

Dreams of Socialism Reflected in a 1947 North Korean School Textbook

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Abstract

In 1945, with the participation of the Soviet Union, which sent naval forces to the northern coast of the Korean peninsula as well as paratroopers to Pyongyang, Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule. A limited contingent of Red Army units was dispatched in the northern part of the Korean peninsula to accept Japanese surrender and maintain law and order until the establishment of the national administration.

From 1945 to 1948, Soviet citizens who worked in North Korea and the new North Korean authorities both made efforts to propagate a positive image of Soviet socialism. Their efforts would be successful among the lower classes of Korean society. The middle school textbook the “*Kugŏ* (Native Speech 국어),” published in 1947 in North Korea, provides a clear example of how the positive image of the USSR, when it came to village development, was presented to the Korean younger generation in the framework of traditional dreams about the lives of peasants.

In particular, the Korean language textbook broke down the Japanese perception of the socialist village where, according to the former Japanese colonial authorities, peasants have no private property. The “Native Speech” textbook stated that the “peasants who choose socialism will *own their land themselves* and will be able to have private property.”

Keywords: Soviet Union, socialism, Korean peasantry, ideal village image

The USSR as a liberating country

The concept of “socialism” is not a dogma whose content has been constant throughout its history. In different historical eras and in different parts of the world, the word “socialism” was understood differently. Moreover, when the term was translated into the languages of the peoples of the East, it could acquire particular semantic shades.

Thus, in the Korean language, the term “socialism” (사회주의 社會主義) implied the idea that the main focus of the state’s activities should be a concern for society, that is, for the collective, and not for a single individual. This conceptual value system fitted well with the consciousness of traditional collectivism, which is reflected, in particular, in the North Korean constitution of 1972 and its later editions.¹

In 1945, the USSR was a country that took part, together with the allied forces, in the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule. Besides, the Soviet Union was a winner in World War II, demonstrating to the whole world the strength, power, and promise of the socialist development model. After all, colonialism spread within the framework of the capitalist system of production, and therefore

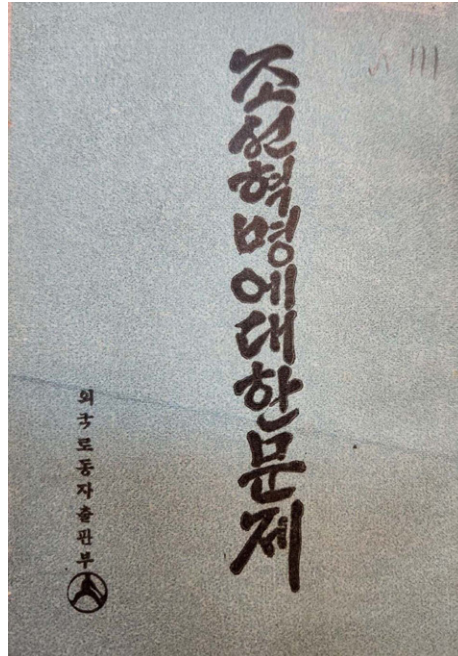


Figure 1 A cover of the 1934 Korean language edition of the brochure “Chosŏn hyŏngmyŏngŭe taehan munje (The Problem of the Korean Revolution 조선혁명에대한문제)²

it was quite natural that the peoples of the former colonies would reject not only the power of the colonialists, but also the entire socio-economic system within which the colonial takeover took place.

This research note does not aim to review the entire history of the left (communist) movement in Korea between the 1910s and the 1940s; it is sufficient to mention that in the 1920s, with the participation of the Comintern, communist parties were formed in China, Japan, and colonial Korea. In the 1930s, the Publishing House of Foreign Workers in the USSR printed a large amount of literature in Korean, which dealt with both the issues of the “Korean revolution” in general and the issues of recreating the Communist Party of Korea in particular.

So, from the 1930s to the 1940s, leftist ideas were quite popular both in the territory of colonial Korea and in the Korean diasporas, mostly in China and the USSR, where many Korean nationals resided on a temporary or constant basis as immigrants.³

When the Soviet Red Army entered the Korean peninsula in August 1945, its main goal was the liberation of Korea from Japanese occupation and the subsequent acceptance of the surrender of Japanese troops. “Before the war ended, the decision to divide [Korea] at the 38th parallel was made in the State Department and proposed to the Soviet Union as a means of joint U.S.-U.S.S.R. acceptance of Japanese surrender on the Korean peninsula.”⁴ On 15 August 1945, the Japanese Emperor surrendered to the Allied Forces, which was the final act of World War II.

After landing on the Korean peninsula and dispatching there a limited number of Red Army troops in the north, the Soviet authorities did not have plans to build any communist system in Korea. This is confirmed, first of all, by the order of the headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army, No. 1130, dated 20 September 1945. It clearly states that “on the territory of North Korea, soviets and other bodies of Soviet power should not be created, Soviet order should not be introduced” and, in addition, Soviet troops should try “to promote the establishment of bourgeois democratic power in North Korea on the basis of a bloc of all anti-Japanese democratic parties and organizations.”⁵

Immediately following liberation, the so-called people’s committees (人民委員會) were organized in the north of Korea. It seems that local northern Korean political leaders established good relations with the temporary Soviet military authorities. As Professor Andrei Lankov wrote, “The social and political system of the DPRK was created in 1948–1950 by the efforts of Soviet generals and political advisers. Many elements of their policy were supported by a large part of the local population. Local initiative also played a certain role.”⁶



Figure 2 A photo taken at the party arranged for the Soviet military authorities on 21 September 1945, the Korean national holiday Ch'usŏk⁷

Photographs taken in North Korea in September 1945, which show representatives of the Red Army and the local Korean political elite together, confirm the establishment of good relations between them (see Figure 2).

Besides, representatives of the Korean intelligentsia and local North Korean self-government bodies visited Moscow to gain experience and training.⁸ One of the reasons for the positive attitude toward the socialist path of development was the image of the Soviet Union and socialism that were spread among the population of North Korea.

On the one hand, “the stories of Soviet soldiers about socialism and the Soviet order”⁹ could have influenced the population of the north. On the other hand, the North Korean authorities themselves, even before the official proclamation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (9 September 1948) were engaged in the massive dissemination of positive information about achievements of the Soviet Union among the population of North Korea.

North Korean 1947 school textbook “Native speech,” basic features

The North Korean People’s Committee (북조선 인민 위원회) was established in February of 1947. This new administrative body replaced the former “North Korean Provisional People’s Committee” (북조선 임시 인민 위원회 北朝鮮臨時人民委員會).¹⁰ In the same year, the Department of Education under the People’s Committee (북조선 인민 위원회 교육국) published a school textbook entitled *Kugŏ: Ch’ogŭp chungghakkyo che irhangnyŏn yong* (국어. 초급 중학교 제 一 학년 용 Native Speech: For grade 1 of middle school) (henceforth referred to as “Native Speech”) for the first grade of secondary school (see Figure 3). In itself, this textbook is very interesting from the point of view that it represents a set of ideological messages that served as the basis for the ideology of the new government in the northern part of the Korean peninsula.

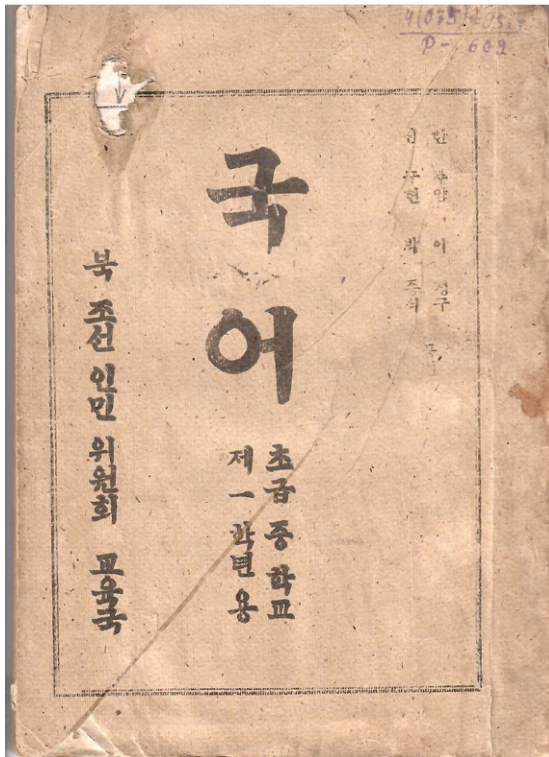


Figure 3 The cover of the 1947 “Native Speech” textbook for schoolchildren, published in the North in 1947. (From the personal book collection of the author)

North Korean youth were the part of the nation's population which had to be first of all educated in the spirit of socialist ideas and that is why one of the first North Korean public journals was "Life of Youth" (청년 생활). The 1947 textbook "Native Speech" consists of thirty lessons, presenting the present, past, and future life of a "democratic" Korea. In 1947, both in the north and in the south, Koreans believed that soon they would establish one united state notwithstanding a temporary division of the Korean peninsula along the 38th parallel. In 1947 the last head of the Provisional government of the Republic of Korea in exile, Kim Ku (1876–1949),¹¹ in his afterword to the printed edition of his diaries *Paekpōm ilchi* (백범일지, The Diaries of Kim Ku) wrote: "My wish is the complete sovereign independence of our nation."¹² He also did not support the idea of establishing two separate states in the north and the south.

So, the North Korean textbook "Native Speech" solved two main tasks: teaching children the native language, which was forbidden for official use in the later period of Japanese colonial rule, and educating ideologically savvy youth. In 1947, it was clear that the state and ideological leader of the country would be General Kim Il Sung. That is why the textbook begins with a text titled "General Kim Il Sung" (김일성 장군).¹³ The first lesson of the textbook lays the foundations for the official image of Kim Il Sung as a fighter for the independence of Korea, the liberator of Korea, and the legitimate leader of the people of North Korea (and theoretically, of all Korea, too). The textbook does not hide the fact that Kim Il Sung "returned in triumph to his homeland" after twenty years being away from Korea. He returned on the evening of 14 October 1945.¹⁴ At the same time, it is very important to note that the textbook contains very few references to the activities of Kim Il Sung as the leader of the communist youth organization (공청 共靑) in Manchuria. The word "revolution" is hardly used. The main merit of the new young leader is determined precisely by the struggle for independence against "Japanese imperialism." The communist ideological component in the official biography of the "commander" in 1947 was not yet so noticeable.

The second text of the textbook is entitled "The first day of a trip to Moscow" (모스크바로 가는 첫 날). This text, second in order in the textbook, is especially important, as it sets several principal ideological vectors for schoolchildren. The narrator describes impressions of the flight of a North Korean man from Pyongyang via Vladivostok and other Soviet cities to Moscow. The "hero" of the educational text who wrote the essay is one of the members of the official North Korean delegation, consisting of peasants, workers, politicians, and artists (농민, 노동자,¹⁵ 학자, 정치가, 예술가).¹⁶ General Ivan M. Chitsyakov himself,¹⁷ seeing off the North Korean delegation, asked its members, who were preparing to visit the Soviet Union, to make sure for themselves whether the Japanese had propagandized the

USSR “in the right way or not” (일본의 소련에 대한 선전이 옳았는가 옳지 못하였는가).¹⁸ Both in this educational text and in other parts of the textbook, its authors wanted to show that the negative image of socialism in general and of the Soviet Union in particular, which may have been familiar to Koreans from previous years, is not due to the fact that socialism in principle is bad, but is associated solely with the position of the Japanese colonial authorities, who, from the point of view of the authors of the textbook, sought to unfairly denigrate the ideas of socialism.

Obviously, along with the promotion of the socialist path of development, the authorities of the north paid special attention to the revival of the national culture, which was suppressed throughout the entire period of Japanese colonial rule, and especially in the first half of the 1940s.

That is why the third text of “Native Speech” is about “Ch’usök” (추석). The day of Ch’usök is the traditional holiday that is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the eighth moon in the lunar cycle. In modern South Korea it is associated with the cult of ancestors and the ceremony of ancestral rites, *chesa* (제사). In 1947, the North Korean perception of the Ch’usök holiday was different. First of all, it was a harvest festival. Visits to the ancestral graves were secondary to the joy of the new harvest.¹⁹ The textbook does not say anything about the ceremony of worshiping the spirits of ancestors, which was performed primarily by representatives of the *yangban* aristocratic class. Perhaps the reason for this was that there were no representatives of the *yangban* class among the population of the north, or, if there were any, they preferred not to advertise their “class origin.”

The fourth text is also connected with Korean national tradition. Its title is the “[National flag] T’aegkŭki is flying” (태극기 휘날린다). The T’aegkŭki is the national flag that first appeared in Korea in 1882 toward the latter part of the Chosŏn era during the reign of King Kojong, and then became the national flag during the years of the Korean Empire (1897–1910), and was used by patriotic fighters for Korean independence, including the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in exile (1919–1945).²⁰

Thus, the new people’s authorities in North Korea, on the one hand, paid special attention to the “independence struggle of Kim Il Sung” and relations with the USSR, but on the other hand, they attached special importance to traditional Korean culture, rituals, and customs, as well as the general Korean history of the independence movement.

Several texts in the textbook are devoted to a description of the realities of the Soviet Union. For example, the text of lesson No. 15 is devoted to the life of Vladimir Lenin (브.이. 레닌).²¹ Lesson No. 23 is titled “Great Stalin” (위대한 스탈린).²² But there are not very many purely ideological pro-Soviet texts in the textbook. For example, lesson No. 25 is not connected with any communist ideology. It introduces to the

schoolchildren the folk song “Song of the Flower” (꽃 노래), which sings of love for the native land.²³ It does not have any particular ideology.

Lesson No. 19, the “Life of Soviet Peasants” (쏘련 농민의 생활), is one of the few lessons that presents in detail the features of the life of ordinary citizens of the USSR, its peasants.²⁴ For the conditions of the former colonial Korea with a predominance of agrarians in the population, the experience of the Soviet Union in this particular sphere seemed to be the most important.

The image of Soviet rural life in a 1947 North Korean textbook

“Native Speech” also presents a very attractive image of the Soviet village, an image that fit well with traditional Korean ideas and peasant aspirations whom for many centuries were economically dependent on landowners. The most important and most painful issue for the Korean peasants was the issue of land ownership. As of 1939, 57.4% of those working in the agricultural sector did not own land, and in addition to the poor, 23.6% of agricultural workers belonged to the category of “semi-owner-semi-tenants.”²⁵ In other words, 81% of those working in the countryside were not full-fledged owners of the land on which they worked. Accordingly, it is understandable how great was the desire of the peasants to become the masters of the land they farmed.

Land use and harvest distribution

From the point of view of the authors of “Native Speech,” the Soviet model of socialism could make Korean peasants’ dreams come true. Land ownership is described in the textbook in the following way: “Land is not the property of the state itself, but the peasants, gathered together in a cooperative, own their land” (토지가 국가 자체의 소유가 아니라 농민의 모인 조합의 소유입니다).²⁶ In other words, socialism does not mean any state land ownership. Socialism provides the peasants’ land ownership. The only condition for it, however, is that the peasants must collectively own the land (see Figure 4).

This view of land ownership was not alien to the traditional rural community. Traditional Korean peasantry, both in the sphere of land use and in the sphere of owning and using agricultural instruments, had a long history of collectivism. At least since the Koryŏ era (918–1392), the population of Korea began to unite in various village organizations. They were quite numerous and had such names as *kye*, *ture*, *hwangdu*, and others (계, 두레, 황두). The purpose of these village

제 三 十 과 일가	제 二 十 九 과 공장 방문기	제 二 十 八 과 노동 법령을 노래함	제 二 十 七 과 에너준의 소년 시대	제 二 十 六 과 마을 노래	제 二 十 五 과 꽃 노래	제 二 十 四 과 북구 소식	제 二 十 三 과 위 한 쓰말린	제 二 十 二 과 살구 꽃	제 二 十 一 과 봄의 선구자	제 二 十 과 보랏 고개	제 十 九 과 뜨린 농민의 생활	제 十 八 과 개벽	제 十 七 과 농촌 위협회의 밤	제 十 六 과 연년 회의 활판기
一 五 七	一 五 〇	一 四 九	一 四 二	一 三 四	一 三 二	一 二 八	一 三 一	一 一 六	一 一 四	一 〇 八	一 〇 二	九 二	八 八	八 三

Figure 4 Table of contents in the 1947 "Native Speech" school textbook with the topic No. 19: "Life of Soviet Peasants" indicated by an arrow. (From the personal book collection of the author)

organizations was to jointly cultivate fields, to weed or to collect the harvest or perform other communal labor.²⁷ Moreover, some of the organizations indicated above assumed the joint use of draft animals and agricultural instruments. Thus, the notions of non-state, namely, collective property of peasants, united in rural labor organizations, as indicated in “Native Speech,” fitted the traditions and realities of old pre-colonial and even of colonial Korea as well. For example, the Korean traditional village organization *ture* (두레) became ubiquitous during the Chosŏn era. Despite the fact that during the years of Japanese colonial rule, traditional village organizations gradually disappeared under pressure from the colonial administration, nevertheless, by 1945 a certain number of them remained, and in the period from 1945 into the 1950s, there was a boom in the revival of *ture*.²⁸ Accordingly, the proposal to the peasants of the North of a new form of collective farming in the countryside, which came from the new authorities, could well have been supported by the local population.

Trying to dispel the “myth” about the “terrible” socialist system, Lesson No. 19 of the textbook says that in the new socialist society not only the land ownership, but the grain harvest itself, “like in the Soviet Union,” will also be exclusively at the disposal of the peasants (그러므로, 농민이 지은 낱알은 국가에 바치는 것이 아니라, 농민 조합 자체가 가지고...).²⁹ The peasants will not have to hand over their crops to the state. They will bear only one responsibility in relation to the state: to hand over one tenth of the harvest (나라에 대해서는 조합이 다만 그 일 년 수확의 십분의 일만 바치면 됩니다), and the remaining harvest will be distributed among the members of the cooperative.³⁰

“Native Speech” introduces the Soviet experience of “workdays” (한 노력 일자). “Workdays” are determined from whether the peasant performed hard or difficult tasks, as well as the time spent by him on the work. The cooperative, based on the “workdays” earned for the year by each member of cooperative, determines how much rice and other cereals the peasant will receive, as well as the amounts of vegetables, meat, and other basic necessities to be distributed.³¹

It is curious to note that although the textbook seems to be talking about the Soviet Union, the indication of rice (쌀) as the main product of agriculture, obviously, should have prompted the reader (a Korean student) to think that the situation in Korea is exactly the same as in the Soviet Union, or at least, there will be a similar situation in Korea if its people firmly set foot on the path of building socialism. When speaking about the harvest and its use, the text of Lesson No. 19 does not mention anywhere that the harvest will be sold or that it will be a part of market exchange. The “workdays” system introduced in the text provides an alternative to market regulation. The quality of life and the level of income are determined, first of all, by the person himself, investing more or less in a

common cause, as well as the team that determines this contribution. The textbook makes a very important point that the government (state) does not interfere in the process of crop distribution. The peasants themselves do this, independently and freely. (국가가 이를 남기거나, 혹은 어떠한 사람이 이를 보는 것이 아니고, 조합의 수학의 전부를 그 조합원 농민에게 그 노력에 의하여 분배=하는 것이...).³²

“Native Speech,” advocating specifically for socialist forms of management and referring at the same time to the positive experience of the Soviet Union, uses a curious technique that leads the reader (a Korean student) to the lack of alternative choices for the future path of development other socialism. The authors of the textbook ask: who criticized socialism and why? Socialism was criticized by the “Japanese colonialists,” saying that “in the USSR, a country of communism, [...] both working and non-working eat the same.” But this was not the case. Why it was just that the Japanese capitalists and landowners were afraid of socialism, and that is why “they spoke all kinds of lies about it.” (이것은 왜국이 사회주의의 국가가 되는 것을 두려워하던 자본가와 지주들의 악 선전입니다).³³

This kind of reasoning could not but work for the Korean reader. Everything that was connected with Japan, which for forty years since the declaration of the protectorate in 1905 had ruled the Korean peninsula, caused a feeling of resentment. Therefore, any Japanese criticism was perceived extremely negatively. It was the Japanese capitalists and landowners who, from the point of view of the Korean peasant, exploited the Korean population and received everything. The desire to end this situation once and for all was so great that it was reflected even in the constitution of the “capitalist” Republic of Korea, according to which a person who does not work on agricultural land cannot own it, and it is forbidden to lease land only for the purpose of personal gain (article 121).³⁴

Continuing the story about the miracles of socialist agriculture, the educational text “The Life of Soviet Peasants” narrates: precisely because the USSR is a socialist country, thanks to both state aid and cooperative self effort, cooperatives achieve a level of mechanization in agriculture that is not even matched in developed capitalist countries, like the USA or England (국가의 원조와 각 조합 자체의 힘으로 미국과 영국등 어느 자본주의 국가에서도 볼 수 없을 만큼 극도로 기계화 하여 이룹니다).³⁵

The 104 pages of the textbook are devoted to describing the benefits of mechanization to the peasant. In the USSR, it does not happen that a village worker carries something himself (having loaded the load on the “traditional Korean shoulder stretcher” *chige* 지게),³⁶ or transports something on a horse-drawn cart. All work in the fields such as plowing, sowing, weeding, harvesting, and delivery of the crop to storage—all this is done by machines. Therefore, it is enough for a

peasant to work in the field from six to eight hours a day only. And there was more; thanks to mechanization and the use of chemical fertilizers, the yield increased two to three times compared to the pre-revolutionary period.³⁷

It is interesting to note here how the “Koreanization” of the text dedicated to the realities of the Soviet Union transforms it into a text dedicated to the realities of the future Korea if it chooses the socialist path of development. In the USSR (Russia) they do not use *chige* shoulder stretchers. There is no word in the Russian language that adequately conveys this Korean reality. Thus, the use of references to traditional Korean realities in relation to the Soviet Union changes the content of lesson No. 19. Unnoticed by the reader, Soviet reality is transformed into the future North Korean reality.

Rural cultural life and women’s lives

Lesson No. 19 then continues and argues that thanks to all the achievements highlighted above, as well as the absence of exploitation by the landowners and capitalists, the Soviet peasant lives in full prosperity. Here the authors of “Native Speech” resort to a specific enumeration of those material benefits available to Soviet rural workers, which, apparently, were the object of desire of the inhabitants of the villages on the Korean peninsula. Soviet peasants “always eat a snack made of meat (고기 반찬), drink plenty of milk and eat eggs.”³⁸ The use of the specific Korean word *panch’an* (반찬, snack) in the text, which is also quite difficult to adequately translate into Russian, also softly transforms “Soviet realities” into “Korean realities.” Thus, the content of the text comes closer and more native for Korean schoolchildren.

The textbook continues. Each peasant has over ten sets of clothing and five or six pairs of leather shoes (어느 농민이든지 옷을 보통 십여 벌, 구두를 오륙 켄레씩 가지고 있습니다).³⁹ Every peasant house has electric lighting and radio, and Soviet peasants use coal or oil for heating instead of wood. In addition, in order for the peasant to live a cultural life, there is a club in the central part of every village (어느 농촌에 가든지 농촌 중앙에 구락부가 있어서...)⁴⁰

Indeed, since peasants spend no more than six to eight hours in the field, they have the time and opportunity to go to the club, which is open to children and old people too. Gathering in a club, peasants listen to good music, dance, and can watch movies, play games and have fun (구락부에 모여서 좋은 음악을 듣고, 또는 춤을 추며, 혹은 활동사진을 보고, 또 오락, 경기, 같은 것을 하여 쉬는 시간을 즐겁게 보냅니다).⁴¹ It is interesting to note that in this phrase, to convey the concept of “cinema,” a literal translation into Korean of the English phrase is used: “moving pictures”: 활동 사진 (“moving photos”).

The textbook then continues introducing the happy life of the Soviet villagers. In any Soviet village, “wherever they go,” cooperatives build common canteens for those who work in the fields. (The Korean text uses the word *siktang* 식당, which is also used for the term “restaurant” in the Korean language). The canteens are located next to the fields and the food is always “tasty and nutritious.” The authors of the textbook complain that “in Korea,” things are not at all like that. Food has to be cooked at home, then carried to the field on a special shoulder stretcher, and this Soviet reality causes a feeling of “envy.”⁴²

A special place in the textbook is given to the position of Soviet women in general and peasant women in particular. On the one hand, they have equal rights with men, and they work together with men (부인들도 남자와 똑 같은 권리를 가지게 되며 일도 남자와 같이 합니다).⁴³ However, when a woman prepares to give birth, six months before giving birth and six months after giving birth, she receives leave, during which the cooperative provides her with all the necessary means of subsistence. Two weeks before giving birth, a woman goes to the hospital, where she is under the supervision of doctors who take care of both the child’s health and the mother’s health. Moreover, unlike capitalist countries, she does not need to pay the costs of this (그러나 자본주의 사회에서처럼 입원비나 기타 돈을 받지 않습니다).⁴⁴

Further, “Native Speech” describes how the preschool and school education of a child takes place in the Soviet Union. For the youngest children, practically from birth to the age of four, there are nurseries that “resemble similar Korean institutions,” called *t’agaso* (탁아소). Usually, children are brought to such a nursery at nine in the morning, and taken away at three or four in the afternoon. If still babes in arms, the children are fed and put to bed; they are supervised by doctors. This way, the children can grow up strong and healthy. From four to nine years old, children are sent to kindergarten.⁴⁵ It is curious that in the textbook the term is literally translated from the Russian language as *adong kongwŏn* (아동 공원), where the first word really means “child,” and the second “garden.” In modern Korean, such a term is not used. Currently the word *yuch’iwŏn* (유치원) is used.⁴⁶

Children are also brought to kindergartens at nine o’clock in the morning and are taken away from four to six in the evening. In kindergartens, children are taught to sing, draw, and read and write. When children grow up, they go to school, then to a higher educational institution. No one needs to pay for education, even for higher education.⁴⁷

Rural social welfare

The textbook “Native Speech” pays special attention to the situation of the elderly. For traditional Korea, this is a special issue. Previously, the issue of caring for

elders was resolved through relationships of filial piety. The eldest son in a family took on the responsibility of caring for elderly parents.⁴⁸ The Korean textbook says nothing about tradition. It only contains an indication that, in contrast to capitalist states, in which the peasant has to “work until his death” (농민은 자본주의 사회에 있어서와 같이, 늙어 죽을 때까지 일하는 것이 아니라...), a man may not work from the age of fifty and a woman from forty-five. At the same time, the cooperative fully covers “living expenses” (생활비). In addition, all peasants can be treated in a hospital for free.⁴⁹ Thus, this part of the textbook says that the issue of a person’s life in old age, so important for traditional Korean society, is positively resolved in a socialist society. On the other hand, the textbook leads the student to the idea that one should not choose an alternative capitalist path.

Concluding the story about an ideal society for peasants, about the kind that was built in the Soviet Union, “Native Speech” raises a very important question for Korean peasants: is there “personal private property” in the USSR? And it answers this question positively: “yes.” A Soviet peasant can own the house in which he lives, household items, a vegetable garden (채소밭), cows (up to five head), pigs (up to five head), chickens (up to fifty). Moreover, he can use all his property freely, at his own discretion.⁵⁰ However, since all this is already in the cooperative (as well as cows, pigs, and chickens), the peasants simply do not feel a special need to run their own household.

This statement about the private ownership in Lesson No. 19 concludes the presentation of the “ideal” life of Soviet peasants. The main idea of the story is that it is not the state that controls the life of the peasants, but they themselves, completely freely and independently, as members of cooperatives. Such a model of the future life under socialism, which perfectly fit the centuries-old traditions of collectivism in the Korean countryside, could not but attract the inhabitants of the Korean countryside.

Conclusion

After the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule in 1945 and the subsequent temporary quartering of the Soviet Red Army in the territory of the north of the Korean peninsula, the Korean media, in particular, through such journals as “Korean-Soviet Culture” (조소 문화) and through direct communication of the Korean population with Soviet people, spread positive information about the Soviet Union. In this case, textbooks for schoolchildren were of particular importance. Only one school textbook (1st edition) considered in this article was printed in a circulation of 97,100 copies. Almost the entire young generation of the north of Korea, along with the study of their native language, also perceived

a positive, ideal image of the Soviet Union, which gave the population of liberated Korea hope for a happy life under the conditions of the social and economic system of socialism.

In this case, Lesson No. 19 of the textbook is of particular interest. By the time Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule, the country continued to remain agrarian, despite partial colonial industrialization. The land reform carried out in the north in March 1946 made all farmers of the north the owners of their land, although the purchase and sale of land was not allowed. Thus, formally, the peasants of the north were faced with the question of how to conduct their farming in the future and how to build relations with the state. The textbook “Native Speech,” which also served as an instrument of state propaganda (although formally the North Korean state did not yet exist), clearly led the young generation of the north to the idea of the inevitability of “choosing” the socialist path of development.

So, effective ideological propaganda gave the population of the north, especially its lower class, previously poor people, the dream of quick happiness under socialism. But the subsequent history of North Korea has shown that dreams associated with the “ideal socialist” way of life did not come true. After the Korean War and the events of 1956, and the defeat of a number of factions in the Workers’ Party of Korea, North Korea took a different path. But just ten years earlier, in 1947, life under socialism was perceived in a completely different and positive way.

Notes

1. *Socialističeskaja konstitucija Korejskoj Narodno-Demokratičeskoj Respubliki* (Pyongyang: Publishing House of Literature in Foreign Languages, 1975), Article 49, p. 18.
2. Chosŏn hyŏngmyŏngŭe taehan munje (Moscow: Publishing House of Foreign Workers in USSR, 1934).
3. Sergei Kurbanov, *Istorija Korei s drevnosti do načala XXI ve* (St. Petersburg: Publishing House of St. Petersburg University, 2022), pp. 427–432.
4. “Investigation of Korean–American Relations. Report of the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations U.S. House of Representatives. October 31, 1978” (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 14.
5. Yuri Vanin, *Sovetskij Sojuz i Severnaja Koreja 1945–1948* (Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 2016), p. 43.
6. Andrey Lankov, *Andrey, Avgust, 1956 god: Krizis v Severnoj Koree* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009), p. 19.
7. A photo from a family archive provided by Yuri K. Goncharov, a son of Klimenty P. Goncharov, the head of the Soviet military administration in the port of Najin in 1945.
8. Yuri Vanin, *SSSR i Koreja // SSSR i strany Vostoka* (Moscow: Hayka, 1988), pp. 155–160.
9. Vanin, *Sovetskij Sojuz i Severnaja Koreja 1945–1948*, p. 51.
10. *Han’guk Kŭnhyŏndaesa sajŏn* (Seoul: Garam gihwek, 1990), p. 300.

11. The name may be also spelled as Kim Koo or Kim Ku.
12. Kim Ku, *Na'ii sowon* (Seoul: Paekpõmgimgusõnsaengginyõmsaõp'yõp'oe, 2016), p. 31.
13. Here and further in the text of the article, we will not indicate the full output of the textbook “Native Speech,” but indicate only pages from the book. *Kugõ: Ch'ogõp chunghakkyo che irhangnyõn yong* (Sinuiju: pingbok inminbosa chulpanguk, 1947), pp. 1–5.
14. *Kugõ*, p. 2.
15. 노동자 is the original graphics used in the textbook, which matches the spelling conventions of the modern South Korean Standard Literary Language. Later in North Korea, the spelling of the word “worker” became different, “archaic” (로동자), but in the 1940s both spellings of this word, “new” and “archaic,” were used in the North Korean official press.
16. *Kugõ*, p. 7.
17. General Ivan M. Chistyakov (1900–1979) was the commander of the 25th Army (Red Army), which liberated the north of the Korean peninsula.
18. *Kugõ*, p. 6.
19. *Kugõ*, pp. 11–12.
20. *Han'guk minjok munhwa taebaek kwa sajõn*, Vol. 23 (Seoul: Han'guk chõng shin munhwa yõn'gu wõn, 1991), pp. 19–22.
21. *Kugõ*, pp. 78–83.
22. *Kugõ*, pp. 121–128.
23. *Kugõ*, pp. 132–134.
24. *Kugõ*, pp. 103–107.
25. Andrew Grajdanzev, *Koreja* (Перевод с английского З.А. Рыбниковой под редакцией и с вводной статьей В.Т. Зайчиковой) (Moscow: State Publishing House of Foreign Literature, 1948), p. 227.
26. *Kugõ*, p. 102.
27. 조선의 민속 (Ethnography of Korea) (Pyongyang: Publishing House of the Academy of Social Sciences, 1986), pp. 198–215.
28. Chu Kanghyõn, *Han'guk ùi ture 1* (Seoul: Chipmundang, 1997), p. 91.
29. *Kugõ*, p. 102.
30. *Kugõ*, p. 102.
31. *Kugõ*, p. 103.
32. *Kugõ*, p. 103.
33. *Kugõ*, p. 103.
34. Constitution of the Republic of Korea, Six Basic Laws (Seoul: Munil Publishing House, 1996), p. 10.
35. *Kugõ*, p. 104.
36. The use of words and terms reflecting pure Korean realities (and another was not possible) should demonstrate to the reader that a similar bright future awaits Korea in the case of choosing a socialist path of development.
37. *Kugõ*, p. 104.
38. *Kugõ*, p. 104.
39. *Kugõ*, p. 105.
40. *Kugõ*, p. 105.
41. *Kugõ*, p. 105.
42. *Kugõ*, p. 105.
43. *Kugõ*, p. 105.
44. *Kugõ*, p. 106.
45. *Kugõ*, p. 106.
46. *Nojo so sajõn* (Pyongyang: Publishing House of Literature in Foreign Languages, 1992), p. 678.
47. *Kugõ*, pp. 106–107.

48. For more details see: Sergei Kurbanov, *Konfucianskij klasičeskij «Kanon synovnej počitel'nosti» v korejskoj traktovke. Korejskoe vosprijatie universal'noj kateogri «počitel'nosti k roditeljami»* (St. Petersburg: Publishing House of the St. Petersburg University, 2007).
49. *Kugŏ*, p. 107.
50. *Kugŏ*, p. 107.

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