

**May 16, 1963**

**Comment on the Internal Korean Workers Party  
Brochure, 'The Revolutionary Traditions of our Party  
Established during the Period of the Armed  
Anti-Japanese Struggle'**

**Citation:**

"Comment on the Internal Korean Workers Party Brochure, 'The Revolutionary Traditions of our Party Established during the Period of the Armed Anti-Japanese Struggle'", May 16, 1963, Wilson Center Digital Archive, SAPMO-BA, Berlin, DY 30, IV A 2/20/250.  
Translated for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer.  
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/110116>

**Summary:**

An East German report on the development of Kim Il Sung's cult of personality and the portrayal of the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle in North Korea.

**Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from ROK Ministry of Unification

**Original Language:**

German

**Contents:**

Translation - English

SED Central Committee  
Department of International Relations  
Archival Signature: SAPMO-BA, Berlin, DY 30, IV A 2/20/250

[GDR Ministry for Foreign Affairs]  
1st Extra-European Department  
Section Korea

Berlin, 16 May 1963

#### C o m m e n t

on the internal KWP party brochure

“The Revolutionary Traditions of our Party Established during the Period of the Armed anti-Japanese Struggle”

1. According to the introduction, this work attempts to examine the historical importance of the anti-Japanese liberation struggle, to summarize experiences and traditions from this struggle, and to establish links between traditions of the anti-Japanese struggle and current society.

2. In outlining the historic position of the anti-Japanese liberating struggle, the brochure correctly defines its qualitatively higher position compared to all previous struggles, and it underlines properly the need for armed struggle.

a. However, the line of argumentation is insufficient and in part wrong. This is mostly due to the attempt to view the Korean-Japanese liberation movement independently from the struggle of the Chinese people and their oppressors, as well as from the international context and its influences. It is an historic fact that there was a strong link between the struggle of the Chinese people and the Korean patriots (flight of many Korean communists to China, among them Kim Il Sung; membership of Korean communists in the Chinese Communist Part, including Kim Il Sung; operations by Korean partisans in the context, and as part, of struggles of the Chinese People's Liberation Army; quantitatively low Korean proportion etc.). This link is not recognized in this brochure, and therefore it provides a very one-sided perspective. Another example for such perspective is the ignoring of international context, like the world economic crisis between 1929 and 1932, the struggle for a united and people's front, or the VII World Congress of the Comintern in May 1935 (where also a representative of the Korean communists participated). As a result of those omissions, the [brochure's] author overstates the role of the Korean partisans' struggle. Two quotes may illustrate this:

“They show that the armed anti-Japanese struggle dealt over the course of 15 years a devastating blow to the Japanese imperialists and accelerated their defeat.”

“The armed anti-Japanese struggle dealt the most striking blow to the Japanese colonialists, not just in military but also in political regard.” (page 8)

In continuation of this nationalist exaggeration of the role of the Korean part in the anti-Japanese struggle, this work also contains boundless nationalist arrogance, as

the following quote demonstrates:

“We know many facts from the past and present history of East and West where eminent heroes, in critical moments of life or death, assumed responsibility for the fate of the nation and gave courage and hope to the broad people’s masses.

However, we do not know of any other such extraordinarily just, patriotic, and heroic struggle like the armed anti-Japanese struggle of the Korean communists under the leadership of Kim Il Sung, which occurred in extraordinarily difficult times.” (p. 23)

b. In this context, we also need to closer examine the role of the leader as portrayed by the author. The correct Marxist-Leninist theory about the role of the leader is abused in order to justify the cult surrounding Comrade Kim Il Sung. The common thread of the entire text is the exaggeration of the role of Kim Il Sung. There is no other name mentioned than his. Though it is known that such leading comrades of the DPRK like Choe Yong-geon [Choe Yong Gon], Kim Il, Pak Geum-cheol [Pak Kum Chol] and other played an important role as well. The same applies to the already deceased Kim Chaek [Kim Chaek], Pak Dal [Pak Tal], and others.

Also two examples here:

“Comrade Kim Il Sung is the great leader of the people. He is the eminent leader of the Korean revolution who accepted responsibility for the fate of the fatherland and the people during the darkest period of the Japanese rule. He held high the banner of the revolution and the torch of anti-Japanese resistance.” (page 15)

“Who if not Comrade Kim Il Sung could have saved the fatherland and the people in their destitute situation during the darkest period of Japanese rule, and called them to struggle and victory?” (page 16)

Especially the development of a Marxist-Leninist line of strategy and tactics about the struggle for revolution in Korea is attributed to Comrade Kim Il Sung.

“The eminent strategy and tactics of the anti-Japanese partisan units, the high communist revolutionary spirit of the partisans, their great style and grand methods of work, all those noble experiences of the revolution assembled during the armed anti-Japanese struggle - they are connected to the ideas, the leadership style, and the methods of guidance of Comrade Kim Il Sung and his struggle.” (page 16)

“During the entire period of the armed anti-Japanese struggle Comrade Kim Il Sung developed, through creative application of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism to concrete reality, the most scientific strategy and tactics. He was always able to defeat a superior enemy with minimal forces.” (page 18)

This does completely negate and depreciate the influences of the CCP, the Comintern, and other Korean communists. Also, it is fact that, for instance, the 10-Point-Proposal by the League for the Rebirth of the Fatherland does feature, despite its overall positive character, an extremely grave deficiency: It completely ignores the peasant issue, although the peasant revolution represented the large majority of the overall population. Yet there is no critical discussion of this issue at all.

3. The author lists as valuable revolutionary experiences: ideological preparation for building a Marxist-Leninist party, formation of the Democratic Patriotic United Front, setting the course for people's power, creation of a people's armed forces, revolutionary optimism, belief in Marxism-Leninism, spirit of unrelenting struggle,

principle “everything by our own force”, socialist patriotism, proletarian internationalism, working methods, etc.

The text makes efforts to find “specific characteristics” for KWP traditions beyond the general ones common to all parties doing the Marxist-Leninist struggle. By doing so, it identifies from a scientific perspective generalities as “specific characteristics”, like for instance: that the traditions are Marxist-Leninist struggle traditions; that they were generated through extremely difficult lengthy struggle and were successfully tested; that they came about during the existence of truly proletarian international relations.

The latter is portrayed exclusively from a vantage point what the Korean partisans did for the Soviet Union and the PR China. It also features the following remark: “Without wavering, they gave their lives to spread the seed of revolution under the broad masses of Chinese people, and to protect life and possessions of the Chinese (page 29)”. Again, this is a quite arrogant remark towards the Chinese comrades. On this issue as well, the argumentation is extremely weak and looks constructed.

4. From those experiences made by Korean anti-Japanese partisans the entire current DPRK policy is derived:

“Based on organizational, ideological, as well as tactical and strategic foundations established during the anti-Japanese struggle, today our party is leading toward victory with the same methods” (page 19). In particular the principle “everything by our own force”, the Juche principle, the Chollima movement, the Cheongsan-ri method, the Tae-an principle, the overcoming of all problems through remembering the anti-Japanese partisans, to lead a life in the spirit of the anti-Japanese partisans, et cetera. For all that, “the revolutionary traditions were comprehensively adapted and developed.”

It is noteworthy in this context that the strong exaggeration of “experiences” and “traditions” for the most part have begun just now, for instance the principle “everything by our own force”. Obviously the partisans had to support themselves mostly by its own. However, the principle “everything by our own force” is applied to them just now. It is suggested from hindsight and turned into a tradition. It is created as a principle and applied today to completely different contexts.

Undoubtedly, this exaggeration of the role played by past experiences ignores substantial qualitative changes that occurred since the time of the anti-Japanese liberation struggle – in particular the establishment of the mighty socialist camp and the power of the Soviet Union, the construction of socialism in the DPRK, and so on. The exaggeration leads to the ignorance of experiences and strength of the socialist camp.

“The course to build an independent national economy is the grand result of our party's economic policy in congruence with 'Juche' in the construction of socialist economy. This is the shining embodiment of the revolutionary spirit of the anti-Japanese partisans. This spirit is based on the principle 'everything by our own force'.” (page 37)

Yet it is this principle “everything by our force”, which prevented the DPRK from faster progress especially in the economic field. Also, fictitious links are created here to force everything into a framework.

This becomes even more evident on the issue of working style and working measures used by the partisans in the struggle against Japanese imperialism. It is portrayed as the foundation for current working mechanisms of party and state to steer and lead a

socialist state. "Since the first days of its existence, our party comprehensively adopted the great working style and the working methods of the anti-Japanese partisans who had developed them in the period of armed anti-Japanese struggle. It develops them further in the process of improving working style and working methods of the cadres and the further solidification of the victorious socialist system." (page 38)

Throughout a strong emphasis of ideological awareness is noteworthy. This correct line, however, is also exaggerated and overstated when it comes to the education of the people. You cannot interpret otherwise, for example, passages like this one: "When they encounter problems, they [the people] look for strength and courage in the revolutionary spirit of the anti-Japanese partisans and overcome the difficulties" (page 44).

There would be many more comments to be made on the text of this brochure. In conclusion, the following can be stated:

Summary:

1. The narrative provided in the text on the anti-Japanese partisan struggle of the Koreans and the assessment of their role does not reflect the actual course of history. This brochure is a new link in the chain of a false representation of Korea's history between 1930 and 1945. This might be the reason why this work is used as internal party material only.
2. The exaggeration of the role of the anti-Japanese partisan struggle and its experiences are an expression of nationalism. It serves as the foundation for the current policy of the KWP and the DPRK government.
3. Kim Il Sung's role in the context of anti-Japanese partisan struggle is exaggerated and continues to be overstated (for example: "a concentration of great working methods and the working style of the anti-Japanese partisans adopted by our party is represented by the famous Cheongsan-ri method invented by Comrade Kim Il Sung", page 39). This is alien to Marxism-Leninism.
4. There is a denial of the Soviet Union's role as Korea's liberator from the Japanese yoke and its support for the establishment of democratic conditions in Korea, as well as of its support for peaceful reunification, and the huge experiences of the Soviet Union concerning the construction of socialism and communism.
5. Thus we see the continuation of teaching to the Korean people a wrong picture of their own history, as well of the history of the international working class.

[signed]

Wegracht

Senior Associate

CC:

1x Central Committee, Foreign Policy Department

1x Embassy

1x Counselor at Embassy

1x Culture Department, Comrade Grunert

1x Section Korea