

Purging ‘Factionalist’ Opposition to Kim Il Sung: The First Party Conference of the Korean Worker’s Party in 1958

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Abstract

In March 1958, delegates from across North Korea met in the National Art Theatre in Pyongyang for the First Conference of the Korean Worker’s Party. To date, it has an event largely overlooked by South Korean and Western historians of North Korea because of a lack of source material. The newly unearthed official minutes, however, reveal a highly staged event in which the opponents of high-level party opponents of Kim Il Sung (Kim Ilsŏng 김일성) are subjected to what amounts to a show trial, before they lose their party membership. The official minutes are notable for containing one of the only official North Korean descriptions of the alleged plot by certain military members of the Yanan Faction to overthrow the Kim Il Sung government in a military coup.

The purpose of the Party Conference within Marxist-Leninist parties is discussed, the background to the Conference and developments in the communist world are also described. The delegate roster is then briefly analysed, interesting and significant statistics are explained with broader reference to North Korean history—the context and what it can tell us about the structure of power in the Korean Workers Party back then. Following this, the show trial by conference is detailed. The trial by conference is split into two parts, the first dealing with their economic crimes and the second with their political crimes. This article discusses both sets of allegations in light of the actual economic pathologies of Soviet-type economies and the political nature of the Kim Il-sungist system.

Keywords: North Korea, North Korean History, Korean Workers Party, Kim Il Sung, Factional Politics

Introduction

In March 1958, five years after the end of the Korean War, Korean Worker's Party (KWP) delegates met in a theatre in Pyongyang for what was to be one of the final chapters in an ongoing struggle for the soul of the party and country. The First Party Conference of Representatives of the Korean Worker's Party is an event that is largely forgotten in discussions of North Korean history within Korean language scholarship in South Korea, in official North Korean historical narratives and within Western scholarship.² This is largely because little evidence as to what actually took place there was in the public domain—that is, before the discovery of the official minutes of the Conference by Fyodor Tertitskiy in the private collection of a former Soviet diplomat.³

The minutes are a remarkable source, unclassified and seemingly in open circulation in the late 1950s. Much of the proceedings are taken up with the alleged economic sabotage of 'factionalists'—discussed further below. Moreover, sensational allegations about a plot within the military to overthrow the state are made. As will be discussed further below, some 'factionalists' in attendance are given the chance to confess their crimes, with one of them refusing to do so. This might be one of the last times that a high-ranking North Korean 'political criminal' is shown openly in defiance of the Party and state.

The leader of the Party and the state, Kim Il Sung, had been waging an internal struggle against 'factions', elements within the party that opposed his policies and grip on power. His major opponents in this struggle—Koreans from the Soviet Union and China—had tried to force him to loosen his growing grip on power, cult of personality, and economic policies that favoured heavy industry over consumer goods. The actual existence of 'factionalism' as opposed to groups of common origin was disputed at the time and has been disputed subsequently by some historians.⁴ Nonetheless, different groups from varied places appeared to have formed networks within the (North) Korean Workers Party, and probably came into existence soon after northern Korea came under Soviet military control in late 1945.⁵ Kim Il Sung, a former Korean independence fighter and guerrilla commander based in Northeast China before 1940, had begun to move against some of these groups in the elite from different backgrounds as early as 1948.⁶ However, it was not until the end of the Korean War in July 1953 that Kim Il Sung began to systematically purge the elite of potential rivals.

The Conference was an event that occurred in a highly significant year: 1958. The Conference finalized the purge of Kim Il Sung's major factional rivals, who had previously sought to make him curtail his growing cult of personality, institute collective leadership, and reorient economic policy in favour of consumer goods production.⁷ The year 1958 saw the withdrawal of Chinese military forces from the North around the time of the Conference, the start of the Chollima mass labour mobilization movement in North Korean industry, and perhaps most significantly for the world today, the signing of a Soviet-North Korean atomic energy cooperation agreement.⁸

The Conference

Background: Factional Warfare

There is some controversy over whether factions actually existed in the Korean Workers Party of the 1940s and 1950s. The term 'faction' does not merely connote a 'group', but has a very specific, negative connotation in the Marxist-Leninist political lexicon. Factions had been banned from the Russian Bolshevik Party in 1921, and Stalin would define any organized opposition to his policies and/or leadership as factionalism.⁹ This political concept was inherited by the North Koreans in the 1940s, and hence the term 'faction' has distinctly negative overtones in North Korean political discourse.

However, while the term 'faction' in the North Korean context may be problematic and may be used to denigrate the character of Kim Il Sung's opponents, there is no doubt that there were distinct if not always unified groups within the leadership of the KWP until the late 1950s. These groups were partially defined by where they had spent the pre-1945 period, and where they had become communists. For convenience they will be referred hereafter as 'factions', but the term is not meant as one of abuse, and where needed, the questions regarding the cohesiveness of some factions will be noted.

There were four major factions in the KWP as of 1953. The domestic faction of communists who had been active in Korea during the Japanese colonial period (1910–45). This faction had largely been purged from the top leadership by the mid-1950s, with the trial of Pak Hŏn-yŏng in 1955 marking the end of this faction as an element within the party elite. Other members of this faction include O Ki-sŏp, who was in attendance at the conference where he is finally expelled from the Party. The domestic faction can be divided into several sub-groups, Koreans from the northern half of the peninsula like O Ki-sŏp and those from the southern half like Pak Hŏn-yŏng. Hence, the concept of 'domestic faction' as a cohesive

group is indeed questionable.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the sub-groups of this perhaps less than cohesive faction appear to have disappeared from elite North Korean politics by the late 1950s.

By contrast, the ‘Soviet faction’ of Koreans who had returned from the Soviet Union post-1945 and who had had experience working in the CPSU and/or Soviet government prior to 1945 were clearly a bloc to some extent.¹¹ Among its most influential members was Pak Ŭi-wan, ex-vice premier, and attendee at the Conference. By this time, many of its other high-profile members were either purged or had found exile in the Soviet Union.¹² That said, a few survived the purge of the 1950s, including Nam Il, a former soldier in the Soviet Army during the Second World War, and Pang Hak-sae, Kim Il Sung’s spy chief.

The third group were returnees from China. The so-called ‘Yanan faction’ was made up of Koreans who had spent time in Yanan as members of the Chinese Communist Party before 1945, returning to the Korean peninsula after liberation. Unlike the domestic and Soviet factions, they also had military units that were to form an important part of the North Korean People’s Army. Some of their number were also to become high-level military leaders.¹³ Among them was the former Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People’s Assembly (nominal head of state), Kim Tu-bong, who was at the Conference.

Kim Il Sung’s faction of ex-guerilla fighters from Manchuria who would ultimately emerge as dominant force in North Korean political life by the late 1950s, and create a state reflecting their own ideological preferences, experiences and mentality.¹⁴ Some were present at the conference including Kim Il, Ch’oe Kwang and Ch’oe Yong-gŏn.

These factions seemingly existed in North Korean political life from the mid-1940s onwards. However, factional intrigues did not boil over into open confrontations on matters of policy and power until the mid-1950s. Indeed, it was not until the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1956 that serious moves began to either unseat Kim Il Sung, or at least radically change the policies that the party and state pursued under his leadership.¹⁵ Before that, as stated above, there had been a significant purge of the Domestic Faction, and a small number members of other factions had also been purged, including Hŏ Ka-i, previously the most influential member of the Soviet Faction.¹⁶

In 1956, Nikita Khrushchev, the new leader of the USSR, denounced Stalin’s cult of personality in a closed session of the 20th Congress and began the process of destalinization that spread to the rest of the Socialist bloc. Kim Il Sung prized many aspects of the Stalinist system, including its leadership principle centred on the cult of personality, and an economic model that emphasized heavy industrial

production and autarky (socialism in one country). Thus, he sought to resist reformism at home. His factional opponents sought the reverse: to ease him out of power. Such moves culminated in the August Plenum of 1956 in which internal party opposition figures sought to force Kim Il Sung to change track. The principal figures behind this move include Pak Ch'ang-ok (vice premier), Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik (also a vice premier), and Yun Kong-hŭm (Commerce Minister), as well as Pak Ŭi-wan. They were outnumbered and outmanoeuvred, and bar the speedy intervention of Soviet and Chinese party officials several weeks later in September 1956, they would likely have disappeared from public view completely. Some of the Yanan faction escaped to China soon after the August Plenum, believing (likely correctly) that they would be purged and face persecution.¹⁷

The intervention joint Sino-Soviet intervention of September 1956 brought a temporary reprieve, though their leadership positions were not fully restored.¹⁸ However by around August or September of the following year, the purge of the elite had begun again in earnest. Gradually the 'ringleaders' were demoted and eventually forced out of any positions of power, before finally being arrested in late 1957, except for those who had managed to escape to China or the Soviet Union back in 1956.¹⁹ Thus, the fate of factional opponents to Kim was largely sealed by September of 1956. North Korea's fraternal allies intervened in September 1956, but did not seek to remove Kim, nor did they succeed in fully restoring his rivals to power.²⁰

The conference's significance is as a public event that finalized purges that began in 1956 and began again in 1957. It was a public forum for the shaming and expulsion of senior rivals to Kim Il Sung, and also where new accusations against Yanan Koreans in the military were made—justifying additional purges of the military.²¹ Moreover, the conference convoked at the very same time as Chinese military forces (who had fought in the Korean War) had begun to withdraw from North Korea.²² It is telling that at the very same time as Chinese People's Volunteer Army (CPVA) were withdrawn, the purge of factional rivals, and Yanan Korean military cadres was finalized.

Purpose and Antecedents

The Korean Worker's Party in the 1950s was a Marxist-Leninist party that had been created under Soviet tutelage in the late 1940s.²³ The Party Congress was the supreme decision making organ of the party, supposed to meet every five years to elect the party's major decision-making body, the Central Committee (CC).²⁴ The Party Conference was a lesser gathering, optional, that could be held between Party Congresses when needed. Under Lenin, Conferences were held frequently,

and Richard Sakwa notes in his study of Soviet politics that they “provided a forum for debate and the discussion of policy options, although their precise powers with respect to electing the CC were unclear.”²⁵ As Graeme Gill notes in his study of Soviet political language and regime legitimacy, Party Congresses and Conferences were important forums “where leading figures gave speeches designed in part to provide guidance to those on lower administrative levels.”²⁶ Thus, both Party Congresses and Conferences had symbolic and practical functions, though the Conference’s functions were far less clear.

Several peculiarities to the 1958 Conference are worth noting here before discussing what actually happened there. First, according to Kim Hak-jun, as of 1958, the Korean Worker’s Party bylaws contained no provisions pertaining to Party Conferences; hence, this was “an anomalous event.”²⁷ Second, the Party Conference format had not been employed in the Soviet Union—upon which most of North Korea’s political institutional forms were modelled—since 1941. Indeed, as Sakwa notes, they had “died out completely under Stalin following the eighteenth [Conference] in 1941.”²⁸

This raises an interesting question: where might Kim Il Sung have gotten the idea of holding a Conference in order to purge the party? It could be that he just thought to revive an old CPSU institution, but perhaps it is more likely that he drew inspiration from prior events in Mao’s China. A factional struggle known as the Gao Gang-Rao Shushi Affair and the purges that resulted was finally resolved with the First National Party Conference of the Communist Party of China (CCP) in March 1955. The first National Conference CCP was in many ways a prototype for the KWP Conference that met three years (almost to the day) later. The resolution of factional issues was discussed by Deng Xiaoping in his report to the conference, and was accompanied by an unrelated report delivered by Chen Yun on the progress of the First Five Year plan. Gao Gang and Rao Shushi were the leaders of an alleged factional plot to depose Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi (number 2 and 3 in the party apparatus at the time). They were formally expelled from the CCP and those influenced by them engaged in self-criticism at the Conference.²⁹ It seems then, that Kim Il Sung may have emulated Mao’s use of the Party Conference format, given the fact that such events were no longer held in the Soviet Union and no such event was even mentioned in the KWP by-laws at the time. Thus, it appears that this ‘anomalous event’ as Kim Hak-jun termed it, may in fact have been a borrowing from an immediate Chinese antecedent.

Existing Research and the North Korean View

As noted above, the first Conference of the KWP has received little coverage in existing historical studies of North Korea. Robert Scalapino and Chong-sik Lee, back in 1972, identify March 1958 as the month in which factional purges spread to the military, with the purge of Chang P'yŏng-san and other Yanan Koreans from the upper echelons of the army.³⁰ They also state that 'Kim forces launched an "anti-sectarian" struggle from below ... being climaxed by the First Conference', but they do not elaborate further on this point.³¹ More recently, Balázs Szalontai uses declassified Hungarian documents to identify the Conference as being the venue in which such purges began.³² Andrei Lankov's study of declassified Soviet diplomatic documents dealing with the period indicates that Soviet diplomats were made aware of much of what occurred at the Conference, including Yanan Korean Yang-gye's speech, and the humiliation of Kim Tu-bong (former Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly and prominent Yanan Korean). Connections with the factional purges of the military seemingly are also referenced, though indirectly.³³ While at the same time, as Lankov notes, North Korean media at the time did not accord the Conference as much attention as such events were given.³⁴

More recent scholarship has shed some further light on the context of the conference. As already noted above, the conference was took place during an important time in North Korean history. Shen and Xia note that conference purged Kim Tu-bong, and the withdrawal of Chinese forces from the North combined with rapidly improving relations with Beijing and Moscow, even as repression inside the DPRK was reaching a high point, and economic autarky becoming a more pronounced policy position.³⁵ Indeed, James Person notes that Kim Il Sung delivered a speech on economic independence at the conference, and that this signalled a significant shift in regime economic policy toward autarky due to a reduction of economic aid from the socialist bloc.³⁶ Here, Person is clearly more focused on the economic matters, as this is what his Soviet documentary sources reflect. However, as the minutes below show, the conference was actually concerned more with politics.

Given the event's significance: the final expulsion of high-level members of rival groups in the top leadership, it is surprising how little coverage of actual events there was. *Rodong Sinmun*, the KWP Central Committee's official newspaper, and the country's newspaper of record, included a simple announcement that Conference was beginning on March 3rd.³⁷ The following day, Ri Jong-ok's (head of the State Planning Committee) report to the Conference on the First Five Year Plan (1957–1961) was printed in full, along with a brief summary of events.³⁸ On March 5th, there was further editorial coverage, photographs and pictorials of

economic plans, described as a ‘great vision.’³⁹ The March 6th edition included Pak Kūm-chōl’s report on party discipline entitled ‘On further strengthening Party unity and solidarity.’⁴⁰ *Rodong Sinmun* covered the broad outline of what is discussed at the Conference, Kim Il Sung’s speech on the final day was not printed, nor were any of the speeches of delegates.⁴¹

While, as will become clear below, the Conference was principally concerned with finalizing the purge of anti-Kim factions from the KWP, *Rodong Sinmun* focused on the Five Year Plan and the need to strengthen party discipline and popular education. While the latter can be seen as a corollary of disunity within the party at lower levels, it does not necessarily directly relate to factional intrigues at the apex of power—which was actually the main subject of the Conference.

The Delegates

Delegates met in the Pyongyang National Art Theatre (now called the Moranbong Theatre) from 3rd March to 6th March 1958. The minutes of the Conference offer a wealth of statistical information on the social and political background of the delegates. The most important statistic of all is the number of party members: 1,181,094, as of the Conference, and 1,075 delegates represent them.⁴² This statistic agrees with Soviet diplomatic documents from later in 1958 cited by Lankov, indicating that total party membership was 1,181,095 as of July 1st 1958.⁴³ It also implies that there may have been a freeze in membership while issues of Party discipline were being ‘dealt with’. Moreover, given that population of North Korea in two years later is estimated to have been less than 11 million, these numbers imply that over 10% of North Korea’s population were party members in 1958.⁴⁴ This also means that party membership had risen by over 400,000 from 725,762 in 1948—a 62% increase.⁴⁵

At the Third Party Congress of the KWP held two years before in 1956, there had been a mere 916 delegates in attendance, while party membership had reportedly only risen by 16,149 from levels given at the Third Party Congress. This indicates that each delegate at the conference represented fewer party members. Conversely, the Conference was four days long, whereas the Third Party Congress was a week long.⁴⁶ In these aspects, the North Korean Party Conference differs from its putative Chinese prototype in that the Chinese conference was attended by a mere 257 delegates, yet these delegates met for a total of eight days.⁴⁷ Indeed, as will become clear below, it appears as if the North Korean Party Conference of 1958 was supposed to be a full-scale gathering of party representatives convoked for a specific purpose in mind: to denounce factionalists and finalize their expulsion from the party. This gives rise to the question: who were these delegates?

The minutes of the KWP Conference indicate that over 50% of delegates were either party functionaries (around 38%), or state officials (nearly 15%).⁴⁸ This in a country where only 14% of the labour force was considered white-collar in 1960, full-time cadres from the party and state were certainly massively overrepresented.⁴⁹ Another interesting statistic is the number delegates with “experience of ‘struggling against either Japanese colonial rule or against the South Korean government following liberation’” (22.5%). The anti-Japanese guerrilla ‘tradition’ that was to play central role of North Korea’s later history is in evidence here. The vast majority ‘entered the Party’ after 1945 but before the formation of the KWP in 1949 (61.5%), while only 6.7% of delegates had been members of recognized predecessor organizations before liberation. Hence, the delegates were a group principally comprised of Party members who joined the North Korean communist movement around the time or after Kim Il Sung became its paramount leader, with a further 27.2% having joined after 1949.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the vast majority were over 30 (97%), with most being in their thirties (50.5%). Most delegates (57.3%) only had a primary school education.⁵¹ In the latter regard, the educational level of the delegates was comparable to Kim Il Sung’s own.⁵² Delegates in their thirties would have been in their teens during the Second World War, living under Japanese colonial rule, where enrolment rates at primary school were still under 50% and post-primary education enrolment rates were far lower.⁵³

The conference was presided over by Kim Il Sung, Ch’oe Yong-gŏn, Pak Chŏng-ae, Kim Il, Pak Kŭm-chŏl, Kim Ch’ang-man, Nam Il and Chŏng Il-ryong.⁵⁴ It is interesting to note that of these eight only three survived the next round of factional purges in 1967. Pak Chŏng-ae, Pak Kŭm-chŏl and Kim Ch’ang-man were all relieved of their positions in 1967–68.⁵⁵ While Nam Il died in suspicious circumstances in 1976, Chŏng Il-ryong also lost his posts in late 1971.⁵⁶

The Conference also saw the election of eleven new full CC members Ri Chu-yŏn, Ch’oe Chŏl-hwan, Ch’oe Gwang, Ch’oe Yong-jin, Kim T’ae-gŭn, Chŏng Du-hwan, Pak Ch’ang-sik, Sŏ Chŏl, Pak Gwang-hee, Pak Yong-guk, Kim Ch’ang-bong.⁵⁷ These new members of the CC had hitherto believed to be added in 1961, at the Fourth Party Congress of the KWP.⁵⁸

The Minutes indicate that 38 delegates (including Kim Il Sung himself) spoke at the Conference. Of those, the identities of four delegates could not be confirmed using existing reference sources. Of the remaining 33 delegates, four had already been purged from top leadership positions—Kim Tu-bong, O Ki-sŏp, Pak Ŭi-wan, and Yang Gye. Of the rest, 24 were full or candidate members of the CC, two appear to have been model workers, two were provincial party secretaries, and two were technical specialists/technocrats (one in public health, another in transport).⁵⁹ The

presence of Kim Hwae-il, a model worker and the putative initiator of the first labour mobilization movement in North Korea back in 1948, is also notable.⁶⁰

Thus, over 60% of speakers were members of the top elite, being members of the CC, a high number indeed. The Conference was clearly an event to show unity of purpose amongst those who ran the country at the time. It was also an occasion in which former top members of the elite—Kim Tu-bong, Pak Ŭi-wan, O Ki-sŏp and Yang Kye—were to confirm the conspiracies that they were allegedly implicated in and confess their wrongdoing.

The Economy and Factionalism

The majority of the conference's content was structured around the reports of two individuals—Ri Jong-ok and Pak Kŭm-chŏl. Ri, head of the State Planning Committee, first delivered a long report about the First Five Year Plan (1957–1961).⁶¹ The report itself contains little in the way of new information relating to the first five-year plan that has been covered in depth already elsewhere.⁶² However, this report was followed by a full 23 speeches, ostensibly on economic matters. For instance, problems with retail prices and product quality are touched upon,⁶³ resistance to innovation amongst sections of party workers and the bureaucracy are raised,⁶⁴ and the failure to achieve targets set by the state planning agency are also mentioned.⁶⁵ A perennial issue in planned economies known as 'sectionalism', in which enterprises under different ministries are reluctant to trade and cooperate with one another, is also mentioned several times.⁶⁶ Yet, as noted above, this conference's principal concern was not the finer points of planning coherence, norm setting for particular industries, or incentive issues.

Indeed, in the main, the speeches given tended to follow a similar pattern: praise for the party, its leadership and the excellent economic plan, before a lengthy denunciation of factionalists and their economic activities (other activities are mentioned by a few speakers). Speakers were as fulsome in their censure for factionalists as they were in their praise for party and leadership. Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, Pak Ch'ang-ok, their nefarious 'associates', and 'lackeys' were accused of being both incompetent and cunning, nepotistic and excessively reliant on outsiders. They were accused of sabotaging, or otherwise seriously hindering production in major industries including construction, coal mining, transport, public health, retail and distribution, fisheries, and finance. However, the level of detail involved in these accusations seemingly speaks to the fact that these were not all merely insults and abuses but some at least were indicative of actual issues that probably existed in industry at the time—being symptoms of the underlying pathologies in command economy.⁶⁷

This was a time of seismic economic changes in North Korea. The first five year plan heralded a big push to construct socialism at home, agriculture had come under state control with 96% of farm families being under direct of the state.⁶⁸ Similarly, the retail sector was also completely nationalized in 1958. Both these changes were very important: North Korea was a predominately rural society in the late 1950s, and the wholesale/retail sector was crucial in supplying consumer goods and food to urban and rural areas. These changes were discussed at length in Ri Jong-ok's report, which stressed the importance of improving the variety of consumer products, and the productivity of the rural sector, among other issues.⁶⁹

The retail sector had been managed over by Yun Kong-hŭm up until the August Incident.⁷⁰ Thus, problems the sector faced with allocation and incentives, particularly issues with low quality and lack of supply were attributed to Yun, who became a convenient scapegoat. Yun was blamed for the decline in the food supply, textiles, and other consumables. Accusations of 'wastage' and 'greed' in the industry, 'illegal' debt write-offs for retailers (presumably private), served as convenient excuses for food shortages and other goods shortages in the country in 1954–5—alleged to be deliberate acts of sabotage.⁷¹

The consequences of Yun's treachery served as justification for a total state takeover of the retail sector. Yun allegedly left the countryside without necessary provisions and allowed unscrupulous merchants to take advantage of the situation.⁷² Such activities appeared to be redolent of private sector merchants in the Soviet Union during the New Economic Policy, the so-called *Nepmen*. Kim Il Sung made the same decision as Stalin before him when faced with private profit in the retail and distribution sector: wholesale nationalisation.⁷³ Interestingly, there were also references to resistance amongst certain richer farmers to the collectivization drive, though this was not blamed on factionalists.⁷⁴ The agricultural question—specifically the speed of collectivisation caused significant trouble—had been a key issue in facing the country prior to the August Incident. A famine occurred in 1955, and Yun appears to have become a convenient scapegoat for Kim Il Sung to explain away issues caused by overly rapid collectivization and policy decisions that he had made which further aggravated food supply issues.⁷⁵

At the same time, other economic sectors where factionalists had been 'found' were singled out for criticism. For instance, 'high quantity and low quality' production is associated with factionalists by speaker Cho Tong-sŏp.⁷⁶ Cho was head of the Ryongsŏng Machine Works Factory Party Committee (in Hŭngnam, South Hamgyŏng) and a Vice-chair of the Central Committee. These accusations are similarly painted as being part of a pattern of deliberate sabotage on the part of factionalists, who allegedly engaged in a wide variety of seemingly unrelated and sometimes even contradictory actions in order to bring the state and economy

to ruin. It should be noted that the accusations Cho made against factionalists could have been made in any Stalinist economic setting toward any manager or worker behaving according to the incentive structures of Soviet-type economies. Simply put, people involved in production prioritized quantity over quality because quantity was associated with success in Kim Il Sung's North Korea just as it was in Stalin's Soviet Union.⁷⁷ Such problems did not disappear with the purges of the 1950s, but factionalism was a convenient excuse for the massive economic problems the country faced in the wake of the Korean War and as a result of the hyper-Stalinist line that Kim Il Sung had decided to pursue.

Pak Ŭi-wan, ex-vice premier, and Kim Tu-bong were both seemingly in attendance for the entirety of the conference. Pak, a Soviet Korean, and Kim, a Yanan Korean, were both prominent members of their respective factions, and are accused of a number of economy-related crimes and misdemeanours. Neither was initially implicated in the events of the August Plenum, however.⁷⁸ Pak was accused by Kim Yu-p'il (an official or worker from a Steel Works in North Hamgyŏng) of never coming to see the facility and disrupting construction there.⁷⁹ Later on in proceedings, Kim Ŭng-sang (candidate member of the CC) accused Pak of behaving like a colonial era 'foreman' at construction sites, threatening subordinates, changing plans arbitrarily, and ignoring 'creative opinions.'⁸⁰

Similarly, Kim Tu-bong was painted as being thoroughly uninterested in economic affairs by Kim Yu-p'il, having never visited the latter's facility.⁸¹ Yet again, such accusations within the economic sphere can actually be seen as a product of the basic facts of the political system and its domination over economic processes, as well as its general organizational dynamics. As Paul Gregory has described at length, Soviet-type economies relied on 'nested dictatorship' in which officials behaved as 'mini-dictators' within their own jurisdiction.⁸² Whether or not the accusations were actually true, disregard and a haughty arrogance toward subordinates would certainly be in keeping with institutional context of the North Korean system at the time.

At the same time, whilst factionalists were subject to a repeated barrage of criticism and abuse from speakers, economic issues are not just blamed on factionalists alone. The famed South Korean Marxist historian, Paek Nam-un delivered a speech, ostensibly in response to Ri Jong-ok's report on the First Five Year Plan, in which Ri criticises some scientists for their lack of interest in productive concerns.⁸³ In the process, he touches on a core debate under actually existing socialism, the place of the intellectual, the 'expert' and 'red', i.e. the extent to which technical expertise or ideological purity was more important in economic matters.⁸⁴ Another speaker stated that the country's scientific community had been thrown into disarray by factionalists, with titles, degrees and positions being

handed out to those willing to defame party and state.⁸⁵ The latter may point to a level of disinterest amongst those in the scientific profession to matters political.

The Military, Party Factions, and Alleged Plans to Stage a Coup d'état

Following the conclusion of discussions about Ri Jong-ok's report on the Five Year plan, Pak Kūm-chōl, who was subsequently embroiled in another purge in the late 1960s, delivered a report on party discipline—mainly discussing why the factionalists were purged and what is to be done now.

Pak's report set the stage for what came next. He catalogued the alleged ideological deviations and abuses of the factionalists, stating that they were willing to conspire with all manner of 'hostile elements', intending to 'incite protest and violence.'⁸⁶ He even alleged that they 'organized' their own 'action groups' within some work places and other institutions in the capital, 'action mini-groups' in certain regions, and a superior 'action committee' to directly plot protests, violence and terrorism.⁸⁷ Similar accusations were made by Hyōn Mu-gwang (South Hamgyōng Party Committee chairman), who accused factionalists of going back to their home provinces to organize against the party after the August Plenum in 1956.⁸⁸

Pak was followed by Kim T'ae-gūn, a candidate member of the CC, who disclosed sensational allegations of a plot in the military, the details of which seemingly were made public for the first time at the conference.⁸⁹ The fact that no speaker before Kim refers to the plot is quite interesting, and it appears that the allegations had been concocted well after the August 1956 Plenum in order to justify a purge of the military top echelons—which did include members of the Yanan faction. Indeed, as Kim Nam-sik (an official in the KWP at the time) conveyed to Lee Chong-sik, the allegations appear to have been manufactured in order to justify a purge.⁹⁰ Chang P'yōng-san, commander of the Fourth Corp of the Korean People's Army was alleged to have spread the 'anti-party idea' that "a people's army cannot be called considered the Party's army, the People's Army was an army on the fatherland's frontline, and therefore cannot be led by the Party".⁹¹ In other words, Chang was alleged to have wanted to separate the military from the Party—the height of heresy in Marxist-Leninist states where the Party controls all institutions.

More unbelievably, it was further alleged that Kim Ung-I, an associate of Chang, bought a Japanese mansion to spread bourgeois ideology.⁹² Another noteworthy allegation is that Ri Ik-sōng, former head of the Officer Training School, had been a member of Chang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist Army (defeated adversary of the Chinese communists), received military training from Nazi 'German advisors'

and had tried bring ‘such training methods’ to the ‘People’s Army’ to turn it into a ‘bourgeois army’.⁹³ This latter allegation seemingly is designed to create distance between the Chinese communists and their comrades-in-arms from the 1930s in the Yanan faction.

These claims of ideological heresy and long-standing treachery are followed by the accusations that they collaborated with factionalists in the KWP in order ‘overthrow the government’ and even having plans in place ‘to welcome the American and Syngman Rhee armies’ in order to ‘unify the country within three days’ of the ‘party and government’s overthrow’.⁹⁴ None of the military men allegedly involved in this coup attempt spoke or appeared to be in attendance, and proposals are made to expel them from the Party and have the matter dealt with by a military tribunal.⁹⁵ It is interesting to note that while other factionalists are accused of conspiring to create a ‘neutral state’, and to wreck the economy through a combination of malice and incompetence, the allegations leveled against Chang and other Yanan faction members of the military elite were more serious. Effectively, they were accused of directly plotting to bring about the complete destruction of the Party and state. These allegations were distinct from those leveled against civilian Party factionalists.

Kim T’ae-gŭn and other speakers after him also made a number of other, interesting allegations that have never been referenced before in existing scholarship on the factional purge of the 1950s. It is well known how joint delegation of Anastas Mikoyan, representing the Soviet Union, and Peng Dehuai, representing the People’s Republic of China, intervened in September 1956 to the immediate purge of factionalists.⁹⁶ What is not known is how the North Korean leadership sought to explain such events. Kim accused factionalists of attempting to sow discord between the ‘fraternal parties’.⁹⁷ Indeed, even as Soviet Union is thanked for its help in reconstructing North Korea after the Korean War, Pak Ŭi-wan is smeared for using a foreign language at the September Plenum (when Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai are in attendance)—Pak was a speaker of Russian.⁹⁸

Indeed, at the conference, foreign culture was often presented in a negative light, with Pak Ŭi-wan, Kim Tu-bong and other factionalists also accused of liking Japanese culture—a smear in a country that had been a colony of Japan up until 1945.⁹⁹ Similarly, author Han Sŏl-ya condemned South Korea for its contaminated, ‘Yankee culture’.¹⁰⁰ Yet, Yanan Korean connections to the Chinese Communist Party go unmentioned. Instead, their supposed connections with fascists (German advisors) and Chang Kai-shek appear to be one made with political correctness in mind, Kim Tu-bong, along with Ch’oe Ch’ang-ik are denounced for having associated with the Blue Shirts Society (a crypto-Fascist movement in China under Chang Kai-shek) for part of the 1930s.¹⁰¹

The Factionalists Speak

As the Moscow trials of the 1930s demonstrate, it would not be a show trial without the accused being given the chance to humbly confess their crimes. Unlike the trials of Yi Sŭng-yŏp in 1953,¹⁰² and Pak Hŏn-yŏng, however, this was a party event rather than being a judicial affair.¹⁰³ Why Kim Il Sung dispensed with Stalinist custom is not clear, but he may have been imitating CCP precedents—self-criticism was delivered at the CCP National Conference of 1955 related to the Gao Gang Affair. However, this is where the similarity ends as the CCP Conference was not accompanied by mass expulsions of more minor members of alleged factions.¹⁰⁴ The First Party Conference of the KWP also seems to be one of the very last times, or perhaps the very last time that the words of alleged traitors were published in open access publications inside North Korea.

Yang Kye, a relatively insignificant member of the Yanan faction is the first factionalist who speaks at the conference. Yang Kye's speech reprises many of the accusations already made by other speakers, but also gives a backstory to August Plenum. He described how he had, from very early on, nurtured 'factional ideas', and especially after coming to Pyongyang to work, he became embroiled in factional intrigues, dividing cadres into those from 'Yanan or Taihang Mountain', 'the Soviet Union' and 'domestically', and slandering other factions.¹⁰⁵ In other words, the factional groups now known to historians were used at the time.

Yang Kye also mentioned that Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik claimed to have met with representatives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In Yang's account, Ch'oe told him that Soviets and Chinese were displeased to see that the KWP was not following the decisions of the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU (i.e. destalinization).¹⁰⁶ Of course, this is all framed within language of self-criticism, and Yang Kye repeatedly attacked the factionalists he once is alleged to have followed. He also directly implicates Kim Tu-bong and O Ki-sŏp, stating that they were supportive of the efforts of factionalists to depose Kim Il Sung and start a rebellion.¹⁰⁷ The latter point is significant because Soviet documents do not indicate that either was directly involved in events leading up to the August Plenum.¹⁰⁸

Yang's speech was followed by a number of additional speeches that denounced the factionalists. Some of the accusations are sexual in nature, others personal, but they add to a tide of abuse directed against factionalists. It is in such an atmosphere that Kim Tu-bong is told, at last, he may speak.¹⁰⁹ He began in a self-flagellating fashion, apologizing for not properly apologizing at a previous event, and then stated that he had no right to have held 'lofty positions', and that he was not well versed in Marxism-Leninism.¹¹⁰ Speakers demanding to know about his 'anti-party anti-revolution' conspiracy soon interrupt him.¹¹¹ His accusers demanded to know

when and how he had plotted with Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, and when they were intending to declare the DPRK a neutral state. Kim responded in a rather rambling, incoherent fashion, admitting that he was guilty of having undertaken 'anti-party' activities', but not 'counter-revolutionary' ones.¹¹² Whether it was hostile atmosphere or his advanced years (he was 71 at the time), Kim was not able to conjure the response the audience wanted, and he was quickly told to get off the stage.¹¹³

Pak Ŭi-wan followed Kim with a speech that is similarly short. Pak begins by stating his gratitude to the Party for the 'love' it has given him and its efforts to 'educate' it him, he also admitted that he has not properly heeded demands for self-criticism. Yet, he proceeds to deny any knowledge of the intentions of those behind the August Plenum of 1956, saying he just believed the words of one of them (Kim Sŭng-hwa) and did what he was told. He said that he was the first to practice self-criticism, and that his lack of ideological consciousness was at the root of the nepotism and flunkeyism (seemingly a reference to the Soviet Union) that had fuelled his factionalism.¹¹⁴

Pak pleaded for forgiveness, but under cross-examination from other delegates, pointedly refused to admit that he had been involved in a conspiracy with other factionalists, and that he had not known that they were 'counter-revolutionaries' when he had collaborated with them.¹¹⁵ He was then told to get off the stage, having refused to admit to many of the supposed crimes of the factionalists. Given the highly scripted nature of the rest of the event, it is remarkable that both Kim Tu-bong and Pak did not appear to have prepared remarks. They didn't appear to have been instructed what to say, nor yet had confessions coerced out of them. Perhaps defiance, partial or full, rather than penitence was what was expected of them before they were to be purged. But this does not explain why Yang Kye's confession is so tightly scripted by comparison.

They were followed by O Ki-sŏp. O is the one member of the domestic faction who is accused of factionalism and is in attendance. As with Pak Ŭi-wan, he declares he knew nothing of what was to happen at the August Plenum of 1956, but interestingly confesses to meeting with domestic faction members and offering them encouragement while being too frightened to act himself.¹¹⁶ Kim Il Sung directly intervenes when O says that while he had not actively opposed the Party or Kim Il Sung, he had opposed the Organization Department of the Party. Kim wants to know who O planned to replace the current office holder with, and cross examination ends soon after.¹¹⁷

O was treated differently to Kim Tu-bong and Pak Ŭi-wan, who were summarily expelled from the proceedings when they resumed.¹¹⁸ Kim Il Sung then gave a speech. He denounced the factionalists, including O, Pak and Kim Tu-bong, listing their many crimes, and asserting that:

there is no evidence as yet that Kim Tu-bong, Pak Ŭi-wan and O Ki-sŏp participated in the counter-revolutionary uprising conspiracy. [But] Kim and Pak said let's overthrow the Party, and chase away the Party's Organizational Department. In other words, they were the same as factionalists. O Ki-sŏp didn't show his hand, but behind the scenes he acted like a thieving dog until he was discovered.¹¹⁹

Kim ended by saying that under the socialist principles of distribution, each shall be paid as much as they have earned, and that the conference shall decide what should be done with them. They are then expelled, along with all the other alleged factionalists in the next session, which ends with fresh elections to major central party organs.¹²⁰

Conclusion

The Korean Worker's Party in 1958 was in the midst of a convulsive purge of its top leadership. Kim Il Sung and the KWP faced a country that remained poor, and backward by world standards. The First Conference of the Korean Worker's Party (KWP) was an event that sealed the fate of leaders who sought closer relations with North Korea's erstwhile benefactors, China and the Soviet Union.

It was a highly important event in the history of the KWP and the North Korean state. It confirmed the growing economic and political isolation of North Korea, the unquestioned leadership of Kim Il Sung, with the final destruction of intra-party opposition, while also cementing a set of policies that would impoverish the North Korean people in the coming decades.

In 1953, the KWP had a relatively diverse leadership, which contained a range of views and preferences regarding the pursuit of both foreign and domestic policy. However, by March 1958, Kim Il Sung was in a position to create a monolithic elite of Manchurian Guerrillas and apparatchiks (economic and administrative technocrats) whose primary characteristic was their loyalty to his personage and his policy preferences. As has above, it is the First Party Conference to which we must look to see the final step in the process of purges that led to this point.

Notes

1. pward89@hotmail.com.
2. Kim Hak-jun, *North Korea's Fifty Year history* [북한의 50년사; Pukhanŭi 50nyŏnsa] (Seoul: Donga Press, 1995), p. 193.
3. The author would like to thank Fyodor for being so generous as to provide him with a copy of the minutes, as well as innumerable suggestions on the topic of this article.
4. James F. Person, "North Korea in 1956: reconsidering the August Plenum and the Sino-Soviet joint intervention," *Cold War History* (2018), pp. 16, 21.

5. On the emergence of factions see: Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945–1960* (C. Hurst & Co.: London, 2002), pp. 77–109. For a dissenting view regarding the existence of factions: James F. Person, ‘New Evidence on North Korea in 1956’, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (2006) 16, pp. 447–527.
6. For instance, see the case of O Ki-söp in 1948 see: Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea: Part I, The movement*, pp. 252–3.
7. Person, “North Korea in 1956: reconsidering the August Plenum and the Sino-Soviet joint intervention,” pp. 3–7.
8. On the latter, see: James Frederick Person, “Solidarity and Self-Reliance: The Antimonies of North Korean Foreign Policy and Juche Thought, 1953–1967,” PhD Dissertation (George Washington University), p. 135.
9. Erik van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joesph Stalin: A Study in Twentieth Century Revolutionary Patriotism* (Oxon: Routledge, 2002), pp. 131–4.
10. The domestic faction has yet to receive book length treatment in English. On the domestic faction’s activities in southern Korea see: Kim Nam-sik, *Investigation of the South Korean Communist Party* [남로당연구; Namrodangyöngu] (Seoul: Tolbaegae, 1984).
11. On the Soviet faction, see the early work of Chong-Sik Lee and Ki-Wan Oh, ‘The Russian Faction in North Korea’, *Asian Survey* (8) 1967, pp. 270–288. Also see the more recent: Andrei N. Lankov, ‘Kim Il Sung’s Campaign against the Soviet Faction in Late 1955 and the Birth of Chuch’e’, *Korean Studies* (23) 1999, pp. 43–67.
12. Andrei Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956* (University of Hawai’i Press: Honolulu, 2005), p. 94.
13. On the Yanan Faction see: Byung Il Chung, ‘The Role of Yeonanpa influencing on the National Construction of North Korea (sic)’ [북한국가건설에 미친 연안파의 역할; Pukhangukkagönsölae Mich’in Yonanpau Yökhall], *Korean Political Science Review* [한국정치학회보; Hangukjöngch’ihakhwaebo] 46 (2012), pp. 145–167.
14. On Kim Il Sung’s faction and the state that emerged under their rule see: Adrian Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty: Politics and Leadership in North Korea* (Boulder: Westland Press, 1999).
15. On this see: Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956*, pp. 93–113. Also see: Balázs Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet-DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism, 1953–1964* (Woodrow Wilson Centre Press: Washington, D.C., 2005).
16. On the case of Hō Ka-I see: Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, pp. 136–153.
17. The escape and subsequent fates of some members of the Yanan faction is discussed in a path breaking recent study: Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, *A Misunderstood Friendship: Mao Zedong, Kim Il-sung and Sino-North Korean Relations, 1949–1976* (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 120–126.
18. Person, “North Korea in 1956: reconsidering the August Plenum and the Sino-Soviet joint intervention,” pp. 14–17.
19. Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea*, pp. 143–174.
20. Person, “North Korea in 1956: reconsidering the August Plenum and the Sino-Soviet joint intervention,” p. 1.
21. Sō Tong-man, *The Formation of the North Korean Socialist System, 1945–1961* [북조선 사회주의 체제 성립사, 1945–1961; Pukchosön sahoejuü ch’ėje söngnipša, 1945–1961] (Seoul: Sōnin, 2005), p. 775.
22. On withdrawal of Chinese forces and agreement surrounding it, see: Shen and Xia, *A Misunderstood Friendship*, pp. 112–119.
23. On the Soviet military government in North Korea see: Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, and also: Erik van Ree, *Socialism in One Zone: Stalin’s Policy in Korea, 1945–1947* (Oxford: Berg, 1989).

24. On the role of Party Congresses see: Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics: In Perspective, 2nd Edition* (Oxon: Routledge, 1998), p. 93.
25. Sakwa, *Soviet Politics*, p. 93.
26. Graeme Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 8.
27. Kim Hak-jun, *North Korea's Fifty Year history* [Pukhanüi 50nyónsa] (Seoul: Donga Press, 1995), p. 193.
28. Sakwa, *Soviet Politics*, p. 93.
29. Frederick C Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950–65* (Oxon: Routledge, 1993), pp. 142–3.
30. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea: Part I, The movement*, p. 497.
31. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea: Part I, The movement*, p. 515.
32. Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era*, pp. 119–120.
33. Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea*, pp. 165–169.
34. Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea*, p. 167.
35. Shen and Xia, *A Misunderstood Friendship*, p. 130. On improving foreign relations coinciding with greater domestic repression also see: Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era*, pp. 113–135.
36. Person, "Solidarity and Self-Reliance," pp. 150–1.
37. *Rodong Sinmun*, March 3rd 1958.
38. *Rodong Sinmun*, March 4th 1958.
39. *Rodong Sinmun*, March 5th 1958.
40. *Rodong Sinmun*, March 6th 1958.
41. See *Rodong Sinmun*, March 7th 1956.
42. *Minutes from the First Conference of the Korean Workers Party* [조선로동당제1차대표자회의회의록; Chosönrodongdangjae1chadaepyojahwaehwaeüirok]: 1958.3.3–1958.3.6 (Central Committee of the Korean Workers Party: 1958), p. 119.
43. Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea*, pp. 153–4.
44. On population see: Nicolas Eberstadt and Judith Banister, *The Population of North Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Institute of Asian Studies, 1992) pp. 28–32.
45. Ministry of National Unification, *2009 North Korea Handbook* [2009년 북한개조; 2009 nyönPukhan Kaejo] (Korea Institute for National Unification: Seoul, 2009) p. 48.
46. Nam-Sik Kim, 'North Korea's Power Structure and Foreign Relations: an Analysis of the Sixth Congress of the KWP', *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* (2) 1982, p. 128.
47. 'National Conference [全国代表会议; Quánguódàibiǎohuìyì] 21st–31st March 1955', *News of the Communist Party of China* [中国共产党新闻; Zhōngguógòngchǎndǎngxīnwén] (*People's Daily*), <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/151935/176588/176595/10555564.html>, retrieved 27th December 2015.
48. *Minutes from the First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 120.
49. Eberstadt and Banister, *The Population of North Korea*, p. 83.
50. *Minutes from the First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 121.
51. *Minutes from the First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 121.
52. Kim Il Sung may or may not have finished middle school while living in Northeast China, but that seems to be the full extent of his formal education. On Kim Il Sung's education see: Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1988) pp. 3–8.
53. On Japanese colonial education in Korea policy see: Seong-cheol Oh and Ki-seok Kim, 'Expansion of Elementary Schooling under Colonialism: Top Down or Bottom up?' in Hong Yung Lee, Yong-Chool Ha & Clark W. Sorensen eds., *Colonial Rule & Social Change in Korea: 1910–1945* (University of Washington Press: Seattle, 2013), pp. 121–131.
54. *Minutes from the First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 3.

55. On the purge of the 'Kapsan faction' in 1967 see: Jae-cheon Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009) pp. 37–40.
56. *North Korea who's who* [북한인명사전; Pukhaninmyöngsajön] 1990 (Joongang Daily Publishers: Seoul, 1990), p. 352.
57. *Minutes from the First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 499.
58. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea: Part II, The society* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 1350–1381.
59. For relevant biographical data see: *North Korea who's who*, p. 13, p. 23, p. 48, p. 95, p. 99–100, p. 119, p. 127, p. 147, p. 170, p. 171, p. 180, p. 186, p. 189, p. 207, p. 223, p. 270, p. 279, p. 305, p. 310, p. 318, pp. 345–6, p. 373, p. 410, p. 414, p. 415, p. 420 pp. 429–30, p. 432.
60. On this movement see: Sö Tong-man, *The Formation of the North Korean Socialist System*, p. 200.
61. *Minutes from the First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, pp. 3–49.
62. Indeed, the plan seems to have become largely non-operational from mid-1958, as mass mobilizations of workers in the new Ch'ollima Movement supplanted centrally set norms. See: Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty*, pp. 1 62–3. For an alternative perspective on economic performance in this period see: Hy-Sang lee, *North Korea: A Strange Socialist Fortress* (Westport: Praeger, 2001) pp. 23–44.
63. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, pp. 90–1, p. 264, p. 278. The final reference is interesting because it deals with exports, and the speaker refers to the displeasure of India with North Korea's substandard export quality.
64. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, pp. 168–170.
65. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 150.
66. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 173, p. 261. For a discussion of 'sectionalism' in the Soviet economy see: Stephen Fortescue, 'The Primary Party organizations of branch ministries', in Peter J. Potichnyj ed. *The Soviet Union: Party and Society* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1988) pp. 26–7; Paul R. Gregory, *The Political Economy of Stalinism: Evidence from the Soviet Secret Archives* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004), pp. 173–177.
67. For instance, Ri Chön-ho (at the time, a candidate member of the CC), the second delegate to deliver a response to Ri Jong-ok's speech, detailed the presence of a certain individual by the name of Ryu Chun-un (seemingly Yanan faction) at the Coal Industry Ministry. Ryu's major 'anti-party act' was considering the 'Dig Fast Movement' to be of 'secondary importance'. See: *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, pp. 84–5.
68. Hy-Sang lee, *North Korea: A Strange Socialist Fortress*, pp. 35–6.
69. See: *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, pp. 25–32; pp. 40–44.
70. Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea*, p. 123. Yun was actually the first to give a speech denouncing Kim Il Sung at that very plenum.
71. For references in the minutes see: *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, pp. 211–12.
72. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 215. Similar accusations are also made later by Hyön Mu-gwang (South Hamgyöng People's Committee Chairman), see: *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 332.
73. On merchants in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, see: Alan M. Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists: The Nepmen, 1921–1929* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1990).
74. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 229, 335.
75. On this famine, see: Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Krushchev Era*, p. 62–65.
76. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 168.
77. On this phenomenon see: Janos Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 184.
78. Andrei Lankov, Personal Communication (5th February 2018).
79. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 98.

80. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 204.
81. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 103.
82. Paul Gregory, *The Political Economy of Stalinism: Evidence from the Soviet Secret Archives* (University of Cambridge: New York, 2004), p. 247.
83. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 273.
84. On the initial debate and its consequences in the Soviet Union see: Gregory Guroff, 'The Red-Expert Debate: Continuities in the State-Entrepreneur Tension', in Gregory Guroff, Fred V. Carstensen eds., *Entrepreneurship in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1983), pp. 201–222.
85. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 362.
86. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 304.
87. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 304.
88. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, pp. 331–2.
89. Balazs Szalontai refers to the plot in the military, but not how it was revealed at the conference nor the details of the alleged plot. See: Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Krushchev Era*, p. 120.
90. Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea: Part I, The movement*, pp. 497–8.
91. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 319.
92. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 321.
93. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 321.
94. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 322.
95. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 323.
96. For recent research on the topic see: Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea*, pp. 136–42.
97. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 319.
98. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 419.
99. For negative references to Japan see: *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 145 and p. 321.
100. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 160.
101. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 285, p. 397.
102. A full scale show trial of a member of the domestic faction who had allegedly spied for the Americans while also heading the occupation government in Seoul when the North Korean Army occupied it in 1950.
103. See, Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, pp. 93–99, on the trial of Pak Hön-yōng.
104. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China*, pp. 129–131.
105. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 336.
106. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 340.
107. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 340–1.
108. See: Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea*.
109. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 420.
110. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 420–1.
111. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 421.
112. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, pp. 421–3.
113. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 423.
114. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, pp. 424–5.
115. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 427.
116. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 437–8.
117. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 439–40.
118. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 441.
119. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 465.
120. *First Conference of the Korean Workers Party*, p. 491–504.