

## **“The August Incident” and the Destiny of the Yanan Faction\***

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### **Introduction**

Various political factions existed in North Korea in the period that immediately followed liberation in 1945. Amongst the most prominent were the so-called Guerilla Faction and Yanan Faction. As such, this was a period characterized by the possibility of diverse political groups emerging in North Korea. However, this possibility gradually disappeared during the mid and late 1950s. The most salient event in this regard was the August Incident of 1956, an event that marked the only organized anti-Kim Il-sung movement in North Korean history and the subsequent downfall of the Yanan Faction. Although China interfered in this incident in an ex post facto manner, it did little to stop the thorough eradication of the Yanan Faction. The August Incident and eradication of the Yanan Faction provided a decisive opportunity to form a highly concentrated and uniformed power structure in North Korea. Numerous studies have been conducted on the August Incident. Korean scholars have achieved some interesting results using previously confidential Soviet files. However, very few Chinese materials related to the August Incident have to date been released. The Chinese materials available to scholars have for the

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most part consisted of personal materials or memoirs of members of the Yanan Faction exiled to China. No materials reflecting the viewpoint of high-ranking Chinese officials could be accessed until the recent publication of records of the meetings of Mao Zedong. In September 1956, Mao Zedong engaged in one-on-one talks with Soviet and North Korean delegations that clearly reflect China's vantage point with regards to the August Incident. The discovery of these records is expected to be of great assistance to scholars.

### **Formation of the Yanan Faction and the independence movement**

Generally speaking, the Korean independence movements waged by those who were exiled to China can be divided into the Guerrilla Faction active in northern China (Manchuria) and the Independence Alliance on mainland China. The Independence Alliance, which received direct support and guidance from the Chinese Communist Party, came to be called the ‘Yanan Faction’.

The Yanan Faction boasted the closest ties to the Chinese Communist Party and was from an organizational standpoint linked to the Korean Independence Alliance and Korean Volunteer Army. These organizations can be traced back to 1938 when the Political Department (Zhou Enlai held the post of deputy director at the time) of the Military Commission of the National Government gathered Korean revolutionaries in the Wuhan area of Hubei to organize a Korean Youth Field Corps that would participate in the Battle of Wuhan. On October 10, 1938, the Korean National Revolutionary Party organized a Korean Volunteer Corps that was to operate under Zhou Enlai's leadership and guidance. After Wuhan fell into enemy hands, the Korean Volunteer Corps was dispatched to the site of different battles to take part in the Chinese anti-Japanese struggle.

The majority of the members of the Korean Volunteer Corps crossed the Yellow River under the leadership of Pak Hyosam and Sök Chŏng,

from late 1940 to early 1941, to meet up with a unit of the Republic of China's National Revolutionary Army, called the Eighth Route Army, at their base in the Taihang Mountains, in Shanxi Province. The inaugural conference of the Hubei-Chosŏn Youth Association was held in Tongyu, Shanxi Province, where the headquarters of the Eighth Route Army was located, from January 10-12, 1941. While Peng Dehuai gave a speech during this gathering, Artillery Commander Mu Chŏng of the Eighth Route Army was elected as the chairman of the association; meanwhile, Yi Yumin and Kim Ch'angman were elected to the leadership group. The youth association established three operational strategies during the inaugural conference. First, there was an urgent need to educate and train cadre members. Second, the various Korean revolutionary organizations active in mainland China needed to be unified. Third, the Korean compatriots in the Hubei area had to be transformed into a revolutionary front.<sup>1</sup> While actively implementing operations with Korean compatriots, the youth association also made contacts with revolutionary groups and comrades in Chongqing and Luoyang. As a result, many of the Korean revolutionary groups in Chongqing and Luoyang had joined the youth association within six months, thereby greatly expanding the size of the association. In April 1942, Kim Tubong arrived in Yanan on foot.<sup>2</sup> News of the ardent nationalist, and some would argue ultranationalist, Kim's trip to Yanan led some independence activists in urban areas to withdraw their support for the Guomindang (GMD) and join the youth association.

With membership rapidly increasing, the Hubei-Chosŏn Youth Association felt the need to organize combat forces. It was with this in mind that the Hubei branch of the Korean Volunteer Corps was created in June 1941. As news of the establishment of the Hubei branch of the Korean Volunteer Corps spread, many young Koreans from across China decided to join its ranks. For example, Yi Haemyŏng, who would later go on to assassinate Pak Yongman, also joined the Korean Volunteer Corps at this time. Many of the youth from the Korea Independence Army, especially those who belonged to Kim Wŏnbong's Korean Volunteer Corps, also joined the Hubei branch of the Korean Volunteer Corps. Zhou Enlai, who

was staying in Chongqing at the time, recommended to Kim Wŏnbong’s Chinese secretary that Kim’s Korean Volunteer Corps join the Hubei branch of the Korean Volunteer Corps in September 1941. According to Kim’s secretary, many members of Kim Wŏnbong’s Korean Volunteer Corps moved to Yanan.<sup>3</sup> The relocation of these members of the Korean Volunteer Corps from Guomindang territory to Chinese Communist Party held territory was motivated by a belief amongst numerous Koreans that Hubei represented a better base of operations.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the emergence of an atmosphere in which Mao Zedong came to be regarded amongst Korean youth as a more future-oriented figure than Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] in the aftermath of the Southern Anhui Incident in January 1942 was another reason why many Korean youth moved to the Hubei area.<sup>5</sup>

The activities of the Hubei branch of the Korean Volunteer Corps from July 1941 to June 1942 are very important in two regards. First, the Hujiazhuang Battle<sup>6</sup> at the end of 1941 and the counterstrike against the Japanese mop up operation in May 1942 became political feats that the Yanan Faction could proudly bring up to the Korean people. Second, it was during this period that the Hubei Korean Volunteer Corps changed its military allegiances from the Guomindang to the Eighth Route Army, which made up part of the National Revolutionary Army of the Republic of China. The Korean Volunteer Corps had in reality already accepted the guidance of the Chinese Communist Party and had been incorporated into the chain of command of the Eighth Route Army.<sup>7</sup>

From July 11-14, 1942, the Hubei-Chosŏn Youth Association held a conference, during which time they decided to expand the organization into the Korean Independence Alliance and the Hubei branch of the Korean Volunteer Corps into the ‘Korean Volunteer Army.’<sup>8</sup> These two entities implemented uniform guidance in their capacity as a unified military-political body. They elected Kim Tubong as the premier of the Korean Independence Alliance and Ch’oe Ch’angik and Hanbin as the vice premiers. Mu Chŏng was appointed to the post of commander of the Korean Volunteer Army, while Pak Hyosam and Pak Ilwu were appointed as the

vice commanders. The Korean Revolutionary Youth Cadre School, opened in August 1942, was subsequently renamed the 'Hubei Korean Youth Revolutionary School' on December 1, 1942, with Mu Chǒng appointed as the principal of the school.<sup>9</sup> In February 1944, the Hubei Korean Youth Revolutionary School was once again renamed, this time as the 'Hubei Korean Revolutionary Military Academy.'<sup>10</sup> The Korean Independence Alliance's Korean Volunteer Army installed branch corps and revolutionary schools in their bases, including Yanan.

The preferred means of struggle against the Japanese forces adopted by the Korean Independence Alliance and Korean Volunteer Army was propaganda maneuvers.<sup>11</sup> Under the command of the Eighth Route Army, the Korean Volunteer Army fought against the Japanese forces. Some of the leading Korean revolutionaries, including Sǒk Chǒng and Kim Hakmu, perished during these battles. The Korean Volunteer Corps had 147 members in June 1941 and 175 member by the end of 1943;<sup>12</sup> all in all, sixteen members or 10% of the total died in battle or from disease.

The central committee of the Korean Independence Alliance included members of the Chinese Communist Party such as Mu Chǒng, but also nationalists such as Kim Tubong and Pak Hyosam and members of the pro-Soviet Communist Party of Korea, such as Ch'oe Ch'angik and Han Pin. The majority of the cadres of the Korean Independence Alliance were connected to one another through national movement organizations receiving organizational and spiritual support from the Guomindang. The Korean Independence Alliance's Korean Volunteer Army identified the enforcement of internal unity as one of the core projects for 1943<sup>13</sup> and internally implemented a rectification movement. Put differently, Mu Chǒng and the Chinese Communist Party intended to achieve organizational and spiritual unity through a rectification movement designed to overcome factional struggles. 1943 marked the low point of the anti-Japanese struggle waged by Koreans as internal factional struggles raged. The central figures in this factional struggle surrounding the evaluation of past movements and command authority over the Korean Volunteer Army were Mu Chǒng and Ch'oe Ch'angik.<sup>14</sup> While Mu Chǒng had earned the

trust of the Chinese Communist Party, Ch'oe Ch'angik's assertions had created a sense of unease within the party. The Chinese Communist Party identified Mu Chǒng as a revolutionary leader, the only Korean to receive this honor. Although Mu Chǒng was appointed as commander during the early stages of the foundation of the Hubei branch of the Korean Volunteer Corps, he never fully grasped control over the Korean Independence Alliance and the Hubei branch of the Korean Volunteer Army. Because Mu Chǒng had long been involved with the Chinese revolutionary movement rather than the Korean national liberation movement, he had a hard time being accepted by other Korean revolutionaries such as Ch'oe Ch'angik. Mu Chǒng emerged from the factional struggles as the top leader of the Hubei branch of Korean Volunteer Army of the Korean Independence Alliance. Nevertheless, he failed to secure the support of other members.

The headquarters of the ever-growing Korean Independence Alliance and Korean Volunteer Army was moved to Yanan in early 1944. The Korean Independence Alliance had established ten branches in the Hubei area by the end of 1944, and its membership had swelled to about 6,000 people at the time of Imperial Japan's collapse. The ranks of the Korean Volunteer Army also rapidly increased after 1944 to reach an estimated 1000 members right before liberation.<sup>15</sup>

On August 11, 1945, the commander-in-chief of the Eighth Route Army, Zhu De, ordered an all-out attack against Japanese forces. In this regard, Order No. 6 concerned the Korean Volunteer Army. The following is the actual text of this order.

Our forces should join up with the Soviet Red Army that has been fighting in China and Korea to liberate the people of Chosŏn (Korea). Commander Mu Chǒng and vice commanders Pak Hyosam and Pak Ilwu shall dispatch units to the northeast to join the Eighth Route Army and Northeast Army in eradicating the enemy and puppet army. Furthermore, the mission of liberating Chosŏn (Korea) by organizing the Chosŏn people in the northeast area shall be completed.<sup>16</sup>

Zhu De's order meant that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had a detailed plan to organize the Korean Volunteer Army as a separate unit that would attack the northeast area and eventually liberate Chosŏn (Korea). This was a clearly different approach than the one taken by the Guomindang led central government, which limited itself to observing the political winds in the United States and United Kingdom.

On the same day, the Korean Independence Alliance sent a telegram in the name of Kim Tubong to the branch offices advising them to follow Zhu De's order and march to the northeast. It also released a statement to the effect that all Japanese forces in China should surrender to the Chinese Communist Party, and that all the Chosŏn people should cooperate with the Chinese Communist Party.

The headquarters of the Korean Independence Alliance began to prepare its members and schools for relocation to the northeast area on August 11, 1945, with the move to be coordinated with the Korean Volunteer Army.<sup>17</sup> Prior to their departure, Mao Zedong gave a celebratory speech in which he stated, "China's independence cannot be achieved without the complete independence of Chosŏn. Good luck to all of you and may you achieve your final goal."<sup>18</sup> The headquarters of the Korean Independence Alliance and the Korean Volunteer Army started for Yanan on September 2, 1945, following the First Field Army of the Northeast Field Army Corps. Upon arriving in Shenyang, the Korean Volunteer Army held a conference at the behest of the North East China Bureau of the Central Committee of the CCP on November 7, during which it announced its intention to reorganize itself into seven branches. In the end four branches (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>) were actually created. In this regard, while the 1<sup>st</sup> branch remained in Tonghua, the 3<sup>rd</sup> branch went to Harbin, the 5<sup>th</sup> branch to Yanbian, and the 7<sup>th</sup> branch established itself in the Jirin and Panshi areas, where it immediately began to engage in activities.<sup>19</sup> Later, the 1<sup>st</sup> branch was incorporated into the 166<sup>th</sup> Corps of the People's Liberation Army and the 3<sup>rd</sup> branch into the 164<sup>th</sup> Corps. The 5<sup>th</sup> branch led by Pak Ilwu was mainly composed of members of the Korean Volunteer Army, and was eventually incorporated into the 156<sup>th</sup> Corps of the

People’s Liberation Army.<sup>20</sup>

The Soviet Union, which occupied the northern part of Korea, did not allow the members of the Korean Volunteer Army to return to Korea until they agreed to turn in their weapons. Leaders such as Mu Chǒng and Kim Tubong had to accept to return as unarmed civilians. Seventy cadres, including Mu Chǒng, Kim Tubong, and Ch’oe Ch’angik crossed the Amnok (Yalu) River and arrived in P’yōngyang [Pyeongyang] through Sinūiju [Sineuiju] in early December 1945. In March 1946, the Korean Volunteer Army was reorganized at the behest of the North East China Bureau of the Central Committee of the CCP. While some of the members returned to Korea along with Pak Hyosam and Pak Ilwu, the remainder ceased to refer to themselves as the Korean Volunteer Army, and were instead incorporated into the Northeast Self-Defense Army.

The core members of the Yanan Faction hailed from three groups. The first were members of the original Korean Volunteer Corps, such as Ch’oe Ch’angik,<sup>21</sup> Pak Hyosam, Kim Ch’angman, and Yi Sangjo.<sup>22</sup> The second group consisted of those who were already members of the Chinese Communist Party and served as officers in the Eighth Route Army, such as Mu Chǒng<sup>23</sup> and Pak Ilwu.<sup>24</sup> The third group was made up of those such as Pang Hosan and Kim Kang,<sup>25</sup> who hailed from the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army and who had been dispatched to Yanan after receiving a short-term military and political education in the Soviet Union. Although the Yanan Faction could be characterized as a united front, it was, as evidenced by the internal factional struggle of 1943, separated into two groups. While one was led by Mu Chǒng and Pak Ilwu, who had earned the profound trust of the Chinese Communist Party, the other was led by Ch’oe Ch’angik. Wada Haruki did not recognize the Yanan Faction as a united political faction.<sup>26</sup> The lack of unity proved to be a disadvantage in terms of the political struggle that subsequently emerged between the Yanan Faction and the Anti-Japanese Guerilla Faction.

## **August Incident and Interference by China and the Soviet Union**

In the early post-liberation days, many exiled political figures began to return to Korea. Among the various factions that returned, the Guerrilla Faction led by Kim Il-sung and the Yanan Faction led by Kim Tubong and Mu Chŏng soon began to assume important roles within North Korea.

After returning home, the Yanan Faction found itself being divided into two groups, which played active roles in the building of the new government. The first group gained important positions within government organizations in North Korea and the military and security sector. For example, Mu Chŏng was appointed as the principal of the second Security Cadres School while Pak Ilwu was appointed as the director of the Bureau of the Interior. The second group played a pivotal role in the organization of the Democratic Party established as part of a return to a united front strategy. The Korean Independence Alliance was reorganized as the New People's Party in December 1946, with Kim Tubong and Ch'oe Ch'angik appointed as the director and vice-director of the party. However, as the new regime in North Korea was established amid the Soviet occupation, the leaders of the Yanan Faction occupied auxiliary positions within the Kim Il-sung regime. They found themselves unable to enter the core power structure. The change in the status of the Yanan Faction after their return home was the result of the internal relationship that prevailed within the Soviet led socialist camp during the early Cold War era.

The Workers' Party of Korea purged Pak Ilwu, who had been referred to as the personal secretary of Mao Zedong,<sup>27</sup> in December 1955. As Mu Chŏng had already died during the Korean War, the two most influential figures within the Yanan Faction had now disappeared from the political stage. The change in the political situation in the aftermath of the Korean War, changes characterized by the purges of the domestic faction, the elimination of Pak Ilwu of the Yanan Faction, the suicide of Hŏ Kai of the Soviet Faction, and Ch'oe Yonggŏn's official ascension to the Workers' Party of Korea, was clearly reflected in the Third Congress of

the Workers' Party of Korea in April 1956.<sup>28</sup> The Guerrilla Faction led by Kim Il-sung concretized their leading status by assuming an absolute majority within the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea. However, it was also during this congress that the complaints of the Yanan Faction started to be expressed.

While Kim Il-sung was visiting the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in June and July 1956, the Yanan Faction led by Ch'oe Ch'angik and some members of the Soviet Faction, led by Pak Ch'angok, decided to form an anti-Kim Il-sung coalition. However, this group was in essence an interest based anti-Kim Il-sung coalition rather than one based on a common ideology and identity. Thus, the coalition could not base its struggle on the most powerful tools available, namely 'ideology' and 'identity.' Furthermore, the anti-Kim Il-sung coalition failed to properly assess the political situation. For instance, Pak Ch'angok thought that he could get Ch'oe Yonggŏn to join their ranks.<sup>29</sup> As Im Ŭn has stated, this was a childish and simplistic effort to correct Kim Il-sung's mistakes through criticism at the congress.<sup>30</sup>

Ch'oe Yonggŏn and the Foreign Ministry sent an urgent telegraph to Kim Il-sung, who was at the time visiting the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, detailing the activities of the opposition group. Meanwhile, the shocking situation in Eastern Europe, which Kim directly witnessed during his visit, helped cement Kim Il-sung's belief that thorough counter-measures had to be implemented against the opposition. Kim Il-sung postponed the general assembly from August 2 to 30, 1956. He only announced the opening of the assembly one day before so as to confuse the opposition. Kim sent a secret order to Kim Kwanghyŏp instructing him to have combat forces along the border prepare for war. He also sent messages to officials on vacation or leave to return to their military units and assembled two army divisions in the Kanli [Ganli] area located north of P'yŏngyang. Shortly before the general assembly, Kim Il-sung and his faction made a show of force designed to outmaneuver and break up the opposition. In this regard, Kim and his faction openly stated that anyone who criticized the party leadership at the general assembly would be

expelled from the party.

Yun Konghŭm of the Yanan Faction criticized Kim Il-sung during the general assembly held on August 30, 1956. However, Yun made a significant tactical error when he pointed out the unjust appointment of the leader of the Democratic Party, Ch'oe Yonggŏn, to the post of vice-chairman of the Workers' Party. Outraged at what he was hearing, Ch'oe Yonggŏn yelled out 'that son of a bitch' and the assembly hall instantly turned into a mad house. While Yun Konghŭm, Yi P'ilgyu, and Sŏ Hwi were instantly expelled from the party, Ch'oe Ch'angik and Pak Ch'angok were dismissed from the Central Committee when the assembly resumed in the afternoon. Increasingly fearful for their personal safety, four of these individuals sought refuge in China under cover of darkness.<sup>31</sup> This episode subsequently came to be known in North Korea as the 'August Incident.'

On September 3, 1956, Yi Sangjo explained the urgency of the situation in North Korea to Nikita Khrushchev and asked the latter to interfere. Khrushchev dispatched Comrades Mikoyan and Ponomarev to Beijing to discuss how to deal with the August Incident, which had taken place in North Korea.

In the evening of September 18, 1956, Mao Zedong engaged in discussions with the Soviet delegation led by Mikoyan. Mao Zedong and Mikoyan agreed to implore the comrades of the Workers' Party of Korea to ensure party unity and to have both sides dispatch a joint delegation to the North. Mao Zedong advised that the Soviet-Chinese delegation emphasize the fact that they had come to help Kim Il-sung rather than overthrow him. Mao also advised the delegation to persuade Kim Il-sung to adopt a conciliatory attitude toward those who were purged from the party and admit his own errors. At the same time, Mao stressed the fact that Kim Il-sung might view the dispatch of this joint delegation as interference in the North's internal affairs and might require the withdrawal of Chinese support troops, a move that China was willing to entertain. Mao also stated that Koreans did not listen to the Chinese, and as such 'the success of this endeavor is in the hands of Mikoyan.' Mao was also concerned

about whether Kim Il-sung would mistakenly perceive the Soviet-Chinese delegation as putting his back against the wall. Mao also believed that Kim would collapse unless he changed his ways.<sup>32</sup> Mao Zedong and Mikoyan knew very well that they had to exercise extreme caution when it came to imploring the various factions in North Korea to reconcile and unite with one another. Furthermore, Mao expected Kim Il-sung to disregard their suggestions, a trait which he attributed to Kim’s independent leanings.

Mao Zedong then met the delegation of the Workers’ Party of Korea led by Ch’oe Yonggŏn. Mao criticized the punishment of Pak Ilwu and Pang Hosan, and also raised the execution of Pak Hŏnyŏng on the grounds that he was a spy. Mao implored the delegation from the Korean Workers’ Party to engage in dialogue with comrades who maintained different opinions, to release arrested comrades, to restore their party registration and position, and to resolve all the problems through objective discussions at the general assembly. Mao also notified the Korean delegation of his intent to dispatch a joint Soviet-Chinese delegation to North Korea.<sup>33</sup>

Contrary to the early stage of Sino-North Korea diplomatic relations, Mao Zedong adopted a more aggressive approach towards the ‘August Incident’ of 1956. In this case, China’s attitude determined the methods used to address this problem as well as the outcome. Mao Zedong’s opinion prevailed in terms of the decision to interfere in North Korea and in the organization of the joint Sino-Soviet delegation; meanwhile, Mikoyan and the Soviets simply acquiesced to Mao.

The joint delegation led by Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai arrived in P’yŏngyang on September 19. They immediately began to hold meetings with members of the individual factions in order to hear their side of the story. During talks with the delegation, Kim Il-sung agreed that the expulsion of Sŏ Hwi, Yun Konghŭm, and Yi P’ilgyu from the Party and the dismissal of Ch’oe Ch’angik and Pak Ch’angok from the Central Committee had been handled in a rash manner and accepted Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai’s proposal to call a general meeting.<sup>34</sup> Mikoyan was con-

vinced that the Soviet and Yanan Factions would openly criticize Kim Il-sung during this general meeting. This mindset clearly exposes Mikoyan's 'arrogant' attitude towards Koreans, whom he looked down on and regularly disparaged in his comments.

On September 23, the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea convened a general meeting. Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai, who participated as observers, hoped that the members of the Central Committee would single out and criticize Kim Il-sung during the meeting. However, only a few people stood up to criticize the cult of personality that had sprung up around Kim Il-sung and the latter's actions. Although Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai must have been aware that this outcome was the result of the thorough obstacles put in place by Kim Il-sung, they found themselves with no other recourse but to accept the outcome. During the general meeting, the Sino-Soviet proposal to restore the party registration of Yun Konghŭm, Sŏ Hwi, and Yi P'ilgyu and reinstate Ch'oe Ch'angik and Pak Ch'angok as members of the Central Committee was accepted. While the Sino-Soviet demands were accepted at the general meeting in September, none of the punishments were revoked and the crimes of the ringleaders in the 'August Incident' were not forgiven. Thus, Sino-Soviet interference failed to restore the situation to what it had been prior to the incident.

According to V. V. Kovyshenko, the matter of replacing Kim Il-sung was raised by China and discussed in a very serious manner during this meeting.<sup>35</sup> However, this claim loses much of its credibility when one looks more closely at the dialogue between Mao Zedong and Mikoyan. Furthermore, the delegation realized that Kim Il-sung enjoyed great support within the Workers' Party. In the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Khrushchev announced that the Soviet Union would no longer interfere in the internal affairs of comrade nations. Both the Soviet Union and China were concerned that the entire socialist camp would be turned upside down if the situation in Eastern Europe spread to other socialist countries. Thus, as the international political situation precluded the possibility of any foreign interference, Kim Il-sung no longer had to

concern himself with the diktats of the Soviet Union and China.<sup>36</sup>

In the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution of October 1956, Kim Il-sung began to show signs of riding out the crisis. Kim Tubong was fiercely criticized once again during the general meeting of the Central Committee held in January 1957. Kim Il-sung and the North Korean leadership started a Workers Party wide purge in P’yŏngyang in January 1957, with the emphasis being on the departments where the opposition had wielded influence. In December 1956, Kim began to implement a five-month series of purges and changes in Party membership certification that resulted in the expelling of about 300 opposition members.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the objective of “Strengthening the struggle against anti-revolutionary elements” was adopted during the meeting of the Central Committee of the Party held on May 30, 1957, and the “anti-factional struggle” was waged in a more intensive manner.<sup>38</sup> On the military front, the meeting of the Korean People’s Army held in March 1958 provided the impetus for the purging of the director of the politburo, Ch’oe Chonghak and hundreds of members of the Yanan and Soviet Factions on the grounds that they were ‘anti-revolutionary and factional elements.’ Although the members of Yanan Faction who sought refuge in China received the protection of the Chinese government, they were expected to remain outside of the political fray.

### **Causes of the Yanan Faction’s Collapse**

The Korean revolutionaries who shared the common title ‘communist’ formed different factions whose characteristics were linked to the region where they engaged in activities for Korean independence and the structure of their factions. This denouement was also related to the notion of the nation-state adhered to by the International Communist Movement. The Korean independence movement in China can be divided into the Guerrilla Faction active in northeast China, which had received the support and guidance of the Soviet Union, and the Yanan Faction, which had

received the support and guidance of the Chinese Communist Party. Although the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army, to which the Guerrilla Faction belonged, took part in the anti-Japanese struggles organized by the Chinese Communist Party, their members, regardless of whether they were Chinese or Korean, received their support and orders from the Soviet Union. This situation can be explained by the manner in which the war unfolded and the area in which they were active. As such, it was difficult for them to establish direct links with the Chinese Communist Party in Yanan.<sup>39</sup> Because the Chinese Communist Party recognized the leadership of the Soviet Union within the socialist camp, the Yanan Faction found itself unable to implement its plans for the future. Instead, it was forced to accept the Soviet-inspired political structure put in place in Korea without raising any serious objections. Although many conflicts emerged between China and Korea over a variety of issues, such as the Korean War later on, the basic structure of the relationship between the Soviet Union and China remained largely the same under Stalin.<sup>40</sup> In short, the composition of the socialist camp allowed the Guerrilla Faction led by Kim Il-sung to successfully pursue the destruction of the Yanan Faction. However, the most fundamental and important cause of the Yanan Faction's collapse was the structure of the socialist camp.

The second cause of the Yanan Faction's collapse was the lack of any active Chinese interference. The exile of many high-ranking Koreans to China after the 'August Incident' and 'anti-Factional Struggle' negatively influenced the Sino-North Korean relationship. For example, many mid-level cadres, including a number from the Workers' Party in P'yŏngyang, were arrested in July 1957 for having attempted to seek refuge in China. Another group also made an attempt to escape to China in October 1957. The Sino-North Korean relationship became so icy that Kim Il-sung refused to participate in the celebratory meeting and banquets held in the Chinese Embassy in P'yŏngyang on the occasion of China's National Holiday.<sup>41</sup> While Mao Zedong had interfered in North Korea's internal affairs by dispatching a delegation, the need to create a thaw in Sino-North Korean relations that had taken a serious turn for the worse after

the Hungarian Revolution of October 1956 and to secure an advantage in the competition for hegemony within the socialist camp meant that he could no longer afford to shun Kim Il-sung.

The subtle change in the Sino-Soviet relationship that took place in 1957 also caused the Sino-North Korean relationship to move away from the shadow of the ‘August Incident.’ The first signal of a thaw in Sino-North Korean relations occurred when China not only welcomed an economic delegation of the Workers’ Party of Korea led by Kim Il-sung in September 1957, but also met North Korea’s request for economic aid, a decision that had been put off for a year. Kim Il-sung responded to this by organizing a magnificent assembly to commemorate the People’s Liberation Army Participation in the Korean War and by sending a telegraph thanking Mao Zedong. Mao Zedong and Kim Il-sung also held talks in Moscow in November 1957. During these talks, Mao apologized to Kim Il-sung for having interfered in the internal affairs of North Korea, and stressed the fact that “the focus should be on the establishment of friendly relations between the two parties and the achievement of mutual understanding.”<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Mao and Kim agreed to withdraw Chinese troops from North Korea the following year.

After the talks, Mao evaluated that Kim could become a leader akin to the Hungarian Imre Nagy. Thus, Mao regarded Kim as having the potential to become a great figure who would open up an ‘independent’ path based on the ‘Chuch’e [Juche] philosophy. In short, the worsening of the Sino-Soviet relationship increased both countries’ need to secure North Korean support. From a political standpoint, neither side could afford to have less than friendly ties with North Korea. The worsening of the Sino-Soviet relationship made Mao Zedong need Kim Il-sung even more.

When Kim Il-sung visited China in 1958, Mao Zedong mentioned that North Korea had provided sustenance to China during the Korean War before China did the same for North Korea. Thereafter, the basic line of the Chinese government changed from China having provided sustenance to North Korea during the Korean War to North Korea having done so for China. China also blindly followed P’yŏngyang’s lead when it came to

the reports of a cult of personality developing around Kim Il-sung. It was at this time that the basic structure of the Sino-North Korean relationship during the Mao Zedong era was established. Mao Zedong and China desperately needed North Korea's support in the competition for hegemony within the socialist camp and could not afford to throw Sino-North Korean relations into a deep freeze because of unnecessary interference or the protection of the Yanan Faction.

Third, the failure to determine a definite leader resulted in the absence of any centripetal force. For example, Guerrilla Faction members such as Ch'oe Yonggŏn and Kim Ch'aek were ten years older and had more experience than Kim Il-sung. However, they moved in perfect order when it came to making Kim Il-sung their leader following the establishment of the Chosŏn Kongjaktan [Gongjakdan] in July 1945.<sup>43</sup> They selected Kim as leader prior to liberation and continued to abide by this decision after their return to North Korea. The fact that senior members could accept a junior as their leader and could unite around Kim Il-sung was a strength that could not be found in the other political factions in North Korea at the time of liberation. In addition, Kim Il-sung was relatively more known than the other two figures in Korea and regarded as having the ability to control his people. On the other hand, there was no definite leader in the Yanan Faction. Mu Chŏng, who was one of the two figures trusted by China, was purged during the Korean War. For his part, Pak Ilwu was purged in 1955. Even if these two figures had not been purged, the internal conflicts that plagued the group during their entire time in Yanan makes it hard to believe that Ch'oe Ch'angik and the others would have selected Mu Chŏng or Pak Ilwu as their definite leader. For example, when Mao Zedong strongly criticized Kim Il-sung's cruel punishment of Yanan Faction members such as Pak Ilwu immediately after the August Incident, Yanan Faction member, Ha Angch'ŏn, came to the defense of Kim Il-sung on the grounds that Pak Ilwu had perpetrated the serious crime of liberalism and factionalism.<sup>44</sup> Kim Ch'angman, who betrayed the Yanan Faction by siding with Kim Il-sung, is another example. In this regard, Ch'oe Ch'angik emerged as the only prominent figure within the

anti-Kim Il-sung camp. However, Ch'oe could not compare to Kim Il-sung as far as capabilities were concerned. Kim Tubong was one rung lower than Ch'oe in terms of his standing as a leader. In fact, the very emergence of Ch'oe Ch'angik as a leader makes clear the inability of the Yanan Faction to select a definite leader.

Fourth, the Yanan Faction failed to seize control over the military. The generals from the Korean Volunteer Army could not break into the military high command structure after their return to North Korea. The top commander of the Korean Volunteer Army, Mu Chǒng, only occupied a secondary rank within the military command structure (lieutenant-general in the Korean People's Army). Control over the Korean People's Army was grasped by Kim Il-sung and the Guerrilla Faction. A look at the list of individuals who were honored for their role in the foundation of North Korea reveals the extent to which the Guerrilla Faction controlled the military. All in all, thirty-one members of the Guerrilla Faction but only fifteen from the Yanan Faction were honored. The inroads made by the Guerrilla Faction within the military became even more pronounced after the Korean War; meanwhile, the Yanan Faction had all but disappeared. The Yanan Faction had lost its influence over the military to such an extent that only a few generals, including Chang P'yǒngsan, remained to be purged after the August Incident of 1956.

Fifth, the Yanan Faction could not compare with the Guerrilla Faction in terms of unity, brutality, and flexibility. A look at the main figures within the Korean Independence Alliance makes clear that the level of unity within the Yanan Faction was much lower than within the Guerrilla Faction. Although the Yanan Faction had greater numbers than the Guerrilla Faction, they could not compare in terms of unity. This proved to be a decisive factor in the factional struggles.

The poor survival environment in Manchuria greatly influenced Kim Il-sung and the Guerrilla Faction in three ways. The first was group unity. Because it could not survive the harsh environment without being unified, the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army greatly influenced the unity of the Guerrilla Faction. In addition to incurring casualties in the battlefield,

many members of the Guerrilla Faction froze or starved to death. The number of dead greatly outnumbered the living. All in all, only 130 members of the Guerrilla Faction returned to North Korea with Kim Il-sung.<sup>45</sup> As such, the unity displayed by the Guerrilla Faction, which had experienced a shared fate, was exceptionally outstanding.

The Yanan Faction and the Korean Volunteer Army were also active in their area of operations and engaged in battles. However, because they mainly focused on a propaganda war against the enemy, only 10% of their members died during the first year of their activities. The environment in which the Yanan Faction operated was much safer than that of the Guerrilla Faction in Manchuria. Although they had implemented closely combined operations with the Eighth Route Army, the Korean Volunteer Army almost never engaged in independent military operations.<sup>46</sup> The unity created by shared fates is less pronounced in safer environments. Furthermore, most of the members of the Guerrilla Faction were poor and had not had a proper education. Most of them originated from Hamgyōng [Hamgyeong] Province and the border area between China and North Korea. On the other hand, the Yanan Faction was composed of individuals who hailed from different parts of Korea and who had been exiled to China. They also had relatively higher education levels than the Guerrilla Faction. Some of them even hailed from rich families. These facts also influenced the unity of both factions.

The second point of departure was the brutality employed against the enemy during the political struggle. Kim Il-sung had gone through numerous political struggles, including the Minsaengdan Incident, in the 1930s,<sup>47</sup> and must have come to understand that showing mercy toward the enemy could come back to hunt you. Kim Il-sung's purges of enemies, such as Pak Hōnyōng and Pak Ilwu, after liberation were very brutal in nature. The Yanan Faction could not compare with Kim in terms of brutality and decisiveness. For example, Ch'oe Ch'angik said in June 1956 that he expected that Kim Il-sung would accept the advice of the Soviet Union to resolve the problems within the Workers' Party of Korea, and that this would bring about good results in terms of the development of

the Party and state.<sup>48</sup> This explains why Ch’oe never considered any coercive measure to purge Kim Il-sung. Ch’oe also tried to stop Pak Hōnyōng, who belonged to a different faction, from being executed when the latter was purged.

The third point of departure was that of flexibility. Kim Il-sung’s flexibility and political power were rooted in his experience of having to separate the ‘basic doctrine’ that served as the long-term goal of the struggle of the Guerrilla Faction in Manchuria from the ‘code of conduct,’ which he had to abide by every day to survive.<sup>49</sup> Kim’s experience within the Guerrilla Faction of having to adjust to daily changes in the environment and survival conditions helped to increase his flexibility in terms of both thought and action, which in turn helped him to seize the all-important political power at the time of the establishment of the party-state under the complex political environment that prevailed after liberation.

## Conclusion

The Guerrilla Faction active in northeast China and the Yanan Faction that operated in southern China shared the commonality of having engaged in the anti-Japanese independence movement in China. However, they experienced clearly different fates after liberation. While the Guerrilla Faction received aid and operational support from the Soviet, the Yanan Faction received aid and guidance from the Chinese Communist Party. This situation resulted from the establishment of clear roles such that the Soviet Union was in charge of northeast China, while the Chinese Communist Party was responsible for southern China. After liberation in 1945, the Yanan Faction remained on the secondary rung of the political ladder, failing to gain access to the core power structure. This situation was the result of the manner in which the socialist camp was composed during the early Cold War era.

China began to jostle for leadership within the socialist camp around

the time of the Korean War. In keeping with this reality, Mao Zedong adopted an active approach during the early stages of the August Incident. As a result, Sino-North Korean relations came to be determined by China's outlook rather than that of the Soviet Union. However, Mao failed to achieve the results he desired from his interference in the internal affairs of North Korea, and soon realized that Kim possessed a strong independent streak. For a variety of reasons, the Chinese government could not be on bad terms with Kim Il-sung. To this end, the wants of the Yanan Faction were to be subjugated to the preservation of positive Sino-North Korean relations. This situation eventually resulted in the inevitable collapse of the Yanan Faction.

In conclusion, the August Incident was a fierce power struggle that emerged during the process that saw Kim Il-sung break up the 'coalition' structure that had brought together different factions and replaced it with a 'single-leader system.' In the aftermath of the August Incident, Kim Il-sung thoroughly purged the opposition, including the Yanan faction, as part of his 'anti-factional struggle' designed to establish a 'single-leader system' domestically and the 'Chuch'e' system to do away with the influence of the Soviet Union and China internationally. The collapse of the Yanan Faction marked a decisive step towards the uniformization of North Korea.

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Notes :

- 1 Yun Ilmo, "Tongnip tongmang kwa üiyonggun üi t'ujaengsa" [A history of the struggle of the Independence Alliance and Korean Volunteer Army], *Sinch'önji* 1-2 (March 1946), 200.
- 2 Some have argued that Kim Tubong went to Yanan at the invitation of Communist China. Yöm Inho, *Kim Wönbong yön'gu* [A study on Kim Wönbong] (Seoul: Ingan Sarang, 1993), 247.
- 3 The secretary maintained that hundreds of them had gone to Hubei. However, this was clearly exaggerated.
- 4 Kim Hakch'öl, *Ch'oehu üi pundaejang* [The Last Squad Commander] (Seoul:

- Moonji Ch’ulp’ansa, 1995), 215.
- 5 Ahn Pyŏngju, “Chang Kaesŏk kwa Mo T’aekdong” [Chiang Kae-shek and Mao Zedong], *Pip’an* 4-5 (July 1936), 42.
  - 6 Four of them were killed and one was captured during this battle. Chong-sik Lee (Yi Chŏngsik) and Han Honggu, *Hangjŏn pyŏlgok* [Anti-Japanese Wars] (Seoul: Kŏrŭm, 1986), 123-124.
  - 7 Lu Weimin, “Yŏnanp’a wa chungjo kwan’gye – tangdae chungjo kwan’gye ūi yŏksa haedok” [The Yanan Faction and the Sino-North Korean relationship – Deciphering the history of the Sino-North Korean relationship], in *2011 nyŏn Chungguk Chosŏn sa yŏn’guhoe nonmunjip* [Collection of Essays Presented to the Research Association of Chinese-North Korean History in 2011], 3.
  - 8 Yang Zhaoquan and Li Fuwen. *Chosŏn ūiyonggun hang Il chŏn sa* [History of the Korean Volunteer Army’s anti-Japanese struggle] (Koguryŏ, 1995), 195.
  - 9 *Haebang Ilbo*. December 27, 1942.
  - 10 *Haebang Ilbo*. December 27, 1944. In February 1945, the school was moved to Yanan and called the Korean Revolutionary Army School.
  - 11 Ch’oe Ch’angik, “Yŏnan sidae ūi tongnip tongmaeng 7” [The Korean Independence Alliance during the Yanan era 7], *Tongnip sinbo*, May 28, 1946.
  - 12 *Cho maeng pogo ch’oan* (朝盟報告草案), December 1943, Housed at Kuksa P’yŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 451; Yŏm Inho. *Chosŏn ūiyonggun ūi tongnip undong* [The independence movement of the Korean Volunteer Army] (Seoul: Nanam, 2001), 143.
  - 13 Yang Zhaoquan et al., *Guannei diqu Chaoxian ren fan Ri duli yundong ziliaoan pian ha* [Materials related to Koreans’ Anti-Japanese independence movement in Chinese areas] (Liaoning: Liaoning Minzu Chubunbu, 1987), 1126.
  - 14 Yŏm Inho, 228.
  - 15 *Ibid.*, 20.
  - 16 Party History Research Center of the CPC Central Committee, ed., *Materials of the Party History Research Center 5* (Renmin Publishing House, 1979), 245.
  - 17 *Haebang Ilbo*, August 15, 1945.
  - 18 Chang Seyun, “Hangil chŏnjaeng ki Chungguk kongsandang ūi Han’guk tongnip munje insik kwa taeŭng” [The Chinese Communist Party’s perception of Korea’s independence movement during the era of the anti-Japanese struggle and responses], *Han’guk tongnip undongsa yŏn’gu* 9 . 271-272
  - 19 Hyŏn Ryongsun et al., *Chosŏnjok paengnyŏn sahwa* 3 [100 year history of

Korean Chinese 3] (Seoul: Kōrūm. 1989), 296

- 20 Ch'oe Myōngse and Yi Pokryong, *156 sa siljōnrok* [Records of the 156<sup>th</sup> Corps of the People's Liberation Army] (Yōnbyōn Kyoyuk Ch'ulp'ansa, 2002), 7.
- 21 Ch'oe Ch'angik was born in Onsōng kun, North Hamgyōng Province in 1896. Having studied in Japan, Ch'oe became increasingly interested in the communist movement while travelling to Manchuria and the Russian maritime province. Ch'oe joined the Communist Party of Korea in 1927. He sought exile in China in 1936, where he participated in the Korea National Revolutionary Party. However, he soon began to oppose Kim Wōnbong and moved to Yanan in 1938 to serve in the 129<sup>th</sup> Corps of the Eighth Route Army. After having served as a central committee member, he was elected as vice-director of the Korea Independence Alliance. Han Pin was educated in the Soviet Union at an early age and subsequently went to Yanan. There are records showing that both Hō Chōngsuk, who remarried Ch'oe Ch'angik in 1937, and Han Pin participated in the Korea National Revolutionary Party.
- 22 Yi Sangjo was born in Tongnae, South Kyōnggi Province in 1916. Yi organized the Korean Youth Vanguard League in China in early 1937 and was subsequently involved with the Korean Independence Alliance in Yanan. Yi established the foundation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> branch of the Korean Volunteer Army while conducting underground activities in Manchuria and South Korea based on the instructions of the Korean Independence Alliance. He was appointed as general of the 3<sup>rd</sup> branch of the Korean Volunteer Army in 1945. He entered North Korea in January 1946.
- 23 Mu Chōng is in many ways the most interesting member of the Yanan Faction. Mu was born in Kyōngsōng, North Hamgyōng Province in 1905 and joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1925. He participated in the Northern Expedition of 1926-1927. He also participated in the Long March undertaken by the Red Army of the Communist Party of China, becoming only one of the two from the original group of 30 Koreans who set out to reach northwest China alive. He was appointed to the post of operational director of the headquarters of the Eighth Route Army and as artillery commander of the Eighth Route Army.
- 24 Pak Ilwu was born in Pyōngan Province in 1904. He graduated from elementary school in Longjing, Jiandao (Kando) and was an active member of the Chinese Communist Party in the Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei Border Region. The trust placed by the Chinese Communist Party in Pak was so profound that he

graduated from the Central Party School of the Chinese Communist Party, a school designed to educate mid-level cadres, in 1940. He was elected as vice principal of the Korean Revolutionary Army School in early 1945. While the principal Kim Tubong was a symbolic figure, Pak handled all the actual school administration and affairs. He participated in the Seventh National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party as a representative of the Korean Independence Alliance.

- 25 Im Ŭn, *Kim Ilsŏng chŏngjŏn* [Biography of Kim Il-sung] (Okchon munhwa.,1989), 80.
- 26 Wada Haruki, *Kim Ilsŏng kwa Manju hang Il chŏnjaeng* [Kim Il-sung and the anti-Japanese struggle in Manchuria] (Seoul: Changbi, 1992), 304-305.
- 27 Paek Haksun, *Pukhan kwŏllyŏk ũi yŏksa* [History of political power in North Korea] (Hanul, 2010), 267.
- 28 Wada Haruki, 309.
- 29 Paek Haksun, 347.
- 30 Im Ŭn, 277.
- 31 Yun Konghŭm’s wife escaped to China but was later extradited to North Korea. She was shot to death. Kim Hakch’ŏl, *Ch’oehu ũi pundaejang* [The Last Squad Leader] (Munhak kwa Chisŏngsa, 1995), 238.
- 32 There are very few materials related to Soviet and Chinese interferences of the Soviet in North Korea. *Chosŏn Rodongdang Ryaksa* [History of the Workers’ Party of Korea], published in 1979 by Chosŏn Rodongdang Tangsa Yŏn’guso. Meanwhile, Kim Han’gil’s *Hyŏndae Chosŏn yŏksa* (Modern Korean history, published in 1983, did not even make any mention of the ‘August Incident’ of 1956. Chinese documents that mention the August Incident include Wang Yan’s *Peng Dehuai Nianpu* [A chronological record of Peng Dehuai]. The descriptions presented above were based on the minutes of Mao Zedong’s meeting with the Soviet delegation.
- 33 “Record of the dialogue between Mao Zedong and the delegation of the Workers’ Party of Korea,” 18 September 1956, Archive of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, People’s Republic of China. This document does not have a number assigned by the Archive of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs .
- 34 Yang Zhaoquan, “1956 nyŏn 9 wŏl p’aengdŏkhoe sŏpyŏngjin kwa mik’oyan ũi chosŏn chihaeng [The dispatch of Peng Dehuai, Nie Rongzhen, and Mikoyan to Korea in September 1956] , in *2009 nyŏn chungguk chosŏnsa yŏn’guhoe nonmunjip*, 298.

- 35 Andrei Lankov, *Soryŏn ũi charyo ro pon Pukhan hyŏndae chŏngch'ŭl sa* [A modern political history of North Korea as viewed from Soviet materials] (Orŭm, 1995), 124.
- 36 Sim Chiyŏn. *Ch'oe Ch'angik yŏn'gu* (A Study on Ch'oe Ch'angik). Baeksan Publishers. 2009. 167.
- 37 Chŏng Ch'anghyŏn, *Inmul ro pon Pukhan hyŏndaesa* [A modern history of North Korea as viewed through its leading figures] (Minyŏn, 2002), 229.
- 38 Yi Chongsŏk, *Hyŏndae Pukhan ũi ihae* [Understanding modern North Korea] (Seoul: Yŏksa Pip'yŏngsa, 2000), 423.
- 39 Lu Weimin, 3.
- 40 Shen Zhihua. "Han'guk chŏnjaeng kigan ũi chungjo kowich'ŭng ũi mosun bun'gi mit kŭ haegyŏl" [Sino-North Korean Conflict and its Resolution during the Korean War], in *Collection of Essays of the Modern History Center, Central Research Institute* 40 (June 2003).
- 41 Document 30. 1957. "CPSU Central Committee Report on the Situation in the KWP and the DPRK, 9 January 1957". CWLHP Bulletin, Issue 16: 520~527.
- 42 Puzanov, *Kim Il-sung tongjiwa ũi taedamnok* [Record of Dialogues with Comrade Kim Il-sung], 13 November 1957; Chŏng Ch'anghyŏn, 232.
- 43 Wada Haruki, *Puk Chosŏn: yugyŏktae kukka esŏ chŏnggyugun kukka ro* [North Korea: from a guerilla state to a regular army state] (Seoul: Tolbegae, 2002), 64.
- 44 "Record of the dialogue between Mao Zedong and the delegation of the Workers' Party of Korea," 18 September 1956, Archive of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, People's Republic of China.
- 45 Wada Haruki, *Kim Ilsŏng kwa Manju hang Il chŏnjaeng* [Kim Il Sung and the Manchurian Anti-Japanese War] (Ch'angbi Ch'ulp'ansa, 1992), 296.
- 46 Kim Hakch'ŏl, 215.
- 47 Kim Sŏnggho, *1930 nyŏndae Yŏnbyŏn Minsaengdan sagŏn yŏn'gu* [The Yanbian Minsaengdan Incident during the 1930s] (Paeksan Ch'ulp'ansa, 1999).
- 48 Document 9. 1956. "Memorandum of Conversation with Choe Changik, 8 June 1956." CWLHP Bulletin, Issue 16: 476.
- 49 Paek Haksun, 504-505.

〈Abstract〉

## “The August Incident” and the Destiny of the Yanan Faction

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The Korean independence movement in China is widely divided into the Guerrilla Faction active in northern China (Manchuria) and the Independence Alliance in mainland China. The Yanan Faction boasted the closest ties to the Chinese Communist Party and was from an organizational standpoint linked to the Korean Independence Alliance and Korean Volunteer Army. The core members of the Yanan Faction belonged to the original Korean Volunteer Army or to the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army; others were officers in the Eighth Route Army that served as a unit of the National Revolutionary Army of the Republic of China. As clearly exposed by the internal struggle that erupted in 1943, the Yanan Faction, which bore the characteristics of a unified front, was never as unified as the Guerrilla Faction. Both the Guerrilla Faction led by Kim Il-sung (Kim Ilsŏng) and the Yanan Faction led by Kim Tubong and Mu Chŏng played important roles in post-liberation North Korea. Because the new regime in North Korea was established with the support of the Soviet Army, the leaders of the Yanan Faction, who had maintained a close relationship with Communist China, found themselves serving as a background force that helped to prop up the Kim Il-sung regime. This outcome was the direct result of the internal relationships that existed within the Soviet-led socialist camp during the early Cold War.

The Yanan Faction and some members of the Soviet Faction were purged from the Workers' Party for being critical of Kim Il-sung in August 1956. Some of the members of the Yanan Faction were exiled to China. On September 18 of that same year, Mao Zedong held discussions with a Soviet delegation led by Anastas Mikoyan, during which time the decision was made to dispatch a delegation to

North Korea. Mao Zedong predicted the possibility that Kim Il-sung would see the dispatch of this delegation as internal interference, and even considered the withdrawal of support troops. During talks with a delegation of the North Korean Workers' Party led by Ch'oe Yonggŏn, Mao Zedong criticized the purges of Pak Ilwu and Pang Hosan, demanded that a dialogue be opened with comrades who had differing opinions, and called for the release of arrested comrades. He also notified the Korean side of the imminent dispatch of a Sino-Soviet delegation. China was at the forefront of Far East affairs within the socialist camp before and after the outbreak of the Korean War. As such, Mao Zedong adopted an active stance during the early stages of the 'August Incident' of 1956. Sino-North Korean relations were at the time determined not by the actions of the Soviet Union, but rather by China's approach to the prevailing problems and the solutions it offered up.

Although North Korea on the surface appeared during the meeting of the Central Committee of the North Korean Workers' Party to accept the demands that had been made by China and the Soviet Union during the people's assembly held in September, it nevertheless refused to grant amnesty to the ringleaders of the "August Incident." Even the interference of a Sino-Soviet delegation could not return the situation to what it had been prior to the 'August Incident.' After October 1956, Kim Il-sung was able to overcome the crisis and even further strengthen his 'anti-factional struggle' designed to purge the Yanan and Soviet Factions. Mao Zedong, whose interference proved to be of little assistance, interpreted this situation as highlighting Kim Il-sung's strong independent streak. For various reasons, China was unable to distance itself from Kim Il-sung. In this regard, it came to view the silencing of the exiled Yanan Faction members as the price to be paid for the continuation of Sino-North Korean relations.

The fundamental cause of the downfall of the Yanan Faction was the power structure that prevailed within the socialist camp. It was the composition of the socialist camp that determined the Yanan Faction's eventual purge and even destruction at the hands of the Kim Il-sung led Guerrilla Faction. China's reluctance to actively interfere in North Korean affairs proved to be another reason for the Yanan Faction's collapse. Mao Zedong and China needed the support of North Korea to emerge victorious in the campaign to assume leadership within the

socialist camp, and as such was not willing to cause a worsening of the Sino-North Korean relationship because of what it perceived as unnecessary interference. The lack of unity caused by the failure to assume leadership and grasp military power in North Korea ultimately proved to be the main cause of the collapse of the Yanan Faction. With the downfall of the Yanan Faction, North Korea took a decisive step toward uniformity.

**Keywords:** Yanan Faction, August Incident of 1956, Guerilla Faction, Kim Il-sung

〈국문초록〉

## “8월종파사건”과 연안파의 운명

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중국에 망명한 조선독립운동역량은 관외지구(만주)의 유격대계열과 관내지구의 “독립동맹”계열로 나뉜다. ‘연안파’는 중국공산당과 관계가 가장 밀접하였으며 그 구체적인 조직형식은 “조선독립동맹” 및 “조선의용군”이었다. 연안파의 핵심들은 원 조선의용대의 성원들, 팔로군 장교였던 사람들과 부분적인 동북항일연군 출신들로 구성되었다. 1943년의 내부 분파투쟁에서 이미 표출되었지만 연안파는 통일전선의 성격이 짙은 단계로서 결속력이 유격대파에 비하여 떨어졌다. 광복 후 북부에서 중요한 작용을 발휘한 것은 주요하게 김일성을 위수로 한 유격대파와 김두봉 무정을 대표로 한 연안파였다. 조선의 새 정권은 소련군이 점령한 배경에서 건립된 것이었기에 중공과 관계가 밀접하였던 연안파 간부들은 김일성 정권의 보조역량으로 충원될 수밖에 없었고 이는 냉전초기 소련이 주도하는 사회주의진영 내부관계의 산물이었다.

1956년 “8월종파사건”에서 김일성을 비판한 연안파와 일부 소련파들은 노동당에서 출당당하고 일부 연안파들은 중국으로 망명하였다. 9월18일 모택동은 미코얀을 위수로 한 소련대표단과 의논하고 양당이 대표단을 파견하기로 결정하였다. 모택동은 김일성이 대표단의 파견을 간섭으로 받아들일 가능성을 충분히 예견하고 지원군의 철병까지도 고려하였다. 모택동은 최용건을 위수로 한 조선노동당대표단과의 회견에서 박일우와 방호산에 대한 처벌을 비평하고 조선노동당대표단에게 구체적으로 상이한 의견을 가진 동지들과의 대화, 체포한 동지들의 석방을 요구한 동시에 중소 양당대표단의 파견을 통보하였다. 한국전쟁의 발발을 전후하여 중국이 사회주의진영의 극동사무를 주도하였다. 그리하여 ‘8월 종파사건’의 초기에 모택동은 상당한 적극성을 보여주었으며 이때의 중조관계는 소련의 태도에 의해 결정되는 것이 아니라 중국의 태도가 문제의 처리방식 및 결과를 결정하였다.

조선노동당 중앙위원회의 9월전원회결정이 중소의 요구를 수용하는 모습을 갖추기는 했지만 “8월 종파사건” 주모자들의 죄를 사면해준 것은 아니었다. 중소 양당 대표단의 간여도 사태를 “8월 종파사건” 전으로 되돌릴 수는 없었던 것이다. 1956년 10

월 이후 김일성은 위기국면을 극복하고 ‘반종파투쟁’을 더욱 강도 높게 진행시켜나가면서 연안파와 소련파들을 제거하였다. 간여에서 별다른 효과를 보지 못한 모택동은 김일성이 독립자주의 성향이 강한 인물임을 간파하게 되었다. 여러 가지 원인으로 중국은 김일성을 소원히 할 수 없었고 중조관계를 위하여 망명 연안파들에게 침묵을 요구하였다.

연안파 몰락의 가장 근본적이고 중요한 원인은 사회주의진영의 구도 자체에 있었다. 사회주의진영의 구도가 연안파가 김일성을 위수로 한 유격대파에게 밀리고 심지어 몰락하도록 미리 결정하였다. 중국의 적극적인 개입이 없었던 점도 연안파 몰락의 중요한 원인이다. 모택동과 중국으로서는 불필요한 개입을 하여 중조관계를 악화시키기보다는 사회주의진영에서의 주도권 경쟁을 위하여 조선의 지지가 더욱 절실하게 필요한 상황이었던 것이다. 확고부동한 지도자의 결실에 따른 결속력의 결여와 군을 장악하지 못했던 점은 연안파 몰락의 자체원인이다. 연안파가 몰락한 후 조선은 획일화를 향하여 결정적인 한걸음을 내디뎠다.

**주제어:** 연안파, “8월종파사건, 유격대파, 김일성