CHAPTER - V
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PROBLEM OF KOREANS IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

5.1 Introduction

The presence of a Korean minority within the borders of the former Soviet Union may seem, at first, an anomaly. In fact it is a living testament to the USSR’s long-standing ambition to establish a firm footing in that country, a goal dating back prior to the 1917 Revolution, to the time of the Tsarist expansionism. As a part of its plan to become a maritime power in the Western Pacific, Imperial Russia strove to gain mastery of the Korean peninsula: in doing so, it collided head on with the Japanese desire to establish a beach head there, as a first step towards erecting its empire on the Asian mainland.1

The Central Asian Republics are multinational states. Dozens of nations and ethnic groups living here generate a lot of problems both imminently national and in the system of international relations. Before moving to the presentations and casual-consequential analysis of the actual problems of Korean Diaspora in Central Asia, it is worth to make a brief historical excursion in the history of appearance of Koreans in the Republics and neighbouring Central Asian States.

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5.2 Settlement of Koreans in Central Asia:

Within its 8.6 millions square miles, the Soviet empire officially recognized 104 ethnic groups (speaking 130 languages), of which one was the Korean, the Sovietskoie Koreitsy (Soviet Koreans) as they were identified in the state censuses; the Koryo Sarain( the people from Koryo) or Choson Saram( the people from Choson) as the Koreans refer to themselves. On the boundary of the last and present century, hunger, cruel exploitation of the ruling classes and Japanese colonial yoke forced dozens of thousands of pauperized Koreans to Manchuria, to the Russia Far East and America. At present the numbers of Koreans constitutes more than 5 million, and the most numerous groups live in China (2 Million); the USA (about 1.5m); Japan(0.7m) and the former USSR(0.45m).

A desire to absorb the Korean Peninsula logically followed the heels of Imperial Russia’s annexation of the Maritime Province (Primorskaya oblast) in 1860 with the signing of the Treaty of Peking. Exploiting the internal weaknesses of the Chinese Empire following the decade long Taiping Rebellion (1849-60), the government of Tsar Alexander II seized the opportunity to extend its grip on the Pacific coast of the Amur River, the locus of an international header since the Manchu-Romanov Treaty of Nerchinsk signed in 1689. The new acquisitions, east of the Ussuri River (a tributary of the Amur), granted Russia a strip of the Pacific coast as far as the

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2. Ibid; p.59.
Korean header along the Tumen River. The strategic significance of this territorial gain was emphasized by the immediate Constitution of Vladivostok, a naval facility free from ice; an historic goal of the Tsars dating back to Ivan III (1462-1505). The second major step of the Imperial government to consolidate the defence of Vladivostok was the Trans-Siberian railroad. This brought about intense commercial penetration of Korea as a prelude to its incorporation into the contiguous Eurasian landmass of the constantly expanding Ramanov Empire.

Official diplomatic relations between Korea and Russia date back to 1884 when the two countries concluded a Mutual Commercial Protection Agreement. After the Japanese victory over China in 1895, both Russia and Japan openly espoused rival ambitions for Korea for much the same imperial reasons: Commercial rights, Colonial ambitions and strategic considerations vis-à-vis their respective foot holds in China. The impending Russo-Japanese collision over Korea led to the 1904-5 war, which ended in the humiliating defeat of the Tsarist Empire, especially of its navy. On the heels of Japan’s military triumph over Russia, Korea became, on 22 August 1910, a Japanese colony (formally a Protectorate).

The Soviet Koreans, thereafter were a product of Russo-Japanese imperial rivalry. Soon after the Japanese victory in Korea, hundreds, and

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later thousands, of Koreans fled north into Russian territory. Quite a sizeable numbers, around 3,30,000 had already migrated northward prior to 1904. They came as farmers, as workers, attracted by construction projects stimulated by Russia’s accelerating expansion in the Maritime Province since 1860. The earliest wave of Koreans largely peasants, had come north to escape the famine of 1869. All those who entered prior to 25 June 1884 enjoyed Russian citizenship; a few hundred had even adopted Christianity. Those who came after 1905 were Korean political refugees escaping Japanese occupation and seeking to fight for the liberation of their country. By 1911, the combined Korean population in the Maritime province had swelled to almost 60,000. (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Koreans In Imperial Russia, 1869-1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>CITIZENS</th>
<th>NON-CITIZEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>8,300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>16,250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>32,410</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>34,339</td>
<td>16,965</td>
<td>17,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>45,914</td>
<td>16,007</td>
<td>29,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>45,497</td>
<td>16,190</td>
<td>29,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>51,544</td>
<td>14,799</td>
<td>36,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>54,076</td>
<td>17,080</td>
<td>36,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>57,289</td>
<td>17,476</td>
<td>39,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>59,715</td>
<td>16,263</td>
<td>43,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>57,440</td>
<td>19,277</td>
<td>38,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>64,329</td>
<td>20,109</td>
<td>44,220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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The newly arrived Koreans, not only found safe haven in the Russian Empire but also hoped to obtain political support. With that began a long interaction between the Koreans and their descendants, on the one hand, and the Tsarist ‘host’ and their successors, the Communists, on the other. In brief, for the Koreans, the Russians represented the best sponsors to evict the Japanese; for the Russians, the Koreans meant a potential vanguard for future Russian/Soviet anti-Japanese policies on behalf of Korea.

In the pre-Revolutionary years, from 1905 to 1917, Korean refugees formed the Hanin Minhoe (The Korean People’s Association), officially a Community organization but, in fact, a political club aimed at restoring Korean independence. With each wave of new comers, Hanin Minhoe tended to radicalize and show its true colours as a centre for anti-Japanese activity. This posed a problem to the Russian authorities — who, by the terms of the 1905 peace treaty of Portsmouth and subsequent agreements such as the 1907 Russo-Japanese Convention, agreed to recognize as legal Japan’s presence in Korea. Thus, from the outset Korean political aspirations and Russian tactical need to bow to reality evinced deep contradictions. 7

On the one hand, the Russians did not prevent Korean armed units, such as the Uibyong (Righteous Army), from training and crossing the border into northern Korea in 1906. But, following Japanese protests, Russia had to put restraints on its Koreans. Indeed, since the 1905 revolution and the ethnic nationalisms it spawned, Russian authorities themselves, had,

for internal considerations, become deeply suspicious of any kind of ethnic minority activity on its soil. However, rather than cave in to Japanese insistence that non-naturalized Koreans be sent back to Korea, the Tsarist authorities agreed that some Korean non-citizens be moved north-ward into Siberia far from the Korean border. This shifted the Koreans from the Maritime Province to the Russian Far East in general and to Central Asia in particular. 8

With the Revolution of 1917, the fate of the Koreans and the unequal power balance between Japan and Russia in the Far East took a turn for the worse. Korean refugee politics was as fractious as that of other peoples in the fragmented Russian Empire. One group, the most radical, made up exclusively of refugees, met in December 1917 in Khabarousk and openly called for the eviction of the Japanese from Korea according to the principle of self-determination espoused by the Soviets. They had broken loose from a more moderate group made up of naturalized Koreans, the Korean National Association, who were more oriented to domestic issues freeing political prisoners, the use of Korean in schools, and general group autonomy. 9

During the civil war, the majority of Koreans sided with the Siberian Regional Council controlled by the Socialist Revolutionaries, while the few radical Koreans attached themselves to the Bolsheviks. The latter's fortune were assisted by the return of 4,000 armed Korean veterans of World War I

8. Ibid; p.61.
who had fought on the German front. Nevertheless, by April 1918, all Russian Koreans were amalgamated into a common front, forming the All-Russian Korean Association in response to their collective fear of a Japanese takeover of the Maritime Province, especially after they landed troops in Vladivostok.

In the face of this danger, Koreans and the Bolshevik Soviets became natural allies, a bond that held throughout the civil war. A number of Uibyong units reappeared; fighting in close co-operation with the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, when Koreans in March 1919 asked to demonstrate in sympathy with the Samil (1st March) declaration of independence in Seoul, the Kolchak government, in deference to its ties with Japan, forbade any from of Korean collective activity, and dismantled Korean schools and the Korean National Council. Despite this repression, small hands of Korean fighters were formed and put into action throughout Eastern Siberia in 1919. In the winter of 1919-20, began an open struggle for control of the Maritime Province between Japan and the Bolsheviks who were supported by small but well trained and highly motivated Korean Units.

The Bolshevik victory in the civil war as far the Koreans in the Far Eastern provinces were concerned, reinstated the pre-1917 status-quo under the Tsars. The international border remained the same: the Japanese still held Korea; and the Russians were the reluctant hosts of militant Koreans. Reflecting the prevailing imbalance of power, the Soviet government had to bow to Japanese demands, namely, to de-activate Korean units and discourage all anti-Japanese propaganda. Nevertheless, as there was no choice, the Koreans emerged from the civil war as pro-Communists. Around
20% of their candidates were members of the Maritime Province’s Russian Communist Party.

In the period, after 1921, all Koreans were offered full USSR citizenship like other ethnic groups and they were expected to adopt Soviet laws (according to Lenin’s script) and eventually, to merge into Russified Soviet society (according to Stalin’s script of assimilation). Interestingly, only 11,500 (16%) accepted the offer of citizenship; the majority refused pressure from the Soviet government between 1924 and 1926, and produced a few more naturalizations; they were induced by economic incentives but privately determined to live as Koreans. However, due to a new wave of Korean exiles in the mid-1920. The proportion between non-citizen and citizen Koreans in the USSR remained the same, about 60% to 40%. This raised problems, except for the naturalized Koreans, who saw themselves as permanently outside their homeland. The majority of Koreans perceived themselves, as temporarily inside the USSR. Their goal was for an independent Korea which in turn, meant preservation of Korean culture and language, and a Korean centered political orientation. While the naturalized Koreans tended to move westward towards European Russia, the hard core Korean nationalists sought to stay close to home (Refer Table 5.2).

10. Ibid; p. 63.
Table 5.2

Koreans In The Soviet Far East

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1,20,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>1,67,400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1,90,000</td>
<td>1,80,000 were deported to Central Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>Annexation of South Sakhalin Island added 40,000 Koreans settled there by the Japanese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>62,648</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Because of the civil war, their ranks increased considerably by a combination of returning Korean World War I veterans, draft-dodgers who came back from Manchuria, and illegal refuges and immigrants from Korea attracted by the expanding rice economy in the young Soviet Union. While a sizeable minority of Koreans who accepted citizenship tended to move north and west in quest of land and acculturation, the majority of those who rejected citizenship remained in the Maritime Province. By 1923, Koreans made up to 17% of the total population of the Maritime Province and a high profile segment of the Communist leadership.11

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11. Ibid; p.64.
By the end of 1929, Koreans made up the bulk of the labour force working on state and collective rice farms and on individual leased fields, largely in the capacity of share-croppers. By the mid-1920, several ten of thousands had already migrated to Kazakhstan as pioneers in rice and cotton cultivation there.\textsuperscript{12} (Refer Table 5.3)

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Total & Kazakhstan & Kirghizstan & Tajik & Turkmen & Uzbekistan \\
\hline
1926 & 52,000 & & & & & \\
1939 & 1,82,000 & 97,000 & & & 73,000 & \\
1959 & 2,13,000 & 74,000 & & & 1,39,000 & \\
1970 & 2,50,000 & 82,000 & 9,404 & 8,490 & 3490 & 1,44,851 \\
1979 & 2,80,000 & 92,000 & 14,000 & 11,000 & & 1,63,000 \\
1989 & 3,54,000 & 1,40,000 & 18,000 & 13,000 & & 1,83,000 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Koreans In Central Asia – 1926 to 1999-2000}
\end{table}


In the Stalin era, the Koreans in the Maritime Province enjoyed a modicum of political participation as members of the party and a fair amount of state-condoned cultural life; 15 party schools, two teacher colleges, 21 high schools, 208 grade schools; community hospitals, Korean language newspapers and publishing enterprises. But Moscow followed a thin line, encouraging a measure of anti-Japanese Korean.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid; p.65.
Political activism for its foreign policy, yet discouraging too great an ethnic self-consciousness on domestic grounds. For this reason, all requests for a Korean autonomous province inside the USSR were repeatedly denied. Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in September 1931 consolidated virtually all Koreans in the Soviet Union behind the Soviet regime, explaining in large measure why Stalin’s decree of 1932 ordering all Koreans to become citizens with little opposition. A golden era with respect to relations between Moscow and the Korean minority seemed in the offing; but was shortlived.\textsuperscript{13}

The March 1935 agreement between Japan and the USSR restored the status quo, leaving Soviet Koreans in the cold, with Russia agreeing to Japanese request to curb Korean exile activity. Stalin used the occasion to solve the ‘Korean Question’ by using his method of purges. He first arrested and imprisoned Afanasii Kim, Secretary of the Posiet Korean National Regional Party Committee, a staunch supporter of Stalin’s Collectivization programme. A wave of arrests, trials, imprisonment and executions decimated the Korean Communist elite. On the charges that Koreans were infiltrated by Japanese agents, Stalin, in 1937, ordered the mass deportation of Koreans to Central Asia to join over 65,000 who had migrated there voluntarily since 1922. Over the course of three months, from September to November 1937, entire villages and towns in the Maritime Province were cleared of Koreans. In all, 1, 80,000 Koreans were involuntarily resettled in the Soviet interior, far from Korea.\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{flushright}
\textit{Ibid;} p.65.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textit{Ibid;} p.66.
\end{flushright}
At this point of history, the centre of gravity of the Korean minority’s history in the Soviet Union shifted to Central Asia. Demographically they continued to have a communal identity and according to official Soviet censuses their number grew dramatically. With their agricultural skills, they became the vanguard of the Soviet campaign to conquer the ‘Virgin Territories’, to cultivate the barren, arid expanses of Central Asia. Beginning with their specialty-rice, the Korean farmers branched out and pioneered in other crops-cotton and sugar beet-from Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan. Their collectives thrived and steadily produced a modern elite of agricultural technicians, agronomists, managerial professionals, and artists and intellectuals, while still retaining a firm hold on their ethnic (Korean and Buddhist) identity in a Russian-dominated, Turkic speaking, Muslim Central Asia. 15

5.3 Problems of the Korean Diaspora

All topical problems of the Korean diaspora in Central Asia can be classified according to a number of parameters. The most surface content analysis of publications in the national periodical press and mini-survey of Korean public will bring about; first of all, such problems as revival of the native language, customs, tradition and better economic relations with South Korea. 16 This should be the most urgent task of the Korean cultural centers

15. *Ibid*; p.66
and associations. If you ask the director of the Korean theatre in Alma Ata about the problems of the diaspora, he will answer there is no building for the theatre, the old building has been closed for 3 years because of its poor condition. Answering the same question the Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper *Koryo Ilbo* speaks about urgent financial problem which can lead to stopping of its publication or about lack of journalists speaking the Korean language.

The topical problems of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, where most of the Koreans reside today can be put under two categories:

a) The problem of all embracing internal ethnic consolidation and the problem of further inter-ethnic integration under the new political and socio-economic conditions of the post-Soviet period.

b) The problem of national revival and problem of national survival as a small ethnic group which does not have any form of autonomy.

### 5.4 Decline of the Korean Language

The Korean cultural associations and centers of Kazakhstan are of the opinion that there is a necessity of revival of the native language. The 1970 census demonstrated the high rate of Korean cultural identity maintained during the first decades in Central Asia. Thereafter, when the next
generation of youths arrived, there was an erosion of their culture and
greater inclination to assimilate into the mainstream of Russified Soviet
culture. Around 3, 98,000 Koreans, in 1979, just over 55% listed Korean as
their first language. Almost half, 47.7% listed Russian as their second
language. 17 (Refer Table 5.4). The decline is still continuing.

Table 5.4

Koreans By First Language In Central Asia (1970)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REPUBLIC</th>
<th>(a)KOREAN</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
<th>(b)RUSSIAN</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KAZAKSTAN</td>
<td>52,218</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>29,380</td>
<td>81,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIRGHIZSTAN</td>
<td>6,067</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>3,337</td>
<td>9,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TADJIKISTAN</td>
<td>5,825</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>2,665</td>
<td>8,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TURKMENISTAN</td>
<td>2,549</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>3,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UZBEKISTAN</td>
<td>1,08,483</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>39,055</td>
<td>1,47,523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,75,142</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75,381</td>
<td>2,50,523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B)1979</td>
<td>2,13,950</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>1,75,050</td>
<td>3,98,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The reasons are complex and individually disputable. There seems to
be increased intermarriage, accelerated urbanization, more higher education
in Russian, professional mobility into the Russian Soviet society, and lack of
a territorial base, no reinforcement from new waves of immigrants and,
above all remoteness both physically and psychologically from Korea. As a
result, the history of the Koreans in the Soviet Union becomes virtually
divorced from that of Korea, completely blurring the earlier distinction
between Russian/Soviet (naturalized) Koreans and foreign (alien) Koreans.

It has been seen that the successful Soviet Koreans, who adopted the Russian language, were visible in Central Asia, as high officials in Republics ministries and Soviet industrial enterprises. They reflected their success by integrating into Soviet society via education, as a result, their orientation was almost all Soviet rather than Korean, except in the traditional ethnic sense. The fate of the ethnic Koreans in Central Asia poses interesting question. Will they be able to assimilate into the Turkic cultures of the majorities in the Central Asian Republics? If the political climates in Central Asia go against minorities in the wake of narrow ethno-politics, will the Koreans be forced to emigrate? If there is an Islamic resurgence will the Buddhist Koreans be tolerated? Only time can answer these questions.

5.5 Revival of Diplomatic and Economic Relations with South Korea

The policy introduced by Mikhail Gorbachov in the late 1980s affected the Korean peninsula, which shared a border with the former Soviet Union. The establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and South Korea in 1990 had a significant impact on both political and economic relation in the Central Asian Republics. During his presidential campaign, Roh Tae- Woo expressed his strong willingness to improve relations with 'Northern' countries, including the Soviet Union. Once elected as the president of South Korea, Roh proposed Nordpolitik.

As one of the principal goal of his foreign policy. Nordpolitik denoted Seoul's foreign policy towards the Socialist countries. In order to implement this policy, the South Korean government sought to utilize its developing economic strength to improve foreign relations with the Russian Federation
and the Central Asian Republics. In response, many Korean business people were allowed to visit Moscow and Central Asia, motivated by the Korean government’s policy of trade promotion. During their visits, many expressed interests and proposed several massive investment projects on Soviet territory. In response, Soviet politicians suggested the possibility of establishing official diplomatic relations between the two countries. Moscow was keen to develop economic ties, ruling out political relations because of its existing links with Pyongyang. Seoul, in contrast, emphasized political relations more than economic relations.\textsuperscript{18}

\section*{5.6 Boom in Economic Relations}

The major projects outlined by South Korean Conglomerates in the public media in Russia and Central Asia were valued at nearly 5.6 billion dollars, involving a total of 48 projects. Many of the planned investments projects focused on Siberia, the Soviet Far East and Central Asia. They included on manufacturing, construction, resource development, food processing and fisheries, automobiles, chemical raw materials, communications and transportation.\textsuperscript{19} Table 5.5 shows country wise trade of South Korea with Central Asian Republics.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Bradshaw and Choongbae; op. cit. n. 4. p.463.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid; p. 464.
\end{itemize}
Table 5.5

South Korea’s Trade with Central Asia 1996($1,000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>EXPORT</th>
<th>IMPORT</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Councilor of the South Korean Embassy in Tashkent, Pak Ro Bek, stated that Seoul viewed Uzbekistan as it “main Central Asian partner”. He further said that South Korea would also become “the focus of Tashkent’s political and economic efforts in Far East”. He announced that in 1994 bilateral trade turnover amounted to $70mn. In 1995, the volume increased to $100 mn. At present, Uzbekistan sells to Korea cotton fiber; non-ferrous metals copper, cars, buses, electronic equipment, consumer goods and communication equipment. He further said that Uzbekistan has seven joint ventures involving the South Korean capital. Daewoo’s investment in the automobile industry in Uzbekistan is having an impact on trade figures. He was speaking this on the eve of the Uzbek President’s official visit to the Republic of Korea, from February 15 to 17, 1995.20

The official visit of the Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov to South Korea in February 1995 began with a positive event. President Karimov was presented Korea’s supreme award, the great order of *Mu Gun Hua*. President Kim Yong-Sam of the Republic of Korea ceremonially conferred the model on Islam Karimov. After the ceremony the two countries discussed on economic, political, cultural and other sphere of mutual cooperation and signed seven documents. They also signed a memorandum on mutual cooperation. The foreign ministers of the two countries, Abdul Aziz Komilov and Kong No-Myong, signed a memorandum of mutual cooperation in the sphere of agriculture, telecommunication and radio broadcasting, education and tourism. A memorandum on mutual cooperation was signed by the National Bank for Foreign Economic Activity of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the *Ikchzhem* Bank of Korea. President Karimov said Korea is a reliable and long-time partner, and Uzbekistan should organize mutually advantageous economic cooperation with that country on a broader basis. 21

The survey of economic boom in South Korea was also felt in Kazakhstan. A senior Kazakh official said on 15th October 1997 that South Korea had become the largest investor in the Kazakh economy in the first half of 1997, with investments amounting to over $1bn. The official, identified as Dulat Kuanyshev, said the first deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the State Investment Committee, Akhmetzhan Yesimov, would

be visiting Seoul on the 15th-18th October 1997, to hold talks with South Korean government officials and the top executive of Samsung, Daewoo, LG Company Ltd and Hyundai. The official trade turnover between Kazakhstan and South Korea in the first half of 1997 had amounted to over $160mn. He said Samsung and Daewoo were among the main investors in Kazakhstan.\textsuperscript{22}

A number of co-operation agreements between Kazakhstan and major South Korean cooperation were signed on 16th and 17th October 1997 during the visit to Seoul by Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister and Seoul Investment Committee Chairman Akhmetov Yesimov. A 10-year cooperation agreement between the Kazakh government and the Samsung Corporation was signed on 16th October 1997. The South Korean Company is to build a processing plant in priority sectors of the Kazakh economy under the accord, investing an estimated $1bn in the initial phase of the projects. Yesimov also met the South Korean Prime Minister Ko Kon the same day for a discussion of the prospects for bilateral cooperation.\textsuperscript{23}

A memorandum of understanding on investment by South Korean’s Daewoo Group in Kazakh infrastructure projects was also signed on 16th October 1997. Daewoo is to build a business complex including a 700 rooms hotel, offices and conference rooms and take part in a $350mn modernization projects for Kazakhstan’s telecommunications sector. The group will also construct a communications research centre and a $12.5mn

\textsuperscript{22} SWBSU/3051 G/3 16th October 1997.
\textsuperscript{23} SWBSU/3055 G/3 21st October 1997.
optical cable factory. Daewoo has already spent $1bn acquiring a 40% stake in Kazakhstan’s telecommunications monopoly, Kazakh Telecom, under an agreement in May, 1997. On 17th October 1997, a contract was signed with LG Electronics, under which that company is to invest $23.4mn in a project to produce up to 373,000 television sets annually in Kazakhstan. The project is expected to generate 300 jobs at a former mining-equipment plant in Alma-Ata. The re-tooled plant is expected to turn out 4,000 sets in 1998, rising to its design capacity of 3,73,000 by 2004.24

So it seems that South Korea and Central Asia have developed closer economic and political relations. At the initial stage of that relationship, both countries have readily recognized the potential benefits of closer ties. Economic relations between Russia and South Korea are increasingly based on economic rather than political considerations. In such a situation, the prospective absence of politically motivated government support for trade with Central Asia will likely prompt the South Korean business community to become even more cautious.

In the present form, the Korean minority in Central Asia is the result of decade of Russo-Japanese imperialistic rivalry for the control of the Korean Peninsula, dating back a hundred years. The Soviet Koreans have demonstrated their ability to overcome the past. Whether the future will allow them similar avenues of group survival is a question that remains

open, even though present trends-potential anti-democratic ethno-politics, religious intolerance, and economic collapse-do not pose well for the immediate future.

Nevertheless, there is a sign that the Korean minorities might play a positive role in the immediate uncertain future of Central Asia. Quite recently, Koreans in Uzbekistan are acting as via-media between the business ventures of South Korea and Central Asia. Whether this isolated instance will serve as a positive index for further integration into post-Soviet life for Koreans in Central Asia is to be seen.

One thing is certain; the former Soviet Korean minority in Central Asia has entered a post-Soviet chapter. Their social composition makes them especially qualified to engage successfully in the new era of privatization and capitalism: and their cultural identity equips them with the power to forge important contacts abroad, with Korea. In turn, Korea, to ward off aggressive Japanese competition, may prefer to cement its ties with the new Commonwealth of Independent States in which Kazakhstan is a key component and in which many Koreans live. Meanwhile, Central Asian-South Korean trade relations are playing an increasingly visible role, much of it mediated by the Korean minority.25