John Crump
Anarchism and Nationalism in East Asia
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> learn lessons in viable self-management from the history of the Korean anarchist movement. (Lee, 1994)

Such developments may, indeed, be encouraging but they need to be free of the nationalism which has influenced so many Korean anarchists over so many years.

In this regard, one final point can be made about relations between Japanese and Korean anarchists. For geographical and linguistic reasons, it is the Japanese anarchists who in the postwar period have been best placed to speak out against some of the negative features of Korean anarchism. Ironically, why they have not done so is due to the continuing legacy of Japanese imperialism. The brutality of colonial domination so poisoned relations between Japan and Korea that Japanese anarchists have mostly been inhibited from criticising the Korean anarchist movement, for fear of being accused of lingering cultural imperialism. It is no coincidence that the most forthright criticism of Korean anarchism that I have seen in Japanese comes from the pen of Song Se-Ha, a member of the Korean minority in Japan, who was therefore uninhibited in assessing the shortcomings of the Korean movement. Song wrote: 'I would even go so far as to say that the Korean anarchist movement derived from nationalism and degenerated due to nationalism' (Song, 1968, p. 16). Apart from such exceptional voices as this, it is the general reluctance of anarchists elsewhere in East Asia to criticise Korean anarchism which explains why it falls to someone living on the other side of the world to make these criticisms of a faraway movement. Prior to 1987, when the anarchists in Korea were confronted by a state which regularly plumbed the depths of viciousness, it was difficult for those of us enjoying the relative luxury of liberal democratic oppression to voice misgivings about their strategy. However, since 1987 repression in Korea has been somewhat eased. Under these circumstances it would be doing the Korean anarchists no favours at all to suppress one's criticisms any longer.

Abstract

In contrast to anarchism in Japan and China, anarchism in Korea has been notable for the extent to which it has been permeated by nationalism and also for the Korean anarchists' readiness over many years to engage in conventional politics. The immediate reasons for these peculiarities of Korean anarchism would seem to lie in Korea's colonial subjugation by Japan from 1910 to 1945 and the division of the country after 1945. It is argued that, under the conditions which can occur in a 'Third World', anti-colonial setting, it is the emphasis which anarchism lays on decentralisation and local autonomy, important though these attributes are, which exposes it to the danger of degenerating into nationalism. On the other hand, it is further argued that anarchism is also equipped with principles which, if the danger is sufficiently recognised, can be invoked so as to safeguard anarchism from nationalist degeneration.

Introduction

The background to this article was the publishing of Ha Ki-Rak's *A History of Korean Anarchist Movement* (Taegu: Anarchist Publishing Committee, 1986). Ha is a prominent Korean anarchist and when I obtained a copy of his book in 1987 I approached it with keen anticipation as the first full-length study in a Western language of a little known anarchist movement by one of that movement's chief participants. The contents of the book were something of a shock, however. Here was a movement which in the prewar period, when Korea was a Japanese colony, had attempted, in the name of anarchism, to organise an administration to manage the affairs of the considerable Korean population then living in Manchuria (and hence beyond the direct control of the Japanese authorities). The setting up of this administration was justified by

reference to the contradictory (and possibly Taoist) formula 'a government of non-governing'. Thus it was asserted:

> This is the very organisation that guarantees [the] 'by the people, of the people' principle and non-rule, non-authoritarianism, non-exploitation. And it is non-government in that meaning. Paradoxically speaking it is 'a government of non-governing.' Non-government means non-rule and non-exploitation, and government means the social management of human lives by the people themselves, namely independent self-government. Therefore, there is no contradiction between the two conceptions of non-government and government. (Ha, 1986, p.81)[1]

During the course of the subsequent Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) the Provisional Korean Government in exile, which had been declared in Shanghai in 1919, moved in 1940 to Chongqing, where the Guomindang leader Chiang Kai-Shek had established his wartime capital. Not only were Yu Ja-Myeong of the Korean Federation of Revolutionaries and Yu Rim of the Korean Anarchist Federation elected to the Provisional Parliament, which met in Chongqing, but the latter was also appointed to the Cabinet of the Provisional Government (Ha, 1986, pp. 112–13).

After the end of the Second World War and the dismembering of Japan's empire, a nationwide anarchist conference was held at Anui in South Kyongsang Province in April 1946. The second day of this three-day conference was given over to a discussion on the desirability of establishing an all-Korea government. The outcome

[1] Here and elsewhere obvious typographical errors or lapses in English usage have been corrected, while ensuring that no change is made to the intended meaning. Ha and other writers quoted are obviously not native speakers of English and their use of the language is therefore sometimes faulty and in need of correction.

of the time have steadfastly rejected nationalism is that anarchism is supplied with other principles besides decentralisation and a commitment to local autonomy: principles which have a global reach and apply universally. The most important of these principles is the belief that all people everywhere, irrespective of so-called nationality, have the capacity to live cooperatively without recourse to the state. If applied consistently, principles such as this can safeguard anarchism from degenerating into nationalism.

However, for this to work effectively, anarchists need to be alert to the danger posed by localism when it is not sufficiently balanced by other anarchist principles which apply universally. Anarchists therefore need to be vigilant against any weakening of their own or others' commitment to these universal principles. This has not always been the case. Most anarchists were shocked by Kropotkin's rallying to the war effort in 1914 precisely because for years prior to the First World War they had ignored signs of incipient nationalism in his ideas (Miller, 1976, pp.225–32). Similarly, most anarchists outside Korea would find no less shocking the long-standing flirtation of many Korean anarchists with nationalism and conventional politics. For the reasons outlined above, it is necessary to speak out against these trends in Korean anarchism and to support those anarchists in Korea who have resisted such tendencies. Lee Mun-Chang has summarised the situation in postwar Korean anarchism as follows:

> In the Korean anarchist movement since 1945, there have been two trends, the one political and the other popular. The popular activities have mainly centred on enlightening the consciousness of the masses in the direction of libertarian ideas and exercising direct democracy in the community from the bottom up… It is interesting to see some signs recently among educated young individuals or groups who are trying to

vertible into goals such as putting power into Korean hands and achieving national independence.

Can any general conclusions about anarchism be drawn from a case such as Korea, which is in many ways atypical? Certainly we need to be aware of the fact that, among those countries which have produced an anarchist movement of any significance, Korea is virtually unique in its experience of colonisation. A glance through any of the standard tomes on the subject (Woodcock, 1963; Joll, 1979; Marshall, 1993) shows that anarchism has rarely taken root in 'Third World', colonial territories. Maybe this is a source of regret to anarchists, hut the Korean case does raise the possibility that, had anarchism made much headway in the 'Third World', its history might have been marked by many more examples of movements succumbing to nationalism, hankering after government and participating in conventional politics.

The conclusion reached by this article is that it is anarchism's emphasis on decentralisation and local autonomy that, particularly in a 'Third World' setting, induces its vulnerability to nationalist and statist deformity. To argue so is not to denigrate these important features of anarchism. Autonomous control by local communities of the decisions which affect their collective well-being is a vital ingredient of a society which seeks to transcend both the coercive power of the state and the alienating influence of uncontrollable market forces. It remains the case, however, that pure, unqualified localism is a blank cheque for divisiveness, prejudice and selfishness. In that sense, localism can be seen as merely a different point on the same spectrum which includes nationalism, so it is hardly surprising that, under the conditions which may prevail in a 'Third World' country, it can facilitate a slide towards nationalism.

It is not the purpose of this article to exaggerate anarchism's weakness in this regard. In the main, anarchism has an honourable record of resisting nationalism even at times when the ideologues of nation-states have done their utmost to swing anarchists behind sordid national interests. The reason why most anarchists for most

was that the conference unanimously adopted a statement which declared in part: 'We [will] do our best to establish an autonomous and democratic united government for our independent fatherland' (Ha, 1986, p. 143). Less than three months after this conference took place, many anarchists cooperated to form the Independent Workers' and Farmers' Party, whose founding meeting was held on 7 July 1946. The first item in the list of basic policies of the Independent Workers' and Farmers' Party read: 'We [will] establish a democratic constitutional government that will secure equality, liberty and happiness for the people' (Ha, 1986, p.147).

Peter Marshall has described the Korean anarchist movement as 'still … somewhat nationalist and reformist' (Marshall, 1993, p.528) but this is mild criticism of a movement which, in many respects, appears to have flouted the basic principles of anarchism. It is true that neither anarchists in general, nor Korean anarchists in particular, have been alone in compromising principles. Throughout the world there have been numerous instances of self-styled liberals acting in decidedly illiberal fashions, just as countless self-declared Marxists have wielded power in ways which would have made Karl Marx's blood run cold. Hence the fact that some anarchists have in practice departed from the theoretical principles on which anarchism is supposed to be based is perhaps unsurprising and should be kept in perspective. Similarly, it would be quite unfair to focus on the shortcomings of Korean anarchism and remain silent about the failings of anarchists in other parts of the world. To mention only the most notorious cases: in February 1916 Petr Kropotkin and other prominent anarchists issued the misleadingly titled *Manifesto of the Sixteen*, which expressed their support for the French-British-Russian side in the First World War;[2] and in November 1936 at the height of the Spanish Civil War the anarchists Juan López, Federica Montseny, García Oliver and Juan Peiró became Ministers of Com-

[2] The *Manifesto of the Sixteen* was misnamed because there were in fact only fifteen signatories. See *Itineraire* no. 3, June 1988, pp.31–2.

merce, Health, Justice and Industry respectively in the Republican Government (Richards, 1972, pp. 59–72).

Nevertheless, it would not do to rationalise the often less than anarchist behaviour of the Korean anarchists simply in terms of 'the way of all [political] flesh'. Elsewhere in East Asia, among both Japanese and Chinese anarchists, there have been occasions when individuals and groups have succumbed to nationalism, entered political parties, and engaged in similarly unanarchist activity, but it is difficult to compare such cases with the scale and regularity of the Korean anarchists' departure from anarchist principles.

In a recent study of anarchism in Japan, Mihara Yokô admitted that there were not a few Japanese anarchists who in the 1930s compromised with the official ideology of *kokutai*[3] and came to argue that the Japanese state was, unlike other states, a supposedly 'natural' political entity and therefore acceptable even to anarchists (Mihara, 1993, pp. 134–5). At times, such views emanated from even the most surprising quarters. A case that could be cited is the essay *Outline of the Theory of the State* which was published over the name of the veteran anarchist communist Iwasa Sakutarô in February 1937. The rhetorical question that was posed there was: 'isn't it only our unique Great Japanese Empire which is a naturally generated state and the others which are all artificially constructed states, no matter whether they are monarchical or democratic?' (Iwasa, 1937, p.337). However, despite such a blatant example of accommodation with the prevailing current of statist opinion, it remains the case that a majority of Japanese anarchists steadfastly resisted the Japanese state, its military expansion and its Emperor-centred ideology (Crump, 1992). This was why over the years Kôtoku Shûsui, Kanno Suga, Ôsugi Sakae, Itô Noe and many other individual

[3] A virtually untranslatable term which is often unsatisfactorily rendered 'national polity' in English. In prewar Japan *kokutai* meant the form taken by the state under the Emperor system.

years to embrace nationalism and to resort to conventional politics. It might be objected that the 'nationalism' to which this article has continually referred is a blunt instrument, that one needs to distinguish, as many anarchists from Bakunin onwards have done, between 'nationalism' as an ideology of state power and 'nationalism' as the aspiration of a subject people to be free (Bakunin, 1973, pp.98ff). Indeed, if this distinction between different nationalisms is valid, prewar Japan and prewar Korea provide striking examples of the two varieties. Japan's empire building was rationalised by an ideology spun around the mystique of the country and the Emperor, and it is the fact that the state justified its actions in nationalist terms which explains why nationalism was anathema to the vast majority of Japanese anarchists. Since the Japanese state occupied the terrain of nationalism, opposition to the state ensured that most Japanese anarchists would reject nationalism as part of their struggle against the state. Conversely, in prewar Korea anarchists were part of a wider anti-Japanese milieu that included out-and-out nationalists and Bolsheviks. Whatever the often acute differences that divided the anti-colonial forces, what they had in common was an assertion of Koreanness in the face of the authorities' attempts to impose a Japanese identity onto Koreans. It could be argued that this anti-colonial nationalism came naturally to nationalists and Bolsheviks, since both intended to achieve an independent nation-state in Korea, albeit one decked out with contrasting nationalist and Bolshevik trappings respectively. Yet, as we have seen, in the anarchist case too, despite their formal opposition to the state *per se* and not merely to its colonial and Japanese form, embracing nationalism as an expression of the Korean people's yearning for liberty led ultimately to acceptance of government, forming political parties and contesting elections. Formal opposition to the state did not prevent the majority of Korean anarchists from arriving at patently unanarchist conclusions because notions of decentralisation and local autonomy, once leavened by nationalism, proved readily con-

> tics. And in order to do so we must create our own political party with which to wage that struggle. (Choe, 1990, p.30)

Until very recently the majority of Korean anarchists have insisted that abstention from conventional politics would spell not only their own isolation from the masses, but also the shirking of their responsibility as anarchists. Paradoxically, they have argued that, under the situation prevailing in Korea, to adhere to the principle of not engaging in party politics would be unanarchist. In other words, in the existing situation, 'if an anarchist had talked about "non-government", he would not have been called an anarchist in a true sense' (Ha, 1986, p. 124). At the level of formal logic, this proposition that to be truly anarchist one needs to engage in unanarchist political activity is difficult to swallow. What makes it plausible in the Korean context is that to be an anarchist in Korea has always meant being first and foremost someone who struggles for national liberation. Once national liberation is accepted as constituting the core of anarchism, then any strategy which can be justified in terms of bringing closer a unified and independent Korean nation becomes acceptably 'anarchist'. If this includes working towards a government which is seen as the instrument for achieving national liberation, then even illogical absurdities such as 'anarchist government' can be contemplated with equanimity.

Conclusion

By means of contrasting anarchism in Korea to anarchism as it has presented in other East Asian countries, such as Japan and China, an attempt has been made to convey some of the peculiarities of Korean anarchism. Among these three countries only Korea experienced outright colonisation and this would seem to account for the readiness of the majority of Korean anarchists over many

Japanese anarchists paid in blood for their intransigence[4] and why the movement eventually had to be suppressed collectively in the mass round-ups of hundreds of anarchists at the time of the 'Anarchist Communist Party Incident' (1935) and the 'Farming Villages Youth Association Incident' (1936).[5] Since the Japanese anarchist movement as a whole would not compromise its principles, the state decided that it had to be broken.

Scalapino and Yu unintentionally complimented the Chinese anarchist movement when they wrote:

> Chinese anarchism suffered from two massive defects, however, in terms of its society, quite apart from the question of world trends. Firstly, despite the seeming ambivalence of some of its leaders, it was a movement forced by its most essential theories to denounce and by-pass nationalism in an era when nationalism represented the wave of the future. No political movement in modern Asia has succeeded unless it has been able to use nationalism. Anarchism, moreover, has a deep aversion to power and authority. (Scalapino and Yu, 1961, p.61)

It is true that among the Chinese anarchists there were cases of even some of the movement's best-known figures joining the Guomindang (Nationalist Party), but most anarchists for most of the time remained organisationally and ideologically independent of all political parties. Wu Zhihui and Li Shizeng were two veteran anarchists who for many years held unofficial, but none the

[4] On Kotoku's and Kanno's trial and execution, see Notehelfer, 1971, pp. 185ff, Crump, 1983, pp.312–16; Anarkowic, 1993. On the murder of Osugi and Ito, see Stanley, 1982, pp.155ff; Crump, 1993, p.43; *Rodo Undo* vol.4, no.2, p.7 (Esperanto section).

[5] On the Anarchist Communist Party Incident, see Crump, 1993, pp. 180–6. On the Farming Villages Youth Association Incident, see Crump, 1993, pp. 172–80.

less influential, positions in the Guomindang. Following the breakdown of cooperation between the Guomindang and the Communist Party in 1927, they made strenuous efforts to persuade other anarchists to enter the ranks of the former party. Some young anarchists responded positively to this initiative, believing that in a factionalised party such as the Guomindang it would be possible to find a niche even for anarchists and hence to turn the situation to their advantage. Yet despite a wave of recruitment into the Guomindang in 1927, there were always anarchists who resisted this trend. As Arif Dirlik has noted: ' as far as it is possible to tell, influential Guangzhou anarchists, such as Liang Bingxian and Ou Shengbai, and Sichuan anarchists, such as Li Feigan (Bajin) and Lu Jianbo, continued to oppose collaboration' (Dirlik, 1991, p.255). Not only was the practice of joining the Guomindang far from universal, but even those who did enter its ranks soon found that their libertarian methods and goals were diametrically opposed to those of the power-hungry Guomindang leadership. Most anarchists soon either left the Guomindang voluntarily or were forcibly suppressed, so that by 1929 the brief flirtation between that party and the anarchists was over (Dirlik, 1991, pp.248ff).

The contrast between the Korean anarchist movement, on the one hand, and the Japanese and Chinese movements, on the other, is thus quite clear with regard to practice. Nor are these differences confined merely to the practical application of theoretical principles. They also extend into the realm of theory. Despite the fact that □□□□□ (literally 'non-govemment-ism') is common to Japanese, Chinese and Korean as the expression which was coined to translate the word 'anarchism', the 1946 nationwide anarchist conference which was held at Anui declared:

> We Korean Anarchists are not literal non-governmentists but non-hetero-govemmentists, in other word auto-govemmentists. And so we want to establish an

to 'anti-communism', nationalism has been an important component of the ideology which the South's rulers have used to bolster their power. Therefore one of the few defences available to the anarchists in South Korea has been to stress their own nationalist credentials.

Yet, although the contours of state power can help to explain why striving for a classless society has played second fiddle to the Korean anarchists' prime concern to unify and 'liberate' the country, it is also the case that this order of priorities flows from their own inner convictions. Reacting to the fact that it was the USA and the USSR which in 1945 divided Korea along the 38th Parallel, the anarchists believed that it was only a government whose jurisdiction extended across the entire peninsula and was acknowledged by the entire Korean people which would have the moral authority to demand an end to interference by the great powers in Korea's affairs. Hence the train of argument advanced by Yu Rim and his supporters in 1946, and which came to be accepted by a majority o! anarchists, ran as follows:

> We, the Korean people, have today neither a free country nor a free government. If we do not demonstrate our ability to govern ourselves we are about to fall under the rule of a foreign trusteeship. Under these conditions, even anarchists are bound to respond to the urgent desire of the people to build our own country and our own government. Therefore the anarchists must form our own political party and play a positive role in building a new Korea. Should the anarchists stand with folded arms, doing nothing, Korea will surely fall into the hands of either the Stalinists to the north or the imperialistic compradore-capitalists of the south. Only the anarchists can ensure for Korea a future of freedom, liberation, unity and independence. This is the reason why we must play a positive part in poli-

Since the Second World War, Korea has been divided into two hostile territories and the North's rulers have used 'communism' (= bolshevism) as an ideology to legitimise their exercise of power. Consequently it has been dangerous in South Korea to express any views that could be mistaken for 'communism'. Obviously, this situation has further muted that facet of Korean anarchism which aspires to a free and classless society based on the common ownership of the means of production. This is not to say that the perspective of liberating society from class divisions has been entirely eliminated from Korean anarchism, but it has been necessary to resort to fairly oblique language when expressing such ideas. For example, when the anarchist group known as the Free People's Federation was formed in Seoul in 1973, the 'economic' section of its publicly declared statement of general principles was deliberately vague, as the following three paragraphs show:

> 3. We regard as criminal anyone who, by whatever means, seizes the fruits of the labour of others without contributing his or her own labour.
> 4. In this free society of free men and women, economic life should be organized along the lines of 'from each according to his or her ability, to each according to his or her need.'
> 5. In line with these basic principles, the free society of the future will allow the development of a variety of modes of life according to the special nature of each district and each occupation. (Libero, 1975, p.33)

Compared with this, the anarchists in South Korea have been free to express the national liberation facet of their doctrine as loudly and as clearly as they wish. Indeed, given their vulnerability in the face of a ruthless and violent state, it is inevitable that they should have done so for reasons of self-preservation. In addition

> independent and democratic unified government. (Ha, 1986, p. 144)

Yu Rim of the Korean Anarchist Federation elaborated on the meaning attributed to 'anarchism' (= 'non-govemment-ism') by Korean anarchists in a newspaper interview conducted in 1945 after his return from exile in China to Korea. Asked by an incredulous newspaper reporter 'Is it true that you are an [anarchist =] non-govemmentist?', he explained:

> It seems that the word 'anarchism' has been used as being synonymous with 'nongovernment' in Korea. But it's a misinterpretation of 'anarchism' by Japanese scholars. To tell the truth, 'an-' means 'without or not,' and 'archi-' means 'boss or chief, that is compulsory power.' Therefore anarchy means 'absence of compulsory power or control.' I am an anarchist who rejects compulsory power, but not a non-govemmentist who objects to an autonomous government. An anarchist objects only to a heteronomous government. (Ha, 1986, p. 122)

By arguing in this fashion, Yu reduced 'anarchism' to a liberal concept. He insisted that it is only despotic government, that is government by an 'other' (*heteros*) who is not answerable to 'us', which is objectionable to anarchists. By way of contrast, so-called 'autonomous government', which presumably proceeds from popular consent, was evaluated favourably. Indeed, at a later point in the interview Yu gave a concrete example of 'autonomous government' when he remarked: 'I participated in the Provisional Government because it was an autonomous organisation which came into being with the spirit of the 1919 Independence Movement of Korea' (Ha, 1986, p.122). To argue thus was to reject the most basic principle of anarchism – that government in any shape or form is coercive and entails the surrender of freedom. The clear implication

of Yu's remarks was that government by an 'other' (such as the Japanese colonial administration) was unacceptable but that 'our own' government (meaning one elected by 'we Koreans') would be supported by Korean anarchists. Such a nationalistic version of 'anarchism' was also in line with Yu's contention that the literal interpretation of 'non-govemment-ism' was a mistake perpetrated by *Japanese* scholars.

The remainder of this article will be concerned with an attempt to account for marked differences which have existed, in theory and in practice, between Korean anarchism and anarchism elsewhere in East Asia. It will be argued that the direct cause of such differences is to be found in Korea's experience of colonial subjection between 1910 and 1945. During that period the Japanese colonial authorities did everything in their power to suppress Koreans' national and cultural identity, and this was coupled with severe political repression and economic exploitation. Asserting their Korean identity thus became a means by which many Koreans, including anarchists, sought to resist their oppressors.

Throughout East Asia, during this period, anarchists saw all around them examples of peasant communities engaged in cooperative living and were strongly influenced by Kropotkin's vision of a society of autonomous communes. Hence the contrast they drew between the despotic states then in existence and local, cooperative communities was rooted as much in their lived experiences as it was in ideas gleaned from anarchist texts. This much was common to anarchists in all three countries that concern us here, but whereas the despots in China and Japan were home-grown tyrants, those who wielded state power in Korea were Japanese, and this had an effect on anarchist perceptions there. The contrast was not merely between a despotic state and local, cooperative communities, but between the *Japanese* state and *Korean* communities. Free-

> The anarchist movement within Korea can be characterized as a combination of these two trends overseas. Therefore, the national liberation front and the class liberation front merged in the movement within Korea (Ha, 1986, p.21)

While it may not be inaccurate to assert that these two facets of Korean anarchism have existed side by side, there can be no doubt as to which has predominated. Even in the postwar period the Korean anarchists have been agreed that the existing situation can be characterised as the stage of 'national democratic revolution' (Ha, 1986, p. 136) and it has been this long-standing perception which explains their decades long involvement in the conventional political process. As the Japan-based anarchist journal *Libero* described the situation in 1975:

> As of way back, from the establishment of the Provisional Government in Shanghai following the March 1st Incident, to the formation of the Independent Workers' and Peasants' Party after Liberation, and right up to the creation of today's DUP, the Korean anarchist movement has adopted a political posture. The entire Korean people, for years under the rule of foreign invaders, have longed to be able to create their own nation and form their own government, even the anarchists. No one, not even anarchists, who disregarded this national longing, has ever been able to organize a mass movement in Korea. Even now this remains the case. One might say, too, that the movement to set up a viable nation and to fight for genuine independence still continues today. In this sense the Korean anarchists who have joined the DUP probably still see themselves as they did in the pre-Liberation independence movement days. (Libero, 1975, pp.35-6)

of trying on Ha Ki-Rak's part. Ha was the driving force behind the nationwide anarchist conference held in Taegu in 1987 and an International Seminar for World Peace, which was sponsored in Seoul in 1988 by the Federation of Anarchists in Korea (Ha, 1989; Crute, 1989). Following these events, Ha made strenuous efforts to launch a new political organisation to be known as the Socialist Party, but without success.

Freeing the Nation or Freeing Society?

In the prewar period, Korean anarchism sought to pursue in tandem two distinct struggles. First, there was the struggle to free Korea from Japanese colonial rule and to achieve national independence. Second, there was the struggle to free everyone from exploitation and to achieve a classless society. It is significant that Ha sees the struggle for a classless society as having been incorporated into Korean anarchism from Japan, where capitalism was already well developed by the end of the First World War, whereas he sees the struggle for national liberation as largely having arisen within the Korean emigre community in economically retarded China. According to Ha:

> Korean anarchist movement in Japan naturally took the line of attaining the national liberation struggle in close connection with the class liberation struggle, while Korean anarchist movement in China put its emphasis on organising a unified joint front in order to attain the national independence. The latter preserved the nationalistic color heavily, while the former inclined significantly in a leftist direction in association with the Japanese labor movement. The difference in the socio-political situation in the two countries was responsible for the different attitude of the Korean anarchist movement mentioned above.

dom from the state and from economic pillage were not the only goals of Korean anarchists, but also the freedom to use the Korean language (which the authorities replaced with Japanese throughout the education system), to be known by one's own name (instead of the Japanese-style names which the colonial government insisted Koreans must adopt) and to say no to irrational practices, such as compulsory worship at *Shintō* shrines (*Shintō* was a belief system entirely alien to Korea and was imposed because it was the basis of loyalty to the Japanese Emperor) (Nahm, 1973; Kim and Mortimore, 1977). Goals such as these last three represented common ground between anarchists and nationalists (and the local Bolsheviks too, for that matter) and could be said to have opened up Korean anarchism to influence from nationalism.

However, it would be misleading to believe that nationalism simply acted on Korean anarchism as an external influence. Internally, anarchism was supplied with commitments to decentralisation and local autonomy and, important though these attributes are in their own right, they provided Korean anarchism with elements which were susceptible, at least in a 'Third World', anti-colonial setting, to nationalist reinterpretation. Under the conditions prevailing in Korea, increasingly decentralisation stopped sounding like an anarchist argument against *all* power relations and came to be heard as a nationalist demand to shift power away from the imperialist metropole to the colonial periphery. Similarly, the anarchist belief in local autonomy was transmuted into the nationalist objective of national independence, despite the fact that this is the lingua franca of all emergent nation-states as they set about constructing new means of repression.

Origins of Anarchism in East Asia

Whatever case one wishes to make for regarding taoism as an East Asian antecedent of anarchism,[6] anarchism as a Western implant first made its appearance in East Asia in 1906. In that year, Kotoku Shusui returned to Japan after spending six months in the USA and announced that he had changed his previously held social democratic ideas in favour of anarchism. The anarchism that Kotoku brought back with him from the USA was a mixture of both anarchist communism and syndicalism. Anarchist communism was mainly represented by the works of Kropotkin, above all by his most influential book, *The Conquest of Bread,* which Kotoku had translated into Japanese by 1909. Syndicalism's influence was less dependent on texts, since in its case there were organisations such as the French union federation, the CGT, which could be held up as concrete examples of syndicalism in action. Nevertheless, one syndicalist text that was influential was Arnold Roller's *The Social General Strike*, a copy of which Kotoku had acquired while in the USA and which he translated into Japanese in 1907.[7] Syndicalism as a political theory struck a responsive chord in Japan because the process of establishing modern industries was advancing rapidly and led to strikes and insurrections among militant sections of the emerging working class (Crump, 1983, pp.162-7). Nevertheless, all attempts to move from theory to practice by organising syndicalist-style unions were routinely blocked until after the First World War, by which stage the state no longer had sufficient power to suppress all working class initiatives. It was under the frustrating circumstances which prevailed before the First World War that some anarchists, like Kanno Suga, toyed with the idea of turning to terrorism. The Japanese state's response was as Draconian as it was swift. A mass round-up of the anarchists was conducted in 1910

[6] On the relationship between taoism and anarchism, see *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* vol. 10, no.l, 1983.

[7] 'Arnold Roller' was the alias of the German syndicalist Siegfried Nacht.

where candidates of a political party supposedly 'under the influence of anarchism' have gained seats in parliamentary elections. In the following general election to the National Assembly, held in December 1978, the Democratic Unification Party ran 63 candidates (Korea Annual, 1979, p.72). Although its share of the vote was 3 per cent less than in 1973, Kim Nok-Yung was re-elected and was joined in the National Assembly by Yang Il-Dong and Kim Hyun-Soo.[8]

By this stage the Democratic Unification Party was cooperating closely with Kim Young-Sam, who is now President of South Korea but who at that time was leader of the opposition New Democratic Party. The Democratic Unification Party was on the verge of re-entering the New Democratic Party under Kim Young-Sam's leadership when it was overtaken by events. Park Jung-Hi was assassinated in October 1979 and by May 1980 another military strongman, General Chun Doo-Hwan, was effectively in control and violently suppressing all opposition, including the anarchists and their Democratic Unification Party. Yang Il-Dong, the President of the Democratic Unification Party, died in April 1980, just before Chun Doo-Hwan took power, and the Party's top adviser, Chung Hwa-Am, followed in January 1981. In a private communication, one Korean anarchist, Lee Mun-Chang described them to me as 'brilliant activists'. Be that as it may, their disappearance from the scene hopefully marks a turning point in the history of Korean anarchism. As Lee Mun-Chang put it: 'After their death… without doubt there has been no more of what is called anarchist politics. In addition, since 1987 [the year when Chun Doo-Hwan lost power], there have been no Korean Anarchists who specifically cooperated with any political party' (Lee, 1994). Although this assessment of the situation is formally correct, one might add that the failure of a new 'anarchist' political party to arise is not for want

[8] I am grateful to Lee Mun-Chang for supplying me with reliable information on thes Democratic Unification Party's elected candidates.

seceded after the 1971 presidential election because they believed the party leadership had gone too far in compromising with Park's government. The political party they then set up in order to contest the 1973 general election to the National Assembly was called the Democratic Unification Party, about which it was said that 'the party itself is not an anarchist organisation, [but] it has most certainly come under the influence of anarchism' (Libero, 1975, p.36). This was evident from the fact that veteran anarchists occupied key positions in its leadership. These included Yang Il-Dong as Party President, Chung Hwa-Am as top adviser and Ha Ki-Rak as head of its Policy Advisory Committee. Together they comprised a majority of the five-person central committee. Yet, although the 'anarchist' credentials of the Democratic Unification Party might have been evident in its leaders' backgrounds, they were far less apparent in the reformist policies it espoused. One source summarises its basic policy as follows:

> The party's foreign policy advocates close ties with Western countries. Promotion of the regional collective security system, expansion of economic cooperation with friendly nations and stepped-up diplomacy towards the United Nations are major ingredients of the party platform. On the economy, the … party calls for a balanced economic development to benefit the masses first and advocates the adoption of a social security system. (Korea Annual, 1979, p.72)

In the general election to the National Assembly, held in February 1973, the Democratic Unification Party put up 49 candidates and received 10.2 per cent of the votes cast (Korea Annual, 1979, p.72; Nam, 1989, pp. 58-9). Its two successful candidates were Kim Nok-Yung and Kim Kyung-In. By winning election to the National Assembly, they conferred on South Korea the dubious distinction of being (to the best of my knowledge) the only postwar country

and twelve of those put on trial, including Kōtoku, were executed for High Treason in 1911, irrespective of whether they were directly involved in planning a terrorist campaign or not (Crump, 1983, pp.301-18; Notehelfer, 1971, pp.l52ff).

Anarchism was introduced into China at about the same time, partly as an extension of what was happening in Japan and partly via an independent route which brought anarchist ideas directly from France. In the years prior to the 1911 revolution, Tokyo was a base for opponents of the Qing dynasty and also a favourite destination for thousands of Chinese students who were eager to obtain a modem education. It was within this milieu that 'Japanese' anarchism took root and found its way back to China. Dissident Chinese intellectuals living in Tokyo, such as Liu Shipei and Zhang Ji, founded in 1907 a Society for the Study of Socialism, whose meetings were often addressed by Japanese anarchists, including Kōtoku Shusui and Ōsugi Sakae (Zarrow, 1990, pp.31-58). In a parallel fashion, in the early years of the twentieth century Paris also became a centre for radical Chinese students, many of whoijn combined employment with study. Among these were Wu Zhihui, Li Shizeng, Zhang Jingjiang and Chu Minyi, who between 1907 and 1910 published an anarchist journal, *The New Century.* The New Century group was in touch with such well known French anarchists as Jean Grave and Paul Reclus and, through them, as well as through Kropotkin's writings, absorbed the theories of anarchist communism. Since the CGT was a major force in France at this time, they were also exposed to syndicalist influences, although syndicalism was less immediately relevant in China than in Japan because industrialisation had barely commenced (Zarrow, 1990, pp.59-81).

In contrast to the introduction of anarchism into Japan and China in the early years of the twentieth century, the Korean anarchist movement did not emerge until after the First World War. This relatively late appearance of the Korean anarchist movement had major repercussions for the form taken by anarchism in that

country. In the first place, it meant that anarchism was introduced only after Korea had been exposed to increasing imperialist penetration, culminating in its formal incorporation in 1910 into the empire which Japan's rulers were intent on constructing in imitation of the British Empire. Korea's reduction to colonial status was widely resisted by a population which found itself subjected to cruel discrimination by the Japanese imperialists. On 1 March 1919 mass demonstrations throughout the country accompanied an ineffectual, but symbolically important, 'Proclamation of Independence'. Thousands were killed and injured as the Japanese authorities acted brutally to suppress the movement and it was in the situation created by this widespread anti-colonial struggle that Korean anarchists took their first tentative steps.

From 1919 onwards anarchist groups were organised among Korean students and workers in Japan, among the emigrant population across the Chinese border in Manchuria, and eventually in Korea itself. The first anarchist groups formed in Korea itself were possibly the Workers' Mutual Aid Association and the Anarchist Movement Association, which were briefly organised in Seoul in 1920 and 1921 respectively (Ryong, 1972, p. 17). Others would point to the Black Flag Alliance, which declared its existence in Seoul in 1925, as the first potentially nationwide anarchist federation (Libero, 1975, p.29). However, it was immediately broken up by the Japanese police and its members imprisoned. With colonial oppression, and resistance to it, as the setting for anarchism's emergence in Korea, the result was that 'you cannot understand [an anarchist movement in a country such as this] without realising that the anarchist movement among Koreans before the war was, by and large, a national independence movement' (Libero, 1975, p.32). When Shin Chae-Ho set out the *Manifesto of the Korean Revolution* in 1923, he defined the common ground on which Korean anarchists and nationalists jointly stood:

As was mentioned previously, a nationwide anarchist conference was held in April 1946 and it was there that the basic strategy of postwar Korean anarchism to work for the establishment of an acceptable form of government with jurisdiction across the whole country was agreed. In addition, Yu Rim's proposal to organise an Independent Workers' and Farmers' Party was accepted. Not all Korean anarchists were happy with these decisions to engage in statist and parliamentary politics. The minority kept clear of conventional polities and instead concentrated its efforts on activities which are more usually associated with anarchism, such as publishing and propaganda work, setting up communes, and so on (Choe, 1990, p.30; Libero, 1975, pp.38-40; Black Flag, 1984, pp. 7-8). Nevertheless, for many years the majority of Korean anarchists adhered to the decisions taken at the 1946 Conference, despite numerous vicissitudes connected with South Korea's stormy postwar history.

It should be noted that the organisational form of the Korean anarchists' political activity changed at various junctures. For example, the Independent Workers' and Farmers' Party was suppressed following General Park Jung-Hi's seizure of power in a military coup in 1961. Subsequently anarchists of the majority persuasion joined the main opposition party, the New Democratic Party. This party was led by the Roman Catholic liberal Kim Dae-Jung, who in 1971 ran for the presidency against the incumbent General-turned-President Park Jung-Hi and, despite all sorts of dirty tricks perpetrated by the regime, won 46 per cent of the vote. After this election, the state reacted to the closeness of the result by introducing a new, highly repressive constitution in 1972 and making it an offence even to criticise its provisions. Furthermore, secret service agents kidnapped Kim Dae-Jung from a hotel in Tokyo where he was staying in 1973 and he was taken back to Korea and detained, first in jail and then under house arrest, almost without interruption (excluding two years spent in exile in the USA) until 1987.

Despite the harshness of this treatment meted out to a mere liberal like Kim, the left wing of the New Democratic Party had

launched in the same year. This was the first nationwide anarchist grouping successfully organised in Korea. It also had sections in Japan and Manchuria. Most anarchist groups existing in Korea today are descended from this Federation (Choe, 1989, p.28). However, within Korea itself the success was shortlived, since Japanese police arrested members of the Federation in 1931 and this virtually marked the end of organised anarchist activity in Korea until after the Second World War. An attempt was made to reconstitute the movement in 1933, but this was foiled when Japanese police raided the restaurant where discussions were being held. Korean anarchists in Japan were also caught up in the waves of mass arrests which swept through the Japanese anarchists' ranks in 1935 and 1936. As a result, it was only among the Korean emigres in China that anarchist activity could be maintained during the period extending up till 1945.

Following the Japanese surrender, the Korean anarchists emerged from prison and from hiding within Korea or returned from exile. They recognised that the breakup of Japan's Empire meant that they had achieved what they had always regarded as their 'primary purpose' (Ha, 1986, pp.129-30). However, Japanese imperialism had been eliminated only to be replaced by the contending imperialisms of the USSR and the USA, whose armed forces arrived in August and September 1945 respectively and occupied the country North and South of the 38th Parallel. The anarchists hastened to set up new organisations, but those in the North did not last long. Soon after they started to issue a journal called *The Voice of the People*, they were arrested by the Russian military police and charged with organising an anti-Soviet movement. Those in the South organised the Federation of Builders of a Free Society in September 1945 and numerous other groups subsequently. Although they experienced severe harassment, what was perceived as their 'anticommunism' (=antibolshevism) probably enabled them to escape from being suppressed entirely.

> Burglar Japan usurped our independent right and violently deprived our nation of the right to live… we declare that the burglar politics of Japan are the enemy of our nation's existence and that it is our proper right to overthrow imperialist Japan by a revolutionary means. (Ha, 1986, p.23)

Song Se-Ha recognised the nationalist roots of both Korean 'anarchism' and 'Marxism' when he wrote:

> We realised that, in fighting against the mighty power of militaristic imperialism, we could not match it simply by resorting to nationalism alone. At that point, one part of nationalism became anarchism and another part became Marxism. (Song, 1968, p. 14)

The extent to which national liberation became the overriding goal of the Korean anarchists is also conveyed by the way in which anarchist attempts in 1929 to reorganise the life of the Korean population in Manchuria on the basis of mutual aid and economic cooperation were seen as a means to the end of a more effective anti-Japanese struggle (Ha, 1986, pp.72-3).

Subsequent Development of Anarchism in East Asia

In subsequent prewar years, anarchism throughout East Asia remained locked in an unequal battle with implacably hostile state forces which everywhere were dedicated to obliterating it. In Japan the first nationwide anarchist organisations were formed in 1926 in the shape of the Black Youth League and the All-Japan Libertarian Federation of Labour Unions. Although these organisations initially encompassed all shades of anarchist opinion, the Japanese anarchist movement split in 1928 into an anarchist

communist wing and a syndicalist wing. However, circumstances were not conducive to prolonged debate on questions of theory and practice, since the situation confronting anarchists of all kinds was soon to worsen rapidly. After the Manchurian Incident between Japanese and Chinese armed forces in September 1931, the already intense repression in Japan became ever more severe and by 1936 successive waves of mass arrests, intimidation and state violence had made it impossible for Japanese anarchists to continue with organised activity any longer (Crump, 1993, pp. 159-87).

This was the unenviable situation in which the Japanese anarchists found themselves until the end of the Second World War. After Japan's defeat, the Anarchist Federation of Japan was formed in May 1946. However, land reform under the American Occupation and the related creation of a class of conserva- tive-minded small farmers deprived the movement of its previous support in the countryside, while anarchists found it no less difficult to re-establish their influence in the labour movement, caught as they were in the pincer-like grip of the state on one side and union bureaucrats on the other. Although the Anarchist Federation of Japan was dissolved in November 1968, smaller groups continued the struggle thereafter, and in October 1988 the Federation was reformed. These days it is the so-called 'citizens' movements' and ecology issues which appear to offer the best chances for anarchists in Japan to link up with wider circles of people in struggle (Mihara, 1993, pp. 135-7).

In China conditions became increasingly difficult for the anarchists as relations between them and the Guomindang reached the point of open hostility by 1929. Then, as the 1930s progressed, China's territory was increasingly partitioned and fought over by rival states (or states in the making). From 1928 Mao Zedong started to establish base areas controlled by the Communist Party's guerilla forces and from 1930 Chiang Kai-Shek's Guomindang government retaliated with 'bandit extermination campaigns'

against territory held by the Communist Party. From 1931 the situation was further complicated as the Japanese Army took over ever wider swathes of Chinese territory in a series of staged 'incidents', starting with the previously mentioned Manchurian Incident. Eventually, with the onset of full-scale war between Japan and China in 1937, Japan came to occupy most of the Eastern seaboard. Although the Japanese threat led to a certain amount of cooperation between the Guomindang and the Communist Party from 1937, they remained bitter rivals and relations periodically reverted to armed conflict. In this three-way confrontation between Japan, the Guomindang and the Communist Party, the anarchists were increasingly squeezed and only with difficulty did they maintain some propaganda activity, establish some footholds in the labour movement, and find niches within which to set up agrarian communes or engage in libertarian education.

Japan's defeat in 1945 brought no improvements for the Chinese anarchists, since it was merely the prelude for full-scale civil war between the Guomindang and the Communist Party. The latter's victory in 1949 brought to power a regime which, ideologically and in practice, was unremittingly hostile to anarchism. Nevertheless, anarchists did not disappear in China as a result of the Communist Party's takeover. Independently-minded men and women continued to adhere to anarchism as a body of thought, they kept in touch with one another as individuals, and contacts were even maintained with anarchists outside China (Meltzer, 1970). However, an organised anarchist movement ceased to exist, since group activity was suppressed and all publications closed down. Only among the Chinese diaspora in centres such as Hong Kong have Chinese anarchists been able to remain openly critical of the state and continue active resistance.

Turning to Korea again, in November 1929 an attempt to hold a Pan-Korean Black Socialists' Conference in Pyongyang was thwarted by the Japanese authorities. Despite this setback, the Korean Anarchist Communist Federation was successfully