

First Session Comments

SHIMOTOMAI Nobuo (Hosei University)

It fills me with great pleasure that *The Last 'Celestial Empire'*, the long-awaited book by my esteemed friend Shen Zhihua, has been published in Japanese by Iwanami Shoten, thanks to the efforts of translator Zhu Jianrong.

It is safe to say that Shen's new interpretation of the 1956 August Faction Incident, that shocked China, North Korea and even Moscow, has established itself as a new standard. Using classified documents from the Chinese Communist Party, Shen has drilled a stake through the heart of the popular belief that Mao Zedong aimed to get Kim Il-sung forced out of power. Even just in terms of the historical documents Shen used to prove this, one cannot help but be blown away. The book is an embodiment of the immense amount of hard work Shen put in to scouring archives both within and outside of China.

From the incident's outbreak in August–September 1956, right up until the withdrawal of China's People's Volunteer Army in early 1958, the China–North Korea relationship posed a risk to the Sino-Soviet Alliance of February 1950. Geographically sandwiched in between China and the Soviet Union, the political crisis in North Korea posed a risk to the security and political ideology of both China and the Soviet Union. Even if that were not the case, crisis management and the hierarchical relationship were key points within the alliance.

After the North Korea-based Soviet-Japanese border conflicts of August 1945 (which originally began with the intention that twenty-five units from the Red Army would battle the Japanese army) came to an abrupt end, the Soviet Union took control of all land north of the 38th parallel and came under pressure to construct a new regime. It was at that point that General Stoykov (also known as Ambassador Stoykov and referred to as the 'son-in-law' of Zhdanov), who handled the management of occupied territories from Moscow, built the ruling party (i.e. the Workers' Party of Korea). It was also at this point that the Division 7, headed up by Japanese interpreter Kovyshenko (who went on to become head of the Japan Unit of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union after working for a period in Tokyo), instated Kim Il-sung, who at the time served as an interpreter to the Soviet Army stationed in Khabarovsk, as the new party leader.

Under the leadership of Stalin, and later Khrushchev, the actual persons responsible at Cominform for devising policy regarding alliance members were Zhdanov, Mikoyan and, from 1957, Andropov. While the question of whether or not an understanding had been reached between China and the Soviet Union regarding the Asian Cominform at the end of 1940 is still under debate, up until the time when Mao Zedong and Kim Il-sung took part in the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution in November 1957, it is believed that an understanding existed that the Soviet Union would manage the strategy for Asia, and that the Asian Tactical Directorate would be based in Beijing. The latter's jurisdiction also likely extended to include the Japanese Communist Party.

The Sino-Soviet and Sino-North Korean relationships were included in this framework. This author believes that 1955 was a crucial turning point for the Cold War in Asia. At the end of April 1955, Kim Il-sung secretly visited Moscow, with the newly proposed manifesto of the Workers' Party of Korea that took the North to be the 'socialist base of operations' in his policy regarding unification with the south. However, Moscow, with its emphasis on peaceful coexistence, turned down this manifesto. It instead criticized Kim Il-sung's 'personality cult' and demanded that the North Korean government divide its authority in a manner akin to one of the Soviet Union's troikas. Kim dealt with the situation by stipulating that he would place Choe Yong-gon in the position of prime minister in the future. However, in December, using the Literary and Art Policy, Kim began to criticize the pro-Soviet faction which had control over the party's internal workings, and also reiterated Juche ideology. The China faction also supported this.

Choe attended the 1956 Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Following that, Brezhnev attended the Third Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea, but in the buildup towards the outbreak of the August Faction Incident, the pro-China faction within the party began to play a central role in the plan to expel Kim under the auspices of 'cult personality' critique. In that regard, it can be inferred that the pro-China faction acted independently of China's wishes, and went into action after informing the Soviet Union's Embassy.

On the other hand, if we observe the actions of Moscow at the end of 1955, it is clear to see that they by no means welcomed the actions of the pro-China faction. Kovyshenko, despite entering Pyongyang together with Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai (it was precisely because of this, that he didn't touch upon the Japanese-Soviet peace treaty negotiations at the time), felt that Kim Il-sung had strengthened his hold over the party. China's image (including that of Peng) was not good at the time in Pyongyang.

Amidst all of this, the revolts in Eastern Europe broke out, forcing China and the Soviet Union to put the North Korea issue on the backburner and deal with the crisis of the demise of Communist Party authority. Furthermore, in 1957, the rebel plot to oust Khrushchev in Moscow failed, and instead, Khrushchev purged top politburo members including Molotov and Bulganin. In the following year, Khrushchev also took on the role of prime minister, and by this stage the Soviet Union's theoretical basis for criticising Kim Il-sung's 'personality cult' and furthermore its clout in Pyongyang had dissipated.

Second Session: *The General Public, Groups and the State*

Letters Written by Citizens of Contemporary China and Their Accompanying Characteristics: A First Attempt at a Research Methodology

ZHANG Letian (Fudan University)

1. On gathering materials relating to life within contemporary Chinese society

After Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, rural Chinese areas headed down the path of agricultural collectivization. This brought with it the need to record in-depth information on the production and distribution of several hundred million peasants. China also experienced the unfolding of multiple political movements, leaving in their wake a vast number of written materials including self-criticisms and confessions.

These two factors led to China becoming the country with the largest stock of non-governmental materials. However, for a variety of reasons, materials which offer us an insight into the lives of everyday Chinese people had hitherto not been collated, let alone utilized for the purpose of academic research.

After Deng's reforms, the combined effect of the dismantling of the people's commune system and the rapid development of Chinese economy and society led to a vast number of these materials being lost or sent to be used in paper mills.

From 1988 on, this author began to collate materials on China's rural areas, focusing mainly on materials hailing from Lianmincun in Northern Zhejiang and its surrounding areas. To this author's knowledge, the body of

