

# **Bridging East Asia's Revolutions: The Overseas Chinese in North Korea, 1945-1950**

Charles Kraus

George Washington University and the Wilson Center

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This article draws on documents captured by United States forces during the Korean War to explore the history of the Overseas Chinese community in North Korea from 1945 through 1950. Although a little known and seldom studied community, the Overseas Chinese in Korea reveal that the Chinese Communist Party and the Korean Workers' Party were well connected almost immediately after 1945. This community also demonstrates that the internecine conflict between the Communist and Nationalist parties spilled across the physical boundaries of the Chinese state and that grassroots actors such as the Chinese diaspora were important players in the Cold War.

**Keywords:** Overseas Chinese, Sino-North Korean Relations, Chinese Civil War, Cold War, Captured North Korean Documents

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As political, economic, and social actors, the Overseas Chinese have long fulfilled diverse roles on the Chinese, East Asian, and world stages.<sup>1</sup> Above all, the Chinese diaspora has served as an important conduit for Greater China's engagement with the wider world. Because of their significant civic, commercial, and international activism, Overseas Chinese communities have rarely been ignored by international statesmen and stateswomen. Generations of leaders and thinkers, including Sun Yat-sen, the so-called founder of modern China, have sought to benefit from the wisdom, energies, and resources of the

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<sup>1</sup> See especially Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008) and Hong Liu, ed., *The Chinese Overseas*, 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Overseas Chinese.<sup>2</sup> As a result, these outlying subjects are firmly embedded within many of the central narratives of modern Chinese history, including China's Cold War experience and its international relations in the latter half of the twentieth century. Indeed, the Overseas Chinese, tethered to civil rivalries, international alliances, and global competitions, were objects of, and intimate partners to, the Cold War from its very outset.<sup>3</sup>

In North Korea during the late 1940s and early 1950s, the geographic and temporal focus of this article, the Overseas Chinese were indeed wedded to multiple layers of the Cold War. In unpacking the story of the Overseas Chinese in Korea from 1945 to 1950, three broader issues and debates are tackled in this article. First, emphasizing that the Overseas Chinese were an important but heretofore unrecognized fixture of the relationship between China and North Korea, this article enters—and hopefully extinguishes—the long-simmering debate about the extent of relations between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) in the “interwar” years.<sup>4</sup> The CCP and the

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<sup>2</sup> Jianli Huang, “Umbilical Ties: The Framing of the Overseas Chinese as the Mother of the Revolution,” *Frontiers of History in China* 6, no. 2 (June 2011): 183-228.

<sup>3</sup> Glen D. Peterson, “Socialist China and the Huaqiao: The Transition to Socialism in the Overseas Chinese Areas of Rural Guangdong, 1949-1956,” *Modern China* 14, no. 3 (July 1988): 309-335; Glen Peterson, “House Divided: Transnational Families in the Early Years of the People's Republic of China,” *Asian Studies Review* 31, no. 1 (March 2007): 25-40; Meredith Leigh Oyen, “Allies, Enemies and Aliens: Migration and U.S.-Chinese Relations, 1940-1965” (Doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University, 2007); Tracy C. Barrett, “A Bulwark Never Failing: The Evolution of Overseas Chinese Education in French Indochina, 1900-1954,” in *China on the Margins*, ed. Sherman Cochran and Paul G. Pickowicz (Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2010), 221-242; Taomo Zhou, “Ambivalent Alliance: Chinese Policy towards Indonesia, 1960-1965” (Cold War International History Project Working Paper no. 67, Wilson Center, 2013); Hongwei Fan, “The 1967 Anti-Chinese Riots in Burma and Sino-Burmese Relations,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 43, no. 2 (2012): 234-256; Kosal Path, “The Sino-Vietnamese Dispute Over Territorial Claims, 1974-1978: Vietnamese Nationalism and Its Consequences,” *The International Journal of Asian Studies* 8, no. 2 (2011): 189-220; and Steven Phillips, “National Legitimacy and Overseas Chinese Mobilization,” *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 7, no. 1 (May 2013): 64-86.

<sup>4</sup> Though the Korean Workers' Party was not founded until June 1949, for the sake of convenience

KWP worked tirelessly together to channel the political, economic, and cultural activities of the Overseas Chinese in North Korea into strengthening party-to-party and country-to-country relations and to supporting the communist position in the Chinese Civil War.<sup>5</sup> Together they carried out land reform, founded a network of Chinese-language schools, circulated information on the situations in China and Korea among Chinese nationals, demanded material support for the Chinese Red Army, and brought together Chinese and Korean peoples for grassroots meetings, playdates, and other exchanges. These activities prove decisively that the two parties were well connected in the period between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Korean War.

These new details on Sino-Korean exchanges are significant for several reasons. The Chinese-language evidence presented here contrasts with the typically Soviet-dominated portrait of North Korea's early history and foreign relations, and shows the importance Chinese and North Korean leaders attached to one another during this time.<sup>6</sup> Simultaneously, the evidence shows that the Sino-Korean relationship was not defined by high-level military cooperation alone. The Sino-North Korean partnership also grew out of people-to-people exchanges and social and cultural cooperation, strands of the relationship rarely

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this paper uses the term to refer to both the party and its various forerunners, including the Korean Communist Party and the North Korean Workers Party. Similarly, the term "North Korea" itself offers simplicity at the expense of precision: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was not officially founded until September 1948.

<sup>5</sup> The best three studies on the pre-1950 Sino-Korean relationship in Chinese, Korean, and English are: Shao Yong, ed., "Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi dongbei yu Chaoxian de guanxi [The Northeast's Relationship with North Korea during the War of Liberation]," in *Shixue lunheng* (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian, 2004), 309-313; Yi Jeong-seok, *Bukhan-Jungguk gwangye, 1945-2000* [North Korean-Chinese Relations, 1945-2000] (Seoul: Jungsim, 2000), 31-105; and Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011), 52-57.

<sup>6</sup> Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945-1960* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2002).

taken seriously by scholars today.<sup>7</sup> Although these facets do not explain China's intervention in Korea in October 1950, the question at the heart of most scholarly inquiry on this period, the fact that the Chinese-North Korean alliance was constructed partially at the grassroots level is useful for understanding both the durability of the relationship, as well as some of the problems—such as those related to the citizenship of the ethnic Chinese in Korea and the ethnic Koreans in China—which it would face during the Cold War.<sup>8</sup>

Second, the vigorous involvement of the Chinese Communist Party in Korea after 1945 suggests that the international scope of the Chinese Civil War was wider than we have presumed. The fear that Overseas Chinese, in Korea and beyond, were ideologically and materially supportive of the Guomindang (GMD) invigorated and gave urgency to the work of Ding Xuesong (丁雪松) and other leading Chinese Communist cadres in Korea, who earnestly desired to build a reliable base of support for the CCP among the Overseas Chinese.<sup>9</sup> Though beyond the scope of this article, it is equally important to note that the Nationalist Party, represented by Ambassador Shao Yulin (邵毓麟) in Seoul, was just as obsessed with the political persuasion of the Overseas Chinese in Korea.<sup>10</sup> Many previous studies have documented how the

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<sup>7</sup> Adam Cathcart and Charles Kraus, "Internationalist Culture in North Korea, 1945-1950," *The Review of Korean Studies* 11, no. 3 (September 2008): 123-148.

<sup>8</sup> Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Ding Xuesong, *Zhongguo diyiwei nv dashi: Ding Xuesong huiyilu* [China's First Female Ambassador: The Memoirs of Ding Xuesong], ed. Yang Dehua (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2000), 173.

<sup>10</sup> This topic awaits much more in depth exploration in the Taiwanese archives, though we can begin to piece together Nationalist strategy in South Korea from Shao Yulin, *Shi Han huiyilu: Jindai Zhong Han guanxi shi hua* [My Mission to Korea: A Personal Record of Modern Sino-Korean Relations] (Taipei: Zhuanji wenxue chubanshe, 1980), as well as John J. Muccio to the Secretary of State, 16 December 1949, 895.4016/12-1649, in *Records of the U.S. Department of State relating to the Internal Affairs of Korea, 1945-1949* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1986). According to Australian documents, Ambassador Shao's priorities in Seoul were two-

Chinese Civil War became bound up with the international rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States, but the international dimensions of the conflict were much broader than the existing literature has heretofore revealed.<sup>11</sup> Echoing the observation which Chinese statesmen V. K. Wellington Koo made in October 1949 (but for altogether different reasons), then, the evidence presented here makes it clear that this was “not altogether an internal civil war.”<sup>12</sup> The struggle for the hearts and minds of this transnational community extended the Chinese Civil War beyond China’s geographic borders.

Lastly, and returning to the theme with which this article opened, this article builds on other recent scholarship about the Overseas Chinese to demonstrate that the diaspora was indeed important to Chinese foreign policy during the Cold War. Many works now foreground the Overseas Chinese in discussions of the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) relationships with the United States, Vietnam, and Indonesia, among other countries.<sup>13</sup> Standing at the intersection of social history and diplomatic history, these studies valuably show the reciprocal dynamic between high-level diplomacy and the on-the-ground experiences of the Chinese diaspora. The Overseas Chinese, according to this recent wave of scholarship, were both affected by and capable of shaping Cold War structures, including the strength and durability of socialist alliances. The

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fold: first, “to negotiate for the repatriation of Koreans in China,” and second, “to attend to the welfare of about 40,000 Chinese at present living in Korea.” See Nanking Chancery, Australian Legation, to the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 15 July 1946, A1838, 3707/40/90 Part 1, “China—Relations with Korea,” National Archives of Australia (NAA), Canberra, Australia.

<sup>11</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *Cold War and Revolution: Soviet-American Rivalry and the Origins of the Chinese Civil War, 1944-1946* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) and Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> “Notes of a Conversation with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, 4:30 p.m., 14 October 1949, at the Indian Embassy,” 5, in “Various Interviews, 1949 #81-90,” Box 130, V.K. Wellington Koo Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, NY.

<sup>13</sup> Zheng Yangwen, Hong Liu, and Michael Szonyi, eds., *The Cold War in Asia: The Battle for Hearts and Minds* (Boston: Brill, 2010).

case of Korea suggests this much and even more: the Overseas Chinese were not just involved in foreign relations, but they were also “present at the creation” of some of the PRC’s most important and enduring alliances.<sup>14</sup>

## Sources on the Overseas Chinese in North Korea

Making these three inter-related arguments is only possible today because, in 1950, the United States Army seized hundreds of thousands of documents, books, magazines, and photographs from North Korea. These records are deposited within Record Group 242 in the National Archives, College Park, Maryland, and are the only accessible North Korean archive in the world.<sup>15</sup> While many scholars have worked with this collection to reassess the North Korean revolution and the origins of the Korean War, the surviving Chinese-language materials contained within, such as those written by Overseas Chinese, have never before been utilized.

It is these documents which encouraged this study, but interpreting them does require some care. Suzy Kim reminds us that much of the North Korean archive “centralize[s] and homogenize[s] what was actually a complicated revolutionary process involving conflict, negotiation, and compromise,” and discovering “authentic” voices within the captured documents, including the writings of the Overseas Chinese, is immensely challenging.<sup>16</sup> The Chinese-language materials were, after all, generally written by Chinese cadres for communist-leading bodies in China and North Korea. This author-audience dynamic dictated what

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<sup>14</sup> The phrase “present at the creation” is of course borrowed from the title of Dean Acheson’s memoirs.

<sup>15</sup> Records Seized by United States Military Forces in Korea, National Archives Collection of Foreign Records Seized, 1941-, Record Group 242, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD. (Hereafter RG 242.)

<sup>16</sup> Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 13.

could (and could not) be said within the documents, and greatly circumscribed the range of narratives and analysis that could be offered. Taking the documents as a fully accurate representation of this period, then, would be naïve. Nevertheless, whatever doubts we have about the reliability of the information contained within the captured Overseas Chinese materials, if assessed at a broader level, they still do depict the critical involvement of this community in alliance building between the CCP and the KWP in the 1940s, that the conflict between the Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang spilled across the physical boundaries of the Chinese state, and that grassroots actors such as Overseas Chinese were important players in China's Cold War-era foreign relations.

The captured Chinese documents are paired here with other primary materials, including the memoirs of Ding Xuesong. A native of Sichuan Province, Ding lived in Korea from 1945 through 1950, playing an intermediary but irreplaceable role in Sino-North Korean relations. Though her responsibilities shifted during her five-year stay in North Korea, Ding's work with the Overseas Chinese and, particularly, her efforts to reestablish Chinese schools remained one consistent thread in this stage of her career. Adding to Ding's vivid recollections, a handful of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) "Information Reports" also dwell on the Overseas Chinese at some length, as do reports produced by the Soviet Red Army in Korea and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It is from this diverse array of sources that this article begins to reconstruct the bridge between East Asia's two revolutions.

## **Colonial Footpaths**

While Overseas Chinese communities thrived around the globe during the Ming Dynasty, large scale Chinese migration to Korea only began late in the nineteenth century when the Qing forcibly opened up Korea to

“multilateral imperialism.”<sup>17</sup> Called the “foot soldiers of informal empire” by Kirk Larsen, the introduction and growth of the Overseas Chinese reflected the Qing Dynasty’s privileged position over the Joseon Dynasty. Beginning in the 1880s, statistics ballooned; Korea’s tiny population of 162 Overseas Chinese in 1883 grew rapidly over the next several decades and reached 11,818 by 1910. According to Larsen, the recurrent political and economic instability in North China had meant that “life at home had grown intolerable” for many Chinese in the waning decades of the Qing Dynasty.<sup>18</sup> Chinese communities thus grew in Korea as the Qing Dynasty edged closer toward its ultimate demise.

The Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910 did not preclude the continued growth of the Overseas Chinese population. Indeed, by 1922 approximately 30,826 Overseas Chinese lived in Korea, nearly a three-fold increase over just a decade’s time.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the relationship between the Overseas Chinese and the Japanese colonial state was in general quite poor, and the Governor-General in Korea looked upon the Chinese with extreme suspicion. In 1924, for example, the General Affairs Department conducted an “investigation” (*chōsa* in Japanese, *diao cha* in Chinese, 调查) of “the Chinese People of Korea.” The report provided detailed statistics about the Chinese population, its geographic distribution, and its socio-economic position. The General Affairs Department claimed in the preface that the growing population and business acumen of the Chinese meant that not only were they coming into economic “competition” with Koreans and Japanese, but that the

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<sup>17</sup> Kirk W. Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea, 1850-1910* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 258-263. See also Sheena Choi, *Gender, Ethnicity, Market Forces, and College Choices: Observations of Ethnic Chinese in Korea* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 58-59.

<sup>19</sup> Zhang Qixiong, ed., *Riben zhimin tongzhi xia de Chaoxian huaqiao: Chaoxian zongdu fu baogao shu ‘Chaoxian de Zhongguo ren’* [The Overseas Chinese in Korea under Japanese Colonial Rule: The Korean Governor-General’s Report ‘Chinese of Korea’], trans. Zu Yunhui (Taipei: Zhonghua Minguo hai wai Hua ren yan jiu xue hui, 2003), 18-28.

Chinese were likely to “win” the battle for economic resources. As a result, the authors of the report sought an “understanding of their [the Overseas Chinese] general situation” in order to carve out advantages for the colonial state.<sup>20</sup>

Relations between the Korean population and the Overseas Chinese were perhaps even more strained, particularly as the demographics of the Overseas Chinese shifted during the concurrent periods of “Cultural Rule” in Korea and Japan’s increasing bellicosity in Northern China. As political crises in China accelerated in the 1920s and 1930s, more and more lower class Chinese from Shandong arrived in Korea. In place of affluent traders and businessmen, the new generation of Overseas Chinese was largely peasant-farmers, while a smaller number were restaurateurs and simple laborers.<sup>21</sup> On several occasions, competition over economic resources between Overseas Chinese and local Koreans morphed into direct violence. Corresponding with the Wanpaoshan Incident (or, the Manbosan Incident) in China’s Jilin Province in the summer of 1931, anti-Chinese violence erupted in Korea on July 5.<sup>22</sup> The Chinese Nationalist government referred this incident to the League of Nations, but, fearing for their safety, many Overseas Chinese voted with their feet and returned to mainland provinces. Although the size of the Overseas Chinese population did quickly recover and continue to grow, these and other bitter memories dating from the late imperial and colonial eras would not be easily erased. How the Chinese Communist Party and the Korean Workers’ Party overcame this history of mistrust and turned the Overseas Chinese into a bridge between East Asia’s revolutions is the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 4. Despite the best efforts of the colonial apparatus, Chinese trade networks remained resilient throughout the colonial period. See Choi, *Gender, Ethnicity, Market Forces, and College Choices*, 59.

<sup>21</sup> Choi, *Gender, Ethnicity, Market Forces, and College Choices*, 60-62.

<sup>22</sup> The best study of the incident is Michael Kim, “The Hidden Impact of the 1931 Post-Wanpaoshan Riots: Credit Risk and the Chinese Commercial Network in Colonial Korea,” *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 10, no. 2 (2010): 209-227.

question to which this article now turns.

## From Colonial Conflict to Cold War Cooperation

By 1945, some 40,000 Chinese nationals made their home in the present-day territory of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).<sup>23</sup> The reactions of this sizable Overseas Chinese community to the onset of liberation in the summer and autumn of 1945 remain largely unknown. While much of the community likely welcomed Japan's defeat on August 15, 1945, there are no surviving Chinese-language memoirs describing either dismay or euphoria at the sight of the Soviet army arriving in North Hamgyeong, Sinuiju, or Pyongyang.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Soviet records

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<sup>23</sup> Precisely how many Overseas Chinese made their home in the present-day territory of the DPRK in 1945 has long been subject to debate. However, I reached this number after combing through dozens of contemporary reports and estimates and weeding away the outliers. See "Activities of Chinese Residents in Korea," 3 June 1949, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST) no. CIA-RDP82-00457R002800480001-2, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; "Evaluation of Citizens of All Walks of Life," 30 October 1945, Central Archive of the Russian Ministry of Defence (TsAMO); Colonel Hrenov, "Report on the Situation in Wonsan and the Work Done by the Military Command," 12 November 1945, TsAMO; Ding, *Zhongguo diyiwei nv dashi*, 172; "Chinese Nationals in North Korea," 6 October 1949, CREST no. CIA-RDP82-00457R003300730002-0; "Chinese Representation in North Korea," 16 October 1950, CREST no. CIA-RDP82-00457R005900780009-7; "Chinese Residents of North Korea," 18 January 1951, CREST no. CIA-RDP82-00457R006700430012-2; Yang Yuping, *Wang zhengquan yu Chaoxian Huaqiao (1940-1945): Dongya zhixu zhiyi yanjiu* [The Wang Regime and the Overseas Chinese in Korea, 1940-1945: A Study of East Asian Order] (Taipei: Daoxiang chubanshe, 2007), 21-22; Mu Dezheng, "Chaoxian huaqiao jiaoyu de lishi huiyu" [On Overseas Chinese Education in Korea: Past and Present], *Huaqiao Huaren lishi yanjiu* 4 (2001), 59; and Sun Yumei and Yang Zhaoquan, *Chaoxian Huaqiao shi* [A History of Overseas Chinese in Korea] (Beijing: Zhongguo Huaqiao chuban gongsi, 1991), 302.

<sup>24</sup> For the experiences of Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese citizens and soldiers during and following the arrival of the Soviet Red Army in Manchuria and North Korea, see Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 82, 109, 109-110, 115; Adam Cathcart and Charles Kraus, "Peripheral Influence: The Sinūiju Student Incident of 1945 and the Impact of Soviet Occupation in North Korea," *Journal of Korean Studies* 13, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 1-27; Michael Kim, "The Lost Memories of Empire and the Korean Return from Manchuria, 1945-1950: Conceptualizing Manchuria in Modern Korean History," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 23, no. 2 (December 2010): 195-223; Adam Cathcart and Charles Kraus, "Nation, Ethnicity, and the Post-Manchukuo

suggest that at least a handful of Koreans used the brief political vacuum following Japan's surrender to gain retribution against resident Chinese. An October 1945 report on areas outside of Cheongjin revealed that while Soviet troops and officials had been greeted warmly by local youth leagues, soldiers in North Hamgyeong Province had made a disturbing discovery on October 18: the bodies of three Overseas Chinese were found hanging inside of a home.<sup>25</sup> While the report does not speculate who was responsible for the deaths of the Chinese or divulge any possible motives, political reprisal or conflict over economic resources—namely grain—seem to have been at the center of the incident.

Even in the face of these disconcerting episodes, the Chinese Communist Party did not dwell on the Overseas Chinese in North Korea, at least not until its grip over Manchuria, the “anvil of victory” in the Chinese Civil War, was at serious risk of coming undone.<sup>26</sup> Though the party stayed afloat in the Northeast following the Siping Battle of March 1946, it was not much later until the CCP's gains in Southern Manchuria began to unravel.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, by the end of 1946, the CCP had been pushed to the edges of defeat by a resurgent Nationalist Party. Much of the leading kernel of the Northeast Bureau, including Chen Yun and Xiao Jinguang (肖劲光), was holed up in snowy Qidaojiang, a small village some sixty kilometers from the North Korean border. Situated far from the region's rail network and its major urban centers, here Chen and his comrades-in-arms could not help but weigh whether to concede defeat in

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Order in the Sino-Korean Border Region,” in *Key Papers on Korea: Essays Celebrating 25 Years of the Centre of Korean Studies, SOAS, University of London*, ed. Andrew David Jackson (Boston: Global Oriental, 2013), 79-99.

<sup>25</sup> Colonel Ignat'ev, “Report on the Situation of Agriculture and National Education in North Korea,” 30 October 1945, TsAMO.

<sup>26</sup> Steven I. Levine, *Anvil of Victory: The Communist Revolution in Manchuria, 1945-1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

<sup>27</sup> Harold M. Tanner, *The Battle for Manchuria and the Fate of China: Siping, 1946* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

the pivotal South Manchurian front.<sup>28</sup>

As the political-military situation deteriorated, the CCP quietly recognized that rural revolution alone would not propel the Party to victory in South Manchuria. In June 1946, the CCP therefore began to search intensively for foreign support. In addition to the obvious desirability of obtaining Soviet aid, the Northeast Bureau of the CCP also concluded that “North Korea is a covert rear area which could offer support for the war in South Manchuria” (*yi bei Chaoxian wei yinbi de houfang lai zhiyuan nan Man zuozhan* 以朝鲜为隐蔽的后方来支援南满作战).<sup>29</sup> To tap into this rich hinterland which lay beyond the legal reach of Guomindang forces, a number of Chinese Communist personalities sojourned to Pyongyang to negotiate cross-border assistance in the summer of 1946.<sup>30</sup> These feeler missions miraculously succeeded, and Zhu Lizhi (朱理治), a Jiangsu native and Tsinghua University graduate, and Xiao Jinguang (肖劲光), a Hunanese who had trained in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, were invited to Pyongyang to open the CCP’s Office of the Northeast Bureau in Korea (*Dongbei ju zhu Chaoxian banshichu* 东北局驻朝鲜办事处) late in the summer of 1946.<sup>31</sup> Disguised as a simple

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<sup>28</sup> Harold M. Tanner, “Guerrilla, Mobile, and Base Warfare in Communist Military Operations in Manchuria, 1945-1947,” *The Journal of Military History* 67, no. 4 (October 2003): 1177-1222.

<sup>29</sup> Ding Xiaochun, Ge Fulu, and Wang Shiyong, *Dongbei jiefang zhanzheng dashiji* [Chronicle of Major Events in the Northeast War of Liberation] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1987), 203.

<sup>30</sup> Allegedly, Zhou Baozhong asked his wife Wang Yizhi travel to North Korea in June 1946 to take part in a series of meetings in Pyongyang. In the North Korean capital, Wang was reunited with Kim Il-sung and Choe Yong-geon, with whom she had become well-acquainted during the guerrilla war against Japan. As described in Zhou’s official biography, Wang Yizhi reported on the gains the Guomindang had been making in the civil war, particularly in South Manchuria. Listening to Wang’s plight, Kim and Choe agreed that the CCP could ship more supplies through Korea and evacuate personnel across the border. See Zhao Sufen, *Zhou Baozhong jiangjun zhuan* [Biography of General Zhou Baozhong] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1988), 518-520, and Zhao Sufen, “Zhou Baozhong nianpu (1902 nian-1964 nian)” [Chronicle of Zhou Baozhong, 1902-1964], *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* 25, March 1988, 261.

<sup>31</sup> Zhonggong Henan shengwei dangshi yanjiushi, ed., *Jinian Zhu Lizhi wenji* [Festschrift for Zhu Lizhi] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2007), 239-242; Wu Dian Yao and Song Lin, *Zhu*

commercial operation, the “Pyongyang Limin Company” (*Pingrang limin gongsi* 平壤利民公司), the Office of the Northeast Bureau in Korea became a major hub for supporting the war effort in South Manchuria. Under Zhu’s capable leadership, the office expanded rapidly, developing a field network all over North Korea in just two short years and forging close partnerships with a number of Korean and Soviet officials. This office, and the support lent by North Korea, would help the Chinese Communist Party to eventually turn the tide of war against the Guomindang in South Manchuria in 1947.<sup>32</sup>

An important convergence, at the same time that the CCP was fighting a life and death struggle in South Manchuria, the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) began its thoroughgoing but cautious socialist transformation of Korea.<sup>33</sup> Though we have very little insight into the internal deliberations of the KWP, we know that the North Koreans were hesitant to carry out land reform among the Overseas Chinese in 1946. While the agrarian reform law announced that land would be seized from Japanese institutions and individuals, collaborators and “traitors to the Korean people,” and those Koreans in possession of more than twelve acres, no mention was made of lands owned by Chinese nationals.<sup>34</sup> According to Chinese sources, the Koreans sidestepped this issue in its official promulgation, instead tendering a request for the Office of the Northeast Bureau in Korea to add the Overseas Chinese to its portfolio.<sup>35</sup>

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*Lizhi zhuan* [Biography of Zhu Lizhi] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2007), 457.

<sup>32</sup> Ding Xuesong et al., “Huiyi dongbei jiefang zhanzheng qijian dongbei ju zhu bei Chaoxian banshichu” [Recalling the Northeast Bureau’s Office in North Korea during the War of Liberation in the Northeast], *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* 17, March 1986, 200.

<sup>33</sup> Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 71-86.

<sup>34</sup> “The Korean Central Year Book, 1950,” A/AC.39/INF.12/Add.7, 22 September 1951, in S-0689-0001-03, United Nations Archives and Records Management Section (ARMS), New York, NY.

<sup>35</sup> Zheng Yijun, *Guiqiao Peng Guanghan de wangshi, jinshi* [History of Peng Guanghan, a Returned Overseas Chinese] (Hong Kong: Xianggang shehui kexue chubanshe youxian gongsi, 2005), 215. See also Sun and Yang, *Chaoxian Huaqiao Shi*, 304-305.

To coordinate the multi-national, multi-party administration of the Overseas Chinese, Korean leaders Kim Il-sung and Pak Il-u partnered with Zhu Lizhi to first establish an Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee within the Central Committee of the KWP. More important for the next three to four years, however, was the invitation extended to Ding Xuesong to invigorate the grassroots organization of the Chinese by founding the Overseas Chinese Federation (*Huaqiao lianhe zonghui* 华侨联合总会; OCF) in October 1946. Bound to both China and Korea in personal and political ways, Ding was an obvious choice to head this CCP front organization. She had joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1937 and was resident in Yan'an for eight years where she spearheaded several women's brigades and took on other organizational responsibilities. Beyond her impressive résumé, Ding had married into Korea in 1941. Her husband was a Korean man named Jeong Yul-seong (Zheng Lücheng 郑律成), and over the years Ding had become personally acquainted with Kim Il-sung, Pak Il-u, Mu Jeong, and other leading Korean personalities.<sup>36</sup>

Headquartered in Pyongyang, the OCF penetrated down to the village level throughout much of northern Korea, allowing the CCP to effectively reach thousands upon thousands of Overseas Chinese.<sup>37</sup> When Guomindang representatives were allowed into United Nations-occupied North Korea in the autumn of 1950, they were alarmed at the depth of the CCP's presence, announcing that "the Association [the OCF] not only operated on a national, provincial, Gun [county], municipal and Myun level, but was also active in forming occupational, youth and women's groups."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ding, *Zhongguo diyiwei nv dashi*, 156-167.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>38</sup> Letter, O.N. Smyth, adviser to Australian Delegation, UNCURK, to the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, "The Chinese Community in Korea," 21 February 1951, A1838, 3707/40/90 Part 1, "China—Relations with Korea," NAA.

The CCP's robust presence in Korea was necessary because, despite that several major rivers separated Ding Xuesong and her Pyongyang-based colleagues from the Manchurian frontlines, the imperative of fighting (and winning) a civil war left an indelible imprint on their work with the Overseas Chinese. Shortly after being catapulted into founding the OCF, however, Ding Xuesong discovered that the Overseas Chinese community was reluctant to put its full energies behind the Chinese Communist Party. Based on her fieldwork and early observations, Ding formed the opinion that the Overseas Chinese community was "wary" of the CCP and generally supportive of Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist Party.<sup>39</sup> Surveys completed by the Nationalist Embassy in Korea during the UN occupation of Pyongyang in the autumn of 1950, even if offering self-fulfilling conclusions, reaffirmed that "there was no pro-Communist activity amongst most of the North Korean Chinese."<sup>40</sup> Liu Qian, an Overseas Chinese living in Pyongyang in the 1940s, also recalled that the Overseas Chinese community was materially rich but politically and socially uncultured, allegedly the result of the absence of CCP influence.<sup>41</sup> Another author, Zheng Yijun, states that "Guomintang spies had a definite influence among the Overseas Chinese" in North Korea.<sup>42</sup> These views, although oversimplifications of what was certainly a much more complex political reality, demonstrate how political leaders on all sides of the Chinese Civil War obsessed over the fate of the Overseas Chinese.

A desire to build an international alliance between China and Korea also invigorated Ding Xuesong's CCP-supported work. Cognizant of

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<sup>39</sup> Ding et al., "Huiyi dongbei jiefang zhanzheng qijian dongbei ju zhu bei Chaoxian banshichu," 206.

<sup>40</sup> Letter, O.N. Smyth, adviser to Australian Delegation, UNCURK, to the Secretary, Department of External Affairs.

<sup>41</sup> Liu Qian, "Chaoxian Huaqiao de diyi ge geming yaolan" [The First Cradle of Revolution among the Overseas Chinese in North Korea], *Liaoning Wenshi Ziliao* 28, November 1990, 169-170.

<sup>42</sup> Zheng, *Guiqiao Peng Guanghan de wangshi, jinshi*, 215.

colonial-era antagonisms, Ding believed that the Chinese in Korea were not only pro-GMD and anti-CCP, but they were also quite ambivalent toward the Korean Workers' Party. Hesitant to "cooperate" with local authorities, Ding added that the Overseas Chinese generally maintained their historically ingrained "prejudice" (*chengjian* 成见) against Koreans.<sup>43</sup> Upon its founding, the OCF therefore not only prioritized the short-term task of land reform, but also the long-term objective of forging amicable relations more generally between Chinese, Koreans, and the party-state.<sup>44</sup>

## The Overseas Chinese Federation at Work

Towards these ends, Ding tightened the organization and control of the Overseas Chinese in 1946 and 1947. She began to lobby the CCP to dispatch more mainland based cadres to the OCF, and when these long-distance efforts failed, Ding personally traveled to Dalian to wrest communist personnel from that city's party secretary.<sup>45</sup> Fortunately for Ding, other experienced CCP cadres arrived in Korea at this time purely out of coincidence, including Peng Guanghan (彭光涵) and his wife Wu Zhao (吴昭). Peng had spent his youth in Malaya, and he returned to China only in 1940. A true international, the CCP tapped into Peng's overseas experiences to strengthen the Party's networks across greater China during the Civil War era. After a brief stint in Inner Mongolia in 1945 and Harbin in 1946, Peng turned southward again, desiring to return to his family and work mobilizing the Overseas Chinese in Malaya. The

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<sup>43</sup> Ding, *Zhongguo diyiwei nv dashi*, 173; Ding et al., "Huiyi dongbei jiefang zhanzheng qijian dongbei ju zhu bei Chaoxian banshichu," 206.

<sup>44</sup> Zheng, *Guiqiao Peng Guanghan de wangshi*, jinshi, 215-216.

<sup>45</sup> Although little is known of their backgrounds or personalities, Ding's persistence resulted in the arrivals of Wang Jingye and Wang Fei, who assumed the top leadership posts in the Overseas Chinese Federation from 1946 until 1948. See Sun and Yang, *Chaoxian huaqiao shi*, 321.

logistical hurdles caused by warfare in Northeast China, however, did not allow him to journey so far. After a prolonged layover in Dalian, the CCP gave up on finding Peng transportation to Hong Kong. Intending to return to Harbin, Peng traveled through North Korea in July 1947 only to have his work orders altered by Zhu Lizhi at the Office of the Northeast Bureau in Korea. For the next ten months, Peng served as the OCF's propaganda chief, a role which he would perform with great aplomb.<sup>46</sup>

Propaganda was at the center of the Overseas Chinese Federation (OCF)'s work. One of its first maneuvers was to begin publishing a Chinese-language newspaper known as *Democratic Overseas Chinese* (民主华侨 *Minzhu Huaqiao*), a publication which drew on radio reports and CCP dispatches sent from the Northeast to provide up-to-date coverage on the Chinese Civil War.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the OCF also began to translate speeches made by Korean officials and other important documents produced by the KWP into Chinese for circulation in Korea and beyond.<sup>48</sup> Wu Zhao, Peng Guanghan's spouse, for example, worked with An Hyo-sang (安孝相)—a capable writer who later helped to publish the works of Lu Xun in Korean—to translate Kim Il-sung's works into Chinese.<sup>49</sup> In the afterword to another translated Korean publication which was later reprinted in Shanghai and Beijing, the Chinese publishing house thanked the Overseas Chinese Federation for its work to bring greater attention to the situation in Korea, a topic on which nary

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<sup>46</sup> Zheng, *Guiqiao Peng Guanghan de wangshi, jinshi*, 215.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>48</sup> Bei Chaoxian Huaqiao lianhe zonghui xuanjiao bu, *Bei Chaoxian zhuyao zhengce faling xuanji* [Selected Important Policies and Laws of North Korea] (Dalian: Guanghua shudian, 1948); Zhang Jing, *Chaoxian gaikuang* [Situation of Korea] (Pingrang: Minzhu Huaqiao she, 1948); Minzhu Huaqiao she, *Chaoxian minzhu zhuyi renmin gongheguo xianfa: 1948 nian 9 yue 8 ri di 1ci Chaoxian zuigao renmin huiyi tongguo* [The DPRK Constitution: Passed by the First Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea on September 8, 1948] (Pingrang: Minzhu Huaqiao she, 1949).

<sup>49</sup> Zheng, *Guiqiao Peng Guanghan de wangshi, jinshi*, 217.

a single book had been released.<sup>50</sup>

In his role as Propaganda Secretary, Peng Guanghan also sought to increase the amount of published material in Korean on the Chinese Civil War. Peng established liaison with several Korean news correspondents and began to act as a consultant for journalists writing columns and reports on developments in China.<sup>51</sup> Although it is impossible to know how important Peng's direct involvement was, the Chinese Civil War did indeed become an important and widely reported on subject in the North Korean media.<sup>52</sup> In her memoirs, Ding Xuesong wrote of a similar process of dispatching Chinese cadres to North Korean news agencies to "assist them with writing news related to China [in order to] allow the Korean people and Overseas Chinese to understand the situation of the Chinese War of Liberation in a timely manner."<sup>53</sup> One of the most important documents translated into Korean and circulated in Pyongyang was Liu Shaoqi's classic pamphlet *Internationalism and Nationalism*.<sup>54</sup>

The Overseas Chinese Federation's efforts to mobilize the Chinese population to support the CCP in the Civil War extended well beyond spreading propaganda and obtaining vocal pledges of allegiance. When the Federation collected a reported 1,818 letters of support from Overseas Chinese to be delivered to communist armed forces, for example, it simultaneously exacted a haul of several million *yuan* to be paid to the CCP.<sup>55</sup> As thousands of wounded Chinese soldiers were

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<sup>50</sup> Note to Shanghai edition included in Xu Zhe, *Chaoxian wenti* [The Korean Problem], trans. Wu Yinghao (Beijing: Dazhong shudian, 1950), 185.

<sup>51</sup> Zheng, *Guiqiao Peng Guanghan de wangshi, jinshi*, 217.

<sup>52</sup> Adam Cathcart and Charles Kraus, "Internationalist Culture in North Korea, 1945-1950."

<sup>53</sup> Ding, *Zhongguo diyiywei nv dashi*, 174.

<sup>54</sup> Liu Shaoqi, *Gukjejuui wa minjogjuui e daehayeo* [Internationalism and Nationalism], trans. Minzhu Huaqiao (Pyongyang: Minzhu Huaqiao she, 1949).

<sup>55</sup> Ren Guixiang, *Huaqiao yu Zhongguo minzu minzhu geming* [The Overseas Chinese and China's National Democratic Revolution] (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 2006), 437-438; Sun and Yang, *Chaoxian huaqiao shi*, 324-325.

brought to Korea from Shandong and Southern Manchuria in 1946 and 1947, Overseas Chinese citizens in Nampo and Pyongyang also often assumed the responsibility to care for them.<sup>56</sup> Finally, the Overseas Chinese Federation also organized a number of visiting delegations to Chinese Communist controlled areas in the Northeast and successfully recruited a number of young male Overseas Chinese to join the Red Army.<sup>57</sup> As a gesture of thanks for the community's small but earnest support, the CCP later arranged for a representative from the Overseas Chinese in North Korea, Zhao Lingde (赵令德), to attend the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing in September 1949.<sup>58</sup>

The OCF was also an erstwhile intermediary for the emerging North Korean state. A 1947 census catalogued Overseas Chinese residents in North Korea, resulting in the creation of thousands upon thousands of personal dossiers. While completed by the North Korean People's Committee, it was the OCF that helped to facilitate the completion of this census. The dossiers contained basic biographical information about the respondents, but interestingly, the Overseas Chinese were also asked about their "hopes" or "wishes" (*xiwang* 希望) for the future. In Hamheung, the most common responses included "for North and South Korea to be unified and for business to develop," "the establishment of an independent Korea," and "the complete

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<sup>56</sup> Sun and Yang, *Chaoxian huaqiao shi*, 323.

<sup>57</sup> Ren, *Huaqiao yu Zhongguo minzu minzhu geming*, 438; Sun and Yang, *Chaoxian Huaqiao shi*, 323-324; Ding, "Huiyi dongbei jiefang zhanzheng qijian dongbei ju zhu bei Chaoxian banshichu," 206.

<sup>58</sup> Ren Guixiang and Zhao Hongying, *Huaqiao Huaren yu guogong guanxi* [Relations between the Overseas Chinese and the GMD and the CCP] (Wuhan: Wuhan chubanshe, 1999), 245, 255. While Zhao was not of the ranking leaders of the OCF, Li Fuchun had previously met Zhao during his short trip to the Port of Rajin in 1948 and found him to be an "able young man" (*ganlian qingnian*). See Hao Zaijin, *Xieshang jianguo: 1948-1949 Zhongguo dangpai zhengzhi rishi* [Talking about the Founding of the Nation: The Political Diary of a Chinese Partisan, 1948-1949] (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2000), 114.

independence and unification of Korea.” One thirty-two year old wrote that he wished “good things upon the Chinese people,” while another respondent praised the “Republic of China.” The most heartwarming (and non-standardized) response, however, came from a young man named Jiang Kexiu (姜克修). Born in Shandong in 1909, Jiang came to Korea in 1928 and immediately went into business. Relatively successful until the onset of World War II, Jiang was then reduced to working in a kitchen and lost a substantial share of his prior income. Hesitant to endorse the political-revolutionary tenor of the times, Jiang wrote that he wished simply “to live” (*shenghuo* 生活).<sup>59</sup>

## Overseas Chinese Education

It was the realm of education where the lion’s share of the Overseas Chinese Federation’s resources was funneled, though this arena too was closely aligned with the organization’s broader emphasis on supporting the communist parties in both China and Korea.<sup>60</sup> Funding for schools came largely from taxes collected by the OCF, although budgetary shortfalls were routinely taken care of by the North Korean government.<sup>61</sup> One captured letter dated June 13, 1947, indicates that Kim Il-sung himself may have sponsored a specialized school system for the Overseas Chinese. Addressing the “Chairman of the North Korean People’s Committee,” or Kim Il-sung, the Overseas Chinese Federation requested government aid to repair elementary schools, noting that the decrepit facilities were “proving a great handicap.” The Federation asked for financial assistance for repairs and to provide a bus service for students, pleading that “these are matters of intimate concern to the educational

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<sup>59</sup> All dossiers were found in “Registered Foreigners in Hamheung, South Hamgyeong Province,” RG 242, Shipping Advice (SA) 2005, Item 9/48.

<sup>60</sup> Mu, “Chaoxian huaqiao jiaoyu de lishi huigu,” 59.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

welfare of the Overseas Chinese.”<sup>62</sup>

Local governments throughout North Korea were also intimately involved in the revival and expansion of Overseas Chinese education. A report from the North Hamgyeong branch of the OCF in particular demonstrates the extent of Chinese “outreach with local governments” (*dangdi zhengfu de lianxi* 当地政府的联系). In the cities of Hoeryeong and Cheongjin, the local governments had provided materials for building repairs; in Seongjin (also known as Gimchaek), the local government provided school uniforms; and in Rajin, the government provided Korean-language teachers. The provincial report concluded that Korean schools and Chinese schools were receiving equal treatment from local governments in North Hamgyeong and that the convening of several joint Chinese-Korean cadres meetings had helped to achieve “a deeper Sino-Korean relationship” (*Zhong Chao de guanxi geng shenke le* 中朝的关系更深刻了).<sup>63</sup> In North Pyeongan, the provincial government also provided aid to the Overseas Chinese schools, including subsidies, assistance with construction and repair work, and grain rations. The OCF cadre, in a report presumably destined for the CCP’s Northeast Bureau, appreciatively concluded that the Korean government “is very concerned about Overseas Chinese education” and offers assistance “without regard to nationality” (*shi bufen minzu de* 是不分民族的).<sup>64</sup> While this type of language was probably used to paper over and obscure a much grittier reality, it does still demonstrate the institutional support the Overseas

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<sup>62</sup> Letter from the Overseas Chinese General Association in North Korea to the Chairman of the North Korean People’s Committee, “Request for Funds to Repair the Buildings of the Overseas Elementary School and to Purchase School Buses,” 13 June 1947, translated and printed in “Overseas Chinese Schools in North Korea,” 2 April 1951, CREST no. CIA-RDP82-00457R007100330001-0.

<sup>63</sup> “Xianbei dao jiaoyu gongzuo zongjie” [Summary of Education Work in North Hamgyeong], 25 February 1949, in RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/23.

<sup>64</sup> “Xuexiao zhengguihua Pingbei dao” [School Standardization, North Pyongan Province] in RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/23.

Chinese Federation was receiving from North Korean officials.

With robust backing from the central and local governments, the Overseas Chinese Federation excelled at conducting ideological education in these schools. In North Pyeongan Province, for example, the OCF directed instruction toward the Chinese Civil War, aiming to reveal the “Guomindang’s typical wrongdoings” (*Guomindang suo zuo dianxing eshi* 国民党所作典型恶事) and the “Communist Party’s services to the people” (*Gongchandang de ti laobaixing fuwu* 共产党的替老百姓服务).<sup>65</sup> Textbooks and other teaching materials were delivered from the Northeast as they became available, and the works of Mao Zedong became a central text utilized in class discussions.<sup>66</sup> Patriotic education had been so successful in North Hamgyeong that OCF staff noted a desire among teachers to “organize” a “tour group to the motherland.”<sup>67</sup> Whether or not Mao’s teachings were actually embraced, the struggle between China’s warring factions had clearly entered classrooms across the Yalu and Tumen rivers.

Though education was often inwardly focused on the Chinese Civil War, schools also mediated cross-cultural exchange between Chinese and Koreans. Beginning in 1949, for example, Chinese schools in Cheongjin and Nanam “taught students Hangul writing” (*xuexi Chaoxian wenzi* 学习朝鲜文字).<sup>68</sup> In Pyongyang, the OCF reported that it had made strides

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<sup>65</sup> “Xuesheng zhengguihua Pingbei dao,” RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/23.

<sup>66</sup> Sun and Yang, *Chaoxian Huaqiao shi*, 310-311; Mu, “Chaoxian Huaqiao jiaoyu de lishi huigu,” 59-60.

<sup>67</sup> “Xianbei dao jiaoyu gongzuo zongjie,” RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/23. The emphasis on democratic education also had its drawbacks, as revealed by various North Hamgyeong reports. According to parent complaints, some students had become imbued with “ultra-democratization” (*jiduan minzhuhua*). Students argued that they could not be forced to complete their homework, would behave inappropriately, and would lecture their parents on “democracy and freedom and equality.” See “Xianbei dao jiaoyuan dui jiaoyu gongzuo quedian zongjie: fujian ziliao” [Summary of Shortcomings in Teachers’ Work in North Hamgyeong Province: Attachments], 25 February 1949 in RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/23.

<sup>68</sup> “Xianbei dao jiaoyu gongzuo zongjie,” RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/23.

to institute what it called “Sino-Korean Children’s Parties” (*Zhong Chao ertong lianhuanhui* 中朝儿童联欢会). These playdates “strengthened the goodwill between Chinese and Korean children, [helping them to] recognize the mistaken conflict between one another in the past.” OCF staff in the de facto North Korean capital described with some hope that “mutual contact between one another [Chinese and Koreans] is gradually becoming more frequent.”<sup>69</sup>

The North Hamgyeong bureau of the OCF also revealed that “Sino-Korean Children’s Parties” had been held in Cheongjin, Rajin, Nanam, Hoeryeong, Unggi (now Seonbong), and Museon, involving a total of 1,930 Chinese and Korean students. A report written by Overseas Chinese in Cheongjin added that “students and the heads of families were both very satisfied. [The party] improved the relationships among Chinese and Korean students.” In Nanam, where an astounding 1,168 students participated, the cross-cultural gathering had also “improved the relationship among students.”<sup>70</sup>

In Hwanghae Province, the local OCF branch had held eleven Sino-Korean Children’s Parties by 1949. The Chinese cadres in this city wrote optimistically that the meetings helped to “eliminate” (*chu diao le* 除掉了) the “hatred” (*choushi* 仇视) between Chinese and Koreans. The mixed populations in Hwanghae had allegedly come a long way to “strengthen intimate unity” (*qiang le qinmi tuanjie* 强了亲密团结) and, as a result, there was greater incentive to “frequently convene Sino-Korean Children’s Parties.” Chinese administrators in Hwanghae announced that “the relationship between Chinese and Korean children is better than in the past.”<sup>71</sup> The North Pyeongan report on a Sino-Korean Children’s

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<sup>69</sup> “Pingrang tiebie shi Huaqiao lianhehui jiaoyu tianxie” [Tables from the Department of Education, Pyongyang Special City Branch, Overseas Chinese Federation], in RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/23.

<sup>70</sup> “Xianbei dao jiaoyu gongzuo zongjie,” RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/23.

<sup>71</sup> “Xuexiao zhengguihua Huanghai dao” [School Standardization, Hwanghae Province] in RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/23.

Party noted similar results: with 616 students in attendance, the party had successfully reduced the once common “bullying” (*qiwu* 欺侮) of Chinese students by Koreans. “Even adults had all been cursed at by Korean children” (*jiu lian daren dou shoudao Gaoli xuesheng de maren* 就连大人都受到高丽学生的骂人), but these meetings were allegedly eroding the antagonisms once common during the colonial era.<sup>72</sup>

These tales of success, cooperation, and mutual trust, while highly interesting, were most likely exaggerations offered to please superiors in Pyongyang and Northeast China. Nevertheless, Overseas Chinese education did undergo a well-documented revival prior to the Korean War. While one surviving record of the OCF offers statistics for only 27 schools, we know that there were in fact closer to 50 Chinese elementary schools in 1949, nearly four-times the number in operation in 1945.<sup>73</sup> The number of students enrolled in elementary schools peaked at around 3,000, although some reports suggest that there were as many as 5,000 students prior to the Korean War.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, two Chinese-language middle schools were opened in Pyongyang and Sinuiju through the collaboration of the OCF and the North Korean government.<sup>75</sup> The Overseas Chinese, as these statistics reveal, had become an important fixture in the relationship between the CCP and the KWP.

Having revived and rehabilitated the Overseas Chinese school system, the management of these schools formally returned back to the hands of the North Korean government in March 1949.<sup>76</sup> In one of her

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<sup>72</sup> “Xuexiao zhengguihua Pingbei dao,” RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/23.

<sup>73</sup> Jiaoyu bu [Ministry of Education], “Bei Chaoxian ge dao Huaqiao de xuexiao yuezhong diaocha baogao” [Month-End Investigative Report on Overseas Chinese Schools in Every Province of North Korea], January 1949, RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/26. The higher estimate of Chinese schools comes from Sun and Yang, *Chaoxian Huaqiao shi*, 311.

<sup>74</sup> Far Eastern Section, Korea, “Briefs,” 24 November 1948, in A1838, 3707/40/90 Part 1, “China—Relations with Korea,” NAA.

<sup>75</sup> Sun and Yang, *Chaoxian Huaqiao Shi*, 311.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 312. See also Jiaoyu bu [Ministry of Education] “Guanyu Zhongguo ren chujǐ zhong

last acts as an OCF administrator, Ding Xuesong facilitated the transfer of the Overseas Chinese Federation's school property to the DPRK Ministry of Education and wrote to Kim Il-sung to thank him for his personal involvement in the founding of dozens of Chinese schools.<sup>77</sup> Though it was really the twin imperatives of fighting a civil war and forging an international alliance—not the footwork of one man—that hastened the successful expansion of Chinese education in Korea, Ding could not help but acknowledge the gracious assistance of this newly founded nation's young premier.

## Conclusion

The CCP and the KWP had become intimately connected with one another after 1945, and it was the tireless efforts to regulate the political, economic, and cultural activities of the Chinese diaspora which brought the two communist parties closest together. Collaboratively, the CCP and the KWP carried out land reform among Chinese nationals, established some fifty Chinese-language schools, distributed Chinese and Korean language publications, and brought together Chinese and Koreans for exchanges across the northern half of the peninsula. While these connections do not explain or rationalize China's decision to intervene in the Korean War in October 1950, they do alert us to an ongoing CCP-KWP dynamic during the early Cold War years which extended well beyond military cooperation. From this collaboration, it is also clear that while the Soviet Union was an important player in North Korea during the "interwar" years, it was not North Korea's only foreign partner. This may

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xuexiao guicheng" [Regulations for Chinese Junior High Schools], 8 April 1950, in RG 242, SA 2006, Item 12/22.

<sup>77</sup> Letter from Ding Xuesong to the Finance Minister of the DPRK, "Request for Aid in Returning the Loan Made for the Building of the Overseas Chinese Middle School," 15 March 1949, in CREST No. CIA-RDP82-00457R007100330001-0.

seem like a trivial point, but North Korea's China connection necessitates that we treat this country as an emerging postcolonial nation-state, not a puppet state, in the study of its infancy and early history.

Beyond alliance building, the life-and-death political struggle fought between China's warring factions from 1946 through 1950 (and beyond) also gave shape to the Chinese Communist Party's policies and activities in Korea. The resources, energies, and passions expended on organizing the Overseas Chinese in North Korea sprang forth directly from the internecine conflict between the CCP and the GMD, suggesting that the Chinese Civil War was not simply a military confrontation fought snugly inside of China's borders. Rather, it was a battle for the hearts and minds of Chinese nationals waged on a global scale, including inside the classrooms of Overseas Chinese schools in North Korea. The international dimensions of this conflict, then, were not limited to the involvement of the Soviet Union and the United States. The global reach of the Chinese Civil War awaits additional research.

The bridge connecting two of East Asia's earliest Cold War-era revolutions, it was during this period that the Overseas Chinese became enshrined within Chinese Communist diplomacy. In Indonesia, Vietnam, and beyond, the Overseas Chinese would also become intimately involved with developments in China's foreign relations. Though their lives were impacted by the top-level decisions made by senior officials, the Overseas Chinese just as often shaped the agendas and activities of high-level diplomats. In North Korea, the Overseas Chinese also happened to be "present at the creation" of one of Beijing's most important, enduring, and problematic relationships.

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