

**The Nationalist Message in Socialist Code:
On the Court Historiography in People's Poland and North Korea***

Jie-Hyun Lim (Seoul, Republic of Korea)

I. Introduction

The fall of the really existing socialist system shed fresh light on the ideological topology in the twentieth century. It is generally argued that after the Fall, nationalism, an ideology of the right, took over from the bankrupt socialist utopias of the left. It is assumed that the Fall triggered the eruption of many different kinds of old-fashioned patriotism, revivalist messianism, conservative nationalism, xenophobia and so on. The dichotomy of the right's nationalism and left's socialism made this argument plausible. In purely theoretical terrain this dichotomy seems to be correct. A further reflection on the historical reality, however, would deny that dichotomy. Communist regimes had leaned on the nationalist pillar in their search for legitimacy in various ways. In fact the official nationalism prevailed under the propaganda banner of socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism. To cite Adam Michnik, "nationalism was the last word of Communism. A final attempt to find a social basis for dictatorship..."¹

The official nationalism in the socialist regimes has another name: 'apparatchik nationalism,' coined by Peter Sugar. Apparatchik nationalism was not the only form of nationalism that existed in the socialist regimes. Nationalism was also an articulation of the political opposition to Communism. In fact the popular nationalism was the offspring of the official nationalism. The socialist regime tried the 'nationalization' of history and kept the state monopoly on history. It reprogrammed the popular memory on the basis of official nationalism. Nationalist propaganda, made by the ruling Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), in order to crack down on the alleged Zionist peril led ironically to the revival of the Polish anti-Communist patriotic and nationalist tradition, which was soon taken over by Poland's emerging opposition movement. It is also curious that Chu-Ch'eism in North Korea found its counterpart in the ultra-rightist historical school in South Korea. Both Koreas shared a common nationalist discourse, despite being opposites in the political constellation of the Cold War. In short they have been intimate enemies.

Likewise, an antiquated understanding of nation bound diametrically opposed po-

* This work was supported by the research fund of Hanyang University, Korea, in 1999.

¹ A. Michnik, "Nationalism," *Social Research*, vol. 58 (winter, 1991), p. 759.

litical camps together in Poland. In a way the socialist ideal of the ethical and political unity of society unintentionally reinforced the primordialist concept of the nation, i. e. a way of seeing the nation as an organic community and even as a family community. This conception of the nation is not only political but also ethical in nature, and hence one able to determine its own fate directly and unanimously.² The two opponent political camps drew a common conclusion that the nation is the supreme value in society, to which group and individual interests should be subordinated. They shared a common goal of realizing the ‘nation’s will’ and ‘collective identity.’ The moral code of national collectivity made the people subordinate to the arbitrary rule of political power in the guise of the ‘nation’s will’. Ultimately the court historiography of the really existing socialist regime and the nationalist historiography of the anti-Communist opposition in Poland shared a common nationalist discourse.

I will examine the PZPR’s official Party historiography to prove that it implied the nationalist message in socialist code. It suffered from chronic schizophrenia between the proletarian internationalism in form and the official nationalism in content. As for North Korea, Party historiography went beyond apparatchik nationalism. Combined with the primordialist concept of nation, it displayed its naked nationalist bias without any hesitation. With the consolidation of the Chu-cheism in recent years it assumed the dimension of personifying nationalism. As we will see, the socialist nomenklatura wielded its political scepter not only through oppression but also through fabricating popular memory in the direction of nationalism. The socialist nomenklatura never hesitated to make use of the accumulated memory of the masses, which was in fact invented and manipulated by the nationalist elite before the socialist transformation. It means that socialism lost “a war of position” to nationalism, while it boasted a victory in “a war of maneuver” with nationalism. But history after the Fall shows us that the winner in a war of position proved to be the real winner.

II. People’s Poland: Schizophrenia between Proletarian Internationalism and Official Nationalism

The 1950 congress of Polish sciences opened a new era of the PZPR’s official historical interpretations. It rebuked interwar historiography as “an ideological endorsement of the mad and criminal policies of Polish fascism.” The first methodological conference in Otwock (Dec. 28, 1951-Jan. 12, 1952) was the landmark of the Marxist turn of the Polish historiography. In his opening address Tadeusz Manteuffel emphasized the

² A. Walicki, *Trzy patriotyzmy* (Warszawa, 1991), pp. 35-36.

role of the historical science in transforming the bourgeois nation into the socialist nation. Historians had to adopt the Marxist methodology for that cause. And he counted Warynski's 'Proletaryat,' Rosa Luxemburg's 'Social Democratic Party of Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL)' and 'Polish Communist Party (KPP)' as the legitimate revolutionary tradition in Poland.³ It severed clearly the post-war historiography from the interwar period's nationalist historiography, which accused the KPP of alienation from Polish society, of being agents of the Soviets, the Jews or the Freemasonry.

The 'Proletaryat', SDKPiL and KPP were ideological heirs of the proletarian internationalism, which emphasized the close collaboration between Russian and Polish working class. The failure to mention the 'Polish Socialist Party (PPS)', the representative of the social patriotic tradition, was obviously a deliberate one. In the following years the Party historiography derided PPS for its anti-Bolshevism, reformism, revisionism, and petty-bourgeois nationalism and accused it of spying for the propertied class within the working class movement. Presumably the Moscow regime and the PZPR might have regarded the proletarian internationalism as an ideological weapon with which to counter the anti-Russian sentiments among the Polish people. There was no ground even for the social patriotism in the official Party historiography. It reveals a great schism between the court historiography and the memory of the civil society, which keeps the private and collective memory of the Soviet-Polish War, the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, the deportations and the massacre of Katyn. To many a Pole "proletarian internationalism" implied nothing more than limitation of Poland's sovereignty within the Soviet bloc.

It was not that Polish historiography in the Stalinist era was totally free from the nationalist bias. As far as the question of the "Regained Land," i. e. newly acquired Western lands after the Second World War, is concerned, we can detect the anti-German nationalist current. The Polish archeologists excavated Western lands to prove that the "Regained Land" had been Polish since pre-historic times. And many exhibitions were organized to present the cultural continuity and the Slavic nature of the "Regained Land." The Polish archeology had to confirm the presence of Slavs between the Oder and the Bug since the second millennium B. C. It served to divert public attention from the lost Eastern territory and establish Germans as the real enemy. In a word the Polish archeology satisfied the PZPR's demand of "Drang nach Westen."⁴ Historical writings

³ T. Manteuffel, "Otwarcie konferencji," *Pierwsza Konferencja Metodologiczna Historyków Polskich* (Warszawa, 1953), vol. I: 15, 19.

⁴ W. Raczkowski, "Drang nach Westen?: Polish archeology and national identity," in M. Diaz-Andreu & T. Champion eds., *Nationalism and archeology in Europe* (London,

reinforced the archeological arguments by emphasizing destructive effects of the German interference in the Polish civilization of the “Regained Land.”

In short court historiography in the Stalinist era bore a seed of schizophrenia between internationalism and nationalism, the one towards the Russians and the other against the Germans. Though it did not cure the schizophrenia of the post-war Polish historiography, Polish October in 1956 was a turning point in historical studies. With the return of Wladyslaw Gomulka, a loud speaker of the “Polish road to socialism,” political climate changed. It had a chain effect on historical writings. Polish historians, freed from the charge of the alleged “rightist nationalist deviation,” could condemn openly the Stalinist historiography for its negative and pessimistic attitudes toward the nation’s past. They criticized the Stalinist historiography for its exclusive emphasis on the class struggle: if a one-sided accent on the nation results in bourgeois nationalism, a one-sided stress on the class leads to national nihilism.⁵

The balance between class and nation made it possible to estimate positively the interwar statehood and national uprisings in the nineteenth century. The rightist political camps such as the Peasant Party, National Democracy and Christian Democracy came to a side focus of the post-October historiography as well.⁶ Of course historical estimation was negative in general to these currents, but the enforced silence was gone. The “Forbidden City” of the national past opened widely its door to the new historical research. The liberalization of historical studies was highlighted in a bold assertion that the SDKPiL and KPP had a difficulty in appealing even to the working mass because of their failure to understand the national question in Poland.⁷ Though not without some reservations, it was a direct challenge to the official historiography that gave a historical legitimacy solely to the internationalist SDKPiL and KPP.

Even before the October, there was a series of the criticism of the Stalinist historiography. The Central Committee’s Department of Party History (WHP) was the main target of that criticism. In June Party historians adopted a resolution, “On the Most Urgent Tasks of the Party in History,” and the director of the WHP, Tadeusz Daniszewski, had to confess publicly that Party historians overlooked the necessity of extensive scholarly research and simplified complex problems. Moreover the exoneration of the KPP in the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU signaled the loosening up of the political control

1996), pp. 208-213.

⁵ T. Jedruszczak, “O kryteriach oceny dziejow Polski w okresie miedzywojennym (1918-39),” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* vol. 65 (1958), p. 488.

⁶ J. Zarnowski, “Wege und Erfolge der polnischen Historiographie 1945-1975,” *Zeitschrift fuer Geschichtswissenschaft* Jg. 25, H. 8 (1977), p. 963.

⁷ T. Jedruszczak, *op. cit.*, p. 492.

over the modern and contemporary history.⁸ But it remains unexplained why the KPP was dissolved by Stalin. Its leaders' criticism of Stalin and Zinoviev in line with Rosa Luxemburg's critique of Lenin remains erased in the official record. By the way it was not the KPP for proletarian internationalism, but the PPS for social patriotism that drew most attention from Polish historians. But the erupted patriotism from the bottom up could not remain unbridled. It had to be revolved around the ideological orbit set up by the Party.

Contrary to the expectation that the Polish October of 1956 would bring about academic freedom, that freedom proved to be very marginal. As for Party history it replaced the Stalinist model, but only with a Leninist one. Leninism remained an inviolable divinity, and the only allowable measure for historical judgment of the socialist past. For example Leon Jogiches's and Rosa Luxemburg's criticism of Leninist ultra-centralist party principle could not be brought to light. If there was any change in Party historiography, it was that the PPS-left was now accepted as legitimate, on two counts. First, the old PPS theoretician Julian Hochfeld defined the PPS-left as a tribune of "open Marxism," a characterization that fit in with the evolving PZPR self-conception. Second, the PPS-left was now seen as having properly grasped the dialectical interplay of social revolution and national independence. Indeed, the second point did fit well into the political line of Wladyslaw Gomulka, who proclaimed a struggle against national nihilism and cosmopolitanism.⁹ It kept well in tune with Lenin's criticism of Rosa Luxemburg regarding the national question.

The Polish October was a fanfare to the Renaissance of the PPS studies. Henryk Jablonski, a founding member of the Marxist Historians' Association, organized a seminar for graduate students and brought up specialists on the history of the PPS. In 1958 the Institute of Party History (ZHP) organized the historians' forum on the PPS study and there published a collection of materials and documents of the PPS-left in 1961. The discussion on the pilot edition of the third volume of the *History of Poland* prepared by the History Institute of Polish Academy of Sciences was the milestone in the interpretation of the PPS history. There appeared a sharp dissenting voice against the dichotomy that distinguishes the KPP as the revolutionary current from the PPS as the reformism. It was a direct challenge to the official Party historiography that reduced the irredentist PPS to the reformism, evaluating only the proletarian internationalism as the

⁸ E. K. Valkeiner, "Sovietization and Liberalization in Polish Postwar Historiography," *Journal of Central European Affairs* vol. 19 (July, 1959), pp. 164-165.

⁹ J. H. Lim, "'The Good Old Cause' in the new Polish left historiography," *Science & Society* vol. 61 (winter, 1997/8), p. 543.

revolutionary tradition.¹⁰

The discussion on the PPS-left organized by the ZHP in December 12, 1961 confirmed the new interpretation of the PPS. Participants in discussion criticized the historical reductionism that reduced automatically the social patriotism and the slogan of independence to reformism. It was a critical moment to give a historical legitimacy to the PPS-left that combined the slogan of independence with the socialist revolution.¹¹ As far as the Party history is concerned, however, there was very little room for Polish historians to maneuver ideologically. The PPS-left's social patriotism was the upper limit that the Party leadership could allow. The political conditions were not yet mature for the study of the PPS-right with an anti-Bolshevik stance that gave a priority to the "raison d'état" of Poland over proletarian internationalism.

It means that patriotic accent in the history of the socialist movement was possible only if it tunes to the proletarian internationalism, i. e. the Soviet Union's hegemony disguised in the tenet of proletarian internationalism. Soviet Union's hegemony in the court historiography reduced the SDKPiL and KPP to suborganizations of the Bolshevik party. Both Rosa Luxemburg's criticism of Leninist principles and the KPP's dissident role within the Comintern were totally ignored.¹² The most serious dilemma with that Polish historians had to encounter was how to reconcile the ongoing patriotic tide with the proletarian internationalism. In order to solve it, they stuck to a hackneyed saying that social patriotism consists with proletarian internationalism. They distinguished sharply between internationalism and cosmopolitanism. If the former can be reconciled with the socialist patriotism, the latter implies the national nihilism. The traditional Polish socialist dichotomy between good patriotism and bad nationalism, made by Bolesław Limanowski, was a good exit for that dilemma as well.

Though it had to compromise with the distorted form of the proletarian internationalism enforced by the Soviet Union, the patriotic tide went up higher and higher in historians' circle throughout the 1960s. Zbigniew Żaluski asserted that the Marxist version of Polish history had failed to produce a new socialist patriotism. He deplored that its denigration of national past bred the national nihilism among the postwar generation. The Party's daily newspaper first dismissed his argument as incompatible with the communist ideology, but it could not suppress the rising nationalist tide at all.¹³ Follow-

¹⁰ "Diskusja nad probnym wydaniem caesci III tomu Historii Polski," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* vol. 68, no. 3 (1961).

¹¹ "Rewizja zalozen programowych przedrozlamowej PPS przez PPS-Lewice (Diskusja w Zakladzie Historii Partii)," *Z Pola Walki* vol. 5, no.1 (1962).

¹² J. H. Lim, *op. cit.*, p. 543.

¹³ E. K. Valkeiner, "The Rise and Decline of Official Marxist Historiography in Poland,

ing Zaluski's book, a similar grave concern of the pessimism on the national past was voiced in the Ninth Congress of Polish Historians in Lublin, 1963. Thanks to the rising patriotic mood Polish historians could comprehend the nineteenth century national uprisings led by feudal gentry in its full historical context. The class-centric interpretation began to fade away.

As for the Party history, however, the historical and ideological legitimacy of the SDKPiL and KPP's revolutionary internationalism remained intact. The proletarian internationalism, an ideological shield of the Soviet Union's hegemony in the Eastern Block, was a sacred and inviolable guideline to the official historical writing. Despite that, the PZPR deployed a plain nationalist propaganda to squeeze the popular support from the working mass indifferent to the socialist cause. The Party propaganda machine coined the nationalist slogans: "Party with nation, nation with Party" "Our labor is the greatest resource of the nation," "Young ones, the future of our nation with the Party," "The defender and builder of the fatherland," and so on.¹⁴ In fact the nationalist discourse had overwhelmed the socialist one in the Party propaganda. Party ideologues were confronted with a mission impossible to present simultaneously proletarian internationalism and official nationalism.

That dilemma deepened with the advent of General Moczar's faction on the PZPR's platform. The apparatchik nationalism evolved by Moczar's faction was a legitimization of the old idea of the nation as the supreme moral cause, as Roman Dmowski, an ultra-nationalist, had preached it. Hinting at a national Communism purged of Soviet and Jewish contamination, the nationalist faction attacked both revisionists and Jewish members as "rootless cosmopolitans." The anti-Zionist campaign, initiated by Communist parties of the Soviet Block immediately after the third Israeli-Arab war, signaled the nationalist turn. The grotesque anti-Semitic campaign led by Moczar's people was the joint production of the hard line dictatorship and the primitive nationalism. The metaphor of the patriotism was just a cover to disguise themselves as "good" patriots.¹⁵ The upsurge of the nationalist tide in the Party leadership made a deep impact on the official Party historiography. The controversy over the so-called "objective patriotism" is a good indication of it.

The discussion organized by the editorial board of *Z Pola Walki* in 1970, under the title of "Internationalism-Patriotism-Nationalism in the history of Polish labor movement," triggered a controversy. In his leading speech Stanislaw Wronski suggested that

1945-1983," *Slavic Review* vol. 44, no. 4 (1985), p. 665.

¹⁴ *Polski plakat polityczny* (Warszawa, 1980).

¹⁵ J. J. wiatr, *Co nam zostalo z tych lat* (Torun, 1995), p. 23.

meaning of the proletarian internationalism should be tuned to the change of historical conditions. And he posed a question of how they could reinterpret the meaning of the contemporary internationalism. His suggestion found an echo in a few participants' arguments that internationalism could be reconciled with neither nationalism nor national nihilism, but only with patriotism. Based on this proposition, they paid attention not to the traditional dichotomy between the irredentist PPS and the internationalist SDKPiL, but to the strategic schism on the national question within the internationalist SDKPiL. They tried to pinpoint the patriotic SDKPiLites opposed to Rosa Luxemburgian national nihilism. To verify the existence of the patriotic group within the SDKPiL would solve by one stroke the dilemma to reconcile the patriotic feeling with the proletarian internationalism. But they could not convince other participants of the new thesis, because of the lack of historical evidences.¹⁶

When Aleksander Kochanski published a new study on the SDKPiL in 1971, the controversy stepped into the second phase. In the conclusion of his book, Kochanski proposed a thesis of "objective patriotism." He meant that the SDKPiL contributed objectively to the independence of Poland despite its programmatic negation of the PPS's slogan of independence.¹⁷ His thesis was showered by the sharp criticism immediately. His critics pointed out that Kochanski disregarded the patriotic current, represented by Julian Marchlewski and Cezaryna Wojnarowska, within the SDKPiL. Norbert Michta was the key figure in that criticism. He argued that Kochanski overestimated the role of Rosa Luxemburg and disregarded the opposition group of Rosa Luxemburg. Michta insisted that Rosa Luxemburg was just a theoretician and therefore played no important role in the party affairs of the SDKPiL. In his analysis it was key members of the patriotic internationalism, i. e. Marchlewski and Wojnarowska, who dominated the SDKPiL.¹⁸

It is noteworthy that dividing line between the so-called patriotic internationalists and the alleged non-patriotic cosmopolitans within SDKPiL coincides with the ethnic line between Polish members and Jewish members. Considering that Michta was the director of Polish Military Academy and a core member of the Moczar's faction, his argument implied the camouflaged anti-Semitism. By that conspicuous way the anti-Semitism infiltrated into the study of the revolutionary internationalism. That sophisti-

¹⁶ "Internacjonalizm-patriotyzm-nacjonalizm w dziejach polskiego ruchu robotniczego," *Z Pola Walki* vol. 13, no. 2 (1970), pp. 117, 130-132, 135 and passim.

¹⁷ A. Kochanski, *SDKPiL 1907-1910* (Warszawa, 1971), pp. 218-259.

¹⁸ N. Michta, "O rzetena ocene SDKPiL," *Z Pola Walki* vol. 15, no. 3 (1973), pp. 121-145; N. Michta, "Tak to wlasciwie bylo," *Z Pola Walki* vol. 15, no. 4 (1973), pp. 67-82; N. Michta, *Julian Marchlewski* (Warszawa, 1974).

cated anti-Semitism was an exit from the dilemma of reconciling the official nationalism of the PZPR with the enforced internationalism by the Soviet Union. It shows a tragic symptom of the chronic schizophrenia in the simultaneous presence of proletarian internationalism and apparatchik nationalism.

Despite the striking contrast to the Party historiography in its political views, the significant part of the opposition camp's historiography in 1980s deployed the same nationalist discourse. Historico-political journalism of a particularly anti-Communist nature cast a devil image onto the entire Polish socialist past. Communist organizations were portrayed in this literature as "active in favor of, and using the money of, a foreign power that aimed at destroying the independence of Poland," or "a sign of the activity of international Jewish agents attempting to constrain Poles."¹⁹ This was a revival of the interwar period's nationalist, and anti-Semitic, historiography, which accused of the KPP of alienation from Polish society, of being agents of the Soviets, the Jews or the Freemasonry. Compared to the Party historiography, the opposition camp did not need any disguise of internationalism and therefore could hold the upright nationalism.

It is more striking that Solidarity constantly stressed that the nation is the supreme value in society, to which group and individual interests should be subordinated. As a result more attention was paid to the rights of the nation than to those of the individual. While Solidarity's collectivist way of thinking undoubtedly stemmed from its socialist populism, the ultra-rightist nationalism was in continuity of the apparatchik nationalism.²⁰ Especially the ultra-rightist and Communist camp shared the primordialist concept of nation, which in turn gave rise to a mixed feeling of the Party's integral nationalism and anti-Communist opposition nationalism. It is proved once again by the fact that some ex-Communist historians crossed the Rubicon River to join the rightist camp after the Fall. Not only the opportunistic careerism but also the ideological affinity made them to join the nationalist camp without any hesitation.

III. North Korea: 'Chu-che' and the Primordialist View of Nation

It was vulgar Marxist dogmatism that held sway over the historical science in North Korea by 1955. When Korean peninsula was liberated from the Japanese colonial rule in 1945, there existed no higher educational institution in North Korea. One local

¹⁹ M. Sliwa, "The Image of the Communist Movement in Contemporary Polish Historiography," *Jahrbuch fuer historische Kommunismusforschung* (1994), pp. 312-313.

²⁰ M. Sliwa, "Idee polityczne opozycji antykomunistycznej w Polsce, 1976-1989," Unpublished paper, p. 17.

historical museum and several poor local libraries were all that she had at that time. The Korean Civil War in 1950-53 made the academic condition more devastating. It was almost impossible for North Koreans to develop their own historiography for a decade after the liberation. Though a few Marxist historians who studied in prewar Japan led the new historical research in this decade, it was just a first step to the Marxist understanding of the Korean history. They tried to apply mechanically the Stalinist version of the historical materialism to Korean history. Under the slogan of “Learn from the experience of the Soviet Union,” eyes of the North Korean Marxist historians were fixed at Moscow.

The de-Stalinization was a turning point in North Korea as well. In the end of 1955 Kim Il-song made a famous speech to criticize the “dogmatism” and “formalism” in the Party propaganda. It implied the criticism of “the dependentism on Great Powers.” Kim Il-song blamed Party ideologues for their homage to the history of the Soviet Union and relative indifference to the Korean national heritage. It was criticized as “the dependentism on Great Powers,” a term reminiscent of the Yi dynasty’s dependent inclination to China. He stressed the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to Korean conditions on the principle of the subjecthood.²¹ Politically it was a signal to the purge of pro-Soviet faction within the Choson Worker’s Party (CWP). Ideologically it meant the nationalistic turn of Marxism. It marked a milestone to get rid of the pro-Soviet dependency, an inevitable result from the “occupation Communism” after the Second World War.

Nevertheless Kim Il-song never denied openly the proletarian internationalism. Like as Polish Communists tried to reconcile the patriotism with the internationalism, he asserted that patriotism was inseparable from internationalism. It was a political declaration just with a tautological metaphor, devoid of the theoretical elaboration. It reads: “a person who does not love her/his fatherland cannot be true to internationalism, and a person who is not true to internationalism cannot love her/his fatherland and her/his people. A good patriot is an internationalist and a true internationalist is a patriot.”²² In the same context Kim confessed that “I am a nationalist as much as a communist.” It is noteworthy that Kim Il-song stressed the “Chu-che” in this address, whose literal meaning in Korean connotes the subjectivity inwardly and the sovereignty outwardly.

The nationalistic turn of Marxism made a significant impact on the historiography in North Korea, shown in two volumes of *A General History of Korea* published in 1956-1958. The Central Committee’s Institute of History of Party was established in the

²¹ *Kim Il-song Sunjip* (Pyongyang, 1960), vol. 4: 325-331.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 338.

end of 1956. It focused on the history of Korean Communist movement instead of the Bolshevik Party history. The symposium of Party historians, organized by the Central Committee in 1958, trumpeted the open criticism of the national nihilism in historical writings. In 1959 Institute of History in the Choson Academy of Sciences published a proposal, "Ten Years' Plan of the Development of Science." It pointed at four major study themes for the historical science: the peaceful reunification of the fatherland and the building of socialism, the revolutionary and patriotic tradition of the Korean people, regularities of the societal development in Korea, the traditional nation culture.²³

The nationalistic turn in North Korea at the first sight was similar to the Polish October in 1956. It was not just a coincidence. The de-Stalinization played a role of bridging between two incidents. But the course of de-Stalinization was quite different from each other. If the ally of the reformist wing and the national Communists dominated the Polish October, it was the anti-reformist wing in alliance with native Communists that led the nationalistic turn in North Korea. Equipped with the ideological weapon of nationalism, Kim Il-song could win the power struggle against the reformist wing. He could defend himself against the reformist's charge of the personal cult under the umbrella of national sovereignty. Having replaced the people's sovereignty with the national sovereignty, Kim counterattacked the reformist wing for their dependentism on Great Powers. His counterattack received a deep resonance from the native partisan Communists because the reformist wing composed mainly of the pro-Soviet faction and pro-Chinese faction. To Kim's party reformism was just an ideology, imported from the Khrushchev's Russia, which did not fit in Korea. With its emphasis on the Korean way of Marxism, the "Chu-che" played a role of blocking the reformist trend politically. The reformist wing was branded as the alien revisionist and finally purged.²⁴

On the other hand it spurred the study of Korean history. Kim Il-song instructed historians to find the "eternality of our history," "shining heritage of the national culture," "decent patriotic tradition," and so on. With the full support of the regime, historical studies in North Korea developed well and bore some fruitful products in 1960s. It is generally said that North Korean quality of the historical research was higher than South Korean one during this period. The most valuable achievement of the North Korean historiography in 1960s was that it substituted the Japanese colonialist's view of Korean history by its own view. It rejected the theory of the Asiatic mode of production

²³ "8.15 haebanghoo Choson ryuksa hakgyega gulo on gil," *Ryuksagwahak*, no. 2 (1960), p. 10.

²⁴ Suh Dongman, "1950nyundai bukhanui jungchigaldunggwa ideologi sangwhang," in *1950nyundai nambukhanui suntaekgwa guljul* (Seoul, 1998), pp. 323-324.

in Korean history, which implies the stagnancy and backwardness of the Korean past and thus the role of Japanese colonialism in modernization. Instead it traced a history of the independent capitalist development to late Yi dynasty and tried hard to find a germ of the native capitalist development in Korea. It is a sad irony that the Chu-che's vision of Korean history was not exempt from the Eurocentric Marxism, which made the European history a universal mode of production narrative, i.e. the unilinear development model of the world history.

Despite its academic achievements, the North Korean historiography began to fall into the nationalist trap in 1960s. The consolidation of the "Chu-che" as a systemic ideology strengthened the nationalist interpretation. It intimated two points in relation to historical studies. First, it was the explicit version of the Marxist voluntarism with premises that "man is the master and determinant of everything" and "man is the social being with self-autonomy, creativity and consciousness." In North Korea where neither the economic nor political institution of modernity existed, the people were the only available resources for the development strategy. To lay a stress on the people's will was a typical way of mobilizing the popular mass in Third World countries.²⁵ It laid a stress on the class struggle rather than the productive forces as a driving force of history. Second, it made an emphasis on the spirit of sovereignty, independence and the national struggle with the foreign invaders. In order not to be squeezed by the Sino-Soviet conflict, the North Korean regime had to stand on its own way, and it found an ideological exit in the Chu-cheism. In 1967 CWP proclaimed the Chu-cheism as the ideological pillar of the whole Party. In 1970 it replaced the Marxism-Leninism with the Chu-cheism as the official Weltanschauung.²⁶

The consolidation of Chu-cheism was another turning point of the North Korean historiography. The nationalist historiography made way for the chauvinist one. The chauvinistic turn was most explicit in the change of the concept of nation. Throughout 1960s North Korean academy stuck to the Stalin's definition of nation as a community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up. The *Dictionary of Philosophy* in 1970 modified slightly Stalin's conception by adding "the eternal history of Korea." It suggested that Korean nation formed already in the pre-modern era. The *Dictionary of Political Science* in 1973 in-

²⁵ See Jie-Hyun Lim, "From the Labor emancipation to the Labor Mobilization-Socialism as a way of the anti-Western Modernization in underdeveloped countries," Unpublished paper presented at 35th Linz International Conference of Labor Historians, in Sep., 1999.

²⁶ "Bukhaneseonun woori yuksarul utuhge bonunga?," *Yuksapipyung* no. 3 (1988), p. 12.

cluded a factor of “common bloodline” in defining the nation. And finally a common economic life was replaced by a common bloodline in the North Korean explication of nation. A common bloodline and language are now the most vital factors in this new conception. It was an explicit deviation from the Marxist concept. In a word the primordialist view of nation overwhelmed the Marxist-modernist approach. As a result the nation was regarded as an unhistorical constant and it became a patriotic duty for North Korean historians to discover or invent its glorious past from immemorial time.

The primordialist concept of nation bred the originism, autochthonism and anachronism. The originism led to a belief: “the older, the better.” North Korean *A General History of Choson* assumes that Paleolithic men began to inhabit the Korean peninsular about B. C. 600,000 to 400, 000 years, while South Korean *A New History of Korea* reckons it some 40,000 to 50,000 years before the present. It is more striking that the North Korean historiography asserts that Paleolithic inhabitants evolved into the contemporary Koreans without any ethnic and cultural rupture, while the latter doubts if the Korean people of today are ethnic descendents of these Paleolithic inhabitants.²⁷ The court historiography in North Korea argues that the physical anthropology proved the uninterrupted bloodline of the Korean people. The archeological fake of the *Tan ’gun’s* tomb, the alleged first ruler of Old Choson in 31 century B. C., can be understood in the same context. Thanks to the originism, the bronze age and iron age in the North Korean historiography begins respectively about 10 centuries earlier than in the South Korean historiography. According to North Korean historiography, there established a feudal society in Korean peninsula about the first century A. D., maybe for the first time in the world history.

The autochthonism tends to ignore “foreign” enclaves in its native land or to extend native territory as large as possible. It is most palpable in historical writings about the Old Choson, which lasted from about 800 B. C. to 108 B. C.. Han China established three commanderies within the former domain of Old Choson in 108 B. C. and in the next year completed the formation of the so-called Four Chinese commanderies by creating Hyondo in the Ye territory. The settled opinion in South Korea is that, except Hyondo that spanned the middle reaches of the Yalu and the T’ung-chia River basin, the other three commanderies were situated in Korean peninsula. North Koreans argue that Nangnang, the most important commandery, was located in Manchuria. In fact, however, the archeological excavation shows that Nangnang’s location is the Taedong river basin at P’yongyang. It means that North Koreans are never willing to recognize the foreign

²⁷ Compare Yuksa Yunguso, *Choson Tongsa* (Pyongyang, 1977) and Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea* (Seoul, 1984).

enclaves in Korean peninsula.

As a result, the territory of Old Choson expanded to Manchuria as large as possible and its center moved from the Taedong River basin to the lower reaches of Liao River.²⁸ If Polish archaeology satisfied the PZPR's demand of "Drang nach Westen," North Korean historiography fulfilled the dream of "Drang nach Manchuria." It is more interesting that the ultra-rightist historiography in South Korea shares "Drang nach Manchuria" in common with the court historiography in North Korea. The shared nationalist discourse melted down the political rivalry between the ultra-rightist in South and the Communist in North. The official invitation of a representative ultra-nationalist historian to *Tan 'gun's* Accession Day by the North Korean government in 1994 is a vivid example that nationalist discourse overcomes the sharp political rivalry. It is reminiscent of the ideological affinity between the PZPR's apparatchik nationalism and the anti-Communist popular nationalism in Poland.

Official historians in North Korea were very keen to refute the alleged Japanese commandery in Kaya around the 5 century A. D., most likely faked by the Japanese imperialist historians, in the same context. When court historians in North Korea met the world history published by the Soviet Union's Academy of Sciences, they found that it reiterated the Japanese colonialists' argument regarding the alleged Japanese commandery in ancient Korea. They criticized the Soviet version of Korean history relentlessly and suggested an alternative thesis, i. e. Korean colonies in Japanese Isles. Its major point lies in that ancient Korean three kingdoms and Kaya established their colonies in Japanese Isles, and Korean colonies played an important role in forming the Japanese ancient state. Regardless of historical facts, it reflects a mood that the foreign enclaves should be recognized in Korean peninsula. If Japanese imperialist historians faked the Japanese commandery to justify the Japanese colonial rule over Korea, North Korean official historians counterposed Korean colonies to refute it. It is certain that the nationalist presentism overwhelmed the historical contextualism in this debate.

The stress of cultural originality is a result of the autochthonism as well. It seems that the North Korean history textbook does not recognize the influx of the Chinese iron culture and the bronze culture of Scytho-Siberian origin. It implies that the bronze and iron culture developed independently in Old Choson by not mentioning the neighbor's influence. This stance on the cultural originality is interrelated with the criticism of the Buddhism and Confucianism. It says that the Buddhism as "a foreign religion" exerted a very harmful influence to the free development of the indigenous art and nation culture.

²⁸ Lee Sunkun, "Gochosonui sunglipgwa sahoisunggyuk," in Ahn Byungwoo and Do Jinsoo eds., *Bukhanui hankooksa insik* (Seoul, 1990), I: 86-92.

But Korean artists of plebian origin succeeded in defending the popular and national art against the influx of the foreign religion.²⁹ The attachment to cultural originality gave rise to the “the oldest or for the first time in the world” syndrome. It boasts of the printing type made of metal for the first time in the world. Though it was the product of the Koryo aristocracy’s life of luxury, celadon ware is highly praised as the proud national heritage.³⁰ In this way nation overrode class in North Korean historiography.

The primordialist view of nation is highlighted in the anachronistic interpretation of history. It never hesitated to project the idea of the modern nation-state to the ancient past. The emphasis on Chu-che, i. e. the sovereignty, has led the North Korean historiography to the preoccupation with the national struggle for national sovereignty. It depicts a long history of the national struggle against foreign invaders from the 3 century B. C., that of Old Choson people against the Yen’s invasion. The title of “history of anti-invasion struggle of the Korean nation” in the era of Old Chosun shows that it presupposes the existence of Korean nation even in this period. The anachronism is most typical in its critical approach to the unification of three kingdoms in Korean peninsula by Silla in alliance with T’ang (668 A.D.). It rebuked Silla for its dependency on T’ang, a Chinese dynasty. It reads: “the ruling class of Silla, disregarding the fate of the country, drew the foreign opponent for its class interest and went to civil war with the support of the foreign power... it committed an irrevocable crime to the nation.”³¹ The reasonable estimation, without the nationalist bias, would be that the unification of the three kingdoms by Silla is the first step to the formation of the Korean nationality.

It is linked with the overrating history of the national struggle for the sovereignty. In *A General History of Korea*, writings on the national struggle occupy 22% and 30% respectively in the era of the Three Kingdoms (57-668) and Koryo dynasty (918-1392). It reminds me of the Polish history textbook aimed to awaken a patriotic sentiment by teaching the ancient Greeks’ heroic struggle against the Persians.³² But North Korean historiography has another aim. It supposes that Silla with its dependency on T’ang is the historical equivalent of the South Korea for its dependentism on the United States, while Koguryo is the historical equivalent of the North Korea with its striving for the sovereignty against the foreign domination. While Silla developed in the southern part of Korean peninsula, Koguryo occupied its northern part. The political implication of this historical explanation is that the sovereign North Korea has a historical legitimacy

²⁹ *Choson Tongsa*, p.157.

³⁰ *Ibid.* , pp. 217-218.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

³² M. Ferro, *The Use and Abuse of History* (London, 1981), p. 170.

over the dependent South Korea. It is a far-fetched presentist interpretation disregarding the historical perspective. The primordialist view of nation made this far-fetched presentism possible. If the originism, autochthonism and anachronism are the offspring of the primordialist conception of nation, the far-fetched presentism is its spouse.

As far as the modern and contemporary history in the North is concerned, it is almost a fake beyond description. It can be summed up as the personification of nationalism. It means that the history of the national liberation movement is reduced to the biography of Kim Il-song and his family history. He is the brain of nation as a social organism and the patriarch of nation as a family community of the common bloodline. In a sense the primordialist concept of nation helped the personification of nationalism by viewing the nation as an organic community and even as a family community. It is noteworthy also that the personification of nationalism went hand in hand with the consolidation of the Chu-cheism. A brief sketch of the court historiography in North Korea shows us how the historical science of the really existing socialism degenerated into “Legitimationswissenschaft” of the political power.

IV. Conclusion

To control the past is to master the present. The political power works not only by the oppression, but also by manipulating the popular memory. The alleged socialist regimes in People’s Poland and North Korea manipulated the popular memory by using the nationalist discourse rather than the socialist one. When unwrapped, the socialist court historiography proved that its content was the nationalist message. The socialist metaphors were just beautiful prints on the wrapping papers of the socialist court historiography. When the concept of the left and the idea of socialism was totally alienated from the working mass, the nomenklatura had to invent the alternative ruling ideology to mobilize the working mass. The official nationalism based on the primordialist concept of nation was the good alternative to the socialism to which the working mass turned their back. The historical experience of the long foreign occupation and colony was the fertile soil for the nationalist manipulation. Thus the ideology of emancipation succumbed to the realism of political power. It is the key to understand the oxymoron of the red court historiography, i.e. nationalist message in socialist code.