Corporatism in North Korea

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BRUCE CUMINGS

THE LEADER AND THE BLESSED EVENT

Kim Il Sung is now seventy-one, born on an inauspicious date, at least from the Western perspective: April 15, 1912, the day the Titanic sank. Now that Tito has died, Kim has the longest tenure of any head of state in the world. This fact is noted by the North Korean press with typical modesty:

> The proud heroic epic recorded in the annals of Juche Korea is the great history which can be created by none other than the respected and beloved leader Comrade Kim Il Sung possessed of unexcelled extraordinary wisdom and outstanding art of leadership.
>
> His steadfast stand of Juche and revolutionary principle and unshakable iron will have been the source of the inexhaustible strength that adorned the history of the Korean revolution, most arduous and rigorous ever known, with heroic events.
>
> He, with an insight into the fundamental principles of the revolution, the demands of the times and the desire of the people, founded the immortal Juche idea. . . . He thus provided our people with the great guiding idea for revolution.
>
> Our people owe everything to Kim Il Sung's rare wisdom and stratagem, exceptional organizational ability and extraordinary revolutionary sweep. . . . With the great leader possessed of unexampled clairvoyance standing at their head, our people have always been able to fight.[1]

Delivered at the 1981 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, New York Hilton Hotel, September 3-6, 1981. My thanks to Daniel Chirot and James Palais for their comments.

1. *Nodong sinmun*, Apr. 10, 1978; Korean Central News Agency, Apr. 13, 1978 (hereafter, KCNA). I have sought to check KCNA English-language articles

For the accolades that truly match this leader's sagacity, the Koreans prudently let foreigners do the talking:

> Immortal Kimilsungism is throwing brilliant rays all over the universe as the highest revolutionary idea representing the present era and the future of mankind. . . .
>
> As you the Great Leader, the Sun of Juche, are standing high in the centre of the era, tightly holding the control stick of history, the world revolution is daringly racing ahead on the track of Juche, despite the rowdyism of imperialism [the U.S.] and dominationism [the U.S.S.R.]. . . .
>
> You the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung are, indeed, the great thinker and theoretician . . . the genius of creation and construction . . . with the art of contracting time, and the blessed Sun of all peoples.[2]

A typical issue of the *Nodong sinmun,* the newspaper of the Korean Worker's party, will feature on the front page a quote from "a certain Pak, peasant in South Korea," who was heard to say, "Kim Il Sung, the respected and beloved leader, is indeed our iron-willed, ever-victorious commander-in-chief." Nearby will be a statement from the head of the Institute for the Study of Juche in, say, Burundi: "Great Kimilsungism is shining rays across the world." A full-page editorial of about sixty paragraphs will have between thirty and forty of them beginning with the phrase, "Our respected and beloved great leader Kim Il Sung. . . ," using every possible honorific in the Korean language. Quotations from the Leader are usually in boldface. Monthly periodicals, whether dealing with politics, social sciences, or culture, will simply reproduce the precipitate of articles in *Nodong sinmun* for the month, in endlessly repetitious articles featuring quotes from Kim on every page. Prizes for arts and letters go almost exclusively to artists who extol Kim's merits. Two decades ago books could be written after an obligatory quote from Kim on the frontispiece, but now most books on contemporary politics, economics, or society quote him on page after page. The *Dictionary of Politics* begins with a long section on Kim's life, while ordinary language dictionaries illustrate the meaning of words as follows: "benevolent: *chaaeroun.* Lead a happy life under the benevolent care of the fatherly Leader."[3] Gigantic statues of Kim greet visitors to Korea: some are sixty feet tall. Ceremonious tablets mark Kim's visits for "on-the-spot guidance": more than two hundred such

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with the Korean original in *Nodong sinmun* where possible; however I have generally left KCNA's English as it is, since this is the way KCNA wishes to present North Korea to the world in English.

2. Foreign greetings on Kim's birthday, KCNA, Apr. 18, 1979.

3. *Yong-Cho sajŏn* [English-Korean dictionary] (Pyongyang, 1976), p. 136. See also *Chosŏn chŏngch'i sajŏn* (Pyongyang: Hagu sobang, 1976).

visits are recorded at the Ch'ŏngsan-ni cooperative farm. Advertisements bought in the *New York Times* are reported in Korean newspapers as bona fide articles, extolling Kim's many virtues.

In 1980 there was a Blessed Event in North Korea. Kim's 42-year old son by his first marriage, Kim Chong Il, was publicly named at the Sixth Congress of the Worker's Party to the Presidium of the Politburo, the Secretariat of the Central Committee, and the Military Commission. His rank seems to be third, behind his father and an old-timer named Kim Il, but it is clear that Kim Chong Il will succeed his father.

The ground has been carefully laid for this succession throughout the 1970s: like Chiang K'ai-shek on Taiwan, Kim has built from below, digging in at the roots, so that his son may sustain power. Chong Il has been immersed in party organizational work, and in a key campaign ("the 3 Revolutions") at the grass-roots level. His rise to power has been carefully coordinated with party control: for years he was referred to as "the party center" *(dang chungang)*, then "the glorious party center." When the glorious party center began visiting factories external observers realized it was a person. People began displaying pictures of the Son alongside the Father in their homes (the Holy Ghost is on hold). A few years ago there were rumors that some generals tried to run Chong Il over with a truck and injured him; he did drop from view in 1977 and 1978. Over the past two years, however, the move toward familial succession has been inexorable.

At Kim's birthday in 1979, the Korean Juvenile Corps pledged to carry the revolution, "started by the Father Marshal," through to completion "generation after generation." In November, an editorial lauded the party and the Leader, calling on people to be loyal to both and implicitly linking both to the succession of the son. The following February, in an editorial on "the glorious party" the writer asserted that the Korean party "can have no traditions except those established by the Leader," and that this tradition must be "brilliantly inherited" and passed on to future generations. At the Leader's birthday in 1980 (the big event every year), editorials called for "reliable succession" so that the Korean people will never forget Kim's "profound benevolence" generation after generation.[4]

In preparation for the Sixth Congress in October 1980, a spate of articles called for "absolute trust" in the party and "steel-like discipline whereby everyone thinks and moves in one body according to the idea and will of the party centre." During the congress itself Kim Yong Nam, a high-ranking leader, referred several times to "the glorious

4. KCNA Apr. 18, 1979; *Nodong sinmun*, Nov. 23, 1979; Feb. 9, 1980; Apr. 16, 1980.

party center" and the need to carry out Kim Il Sung's will "generation after generation."[5] Since that time the Korean press has tended to rely on foreigners in referring to the succession. Thus, a ship captain from Singapore will thank "the dear guide" (Chong Il) for his beneficence, foreign Juche study groups will display his picture, or will be quoted on the son's many virtues. A leader of a Japan-Korea solidarity group averred that the Korean people have their leader "in the person of Kim Chong Il," who finds himself "always among the people"; in May 1981 one T. B. Mukherjee, a director of the Board of the International Institute of the Juche Idea referred to "the outstanding and seasoned leadership of his excellency sagacious leader Kim Chong Il," and said that "all the successes" of the Korean people are owed to "Dear Kim Chong Il, who has perfectly acquired Kimilsungism thanks to his genius insight and energetic study."[6] Now foreign groups refer to Chong Il simply as the successor to Kim Il Sung.

The reader has already begun to tire of this rhetoric, but will understand that he is in the presence of the most finely developed and systematically organized personality cult of our century, and the first attempt ever to constitute a Communist dynastic system. In its absurdly inflated hero worship and its nauseating repetition the North Korean political rhetoric seems to know no bounds; to a person accustomed to a liberal political system it is instinctively repellent. It seems impossible that anyone actually reads this mind-numbing prose that flows out in the millions of words. Yet, the task of the analyst is to explain. Although one can find in the literature on Korean politics much discussion of the personality cult, Communist dynastic succession, monocracy, and the like, there are few explanations of the startling phenomenon of North Korean leadership. The Stalin system, the most obvious precedent, merits first examination in an effort to find explanation.

THE STALIN PRECEDENT

> He orders the sun of the enemies to set
> He speaks . . . and the East reddens for his friends
> If he tells the coal to turn white
> It will be as Stalin wishes[7]

The Soviet Twenty-Fifth Army occupied northern Korea in 1945 and the DPRK, like China, came to have the typical administrative structure of socialist governments formed in the shadow of Stalin: a

5. KCNA, Sept. 26, 1980; see also KCNA, Aug. 20, 1980, and Oct. 14, 1980.
6. KCNA, Nov. 17, 1980; May 28, 1981; May 26, 1981.
7. Georges Bertoli, *The Death of Stalin* (New York: Praeger, 1975), p. 6. I am grateful to Herbert Ellison for bringing this book to my attention.

hierarchical, cumbersome state and party bureaucracy, five-year plans, emphasis on heavy industrialization, centralization, top-down coordination and arousal of the masses. Did it also have the Stalinist leader principle?

Lenin railed against the cult of the personality: "They write that I'm such and such, exaggerate everything, call me a genius, a special kind of man. Why, this is horrible. . . . We long ago solved the question of heroes."[8] In fact, of course, "they" had by no means solved this question. Stalin, Mao, Tito, Hoxha, Ceausescu, and Kim all bear witness to the frequent inability of Communist regimes to run affairs without a maximum leader. In part, the reasons are bureaucratic: the leader principle is expedient for functionaries who want to be secure and to go about their business; since heads tend to roll down the line during struggles for power, it is far preferable to have one leader and one line that can endlessly be repeated. A bureaucrat knows who is in charge and what the line is at any given time. For the masses, the leader becomes a Rorschach inkblot upon which to project all their fond hopes for how things ought to work. At the end of a long day of standing in lines, the Russian could come home, fall on his knees, and say "if only Stalin knew" about it all. It is the equivalent of a welfare mother in New York returning home after a day with the bureaucrats and praying to God.

North Korea had many differences from the Soviet model of socialism from the beginning, and was among the first of the postwar socialist states to distance itself from Moscow, beginning in 1955 with Kim's enunciation of the *chuch'e* ideology. But one element it has shared is centralism and top-down principles of administration, the result of Kim's particular path to power, in which he imposed his control from the center outward upon spontaneously emerging people's committees in the wake of Japan's defeat in 1945.[9] This has skewed Korean practice toward ponderous imperative coordination, and unlike Mao, Kim has never launched large-scale assaults against the bureaucracy. The principle of hierarchy has never been challenged. Thus, our first approximation at explaining Kim's role would combine this centralized bureaucratic pattern with the Soviet leader principle during the Stalin years. Indeed, we find many similar phrases in the adulatory rhetoric of both countries.

Stalin was termed "our beloved father," "our dear guide and teacher," "the greatest leader of all times and of all peoples"; with his

8. Kenneth Jowitt, *The Leninist Response to National Dependency* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1978), p. 39.

9. Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), chap. 11.

"consummate genius as a strategist" his "truly amazing" energy, his "fatherly solicitude for the younger generation," he also was "a titan of scientific thought," a "sensitive and responsive educator," "a wise teacher and leader," "a model to all," whose "supreme vision and foresight, iron will, invincible force of mind, and boundless love and devotion to the Party and the People" made everyone labor "with the name of Stalin on their lips."[10] All of this could be interchanged with North Korean rhetoric today. Stalin's quotations had to be featured in books, his picture or bust was in every home and workplace, workers gave thanks for his beneficence, and his birthday was such an extravaganza that *Pravda* featured greetings from around the world for weeks, and gifts came in by the carload, such that a Museum of Gifts had to be opened. Presumably Stalin's son might have been a candidate to succeed him, too, except that Vasily was an alcoholic sybarite whose indiscretions and insolence offended even his father.[11]

This explanation is too parsimonious, however, and too boring. Even if Stalin's leader principle was copied, questions would remain: why this aspect of Soviet socialism and not others? Why does the adulation of Kim seem so much deeper and more enduring? But above all, why do you get similar political behavior in South Korea, not well known for emulating the Soviet model? President Park Chung Hee, until his abrupt demise, was the object of an ever-growing cult of personality. Political scientists spoke of "his unremitting and irreconcilable courage," his "cool-headed judgment," his "driving force," his "knightly view on life and death" ("life and death are one," Park said), and his "endless concern for the people," who were in turn "grateful to the attitude of their proud leader who values and loves his people." Park's public spokesmen wrote books extolling his "solicitude" for children, his "matchless leadership, never-cooling enthusiasm, and adamant convictions," "his love of the homeland and his lofty confidence in the historic destiny of his fellow countrymen," and his tireless striving to give "all his thoughts and energies" to the people, "out of his vast and complete sincerity."[12] Syngman Rhee, in his time, was termed the Moses and Messiah of Korea, father of the people, and so on.

In December 1980 I heard a fascinating lecture by Professor T. K. Tong, a scholar with intimate knowledge of the Kuomintang. He

10. *USSR in Construction* (Moscow, December 1949), p. 1; also Bertoli, *Stalin*, p. 5.

11. Bertoli, *Stalin*, pp. 19-20, 37, 96.

12. Bom Mo Ku, "Leaders and National Development in Connection with Park Chung Hee's Leadership," *Korea Observer* (Summer 1978), pp. 143-77; see also Kil Joun-sik, *Park Chung Hee: President of All the People* (Seoul, 1972).

described in great detail how Chiang K'ai-shek had prepared the way for Chiang Ching-kuo, his son and the current president of the Republic of China, to take power. He worked down at the roots, not at the top, he said, over a period of many years. The conclusion? "All this shows that Chiang was a much better politician than Mao Tse-tung, who never could find a reliable successor and whose wife was arrested just after he died." So, we can say that there also is an Asian political culture at work here.

It is quite common to witness Koreans with Ph.D.'s in political science earned in the United States who will condemn the Kim cult for its illiberality and then return to Seoul and laud the South Korean leader of the moment for his sagacity. The principle of hierarchy and deference to superiors and elders remains deeply ingrained in the culture of all Koreans; I had occasion to spend several hours in the office of the ROK Cultural Attache in the Tokyo Embassy, conversing informally and cordially in English with this official who had spent seventeen years teaching psychology in the United States. Completely at ease with me, he would sit bolt upright and look down his nose whenever an underling entered his office, and the underlings seemed utterly obsequious, bowing and scraping and using the most honorific language to speak to the attache. I later learned that this man got his job because he was the brother-in-law of the director of the KCIA, Kim Chae-gyu. When Kim shot and killed Park Chung Hee in October 1979, the brother-in-law abruptly lost his post in Tokyo and returned to the United States.

So, the cultural argument, as stated thus far, seems to reinforce the borrowing from Stalin and to account for the depth of the leader principle in Korea. But this explanation, too, is unsatisfying. It overlooks similar practices outside the political arena in the United States, for example: the adulation of religious leaders (e.g., Billy Graham), the repetitious mouthings of many churches, the mindless babble of television commercials and prime-time shows, or The Speech that Mr. Reagan has given almost unchanged for the past two decades. If Americans do not invest their political leaders with superhuman powers, it is probably because, as Tocqueville noted, Americans are among the least political people in the world and are too busy with other pursuits. Americans also tend to forget how much nepotism there is in the economy. It is commonplace for corporate heads to replace themselves with their children (e.g., the Fords and the Rockefellers), and we even have a little corner of industrial feudalism in Delaware. The Du Ponts have not only held their giant chemical company in the family since the French revolution, but have housed their workers on their fiefs in good paternal fashion, and have supported one son after another for the

lesser business of running the state of Delaware (e.g., the current governor, Pierre Du Pont).[13]

The Stalin leader principle and Asian culture do not give us a sufficient explanation of the Kim phenomenon, nor do we find much in Marxist-Leninist theory to guide us. Socialism over the past century either presents us with a vacuum where the political should be, or has had such a varied politics—from social democracy to totalitarianism—as to be no guide at all. Marx had no political model, only a highly opaque set of prescriptions for politics under socialism (mainly the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* and some remarks on the dictatorship of the proletariat). It was Lenin who turned Marxism into a political theory and, some argue, transformed Marxism into a voluntaristic doctrine that left open the possibility of the extreme statism of Stalin, in which superstructural politics became the agency for engineering society. For Marxist-Leninists who have opposed Stalinism—Bukharin, Trotsky, Mao, and the Gang of Four, as examples—their critique always resolved to the political. Bukharin saw the Bolshevik state as a new "iron heel" oppressing the masses. Trotsky located the problem of Stalinism in the control of the commanding heights of the state by the wrong people; in the early stages of socialism there was no automatic conditioning of the superstructure by the base as had existed under capitalism, and therefore a tiny stratum could seize power and undo the revolution. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution this is where Mao located the problem as well, in "bad elements" and strata at the top, and the Gang of Four simply completed the logic by arguing that a veritable "new class" had emerged right inside the Communist party.[14] If politics is so fragile and critical in the early socialist stage, then of course the problem of succession becomes paramount. But the political vacuum in Marxism-Leninism also opens the way to an assertion of indigenous political culture; this may even be demanded by the very paucity of political models.

In a period of revolution Marxism-Leninism seems to be a talisman that makes all things possible, rapid and millennial change that wipes away the past. In fact Marxism-Leninism has had far less transformative effect than either its proponents or opponents care to admit. Mao said

13. On the Du Ponts see Gerald Colby Zilg, *Du Pont: Behind the Nylon Curtain* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

14. Important references here would be: Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), chap. 5; Stephen E. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975); Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1937), pp. 53-54, 239, 249; on China see my "The Political Economy of Chinese Foreign Policy," *Modern China* (Oct. 1979), pp. 411-61.

just before he died that he had only been able to change a few things around Beijing, nothing more, and the experience of the past seven years suggests that this utterance was closer to the truth than his many statements about seizing the time and moving mountains. Marxist-Leninist ideology functions as a new, self-conscious ethos seeking to replace an existing ethos; Lenin conceived of the replacement of old ethos with the new as one of generations. Although the dictatorial aspect of proletarian rule should be ever-receding into the future, it could not be done away with until people's habits had changed, until they all got up in the morning and automatically acted like good communists instead of good capitalists.[15]

We all know how hard it is to change old habits ("culture"); they prove far more recalcitrant than revolutionaries can know. Thus Marxism-Leninism cannot affect the deep structures of thought and behavior in any society except over a very long period: it will be grafted onto existing, longstanding roots and, while seeking to transform the roots, will itself be transformed as peoples and cultures render it intelligible to their lives. Part of the roots will be whittled away, but the branches will be pruned as well.

This has proved truer in Korea than in many settings for building socialism, precisely because of the very alienness of the setting to this fundamentally Western set of ideas. Korea had a minuscule proletariat, the beginnings of capitalism, and far too much internationalism (capitalist-style) by 1945. It therefore took from Marxism-Leninism what it wanted and rejected much of the rest: a state with potent organization, capable of providing the political basis for independence at a future point; an economic program of rapid industrialization and a philosophy of subjecting nature to human will; Lenin's notion of national liberation; Stalin's autarky of socialism-in-one country (to become in Korea socialism in one-half-a-country, and now, as Kenneth Jowitt remarked, socialism-in-one-family). Autarky fit Korea's Hermit Kingdom past, and answered the need for *closure* from the world economy after decades of opening under Japanese auspices. What was unusable was dispatched as soon as possible: above all the socialist internationalism including a transnational division of labor that the Soviets wanted and that Korea successfully resisted, beginning in the late 1950s. The foreign lingo of *p'ŭroret'ariat'ŭ* and *Mak'ŭssŭ chuŭi* (proletariat and Marxism) has not been so much eliminated as overwhelmed by the indigenous doctrine of *chuch'e*. Soviet-style socialist realism has been muted as traditional art forms reassert themselves, including family-theme

15. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), pp. 379-84.

soap operas that seem dominant in North Korea today; the traditional structural hierarchy of the language is modified but preserved, such that there is a high form and a low form of the term "comrade," and the honorifics are still used when speaking to or about elders and superiors. Above all, a political system has evolved within the Marxist political vacuum that can best be compared to varieties of corporatism, and merits the use of the term *socialist corporatism.*

VARIETIES OF CORPORATISM

Although most American intellectuals who do not work on Latin America or Southern Europe seem bewildered when asked to define corporatism, the phenomenon has a long pedigree. One might say it is the pre-eminent antithesis of a liberal politics. It predated the emergence of liberalism, it fueled the romantics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who hated liberalism, and it sparks the dreams of utopians who envision a transcendence of liberalism. Liberal theory is pre-eminent in separating the political from other realms of human behavior, making politics just a part of one's existence, or a subdiscipline for study, instead of the architectonic role that politics played for the ancients, and its interconnection with society in corporatism.

We can distinguish a traditional corporatism, a conservative corporatism, a pathological corporatism, a neosocialist corporatism, and an Asian corporatism. *Traditional corporatism* had three great themes: hierarchy, organic connection, and family; and three great images that corresponded: political fatherhood, the body politic, and the great chain. "The whole of the chain of being might be imagined as an immense organism, animated by its divine source."[16] For traditionalists, and later for Fascists like Mussolini, the body politic was a living organism, literally corporeal.[17] All members of the body politic were interconnected and functional to the whole. The head (or king) was the father of the people, ruler and ruled were joined by "perfect love," and the paternal wisdom and benevolence of the leader "was to be relied upon and never doubted." The king would display loving solicitude and "fatherly care" for his subjects; in the words of the Earl of Strafford, "princes are to be the indulgent nursing fathers to their people . . . love and protection descending and loyalty ascending."[18] The most significant corporate body was the family, and then the church, which was

16. Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 149.

17. Ibid., p. 171; see also Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1942), p. 358.

18. Walzer, *Revolution of Saints,* pp. 172, 186.

seen in medieval times as the visible body of Christ.[19] The leader was the object of adulation: Henry VIII of England was thought to be "the sun of man."[20] This was a politics of the medieval society of estates and communal organizations that slowly disappeared in the solvent of capitalism. The traditional corporate ideal, of course, held fastest and longest in those countries where the Catholic church remained dominant.

Conservative corporatism seeks to recapture this lost age, and was a prevalent ideology in the nineteenth century among romantic anti-capitalists and antiliberals. It idealizes hierarchy, fixed social position, commonly shared values, and closed communities. As Unger puts it, "Forgetful of history, it proposed to resolve the problems of bureaucracy by reviving the very forms of social order whose dissolution created these problems in the first place."[21] Among twentieth-century dictatorships of the Right, conservative corporatism provided an ideology and a set of slogans, but not much guidance in practice. Linz's model of weak authoritarianism in late Franco Spain, Schmitter's analysis of Portugal and Brazil, and some of the interwar regimes in Eastern Europe adhered to this set of ideas but never succeeded in establishing a real corporate hierarchy of groups and classes segmented according to work and station, and never really tried to do so.[22]

The *pathological* variant of corporatism is fascism, exemplified by Germany and Italy in the 1930s. Fascism gave corporatism the bad name that it still possesses. For example, the entry on corporatism in the recent *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* reads simply, "see fascism." Fascists used the rhetoric of conservative corporatism toward different ends: totalitarianism, breaking up the secondary associations that real corporatism would presumably wish to preserve, an aggressive militarism, and a mobilized politics of the street that corporatist regimes could never muster.

Fascist regimes also relied on the charisma of a leader, whereas the corporate polities were led by more plodding, truly "fatherly" types. Instead of organic connection, Neumann argued that in Germany only the leader principle unified state and party, with the leader and various

19. Ibid., pp. 171, 188.

20. Neumann, *Behemoth*, p. 86.

21. Roberto Mangiaberra Unger, *Knowledge and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1975), pp. 188, 249-50.

22. Juan Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in *Cleavages, Ideologies, and Party Systems*, ed. Erik Allardt and Yrjo Littunen (Helsinki: Academic Bookstore, 1964), pp. 291-341; Philippe C. Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" in *The New Corporatism*, ed. Frederick B. Pyke and Thomas Stritch (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), pp. 85-131.

Nazi groups functioning to disaggregate people and leave them helpless: nazism appealed not to organically rooted individuals but to the "least rational" stratum of the population.[23] But the corporate underpinning of great minds like Pareto, who identified society with a living organism, could not resist the attractions of the pathological variant; nor could some neosocialists who found that there is a hazy netherworld where fascism and communism seem to meet.

This last point should not lead to the banal conclusion, as in Friedrich and Brzezinski, that "from all the facts available to us . . . fascist and Communist totalitarian dictatorships are basically alike."[24] They are not alike, the most glaring differences being in the goals of the regimes and the treatment of the working class. Instead the interesting similarities come in with *neosocialist corporatism.* People like the Romanian Manoilescu, Robert Michels, Pareto, and others, moved from a sophisticated and interesting corporate conception of socialism to more-or-less egregious sympathy with 1930s Fascist regimes. Their fundamental departure from Marxism was to substitute nation for class and to develop a conception of a world system of advantaged and disadvantaged (or bourgeois and proletarian) nations. It was Polanyi's great merit to discern how the breakdown of the world economy in the 1930s explained both Stalin's socialism-in-one-country and the behavior of the Fascist powers: "fascism, like socialism, was rooted in a market society that refused to function."[25] This breakdown was at the root of neosocialist corporate ideas.

For Manoilescu, "the organic, 'productivist,' vertically structured metaphors of a harmonic political-economic order"[26] at home had their corollary in a hierarchical world at large. The international division of labor of world capitalism had distributed rich nations here, poor nations there; the "proletarian" nations of what we would now call the periphery should structure themselves vertically at home (to accumulate power) and horizontally abroad to redress their positions in the world economy. Here, as several writers have pointed out, was an early and sophisticated variant of dependency and world-system

23. Neumann, *Behemoth*, pp. 83-84, 96.

24. Zbigniew Brzezinski and Carl Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 10.

25. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Beacon Press, 1944), chap. 20, and p. 239.

26. Philippe Schmitter, "Reflections on Mihail Manoilescu and the Political Consequences of Delayed Development on the Periphery of Western Europe," in *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940,* ed. Kenneth Jowitt (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1978), p. 120.

theory.[27] Other neosocialists thought no practical Marxism could continue to avoid the problems that nations and nationalism posed for class analysis: class was for the nineteenth century, whereas "the concept of the nation would be the key concept of political organization in the twentieth century."[28] Such thinking led neosocialists into strong support for protectionism and the type of development associated with Stalinism in the 1930s. Obviously this strain of thought is even more relevant to our era, as one nation after another has been released from or has formed itself in the aftermath of colonialism. Neosocialist corporatism has had its most profound recent statement in the work of Roberto Mangiaberra Unger, who proposes a movement toward a corporatism embodying equality of conditions, democracy, and the overcoming of liberalism and individualism through a new conception of organic groups.[29] Unger's proposals, like the radical criticism of Christopher Lasch and the conservative populism of the Moral Majority, seek once again to introduce the family as either a refuge from liberal politics or a metaphor for transcending liberalism. Unger writes that the family "comes closest to [the ideal of] community of life in our experience. . . . The modern family forever draws men back into an association that . . . offers a measure of individual recognition through love."[30] Thus we have come full circle: the logic of corporatist disgust with liberalism leads progressives to rediscover the family as a model for politics, something that the traditionalist never abandoned. In the absence of other organic groups, it is the best candidate.

It has rarely occurred to Asian thinkers to abandon the family as metaphor or reality: only Mao's China during the Great Leap Forward assaulted the family structure and even this monumental effort was dropped rather quickly. The family has been the centerpiece of *Asian corporatism,* the pre-eminent example of which is interwar Japan.

In Japan the three corporatist images of political fatherhood, a body politic, and the great chain, were pronounced. The emperor was the father of all the people, the people were united by blood ties, and the blood "running through the veins of the race . . . has never changed"

27. Daniel Chirot, "Neoliberal and Social Democratic Theories of Development," in *Social Change in Romania,* pp. 31-52; also Schmitter, ibid.

28. Zeev Sternhell, "Fascist Ideology," in *Fascism: A Reader's Guide,* ed. Walter Laquer (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 352-55.

29. Unger, *Knowledge and Politics,* p. 250.

30. Ibid., pp. 252, 264; see also Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Beseiged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

since time immemorial.[31] As one publicist put it, "It is only Nippon in which national society has ensured not merely horizontal union by dint of blood and land relations but also the blood-relation-centre of the society itself . . . as the authority of national society."[32] The emperor was the center of blood relations extending through the whole polity and back through time. He was benevolent, august, solicitous, wise, eternal, and loving.

Masao Maruyama, seeking out the unique in what he called "Japanese fascism," rested upon "the family system extolled as the fundamental principle of the State structure." Its basic characteristic was that the state "is always considered as an extension of the family; more concretely, as a nation of families composed of the Imperial House as the main family and of the people as the branch family. This is not merely an analogy as in the organic theory of the State, but is considered as having a substantial meaning."[33] According to imperial officials, each Japanese family was "an independent animate body, a complete cell in itself." Radicals like Kita Ikki called Japan "an organic and indivisible great family."[34]

In the 1930s the Japanese government sought to popularize an opaque formula expressing the principle of eternal Japanese unity, *kokutai.* One can read book after book and not fathom the core meaning of this set of dicta, recited and memorized by schoolchildren in the thirties. *Kokutai* means something like national essence. The character compound combines country *(koku),* and a term meaning basis (of philosophy) or essence, that is, what makes Japan different from other countries *(tai).* The emperor and the rulers were to govern "with the real significance of Kokutai as the centre, in every national affair and in perfect order." The people were to let "every thought, idea, and action have Kokutai as its principle and clearly display the principle in national life."[35]

These various emphases, always latent in Japan, were pushed forward in the 1930s as Japan joined with the Fascist powers in unity and conquest abroad and authoritarian coordination at home. This was not fascism, however, lacking a mass party, Fascist ideology, or the raucous mass politics of the streets of Germany. The better term would be conservative corporatism, more specifically an Asian corporatism deeply

31. Chigaku Tanaka, *What is Nippon Kokutai?* (Tokyo: Shishio Bunko, 1936), p. 95.

32. Ibid., Appendix, p. 3.

33. Masao Maruyama, *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics,* ed. Ivan Morris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 36.

34. Ibid., p. 37.

35. Tanaka, *Kokutai,* pp. 102, 186.

influenced by the Confucian past. (Today, many argue, Japan has a sort of capitalist corporatism.) As with our earlier discussion of the application of Marxism-Leninism to Korea, in Japan the Fascist or European corporatist model sought to root in a very different soil, and was transformed.

NORTH KOREAN CORPORATISM

> Today our revolutionary ranks are firmly united as a living organism in which all the people . . . think and act only in accordance with the idea and will of *Juche (Nodong sinmun,* Jan. 31, 1979).

With this review of corporatism in its many forms, we now come to the central argument: the application of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete realities of Korea, as the saying goes, has resulted in a peculiar and fascinating form of socialist corporatism, mingling together classic corporatist verbiage and images, but growing out of the Korean political culture, with the progressive rhetoric and practices of Marxism-Leninism. The DPRK is a socialist state, meaning that the means of production are socialized, the goal of "building socialism" toward the distant point of communism remains the basic agenda, and politics and administration are under control of a hierarchical party structured in the typical ways that have characterized communism in this century. In other words I am not arguing that North Korea is Fascist, or "feudal-Fascist," the grotesquerie currently used by the Chinese regime to characterize the tenure of the Gang of Four. Under the general rubric of socialism, however, the Koreans have carved out a unique entity. It will please few foreign observers and will hardly be a model for anyone not a Korean; not a beautiful politics, it parodies itself in its wretched excesses. But it is original and interesting.

What does this corporatist socialism look like? We can sketch out the model and then fill in the details:

The Leader:	functions as a charismatic source of legitimacy and ideology; also as a father figure, head of the Korean family; also as the "head and Heart" of the body politic
The Party:	the core of the body politic; itself a living organism, it also provides the sinews linking the nation together; it represents the "blood ties" linking ruler and ruled. Metaphorical images are blood relations and concentric circles of organization. Now termed the "Mother party."
The Idea:	Juche *(chuch'e),* the symbol of the nation and the Leader; source is Leader's brain; the metaphor for the people acting as one mind
The Family:	core unit of society; Leader's family is the model, and the

	historical extension symbolizing the great chain; metaphor for the nation; interpenetrates the state
The Revolution:	the Leader's biography, stretching back half a century through him and a century through his family; model for how to apply *chuch'e*
The Guide:	the Leader's progeny; symbolizes the future; establishes the principle of family-based succession
The Collective:	social organization mediating between party and family; model is family; pools state and family property
The World:	structured by a national solipsism in which the Sun (the Leader) is the center; the Sun spreads its rays (Juche) outward; the world tends toward the Sun

This model suggests all of the phenomena we have associated with corporatism in its nonpathological forms: organic solidity; the family as metaphor and model; the great chain connecting past, present, and future; the fatherly role of the leader (whether a traditional king or a charismatic revolutionary); the subsuming of the individual by family, collective, or state (all three in the DPRK); the hostility to liberalism in politics and modernity in culture (bourgeois decadence being reviled both by conservative and socialist corporatists); the principle of hierarchy (modified more or less by general equality and democracy, depending on the type of corporatism). In North Korea, the determinant causes for the peculiarities of the model are Korea's "Hermit Kingdom" and Confucianist past; its history of colonial opening and penetration by the market, followed by closure and development on an autarkic model; and peculiarities of the domestic political economy and demographic base at the time of regime formation.

Now we can fill in some detail, first by attention to the rhetoric and then by attention to regime formation and Korea's place in the world economy. The pronounced organicism of the recent past is, it so happens, nothing more than an embellishment on themes that have been present since the establishment of the regime in 1945-46, even since Kim's guerrilla days in Manchuria in the 1930s. I had not recognized this (nor had anyone else), until a large volume of documentation on North Korea in the period of 1945 to 1953 appeared in the U.S. National Archives in 1977. These consisted of materials seized during the only postwar occupation of Communist territory in the autumn of 1950. It now is possible to prove that from the very moment Kim Il Sung emerged as maximum leader—early 1946—corporatist and family themes predominated. Although this is not the place to detail these findings, we may summarize them as follows.

First, the point is to have one leader, onto which everyone is expected to project the fondest ideals of the nation, and around which

everyone is expected to unite. The phrase, "uniting around Kim Il Sung" *(Kim Il-sŏng chuŭi e tan'gyŏl)* expresses the notion that the leader is the center and the source of all good ideas, and an organizational principle of concentric circles spreading out from the leader. Second, the leader surrounds himself with a *core,* usually rendered as nucleus *(haeksim),* but sometimes by a rare term that carries the connotation of marrow *(kol'gan).* Third, the critical core group is the leader's family: it is virtuous (i.e., revolutionary), it is exemplary (all the relatives were virtuous), and it is a chain linking past with present (e.g., the great-grandfather led the first blows struck at U.S. imperialism, in 1866). Fourth, the core holds all effective political power. From the 1930s until the 1980s, that core has consisted of Kim, his family and relatives, and those Manchurian guerrillas who either fought with him, or quickly united with him after liberation. Fifth, the leader spreads love and benevolence (the classic Confucian virtues), and the followers respond with loyalty and devotion, and with fulsome accolades designed to enhance the leader's stature.[36]

What is striking is the indigenous, Confucian resonance; this is how Korean kings also instituted their rule. It is not Stalinism. The tone of Stalin's rhetoric always clanked with references to so many tons of pig iron; Stalin saw himself as the ironlike engineer of Soviet politics and society. Kim's rhetoric rings with devotions of love, morality, beneficence, solicitude—except where the enemy is concerned, of course.

But this was not Confucianism. Confucius never talked about the "mass line." Kim never tired of doing so, however, from the beginning. This emphasis was clearly drawn from his experience in the Chinese Communist party (a past openly discussed in the 1940s if not now), and we find as early as 1947 a profusion of Maoist dicta about always going among the masses, teaching and learning from them, uniting them, sending officials to the lower levels, correcting bad behavior through moral example and reformation of thought. In one stunning instance, an entire passage is lifted from Mao's classic mass line speech of 1942, but attributed to Kim by one of his close followers.[37] One gets from all this an image of Kim's leadership style, spinning like a helicopter from top to bottom and back again, giving on-the-spot

36. See Han Chae-dok, *Kim Il-sŏng Changgun Kaesŏn-gi* [Record of General Kim Il Sung's Triumphal Return] (P'yŏngyang: Minju Chosŏn-sa, 1947), esp. Han's interview with an important member of Kim's guerrilla detachment, pp. 35-65.

37. Kim Ch'ang-man, "Several Questions in Methods of Leadership in Party Work," *Kŭlloja,* no. 11 (January 1948), pp. 12-22. The passage in question appears on p. 17: "In all our practical work, correct leadership must be based on the method, 'from the masses, to the masses'. . . ." Such plagiarism from Mao continues for several lines.

guidance, and uniting all those who can be united into one tightly knit mass. An oft-used phrase, literally translated as "making yourself one lump with the people," captures the latter imagery.

The organizational effort was most pronounced in the late forties in the army and the party. Kim's core group was termed the *kol'gan* of the People's Army as soon as it was formed, and it was at the second anniversary of the founding of the army in February 1950 that the term *suryŏng* (Leader) was first used for Kim.[38] Until that time, Stalin had been the *suryŏng* (of the world's working masses) and Kim had been the *chidoja* (of the Korean people). But the stunning departure of 1950, before the war began, put Kim in effect on a par with Stalin—a heresy that went unpunished, because Soviet divisions had been withdrawn from Korea, and tens of thousands of Koreans who fought with the Chinese Communists were pouring in; this latter influx was probably the reason for the abrupt elevating of Kim's status by the core leadership group. Having digressed on the historical origins of Kim's leadership, if briefly, we can now return to the contemporary period, more specifically the period since Kim passed his sixty-year cycle (1972), a point beyond which Korean elders are venerated generally.

At Kim's sixty-fifth birthday it was stated that "our whole society has become a big revolutionary family, all members of which are firmly united in one ideology and one purpose." Kim was also described as the "tender-hearted father" of the million or so Koreans living in Japan.[39] In November 1978, for the first time to my knowledge, Kim was termed "the supreme brain of the nation,"[40] a formation that has now been changed to "heart" *(maŭm,* a Korean term that can mean heart, mind, or both). Long termed "the fatherly leader" *(ŏbŏi suryŏng),* Kim now became simply "our father," and the country the "fatherland" or "motherland." (The latter are not new—the Korean War is known as the "fatherland liberation war" in the North). With the Sixth Congress and the Blessed Event of autumn 1980, organic metaphors proliferated one after the other.

Kim Il Sung's report to the congress referred to "the organizational will" of the party; the party's "pulsation," always felt by the masses; the party as "one's own mother"; "infinite loyalty" to the party; and

38. See *Nodong sinmun,* Feb. 9, 1950, where Ch'oe Yong-gŏn refers to Kim Il Sung as the *suryŏng* of the Korean people; also Kang Kŏn, "The Korean People's Army is Carrying on the Patriotic Tradition of the Kim Il Sung Guerrilla Detachment," *Nodong sinmun,* Feb. 6, 1950. Kang refers to the Kim group as the *kolgan* of the KPA. The *Nodong sinmun* from this period may be found in RG 242, "Captured Enemy Documents," National Records Center.

39. KCNA, Apr. 17, 1977.

40. KCNA, Nov. 23, 1978.

the establishment of an "iron discipline," "under which the whole Party acts as *one body* under the leadership of the Party central committee. It is a fixed practice in our party that all its organizations move *like an organism* according to the principle of democratic centralism" (emphasis added).[41]

In the aftermath of the congress the party newspaper published several editorials and articles full of organic metaphors. "Father of the People" in February 1981 said the following:

> Kim Il Sung is . . . the great father of our people . . . possessed of greatest love for the people. Long is the history of the word father being used as a word representing *love and reverence* . . . expressing the unbreakable *blood ties* between the people and the leader. Father. This familiar word represents our people's *single heart* of boundless respect and loyalty. . . . The love shown by the Great Leader for our people is *love of kinship*. . . . Our respected and beloved Leader is the *tender-hearted father* of all the people.
>
> *Love of paternity* . . . is the noblest ideological sentiment possessed only by our people, which cannot be explained by any theory or principle or fathomed by anything. [Emphasis added][42]

Another article in February argued that "the *blood ties* between our Party and the people [mean that] . . . the Party and the people always *breathe one breath* and act as one. . . . The *creed* of the people [is] that they cannot live or enjoy happiness apart from the Party . . . today our party and people have become *an integrity* of ideology and purpose which no force can break. The Worker's Party of Korea . . . is the *Mother Party* bringing boundless honor and happiness to the people . . ." (emphasis added).[43] In March Kim Il Sung got a new name: "Great Heart" *(widaehan maŭm)*:

> Only a man of great heart . . . possessed of rare grit and magnaminity and noble human love can create a great history. . . . His conception of speed and time cannot be measured or assessed by established common sense and mathematical calculation. . . . The grit to break through, even if the Heavens fall, and *cleave the way through the sea* and curtail the century [is his] . . . . His *heart* is a traction power attracting the hearts of all people and a *centripetal force* uniting them as one. . . . His love for people—this is, indeed, a *kindred king of human love*. . . . No age, no one has ever seen such a great man with a warm love. . . . Kim Il Sung is the great sun and great man . . . this great heart. . . . Thanks to this, *great heart national independence* is firmly guaranteed. . . . As there is this great heart, the heart of our Party is great. As the heart of our Party is great, the victory of the cause of *Juche* is firmly guaranteed . . . and the entire people [are] rallied in *one mind and* thought.[44]

41. KCNA, Oct. 14, 1980.
42. *Nodong sinmun*, Feb. 13, 1981; KCNA, Feb. 16, 1981.
43. *Nodong sinmun*, Feb. 4, 1981; KCNA, Feb. 7, 1981.
44. KCNA, Mar. 12, 1981.

Here the organic metaphors are joined with religious references; the language is reminiscent of the *Nippon kokutai* material referred to earlier and, of course, the kings and princes of medieval Europe.

A few days later *Nodong sinmun* published a full-page editorial, "Spirit of Korea," which linked "the glorious Party center" (Kim Chong Il) with "the eternal spring of Mankind" and a new, "youthful spirit," "alien to decrepitude," now marching through Korean land. "A solid foundation" (the succession) had been laid, so that "our people will sing of the prosperous Fatherland down through generations . . . in one mind and one purpose."[45]

Kim Il Sung's sixty-ninth birthday passed with less fanfare than usual; the party editorial on April 15, 1981, said "By having him and attending him in high esteem (we) . . . have the centre of great unity, the centre of leadership . . . the great benevolence and the great feat in our national history." He also was referred to as "the great communist," whose "burning passion . . . promotes the prosperity of the fatherland."[46] In June 1981 the party was again referred to as the "Mother Party," run by "the glorious Party center" who has "firmly established *Juche*"; and as "this great integrated entity never known in previous ages."[47] It is likely that as the "glorious Party center" moves closer toward receiving the father's mantle, the organic metaphors will develop further. After all, a "great heart" pumping "blood" to tie together leader and led; a "supreme brain" commanding the "Mother Party," may have other prodigious organs worth reflecting upon as well.

North Korean socialist corporatism also possesses a pronounced voluntarism before which Maoist will and vision pale by comparison. We have already detected the frequent use of the term "will": iron will, Leader's will, steellike will, and so forth are frequently seen. Recently the Korean propagandists stated that "everything is decided by idea."[48] Such emphases have been around from the beginning, the result both of the cult of the Leader and his Juche-thought, and the inevitable prominence of the superstructure in a socialism that must, in part, create its own base (thus the engineering metaphors of Stalin). Voluntarism, of course, was yet another characteristic of corporatism, especially the pathological Hitler version.

"The Idea," *chuch'e*, seems at first glance to be readily understandable. It means self-reliance and independence in politics, economics, defense, and ideology; it first emerged in 1955 as P'yŏngyang drew away from Moscow, and then appeared full-blown in the early sixties as

45. *Nodong sinmun*, Mar. 25, 1981; KCNA, Mar. 26, 1981.
46. *Nodong sinmun*, Apr. 15, 1981; KCNA, Apr. 17, 1981.
47. KCNA, June 10 and June 20, 1981.
48. KCNA, June 20, 1981.

Kim sought a stance independent of both Moscow and Beijing. On closer inspection, however, the term's meaning is less accessible. For example, "self-reliance" is often translated as *charyok kaengsaeng,* the same four-character expression used by the Maoists; "independence" can be *charip, chajusŏng* or *tongnip. Chuch'e* seems to stand above and to encompass these other meanings. Yet *chuch'e* is used in ways that the other terms are not.

The North Koreans say things like "everyone must have *chuch'e* firm in mind and spirit"; "only when *chuch'e* is firmly implanted can we be happy"; "*chuch'e* must not only be firmly established in mind but perfectly realized in practice"; and so on. The closer one gets to its meaning, the more the meaning recedes. It is the opaque core of Korean national solipsism. Few would have much guidance for how to get up every morning and "perfectly realize" *chuch'e.* In fact it seems to be used much like *kokutai* in interwar Japan, or *volkische* in Germany, or *Mao Tse-tung Thought* in China: a term defining an emotion that puts the nation first, or the Leader's wishes first, in everything. *Chuch'e* shares the same second character as *kokutai (kukch'e* in Korean); *chu* means something like main or master, so that the literal translation of *chuch'e* would be main or master principle.

Corporatism seems to be a flexible framework within which Left and Right can meet, something many have noted about interwar Europe. Korea is no different. *Chuch'e* resonates with *kokutai* and other such phrases precisely because of its diffuse and all-purpose meaning; an emotion masquerading as an idea, it appeals to nationalists of all persuasions. Thus it is that Kim Il Sung's ideology calls up comparisons with perhaps the most extreme right-wing figure in postwar South Korea, Yi Pŏm-sŏk, founder and leader of the early postwar Korean National Youth (KNY).

In the 1930s Yi had studied European corporatist and Fascist youth groups, and worked with the Kuomintang Blue Shirts and Special Services in China.[49] Upon his return to Korea in 1946 he organized some 70,000 youths into a classic rightist vehicle of the streets; by 1948 the KNY had over a million members and made Yi second only to Syngman Rhee in power. His famous slogan, *minjok chisang, kukka chisang* (nation first, state first) expressed his German learning;[50] he was among the first Korean political figures explicitly to exalt not just the nation, but the state. He opposed Korean reliance on foreigners *(sadae* or "flunkeyism," as the North Koreans translate it), advocated

49. See Gregory Henderson, *Korea: The Politics of the Vortex* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 141; also Cumings, *Origins,* chap. 5.

50. Yi Pŏm-sŏk, *Minjok kwa ch'ŏngnyŏn* [Nation and youth] (Seoul, 1948), p. 27.

independence, lambasted those politicians who were "un-Korean," and urged Koreans to adopt a standpoint of *chuch'e,* which in his usage meant complete subjectivity where everything Korean was concerned. He preferred economic autarky to any external international involvements that might subordinate Korean interests. He urged a pan-national Korean solidarity based on racial purity: "the Nation is the race and the race is the nation" (something perhaps more accurate of Korea, with its coincidence of ethnicity and territory, than any other country save Japan). Talk of "racial essence" and "bloodlines" *(hyŏlt'ong)* runs throughout his work: this for him was the key characteristic defining Korea, and the essential element in its corporate and organic unity. As for the mind and spirit, he thought only the strongest national consciousness *(minjok ŭisik)* could save Korea from predatory great powers. He lived in the era of "the masses," he said, and therefore leaders must "understand and love" the masses, always be among them and never separate from them. One race, one blood, one nation, one state, and inseparable unity between leaders and led would create "a great family" that would endure.[51]

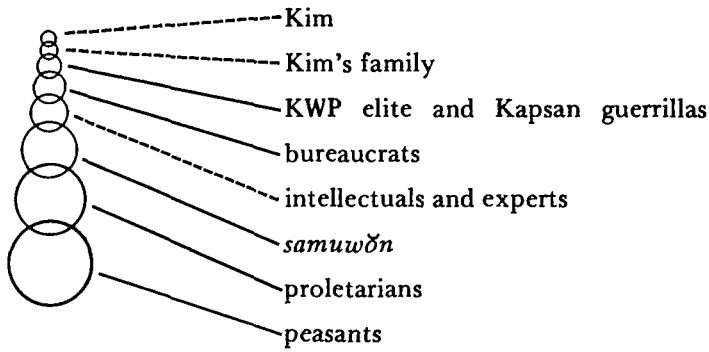
The resonance with Kim Il Sung's ideas is crystal clear. Yi was, however, a romantic and conservative corporatist. He exalted the state, thought leaders should be patriots above politics, railed against the concept of class struggle, and in his bias against capitalism and material pursuits he sought not to overcome it in socialism but to return to an earlier era of community. But his experience and his success in the South suggests that if there is one kernel idea linking postwar Korean leaders together it is corporate national unity at home and autarky vis-à-vis the rest of the world, a combination that is quite overdetermined by Korea's past history of internal factionalism and disastrous external penetration in the imperial era of the nineteenth century, and its political and economic autarky (thus the "Hermit Kingdom") in the 200 years after the Hideyoshi invasions (1592 and 1597). The salience of ideas like those of Yi Pŏm-sŏk in South Korea is perhaps reflected in it being one of the only countries in the world where *Mein Kampf* (in translation) seems still to be a good seller (judging from sidewalk bookstalls). When I taught English in Korea in 1967-68 my middle-school students would often say Hitler was the world leader they most respected.

A socialist (or a conservative) corporatism also appeals to a people with a very strong extended family system, high consciousness of lineage ("the great chain"), major cottage industries putting out genealogies, and the Confucian background that justifies and reinforces

51. Ibid., pp. 9-13, 29-30.

it all. The hierarchical language, with verbal endings and even grammatical markers differing according to the station of the person speaking and being spoken to, is deeply embedded in Korean family practices—so much so that, surprisingly, the North Koreans have not done much to eliminate it. The DPRK constitution defines the family as the core unit of society. Furthermore marriages apparently are still arranged in the North, family themes are exalted in the arts, and the regime has never sought to break up the family unit. For these and other reasons, North Korea often impresses foreign visitors precisely in its cultural conservatism: a Japanese visitor old enough to remember prewar Japan remarked on the similarities he found, and noted the "antiquarian atmosphere" in North Korea.

There remain two additional aspects of the DPRK experience that also account for the emergence of corporate socialism: the process of regime formation, and North Korea's position in the world economy. As discussed above, in the late 1940s the regime emerged with twin characteristics: a top-down hierarchy, and a unique mass politics. If we were to depict the model in abstract, it would look like the old image of a radio signal:



There was a first principle of hierarchy: "cadres decide everything." The Koreans have never challenged the principle that leadership and Communist consciousness coincide at the top, although they have leavened this principle with attention to mass line politics. The mass line usage was not much different from Mao's; the same phrases ("from the masses, to the masses") and the same practices (sending cadres down to lower levels, small group crit/self-crit sessions) are to be found, even if the epistemology is different (Kim would answer Mao's question, "Where do good ideas come from?" by saying "the top").[52] What was different was the peculiar organizational aspect of mass politics.

52. See my "Kim's Korean Communism," *Problems of Communism* (March-April 1974).

The Korean Worker's party from the beginning in 1946 was designated a "mass party of a new type," not a typical small, vanguard unit. Korea has always had the highest percentage of the population enrolled in the party of any Marxist-Leninist regime, fluctuating between 12 and 14 percent. If China followed suit, the CCP would have about 120 to 140 million members! Kim argued that almost anyone should be able to join the party, as long as they were patriots who put the nation and the revolution first. For young people not eligible for the party, and the 70 to 75 percent of the adult population not in the party, there were extensive mass organizations of youths, workers, women, and peasants that made it virtually obligatory for everyone to join something.[53] The unique symbol of the KWP places a writing brush across the hammer and sickle, acknowledging the inclusive policy toward intellectuals and experts: Kim has rarely if ever denigrated them, unlike Mao, and explicitly authorized their widespread introduction into positions of authority. The Koreans also established a vague category, *samuwŏn,* meaning clerks, petty-bourgeois traders, bureaucrats, professors, and so on. My own research into the late 1940s suggests that this category served two purposes: for the regime, it retained educated people and experts who might otherwise have fled south; for large numbers of Koreans it provided a category within which to hide "bad" class background. In membership lists for mass organizations, giving class background of members and their families, the *samuwŏn* are very prominent.[54] *Samuwŏn* also show up prominently in aggregate statistics on KWP membership. In 1946 the percentage was 48 percent; by 1956 *samuwŏn* had dropped to 13 percent and peasants had grown to 61 percent, mostly the result of the war (many *samuwŏn* moved south or were killed, or were working fields in the mid-1950s amid all the destruction). Thus the Korean revolution, far from polarizing the population exclusively into good and bad classes, pursued an inclusive, all-encompassing mass politics. Probably the key factor explaining this would be the relatively industrialized character of the North, and its chronic labor shortages, especially among skilled experts.

This organizational history, however, also expresses the corporate character of the DPRK. Kim Il Sung has often referred to an incorporating method beginning with a core *("haeksim"),* originally referring to his guerrilla comrades but now meaning his own family, which has interpenetrated the commanding heights in truly astonishing

53. Cumings, *Origins,* chap. 11.

54. See original materials on the Tongmyŏn youth corps and party organizations, 1946, in SA 2005/4/35-39, RG 242, "Captured Enemy Documents."

fashion; the core must be constantly steeled and hardened, while moving outward in concentric circles to encompass other elements in the population. It is the primary method of Korean organization, cited over and over in Kim's works. More fundamentally, in my view, this history suggests that, in good corporate fashion, the Koreans have envisioned their society as a mass, the gathered-together "people," rather than a class-based and class-divided society. The union of the three classes—peasant, worker, *samuwŏn*—excludes few but the landlords of the old period who, after all, were much stronger in southern than in northern Korea. In striking contrast to China, the Koreans have not since the 1950s mounted campaigns against "the old bad classes," nor have they suggested that the socialist period may spawn new classes, the clarion call of the Cultural Revolution.

One last aspect of this corporate socialism helps us to understand why Immanuel Wallerstein likes Kim Il Sung—sometimes even quoting from "Comrade Kim." North Korea is the supreme example in the post-colonial developing world of conscious withdrawal from the capitalist world system as Wallerstein defines it (South Korea is perhaps the leading example of the opposite model, too, a fact worth pondering). The DPRK shows the way in the periphery. Unlike Albania in the socialist world and Burma in the "free world," two countries that have withdrawn but to no apparent purpose as their economies idle along, North Korea never idled but always raced. This is withdrawal with development, withdrawal for development. It has been highly successful in its aggregate totals, not just in industry, which might be expected, given Japanese industrialization of northern Korea, but also in agriculture (the North stands somewhere between South Korea and Japan in its per hectare grain production).[55]

Franz Neumann once remarked that "autarky is the philosophy of a fortress about to be beleaguered,"[56] but in North Korea the fortress has always been beleaguered. Few countries have a more unfortunate geopolitical position, jammed cheek-by-jowl against two feuding socialist giants with an always-tense confrontation with the United States and South Korea along the DMZ. The combination of external political pressure and internal ethnic homogeneity is almost enough to predict a tight little polity. But the Koreans have, since the late 1940s, quite consciously sought an autarkic and self-reliant development policy. Late industrial development has always suggested neomercantile strategies abroad and unity and strong states at home, and in the 1930s the late developers (Japan, Germany, Italy) turned corporate or Fascist as

55. U.S. CIA, *Korea: The Economic Race Between North and South* (Washington, 1979).

56. Neumann, *Behemoth*, p. 329.

well. What about "late-late" development? A fortiori, the later the industrialization the stronger the necessity for coordination and unity at home? The experience of both Koreas would suggest a positive answer, not simply because of DPRK corporate socialism, but because the intense pressures of late-late development in South Korea have helped to generate an unprecedentedly strong state as well. In any case the strong domestic unity, the political economy of development, and no doubt the wretched excesses of North Korea, are in part the precipitate of world system pressure in the periphery.

This paper can be brought to a close with one last observation. Roberto Unger, in his fascinating book, distinguishes between an inner and an outer circle in contemporary politics. The inner circle represents power and domination, exercised everywhere by the few. The outer circle includes all the rest, and their search for community, decency, and participation through the architecture of politics. Nowhere has the problem of the inner circle been resolved, he argues, and therefore in the outer circle "the search for community is condemned to be idolatrous, or utopian, or both." In his sense, the inner circle—Kim's nucleus—is clearly the problem in North Korea; in the absence of a nonfamily principle for constituting the core, the outer circle is condemned to idolatry. I think that the apparent stability of the outer circle masks instability at the core, in the failure to constitute a politics that can extend beyond the circle of family and personal relations. With Kim's passing drawing ever closer, the problem of the core moves front and center. The inner core may shatter, whether within the family circle or in the penumbra of old guerrilla allies. When it does, the outer circle will hang in the balance. A politics that, whatever else one may say about it, has brought remarkable stability to Korea for thirty-five years, will be put to the test.

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