

# Lost Paradise: The phenomenon of ‘Soviet Korean Advanced Kolkhozes’ in Central Asia<sup>1</sup>

(Part 1)

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*Abstract.* In the history of Soviet kolkhoz (collective-farm) research, the ‘advanced kolkhoz (millionaire) phenomenon’ remains almost unexplored, although it was a notable social-economic phenomenon. Members of the Korean advanced kolkhozes in Central Asia, which operated from the late 1930s to the 1980s, at first adapted to the kolkhoz system through hard work, but later became very active in creating social-cultural institutions within the kolkhoz system for common benefit (not only ethnic Koreans but also natives). Regionally, the overwhelming majority of Korean advanced kolkhozes, including the legendary ‘Polar Star’ and ‘Politotdel’, were active in Uzbekistan, followed by Kazakhstan. Perhaps, Korean advanced kolkhozes in Central Asia reached the peak of the Soviet-style socialist agricultural development in the 1960s — 1970s. These well-to-do Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia developed a strong social infrastructure in their community as a basis for the contemporary living culture. Local common assets were formed from their own abundant undivided funds, consumption and cultural funds. However, what is more important is that Korean kolkhozes-millionaires not only built an excellent material and technical foundation in the village based on their high economic performance, but also created harmonious multiethnic communities while enjoying various social benefits similar to city life.

*Key words:* Soviet Korean advanced kolkhoz, Central Asia, community-wealth building, competent dedicated leader, efficient labor organization, kolkhoz garden city, multiethnic community

DOI: 10.22394/2500-1809-2024-9-2-109-138

*“At the entrance to the kolkhoz village,  
a red flag flutters above the memorial gate filled with trees.*

*This is a civilized socialist town”*

1949, Tashkent Province, Uzbekistan, ‘Polar Star’ kolkhoz village scene<sup>2</sup>

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1. This paper was written with the support of the research fund of the SungKongHoe University.
  2. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 18.06.1949

*“Dimitrov” kolkhoz in Akkurgan district is a paradise on Earth...*

1965, “Dimitrov” kolkhoz’s village scene<sup>3</sup>

*“If all agricultural enterprises in the Soviet Union were like Politotdel, we would have definitely had to introduce your management system”*

Norwegian Prime Minister T. Bratelli in Politotdel kolkhos, Tashkent Province, Uzbekistan, 1974<sup>4</sup>

*“What we saw today is like a fairy tale...*

*If I were an Uzbek, I would live right here, in paradise, not in Tashkent”*

N. Mordukova, honored Soviet actress who visited kolkhoz ‘Politotdel’<sup>5</sup>

### Unexplored phenomenon of advanced kolkhozes

The post-war period in the Soviet Union, especially from the 1950s and 1970s, provide a lot of data on advanced kolkhozes. The materials were truly diverse, ranging from articles in periodicals (newspapers and magazines) describing specific kolkhozes to documentaries, pamphlets written by chairs of the kolkhoz management committee or journalists, and academic research<sup>6</sup>. In addition, academic studies addressed the nature, operation, and problems of the kolkhoz system to present some advanced kolkhozes, conditions and farming styles that would allow underdeveloped kolkhozes to catch up the advanced ones<sup>7</sup>. Although such materials were not free from ideology imposed by the state socialist system at the time, they provide useful information on the history, experience, analysis and statistics of the initial kolkhozes organization in various parts of the Soviet Union, their subsequent operation, and the causes of their success and failure.

However, since the 1990s, the history of the Russian advanced-kolkhoz research remains almost empty. Most researchers seem to ignore this issue as an episode or do not fully recognize its importance. Therefore, it is not surprising that no serious academic works focusing on the advanced kolkhoz have been published (Beznin, Dimoni,

3. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 17.09.1965

4. Kim Brutt (2019) *Hwang Man Geum: Through Olympus and Golgotha*, Tashkent: Baktria Press, p. 56.

5. Kim Brutt (2019) *Hwang Man Geum: Through Olympus and Golgotha*, Tashkent: Baktria Press, p. 105.

6. Most of these materials can be found in the national libraries of Russia and other former Soviet republics, local libraries, archives and web-sites, and some are held by individuals.

7. See, e.g.: Estonian advanced kolkhoz ‘Eduard Vilde’ presented in Venzher V. G. (1965). *Collective-Farm System at the Present Stage*, pp. 293–294.

2014; Koznova, 2016; Kondrashin, 1997). One might say that advanced kolkhoz as a specific research topic is nothing more than propaganda to hide the failure of the Soviet authorities' agricultural and rural policies or that the number of advanced kolkhozes was so small that it can be ignored academically. Thus, T. Zaslavskaya's memories of the miserable state of the Soviet countryside in the 1950s vividly testify how poor and desolate the lives of "rural residents who had fallen into the abyss" were after the World War II compared with "the city which was considered a paradise" (Zaslavskaya, 2000). It is difficult to estimate the share of advanced kolkhozes in the total number of kolkhozes in the Soviet Union, since the criteria for being 'advanced' or 'underdeveloped' were practical (technical) and relative: there were a few cases, when the same kolkhoz was once 'advanced' and later turned into 'underdeveloped', or vice versa.

According to the report in the newspaper "Lenin's Banner"<sup>8</sup> (in Korean, published in Kazakhstan in the Soviet era), there were 13 kolkhozes-millionaires in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 1940 and 285 in 1954<sup>9</sup>, and in the early 1960s, the number of advanced kolkhozes reached approximately 3,000 in the Soviet Union<sup>10</sup>. These numbers may be somewhat exaggerated; however, there always were advanced kolkhozes in the agricultural belt of the Soviet Union, including Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Central Asia. Based on the periodicals, pamphlets, documentaries and testimonies of people who lived at that time, it is clear that advanced kolkhozes were a notable socio-economic phenomenon.

On the other hand, in the peasant-studies perspective, the ignorance of the advanced-kolkhoz phenomenon is determined by the fact that most studies describe Soviet peasants as too passive, i.e., as victims of the wrong land system and agricultural policy. However, as was historically proven by the peasantry worldwide, peasants passively adapt to the policies and influence of those in power, while constantly using "weapons of the weak" for their survival and moral economy and fight in various ways (Scott, 1971; 1985). The same was true for members of the Soviet advanced kolkhoz.

In the late 1920s — early 1930s, after the craze for full-scale collectivization, as time passed, many kolkhoz members self-organized to transform the kolkhoz into an organization advantageous to them. It was an attempt to create a system in which people could enjoy ad-

8. This newspaper was founded in Vladivostok in 1923 and entitled "Avant-garde", after 1938 it was published in Kazakhstan. Its status changed from the organ of the Kyzyl-Orda-Region Syr-Darya District Party to the organ of the Kyzyl-Orda State Party Committee, then to the organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and finally, in 1960, it became an inter-republic newspaper of the Soviet Union.

9. Newspaper "Lenin's Banner", 10.07.1954.

10. Newspaper "Lenin's Banner", 20.02.1962.

vantages of the community life without a huge gap between the rich and the poor. In particular, members of the advanced kolkhoz among the Central-Asian Koreans (from the late 1930s to the 1980s) first adapted to the kolkhoz system through hard labor, and then actively engaged in creating institutions (large-scale accumulation of common assets for the common good), following new ideas about common benefit. Therefore, the advanced kolkhoz phenomenon can be a very interesting research subject to understand how the peasant passivity and activity were dynamically combined within the Soviet system.

Another reason for the scientific ignorance of the advanced kolkhoz phenomenon is the duality of kolkhoz, which may be due to the lack of comprehensive recognition of the fact that it was not only a basic agricultural production unit, but also a social and cultural community that served as the heart of rural society. Commercial farms pursuit profit is their top priority, agricultural systems pursue both self-consumption and commercial profit, i.e., there is no inseparable or close relationship between production units and local communities. However, in countries of the socialist camp, including the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, collective and cooperative farms were unique as collective production units that functioned as farmer-centered village communities. The fact that production and living culture, in which local community members participated, was a key component of the rural system is a very important historical aspect for understanding the nature of the Soviet socialist civilization in the 20th century.

On the other hand, there are several works and biographies on the Central-Asian Korean advanced kolkhoz written after the collapse of the Soviet Union, for instance, the work of several researchers (Seong, 2006; Lim, 2007; Hwang, 2007) in Korean and of Soviet Koreans (Vanin, 2006; Ten, 2005; Kim, 2021), descendants of more than 170,000 immigrants who were forced to move from the Far Eastern Region to Central Asia in 1937. These works describe the first struggles and organization of the advanced Korean kolkhozes, focusing on the “Polar Star”, “Politotdel”, “Pravda” and “Nothern Lighthouse” which were legendary kolkhozes-millionaires in Central Asia. These works highlight the remarkable achievements of these kolkhozes in agricultural production and in the development of social and cultural infrastructure, mentioning achievements of their leaders granted the title of the Socialist Labour Hero by the Soviet government. Such a focus on the famous kolkhozes’ committee chairs indicates a personality-centered, nationalist approach determined by the fact that Koreans were oppressed under the Stalinist regime and were suddenly relocated to an unfamiliar area thousands of kilometers away from their historical homeland. Nevertheless, their descendants overcame numerous difficulties and achieved a great victory in their “new homeland”: their advanced kolkhozes were based on hard work and creativity recognized as the national features of the Korean people in Central Asia.

When considering the advanced-kolkhoz phenomenon, a specific leader-centered approach and a national perspective have limitations. It is clear that leaders with excellent organizational capabilities played a decisive role in the success of advanced Korean kolkhozes. However, it is recognized that their capabilities were basically developed in the structural environment of the Soviet land system and agricultural policy, with the help of organizational factors such as efficient labor organization and strengthened labor discipline, and in the favorable social and cultural conditions of ‘socialist internationalism’ in Central Asia. Therefore, the study of the Central-Asian Korean advanced kolkhozes should reveal both their specific features and general characteristics shared with other Soviet advanced kolkhozes.

### **Perspectives and concepts: kolkhoz system, commons and community-wealth building**

The Soviet kolkhoz was economically an agricultural production unit, but socially it was also the central institution of the rural community. Therefore, to explain the nature of the kolkhoz system, first, we should reveal the connection between these two aspects, applying relevant conceptual tools. I suggest to use the terms ‘commons’ (Standing, 2019; Ostrom, 1990; Bollier, 2014), ‘community-wealth building’ (Guinan, O’Neill, 2019); Brown, Jones, 2021)<sup>11</sup>, and ‘common spaces’ (The Care Collective, 2020) to comprehensively understand the economic nature and social aspects of the kolkhoz system, and also the concept of ‘recognition struggle’<sup>12</sup> to reveal the mentality and attitude of Korean immigrants who had unique political tasks different from Russians and native peoples of Central Asia.

Commons are not commodities to be bought or sold but the basis for collective life, a common resource that community members can use according to mutually agreed rules, and a set of norms and practices to manage these resources. Therefore, commons can play a positive role in social relationships — strengthen the bonds of community members, moral norms that prevent deviation, and cultural exchange and diversity that allow to be open to other groups while maintaining one’s group identity. Almost all commons are to some degree connected to the state and markets. For creating and

11. This term was introduced in the United States in 2005 to define a community responding to the crises of chronic poverty, unemployment and austerity in urban areas. Mondragon in Spain, Cleveland in the United States, and Preston in the United Kingdom are important examples. The concept of ‘building community assets’ can be traced back to the Paris Commune of 1871, and Kropotkin (1902) who recognized the importance of this issue among the first.

12. This concept was introduced by G. Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and later developed by A. Honneth.

maintaining large-scale common resources, the group needs support and protection from the public sector, such as national or local governments. If the community appropriately uses market mechanisms (rather than capitalism)<sup>13</sup>, it can significantly help to develop commons with its own funds.

The Korean advanced kolkhozes' workers in Central Asia adapted to the national system of the Soviet kolkhoz, but at the same time created their own social-cultural system by using the institutional advantages and opportunities within the Soviet economy. For the researchers of advanced Soviet kolkhozes, commons are (1) joint efforts of villagers to create a 'commonwealth' in rural areas, (2) and common assets and resource management such as the collective production facilities, village infrastructure, social-cultural institutions, (3) and also a practical paradigm for the village community autonomy that result in a multi-ethnic friendly community. In other words, numerous advanced or millionaire kolkhozes<sup>14</sup> established by Koreans in Central Asia from the late 1940s to the 1980s, their social infrastructure, their public spaces and networks of relationships can be interpreted as a kind of 'commons'.

In addition, various projects and efforts of Korean advanced kolkhozes in Central Asia can be also considered in the perspective of creating community assets and expanding common space. The community-wealth building is a new economic-social development tool that emerged under the decline of local communities and deepening inequality. It is not an accumulation of wealth through private ownership but a regional strategy based on the formation and maintenance of community assets<sup>15</sup>, which emphasizes the leading role not of the large-scale external capital but of the local community, its internal resources, partnership of its various organizations and mutually beneficial cooperation methods. For villagers, common space is an essential physical element and medium for a healthy local community and accumulation of social capital. Individuals who frequently use common

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13. Most scholars still confuse capitalism and market economy. Unlike capitalism, market economy is a mechanism of exchange essential for society. In most cases, capitalism develops from the market economy, distorting or suppressing the normal market economic system (see, e.g.: Braudel, 1979; Zamagni, Zamagni, 2010).

14. 'Advanced kolkhoz' was an official name, and 'kolkhoz-millionaire' — rather an everyday name. Such kolkhozes were especially numerous in Central Asia, where the Korean people lived collectively, but some operated in other republics of the Soviet Union, including Russia.

15. When community assets are owned by a private company or sold as commodities for profit, residents lose the ability to control real estate prices and gentrification. As a result, the community is atomized, and there is a high risk that it would turn into a number of helpless consumers rather than active citizens, or that its members would lose their homes and be driven out of the area.

spaces and participate in common programs are more likely to develop friendly relationships. Common spaces become a place for daily communication and constitute a culture of consultation and cooperation<sup>16</sup>. But to function in such a way for a long time, common spaces need institutional support and partnership.

### **Central-Asian advanced Korean kolkhozes**

When Koreans were deported from the Far East to Central Asia in the fall of 1937, they immediately started to reorganize kolkhozes. With a few exceptions, Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia kept their names and members (as before deportation)<sup>17</sup>. In 1937, there were 138 Korean kolkhozes operating in the Far East, mainly in the Ussuri Region (53) and the Primorsky Region (50), while the rest developed in the Khabarovsk Region (21), Jewish Autonomous Region (8), and Amur Region (4) (Lee Jaehoon, 2015: 173–177). In the Primorsky Region, despite the opposition of some rich peasants, Koreans supported the 'comprehensive collectivization' policy that began in the late 1920s. The collectivization rate of Korean peasants in the Far East increased rapidly from 6.9% in 1929 to 25.2% in 1930, 37.8% in 1931, and 82% in 1932, which was far ahead of the general collectivization rate of 62% in the Far East (Shim Youngseop, Kim German, 1999; Lee Chae-moon, 2007: 265–266). For instance, in the Posiet district of the Primorsky krai, where Koreans accounted for about 90% of population, the collectivization rate reached 95% in 1933 (Haruki, 1987: 44–45). The main reasons were as follows: (1) most of them came from poor peasants in the northern part of the Korean peninsula and voluntarily moved to the Primorsky Region in the late 19th — early 20th centuries; (2) they supported the Russian Revolution in the Far East and Siberia, fought against Japanese imperialists, and chose a 'socialist homeland'.

In the late 1930s, 66 kolkhozes were reported to have been reorganized by Korean immigrants in Kazakhstan (Kim, 2005: 212–214); many were organized in Uzbekistan, some in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. This number decreased significantly due to the

16. Common space is jointly owned by the community members, maintained as a public good and not exploited for personal benefit (privatization, modification or other purposes). Under the neoliberal regime all around the world (since the 1980s), the destruction of common spaces has had a negative impact and has destroyed communal traditions of mutual aid and care, communities' ability to foster a culture of everyday consultation and cooperation (The Care Collective, 2020).

17. Some kolkhoz leaders were Koreans executed or imprisoned by the Stalinist regime in the Primorsky Region just before the forced displacement in 1937. It was a considerable loss for the early Korean settlements and the development of kolkhozes in Central Asia.

policy of consolidating kolkhozes carried out in the 1950s — 1960s and the policy of turning some collective farms into soviet farms after the 1960s<sup>18</sup>.

The Koreans' movement to a completely unfamiliar region and settlement in their 'new hometown' were accompanied by hard labor and unbearable sufferings as they had to adapt to completely new geographical, climatic, ethnic and cultural environments. Many of the lands allocated to them were wastelands. Korean peasants in the Tashkent Region of Uzbekistan had only primitive tools to cultivate reed grasslands and swamps on the left bank of the Chirchik River, infested with mosquitoes and howling wild cats. The construction of irrigation canals also required hard labor to grow rice and cotton in Central Asia, where annual rainfall is much less than on the Korean Peninsula or in the Primorsky Region. Lots of immigrants had to sleep in yurts (tents), clubs, barns, animal nurseries, stables, and warehouses due to the lack of residential facilities. They suffered from various infectious diseases, including scurvy, typhoid fever, diphtheria, dysentery, brucellosis, measles, and malaria. However, Korean immigrants not only survived with their tireless efforts and with the help of natives, but also created many successful kolkhozes in a short period of time. The economic success of advanced Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia was determined by the record yields of such crops as rice, cotton, kenaf and corn and the profitability of raising livestock. Later these kolkhozes served as a base for the development of the Korean diaspora in each republic of Central Asia and the Soviet Union (Kim, 1954).

The first Korean kolkhozes-millionaires appeared in Kazakhstan in the late 1940s — late 1950s, just 3-4 years after the end of the World War II and 10 years after Koreans settled in Central Asia. The rich Korean kolkhozes — Kazakhstan's "Avant-garde", "Gigant", "3rd International", Uzbekistan's "Polar Star", "Northern Lighthouse", "Dimitrov", "Politotdel", "Pravda", and "Sverdlov" etc. — built a strong social infrastructure and established a base for living culture. Kolkhoz families equipped each house with electricity, gas, refrigerators, radios, televisions, bought motorcycles and even some own cars, asphalted roads connecting the kolkhoz central village with its branches; decent houses, schools, kindergartens, palaces of culture, power plants, hotels, hospitals, department stores, restaurants, social-welfare complexes, large stadiums, youth camps, resorts, and health centers with modern facilities were built one after another<sup>19</sup>.

18. According to the article in the newspaper "Lenin's Banner" about the changes in the number of kolkhozes in the Soviet Union in the early 1950s, 254,000 small kolkhozes as of January 1, 1950, turned into 97,000 large kolkhozes as of June 1953 (12.06.1953). The names of some Korean kolkhozes changed over time, but some kept their names even in other regions of Central Asia.

19. Newspaper "Lenin's Banner". 17.06.1960.

The leaders of advanced Korean kolkhozes paid special attention to schools for the younger generation: in addition to the Korean historical tradition of respect to education, such a tendency was also the main means of the struggle for recognition of ‘subversive’ as legitimate citizens in the new homeland. It is no coincidence that by the late 1970s, Koreans were among the most educated peoples in Central Asia.

These ‘homogeneous’ Korean kolkhozes integrated several nearby underdeveloped kolkhozes according to the Soviet state policy of consolidating kolkhozes in the early 1950s — 1960s. As a result, one kolkhoz became a combination of more than 10 different ethnic groups, turning into a multi-ethnic kolkhoz in a multi-ethnic country. Nevertheless, as the majority of managers (including committee chairmen) and members of such kolkhozes were Koreans, they were usually called ‘Korean kolkhozes’ (until the mid-1980s)<sup>20</sup>. In Central Asia, in a very short period of time, Koreans got a reputation of the excellent people — diligent, sincere and good at farming and education. What is more important, is that advanced Korean kolkhozes not only ensured an excellent material and technical foundation of the village based on high economic performance, but also a harmonious multi-ethnic community enjoying various social benefits at the city level. However, in the mid-1980s — early 1990s, under the perestroika, subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union and privatization of national assets, this unique “paradise in the desert” was lost.

According to various materials, including the newspaper “Lenin’s Banner” (1946–1990) as the main source of this research, pamphlets written by Korean heads of the advanced kolkhozes’ management committees (Kim Byug Hwa, Hwang Man Geum), documentaries, and testimonies of that era, many Central-Asian Korean kolkhozes were once or for decades called advanced or millionaires, mainly in Uzbekistan, followed by Kazakhstan. There are about 50 advanced Korean kolkhozes identified so far. The question is how poor Korean peasants, who were only yesterday growing rice in Primorsky Region, and today started to grow cotton and kenaf, crops unfamiliar to them, and raise dairy cows also unfamiliar to them in unfamiliar Central Asian, by maximizing the advantages of social labor, managed to create an “oasis in the desert” — agricultural socialist civilization — and eventually become the embodiment of the Soviet internationalism.

20. However, as Korean people gradually migrated to regional centers and cities in the 1960s and 1970s, their share in some villages fell below 40% in the 1980s.

*Institutional context: opportunities and limitations of the kolkhoz system*

The Soviet kolkhoz rapidly organized since the late 1920s under the policy of “comprehensive collectivization” was primarily driven by an ambitious state initiative. In general, peasants were mobilized by the Stalinist regime and forced to make considerable sacrifices. Certainly, there were poor peasants motivated to meet their desperate economic needs through the collective production method called kolkhoz. One might go further and argue that the kolkhoz form as a production unit is more in line with Russia’s natural conditions and peasant collectivist traditions than commercial farms or peasant cooperatives based on private ownership (Babashkin, 2011; 2015).

The operation of the Soviet kolkhoz was overwhelmingly influenced by the state policy (from above), but at the same time it could not help but meet certain requirements of its peasants (from below). During the Soviet period, “national goals that must be achieved” were set ‘vertically’ — from Moscow’s Kremlin through rural district parties to kolkhozes. However, the entity that achieved or failed to achieve the planned national goals was the kolkhoz made up of peasants with their own wants and needs. Therefore, it can be said that the kolkhoz was a hybrid system combining both the state demands with the peasant needs and their tense relationship. It was neither a pure state institution or a pure agricultural cooperative. The Soviet leadership defined the ideal feature of the kolkhoz as its ability to properly combine individual and social interests, and the challenge was to ensure their balance. Advanced (millionaire) kolkhozes of the Soviet period were those kolkhozes that succeeded to a large extent in achieving this balance.

The Soviet kolkhoz was formally a peasant organization, but in practice it could not be free from the state control. On the one hand, the state guardianship implied the requirement to achieve national plans and the control over the composition of kolkhoz leadership, including the chairman of the management committee; on the other hand, the state provided institutional and agricultural policy support through its various agencies. Kolkhoz leaders were often dissatisfied with the Soviet centralized planned economic system as applied to kolkhozes at the district level — ‘from above’. In the early 1960s, Hwang Man Geum, the chairman of the management committee of the “Politotdel”, said that the national plan and the plan developed by the kolkhoz should be properly combined, and insisted that production goals should be set per hectare, not per kolkhoz, because the soil quality dif-

ferred<sup>21</sup>. His statement follows the arguments of the organization-production school (Chayanov school) (Nikulin, 2017; Chayanov, 1927; Chelintsev, 1962; Makarov, 966). A. Chayanov, A. Chelintsev, N. Makarov and other representatives of this school argued that the entire Soviet Union should be organized not as a homogeneous unit but as a unit focusing on the most profitable production based on the quality of land. On the other hand, within the institutional and agricultural policy support, what had a decisive meaning for the peasants was the allocation of land, credits for building agricultural infrastructure, tax benefits, and the supply of inputs, such as various agricultural machines and fertilizers. For the Central-Asian Korean kolkhoz, the state institutional support was essential due to the resettlement to an unfamiliar area far away from the Primorsky Region and the need to start from scratch.

Since the kolkhoz was not directly managed by the state like the sovkhoz, it had to form and expand its own assets, except for the land provided for permanent lease. The indicator of the expansion of the kolkhoz assets was indivisible capital (funds) accumulated at the end of each fiscal year. According to the Article 12 of the 1935 Kolkhoz Standards Regulations, the kolkhoz had to allocate 15% of its annual financial income as indivisible capital (Decisions of the Party and Government on Economic Issues (1917–1967)). This indivisible fund was used for the construction of agricultural and livestock buildings, houses and power plants, major repairs, purchase of agricultural machinery and transport, expansion of irrigation networks, and purchase of other production inputs<sup>22</sup>. Central-Asian Korean millionaire kolkhozes constantly attempted to take full advantage of such institutional opportunities, minimizing their restrictions. As a result, since the late 1940s, the record agricultural production levels were achieved, which determined abundant indivisible funds, consumption, cultural and social welfare funds, i.e., “desert oases — beautiful garden cities” in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

#### *Competent and dedicated leader*

In general, among the key factors that influenced the success or failure of the kolkhoz, the most significant were as follows: who was appointed or elected as the chairman and what kind of leader he was. The ideal type of the kolkhoz management committee chairman as prescribed by the Soviet leadership was “a commander of kolkhoz production, an introducer of advanced experience, a propagator of agricultural knowledge, a practitioner of the Communist Party’s agricultural policy, an educator of peasants, and a disseminator of new cultural customs, a standard bearer of socialist competition, a pio-

21. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 15.12.1964.

22. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 26.12.1954.

neer of communist morality, and an indomitable fighter for the new”<sup>23</sup>. These features are also very important for considering the phenomenon of advanced Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia<sup>24</sup>. In fact, in many cases the leader’s role was crucial both when the kolkhoz was initially underdeveloped and made a leap forward to become advanced kolkhoz, and when the advanced kolkhoz turned into underdeveloped kolkhoz at some point<sup>25</sup>. For instance, in the case of the “Lenin” kolkhoz (Kazakhstan, Kyzyl-Orda Region), the basic causes of backwardness were the low level of production control, lack of improvement in selection, placement, and training of managers, and their low responsibility for work<sup>26</sup>.

Russian researcher Yu. Kostyashov in his book *Everyday Life of the Post-War Village: From the History of the Resettled Kolkhoz in the Kaliningrad Region (1946–1953)* analyzed 230 biographies of chairmen of the kolkhoz management committees (1946–1953) and identified 7 basic types of them (Kostyashov, 2015: 167–178):

1. drunkard — the most common leader type in the kolkhoz, who is always drunk, does not appear at general meetings, and mainly lies on the chair in the rural soviet;
2. accidental type: one who happens to get that position; even if one appeals to quit at each general meeting, one is re-appointed against one’s will;
3. desk-bound type: sits in the office and ‘leads’, never interacting with people or visiting the production site.

23. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 24.02.1967.

24. An article in the newspaper “Lenin’s Banner” (in the late 1960s) provides the following explanation of the success or failure of the kolkhoz project: “We have unwritten rules and customs. People evaluate the work of each kolkhoz by looking at its management committee chairman. In fact, that assessment is probably correct in nine out of ten cases. When kolkhozniki affectionately refer to “our chairman”, the kolkhoz is going well”. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 24.02.1967.

25. Most Korean advanced kolkhozes were underdeveloped at first and then turned into advanced in a relatively short period of time, but there were cases when the initially advanced kolkhoz later became underdeveloped. Representative examples of the latter are the “Avant-garde” in the Chili district and “Guangdong Commune” in the Keren-Ushak district (Kyzyl-Orda Region, Kazakhstan). The “Guangdong Commune” was previously an advanced kolkhoz but turned into underdeveloped after it was integrated with four neighboring kolkhozes in 1955 and Alexei Kim sent by the State Party Committee took office as chairman. Serious problems occurred, such as sharp decline in harvest, lack of discipline, poor accounting, non-payment of salaries, and financial losses. The “Lenin Banner” accused the district party and state party committees, saying that they selected and assigned management committee chairs based solely on their resumes. The members of the “Guangdong Commune” appointed Heo Semyeon, a livestock industry expert, the new chairman instead of Kim Alexei. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 26.02.1960.

26. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 18.04.1974.

4. self-provision type: blatant greedy individuals preoccupied with personal enrichment by stealing and expropriating the kolkhoz property;
5. organized-crime type: a gang of thieves, a variety of type (d); they appoint relatives and friends to key positions and work together to plunder the kolkhoz;
6. parachute type: leader who does not know much about agriculture but has connections with district or higher authorities and is often dispatched to cover up their misdeeds;
7. authoritarian leader: usually a former soldier or the World War II veteran, who exercises coercive power over collective farmers in an administrative-command rather than economic manner.

None of the seven types is ‘positive’ as a kolkhoz leader, all of them are negative. M. Beznin and T. Dimoni added the type “reproduction of kolkhoz dynasties’ in the book *Agrarian System of Russia*: the Dubrov family of Donbas and the Linkov family of the Volgoda Region each served as chairmen of the kolkhoz management committee for three generations in a row (Beznin, Dimoni, 2014: 222), which can be called “privatization of kolkhoz”. Such these negative types of leaders are often mentioned in works on the history of the Russian peasants’ mentality under the Soviet kolkhoz system. Obviously, with such leaders, collective farmers would not show a positive attitude toward the kolkhoz labour, and it would not achieve good economic performance. Furthermore, it would be difficult to expect moral behavior from kolkhozniki in their daily life. The fact that there was a significant number of these negative types of kolkhoz leaders throughout the Soviet history — the 1930s to the 1980s — is repeatedly confirmed by various materials and the testimonies of contemporaries. Even in the newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, one can find articles exposing and warning about the behavior of these negative types of leaders.

However, it would be misleading to generalize all Soviet kolkhoz leaders as negative types. In fact, in many rural areas of the Soviet Union, there were quite a few “honest and descent leaders”, “dedicated and leading by example”, “competent organizers” or “agricultural experts”. They showed record-breaking achievements in farming and animal husbandry by overcoming or bypassing various natural, institutional or human factors unfavorable for normal agricultural activities. Together with their foremen and assistants, they led the development and modernization of productive capacity in underdeveloped Soviet rural areas by awakening collective farmers’ enthusiasm and creativity. It can be said that they were innovators who strived to maximize advantages of the Soviet agricultural system and rural policy and to minimize their limitations and problems. Nevertheless, the Soviet regime did not succeed in the systematic national dissemination of good leaders’ experience, knowledge, enthusiasm and capabilities.

Unlike the kolkhoz leaders of the Kaliningrad Region after the war, leaders of the Central-Asian advanced Korean (millionaire) kolkhozes were not alcoholics — they were honest and did not steal communal property, they knew how to run an organization efficiently, had extensive experience and specialized knowledge in farming, they led informally, by example and in harmony with kolkhoz members, they were sincere in their kolkhoz and village community projects, they were overwhelmingly altruistic and devoted to villagers (Kim, 2011: 11). Above all, they knew how to solve the most vulnerable problem in the kolkhoz system — of motivating kolkhozniki to work<sup>27</sup>. Furthermore, they practiced socialist internationalism in rural areas in the multi-ethnic country.

In this research, these leaders are divided into four basic types as follows.

*Oriental virtuous leader with principles: “Polar Star” leader  
Kim Byung Hwa<sup>28</sup>*

Kim Byung Hwa was a former Red Army officer and Communist Party member, a Socialist Labor Hero (twice — in 1948 and 1951). He was elected as a deputy to the Supreme Council of the Uzbek Republic (1961). His leadership style was not authoritarian, he seemed to embody the Eastern proverb “Humble your body but raise your mind”. Although he had a peasant background, he seemed to have the dignity of a nobleman. He was culturally sophisticated, behaved humbly, was benevolent and frugal in private life. People who visited his home were amazed at his asceticism when they saw its simple furnishing (Vanin, 2006: 261). He was respected by all kolkhoz members by living a life of an ordinary kolkhoznik and by taking the same care of all kolkhoz members as of his own family<sup>29</sup>.

After Kim Byung Hwa took office as chairman of the management committee in 1940, he held a daily work meeting at 5 am to strengthen poor work discipline, which was one of the main reasons for the kolkhoz backwardness in social production. Instead of sitting in the office, he was in the fields with kolkhoz workers from sunrise to sunset, being engaged in farming all day long. As a leader, he worked with agricultural experts to identify the causes of low productivity and ensured that kolkhozniki’s working hours were accurately recorded for salary calculations. Kim Byung Hwa even distributed surplus production that exceeded the national payment plan equally among kolkhoz members. He refused any special treatment other than the chairman salary. Anyone could express their opinion on kolkhoz management

27. A. Chayanov believed that the success or failure of the kolkhoz depended on how leaders would motivate collective farmers to work.

28. See: Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 04.12.1964; Iskhakov, 1972.

29. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 24.02.1967.

to the chairman, and if a proposal was reasonable and constructive, there was no hesitation in accepting it at the executive committee, but he severely reprimanded kolkhoz members for lies or laziness.

Moreover, Kim Byung Hwa, who served as the kolkhoz leader for 34 years (1940–1974), did not appoint any family members or relatives to key positions. In selecting foremen (*brigadirs*) and assistants (*zvenievyyh*), on whose work the kolkhoz productivity directly depended, he followed the principle of meritocracy: “honest and sincere communist” was the main criteria. Even in his daily life, he did not allow himself or his family members to enjoy any preferential treatment. There is a famous anecdote that he forbade his wife to use kolkhoz vehicles when she went to the market. Therefore, it was no coincidence that he earned the trust of kolkhoz workers in a short period of time. Kim Byung Hwa was the first ideal leader of the advanced Korean kolkhoz in Central Asia.

*Entrepreneurial leader who looks ahead: Hwang Man Geum, leader of the “Politotdel”*

Hwang Man Geum, who served as the chairman of the management committee of “Politotdel” kolkhoz for more than 30 years (1954–1985), was famous not only in Uzbekistan but in the Soviet Union. Although he was a district agricultural manager, he wanted to become a leader of an underdeveloped kolkhoz. Before he became the chairman of the management committee, the “Politotdel” kolkhoz was among the poorest but not due to barren land, lack of agricultural machinery or workers. Despite snowy winters, rice and kenaf were still in the fields, and villagers held a drinking party. 30%–40% of kolkhoz members did not participate in collective labor even though they had the ability to work.

When Hwang Man Geum was elected the new chairman of the management committee in January 1954, the urgent task was to ensure work discipline. From his first day in office, he toured all kolkhoz plots and workshops one by one, holding meetings with enthusiasts. And early the next morning, he put on his work clothes and boots and headed to the rice threshing floor. In this way, he led by example and taught his workers, and they never left the work site. As a result, cotton harvest that previously had taken five months was completed in a month. Hwang Man Geum appointed capable and experienced people, including several socialist labor heroes, as work team leaders. Moreover, he took steps to reduce the overextended private gardens, and some workers dissatisfied with this step left the kolkhoz. In 1955, “Politotdel” was already among the advanced kolkhozes of the region.

Hwang Man Geum energetically aimed at rationalizing work organization on the principle of hiring for talent and ability, applying new farming technologies, introducing mechanization, and satisfying material needs of kolkhoz workers. As a result, the kolkhoz record-

ed the national highest yields in kenaf, cotton, and corn, and got additional profit in husbandry, greenhouses, and raising quails. Hwang Man Geum was a leader with an outstanding entrepreneurial temperament. He also deeply understood the interconnection of the improved productivity, high standard of living, social welfare, developed cultural and sports activities. His enthusiastic interest and support of the amateur art troupe of the “Politotdel” and sports activities, including the soccer team, made the kolkhoz reach the highest level in the Republic of Uzbekistan. He knew exactly what a kolkhoz near the capital city Tashkent needed to attract young people dreaming of a big city life. He also had excellent skills in establishing personal relationships, which helped him to get support of the high-ranking party and government leaders. As a socialist labour hero (1958), he was appointed a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek Republic and a member of the Central Committee of the Uzbek Communist Party, and also attended the General Assembly of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held in Moscow as an Uzbek representative<sup>30</sup>.

*Excellent organizer with a high level of education: Choi Ivan, leader of the “Pravda”*

Among the kolkhoz leaders of his time, not only in Central Asia but also in the Soviet Union, Choi Ivan was one of the very few who got the best education and had already had a career before taking office as a chairman of the management committee<sup>31</sup>. It was due to the socialist education system that he was able to get higher education. He was born in 1901 in the Primorsky Region and as a child of a poor farmer had to work as a hired hand for a wealthy farmer from the age of 14. In 1917, his family moved to Petrograd, the capital of the Russian Empire, in search of work, and the boy Ivan joined the Russian Revolution with a group of Koreans. Under the Soviet system in the 1920s, he graduated from the Plekhanov University of People’s Economics in Moscow. Until 1937, he continued his career in Sakhalin as a district party secretary and as the director of the large state company (Kim, 2021: 9–10). In 1937–1940, when the Stalinist regime’s oppressions was at its peak, Choi Ivan was imprisoned like other Korean leaders, but released as there was no evidence of a crime. After moving to Uzbekistan, Choi Ivan, who regained membership in the Communist Party, worked as the deputy manager of the “Pravda” kolkhoz and as a foreman of the animal breeding farm for eight years (from 1942). During his leadership as the chairman of the management committee (1950–1972), “Pravda” turned into one of the lead-

30. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 24.02.1967, 18.01.1973, 30.05.1975.

31. He was one of the very few Koreans in the early 20th century who spoke Russian fluently and without accent.

ing kolkhozes not only in the Tashkent Region but also in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Choi Ivan led “Pravda” to the top-level kolkhozes with his economic education, agricultural knowledge, leadership experience and extraordinary organizing skills. He began his service by visiting each worker’s house to learn about their personal circumstances, including careers, financial situation, relationships and major interests. After a few months, he learned the names of all workers. He had an amazing memory and often hung out with kolkhoz workers to listen to their life stories. He was always ready to listen to various requests of workers, not promising to solve any problem on the spot, but later he did his best to fulfill all requests, which was to prevent the negative experience of excessive expectations that would not come true.

As the kolkhoz leader, Choi Ivan was to ensure conditions that would allow the “Pravda” members to fully feel the advantages of social production rather than individual farms. This was determined by the fact that the productivity of the kolkhoz was low, and many kolkhoz workers were cultivating relatively large private gardens of 0.25 to 0.3 hectares. They took great care of their gardens, sometimes earning more from them than their official kolkhoz wages. Many workers were passive, saying that they had no choice but to work in kolkhoz not to lose their gardens (would be taken after leaving the kolkhoz). Therefore, in order for the kolkhoz to fulfill its social role, it was inevitable to reduce the size of gardens. Such a measure would certainly be unpopular, but after three months as the leader Choi Ivan suggested to the kolkhoz general meeting to reduce the size of gardens by half (0.12 ha for irrigation and 0.01 ha for construction = 0.13 ha) (Kim, 2021: 92–95)

It was not the coercive administrative-command control that allowed Choi Ivan to change the mentality and attitude of workers toward social production from his first year in the office. He chose a method of persuading, encouraging and inspiring workers with rational explanations based on scientific evidence. “Choi Ivan even knew how to accurately measure the depth of tillage in farmland plowed with a tractor. If the tillage work was not satisfactory, chairman Choi had the tractor driver do the tillage work again”. In that way, he taught people to work honestly and conscientiously.

Choi Ivan believed that changes in the workers’ attitudes should be achieved through voluntary participation rather than coercion, which would result in the strengthening work labor discipline. The management committee used the method of satisfying material needs of workers — rewarding for high achievements. In 1951, radios, gramophones, wristwatches and rubber boots were given as prizes, in 1956 — televisions worth 2,136 rubles, which had just begun to be distributed in rural areas and were considered luxury goods at the time (Kim, 2021: 100, 137).

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Choi Ivan promoted modernization of the village, forecasting the kolkhoz future. Before taking office as a chairman, he had already predicted an increase in electricity demand for production and everyday practices and raised a question of building a power plant. By the end of the 1950s, the village of “Pravda” had been transformed into a garden city with a developed system providing all material goods and social benefits. Certainly, it was not an isolated village for Koreans, but like other Korean advanced kolkhozes, it was a multi-ethnic friendly community.

*Communist-pragmatist agricultural expert: “Lenin’s Road” leader  
Um Terenty*

“Lenin’s Road” kolkhoz, located in the Upper-Chirchik district, Tashkent Region, Uzbekistan, was an example of a leap from an underdeveloped to an advanced kolkhoz in just 10 years since the early 1960s. Until 1962, it was very underdeveloped, which is why many kolkhoz members left it with their families. At that time, Um Terenty, who had been the secretary of the primary Party Committee and vice-chairman of the management committee in the neighboring “Sverdlov” kolkhoz for about eight years, was elected chairman of the management committee of the “Lenin’s Road” kolkhoz on the recommendation of the Tashkent Party Committee. The new chairman understood that the kolkhoz would not be run properly without strengthening its material and technical foundation and improving welfare and cultural conditions of kolkhoz members. First, he equipped the kolkhoz with advanced agricultural machinery, while mobilizing funds to construct public buildings and housing. He devoted himself to appointing executives to the right positions and improving the culture and welfare of kolkhoz members. As a result, this kolkhoz, having been stagnant for a long time, began to develop. Based on the farming results of 1962, when the new chairman was elected, kolkhoz was already strengthened economically, and its members began to improve their lives<sup>32</sup>.

Um Terenty clearly recognized that the improvement of farming technologies was a decisive factor in the kolkhoz economic growth. Thereby, he started land improvement and crop rotation, organized crop crews to ensure the rational use of precious irrigated lands, and carried out regular inspections. As a result, in 1969, the kolkhoz showed high yield rates — 150 centners of kenaf, 28 centners of cotton, and 50 centners of rice per hectare. In addition, the “Lenin’s Road” kolkhoz built a fish farm to supply its workers and earned an additional income of 20,000 rubles per year<sup>33</sup>.

There were many other great leaders who turned ordinary or underdeveloped kolkhozes into advanced ones. Park Jong Heup

32. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 17.05.1973.

33. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 14.12.1968.

from Uzbekistan, Choi Sergei and Um Timofei from the “Northern Lighthouse”, Shin Jong Jik from “Dimitrov”, Kim Vladimir from the “Lenin”, Kim Dmitry from the “Sverdlov”, Kim Ha-Un<sup>34</sup> from the “Pravda” in the Namangan district, Kim Alexei from the “Communism” in the Gurlen district of the Khorezm Province, Kim Viktor from the “Akkul” in the Jambul Region, and Chae Jeong Hak from “The 3rd International” in the Karmakchi district in the Kyzyl-Orda Region of Kazakhstan, etc. These leaders of the advanced Korean kolkhozes developed agriculture based on technologies: irrigation, land improvement, correct crop rotation, intensification of agriculture, introduction of scientific achievements and advanced experiences, comprehensive mechanization and chemicalization. However leaders also relied on interested peasants and organizational aspects: strengthening work discipline through improved labor organization, providing material and other preferential treatment for kolkhoz workers, improvement of kolkhoz management and productivity for profitability. All successful leaders combined personal and social interests successfully<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, kolkhoz members usually called their kolkhoz “our kolkhoz” and its leader — “our chairman”. Such leaders of the advanced Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia had been in power for at least 10 to 30 years, ensuring the political and administrative support from regional parties and local governments in addition to the support of their kolkhozniki.

### **Homogeneous workforce, efficient labor organization, and rational farming**

The success of the advanced Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia was determined by the labor of dedicated workers. The majority of Koreans, famous as “hard-working”, did not know how to lounge in the field. They devoted their body and soul to work in the fields and barns from sunrise to sunset for their survival and for prosperity of their children. The outstanding diligence of Koreans was explained primarily by their attachment to land — the majority of them were from the northern mountainous region of the Korean Peninsula with small farmland. Before moving to Central Asia, they shared the experience of suffering from the exploitation of the landlord class and from the tyranny of rich farmers as tenants or landless peasants. Thereby,

34. Kim Ha Un served as the “Pravda” management committee chairman for 10 years (from 1960) and turned an underdeveloped farm to an advanced one. He was called “a man who does not know how to sleep at night”. An article in the newspaper “Lenin’s Banner” described “the village of kolkhoz, surrounded by street and fruit trees, as resembling a resort”. “Lenin’s Banner”, 08.10.1969.

35. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 28.05.1955; 09.09.1955; 24.02.1964.

they were a very homogeneous workforce, accustomed to agriculture, with poor peasant background or with a background as revolutionary partisans, which Chayanov mentioned as one of the factors for the kolkhoz success (Chayanov, 1972). After the integration of small kolkhozes, other ethnic groups in Central Asia (Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Russians, Tatars, etc.) were relatively smoothly included into the homogeneous Korean workforce.

Certainly, the expansion of farmland through the integration of small farms in the 1950s — 1960s and the transfer of MTS agricultural machinery to kolkhozes in 1958 was a great opportunity for development of advanced Korean kolkhozes<sup>36</sup>, but such an expansion was typical for the whole Soviet Union, and what is important is how advanced Korean kolkhozes took advantage of the benefits of such policies and managed to minimize their problems. In general, the most basic factors that determined the success or failure of the Soviet kolkhoz were the management committee chairman's abilities as an organizer and his dedication to the community. However, especially after the consolidation measures of the 1950s, it was virtually impossible for the chairman to effectively manage large multi-sectoral farms and villages on his own. Although the kolkhoz management committee and party organizations assisted him, the specific mechanism that ensured his leadership was the labor organization at the production site. "Properly organized work was the foundation of success" (Iskhakov, 1972: 44) Therefore, an efficient labor organization needed a competent and conscientious foremen (*brigadir*) and assistant (*zvenievoy*) to improve work discipline and economic productivity through introduction of advanced experience, scientific technologies, and mechanization to achieve high results in all agricultural and construction sectors.

Another necessary factor was the relatively equal distribution of the kolkhoz income. To overcome workers' indifference and encourage their enthusiasm, it was first necessary to show that the fruits of labor would be distributed fairly: for kolkhoz members, satisfying their material needs would be the most persuasive motive for participating in kolkhoz production activities. Mechanical equalization was avoided in the kolkhoz workers' payment, but extreme disparities (such as the difference between top executives and ordinary employees in capitalist enterprises) were also unacceptable.

In terms of organization, kolkhoz's production unit consisted of branch/work groups/teams. After the consolidation in the 1950s — 1960s, small farms were reorganized into branches of integrated large

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36. Hwang Man Geum, the chairman of the management committee of the advanced Korean kolkhoz "Politotdel", summarized the factors of its success as follows: dedicated work, thoughtful labor organization, mechanization, scientific farming, selection of highly profitable crops, and international cooperation.

farms. Representatives of small farms were appointed branch heads, or new people became work-group leaders. Therefore, an appointing of a conscientious, competent and experienced foreman could in fact determine the final yield and total income of the farm. As the leader of the production unit, the foreman was to be an excellent organizer and to have extensive agricultural knowledge (about soil, fertilizers, agricultural machinery and livestock)<sup>37</sup>. The management committee chairs of the Korean advanced kolkhozes adopted the common principle of selecting talents when appointing work leaders (Iskhakov, 1972: 46–47). On the contrary, the problem of underdeveloped kolkhozes was that incompetent people were usually appointed foremen or assistants due to their connections with the chairman. In the selection, placement and training of mid-level executives, the “Politotdel” used a procedure in which the management and party committees reconsidered executives and comprehensively evaluated and approved all new candidates<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, mid-level executives at advanced Korean kolkhozes had a high level of education and regularly took advanced training courses.

Many kolkhoz workers with record harvests in rice, cotton, kenaf, corn and livestock sectors (many were awarded the title of the Socialist Labor Hero) were foremen or assistants like Kim Man Sam and Kim Seung Hak<sup>39</sup>, heads of the rice cultivation work group of the “Avant-garde” in Kazakhstan, Lee Lyubov, head of the corn cultivation work group of the “Politotdel” in Uzbekistan, and its branch manager Jeong Valery, Kang Oh Nam<sup>40</sup>, head of the cotton cultivation work group of the “Engels” — they all were work group leaders, became socialist labor heroes and received the Order of the Labor Red Flag, which made them as famous as their management committee chairmen. Among them, the corn work group headed by Lee Lyubov of the “Politotdel” achieved the best results in the Soviet Union in 1961 by harvesting 1,967 centners of corn (stalks and fruits) per hectare (the average was 1,850), which was higher than of agricultural enterprises in capitalist countries. The high yield of corn increased the quantity and quality of livestock feed, so the “Politotdel” was able to overcome the backwardness of its livestock sector in a short period of time and produce a lot of milk and meat. Lee Lyubov summarized 9 secrets to get the highest corn yield (Hwang, 1962: 3–5, 57). As the head of the “Politotdel” branch, Jeong Valery took measures to improve labor organization and work discipline, providing material and other preferential treatment to the kolkhoz workers. He turned an un-

37. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 31.01.1970.

38. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 31.03.1979.

39. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 31.01.1970; 10.02.1970.

40. Kang Oh Nam, who was born in 1926 in a poor family in the Far East, received the title of the Socialist Labor Hero in 1976 for the record cotton yield of 57.4 centners per hectare.

derdeveloped branch into an advanced one in a relatively short period of time, and earned 3 million rubles for his branch alone<sup>41</sup>.

In terms of farming technology, irrigation, land improvement and intensive agriculture methods had fundamental importance for productivity of the advanced Korean kolkhozes (Khvan, 1962: 13). From the very beginning, it was extremely important to dry out swamps and improve wastelands to make land suitable for farming, providing an adequate supply of water in dry areas of Central Asia, where rainfall is much less than on the Korean Peninsula or in the Primorsky krai, as kolkhozes cultivated not only rice but also cotton, corn, alfalfa and vegetables. In addition, the Soviet kolkhoz was a large farm of thousands of hectares, and Koreans cultivated rice, so irrigation experts were considered a very important profession in agriculture. For example, in the early 1960s, in the “Polar Star”, each work group had a permanent group 8-10 irrigation experts<sup>42</sup>.

On the other hand, the “Politotdel” introduced a crop rotation system in 1954. The main crops were cotton, kenaf, corn and rice; alfalfa as forage was cultivated in some areas. After several years of experiments, kolkhoz leaders concluded that “the unscientific pasture rotation system had been ineffective for a long time”. Advocates of pasture rotation argued that land could only be improved by growing perennial grasses on at least one third of farmland, but alfalfa required 1.5 to 2 times more moisture than cotton. Therefore, the “Politotdel” achieved much higher yields with a “centralized agricultural system” without growing grass in cotton, kenaf and corn fields (Hwang, 1962: 18–19, 26). Moreover, extensive mechanization of production and scientific farming have become the main methods for increasing productivity since the 1950s. The expansion of the cultivated area promoted mechanization and facilitated it. For example, the farm size of the “Polar Star” in 1938 was 128 hectares, but in 1954 it increased to 3,235 hectares, of which the sowing area accounted for 2,454 hectares (Iskhakov, 1972: 22). The “Polar Star”, whose main crop was the most labor intensive cotton, mechanized almost all production except weeding in the late 1960s. As a result, an average annual labor productivity increase was almost 20% for three years. In his book, Hwang Man Geum, the chairman of the management committee, evaluates very positively the integration of small farms from 1951 and 1963 and the transfer of agricultural machinery from MTS<sup>43</sup> to kolkhozes in 1958. With such measures, the more rational use of land, water and machinery became possible: labor costs per land area and production costs decreased, while the yield of crops and livestock increased. In other words, the expansion of pastures and increased

41. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 06.09.1979.

42. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 01.10.1963.

43. See positive assessments of the initial role of the MTS in: Kondrashin, Mozokhin, 2017.

feed allowed small livestock farms to develop into large ones and them into huge livestock complexes (Hwang, 1977: 18–19).

In the 1960s, under the widespread mechanization, a new form of labor organization called mechanized sub-teams developed. The “3rd International” kolkhoz in the Karmakchi district of the Kyzyl-Orda Region in Kazakhstan was the first to start mechanization of rice cultivation: 30% of machine harvesting in 1959, 70% in 1960, and from 1962 — 100%. The “3rd International” first introduced the mechanized rice-cultivation sub-teams in 1964, following the experience of the Krasnodar Region rice growers. The sub-team consisted of 5 (tractor/combine/car drivers and irrigation experts) to 7–9 people (4–5 mechanics). In 1965, the number of mechanized sub-teams increased to 9, and they were allocated 1,300 hectares, with each sub-team receiving 120–180 hectares. Sub-teams were equipped with 4–5 tractors, mineral fertilizer spreaders, seed drills, rolling machines, rice harvesting machines, combines and other machines, and carried out all types of work — plowing, sowing, watering and harvesting. The wages of sub-team members depended on the area of rice field, the amount of grain produced, etc., and additional money were paid for the produce above the planned indicators<sup>44</sup>. In 1980, the 4th working group of the “3rd International” (leader Kim Ryon Gun) achieved the high average harvest of 64 centners per hectare from 500 hectares of rice fields. The factors that led to such a result were as follows: allocation of agricultural machinery and fertilizers to the work group, use of chemical fertilizers and herbicides, and activities of conscientious irrigation experts (one was able to accurately manage 2–3 hectares of cultivated land), etc. In addition, the shift from the daily work system to the monthly wage system (later was changed back to the piece-work wage system), also played an important stimulating role<sup>45</sup>.

Advanced Korean kolkhozes, especially in Uzbekistan, gradually reduced the share of traditional rice farming on their arable land and intensively cultivated more profitable cotton and kenaf. As rice was a traditional staple food for East Asians, there were limits to the expansion of its demand in Central Asia and the Soviet Union, in which wheat and meat were staple foods. Cotton and kenaf were in high demand as industrial crops, and their selling prices were high, making them profitable crops for kolkhoz peasants. Since the 1960s, double cropping also contributed significantly to the increased grain production. By growing corn in the fields where wheat was harvested, it was possible to produce additional corn for the livestock industry<sup>46</sup>.

In the late 1950s — early 1960s, advanced Korean kolkhozes introduced a separate accounting system<sup>47</sup> which implied a specific ar-

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44. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 17.02.1965.

45. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 31.10.1980.

46. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 08.05.1964.

47. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 01.01.1960.

rangement of means of production and labor for each unit (work units, livestock sheds, auto repair shops and construction sites) with guidance and support from the management committee to help the production units to use them (means of production and labor) freely or rationally. In the “Polar Star” led by Kim Byung Hwa, the population of five branches in the early 1970s was about 6,000 and the number of workers — about 1,700. These five branches were organized as independent production sectors with separate accounting systems, fields (divided farmland), agricultural machinery, livestock, buildings, etc. In addition, a council (soviet) was organized for each branch’s working group, and councils resolved all problems in production and social life. Thus, it was easier for the kolkhoz management committee to operate production and improve productivity, i.e., there was no need to repeat the inefficient practice of gathering production leaders at the kolkhoz central village management committee office every day for assigning work tasks<sup>48</sup>.

### **The struggle for recognition of a “legitimate Soviet citizen”**

In his book *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), G. W.F. Hegel defined the theory of recognition as an important part in the development of the human spirit: all conflicts between humans stem from the desire to be recognized, and self-identity is a result of the satisfied desire for recognition. According to A. Honneth, who developed Hegel’s theory, recognition is a social condition that allows us to successfully realize our lives and a psychological condition that allows to find positive self-consciousness; recognition struggle is a moral affair that continues until mutual recognition is reached (Honneth, 2011).

Koreans who immigrated to Central Asia desperately needed to be recognized politically as legitimate citizens of their new homeland — the Soviet Union, because just before the forced relocation from the Primorsky Region in 1937, numerous Korean leaders were arrested or executed on charges of being nationalists or “spies of the Japanese Empire”. Among them were quite a few partisans who fought for the Soviet power against the White Army and Japanese imperialists in the Far East. The charges of the Stalinist regime were not applicable to most Koreans, but they still had to prove that they were “loyal Soviet people”. At that time, the only way for Koreans to avoid the status of “subversive minority” was non-political — in economy, education, culture, sports or army. From the late 1930s to the 1950s, Koreans achieved record agricultural and livestock produce by combining superhuman labor, efficient labor organization and creative farming technologies, since they aimed at and responded to the national economic policy and improved their standard of living. Howev-

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48. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 02.03.1971.

er, they also had a strong psychological desire to be recognized politically by the Soviet authorities and socially by natives by achieving higher economic performance than any other ethnic group.

The amazing agricultural achievements of Koreans were recognized by the Soviet authorities with various awards and plaques, including the title of the Socialist Labor Hero, the Order of Lenin and the Stalin Prize. Several chairs of the advanced kolkhoz management committees or work group leaders were elected delegates to the Supreme Council of People’s Deputies of republics or the Soviet Union, which provided them with political honor and social influence. The first Korean to be awarded for his record-breaking harvest was Kim Man Sam, head of the rice cultivation sub-team of the “Avant-garde” kolkhoz: he broke the record of 150 centners per hectare of rice in 1942 and 160 centners in 1943 and received the Stalin Prize in 1946<sup>49</sup>. Kim Man Sam’s record rice yield of 15,000-16,000 kg per hectare was a new world record.<sup>50</sup> In 1968, the total number of the Socialist Labour Heroes in Kazakhstan was 1,347, of which 66 were Koreans. All of them were recognized for their outstanding agricultural achievements: 10 management committee chairs, 12 work group leaders, 23 sub-team leaders, 15 team members, and the rest were combiners, chief agricultural engineers, a senior horse breeder, a sovkhoz director, and a chief agricultural engineer at the MTS, etc.<sup>51</sup> In September 1970, 33 Koreans working in the agricultural sector of the Republic of Kazakhstan were awarded the title of the Socialist Labour Hero<sup>52</sup>.

In Uzbekistan, an agricultural country, many more Koreans received national awards, including the title of the Socialist Labor Hero. In the “Polar Star” kolkhoz, 9 people, including its leader Kim Byung Hwa, were awarded the title of the Socialist Labor Hero in 1948<sup>53</sup>. In this kolkhoz, the number of the Socialist Labor Heroes in 1950 reached 16, and about 270 people received various awards and plaques, including the Lenin Medal<sup>54</sup>. In 1960, 25 members of the “Polar Star” received the title of the Socialist Labour Hero, 75 — the Order of

49. Kim Man Sam received the Stalin Prize together with his student Ibrai Sahayeb. The highest yield recorded by Sahayeb in 1945 was 156.5 centners per hectare: “Lenin’s Banner”, 03.07.1946. The newspaper “Lenin’s Banner” published 10 articles about Kim Man Sam and the “Avant-garde” kolkhoz from 1946 to 1948.

50. Korea’s rice harvest from 1953 to 1955 was only 1,800 kg (1.8 tons) per hectare. In 1970, only 3,980 kg (3.98 tons) of regular rice (Japonica) and 5,130 kg (5.13 tons) of Tongil, high-yielding rice were produced. Surprisingly, according to the statistical data of Korea’s Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in November 2005, 80 years after Kim Man Sam’s record, Korea’s rice production was 6,627 kg per hectare, and the world’s highest rice yield was 10,071 kg per hectare (in Australia): “JoongAng Ilbo”, 27.11.2005.

51. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 26.03.1968.

52. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 06.10.1970.

53. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 30.04.1948; 18.06.1949.

54. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 27.09.1950.

Lenin, 105 — the Red Flag Medal for Labor, and 400 people in total received various awards. Kim Byung Hwa, who served as the chairman of the “Polar Star” management committee for 20 years, was awarded the Socialist Labour Hero twice and received three Orders of Lenin, one Red Flag Medal for Labor, one Order of Honor and a medal. He was elected a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek Republic, and his kolkhoz’s name was changed from the “Polar Star” to “Kim Byung Hwa”. Thousands of people gathered at the unveiling ceremony of the statue of Kim Byung Hwa, which was erected to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the start of his work as the kolkhoz leader<sup>55</sup>.

In 1949, just two years after the organization of the “Mikoyan” kolkhoz in the Lower-Chirchik district of the Tashkent Region, four kolkhoz members were awarded the title of the Socialist Labour Hero, and 29 members — medals and plaques for great achievements in kenaf cultivation<sup>56</sup>. In 1950, the first year that Choi Ivan took office as the chairman of the management committee of the “Pravda” kolkhoz, 8 out of its 197 workers were awarded the title of the Socialist Labour Hero, and three years later, in 1957, also Choi Ivan and 12 other workers (Kim, 2021: 100–101, 108). Hwang Man Geum from the “Politotdel” kolkhoz also received the title of the Socialist Labour Hero in 1957, just three years after taking office as the chairman. The “Politotdel” which enjoyed its heyday in the 1960s–1970s was visited by Khrushchev (1961), Brezhnev (1970) and foreign dignitaries visiting the Soviet Union. From 1948 to 1957, 130 Koreans who worked in agriculture in Uzbekistan were awarded the title of the Socialist Labour Hero, and 70 were from three kolkhozes in the Tashkent Region — “Polar Star”, “Sverdlov” and “Dimitrov”. From 1948 to 1976, the number of the Socialist Labor Heroes in the Central Asian Korean community reached 206 (Kim, 2021: 5–6; Shin, 2021: 523).

The Great Patriotic War was a time of severe trials for Korean peasants in Central Asia. Young men, the mainstay of the kolkhoz workforce, went to the front; vehicles (trucks), horses and metal for making weapons were requisitioned; the food provision for the front was added. Kolkhoz struggled to survive under the total absence of everything. On the other hand, the war was considered a good opportunity for Koreans to prove that they were “loyal Soviet people”. Young men volunteered to the Red Army, but Koreans had not yet got rid of the stigma of being “subversive” and could not officially join the Red Army, except for a very few who changed their last name in documents as if they were of a different ethnicity, while the remaining Korean men joined the Labor Army. The only way left for Koreans was to voluntarily provide large quantities of military supplies. Kim Man Sam, the head of the sub-team in the “Avant-garde” kolk-

55. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 04.01.1961.

56. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 08.12.1950.

hoz in Kazakhstan, donated 105,000 rubles to the Red Army’s tank production fund in 1941<sup>57</sup>. He was awarded the Order of Merit for Effort (1945), the Stalin Prize (1946) and the title of the Socialist Labour Hero (1949) for the world record in rice yield. In 1943, all members of the “Polar Star” raised over 2.2 million rubles for the production of airplanes for the Red Army. Kim Byung Hwa, the chairman of the management committee, also donated 100,000 rubles. In the first year of the war, 75 men from the “Politotdel” donated more than 500,000 rubles to produce airplanes and 350,000 rubles to make a tank unit (Hwang, 1977: 16–17). In 1943, five Korean kolkhozes in the Tashkent Region, including “Polar Star”, “Lenin”, “Pravda”, “Sverdlov”, and “Northern Lighthouse”, donated 6 million rubles and 695 gift packages to the Soviet Army. As in 1945 the average salary of the worker was about 500 rubles, the bomber cost 265,000 rubles and the tank — 142,000 rubles, 6 million rubles were enough to make two T-34 tank regiments (Kim, 2021: 88).

On the other hand, being immigrants, in addition to solving the problem of physical survival, one of the first tasks undertaken was to build a school building for the children’s generation. Koreans have traditionally attached great importance to education in terms of individual development, family legacy and social enlightenment. Education was Koreans’ second weapon after agriculture in their recognition struggle. All advanced Korean kolkhozes had decent school buildings and excellent teachers. In Central Asia, where nomadic traditions were strong and modern educational institutions were not widespread, Koreans were known as “the people of farming and education”. It is no coincidence that by the late 1970s, Koreans were one of the most educated peoples in the Central-Asian republics.

The first generation of Korean immigrants desperately hoped that education would help their children succeed in every profession and live proudly as recognized citizens of their socialist homeland. Thereby, the advanced Korean kolkhozes opened a 7-year or 10-year schools with their own funds and did not spare any support — from educational equipment for students to the facilities of youth camps. According to the article in the “Lenin’s Banner”, in the late 1940s (ten years after Koreans had settled in Uzbekistan and begun farming), the 7-year compulsory education became a reality in the kolkhoz village of the “Polar Star”. Teachers of this kolkhoz school were intellectuals who got professional education at universities in Moscow, Leningrad, Kyzyl-Orda and Tashkent. Fifty graduates of the school got higher education in cities of Central Asia, Russia and Ukraine<sup>58</sup>. Some of them returned to their villages and worked as agricultural instructors, engineers, teachers, doctors, etc. Graduates who stayed

57. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 01.01.1947; 20.01.1953.

58. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 18.06.1949.

in the city remembered and thanked their kolkhoz for giving them the opportunity to get higher education.

The “Mikoyan” kolkhoz organized in 1947 opened a 7-year school in September 1950<sup>59</sup>. In the 1960s — 1970s, among the graduates of the school No. 16 in the “Pravda” kolkhoz, 80% entered universities (Kim, 2021: 6), like in other advanced Korean kolkhozes. The “Sverdlov” kolkhoz secondary school No. 33 turned into a prestigious school, and students from nearby kolkhozes came to study here, and at its peak, the number of students reached 1,500. In 1970, there were about 4,000 students at schools affiliated with the “Politotdel”. Moreover, 200 rubles were paid annually to 13 kindergartens for each child attending from morning to evening, which completely solved the problem of pre-school child care and school education<sup>60</sup>.

Finally, an interesting fact is that the leadership of the Central-Asian Korean advanced kolkhozes realized early in that the expansion of daycare centers and kindergartens was necessary to increase the female workforce, and began their construction, since many young women could not participate in production due to taking care of their children. Therefore, it was considered the kolkhoz responsibility to provide daycare centers with decent building, toys, food and qualified caregivers. In the summer of 1954, in the new two-story kindergarten of the “Polar Star”, 150 children stayed from 7 am to 9 pm<sup>61</sup>, and in 1964, about 600 women were engaged in various work activities<sup>62</sup>.

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59. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 08.12.1950.

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61. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 01.06.1954.

62. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 03.06.1964.

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### **Потерянный рай: феномен «советско-корейских передовых колхозов» в Средней Азии**

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**Аннотация.** В истории советских колхозных исследований «феномен передового колхоза (колхоза-миллионера)» остается почти неисследованным, хотя это был заметный социально-экономический феноменом. Члены корейских передовых колхозов Средней Азии, существовавших с конца 1930-х по 1980-е годы, сначала адаптировались к колхозной системе посредством самоотверженного труда, а затем активно создавали социально-культурные институты внутри колхозной системы для общего блага не только этнических корейцев, но и коренного населения. В региональном масштабе подавляющее большинство «корейских передовых колхозов», в том числе легендарные «Полярная звезда» и «Политотель», действовали в Узбекистане, реже в Казахстане. Видимо, корейские передовые колхозы Средней Азии достигли пика сельскохозяйственного социалистического развития советского типа в 1960-е — 1970-е годы. Эти богатые корейские колхозы создали сильную социальную инфраструктуру и заложили основу современной живой культуры. Местные общие ресурсы были созданы ими за счет своих богатых неделимых фондов, потребительских и культурных фондов. Корейские колхозы-миллионеры не только обеспечили деревне прекрасную материально-техническую базу типа города-сад, основанную на высоких экономических показателях, но и жили в гармоничной многонациональной общине, пользуясь различными социальными благами городского типа.

**Ключевые слова:** советско-корейские передовые колхозы в Средней Азии, компетентный и самоотверженный руководитель, эффективная организация труда, колхозный город-сад, многонациональная дружественная община