100. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 January 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001702/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 February 1960, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 001709/1960. See also Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 885.

101. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 May 1959, KA, 8. doboz, 15/i, 004532/1959.

102. Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, 116. The prominent Soviet Koreans who eventually left the DPRK included, among others, Chin Pan-su, Pak Ch'ang-sik, and Deputy Minister of Health Cho Yong-ch'ol. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 17 November 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 007488/RT/1960; Yang, *The North and South Korean Political Systems*, 347.

103. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 106–107.

104. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 24 February 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959.

105. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 January 1959, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/cb, 001700/1959.

106. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 3 September 1958, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/bc, 00264/3/1958.

107. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 June 1958, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 004375/1958.

108. On 24 January 1959, the Czechoslovakian ambassador also complained of similar practices. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 January 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001701/1959.

109. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 June 1959, KTS, 2. doboz, 1/b, 001701/1/1959.

110. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 January 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001701/1959.

111. In the early 1960s, the DPRK imported 1.6 million metric tons of coal used to make coke from the PRC every year, while annual North Korean anthracite exports to China amounted to 450,000 metric tons. Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 5/a, 001/114/2/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 November 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006837/1959; Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962.

112. In June–July 1957, Gheorghiu-Dej expelled Constantinescu and Chisinevski from the leadership of the Romanian Workers' Party, and in June 1958, he purged a lot of other high-ranking party cadres, including Constantin Doncea. In the GDR, the

number of political prisoners rose from 8,115 in 1958, to 18,198 in 1960, as the Ul-bright regime accelerated the collectivization of agriculture. Paczkowski, *Fél évszázad Lengyelország történetéből*, 212; Tismaneanu, “Gheorghiu-Dej and the Romanian Workers’ Party,” 24–31; Bruce, *Resistance with the People*, 260.

113. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 November 1958, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/i, 006450/1958.

Notes to Chapter 6

1. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1964, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 001775/1/1964; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 September 1964, KA, 5. doboz, 5/i, 2/25/14–1/1964.

2. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 January 1959, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 001706/1959.

3. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 December 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001660/1960.

4. Hungarian Board of Trade, Study, October 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 5/a, 001/114/2/1959.

5. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 December 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001660/1960.

6. Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P’yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962.

7. In 1962, North Korean intraparty propaganda would stress that “we have no apples, because we must export everything.” Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 April 1962, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 0025/RT/1962.

8. Chung, *P’yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 35–45.

9. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 December 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001660/1960.

10. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 May 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 004528/1959.

11. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 May 1959, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 002818/1/1959.

12. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 May 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 4/bc (no reference number)/1959.

13. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 July 1959, KTS, 10. doboz, 23/b, 005420/1959.

14. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 May 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 004528/1959.

15. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 August 1959, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 003047/3/1959.

16. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 August 1959, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 005421/1959. Interestingly enough, it was the People’s Committees of North and South Hamgyong that the KWP leadership singled out for criticism. Since a disproportionately high number of high-ranking Kim loyalists were Hamgyong-natives, the criticism to which these provincial leaderships were subjected revealed the differences between North and South Korean political favoritism. For instance, Park Chung Hee, Chun Doo Hwan, and Roh Tae Woo openly favored the province they hailed from. On

this issue, see Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 733–753; and Yang, *The North and South Korean Political Systems*, 278–279.

17. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 August 1959, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 005421/1959.

18. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 30 October 1959, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 006373/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 February 1960, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 001714/1960.

19. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 August 1959, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 003047/3/1959.

20. Kim, *The Unification Policy of South and North Korea*, 157–160.

21. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 9 June 1958, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 002246/1/1958.

22. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 May 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 004528/1959.

23. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 July 1960, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 1/25/34–1/1960.

24. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 November 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006837/1959.

25. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 September 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006029/1959.

26. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 September 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006029/1959.

27. Han, *The Problem of Korean Unification*, 148–150, 155–156.

28. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 February 1965, KTS, 1965, 73. doboz, IV–50, 001822/1965; Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 67–68.

29. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 October 1959, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006840/1959; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 17 November 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 007488/RT/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 April 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0037/RT/1962.

30. Chung, *P'yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 35–45.

31. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 December 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001660/1960.

32. Zubok, “The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations,” 247.

33. Chung, *P'yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 35–45.

34. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 2 September 1959, KA, 1. doboz, 4/a, 683/1959.

35. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 January 1959, KA, 11. doboz, 22/d, 001698/1959.

36. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 October 1959, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 006028/1959.

37. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 October 1959, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 006028/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 October 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006841/1959; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 13 May 1966, KTS, 1966, 74. doboz, IV–10 (no reference number)/1966.

38. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 October 1959, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 006028/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 October 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006841/1959.

39. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 30 October 1959, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 006373/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 July 1960, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 0029/RT/1960.
40. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 December 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001711/1/1960.
41. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 6 February 1960, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 00210/3/1960.
42. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 November 1958, KA, 8. doboz, 15/c, 001697/1959.
43. Cumings, *North Korea*, 53; Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 70.
44. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 May 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 4/bc (no reference number)/1959.
45. Krueger, *The Developmental Role of the Foreign Sector and Aid*, 41–42, 57–61, 80–81.
46. Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962.
47. Kim, *The Fall of Syngman Rhee*, 24.
48. Ahn, Kil, and Kim, *Elections in Korea*, 8–10, 45–46.
49. Kim, "From Protest to Change of Regime," 6–11.
50. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 2 September 1959, KA, 1. doboz, 4/a, 683/1959.
51. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 6 February 1960, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 00210/3/1960.
52. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 February 1960, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 00586/1/1960.
53. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 December 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001660/1960.
54. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 July 1960, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/f, 0029/RT/1960.
55. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 February 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 25/b, 002290/1962.
56. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 January 1960, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001712/1960.
57. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 December 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/f, 002278/1961.
58. See Selva, "New Evidence on the Berlin Crisis," 200–202; Zubok, "Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis," 13–25.
59. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 13 November 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006837/1959; Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962. See also Ree, "The Limits of *Juche*," 62–63.
60. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 December 1959, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001715/1960.
61. Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962.
62. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 February 1960, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 00586/1/1960.

63. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 December 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001710/1960.
64. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 December 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001660/1960.
65. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 December 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001710/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 January 1960, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 001670/1960.
66. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 May 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001708/1/1960.
67. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 11 February 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001708/1960.
68. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 March 1960, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 003337/1960.
69. Chung, *The North Korean Economy*, 35–38.
70. G. A. E. Smith, “Agriculture,” in McCauley, *Khrushchev and Khrushchevism*, 100–101.
71. Schnytzer, *Stalinist Economic Strategy in Practice*, 147–148.
72. Alec Nove, “Industry,” in McCauley, *Khrushchev and Khrushchevism*, 63–66.
73. Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty*, 49.
74. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 December 1959, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001660/1960.
75. The Polish government was the only one that began to reduce investments as early as 1959–1960. Bauer, *Tervgazdaság, beruházás, ciklusok*, 91, 157, 211–213, 266–267.
76. Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China*, 44–52; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 May 1959, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 002818/1/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 5 December 1960, CTS, 9. doboz, 5/ca, 0066/RT/1961.
77. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 25 January 1960, VA, 7. doboz, 22/a, 001848/1960.
78. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 294.
79. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 March 1960, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 003331/1960.
80. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 May 1959, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 002818/1/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 April 1962, KTS, 13. doboz, 30/d, 004853/1962.
81. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 May 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 004238/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 August 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 004238/1/1960.
82. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 899–905.
83. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 May 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 004238/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 August 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 004238/1/1960.
84. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 3 June 1960, KTS, 2. doboz, 1/b, 004819/1960.
85. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 899–905.
86. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 July 1960, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 1/25/34–1/1960.

87. Yang, “Mao Zedong’s Ideological Influence on Pyongyang and Hanoi,” in Scalapino and Kim, *Asian Communism*, 56–57.
88. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 December 1960, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 002505/1961.
89. Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China*, 65–66.
90. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Memorandum, 29 September 1957, CTS, 3. doboz, 4/b, 003830/6/1957.
91. Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P’yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962.
92. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Memorandum, 29 September 1957, CTS, 3. doboz, 4/b, 003830/6/1957.
93. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 10 May 1959, CTS, 3. doboz, 4/b, 002169/6/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 30 September 1961, CTS, 9. doboz, 5/ca, 0076/RT/1961.
94. Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China*, 35.
95. Yoon T. Kuark, “North Korea’s Industrial Development During the Post-War Period,” in Scalapino, *North Korea Today*, 54–62.
96. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 10 May 1959, CTS, 3. doboz, 4/b, 002169/6/1959.
97. Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China*, 47.
98. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 2 October 1961, VTS, 8. doboz, 24/b, 007457/1961.
99. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 22 April 1960, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 003577/1960.
100. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 27 June 1960, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 005061/1960.
101. Kim, “From Protest to Change of Regime,” 6–11.
102. Ahn, Kil, and Kim, *Elections in Korea*, 10–15, 17–18, 72–74; Shin, “Social Change, Political Elections, and the Middle Classes in Korea,” 36–38.
103. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 May 1962, KA, 8. doboz, 15/b, 005805/1962.
104. Hungarian Embassy to the USSR, Report, 12 May 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 004073/1960.
105. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 July 1961, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 004517/1/1961.
106. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 11 October 1960, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 007686/1960. The term “mass line” was probably borrowed from the Chinese communist ideological vocabulary.
107. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 December 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001/RT/1961; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 March 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 003645/1961; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 August 1960, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 006165/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 25 November 1960, KTS, 12. doboz, 25/j, 008457/1960.
108. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 9 June 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 004823/1960.
109. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 27 June 1960, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 005061/1960.

110. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 July 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 004823/1/1960.
111. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 12 July 1960, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 005061/1/1960.
112. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 July 1960, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 1/25/34–1/1960.
113. Kim, *The Unification Policy of South and North Korea*, 177–179, 186–187.
114. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 November 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 005476/1/1960. On the South Korean land reform, see El-Ghonemy, *The Political Economy of Rural Poverty*, 199–208.
115. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 7 September 1955, VTS, 9. doboz, 27/a, 006076/1/1955.
116. Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty*, 65–66.
117. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 30 August 1960, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 0032/4/1960.
118. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 March 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 003645/1961; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 5 April 1961, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 003159/2/1961.
119. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 17 June 1961, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 003159/6/1961.
120. I would like to thank Yvette Chin for this piece of information. The MPR was admitted to the UN in October 1961.
121. “Moscow’s efforts to win admission to the United Nations for both Vietnamese governments made Hanoi reticent toward the USSR,” Boudarel notes. See Georges Boudarel, “Influences and Idiosyncracies in the Line and Practice of the Vietnamese Communist Party,” in Turley, *Vietnamese Communism in Comparative Perspective*, 145.
122. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 August 1960, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 0033/RT/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 December 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001/RT/1961; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 February 1961, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/c, 003629/1961.
123. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 November 1960, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 002482/1961.
124. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 November 1960, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 002481/1961.
125. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 November 1960, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 002481/1961.
126. Chung, *P’yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 48–52.
127. “A szovjet-kínai konfliktus és Magyarország,” 12–13.
128. Chung, *P’yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 65–66.
129. Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty*, 66.
130. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 5 November 1960, VTS, 9. doboz, 27/d, 007699/1960.
131. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 25 October 1960, VTS, 3. doboz, 5/a, 007700/1960.
132. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 December 1960, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 002505/1961.
133. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 April 1962, KTS, 13. doboz,

30/d, 004853/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 October 1961, CTS, 9. doboz, 5/cc, 0074/RT/1961.

134. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 March 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0030/RT/1961.

135. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 February 1961, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 002489/1961.

136. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, August 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 002304/1/1962.

137. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 15 November 1961, VTS, 9. doboz, 27/f, 008166/1/1961.

138. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 March 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0030/RT/1961; Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Annual Report, 1963, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 002086/1963. See also Chung, *P'yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 54–56.

139. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 July 1960, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 0029/RT/1960.

140. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 March 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0030/RT/1961.

141. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 March 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 003645/1961.

142. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 12 July 1960, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 005061/1/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 December 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001/RT/1961; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 25 November 1960, KTS, 12. doboz, 25/j, 008457/1960.

143. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 January 1961, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 002485/1961; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 28 March 1961, CA, 13. doboz, 18/b, 003653/1961.

144. Cumings, *North Korea*, 53.

145. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 25 August 1961, KA, 8. doboz, 15/c, 007487/1961.

146. I would like to thank Dr. Andrei N. Lankov for this piece of information.

147. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 17 November 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 007488/RT/1960.

148. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 August 1960, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 006165/1960.

149. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 October 1960, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 007680/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 November 1960, KA, 11. doboz, 18/i, 002503/1961.

150. Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962.

151. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 November 1960, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007687/1960.

152. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 November 1960, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 2/25/19–3/1960.

153. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 November 1960, KA, 11. doboz, 18/i, 002503/1961; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 March 1961, KA, 11. doboz, 22/a, 003633/1961.

154. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 March 1961, KTS, 10. doboz, 25/b, 003640/1961.
155. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 564–565.
156. MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution I*, 314.
157. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 December 1961, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/f, 002285/1962.
158. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 25 January 1962, CTS, 8. doboz, 5/c, 002045/1962.
159. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 May 1961, KA, 9. doboz, 18/b, 004517/1961.
160. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 October 1960, KTS, 12. doboz, 27/a, 007690/1960.
161. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 May 1960, KA, 9. doboz, 18/g, 2/25/19–1/1960.
162. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 June 1961, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/e, 003643/1/1961.
163. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 March 1961, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/f, 003643/1961.
164. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 October 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 008672/1961.
165. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 July 1960, KA, 11. doboz, 27/a, 1/25/34–1/1960.
166. Kim, *The Unification Policy of South and North Korea*, 180.
167. Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 75, 116.
168. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 May 1959, KA, 3. doboz, 4/bc (no reference number)/1959; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 January 1960, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001712/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the USSR, Report, 12 May 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 004073/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 May 1961, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 0041/RT/1961.
169. Kim, “Civil Society in South Korea,” 81–98.
170. Shin, “Social Change, Political Elections, and the Middle Class in Korea,” 34–36.
171. Kim, *The Unification Policy of South and North Korea*, 177, 187, 195–196.
172. B. C. Koh, “The War’s Impact on the Korean Peninsula,” in Williams, *A Revolutionary War*, 245–253.
173. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 487–488.
174. Hong, “Reunification Issues and Civil Society in South Korea,” 1242–1246; Kim, “Civil Society in South Korea,” 81–98.
175. Ahn, Kil, and Kim, *Elections in Korea*, 20.
176. Kim, *The Unification Policy of South and North Korea*, 188–189.
177. Hong, “Reunification Issues and Civil Society in South Korea,” 1242, 1247–1251.
178. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 December 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 001/RT/1961.
179. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 9 June 1960, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 004823/1960.

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2. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 May 1961, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 0041/RT/1961.
3. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 266.
4. Clifford, *Troubled Tiger*, 36–39; Kim, *The Politics of Military Revolution*, 98–100.
5. Kim, *The Politics of Military Revolution*, 112–118.
6. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 17 June 1961, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 003159/6/1961.
7. Clifford, *Troubled Tiger*, 39–42; Kim, *The Politics of Military Revolution*, 84–85, 90–91.
8. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 22 June 1961, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 003159/7/1961.
9. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 31 July 1961, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 003635/1/1961.
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14. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 16 December 1961, ATS, 4. doboz, 5/b, 009055/1961.
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16. Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 172.
17. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 May 1962, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 005136/1962.
18. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1964, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 001775/1/1964.
19. Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962; Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Annual Report, 1963, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 002086/1963.
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21. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 September 1961, KA, 8. doboz, 15/b, 1/25/34–1/1961.

22. Clifford, *Troubled Tiger*, 39.
23. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 October 1961, KA, 1. doboz, 1/c, 1/25/46–1/1961.
24. Kim, *The Unification Policy of South and North Korea*, 196.
25. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 November 1961, KA, 8. doboz, 15/b, 3/25/3–1/1962.
26. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 November 1961, KA, 11. doboz, 21/c, 1127/1961.
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28. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 November 1961, KTS, 10. doboz, 17/d, 008662/1961.
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36. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 December 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 002297/1962.
37. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 April 1962, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 0025/RT/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 May 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 005130/1962.
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50. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 3 April 1962, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/bc, 0029/RT/1962.
51. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 April 1962, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 0025/RT/1962.
52. Chung, *P'yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 70–77.
53. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 February 1962, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 002307/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 May 1962, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/i, 004856/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 3 July 1962, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/b, 006413/1962.
54. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 19 January 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 002255/1962.
55. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 18 May 1964, CTS, 17. doboz, 27/a, 004102/RT/1964.
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57. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 May 1962, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 005136/1962.
58. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 30 May 1962, CTS, 6. doboz, 5/b, 002053/1/1962.
59. Griffith, *The Sino–Soviet Rift*, 35.
60. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, August 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 002304/1/RT/1962.
61. Griffith, *The Sino–Soviet Rift*, 49.
62. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 October 1963, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 007246/1963.
63. Anxious to stay clear of the Sino–Soviet debate, in September 1962, the North Vietnamese leadership finally decided not to display the picture of any foreign party leader during the celebration of the 17th anniversary of the DRV's liberation. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 2 October 1962, VTS, 5. doboz, 5/f, 006712/2/1962.
64. Hungarian Embassy to the MPR, Report, 23 January 1962, CTS, 7. doboz, 5/bc, 0010/RT/1962.
65. Hungarian Embassy to the MPR, Report, 23 January 1962, CTS, 7. doboz, 5/bc, 0010/RT/1962. Significantly, the Stalin statue erected in Ulaanbaatar remained there until the fall of the Mongolian communist regime. The statue of Choibalsan, Mongolia's

“little Stalin,” still stands in front of the National University of Mongolia, and a town in Eastern Mongolia continues to bear Choibalsan’s name.

66. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 23 May 1960, VTS, 2. doboz, 4/bb, 001852/1/1960.

67. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 15 November 1961, VTS, 9. doboz, 27/f, 008166/1/1961.

68. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, 1 February 1962, VTS, 3. doboz, 5/b, 002180/1/1962.

69. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 29 January 1962, VA, 4. doboz, 5/i, 1/38/5–1/1962.

70. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 6 May 1963, VTS, 3. doboz, 5/b, 004323/1963.

71. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 16 August 1963, VTS, 3. doboz, 5/a, 006368/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 18 August 1963, VTS, 5. doboz, 5/f, 006369/1963.

72. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 31 January 1962, CTS, 6. doboz, 5/b, 002053/1962.

73. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 April 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/b, 004106/1962.

74. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 March 1962, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 004108/1962.

75. Nehru’s military action seems to have impressed Pyongyang. On 19 December 1961, Paek Chong-won praised the liberation of Goa, and stated that both Beijing and New Delhi should be more flexible in order to solve the Sino–Indian border conflict. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 19 December 1961, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/af, 003159/17/1961; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 April 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/b, 004106/1962.

76. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 April 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/b, 004105/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 June 1962, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 006081/1962.

77. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 April 1962, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 004855/1/1962.

78. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1963, KTS, 9. doboz, 11/f, 002970/1963.

79. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 January 1963, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 00385/1963.

80. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, August 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 002304/1/RT/1962.

81. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 October 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0081/RT/1962.

82. Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 71.

83. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 June 1962, KTS, 9. doboz, 11/f, 006076/1962.

84. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 March 1960, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 003331/1960; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 June 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 005800/1962.

85. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 June 1962, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 006081/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 August 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0066/RT/1962.

86. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 August 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0066/RT/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 October 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 007976/1962.

87. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 October 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0081/RT/1962.

88. See Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty*, 67; Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 72; Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 594.

89. In the spring of 1964, the director of the Propaganda Department of the VWP CC presented a lecture about the Sino–Soviet conflict, and stated that if Khrushchev “had attacked the USA with these missiles, Cuba would have had to endure the retaliation.” Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 November 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 004105/1/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 15 May 1964, VTS, 9. doboz, 27/f, 004058/1964.

90. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, November 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0085/RT/1962.

91. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 January 1963, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 002085/1963.

92. Brenner and Blight, “The Crisis and Cuban–Soviet Relations,” 81–82.

93. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 4 February 1963, VTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 002063/1963.

94. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, November 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0085/RT/1962.

95. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 November 1962, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/g, 002299/1/1962; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 25 July 1963, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/g, 006343/1963.

96. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 December 1962, KTS, 1. doboz, 1/a, 009256/RT/1962.

97. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 February 1963, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0012/RT/1963. See also Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 72.

98. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, January 1963, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 00380/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 February 1963, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/d, 0011/RT/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1963, KTS, 9. doboz, 11/f, 002970/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 May 1963, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/ca, 004357/1963. See also Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, 71; Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 595–596.

99. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 February 1963, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/d, 0011/RT/1963.

100. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 27 May 1963, KA, 5. doboz, 5/f, 1/25/17–1/1963.

101. In January 1963, the Park regime gave its consent to the creation of new political parties, an action that did not lessen Kim Il Sung’s belligerence. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 February 1963, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/d, 0011/RT/1963.

102. Krueger, *The Developmental Role of the Foreign Sector and Aid*, 100–101.
103. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 March 1963, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 002965/1963.
104. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 March 1964, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 003819/RT/1964.
105. Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, 89–90.
106. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 February 1963, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/d, 0011/RT/1963.
107. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, August 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 002304/1/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 October 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 007976/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 25 January 1964, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001400/1/1964.
108. Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty*, 67–68.
109. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 May 1963, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 0022/RT/1963.
110. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 May 1963, KTS, 2. doboz, 3/g, 004349/1963.
111. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 May 1962, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 005130/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 2 June 1962, CA, 18/i, 005845/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 September 1963, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 006730/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 January 1964, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001400/2/1964; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, June 1964, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001400/3/1964.
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113. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, June 1964, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001400/3/1964.
114. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 December 1963, KTS, 10. doboz, 22/d, 0014/RT/1963.
115. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 December 1963, KTS, 10. doboz, 22/d, 0014/RT/1963.
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117. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 December 1963, KTS, 10. doboz, 22/d, 0014/RT/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 January 1964, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 001775/2y/1964; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 March 1964, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 001775/1–2/1964. See also Chung, *The North Korean Economy*, 17–20.
118. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 June 1964, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 004092/1964.
119. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 12 September 1962, CA, 18. doboz, 22/a, 007407/1962; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Report, 11 April 1964, CA, 19. doboz, 25/c (no reference number)/1964.
120. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 11 June 1964, ATS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 00952/2/1964.

121. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 18 January 1964, ATS, 4. doboz, 5/c, 00810/1964.
122. Lee, *China and Korea*, 99–102.
123. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, January 1963, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 00380/1963.
124. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 August 1963, KTS, 9. doboz, 11/f, 006346/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 June 1964, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 004092/1964; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 15 August 1963, VTS, 5. doboz, 5/i, 006371/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 15 August 1963, VA, 4. doboz, 15/b, 006366/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 24 August 1963, CTS, 9. doboz, 5/e, 006342/1963. See also Chung, *P'yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 81–92.
125. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 7 January 1963, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 00398/1963.
126. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 February 1963, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0012/RT/1963.
127. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 6 April 1963, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0021/RT/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 May 1963, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/e, 0024/RT/1963.
128. Yang, “Changes in Mao Zedong’s Attitude,” 24–25.
129. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 11 May 1963, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/g, 004161/1/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 23 September 1963, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/g, 006728/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 11 January 1964, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0015/RT/1964; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 15 May 1964, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 004090/1964; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 18 October 1964, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 004087/1/1964.
130. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 14 October 1960, ATS, 3. doboz, 5/b, 007059/1960; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 8 December 1961, VTS, 4. doboz, 15/b, 008817/1961; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 25 January 1964, VTS, 1. doboz, 1/a, 001752/1964.
131. Hungarian Legation to the PRA, Report, 27 October 1952, AA, 5. doboz, 10/a, 006581/7/1952.
132. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 28 November 1960, CTS, 9. doboz, 5/ca, 0066/RT/1961; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 21 July 1961, VTS, 7. doboz, 17/d, 005074/1/1961; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 26 July 1963, VTS, 7. doboz, 17/d, 006043/1963.
133. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 June 1963, KTS, 13. doboz, 30/b, 005273/1963; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 October 1963, KTS, 13. doboz, 30/b, 005273/1/1963.
134. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 19 December 1963, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/h, 00149/1964.
135. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 December 1963, KTS, 10. doboz, 22/d, 0014/RT/1963.
136. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 June 1964, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 004558/RT/1964.
137. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 October 1964, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 005971/1964.

138. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 April 1965, KTS, 1965, 73. doboz, IV–571, 003654/1965.

139. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 1 February 1964, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001776/1964.

140. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 March 1964, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 003819/RT/1964.

141. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 6–20.

142. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 4 January 1963, VTS, 8. doboz, 25/c, 00221/1963; Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade, Memorandum, 9 January 1965, VTS, 1965, 108. doboz, 00681/1965.

143. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 25 January 1964, VTS, 1. doboz, 1/a, 001752/1964.

144. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, September 1960, CTS, 9. doboz, 5/ca, 0042/RT/1960.

145. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 29 June 1964, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 004558/RT/1964.

146. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 11 July 1966, VTS, 1966, 114. doboz, 1, 004068/1966.

147. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 5 January 1963, KTS, 6. doboz, 5/a, 00384/1963.

148. J. F. Brown, “Romania and Bulgaria,” in Bromke, *The Communist States at the Crossroads*, 112–113; Fejtő, *A History of the People’s Democracies*, 108; Andrea R. Süle, “România politikatörténete 1944–1990,” in Hunya, *Románia 1944–1990*, 234–235.

149. Griffith, *The Sino–Soviet Rift*, 139–141.

150. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 August 1963, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0034/RT/1963.

151. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 20 January 1964, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 001771/1964.

152. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 May 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 004516/1961.

153. Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P’yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, June 1964, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001400/3/1964.

154. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 10 November 1962, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 008695/1962.

155. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 July 1964, KA, 10. doboz, 18/g, 004878/1964.

156. Chung, *P’yongyang Between Peking and Moscow*, 92–98.

157. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, June 1964, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 001400/3/1964.

158. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 January 1964, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 001770/1964.

159. Hungarian Embassy to the CSSR, Report, 17 October 1961, ATS, 4. doboz, 5/bd, 0078/RT/1961.

160. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 9 September 1963, ATS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 007776/1963.

161. Pano, *The People's Republic of Albania*, 113–115; Adi Schnytzer, “Industry,” in Grothusen, *Albanien*, 314–319.
162. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 14 October 1960, ATS, 3. doboz, 5/b, 007059/1960; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Report, 2 December 1960, ATS, 3. doboz, 4/i, 00363/3/1961.
163. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 14 October 1960, ATS, 3. doboz, 5/b, 007059/1960.
164. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 December 1964, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 006558/1964.
165. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 12 December 1964, KTS, 13. doboz, 27/a, 004092/1/1964.
166. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 December 1964, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 006558/1964.
167. Hungarian Embassy to the USSR, Report, 21 December 1964, VTS, 5. doboz, 5/f, 006581/1964.
168. Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, 287–288.
169. Crampton, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*, 183.

Notes to Chapter 8

1. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 140, 192, 223; Kimura, “From Fascism to Communism,” 69–86.
2. Banac, *With Stalin against Tito*, 248–252; Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, 199–207; Kofas, *Authoritarianism in Greece*, 135–139.
3. The ideas and practices of the North Korean regime can be contrasted with the policies of Ne Win (Burma), Nyerere (Tanzania), Nkrumah (Ghana), Siad Barre (Somalia), Nasser (Egypt), and Boumediene (Algeria).
4. Heller and Nekrich, *Utopia in Power*, 259–264.
5. Benvenuti, “The ‘Reform’ of the NKVD,” 1048.
6. Nicolas Werth, “A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union,” in Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism*, 246–248.
7. Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam*, 59.
8. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War I*, 396–397.
9. Of course, some of these Chinese measures were not in use either before or after the Cultural Revolution, and thus they were not necessarily typical of Chinese communism as such.
10. Certain technocrats, including Chong Chun-t’ae, were consistently spared, but they never became as influential as the members of the first circle.
11. Yang, *The North and South Korean Political Systems*, 339–341.
12. Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty*, 53.
13. The latter development may have been caused, or at least accelerated, by the political, diplomatic, military, and economic problems that cropped up in the mid-1960s.
14. Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System*, 285–286.
15. T. H. Rigby, “Was Stalin a Disloyal Patron?,” in Dallin, *Articles on Russian and Soviet History*, 117–124; Scott, *Russian Political Institutions*, 144–145; Nicolas Werth, “A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union,” in Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism*, 246–249.

16. The “core class” was composed of the favored groups, while former private entrepreneurs and clergymen, intellectuals trained before 1945, persons of South Korean origin, the family members of those who had fled to the South, and other “unreliables” belonged to the “hostile classes.” See, among others, Hunter, *Kim Il-song’s North Korea*, 3–11.

17. Moshe Lewin, “Society, State, and Ideology during the First Five-Year Plan,” in Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Revolution in Russia*, 59.

18. Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia*, 69–70.

19. Nicolas Werth, “A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union,” in Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism*, 187–188.

20. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 2 December 1969, KTS, 1969, 59. doboz, 001365/6/1969.

21. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 350.

22. Ibid., 195–196.

23. For instance, Pyongyang, unlike Beijing, did not launch a campaign against “kulaks” in 1955. Kim Il Sung had slowed the Ch’ollima Movement much before Mao halted the Great Leap Forward. In 1960–1961, the KWP leaders even contemplated to give their consent to the simultaneous admission of both Koreas to the United Nations, a concession neither the PRC nor the DRV was willing to make to Taiwan and South Vietnam, respectively.

24. Jean-Louis Margolin, “China: A Long March into Night,” in Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism*, 486–487.

25. Hungarian Embassy to the PRC, Report, 4 July 1964, CTS, 8. doboz, 5/c, 004564/1964.

26. Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 21.

27. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 222–223.

28. Figes, *A People’s Tragedy*, 533–534, 627–629, 750, 806.

29. Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System*, 293.

30. For example, North Korean propagandists claim that the birth of Kim Jong Il was heralded by a swallow that had descended from heaven. Carlson, “‘Dear Leader’ Is Role He Was Born to Play,” A3.

31. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 223–224.

32. Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 24–30; Springer, *Pyongyang*, 143–145.

33. Springer, *Pyongyang*, 83.

34. Petrov, “The Rise of the Socio-economic School,” 284.

35. De Ceuster, “The Nation Exorcised,” 222–223.

36. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 22 May 1962, KTS, 8. doboz, 5/f, 005132/1962; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 17 August 1965, KTS, 1965, 73. doboz, IV–100, 001819/3/1965; Hunter, *Kim Il-song’s North Korea*, 175–178.

37. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 January 1966, KTS, 1966, 74. doboz, IV–71, 001500/1966.

38. Hunter, *Kim Il-song’s North Korea*, 99–106.

39. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 003133/1956.

40. Mark Peterson, “Confucianism,” in Koo and Nahm, *An Introduction to Korean Culture*, 143.

41. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, 171.

42. Krueger, *The Developmental Role of the Foreign Sector and Aid*, 57–61.
43. Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Study, June 1962, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 007195/1962.
44. Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 305–308; Krueger, *The Developmental Role of the Foreign Sector and Aid*, 75–80; Lie, *Han Unbound*, 23–24.
45. Clifford, *Troubled Tiger*, 40–41, 63–64, 94–95, 130–131.
46. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 194–208, 212–217, 229, 249, 392. See also Clifford, *Troubled Tiger*, 56, 80–85; MacDonald, *Korea*, 41.
47. Ahn, Kil, and Kim, *Elections in Korea*, 46–50; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 484–486; Kim, *The Korea-Japan Treaty Crisis*, 103–111, 186–190.
48. George, *Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore*, 70.
49. Nguyen Thai, "South Vietnam," in Lent, *The Asian Newspapers' Reluctant Revolution*, 236–251; Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, 53.
50. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 312.
51. Paik, "The Formation of the United Lineage in Korea," 75–90.
52. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 21 April 1969, KTS, 1969, 60. doboz, 002219/1969.
53. For instance, the political confrontations that occurred in post-1953 South Korea were considerably motivated by age-old Korean provincial rivalries. This factor, in all probability, did not play a decisive role in North Korean factional struggles.
54. Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 329–330, 353, 375, 380; Kim, *The Politics of Military Revolution*, 98–100, 112–118, 156–158.
55. Walker, *The Waking Giant*, 198–199.
56. Shafir, *Romania*, 69–79; Vlad Georgescu, "Introduction," in Georgescu, *Romania*, 6–7.
57. Terrill, *Mao*, 307, 382, 418.
58. Thai, *Collective Leadership and Factionalism*, 73–91.
59. I would like to thank Artan Puto and Ardian Vehbiu for this piece of information.
60. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 11 January 1962, ATS, 5. doboz, 5/c, 001084/1962; Biberaj, *Albania*, 34–38. I am also very grateful to Elez Biberaj, Professor Robert Elsie, Artan Puto, and Ardian Vehbiu for many additional pieces of information.
61. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Report, 16 December 1960, ATS, 3. doboz, 5/b, 008050/1960.
62. I would like to thank Dr. Andrei N. Lankov for these pieces of information.
63. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 4 December 1961, KTS, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 002297/1962.
64. Shafir, *Romania*, 72, 77.
65. Marmullaku, *Albania and the Albanians*, 71; Pano, *The People's Republic of Albania*, 111–112.
66. These additional factors were, above all, the following: a one-party system, a strongly nationalist leadership, a permanent military competition with stronger foes, the elimination of private economic activity, and the absence of external control over the regime's domestic policies.
67. Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 14–15.
68. Ahn, Kil, and Kim, *Elections in Korea*, 195–196.

69. Lim, “Political ‘Bossism’ Persists in Candidate Nomination Process,” 144–145.
70. Donald Baker, “Christianity,” in Koo and Nahm, *An Introduction to Korean Culture*, 195.
71. As noted in Chapters 3 and 7, Pyongyang’s attempts to improve its relations with Tokyo were often hindered by Seoul’s protests.
72. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 13 November 1967, VTS, 1967, 93. doboz, 146, 004437/1967.
73. Makai, *Khomeini Iránja*, 221.
74. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 May 1966, KTS, 1966, 60. doboz, 1, 003534/1966; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 16 January 1967, VTS, 1967, 95. doboz, 001232/1967.
75. Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 19 July 1952, KTS, 3. doboz, 4/bc, 001024/2/1952.
76. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 28 December 1956, KTS, 7. doboz, 5/f, 001016/2/1957.
77. As Oberdorfer notes, “Park had no belief or interest in unification in his lifetime.” Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 25–26.
78. Qiang, “Beijing and the Vietnam Conflict,” 242.
79. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 16 December 1963, KA, 9. doboz, 18/d, 001779/1964.
80. Park, “Forget ‘Cultural Purism’,” 151–152; Yim, *The Emergence and Change of Cultural Policy in South Korea*, 115–116.
81. Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*, 281–282; Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, 17.
82. Hungarian Embassy to the PRA, Report, 15 May 1963, AA, 8. doboz, 18/b, 004430/1963; Robert Elsie, “Theatre,” in Grothusen, *Albanien*, 685.
83. Hodos, *Show Trials*, 6–7.
84. Bui, *Following Ho Chi Minh*, 54–55; Thai, *Collective Leadership and Factionalism*, 73–75, 84.
85. Biberaj, *Albania*, 35–36.
86. In contrast, some of the imprisoned victims had been rehabilitated or amnestied before a leadership change.
87. External assistance and pressure possibly gave a substantial push to the afore-said precedent-creating purges. The Soviets were, in all probability, involved in the show trials of Xoxe and Yi Sung-yop, while the 1944 liquidation of Albanian communist leaders had been partly suggested by Yugoslav “advisers.” The 1953–1956 North Vietnamese land reform campaign, which led to one of the most destructive purges that the VWP has ever been subjected to, was proposed by CCP “advisers.” That purge, however, did not affect any of the top VWP leaders, although it moved up to the provincial level. This may have facilitated the “correction” of the “errors” in 1956–1957, since the advancement of the high-ranking leaders had not been as closely linked up with the purges as it was the case in the DPRK and Albania. Qiang, *China and the Vietnam War*, 39–42, 75–76; Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam*, 237.
88. Thai, *Collective Leadership and Factionalism*, 73–74.
89. Templer, *Shadows and Wind*, 107–111.
90. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 26 February 1968, VTS, 1968, 89. doboz, 7, 001875/1968.
91. Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 181.

92. Decades later, this leadership style still persisted. In 1997, Kim Jong Il blamed the current food shortages on certain high-ranking cadres, including CC Secretary So Hwang-hui, and had them executed.

93. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 May 1963, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 0022/RT/1963. On 14 December 1968, Kim made a very similar statement in the presence of the East German Ambassador. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 24 January 1969, KTS, 1969, 59. doboz, 001364/1969.

94. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 26 January 1966, KTS, 1966, 74. doboz, IV–71, 001500/1966.

95. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 14 June 1968, KTS, 1968, 58. doboz, 2, 001882/3/1968.

96. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 11 December 1969, KTS, 1969, 59. doboz, 003557/6/1969.

97. It is possible that the dictator's "skeptical" views on the mentality and social composition of the population were based on the results of the extensive post-1957 investigations of the background of all citizens, but he may have reached such a conclusion years earlier.

98. Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in P'yongyang, Memorandum, 10 September 1968, KTS, 1968, 58. doboz, 5, 00306/6/1968.

99. Yang, "Changes in Mao Zedong's Attitude," 20. See also Harrison, *The Long March to Power*, 464–465.

100. Jean-Louis Margolin, "China: A Long March into Night," in Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism*, 516–517.

101. Baráth, "Gerő Ernő politikai pályája," 58.

102. McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow*, 27, 76.

103. Bui, *Following Ho Chi Minh*, 32.

104. Chong, *A Handbook on North Korea*, 75–77.

105. Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 125–126, 186–187, 276–278.

106. Bruce, *Resistance with the People*, 260.

107. Baráth, *Szovjet nagyköveti iratok*, 17; Ostermann, "This Is Not a Politburo, But a Madhouse," 65–66.

108. Nikova, "The Blow against the State Leadership of Bulgaria," 116–126.

109. Baráth, *Szovjet nagyköveti iratok*, 21.

110. Hungarian Legation to the PRA, Report, 29 April 1952, ATS, 7. doboz, 5/g, 001016/1952.

111. Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 95–103.

112. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 308; Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Annual Report, 1 March 1956, KTS, 4. doboz, 5/a, 003133/1956.

113. Hutchings, *Historical Dictionary of Albania*, 121.

114. I would like to thank Professors Magdolna Baráth, Rüdiger Frank, Andrei N. Lankov, Hua-yu Li, and Igor Lukes for these pieces of information. It is noteworthy that in Mongolia, the MPRP regime erected both a Stalin statue and a Choibalsan statue.

115. See the [source provided in Chapter 1] letter that the CPSU Politburo sent to the KWP leadership in September 1950, and the characteristics of the 1953 show trial.

116. Mansourov, "Stalin, Mao, Kim, and China's Decision to Enter the Korean War," 99.

117. Bajanov, “Assessing the Politics of the Korean War,” 88; Mansourov, “Stalin, Mao, Kim, and China’s Decision to Enter the Korean War,” 99–105.

118. In 1949–1951, Kim Il Sung, as CC chair, had to share power with First Secretary Ho Ka-i. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 145.

119. Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, 164–166.

120. As Westad notes, “the very fact that the head of the Soviet party came to see Mao—and not the other way around—carried tremendous symbolic significance to most Chinese,” and it must have produced a similar effect on the North Korean leaders as well. Westad, “Introduction,” in Westad, *Brothers in Arms*, 15–16.

121. In 1956, the presence of Soviet troops did not hinder Gomulka and the Polish leaders in standing up to Khrushchev, although he did threaten them with a military intervention.

122. Banac, *With Stalin against Tito*, 67–77.

123. Hutchings, *Historical Dictionary of Albania*, 133–134; Hodos, *Show Trials*, 6–7; Robert Elsie, “Literature,” in Grothusen, *Albanien*, 656–657.

124. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 92.

125. Clifford, *Troubled Tiger*, 85–86; Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 354, 359–361.

126. Actually, a prominent dissident, Tömör-Ochir, fell victim to a murder that may have been carried out by agents of the state security service. Dashpurev and Soni, *Reign of Terror in Mongolia*, 63–75; Rupen, *Mongols of the Twentieth Century*, 323, 331.

127. For instance, in 1954–1957, the Soviet regime released nearly 400,000 political prisoners, and by 1959 only 11,000 “politicals” had remained in the labor camps. In 1979, a resolution of the CCP CC removed the label “landlord” or “rich peasant” from as many as 4.4 million Chinese villagers. See Nicolas Werth, “A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union,” in Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism*, 256; Tálas, *Economic Reforms and Political Attempts in China*, 71.

128. Such attitudes and reactions proved quite common in Stalin’s USSR as well. Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia*, 83, 96, 157–162; Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants*, 11–16.

129. Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia*, 53; Ward, *Stalin’s Russia*, 82–83, 90–91.

130. Kim Il Sung’s “Thesis on the Socialist Agrarian Question” also declared that the property of coops would be eventually transformed into state property.

131. G. A. E. Smith, “Agriculture,” in McCauley, *Khrushchev and Khrushchevism*, 103–105; Waedekin, *Agrarian Policies in Communist Europe*, 45–55. Since the reduction of Soviet grain procurements in traditional cropland areas would not have been possible without the Virgin Lands project, Pyongyang’s reluctance to cut grain procurements may have been partly related to the unfeasibility of such a project in the DPRK. As Kim Il Sung told Moskovsky on 22 April 1963, in North Korea there was no way of assimilating virgin land, and the reclamation of coastal land proved extremely labor intensive. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 8 May 1963, KTS, 11. doboz, 24/b, 0022/RT/1963.

132. Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, 30 December 1963, KTS, 10. doboz, 22/d, 0014/RT/1963.

133. Donald Filtzer, “Labour,” in McCauley, *Khrushchev and Khrushchevism*, 120–121.
134. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants*, 317–318; Waedekin, *Agrarian Policies in Communist Europe*, 48–49.
135. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, 456–457.
136. Kramer, “The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle,” 3–8.
137. Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China*, 105–108.
138. Banac, *With Stalin against Tito*, 16–23, 29–37, 131–137, 146–163.
139. Ree, “The Limits of Juche,” 51.
140. Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty*, 173.
141. See, for instance, the coincidence between “corrections” made in 1952–1956 and occasions when the DPRK received large-scale economic aid.
142. On the other hand, this factor did induce Tito to make concessions to the West in the field of foreign policy. For instance, this is why Belgrade stopped assisting the Greek communist guerrillas.
143. These reforms included the release of a substantial number of political prisoners, the halting of collectivization, the relaxation of anti-clerical measures, and the removal of the cadres’ special privileges.
144. Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat*, 67–68, 82–83, 90–92, 139.
145. Banac, *With Stalin Against Tito*, 246–247.
146. As a high-ranking Yugoslav official put it in 1950: “These are the same people who during the course of the war were our most ardent supporters; now they hate us the most.” Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists*, 134.
147. Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 299–302, 312, 320–323.
148. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 224–228.
149. Ibid., 382; Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 446.
150. Pavlowitch, *Tito*, 75–84.
151. Martin McCauley, “Khrushchev as Leader,” in McCauley, *Khrushchev and Khrushchevism*, 21.
152. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War II*, 668.
153. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 186–187.
154. Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 14 May 1965, VTS, 1965, 108. doboz, 001330/55/1965; Hungarian Embassy to the DRV, Report, 2 May 1968, VTS, 1968, 88. doboz, 4, 001578/4/1968.

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