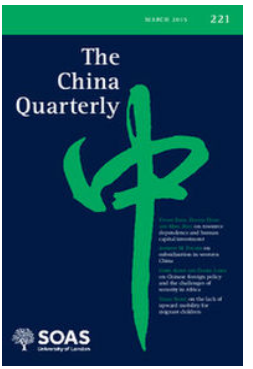

Land Reform, Collectivisation and the Peasants in North Korea

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By CHONG-SIK LEE

IN a speech delivered at the rally commemorating the fifteenth anniversary of the liberation of Korea, the North Korean Premier announced that the peasants in North Korea were now the owners of large-scale collectivised farms and that they had the firm technical foundation for bumper crops every year without strenuous efforts. He declared: "This is the beginning of a world for our farm villages." Another spokesman of the North Korean régime has stated: "It is easy (or good) to work and enjoyable to live in the co-operativised North Korean farms. There is a bumper crop every year in the constantly changing collectivised fields and the peasants' work and living are literally song and dances." [1]

Careful reading of even the propaganda materials reveals, however, that the millennium is yet to come in North Korea and that the régime has been undergoing a considerable degree of strain in the agricultural sphere. Peasants have been under the severest regimentation and the life of "song and dances" is a remote possibility, if that.

What, then, is the actual condition of North Korean peasants? What transformation have North Korean farms undergone, and how have the changes been accomplished? What is the lot of the peasants on the "co-operativised" farms in North Korea?

When the Russian army marched into North Korea in August 1945 it faced a number of major problems in connection with the task of occupation. One of these was establishing a régime of native personnel sympathetic to Communism, and another was clothing this régime with a semblance of legitimacy and public support.

The first problem was solved with relative ease. The Russian command initially endorsed a popular local leader, Cho Man-sik, as the head of the native governing body over its entire zone of occupation. When the institution of the Five Provinces Administration Bureau

[1] Kim Il-Song, *Choson inmin ui minjokjok myongjol 8.15 haebang 15 chunyon kyongch'uk taehoe eso han pogo*. (A Report Delivered at the Rally Commemorating the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Liberation of August 15 which is the national Holiday of the Korean People) (Pyongyang: Korean Workers' Party Press, 1960), p. 7. Kim Kwang-hyon, in his *Ch'ollima Choson* (*Korea of the Flying Horse*) (Pyongyang: National Press, 1961), p. 61.

gained a degree of legitimacy in North Korea, Cho was replaced by Kim Il-song, the Russian choice for North Korean leadership.

For the second and the more difficult task of winning popular support for the Russian-endorsed régime, such progressive measures as land reform, promulgation of the labour ordinance, which stipulated an eight-hour work day for workers, and the implementation of free and compulsory education were used.

The land reform programme served a particularly important political function for the Russian authorities. In spite of the heavier concentration of industry in North Korea, the Russian zone of occupation was still predominantly agricultural. According to a recent North Korean source, 74·1 per cent. of the North Korean population in 1946 was engaged in agriculture.[2] But the majority of the peasants had little or no land of their own. According to Kim Il-song's report of 1947, 6·8 per cent. of the farmers held 54 per cent. of the tilled land in North Korea, while 56·7 per cent. were classified as " poor farmers " and held only 5·4 per cent. of the land.[3] Except for approximately twenty per cent., who were self-employed, the North Korean farmers belonged either to the " pure " tenant-farmer category and had no land of their own or to the " poor farmer " category and worked their own small plots along with the land held by wealthier landlords.

This lopsided distribution of land, coupled with an iniquitous system of farm rent (farm rent averaged from 50 per cent. to 60 per cent. of the crops, often mounting to 70 per cent.) had caused much unrest among the peasants under Japanese rule. Many peasants were forced to abandon their farms and tenancies to migrate to Manchuria. Strikes of tenant farmers had been frequent throughout Korea, even though the Japanese government discouraged them. For these reasons, Communist agitation and propaganda among the peasants during the 1930s, particularly in the more mountainous Hamgyong Pukto, was very effective.[4] Although the situation in the other provinces in North Korea was considerably better than that in Hamgyong Pukto, grievances did exist among the poorer elements of the agricultural population, and the Communist-led " peasants union " movement had a fairly strong following. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the Russian

[2] *Facts about Korea* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), p. 9.

[3] Kim Il-song, " What Should the Parties and Social Groups Demand on the Occasion of the Establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," dated June 14, 1947, in *Kin Nichisei Senshu* (*Selected Works of Kim Il-song*), (Kyoto: Sanichi Shobo, 1952), I, p. 217. In his speech of April 20, 1948, Kim revised the statistics to 6·8 per cent. of the landlords holding 58·8 per cent. of land: *ibid.* Supp. Vol., p. 114.

[4] See Thought Section, Prosecutor's Bureau, High Court, *Shiso iho* (*Ideological Report Series*), No. 11, (June 1937), pp. 146–170.

authorities in North Korea assigned priority to winning the support of the peasants and that the land reform programme was employed for this task.

On February 8, 1946, the North Korean Interim People's Committee was established in Pyongyang after a conference of the "political parties, social organisations and local people's committees." This conference also decided upon the "impending duties" of the new Interim People's Committee, which, of course, included the land reform programme. The second of the eleven articles stated: "Preparations [will] be made to dispose of, within a short period, the land and forests confiscated from the Japanese aggressors and pro-Japanese reactionary elements. Land and forests subject to confiscation from Korean landlords will be nationalised, the land-tenant system will be abolished, and the land will be distributed to the peasants without compensation." [5] On March 5, the committee, ostensibly adopting the proposals of the Peasants Federation which had demanded the agricultural reform, proclaimed the ordinance on land reform.[6]

The ordinance stipulated that all land formerly possessed by Japanese imperialists (including the government, civilians and organisations), national traitors, Korean landlords with more than five *chongbo* (a *chongbo* is 2·45 acres), absentee landlords, and churches, monasteries and other religious organisations with more than five *chongbo*, and all land continuously held in tenancy, be confiscated without compensation and be distributed without charge to landless peasants or peasants with little land. The ordinance further stipulated that all debts owed by peasants to landlords would be voided and that all farm animals, farm machinery, and houses formerly owned by landlords should be confiscated and then distributed among the peasants. The government, however, retained the option of transferring all the buildings to schools, hospitals, and other social groups. Further, the peasants were prohibited from selling, renting, or mortgaging their newly acquired land. Irrigation facilities formely owned by expropriated landlords and all forests, except small forests owned by peasants, were confiscated and transferred to state ownership.[7]

[5] "Political and Organisational Policies of the Workers' Party," Dec. 25, 1947, *Kin Nichisei Senshu*, I, pp. 264–265.

[6] Kwahakwon Yoksa Yonguso (Academy of Science, Centre for Historical Studies), *Choson t'ongsa* (*Outline History of Korea*) (Pyongyang: Academy of Science Press, 1958) [Hak-u Sobang reprint edition, Tokyo, 1959], III, p. 31.

[7] *Ibid.* p. 32. For an English text of the land reform ordinance see *Report of the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea* (New York: United Nations, General Assembly, Official Records: Sixth Session, Supplement No. 12 (A/1881), 1951), pp. 59–60.

Table I. Origins of the Confiscated Land, 1946

Owners	Area (*chongbo*)
Japanese Government, nationals and organisations ...	100,797
National traitors	21,718
Landlords with more than five *chongbo*	285,692
Landlords who rent all of their land	338,067
Landlords who continuously rent their land	239,650
Churches, monasteries and other religious groups	14,401
Total	1,000,325

Source: *Kin Nichisei Senshu*, Supp. Vol., p. 115; also in *Choson T'ongsa*, III, p. 34, quoted from *Choson Chungang Nyongam* (*Korean Central Almanac*), 1949, pp. 71–72.

Table II. Disposition of the Confiscated Land, 1946

Recipients	Number of families	Area (*chongbo*)
Farm labourers	17,137	22,387
Tenants without land	442,973	603,407
Farmers with little land	260,501	345,974
Landlords wishing to farm in new localities ...	3,911	9,622
Total	724,522	981,390

Source: *Kin Nichisei Senshu*, Supp. Vol., p. 115; also in *Choson T'ongsa*, III, pp. 34–35.

How was it that the peasants with admittedly retarded class consciousness were "aroused" in such a short period to make the land reform successful? What were the actual functions of the cadres dispatched from Pyongyang and the provincial headquarters of the Party? How was the resistance of the landlords overcome? The tactics employed in executing the land reform deserve to be elaborated beyond the bare outlines and the statistics provided by Communist sources. The North Korean experience deserves scrutiny particularly because, unlike that of neighbouring China, it was accompanied by little bloodshed.

A prize-winning novelist in South Korea, Hwang Sun-won, depicts the entire process of land reform masterfully in fictionalised form in his novel *K'ain Ui Huye* (*The Heirs of Cain*). Hwang, a North Korean, escaped to the south in May 1946, and evidently had first-hand knowledge.

The cadres dispatched from Pyongyang, according to Hwang, were mindful to execute the land reform with the least disturbance and resistance. The programme was to be carried out in the name of the peasants and, therefore, it required their direct participation. The cadres began by nurturing an atmosphere conducive to smooth functioning. Their first course of action was effectively to ostracise the landlords and to isolate them from the other peasants. Mere intimation that it would not be to their own advantage to associate closely with their former landlords was sufficient to make most of the tenant-farmers shun the landlords, who in many cases had developed friendly relationships with their tenants. The landlords were then constantly harassed by frequent questioning by the cadres and the police and were placed under close observation. Local tenant-farmers, particularly those with a record of close collaboration with the landlords, such as former tenant-foremen, were chosen as heads of the peasants' committees to aid the cadres. This system provided those with dubious records an opportunity to rectify their past mistakes; the chosen ones, who had the best knowledge of the community, showed enthusiasm and ruthlessness in their new duties, not realising that they would also be purged at a later date.

The peasants were at first sceptical of the land reform ordinance. They would not believe that the land could be distributed without compensation to the owner. They were excited by the possibility that the land could be theirs, but they were embarrassed by their own excitement: How could one take the property of someone else without compensation? Would it not amount to robbery? The peasants were not easily convinced by the cadres' argument that the land originally belonged to them. Many of the peasant families had never owned a plot of land for generations.

The peasants' curiosity, however, was aroused. Landlords seemed to be powerless before the new government. It was obvious to all that the land would be taken away from the former owners, regardless of the local peasants' attitudes. Should one resist the temptation of free land, resist the government in power and, indeed, resist what appeared to be the current of the time? But, if so, why? Was it not clear that the landlords were doomed, regardless of one's efforts? Under these circumstances, would it not be prudent to follow the cadres' instructions more willingly, thereby perhaps obtaining a better piece of land? The peasants' consciences were clear; they did not initiate the land reform programme, and, in fact, they loathed it. They were as helpless as the landlords.

When the first part of the actual land reform was begun—that is, the confiscation of landlords' properties—the cadres were careful not

to involve any large number of landlords on any one occasion. Undue agitation of landlords as a class should be avoided, lest they should organise themselves for revolt. Confiscations of land would take place sporadically; confiscations would not even take place simultaneously within a prefecture. Only the properties of the absentee landlords and the large landowners would be confiscated at first. Another round would reach the lower level. This scheduling left landlords with smaller properties a faint hope that they might be spared. It assured the régime of minimal resistance at each stage and even some co-operation from those spared at a particular stage. Human greed and instinct for survival seem to know no bound; and when the price for survival was mere acqiescence in others' destruction, the price was willingly paid.

There was no recourse for the purged landlords. They could gain freedom only by fleeing from Communist jurisdiction and escaping south of the 38th Parallel. In North Korea they would either be arrested and sentenced to an indefinite period of hard labour, transferred to another locality with a small plot of land, or maltreated by the new local authorities and simply chased away. Crossing the "border" at the 38th Parallel became more and more difficult as time went by. There was no time to be wasted. Many purged and yet-to-be purged landlords chose South Korea as their future home.[8]

Being assured of the success of the land reform programme, the authorities in Pyongyang immediately moved towards further consolidation of its bases. This phase of the programme entailed two areas of activity: organisation and discipline of the peasants, and the increase of food production.

Organisation of the peasants had, in fact, been begun even before land reform was put into effect. Domestic-faction Communists had appealed to those of the "poor peasants" class immediately after the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945, and carried on a broad campaign to enlist them in the Communist Party. We do not know how many peasants were inducted at various stages of the campaign, but, according to Kim Il-song, more than 105,000 members of the North Korean Workers' (Communist) Party in July 1946, were of "poor peasant" origin.[9] Efforts to enlarge the membership of the Party continued, and by March 1948, Kim reported the total to be more than 700,000 members, of which 374,000 were of "poor peasant" origin. It is significant that while the total rose by 90·3 per cent. during the

[8] The estimated number of refugees in South Korea of North Korean origin on Dec. 31, 1947, was 1,116,600. *First Part of the Report of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea* (New York: General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 9 (A/575), 1948), I, p. 23.

[9] *Kin Nichisei Senshu*, III, p. 48. The party members of worker (proletariat) origin at this time were 73,000 and the total membership was 366,000. *Ibid.* p. 47.

twenty months, the membership of "poor peasant" origin showed more than a threefold increase.

The Party was not the only organ used to organise the peasants. Peasants' federations, the Democratic Youth League and the Women's League carried out equally vigorous campaigns for membership. Membership of an individual in the Party or any one of the organisations did not make him ineligible for membership in another group. The intensity of the membership campaign is indicated by the following two sets of figures presented by Kim Il-song [10]:

	April 1946	July 1946
Peasants' federations	800,000	1,800,000
Workers' Leagues	350,000	350,000
Democratic Youth League ...	500,000	1,000,000
Women's League	350,000	600,000
Total	2,000,000	3,750,000

It is important to note that the membership of the workers' leagues did not increase at all during the three-month period, while that of the peasants' federations more than doubled. The rise in the membership of the other two organisations also doubled or nearly doubled. It is reasonable to assume that most of the new members of the young persons' and women's organisations were from the rural areas.

The Pyongyang government immediately began to utilise the peasants' organisations for the purpose of solving economic problems. Kim Il-song declared on February 19, 1947, that "the immediate task of the North Korean agricultural economy is the solution of the food problem. North Korea must be transformed from a region of food shortage into a region of abundance. This can be done by enlarging the area of cultivation and increasing the rate of production." [11] Kim specified further that in 1947 the area of cultivation would be increased by 300,172 *chongbo* (735,421 acres), an increase of 15·5 per cent. as compared to 1946, and that 155,000,000 Won would be invested by the People's Committee in the expansion of irrigation facilities. The use of chemical fertilisers would also be accelerated, from 109,000 tons in 1946 to 187,000 tons in 1947.

Implicitly, the peasants in North Korea were warned to brace themselves for a period of hard labour. Kim Il-song's speech of April 13,

[10] The figures for April are from his speech on land reform, Apr. 13, 1946, at the first enlarged committee meeting of the North Korean Provisional People's Committee. *Kin Nichisei Senshu*, I, p. 18. The figures for July are from his report on the establishment of Democratic People's United Front, July 22, 1946. *Ibid.* p. 64.

[11] A report on the People's Economic Development Plan for 1947, at the conference of North Korean provincial, municipal and prefectural People's Committees. *Kin Nichisei Senshu*, I, p. 180.

1946, summing up the results of the land reform programme, included the following paragraph:

> The peasants must help each other and mobilise all labour power for the sake of the [successful completion of the] first movement to increase agricultural production since the liberation. The economic and financial foundations of Korea are still weak. Therefore, it is important for us to mobilise labour power fully. We must organise "Build the Nation" labour-service corps and systematically organise and guide the construction and repair of the irrigation facilities. . . .[12]

Later Kim reported that the peasants had shown creativity in developing irrigation works on a broad scale, completing 58 irrigation projects in 1947 alone, for irrigating 19,753 *chongbo* of ricefields.[13] In January 1950, Kim made it known that the irrigation works at Anju must be completed. "For this purpose," he declared, "the entire people and all civil engineers must be mobilised."[14]

In spite of these duties required of the peasants, they were promised a prosperous life. The ordinance on tax in kind for farm products, proclaimed June 27, 1946, specified that the peasants would be "exempt from all taxes on land and rent," and would submit instead only 25 per cent. of their total harvests (rice, other grains, beans and potatoes), being permitted to dispose of the surplus at free markets. On May 1, 1947, the ordinance was amended so that the tax in kind would be 27 per cent. on paddy land, 23 per cent. on dry land and only 10 per cent. on "fire field."[15] Compared to the 50 to 60 per cent. of the crops that tenants paid to their landlords before the land reform, this was indeed a significant improvement.

The peasants, however, were not permitted to enjoy their improved economic status for long. Ambitious economic development plans instituted by the Pyongyang government demanded more than token co-operation from the peasants. The economic plan for 1947, the first of the development plans to be instituted in North Korea, called for a rapid reconstruction of industries to double the production of 1946. The workers were called to increase their productivity by 48 per cent. An increase in coal production and an improvement in transportation facilities were also demanded.[16] Should not the peasants be permitted to participate in the movement for progress?

[12] *Ibid.* p. 16.
[13] *Ibid.* Supp. Vol., p. 116, speech of Apr. 20, 1948.
[14] *Ibid.* p. 198, speech of Jan. 25, 1950.
[15] For the text of the ordinance see *Report of the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea*, 1951, p. 60. See also U.S. Department of State, *North Korea: A Case Study in the Techniques of Takeover*, p. 57. "Fire field" indicates the areas cleared for cultivation by fire but abandoned in a few years when fertility of soil was exhausted.
[16] For Kim Il-song's report on the economic development plan of 1947 see *Kin Nichisei Senshu*, I, pp. 170–183. Kim noted in this connection that the number of

Already, in 1947, Kim Il-song had announced publicly that an extensive movement for the donation of "patriotic rice" had been started among the farmers by Kim Che-won and was making a great contribution towards national development. This "manifestation of passionate patriotism by the North Korean peasants," Kim said, had brought in such large donations of rice that there was "more than enough for the construction of the fatherland." He declared that the government intended to use the 1,500 ton surplus of rice in 1947 towards the building of a large-scale modern university in Pyongyang.[17] We can assume that the amount of "patriotic rice" donations would be expected to increase as the "peasants' patriotism" was intensified during the successive years. Official sources revealed that the peasants began to donate "large sums in foodstuffs and money" to enable the government to purchase military aircraft.[18] The peasants, along with the rest of the society, were required to purchase assessed amounts of the public bonds which the government began to issue in large quantities in late 1949. As the Korean War drew near and the Pyongyang régime mobilised all available resources in preparation for war, the material benefits that had accrued to the peasants by the land reform programme were reduced to virtually nil.

The opening of the war in 1950 brought about a major disruption in North Korean agriculture, as in every other sector of the economy. Many villages that lay in the path of war were destroyed. Many peasants, young and old, were conscripted for army service before and during the war, and the casualty rate during the war was very high. Furthermore, a great number of North Korean peasants abandoned their farms during the short period of the United Nations occupation of North Korea and moved to South Korea. In short, the socio-political and economic fabric of North Korean agriculture was broken down almost completely.

If the war meant economic disaster for North Korea, however, it at least provided the leaders with an opportunity to review their past performance and plan for future development. We have no means to determine the exact thoughts of the North Korean leadership, but Kim Il-song's speech of December 21, 1950, at the third congress of the central committee of the Communist Party rings with bitterness against

workers, engineers, technicians and office clerks must be increased by 156,000 or 20 per cent. in 1947, as compared to 1946. This additional labour force was to be drawn from the farms.

[17] *Ibid.* p. 246.

[18] *Cho Chung ch'inson nongop hyoptong chohap nongmin dul ui munhwa wa p'ungsup* (*Culture and Customs of the Peasants in the Korea-China Friendship Agricultural Co-operative*) (Pyongyang: Academy of Science Press, 1960), Folklore Research Series, No. 4, p. 211. For a discussion of the inflated assessment of the crop for tax purposes and the quality of crop required for tax, etc., see U.S. Department of State, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–59.

poor performance and weak discipline among the Party cadres. Nor was the Premier satisfied with the cadres' achievements among the masses. Despite the rapid increase of membership in the Party and the auxiliary organisations, the Party had not been able to muster the support it needed from the people during the most trying period of its existence.

Indeed, the weakness of the Party's educational activities was manifested everywhere. By the Premier's own admission, some North Koreans co-operated with the enemy. " Some joined the local security units [formed against the Communists by the Republic of Korea authorities], anti-Communist groups, and other reactionary groups to murder, insult, and suppress the members of the Workers' Party and its supporters." [19]

There are reasons to believe that the Party decided to rectify these weaknesses, particularly the paucity of propagnada and " political education " directed towards the masses, by changing the economic structure in North Korea. The land reform may have eliminated the " feudalistic components " of society, but this was far from creating necessary conditions for the transition to the Socialist stage of economy.

It was only natural that the peasants would retain and even develop " capitalistic thought " under the system of private ownership of land. When the " poor peasants " were allotted pieces of land, their appetite for land and material goods was heightened to a new degree and their pecuniary interest was sharpened more than ever. Instead of arousing the revolutionary consciousness which the Communist leaders seem to have hoped for, the peasants under the new system tended to develop political complacency. The Communist theoreticians should have realised that the land reform merely eliminated the contradiction between the means of production and the productive forces that had existed before and did not create the conditions necessary for the growth of " workers' consciousness " or " revolutionary consciousness."

Thus the land reform in fact dichotomised the society into two distinct sectors: the socialised urban sector of the proletariat and the more capitalistic rural sector. Only by depriving the peasants of their private ownership of the means of production could the Party be assured that the gap would be filled and workers' consciousness developed among the peasants.[20] Stalin's " law of development " also required the subordination of agriculture to the direction of Socialist industry.

[19] *Kin Nichisei Senshu*, II, p. 141.

[20] The North Korean Communists were hard put to justify the collectivisation programme. Thus a North Korean theoretician, Cho Chae-son, was forced to admit that " The Socialistic transformation of the agriculture is a *special* (or *unusual*) *application* of the law of (interrelationship between) the characteristics of productive

While these ideological and political considerations were compelling North Korean leaders to re-examine the régime's agrarian policies, economic conditions in North Korea after the war seem to have compelled them to take immediate action. Grain output decreased during the war [21] and the food shortage was severe. North Korea found it necessary to import at least 5 to 10 per cent. of its consumption needs not only during the war, but for several years afterward. Even in 1961, when the North Korean radio was jubilantly announcing bumper crops in the collectivised fields, the régime found it necessary to import 45,000 metric tons of grain from Australia.[22]

In addition to these problems there was an acute labour shortage. The North Korean loss of population during the war, including migration to the south and war casualties, was estimated to be about 2·1 million persons.[23] Industrial development required the mobilisation of labourers from rural areas. According to official statistics, the proportion of peasants in the population declined from 74·1 per cent. in 1946 to 66·4 per cent. in 1953 and to 44·4 per cent. in 1960. In other words there was a shift of approximately 20 per cent., or 200,000 persons from rural areas to the urban centres between 1953 and 1960.[24] Serious

forces and the productive relations during the transitional period toward Socialism." (Italics added.) In his explanation of this " special application " of the Marxist law, Cho cited the " positive reaction of the new superstructure," *i.e.*, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the harmful effect of the imbalance between the Socialist industrial sector and the privately managed agriculture. He added further that the imbalance has been noticeable at the latter part of the two-year People's Economic Plan (1949–50). Cho Chae-son, *Choson Minjujuui Inmin Konghwaguk Sahoe Kyongje Chedo* (*The Socio-Economic System in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*) (Pyongyang: Korean Workers' Party Press, 1958), pp. 38–39.

21 According to a North Korean source, the sown area and grain output decreased as follows:

	1948	1951	1952	1953
Sown area	100	89·2	95·6	97·4
Grain output	100	84·9	91·9	87·2

Data from *Agricultural Co-operativisation in D.P.R.K.* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958), p 8.

22 U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, " Research Memorandum," June 21, 1962, RSB-105, p. 13. (Processed.)

23 *Ibid.* p. 14.

24 The percentages by occupation divisions of and total population of North Korea are reported to be as follows:

	1946	1949	1953	1956	1960
Workers and office employees	18·7%	26·0%	29·7%	40·9%	52·0%
Farmers	74·1	69·3	66·4	56·6	44·0
Others	5·0	2·9	2·4	2·0	3·3
Total	100·0%	100·0%	100·0%	100·0%	100·0%
Population (thousands)	9,257	9,022	8,491	9,359	10,789

Facts About Korea (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), p. 9. The population figures were taken from U.S. State Department, " Research Memorandum," p. 14.

as the agrarian problems were, industrial development took priority over agriculture.

It is against this background that the " co-operativisation " movement was initiated. After a brief " experimental stage " between August 1953 and October 1954, the Pyongyang régime decided to launch a full-scale collectivisation movement at the Communist Party's central committee's plenum in early November 1954.[25] Within the first year—by December 1955—49 per cent. of the peasants were collectivised. Another 30 per cent. were collectivised during the following year. By December 1957, three years after the co-operative movement had been initiated, 95·6 per cent. of the peasants were organised into 16,032 co-operatives with an average of 64 households each. By August 1958, the entire farm population in North Korea had been inducted into co-operatives and minor adjustments of the size of co-operatives had been made; there were then 13,309 co-operatives with an average of 80 households each.[26]

In October, only two months after the announcement of the " victorious completion of the agricultural co-operativisation movement," the régime proclaimed that the co-operatives would be reorganised into larger units. Henceforth, the *ri*—originally the lowest administrative unit, roughly equivalent to a precinct, but enlarged by the North Korean régime to encompass several villages—would serve as the unit for co-operatives. Instead of 13,309 co-operatives there would be only 3,843 and each would consist of an average of 300 households rather than 80. The average acreage of a co-operative would be 500 *chongbo* (1,225 acres) rather than 130 *chongbo*.[27]

There is little room for doubt that the sudden reversal of the previous policy was brought about by the North Korean leaders' fascination with and idealisation of the commune movement in China. It is to be noted that the Chinese Communists began the merger of co-operatives in April 1958, and in August the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party ordered the adoption of the commune system throughout China. The enthusiasm of the Chinese Communists was promptly echoed by North Koreans.[28]

[25] Pak Mun-gyu, the Minister of Agriculture from September 1948 to March 1954, was replaced by Kim Il-song's comrade of the partisan days, Kim Il, in March 1954. Kim Il served as Vice-Premier and Minister of Agriculture until September 1957. Kim Il became First Vice-Premier in 1959. Pak Mun-gyu, an agrarian economist of long standing, was relegated to a less important cabinet post.

[26] For a detailed treatment of the process of collectivisation see my article, " The ' Socialist Revolution ' in the North Korean countryside," *Asian Survey*, II, No. 8 (Oct. 1962), pp. 9–22.

[27] *Kim Il-song Sonjip* (*Selected Works of Kim Il-song*) (Pyongyang: Korean Workers' Party Press, 1960), VI, p. 185

[28] See " Chungguk eso ui sahoejuui konsol ui taeyakchin " (" The Great Leap Forward in the Socialist Construction in China "), *Kulloja* (*The Worker*), No. 155, Oct. 15, 1958, p. 77.

Just as in the Chinese communes, the organ of the government, *ri*, was merged with the organisation in charge of production, the co-operative. The co-operative become at once a basic social unit and a basic organisation of state power in that it is designed to integrate rural industry, agriculture, trade, culture and education, and military affairs into a single whole.

Even official North Korean sources admitted that the bulldozing of the collectivisation programme had been accompanied by outright coercion and intimidation along with propaganda. "In some places," according to a North Korean booklet,

> organisational work was undertaken in a bureaucratic manner or as a campaign, on the pretext of overtaking and surpassing those areas where the co-operative movement had advanced faster. In so doing, the degree of preparedness of the peasants was not taken into consideration and various unfair methods were used in drawing some irresolute peasants into co-operatives. . . . Such deviations were also to be seen in the practice of showing contempt for individual farmers and encroaching upon their interests under the pretext of consolidating and developing co-operatives.[29]

Resistance of the farmers to the radical collectivisation programme was by no means negligible. Although no violent uprisings were reported by North Korean sources, cases of evasion and sabotage were not infrequent. Premier Kim summed up the situation in a speech delivered before a conference of the leaders of the co-operatives in 1959 in pointed language:

> Class enemies slandered our Party's policies and spread reactionary rumours opposing the agricultural co-operativisation movement. They also fought to destroy our agricultural co-operatives by damaging common properties or obstructing production. Especially when agricultural co-operativisation was near completion and Socialist victory was becoming more consolidated in cities and farms, the anti-revolutionary elements' infiltration, destruction, and obstructive behaviour became more vicious.[30]

North Korean authorities also encountered considerable difficulty in executing the collectivisation programme because of the lack of well-trained cadres. Violation of democratic management principles, inadequate planning, poor utilisation of co-operatives' properties and financial mistakes were cited as some of the mistakes committed by the "executives." An official source also reported that

> among the managerial personnel of some co-operatives were found subversive elements who had crept into the co-operatives and managed to occupy the leading positions. The defects of officials not only led to

[29] *Agricultural Cooperativization in D.P.R.K.*, pp. 37–38.
[30] *Kim Il-song Sonjip*, VI, p. 175.

waste of labour but also a drop in the rate of co-op members' attendance at work, causing a hindrance to important farm work.[31]

Collectivised farms in North Korea are still called co-operatives, but in fact they differ only very slightly from the artel type *kolkhozy* (collective farms) in the Soviet Union and the communes in China. All land formerly held by individual farmers is now controlled by co-operatives which theoretically own the land. Individual farmers, who work as members of "work teams" or "brigades," under the co-operatives, are paid in kind and cash at the end of the year according to the work days contributed. Farmers are allowed to own a private garden plot, fruit trees, cattle and bees, although data on the extent of these possessions are not available.

In theory, each co-operative is an independent entity and the farmer has full authority to control the affairs of his co-operative through either the co-operative general assembly or the representative assembly which elect the chairman and the members of the co-operative committees. In practice, however, the co-operatives form an integral part of the national economy, and each co-operative is rigidly controlled by the "management committees" at the *kun* (prefectural) level which were created by the Party's central committee plenum in November-December, 1961. It should be noted that the central committee of the Workers' Party admitted, at the time of the establishment of the management committees, the inadequacy of the co-operative officials in meeting the demand for increased production and the deficiency of the "administrative (or bureaucratic) method" used by prefectural people's committees in guiding the co-operatives. The prefectural people's committees still exist as administrative agencies of government but they are deprived of power over agricultural production and management. The new management committees are staffed by agro-technicians from central government organs.[32]

Under the "co-operative system," the state exercises rigid control over the farmers' income and consumption. Since grain dealers were eliminated by decree in October, 1954, and the state-operated stores constitute the only channel for farmers' disposal of their surplus products, state control and supervision is easily facilitated. The régime has instituted a progressive scale of tax in kind, compulsory purchase of farm products with price differentials, and compulsory accumulation of funds and grains at the co-operative level. Although the official figure for tax in kind was reduced from an average of 20·1 per cent. between 1956 to 1958 to 8·4 per cent. after 1959, actual rates of tax collection

[31] *Agricultural Cooperativization in D.P.R.K.*, p. 43.
[32] *Cf. Nodong Shinmun*, Dec. 25, 1961, editorial.

and compulsory savings at the co-operative level cannot be accurately determined.

The life of co-operative peasants is regimented, disciplined and organised to the minute. The demands heaped upon peasants seem to have no limit.

A Japanese reporter sympathetic to the North Korean régime describes the daily schedule of the North Korean farmers as it was related to him by the head of a co-operative:

> [Members of the co-operative] gather on the farm (or in the workshops) around 8.30 in the morning at the signal of a bell from the co-operative. Each member receives instructions from his group leader regarding the day's work. At noon, the bell will ring again and members can go either to the public dining hall or their own homes for lunch. There are circle meetings for drama, music and dancing during the lunch hour. Peasants rest ten to twenty minutes after fifty minutes of work. During the breaks, there are "news reading meetings" when newspapers or magazines will be read aloud. After a day's work, members have their work evaluated and they receive certain points which are recorded in their Labour Notebook. Distribution of crops or cash at the end of the year is done according to the total points accumulated. . . . After work, members with their Labour Notebooks either return home or go to a common bathhouse. They see movies, listen to the radio, or join circle activities.[33]

Even this idealised version does reveal the extent to which the peasants are regimented. In terms of daily work, the above story omits a vital part, *i.e.*, the "voluntary" work undertaken by the peasants. In December 1959, for instance, the Democratic Youth League in the co-operative visited by the Japanese reporters is supposed to have decided to collect three tons of "mud coal" a month per person. The "mud coal" was to be used either as fuel or fertiliser.[34] Earlier in 1958, when the régime had decided to execute a "people's movement for light industry," a variety of "factories" had been established at co-operatives to produce consumers' products.[35] The labour required for irrigation works, construction of schools, roads and houses had to be furnished by the peasants on a "voluntary," hence unpaid, basis.

The régime has evidently decided that overwork and the lack of material incentives can be offset by further indoctrination and intimidation of the peasants. For instance, in the "Korea-China Friendship Agricultural Co-operative," which consisted of 750 families with 1,227 co-operative members as of December 1959, there were fifteen party-policy study groups with some 600 members "guided" by fifty-nine

[33] Ho-Cho Kishadan (Reporters' Group Visiting Korea), *Kita-Chosen no Kiroku (Record of North Korea)* (Tokyo: Shin Dokusho-sha, 1960), pp. 200–201.
[34] *Ibid.* p. 206.
[35] Tera Goro, *38 Dosen no Kita (North of the 38th Parallel)* (Tokyo: Shin Nippon Shuppansha, 1959), p. 106.

agitators and seven "conversation leaders." The co-operative maintained six "Korean Workers' Party History Study Rooms" along with sundry kinds of circles and "mass political edification networks."[36] The function of the "agitators" and "conversation leaders" is to visit the working teams during their rest periods and "explain" the Party's policy and the domestic and international developments. The co-operative, which is one of the "model co-operatives" in North Korea, has also been favoured by the frequent visits of "concentrated guidance groups" dispatched by the central committee of the Party.[37] In order to guarantee the effect of the Party's activities in the co-operatives, the Party interspersed indoctrination activities with occasional "struggles against the counter-revolutionary elements" in the co-operatives, which exposed "liquidated landlords, collaborators with the enemy during the temporary retreat period, and Christian ministers and elders." Some of the purged are alleged to have attempted to collaborate with espionage agents dispatched by the enemy.[38] These purges (the report on the "Korea-China" co-operative mentions purges in 1957 and 1959) were followed by intensive "edification activities" in order to instil "revolutionary awareness" among those influenced by the purged elements.[39]

North Korean publications of the past few years have been exuberant in asserting the success of the collectivisation programme and the continuous increase (except in 1959 when the total output declined below the 1958 level) in agricultural production. The Seven-Year Development Plan (1961–67) calls for an increase of total agricultural production by 2·4 times, although the grain output is aimed at 1·7 times the 1960 norm. The plan calls for 5,000,000 metric tons of grain in 1963.[40] Obviously some progress has been made in agricultural production during the last several years, although the food problem in North Korea is far from being solved.

As of the spring of 1963, there is no sign of retreat in the North Korean collectivisation programme in spite of the virtual abandonment of the commune system in China. According to official sources, 1962 was another "bumper crop year" despite drought and floods. Is there

[36] *Cho Chung Ch'inson Nongop Hyoptong Chohap . . .*, p. 241.
[37] *Ibid.* p. 237.
[38] *Ibid.* p. 240.
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] See *Control Figures for the Seven-Year Plan (1961–67) for the Development of the National Economy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (Pyongyang: Korean Central News Agency, 1961), p. 18. The officially reported grain outputs in 1960 and 1961 were 3,803,000 tons and 4,830,000 tons, respectively. Approximately 40 per cent. of the total was rice. The adjusted estimates of the U.S. Department of State for these years were 2,781,000 tons and 3,378,000 tons, respectively. See Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "Research Memorandum," RSB-105, June 21, 1962, p. 11.

anything inherently superior in the North Korean system *vis-à-vis* the Chinese? Space does not permit detailed analysis of this question but a few factors are obviously in favour of North Korea: smaller territory (46,539 sq. mi. vs. 3,691,502 sq. mi. in China), smaller population (10,700,000 vs. 700,000,000 in China), relatively abundant supply of chemical fertilisers, and extensive irrigation facilities. The fact that the North Korean collectivisation programme was instituted immediately after a devastating war during which a great proportion of farmers had been uprooted from their farms and many others had abandoned their farms to flee to South Korea was also advantageous to the initial stage of collectivisation.

The success of agricultural policies in North Korea is not to be measured by the increase in production alone, however. As has been repeatedly emphasised by North Korean authorities, the major purpose of the socialisation movement has been to bring about the equilibrium between the industrial and agricultural sectors of the economy and to prepare the peasants for the transition to the Communist stage. Judged by this criterion, the land reform programme before the war was an obvious failure. But will collectivisation and intensive indoctrination successfully bring about a change in the minds of the peasants? Will the change be significant enough to avoid the kind of catastrophic defeat that the Communist régime suffered in 1950 with the mass exodus of the peasants? No one, including the Communist leaders themselves, can offer a definite answer to this question. One thing, however, is certain. The Communist régime will never be able to win over the minds of the peasants as long as it regards the rural population as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. As the Communist leaders should know, the Korean peasants have been exploited far too long not to recognise exploitation for what it is, no matter what it is called.