

Long Live Korean Reunification and Independence! Down with Korean Revisionism!*

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* Adapted by Joe Nada from [the original at ML Review](#).

Introduction

At the end of the XXth century, we are still faced with the anachronistic endurance of Korea's partition between north and south that has lasted for about 55 years. This division represents a tragic and anomalous chapter after a 5,000-year-long history of Korea as a unified and homogeneous nation, developing its own distinct cultural, linguistic and psychological features. No sooner had the Korean people successfully liberated themselves from Japanese colonialism in 1945 than Washington arbitrarily and artificially amputated the country into two halves, through US military and political interference. After replacing Japanese colonial rule with its military occupation in the south, Washington could instigate and later unleash – under the nominal aegis of the United Nations – its hot war confrontation in Korea during 1950–53. Korean resistance foiled American attempts to dominate the entire peninsula, forcing Washington to sign an armistice in July 1953 and stabilise the military demarcation line along the 38th parallel. This armistice has by now become the century's longest running, due to the American refusal to reach a final peace agreement. And in the meantime US imperialism has deployed in South Korea the world's highest concentration of conventional and nuclear weapons, together with thousands of troops. This enormous military threat against the north is highlighted by regular war exercises in conjunction with anti-north confrontation propaganda. There have also been uninterrupted US sanctions and embargoes since the early fifties. All this has increased tension in the region and has been detrimental to the current economic situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Because of all this savage and unjustified aggression and interference on the part of US imperialism, therefore, the cold war still carries on unabated in the Korean peninsula. Likewise, in order to avert the constant danger of a second Korean War, never have the Korean people given up their inalienable right to live peacefully re-united, sovereign and independent in their own land.

During the current era of imperialism, the peoples' independence – in Korea, just as elsewhere – represents a major issue requiring an adequate and just solution in the interest of all those countries that still remain subjugated in a semi-colonial and dependent status. The post-1945 national liberation revolutions – marking an historical landmark in our century – had indeed determined the collapse of the traditional colonial system of imperialism. De-colonisation, however, immediately prompted the USA and other competing imperialist powers to retain their own spheres of influence, among nominally independent states, by devising an endless series of economic, political, military, diplomatic and other forms of domination and enslavement. Direct colonial exploitation has thus been replaced by neo-colonialism, which now affects – under the cloak of imperialist globalization – the overwhelming majority of mankind.

Within the above general framework, and in order to pursue its hegemonic aims in north-east Asia, Washington has for more than half a century implemented its “two Koreas” policy – a policy intended to perpetuate Korea's division through the US permanent military occupation and economic domination of the Republic of Korea (ROK), sheltered under the American “nuclear umbrella” and reduced to a semi-colonial status. Such unwanted interference has permitted a succession of fascist dictatorships and pseudo-democratic regimes in the ROK, now gripped by its most severe crisis and totally reliant upon the dictates imposed by Washington and the IMF. On the other hand, the DPRK has spearheaded the Korean people's struggle for the reunification of their country – a vital question that cannot be solved peacefully and independently as long as the constant threat of war hangs over the Korean peninsula because of the US military occupation in the south.

In sharp contrast to the sycophantic and servile policies towards Washington, as pursued by the South Korean ruling bourgeoisie, the DPRK has always correctly singled out the continued US military presence in the south – hardly justifiable today, after the disappearance of the “Soviet threat” in Asia – as the principal stumbling block to any peaceful solution of the Korean question and to stability in the region. Hence, as a matter of principle, Pyongyang continues to demand that the US withdraw its troops as a precondition to national reunification, to be achieved without reliance on outside forces and by transcending the ideological and socio-political differences existing between North and South Korea. This anti-imperialist stance fully complies with the current historical trend towards the self-determination, sovereignty and independence of the peoples, particularly in the semi-colonial and dependent countries of the Asian, African and Latin-American continents.

As always – all the democratic, progressive, peace-loving forces world-wide have the obligation to step up their unconditional support for the just cause of Korea's independence. This goal can only be achieved by

dismantling US military bases in the Korean peninsula, by sending American soldiers back to their homes in the USA and by breaking off all links of dependence on US imperialism. Once outside interference is eliminated, the military demarcation line, which has tragically bisected brothers and sisters of the same blood for such a long time, would soon disappear. The way would be opened towards a peaceful settlement of the Korean national question which is, after all, an internal affair of the Korean people themselves.

While resolutely supporting Korean reunification and independence, it is also up to the Marxist-Leninist parties and organisations to tackle the issue of Korean revisionism – as it has developed in North Korea since 1945, without having been affected by the final collapse of the USSR and other revisionist countries during the late eighties. By having creatively applied and modified socialist principles to Korea's specific conditions, the DPRK claims to have established a socialist society that proceeds towards communism by means of Juche or Kimilsungism.

Nonetheless, the only revolutionary compass in the hands of the working class in order to advance towards socialist, and ultimately communist, societies still remains Marxism-Leninism – i.e., the doctrine of scientific socialism as elaborated by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. It is, therefore, from a Marxist-Leninist perspective that the conclusion must be drawn about the undisputed fact that revisionism only, and not genuine socialism, has been thoroughly implemented in the DPRK up to the present.

Following liberation from Japan, North Korea was still a semi-feudal country whose capitalist development had just started to take off. It proceeded along the path of “progressive democracy” by overthrowing pro-Japanese capitalist forces and establishing the joint dictatorship of several classes in society, including the national bourgeoisie. Thanks to important reforms of an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal character (with particular regard to agricultural cooperativization and the nationalisation of its main industries), North Korea was able to rapidly overcome its century-long backwardness and transform itself along democratic lines. But neither before nor after the Korean War, at no time since 1945 has the national-democratic stage of the Korean revolution developed into its subsequent, socialist stage under the dictatorship of the proletariat. “Socialist relations of production” in North Korea were officially proclaimed in 1958. But they were, in fact, established without a socialist revolution, i.e., without overthrowing the national capitalist class, which had in the meantime been “remoulded”, persuaded to embrace socialism and “voluntarily” absorbed into the “socialist state.”

During the late fifties, in order to solve the crucial issue of the dictatorship of the working class, which is indeed essential in strengthening true socialism, the North Korean leader, Kim Il Sung, simply equated the new democratic system of various classes exercising state power in the DPRK with the dictatorship of the proletariat itself. No working class leadership has ever been subsequently established. And in the absence of a genuine proletarian dictatorship, revisionism could pervade all aspects of social and political life. In essence, therefore, the North Korean revolution can never be regarded as a socialist revolution.

Under the banner of Juche, collectivism was corrupted and began to be transformed into servility towards, and absolute loyalty to, the leader, whose adulation has now reached unimaginable proportions. This personality cult around Kim Il Sung has in turn allowed nepotism and hereditary succession of power with his son, Kim Jong Il, gradually replacing Kim Il Sung as the DPRK's leader. Policies are now supposed to be implemented by means of “love and trust.” Korean revisionism, in the meantime, has evolved into an idealistic and eclectic philosophy confusing socialism and communism with independence, just as the anti-imperialist cause is identified with the socialist revolution!

Such vulgar distortions of scientific socialism have led to a total negation – both in theory and in practice – of Marxism-Leninism in the DPRK. Consequently, they have consolidated a fully fledged revisionist society under the banner of Juche. Its creator, Kim Il Sung, cannot escape political responsibility for having added further confusion and ideological disorientation to the wide-ranging arsenal of modern revisionist trends that prevent the real emancipation of the working class by upholding socialism and communism in words, but not in deeds, under false red flags. It is from the standpoint of a principled Marxist-Leninist criticism that Kim Il Sung should be characterised as a revisionist, notwithstanding his enormous merits as a progressive revolutionary patriot who had energetically mobilised all forces in society to liberate Korea from Japan's colonial rule and to later challenge US imperialism with the aim of achieving the country's reunification and independence.

Though the two questions are somehow intertwined, the issue of Korean reunification and independence stands separately from the issue of Korean revisionism. In order to increase internationalist solidarity and assistance to the Korean people, communist parties and organisations world-wide should struggle at the forefront of all initiatives aimed at supporting the DPRK in its heroic, anti-imperialist efforts to challenge US domination and interference in the Korean peninsula and to achieve a lasting peace in a reunified and truly independent state. But while militantly defending the Korean people's inalienable right to their independence, Marxist-Leninist forces should be equally clear about the limitations of Korean revisionism and the serious damage it is doing to the genuine cause of scientific socialism and communism. Support of Korean reunification and independence must not imply political support of "Korean socialism" under the banner of Juche.

Marxist-Leninists stand by a clear set of principles that are dialectically implemented according to different situations in different parts of the world. But on the pretext of creatively applying them, there exists no need today to invent new "socialisms" and thus deviate from the true revolutionary theory and practice of scientific socialism. Everywhere, the working masses are continuously subjected to imperialist oppression and exploitation, just as they face poverty, social deprivation, unemployment and war. In particular, as the contradictions between the popular masses in semi-colonial and dependent countries, on the one hand, and imperialism and monopoly capital, on the other, together with the contradictions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie all the world over, are increasingly sharpening and producing an incurable global crisis, it is only Marxism-Leninism – the revolutionary ideology of the working class – that can provide a reliable orientation towards social and national liberation, towards socialism and communism.

1. Brief Historical Background

After centuries of foreign invasions and internal strife, the unification of the Korean peninsula was attained in the seventh century AD and lasted – with occasional interruptions and more foreign occupations from neighbouring Asian states (namely, China and Japan) – until 1945.

Unification was first achieved under the Silla dynasty which had been capable of conquering, with Chinese support, the Korean kingdoms of Koguryo and Paekche by 668 AD. Although the Silla state was still obliged to recognise China as a suzerain nation, it could independently develop its peculiar philosophical, literary and artistic features, initially stimulated by Buddhism. Silla's decline became increasingly associated with the parasitic nature of its nobility, as well as with the continuous struggles and palace coups among its various kings succeeding to the throne. In addition to the collapse of the old social order based on the so-called 'bone-rank' system (i.e., hereditary bloodline), social instability ultimately determined the replacement of Silla with the state of Koryo. From 918 until 1392, the Koryo period was also affected by divisions among its ruling class, aggravated by numerous rebellions of peasants and slaves. Moreover, following Mongol incursions throughout the Korean peninsula, Koryo was forced to become subservient to Mongol power during the thirteenth century.

In 1392 the Koryo dynasty was succeeded by the Yi dynasty, the longest in Korean history as it remained in power until 1910. Though heavily influenced by China, the initial period of the Yi dynasty was characterised by rich cultural developments in Confucian studies (at the expense of Buddhism), historical writings, fine arts, medicine, science and technology. Subsequent Japanese invasions (1592–1598) and Manchu invasions from China (1627–1637) gradually contributed to the progressive decline of the Yi rulers who implemented – from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries – a policy of isolationism. Thence the reduction in status to that of "Hermit Kingdom."

Korea was compelled to terminate its isolationism during the second half of the nineteenth century under trading and other pressures from Japan, Russia and the Western powers. The Korean-Japanese Treaty of Kanghwa (1876) pronounced Korea as an independent state, but subjected it to many Japanese-imposed conditions. In the meantime, American, British, German, French and other Western powers emerged on the Korean scene, competing among themselves to secure trade and economic advantages and concessions in the country. Under constant foreign pressure, the Korean government had to face mounting social dissatisfaction and instability, crushing internal revolts such as the 1894 Tonghak rebellion. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Korean society still retained the feudal fetters that hindered the initial growth of capitalism. In

parallel with foreign exploitation of Korea's main resources, some local textile, paper and other industries had, in fact, emerged and by 1903 five banks, including the Korea Bank, had also been set up.

Following its victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), Japan began to replace the Korean Min government with pro-Japanese elements. Russian ambitions to meddle in Korean affairs were later shattered by Japan's decisive military victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Through American mediation, Japanese supremacy over the Korean peninsula was further strengthened and recognised by the Treaty of Portsmouth at New Hampshire (5–9–1905). Two years later, on 24–7–1907, an agreement was signed by the Japanese and Korean governments, preventing the latter from taking any independent decisions in internal and foreign policies. Koreans were only allowed to operate under conditions of "advice" and this de facto Japanese domination of the country became formally sanctioned with the treaty of annexation, promulgated on 29–8–1910. The last Korean emperor Sunjong effectively abolished the monarchy, thus terminating the reign of the Yi dynasty.

2. Japan's Colonial Rule

Japan's direct colonial rule over the Korean peninsula – as established in 1910 – lasted until Korea's final liberation on 15–8–1945. For more than thirty years, therefore, Japan's colonial plunder of Korea's resources and manpower prevented the normal development of capitalist relations of production by keeping the country in a backward, agrarian, semi-feudal state. Japanese imperialism secured exclusive ownership in all key branches of Korean industry and in agriculture, maximising its profits through the harsh exploitation of the local labour force. Given the extent of this colonial yoke, the Korean bourgeoisie remained weak and divided between its comprador section and its national section.

The comprador capitalist class in Korea, or comprador bourgeoisie, was made up by comparatively big capitalists who – in alliance with feudal land-owners – were allied with Japanese imperialism. On the other hand, the non-comprador, national capitalist class in Korea, or national bourgeoisie, mainly consisted of middle and small entrepreneurs. Since it was subjugated by both the Japanese imperialists and the Korean comprador capitalists, this national capitalist class was particularly disaffected with foreign colonial rule. Nonetheless, the most exploited classes suffering under Japan's imperial yoke in Korea consisted of peasants and workers. During the thirties – as Japan's military preparations were increasing for its aggression against China – the heavy industry sector in Korea was specifically stimulated by major Japanese companies through various mining projects. Korean manpower was mobilised in mines and factories, in both Korea and Japan, as effectively slave labour required for Japan's war efforts. Under close Japanese supervision, by 1944 there were 350,000 Koreans working in Korea's mines in addition to 600,000 working in various factories throughout the country. Since 1910, some 700,000 Koreans were forcibly sent to work in Japan and, by 1940, the number of Koreans who had moved to Japan as economic immigrants reached over a million.

As for Korea's countryside, the Japanese took over land and property, thus increasing poverty and homelessness among its peasants. The overwhelming majority of the big landlords (i.e., 81% of the landlords owning more than 200 hectares of land) were Japanese. Landless peasants accounted for some 80% of the farm households and over half of the total crop area was possessed by landlords who accounted for only 3% of farm households. The latter extracted from the peasants farm rents which amounted from 50% to 90% of their total yields. Colonial, feudal and capitalist oppression and exploitation often forced the destitute rural population – always on the verge of starvation – to migrate to towns or abroad.

Attempts by Koreans to fight for their independence were bloodily suppressed by the Japanese authorities (according to official Japanese statistics, during the initial period of colonial rule in Korea – from 1911 to 1918 – there were 330,025 cases of summary conviction). Whether in their own land or in Japan, Koreans were regarded and treated as racially inferior, possessing none of the political rights enjoyed by the Japanese. Through enforced "Japanization", harsh measures were undertaken to eliminate traces of Korean identity: Japanese was, in fact, declared as the official language in Korea during the 1930s and all forms of cultural expression with a national Korean content were abolished under the slogan "Japan and Korea Are One Entity". This racial discrimination became particularly brutal during the Second World War, as more than 200,000 Korean women and girls were rounded up by Japanese troops to be confined as their sex slaves. According to

some scholars, this harsh colonial rule by Japan produced the effect of deepening Korean nationalism by later determining what Cumings describes as “national solipsism”, i.e., the idea of an:

“untainted, self-contained community of Koreans” intending to resist any outside pressure.

– Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 2, *The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950*, Princeton, 1990, p. 367.

The March First Movement (1919)

Significant nationalist uprisings developed in Korea nine years after its annexation to Japan: more than two million people from all walks of life were involved in about 3,200 demonstrations and revolts throughout the country during 1919. An additional force of 6,000 Japanese troops was thus dispatched to Korea: 7,509 Koreans were killed, with many thousands arrested, wounded and beaten. Many activists and nationalists were forced either to go underground or to carry on their struggle overseas.

This movement became known as the March First Movement, or the Mansei revolution, since a declaration proclaiming “the independence of Korea and the liberty of the Korean people” was signed on 1–3–1919 in Seoul by 33 prominent patriots (land-owners, capitalists, religious leaders, intellectuals and others). The declaration called for peaceful resistance to Japan and appealed to foreign powers for assistance. But as Japan had succeeded in repressing the movement, some nationalists went into forced exile to China and America and it was outside Korea that a provisional Korean government, led by Syngman Rhee (living in Washington), was set up. At that time about 600,000 Koreans lived in south-eastern Manchuria, about 200,000 in the Maritime Provinces and about 6,000 in Hawaii and the USA. The geographical dislocation of the various nationalists around the world, together with their internal disputes and differences about whether to use either peaceful, diplomatic means or armed force against Japan, soon led to the virtual collapse of the provisional government.

Early Communist Movement

Under the impact of the 1917 October Revolution, Marxism-Leninism began to permeate Koreans, so that a variety of communist-oriented organisations emerged inside and outside the country. The first socialist organisation, set up in 1918 in the Far Eastern Region of the Soviet Union, was the Korean Socialist Party. The party split three years later into the Communist Party of Koryo in Irkutsk and another Communist Party of Koryo in Shanghai. During the same time, the Proletarian Fellowship Society and the League of Men of Advanced Ideas merged into the Proletarian Union. The Union later joined with the Irkutsk organisation, thus forming the Society for the Study of the New Ideas in 1923 (later renamed the Tuesday Society). There also existed the Seoul Youth Society (1921), the North Star Society (1923) among Korean students in Japan (later renamed the North Wind Association), and various other radical associations and clubs. Labour organisations were established as well: the Workers’ Mutual Aid Society of Korea, the Korean Federation of Workers and Peasants and the Korean Federation of Youth.

Between 1920 and 1925 mass struggles gained momentum in the country with the participation of about 27,000 workers in more than 330 strikes. A certain degree of unity among some of the above political organisations was achieved in April 1925 with the foundation of the Communist Party of Korea (CPK). But this unity remained short-lived as internal sectarian strife soon began to reappear within the newly created party. In the meantime, the Seoul Group did not merge with the CPK and two new groups emerged on the scene: the ML Group and the Seoul-Shanghai Group. These extreme sectarian divisions – both before and after the formation of the CPK – produced little impact on the Korean situation, to the advantage for neither the communist cause nor the anti-Japanese struggle. After three years of factional strife, the CPK, which had provisionally been admitted to the Communist International in 1926, ceased to exist and dissolved by the end of 1928.

In indicating the shortcomings of the communist movement in Korea, the Communist International expressed its criticism to both the preponderant factional struggle within the CPK and the composition of its cadres (mainly consisting of intellectuals and students). In a 1928 resolution on the Korean question, the Executive Committee of the Communist International highlighted the necessity – for the Korean communists – to carry

out an agrarian revolution while strengthening the proletarian character of the revolutionary movement in the country:

“The main line to be followed by the Communist movement in Korea in the present phase of development is... to strengthen the proletarian revolutionary movement, to guarantee its complete independence with regard to the petty-bourgeois national revolutionary movement... The Korean communists must do their utmost to attract first of all industrial workers and also poor peasants, who have not given up their farming, into the Party. The Communists will be able to accomplish this great task only if they effect a sharp break with the old methods of organisation of intellectual circles and undertake mass Bolshevik work, particularly in the factories and trade unions.”

– “Resolution of the ECCI on the Korean Question”, 10–12–1928, in D. Suh, Documents of Korean Communism 1918–1948, Princeton, 1970, pp. 250–1.

3. The Marxist-Leninist Strategy for the Revolutionary Process in Colonial-Type Countries

Marxist-Leninist parties and organisations in each country aim to lead their respective working classes towards the establishment of socialist, and ultimately communist, societies by successfully accomplishing the socialist revolution. The revolutionary process will necessarily differ in each country – according to its specific conditions and its stage of development. Colonial-type countries usually encompass all those relatively underdeveloped countries that are somehow dominated by a foreign imperialist power. A colonial-type country can be:

1. a colony, which is directly ruled by a Great Power (such was the status of the whole of Korea under Japanese imperial rule from 1910 to 1945); or
2. a semi-colony or neo-colony, which is nominally independent but is in fact dominated by a Great Power (such is the case of South Korea under US imperialist domination from 1945 until today).

In these colonial-type countries, the revolutionary process which achieves the national liberation of the country from the foreign yoke is regarded as a national-democratic revolution. The revolutionary process which achieves the political power of its working class is regarded as a socialist revolution.

One relevant feature in the social structure of a colonial-type country is the role played by the local capitalist class, which is divided into two sections:

1. the comprador capitalist class or comprador bourgeoisie, which has close links with the landlord class and whose exploitation of the local working class is primarily based upon foreign trade and upon its connections with foreign corporations and multinationals. Like the landlord class, this section of the bourgeoisie relies and depends upon the dominating Great Power; and
2. the national capitalist class or national bourgeoisie, whose exploitation of the local working class is based on the ownership of industrial enterprises and whose economic advancement is held back by the dominating Great Power.

As Stalin noted in 1925, in some colonial-type countries the native bourgeoisie

“is splitting up in two parts, a revolutionary part (the national bourgeoisie – Ed.)... and a compromising part (the comprador bourgeoisie – Ed.), of which the first is continuing the revolutionary struggle, whereas the second is entering a bloc with imperialism.”

– J. V. Stalin, “The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East: Speech Delivered at a Meeting of Students of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East”, 18–5–1925, in Stalin, Works, vol. 7, Moscow, 1954, p. 147.

The 6th Congress of the Communist International, in September 1928, agreed that the native bourgeoisie in colonial-type counties maintained a differentiated attitude towards imperialism.

“One part, more especially the commercial bourgeoisie, directly serves the interests of imperial capital (the so-called comprador bourgeoisie). In general, they maintain, more or less consistently, an anti-national, imperialist point of view, directed against the whole nationalist movement, as do the feudal allies of imperialism and the more highly paid native officials. The other parts of the native bourgeoisie, especially those representing the interests of native industry, support the national movement.”

- “Extracts from the Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries Adopted by the Sixth Comintern Congress”, 1–9–1928, in J. Degras (Ed.), *The Communist International: 1919–1943: Documents*, Vol. 2, London, 1971, p. 538.

In colonial-type countries the national bourgeoisie is indeed a class in favour of the national-democratic revolution, but objectively opposed to the socialist revolution. It follows that the class forces which are objectively in favour of the national-democratic revolution are wider and stronger than the forces objectively in favour of the socialist revolution. Hence, in order to mobilise the maximum class forces available for both the national-democratic and socialist revolutions, the Marxist-Leninist strategy is to strive to advance the revolutionary process in colonial-type countries through two stages:

1. the first stage of the national-democratic revolution; and
2. the second stage of the socialist revolution.

During the first national-democratic stage, the Marxist-Leninist party aims at allying itself with the national bourgeoisie, to the extent that this class remains genuinely revolutionary.

“Temporary cooperation is permissible, and in certain circumstances even a temporary alliance, between the Communist Party and the national-revolutionary movement, provided that the latter is a genuine revolutionary movement, that it genuinely struggles against the ruling power, and that its representatives do not hamper the Communists in their work.”

- “Extracts from the Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries Adopted by the Sixth Comintern Congress”, 1–9–1928, in J. Degras (Ed.), *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 542.

Such cooperation, such an alliance with the national bourgeoisie, is only temporary because the aim of the Marxist-Leninist party is to win for the working class the leading role in advancing from the national-democratic revolution into the socialist revolution. This leadership of the working class can only be won by struggling with the national bourgeoisie. The latter, in fact, will inevitably desert the revolution and go over to the counter-revolution as soon as the working class becomes capable of achieving a socialist revolution.

“The proletariat pushes aside the national bourgeoisie, consolidates its hegemony and assumes the lead of the vast masses of the working people in town and country, in order to overcome the resistance of the national bourgeoisie, secure the complete victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and then gradually convert it into a socialist revolution.”

- J.V. Stalin, “Questions of the Chinese Revolution”, April 1927, in *Stalin, Works*, vol. 9, Moscow, 1954, p. 225.

“The bourgeois-democratic revolution, consistently pursued, will be transformed into the proletarian revolution in those colonies and semi-colonies where the proletariat acts as a leader and exercises hegemony over the movement... In these (colonial-type – Ed.) countries the main task is to organise the workers and peasants independently in the Communist Party of the proletariat... and emancipate them from the influence of the national bourgeoisie.”

- Programme of the Communist International Adopted at its Sixth Congress”, 1–9–1928, in J. Degras (Ed.), *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 507, 522.<

Once the working class, in alliance with the peasantry, has gained the leadership in the revolutionary process and has begun to transform the national-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution by overthrowing the national bourgeoisie and other exploiting classes, the Marxist-Leninist strategy is to bring about the

final victory of socialism by establishing the dictatorship of the working class. The transition from the first national-democratic stage into the socialist one proceeds “uninterruptedly”. As Lenin said,

“From the democratic revolution we shall at once, and precisely in accordance with the measure of our strength, the strength of the class-conscious and organised proletariat, begin to pass over to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way.”

– V. I. Lenin, “Social-Democracy’s Attitude toward the Peasant Movement”, 14–9–1905, in Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 9, Moscow, 1962, pp. 236–7.

4. Kim Il Sung and the Anti-japanese Armed Struggle

Kim Il Sung was born on 15–4–1912 in Mangyongdae, near Pyongyang, of a peasant family with clear patriotic traditions. In 1926, at the early age of 14 as a schoolboy in Huatien, Manchuria he formed the Down-With-Imperialism Union (DIU), whose goal was to defeat Japanese imperialism and achieve Korean liberation and independence. One year later Kim Il Sung reorganised the DIU into the Anti-Imperialist Youth League (AIYL) and also founded the Young Communist League (YCL), a vanguard youth communist organisation. These two organisations, together with the Peasants’ Union, the Children’s Pioneers and other organisations, were clandestinely organising the struggle against Japanese imperialism throughout Korea.

In 1928 Kim Il Sung led the students’ struggle against the Kirin-Hoeryong railway project, a scheme designed to extend Japanese communications into Manchuria. He soon emerged as the leading figure among a “new generation of communists”, somehow different from those involved in the early communist movement in Korea. DPRK’s current political literature emphasises the fact that this new generation represented a rupture with factionalism for two reasons. Firstly, they had embraced communist ideas from the outset of their struggle, with no involvement in former sectarian groups. Moreover, they had belonged mainly to peasant and working class families.

After having been detained for seven months in the Kirin prison, Kim Il Sung became instrumental in organising the anti-Japanese armed struggle. It was in Kuyushu on 6–7–1930 that the first unit of the Korean Revolutionary Army (KRA) was formed upon the initiative of members of the YCL and the AIYL. Small KRA groups were dispatched to various locations but especially in the countryside. However KRA bases could barely operate within Korean territory, for it was strictly controlled by Japanese authorities. They therefore decided to set up the armed struggle’s headquarters in the wooded area along the Tuman-gang river in East Manchuria, a region whose population was made up by nearly 400,000 Koreans (i.e., 80% of its total number).

The anti-Japanese armed struggle grew and developed through different and difficult stages. In September 1931, Japan launched its invasion in Manchuria, thus threatening the guerrilla bases and urgently prompting the formation of the Anti-Japanese People’s Guerrilla Army (AJPGA) in Antu, Manchuria, on 25–4–1932. On the occasion of its founding, Kim Il Sung stated:

“The aim and mission of the people’s guerrilla army is to overthrow the colonial rule of Japanese imperialism in Korea and bringing national independence and social emancipation to the Korean people... The foundation of the AJPGA will open up a phase in implementing the line of the anti-Japanese united front and the policy for founding a Marxist-Leninist party.”

– Kim Il Sung, “On the Occasion of Founding the Anti-Japanese People’s Guerrilla Army: Speech at the Ceremony to Found the Anti-Japanese People’s Guerrilla Army”, 25–4–1932, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 1, Pyongyang, 1980, p. 47.

In March 1933 guerrilla units crossed the Tuman-gang river, advancing into the Onsong district on the northern border of Korea. A “people’s revolutionary government” was set up in the liberated areas so that the ranks of the guerrilla army could considerably grow and strengthen. In March 1934 the AJPGA was reorganised into the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army (KPRA) with divisions, regiments, companies, platoons and squads, systematically organised and placed under a unified organisational system. Battles were fought against Japanese forces, as KPRA units were extending their operations into wider areas of Korea and

North and South Manchuria. In the meantime, Japanese authorities were reacting by intensifying repression of these mounting popular struggles. According to official Japanese figures, in the period 1931–35 more than 900 strikes took place involving over 70,000 workers and during the same time more than 453,800 Koreans were arrested, imprisoned or punished.

Various paramilitary organisations were also active in the guerrilla zones: the Red Guards (Anti-Japanese Self-Defence Corps), the Children's Vanguard, the Youth Voluntary Army and the Shock Brigade. Self-governing bodies and people's committees were created and, in order to increase popular support, on 5–5–1936 the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland (ARF) was also founded. The creation of this anti-Japanese united front organisation represented – according to Kim Il Sung:

“an event of epochal significance in consolidating the mass basis of revolution.”

The ARF was, in fact, intended to unite all patriotic sections of Korean society, with the exclusion of pro-Japanese landlords, comprador capitalists and traitors to the nation. Its main aim was:

“to mobilise the entire Korean nation and realise a broad-based anti-Japanese united front in order to overthrow the piratical Japanese imperialist rule and establish a genuine people's government in Korea.”

– Kim Il Sung, “The Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland”, 5–5–1936, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 1, Pyongyang, 1980, p. 112.

In November 1937 Kim Il Sung reiterated and emphasised the independent character of the Korean struggle in the following terms:

“The Korean communists should, above all, adhere to a firm independent position in order to crown their revolutionary tasks in success... The masters of the Korean revolution are the Korean people and the Korean communists. The Korean revolution must be carried out by the Korean people under the leadership of the Korean communists... Victory and glory belong to the Korean communists who are fighting unyieldingly under the unfurled banner of the Korean revolution.”

– Kim Il Sung, “The Tasks of Korean Communists: Treatise Published in Sogwang, Organ of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army”, 10–11–1937, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 1, Pyongyang, 1980, pp. 166–7.

After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in July 1937, military and political activities against Japanese imperialism intensified in scope throughout Korea. However, it was decided to postpone the creation of a new Korean communist party to a later date. Subsequent to Japan's forced mobilisation of Korean men and women during the Second World War, extensive preparations were made for anti-Japanese revolts as a prelude to the KPRA's general offensive throughout the country. After Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender on 9–5–1945 and the subsequent Soviet declaration of war against Japan on 9–8–1945, KPRA units crossed the Tuman-gang river, rapidly advancing to the areas of Kyonghung and Kyongwon. Other units, in the meantime, landed at Unggi, Rajin and Chongjin. As the KPRA had successfully intensified its attacks and liberated many areas, the Japanese army was forced to surrender unconditionally on 15–8–1945, the day that marks the Korean people's final liberation from Japan's 35-year-long colonial rule.

The anti-Japanese armed struggle has indeed gone down in Korea's history as an heroic national-liberation war which had activated and mobilised all patriotic forces, from both inside and outside the country, in order to successfully liquidate Japanese imperialism. Korea's national liberation movement developed autonomously and relied mainly on its own forces, with no direct assistance from outside. Nor did it maintain organic links with either the USSR or the Third Communist International. During this time, Kim Il Sung ardently fought for his country's liberation as a revolutionary, patriotic leader. But in the DPRK today, an almost exclusive merit is attributed to his role and leadership for having achieved Korea's liberation:

“The brilliant victory of the anti-Japanese armed struggle was ascribable *only* to the sagacious guidance of the respected and beloved leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, a gifted revolutionary, great thinker and theoretician, ever-victorious iron-willed brilliant commander, and outstanding military strategist. All the factors in victory of the anti-Japanese armed struggle could be formed just

by his ingenious organisation and guidance... The brilliant victory of the anti-Japanese armed struggle could be possible thanks to the identity of thought and will and revolutionary unity of the revolutionary ranks with the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung as the pivot... The steel-strong unity of thinking and will and revolutionary cohesion of the revolutionary ranks could be achieved because the revolutionary thought and theories of the respected and beloved leader Comrade Kim Il Sung were correct and great and his guidance was sagacious. And nothing could break that unity and cohesion... The victory of the anti-Japanese armed struggle was the brilliant victory of the superb military strategy and guerrilla tactics of the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung."

– Kim Han Gil, Modern History of Korea, Pyongyang, 1979, pp. 169–71. My emphases.

5. Korea's Partition

The artificial division of the Korean peninsula and its people was a decision taken by the US State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee in Washington, DC, during the night of the 10–11 August 1945, four days prior to Korea's final liberation. Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy directed two colonels, D. Rusk and C. H. Bonesteel, to decide – and they were given around 30 minutes in which to do so – where to draw a line of demarcation on Korea's map. The line was drawn along the 38th parallel so that the surrender of the Japanese army could be offered to Soviet forces (which moved into north-eastern Korea on 12 August) in the north and to American forces in the south. This arbitrary partition – created in total disregard of the national liberation struggle that had been fought by the Korean people for their self-determination and independence – was the product of US imperialism's expansionist attempts to extend its tentacles into the Asian continent.

By mid-1946, the cold war against the USSR and the newly formed people's democracies had soon emerged. In Korea as well, the USA was:

"in an ideological battleground upon which (America's – Ed.) entire success in Asia may depend", according to President Truman himself.

– Truman to E. W. Pauley, Ambassador-at-large for German and Japanese reparations' policy, 16–7–1946, in Foreign Relations of the US, 1946, vol. 8, The Far East, Washington, DC: Department of State Publication 8554, 1971, pp. 713–4.

After partitioning the country, US imperialism established a fresh military occupation in South Korea, where it has imposed – for more than half a century – a succession of fascist or pseudo-democratic regimes congenial to American strategic and economic interests. American domination in the south immediately replaced Japanese rule by dismantling the self-governing bodies and the people's committees created during the war, by establishing a ruthless military administration, by suppressing any democratic rights and denying national independence to the Korean people. Different developments soon began to unfold in the north and in the south. Consequently, Korean efforts to reconstruct and democratise their country were made particularly complicated by the US military occupation and interference in the south, where the ROK was created with the installation of Syngman Rhee as its dictator.

During early 1948, the universal aspiration of the Korean people to national reunification was unanimously expressed at the Joint Conference of Representatives of North and South Korean Political Parties and Social Organisations, organised in Pyongyang in April 1948 and attended by 695 representatives of 56 different parties and organisations. Their final resolution demanded the withdrawal of both Soviet and American troops from Korean territory, supported the establishment of a provisional government representing the whole of Korea, while rejecting American attempts to hold separate elections in the south. The resolution concluded as follows:

"In order to prevent the split of the country and domination of the south Korean people by the US imperialists, we, both south and north Korean political parties and social organisations should pool our forces so that we can further develop a movement throughout the country to frustrate the separate elections in south Korea and to support the Soviet proposal on granting the Korean

people the right to establish a unified democratic independent country by themselves by having foreign troops withdrawn from Korea without delay.”

- Joint Conference of Representatives of North and South Korean Political Parties and Social Organizations in Pyongyang, Resolution on the Political Situation in Korea, 23–4–1948, quoted in Korea is One, Pyongyang, 1978, p. 190.

Contrary to the above wishes of the Korean people, a short time later, on 10–5–1948, the Americans engineered separate elections in South Korea, at a time when substantial areas of the country were outside Rhee’s control. But all over Korea, general elections to the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) took place on 25–8–1948. In the north elections were held on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage to select 212 deputies (99.97% of the eligible voters participated and 98.49% of them voted for the candidates of the Democratic National United Front of North Korea). Overcoming considerable obstacles, secret elections also took place in the south in order to choose 360 deputies (but given the extent of political repression, participation in the elections was limited to 77.52% of the eligible voters). A total of 572 deputies (out of which 102 belonged to the North Korea’s communist party – then called the Workers’ Party of Korea, WPK) took part in the first session of the SPA on 2–9–1948, adopted the constitution of the new state and elected Kim Il Sung as its prime minister. His government stressed the urgency to reunify the divided country through the simultaneous withdrawal of Soviet troops from the north and American troops from the south. A few days later, on 9–9–1948, the SPA officially proclaimed the founding of the DPRK:

“an epoch-making step forward in the struggle for the reunification and independence of the country and for its democratic development.”

- Kim Il Sung, “Report to the Third Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea on the Work of the CWorks, vol. 10, Pyongyang, 1982, p. 159.

By the end of 1948, Soviet troops (numbering about 10,000 in mid-1946) were all withdrawn while the continued military presence of the US in the south prompted yet another joint initiative for the peaceful solution of the Korean question. The Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland (DFRF) was, in fact, created in May 1949 with the participation of various political parties and social organisations from both the north and the south of the country. Prior to the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, both the DFRF and the DPRK’s government put forward various proposals in order to achieve a peaceful reunification of Korea.

6. “Progressive Democracy” In North Korea

At the time of its liberation in 1945, North Korean society still maintained a semi-feudal character as capitalist development had been hampered by Japan’s 35-year-old colonial domination. North Korea soon embarked along the path of “progressive democracy” in order to carry out its anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. The immediate post-war task was therefore:

“to form a democratic national united front embracing all the patriotic, democratic forces of our country such as the workers, peasants, progressive intellectuals, conscientious national capitalists and conscientious men of religion and, on this basis, to establish a Democratic People’s Republic.” Excluded from power were the pro-Japanese comprador capitalists and landlords.

- Kim Il Sung, “On Building the Party, State and Armed Forces in the Liberated Homeland: Speech Delivered to Military and Political Cadres”, 20–8–1945, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 1, Pyongyang, 1980, pp. 235–6.

As Kim Il Sung indicated in 1945, democracy – in this sense – was:

“not a democracy for one class only, one political party, one organisation or one religion; it is a democracy for the broad masses of people.” – Kim Il Sung, “On Progressive Democracy: A Lecture Given to the Students of the Pyongyang Worker-Peasant Political School”, 3–10–1945, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 1, Pyongyang, 1980, pp. 259.

Progressive democracy was therefore intended to establish a joint dictatorship of several classes in North Korea with the inclusion of the national bourgeoisie, as well:

“a Democratic People’s Republic . . . must be built by forming a democratic united front . . . which embraces . . . even the national capitalists with a national conscience.”

– Kim Il Sung, “On the Building of New Korea and the National United Front: Speech to the Responsible Functionaries of the Provincial Party Committees”, 13–10–1945, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 1, Pyongyang, 1980, pp. 298.

Emphasis was placed on the assumption that – in North Korea’s specific conditions after 1945 – a socialist system or a Soviet power was indeed premature. Korean communists were therefore instructed by Kim Il Sung to adhere to:

“the principle of uniting to the maximum all forces that love the country and people.”

– Kim Il Sung, “On Building a Marxist-Leninist Party in Our Country and its Immediate Tasks: Report to the Inaugural Congress of the Central Organizing Committee of the Communist Party of North Korea”, 10–10–1945, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 1, Pyongyang, 1980, p. 286).

“There is no reason why communists and nationalists cannot unite in the efforts for nation-building . . . Unity alone is the patriotic road for the country and the people and the true road to nation-building, the road to guaranteeing a new, democratic Korea.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Talk with Participants in the Nationalist Movement”, 5–11–1945, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 1, Pyongyang, 1980, p. 347.

In North Korea’s progressive democracy, communism – rather than being perceived in a Leninist, Bolshevik sense – became associated with Korean patriotism and independence. Kim Il Sung reported the following anecdote during a mass rally in Sinuiju:

“Somebody asked me just now: General, are you also a communist? Yes, I am a communist. Communists are true patriots fighting unwaveringly for the complete independence of the country and the happiness of the people. If a man called a communist does not love his country and nation, he is not a true communist. I am not the kind of communist who looks up to foreign countries but one who relies on our own people and fights for the benefit of the Korean nation and people.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Which Path Should Liberated Korea Take?: Speech at a Mass Rally in Sinuiju”, 27–11–1945, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 1, Pyongyang, 1980, pp. 398.

Imbued with considerable doses of nationalism, the Communist Party of North Korea (CPNK, renamed Workers’ Party of North Korea in August 1946, and then Workers’ Party of Korea) was officially founded on 10–13 October 1945. Besides the CPNK, other parties and social organisations emerged during late 1945 and early 1946: the Democratic Party (mainly made up of small and middle class capitalists and Christians), the Chondoist Chongu Party (made up of Chondo believers, mostly peasants) and the New Democratic Party (made up mainly of middle peasants and intellectuals). Social organisations included the General Federation of Trade Unions, the Peasant Union, the Democratic Youth League, the Democratic Women’s Union, the General Federation of Unions of Literature and Arts, the General Federation of Industrial Technology, the Christian Federation, the Buddhist Federation and others. Representatives from all these parties and organisations – together with those from local committees – convened in Pyongyang on 8–2–1946 in order to establish the Provisional People’s Committee of North Korea (PPCNK) functioning as the democratic government and aiming at deepening the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic revolution.

Some time later, Kim Il Sung would state that, since the establishment of the 1946 provisional government, North Korean society had entered the period of gradual transition to socialism.

“The Provisional People’s Committee of North Korea formed in February 1946 played a great historic role. A form of people’s government relying on a democratic national united front which rallied broad anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic forces in the country on the basis of the

worker-peasant alliance led by the working class, this committee carried out the function of the people's democratic dictatorship."

– Kim Il Sung, "Report to the Third Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea on the Work of the Central Committee", 23–4–1956, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 10, Pyongyang, 1982, p. 157.

"With the establishment of the people's government, for the first time in their history, our people became genuine masters of the country, with state power firmly in hands. Under our Party's leadership, the people's government ... opened up wide avenues for social progress. In this way the northern half of the Republic carried out the tasks of the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic revolution and entered the period of gradual transition to socialism."

– Kim Il Sung, "On the Nature of the Revolution in Our Country at the Present Stage and the Basic Direction of the First Five-Year Plan: Concluding Speech at a Meeting of the Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea", 29–12–1954, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 9, Pyongyang, 1982, pp. 169–70.

But contrary to the above claims, made in retrospect during the mid-fifties, neither the CPNK nor any other party contemplated – during the period of the so-called progressive democracy – the transition from the national-democratic stage into the socialist one. The decision was, in fact, taken on 28–8–1946 to merge together the CPNK and the New Democratic Party, thus creating the Workers' Party of North Korea (WPNK), "aimed at building a prosperous, independent, sovereign and democratic state," but without the slightest reference to an eventual transition towards socialism. (The WPNK had an initial membership of 370,000, which increased to 680,000 one year later). The amalgamation that gave birth to the WPNK took place rather artificially: according to Kim Il Sung:

"even if there were some friction between the two parties, the question of eliminating it would be solved by expelling the ultra-'Left' sectarians from the Communist Party and the ultra-Right die-hards from the New Democratic Party, rather than merging them into one."

– Kim Il Sung, "The Present Political Situation and Our New Tasks: Report to the Enlarged Joint Meeting of the Central Committees of the Communist Party of North Korea and the New Democratic Party of Korea", 29–7–1946, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 2, Pyongyang, 1980, p. 282.

No trace of socialism can be spotted in the WPNK's programme. Its democratic tasks were the following.

"To confiscate the land of the Japanese imperialists and the landlords and distribute it among the peasants; to nationalise the industries, transport, communications, banks, etc., belonging to Japanese imperialism and the comprador capitalists and transform them into the property of the people; to introduce an eight-hour working day and a social insurance system for factory and office workers; to grant women equal rights with men; to ensure the people freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association and religious belief; to institute a democratic system of public education and establish compulsory education; and to develop science, national culture and arts."

– Kim Il Sung, "For the Establishment of a United Party of the Working Masses: Report to the Inaugural Congress of the Workers' Party of North Korea", 29–8–1946, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 2, Pyongyang, 1980, p. 336.

What about Marxism-Leninism? Under the pretext of its creative implementation in the country's specific situation, Marxism-Leninism (i.e., scientific socialism as elaborated by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin for the emancipation of the working class) was distorted and became equated with Korean independence. Its vulgar revision is presented by Kim Il Sung as follows:

"Marxism-Leninism is not a dogma; it is a guide to action. We must learn to apply Marxism-Leninism creatively to the realities of Korea today. Only through the formation of a mass party can we win the victory of democracy. This victory is essential for the complete independence of Korea. The complete independence of Korea means precisely the victory of Marxism-Leninism in Korea."

– Kim Il Sung, “Report to the Third Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea on the Work of the Central Committee”, 23–4–1956, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 10, Pyongyang, 1982, p. 158.

During the 1946 summer the WPNK joined in coalition with the two other existing political parties and with fifteen social organisations in order to set up the Democratic National United Front of North Korea (DNUFNK). Its purpose was to organise elections to the provincial, city, county, ri (Dong) and sub-county people’s committees during November 1946 and early 1947. The elected representatives from these people’s committees formed the North Korean People’s Assembly (NKPA) on 17–2–1947.

The NKPA thus became the country’s supreme organ of power, with the North Korean People’s Committee (NKPC) as its executive body. The 237 NKPA deputies were affiliated to the existing parties as follows (in percentage): 36% to the WPNK, 13% to the Democratic Party, 13% to the Chogu Party and 38% non affiliated. As for their social origin, 22% were workers, 26% peasants, 24% office employees, 15% intellectuals, 3% enterprisers, 4% traders, 2% handcraftsmen and 4% religious men.

In a later assessment, Kim Il Sung characterised this NKPC as another intermediate step towards socialism! Only in 1956 would he state that the NKPC had:

“set out to implement the tasks of the transition period to switch over gradually to socialism by further extending the results of the democratic reforms in north Korea and developing a planned national economy.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Report to the Third Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea on the Work of the Central Committee”, 23–4–1956, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 10, Pyongyang, 1982, p. 158.

But this is another unsubstantiated claim, since no transition towards socialism under the leadership of the working class and its communist party can be envisaged in the official documentary sources of the forties. In other words, “progressive democracy” was not viewed – at that time – as a transition stage which would lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat in North Korea.

Indeed, this “progressive democracy” in North Korea bears similarities with the “new democracy” that was implemented in China after its liberation in 1949. The latter had, in fact, been outlined in Mao Tse-tung’s *The New Democracy* (1940), according to which four anti-imperialist and anti-feudal classes – such as the proletariat, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie – were all going to participate and share power in post-liberated China. But whatever labels can be attached to these forms of democracy – whether it is “progressive” or “new” – both Kim Il Sung’s and Mao Tse-tung’s formulations deny the basic Marxist-Leninist principle that it is only by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat that real democracy and socialism can be established. As Lenin clearly indicated,

“The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: *the dictatorship of the proletariat.*”

– V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution*, August-Setember 1917, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25, Moscow, 1964, p. 413. Emphasis in the original.

Both Kim Il Sung’s “progressive democracy” and Mao Tse-tung’s “new democracy” represent right-wing revisionist distortions on the revolution in the colonial-type countries. These deviations were, in fact, later elaborated by the Krushchevite revisionists around the idea of a state of “national democracy”. It was during the sixties that, in this regard, the revisionist USSR reversed Lenin’s and Stalin’s policies in order to subvert and disrupt the revolutionary process in the developing countries. Support was therefore given to newly-emerged, allegedly non-capitalist, states (such as Nehru’s India or Sukarno’s Indonesia) in their attempts to encourage their national capitalist classes and all other patriotic forces to harmoniously pass over to “socialism”, mainly through state nationalisations. Unquestionably, all these policies confusing “democracy” with “reconciliation” between antagonistic classes are revisionist formulations and theories that halt the advance towards the dictatorship of the working class and raise a “Chinese wall” between the first and second phase of the revolutionary process in the developing countries.

Agrarian and other Reforms

Although North Korea – compared with the south – possessed a relative advantage in inheriting most of the country's heavy industry and mines, the scale of Japan's sabotage before its final surrender in 1945 had been so damaging that 19 hydro-electric plants had been put out of operation, 64 mines totally flooded, 178 partially flooded, 6 enterprises (including the Pyongyang Aircraft Factory) completely destroyed and 47 enterprises partially destroyed. *Jon Halliday, "The Economies of North and South Korea", in Sullivan and Foss (Eds), Two Koreas – One Future?, Lanham, MD, 1987, p. 21.*

Nonetheless, remarkable progress was soon achieved, as reconstruction and economic development began to be planned (on a yearly basis in 1947 and 1948 and on a two-year basis in 1949–50). As compared to 1946, industrial output grew by 53.3% in 1947, by 117.9% in 1948 and by 236.7% in 1949. All domains of society were affected by democratic reforms – from the agrarian reform and the nationalisation of the main industries to new laws on labour protection, equality of sexes, the democratisation of the judiciary, education and culture, etc. – thus beginning to eradicate the colonial and feudal features inherited from the past.

Given Korea's backwardness and its overwhelming peasant population, of particular importance was the "Law on Agrarian Reform in North Korea", promulgated on 5–5–1946. All lands possessed by Japanese colonialists and by landlords who owned more than five hectares were confiscated without compensation and distributed free to the landless and poor peasants, according to the size of their families. Sale, purchase and mortgaging of the distributed land and all systems of tenancy were now prohibited. The agrarian reform was carried out successfully in a short time: more than 1,000,000 hectares of land were confiscated and distributed to over 720,000 peasant households. A subsequent law on "agricultural tax in kind" required the peasants to pay the state 25% of their yields (this percentage was later revised in the range between 10% and 27%, according to crops or land fertility). This tax was then abolished in 1966.

According to the "Law on the Nationalisation of Industry, Traffic, Transport, Communications and Banking" (10–8–1946), all major industries, formerly owned by the Japanese state or by traitors to the Korean nation, were nationalised without compensation and transferred to the state. As a result, more than 1,000 industrial establishments, railways, communications and banks (i.e., over 90 % of all industries formerly owned by Japanese imperialism or by the comprador bourgeoisie) were brought under state ownership. This nationalisation, though having a democratic, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal character, did not liquidate capitalist ownership as a whole: the properties belonging to the national capitalist class remained unaffected by this nationalisation and were legally protected. The law protecting private ownership and encouraging capitalist private businesses was, in fact, approved on 4–10–1946.

The overwhelming state-ownership in the industrial sector, the small private peasant economy and the urban handicrafts economy could therefore coexist with the national capitalist sector, comprising private capitalist trade and industry in towns and rich peasants' economy in the countryside.

7. The Korean War (1950–53)

While disregarding the efforts on the part of the DPRK and DFRK to achieve Korean reunification by peaceful means during the late forties, Washington increased its military build-up in South Korea in the prelude to the outbreak of hostilities. Clashes with the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) along the 38th parallel became frequent and on 4–5–1949 South Korean forces launched an attack towards Kaesong, resulting in a total of 4,000 North Korean soldiers, 22 South Korean soldiers and about 100 civilians killed. The Rhee regime in the ROK, in the meantime, was attempting to repress peasant and labour disturbances and to stamp out guerrilla activities that had developed in the south on a large scale. These repressions, aimed at "annihilating rebels", reached their peak in early 1950, as thousands were murdered and many more were wounded or displaced and their homes were completely or partly destroyed.

On 25–6–1950, at dawn, the attack from the south – all along the 38th parallel in the direction of Haeju, Kumchon and Cholwen – eventually initiated the war against the DPRK, prompting the NKPA's subsequent military offensive towards the south. Thus, the Korean people began their three-year-long Fatherland Liberation War against the military might of the allied forces of imperialism led by the USA. With the aim

of reducing the whole Korea into an American neo-colony, US official propaganda was presenting the Koreans' struggle for their reunification as civil war. Most Western sources still refer to an alleged "communist invasion" from the north to the south. But as to which Korean side would have been to blame for the outbreak of hostilities, British historian Geoff Simons noted the following differences:

"The aggressive intentions of Syngman Rhee towards North Korea were well known, copiously documented, and often an embarrassment to the United States government and the US military authorities in South Korea. The North too was equally interested in the possibility of reunification, though necessarily its interpretation of events was somewhat different to those emanating from Washington and Seoul. It would however be a mistake to assume a simple parity of pro-war rhetoric in the South and the North: even the usual anti-communist sources cite few rantings from Kim Il-sung to match those of Syngman Rhee and his bellicose supporters. Statements emanating from Pyongyang allow for the possibility of a militant (or military) reunification, but the temper is different to that of Rhee; and emphasis is sometimes given to the need for a *peaceful* reunification."

– Geoff Simons, *Korea: The Search for Sovereignty*, London, 1995, p. 192. Emphasis in the original.

By the early fifties – and particularly after the proclamation of the Truman doctrine in 1947 – Washington had come to regard events in any one nation or area in the context of its global imperialist perspective and in order to attack the USSR and other nations struggling for independence, peace, democracy and socialism. The cold war was activated by US imperialism and designated to exacerbate international tension, justify an unrestrained arms race and increase military expenditures and anti-communist reaction in all continents. It was within this framework that conditions could be created for the outbreak of the hot war in the Korean peninsula in 1950.

From June to early September 1950, the US-led UN forces were pushed back to the small south-east area of Pusan. On 15–9–1950 the American landings at Inchon (just south of the 38th parallel) forced the NKPA into retreat and facilitated a UN breakout from Pusan. In November, the rapid advance of the UN forces towards the Yalu river prompted a massive Chinese intervention, causing a UN retreat on all fronts. Hasty UN evacuations took place by sea from Hungnam and Wonsan in North Korea. By January 1951 the UN retreat halted north of Taejon in South Korea and, after a three-month UN counter-offensive, the confrontation stabilised around the 38th parallel until the armistice line was finally agreed upon on 27–7–1953. According to the terms of the armistice, the exchange of prisoners also took place: 77,000 North Korean and Chinese soldiers against 12,700 UN personnel, including 3,597 Americans and 945 Britons.

The 1950–53 war against the Korean people produced about four million deaths with many more men, women and children wounded, mutilated, traumatised (perhaps ten million dead and wounded altogether): the greatest number of casualties was suffered by the North Koreans and the Chinese. US bombers attacked power plants, factories, bridges and all communications throughout the north and in entire provinces scarcely a building remained standing. The war also provided US imperialism with the opportunity to test napalm and related products on a sustained and widespread basis against both military and civilian targets in the north. By 1953, in proportionate terms, the DPRK had been more comprehensively devastated than any country (including Germany or the USSR) in the Second World War, and more than North Vietnam would be in the Vietnam War.

As is known, the US attack against Korea was fought under the nominal aegis of the UN. So troops from countries such as Britain, Japan, Australia and twelve other states united their military strength against the DPRK. However, the decision to involve the UN in the Korean War had not been a UN initiative, but a decision of the USA. Because of the USSR's temporary boycott in the Security Council (that is, in the absence of a Soviet veto), the US imperialists could secure three Council resolutions authorising UN intervention in Korea (resolution n. 82 of 25–6–1950, n. 83 of 27–6–1950 and n. 84 of 7–7–1950). It is also important to consider that:

1. the first resolution n. 82 did not contemplate UN military intervention in Korea;
2. the USA took military action before UN authorisation had been given; and

3. the USA has continued to station its own forces in South Korea under the name and flag of the UN in line with the Security Council resolution n. 84. But considering that the UN charter requires unanimous approval by the permanent members of its Security Council, resolution n. 84 establishing the “UN Command” in the south can have no legal effect since – in the absence of the USSR, a then permanent member nation – it was adopted without the participation of all the Security Council permanent members.

It is therefore clear that in this instance – just as it is currently occurring today – US imperialism manipulated and used the UN as an instrument to pursue its own expansionist ambitions and strategic interests. And the “UN Command” in the ROK continues to remain a US product of the cold war.

The armistice talks for the ceasefire, conducted between the “UN Command” (i.e., essentially a US delegation) and the North Korean/Chinese representatives, concluded with the signing of the armistice agreement on 27–7–1953 at Panmunjom. The armistice foiled US designs to occupy the entire Korean peninsula and thus strengthened the anti-imperialist front in Asia. This armistice (that has by now become the world’s longest-running) has never been replaced by a peace treaty, as Korea continues to prolong its division into two along its 38th parallel. Although the continued military occupation by US imperialism is in violation of the 1953 armistice agreement (envisaging the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the Korean peninsula), Washington had been able to conclude a “mutual defence treaty” with the South Korean government on 8–8–1953 in order to “justify” its military presence there for an indefinite period of time. On the other hand, all Chinese troops had left the DPRK by 1958.

During the Korean War the banner of national liberation and independence was heroically held high by the Korean people in their armed confrontation against the US-led military intervention in the Korean peninsula. The anti-imperialist character of the Koreans’ struggle – fought, this time, against US imperialism – was highlighted by Kim Il Sung as follows:

“The struggle is, on the one hand, an anti-imperialist national-liberation revolution, with the task of defending the freedom and independence of the country against the foreign imperialist aggressors. On the other hand, it is a democratic revolution involving the entire people... The enemies of the Korean people are the US imperialist aggressors and their minions, the traitorous Syngman Rhee clique – pro-Japanese and pro-US elements, traitors to the nation, landlords and comprador capitalists. So, the task of our revolution at the present stage is to destroy our two enemies, the internal and the external, defend the freedom and the independence of the country and bring about its reunification... The struggle of the Korean people against the US imperialist invaders is... at the same time a struggle for world peace and security, one which serves as a banner for the national-liberation movement of the peoples of colonial and dependent countries.”

– Kim Il Sung, “The Organizational and Ideological Consolidation of the Party is the Basis for Our Victory: Report to the Fifth Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 15–12–1952, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 7, Pyongyang, 1981, p. 343.

In order to maximise popular support for Korea’s liberation and reunification during 1950–53, Kim Il Sung placed major emphasis on strengthening unity among all patriotic elements in Korean society, regardless of their social status or political allegiance. In the DFRF, in fact, members of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) were working in close contacts with those of the Chongu Party and the Democratic Party. But during the period September–November 1950 – as the NKPA had temporarily retreated and US-led UN troops had occupied most of the north – some reactionary forces in the north re-organised themselves under American protection. Members of the Chongu and Democratic parties joined the newly-formed reactionary organisations and some of them even murdered WPK members and their families. In such instances, however, Kim Il Sung called for political restraint, opposing attempts to characterise “friendly parties” as reactionary organisations. As he indicated to WPK cadres in November 1951:

“the united front can never be formed through coercive measures. Coercion will only provoke antipathy. We must influence the members of the friendly parties through education and persuasion and get them to support us wholeheartedly and be determined to stand by us to the last.”

– Kim Il Sung, “On Improving the Party’s Organizational Work: Concluding Speech at the Fourth

Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea", 2–11–1951, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 6, Pyongyang, 1981, p. 427.

8. Establishing “Socialist Relations of Production” in the DPRK

In order to rehabilitate the post-1953 economy, totally ruined by the Korean war, and lay the economic foundations of socialism, priority was given to the development of heavy industry in parallel with the development of light industry and agriculture. The post-war reconstruction took place through three stages:

1. the preparatory work for economic rehabilitation was carried out during the second half of 1953;
2. a three-year plan (1954–56) was then implemented in order to reach pre-war levels in all branches of the economy. It was successfully fulfilled within two years and eight months and overfulfilled by 22% by the end of 1956;
3. the subsequent five-year plan (1957–61) was meant to lay the socialist foundations of industrialisation, modernising various branches of the economy while raising the cultural standards of the population and solving problems related to food, clothing and housing. The plan was successfully completed during the first two and a half years only.

A major role in achieving these remarkable and fast successes after the Korean War was played by the so-called Chollima movement (Chollima traditionally signifies a horse galloping about 1,000 miles a day). This movement was aimed at educating and converting people into communist activists by speeding up innovation and production collectively under the slogan “one for all and all for one.” Emphasis was always placed on Korea’s national peculiarities, i.e., on the fact that the revolution was a Korean one and – as such – it should not have copied foreign models. In this regard, the term “Juche” (“independence”) appeared for the very first time in a speech, delivered by Kim Il Sung on 28–12–1955. In attacking dogmatism and formalism:

“there should be no set rule – Kim Il Sung remarked – that we must follow the Soviet pattern. Some advocate the Soviet way and others the Chinese, but is it not high time to work out our own?”

– Kim Il Sung, “On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work: Speech to Party Propaganda and Agitation Workers”, 28–12–1955, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 9, Pyongyang, 1982, p. 403.

This independent and national character of the Korean revolution was very often reiterated and underlined. As Kim Il Sung pointed out in 1959:

“the most important thing in the revolution is to establish Juche thoroughly, adhering to the principles of Marxism-Leninism.”

– Kim Il Sung, “On Opposing Dogmatism and Establishing Juche in Party Political Work in the People’s Army: Talk with Military and Political Workers at the Corps or Higher Levels of The Korean People’s Army”, 16–5–1959, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 13, Pyongyang, 1983, p. 256.

According to official Kimilsungist literature, the economic and social transformations which took place during the mid-fifties both in the cooperativization of agriculture and in the reorganisation of private trade and industry led to the establishment of socialist relations of production by 1958.

In the agricultural sector, the principal goal was to turn the individual and private peasant economy into the cooperative economy. This change was also dictated by the necessity to improve living standards in the countryside, as they had considerably deteriorated during the war (in 1953 poor peasants amounted to 40% of the total population in the countryside). During 1953–54, agricultural cooperatives were therefore set up on an experimental basis: 1,090 of them (involving 21.5% of the total peasant households) were created by June 1954. Three different forms of agriculture cooperatives were set up:

1. the first form consisted of mutual-aid teams in which work alone was carried out jointly without pooling the land;

2. in the second, semi-socialist form, the land was pooled, work was organised jointly and income was distributed according to the amount of land that had been contributed to the cooperative; and<
3. in the third, socialist form, both the land and the means of production were pooled and income was distributed only according to the amount of work done.

Rapid advances were made in agricultural cooperativization which could attract not only poor peasants, but also an increasing number of middle peasants. By the end of 1956, 80.9% of the total farm households had joined the cooperatives (almost all of them belonging to the third form). In general, rich peasants who usually engaged in trade, as well, remained excluded from the cooperatives. But although they were not confiscated of their properties, both rich and middle peasants were instead – according to Kim Il Sung – “persuaded” and ideologically “remoulded” in order to join agricultural cooperatives voluntarily.

“In agricultural cooperativization the voluntary principle was applied not only to the middle peasants but to all sectors of the rural population, including the rich peasants... Our Party adopted the policy of gradually remoulding rich peasants as the cooperative movement developed, while strictly restricting their exploitative practices... the majority of rich peasants joined the cooperatives voluntarily.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Report on the Work of the Central Committee to the Fourth Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 11–9–1961, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 15, Pyongyang, 1983, pp. 136–7.

“The rich peasants were remoulded into socialist working people by way of restricting their negative tendencies and educating them with patience, instead of expropriating them... The voluntary principle was strictly adhered to in the finishing stage, too.

... agricultural cooperation was completed at last in August 1958. Thus the difficult and complex task of transforming the small peasant farming and capitalist economy in the countryside into the socialist cooperative economy was successfully carried out in a matter of 4–5 years.”

– Kim Han Gil, Modern History of Korea, Pyongyang, 1979, pp. 411–2.

Alongside agricultural cooperativization, the reorganisation of handicrafts and capitalist trade and industry (a sector which had been considerably reduced since 1945) was stepped up along socialist lines and was allegedly completed by August 1958. In this instance, as well, cooperatives could be set up by “remoulding” national capitalists, but without expropriating their properties:

“We intend to carry out the revolution to eliminate the capitalist elements in the north not by expropriating the capitalist merchants and manufacturers, but by transforming them on socialist lines by drawing them into various forms of cooperative economy.”

– Kim Il Sung, “On the Nature of the Revolution in Our Country at the Present Stage and the Basic Direction of the First Five-Year Plan: Concluding Speech at a Meeting of the Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 29–12–1954, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 9, Pyongyang, 1982, p. 171.

Our Party should form a solid united front with the entrepreneurs and merchants... Various methods... can be applied in curbing the exploitative practices of the entrepreneurs and merchants. But it will not do to try to confiscate their properties.”

– Kim Il Sung, “On Strengthening United Front Work: Concluding Speech at the Seventh Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 18–12–1953, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 8, Pyongyang, 1981, pp. 171–2.

“The capitalist elements still remaining in town and country will have to be restricted and utilised, and remoulded, step by step, on socialist lines.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Every Effort for the Country’s Reunification and Independence and for Socialist Construction in the Northern Half of the Republic: Theses on the Nature and Tasks of Our Revolution”, April 1955, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 9, Pyongyang, 1982, p. 201.

Just as in the case of the agricultural cooperatives, three forms of producers' cooperatives were set up:

1. in the first form work was carried out collectively, while production tools were kept in private ownership;
2. in the second, semi-socialist form, the means of production was either jointly or privately owned, while income was distributed according to both the amount of investment which had been previously made to the cooperative and the work done; and<
3. in the third, socialist form, all means of production and funds were turned into common property and only socialist distribution applied. Income depended only on the work performed, and not on the amount invested.

National capitalists joining a cooperative could freely choose which form of distribution to adopt. They naturally exercised this choice in accordance with their interests by joining the second form of cooperation and by receiving dividends upon their investments. They were then encouraged to pass to the third, higher form of cooperatives and those capitalists who opted for this transition were paid additional compensation.

As for private trade, this was transformed through the formation of marketing cooperatives (where marketed goods were either purchased or partly processed by private traders) and producing-marketing cooperatives (where private traders were engaged in both producing and marketing their products). These latter cooperatives were later reorganised – with considerable financial assistance from the state – as producers' cooperatives. Such a reorganisation of private trade and industry into producers' cooperatives proceeded rapidly at the rate of 33.7% in 1953, 77.2% in 1957 and was then declared as completed by August 1958. Kim Il Sung alleged that the mere act of joining a cooperative could transform a national capitalist into a “socialist worker”.

“In transforming private trade and industry along socialist lines, the Party closely combined the change of economic forms with the remoulding of people. Joining the producers' cooperatives, the entrepreneurs and merchants completely broke with their former life based on the exploitation of others, they have been changed into socialist working people who produce material wealth by their own labour. This has also speeded up their ideological transformation.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Report on the Work of the Central Committee to the Fourth Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea”, 11–9–1961, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 15, Pyongyang, 1983, p. 142.

“Our Party introduced the policy of transforming the economy of the capitalist traders and industrialists, together with that of handicraftsmen and small traders, along socialist lines through various types of cooperative economy. This conformed both to the demands of socialist construction and to the interests of the entrepreneurs and traders themselves. Almost all the entrepreneurs and traders, therefore, accepted our Party's policy on cooperativization, and the socialist transformation of private trade and industry was completed in a short time after the war.”

– Kim Il Sung, “On Socialist Construction in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the South Korean Revolution: Lecture at the 'Ali Archam' Academy of Social Sciences of Indonesia”, 14–4–1965, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 19, Pyongyang, 1984, p. 246.

“The state confiscated none of the property of medium and small businesses... The policy of our Party and the Government of our Republic towards the private traders and manufacturers is being appreciated even by people who are not communists. A great many visitors to our country from capitalist countries say that they support and approve socialism in Korea.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Korean Merchants and Manufacturers in Japan Must Make a Strong Contribution to the Patriotic Work for Their Homeland and Nation: Talk to the Second Group of Korean Merchants and Manufacturers from Japan on a Visit to Their Homeland”, 19–11–1973, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 28, Pyongyang, 1986, p. 499.

“In the socialist revolution, it (the WPK – Ed.) did not eliminate rich peasants and capitalist businessmen and entrepreneurs; it admitted them into the cooperative economy on the principle of voluntary participation and led them to be transformed into socialist working people. Our Party has been leading all these transformed people to socialism and communism by trusting

them as its lasting companions, rather than as temporary fellow travellers, no matter which class or stratum they came from.”

– Kim Jong Il, Our Socialism Centred on the Masses Shall not Perish: Talk to the Senior Officials of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, Pyongyang, 5–5–1991. My emphases.

These policies – thoroughly implemented in the DPRK in order to “persuade” and “remould” rich peasants and capitalists along allegedly socialist lines – have little in common with scientific socialism. They conform, instead, to Nikolai Bukharin’s revisionist theory, in which irreconcilable antagonisms of class interests soon disappear under socialism as the exploiting classes peacefully and harmoniously come to embrace socialist and communist policies. But such revisionist assumptions run contrary to the basic laws of economic and social development. As Stalin noted,

“There have been no cases in history where dying classes have voluntarily departed from the scene. There have been no cases in history where the dying bourgeoisie has not exerted all its remaining strength to preserve its existence.” – J. V. Stalin, “The Right Deviation in the CPSU(B): Speech Delivered at the Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the CPSU(B)”, April 1929, in Stalin, Works, vol. 12, Moscow, 1955, p. 40.

As for the DPRK, it is rather revealing to consider the rapidity through which complete socialist relations of production are alleged to have been established by 1958. In September 1957, in fact, the democratic government was not only representing workers and peasants, but also the private capitalist sector (i.e., “entrepreneurs, traders and those in other social sections” who were supposedly transforming themselves voluntarily into “socialist working people”):

“Under the people’s democratic system in our country, the individual entrepreneurs, traders and those in other social sections participate in government together with the workers and peasants, and form a component part of the unified front. The entrepreneurs and traders in our country are fellow-travellers of all the working people, including the working class, not only when carrying out the democratic revolution but also the socialist construction in the northern half. The people’s government supports the legitimate business activities of entrepreneurs and traders... it opens the way to a new life for them by gradually turning them into socialist working people through voluntary membership in various cooperatives and by other methods.” – Kim Il Sung, “On the Immediate Tasks of the People’s Power in Socialist Construction”, 20–9–1957, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 11, Pyongyang, 1982, pp. 273–4.

By March 1958 the then existing government (also inclusive of the national bourgeoisie) had almost assumed – according to Kim Il Sung – the character of a proletarian dictatorship which should have accomplished the socialist revolution in order to overthrow the exploiting classes (i.e., the national bourgeoisie itself). In fact,

“Today (in March 1958 – Ed.), our people’s power is a state power that belongs to the category of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the northern half of the Republic, now that we are in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism, the functions of the proletarian dictatorship of our people’s power must be strengthened even more... Although great achievements have been obtained in our socialist construction, we cannot say that the exploiting classes have now been completely destroyed in the northern half... As long as small commodity producers, private merchants and manufacturers, even in limited numbers, remain in urban and rural areas, as long as the tasks of the socialist revolution have not yet been accomplished ... how can we neglect to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat?

... The dictatorship of the proletariat is a powerful weapon of the working class in thoroughly crushing all the counter-revolutionary elements hostile to the socialist revolution and in defending the interests of the working people and the revolution.”

– Kim Il Sung, “For the Successful Implementation of the First Five-Year Plan: Concluding Speech at a Conference of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 6–3–1958, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 12, Pyongyang, 1983, pp. 115–6.

But in a matter of six months only, by September 1958, socialist relations of production were declared to have been completely established in both the industrial and agricultural sectors of the economy. Thus, an allegedly socialist society, free from exploitation and oppression – but achieved without the socialist revolution in a very short period of time – had suddenly emerged.

“Thanks to the correct policies of the Party and the Government and to the devotion and efforts of our working people, we have already made tremendous achievements in socialist construction... .

The Party and Government adhere to the line of gradually transforming private trade and industry along socialist lines, through the organisation of production-and-marketing cooperatives. It has been only in the interests of individual tradesmen and manufacturers that they have been made to pool their small businesses to engage in production and trade.

As a result of this policy by the Party, entrepreneurs and tradesmen in our country started to transform themselves into socialist workers. Thus, today (in September 1958 – Ed.) the socialist transformation of private trade and industry has already been completed in our country... .

Socialist transformation of agriculture enabled us to solve the problems that existed between socialist industry and the individual peasant economy... . Our agriculture has been turned from a scattered, individual peasant economy to a completely cooperativized socialist economy... .

Our Party... fulfilled this task very smoothly in only three or four years after the war... . As a result, the worker-peasant alliance, the basis of the people's democratic system in our country, has been still more strengthened on new socialist foundations... .

There are no longer any landlords or capitalists in our country. Exploitation of man by man has disappeared for ever in our society... . In our country, socialist relations of production have already been successful in all fields of the national economy.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Report at Celebrations Marking the Tenth Anniversary of the Founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea”, 8–9–1958, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 12, Pyongyang, 1983, pp. 409, 411–12, 415, 417.

“The socialist transformation of production relations has now been completed in the urban and rural districts of our country. Thus, our society has become a socialist one, free from exploitation and oppression. The main task confronting us is to consolidate the socialist system in the northern half of the republic and, by developing it still further, to complete the building of a socialist society.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Against Passiveness and Conservatism in Socialist Construction: Speech at a National Meeting of Production Innovators”, 16–9–1958, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 12, Pyongyang, 1983, p. 440.

On the basis of the above official sources of the 1957–58 period, therefore, ample evidence can prove that “socialism” had been achieved in North Korea without the socialist revolution (i.e., without expropriating and overthrowing the national capitalist class), without the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat (thus rejecting the Marxist-Leninist concept that the dictatorship of the working class is essential to construct and maintain socialism once the exploiting classes have been overthrown) and by peacefully and “voluntarily” absorbing the national capitalist class into the state, either through direct participation in government or through cooperatives. There is no doubt that this capitalist class was numerically small and that its power had been considerably reduced by the democratic reforms implemented in the country after 1945. Nonetheless, this capitalist class did exist and did actively participate in establishing Korean-style socialism. The issue of the proletarian dictatorship was therefore simplistically solved, during the late fifties, by equating the new democratic system of various classes exercising state power in North Korea with the dictatorship of the proletariat itself.

From their very inception, in fact, political developments in North Korea proceeded along a direction radically different from, and in opposition to, the revolutionary transformations that had established Soviet power in Russia in 1917. Indeed, we should consider that at that time in Russia – just as in North Korea during the

forties and fifties – the peasantry represented the overwhelming majority of the population. Nonetheless, it was under the leadership of the working class – and in alliance with the poor peasants – that the Bolshevik party could open up the new era of proletarian revolutions by overthrowing and expropriating the bourgeoisie, by transferring the land to the peasants and nationalising it, and by establishing a socialist Soviet state by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Clearly, this revolutionary pattern was not followed in North Korea.

Factionalism During The Fifties

From the end of the Korean war onwards, considerable attempts were made by Kim Il Sung to establish Juche thoroughly. Placing major emphasis on the national character of the Korean revolution, the struggle to establish Juche became associated with efforts to root out attitudes which were typified as dogmatic, formal and unsuitable to Korea's reality. Kim Il Sung's first reference to Juche in December 1955 was, in fact, made in a speech entitled "On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work". According to Kimilsungist literature, this ideological struggle under the banner of Juche became increasingly incompatible with factionalism, flunkeyism and dogmatism.

"The anti-Party factionalists, flunkeys and dogmatists, swallowing foreign things whole and copying them mechanically, opposed overtly and covertly our Party's independent lines and creative policies which embodied the Juche idea. They not only took exception to the basic line of economic construction most suited to the actual conditions of Korea and the policy for socialist transformation of the relations of production but also prevented the Party's ideological work from being conducted in conformity with the demand of the Korean revolution. They even fell victim to national nihilism which extols foreign things without consideration while slighting one's own. The harm done by flunkeyism and dogmatism became intolerable."

– Kim Han Gil, Modern History of Korea, Pyongyang, 1979, p. 417.

During the Korean war, factionalist activities within the WPK centred around the group led by Pak Hon Yong and Li Sung Yop, who were accused of counter-revolutionary intrigues and treachery in collusion with US imperialism. In parallel with Kim Il Sung's fast ascent to power, a considerable number of political figures were then expelled from the WPK or purged during 1956–58. These purges affected prominent cadres who had held positions such as deputy premier (2 cases), minister of construction, minister of coal industry, minister of railroads, minister of commerce, minister of labour, vice minister of culture and propaganda (2 cases), vice minister of defence (2 cases), formerly vice minister of home affairs, bureau chief of the cabinet secretariat, commander of the Pyongyang Reconstruction Corps, editor-in-chief of Minchu Choson, NKPA commander in chief, NKPA division commander, political committee chief of national defence, principal of the Central Party School, vice chairman of the Central Women's Alliance, member of the SPA judicial committee, chief of propaganda of the central committee secretariat, ambassador to the USSR, ambassador to Poland, etc. As the WPK's fourth congress convened in September 1961, Kim Il Sung's position had clearly consolidated and proved to be unchallengeable. According to the official version of events, as presented by Kim Il Sung himself,

"In 1955 ... our Party laid down a firm policy to oppose dogmatism and establish Juche in all spheres, and went on to wage a resolute struggle to carry it through..."

The attack of the opportunists on our Party became most pronounced around the years 1956–57. At that time a handful of anti-Party factionalists and obstinate dogmatists lurking in our Party challenged it, teaming up with each other on a revisionist basis, with the backing of outside forces. They not only slandered the lines and policies of our Party, but also conspired to overthrow its leadership...

... the struggle against opportunism after the war was the most intense battle against the enemy within the communist movement itself...

Our Party decisively crushed the factionalism which had done tremendous harm to the communist movement all through its history, thus achieving a firm unity of thought and purpose within its

ranks. The Party defended its Marxist-Leninist revolutionary line against modern revisionism, rooted out dogmatism and established Juche throughly.”

- Kim Il Sung, “On the Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Workers’ Party of Korea: Report Delivered at the Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 10–10–1965, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 19, Pyongyang, 1984, pp. 427–9.

Anti-communist sources – mainly on the basis of defectors’ accounts – point to the existence of the Soviet and Yenan (Chinese) factions within the WPK. In contact with the respective Soviet and Chinese embassies in Pyongyang, these two factions were orchestrating their opposition to Kim Il Sung during the fifties. It is moreover suggested that – rather than one’s factional affiliation or background – the crucial factor often depended on one’s personal relationship to Kim Il Sung. Hardly any documents remain available in order to verify the existence of pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese lines among those groups that did challenge Kim Il Sung’s position and his Juche ideology. Nor is it possible to assess – for the same reason – the political strength of possible Marxist-Leninist groups or individuals fighting to implement scientific socialism in North Korea. But the very fact that purges and factional struggles in the DPRK reached their peak during this time (particularly in 1956–57) – i.e., during the period leading to the official establishment of “socialist relations of productions” under the banner of Juche – may indeed suggest a degree of Marxist-Leninist opposition to the revisionist course hastily implemented by Kim Il Sung and his supporters.

We should also consider that, in the meantime, major developments were taking place in the international communist movement:

1. the emergence of Khrushchevite revisionism in the USSR, reforming the country along capitalist lines (particularly after the 1956 20th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union); and
2. the unfolding of equally revisionist lines in China, with particular regard to the liquidation, by the mid-fifties, of the Marxist-Leninist grouping headed by Kao Kang and the subsequent launching of the “Great Leap Forward” (a revisionist campaign initiated by Mao Tse-tung – in alliance with the Chinese comprador bourgeoisie – in order to mobilize the peasantry into conflict with the political representatives of the national bourgeoisie headed by Liu Shao-chi).

Given the extent of the above revisionist trends developing in the USSR and China, it is highly unlikely that these two countries would have exerted – at that time – their political influence in the DPRK in order to support the consistent implementation of Marxism-Leninism rather than Juche.

The period leading to Kim Il Sung’s consolidation in power during the late fifties also coincided with a remarkable numerical increase of the WPK’s members. In January 1956 the total membership amounted to 1,164,945 (with 58,259 cells and sub-cells), an extraordinarily high figure out of a population of about 10 million: 22.6% of members were workers, 56.8% poor peasants, 3.7% middle peasants, 13% office employees and 3.9% belonging to other categories. *Kim Il Sung, “Report to the Third Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea on the Work of the Central Committee”, 23–4–1956, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 10, Pyongyang, 1982, pp. 221, 236.*

In its composition, therefore, the WPK consisted of more than 60% peasants and less than one -fourth workers. At the time of the WPK’s fourth congress in 1961, the party increased its total membership to 1,311,563 (1,166,359 full members and 145,204 probationary members). *Kim Il Sung, “Report on The Work of the Central Committee to the Fourth Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 11–9–1961, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 15, Pyongyang, 1983, p. 226.*

9. “Socialist Construction” in the DPRK

From the early sixties onwards, the DPRK embarked on the “all-round socialist construction” by continuing to develop its economy on the basis of centrally organised plans. A series of new, democratic, progressive, often socialist oriented reforms significantly transformed North Korean society on the basis of the following economic plans:

1. the first seven-year plan, extended by three additional years (1961–70);

2. the six-year plan (1971–76) (1977 was designated a “buffer year”);
3. the second seven-year plan (1978–84), extended by two more years;
4. the third seven-year plan (1987–93).

In the first seven-year plan, priority was given to heavy industry while developing light industry and agriculture at the same time. Its fundamental task was to carry out a comprehensive technological reconstruction (particularly in the countryside by means of farm mechanisation and by completing the irrigation and electrification systems), together with a cultural revolution. The plan was successfully carried out in two phases (1961–64 and 1965–70). Both US imperialism’s war mongering provocations (in parallel with the Caribbean crisis against Cuba and its war against Vietnam) and also the negative effects of the Sino-Soviet dispute on the DPRK’s economy required greater military efforts in strengthening the country’s defence capabilities. The economic plan was therefore partly modified and later extended by three years. Industrial output grew by 12.8% per annum during the sixties.

The successful completion of the plan’s targets by 1970 led Kim Il Sung to declare the final conversion of North Korea into an independent and socialist industrial state, based on economic self-reliance:

“by Juche industry we mean an industry which emphasises developing production, basically using our own raw material.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Let Us Further Consolidate and Develop the Achievements Gained in the Struggle to Attain the Six Goals: Concluding Speech Delivered at the Fifth Plenary Meeting of the Fourth Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 14–12–1962, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 16, Pyongyang, 1984, p. 471.

The subsequent six-year plan (1971–76) was intended to consolidate and further advance industrialisation while deepening the technical revolution. It was particularly important to reduce distinctions between industrial and agricultural workers and to alleviate women from their heavy household duties. The plan was declared fulfilled a year and four months ahead of schedule: between 1971 and 1976 industrial output developed at an annual rate of 16.3% and in 1976 the overall volume of industrial production increased by 2.5 times since 1970.

The goals of the second seven-year plan (1978–84), which was then extended for two more years until 1986, aimed at further strengthening the independent character of the economy. It mainly relied on the DPRK’s own mineral resources (such as coal, iron-ore, magnesium, graphite, lead and zinc) and gave priority to the development of energy (mainly hydro-electric) and extractive industries.

The economy became increasingly modernised and more Juche oriented. In a similar fashion, the last seven-year plan (1987–93) required further modernisation of the economy. As in the past, its goals set as a priority the development of heavy industry, in parallel with the simultaneous advancement of light industry and agriculture.

Problems, however, emerged during the early nineties. While economic growth had increased by 2% to 3% annually during the eighties, it turned negative in 1989 and dropped by 3% to 5% annually until 1992. International sources estimated that in 1991 the DPRK possessed a gross national product (GNP) at \$22,900 million (compared with \$280,800 million in the south), a per capita GNP at \$1,038 (compared with \$6,498 in the south) and an external trade at \$2,700 million (compared with \$153,400 million in the south). As the gap between the economies in the north and in the south was widening, DPRK’s economic failures in its planned targets were officially admitted in December 1993 (refer to chapter 12).

This entire period of “socialist construction” in the DPRK paralleled with relevant political and ideological initiatives, which were intended to deepen the Juche character of its society. It was during the early sixties that the Chongsanri spirit and method, together with the so-called Taean work system, began to be thoroughly implemented. According to the Chongsanri spirit and Chongsanri method (principles that are still embodied in the current constitution), cadres appointed at higher positions must help and assist their subordinates and mix with them. This “mass line” allows officials to grasp the real situation and arouse enthusiasm and initiatives among the masses.

A new system in industrial management was also introduced during the sixties through the Taean work system. Accordingly, all decisions regarding organisation and management in factories and enterprises are collectively taken by the WPK committees, which are also supposed to play a political role by raising enthusiasm among workers. With the adoption of this system, the former individual management by one director in enterprises was replaced by collective responsibility. As Kim Il Sung pointed out,

“The Taean work system and the Chongsanri spirit and method constitute the economic management system and the method of mass leadership which together embody our Party’s revolutionary mass line. As required by the Taean work system and Chongsanri spirit and method, the leading officials should thoroughly abolish bureaucracy and formalism and go deep into the reality in order to help the officials at lower echelons and to solve complex problems; they should always give priority to political work and organise the masses to implement the economic tasks. Moreover, they should direct production and manage enterprises by relying on the Party organisations and on the masses.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Let Us Further Consolidate and Develop the Achievements Gained in the Struggle to Attain the Six Goals: Concluding Speech Delivered at the Fifth Plenary Meeting of the Fourth Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 14–12–1962, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 16, Pyongyang, 1984, p. 471.

A new organisational system also became operational in the countryside during the sixties. The county people’s committees (which formerly provided guidance mainly through administrative methods) were replaced by the county cooperative farm management committees. All agro-technicians were placed under the authority of these committees, as the state provided more material and scientific assistance to the rural economy. According to the “Theses on the Socialist Rural Question in Our Country” (adopted by the WPK in February 1964), three basic principles were proclaimed in agricultural policies:

1. the implementation of a technical revolution involving irrigation, mechanisation, electrification and chemicalization in rural areas, in parallel with a cultural and ideological revolution;
2. the consolidation of the working class leadership among the peasantry, so that industry could assist agriculture with the aim of gradually diminishing distinctions between town and countryside; and
3. the improvement of management performances in agriculture with the ultimate goal of transforming the cooperative economy into state ownership (i.e., into social ownership by the whole people).

Public education was further enhanced with the introduction of universal compulsory primary education in 1956. Secondary education became compulsory in 1958. The current 11-year compulsory education (one year of preschool education plus ten years at primary and secondary schools) has been in force since 1972. From the sixties onwards, major emphasis has been placed on ideo-political education along Juche lines. The ideological, technical and cultural revolutions – the so-called Three Revolutions – have become components of a single revolutionary process through which the working masses are supposed to advance towards socialism and communism.

Under the banner of Juche, all members of society are educated, persuaded, remoulded and transformed into “men of a communist type”. For this purpose – with the aim of gradually liquidating all class distinctions – the so-called working-classification of the whole North Korean society began during the sixties. This idea was presented by Kim Il Sung in 1966 in the following terms:

“In our society, where the exploiting classes have been wiped out and the socialist system has triumphed, an important task of the dictatorship of the proletariat is to educate and reshape the working people and working-classify the whole of society”

– Kim Il Sung, “The Present Situation and the Tasks of our Party: Report to the Conference of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 5–10–1966, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 20, Pyongyang, 1984, pp. 365–6.

In 1970 Kim Il Sung assessed the impact of the above policies as follows:

“Our Party . . . has conducted its work of revolutionising and working-classizing the working people by means of persuasion and explanation, putting the main stress on ideological education. We have worked unceasingly to revolutionise and working-classize the masses of all social backgrounds on the principle of boldly trusting any person who wants to follow our Party and winning him over to the revolutionary cause even though his origin, environment and social and political backgrounds are dubious.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Report to the Fifth Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea on the Work of the Central Committee”, 2–11–1970, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 25, Pyongyang, 1986, p. 216.

References to the “dictatorship of the proletariat” (a term occasionally used by Kim Il Sung up to the sixties) seem to disappear altogether in the official Kimilsungist literature from the seventies onwards. At the same time, Juche began to pervade all aspects of political and social life in North Korea. As Kim Il Sung stated during the early seventies,

“Our Party has endeavoured to embody the Juche idea thoroughly in all areas of the revolution and construction in the same way that it established Juche in ideology. All the lines and policies of our Party stem from the Juche idea, and they are permeated with it. Our Party’s consistent principle of independence in politics, self-support in economy and self-defence in guarding the nation is the embodiment of the Juche idea in all realms. . . All our achievements represent a shining victory for the Juche idea of our Party.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Report to the Fifth Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea on the Work of the Central Committee”, 2–11–1970, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 25, Pyongyang, 1986, pp. 285–6.

“The Juche idea is the sole guiding idea of our Party and the guiding principle for all activities of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Taking the Juche idea as a steadfast guide in revolution and construction, we have firmly established Juche in all fields of our activities.”

– Kim Il Sung, “On the Present Political and Economic Policies of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Some International Problems: Answers to Questions Raised by Newsmen of the Japanese Newspaper Yomiuri Shimbun”, 10–1–1972, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 27, Pyongyang, 1986, p. 22.

Later, during the early eighties, Kim Il Sung would relate Juche to his idea of a “communist paradise” in the DPRK:

“Our Party’s unity and cohesion have now reached an ever higher level. The whole Party is rallied rock-solid behind its Central Committee and is knit together in ideology and purpose on the basis of the Juche idea, and no force will ever break its unity and cohesion that are based on this idea.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Report to the Sixth Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea on the Work of the Central Committee”, 10–10–1980, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 35, Pyongyang, 1989, p. 353.

The struggle to infuse the whole society with the Juche idea is a noble task to build a communist society, the ideal of humanity, by stepping up our revolution which was pioneered and has advanced under the banner of this idea. . .

Modelling the whole society on the Juche idea is the general task of our revolution and a historic mission for the Government of the Republic. This government must fulfil its mission with credit by building a communist paradise in this land as quickly as possible through a vigorous struggle to model the whole society on the Juche idea.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Tasks of the People’s Government in Modelling the Whole Society on the Juche Idea: Policy Speech at the Joint Meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea and the Supreme People’s Assembly of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, 14–4–1982, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 37, Pyongyang, 1991, pp. 99–100.

A major role in advancing society along the above directions was played by the Chollima Workteam Movement during the sixties, later developed – from 1975 onwards – as the Three-Revolution Red Flag Movement.

These movements served the purpose of educating and remoulding people from different walks of life by means of strengthening collectivism in society under the slogan “let’s live and work in a communist way.” In the countryside, in particular, these movements were aimed at removing selfish, petty-bourgeois, backward ideas that were still rooted among peasants.

“More than a collective innovation movement in production, it (the Chollima Workteam Movement – Ed.) is also an excellent vehicle for educating and reforming the working people in a communist way and is a mass movement to speed up the revolutionization and working-classification of all society.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Report to the Fifth Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea on the Work of the Central Committee”, 2–11–1970, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 25, Pyongyang, 1986, p. 216.

Not only the peasantry, but also the intelligentsia and the national bourgeoisie were all equally remoulded, revolutionised and “working-classified”. This was presented as “class struggle”. But class struggle according to Juche is not class struggle in the Marxist-Leninist sense. In the absence of a truly proletarian state in the DPRK, class struggle could not constitute the necessary medium to strengthen the political power of the working class under its dictatorship. Instead, class struggle was finalised towards achieving harmony and “cooperation” among all classes and members of society for the sake of “unity and solidarity” under the banner of Juche.

“It is our standpoint to apply the propositions of Marx and Lenin creatively to the new historical circumstances and the specific practices of our country... the class struggle in socialist society is a struggle aimed at achieving unity and solidarity, and is by no means a class struggle waged between the members of that society at war with each other. In a socialist society the class struggle certainly exists, but it is carried *on by means of cooperation for the purpose of achieving unity and solidarity...*

Our class struggle is designed not only to working-classify the peasantry and terminate its existence as a class, but also to revolutionise the previous middle class including the intelligentsia and urban petty bourgeoisie and remould them on the pattern of the working class. This is the principal form of the class struggle we are now waging.”

– Kim Il Sung, “On the Questions of the Period of Transition from Capitalism to Socialism and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat: Speech Delivered to Party Ideological Workers”, 25–5–1967, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 21, Pyongyang, 1985, pp. 233–4. My emphasis.

Admittedly, the above positions represent an evident negation of the class struggle between antagonistic classes and ideologies. According to the founders of scientific socialism, it is only the proletarian state that can guarantee the necessary economic, political, ideological preconditions for the gradual and final extinction of classes. On the contrary, this ultimate goal of a classless, communist society is allegedly achieved in the DPRK by ideologically conforming anyone – regardless of one’s social status – to a uniform pattern of behaviour under Juche. Indeed, collectivism has provided the basis for such a hybrid amalgamation of different classes, allegedly united under the working class’ leadership.

“Collectivism is one of the intrinsic characteristics of the working class. It is the basis of social life in socialist and communist societies where the working people are closely united and work towards common goals. We must continue to pay particular attention to strengthening the education of the working people in collectivism.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Report to the Fifth Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea on the Work of the Central Committee”, 2–11–1970, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 25, Pyongyang, 1986, p. 246.

But ironically, collectivism began to translate into collective forms of servility towards the leader, Kim Il Sung. In this regard, he himself in 1975 indicated the following:

“At Party meetings no single person should be allowed to run a one-man show... One of the important matters in Party organisational life is to harden the Party spirit... The Party spirit means, in short, loyalty to the leader and the Party... The members of the Party Central

Committee must unite firmly around the General Secretary with one mind and one will. In this way they will say “A” if the General Secretary says “A” and they will say “B” if the General Secretary says “B”. They must say the same thing and act in concert.”

- Kim Il Sung, “Let Us Meet a Revolutionary Upheaval Victoriously by Strengthening the Party, Governments Organs and People’s Army and Carrying Out Great Socialist Construction More Efficiently: Concluding Speech at the 10th Plenary Meeting of the Fifth Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 17–2–1975, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol 30, Pyongyang, 1987, pp. 46–7, 61.

Consequently, and notwithstanding all preachings about collectivism in society, the personality cult around Kim Il Sung and his nepotism began to reach unimaginable proportions in North Korea from the sixties onwards. Millions of copies of Kim Il Sung’s writings, together with interpretations and analyses of his writings and other reference books, began to be published and distributed all over the country. In 1969, for example, expenditures for such cultural activities from WPK’s funds were reported to be thirty times the amount spent in the year 1960. During the sixties 39 million copies of the Selected Works of Kim Il Sung were published, along with 8.8 million copies of the History of the Revolutionary Activities of Comrade Kim Il Sung and 45.5 million copies of other “revolutionary guidance” books – and this took place at a time when the total population was only 14 million, out of which 6.6 million were under 14 years of age.

Political education centred almost exclusively on studying the life and works of Kim Il Sung and party members were required to spend, for this purpose, a minimum of two hours per day. In the meantime, between 1966 and 1970, several members of Kim Il Sung’s family were appointed to top party and government positions. At the WPK’s 5th Congress in 1970, Kim Il Sung was officially described as:

“the great leader of the 40 million Korean people, peerless patriot, national hero, ever-victorious, iron-willed brilliant commander, one of the outstanding leaders of the international Communist movement and working-class movement, and General Secretary of the Central Committee of our Party.”

- Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report, 2–11–1970, KCNA International Service.

Furthermore, in order to prove Kim Il Sung’s personal legitimacy as successor of “a patriotic and revolutionary family that have fought from generation to generation for the independence of the country and the freedom and liberation of the people against foreign aggressors”, official publications presented his genealogy as follows:

- his great-grandfather, Kim Ung U, was a patriot who led a revolt against the Americans in 1866;
- his grandfather, Kim Bo Hyon, and his grandmother, Li Bo Ik, were also patriots who fought against the Japanese;
- his grandfather on the mother’s side, Kang Don Uk, was an anti-Japanese fighter;
- his father, Kim Hyong Jik, was an outstanding leader of Korea’s national-liberation movement;
- his mother, Kang Ban Sok, was an anti-Japanese revolutionary fighter too;
- his uncle, Kim Hyong Gwon, was a revolutionary fighter and communist;
- his uncle on the mother’s side, Kang Jin Sok, was an anti-Japanese fighter;
- his two younger brothers and his cousin, Kim Won Ju, were also revolutionary fighters and communist.

- Brief History of the Revolutionary Activities of Comrade Kim Il Sung, Party History Institute of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea (Ed.), Pyongyang, 1969, pp. 3–7.

Kim Il Sung became the DPRK’s president in 1972, a position he held until his death in 1994. But a dynastic power succession plan had been drafted since the early seventies in order to settle the continuation of the Juche cause under the leadership of Kim Il Sung’s son, Kim Jong Il. Evidence suggests that, in this instance,

Kim Il Sung encountered opposition as more than 1000 political and military cadres were reported to have been purged.

But by the WPK's 6th Congress, held in 1980, this opposition appeared to have been overcome as Kim Jong Il was elected as party secretary and was confirmed as his father's heir successor. In a similar fashion to that accorded to his father, the 6th Congress described Kim Jong Il as the:

"dear leader", "endlessly loyal to the great leader, perfectly embodying the ideas, outstanding leadership, and noble traits of the leader, and brilliantly upholding the grand plan and intention of the leader at the highest level" and possessing "bright wisdom, deep insight, strong sense of revolutionary principles and strong will."

– quoted in Chong-Sik Lee, "Evolution of the Korean Workers' Party and the Rise of Kim Chong-il" in Robert A. Scalpino and Jun-Yop Kim, North Korea Today: Strategic and Domestic Issues, Berkeley, 1983., p. 76.

A book, which was widely circulated in the DPRK in 1990, presented Kim Jong Il as:

"the giant of our times ... a unique person distinguished in all aspects – wisdom, leadership ability, personality and achievements."

The relevance of his blood relationship with his parents and ancestors was also highlighted in this book:

"It was a brilliant dawn for the future of Korea that he (Kim Jong Il – Ed.) was born to General Kim Il Sung ... and the heroine of the anti-Japanese war Kim Jong Suk..."

Not only his parents but also his ancestors had fought for generations for the independence of the country ... so, the blood of a peerless patriotic family runs through the veins of Secretary Kim Jong Il."

– Kim Gang Il, The Leader Kim Jong Il, Pyongyang, 1990, p. 1.

What indeed constituted a hereditary succession through Kim Jong Il's gradual accession to power – almost like a family affair typical of Korea's feudalistic dynasties of the past – was presented in the DPRK as a model of succession for the Juche cause. According to a Japanese apologist of Kimilsungism,

"In Korea, with the succession issue of the revolutionary cause successfully settled, the lever of the Juche idea authored by President Kim Il Sung has been inherited by Secretary Kim Jong Il, and the Korean people have laid firm groundwork whereupon to move ahead under the banner of Juche.

It is now obvious that this event will dynamically function to put the world solidly on the Juche path and drive it towards the future of independence."

– Inoue Shuhachi, Modern Korea and Kim Jong Il, Tokyo, 1984, p. 311.

Constitutional Developments in the DPRK

North Korea's first constitution was approved by the SPA on 8–9–1948 and remained in force – with some minor amendments made between 1954 and 1962 – until a new one was adopted in 1972. Without any reference to Juche, socialism or Marxism-Leninism, the 1948 constitution defined the country as the "Democratic People's Republic of Korea", where sovereignty resided in the people who exercised their power through the SPA and the local people's assemblies at various levels. Besides major nationalisations, three forms of ownership were contemplated: state, cooperative and private.

A new "Socialist Constitution" was adopted on 27–12–1972, though the name of the state – DPRK – remained unchanged. This constitution remains in force today, after having been revised and supplemented on 9–4–1992 and on 5–9–1998 (some articles have, in the meantime, been amended from time to time). The 1972 constitution explicitly stipulated, in its original version, that the country was an independent socialist state representing the interests of all Koreans and that it was guided by "*the Juche idea of the Workers' Party of Korea, a creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions of our country*" (my emphasis). Another

reference was made to “Marxism-Leninism”, while the “dictatorship of the proletariat” was only mentioned once. But later, the 1992 constitutional revision deleted altogether any reference to “Marxism-Leninism” and the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” It is now stated that the DPRK is guided by *“the Juche idea, a world outlook centred on people, a revolutionary ideology for achieving the independence of the masses of people.”* (my emphasis).

The “socialist constitution” clearly indicates that socialist relations of productions have been established in North Korea: “class antagonisms and all forms of exploitation and oppression of man by man have been eliminated for ever”, the DPRK relies “on the socialist production relations and on the foundation of an independent national economy”, it “shall strive to achieve the complete victory of socialism in the northern half”. In his speech made at the SPA two days prior to the approval of the constitution in December 1972, Kim Il Sung stated that both the socialist transformation of the economy and agricultural cooperativization had been completed in the DPRK by 1958. He also confirmed, once more, that this sudden establishment of socialist relations of productions had been made possible by the inclusion of the national bourgeoisie:

“from the beginning our policy with regard to the national capitalists was not only to carry out the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, democratic revolution with them, but also to take them along with us to a socialist, communist society.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Let Us Further Strengthen the Socialist System of Our Country: Speech Made at the First Session of the Fifth Supreme People’s Assembly of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, 25–12–1972, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol. 27, Pyongyang, 1986, p.484.

Since the abolition of class antagonisms is declared as final and no provision is made to the recognition of class struggle under socialism, the 1972 constitution endorses revisionism. The uninterrupted development of the revolution cannot, indeed, be separated from consistently waging class struggle during the whole period of socialist construction. The fundamental antagonistic contradiction between socialism and capitalism continues to affect various political, ideological, economic and cultural fields of social life until the final triumph of communism. It’s only through class struggle that both antagonistic contradictions (i.e., between workers in power and the overthrown bourgeoisie) and non-antagonistic ones (i.e., those among the working people) are continuously resolved while socialist society develops towards communism. Needless to say, class struggle within a socialist country is closely linked with class struggle outside it, i.e., against imperialism, capitalism and revisionism, which all exert a powerful pressure in order to strangle and destroy socialism – through military aggression, ideological degeneration, political interference, economic blockades or starvation, etc. From the sixties onwards, revisionist degeneration could, in fact, take place in the USSR and other countries that had not recognised the necessity of class struggle under socialism. Their recent set-backs have, in fact, fully validated Lenin’s teaching that “the dictatorship of the proletariat is not an end, but a continuation of class struggle in new forms”. This basic proletarian principle has always been absent in the DPRK’s constitution.

Some other relevant points embodied in the current constitution are the following:

1. the right of the electors to recall deputies if the latter are “not to be trusted”;
2. the implementation of the Chongsanri spirit and Chongsanri method;
3. the support of the Three-Revolution Red Flag Movement;
4. abolition of taxes while providing people “with every condition for obtaining food, clothing and housing”;
5. planned economy;
6. compulsory 11-year education;
7. free medical service and preventive medicine;
8. self-reliance in defence;
9. the implementation of the collectivist principle, “one for all and all for one” (“collectivism is the basis of life of socialist society”);

10. emphasis on marriage and the family, regarded as “the basic unit of social life.”

State institutions in the DPRK include the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA), the highest state organ which exercises legislative power and is elected for a period of five years (687 deputies were recently elected to the 10th SPA in July 1998), the National Defence Commission (the highest military leadership organ), the SPA Presidium, the Cabinet (the highest administrative and executive body), the local People’s Assemblies, the local People’s Committees, the Public Prosecutor’s Office and the Court. Kim Il Sung, who had served as president until his death in 1994, has now been made the DPRK’s “eternal” president.

10. Juche: A Revisionist Theory and Practice

The ruling ideology in the DPRK is Juche, initially formulated by Kim Il Sung and later developed by Kim Jong Il. As it is closely associated with its creator, Kim Il Sung, Juche becomes synonymous with Kimilsungism or Korean revisionism. It is so pervasive that, since 1997, the Juche Era has been institutionalised in the DPRK, commencing from the date of Kim Il Sung’s birthday on 15 April (Sun’s Day) 1912. Juche is regarded not only as suitable to the specific Korean conditions, but as relevant to the revolutionary process world-wide, as well. Its definition:

“The historical task of putting socialism on a new scientific basis was successfully solved by the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, who created the Juche idea and, on this basis, evolved an original socialist theory. The respected Comrade Kim Il Sung discovered the philosophical principle that man is the master of everything and decides everything. He explained a new law which governs social movement, the movement of the motive force, and he thus put socialism on a new scientific basis. The socialist and communist cause as clarified by the Juche idea is the cause of the popular masses for their complete independence. Socialism as scientifically systematised by the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung is man-centred socialism and socialism centred on the masses. Ours is a socialism where the popular masses are the masters of everything, where everything serves them, and which is developing through their united efforts. The Juche-orientated theory of socialism scientifically clarified the essence of socialism and the law governing its development, by placing man at the centre. On this basis, the theory explained that if the building of socialism is to succeed, a vigorous struggle must be waged to occupy the two fortresses of socialism and communism, the ideological and material fortresses, and that here, absolute precedence must be given to the struggle to take the ideological fortress... The Juche idea has given scientific definition of man’s essential qualities, for the first time in history...

Man is a social being with independence, creativity and consciousness. Herein lie his essential qualities...

Independent, creative and conscious activities constitute man’s mode of existence...

Man transforms nature and society and develops history...

Man’s life becomes noble when he is loved and trusted by the social collective; it is worthless when he is forsaken by it. Man enjoys the love and trust of the social collective when he considers the interests of the social collective to be dearer than those of individuals and when he faithfully serves the social collective. In the final analysis, the greatest value and worth of man’s life is to lead an independent and creative life, enjoying the love and trust of the social collective, while at the same time combining his own destiny with that of the social collective and serving it heart and soul...

In our country, everyone regards and supports the leader as they would their own father. They trust and follow the Party, regarding its embrace as that of their own mother. The leader, the Party and the people form one socio-political organism, and share the same destiny. The whole of society overflows with communist morality.”

– Kim Jong Il, Socialism is a Science: Treatise Published in Rodong Sinmun, Organ of the Central Committee of the Workers’Party of Korea, Pyongyang, 1–11–1994, pp. 8–16, 31. My emphases.

Juche puts forward the following propositions:

1. the popular masses are the subjects of history;
2. society's historical development reflects the creative movement of the popular masses;
3. human history is the struggle of the popular masses in order to implement their Chajusong, i.e., the spirit of liberty, independence and self-reliance;
4. the independent thought, consciousness and initiative of the popular masses perform their decisive role both in changing nature and in carrying out the revolutionary struggle;
5. it is the leader that interprets, and gives form to, the masses' aspirations while directing their efforts. Individual independence and/or people's independence lie in loyalty to the leader and the party.<

Proceeding from the above premises, Juche denies the materialistic and dialectic conception of history, according to which ideas and sensations essentially reflect the primary, objective reality existing per se, regardless of our mind and will. Juche philosophy is idealistic, based on man's volition and imbued with metaphysical, almost theological features. It aims at establishing independence in politics, self-sufficiency in the economy and self-reliance in defence.

The history of Korea itself, that of the international communist movement and the recent set-backs of socialism are all interpreted in the light of Juche. Although Juche began to develop in North Korea only from the mid-50s, official North Korean historiography discovers its fundamental role retrospectively. For instance,

“the victory of the anti-Japanese armed struggle was, first of all, a brilliant victory of his (Kim Il Sung's – Ed.) great Juche idea and the Juche-oriented revolutionary line.”

– Kim Han Gil, Modern History of Korea, Pyongyang, 1979, pp. 169–170.

Emphasis on man's independence leads to the critique and misinterpretation of Marxism. The latter is alleged to have stressed only material and economic conditions in history, while having underestimated the independent initiative of the popular masses. Kim Jong Il (who supposedly read almost all the classics of Marxism-Leninism, including Marx's *The Capital*, during his university years from May 1966 to July 1969) indicates the following “limitations” of Marxism-Leninism:

“Marxism was a revolutionary doctrine which represented the era when the working class had emerged in the historical arena and was waging a struggle against capital... But the times have changed and history has developed, so Marxism has acquired *inevitable historical limitations*...”

Ultimately, Marxism failed to provide a proper explanation concerning the building of a socialist and communist society by continuing the revolution after the establishment of the socialist system. Historically, Marxism is an idea and theory dealing with the requirements of the initial stage of the socialist cause.”

– Kim Jong Il, On Carrying Forward the Juche Idea, Pyongyang, 1995. My emphasis.

“Our Party and people respect Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin as the leaders of the working class and speak highly of their distinguished services... In their days, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin represented the aspirations and demands of the exploited working masses, and the cause of socialism was inseparably linked with their names...”

The conditions and circumstances of the revolution ceaselessly change and develop... Our Party has established its own guiding ideology and theory on the basis of a correct analysis of the historical limitations of their doctrines... The great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung... authored the Juche idea and blazed the trail for the independent development of our revolution... The historical limitations of the preceding theories were overcome by the Juche idea.”

– Kim Jong Il, Respecting the Forerunners of the Revolution is a Noble Moral Obligation of the Revolutionaries: Discourse Published in Rodong Sinmun, the Organ of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, Pyongyang, 25–12–1995, pp. 13–15. My emphases.

“The major limitation of the materialistic conception of history is that it failed to correctly expound the peculiar law of the social movement and explained the principles of the social movement mainly on the basis of the common character of the motion of nature and the social movement in that both of them are the motion of material.”

– Kim Jong Il, The Juche Philosophy is an Original Revolutionary Philosophy: Discourse Published in Kulloja, Theoretical Magazine of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, Pyongyang, 26–7–1996, p. 5.

“The theory of socialism in the preceding age . . . did not regard the social and historical movement as a movement of the motive force, as a movement which begins and develops on the initiative and through the role of the popular masses, its motive force, but as a natural historical process which changes and develops due to material and economic factors . . .

In socialist society, the transformation of man, his ideological remoulding, becomes a more important and primary task than that of creating the material and economic conditions of socialism . . .

In the past, the founders of Marxism evolved socialist theory by putting the main stress on material and economic conditions . . . Marxism defined man’s essential quality as the ensemble of social relations . . . the definition of man’s essential quality as the sum total of social relations does not provide a comprehensive elucidation of man’s own essential qualities . . . The history of social development is, in the long run, the history of the development of man’s independence, creativity and consciousness.”

– Kim Jong Il, Socialism is a Science, Pyongyang, 1–11–1994, pp. 5, 11.

Indeed, this anthropocentric version of Korean socialism, while claiming to be scientific, runs contrary to the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism. According to Marx, man’s position in society is determined by a specific social order: outside the existing social framework – and in separation from it – it is only possible to define man in metaphysical and idealistic terms. Marx contextualises man both diachronically and synchronically, i.e., both in history and in society. If one detaches man from his social class and considers him as an individual abstraction, one supports idealism and perpetuates capitalism – no matter how much capitalism can be disguised under false red flags and through pseudo-revolutionary phraseology. Dialectical and historical materialism rejects the abstract and general treatment of this issue and demonstrates the decisive role played by the modes of production as the real bases of every particular social order. The mode of production, in fact, lies at the foundation of the entire system of social relations where the very “essence” of man can be perceived. As early as January 1859 in his Preface to A Contribution to The Critique of Political Economy, Marx succinctly formulated the fundamental and truly revolutionary features of historical and dialectical materialism in the following terms:

“In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.”

– Karl Marx, Preface to A Contribution to The Critique of Political Economy, in Marx and Engels, Collected Works, vol. 29, London, 1987, p. 263.

As the material productive forces – at a certain stage of their development – enter into conflict with the given relations of production, a phase of social revolution takes place so that one social system is replaced by another. The primitive community, the slave-owning society, feudalism, capitalism and socialism constitute different kinds of social order so far achieved in history. The clear definition of the social system can also reflect the degree of historical development which – from a lower social order to a higher one – leads to the

establishment of socialism. The principal aspect of capitalist relations of production, in fact, is highlighted by the enslavement of the working class to capital. Consequently, the replacement of capitalism with socialism – by virtue of economic development – requires the liquidation of the exploitation of man (i.e., workers) by man (i.e., the bourgeoisie) and the establishment of the proletarian state, which struggles to achieve a communist society.

Under both capitalism and socialism, ideas possess a class character: in every society – as Marx and Engels indicated – the dominant ideas are those of the ruling class. New social ideas and theories can, therefore, emerge and develop as they reflect the newly created needs in material life. These new revolutionary ideologies assist progressive forces in society and become the possession of the popular masses in forcing their way through history by overthrowing the moribund social forces hampering progress. Therefore, in parallel with the advancement of the proletariat, it is Marxism-Leninism – the revolutionary ideology of the working class – that asserts itself as the dominant ideology in a socialist society, a society that is built for the very first time in history under the working class' leadership.

According to Juche, instead, it is an abstract man that possesses the freedom to transform both nature and society by his own volition. Kim Jong Il argues that:

“the social movement is caused and developed by *the volitional action* and role of the driving force (the popular masses – Ed.)”

– Kim Jong Il, The Juche Philosophy is an Original Revolutionary Philosophy: Discourse Published in Kulloja, Theoretical Magazine of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, Pyongyang, 26–7–1996, p. 5. My emphasis.

Far from representing a new philosophical discovery, such an idealism, based on the masses' volitional independence, reiterates Dühring's subjective, voluntarist views, formulated in Germany more than a century ago. But these views had already been refuted by Engels as he clearly indicated that freedom is based on the understanding of necessity, on the cognition of the objective laws of nature and society. Engels noted the following:

“Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends... Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with knowledge of the subject... Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature, a control founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development.”

– Frederick Engels, Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science, in Marx and Engels, Collected Works, vol. 25, London, 1987, pp. 105–6.

Socialism replaces capitalism neither on the basis of volitional and subjective desires nor according to the good wishes of “great leaders”, but on the basis of objective laws of development which are consciously implemented by the working class. Proceeding from these scientific premises, Marx and Engels attached fundamental importance to the workers' self-emancipation in both material and ideological terms. According to the principles of the First International, in fact, “the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the workers themselves.”

But North Korea's society – as admitted by Kim Jong Il – openly departs from the above principles:

“In socialist society, all people are transformed into socialist working people, so everyone is a member of the masses of the people...”

The basic criterion for deciding whether one is a member of the masses of the people or not is not one's social and class origin, but one's ideas. The ideological foundation on which to unite people from all walks of life into the masses of the people is not just the idea of socialism and communism. Anyone who loves the country ... is qualified to be a member of the masses of the people.

From such a point of view, at every stage of the revolution, the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung united everyone who was ideologically ready to serve the fatherland, the people and the nation into one revolutionary force, and he successfully carried out the revolution and construction. Our Party trusts people of different classes and strata who are interested in the revolution. It considers them everlasting companions, not chance fellow travellers, on the road to revolution, and it is leading them along the road to socialism and communism.”.

– Kim Jong Il, Socialism is a Science, Pyongyang, 1–11–1994, p. 19. My emphases.

Is this scientific socialism?

Is this “road to socialism and communism” in North Korea consistent with Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin? No.

Juche is revisionism and Kim Il Sung was not a Marxist-Leninist.

Unquestionably, it becomes obvious that the DPRK’s developments flatly deny the basic Marxist-Leninist strategy for the revolutionary process in colonial-type countries, according to which a temporary alliance with the national bourgeoisie should be established only during the initial national democratic stage of the revolution. On the contrary, the national capitalist class has been harmoniously integrated into “socialism” – in accordance with the principles of Juche – and never, at any time since 1945, has the dictatorship of the proletariat been established in North Korea. And indeed, the dictatorship of the proletariat remains the political yardstick in order to determine whether socialism has been achieved or not.

For genuine Marxist-Leninists, during the entire historical period of transition from capitalism to the classless, communist society,

“the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.”

– Karl Marx, Critique of the Gotha Programme, in Marx and Engels, Collected Works, vol. 24, London, 1989, p. 95. Emphasis in the original.

This was clearly indicated by Marx more than a century ago in his Critique of the Gotha Programme, where he refuted Lassalle’s concept of a “free popular state”, which denied the class character of the state itself as the organ of a given social class. By liquidating the exploiting classes and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, the most complete form of democracy – the true democracy for the proletariat, the peasantry and the other working masses – is guaranteed for the first time in history. As the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* pointed out, *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, in Marx and Engels, Collected Works, vol. 6, London, 1976, p. 504*.

Only proceeding from the above parameters, is it possible to assess whether scientific socialism has been implemented or not in the DPRK. And in the absence of a truly proletarian state, the characterisation of the North Korean society as a socialist one would amount to self-deceit. The essence of Juche is revisionism. As a consequence, it ranks among all those ideologies – such as Krushchevite revisionism, Titoism, Maoism, Cuban revisionism, Leduanism, etc. – that have deviated from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin in order to “creatively” develop their own peculiar trends of modern revisionism. Revisionism aims at setting up and justifying pseudo-socialist societies, where the working masses remain excluded from power and where socialist democracy is not implemented in deeds, but only through resounding revolutionary words and phrases.

In line with its anti-Marxist formulations, Juche equates socialism and communism with independence – independence of man, independence of the masses, independence of the nation, independence that unites all classes in society. As Kim Il Sung always indicated,

“The cause of building socialism and communism . . . will provide the masses of the people with complete independence.”

– Kim Il Sung, “For the Complete Victory of Socialism: Policy Speech at the First Session of the Eighth Supreme People’s Assembly of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, 30–12–1986, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol. 40, Pyongyang, 1995, p.199.

Kim Jong Il reiterates the same revisionist principle as follows:

“Socialism is the ideal and the revolutionary banner of the popular masses who are fighting for independence. The masses achieve their independence by means of socialism and communism... . Ours is an age of independence.”

– Kim Jong Il, Socialism is a Science, Pyongyang, 1–11–1994, p. 1.

“The cause of socialism is a just cause for realising the independence of the popular masses.”

– Kim Jong Il, On Carrying Forward the Juche Idea, Pyongyang, 1995.

“Being the application of the Juche idea, the revolutionary idea of the era of independence, our socialism is the best socialism; it is centred upon the masses and strongly champions ... the nation’s right to independence and the aspirations of the world’s people to independence.”

– Kim Jong Il, Our Socialism Centred on the Masses Shall not Perish, Pyongyang, 5–5–1991, p. 10.

“Adherence to the Juche character and national character in the revolution and construction is a fundamental principle that must be maintained in accomplishing the people’s cause of independence, the cause of socialism... . The socialist cause is the revolutionary cause of independence.”

– Kim Jong Il, On Preserving the Juche Character and National Character of the Revolution and Construction, Pyongyang, 19–6–1997, p. 2.

By upholding the above concept of independence, the role played by the Third Communist International comes under criticism. As for the history of the international communist and workers’ movement, in fact, Kim Jong Il states the following:

“The time is long past when there was one centre in the international communist movement and individual parties acted as its branches... . In the past ... the parties of some socialist countries did great harm to the development of the international communist movement by failing to rid themselves of the old customs of the Communist International. The party of a certain country claimed to be the “centre” of the international communist movement, and ordered other parties to do this or that. It acted without hesitation to put pressure on other parties and interfere in their internal affairs if they refused to follow its line, even though it was a wrong one.”

– Kim Jong Il, On Carrying Forward the Juche Idea, Pyongyang, 1995.

“But even after the Comintern had been dissolved, old practices lasted for a long time in the relations between communist and workers’ parties, practices expressed in their dogmatic acceptance of the party lines and policies of a major country which had carried out the socialist revolution earlier.”

– Kim Jong Il, On the Fundamentals of Revolutionary Party Building: A Treatise Written on the Occasion of the 47th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Workers’ Party of Korea, Pyongyang, 10–10–1992, p.9.

No detailed analyses are made with regard to the economic, political and ideological factors that led many parties to abandon socialism and degenerate along revisionist lines. But the collapse of revisionism in the USSR and other states becomes ascribable – according to Juche – to the fact that genuine independence had not been consistently applied and that, in the meantime, the people had not been properly educated and transformed accordingly.

“The socialist government parties and the socialist systems collapsed in many countries, not just a few, because they had failed to establish Juche in their development and activities.”

– Kim Jong Il, On the Fundamentals of Revolutionary Party Building, Pyongyang, 10–10–1992, p. 8.

“Because the socialist cause failed to become the cause of genuine national independence in several countries, socialism suffered a gradual weakening of its class foundation and was unable to

ward off frustration and collapse due to the anti-socialist manoeuvres of the imperialists and the renegades from the revolution.”

– Kim Jong Il, On Preserving the Juche Character and National Character of the Revolution and Construction, Pyongyang, 19–6–1997, p. 6.

“Some countries believed that socialism could be built merely by hastening the progress of economic construction while keeping control of state power and the means of production, and they did not put their primary effort into the transformation of the people to raise their ideological and cultural levels rapidly and prepare them fully as the driving force of the revolution and construction.”

– Kim Jong Il, On Carrying Forward the Juche Idea, Pyongyang, 1995.

According to the North Korean revisionist perspective, since the collapse of the former revisionist regimes, it is Juche that has:

“fully demonstrated its truth and viability through the successful advance of the people-centred socialism set up in North Korea and the accelerated advance of the cause of independence in the world.”

– Guiding Light: General Kim Jong Il, Pyongyang, 1997.

The first organisational attempt to rally political forces around Juche took place in Pyongyang in April 1992 with an heterogeneous gathering of progressive, Marxist-Leninist, revisionist and pacifist parties and organisations. The final declaration, Let Us Defend and Advance the Cause of Socialism, was originally adopted by 70 of the organisations present in Pyongyang in 1992. But the number of the political organisations which have subsequently supported and signed the declaration has by now risen to more than 200.

The Pyongyang Declaration embodies and supports – in line with Juche – both the equation of socialism with independence and the unspecified ideal of a socialism created by the “people”. No mention is made of the class character of the socialist society, to the very existence and role of the working class, to the necessity of its dictatorship or to the final goal of communism. Nor any reference is made to Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin. The signatories, nonetheless, affirm their “firm determination to defend and advance the socialist cause.” The declaration states the following:

Ours is an era of independence and the socialist cause is a sacred one aimed at realising the independence of the popular masses...

Socialist society is, in essence, a genuine society for the people where the popular masses are the masters of everything and everything serves them... The socialist movement is an independent movement...

All parties should cement the ties of comradely unity, cooperation and solidarity among themselves on the principles of independence and equality. International solidarity is essential to the struggle for socialism.”

– Let Us Defend and Advance the Socialist Cause, Pyongyang Declaration, 20–4–1992. My emphasis.

These revisionist and opportunist positions reduce both socialism and internationalism to empty phrases about independence and solidarity. They may be genuine manifestations of anti-imperialist feelings, but, as a matter of fact, the declaration seeks to divert the national and international communist movement from destroying capitalism and building communism in the world. These positions, contained in the Pyongyang Declaration, are reiterated by Kim Jong Il:

Although the socialist idea is the ideology of the working class, it does not represent the interests of one class alone; it is a universal idea for humanity which reflects the social nature of human beings ... which reflects the desire for independence of all nations and the whole of humanity...

The Pyongyang Declaration is infusing the revolutionary people of the world who aspire after independence with confidence in victory and a revolutionary fighting spirit...

The internationalist unity and solidarity of the revolutionary parties must be achieved on the basis of independence...

It is an important task for the revolutionary parties to form a united front with the democratic political parties and organisations in the struggle to accomplish the cause of socialism."

– Kim Jong Il, On the Fundamentals of Revolutionary Party Building, Pyongyang, 1992, pp. 37–8.

With this stance two separate issues are somehow confused and inappropriately identified with one another:

1. The unity and solidarity among anti-imperialist forces, which transcend political, ideological, social and religious differences; and
2. The unity and solidarity among communist forces, the aim of which remains the replacement of capitalism with socialism and communism.

For the purpose of fighting imperialism, domination, aggression and war, a broad solidarity must indeed be established among all communist and non-communist organisations and parties in the world. But for the purpose of carrying out the socialist revolution and supporting proletarian internationalism, a clear line of demarcation should be drawn between genuinely communist, Marxist-Leninist forces, on the one hand, and non-communist, democratic and progressive forces, on the other.

Ours is not the epoch of independence only. Ours is still the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolutions, the epoch of the replacement of the old exploiting society with the new society that liquidates exploitation of man by man. Therefore, in order to attain this final goal, the working class fulfills its historical mission by carrying out the socialist revolution in its own country and thus offering greater support to the international revolutionary movement. The true significance of proletarian internationalism was explicitly indicated by Lenin:

"There is one, and only one, kind of real internationalism, and that is – working whole-heartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in one's own country, and supporting ... this struggle, this, and only this, line, in every country without exception."

– V.I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution: Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party", 10–4–1917, in Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 24, Moscow, 1964 , p. 75. Emphases in the original.

On the basis of Leninism – and under the famous slogan of The Communist Manifesto, "Workers of All Countries, Unite!" – cooperation and unity should be strengthened among all the communist, Marxist-Leninist forces in different countries. But these forces should indeed avoid reducing the entire revolutionary struggle to the sole struggle for independence against imperialism, while subordinating the struggle for the social liberation and emancipation of the working class. Only victory in this latter struggle can safeguard genuine national sovereignty, freedom and independence. Excessive emphasis upon independence alone, devoid of any class content, runs contrary to Marxism-Leninism, amounts to petty-bourgeois nationalism and echoes the old slogans of the Second International, whose leaders had abandoned the socialist revolution in order to replace it with the defence of their own capitalist homelands.

The Workers' Party of Korea

The WPK constitutes the leading political force in the DPRK, recognised as such by the current constitution. Around 10 percent of the population (approximately 2 million people) are party members: each member belongs to a cell of 10 to 100 members in a plant, cooperative or locality. The party parallels and penetrates government organisations at all levels. Its supreme organ is the National Party Congress which is supposed to be held every five years, but in fact has met only six times since 1948.

The WPK's 6th congress in 1980 was the first in 10 years, and – with no credible explanations given – another congress has not been held since. One may wonder how democratic centralism can function in a party that has not convened its highest decision-making body for 19 years. The WPK Central Committee (about 329 members, including alternate members) should meet at least once every six months. The Politburo had 24 members in 1992 (16 of whom were alternates) and its number had fallen to 18 in 1995.

Crucial to the activities of the WPK are supposed to be democratic centralism and its mass line through the so-called Chongsanri spirit and Chongsanri method (i.e., cadres mixing with people in order to unite them behind the party and implement its policies). The WPK is supported by a number of related organisations: the Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland, the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland, the General Federation of Trade Unions, the Kim Il Sung Working Youth League, the Union of Agricultural Workers, the Democratic Women's Union, the General Federation of Literature and Arts Unions, the Journalists Union, the General Federation of Industrial Technology, the Buddhist Federation, and others. Besides the WPK, there are also two other political parties (whose free activities are guaranteed by the constitution): the Korean Social Democratic Party and the Chondoist Chongu Party.

The WPK's sole guiding ideology is represented by Juche, on the basis of which

“our Party put forward for the first time in the history of the building of the working-class parties the new principle that work with people is basic to party activities.”

– Kim Jong Il, “The Workers' Party of Korea Organizes and Guides All the Victories of Our People”, 3–10–1990, in Kim Jong Il, On Enhancing the Party's Leading Role, Pyongyang, 1992, pp. 227. My emphases.

The WPK's main goals are: achieving independence in politics, self-sufficiency in the economy and self-reliance in national defence. In the WPK's programme, major stress is placed on independence which – according to Juche – equates with socialism and communism.

Since it cannot provide the North Korean working class with a genuine Marxist-Leninist leadership, the WPK implements its policies by means of “love and trust” and by over-emphasising sentimental and patronising attitudes towards the people. As Kim Jong Il explains,

Love and trust constitute the essence of politics in socialist society... we call the politics of love and trust, benevolent politics...

If the politics of love and trust are to be exercised in socialist society, the socialist party in power must be built into a motherly party... the party should become a genuine guide and defender of the people... just as the mother deeply loves her children and looks after them warmly...

It is a true feature of our society that all its members form a large harmonious family. They trust, love and help each other...

The Party loves and trusts people from all areas of society, without discrimination. In this sense, we call our Party's benevolent politics all-embracing politics. They are politics of invariable love and trust.”

– Kim Jong Il, Socialism is a Science, 1–11–1994, pp. 28–9, 33. My emphasis.

“Our Party is genuinely a maternal party. It leads the people and takes care of them, pursuing the politics of love and trust – benevolent politics.”

– Kim Jong Il, Respecting the Forerunners of the Revolution is a Noble Moral Obligation of the Revolutionaries, Pyongyang, 25–12–1995, p. 17.

“The relations between the party and the masses are those between the leader and the led, between the giver and the receiver of life and between those who look after people's destiny and the people who entrust it. The relations between the party and the people can be firmest and strongest when the party values and takes the greatest care of the people as their mother...”

We should continue to meet the essential requirements of our Party and ensure that it performs its duty as the Mother (with capital “M” in the original – Ed.) Party better.”

- Kim Jong Il, “The Workers’ Party of Korea Organizes and Guides All the Victories of Our People”, 3–10–1990, in Kim Jong Il, On Enhancing the Party’s Leading Role, Pyongyang, 1992, pp. 228–9.

But a party that claims to be the revolutionary leading force in a socialist society cannot be the workers’ “mother”. “Love and trust” cannot substitute for political consciousness in building socialism. The socialist revolution is carried out – and true socialism is built – only under the sole political leadership of a communist party which is the vanguard of the working class, the most advanced detachment of the popular masses.

Such a total negation of scientific socialism in the DPRK becomes even more apparent as we consider the role of the leader. In North Korean society the people, the WPK and its leader are supposed to constitute an integral whole:

“In the driving force of the revolution, the leader is the top brain and the centre of unity.”

- Kim Sun Ryong, “The Juche Revolutionary Party”, in Korea Today, n. 1, 1996.

The leader is said to love the people “unfailingly” and “boundlessly”, while the people reciprocate with love and trust. Just as the party represents the mother, the leader represents the father: as caring parents, they both look after their enlarged North Korean family. In the current political literature of the DPRK, endless references can be found to this distorted role played by the leader as the people’s father. In this regard, particularly revealing are the following remarks made by Kim Jong Il:

We must realise that the greatest value and worth of life exist in faithfully implementing the revolutionary tasks set by the leader by trusting in him as a strong moral support at all times, and we must prove ourselves unfailingly loyal to the leader through our revolutionary activities to implement his ideology and will...

Party leadership implies guidance by the leader, and the concept of and attitude towards the party are, in essence, identical to the concept of and attitude towards the leader...

We must value and respect the party organisation as the parent body of our integrity. We refer to the leader as the fatherly leader and to the Party as the motherly Party because the Party organisation with the leader at its centre is the parent body of our socio-political integrity...

To hold the fatherly leader in high esteem and to be loyal to him is a moral obligation for all Koreans...

We call loyalty to the leader the highest expression of communist morality.

- Kim Jong Il, “On Establishing the Juche Outlook on the Revolution: Talk to the Senior Officials of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 10–10–1987, in Kim Jong Il, On the Juche Idea, Pyongyang, 1989, pp. 160–2, 170. My emphasis..

“The unity and cohesion of our Party developed into the unity of the entire Party in ideology and purpose, reinforced by morality and loyalty, based on the leader’s idea and centring on the leader.”

- Kim Jong Il, The Workers’ Party of Korea is the Party of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, Pyongyang, 2–10–1995, p.7.

“Loyalty and dutifulness to the leader are the highest expression of the good qualities of Kim Il Sung’s nation.”

- Kim Jong Il, On Preserving the Juche Character and National Character of the Revolution and Construction, Pyongyang, 19–6–1997, p. 26.

“The leader is the centre of unity and cohesion ... He is the great revolutionary leader who defends the independent demands and interests of the popular masses; he has an unusual gift of

foresight, is all-powerful in the leadership art and noble in personal virtue, and leads the people wisely in their struggle.”

– Kim Jong Il, Our Socialism Centred on the Masses Shall not Perish, Pyongyang, 5–5–1991, p. 34.

“The essence of ideological and spiritual qualities of communist, revolutionary workers is the true loyalty and devotion to the leader, which never change no matter what the circumstances.”

– Kim Jong Il, Let Us Further Enhance the Role of Intellectuals in the Revolution and Construction: A Speech Delivered to the Senior Officials of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, Pyongyang, 20–9–1990, p. 39.

“Loyalty to the leader is the highest expression of the sense of revolutionary obligation . . .

Carrying forward the cause of independence of the popular masses, the cause of socialism, means none other than the continuation of the cause of the leader . . . The communist morality of our people finds its highest expression in their unqualified respect for and absolute allegiance to the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung.”

– Kim Jong Il, Respecting the Forerunners of the Revolution is a Noble Moral Obligation of the Revolutionaries: Discourse Published in Rodong Sinmun, the Organ of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, Pyongyang, 25–12–1995, pp.5–6, 9. My emphases.

But clearly, all these preachings have nothing to do with communist morality. As Lenin pointed out,

“Our morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the proletariat’s class struggle. Our morality stems from the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat.”

– V. I. Lenin, “The Tasks of the Youth Leagues: Speech Delivered at the Third All-Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League”, 2–10–1920, in Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 31, Moscow, 1966, p. 291.

Marxist-Leninists possess a specific programme and specific aims in order to overcome the old exploiting society. The cult of the leader in the DPRK runs contrary to these aims and – as such – cannot contribute to the workers’ emancipation and liberation. The undue emphasis on the absolute loyalty to the leader contravenes the very essence of socialism, which should be built by the popular masses under the collective leadership of the revolutionary party of the working class. The extent to which Kim Il Sung had been, and still is, adulated as a god inside his country is well-known. Worship has replaced politics with Juche – something inadmissible from a Marxist-Leninist viewpoint. Such an excessive personality cult of both Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il cannot but discredit and ridicule the DPRK’s reputation in the world and among progressive forces.

Through unconditional loyalty to the leader and his personality cult, Juche’s revisionist paradox becomes obvious: all people possess independence and freedom to master everything in the world (including nature), provided only that they achieve their oneness behind the leader. This is the philosophical device for the revisionist clique in North Korea to cling to power and to wind the clock of history back to the reactionary, feudal socialism.

Not only has the personality cult played a reactionary and unhealthy role in the history of the communist movement, but – as Soviet history could prove – it also provided the revisionists with an additional weapon in order to liquidate socialism. Indeed, it has now become clear that the personality cult around Stalin had been deliberately built up by concealed revisionists and its practice had been contrary to the expressed wishes of Stalin himself. In fact, the Krushchevite revisionists created the “cult of the individual” around Stalin in order:

1. to attack him from the mid-fifties onwards under the guise of carrying out a programme of liberalization, that was in fact a programme of dismantling socialism; and
2. to lay the blame on him for breaches of socialist legality and for deviations from Marxist-Leninist principles on their part.

It was Stalin himself that on numerous occasions denounced and ridiculed the personality cult as a distortion of Marxism-Leninism. For example,

“You speak of your ‘devotion’ to me. Perhaps it was just a chance phrase. Perhaps... But if the phrase was not accidental I would advise you to discard the “principle” of devotion to persons. It is not the Bolshevik way. Be devoted to the working class, its Party, its state. That is a fine and useful thing. But do not confuse it with devotion to persons, this vain and useless bauble of weak-minded intellectuals.”

– J.V. Stalin, “Letter to Comrade Shatunovsky”, August 1930, in Stalin, Works, vol. 13, Moscow, 1955, p. 20.

“Marxism does not at all deny the role played by outstanding individuals or that history is made by people... Every new generation encounters definite conditions already existing, ready-made when that generation was born. And great people are worth anything at all only to the extent that they are able correctly to understand these conditions, to understand how to change them. If they fail to understand these conditions and want to alter them according to the promptings of their imagination, they will land themselves in the situation of Don Quixote... .

Individual persons cannot decide. Decisions of individuals are always, or nearly always, one-sided decisions... .

Never under any circumstances would our workers now tolerate power in the hands of one person. With us personages of the greatest authority are reduced to nonentities, become mere ciphers, as soon as the masses of the workers lose confidence in them, as soon as they lose contact with the masses of the workers.”

– J.V. Stalin, “Talk with the German Author Emil Ludwig”, 13–12–1931, in Stalin, Works, vol. 13, Moscow, 1955, p. 107–9, 113.

As for the DPRK, reservations and doubts can also be raised about the way in which the son, Kim Jong Il, could succeed – as a leader – to his father, Kim Il Sung. It was in October 1997, for example, that Kim Jong Il was inaugurated as WPK general secretary, simply by means of a statement jointly produced by the WPK Central Committee and the Central Military Commission. But the procedure employed for the appointment violated the party charter, which calls for the election of the top party position in a full session of the WPK Central Committee. Nonetheless, legal considerations are supposed to remain subordinated to the personal desires of Kim Il Sung, who once had the following to say:

“‘Comrade Kim Jong Il carries out at all costs what he regards as necessary for the sake of the country and the people. Particularly, he makes every possible effort to please me by implementing what I wish and am worried about.’”

– Kim Kyong Hui, “A Model of Loyalty and Filial Devotion”, The Pyongyang Times, 27–9–97.

Love and trust between father and son are said to date back to the times of Kim Jong Il’s childhood. Various official anecdotes have been publicised in the DPRK in order to substantiate this filial devotion. The following story is just one example.

“It was one day when *Secretary Kim Jong Il was five years old*. He was standing at the gate of his house, with a wooden rifle on his shoulder. Seeing him, his mother said, ‘What are you doing there?’ Then, Jong Il replied, ‘I am guarding my father.’ At lunch time, the President returned home for a short stay. Looking at his son, the President asked his wife what was the matter with his son. Hearing from his wife what his son was doing, the President said, ‘Is that so! He is guarding me,’ and then turned his eyes to his son with a look of trust in him on his face.”

– Inoue Shuhachi, Modern Korea and Kim Jong Il, Tokyo, 1984, p. 129. My emphasis..

In conjunction with Kim Jong Il’s appointment as the WPK’s leader in 1997 (Kim Jong Il had replaced his father as KPA supreme commander in late December 1991), the DPRK’s media reported that:

"legendary stories about (Kim Jong Il's – Ed.) affection for the people are on the lips of the people and meritorious deeds and miracles are reported daily in socialist construction."

– Inoue Shuhachi, Modern Korea and Kim Jong Il, Tokyo, 1984, p. 129.

He was now presented as:

"the Lodestar for Sailing the 21st Century."

Moreover,

"a new age calls for a new leader, and the age advances under the leadership of an outstanding leader... Today, mankind is convinced that the thinking and theory of Kim Jong Il are the guiding thought for the 21st century, and is vigorously studying and disseminating them on a worldwide scale... The esteemed name of Kim Jong Il, the leader of the 21st century acclaimed by history and mankind, is the banner for and blessing of the 21st century."

– Guiding Light: General Kim Jong Il, Pyongyang, 1997.

Finally, Kim Jong Il was appointed as the WPK general secretary on 8–10–1997, a few days later the official KCNA reported mysterious happenings taking place around Mount Paektu, Kim Jong Il's birthplace:

"Wonderful natural phenomena have been witnessed on Mt. Paektu, the time-honoured place of the revolution, in Korea. It was dawn on September 21 when the South Phyongan Provincial Party Conference was held to discuss the agenda item on recommending General Kim Jong Il as General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea. The day before, it snowed and rained on Mt. Paektu as usual till mid-day. In the evening, its temperature abruptly increased more than 10 degrees centigrade higher than the average. And the north-western wind and north-eastern wind, the typical winds on Mt. Paektu, disappeared and the south-western wind blew. At night, high and low clouds completely disappeared. As the new day was breaking, the eastern sky of orange and yellowish brown colours turned red and a bright sun rose above Mt. Paektu. This grandiose sunrise continued several days. Meteorological observations in this area say that on Mt. Paektu, the sunrise has never occurred for three consecutive days, it showered in the dry season, the sun rose in the rainy season and that cloud and sunshine appeared by turns every one or three days and even hourly. However, in the emotional period when the great general Kim Jong Il was elected as General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, the sunrise continued for 25 consecutive days, spreading grandiose landscape.

A more mysterious natural phenomenon was observed on the afternoon of October 8. At around 05:10 when the special communique informed the people of the election of general Kim Jong Il as General Secretary of the WPK, a coloured cloud appeared on Mt. Paektu. This cloud slowly moved from the sky above Janggun Peak toward the Hyangdo Peak. The ground colour of the cloud of big parachute type was white and its rims were dyed with seven colours. It was all the more wonderful that the cloud stayed low above Hyangdo Peak for a long time before moving toward Janggun Peak. The moment, mysterious sounds reminiscent of cheers and applause came from surface of Lake Chon and a strong whirlwind rose which carried piles of snow into the sky and dropped them onto the ground, adorning the sky on Mt. Paektu in various colours. Witnessing these wonderful natural phenomena, its inhabitants said that nature also celebrated Kim Jong Il's election as WPK General Secretary."

– KCNA, Pyongyang, 20–10–1997.

Stories like these can recall Marx's remark about superstition and religion as being the opium of the people! And unfortunately, that is the case in the DPRK.

11. The DPRK in the Non-Aligned Movement

Since the end of the Korean War, it became crucial for the DPRK to continue to defend its independence and economic self-reliance vis-à-vis US military pressure and its economic sanctions. The revisionist policies

advocating Juche and Chajusong in international relations also allowed the DPRK to maintain an equidistant position with regard to the USSR and China. By means of its selective participation in Comecon, for instance, the DPRK could reap advantages, such as establishing barter trade with no need for convertible currencies, while keeping its economic independence intact. Pyongyang always argued that its independence would have been lost, had the country been integrated in the so-called socialist international division of labour imposed by Soviet social-imperialism. It was, nonetheless, on the basis of pragmatical and opportunist considerations that the DPRK could maintain a “neutral” stand towards the Sino-Soviet dispute. From the sixties onwards – according to Kim Il Sung – the USSR and China were both seen as socialist countries that should have sorted out their disagreements for the sake of unity within an unidentified “socialist camp.” But as-a-matter-of-fact, all three of them – the Soviet Union, China and North Korea – were developing and defending their respective brands of anti-Marxist and anti-Leninist positions, i.e., Soviet revisionism, Maoism or Chinese revisionism, and Juche or Korean revisionism.

A particularly special relationship was, instead, established between Korean and Titoite revisionisms, based on the assumption that both countries were upholding socialism and non-alignment. As stated by Kim Il Sung,

“The relations of friendship and cooperation between Korea and Yugoslavia constitute a comradely relationship based on the noble ideas of socialism and non-alignment, a relationship which makes a valuable contribution to accelerating the work of socialist construction in the two countries, strengthening the forces of socialism as a whole, and expanding and developing the non-aligned movement.”

– Kim Il Sung, “Answers to Questions Raised by the Director and Editor-in-Chief of the Review of International Affairs of Yugoslavia”, 28-12-1984, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol. 38, Pyongyang, 1993, p. 413.

It should be noted that, during his foreign travels, Kim Il Sung visited Yugoslavia and various other revisionist countries of Europe, but never did he pay a visit to the only socialist country existing in Europe since the advent of Krushchevite revisionism, i.e., the People’s Socialist Republic of Albania.

From the mid-seventies until today, in fact, the DPRK has closely associated itself with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), regarded as the most natural ally in fighting imperialism and achieving Chajusong in the international arena. NAM started in the early sixties, as 25 mainly Asian, African and Latin-American countries had established some common ground in order to uphold political independence and non-alignment, to support the national liberation movements and to reject military alliances with imperialist powers. The movement developed by increasing cooperation with the UN and by augmenting its membership (currently including more than one hundred developing countries). Since its first admission to NAM in 1975, North Korea has been actively promoting non-alignment as part of its foreign policy towards the “third world” (a term which was used in its official statements for the first time in 1973) and is currently holding its position as one of the vice-chairmen in the movement’s coordinating bureau. South Korea, which had also applied for membership in NAM, was rejected and continues to remain excluded from it.

In parallel with the DPRK’s active participation in NAM, a similarity of revisionist views also emerged between Maoism and Kimilsungism during the seventies – more specifically, between the counter-revolutionary theory of the “three worlds” and the equally revisionist, counter-revolutionary idea of Chajusong. The lines originating from Beijing and Pyongyang converged on the following points:

1. they both called for total unity and solidarity among the heterogeneous “third world” countries, irrespective of the fact that this category of states included, and still includes, conservative, feudal, bourgeois regimes ruled by kings, reactionary landlords and dictators who keep their own people in bondage, while maintaining various forms of dependence on foreign imperialism;
2. they deny the basic Marxist principles in regard to class struggle, according to which capitalist and semi-capitalist societies are divided into exploited and exploiting classes, i.e., into workers and destitute peasantry, on the one hand, and capitalists and land-owners, on the other. By negating class struggle, both theories also undermine the efforts of the oppressed people to free themselves from foreign domination and achieve genuine democratic rights and freedom;

3. while advocating social peace and conciliation between antagonistic classes, they reject the Leninist principle that our epoch is pregnant with great social transformations that will assert a new socialist society; and
4. they both amalgamate views and theses borrowed from Marxism-Leninism with revisionist, anarchist, Confucian, Buddhist and other ideas, marked by considerable doses of petty-bourgeois nationalism and chauvinism.

But within the same revisionist framework, the Maoist theory of the “three worlds” differs from the Kimilsungist idea of Chajusong in that the former supported – until about ten years ago – a broad alliance between the “third world”, the “second world” and US imperialism against what used to be regarded by Beijing as its main enemy – Soviet social-imperialism.

Chajusong, on the other hand, still intends to embrace “third world” and non-aligned countries together with “socialist” (i.e., revisionist) countries against its main enemy – US imperialism. But all these divisions of the globe into the “first”, “second”, and “third” world, and the “non-aligned” world do indeed cover up the fundamental contradictions existing between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between socialism and capitalism, and between the peoples and imperialism. While Lenin regarded our century as the era of imperialism and proletarian revolutions, according to Korean revisionism we live in the age of Chajusong. As stated by Kim Il Sung,

“The third world, a great anti-imperialist revolutionary force of our times, was born of the fierce flames of the national-liberation struggle to enter the arena of history.

The third world is now a dependable ally of the socialist forces, and a great motive force to speed the history of mankind forward. Many peoples of the third world are heading for socialism...

Today the third world constitutes the battle front where the anti-imperialist struggle is raging most fiercely. It embraces a great many revolutionary countries...

Ours is an age of Chajusong. Today many peoples throughout the world are calling for Chajusong and are fighting against all kinds of subordination.”

– Kim Il Sung, “On the Occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Foundation of the Workers’ Party of Korea: Report Delivered at the Commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, 9–10–1975, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol. 30, Pyongyang, 1987, pp. 468–70. My emphasis.

“The non-aligned movement is a powerful anti-imperialist revolutionary force reflecting the main trend of the present era... *The non-alignment reflects this trend.*”

– Kim Il Sung, “The Non-Aligned Movement is a Mighty Anti-Imperialist Revolutionary Force of Our Times: Treatise Published in the Inaugural Issue of the Argentine Magazine Guidebook to the Third World”, 16–12–1975, in Kim Il Sung, Works, vol. 30, Pyongyang, 1987, pp. 573–4. My emphasis.

According to Kim Il Sung, the famous Marxist slogan, “Workers of all countries, unite!”, has been replaced by “the international slogan of our times”: “Let the world’s people advocating Chajusong unite!”

And in line with these revisionist elaborations, it follows that

“mankind’s cause of Chajusong, the cause of socialism, will surely emerge victorious by overcoming the obstacles and difficulties that lie in the way of its advance.”

– Kim Il Sung, Let Us Bring the Advantages of Socialism in Our Country into Full Play: Policy Speech Addressed to the First Session of the Ninth Supreme People’s Assembly of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 24–5–1990, Pyongyang, 1990, pp. 30–1. My emphasis.

Korean revisionism is highly misleading in this instance:

Independence alone cannot be equated to either socialism or communism. Just as anti-imperialism cannot be identified with the socialist revolution.

This confusion between two different, though interrelated, stages of the revolutionary development during our times leads to major disorientations, divisions and defeats. In particular, it creates the illusion – among the popular masses fighting for national and social emancipation in the developing countries – that a shelter from imperialist aggression and domination has allegedly been found in non-alignment.

Countries like Afghanistan, Algeria, the Arab Emirates, Bangladesh, Colombia, Congo, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, and Uganda are all NAM's full members, just to mention only a few. Judging these countries through class criteria, almost all of them are ruled by oppressive, anti-popular cliques. If we follow the revisionist logic of Chajusong, whom will workers and peasants in these countries unite with? Should communists hail the replacement of Suharto by another despot or should they support the Indonesian people's struggle against dictatorship and foreign imperialism? Should communists side with the popular, anti-imperialist struggles in the Asian continent? Or should they side, instead, with the corrupt, reactionary leaders of the so-called tiger economies who save their skin by allowing the IMF and imperialism to further squeeze their own peoples? And what about in Africa, whom should communists support there? The various dictators and puppets of imperialism or the African peoples' struggles for social emancipation and freedom?

Unreserved support should indeed be given to all different steps that developing countries are genuinely undertaking in defending their rights and the sovereign administration of their national assets against imperialist interference and neo-colonialist plunder. But never at any time, should Marxist-Leninist tactics and strategies reduce the entire revolutionary process to a struggle for independence only. As Lenin indicated, the anti-imperialist, national-liberation revolution must not be stopped half-way, but carried through up to the end by liquidating the bourgeoisie and its state power in order to achieve true freedom, independence, sovereignty and socialism. In the Marxist-Leninist, internationalist programme, national liberation is inseparably connected with social liberation: that is, the termination of the exploitation of one nation by another becomes part and parcel with the end of the exploitation of one individual by another.

The people's unity both against external imperialism and the transnational corporations and against internal capitalism and reaction must be achieved mainly from below, among the popular masses who are victims of a double exploitation – by external imperialism and by their local bourgeoisie. This unity has nothing in common with the unprincipled unity advocated by NAM, which is now openly calling for the developing countries' integration into the "global village" of imperialism. And this takes place at a time when transnational corporations are maximising billions of profits through globalization, at the expense of growing unemployment, poverty, hunger, and other hardships in the developing countries.

During the recent NAM's 12th Summit (September 1988), various global, regional, economic and social issues were dealt with, including the democratisation of the UN, international economic cooperation, debts, the North-South dialogue, disarmament and international security, etc. In his concluding remarks, the head of the DPRK delegation, SPA's vice chairman Pak Song Chol, expressed the revisionist wishful thinking as follows:

"The NAM should concentrate its effort on establishing a package joint strategy in a bid to counter the challenges of "globalization." It should raise it as the basic strategy for coping with the negative effect of "globalization" to strengthen economic relations among the developing countries, organise actions of south-south cooperation in keeping with the changed circumstances and develop them more broadly and vigorously. The DPRK government will in the future remain faithful to the basic idea and aim of the NAM and make active contributions to accomplishing the human cause of independence under the wise guidance of General Secretary Kim Jong Il."

– KCNA, Pyongyang, 5–9–1998.

But the summit's final document did not in the least challenge the current imperialist globalization. Instead, NAM called for coexistence and cooperation between imperialist, oppressive powers and developing, oppressed countries. The 12th summit, in fact,

"agreed that the central focus of international development efforts should be in the creation of an enabling environment where developing countries would be able to acquire the requisite capacities to *successfully enter, compete and benefit from globalisation*."

- The Final Document of the 12th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, 2–3 September 1998, Durban, South Africa. My emphasis.

It is therefore apparent that the cause of real independence and freedom, and that of socialism, cannot be consistently supported by either NAM or Korean revisionism. It is by opposing all various forms of revisionism and opportunism that Marxist-Leninists can indeed wage a meaningful struggle against imperialism. As Lenin clearly indicated prior to the building of the Third Communist International,

“Struggle against imperialism that is not closely linked with the struggle against opportunism is either an empty phrase or a fraud.”

- V. I. Lenin, “The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution” September 1916 , in Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 23, Moscow, 1964, p. 83.

12. Recent Developments in the DPRK

Notwithstanding the DPRK’s successes achieved in the industrial and agricultural sectors until the late eighties, a series of problems led the government to admit economic failures at the end of 1993 and to note that industrial output, energy supplies and agricultural production were below target. It was concluded that three years of economic adjustments would be necessary, with priority now being given to the development of agriculture, light industry and foreign trade. The grave economic situation, increasingly worsening until today, has significantly decreased people’s living standards, particularly in the countryside. Economic development is currently planned on a short-term, yearly basis only. Food shortages have also prompted humanitarian assistance from various international organisations. Foreign media, in the meantime, have often highlighted the country’s decline towards economic catastrophe, speculating that malnutrition and hunger have led to as many as two million North Koreans dying of starvation since 1995.

Vis-à-vis this crisis, and in line with the principles of Juche and Chajusong, the DPRK has continued to abide by its policy of economic self-reliance, based on the exploitation of the country’s rich mineral resources and its potential for hydro-electric power.

According to Pyongyang, self-reliance can prevent North Korea from losing its independence.

“Building an independent national economy means building an economy which is free from dependence on others and which stands on its own feet, an economy which serves one’s own people and develops on the strength of the resources of one’s own country and by the efforts of one’s own people... It is essential to adhere to the principle of self-reliance in economic construction.

Self-reliance is the revolutionary spirit and a principle of struggle of the communists in carrying out the revolution by their own initiative. One must believe in one’s own strength and depend on it in economic construction, just as in all other economic activities for the revolution and construction.”

- Kim Jong Il, “On the Juche Idea: Treatise Sent to the National Seminar on the Juche Idea Held to Mark the 70th Birthday of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung”, 31-3-1982, in Kim Jong Il, On the Juche Idea, Pyongyang, 1989, pp. 50–1.

These above principles upholding economic self-reliance – as indicated by Kim Jong Il in the early eighties – have been recently reiterated in similar terms with the aim of challenging the damaging effects of globalization on the Asian economies. In a joint article, appearing in Rodong Sinmun and Kumroja in September 1998, it is also pointed out the following:

“We must heighten vigilance against the imperialists’ moves to induce us to ‘reform’ and ‘opening’ to the outside world.’ ‘Reform’ and ‘opening’ on their lips are a honey-coated poison. Clear is our stand towards ‘reform’ and ‘opening.’ We have nothing to ‘reform’ and ‘open.’ By ‘reform’ and ‘opening’ the imperialists mean to revive capitalism... The source of our economy is, first of all, political and ideological might and unity.”

– “Let Us Adhere to the Line of Building an Independent National Economy”, joint article in Rodong Sinmun and Kunroja, in KCNA, Pyongyang, 17–9–1998.

The current economic crisis in the DPRK – that has not deterred Pyongyang from proceeding along the road of independence and economic self-reliance – can be ascribed to the following factors:

1. US imperialism’s constant military and political pressure, together with economic sanctions and embargoes imposed against the DPKK;
2. political changes in both Russia and China during the early nineties and their effects on trade relations with the DPRK; and
3. recent natural calamities.

In addition to the above causes, the crisis must also be viewed as the outcome of the ruling revisionist class’ inability to provide its people with a genuine socialist system, while claiming that a socialist “paradise” has been built in North Korea over the last fifty years.

Unquestionably, US continued military presence in South Korea represents the principal cause for both regional instability and the north’s economic crisis. This forces Pyongyang to place crucial emphasis on, and divert a big proportion of the economy to its defence. It should never be underestimated that for decades the DPRK has remained the target of constant nuclear threats from US imperialism. Recently, KPA troops have also been redeployed along the northern borders with China and Russia since the disintegration of the former USSR. Espionage activities and provocations from South Korea, together with war exercises regularly staged by American, South Korean and other foreign forces, have highlighted tension, too. In addition, there has been no armistice supervisory machinery along the demilitarised zone (DMZ) during the last seven years (talks between the UN Command and the Korean People’s Army, KPA, in Panmunjom have only resumed in June 1998, for the first time since 1991). Washington also continues to characterise the DPRK as one of the seven states sponsoring “terrorism”.

Economic sanctions and embargoes against the DPRK – imposed by US imperialism for about half a century since the early fifties – are regulated by the US Law on Trade against Hostile Countries, the US Law on Supervision of Exports and the US Law on Prohibition of Assistance to the DPRK. Although commitments were recently made by Washington to normalise its bilateral relations with Pyongyang, these laws are still in force and are detrimental to the DPRK’s trade with other countries, as well. US products, technology or services cannot be exported to North Korea, either directly or through third countries. Exports of commercially-supplied goods to meet basic human needs may be authorised under individually validated licences by the US Commerce Department, and on a case-by-case basis only.

Until the late eighties, most of the DPRK’s trade had been in the form of barter agreements with former Comecon countries and China. But as the USSR and Comecon were collapsing, the demand for payment in hard currency at world market prices for its exports, made by Moscow in November 1990, hit the DPRK particularly hard. A significant reduction of the amount of China-North Korea trade also took place at the same time, with China following Russia by conducting trade with foreign exchange from 1993 onwards rather than on the basis of barter. The official announcement that the traditional Soviet-North Korean ties had been finally severed came from Russian President Boris Yeltsin in June 1992, as he confirmed that the 1961 treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance between Pyongyang and Moscow was no longer effective. Nor would Russia any longer provide financial or military support to the DPRK. Similarly, during 1992, ties between Beijing and Pyongyang also became severely strained following China’s establishment of diplomatic relations with Seoul in August.

It was during the early nineties, in fact, that both Russia and China opted for closer trade and diplomatic relations with the ROK and prompted the simultaneous admission of both Korean states to UN membership. This simultaneous entry was made possible, notwithstanding the fact that the DPRK had always strongly opposed the “two Koreas” policy and the “cross-recognition” of the two separate states. As a consequence, the DPRK had to diversify its trade by establishing closer trade links with Japan and South Korea. North Korea, in fact, is necessitated to import petroleum, chemicals, grains and cereals, cooking coal, machinery and capital equipment, while it exports non-ferrous metals, steel, magnesia clinker, coal, and cement.

An additional cause of the economic decline over the last four years has been represented by natural calamities and their damages to the infra-structures of the country. Traditionally, conditions for farming have always been unfavourable in North Korea since mountains represent nearly three quarters of its territory and arable fields account for about 16% of the land. Extensive floods in 1995 and 1996, followed by the worst drought in decades in 1997, severely damaged the country's economy and seriously undermined the government's ability to feed the population. Natural disasters during 1998 – such as downpours, hailstorms, strong winds and tidal waves affecting crops, vegetable and rice harvests – further jeopardised the DPRK's economic capacity. And to complete the picture of natural calamities during 1998: thousands of hectares of paddy and non-paddy fields together with more than 180 mining pits were submerged in water. Electricity supplies were suspended and telecommunication networks were paralysed. Roads and railways were completely destroyed by landslides, dwelling houses and buildings were also destroyed in some of the affected areas with people reported missing or dead.

The economic situation has now reached a critical point, particularly highlighted by severe food shortages. Standards of living are better in the capital – with shops mainly selling biscuits, drinks and dried fish – but they are appalling in the countryside. Although the current ration of rice (mid-1998) amounts to 450 grams per person per day, it can be less in some areas especially damaged by natural disasters. This situation has led to the flourishing of a black market, but at a very low-key level. Reports of starvation remain unsubstantiated, but malnutrition is evident in the countryside as people wander around rivers and fields in search of fish or grass. Peasants toil on the land with very rudimentary tools, having to walk for long distances without cycles or other means of transportation. Agricultural machinery and tractors are now visible only in the Three-Revolution Exhibition in Pyongyang. Interruptions to electricity and water supply are frequent and the transport system is very inefficient. Because of energy shortages, few factories seem to be functioning and in some areas the survival of the people depends on "humanitarian" aid or projects from UN or non-governmental foreign organisations.

Coping with such an acute and deep crisis, not only has the government been forced to appeal for humanitarian aid from abroad (which is mainly donated by the UN World Food Programme, the USA, Japan, China, the EU, etc.), but it has also allowed provisions for greater foreign investments into the country. The entire population is, in the meantime, mobilised by channelling all energies to solve the food crisis collectively and going voluntarily to the countryside to help farmers. People are constantly reminded about the economic crisis through television, papers, meetings at workplaces ... and urged to find adequate solutions with the patriotic "Chollima" spirit. During the first half of 1998, for example, more than 1,900 minor power stations have been built across the country by using flowing water, wind power, methane, charcoal gas and other power resources.

It was during the early nineties that the DPRK decided to introduce new measures in a number of areas of economic management:

1. in management development, by improving production and management on a more scientific basis through automation and computerisation;
2. in trade diversification and liberalisation, by increasing efficiency and competitiveness in the foreign trade sector and by diversifying exports; and
3. in direct foreign investment and joint ventures. With the aim of encouraging foreign investments in the country, the constitution was supplemented in 1992 in order to safeguard the rights and profits of foreign companies operating in the DPRK. Three sets of laws were subsequently approved in order to permit contractual joint ventures and equity joint ventures with foreign companies which can share their profits in proportion to the investments made. Wholly-owned foreign enterprises are also allowed to operate in the country. In this case, foreign companies alone can invest in the DPRK and carry out management on their own account. Such enterprises operate, in fact, in the newly-created Rajin-Sonbong Free Economic and Trade Zone in the north-east of the country, where a variety of benefits are granted to foreign companies, including exemption from, or reduction of, enterprise income tax. Total foreign ownership on investments is therefore now permitted for the first time in the DPRK's history.

According to a survey by the Korea Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) in Seoul, in 1995

DPRK's trade with Japan totaled \$594.6 million, representing 29% of \$2.05 billion in total foreign trade. Trade with China was \$549.8 million, or 26.8% of the total trade. The comparable figures were 6.2% for India, 4.1% each for Russia and Hong Kong, 3.9% for Germany and 3.0% for Thailand. DPRK's economic relations with South Korea have steadily developed as South Korea's firms can maximise their profits by employing cheap North Korean labor through joint ventures or production on commissions, and by importing cheap North Korean minerals and steel products. Though through third countries, the DPRK's trade with the South totalled \$287.3 million in 1995, compared with \$194.5 million in 1994 and \$111.3 million in 1991, according to KOTRA. A Handbook on North Korea, Korea Herald, Seoul, 1996.

Vis-à-vis the DPRK's worsening economic crisis during the nineties, and in spite of the severe living conditions of the population, there is no apparent opposition to the authority and cohesion of the regime. This political stability was confirmed by the recent elections to the 10th SPA, held on 26–7–1998, i.e., after more than three years from the expiry of the five-term of the 9th SPA (last elections had been held in April 1990). DPRK's media reported, in fact, that all 100% of the votes had been cast to the officially appointed candidates. More than one in every ten newly elected deputies belong to the army: 687 SPA members include, in fact, 75 lieutenant generals or higher military personnel. The army is very much in evidence in the country because of the high number of soldiers necessary to counter the threat from the south. The military are also employed on public projects and in helping the peasants in the countryside. Various military check-points are located around the country, in order to control movements from one place to another. In this sense, there exists a militarised society in North Korea, and also on account of the major emphasis placed on the army's role. Kim Jong Il is always referred to as "General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, Chairman of the DPRK National Defence Commission, and Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army." His regular visits to army units around the country for "on-the-spot guidance" appear as the principal item of news in daily papers.

But the DPRK's most striking political feature continues to remain the enormous emphasis placed upon the people's unity behind their leader, Kim Jong Il. This unity is essentially strengthened sentimentally and emotionally: "love and trust" – and not political and ideological consciousness – are supposed to pervade all aspects of social and political life. According to one of Kim Jong Il's quotations, "the art of moving people lies in the heart." The DPRK has thus come to resemble a theocracy, where the leader's "legendary" exploits and his "on-the-spot guidances" determine everything. This personality cult has reached astonishing proportions, unprecedented in our century, and sharply contrasts with the basically equalitarian and collectivist nature of the North Korean society itself. At the first session of the 10th SPA, convened in September 1998, for example, Kim Jong Il was praised as "an outstanding thinker and theoretician, a distinguished statesman and a peerlessly brilliant commander . . . as the most intimate comrade, the most faithful helper of Kim Il Sung for more than 30 years." KCNA, Pyongyang, 5–9–1998.

As for developments in the ideological domain, the uniqueness and originality of Juche have been particularly highlighted so that it should be no longer interpreted as a development or creative application of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine to the specific conditions of the country. Juche can now stand on its own principles, totally detached from Marxism-Leninism (already in 1992 any reference to "Marxism-Leninism" had been deleted from the constitution). As Kim Jong Il pointed out in 1996,

"The Juche philosophy is an original philosophy which has been evolved and systematised with its own principles. The historic contribution made by the Juche philosophy . . . lies not in its advancement of Marxist materialistic dialectics, but in its clarification of new philosophical principles centred on man..."

The Juche philosophy is an original philosophy which is fundamentally different from the preceding philosophy in its task and principles."

– Kim Jong Il, The Juche Philosophy is an Original Revolutionary Philosophy: Discourse Published in Kulloja, Theoretical Magazine of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, Pyongyang, 26–7–1996, pp. 1–2. My emphases.

Nowhere in the country, in fact, can one find a monument or a bust of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin, but only two small portraits – one of Marx, the other of Lenin – appear in Kim Il Sung Square in the capital.

Marxist education has long been abolished, as well. Hence, all North Korean students – until the termination of their university studies – now have to study “The Revolutionary Activities of Comrade Kim Il Sung” for one or two hours per week and also “The Revolutionary Activities of Comrade Kim Jong Il” for another one or two hours per week.

13. The Struggle for Reunification and Independence

A final peace arrangement has yet to be found in Korea, whose division continues to remain frozen along its 38th parallel, the most heavily armed border in the contemporary world. This anomalous situation is dramatically evidenced not only by the 250-km-long military demarcation line (MDL) bisecting the peninsula and its people, but also by the concrete wall (5–8 m. high, 10–19 m. wide at the bottom and 3–7 m. wide at the top) that runs all along the MDL’s southern side, since it was built by the South Koreans during 1977–79. Undoubtedly, it is US imperialism that bears the responsibility for having imposed – for more than half a century – such a tragic and anachronistic division and for having instigated the political animosity between the two sides.

During all this time, Washington has amassed in South Korea its highest concentration of troops outside the USA (more than 45,000 during the mid-eighties, a number that has now been reduced to 37,000) together with its most modern conventional and nuclear weapons. ROK’s claims – during the early nineties – that there are no longer US nuclear missiles stationed in its territory have neither been confirmed nor denied by Washington. No inspection has ever been conducted to verify the existence of American nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea. But in any case, when entering South Korean ports and US air installations in the ROK, American naval and air forces routinely carry a range of nuclear weapons. It is therefore absolutely clear that – today, as well – US imperialism can easily target any part of the north by using its air-launched weapons and sea-borne cruise nuclear missiles.

With complete disregard for the Korean people’s right to self-determination, sovereignty and independence, the American presence has produced the double effect of both partitioning the country and arrogantly subjugating South Korea to semi-colonial status. The maintenance of Korea’s separation between two states has obviously permitted Washington to dominate South Korea, viewed as its military strategic foothold in Asia, and to directly interfere in its internal affairs. Therefore, the general struggle of all Korean people for their reunification and independence becomes part and parcel of South Korea’s liberation from the American yoke and of the democratisation of its society.

Because of American military, political and economic domination, for more than half a century the ROK has indeed witnessed a succession of barbarous fascist, military dictatorships and pseudo-democratic regimes, all congenial to US monopolies’ penetration into the country. Anti-communist, fascist laws and institutions – such as the National Security Law and the National Security Planning Agency (formerly known as the Korean Central Intelligence Agency until 1980) – have particularly contributed to brutally suppress patriotic and democratic forces in the south, preventing substantial steps towards national reconciliation. Soon after the Korean war, the ROK-US Mutual Defence Pact (permitting US troops to be stationed indefinitely in the south) and a series of other economic and political agreements between Washington and Seoul strengthened American domination in the ROK. Syngman Rhee was thus allowed to retain power until 1960, mainly by means of ballot rigging, martial law, terrorism, repression and massacres of students and others. Shortly after popular uprisings had forced Rhee’s resignation, a military coup was staged by Pak Jung Hi together with other fascist, pro-American elements within the ROK army, whose goal was to achieve “unification through victory over communism.” By dissolving the National Assembly, and through martial law, anti-communism, suppression of democratic activities and so on, this fascist dictatorship could securely safeguard American military and commercial interests in South Korea. The country became a useful supplier of mercenary troops for US imperialism in its war against the peoples of Indochina. Towards the end of the Vietnam war, in fact, South Korean troops in Vietnam could even outnumber American ground troops, while South Korean businesses could derive immense economic benefits from Seoul’s support to US military aggression in Vietnam.

Pak’s fascist tyranny exacerbated class contradictions and conflicts: anti-fascist and anti-imperialist struggles intensified in scope and developed among various social strata, also involving bourgeois democratic parties.

Towards the late seventies Pak was shot and killed by one of his closest aides and replaced by other military hardliners. Particularly brutal repressions were carried out in May 1980, with an estimated 2,000 civilians murdered by the army in the south-western city of Kwangju. As on other occasions, this massacre was supported by Washington since ROK was a “treaty ally” and the USA had “a very strong security interest in that part of the world.” Throughout the eighties, this constant repression of democratic and religious organisations, trade unions, students, etc., and the denial of their social and political rights became highly congenial to those South Korean corporations which could easily maximise their profits by relying on American investments. Democratic protests thus escalated and involved millions of South Koreans during the second half of the eighties. Inevitably, the traditional power of the military was gradually eroded as liberal opposition groups and parties began to actively engage in the political scene.

The chapter of military dictatorships and fascist repression in the ROK seemed to have been finally closed. With the appointment, as president, of Kim Young Sam (Democratic Liberal Party) in February 1993 and with the subsequent appointment of former political prisoner Kim Dae Jung (National Congress for New Politics) in February 1998, partial democratic steps were taken to improve the faltering economy, combat corruption and grant amnesty to thousands of political prisoners. However, these reformist and democratic changes must always be contextualized within the framework of the foreign-dependent capitalism existing in the ROK, one of the so-called tiger economies, now hit by the Asian crisis and affected by radical social and political struggles on the part of increasingly impoverished workers. Due to the most serious economic crisis in the country’s history, Seoul requested the IMF to provide an emergency rescue package for its economy during late 1997. At the same time, the permanent US military and economic domination of the ROK continues to remain the main stumbling block to the full democratisation of its society. The National Security Law, obstructing contacts and exchanges between the south and the north, has never been repealed, just as the fascist National Security Planning Agency still remains active in repressing patriotic and democratic forces. Indeed, the abolition of these fascist laws and institutions cannot but represent a preliminary step along the path towards national reconciliation and peace. The “democratic” credentials of the Kim Dae Jung’s government – and its “sunshine policy” towards the north – will become credible and trust-worthy only provided that a new political determination is displayed to truly democratise South Korean society and to sever ROK’s dependence on US imperialism.

By maintaining its permanent military presence in the south and the continuation of the national divide, Washington – with Seoul’s official approval – has consolidated the so-called “two Koreas” policy – a policy intended to freeze for ever the separation between the two Korean states and to maintain a permanent US military foothold in the South. American ambitions to dominate the entire Korean peninsula at the height of the cold war had been frustrated by the outcome of the Korean war and by the signing of the 1953 armistice agreement. Once its scheme to dominate the whole of Korea by “prevailing over communism” had proved unachievable, Washington resorted to its “two Koreas” policy with its long-term aim of increasingly strengthening its military, economic and political interests in the whole north-east Asian region. This policy has therefore become an integral component of the US hegemonic strategy at the expense, in particular, of the Korean people. As part of the US forces’ arsenal in South Korea, nuclear weapons began to be deployed from 1957 onwards. It was from the sixties onwards – until today – that Washington also began to establish a triangular “security system” between the USA, Japan and the ROK. Amid strong opposition and resistance by the South Korean students and people, Seoul was prompted to accept Japan’s terms in normalising their bilateral relations by means of the ROK-Japan agreements of 22–6–1965. These agreements were reached in parallel with the 1965 Japan-US treaty, later followed by the 1969 Japan-US joint statement. These agreements determined South Korea’s security as “essential to the security of Japan itself.” A dangerous US-Japan-ROK military alliance was thus put into place.

Until about ten years ago – as the USA was competing for world hegemony with Soviet social-imperialism – it was the “red threat” in Asia that allegedly justified Washington’s military, nuclear build-up in Korea. The American imperialist strength in the north-east Asian region was not only made possible through closer military links with Japan, but also by means of the Sino-American rapprochement. But with the collapse of the USSR and the disappearance of its “threat” in Asia, no substantially different attitudes emerged in Washington which – on account of its imperialist nature and its hegemonic aims – continues to pursue its “two Koreas” policy by alleging a “southward invasion from the north.” Consequently, a serious threat to peace

and security in the Korean peninsula has been posed by regularly staging yearly military exercises against the DPRK since 1969 (code-named Team Spirit since 1976) and by targeting the north with increasingly sophisticated weapons of mass destruction. The Team Spirit exercises have expanded each year, involving some 200,000 US and ROK troops and becoming the largest such exercise conducted by US forces throughout the world. This aggressive US interference in Korea has effectively subordinated the ROK's ruling class to American interests and demands, thus obstructing the way towards national reconciliation and reunification between the north and the south of the country.

Vis-à-vis the “two Koreas” policy and Seoul’s subservience to US imperialism, the struggle to uphold the necessity of one Korea only, rather than two separate halves, has always been consistently maintained by the DPRK. Its policies, in this regard, reflect the genuine and patriotic aspirations of all Korean people wishing to live re-united, independent and free from outside domination and interference. Given the impasse that has prevented reunification for half a century, Pyongyang’s anti-imperialist stance has indeed permitted the maintenance of the northern half of Korea as a sovereign and independent state. The attitude towards US imperialism becomes, in this case, the main criterion by which to differentiate the patriotic, anti-imperialist forces in Korea, truly interested in national independence, from the flunkeyish forces, subservient to foreign imperialism. It is abundantly clear, in fact, that Korea cannot be peacefully reunified as long as the constant threat of military confrontation, instigated by Washington, hangs over its peninsula. The Korean people’s inalienable right to their full independence represents a question of both justice and principle that cannot be bartered for some concessions from US imperialism.

Repeatedly, the DPRK has had to challenge US pressure militarily, economically, politically and diplomatically for more than half a century. It was soon after the Korean war that an international conference was organised in Geneva in April-June 1954 in order to deal with the peaceful settlement of the Korean question. The DPRK’s proposals to withdraw all foreign armed forces from Korean territory within six months and to hold free, general elections were met with approval by the Soviet, Chinese and other delegations, while they were blatantly rejected by the USA and its allies. On various occasions, between the fifties and sixties, Pyongyang reiterated the necessity to speed up the process towards peaceful reunification by requesting official negotiations between the DPRK’s SPA and the ROK’s National Assembly, to develop bilateral economic, scientific and cultural exchanges and to allow unrestricted travel between the north and the south. Particular emphasis was placed on the proposal to involve – once US troops had withdrawn from South Korea – all political parties and organisations from the north and the south in holding general elections and forming a unified Korean government. The DPRK also suggested to Seoul the reduction of their respective armed forces to no more than 100,000 units on each side. However, all these various proposals – even those regarding the establishment of travelling arrangements – were systematically turned down by both Seoul and Washington, whose official policies were dictated by their belligerent and uncompromising slogan: “march north for unification.”

But for the first time, during the early seventies, official bilateral exchanges and contacts between Pyongyang and Seoul led to a series of significant agreements contained in the North-South Joint Statement of 4-7-1972. The agreements contemplated some confidence building measures in order to avoid armed provocations along the MDL, the resumption of bilateral contacts and exchanges at various levels and the establishment of direct telephone links between Pyongyang and Seoul in order to immediately tackle the solution of any eventual problems or incidents. Most importantly, the three principles of national reunification, which had been put forward by Kim Il Sung, were clearly indicated in the joint statement:

“Firstly, reunification should be achieved independently, without reliance upon outside force or its intervention; Secondly, reunification should be achieved by peaceful means, without recourse to the use of arms against the other side; Thirdly, great national unity as one nation should be promoted first of all, transcending the differences of ideology, ideal and social system.”

– Kim Han Gil, Modern History of Korea, Pyongyang, 1979, pp. 548–9.

As for the differences between the two systems existing in the north and the south, Kim Il Sung always put the accent on their necessity to coexist within a unitary framework:

“We consider that the north and the south will be able to promote great national unity in spite of

the differences in their ideas and systems, political views and religious beliefs, if they all take a patriotic attitude and stand for national reunification...

Whether one believes in communism, nationalism or capitalism must not be an obstacle to great national unity. We are not opposed to the nationalists and capitalists in south Korea. The majority of the south Korean capitalists are national capitalists. We have been pursuing a policy of protecting national capitalists. For the sake of national reunification, we will unite and cooperate with the people of all backgrounds in south Korea including nationalists and national capitalists."

– Kim Han Gil, *Modern History of Korea*, Pyongyang, 1979, pp. 548–9.

In line with the provisions contained in the 1972 statement, a north-south coordination commission was set up in order to settle various outstanding issues and implement the principles contained in the joint statement. But by 1975 the commission had made no concrete progress in fulfilling its task. Similarly, parallel talks between the Red Cross organisations of North and South Korea also came to a deadlock. As always, major pressure was exerted by Washington in line with its "two Koreas" policy of permanent separation between the two states. Even after the signing of the 1972 north-south joint statement and the beginning of some bilateral dialogue, Washington carried on with its policy of aggression and war by fomenting an intensified wave of anti-communism and anti-north confrontation in the ROK, and by increasing and updating its military arsenal there. During the mid-seventies, in fact, more than 42,000 US troops were stationed in the south, together with an enormous stockpile of more than 1,000 nuclear weapons (i.e., a concentrated nuclear capability which was 820 times greater than the force of the atomic bomb dropped at Hiroshima).

The Korean issue was raised at the UN in 1975 and its General Assembly passed a resolution – the first of its kind – calling for the eviction of US forces from the ROK, the dissolution of the UN Command stationed there and the conclusion of a peace treaty to replace the armistice agreement. In the meantime, no reply was ever given to a proposal which had been sent by the DPRK's SPA to the US congress in March 1974 with the aim of finalising a final peace arrangement between Pyongyang and Washington. After US imperialism's defeat in the Vietnam war, instead, the US defence department contemplated the option of using nuclear weapons in case of hostilities in Korea, viewed within the perimeter of the "forward defence zone" of the USA.

American interference in South Korea's internal affairs also intensified during the seventies. The then South Korean military dictator, Pak Jung Hi, while barbarically repressing democratic forces at home, felt compelled by Washington to disavow the spirit and the principles contained in the 1972 joint statement so that the ROK could be maintained as the USA's anti-communist bulwark in Asia. Pak Jung Hi's approach to "peaceful reunification" indeed translated into the traditional cold war policy of "prevailing over communism" by force. In 1973 he wrote the following:

"The only way to bring Communists to their knees is to 'display strength' superior to theirs in politics, economy and other fields of the society. Concentrically expressing the idea and creed of mine and my colleagues, we set forth 'unification by prevailing over communism'."

– quoted in *Korea is One*, Pyongyang, 1978, p. 198.

By contrast, Kim Il Sung correctly singled out Washington as the main factor fomenting such divisive policies pursued by Seoul. On 23–6–1973 he declared:

"Adopting two-faced tactics under the 'Nixon doctrine', the United States is not willing to desist from its plans to instigate south Korea's bellicose elements to make Koreans fight Koreans, perpetuate the division of Korea and create two Koreas, even after the North-South Joint Statement was published and dialogue started between the two parts of Korea."

– Kim Il Sung, "Let Us Prevent a National Partition and Reunify the Country: Speech at the Pyongyang Mass Rally to Welcome the Party and Government Delegation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic", 23–6–1973, in Kim Il Sung, *Works*, vol. 28, Pyongyang, 1986, p. 326.

During the seventies, Pyongyang continued to reiterate the three principles of independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity and put forward the idea of a neutral, confederal state, free from the

presence of foreign troops and military bases: the “Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo” which would join the UN as a single state. During the early eighties, Pyongyang proposed to hold tripartite talks between the DPRK, the USA and ROK in order to replace the armistice agreement with a final peace arrangement and to adopt a non-aggression declaration between the north and the south. These two proposals, too, met with American and South Korean opposition since their implementation would have made US military presence in the south redundant. In October 1980, Kim Il Sung also suggested the creation of a permanent nuclear-free peninsula by indicating the following practical steps in an envisaged process:

1. The reduction – once all American troops had been withdrawn – of the military strength of North and South Korea’s forces to 100,000–150,000 soldiers on each side;
2. the abolition of the MDL and the dismantling of all military installation in its vicinity; and
3. the formation of a single, combined army through the amalgamation of the KPA with the ROK’s National Army.

In line with the above anti-imperialist positions, during the early nineties Kim Il Sung further elaborated the crucial issue of Korean reunification and independence in the “10-Point Programme of the Great Unity of the Whole Nation for the Reunification of the Country”. Its main points:

1. A unified state, independent, peaceful and neutral, should be founded through the great unity of the whole nation. The north and the south should found a pan-national unified state to represent all parties, all groupings and all the members of the nation from all walks of life, while leaving the existing two systems and two governments intact. The pan-national unified state should be a confederal state in which the two regional governments of the north and the south are represented equally, and an independent, peaceful and nonaligned neutral state which does not lean to any great power.
2. Unity should be based on patriotism and the spirit of national independence...
3. Unity should be achieved on the principle of promoting co-existence, co-prosperity and common interests and subordinating everything to the cause of national reunification...
4. All political disputes that foment division and confrontation between fellow countrymen should be ended and unity should be achieved...
5. The fear of invasion from both south and north, and the ideas of prevailing over communism and communisation should be dispelled, and north and south should believe in each other and unite. The north and the south should not threaten and invade each other. Neither side should try to force its system on the other or to absorb the other.
6. The north and south should value democracy and join hands on the road to national reunification, without rejecting each other because of differences in ideals and principles.
7. The north and south should protect the material and spiritual wealth of individuals and organisations and encourage their use for the promotion of great national unity...
8. Understanding, trust and unity should be built up across the nation through contact, exchange visits and dialogue...
9. The whole nation, north, south and overseas, should strengthen its solidarity for the sake of national reunification...
10. Those who have contributed to the great unity of the nation and to the cause of national reunification should be honoured... – Kim Il Sung, 10-Point Programme of the Great Unity of the Whole Nation for the Reunification of the Country, 6–4–1993.

Indeed, bilateral exchanges aimed at peaceful reunification made rapid progress during the early nineties, with eight rounds of talks between the two Korean governments during 1990–92. In February 1992 both sides ratified the Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, Cooperation and Exchange between the North and the South and the Joint Declaration on the De-nuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. The agreement

reiterated non-interference in each other's systems, the replacement of the armistice agreement with a final peace treaty and also contemplated various forms of mutual cooperation. High-level contacts between the north and the south followed this agreement. However, while breaching both the spirit of the non-aggression agreement and the declaration on denuclearisation, US and South Korean forces staged Focus Lens military exercises in 1992 and then, in 1993, resumed their Team Spirit military exercises which included rehearsals for battlefield nuclear war against the DPRK. These aggressive military moves prompted the DPRK to break off all high-level contacts with the south. It is important to note, in fact, that American war games in Korea used to be aimed at imaginary Soviet- or Chinese-backed invasions. But since the collapse of the USSR and the normalisation of relations between Beijing and Seoul, they have been aimed only at the DPRK and its non-nuclear military forces.

Notwithstanding attempts to establish a bilateral dialogue between the two Korean states during the early nineties, tension also re-emerged in the Korean peninsula because of the so-called nuclear crisis. While possessing its nuclear arsenal in the region, Washington began to create the suspicion that the DPRK was diverting plutonium from peaceful nuclear projects towards developing its own nuclear weapons. The dispute over the DPRK's possible development of nuclear weapons began to assume crisis proportions in late 1993, thus escalating during 1994. In the midst of the crisis, in July 1993, during his visit to Panmunjom US president Bill Clinton strongly warned the DPRK against developing its nuclear weapons, since:

“if they ever use them, it will be the end of their country.”

– Keesing's Record of World Events, News Digest for July 1993, p. 39557.

In its ideological propaganda, Washington continued to brand the DPRK as the last remaining bastion of “stalinism” sponsoring international terrorism. But during the crisis, one clearly recognised that no solid proof ever emerged from the various inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) during 1992–94 that Pyongyang had actually assembled a nuclear device or was going to do so. Finally, the crisis was solved on 21–10–94 with the signing of a bilateral US-DPRK agreement (reached without ROK's direct involvement). Its main provisions:

1. the USA would organise an international consortium to provide light-water reactors (LWR), with a total generating capacity of 2,000 megawatts, by a target date of 2003. In return, North Korea would freeze all activities on its existing nuclear reactors and related facilities, and permit them to be continuously monitored by IAEA inspectors;
2. North Korea would come into full compliance with the IAEA (i.e., by means of accepting its inspections);
3. the USA would arrange to supply 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil annually to make up for energy foregone by North Korea before the LWR came into operation;
4. the two states would reduce existing barriers to trade and investment and open diplomatic liaison offices in Washington and Pyongyang as preliminary steps aimed at eventually normalising their relations; and
5. the DPRK would re-engage in the north-south dialogue.

In order to implement the terms of the above agreement, the Korean Peninsula Development Organisation (KEDO) was created in March 1995. KEDO was charged with providing North Korea with two LWR to replace its existing graphite-based models. But as a matter of fact, only limited steps have so far been taken to properly implement the provisions of the 1994 US-DPRK agreement. Delays have been experienced, for example, in delivering heavy oil supply to the DPRK and various sources have recently indicated that the construction of the reactor project in the DPRK may face indeed a delay of several years.

In the meantime – while an extreme economic crisis has recently affected North Korea and dramatically deteriorated the living standards of its population – Washington has not desisted from exerting economic and military pressure even after the conclusion of its bilateral agreement with Pyongyang in 1994. Contrary to the provisions of this agreement, not only does Washington continue to maintain its sanctions against the DPRK, but it also continues to stage regular war exercises in the Korean peninsula, having deployed additional troops and updated nuclear-powered carriers and attack submarines around the Korean peninsula. The so-called RIMPAC military exercises in 1998 were intended – as in the past – to discourage the DPRK

from an imaginary “invasion to the south”. Furthermore, other anti-DPRK manoeuvres code-named “98 Foal Eagle” and “98 Hwarang” were staged between October and November in close military cooperation between the ROK, the USA and Japan, and with the involvement of additional troops, aircraft carriers and warships of the US 7th Fleet stationed in Japan. In June 1998, US secretary of defence William Cohen stated that the USA would continue to deploy its troops in South Korea even after the north and the south are reunified.

This constant, provocative show of military strength on the part of US imperialism – almost driving the north and the south of Korea to the brink of a second Korean war – has not prevented Pyongyang from maintaining a channel of communication and dialogue in order to peacefully solve the national question. In March 1998 the so-called four-way peace talks in Geneva involved the two Korean states, the USA and China and aimed at creating a permanent peace arrangement in the Korean peninsula. These talks, nonetheless, failed to achieve any concrete results because of Washington’s refusal to include on their agenda the principal outstanding issues of the Korean question, i.e., its troops’ withdrawal from the ROK and the signing of a US-DPRK peace agreement. A fourth round of the four-way talks is scheduled to resume in early 1999 in Geneva. Pyongyang maintains that, once US troops have been unconditionally withdrawn from the Korean peninsula, all other outstanding matters can then be resolved by the two Korean states bilaterally, without necessarily involving the USA and China.

In line with its former anti-imperialist positions, the DPRK regards both the US troops’ withdrawal from the ROK and the conclusion of a US-DPRK peace treaty as questions of principle, as preconditional steps towards genuine reunification and independence. Pyongyang’s insistence on a new comprehensive peace treaty with Washington is determined by the fact that the USA and the DPRK had been the only signatories to the 1953 armistice. In this regard, Kim Jong Il has recently pointed out the following:

“The question of the reunification of our country is a question of putting an end to the foreign domination and intervention of South Korea... The question of easing the tension and removing the danger of war in our country can be settled, before all else, when the United States gives up its hostile policy against our republic and a peace treaty is concluded between the DPRK and the US. Our Republic and the United States are still in the state of temporary armistice and the danger of war has not been dispelled from our country. In order to remove the danger of war and ensure peace, a peace treaty must be concluded between DPRK and the United States and a new peace-keeping mechanism must be established.”

– Kim Jong Il, *Let Us Carry Out The Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung’s Instructions For National Reunification*, 4–8–1997, Pyongyang, 1997, p. 2, 15.

In April 1998, the DPRK’s latest proposal for national reunification and independence has been put forward on the basis of the following five-point policy:

1. maintaining the principle of national independence;
2. achieving unity under the banner of patriotism;
3. improving inter-Korean relations;
4. fighting against domination by outsiders and anti-reunification forces; and
5. encouraging contacts, dialogue and solidarity among all Koreans.

Kim Jong Il elaborated this five-point policy by indicating the following:

“Claiming for independence and north-south reconciliation and unity while pursuing the policy of dependence on foreign forces is nothing but an empty talk... .

We must categorically oppose and reject sycophancy to great powers and dependence on foreign forces, and achieve great national unity on the basis of the principle of national independence... .

The demands and interests of different classes and strata of the nation are different from one another, but the primary task facing our nation today is national reunification, and we must subordinate everything to the cause of national reunification... .

We will also unite with people from upper classes in power, figures from the ruling party and the opposition party, big capitalists and generals (in South Korea – Ed.) under the banner of great unity of the nation, if they value the common interests of the nation and want the reunification of the country... Without fighting against the domination and interference of the foreign forces and the divisive force at home and abroad, it would be impossible to realise unity between north and south, the great unity of the nation and the reunification of the country.”

– Kim Jong Il, Let Us Reunify the Country Independently and Peacefully Through the Great Unity of the Entire Nation: Letter to the National Symposium to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the Historic Joint Conference of Representatives of Political Parties and Public Organizations in North and South Korea, 18–4–1998, Pyongyang, 1998, pp. 10, 12,15.

It clearly appears that the above DPRK’s policies neither strengthen nor advance the socialist cause – i.e., the cause of Marxism-Leninism – in the Korean peninsula. And it could not be otherwise, since North Korea is a revisionist state. However, its 1998 five-point policy, aimed at reunification and independence, does challenge US imperialism in its aggressive attempts to dominate both the south and the north of the country. And eventually, even the prospect of an absorption of North Korea by the South – under the aegis of US imperialism – would also represent a severe set-back for all peoples of Korea and Asia.

The current struggle waged by the Korean people for their reunification and independence, free from outside American interference and from its nuclear threat, becomes an integral component of the world anti-imperialist revolution. As such, the Korean people’s struggle against US imperialism must be highly estimated and unconditionally supported by all democratic and progressive forces world-wide. In Imperialism and the Revolution Enver Hoxha brilliantly outlines the correlation between the anti-imperialist revolution and the socialist revolution in the following terms:

“When we speak of the revolution we do not mean only the socialist revolution. In the present epoch of the revolutionary transition from capitalism to socialism, the peoples’ liberation struggle, the national-democratic, anti-imperialist revolutions, the national liberation movements, also, are component parts of a single revolutionary process, the world proletarian revolution, as Lenin and Stalin explained.

‘Leninism,’ says Stalin, ‘has proved ... that the national problem can be solved only in connection with and on the basis of the proletarian revolution, and that the road to victory of the revolution in the West lies through the revolutionary alliance with the liberation movement of the colonies and dependent countries against imperialism. The national problem is a part of the general problem of the proletarian revolution, a part of the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat’.

– J. V. Stalin, Works, vol. 6, p. 144, Alb. ed.

This connection has become even clearer and more natural today, when, with the collapse of the old colonial system, most of the peoples have taken a big step forward towards independence by creating their own national states, and when, following this step, they are aspiring to go further. They want the liquidation of the neo-colonialist system, of any imperialist dependence and any exploitation by foreign capital. They want their complete sovereignty and economic and political independence. It has now been proved that such aspirations can be realised, such objectives can be attained only through the elimination of any foreign domination by and dependence on foreigners and the liquidation of oppression and exploitation by local bourgeois and big land-owner rulers.

Hence, the linking and interlacing of the national-democratic, anti-imperialist, national liberation revolution with the socialist revolution, because, by striking at imperialism and reaction, which are common enemies of the proletariat and the peoples, these revolutions also pave the way for great social transformations, assist the victory of the socialist revolution. And vice-versa, by striking at the imperialist bourgeoisie, by destroying its economic and political positions, the socialist revolution creates favourable conditions for and facilitates the triumph of liberation movements...

Therefore, when we draw the conclusion that the revolution is a question put forward for solution, that it is on the agenda, we have in mind not only the socialist revolution, but also the democratic anti-imperialist revolution.”

– Enver Hoxha, Imperialism and the Revolution, Tirana, 1979, pp. 173–5. My emphasis.

Conclusion

It is high time for the Korean people to live re-united, free from outside interference, sovereign in their own territory, and fully independent. Consistent and unconditional support must therefore be given to all their anti-imperialist efforts in both North and South Korea, and outside the country, in order to uphold their inalienable and sacred right to independence. To achieve the peaceful reunification of Korea, therefore, all political and diplomatic steps undertaken by the DPRK which challenge US imperialism must be publicised and defended by the widest possible sections of peoples in various countries, including the USA. But at the same time, neither revisionism in the north nor pseudo-democratic capitalism in the south will ever free the Korean working masses from economic and political exploitation and oppression. The prospect of real social and national liberation can only be achieved through a Korean socialist revolution led by a truly Marxist-Leninist party.

Long Live Korean Reunification And Independence!

Down with Korean Revisionism!

For an Independent and Socialist Korea!

Reference

Abbreviations

- **AIYL** – Anti-Imperialist Youth League
- **AJPGA** – Anti-Japanese People’s Guerrilla Army
- **ARF** – Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland
- **CPK** – Communist Party of Korea
- **CPNK** – Communist Party of North Korea
- **CPSU(B)** Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)
- **DFRF** – Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland
- **DIU** – Down-With-Imperialism Union
- **DMZ** – demilitarised zone
- **DNUFNK** – Democratic National United Front of North Korea
- **DPRK** – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
- **ECCI** – Executive Committee of the Communist International
- **EU** – European Union
- **GNP** – gross national product
- **IAEA** – International Atomic Energy Agency
- **IMF** – International Monetary Fund
- **KCNA** – Korean Central News Agency
- **KEDO** – Korean Peninsula Development Organization

- **KOTRA** – Korea Trade and Investment Promotion Agency
- **KPA** – Korean People’s Army
- **KPRA** – Korean People’s Revolutionary Army
- **LWR** – light water reactor
- **KRA** – Korean Revolutionary Army
- **MDL** – military demarcation line
- **ML** – Marxist-Leninist
- **NAM** – Non-Aligned Movement
- **NKPA** – North Korean People’s Army
- **NKPC** – North Korean People’s Committee
- **PPCNK** – Provisional People’s Committee of North Korea
- **ROK** – Republic of Korea
- **SPA** – Supreme People’s Assembly
- **UN** – United Nations
- **USA** – United States of America
- **USSR** – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
- **WPK** – Workers’ Party of Korea
- **WPNK** – Workers’ Party of North Korea
- **YCL** – Young Communist League

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