

# **1945 and the division of Korea - For advance toward socialism without distinction between ethnic groups**

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**It has been 72 years since the Korean people defeated the colonial rule of Japanese imperialism. But what resulted was the divide between North and South Korea instead of a unified state.**

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Over the past 72 years, the divided North and South Korea were under permanent threat by the United States. In the Korean Peninsula, this created a contradiction between oppressing people and oppressed people in addition to the basic class contradiction between bourgeoisie and proletariat. And international solidarity in the East Asia area to resolve the contradictions between oppressing people and oppressed people was insufficient. So a united front of working class against imperialism and the ruling class was not created in East Asia.

But from before foundation of divided North and South Korea, oppressed Korean people have continued a permanent international movement to organize a unified state with political independence rather than waiting for social revolution.

This year marks the hundredth anniversary of the Russian revolution. In 1917, the Soviet regime of Vladimir Lenin proposed the immediate conclusion of a peace treaty with the all belligerent countries of the First World War; insisting on self-determination for all nations with no compensation and no annexation as the first Russian foreign policy during the October Revolution.

What Is To Be Done in the present crisis of nuclear war in East Asia?

This article aims to examine the way to solve the problem of current situation especially in East Asia. We will discuss the major independence movement against imperialism by the Korean people before the divide between North and South Korea first. After that, we will pursue the possibility of forming a united front of oppressing and oppressed peoples through acquisition of the right of self-determination for the Korean people.

## **Major independence movement by Korean people before division of North and South Korea**

North and South Korea were not divided just after Korea's independence from Japan. Divided North and South Korea did not exist for three years: from 1945 to 1948. So analysis of independence movement in those three years is required to ascertain the nature of foundation of divided North and South Korea. And to analyze independence movement against Japanese colonial rule to clarify the nature of foundation of divided North and South Korea, analysis of independence movement during the Second World War is also required.

The independence movement against Japanese imperialism during the Second World War was developed through various organizations; so we need to analyze the nature of those organizations.

The fundamental nature of the independence movement is not mere opposition to Japanese colonial rule. An analysis of philosophy and content of the organizations will allow us to clarify the nature of independence movement.

Four major independence movement bodies existed: Korean Restoration Brotherhood (KRB), Korean Fatherland Restoration Association (KFRA), North Korean Independence League (NKIL), and Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea (PGRK). The political ideologies of these organizations are almost the same from the standpoint of independence from the Japanese colonial rule. But their political characters are completely different. They divide into two groups on the basis of their ideas. One group includes the KRB, KFRA, and NKIL which intended the foundation of a "people's democratic nation". The other group includes the PGRK which wanted the establishment of anti-communist nation.

### **Movement for establishment of people's democratic nation**

#### **KRB**

In August 1944, the KRB was founded by the activists including Lyuh Woon-hyung [1]. The political ideology of KRB intended to build the people's democratic nation for freedom of workers and farmers after overthrowing Japanese imperialism. With organizational expansion, the KRB developed struggle against colonial rule of Japanese imperialism putting out a manifesto which includes democratic principles and liberation of workers and farmers.

But the KRB confronted some problems to establish an independent state. First, the KRB did not have an armed organization. Second, the KRB did not have any direct international relations with other anti-fascist forces. Lack of international solidarity with other anti-fascist forces set limits to the scale of anti-Japanese independence movement. And the political ideology of the KRB may have not been reflected in the movement if the independence problem of Korea became an international problem between anti-fascist forces.

In August 1945, Lyuh Woon-hyung founded Committee for Preparation of Korean Independence (CPKI) based on the KRB. CPKI was dissolved after the foundation of National People's Representative Conference (NPRC) on September 6, 1945. [2]

His past left-right collaboration was criticized by Park Heon-young [3]. And in July 1947, Lyuh Woon-hyung was assassinated.

The People's Committees, the local organization of NPPC, existed in the area of 38<sup>th</sup> parallel north which was occupied by the Soviet Union Army. The People's Committees played the role of founding the current Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

### **KFRA (later Manchuria Faction and Kapsan Faction)**

Activists such as Kim Il-sung [4] started to carry out anti-Japanese independence work from the first half of 1930 in the area from Korea to Manchuria. The Korean People's Revolutionary Army (KPPA) was organized in April 1932. And KFRA was founded as a unified front organization of nationalists and communists. The KPPA and KFRA cooperated closely with each other. Since its foundation, KFRA declared its political ideology was to establish people's democratic regime after liberation from Japanese colonial rule.

KFRA built an independence movement with international solidarity with anti-fascist nations and political parties such as the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China. After the outbreak of the Second World War, KFRA put forward two social missions: the overthrow of Japanese colonial rule and the foundation of people's democratic regime. Korean people responded to communist policy of KFRA and developed an anti-Japanese independence movement based on solidarity with the organizations such as KRB and NKIL. Therefore there was a favorable possibility of establishing people's democratic nation based on the political ideology of KFRA after the Second World War.

On the other hand, problems may have been created by the relationship with the Soviet Union. The foreign policy of the Soviet Union may have prevented the development of independence from Japanese imperialism and may have hindered the independence movement of KFRA by signing a neutrality pact with the Japanese. [5] The manifesto of KFRA was based on the revolutionary ideology of the current DPRK.

### **NKIL (later Yan'an Faction)**

Korean communists such as Kim Du-bong [6] carried out anti-Japanese Independence movement work around Yan'an (China) area. In 1935, Kim Du-bong founded the Korean National Revolutionary Party. And in 1942, he moved to Yan'an with Korean Volunteer Corps which was founded the previous year. Then Kim Du-bong became chairman of NKIL with farmers, workers, and young activists in the July.

The NKIL and Korean Volunteer Corps cooperated with each other toward foundation of the people's democratic nation based on the labor-farmer union of Koreans. NKIL carried out its work in cooperation with other Korean independence movement bodies. And NKIL and Korean Volunteer Army was founded as a result of joint struggle with communists of KFRA.

NKIL had a close relationship with KRB and especially with other anti-fascist forces such as Communist Party of China. Also NKIL carried out joint struggle with Japanese who were against the war of invasion.

But NKIL had some problem to develop independence movement. First, NKIL did not have any movement bodies in Korea. Second, Communist Party of China was the main object of international solidarity of NKIL. At that time, Communist Party of China strongly conflicted with Chinese National Party. Therefore anti-Japanese independence movement of Communist Party of China was restricted by relation between Communist Party of China and Chinese National Party.

At that time (before 1949) the Communist Party of China still did not represent China.

## **Movement for establishment of anti-communist nation**

Kim Koo [7] and other activists founded the PGRK as a political organization and carried out independence movement during the Second World War. PGRK was led by former landed class of the former Joseon Dynasty. In September 1940, the former landed class such as Kim Koo formed Korean Liberation Army (KLA) under PGRK. PGRK intended to found anti-communist nation after independence from Japanese colonial rule.

The PGRK was formed by a small number of Koreans and had no political, military, and economic independence. The PGRK was the movement body which subordinated to the Chinese National Party Government. The KLA of PGRK supported Chinese National Party Government.

PGRK carried out no independence work during the Second World War in Korea. So no Korean people in the Korean Peninsula were involved in the movement. Only independence movement bodies in the United States joined the anti-communist force of Chinese National Party government. Despite the historical background, PGRK strengthen the international political work for approval of the organization as the only legal government of Korean people.

First PGRK requested China and the United States to approve the organization. But even the Republic of China Government did not approve PGRK. The United States also did not approve PGRK. Consequently, it was hardly possible for the anti-communist state to be established.

## **Conclusion**

In the sections above, we have analysed the organizations which intended to found people's democratic nation. Among these organizations, especially the KFRA maintained its hegemony as a big power to found the people's democratic nation. And there was almost no possibility that the nation of anti-communist forces was founded with politically and militarily dependence on other countries. Therefore there was a favorable possibility of establishing unified people's democratic nation based on the political ideology of KFRA after the Second World War if the right of self-determination of Korean people was not violated.

But among the interests of the great powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union, the right of self-determination was violated. The cause of the divided North and South Korea was a violation of the right of self-determination of Korean people mainly by the United States and to some degree by the Soviet Union.

The problem around the Korean Peninsula has been prolonged by complicated causes. And the Korean War (1950-1953) completely broke Korean popular movements which oriented foundation of people's democratic nation.

Just before the Korean War, Republic of Korea (ROK) was faced with armed struggle by communist forces. Compared with ROK, DPRK was organized with a rather stabilized structure from a political point of view compared with ROK after its foundation in 1948.

Faced with the tense situation in East Asia, we should examine the fundamental cause of foundation of divided North and South Korea. The right of self-determination of Korean people should be restored completely under international solidarity with the working class of oppressing people and

under unity without distinction between ethnic groups. Before solidarity with oppressed people, oppressing people have to overcome self-denialism and destroy the wall of unilateralism which prevents the formation of united front to overthrow imperialism.

Unavoidable fusion of ethnic groups will be realized through transition period with freedom of ethnic separation. Oppressed people's acquisition of the rights equivalent to oppressing people and freedom of political separation from oppressing people should be guaranteed unconditionally to create united front for development of international struggle against the common enemies of working class toward socialism.

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## **Chronology**

1919.3.1: March First Independence Movement

1919.4.13: Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea founded.

1925: Communist Party of Korea founded.

1930: Korea Independence Party founded.

1932.4: Korean People's Revolutionary Army founded.

1935: Korean National Revolutionary Party founded.

1936.5: Korean Fatherland Restoration Association founded.

1940.9: Korean Liberation Army founded.

1941: Korean Volunteer Army founded.

1942.4: North Korean Independence League founded.

1944.8: Korean Restoration Brotherhood founded.

1945.8.15: Japan surrendered.

1945.8.17: Committee for Preparation of Korean Independence founded.

1945.9.6: National People's Representative Conference founded.

1945.11.12: People's Party of Korea founded.

1945.11.23: Communist Party of Korea merged into Workers' Party of South Korea. People's Party of Korea partly merged into Workers' Party of South Korea.

1946.2.16: New People's Party of Korea founded. (chairman :Kim Du-bong)□

1946.5: Communist Party of Korea (North Korea Bureau) renamed to Communist Party of North

Korea.

1946.7: New People's Party of Korea (Pyongyang) and Communist Party of North Korea merged into Workers Party of North Korea (chairman: Kim Du-bong).

1946.11: New People's Party of South Korea and People's Party of Korea merged into Workers' Party of Korea.

1947.7.19: Lyuh Woon-hyung assassinated.

1948.8.15: I Seung-man declared independence of Republic of Korea with the approval of the United States.

1948.9.9: Democratic People's Republic of Korea founded.

1949.6.30: Workers Party of North Korea and Workers' Party of South Korea merged into Workers' Party of Korea.

1950.6.25: Korean War began.

1953.7.27: Korean Armistice Agreement signed.

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**P.S.**

\* <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org>

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## Footnotes

[1] Korean politician who argued that Korean independence was essential to world peace, and a reunification activist who struggled for the independent reunification of Korea since its national division in 1945.

[2] Originally, CPKI was composed of nationalists and communists. Before September 6 1945, Lyuh Woon-hyung began to strengthen cooperation with communists such as Park Heon-young after withdrawal of nationalists from CPKI. Resolution of CPKI and foundation of NPRC were advances for Korean communists. Lyuh Woon-hyung formed People's Party of Korea through left-right collaboration in November 1945. After that he became chairman of Workers' Party of South Korea.

[3] Korean independence activist, politician, philosopher and Communist activist. One of the main leaders of the Korean communist movement during Japan's colonial rule (1910-45)

[4] The leader and dictator of North Korea from its establishment in 1948 until his death in 1994

[5] The Anti-fascist block originally included the Soviet Union and Japan. Before April 17 1941, the KFRA thought that the contradiction between the Soviet Union and Japan could not be resolved and they would win independence But contrary to their expectations, they were betrayed by Soviet Japanese Neutrality Pact concluded on April 17, 1941. The independence movement

guided by communists was negatively affected by the foreign policy of the Soviet Union

[6] The 1<sup>st</sup> Chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of North Korea from 1946 to 1948.

[7] A Korean nationalist politician. The sixth and later of the last Premier of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea and a leader of the Korean independence movement against the Japanese Empire