

The Involvement of the two German States in Korea during the 1950s in the Context of the Cold War



War and Conflict Studies

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This dissertation is submitted to the examining board of the
Master of Arts in War and Conflict Studies
October 2020

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Published online on the
Publication Server of the University of Potsdam:
<https://doi.org/10.25932/publishup-48731>
<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:kobv:517-opus4-487315>

Abstract

This master thesis will analyze the background of the involvement of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in Korea during the 1950s in the context of the Cold War. In both Korean states, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as well as the Republic of Korea (ROK), the so-called humanitarian aid that was provided to them in the form of medical and economic assistance to help surmount the hardship of the postwar period is remembered with great appreciation to this day. However, critical views on the German engagement in Korea are still relatively hard to find. In this paper, two exemplary cases will be studied: the GDR's city reconstruction project in the North Korean cities of Hamheung and Heungnam and the FRG's medical assistance to the ROK by means of the West German Red Cross Hospital in Busan. By looking at primary sources like governmental documents, this thesis will examine the geopolitical conditions and particular national interests that stood behind the German development and humanitarian aid for the Korean states at that time, thus shedding light on the political goals the two German states pursued, and the benefit they expected to derive from their engagement in Korea. Sources consulted include primary archival materials, secondary sources like monographs, journal articles, contemporary newspaper articles, and interviews with contemporary witnesses.

Zusammenfassung

In dieser Masterarbeit wird der Hintergrund des Engagements der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD) und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (DDR) in Korea in den 1950er Jahren im Kontext des Kalten Krieges analysiert. Während und nach dem Koreakrieg erhielten die beiden koreanischen Staaten, die Demokratische Volksrepublik Korea (DVRK) sowie die Republik Korea (ROK) sogenannte Humanitäre Hilfe in Form von medizinischer und wirtschaftlicher Hilfe zur Überwindung der Not. Bisher gab es zahlreiche Forschungen zu diesem Thema, die historische Fakten ausgegraben haben, aber kritische Ansichten dazu sind noch relativ schwer zu finden. In dieser Arbeit werden zwei beispielhafte Fälle untersucht: das Wiederaufbauprojekt der DDR in den nordkoreanischen Städten Hamheung und Heungnam und die medizinische Hilfe der BRD in der ROK durch das Westdeutsche Rotkreuzkrankenhaus in Busan. Anhand von Primärquellen wie Regierungsdokumenten werden in dieser Arbeit die geopolitischen Bedingungen und besonderen nationalen Interessen untersucht, die hinter der deutschen Entwicklungs- und humanitären Hilfe für die koreanischen Staaten zu dieser Zeit standen. Außerdem werden die politischen Ziele sowie der Nutzen beleuchtet, den sich die BRD und die DDR von ihrem Engagement in Korea versprachen. Zu den konsultierten Quellen zählen primäres Archivmaterial, sekundäre Quellen wie Monographien, Zeitschriftenartikel, zeitgenössische Zeitungsartikel und Interviews mit zeitgenössischen Zeugen.

Acknowledgements

Here I would like to express my gratitude to people whose generous support enabled me to complete this dissertation.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Professor Bernd Stöver and Professor Christian Müller for the most important inspiration and generous guidance in the writing of this thesis.

Likewise, I would like to thank Professor Sönke Neitzel for giving the decisive advice on taking the thesis to the next level, as well as the fellow students who participated in his colloquium for graduate and doctoral students.

I would like to express my special thanks to the Korean Red Cross Humanitarian Academy, especially to the Assistant Manager Mok Jeong-ha for his dedication to collecting materials and inviting me to the academic conference held by the Korean Red Cross Seoul on 19 August 2020.

I owe special thanks to Dr. Alexander Röhreke of the Studienwerk Deutsches Leben in Ostasien e.V. who willingly helped me to use the invaluable original photographs for this paper.

Thanks also to Cho Hyun-jin, Kim Ji-won, and Nicola Hoch for helping me find materials.

I am also highly grateful to German Hoch who was my first professor at Hanyang University for his continuous assistance.

Above all, I express my special thanks to my beloved parents, Park In-sook and Kim Sun-min, who always devoted themselves to me and my brother.

Any glaring errors are probably my fault.

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Abbreviations

Archives, Organizations and Acronyms

AA

Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Ministry, FRG)

ADRK

Archiv des Deutschen Roten Kreuzes

BA

Bundesarchiv

DAG

Deutsche Arbeitsgruppe (German Working Group)

DPRK

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)

FRG

Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)

GDR

German Democratic Republic (East Germany)

ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross

MfAA

Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the German Democratic Republic)

NARA

National Archives and Records Administration

PAAA

Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes

PRC

People's Republic of China

ROK

Republic of Korea (South Korea)

SAPMO-BA

Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv

SED

Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)

UNKRA

UN Korean Reconstruction Agency

1. Introduction: “*Then as now*”

“The sorrowful experience of division ties Germany and Korea...

...Then as now, Germany stands tight on your side.”

- Frank-Walter Steinmeier, June 25, 2020¹

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, the German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier sent a video message to the people in South Korea that was broadcast on South Korean television. The sudden appearance of the German president was quite surprising for many South Koreans. Firstly, because they were not well aware of the fact that Germany also has a president besides the familiar Federal Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and secondly, because the “German President” was the first among all the other state leaders to address the South Koreans right on “the occasion of the Korean War memorial”, even putting aside U.S. president Donald Trump.

Such a reaction was nothing but natural because Germany was regarded as a country irrelevant to the Korean War for a long time. It was only in 2018 that the government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) officially recognized that the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) participated in the Korean War. As matter of course, no German soldier fought on Korean soil, but the FRG rather provided medical assistance from 1954 to 1959 through the German Red Cross Hospital in the south-eastern port city Busan. The ROK government recognized that the West German medical assistance was significantly beneficial to then South Koreans who were still suffering from the harsh postwar living conditions. All the medical services, which were urgently needed at the time were provided for free.²

However, since the 1960s West Germany’s involvement in South Korea had almost

¹ TV program on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Korean War, “*영웅에게* * *Salute to the Heroes*”, broadcasted on the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), 8:15-8:51, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FuNFppAtds> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

² 국방백서 * *Defense White Paper 2018*, Ministry of National Defense (ROK), December 2018, pp. 236-239

vanished into obscurity. For instance, Professor Choi Jong-go's book, *The history of the German-Korean relations*, one of the very few studies about the German-Korean relations, contains only a few sentences about the medical aid.³ Even the ROK government did not keep in memory and commemorate at all West Germany's contribution during the last decades. In the book *30 Years of Korean Diplomacy* published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of Korea, the cases of eight other European countries which participated in the Korean War by sending military troops or shipping supplies were mentioned, but the case of West Germany was not covered at all.⁴ Only a few local historians in Busan uncovered a handful of traces, but their work failed to attract major interest of the public.⁵ In Germany proper, this tendency appeared to a similar extent. In the last couple of decades, just a few memoirs of the German doctors who were dispatched to Busan were published, but there was no remarkable mention nor commemoration at all.⁶

The South Korean academia, too, showed little interest in this issue. Only recently, several researches have been conducted and the related historical facts successfully dug up. However, these studies apparently aimed to praise the West Germans or show off a sense of appreciation, in accordance with the persisting typical Korean War narrative in South Korea, the heroization of allies.

But when it comes to understanding history, it is absolutely imperative to take into consideration the contemporary historical framework. That means, the Korean War, the starting point for the German involvement in Korea must be seen and analyzed against the backdrop of the global East-West confrontation in the 1950s, the era of the

³ Choi Jong-go, *한강에서 라인까지: 한독관계사* * *Vom Han bis zum Rhein: Geschichte der Deutsch-Koreanischen Beziehungen* (Seoul: HongSungSa) 1983, p. 244

⁴ *한국외교30년 1948-1978* * *30 years of Korean diplomacy 1948-1978*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1979, pp. 50-51

⁵ *부산시사* * *City History of Busan* Vol. 3, Busan City History Compilation Committee, 1991; Jung Kyu-han, *부산지역 의료 130년사* * *130 years of medical service in the Busan area* (Busan: Yeonmun C&P), 2008

⁶ Stefan W. Escher, *Das Jahr in Pusan: Logbuch eines Arztes* (München: Pieper & CO Verlag), 1959; Gerd Himstedt et al., *Bilanz einer Freundschaft: 100 Jahre deutsch-koreanische Beziehungen* (Bonn: Deutsch-Koreanische Gesellschaft), 1984; Karl Silex, *Die Ära Adenauer* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer) 1964, s. 143-146, as quoted in Choi, p. 243

Cold War.

The 1950s was a particularly memorable decade in the turbulent 20th century for both Germany and Korea. Both nations shared the tragedy of division. However, in addition to that, the Korean Peninsula, which had already been left in tatters by 35 years of Japanese colonial rule, in June 1950 became the theater of a new devastating war that inflicted even more destruction on North and South Korea. Even though far away from the battlefield, it was inevitable for Germany to get involved in the Korean War through the Cold War context.

Certainly, the West German medical aid to Korea between 1954 and 1959 which provided free medical services to more than 300,000 South Korean people suffering from the harsh conditions deserved respect. But, at the same time, still there arise some questions. At first glance, the West German medical assistance in Korea appears to be comparable to that granted by other countries. However, especially given that some countries even sent their own medical personnel to the front line, it is doubtful that the medical aid from West Germany was so sublime an activity that the South Korean government rightly sent face masks to Germany in spring 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷ Would it not have been possible to dispatch medical staff already in the autumn of 1950 after the Battle of Inchon, if West Germany truly had the intention to support an ally in need? More opportunities to act like this arose since the summer of 1951. As the hostilities had come to a deadlock near the 38th Parallel, the medical units could have safely landed in the rear without any risk.

Regarding the Korean side it is suspicious that the South Korean government has virtually neglected for decades the history of medical aid from West Germany. It is hard to believe that Korea might just have forgotten this historical fact. Particularly, considering that Germany enjoys a good reputation in Korea, it is very strange that such a heroic narrative has almost disappeared. It is obvious, though, that the embarrassing circumstances which eventually led the West German government to close the Red Cross Hospital in Busan also brought the South Korean government to keep silent about the German aid activities that had been overshadowed by scandalous

⁷ “6.25전쟁 유엔참전용사 마스크 지원 * Mask donation for the Korean War veterans”, Ministry of the Interior and Safety, 7 May 2020, URL: <https://www.gov.kr/portal/ntnadmNews/2155942> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

events.

Contrary to West Germany, East Germany despite still suffering from economic and social problems, started to send aid to North Korea soon after the outbreak of the Korean War. The main reason for this swift engagement definitely was the sense of obligation towards a socialist sister country that both the East German government and the East German people felt.

This thesis will examine the background of the intervention of the two German states on the Korean Peninsula in the 1950s in the context of the Cold War. It will pursue the question what both states were expecting from their humanitarian engagement in Korea. If Germany's attitude toward Korea in the German President's words is "now" the same as "then", would it be quite different from what Koreans expect?

In the following chapter, relevant researches referred to in this paper will be introduced.

1-1. Sources and Status of Research

Most of the studies on the German-Korean relations are focused on the economic cooperation since the 1960s.⁸ There are a few researches that primarily deal with the influence of the Korean War on the policy of the West German government, especially the rearmament of West Germany.⁹ Some of those papers mention the German

⁸ André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan. Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt), 2004; Choi Ki-chul, *Koreanische Direktinvestitionen in Europa, insbesondere in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, unpublished dissertation, Universität Göttingen, 1991; 1984; Han Jong-soo, *Die Beziehungen zwischen der Republik Korea und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1948-1986* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang), 1991; Hans Siegfried Lamm and Siegfried Kupper, *DDR und Dritte Welt* (München: Oldenbourg), 1976; Harald Möller, *DDR und Dritte Welt: die Beziehungen der DDR mit Entwicklungsländern: ein neues theoretisches Konzept, dargestellt anhand der Beispiele China und Ägypten sowie Irak, Iran* (Berlin: Dr. Köster), 2004; Jürgen Kleiner, *Korea – Auf steinigem Pfad* (Berlin: Vistas Verlag) 1992; Kim Moo-hyoung, *Die wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit zwischen Südkorea und der BRD – aus südkoreanischer Sicht*, unpublished dissertation, Universität Münster, 1992; Lee Eun-jung and Hannes B. Mosler, *Länderbericht Korea* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung), 2015; Werner Abelshausen, *Deutsche Wirtschaftsgeschichte seit 1945* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung), 2004; Yae Byung-hwan, *Die Handlungsbeziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Korea nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag), 1997

⁹ Choi Chong-go, loc. cit.; Choi Hyung-sik, *Zur Frage der Rolle des Korea-Krieges bei der westdeutschen Wiederaufrüstungsdebatte und des Einflusses auf die prinzipielle Entscheidung für die Wiederaufrüstung im Kontext der Aktualisierung des Ost-West-Konfliktes*, doctoral dissertation, Heinrich-Heine Universität Düsseldorf, 1994; Gunther Mai, *Westliche Sicherheitspolitik im Kalten Krieg: der Korea-Krieg und die deutsche Wiederbewaffnung 1950* (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt

humanitarian aid to Korea in the 1950s briefly, but the majority does not. Notwithstanding, these studies helped to understand how the German-Korean relations developed during the second half of the 20th century. Most of this material will be mentioned in the bibliography at the end of this paper.

Studies exclusively on the West German humanitarian aid to South Korea appeared after 2010. Hong Young-sun's book "*Cold War Germany, the Third World and the Global Humanitarian Regime*" is one of the most relevant works on this topic.¹⁰ It critically examines the humanitarian aid policy of both German states during the Cold War period and shows how the German humanitarian aid became institutionalized, which acted as a means of projecting the German influence abroad. Moreover, this book contributed to reconstructing historical facts based on archival sources from various countries like Germany, the U.S. but excluding Korea.

There is also a significant study on this topic by the medical professor Walter Bruchhausen of the University Hospital of the RWTH Aachen University published in 2019. This study illustrates the characteristics of the medical assistance from the two German states, by comparing and analyzing the cases of Korea, Vietnam and Congo.¹¹ Also, using the example of Vietnam and Congo, it reveals how the German humanitarian aid during the Cold War period developed and why each case was different depending on its geopolitical context.

Recently in South Korea, several researches on the West German medical aid have been done, in particular the paper written by Dr. Cho Sung-hun, the director of the Institute for Military History under the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Korea,

Verlag), 1977; Lee Kyu-ha, 韓國戰爭이 獨逸의 再武裝에 끼친 影響 * The Influence of the Korean War on the Rearmament in Germany, in *전북사학 Jeonbuk Sahak*, Vol. 8, 1984, p. 329-396; Sascha Foerster, *Die Angst vor dem Koreakrieg: Konrad Adenauer und die westdeutsche Bevölkerung 1950* (Marburg: Tectum Wissenschaftsverlag), 2013; Suh Zun-weon, *Der Einfluss des Korea-Krieges auf die politische Emanzipation und die Wiederbewaffnung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, doctoral dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität zu München, 1994

¹⁰ Hong Young-sun, *Cold War Germany, the Third World and the Global Humanitarian Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), March 2015

¹¹ Walter Bruchhausen, Between Foreign Politics and Humanitarian Neutrality: Medical Emergency Aid by the Two German States before 1970, *Social History of Medicine* Vol. 32, Issue 4 (November 2019), pp. 819-842

and another paper that was published in German.¹² Dr. Cho's paper was the first and only study on the West German medical support to South Korea in the 1950s. It deals with the progress of the aid and presents lots of historical facts based on vast archival material from the U.S., Germany and Korea. The second paper covers almost the same content but was translated into German language and added more German sources.

Regarding the East German-North Korean relations, too, not many studies have been published. But one interesting point is that some of the research was conducted by people who directly participated in the aid activities at that time or people who were able to base oneself on memoirs of or interviews with contemporary witnesses. In 1996, Rüdiger Frank published his doctoral dissertation on the city reconstruction project in Hamhung. His dissertation is based on the testimonies of Konrad Püschel, the first team leader of the city's urban design team.¹³ Another doctoral dissertation on the East German city reconstruction projects in North Korea was written by Sin Dong-sam who participated in the project as translator.¹⁴ He used to be one of several North Korean students at Dresden University of Technology that had been sent to East Germany by the Kim Il-sung regime in 1950. Both studies are based on valuable sources even from North Korea and East German archives and thus were able to successfully reconstruct historical facts in detail.

The doctoral thesis of Liana Kang-Schmidt attempted to analyze the diplomatic relations between East Germany and North Korea between 1949 and 1990 based on vast archival material. Her study briefly mentions the city reconstruction project in Hamheung as an example of the East German-North Korean relations in the 1950s.¹⁵

As the studies on the West German humanitarian aid to South Korea are attracting

¹² Cho Sung-hun, 6.25전쟁시 독일 의료지원단 파견과 성과 * The dispatch and achievements of the German medical Unit in the Korean War, *항도부산* * *Port City Busan*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (August 2018), pp. 133-165; Chung Tae-hung and Chung Ch. S., Das westdeutsche Rotkreuzhospital in Busan in den Jahren 1954-59, *Dokilomunhak*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (March 2019), pp. 111-142

¹³ Rüdiger Frank, *Die DDR und Nordkorea. Der Wiederaufbau der Stadt Hamheung von 1954-1962* (Aachen: Schaker Verlag), 1996

¹⁴ Sin Dong-sam, *Die Planung des Wiederaufbaus der Städte Hamhung und Hungnam in Nordkorea durch die DAG-Städtebaubrigade der DDR von 1955 – 1962*, unpublished dissertation, HafenCity Universität Hamburg, 2017

¹⁵ Liana Kang-Schmitz, *Nordkoreas Umgang mit Abhängigkeit und Sicherheitsrisiko - Am Beispiel der bilateralen Beziehungen zur DDR* (Berlin: epubli), 2011

attention as a new topic in South Korea, the number of studies on the East German aid to North Korea has increased as well.¹⁶ In fact, this is not a brand-new trend, because in the field of unification studies there have already been done several researches before.¹⁷ They focused on interpreting the significance of the East German aid to North Korea during the 1950s in the context of the international socialism, and noted how the relationship between East Germany and North Korea changed over time especially related to the internal conflicts in the Communist Bloc.

Other studies referred to in this paper are comprehensive studies on the Korean War, Cold War, and Humanitarian Aid, published in English, German, and Korean. Whenever excerpts from these sources are cited, they will be mentioned in the footnotes.

Other primary sources include archival sources in German archives like Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-

¹⁶ Lee Jeong-min, *함흥 전후복구사업을 통해 본 북한-동독 관계* * North Korea-East Germany Relations through Hamhung Post-war Restoration Project, in *역사문제연구* * *Critical Studies on Modern Korean History*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (April 2020), pp. 423-455; Lee Kyung-suk and Kim Kyung-mi, *냉전기 북한-동독의 외교관계(1953~1989): 협력과 갈등* * Foreign Relations between North Korea and East Germany during the Cold War period (1953-1989): Cooperation and Conflict, in *유럽연구* * *The Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (August 2016), pp. 149-180; Lee Shi-yon, *전후 복구 시기 동독의 북한 원조* * East Germany's aid to North Korea during the post-war recovery period, in *세계역사와 문화연구* * *World History and Culture*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (March 2020), pp. 161-184; Park Jong-chol and Jung Eun-lee, *한국전쟁 이후 북한 재건을 위한 동유럽 사회주의 국가의 원조에 대한 검토* A Study on East Europe's Aids for the Reconstruction of North Korea after the Korean War, in *중동유럽한국학회지* * *The Central and East European Society of Koreanology*, Vol. 15 (2014), pp. 49-73

¹⁷ Chung Yong-kil, *동독과 북한의 통일정책 비교* * North Korea's Unification Policies and Activities against the South: A Comparative Study on Unification Policies of North Korea and East Germany, in *안보연구* * *Security Studies*, Vol. 17 (1987), pp. 197-226; Hwang Byung-deok, *동독의 대서독 정책과 북한의 대남정책 비교분석* * Comparative Analysis of East Germany's Policy toward West Germany and North Korea's Policy toward South Korea, in *통일연구논총* * *Unification Policy Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (June 1998), pp. 163-184; Woo Pyung-kyun, *동유럽 공산체제 해체와 북한체제 붕괴의 연관성* * Connection with the Collapse of Communist System in Eastern Europe and Demise of the North Korean System, in *평화학연구* * *The Journal of Peace Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (December 2014), pp. 35-56

BA), Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR im Politischen Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (MfAA in PAAA), and The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). All these sources were accessed mainly through the National Archives of Korea. Additional primary sources are interviews with Dr. Sin Dong-sam and his wife, and the original photographs of the West German Red Cross Hospital in Busan. The pictures were taken and preserved by Elisabeth Huwer, the wife of the hospital director Günther Huwer, and provided by Studienwerk Deutsches Leben in Ostasien e.V. On August 18, 2020, an academic conference on the international Red Cross activities during the Korean War was held by the Korean Red Cross Humanitarian Academy in Seoul. At this conference, Dr. Cho Sung-hun gave a presentation on the activity of the West German Red Cross Hospital in Busan. All referenced content will be indicated in footnotes as well whenever they are cited.

In the next chapter, the research method and the way the sources were used will be introduced.

1-2. Methodical Approach

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the background of the German humanitarian aid to Korea in the 1950s. As a historical research, the first task of this paper is the reconstruction of the past based on the collected material. Therefore, mainly archival materials have been referred to, and if available, materials from multiple archives have been compared and cross-checked.

Since the foremost goal of this paper is to interpret historical events in their historical context, it will analyze the general concept of Humanitarian Aid in the 1950s against the backdrop of the Cold War and the Korean War as a manifestation of the global conflict between the Great Powers USA and USSR. Thus, the decision of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic to get involved on the war-stricken Korean Peninsula by providing humanitarian aid will be examined in this context.

Most primary South Korean sources such as local newspapers are used to document the local events and how the German engagement was perceived by Koreans.

Moreover, the special features of the humanitarian aid provided by the two German

States will be demonstrated by comparing it with similar contributions from other countries like Sweden – that established its own Red Cross Field Hospital in Busan – and countries from the Communist Bloc.

2. The Korean War: The First Hot War of the Cold War

When the Korean War broke out, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic were not in a position yet to intervene militarily themselves in the conflict, nonetheless, both states directly participated in the Korean War by sending emergency aid. The GDR government's reaction was swift. Within three months from the outbreak of the war, a state-sponsored mass organization, the Korea-Aid-Committee (Korea Hilfsausschuss) was established which was composed of several high officials from the SED and the governmental administration. The most remarkable one among the many East German aid activities in North Korea was the postwar reconstruction of Hamheung, the second-largest city after the capital Pyongyang and the largest industrial city. West Germany on the other side initially sent one shipment of medical supplies to South Korea through the UN, and after the ceasefire built a Red Cross Hospital in Busan where the vast majority of war refugees in South Korea were concentrated. All the medical services to South Koreans suffering from the harsh postwar conditions were provided for free. Thus, it is fair to say that the humanitarian assistance of the two Germanies to Korea during the 1950s was by no means insignificant.

This raises the question what was the reason for the German states to get involved in wartime and postwar Korea.

The Korean War was not just a civil war between the Korean states nor a typical regional conflict in the postcolonial era. As a matter of course, local dynamics on the Korean Peninsula also contributed greatly to the outbreak and escalation of the war. For instance, the tensions between the left and the right and their belligerent leaders already had existed under the Japanese occupation, but without the particular supraregional, global political framework the war would have hardly happened. Especially, it would have been impossible for the leader of the DPRK Kim Il-sung alone to start a war. All the processes that eventually led to the outbreak of the war were a smaller piece of the grand picture of the global system rivalry between the

Eastern and the Western Bloc that culminated in the so-called Cold War.¹⁸

After Korea's liberation from Japanese rule on August 15, 1945, the Korean people had high hopes that they would regain their independence and sovereignty. However, their hopes were dashed again and they were deprived of the opportunity to choose their own political system by the victorious Great Powers.¹⁹ In particular, Korea had its own provisional government and the provisional government that showed its will to resist Japan, but the voice of the Korean people was not taken into account seriously by the victorious heads of state. So, the Koreans had to watch their territory being divided and ruled by foreign powers again.²⁰

The division along the 38th Parallel was supposed to be the temporary demarcation line between the northern part of the peninsula occupied by the Soviet Union and the southern part of Korea occupied by the United States.²¹ However, contrary to the initial expectations, the division lasted longer, and in 1948, two different states and governments were established, the DPRK in the North and the ROK in the South. Thus,

¹⁸ For different views on this issue see, Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 1: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1981, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1990; David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (New York: St. Martin's Press), 1978; Kathryn Weathersby, *Korea 1949-50. To Attack, or Not to Attack? Stalin, Kim Il Sung and the Prelude to War*. In *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 5 (Spring 1995), pp. 2-9; William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 1995

¹⁹ There is an argument that Korea was divided instead of Japan because the Japanese hurriedly surrendered to the U.S. to protect their imperial system and to avoid being divided and ruled by the Allied Powers, especially by the Soviets. See Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the surrender of Japan* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 2006

²⁰ The U.S. government did not approve the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea, nor the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (건국준비위원회) and the People's Committee (인민위원회) which were the largest preparatory organizations for the establishment of the independent and unified Korean state. "Proclamation No. 1 by General of the Army Douglas MacArthur." September 7, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), 1945, Volume VI, The British Commonwealth, The Far East, eds. John P. Glennon, et al, (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1969, Document 776 URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v06/d776> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

²¹ A Korean scholar argues that the division of Korea was discussed at the Potsdam Conference, about a month earlier than broadly known. Lee Wan-bom, *삼팔선 획정의 진실 * The truth about the definition of the 38th Parallel* (Paju: JiSikSanUpSa), 2001. See also, James I. Matray, *Potsdam Revisited: Prelude to a Divided Korea*, *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* Vol. 24(2-3), September 2017, pp. 259-280

the division was officially fixed.²² Finally in June 1950, the tension and pressure that had accumulated inside the Korean Peninsula erupted into a full-blown military conflict.

Besides the rivaling Great Powers Soviet Union and U.S.A., the presence of the People's Republic of China, which emerged as the new communist hegemon in the Far East, served as a catalyst as well. The PRC could not offer an immediate military assistance of troops or heavy weapons to the DPRK because of the Taiwan issue, but Mao Zedong promised a military intervention if the U.S. or Japan intervened in the military conflict in Korea.²³ Also, it is true that to the U.S.A. Korea was not the top-priority object in the Pacific-Asia area, but the U.S. did not neglect the situation when the war broke out in reality.²⁴ On June 27, 1950, the second day after the DPRK's

²² It was decided at the Moscow Conference in December 1947 that the trusteeship would last maximum five years, but the U.S. and the USSR failed to reach an agreement for a unified Korean state, thus, the U.S. transferred the Korean issue to the UN. However, the UN also failed to hold free elections in the entire Korea. This failure eventually paved the way for the foundation of two separate Korean states. The ROK was founded in August 1948 through a referendum under UN surveillance, then the DPRK was established the following month.

²³ Shen Zhihua, translated by Kim Dong-kil, *조선전쟁의 재탐구 * Re-exploration of the Korean War* (Seoul: SunIn), 2014 p. 321, 328, 330-1. The original Chinese publication is 毛澤東·斯大林與朝鮮戰爭 * *Mao Zhedong, Stalin and the Korean War*, (Guangdong: Guangdong People Publishing House), 2003

²⁴ Korea was not the top-defense-priority to the U.S. It was revealed by the security report called National Security Council (NSC) 48/2 which was handed over by a British counterspy to the USSR, and through the speech of the U.S. Secretary of State Department in January 1950. However, it did not mean that Korea has been entirely excluded from the U.S. defense perimeter in Asia. See the NSC 8/2.

NSC 48/2, 3. b. *The United States should act to develop and strengthen the security of the area from Communist external aggression or internal subversion. These steps should take into account any benefits to the security of Asia which may flow from the development of one or more regional groupings. The United States on its own initiative should now:*

(1) Improve the United States position with respect to Japan, the Ryukyus and the Philippines...

...3. e. (1) The United States should continue to provide for the extension of political support and economic, technical, military and other assistance to the democratically-elected Government of the Republic of Korea...

“Memorandum by the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Souers) to the National Security Council”, Washington, December 30, 1949. *FRUS*, 1949, The Far East and Australia, Volume VII, Part 2, eds. John G. Reid and John P. Glennon (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1976, Document 387. URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v07p2/d387> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]; Kathryn Weathersby, “Should We Fear This?” Stalin and the Danger of War with America, *Woodrow Wilson International Center For Scholars Working Paper*, No. 39, July 2002, p. 11

People's Army crossed the 38th line, U.S. President Harry Truman declared a military response. And he appealed to his allies, especially the members of the UN, to join the UN Forces to be sent to Korea.²⁵

The process of participation in the Korean War did not proceed smoothly. The U.S. was in the midst of disarmament but had to reverse its existing policies due to the outbreak of the war. Britain, a former World War ally of the U.S., did not even understand the existence of Korea, and regarded the value of Korea to be less than a single grenadier.²⁶

Despite such reluctance, soldiers from six countries, the United Kingdom, Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, and France including French Togo, landed on the South Korean coast about only within a month from the outbreak of the war, and a total of 10 additional countries sent their troops in succession. Among them were

"...The defensive perimeter runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to the Ryukyus. We hold important defense positions in the Ryukyu Islands, and those we will continue to hold..."

"Speech on the Far East", Dean Acheson, January 12, 1950. URL: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1950-01-12.pdf> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

²⁵ *"...The Security Council of the United Nations called upon the invading troops to cease hostilities and to withdraw to the 38th parallel..."*, *"...In these circumstances I have ordered United States air and sea forces to give the Korean Government troops cover and support."*

"Statement by the President, Truman on Korea", June 27, 1950, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Public Papers of the Presidents, Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953. URL: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116192> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

NSC 8/2, (2) *In NSC 8 it was concluded that "it should be the effort of the U.S. Government through all proper means to effect a settlement of the Korean problem which would enable the U.S. to withdraw from Korea as soon as possible with the minimum of bad effects". As a means to that end, it was further concluded in that paper that, following the anticipated establishment of a government in south Korea, the U.S. should undertake "within practicable and feasible limits" a program of support of that government, including the extension of economic aid and the training and equipping of native armed forces "capable of protecting the security of south Korea against any but an overt act of aggression by north Korean or other forces". With respect to the withdrawal of occupation forces, NSC 8 stipulated that the U.S. should be prepared to proceed with the implementation of withdrawal following the formation of a government in south Korea, and that such withdrawal should be phased in consonance with the accomplishment of the broad objectives of the U.S. in Korea and with the relevant commitments of the U.S. vis-à-vis the UN, every effort being made, however, to create conditions for the withdrawal of such forces by December 31, 1948.*

"Report by the National Security Council to the President". Washington, March 22, 1949. *FRUS*, 1949, The Far East and Australasia, Volume VII, Part 2, eds. John G. Reid and John P. Glennon (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1976, Document 209. URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v07p2/d209> [last accessed 1 September 2020]

²⁶ Paul M. Edwards, *United Nations Participants in the Korean War: The Contribution of 45 Member Countries* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc.), 2013, p.46

soldiers from Europe, as well as from Ethiopia and Colombia.²⁷

One of reasons for such broad participation into the Korean War from various countries was that because many countries in the Free Camp generally shared the assessment in view of the Korean War that since 1949, with the establishment of the PRC and the successful Soviet nuclear test, the Soviet Union gradually tried to test its influence around the world.²⁸

On the other side, the PRC and the Soviet Union most actively participated in the Korean War among the communist states. The PRC got directly involved in the military operations on the Korean Peninsula after the UN Forces had driven back the North Korean People's Army and approached the Chinese border with North Korea. And the Soviet Union assisted the North Korean forces with military planes and pilots.²⁹

As such, while the two camps were fighting a war on the Korean Peninsula, attention began to be drawn to Germany at the same time, which was in a similar situation to Korea. Given the particular features of postwar Germany – a divided country with two rivaling states confronting each other along the Iron Curtain that separated the Western from the Eastern Bloc - drawing comparisons to the situation on the Korean Peninsula was obvious.³⁰

Of course, the situation in Germany and Korea has never been similar. In the case of

²⁷ Park Dong-chan, *통계로 본 6.25 전쟁 * The Korean War seen through Statistics*, Institute for Military History (ROK), 2014, pp. 280-281

²⁸ Mario Del Pero, Incompatible Universalism, in *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War*, Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle, eds., (Abingdon: Routledge), 2014, pp. 3-16.

²⁹ However, the both states seemed to be trying to keep a distance themselves from the Korean War at the same time. The Chinese troops in Korea operated under the name of “People's Voluntary Army (中國人民志願軍)”, which meant that those troops voluntarily participated into the Korean War to protect the North Koreans from the aggression of the US, were not sent by the government. But the PVA consisted of military units separated from the official “People's Liberation Army”, the regular military force of the PRC. And the Soviet air force pilots never crossed over the 38th Parallel and their planes were even disguised with the North Korean flag. See Shen, loc. cit.; Michael J. McCarthy, Uncertain Enemies: Soviet Pilots in the Korean War, in *Air Power History*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 32-45; Mark O'Neil, Soviet Involvement in the Korean War, in *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 14, No. 3, The Korean War (Spring 2000), pp. 20-24

³⁰ David G. Coleman, The Berlin-Korea Parallel: Berlin and American National Security in Light of the Korean War, in *Australian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (July 1999), pp. 19-41

Germany, the possibility of a large-scale military conflict such as the Korean War was remarkably low. In particular, the two leaders of the German states were by no means as aggressive as the leaders of the Korean states. In the case of Korea, unlike Germany, it was rather easy to start a war because the world's interest in Korea and Korea's strategic importance were relatively low.³¹

By the time the Korean War was raging, neither the FRG nor the GDR had a proper army. Rather, the escalation of the East-West conflict through the Korean War led both the USA and the Soviet Union to accelerate the rebuilding of new military structures in both German states. Thus, getting militarily involved in the Korean War theater was no option for them, but like many other countries they decided to participate in the civil aid activities.

The international humanitarian, especially medical aid was urgently needed since the war caused enormous damage and destruction to almost all regions of the Korean Peninsula. It is generally estimated that casualties were over 3 million at least. However, this calculation does not take into account all the civilian victims from massacres and abduction, therefore, the real number of victims is assumed to be higher.

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Material damage was also significant. According to the estimate of the Bank of Korea, damage of a total of 900 billion KRW at the exchange rate at the time occurred on both sides. Even in the case of South Korea alone, the amount of damage was about twice the amount of the Gross National Product in the year of 1950. In particular, the damage to the private housing sector in both South and North Korea was counted as the most serious one.³³

³¹ Ra Jong-yil, *세계와 한국전쟁* * *The World and the Korean War* (Seoul: National Museum of Korean Contemporary History), 2019

³² Park Dong-chan, loc. cit., pp. 30, 200, 449, 475; *한국전란 1년지* * *The First Year of the Korean War*, Ministry of Defense (ROK), 1951, p. D35, D37; *한국전란 3년지* * *The Third Year of the Korean War*, Ministry of Defense (ROK), 1953, p. D6; *대한민국 통계연감* * *Statistical Yearbook of the ROK*, The Bureau of Statistics of the Ministry of Home Affairs, 1955, pp. 212-213

³³ *경제연감* * *Economic Yearbook*, Bank of Korea, 1955, p. 16; Kang Suk-hee, *조선인민의 정의의 조국해방전쟁사* * *The History of the Joseon People's War for the Liberation of the Fatherland*

The nature of the international humanitarian aid during the 1950s will be covered in more detail in the following chapter.

3. Humanitarian Aid as a Political Tool in the System Rivalry between the East and the West

“...*But the United States must run the show.*”

- Will L. Clayton, 1947.³⁴

Since the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, the war that lasted about three years and a month caused serious damage to the entire Korean Peninsula. As a result, numerous countries around the world participated in aid activities for Korea. Considering only countries that did not participate in the battle but provided purely supplies, it is estimated that a total of 39 countries provided supplies to South Korea and 10 to North Korea.³⁵

Among them were East and West Germany as well. When the war broke out, East Germany delivered necessities and medical supplies to North Korea and took care of North Korean orphans and students in its territory. West Germany once delivered medical supplies to South Korea through the UN. Efforts to help Korea continued after the ceasefire. East Germany dispatched technical advisors and workers to rebuild North Korea's largest industrial city, Hamheung, while West Germany built a Red Cross Hospital in Busan to provide free medical service for about five years.

These activities are called “humanitarian aid”. Humanitarian assistance refers to an act of aid to rescue lives by providing supplies for people at risk of life in crisis like war,

(Pyeongyang: SaHoeGwaHakSa) 1983, p. 129; *북한의 정치경제 * Economy and Politics of North Korea*, Board of National Unification, 1988, p. 42

³⁴ *FRUS*, 1947, Volume III, The British Commonwealth; Europe, 1947, eds. Ralph E. Goodwin et al, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office), 1972, p. 232 (emphasis in original)

³⁵ *국방백서 * Defense White Paper 2012*, Ministry of National Defense (ROK), December 2012, pp. 282-285; Park and Jung, loc. cit., pp. 57-58

disease, famine, or natural disasters. This is a kind of philanthropic act that has existed commonly throughout human history, often carried out voluntarily by individuals with ethical and moral convictions to save lives regardless of nationality, race, political position, or class.³⁶

However, it is difficult to simply regard all of those aid activities for Korea in the 1950s as humanitarian activities. According to the saying *that all governments take their decisions in the name of national interest and then explain them in terms of self-sacrificing altruism*, the various forms of humanitarian assistance had their own reasons.³⁷

One of the significant features of humanitarian aid during the Cold War era was that it pursued both political and humanitarian objectives.³⁸ This tendency was stronger especially in the mid-20th century, because shortly after the end of the Second World War only a handful of countries in the northern hemisphere, the so-called Global North, were able to support other countries in need. Conversely, poor and in terms of “Western standards” underdeveloped countries were excessively concentrated in the southern part of the globe. Unlike the postwar period of World War I, therefore, the task of providing material support in the 1950s could not be assumed merely by individuals and private charities anymore. As a result, such kind of humanitarian aid activities could only be carried out by the small number of wealthier nations. “Impartial” and “neutral” humanitarian activities, which should be so in principle, were extremely rare.³⁹

As the era of the Cold War began, interstate humanitarian aid was only nominally “humanitarian”, but rather was used by the superpowers as a means of strengthening their own camp by binding weaker, dependent countries to their alliance through

³⁶ The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) suggests the seven key principles of humanitarian assistance: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality. “The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement”, ICRC, 2014. URL: <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4046-fundamental-principles-international-red-cross-and-red-crescent-movement> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

³⁷ Abba Eban, *The U.N. Idea Revisited*, Foreign Affairs 74, No. 5 (1995): 51, as cited in Eric A. Belgrad and Nitza Nachmias, eds., *The Politics of International Humanitarian Aid Operations* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger), 1997, p. 10

³⁸ Belgrad and Nachmias, loc. cit., p. 7

³⁹ ICRC, loc. cit.

economic and military assistance, for instance.

The United States took the lead. The U.S. already in 1943 envisioned that the postwar world would require a massive humanitarian aid program for the countries liberated from the occupation by the Axis Powers and therefore proposed to its ally, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and China to establish an international relief organization that was named The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and mainly funded by the U.S. Congress. 10 years later, the UNRRA would assume an important role during the Korean War.⁴⁰

However, contrary to the expectation of the United States that it could hold hostage the entire organization, there was no room for the U.S. alone to reflect its political intention in such aid activity, because the members - mostly the Central Committee of the Council of the UNRRA was composed of the four wartime alliance states - decided the object and method of aid. Therefore, the U.S. Congress wanted to launch another overseas aid program that the U.S. government could lead directly through a government agency. In 1948, this wish was realized in the form of the so-called “Marshall Plan”. The United States offered rapid, extensive and large-scale economic aid to those European countries that could share and agree with the U.S. worldview, even including countries that did not participate in the war, like Iceland.⁴¹

Meanwhile, the UNRRA was already confronting the emergence of the Cold War in East Asia. The UNRRA and the U.S. government were supporting the Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-shek in China who was confronting the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Zedong. The UNRRA agreed to establish its Chinese branch, the Chinese National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (CNRRA) and give it almost all authority to manage the aid materials. Thus, from this moment on, the “humanitarian cold war”, which was de facto a proxy war of the superpowers, began in Asia.⁴²

⁴⁰ “United Nations” here means the wartime alliance, not the international organization established in 1945.

⁴¹ “Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Clayton)”, *FRUS*, 1947, The British Commonwealth; Europe, Volume III, eds. Ralph E. Goodwin et al (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1972, Document 136. URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v03/d136> [last accessed 4 September 2020]

⁴² Katrine R. C. Greene, UNRRA’s Record in China, *Far East Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 10, 1951, pp. 100-102

In Europe, the conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union gradually became visible as well from 1946. Concerns about the “ideological, political, economic, and military conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States”, which George F. Kennan conveyed from Moscow in 1946, emerged in reality.⁴³ The new foreign policy of the United States named “Public Law 75” that later became known as Truman Doctrine and the precursor to the Marshall Plan at the same time, clearly defined the nature of the U.S. humanitarian aid. The goal of the then U.S. humanitarian aid was to contain the Soviet omnidirectional expansion, by providing economic and military support to any state that could be brought under control by the U.S in Europe or anywhere else. Truman himself revealed this goal of the new U.S. foreign policy in his speech to the Congress on March 12, 1947 by saying that *the goal was to keep the hope of people for a better life alive so that the seeds of totalitarianism that are nurtured by misery and want cannot grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife.*⁴⁴

In particular, the Point Four Program (PFP), designed for the less-developed countries, was created to counter the emerging Soviet influence over the world. However, it still failed to overcome the inherent limitations of the U.S. humanitarian aid program at the time. In other words, no matter how much the PFP aided the Third World countries, the main interest of the United States was directed at the Western European countries that could provide tangible mutual benefits to the United States. Therefore, it was difficult for the Third World countries, which desperately needed assistance and were directly exposed to the influence of the Soviet Union, to receive full support from the United States. For example, the annual budget of the PFP, which was supposed to cover underdeveloped countries around the world regardless of geographic region, was 26.9 million U.S. Dollars in the fiscal year of 1950/51. In the same year, West Germany alone received approximately 342.4 million U.S. Dollar in aid, equivalent to almost 12.7 times the annual PFP budget.⁴⁵

⁴³ William C. Cromwell, The Marshall Plan, Britain and the Cold War, *Reviews of International Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (October 1982), pp. 233-249

⁴⁴ “...*the seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive.*”

“Speech by Harry S. Truman to Congress.” Belgrad and Nachmias, eds., p. 16

⁴⁵ Thomas G. Peterson, Foreign Aid under Wraps: The Point Four Program, in *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (1972), pp. 119-126

The humanitarian activities of the United Nations, which were expected to be separated from the political objectives of a single state, were not very different from the other foreign aid programs that prioritized the political interests of a donor state in real. Fundamentally, the UN was also an international organization operated with funding from its member states, so it could not act completely independently of the political interests of the major member states especially, and sometimes even failed to meet the minimum requirement of the recipient states or the UN itself.⁴⁶

Although there may be differences in the size and target of Soviet humanitarian aid, the principle did not differ much from that of the U.S. The Soviet Union also, just like its biggest rival, made such countries the major targets of aid that were capable of reciprocating political and economic interests within the “Soviet Communism” system.

For example, the Soviet Union was not reluctant to advocate or cooperate in international organizations established by the West, if it was judged to be for its own benefit. When international humanitarian organizations such as the UN and the World Health Organization (WHO) were established, the Soviet Union at first suspected that these agencies and experts were dominated by the West and pursued the Western agenda. However, in order to signal that alliances with the communist camp would prove a benefit, the Soviet Union joined the WHO in 1956 and actively utilized international organizations from the West to engage in aid activities.⁴⁷

Yet, as much as the U.S. was concerned, the USSR did not actively provide aid to all emerging countries in the Third World that had just escaped from the colonial status. This was the case in India, Burma, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. What they have in common was that they did not gain liberation through revolution or war but were liberated through a relatively smooth agreement with the existing colonial powers. The Soviet Union was reluctant to grant support in this respect, suspecting that these countries would still maintain friendly relations with their former ruling powers.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Nitza Nachmias, *The Case of UNRWA: Five Decade of Humanitarian Aid*, in Belgrad and Nachmias, eds., loc. cit., pp.67-88

⁴⁷ Hong, loc. cit., pp. 29-31

⁴⁸ Branko M. Pešelj, *Communist Economic Offensive Soviet Foreign Aid. Means and Effects*, in *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 29, No. 4, *The Soviet Impact on International Law* (Autumn 1964), pp. 983-999

At that time, the Soviet Union's – just like the United States' - main area of interest was Europe. In particular, the Soviet Union was forced to feel a sense of crisis, seeing that the Marshall Plan was being proposed to countries such as Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, which were already integrated in the Eastern Bloc. Accordingly, in 1949, an economic cooperation organization under the leadership of the Soviet Union called Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) was formed to establish an economic aid system in response to the Organisation for European Economic Co-Operation (OEEC) that had been established by the Western powers the year before.⁴⁹

Another problem facing the Soviet Union arose in Asia. While the United States exclusively “ran the show” in the Western camp, the Soviet Union was compelled to be conscious of the PRC, a new powerhouse in the same camp, reducing the Soviet influence especially in the Asian theater. The PRC did not project its influence over the world - especially to Europe - with a single and standardized image like the Soviet Union, but it secured its position as a center of the new communist sphere by providing aid more flexibly to neighboring Asian countries that the Soviet Union had not paid much attention to.

Correspondingly, the Soviet Union also made plans to actively pursue the provision of economic aid after 1949, but in many cases, it was postponed until 1953, after Stalin's death, and its scope was less far reaching than that of the United States, it was rather insignificant.⁵⁰

In summary, humanitarian aid at the beginning of the Cold War, around the middle of the 20th century, became a kind of developmental aid to reconstruct the Third World allies in line with the First, or Second World standard so that they could confront the opposite side.

Then, what was the German humanitarian aid to Korea in the 1950s like? Was the action also based on political calculations, just like the humanitarian aid of the US or the Soviet Union? If this was the case, then what goals did the German states pursue in Korea? Or was it the embodiment of the humanitarian spirit that transcended all the rigor of that time? In the next chapter, the domestic circumstances that played a role

⁴⁹ Cromwell, loc. cit., p. 233

⁵⁰ Pešelj, loc. cit., pp. 985-986

for the German assistance will be explored.

4. Background of the German Involvement in the Korean War

In the early 1950s, when the Korean War was in full swing, the Cold War was progressing sharply in Germany. Since the divisional occupation system by the victorious allied powers had begun after the Potsdam Declaration in the summer of 1945, the partition of Germany progressed gradually but irreversibly. Although until the moment the Cold War in Europe came to an end with the dissolution of the USSR and finally the re-unification of Germany, the confrontation between the camps on German territory had never escalated into a military clash nor into an outright war like in Korea, the German states had to suffer from the constant pressure and tension in view of the threat of a potential war in Germany.

As the massive armed conflict between the free and communist camp finally broke out on the Korean Peninsula, Germany which was regarded as being in a similar geopolitical situation like Korea was focused. There were debates on the possibility of an outbreak of “another Korean War”, but most parties agreed to avoid a military confrontation at least. Of course, that didn't mean they found a peaceful solution to release the high pressure that resulted from the military antagonism on the border between East and West Germany, but they rather decided to strengthen the bipolar system by maintaining the status quo with enhanced armament.

Amid the Cold War in Germany in the 1950s, both East and West Germany took the decision to directly intervene in the Korean War. This was a quite remarkable decision considering the difficult economic situation in Germany - especially in East Germany - in the early 1950s. An intervention in foreign disputes had to be accompanied by considerable industrial efforts and sacrifice of the own citizens. Moreover, since West Germans as well as East Germans were at the same time still suffering from the psychological aftereffects of the Second World War, such an intervention in another war in a foreign county could not have been easily welcomed by both nations and governments.

Then, what was the reason for East and West Germany to intervene in the Korean War even beyond all the practical difficulties? Was it worth to even put at risk the economic

efforts and arouse public opposition? What were East and West Germany trying to achieve on the Korean Peninsula? In the next two subchapters, these questions will be dealt with.

4-1. German Democratic Republic

After the establishment of the German Democratic Republic, the relations between the GDR and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea evolved rapidly, especially compared to the West German-South Korean relations.⁵¹ As the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) approved a draft constitution passed by the German People's Council (Deutscher Volksrat), the establishment of the GDR was proclaimed in October 1949, about a year after the foundation of the DPRK. On November 11, 1949, the North Korean and East German governments exchanged letters of mutual diplomatic recognition to initiate the official diplomatic relations.⁵² The diplomatic relations between the two countries were not even interrupted by the war. In July 1951, when the frontline started to be stuck in a stalemate situation near the 38th Parallel, both governments agreed to maintain diplomatic channels through the respective ambassadors in Beijing, Moscow and Warsaw.⁵³ The first mutual exchange of ambassadors took place in the middle of 1954, as the battles on the front halted due to the signing of the armistice treaty.⁵⁴

⁵¹ West Germany and South Korea had no diplomatic relations until 1954. Only in 1954, the South Korean diplomatic delegation could request the establishment of diplomatic relations through the West German diplomatic delegation in Paris. The South Korean delegation requested three different proposals because they thought that West Germany would refuse to have diplomatic relations with South Korea. Among the three options, the lowest-level proposal was accepted, and in October 1954, the "Korea Trade Representative (KTR)" office was established in Remagen, serving as a consulate. Only on December 1, 1955, both nations approved mutual diplomatic relations, so the consulate could move to Cologne in August 1956. Afterwards, on March 3, 1957, the consulate was promoted to a legation, thus it moved again to Bonn, the temporary capital of West Germany, and finally promoted to the embassy through a joint statement on August 1, 1958. Choi (1983), loc. cit., pp. 243-244

⁵² The very first request for the establishment of diplomatic relations between East Germany and North Korea was made by the North Korean Foreign Ministry on 10 November 1949. The reply from the East German counterpart arrived two days later. Kang-Schmidt, loc. cit., p. 27

⁵³ On 13 July 1951, the North Korean Foreign Ministry received a letter saying that the East German ambassador in Beijing would be the liaison officer until the formal exchange of ambassadors between the two states was completed. The Polish ambassador played the role of liaison officer between the two states since 1953. Ibid, p. 28-29

⁵⁴ The first North Korean ambassador to East Germany Park Gil-ryong (*written as Pak Kil Jon on the document) submitted the credentials on 12th May 1954, and the first East German ambassador to North Korea Richard Fischer arrived in Pyongyang on 4th August. Kang-Schmidt, loc. cit., p. 264,

This active diplomatic relationship with North Korea corresponded to the fundamental state principle of East Germany, the international socialist solidarity.⁵⁵ The same principle also led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the DPRK and other Eastern European countries. In October 1948, diplomatic relations between North Korea and the People's Republic of Poland (16th), the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (21st), the Socialist Republic of Romania (26th), the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (30th) were established and the Hungarian People's Republic (11th) and the People's Republic of Bulgaria (29th) followed in November. The People's Republic of Albania on May 17, 1949 came next.⁵⁶

For the GDR and the DPRK, the common experience of national partition and the fear of military aggression by the Western Powers acted as catalyst for the development of the relations between the two nations. To some extent, this held true also for other socialist sister countries like Poland.

The solidarity with North Korea became a source for the propaganda offensive inside and outside East Germany as well. In particular, the Korean War was a timely historical coincidence and opportunity for the communist camp in general, which hoped to be able to attain proper achievements to compete with the Western camp. The Eastern Bloc was once overwhelmed by the massive capital power of the West in the Berlin Blockade Crisis, and internally most East European States were still struggling to calm the potential turmoil caused by political instability throughout the postwar period.⁵⁷

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⁵⁵ ...A. *Basic of State Authority. Act 5. (2). It is the duty of the state to maintain and maintain friendly relations with all peoples.*

*...A. *Grundlagen der Staatsgewalt, Artikel 5. (2). Die Aufrechterhaltung und Wahrung freundschaftlicher Beziehungen zu allen Völkern ist die Pflicht der Staatsgewalt....*

“The constitution of the German Democratic Republic on 7 October 1949 * Die Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 7. Oktober 1949”, URL: https://www.1000dokumente.de/index.html?c=dokument_de&dokument=0232_ddr&object=pdf&st=&l=de [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

⁵⁶ Kim Jin-hyouck and Moon Mi-ra, *The Socialist Camp's North Korean Medical Support and Exchange (1945-1958): Between Learning from the Soviet Union and Independent Course*, in *역사학* * *Korean Journal of Medical History*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (April 2019), pp. 139-190

⁵⁷ In order to highlight war atrocities against North Korean civilians by the U.S. and Rhee Syngman's South Korean troops, a female civilian organization was sent to North Korea, which was composed of various nationalities, including even West Germans.

At this moment, the “Fatherland Liberation War from the American imperialism” in Korea broke out. Soon the war became an exhibition of the ruthless violence of the Western forces against the innocent socialist North Korean comrades.⁵⁸ One of the most common agendas in this period among the Communist Bloc was that they had to unite under the socialist party leadership to fight against the Western powers. The propaganda phrase “*Those, who help the Korean people, also help the German people (Wer dem koreanischen Volk hilft, hilft auch dem deutschen Volk)*”, which was often used in East Germany, emphasizes one major aspect of communist ideology, the international socialist solidarity, while on the other hand, it reveals the East German leadership’s intention to make the East German citizens follow the leadership of the SED in the end.⁵⁹

The SED actively institutionalized the Korean aid campaign to inspire the anti-American sentiment not only in East but also in West Germany. That is why the SED delegated the Korean aid campaign to the National Front (Nationale Front), the large-scale pan-national civic group, instead of taking the lead itself.⁶⁰ In doing so, the SED intended the Korean aid campaign to look like a pan-German people’s movement, hoping that a similar anti-American sentiment would spread in West Germany. The slogan “*Korea to Koreans! Germany to Germans! (Korea den Koreanern! Deutschland den Deutschen!)*” is not based on the international bond between the two

Report of the Women’s International Commission for the Investigation of Atrocities Committed by U.S.A. and Syngman Rhee Troops in Korea, Women’s International Democratic Federation. NARA, RG 263, The Murphy Collection on International Communism, 1917-58, Entry Murphy Papers, Box 69 (4), in the Archives of Korean History, AUS027_09_00C0004_037

⁵⁸ Regarding the military conflict on the Korean Peninsula, the name “Korean War” is commonly internationally accepted, but in North and South Korea different names are used. North Korea officially uses the term “Fatherland Liberation War (조국해방전쟁)” to emphasize the anti-U.S. spirit, while in South Korea, the name “6.25 war (6.25 전쟁)” is used to commemorate the date of the outbreak of the war in the sense of emphasizing North Korea’s illegal surprise attack. Lee Sin-chul, 조국해방전쟁승리기념관 * The Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum in the DPRK, Encyclopedia of Korean Culture, 2013

⁵⁹ ‘Mahnung nicht überhören’. Berliner Zeitung, 11 October 1951. There are many variations like “*those, who make donation to Korea, assist the reconstruction work of the peace-loving people, join in helping prevent new rubble in Germany (Wer für Korea spendet, hilft mit beim Aufbauwerk des friedliebenden Volkes, hilf mit, neue Trümmer in Deutschland zu verhindern.)*” ‘Spendet für Korea’, Berliner Zeitung, 14 October 1951

⁶⁰ ‘Hilfskomitee für Korea’, Berliner Zeitung, 4 July 1950.

nations facing the devastating fate that they never wanted, but it was a cry to the West Germans to question the dominance of the Western Powers.⁶¹ It was not a coincidence that Stalin's policy towards Germany was exactly in line with the SED's Korea campaign. Indeed, in the fall of 1950, the SED proposed to the West German government to create a council composed of German citizens from both German states. And it was not an illusion of the SED but a deliberately calculated political strategy for the German problem.⁶²

However, one thing is clear: The aid campaign of the socialist camp for North Korea was by no means solely the result of the ruling socialist parties' instigation. Prior to the start of a full-fledged party-led campaign, voluntary movements for North Korea were already occurring simultaneously in almost all social sectors. Pharmaceutical companies in East Germany voluntarily worked overtime to produce stockpiles in anticipation of a sharp increase in demand for medical supplies in North Korea.⁶³ In addition, unlike general party conventions, the rallies for humanitarian aid for Korea attracted too many people, so they had to be held several times again. Given the devastating bombing campaign by the Allied forces, the ensuing ruthless looting of the Soviet Red Army, and the severe economic hardship that East Germany suffered from the dismantling of industrial facilities, the donations of almost all the East German citizens cannot be explained only by the party propaganda movement.⁶⁴

The heat of the aid campaign in East Germany could be found to the same extent in other Eastern European countries. In Czechoslovakia, under the slogan "*Hands off Korea! (Ruce pryšod Koreje!)*", rallies to condemn the U.S. aggression against the North Korean comrades were held in every social sector. In order to increase the amount of goods that would be sent as aid to North Korea, more than 3,200 production competitions between various factories in Czechoslovakia were organized involving

⁶¹ 'Deutsch-Koreanische Freundschaft', Berliner Zeitung, 26 January 1951

⁶² At the time, 49% of West German citizens favored the East German Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl's proposal for dialogue in Germany and a pan-German council and only 27% opposed it. See Michael Lemke, Wahrnehmung und Wirkungen des Koreakriegs im geteilten Deutschland, in Christoph Kleßmann and Bernd Stöver, eds., *Der Korea-Krieg. Wahrnehmung-Wirkung-Erinnerung* (Köln; Weimar; Wien: Böhlau), 2008, pp. 74-98, here p.87-88

⁶³ Hong, loc. cit, p. 51

⁶⁴ Lemke, loc. cit. p. 81

workers and technicians from all over the country.⁶⁵ The case of Hungary stood out among the international efforts. The Hungarian government, which even stated that “helping North Korea is our duty”, sent medical aid teams to North Korea most quickly. Thanks to that commendable effort, the Hungarian primary medical aid team successfully entered North Korea on July 29, 1950, only a month after the outbreak of the war, and subsequently prepared 6,000 workers for reconstruction work in North Korea. What is even more surprising is that the Hungarian aid also reached South Korea. Since there were many restrictions on sending medical personnel directly over the battle zone, the Hungarian government expressed its intention of sending medical supplies through the UN.⁶⁶

However, as the East German aid movement for North Korea started to be subordinated to the political goals of the SED, the aid activity for North Korea gradually began to subside. In addition, the propaganda method that stimulated trauma through excessively belligerent phrases or depictions of violence against women and children, and the outright anti-U.S. struggle, finally struck the East German citizens more than the sentiment of proletarian internationalism.⁶⁷

The worsening economic situation was also playing a crucial role for the depression. Finally, in June 1953, when the demands of East German workers were trampled by Soviet tanks, the dream of a proletarian utopia was broken. It was the moment that made the citizens of East Germany realize what the SED rule was like.

Eventually, after the armistice treaty, the SED exclusively took over the responsibility for the campaign. The propaganda, which had been eagerly carried out and even

⁶⁵ Kim Jin-hyouck and Moon Mi-ra, loc. cit, p. 149

⁶⁶ Yang Yong-jo, 6.25전쟁 시 국제사회의 대한(對韓) 물자지원 활동 * UN member Nations' Support during the Korean War: Emphasis on Supply Support, in *군사 * Military History*, Vol. 87 No. 2 (June 2013), pp. 53-86

⁶⁷ One of the examples of the narrative that emphasizes the fear of war atrocities, especially the oppression of women, is the campaign to promote the North Korean movie “Partisan Lady * 빨치산 처녀(Junge Partisanen)” in the year of 1953. The most famous propaganda actress Moon Ye-bong starred in this movie which was produced by a North Korean director Han Sang-woon in 1952. The main plot is about the female protagonist named “Cho Ok-hee” who struggles in a North Korean village occupied by the U.S. military. The film has been screened in Berlin, Dresden, Neubrandenburg and Suhl. SAPMO-BA, Bestand DY 30, Band 221. Filmbesuch des koreanischen Films “Junge Partisanen”.

reached West Berlin disappeared as well. Nevertheless, the government-led aid campaign for North Korea was still able to continue for the next few years thanks to the constant participation of the East German citizens. But it never was the same as before.

Changes in the Cold War landscape in the Asian theater also contributed to the fading interest in the East German aid campaign for North Korea. After July 1953, the situation on the Korean Peninsula gradually became less dramatic, but at the same time Vietnam was emerging as a new hotspot of the East-West confrontation and became a new source for global resistance against Western imperialism.⁶⁸ As the East German geopolitical interest in the Asian theater gradually shifted from North Korea to Vietnam, a new type of project called the “post-war restoration project” by the GDR was launched in North Korea. The relationship between East Germany and North Korea faced another phase from then. This and the procession of the post-war restoration project will be explored in Chapter 5 in detail.

4-2. Federal Republic of Germany

Unlike East Germany which actively intervened on behalf of socialist solidarity as soon as the war broke out, West Germany has never officially intervened directly on the Korean Peninsula in any form. However, from a record that up to 70 German Benedict missionaries were imprisoned in North Korea, it can be concluded that there might be several cases where individuals of German nationality came to the Korean Peninsula for some reasons.⁶⁹

West Germany’s interest was not directed at the war on the Korean Peninsula but has always been confronting the threats from East Germany and the Soviet Union. This was the result of the special security circumstances West Germany faced at the time. After its foundation in October 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany was not a completely sovereign state. The High Commissioners (Hohe Kommissare) of the three victorious allied nations who were managing the existing occupied German territories

⁶⁸ Protokoll Nr. 15/54 Sitzung am 6. Juli 1954, SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/2/371.

⁶⁹ “Telegramm aus Washington an Auswärtig Bonn”, February 12, 1954, PAAA, Bestand 11, Band 792, Krieg- Allgemeines – Die Alliierte Hohe Kommission ect [1/2], p. 197

controlled and governed the diplomatic, security, economic and demilitarization policies of the FRG through the “Occupation Statute (Besatzungsstatut)”.⁷⁰ In particular, the demilitarization policy allowed West Germany to maintain only a minimal police force for security purposes with only basic level light armament, but not any troops and armaments capable of waging a battle. In contrast, East Germany had at least tens of thousands of “German People's Police (Volkspolizei)” troops that were able to carry out a certain level of combat through active restructuring from the beginning of the occupation by the Soviet Union.⁷¹ The existence of the East German police forces was regarded as a potential threat to the security of West Germany given the confrontational situation between the two German states.

Of course, most of the West German political elite and citizens did not expect seriously that in Germany an all-out large-scale military conflict could arise like on the Korean Peninsula. The anti-war sentiment among the public in both East and West Germany was overwhelmingly strong. However, despite this prevailing opposition to military force, the outbreak of the Korean War led to an open debate about the rearmament of West Germany. Already the Berlin Blockade and the successful Soviet nuclear test had encouraged those voices which promoted the idea of West Germany joining the Western military alliance. In particular, the West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who was absolutely convinced that West Germany’s liberal democratic system could be preserved only through integration with the West, took advantage of the opportunity the Korean War presented to spur the discussion about rearmament.

In the midst of this debate, the West German government finally began to look for opportunities to get involved in a non-military way on the Korean Peninsula. The first

⁷⁰ “Besatzungsstatut, veröffentlicht am 12. Mai 1949 durch die Militärgouverneure und Oberbefehlshaber der drei Westzonen”. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Document Library.

...2. a). disarmament and demilitarization and related scientific research; prohibitions and restrictions imposed on industrial production; and civil aviation (die Entwaffnung und Entmilitarisierung sowie die damit im Zusammenhang stehende wissenschaftliche Forschung, die der industriellen Erzeugung auferlegten Verbote und Beschränkungen und die zivile Luftfahrt)

URL: https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=f7263e3e-2cb8-bc71-8487-6fc7b7e1746b&groupId=252038 [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

⁷¹ At the end of 1948, the East German Border Guard (Grenzpolizei) troops alone reached 10,000, and in 1949, the People's Police were able to mobilize 35,305 troops, and in 1951 it reached to 52,006, even including 2,558 naval forces (Hauptverwaltung Luftpolizei) and 121 air forces troops (Hauptverwaltung Seepolizei). See Rüdiger Wenzke, *Geschichte der Nationalen Volksarmee 1956-1990* (Erfurt: Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung Thüringen), 2017, pp. 7-24

decision for a direct engagement in Korea was taken in 1951, and in early 1952 Gustav Heinemann, the Minister of the Interior, asked Otto Geßler, the chairman of the West German Red Cross, to prepare 10 military surgeons to be shipped to Korea in March 1953.⁷² Eventually, in April 1953 when Adenauer visited the United States, he suggested to provide a field hospital (Feldlazarett) for the U.S. troops in Korea under the UN command “*to show off German solidarity in the struggle against communist aggression to Korea*”.⁷³

Until this time, there was no official diplomatic channel between West Germany and South Korea, so the German Ambassador to the United Nations Hans Risser explained to South Korean Ambassador Lim Byung-jik that a field hospital for allied forces was proposed to the U.S President Eisenhower “*in a gesture intended to symbolize his cooperation with the Free World against communism.*”⁷⁴

Thus, West Germany intervened in Korea while its security situation was revised due to external factors. Still, the FRG’s main concern was to select the right allies to be with on the Cold War front and to prove its worth within the alliance, but not the Korean people. This was the most crucial and important factor regarding the intervention on the Korean Peninsula.

As a result, South Korea, which had little to do with the interests of West Germany, was excluded from almost all discussions regarding the deployment of the medical assistance. In the whole process of dispatching and installing hospital, the only thing that was notified directly to South Korea was that Ambassador Lim Byung-jik

⁷² Hong, loc. cit., p. 90

⁷³ “Memorandum by the Director of the Bureau of German Affairs (Riddleberger) to the Secretary of State, Agenda for Adenauer Visit”, 29 March 1953.

...7. *In order to demonstrate West German solidarity with the struggle of the free world against Communist aggression, the Chancellor would like to offer a medical unit for Korea. This is known in Germany as a “Feldlazarett” and is a completely equipped medical unit...*

FRUS, 1952-1954, Germany and Austria, Volume VII, Part 1, eds. David M. Baehler, John A. Bernbaum and Charles S. Sampson (Washington: United States Government Printing Office), 1986, Document 172, URL: [https://history.state.gov/historical documents/frus1952-54v07p1/d172](https://history.state.gov/historical%20documents/frus1952-54v07p1/d172) [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

⁷⁴ “Letter to Syngman Rhee and Mrs. Rhee”. Lim Byung-jik, 16 February 1954, in *이승만관계서한 자료집6* * Letter collection related to Syngman Rhee, Volume 6, 1954, in *대한민국사자료집 33* * The Korea History Material Collection. Volume 33, No. 911.07 국51ㄷ v.33, p. 49-50

delivered the message that Germany would send medical aid for the United Nations.⁷⁵ Agreements on hospital were exclusively negotiated with the United States. During this process, no detailed discussions with the South Korean government took place at all, resulting in a number of unnecessary issues regarding the hospital's facilities, which will be explained later in chapter 6. In addition, the West German officials tried to dismiss the problem while maintaining the attitude of disregarding Koreans.

In the following chapters, it will be explored what kind of efforts the German states made in Korea to achieve their goals, what they finally achieved, and what happened with the Koreans in this whole process.

5. East German-North Korean Relations

As the Korean War broke out in June 1950, a wave of voluntary aid from citizens for North Korea rose across East Germany. From small children to old people, countless East German citizens eagerly started voluntary fundraising and overtime work to help out the people in North Korea who were suffering from the war, but they were at a loss how to deliver the tons of stuff to North Korea. Therefore, in order to collectively manage these individual aid activities and deliver them efficiently to North Korea, the SED organized the Korea Aid-Committee (Korea Hilfsausschuss), including party and government officials, which was operating until its dissolution in 1957. In addition, since North Korea started its national reconstruction work after the armistice treaty in July 1953, East Germany took over the reconstruction project of Hamheung, the second largest city and the largest industrial city in North Korea.

Besides the representative aid activities of the Korea Aid-Committee and the Hamheung reconstruction project, there were a number of other aid programs. For instance, the socialist countries took in North Korean orphans and cared for them by granting them formal education. Thanks to such efforts by the socialist sister countries, thousands of North Korean children and students who had lost their homes and families during the war were able to enjoy a much more comfortable environment and

⁷⁵ Ibid.

continue to attend school.⁷⁶

In the next two subchapters the two cases of East German aid activities in North Korea, the Korea Aid Committee and the reconstruction project in Hamheung, will be explored more thoroughly. At the same time, the specific background of the East German engagement in North Korea will be examined, too.

5-1. Korea Committee for Humanitarian Aid (Korea-Hilfssausschuss)

As the East German citizens' voluntary movement for humanitarian aid to North Korea was expanding across the country, the SED also felt a need to convey the strong will of the East Germans to assist North Korea. As a result, on August 2, 1950, Helmut Lehmann, a member of the Central Secretariat (Zentralsekretariat) of the SED, proposed the establishment of an official committee to help Korea to Otto Grotewohl, the first Prime Minister of the GDR.⁷⁷ The Korea Aid Committee was a kind of management organization run by the party to collectively manage individual donations of money and goods and deliver them to North Korea that was in need of such emergency aid.

The Aid Committee was established on September 9, 1950 at the meeting of the National Council of the National Front. It consisted of officers from the council and members of parties and mass organizations. The first chairman was Professor Karl

⁷⁶ The official request of North Korea to the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries for help in raising orphans was made on February 13, 1951 through the North Korean Ambassador Li Ju-yeon and the Chinese Foreign Minister Zhōu Ēnlái. Between 1951 and 1952, more than 2,000 war orphans were sent overseas, among others to the Soviet Union, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Mongolia. The PRC signaled its readiness to North Korea to accept 23,000 orphans to educate in its schools. East Germany accepted 957 orphans and students during the 1950s. However, since the late 1950s, most of these North Korean children and students were repatriated in the process of the Kim Il-sung's regime's attempt to reduce diplomatic relations and its endeavor to pursue its doctrine of independence and autonomy. Some of the children who refused to be forcibly repatriated committed suicide or went into exile in other countries, but many later on became part of the political elite circle in North Korea. *소련 군사고문단장 라주바예프의 6.25 전쟁 보고서 (3) * Vladimir Nikolaevich Razuvaev the Soviet Chief Military Advisor's Report on the Korean War, Volume 3*, Institute for Military History (ROK), 2001, pp. 16-18. To see archival source, PAAA, A 5568, IV 17/39, Sektion Korea. Aufnahme koreanischer Studenten zum Studium in der DDR und die Erziehung koreanischer Waisenkinder in der DDR (04.1952-10.1953).

⁷⁷ "An Gen. Grotewohl von Lehmann: Hilfsaktion für Korea", BA-B, Bestand NY 4090, Band 481, Die Unterstützung der DDR für die KVDR (1950-1960), pp. 1-3

Linser and the second chairman was Max Nierich. Other major constituents were the Minister for Health Luitpold Steidle, Otto Schön of the SED, Hans Kleinert of the People's Solidarity (Volkssolidarität), Ferdinand Geissler of the Chairman of the Free German Trade Union Federation (Freier Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund), Mr. Deckers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lieselotte von Schnitzler of the Democratic Farmers' Party of Germany (Demokratische Bauernpartei Deutschlands) and Ralph Liebler as the representative for Thuringia, Mrs. Andersen-Nexö and Otto Buchwitz for Saxony.⁷⁸

In September 1950, the Korea Aid-Committee announced that the additionally produced medical supplies stockpile would be delivered of course, and more medical supplies and hygiene products would be purchased with the individual donations. Since so many different people participated in the aid movement, not only donations but also various industrial goods and supplies were entrusted to the committee. These goods were collected at the office of the National Council of the National Front in Berlin and then sent to North Korea.⁷⁹

The donations and items collected for the Aid Committee office gradually increased, so it was necessary to seek a special way to deliver the donated items in bulk. At that time, the only way to transport such large-scale shipment from East Germany to North Korea was in fact the Trans-Siberian Railway. Fortunately, because the UN forces' attack did not extend to Manchuria, the train was also a means to safely deliver goods to North Korea without the risk of being attacked. Considering the harsh circumstances at the time, having to run dozens of trains full of supplies through the frozen railway over a distance of about 13,000 km by no means was a simple matter. Nevertheless, until 1954 more than 150 tons of medicine and 200 tons of medical equipment as well as two ambulances were delivered.⁸⁰

The donated items were also gradually diversified, so other items besides medical stuff could be delivered, too. This may be because East German aid activities were taking

⁷⁸ Protokoll Nr. 153/52 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des ZK der SED am 10. April 1952. SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/3/282, Tagesordnungspunkt Nr. 37. Bericht über die Tätigkeit des Korea-Hilfs-Ausschusses beim Nationalrat.

⁷⁹ 'Hilfe für das koreanische Volk', Berliner Zeitung, 13 September 1950

⁸⁰ Frank, loc. cit., pp. 7-8, and 16.

place at the national level, so various forms of donation were made, and those items were sent to North Korea. In June 1952, various kinds of clothing, textile products, shoes, bandages, typewriters, sewing machines, furniture, musical instruments, bicycles, motorcycles, sports goods, cameras, and toys also were shipped. In September 1953, after the armistice agreement, a full-scale reconstruction project throughout North Korea began, so heavy agricultural equipment such as tractors and construction equipment, which were donated by the Agricultural Production Cooperative (Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft) were sent to North Korea.⁸¹

Both the donated goods and those produced by voluntary work were even best-quality products. An East German worker, who was staying in Hamheung in 1956, said he remembered that the goods shipped to North Korea were by far the highest quality items, something he had never seen in his hometown, Magdeburg.⁸²

Soon the Aid Committee was reorganized into the Aid Committee for Korea and Vietnam (Hilfssausschuss für Korea und Vietnam) in 1954, however, it never stopped supporting North Korea, although the scale was reduced. From November 11 in 1954, a total of four additional trains consisting of 92 wagons arrived in North Korea, provided free of charge like before.⁸³

Regarding the amount of donations, records differ depending on the items, and various fundraising activities were not summarized collectively in a document. Thus, it is difficult to estimate the amount accurately, but it is estimated that the value of donations and goods approximately amounted to a total of 40 million DM, 18 million in the form of funds and 22 million in the form of commodities. Some of the donations

⁸¹ Kang-Schmitz, loc. cit., pp. 130-131; See archival source, Protokoll Nr. 8/53 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des ZK de SED am 2. Februar 1953, Tagesordnungspunkt Nr. 15. Tätigkeit des Korea-Hilfssausschusses. SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/3/359

⁸² Oral record of Mr. Lübke, 26 June 2003, recorded by Kim Myun. as quoted in Kim Myun, 구동독의 대 북한사회주의 건설지원 * A Study of East German Assistance to North Korea in the 1950s, in *한국동북아논총* * *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (September 2005), pp. 351-374, here p. 357

⁸³ “Die Ergebnisse der Arbeit des Solidaritätsausschusses für Korea und Vietnam beim Nationalrat der Nationalen Front”, BA-B, Bestand 4090, Band 481, Die Unterstützung der DDR für die KVDR (1950-1960), p. 151

were used to build polyclinics for skin and venereal diseases, a TBC ambulatory clinic, and the reconstruction of kindergartens and schools.⁸⁴

Of course, the SED took this voluntary and large-scale internal dynamics of East German citizens as an opportunity to achieve its own political goals. The background of the aid activities was absolutely the voluntary willingness of the citizens to help, but the activities of the Committee were thoroughly coordinated and guided by the SED. Of course, the Korean Aid Committee's campaign emphasized the horrors of the war that the North Korean people faced and the need and significance of humanitarian aid for these suffering North Korean people, but on the other hand, the "struggle for freedom (*Freiheitskampf*) against the American imperialism (*Amerikanischer Imperialismus*)" was equated with the problems in Germany to raise anti-American sentiment. The message that East Germany and North Korea share the same fate (*das gleiche Schicksal*) and Germany is to become a battlefield once again if the American monopolists have their way (*...Deutschland soll, wenn es nach den amerikanischen Monopolherren geht, erneut zum Schlachtfeld werden...*) coincided with the political slogan of the SED, which emphasized that the aid efforts of the citizens were part of the pan-international communist struggle against the global dominance of American imperialism.⁸⁵

However, the wide spectrum of the participants in the campaign and the scale of aid activities were too broad and enormous to dismiss the whole campaign as a simple political showmanship. Certainly, from the beginning, the SED leadership was constantly trying to politicize the campaign. A rally condemning the U.S. bombing campaign in North Korea was held by the Committee and adopted such anti-American statements as its main agenda. However, considering the harsh economic situation and living conditions in East Germany at the time, it is conjectured that aiding the socialist sister country was an ideological action that went beyond mere state interests. Indeed, in 1955, the German ambassador to Pyongyang, Richard Fischer, said it would be difficult for East Germany to increase aid to North Korea because East Germany was also suffering from a similar situation like North Korea, division and confrontation.

⁸⁴ Kang-Schmitz, loc. cit., p. 131, 253-62

⁸⁵ 'Helft dem tapferen koreanischen Volk!' Neues Deutschland, 13 September 1950

Otto Grotewohl sent a message to Fischer, saying that East Germany was unable to utilize 20% of its production capacity due to a shortage of raw materials, thus, if North Korea supplied copper or other concentrates, it would be able to provide additional support to North Korea. Nonetheless, economic aid to North Korea never ceased throughout the 1950s.⁸⁶ The Aid Committee's activities were suspended in 1957 because the GDR government wanted to shift the focus of the Korea aid from civic donations to state-run activities, especially the Hamhung restoration project.

Another notable point is that some East Germans at that time participated in the aid campaign because they felt a great responsibility for Germany's causing World War II. As a German memoir said, helping North Korea was "*a really enjoyable task to help someone instead of being a destroyer*" and her participation in the Korea Campaign made her "*feel thankful to North Korea to this day*". These words reveal that as a matter of fact, possibly some of Germans participated in the aid campaign for the reason of feeling guilt and responsibility.⁸⁷

Rather, in the relationship between East Germany and North Korea, it was North Korea that exploited this voluntary and dedicated aid to its own benefit. Furthermore, the Kim Il-sung regime tried to portray the economic development achieved by foreign aid as its own achievements, but never properly expressed appreciation for the foreign aid. Indeed, when the Korea Aid Committee announced the termination of its activities on 31 October 1957, no North Korean media reported on the activities of the Aid Committee at all. This problem becomes more prominent with the Hamheung reconstruction support project, which will be described in the following subchapter.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Journal of Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK V. I. Ivanov for 23 December 1955, December 23, 1955, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, translated by Gary Goldberg (original in Russian). URL: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120780> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

⁸⁷ Oral statement by Madeleine Grotewohl, recorded by Mr. Lübke. Kim (2003), loc. cit., p. 357

⁸⁸ Kang-Schmitz, loc. cit., p. 131

5-2. Reconstruction Project in Hamheung



Hamheung and Heungnam (in red box) in North Korea. National Geographic Information Institute, 2011. URL: <https://www.ngii.go.kr/world/mapdownload.html> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

Hamheung has been widely known as the largest city in the northeast of the Korean Peninsula for thousands of years from ancient times to the present. Historically, it had been firstly known as a major city of Okjeo (옥저), an ancient country that existed from the 3rd century B.C. The decisive moment for Hamheung to become more famous was when Lee Seong-gye, who spent his childhood in Hamheung, became the first king of Joseon, the third dynasty that unified the entire Korean Peninsula. Hamheung was the main base of his clan and the place where he founded the new dynasty, so the city's name was well known throughout the dynasty.

In addition, Hamheung is one of the few cities with a warm climate in the harshly cold North Korea that can be inferred from the nickname “Frozen Chosin”. It is a truly blessed city with a small annual range of temperature and relatively low rainfall within the city.⁸⁹

Thanks to its historical significance and natural climatic conditions, Hamheung has developed steadily since the ancient period and its development reached its peak

⁸⁹ For instance, the annual range of temperature in Hamheung recorded 26.6°C in 2019 and in the capital Pyongyang it recorded 30.6°C in the same year. The highest amount of rainfall by month in Hamheung reached to 199.9mm in July 2019 but 260.5mm in Pyongyang in the same month. “Domestic Weather Information. North Korea”, Korea Meteorological Administration. “Domestic Weather Information. North Korea”, Korea Meteorological Administration. URL: https://www.weather.go.kr/weather/climate/average_north.jsp [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

during the Japanese occupation. In 1934, 4,612 people were living in Hamheung, but only nine years later, in 1943, the number of inhabitants reached to 12,760. Large numbers of people, especially workers flocked into the city as the Japanese imperialists turned Hamgyeong-do (Hamgyeong Province) into a logistic base to support their war efforts in Manchuria and China, where large factories and various transportation facilities had been built.⁹⁰

Even the U.S. military, which had to wage war on the Korean Peninsula for the first time in its history, was aware of the strategic value of Hamheung City from an early period of the war. Particularly Hamheung was known as a transportation hub with a large railway network connecting the east and the west coast of North Korea. Therefore, from July 11, 1950, when the U.S. Far East Air Force (FEAF) began its operations in North Korea, Hamheung was identified as one of the main targets for the FEAF.⁹¹ Besides, as the UN allied forces started to withdraw from the northern tip of the Korean Peninsula due to the intervention of the Chinese forces in the winter of 1950, the UN command attempted to destroy as much as possible all facilities that could be occupied and reused by the Chinese or North Korean troops in the future including those in Hamheung, located on the road to Heungnam port where the UN forces planned to evacuate by ship. Eventually, on December 20, 1950, the U.S. FEAF commander George Stratemeyer pointed out the four cities including Hamheung that had to be destroyed, stating that “*Pyeongyang, Wonsan, Hamhung and Hungnam should be burned without delay*”.⁹² The major facilities in Hamheung were destroyed again by this bombing campaign targeting the whole city area. According to the U.S. Air Force’s evaluation, about 80% of the city’s area was destroyed during the three years of the war, and North Korea announced that up to 95% of the Hamheung area was destroyed.⁹³

After the armistice treaty had been signed, North Korea immediately initiated its post-

⁹⁰ Jo Dong-kyu, 함흥 * Hamheung, Encyclopedia of Korean Culture, 1996

⁹¹ Kim Tae-woo, Limited War, Unlimited Target, in *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, Issue 3 (August 2012), pp. 467-492, here 475

⁹² William T. Y’Blood ed., *The Three Wars of Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer. His Korean War Diary*. Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999, p. 355

⁹³ Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea 1950-1953* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas), 2000, pp. 168-169

war restoration project. On August 5, 1953, Kim Il-sung announced a three-year plan for post-war restoration development at the 6th meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea.⁹⁴ In this meeting, he emphasized the power of *the cooperation of the international democratic camp* and that this had to be the key for the successful restoration of his nation. Indeed, North Korea already endeavored to secure aid from socialist countries before the armistice treaty. In June 1953, North Korea dispatched its delegation to seven socialist sister countries in Eastern Europe, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania and Albania to coordinate the reconstruction aid from each country.⁹⁵ As soon as the armistice was concluded, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, Gregory Malenkov, delivered a letter to Kim Il-sung stating that he was ready to provide “any assistance” to North Korea, expressing his intention to fully support Kim Il-sung’s postwar restoration plan.⁹⁶

In response to the efforts of North Korea and the socialist camp to launch the post-war restoration, East Germany also signed an agreement on October 6, 1953 to join in North Korea’s post-war restoration project, sending free aid of 30 million RUB from 1955 to mid-1956. That amount was originally decided to be provided in the form of a loan like the agreement signed on November 14, 1952, but it was converted to a form of free aid for various commodities and technical aid for factory construction.⁹⁷

The East German aid project for North Korea was scheduled to proceed according to the agreement mentioned above, but all of sudden, a city reconstruction project was added. It happened that then Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl, spontaneously proposed the GDR participate in a city reconstruction project. He had an opportunity to meet with the North Korean delegation at the Geneva Conference in June 1954. In that meeting he was shown a film about the North Korean cities that had been destroyed

⁹⁴ 김일성 저작집 8 * Kim Il-sung’s collected writings, Volume 8 (Pyeongyang: JoSeonLoDong DangChulPanSa), 1980, pp. 11-64

⁹⁵ Lee (2020), loc. cit., pp. 167-168

⁹⁶ Letteer, G. Malenkov to Kim Il Sung, July 27, 1953. History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archives of the Russian Ministry of Defense (TsAMO). Contributed by Andrei Mefodievich Ledovskii. URL: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117428.pdf?v=a8cd5dbf3b5265bc9f2de54442db6679> [last accessed on 2 October 2020], as quoted in Ibid.

⁹⁷ Frank (1996), loc. cit., p. 10

by the U.S. bombing campaign. So he suggested on the spot that East Germany take over a North Korean city reconstruction project.⁹⁸ Upon hearing this news, Kim Il-sung immediately suggested *Hamheung, one of the country's central cities (...die Stadt Khamkhyn, eines der Provinzialzentren unserer Republik...)*, in a letter on July 1, 1954.⁹⁹

Although Grotewohl's unexpected and spontaneous decision was taken without prior discussion with the Council of Ministers of East Germany, the SED regime responded positively to the Prime Minister's proposal and soon began to draw up a plan for the new aid program regarding the reconstruction of Hamhung. On July 6, 1954, the SED Politburo (Politbüro) adopted the reconstruction aid plan as an official state-level aid project.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, the Kim Il-sung regime was also discussing the Hamhung reconstruction project. Already on 11 March 1954, through the resolution No. 42, it was decided to rebuild six war-damaged cities including Hamheung. The East German government's decision was based on the North Korean government's reconstruction plan.¹⁰¹

On July 12, Grotewohl called the North Korean Ambassador Park Gil-ryong and German Ambassador Fischer to his residence to talk about the North Korean restoration plan. After examining the project plan, Grotewohl asked the North Korean ambassador a few questions. The fifth and final question was whether Hamheung would be "restored (wiedererrichten)" or "will be completely rebuilt (neuaufbauen)" The ambassador replied, "It will be completely new." So, for East Germany the Hamheung reconstruction project meant a large-scale aid project to rebuild the entire

⁹⁸ Rüdiger Frank, *Lessons from the Past: The First Wave of Developmental Assistance to North Korea and the German Reconstruction of Hamhŭng: East German Assistance to North Korea*, in *Pacific Focus*, Vol. 23, Issue 1 (April 2008), pp. 46-74, here p. 56

⁹⁹ Khamkhyn is the Russian name for the city Hamheung. "An den Ministerpräsidenten der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Genossen Otto Grotewohl", Pyeongyang, July 1, 1954, Kim Il-sung (wirrt in *Kim Ir Sen* in the letter). BA-B, Bestand NY 4090, Band 481, Die Unterstützung der DDR für die KVDR (1950-1960), pp. 84-85.

¹⁰⁰ Protokoll Nr. 15/54, Sitzung am 6. Juli 1954, SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/2/371, Tagesordnungspunkte Nr. 5. Hilfe für den Aufbau in Korea

¹⁰¹ Frank (1996), loc. cit., p. 25

North Korean metropolis Hamheung. However, Grotewohl accepted the plan.¹⁰²

Considering the economic downturn which depressed East Germany at the time, the Hamheung reconstruction project was an aspiring undertaking. East Germany was still exposed to political and economic pressure due to competition with West Germany and its Western allies. Despite several economic reforms, the continued domestic economic downturn led to the 1953 unrest in Berlin and the exodus of GDR citizens in the end. In this chaotic situation, it was clear that taking charge of rebuilding a city far away across the continent was a burdensome decision, although it was based on the principle of proletarian internationalism that required helping a socialist sister country.¹⁰³

In fact, the East German ambassador Fischer explained to the Soviet ambassador that East German aid to North Korea could no longer be unlimited like before, and asked North Korea to provide fish, fish meal, and minerals equivalent to the amount of aid in return. However, the problem was that North Korea virtually had no means to secure the goods East Germany asked for. Almost the entire fishing fleets and facilities related to aquatic products had been destroyed by bombs. Even the mines could not escape the bombing, and Soviet technicians were already working to repair the mine plants.¹⁰⁴

In the end, Ambassador Fisher discussed this issue with Park Chang-ok, the vice chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea on November 10, 1954. But he only could reaffirm that North Korea had no capacity to meet the East German demand. However, even though East Germany recognized that it could not receive the requested compensation, it promised to maximize aid to North Korea as well as possible. Yet Fischer demanded that North Korea provide most part of the materials necessary for construction work at least.¹⁰⁵ Besides, on November 9, in a

¹⁰² "Aktenvermerk. Über die Besprechung bezüglich des Angebotes des Herrn Ministerpräsidenten Otto Grotewohl über den Neubau einer koreanischen Stadt." PAAA, II 70/101, A 5579, Sektion Korea. Hilfe der DDR beim Aufbau von Hamhyng. pp. 226-227

¹⁰³ Gerald D. Feldman, German Economic History, in *Central European History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (June 1986), pp. 174-185; Margrit Grabas, 17 June 1953 – The East German Workers' Uprising as a Catalyst for a Socialist Economic Order, in *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, Vol. 102, No. 2 (2015), pp. 182-190

¹⁰⁴ Lee Jeong-min (2020), loc. cit., pp. 429-430

¹⁰⁵ "Protokoll. Über die Besprechung beim Stellvertr. Ministerpräsidenten und Vorsitzenden der Staatlichen Plankommission Genosse Pak Tschan Ok am 10. November 1954", PAAA, II 70/101, A

meeting with North Korean Foreign Minister Nam Il, both sides agreed to temporarily return several North Korean students studying in East Germany in order to secure the necessary manpower for the reconstruction work.¹⁰⁶

As the discussion on the Hamheung reconstruction project proceeded in earnest, the GDR government wanted to have firsthand knowledge of the situation in the city. Accordingly, the SED dispatched an investigation team to Hamheung on November 1, 1954 to inspect the situation for six weeks, trying to understand in advance the possible demand that would arise in the context of the reconstruction project.¹⁰⁷ When the investigation was completed in mid-December, the report of the investigation team was immediately handed over to the Council of Ministers so that the issue of preparing the necessary equipment and securing the financial resources for the project could be dealt with.¹⁰⁸ On January 3 of the following year, specific machines and facilities were determined for construction works, and on February 3, the Council established the Korea Construction Headquarters (Baustab Korea), an agency responsible for the restoration of Hamheung, and it was decided to send a total of 188 workers.¹⁰⁹

On February 17, the final budget for the Hamheung reconstruction project was approved for a total of 10 years until 1964. For 1955, 526 million RUB and for the remaining 9 years 350 million RUB each were earmarked.¹¹⁰

Reconstruction work in Hamheung began on September 1, 1955. Contrary to the initial plan, a total of 143 German technicians and assistants were deployed. Including the son of the prime minister, Hans Grotewohl, they were all assigned to the German Working Group (Deutsche Arbeitsgruppe Hamhung, DAH or DAG), a branch of the Korea Construction Headquarters in Hamheung. The construction team aimed to build

5579, Sektion Korea. Hilfe der DDR beim Aufbau von Hamhyng, pp. 185-189

¹⁰⁶ Lee Jeong-min, *Ibid*, p. 432

¹⁰⁷ Frank (1996), *loc. cit.*, p. 25

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in interview with Hans and Madeleine Grotewohl by Rüdiger Frank on 1 December 1995, as quoted in *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁹ BA-B, Bestand DC 20, Band 364, Bericht über die Durchführung des Beschlusses des Präsidiums des Ministerrates vom 3. 2. 1955 über die Hilfe der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik beim Aufbau der Stadt Ham Hyng in der Koreanischen Volksrepublik. pp. 1-3

¹¹⁰ BA-B, Bestand DC 20, Band 15513, Beschluss über die Hilfe der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik für den Wiederaufbau in der Koreanischen Volksdemokratischen Republik. pp. 2-3

a large-scale housing complex (Wohnkomplex) for Hamheung citizens who lost their houses and to establish infrastructures for the city that could create stable living conditions. Therefore, it focused on rebuilding housing complexes, roads, underground waterworks, bridges, drainage and so on. The DAG succeeded in completing 400 households in the very first year and a factory to produce basic construction materials.¹¹¹



Workers on the construction field. (Nov. 1955 - Apr. 1959?) BA-B, Bestand DC 20, Band 1326.

However, the poor economic conditions in both East Germany and North Korea began to prevent the Hamhung project from progressing smoothly. On December 19, Grotewohl visited Pyongyang to hold talks with Kim Il-sung on the ongoing Hamheung project. He promised that East Germany would continue its aid program, including financial support, delivery of machinery and equipment, and dispatching experts, but he made it clear that the GDR was unable to supply enough construction materials due to the lack of raw materials in East Germany. Kim Il-sung responded that North Korea had enough mineral resources to support the reconstruction project,

¹¹¹ “Bericht über die Durchführung des Beschlusses des Präsidiums des Ministerrates über die Hilfe der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik beim Aufbau der Stadt Hamhung in der Koreanischen Volksdemokratischen Republik (Beschluß 6/10 vom 3.2.1955)”. BA-B, Bestand DC 20, Band 1326, Die Bericht und Einschätzung von Baustab Korea (1957-1958), pp. 1-10

but it was still lacking the means to produce enough raw materials so it could meet East Germany's demand.¹¹²

Since the North Koreans failed to provide the materials required by the DAG in time, 6,000 tons of cement had to be brought straight from East Germany to Hamheung. Also, there was the problem that commodities were not properly provided to East German engineers.¹¹³ The material supply issue endlessly hindered the construction work until the end of the project, and due to this problem, sometimes the planned budget could not be executed in time, so it happened frequently that the budget accumulated. When the North Korean side tried to transfer the unexecuted budget to the Pyeongyang reconstruction project, it caused a friction with the German side.¹¹⁴ Also, the East Germans only blamed the North Korean officials but did not consider the fact that North Korea was still struggling to overcome the tremendous war damage.¹¹⁵

There were many misunderstandings between the two sides due to cultural differences. For example, a German technician notified that several North Korean mothers complained that the German workers did not build a barn when they set up a nursery. The North Korean interpreter explained that there should have been room for at least

¹¹² "Aktenvermerk. Beim Besuch der Regierungsdelegation der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik unter Führung des Ministerpräsidenten Genossen Otto Grotewohl vom 19. – 21.12.1955 in Korea wurde auf der Visite beim Vorsitzenden des Ministerkabinetts, Genossen Kim Ir Sen, am 19.12.55 zwischen Obengenannten folgendes Gespräch geführt, das auszugsweise wiedergegeben wird:", PAAA, I 1/102, A 5584, Gespräche zwischen den Mitarbeitern der Botschaft Phoengjang und Vertretern des Außenministerium der KVDR und Diplomaten anderer in Phoengjang akkreditierter ausländ. Vertretungen über politische, kulturelle und wirtschaftliche Fragen. pp. 1-3

¹¹³ "Vermerke über Erfahrungen in der hiesigen Arbeit, die sich aus dem Gespräch mit Genossen Meloh und Kummert ergaben. Phöngjang, den 25. 1. 1956 ", PAAA, II/1 34/162, A 10211, Botschaft Phöngjang. Solidaritätsaktion für Hamhyng. 1954-1956, pp. 63-65

¹¹⁴ "Jahresübersicht der Deutschen Arbeitsgruppe Hamhung für das Jahr 1957" BA-B, Bestand DC 20, Band 1326, Die Bericht und Einschätzung von Baustab Korea (1957-1958), pp. 11-69

¹¹⁵ At the time, North Korea remained economically unstable despite the aid provided by the socialist countries. In particular, the agricultural policy which directly affected the lives of the people was a failure. In 1955, the annual production yield was expected to be a maximum of 4 million tons, but already in spring it turned out that it was impossible to achieve this goal, so the yield was lowered to 2.7 million tons. Nevertheless, in order to cover taxation, 50% of the harvest was taken as tax, equivalent to about twice the amount according to the current law. Kim Bo-mi, Economic Aid from Socialist Countries in DPRK's Post-war Reconstruction and the Rise of 'Juche' 1953~1955, in *아사연구* * *Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (December 2013), pp. 305-340, here 320

two cows to provide enough milk to feed the children.¹¹⁶ In addition, there were cases where North Korean workers recklessly denounced East German engineers as fascists when opinion disputes occurred.¹¹⁷ Of course, such problems never got worse to the extent that the construction was at risk of being discontinued, and the construction team also learned how to work with a cautious attitude, such as preserving and restoring the North Korean culture and architectural style as much as possible.¹¹⁸

However, despite the solidarity efforts of the German and Korean workers, the economic depression and political instability within the communist camp in the mid-1950s made it clear that even the ideal of proletarian internationalism could not surmount the harsh reality. It affected the East German-North Korean relations as well, especially after Kim Il-sung had finished his overseas trip in the summer of 1956.¹¹⁹ Starting with East Germany on June 7, Kim Il-sung visited the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Mongolia until July 19, asking for active cooperation from the socialist sister countries for the restoration of his country. However, the atmosphere of the tour in 1956 was quite different from that of three years before. For example, during his trip, in June the Poznan incident with Polish factory workers staging mass protests against the government occurred in Poland, just a week before he arrived there, so Kim Il-sung himself could witness the sociopolitical instability within his socialist sister countries.

Therefore, when announcing the new five-year economic development plan on August 30, Kim Il-sung emphasized North Korea's reliance on its internal resources. In fact, the share of foreign aid in the total amount of North Korea's foreign income was rapidly decreasing. Three years before the three-year plan was announced in 1953, the

¹¹⁶ Oral record of Mr. Lübke and Mr. Werner on 26 June 2003, recorded by Kim Myun. as quoted in Kim Myun (2005), p. 368

¹¹⁷ Oral record of Sin Dong-sam on 23 February 2004, recorded by Kim Myun, as quoted in Ibid, p. 369

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 368

¹¹⁹ This visit was rather a personal visit to express his appreciation for the foreign aid planned in a meeting in Moscow in May 1956, in which the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries discussed aid activities in North Korea (East Germany did not participate here). A total amount of 1 billion RUB of aid was decided at the meeting. The Soviet Union decided to contribute 500 million rubles, China 250 to 300 million rubles, and the remaining amount was to be shared by East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. "FS-Nr. 300 aus Pheongjang vom 31.5.56 (eilig)" BA-B, Bestand NY 4090, Band 481, Die Unterstützung der DDR für die KVDR (1950-1960), pp. 182-186

share of foreign aid stood at around 20%, and from 1954 to 1956, it was estimated reaching a maximum of 80% since the aid from the Soviet Union and China increased significantly, but from 1957 the amount of aid fell sharply. As a result, the share of foreign aid in imports decreased to 12% in 1957, 4.2% in 1958, and 2.4% in 1960.¹²⁰

In particular, Kim Il-sung emphasized the importance of heavy industry in preparation for such a decrease in foreign aid and argued that only through strengthening the capacity of the heavy industry, North Korea could achieve economic success after the five years plan. Accordingly, the Hamheung reconstruction plan, which had been promoting light industry and private housing construction, had to be revised.¹²¹

The biggest change was the addition of the Heungnam Main Palace area and Heungnam City to the reconstruction plan.¹²² Heungnam is a city south of Hamheung and was also a pier at the east coast with industrial facilities like the chemical factory complex built during the colonial period. Kim Il-sung wanted to devote the existing aid capacity to Heungnam as well, which meant that the funds and manpower invested in the Hamheung reconstruction project had to be redistributed to Heungnam. Moreover, the expansion of the heavy industry meant that the existing material shortage would intensify because new construction materials and plans were needed.¹²³

Nevertheless, Fischer accepted the North Korean proposal to add the new construction areas of Heungnam and another sector of Hamheung. North Korea sent a delegation to Leipzig from August 16 to September 12 to inspect chemical facilities to devise a model for the development of its own heavy industry in Heungnam, and on September 13 and 16, both sides agreed that East Germany would provide additional machines

¹²⁰ Avram Asenov Agov, *North Korea in the Socialist World: Integration and Divergence. 1945-1970. The Crossroads of Politics and Economics*, doctoral thesis at the University of British Columbia, 2010, p. 220, 463-464

¹²¹ Nam Koon-woo, *The North Korean Leadership: A Study of Factionalism and Political Consolidation* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press), 1974, p. 101

¹²² Heungnam Main Palace (흥남 본궁) area was the region where the house of the first king of Joseon (잠저, the house of a king where he lived before he ascended the throne) was located.

¹²³ Sin Dong-sam (2017), loc. cit., pp. 125-148

and tools for the construction of the Heungnam area.¹²⁴

However, Kim Il-sung expected more than this, and expected East Germany to share some of the restoration projects in regions other than Heungnam, too. On September 11, Kim Il-sung sent a letter to Grotewohl, requesting that some amount of the funds designated to be invested in Hamheung be used for the restoration project of the steelworks in Hwanghae and Gangsun. He also added that North Korea would cover any additional costs for this additional work.¹²⁵

Grotewohl wrote in his reply on October 6 that it was difficult for East Germany to carry out projects in other parts of the country, and he virtually rejected Kim Il-sung's request. Instead, he promised that East Germany would provide additional 15 million RUB in 1957 and 1958 respectively.¹²⁶ This must have been burdensome to East Germany because it had already agreed to join in other reconstruction projects such as the establishment of telephone offices with 6,000 telephone sets and a printing plant in Pyeongyang in October 1953.¹²⁷

Eventually on February 21, 1957, the Council decided to reduce the scale of aid to Hamheung in the upcoming years.¹²⁸ This decision was first reflected in the working-level meeting of the DAG in Hamheung on July 28 and 29, 1959. The DAG explained to the North Korean side that East Germany could not offer unlimited aid endlessly. The North Korean counterpart opposed the reduction of the plan itself firstly, but soon they agreed to proceed with the existing plan under the condition that North Korea would provide construction materials and labor force for the project without any

¹²⁴ "Protokoll der Abschlussbesprechung mit der bevollmächtigten koreanischen Delegation über die Hilfeleistung der DDR beim Aufbau des Chemie-Werkes Bonguhn, Berlin, den 19.09.1957", PAAA, II/2 1153/63, A 10258, Botschaft Phoengjang. Hilfe der DDR beim Aufbau von verschiedenen Industrieobjekten in Korea, pp. 109-116

¹²⁵ "An den Ministerpräsidenten der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Genossen Otto Grotewohl, Kim Ir Sen, Pheongjang, 11. September 1956," BA-B, Bestand DC 20, Band 15515, Die Besprechung zwischen der KDVR-DDR Regierung über die verliehene aus DDR Fabriksanlageteil. pp. 10-11

¹²⁶ PAAA, II/1 1153/63, A 10258, Botschaft Phoengjang. Hilfe der DDR beim Aufbau von verschiedenen Industrieobjekten in Korea, p. 122

¹²⁷ "Bericht über die Hilfe der DDR für die KVDR auf der Zusammenkunft der Sekretäre der Botschaften am 5. 2. 1958", PAAA, II 1157/64, A 7013, Hilfe der sozialistischen Länder beim Wiederaufbau der KVDR, p. 60

¹²⁸ "Jahresabschlußbericht 1957" BA-B, Bestand DC 20, Band 1326, Die Bericht und Einschätzung von Baustab Korea (1957-1958), p. 73

disruption. Nevertheless, as the construction work was delayed due to continuous shortage of materials, the North Korean side eventually held an internal meeting on May 31, 1960, where it was decided to focus on the construction of the industrial complex first investing all the produced materials.¹²⁹

However, the Hamheung project that was to be completed in 1964 ended actually in 1962, two years ahead of the original plan. The reason for the GDR government's decision to terminate the project earlier was that East Germany was under pressure to stop supporting other socialist states due to the increasing military threat by West Germany and the economic blockade by the NATO states, as revealed in a letter by Grotewohl to Kim Il-sung on October 6, 1960.¹³⁰ On November 5, Kim Il-sung sent a reply, briefly stating that the North Korean government accepted the East German government's decision.¹³¹

As the project was to be terminated early, the DAG needed to complete the existing projects within the deadline. On March 7, 1961, the DAG also notified once again the position of the East German government that the original plans would be pursued until August 1962.¹³² In the first half of 1961, facilities such as factories and hospitals that were almost completed or had already been completed were handed over to the North Korean counterparts and in the second half of the year, construction work of waterworks and telephone offices were finished.¹³³ Eventually in August 1962, still running construction projects were terminated, and the eight-year long Hamheung reconstruction project came to an end.

The construction project in Hamheung achieved considerable results despite the difficulties it faced. According to the annual report published in May 1960, housing

¹²⁹ "Besuch des stellvertretenden Ministerpräsidenten Nam Ir in Hamhung", PAAA, II/1 1152/63, A 10257, Botschaft Phoengjang. Hilfe der DDR beim Aufbau der Stadt Hamhung, pp. 2-9

¹³⁰ BA-B, Bestand DC 20, Band 2186, Das Einverständnis der DDR über die Verkürzung von der Hilfe für KVDR, pp. 8-9

¹³¹ Ibid, pp. 10-11

¹³² "Halbjahresbericht der Deutschen Arbeitsgruppe Hamhung für das 1. Halbjahr 1961, Hamhung, den 15. 6. 1961", BA-B, Bestand DC 20, Band 1328, Die Verkürzung der Hilfe-Korea von DDR, p. 64-65

¹³³ Ibid; "Jahresabschlussbericht 1961, Hamhung, den 2.2.1962", PAAA, II/1 1151/63, A 10256, Botschaft Phoengjang. Hilfe der DDR beim Aufbau der Stadt Hamhung sowie Protokolls und Bericht, pp. 63-99

complexes, concrete factories, ceramic factories, fiberglass and cardboard factories were built, and the Hamheung train station, a TBC hospital, Hamheung Medical University, the College for Chemical Technology, infrastructures such as water and sewage facilities, roads, and bridges were also reconstructed.¹³⁴ According to the report published after the project was finally completed, a total of 457 personnel from the GDR were dispatched and 5,236 houses, elementary schools, high schools, dormitories, kindergartens, department stores, restaurants, youth centers (Jugendklubhaus), public baths and laundry facilities, general hospitals, city electrical facilities, and industrial complexes were completely newly built.¹³⁵

The beginning of the whole project was rather spontaneous and the project itself had never been a small-scale work, but the SED leadership and the East German officials put huge effort into the project every year. Of course, not everything went smoothly. North Korea continued requesting additional assistance from East Germany, and some of these proposals were rejected due to the domestic circumstances in East Germany. Nevertheless, the GDR government gave its best to meet the unfair demands of Kim Il-sung as much as possible by providing additional material North Korea had asked for as well as financial aid. This underlined the GDR government's keen interest in continuing its support for North Korea. And according to the self-evaluation of the DAG team after the reconstruction work had finished, many of the targets were achieved in high quality.¹³⁶

Then, what did East Germany actually expect from supporting the Hamheung reconstruction project? And what was the GDR trying to achieve in North Korea? Why did North Korea continue to make unreasonable demands, and why did the GDR government try to accommodate them? What was the reason for such decisions? First of all, it can be said that East Germany's aid to North Korea in the early 1950s, at the beginning of the aid project, was based on the principle of proletarian internationalism.

¹³⁴ "Jahresabschlußbericht der Deutschen Arbeitsgruppe Hamhung für das Jahr 1959", BA-B, Bestand DC 20, Band 1327, Die Bericht und Einschätzung von Baustab Korea (1959), pp. 49-109

¹³⁵ "Die Hilfe der sozialistischen Staaten an die KVDR während bzw. nach dem Koreakrieg", PAAA, 28/L89, C 152/75, Abt. Ferner Osten, Sektion Korea. Informationen über Hilfs- und Solidaritätsaktionen der DDR und anderer sozialistischer Länder für die KVDR 1950-1962, pp. 14-15

¹³⁶ "Hamhung – Denkmal des proletarischen Internationalismus", PAAA, II 1157/64, A 7012, Sektion Korea. Aufenthalt einer Partei- und Regierungsdelegation der DDR in der KVDR zum Abschluss der Hilfe der DDR für Hamhyng, pp. 53-55

Assisting the North Korean comrades in the anti-U.S. struggle was a major task for all communist nations. The socialist siblings sent enormous amounts of money and aid to North Korea, which allowed North Korea to start reconstruction projects in earnest after the armistice agreement in 1953.

However, through the mid-1950s, economic and political issues within the socialist camp continued, and gradually it became impossible for them to provide as much support to North Korea as before. East Germany was not an exception. Due to various internal circumstances, the East German aid to North Korea gradually decreased. As previously stated, the campaign run by the Korea Aid Committee gradually reduced its activities and finally in 1957, the whole activities ceased. The aid budget for Hamheung began to gradually diminish as well. The volume of trade between the two countries also shrank in 1959.¹³⁷

First of all, there have been significant changes within the North Korean Kim Il-Sung regime. Kim Il-sung was still a young and inexperienced leader in his 30s, and the legitimacy of his rule was being questioned because of the devastating failure of the Korean War, which in an early analysis he had insisted he could quickly win. In addition to that, he was confronted with opposing factions within the Workers' Party of Korea and his cabinet such as independent fighters with Chinese and Manchurian background.¹³⁸ In order to overcome this situation, he devised a strategy to create a unique and independent regime through a strong authority. In this process, excessive passion for loyalty to Kim Il-sung finally led to his idolization, even deification.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Frank (1996), loc. cit., p. 14

¹³⁸ Until August 1956, there were various factions inside the North Korean regime. Kim Il-sung belonged to the Manju-pa (Manju-faction), who mostly fought against the Japanese colonialists in Manchuria since the 1930s. Other factions were the Kapsan-pa, based in the region Kapsan in Hamgyeongnam-do in North Korea, the Yeonan-pa, composed of the military officers and soldiers who fought in Mainland China together with the CCP, the Soryeon-pa (the Soviet-faction), who belonged to the second or third generation of ethnic Koreans that had been forcibly transferred to Central Asia in the 1930s and were raised in the Soviet Union, and the Namrodang-pa, who fled from South Korea before and during the Korean War and participated in the former political movement for North Korea or the guerilla attacks against South Korea. See Chae Jong-so and Suh Jae-jung, *Origins of North Korea's Juche. Colonialism, War, and Development* (New York: Lexington Books), 2013.

¹³⁹ Chung Young-chul, The Suryŏng System as the Institution of Collectivist Development, in *Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Fall 2007), pp. 43-73; David W. Shin, North Korea's Post-Totalitarian State: The Rise of the Suryong (Supreme Leader) and the Transfer of Charismatic Leadership, in *American Intelligence Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2016), pp. 31-48

In 1956, the so-called “anti-sectarian struggle” (반종파투쟁) known as the “August Faction Incident” broke out, which resulted in the suppression of all the other factions. Those who did not actively comply with or opposed the Kim Il-Sung regime could be subject to punishment, even their entire families. In the same year likewise, the North Korean ambassador to the USSR Lee Sang-jo reported that the number of people imprisoned for this reason reached about 50,000, that is about one in 300 North Koreans.¹⁴⁰ Several political figures who participated in the Hamheung reconstruction project, too, fell victim to Kim Il-sung’s purges, such as Park Eui-wan, the chairman of the National Construction Committee, Park Chang-ok, and Kim Seung-hwa in 1957.¹⁴¹ Moreover, some of the money and supplies destined for the Hamheung restoration project were diverted to Pyeongyang, because some of the political leaders did not want Hamheung to develop more strongly than Pyeongyang.¹⁴²

Accordingly, when the ambassadors of East Germany and other Eastern European countries in a report to the Soviet government expressed their concern about the radical idolization phenomenon and delivered a straight warning to North Korea, Kim Il-Sung regarded this reaction as an intervention in the domestic affairs of the DPRK. Kim Il-sung, in particular, came to the conclusion that the Eastern European countries were actually under the influence of the Soviet Union, therefore he tried to limit North Korea’s relations with East Germany in this context.¹⁴³

In the midst of these ruptures inside North Korea, a significant historical event occurred that became a game changer in the communist camp. It was the so-called Sino-Soviet Conflict. As the battle between the strongest powers in the communist

¹⁴⁰ “Letter from Ri Sang-jo to the Central Committee of the Korean Workers Party,” October 05, 1956, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 233-295. Obtained by Nobuo Shimotomai and translated by Gary Goldberg. URL: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114152.pdf?v=59c71679651715df25c4665dfde9788f> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

¹⁴¹ Lee Jeong-min (2020), loc. cit, p. 443. The DAG was also worried about the abrupt withdrawal of some of their North Korean colleagues. “Jahresschlußbericht der Deutschen Arbeitsgruppe Hamhung für das Jahr 1957”, BA-B, Bestand DC 20, Band 1326, Die Bericht und Einschätzung von Baustab Korea (1957-1958), pp. 11-69, here p. 63

¹⁴² “Protokoll über die Besprechung beim Ministerpräsidenten der VDR Korea Genossen Kim Ir Sen”, PAAA, II/1 1152/63, A 10257, Botschaft Phoengjang. Hilfe der DDR beim Aufbau der Stadt Hamhung pp. 88-102

¹⁴³ Kim Bo-mi, loc. cit., here p. 325

camp broke out, Kim Il-sung faced a crossroads where he had to choose between the Soviet Union and China.¹⁴⁴ In the end, he chose China. Even if he pursued his own doctrine of independence, he could not ignore the border-to-border relations with China and its enormous influence in various sectors of politics and economics. In particular, the Chinese military support during the Korean War that came at the expense of heavy casualties made North Korea finally choose China over the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁵

In fact, China took the decline in aid from other countries to North Korea as an opportunity to expand its influence in North Korea. The Commodity Trade Agreement, which had previously been rejected until 1956, was signed in January 1957 and the PRC began to provide large-scale economic aid to North Korea based on the newly signed agreement. The PRC provided an additional 150,000 tons of food, 11,000 tons of cotton, 1 million tons of coal, and products worth 75 million Yuan, of which 50 million was free. In addition, in 1958, the amount of RMB 100 million was provided. Considering the free stationing of the Chinese military, free education program for North Korean engineers, and support program for the repatriation of Korean-Chinese who used to live in exile in China during the colonial period, the total amount of Chinese aid to North Korea must have been much higher.¹⁴⁶

Obviously, these changes in North Korea's foreign relations also affected the relations between East Germany and North Korea in the late 1950s. In 1959, the North Korean government delayed providing supplies to East Germany even though it was suffering from an extreme drought. It also planned to reduce the provision of goods to East Germany in 1960 by 30% compared to the previous year.¹⁴⁷ In a telegram on

¹⁴⁴ Frank (1996), loc. cit., pp. 75-77, 86-92; Kang-Schmitz, loc. cit., pp. 83, 119, 174-176

¹⁴⁵ Seong Sang-hwan, 북한과 구동독의 외교관계에 대한 분석적 고찰 * Eine analytische Betrachtung der diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen Nordkorea und DDR -in Bezug auf die Archivmaterialien von 1954 bis 1960, in *독어교육* * Koreanische Zeitschrift für Deutschunterricht, Vol. 49, December 2012, pp. 399-421, here, p. 409

¹⁴⁶ Kim Dong-gil and Han Sang-jun, 제2의 해방: 북한 자주화와 1956-57년의 중국-북한관계 * The 2nd Liberation: Struggle for Equal and Sino-North Korean Relations in 1956, in *국가전략* * National Strategy, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June 2014), pp. 69-108, here pp. 94-96, here pp. 94-96

¹⁴⁷ "An den Stellvertreter des Ministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten Genossen Botschafter Schwab", PAAA, 39/203, A 17238, MB Schwab I A.S.39/203 A:Protokolle von Dienstbesprechungen

November 5, 1959 Ambassador Fischer described this North Korean attitude as follows:

*“...As our reports so far show, we have proven that in all matters we are entirely sympathetic to the economic difficulties facing our Korean friends. But should one not assume, too, that, conversely, our Korean friends ought to take into account our circumstances and be sympathetic to them? Notwithstanding the best intentions on our part, we cannot perceive a conduct of this sort with them, but now as before, they keep starting only from their concerns and do not consider our situation...”*¹⁴⁸

The East German government nonetheless consistently insisted on expanding its diplomatic relations with North Korea even further, despite realizing that North Korea was no longer trying to maintain its relationship. This can be because, in order to maintain Soviet influence in the Far East Asian socialist country, maintaining trade relations at least through East Germany could have been a countermeasure.¹⁴⁹ Thus, East Germany continued to seek ways to actively maintain relations with North Korea. For example, in the East German ambassador’s judgement the reason behind the decline in trade between East Germany and North Korea was the success of the North Korea’s five-year economic development plan and as a result the changes in industrial structure, so East Germany had to meet the new trade demands of North Korea, not blaming its passive attitude.¹⁵⁰ Also, it was assumed the reason why the trade volume between the two countries was reduced because North Korea found other trade partners that could replace East Germany, especially Japan, thus, the GDR should make efforts

beim Staatssekretär 1957, II A.S.39/203 B:Informationen, Vermerke über die Lage I der KV Korea und die Beziehungen DDR - VR Korea 1956-1959 enth.u.a.: einen Vermerk Handelsbeziehungen KVDR-Westdeutschland 1959. (2), pp. 122-124

¹⁴⁸ [...*Wie unsere bisherigen Berichte zeigen, haben wir bewiesen, dass wir in allen Dingen voll und ganz Verständnis für die wirtschaftlichen Schwierigkeiten unserer koreanischen Freunde aufbringen. Müßte man nicht aber auch annehmen, adss umgekehrt die koreanischen Freund auf unsere Verhältnisse Rücksicht nehmen und dafür Verständnis zeigen müßten? Trotz des besten Willens unsererseits können wir ein derartiges Verhalten bei ihnen nicht erkennen, sondern sie gehen nach wie vor nur von ihren Belangen aus und berücksichtigen unsere Lage nicht...*], in Ibid, here, p. 124

¹⁴⁹ Kang-Schmitz, loc. cit., pp. 31-36, Bernd Schäfer, Weathering the Sino-Soviet Conflict: The GDR and North Korea, 1949-1989, in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 14/15 (Winter 2003-Spring 2004), Christian F. Ostermann, ed., pp. 25-38, here pp. 29-31

¹⁵⁰ “Einschätzung der Zusammenarbeit der Sektion Korea mit den zuständigen Mitarbeitern des MAK und der Staatl. Plan-kommission bzw. anderen Wirtschaftsinstituten.”, PAAA, II/III 1030/62, A 6966, Wirtschaftslage in der KVDR und Informationen zu den Handelsbeziehungen der KVDR zur DDR und zu dritten Staaten, pp. 12-15

to find new trade items or organize a trade fair in Pyongyang to promote trade between the two countries.¹⁵¹

However, the Kim Il-sung regime's passive and inactive attitude toward East Germany was still consistent. North Korea even tried to downplay the importance of its relationship with East Germany or ignore it altogether. For example, the East German signboards installed in facilities in Hamheung and in the Pyongyang printing factory were removed, and all problems arising from these companies and production facilities were entirely blamed on the East Germans.¹⁵²

Therefore, in conclusion, the aid to North Korea and the Hamheung reconstruction project that were started on the basis of proletarian internationalism gradually changed and were scaled down in accordance with the political situation in North Korea and the struggles within the Workers' Party of Korea during the second half of the 1950s. Meanwhile, while pursuing the doctrine of self-reliance and independence, the Kim Il-sung regime at the same time sought cooperation with China, gradually reducing its relations with the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. As a result, trade with East Germany was gradually reduced and the Hamheung reconstruction project was terminated in 1962, two years ahead of schedule. However, East Germany still regarded it as important to maintain Soviet influence in the Far East, thus, it endeavored to continue the relations with North Korea.

In a way, the East German investment in North Korea was a complete failure. The amount that East Germany finally redeemed was almost inadequate, and there were no diplomatic results. On the other hand, East German investment had never been small. The GDR alone provided financial aid of the order of approximately 545.4 million RUB (303 million Deutschmarks), the third largest amount after the Soviet Union and China, which accounted for 16.5% of the total aid received by North Korea between 1953 and 1962. Given that the gross domestic product (GDP) of East Germany in 1954 was estimated at 30 billion DM, then the amount of the East German aid alone would

¹⁵¹ "An die Botschaft der DDR in der Koreanischen Volksdemokratischen Republik", PAAA, II/5 1155/63, A 10260, Botschaft Phoengjang. Technisch-wissenschaftliche Zusammenarbeit mit Korea, pp. 1-10, here p. 4

¹⁵² Charles K. Armstrong, 'Fraternal Socialism': The International Reconstruction of Korea, 1953-62, in *Cold War History*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (May 2005), pp. 161-187, here p. 180

be equivalent to nearly 1% of the total GDP for 1954.¹⁵³ The total income of East Germany in 1954 was 4.6 billion marks, that means about 8.4% of this amount was invested in the Hamheung project alone.¹⁵⁴

In the next chapter, it will be explored how the relationship between West Germany and South Korea unfolded, whether patterns similar to the East German-North Korean relations can be found, and in what respect the relations between the FRG and the ROK were different from that between the GDR and the DPRK.

6. West German-South Korean Relations

Although not widely known, the medical aid provided by West Germany in the 1950s wasn't the first time that Germany helped Korea. In October 1936 a huge typhoon hit the Korean Peninsula causing an enormous flood in the southern provinces. Thus, the Japanese Governor-General of Korea, the Japanese institution that managed the Joseon Dynasty, held a fundraising campaign for flood damage recovery. On 19 October, the German Ambassador in Daren, China, Ernst Bischof, visited the Governor-General of Korea in person and said, "*The Führer is interested in the Far East, and as he had heard of the news of the flood in Korea, he handed me over the check.*"¹⁵⁵ Meanwhile, in Joseon, a newspaper reported "...It was indeed the incarnation of love for mankind that the German the white man sent us money" and "...It was truly an unprecedented affair that a head of a state sent an envoy personally...", praising Hitler for his gesture of love for humanity.¹⁵⁶

As matter of course, it is very unlikely that Hitler felt particularly compassion for the Koreans. It is more reasonable to interpret his action as a diplomatic gesture towards the Japanese Empire, considering the future friendly relationship between the two

¹⁵³ Agov, loc. cit., p.214

¹⁵⁴ Frank (1996), loc. cit., p. 14, 80; Yoon T. Kuark, North Korea's Industrial Development during the Post-War Period, in *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 14, June 1963, pp. 51-64, here p. 61

¹⁵⁵ 'Eine Spende des Führers', *Deutsch-Chinesische Nachrichten*, 22 October 1936

¹⁵⁶ '히틀러독총통(獨總統) 조선수재(朝鮮水災)에 금일봉(金一封) * The German Chancellor Hitler granted money to Joseon for flood damage', *조선석간* * *Joseon Evening Paper*, 21 October 1936

countries.

Then, how did the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Konrad Adenauer 16 years later arrive at the decision to dispatch medical aid to South Korea? Did he somehow feel compassion for South Koreans suffering from the war? Or was it a diplomatic gesture that took into consideration the relationship with his western ally? In the following two sub-chapters, the involvement of West Germany on the Korean Peninsula as well as the background of the FRG's engagement will be explored by analyzing historical facts and drawing comparisons with other cases of medical assistance.

6-1. Cooperation with the United Nations

As briefly explained in Chapter 4, West Germany expressed its intention to dispatch medical assistance to South Korea for the purpose of supporting the UN and U.S. troops in the Korean War. However, there is a record of attempting to deliver medical supplies through the United Nations once, so this chapter tries to explore the record of West Germany's engagement with the UN.

There were a total of 9 UN-affiliated organizations that were active in South Korea during the period of military actions and after the armistice treaty as well. The five permanent organizations were: the International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Refugee Organization (IRO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).¹⁵⁷ And there were the Economic Cooperation Agency (ECA), the United Nations Civil Assistance Corps Korea (UNCACK), the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA), and the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK), all of which organizations were later disbanded.¹⁵⁸

West Germany has never expressed its intention to engage in activities in Korea through any of these agencies. However, according to the report of the UN, the West

¹⁵⁷ The UNICEF was called United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund before 1953. "Learning from Experience: 1946-1979", UNICEF. URL: <https://www.unicef.org/stories/learning-experience-19461979> [last accessed 23 September 2020]

¹⁵⁸ 국방백서 * Defense White Paper 2012, Ministry of National Defense (ROK), December 2012, pp. 285

German government notified the United Nations on November 25, 1952 of its readiness to send medical supplies to the ROK. At that time, the United Nations was providing aid through a channel called Emergency Relief Program (ERP) based on UN Security Council meetings S/1551 and S/1588, and resolution 323 of the UN Economic and Social Commission, so even countries that were not affiliated with the United Nations could participate in its humanitarian activities.¹⁵⁹ Since West Germany was not a member state during the 1950s, it seems that it decided to support South Korea through the program run by the UN.

Through the ERP, West Germany decided to send medicine worth a total of 47,619 U.S. Dollars to South Korea. But it is unclear when the goods arrived in Korea. The data recorded on the Korean side only mention “before August 30, 1954”, and the UN report covering humanitarian aid activities in South Korea until September 30, 1953 said that the medical supplies from West Germany were under shipment.¹⁶⁰ Since the West German Red Cross Hospital in Busan opened in May 1954, these supplies were possibly transported directly by West German medical staff.

Also, in other sources like official documents published by the United Nations and the South Korean government, no case of private aid from West Germany has been found. The UN report mentioned above recorded the activities of various non-governmental organizations by nationality, excluding UN-affiliated agencies, but no cases of German support were registered. Similarly, the report also shows the activities of the Red Cross by nationality, but records of the German Red Cross did not appear until September 30, 1953.¹⁶¹

However, some evidence has been found in diplomatic documents exchanged between the United States and the FRG that West Germany may not have deliberately participated in UN activities supporting South Korea at the time. In late September 1953, the U.S. State Department suggested to West Germany to participate in aid programs for South Korea even in the form of funding as was the case with Italy,

¹⁵⁹ *Report of the Agent General of the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency for the period 15 September 1952 to 30 September 1953*, UN General Assembly, New York, 1953, p.5

¹⁶⁰ *한국전쟁 5년지* * *The Fifth Year of the Korean War*, Ministry of Defense (ROK), 1955, p. D 19-21; UN General Assembly (1953), loc. cit., p. 20

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Austria, and Sweden which like West Germany were not member states, and other Scandinavian countries like Denmark and Norway.¹⁶² So the two officials from the UNKRA visited Bonn in person and asked the German officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Finance to provide 5 million U.S. Dollars in financial aid, suggesting examples of aid from other non-member countries such as Austria, Sweden and Italy.¹⁶³ In December 1953, in a meeting with the Chief of Office of the UNKRA the possibility of Germany donating 5 million U.S. Dollars was discussed.¹⁶⁴

Later, in May 1954, when the German Red Cross Hospital in Busan was already opened, the U.S. State Department told the Office of the High Commissioners for Germany that the West German government was strongly expected to make a financial contribution to the UNKRA. However, the West German government answered that it hoped that either the hospital would be regarded as a donation or the requested amount of donation would be reduced.¹⁶⁵

Eventually, on June 21, 1954, the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs recognized the plan of the UNKRA through the British High Commissioner and requested the Ministry of Finance to support the UN activity, but the Ministry of Finance answered that it would be difficult to provide additional assistance except for maintaining the hospital and its equipment. It added only that it would be considered whether the requested aid would be realized in the following fiscal year.¹⁶⁶ However, since there was nothing found that could have confirmed the West German government's financial

¹⁶² "Bonn to Department of State, September 29, 1953", Box 2-9/RG 59, Records of Pertaining to UN Korea Relief Organizations, 1950-1960. as quoted in Cho Sung-hun, 부산 서독 적십자병원의 활동 성과와 기억 The Achievement and Memories of the Busan West German Hospital, *일제강점기 한국 전쟁기 인도주의 활동 * Humanitarian Activities during the Japanese Occupation and the Korean War*, Seoul, 2020, p. 125.

¹⁶³ "Department to HICOG, Bonn", Oct. 5, 1953, Box 2-9/RG 59, Records of Pertaining to UN Korea Relief Organizations, 1950-1960, as quoted in Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ "John L. Thurston, Acting Chief of Office, UNKRA to Graham Hall, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State for UN Affairs", Dec. 23, 1953, Box 2-8/RG 59, Records of Pertaining to UN Korea Relief Organizations, 1950-1960, as quoted in Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ "Department to HICOG, Bonn: Contribution to UNKRA by the Federal Republic of Germany" May 26, 1954, Box 2-9/RG 59, Records of Pertaining to UN Korea Relief Organizations, 1950-1960, as quoted in Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ "HICOG, Bonn to Department of State: UNKRA Contribution" June 22, Aug. 11, 1954, Box 2-9/RG 59, Records of Pertaining to UN Korea Relief Organizations, 1950-1960, as quoted in Ibid.

support to South Korea in the 1950s, it remains unknown to this day what additional supplies or funds were provided except for the West German hospital.

Meanwhile, the five countries that sent medical assistance to South Korea (Sweden, Denmark, Italy, India, and Norway in the order of arrival in Korea) provided additional medical supplies through the United Nations.¹⁶⁷

Before introducing the activities of the West German hospital in Busan, the other cases of the five countries that participated in the Korean War by sending medical personnel or field hospital will be briefly reviewed. Although it is not possible to introduce all the details and specific context in this chapter, it will be worth taking a look at them to find the features that can be compared with the case of West Germany.

Sweden announced its intention to dispatch a single field hospital to the United Nations on July 14, 1950, the first of the five countries that provided medical aid. The Swedish field hospital arrived in Busan on September 23 and soon tried to move to the front line according to the original plan. But due to the unfavorable situation for the UN troops since October 1950, the Swedish hospital remained as a rear hospital in Busan and started full-fledged medical service for civilians.¹⁶⁸

One of their greatest achievements was supplying the tuberculosis vaccination (Bacillus of Calmette and Guérin, BCG) to Korea for the first time. In addition, after moving to the National Maritime University of Pusan in May 1955, it established the largest blood bank in Korea and provided 5,870 pints of blood in the same year alone. The Swedish medical staff stayed in Korea for a total of 6 years and 6 months until they withdrew from Busan in March 1957, operated with 1,124 people, and treated more than 2 million patients from 20 different countries during their deployment.¹⁶⁹

Some of the Swedish personnel voluntarily remained in South Korea and continued their medical activities despite the official termination of the medical assistance

¹⁶⁷ UN General Assembly, loc. cit., Ibid, pp. 20-29

¹⁶⁸ Won Tae-jae, ed., *The History of the Nations that Provided Medical Assistance in the Korean War* (Sejong: Ministry of Patriots and Veteran Affairs of the Republic of Korea), Translated by Kim Chang-su, Korea Research Institute for Strategy, 2014, pp. 51-53

¹⁶⁹ "Sweden. BCG Vaccination" in *the Journal of American Medical Association*, Vol. 161, No. 6 (June 1956), pp. 551-552, as quoted in Park Ji Wook, The Medical Assistance of Swedish Red Cross Field Hospital in Busan during and after the Korean War, in *역사학* * *Korean Journal of Medical History*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (June 2010), pp. 189-208, here p. 199

program. The pediatrician Aino Vainola and the nurse Kerstin Persson kept moving from hospital to hospital and from nursery to nursery in Busan with other South Korean medical staff to continue the supply of the BCG vaccine in South Korea. From April 1957 to September 1958, a total of 61,172 people were tested for tuberculosis and 24,983 people were vaccinated by the Swedish medics.¹⁷⁰

Then, in cooperation with the Norwegian and Danish medical staff who shared their humanitarian intentions, on October 2, 1958, they finally opened the National Medical Center of the Republic of Korea. Until August 12, 1968, as the management of the hospital was handed over to the Korean government, the hospital conducted non-profit medical activities with virtually no fees. This hospital was called the “Scandinavian Hospital (스칸디나비아 병원)”, and at the time it was equipped with the best medical equipment, facilities, and medical staff in South Korea. Since the management of the hospital was transferred to the government of the Republic of Korea in 1968, it kept providing medical services almost for free to patients who are unable to afford treatment at private hospitals.¹⁷¹



The main building of the National Medical Center (1958), Kang (2008), loc. cit., p. 56

The Indian government dispatched a field hospital for the purpose of providing close support on the front line. On July 31, 1950, the Indian government conveyed its

¹⁷⁰ Swedish Red Cross Hospital, *Monthly Reports from Dr. Aino Vainola*, as quoted in *Ibid*, p. 200

¹⁷¹ Kang Jae-kyu, Choi Kyung-woo (ed.), *국립의료원 50년사 1958-2008 * History of National Medical Center: 1958-2008* (Seoul: National Medical Center) 2008, p. 51-53

intention to dispatch a medical support unit to South Korea to the United Nations and the US government, and soon it announced that it will additionally provide 400,000 bags of rice as well. The Indian government decided to dispatch the 60th Indian Field Ambulance Unit, which had also participated in World War II. This unit established in August 1942 was composed of veteran elite field soldiers with at least 18 months of service in the mountains of Kashmir. All the members of the unit had received airborne training. The Indian government decided to increase the number of personnel in the unit and dispatch a total of 341 (15 doctors) troops and 40 vehicles.¹⁷²

The Indian Field Hospital arrived in Busan on November 20, 1950. The field hospital was immediately assigned to the 27th Brigade of the British Army and was ordered to advance to the front line. On December 4, they arrived in Pyeongyang, the forwardmost front line at that moment, and moved back and forth between the front and the rear to carry and treat the wounded. However, a few hours after their arrival, Pyeongyang was besieged by the Chinese and North Korean troops and the entire medical staff was in danger of being destroyed. The train abandoned on the track they found was the last train to leave Pyeongyang in the winter of 1950 headed south. Since the Indian medical staff had been active on the frontline all the time, a total of 3 men were killed and 23 were injured during the deployment.¹⁷³

From February 1951, civilian medical services also initiated in Daegu. 140 beds were prepared in Daegu West District Hospital for the Indian doctors. They treated an average of more than 300 patients per day and conducted more than 1,400 operations from June 1952 to February 1953. In particular, in August 1952, since they were particularly skilled in anesthesia and treating eye problems, the eye disease prevalent in an orphanage near the Daegu garrison could be completely eradicated by the Indian doctors, so 250 children safely had restored their eyesight.¹⁷⁴

One noteworthy record is that the Indian Red Cross tried to send medical personnel

¹⁷² Won, loc. cit., p. 94-96

¹⁷³ La Dae-sik, *한국전쟁사: 유엔군 참전편, 제 11 권* * *The History of the Korean War: The Participation of the UN Forces, Volume 11* (Seoul: Institute for Military History), 1980, pp. 782-783; *UN군지원사* * *The History of the Support of the UN Forces*, (Seoul: Institute for Military History), 1998, pp. 431-432

¹⁷⁴ La, loc. cit., pp. 795-796

and supplies to the Manchurian region to treat the wounded Chinese soldiers. However, the operation failed because the shipment was hijacked with the assistance of the Kuomintang government in Taiwan.¹⁷⁵

Denmark proposed to send an ambulance contingent on July 19, 1950. But on August 19, it increased the scale of medical assistance and dispatched the Danish East Asiatic Company's 13,164-ton power ship *Jutlandia* as a medical vessel. It also announced that the Danish government would provide an additional 500 tons of sugar and various medicines.¹⁷⁶

The *Jutlandia* departed Denmark on January 23, 1951 and arrived in Busan on March 7. The ship traveled between Denmark and Korea three times until October 1953 for supplying goods and transporting the injured European soldiers. A total of 630 personnel was onboard yearly and treated more than 6,000 patients. Most of the patients were too seriously injured to be evacuated by helicopter from the ship, but only 25 patients died on the ship during the whole period.¹⁷⁷

Norway originally proposed a ship for maritime transport in early July 1950, but on July 31 it decided to expand the scale of support to Korea by providing 74,600 dollars in cash and 126 tons of used clothing through the Red Cross. It also proposed to the United Nations that it would donate an additional 1,725,523 dollars to UNKRA and send their Red Cross agents to set up a refugee camp in Japan that could accommodate up to 2,000 refugees.¹⁷⁸

Afterwards, on January 27, 1951, the Norwegian government proposed to the United Nations to dispatch a medical unit to South Korea directly. The Norwegian Red Cross was in charge of the task, and a total of 83 medical staff were prepared for the deployment. They built a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) for the purpose of supporting the U.S. 1st Corps. On July 19, 1951, they set up a field hospital in

¹⁷⁵ Hong, loc. cit., p. 85-86. According to her research, there were similar cases of the ICRC and the British Red Cross that the countries of the Western camp attempted to send medical aid to North Korea, but they all never succeeded in implementing their plans. Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ 'USUN New York to the Secretary of State' 19. 8. 1950, "DENMARK", NARA, RG 319, Records of the U.S. Army Staff, E. 99A Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Far East and Pacific Branch, Korean Message File, June 1950 – May 1954, Box 725, as quoted in Won, loc. cit., p. 115

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 116

¹⁷⁸ Institute for Military History (1988), loc. cit., p. 445

Dongducheon, about 19km north of Seoul. However, it was difficult to handle all the injured with the number of just 83 personnel, so additional manpower was provided from South Korea, the United States and Norway.¹⁷⁹

Since the Norwegian hospital was located not far from the suburbs of Seoul, civilians living in Seoul were also able to receive treatment in the hospital. The radiology department treated 36,593 people, among them more than 8,000 civilians from the near Seoul area and the surrounding Gyeonggi Province, until it withdrew in October 1954. Including soldiers and civilians, there were 14,755 hospitalized patients, however, the total number of deaths was only 150, so the death rate stood at 1.2%.¹⁸⁰

Like in the case of their Swedish colleagues, some of the Norwegian medical staff voluntarily remained in Korea and participated in medical volunteer work even after the official activities had ended. Most of them served their compulsory service period for six months and voluntarily remained for one to two more years to continue medical assistance. When they went to Seoul on vacation they worked at private hospitals and supported medical activities together with South Korean doctors.¹⁸¹

Italy announced its intention to provide medical assistance through the UN headquarters on September 27, 1950. Specific matters were discussed until December 18, 1950 when the final size and specific operation matters of the hospital were determined. However, since Italy was not a member state of the United Nations, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Italian Red Cross on April 4, 1951 through the U.S. Ambassador sent a memorandum to the U.S. Secretary of State expressing their hope for being able to carry out neutral missions only as often as possible.¹⁸²

Italian medical staff, named the 68th Red Cross Hospital, left Italy on October 16,

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, pp. 445-447; *NORMASH: 우리의 가슴속에 자리한 한국* * *NORMASH: Korea, Inside of Our Heart* (Seoul: Norwegian Embassy in Korea), 2013, p. 20-21. The original title in Norwegian is Fin Bakke, *NORMASH: Korea i våre hjerte* (Oslo: Norwegian Korean War Veteran Association), 2010

¹⁸⁰ Ibid; Institute for Military History (1998), loc. cit., p. 447-449. Additionally, three of Norwegian medical personnel were killed in action. Park Dong-chan, loc. cit., p. 283

¹⁸¹ Won, loc. cit., pp. 156-157

¹⁸² ‘Note Verbale #04962/41’, “Rome to the Secretary of State, subject: Italian Red Cross Field Hospital Unit for Korea” 4. 4. 1951; ‘Translation of Statement Prepared by the Italian Red Cross: Italian Red Cross Field Hospital No. 68 intended for the Assistance of the Civil Populations in Korea’, “US Ambassador Rome Italy Sgd Thompson to the Secretary of State”, RG 319, E. 99A, Box 725; as quoted in Won, loc. cit., p. 182

1951 and arrived in Busan on November 16. They set up a clinic at Wooshin Elementary School in Yeongdeungpo in Seoul on December 6, and operated departments of internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, dentistry, and radiology with a scale of 150 beds and 128 personnel. Most of the supplies were purchased and provided by the Italian government and the Red Cross, and services such as transportation of goods and emergency medicines were supported by the U.S. military.¹⁸³

They carried out a total of 50,057 medical treatments and surgeries until August 1952. In particular, they were dispatched urgently to the site of a train crash in Guro-dong on the Gyeong-In Line on September 17. They rescued and evacuated 39 critically injured civilians which all received free treatment until they recovered, so the medical staffs were awarded the Presidential Medal from the South Korean president Syngman Rhee.¹⁸⁴

Unfortunately, on November 30, 1952, the hospital building was completely burned down in a fire of unknown cause. The UNCACK assisted them in building a new hospital facility and on February 23, 1953 the hospital was handed over to the Italian medical team. The Italians expressed their appreciation and put more effort in medical service for civilians by operating a 24-hour emergency room and an outpatient clinic.¹⁸⁵

Until the last remaining personnel returned to Korea on January 2, 1955, the Italian Hospital recorded 3,297 surgical operations, 7,250 inpatients, 222,885 outpatients, 1,115 dental treatments, 8,444 pathological tests, and 17,115 radiological examinations.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Won, loc. cit., pp. 183-184

¹⁸⁴ “內外負傷兵慰問(내외부상병위문) 서울의李大統領夫妻(이대통령부처) * President Syngman Rhee visited the injured in the hospital”, *동아일보* * *Dong-A Daily*, October 13, 1952.

¹⁸⁵ 伊太利病院(이태리병원) 再建(재건)에着手(착수) * The Reconstruction of the Italian Hospital initiated, *경향신문* * *KyeongHyang Newspaper*, 18 January 1953; 伊太利野戰病院(이태리아전병원) 來廿日頃(내입일경)에再開(재개) * Italian Field Hospital resumes Tomorrow, *KyeongHyang Newspaper*, 8 February 1953

¹⁸⁶ Won, loc. cit., pp. 188-191

In the next chapter, finally the activities of the West German Red Cross Hospital in Busan will be explored and compared to those of the countries mentioned above. Moreover, the intentions of the West German government that were behind the medical assistance to South Korea will be revealed.

6-2. German Red Cross Hospital in Busan

Before following other countries into sending medical aid to South Korea, the West German government first discussed the details of its humanitarian assistance with the US government and the United Nations. On February 12, 1954, the two governments signed an agreement on medical assistance in Washington, and the following month on March 15, the details of the agreement were notified by the US Department of Defense to the United Nations Command.¹⁸⁷ The West German Red Cross was selected as the organization responsible for providing medical aid on the field. The total scale of medical staff was 70 to 80 people, including 10 to 12 doctors, 2 pharmacists and 25 nurses.¹⁸⁸

One unusual aspect of the West German medical assistance compared to the other cases of medical assistance was that the West German Red Cross refused to take on the preparatory work. Except in the case of India, the governments usually cooperated closely with the Red Cross.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior took charge of preparing the whole process. Specifically, the Federal Health Department established a temporary organization to gather the personnel to be dispatched to the Korean Peninsula.

The first West German medical unit arrived in Seoul on January 30, 1954. They were not the medical personnel but administrative officials whose task was to discuss

¹⁸⁷ “Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany Concerning Participation of a German Red Cross Hospital in Connection with the United Nations Operations in Korea”, 12 February 1954, in Korea: Treasury Program – Briefing Materials: File IV, Section H, Nos. 18-39, Section I-Not Located, Section J [1950-1956], in the Archives of Korean History, AUS 267_01_01C0083_051

¹⁸⁸ Cho (2018), loc. cit., p. 146; *Jahresbericht*, (Bonn: Deutsches Rotes Kreuz), 1958, p. 20

¹⁸⁹ The Indian Red Cross was in charge of independent civilian aid, sending mepacrine tablets and medical supplies on 13 June and 15 August 1951, because the Indian Army alone controlled the whole medical affairs. UN General Assembly, loc. cit., p. 29

specific matters regarding the operation of the hospital with the US and South Korean partners, for instance the location of the hospital. On February 18, the South Korean president Syngman Rhee personally met with the West German medical delegation, and two days later, on the 20th, the UN Forces Command officially informed the South Korean Foreign Ministry that the West German medical staff had arrived in Korea to start the medical affairs.¹⁹⁰

However, the opening of the hospital was delayed by about four months since the first delegation landed in Seoul. For only on April 24, 1954, the U.S. military 21st field hospital in Busan, which was accommodated in a building that originally belonged to the Busan Girl's High School and subsequently was designated to be used as the German hospital building, was handed over to the German medical team. Because there still were approximately about a million refugees living inside in the city and the suburban area of Busan, additional medical aid was desperately needed. However, the building was not in a condition adequate to serve as hospital, thus, internal facilities had to be reorganized for about 20 days. So the first patient was able to visit the German hospital on May 17, 1954.¹⁹¹

Another major reason for the delayed opening of the hospital was that the German and the South Korean government had defined the character of the medical activity differently. The ROK government wished that the West German medical team would care for civilians, not belonging to a military unit as a field hospital. The ROK ambassador to the UN Lim Byung-jik already had explained the position of his nation to the German UN Ambassador, "*It is a mistake for the German prime minister Adenauer that he gives his medical team to the United States as a diplomatic gesture*". He also insisted that the hospital should be used for civilian purposes in accordance with the UN policy in Korea.¹⁹² The ROK government even had already decided where the West German medical team would be deployed. On December 10, 1953, the

¹⁹⁰ Cho (2018), p. 145; It seems that the first team left Hamburg to Kobe in Japan around the middle of December 1953. "Hans E. Riesser to Colonel Ben C. Limb" 17 December 1953, PAAA, Bestand 11, Band 792, Krieg- Allgemeines – Die Alliierte Hohe Kommission ect [1/2], p. 208

¹⁹¹ "부산여자중학교 교사 명도 의뢰의 건 * The Agenda of Request for Vacation of the Busan Girls' High School Building", November 18, 1957, National Archive of Korea, as quoted in Cho (2018), loc. cit., p. 145

¹⁹² Lim, loc. cit.

minister of health Choi Jae-yoo reported to the South Korean prime minister Baek Doo-jin that he had already agreed with the UNCACK that the German medical team should be centered on the Daejeon City Hospital and the Onyang National Relief Hospital which were run by the South Korean government.¹⁹³

However, the West German medical team regarded their activities in South Korea as supporting the war efforts of the UN against the communist invaders. For example, the West German government wanted the United States to inform China and North Korea on behalf of the United Nations that the West German hospital treated the injured and sick of the United Nations troops and South Korean civilians, even though hostilities between them had already ceased. Therefore, on March 19, the US government notified the North Korean foreign minister Park Hun-yeong and the Chinese foreign minister Zhōu Ēnlái of the medical assistance from West Germany, but no one responded. On May 27, the US sent the same message, but there was no reply again.¹⁹⁴

However, the UN and the US military defined the West German medical aid as medical aid for civilians. In April 1954, the hospital was officially approved as a “relief organization”, not a field hospital.¹⁹⁵ Also, in August 1957, the US 8th Army Command reconfirmed that the German hospital was originally established to support the injured UN troops, however, since the armistice treaty was already signed, it provided valuable medical services to South Korean civilians.¹⁹⁶

Indeed, the West German hospital provided significant medical services for the Busan citizens, mostly refugees from the entire Korean peninsula, even from North Korea as well. So during their service period, in total 22,516 inpatients and 282,468 outpatients

¹⁹³ ‘서독병원정식개원 * The West German Hospital Opens’, *Dong-A Daily*, 28 June 1954

¹⁹⁴ “Red Cross Hospital of the Fed. Rep. of Germany in Korea” March 4, 1954, RG 59, Department of State, Decimal File, 1950-54, Relating to Korea (Excerpt), Box No. 1381, from 357.AD/9-153 to 357.AD/12-2854 (4 of 4); “Telegram from D. Hammarskjold to Pak Heun Young”, May 27, 1954, RG 59, Department of State, Decimal File, 1950-54, Relating to Korea (Excerpt), Box No. 1381, from 357.AD/9-153 to 357.AD/12-2854 (1 of 4); “(UN-UNP-FE) German Red Cross Hospital in Korea”, June 3, 1954, RG 59, Department of State, Decimal File, 1950-54, Relating to Korea (Excerpt), Box No. 1381, from 357.AD/9-153 to 357.AD/12-2854 (4 of 4)

¹⁹⁵ “부산서독적십자 관계, 1956-59 * The Relation with the Busan West German Red Cross Hospital”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ROK), in National Archive of Korea, No. CA0002008, p. 14

¹⁹⁶ “A. T. McAnsh, B. G., General Staff, Deputy Chief, HQ, EUSA to PAIK SUN JIN, MG., Chief, Logistics Bureau, ROKA”, August 1, 1957, as quoted in Cho (2020), loc. cit., p. 129

were treated until the hospital closed on February 15, 1959. One of the most important achievements of the West German hospital was that a total of 6,025 babies were born in the hospital. Since 40 of the 200 beds in the hospital belonged to the well-staffed and well-equipped department of obstetrics and gynecology many pregnant women were able to visit the hospital and deliver their children safely.¹⁹⁷



Prof. Dr. Günther Huwer (seated) with Korean doctor Woo Won-hyeong,
in front of the German Red Cross Hospital, ca. 1958.
(Provenance Elisabeth Huwer) P6292 © Studienwerk deutsches Leben in Ostasien e.V.

The German hospital also served as an institution of higher education to train doctors and nurses. A total of 41 South Korean doctors were given the opportunity to practice and study in the hospital. Some of them later became professors and doctors who contributed to the development of the medical system of South Korea, for instance, Mun Han-kyu, director of the Busan University Hospital, Kim Doo-sang at Hanyang University, Choi Ha-jin, professor at Busan University and the first hospital director

¹⁹⁷ Cho (2020), loc. cit., p. 127. His research found and added the number of patient, who were treated until 15 February 1959. They were not counted in the official publication of the German Red Cross in 2018. Hans-Christian Breggott, et. al., eds., *inform. Das Magazin des DRK*, Deutsches Rotes Kreuz e. V., 2018, p. 5

of the Busan Paik Hospital, Woo Won-hyeong, who also became the director of his own gynecological hospital. Besides, the West German hospital also succeeded in fostering a total of 60 new South Korean nurses.¹⁹⁸

However, despite such great achievements and dedication, unfavorable incidents inside and outside the hospital were recurring, which finally led the hospital to be closed. First of all, racist behavior of some of the German medical staff became an issue even among the German colleagues. Most of the South Korean medical staff and personnel had not been paid adequately nor treated fairly, even though they possessed fine skills comparable to that of the German medical staff. For instance, South Korean doctors were forbidden to have meals together with their German colleagues.¹⁹⁹

There were more serious problems like assaulting or neglecting patients without giving them proper treatment, thus, in the end several patients died from misdiagnosis by unskilled medical staff. On 13 March 1958, two junior doctors, Hans Hannak and Hans Bommert accused the director of the surgery department Harald Friedrichs of causing the death of nine patients by misdiagnosis and beating.²⁰⁰ There are no exact records of how many patients died in medical facilities run by other countries providing medical support, but obviously improper behavior and treatment by some German medical personnel might be related to the 1,333 deaths that occurred throughout the operation period of the German hospital from May 1954 to March 1959. Of course, there are other factors as well which have to be taken into consideration with regard to calculating the death rate of a hospital, such as the high number of already critically injured patients or the poor condition of hospital facilities.²⁰¹

The poor hygienic conditions at the hospital were also criticized by some German

¹⁹⁸ ‘전쟁 한국’ 치료한 독일 병원 있었다 * There was a German Hospital providing medical treatment in the ‘Korean War, *중앙시사매거진* * *JoongAng Magazine*, 1 May 2010. Dr. Woo (1927) had provided valuable records regarding his experience at the hospital and its history as well. He kept the annual report of the German Red Cross in 1959 for 51 years and translated the memoir of the hospital director into Korean. All the records were referred to for the article and the further research of the Institute for Military History. See archival source, “Bettenzahl des DRK-Hospitals Korea”, Bonn, den 28 October 1954. PAAA, Bestand 11, Band 792, Krieg- Allgemeines – Die Alliierte Hohe Kommission ect [1/2], p. 235

¹⁹⁹ Hong, loc. cit., p. 97-101

²⁰⁰ ‘Nase zukneifen’, *Der Spiegel*, 28 Januar 1959, pp. 33-34

²⁰¹ Hong, loc. cit., p. 101

medical personnel like Hans-Werner Graumann, the director of the radiology department and Franz Josef Rosenbaum, the second director of the department of internal medicine. They pointed out that the hospital did not even meet the minimum standards of a medical facility. Patients with infectious diseases were crowded in the corridor without proper protection and the hospital lacked enough water supply, making it difficult to maintain stable hygienic conditions.²⁰²

Near the end of the service period, the hospital gained greater fame as a “brothel” among the local residents (...während die “untragbare sittliche Verhaltensweise” einer gewissen Gruppe nicht nur die einheimische Bevölkerung zu der Ansicht gebracht habe, “es handele sich um einen Bordellbetrieb verkrachter Existenzen” ...) than for its medical achievements. This indicates the serious moral misconduct of some members of the medical staff and the inadequate circumstances at the hospital. The problems inside the hospital finally started to gradually spread in public.²⁰³

However, the doctors who had revealed the internal scandals at the hospital in a letter to the West German authorities did not receive any reply from them but were fired instead. That is why soon they communicated the story to the West German media such as the weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel*, but none of the accused was brought to court, and not even harshly criticized. The hospital director Günther Huwer was awarded the prestigious Paracelsus Medal from the German Medical Association (Bundesärztekammer) in 1957.²⁰⁴

The scandal was finally stopped by a person close to the Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. In September 1958, while on a trip to Busan, a German catholic priest who happened to be a friend of the chancellor’s son Paul Adenauer, had a chance to have a conversation with Franz Josef Rosenbaum, the doctor who had made known to the public the problems of the German hospital in Busan. After the chancellor had become aware of the events in Busan, soon a thorough investigation was launched.²⁰⁵ Eventually, the West German Foreign Minister Heinrich von Brentano decided to close

²⁰² Hong, loc. cit., p. 104; Cho (2020), loc. cit., p. 138

²⁰³ *Der Spiegel*, loc. cit., p. 34

²⁰⁴ ‘Gestorben’, Deutsches Ärzteblatt, 2 October 1992

²⁰⁵ Hong, loc. cit, p. 105-106

the hospital because he came to the conclusion that maintaining the hospital would not be beneficial to West Germany's reputation in the international community.²⁰⁶

Besides this issue another factor led to the closure of the hospital. As mentioned above, the West German Red Cross Hospital in Busan was established in a building that formerly belonged to Busan Girls' High School. As a consequence, the school was forced to look for alternative accommodations for its 2,600 students. However, the school administration kept demanding the return of their former school building from the German side. This was not the only case of restituting public facilities in Busan that had been requisitioned by the city authorities. For instance, the Busan Fruit Market which was used for the 5th Army Hospital and the Busan Agricultural School which was used for the 23rd Army Hospital had their properties restituted, too.²⁰⁷ Thus, eventually, on November 18, 1957, the Minister of Culture and Education Choi Jae-kyu requested the German hospital administration to return the building to the school.²⁰⁸

The West German government had also already been examining the timing of the hospital closure since 1957. As the German medical team which originally was supposed to support the military forces arrived in Korea, the UN forces' military operations had already ended. So the Germans had to shift their medical aid activities to South Korean civilians. However that was not in line with the original intentions. In the end, the additional problems and scandals that arose inside the hospital drove the West German government to close the hospital.²⁰⁹

Another factor outside Korea also facilitated the decision. Since the mid-50s, the United States shifted its geostrategic interests in the Asian theater from the Korean Peninsula to Vietnam where the anti-American sentiment was rising. Thus, West Germany - like East Germany - was also paying attention to the changing situation in

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ ‘徵發建物續續返還(징발건물속속반환) 釜山(부산)을筆頭(필두)로全國各地(전국각지)에서 * Requisitioned buildings return one after another, from Busan to the whole of the country’, in *Dong-A Daily*, 7 June 1955, 1955; Cho (2018), loc. cit., p. 156

²⁰⁸ Cho (2018), loc. cit., p. 145

²⁰⁹ “Department of State Memo: German Red Cross Hospital in Pusan”, December 2, 1958, as quoted in Cho (2018), p. 157

Vietnam rather than to Korea, where hostile actions were suspended. The West German government attempted to satisfy the U.S. expectations on West Germany to align itself with the U.S diplomatic strategy in Asia through shifting its medical support to Vietnam. The U.S. government designated the Vietnamese city Hué as the place where West Germany would provide medical aid. So the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs dispatched medical staff led by Professor H. O. Krainick to modernize Hue University's curriculum of medical education so it would be able to provide medical services to civilians from surrounding areas, just as the West Germans had done before in Busan.²¹⁰

Given that the embarrassing events that led to the closure of the Busan Red Cross Hospital overshadowed the honor of it being the first and longest running – and the most costly at that - overseas medical aid mission, the West German government decided to cover up the history of the medical aid in South Korea. After the report in the *Spiegel*, the West German Foreign Ministry and the West German Red Cross tried to control the political aftereffects and let the matter vanish into oblivion.²¹¹

Perhaps because the ROK government, too, was aware of this matter, it did not take steps either to preserve the memory of the hospital and to honor its achievements. On March 14, 1959, neither the president nor the minister of health and society but only lower-ranking officials participated in the hospital closing ceremony. On March 20, the president awarded a Civil Merit Medal (공익포장) to the hospital director. However, this medal was the lowest grade of its kind, not even officially recognized as a medal and one which was usually given to civilians.²¹² On the other hand, on December 30, 1954, the minister of defense and the minister of health personally attended the farewell ceremony of the Italian field hospital awarding the Chungmu and Hwarang Order of Military Merit, which were the third and fourth highest among the

²¹⁰ Hong, loc. cit., p. 108

²¹¹ Hong, loc. cit., p. 106

²¹² ‘公益褒章授與(공익포장수여) 西獨病院長(서독병원장)에 * GongIkPoJang Award to the German Hospital director’, *Dona-A Daily*, 20 March 1959; Currently it is called 국민포장 (GukMinPoJang). “대한민국 상훈 * The ROK Prize and Decoration”, Ministry of the Interior and Safety. URL: <https://www.sanghun.go.kr/nation/information/posangInfo3.do> [last accessed 2 October 2020]

entire Korean medals awarded to soldiers mostly.²¹³

Since then, the South Korean government had never commemorated the German hospital activities in the 60s or 70s as well. Even when the West German Red Cross Monument was erected at the former hospital site on October 24, 1997 on the United Nations Day, no West German officials attended.²¹⁴ Meanwhile, when the Swedish War Veterans Monument was established on October 1, 1971, the Swedish Field Hospital Association and the Swedish-Korean Association attended and celebrated its significance together.²¹⁵ The relation between the Swedish veterans and the South Korean government has been lasting to this day. For instance, Kerstin Silvia Jonasson, who came to Korea as a nurse in September 1951 and served for 9 months, donated her fortune to the Swedish Royal Institute for Technology in 2011, notifying that one fourth of her donation, about 17.5 million SEK should be given to South Korean students.²¹⁶

In sum, the West German government sent medical aid to South Korea to support the UN forces, while the South Korean government and the UN expected the German medical delegation to provide aid to civilians as the hostile actions had ceased after the signing of the armistice treaty. As a result, the hospital did treat more than 300,000 civilians for about five years. However, various internal issues did not allow to honor the efforts of the German medical team. Several medical personnel with racist manners came into conflict with their colleagues, not only South Korean but German colleagues as well. Moreover, the hospital gradually started to operate carelessly not providing proper treatment for patients. Eventually, the situation was revealed by several whistleblowers and the first West German overseas humanitarian mission ended in

²¹³ ‘各種勳章授與(각종훈장수여) 伊病院關係者(이병원관계자)에 * Various Medals were awarded to the associates to the Italian Hospital’, *Dong-A Daily*, 1 January 1955

²¹⁴ ‘부산 독일적십자병원 기념비 선다 * The Busan German Red Cross Hospital Monument erected’, *Dong-A Daily*, 22 October 1997

²¹⁵ 6.25 전쟁 60주년 UN참전 기념시설물 도감 1 * 60th Anniversary of the Korean War *Encyclopedia of the UN Veteran Memorials Volume 1*, Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs, 2010, p. 304

²¹⁶ “유럽 참전용사 현지 위로 및 보훈외교 순방 * Local Consolation for European Veterans and Veteran Diplomatic Tour”, Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs, 7 October 2014, URL: <https://www.mpva.go.kr/mpva/news/bohungalleryView.do?id=1740> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

disaster. Both the government of the FRG and the government of the ROK decided to keep silent about the project rather than to honor it, even though more than 300,000 patients had benefited from the hospital treatment.

Also, the activities of the West German Red Cross Hospital did not bring about significant progress in diplomatic relations with the United States and other Western countries. Of course, the United States expressed its appreciation for the German medical support emphasizing that “*the only augmentation of Allied forces has been a hospital unit from West Germany*”.²¹⁷ Moreover, on September 28, 1956, the hospital director was awarded the Medal of Freedom, but there has been no more mention of the hospital.²¹⁸ Therefore, no UN Korean Service Medal was given to the West German medical staff. The United Nations Korean Medal and the United Nations Service Medal Korea were also never awarded by the ROK government.

Perhaps, as the South Korean ambassador Lim Byung-jik insinuated before, the German medical aid to Korea was highly likely a kind of diplomatic gesture towards its allies, especially the United States. It was always clear that the original purpose of the West German medical aid was to support the war efforts of the UN against the communist side. Therefore, the attitude of the West German government and the medical staff was quite different from that of other countries that provided medical support, because the West Germans actually had no plan to help the South Korean citizens in the first place. There were no German medical staff staying behind in Korea voluntarily, and the history of the Busan hospital gradually slipped their memory after returning home. Thus, over the last couple of decades neither the Koreans nor the Germans cared about preserving the memory of the German Red Cross Hospital in Busan.

²¹⁷ A. Statement of Action by Paragraphs of NSC 170/1. ...Para. 10c. *In view of the armistice and the redeployment of two of our own divisions, it has not been practical to carry on a vigorous campaign to secure additional armed forces from other UN members for service in Korea, and the only augmentation of Allied forces has been a hospital unit from West Germany...*

“Progress Report by the Operations Coordinating Board to the National Security Council”, 26 March 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part 2, ed. Edward C. Keefer (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1984, Document 882. URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p2/d882> [last accessed on 2 October 2020]

²¹⁸ ‘西獨病院長(서독병원장)을表彰(표창)* Award to the West German Hospital director’, *KyeongHyang Newspaper*, 29 September 1956

7. Conclusion

This paper aimed to examine the background of the East and West German involvement in the Korean Peninsula during the 1950s in the context of the Cold War. Therefore, in order to grasp the greater geopolitical context, it first explored the international characteristics of the Korean War, in which East and West Germany inevitably intervened, and the general characteristics of humanitarian aid in the early Cold War period in the 1950s. In addition, it also examined the process of decision making both in East and West Germany regarding their intervention in Korea and the historical facts related to their on-site activities.

First of all, the East German aid for North Korea was based on the perception of the Korean War as liberation struggle of the North Korean sister people against U.S. imperialism. Most countries in the socialist bloc shared this Korean War narrative, which recognized the Korean War as legitimate military operation by North Korea in response to the provocation of the South Korean armed forces, which had been manipulated by the United States. It was believed that the ultimate goal of the Korean War was to drive the American imperialists out of Korea and to achieve the liberation and independence of the Korean people.

In particular, East Germany, which was in a situation similar to that of North Korea, took the situation in Korea more seriously than others. Therefore, the socialist countries including East Germany supported North Korea's war efforts in various ways. The Soviet Union and China, who directly participated in the preparations for the war, also sent huge amounts of aid to North Korea. Many Eastern European socialist countries and Mongolia, too, joined the humanitarian aid program for North Korea by providing necessary commodities and medical supplies to military personnel and civilians alike.

On the other hand, the East German SED regime attempted to exploit the Korean crisis in its own struggle against West Germany. The North Korea aid campaign was soon regarded as an effort for the anti-US struggle in Germany. The SED regime pointed out the similar geopolitical situation of North Korea and East Germany, which were both confronted with the Western Powers directly at their borders. In the case of East Germany, even for a short time, but there was at the same time a heightened concern that an armed conflict could occur in Germany proper. As matter of course, these

policies were not an independent strategy devised by the SED itself, but rather in line with the Soviet policy, which was pursuing the goal of pushing the Western Powers back from German territory and maintaining its own influence inside Germany.

However, one fact that should not be forgotten is that East German citizens had voluntarily initiated support for North Korea, even before the official aid campaign by the government started. For example, the Korea Aid Committee, which was established in September 1950, was created to efficiently deliver funds and donations from East German citizens to North Korea, after the citizens themselves had already started to collect donations and to raise funds for North Korea.

Such voluntary and devoted attitude of the East German side could be found in the context of the Hamheung reconstruction project as well. The rebuilding of the entire metropolis Hamheung by a socialist sister country itself was already enough to be exploited for propaganda purposes toward the West and the SED regime partially aimed to do so of course, but East Germany also showed genuine concern and sympathy for the North Korean people. In spite of the unstable political situation and economic stagnation that persisted in East Germany, the SED regime devoted a large amount of budget every year to invest in the reconstruction project of Hamheung. Even when the North Korean side made an unreasonable request, requiring more supply of material and aid funds or engaged in a non-cooperative manner in the joint project, East Germany did not stop the aid program but rather tried to meet the demands as much as possible.

However, even the socialist solidarity between the GDR and the DPRK across races and cultures failed to completely overcome the harsh Cold War situation. The Hamheung reconstruction project ended two years earlier than the initial plan due to the radical changes in the Kim Il-Sung regime's governing system, and the internal turmoil and conflicts within the communist camp since the mid-1950s. However, it can be concluded that the relationship between East Germany and North Korea in the 1950s at least could be sustained thanks to the dedication of the one side, East Germany, which is rarely seen in other normal interstate relations. Of course, the political interests of East Germany were not completely excluded from the relationship between the two countries, nor was the genuine solidarity able to transcend the context of the Cold War, but based on the ideological factor of proletarian internationalism, the unilateral efforts of East Germany allowed the relations to be continued further, despite

such imbalanced transfer and investment.

In contrast, the West German side had never shown much interest in South Korea. In 1951, the Adenauer cabinet planned to send medical staff to the Korean Peninsula, but for unknown reasons the dispatch was delayed until February 1954 when the first West German medical staff actually arrived. Once West Germany provided medical supplies to South Korea through the United Nations, but the shipment was also delayed for about one year, so it arrived after the armistice treaty. Also, there were no records of voluntary aid plans or donations by non-governmental organizations or civic groups. Rather, as a matter of fact the West German government several times rejected the US proposal that West Germany donate cash to South Korea.

The reason why West Germany sent its medical staff to the Korean peninsula was to support the war efforts of the UN forces against the communist aggression. From the time when Adenauer directly announced his intention to dispatch a field hospital to Korea to the moment the hospital in Busan was closed and the West German medical team left South Korea in 1959, the West German government continued to regard the mission of their medical assistance as support of the UN military action, regardless of the ROK and US governments' judgment.

The main interest of the Adenauer cabinet in regards to the Korean War was the defense and foreign policy he promoted. The West German government neither thought of the possibility to directly intervene on the Korean Peninsula like East Germany nor did it feel sympathy for the Korean civilians. However, the Korean War sparked discussions on the potential threat of war in view of the confrontational relations with East Germany. Therefore, the Korean War rather provided Adenauer with the chance to actively promote his defense and foreign policy aimed at West Germany's integration into the Western Bloc.

As such, the FRG decided to dispatch medical staff to support the Korean mission of the UN forces. In particular, considering the timing and results of the deployment of the West German medical team, as predicted by the South Korean UN ambassador Lim Byung-jik, dispatching a field hospital only after the armistice treaty was highly likely to be a diplomatic gesture to strengthen the solidarity within the Western camp - especially between the United States and West Germany.

The fact that the West German medical staff actually was sent for supporting the UN

forces manifested itself in the dispatch process and the results as well. The negotiations were mostly conducted with the United States, not with South Korea, so there was a conflict with the South Korean government over the purpose and the location of the German medical staff's deployment. The West Germans neither provided voluntary medical treatment which was commonly done by other foreign medical staff, nor additional material or medical support through the Red Cross or civil organizations.

Since the West German Red Cross Hospital in Busan was not intended to be a hospital for Koreans in the first place, several problems with the attitude of the medical staff emerged inside the hospital. Some of the West German medical staff often neglected South Korean colleagues and patients. Sometimes they even assaulted patients and most of all, some medical accidents leading to the death of patients also occurred, but the doctor who was responsible for these incidents tried to manipulate the records. Eventually, the hospital, which had been managed in such a mess, produced filthy scandals and eventually was shabbily closed. Later on, the South Korean government did not commemorate the German Hospital, having awarded the hospital chiefs only with the lowest grade of honor.

As the first hot war of the Cold War period, the Korean War was meaningful to both the Socialist Camp and the so-called Free World. The Soviet Union wanted to test the readiness of the United States to sacrifice itself for its allies, and the United States showed its strong will to protect the Korean Peninsula, mobilizing millions of its own soldiers and those of its international allies. The allied states of each camp supported North and South Korea, respectively, which were fighting each other on behalf of them. Some of them sent troops to join the battle and others sent aid supplies and medical staff to support the allied troops and civilians. The same was also true of East and West Germany. East Germany attempted to save civilians by sending medical supplies and commodities to North Korea and West Germany sent a field hospital to support the UN forces. They differed in form, but their engagement served the same purpose, namely to assist the ally's fighting on the front and to join the greater conflict between the camps in the form of humanitarian aid. In other words, the intervention of East and West Germany on the Korean Peninsula in the 1950s was not only the first foreign aid project for both countries, but at the same time also a kind of proxy war between East and West Germany within the framework of the overriding conflict between the East and West.

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* With sources in Korean language and in Chinese characters (Hanja), respectively, the original title in Korean comes first, followed by an English translation.

* With Korean authors, the family name comes first, followed by the first name. (i.e. Park Dong-chan). The only exception is the name of “Syngman Rhee” which actually should be written “Lee Seung-man”. However, because the spelling ‘Syngman Rhee’ is much more common his name is written as Syngman Rhee in this paper.

* The Korean proper names and nouns follow the rules of the Yale Romanization of Korean (i.e. SaHoeGwaHakSa)

* If there is an official English or German translation for a Korean name, the official English or German translation is used. (i.e. Defense White Paper)

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9. Appendix

All the pictures below were provided by Dr. Alexander Röhreke from the Studienwerk Deutsches Leben in Ostasien e.V.



Members of the German Red Cross Hospital and the US Army on November 24, 1954. (Provenance Elisabeth Huwer) P6292 © Studienwerk deutsches Leben in Ostasien e.V.



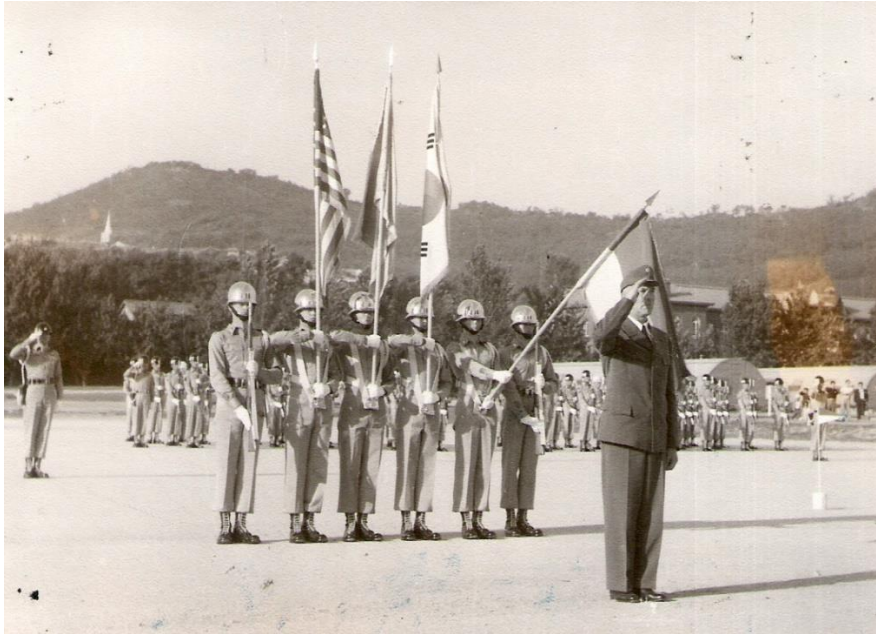
Staff of the German Red Cross Hospital in Busan, on November 24, 1954. Sitting: Prof. Günther Huwer (3rd from left), young American liaison officer (also in the pictures P6292), Prof. Germer, Dr. King. Standing: Intendant Zimmermann (behind Prof. Germer), Dr. Gerlituky (behind Dr. König). P6519 © Studienwerk deutsches Leben in Ostasien e.V.



The South Korea president Syngman Rhee with doctors visited the hospital ward of the German Red Cross Hospital in Busan on January 10, 1955. In the foreground Prof. Günther Huwer. (Provenance Elisabeth Huwer) P6266 © Studienwerk deutsches Leben in Ostasien e.V.



Prof. Günther Huwer of the German Red Cross Hospital in Busan receives the “Medal of Freedom” from General J. D. White at the US Army camp in Busan. White puts the medal. On the right the “Honor Guard” on September 28, 1956. (Provenance Elisabeth Huwer) P6501 © Studienwerk deutsches Leben in Ostasien e.V.



Prof. Günther Huwer salutes the flag bearers on September 28, 1956. (Provenance Elisabeth Huwer) P6513 © Studienwerk deutsches Leben in Ostasien e.V.



Accountant Jung, Ms. Thurmer, 2 Chinese from Busan, Prof. Günther Huwer. Before the Germans left Busan, on January 22, 1959. P6523 © Studienwerk deutsches Leben in Ostasien e.V.