**From the Yi Dynasty to 1945**

**by James Wade**

The history of Korea’s journalism is, in a very real sense, the history of modern Korea; and the record of the reform movements, campaigns, and exposes of Korean newspapers constitutes, in effect, an account of the modernization process itself, with all its vicissitudes and setbacks. For in no other time or nation, it seems to me, has the journalistic profession been so closely linked with national destiny as it was in Korea during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Up to the time of the Japanese annexation in 1910, the Korean press was practically the sole means of articulating the urge toward political and technological modernization, so bitterly opposed by court conservatives. After the Annexation, and following a ten-year eclipse, Korean journalism waged a desperate twenty-year fight against crushing odds to oppose the Japanese policy of assimilation; to keep alive the spark of Korean national and cultural identity, increasingly threatened by the rising winds of pan-Japanism between the two World Wars.

Certainly there have been other instances of the power of the crusading press in history; one thinks of the period leading up to the American Revolution, or of the food and drug control reforms initiated by U.S. magazine exposes in the 1890’s. But Korea, it would appear, is unique in that here the newspaper was the focal and generating point for much of the agitation for political and social reform, where [page 14**]** as in most parallel cases elsewhere, newspapers have come into being as organs of expression for groups or movements already strongly established in their own right. In Korea, the press created its own movements, its own leadership―and readership― plus its own philosophy of function, truly constituting the “growing edge” of the society.

In view of the importance of the press in Korea’s modern history, it is surprising to discover the dearth of specialized materials relating to this field. In English there are a few brief accounts in reference books, interesting enough but of limited usefulness to the student because of the very nature of such entries, combining generalization with condensation. In Korean, so far as I have been able to learn, there is only one book available on the history of the nation’s journalism. This has been partly, and partially, translated into English. (Both strictures apply.)

In the matter of original materials, it is not surprising to learn that large gaps exist, considering the burning of newspaper offices by mobs at the beginning; the suppression and censorship by the Japanese later; and the wholesale destruction and looting during the Korean War. Fairly complete files for the Dong-A Ilbo and Chosun Ilbo exist, but of the earlier, long-discontinued papers, much less remains. Some of the most valuable of such material, including microfilms of rare items, is on deposit in the library of the Korean Research Center. The scarcity and scattering of this material have made this account much less detailed and com-prehensive than I would have wished. There is indeed room for a specialized scholar in journalistic history to carve himself a career in the study of the early Korean press.

The present paper limits itself to an account of Korea’s journalism up to the time of the Liberation (actually only [page 15**]** until 1940, when all independent papers were entirely suppressed by the Japanese authorities who had battled them for so long). After 1945, the field expands bewilderingly, and contains ramifications that are still matters of lively political controversy. It has not been practical, nor did it seem wise, for me to go into recent or current affairs here. Let it suffice to say that Korean pressdom in the past twenty years has shown no abatement in its tradition of crusading zeal. Whether it still serves the same function in a maturing society as it did earlier is another, debatable matter.

Mr. Lew Chi-ho\* states that, in a technical sense, the history of Korean journalism may be said to date back to the year 692 A. D., during the Silla Dynasty, when the first known court journals were issued. These were organs for transmission of official statements and announcements, directed solely toward court and government officials, and thus were not really newspapers in our sense of the word. Nor could they, by their very nature, be vehicles of reform, reflecting as they did only the official attitudes and policies.

The first independent paper we encounter in Korean history was issued in 1578，in imitation of a court journal This publication was also intended for government officials and intellectuals, who were indeed the only group that would have been capable of reading the Chinese characters which were the sole form of writing known to cultivated persons of that period We may infer, perhaps, that the reform movement in Korean journalism was already active by the fact that King Sun jo banned the paper and exiled its luckless staff. (He even exiled the courtiers whose official journal had been the model for the independent paper!) Of

\* see *Sources*

[page16**]** the contents of this paper we know nothing, but the year 1578 remains as the earliest recorded instance of the long-continued persecution of the Korean press.

It may be assumed that some Koreans were reading foreign newspapers as far back as 1867, when protest was made against an article derogatory to Korea written by a Japanese in a Chinese newspaper. But the seed of Korea’s modern press growth was sown in 1881, when a Korean mission headed by Pak Chong-yang went to Japan to tour her new westernized institutions and facilities. One of the members of that mission, Kim Ki-su, made a report to the king on the subject of Japanese newspapers as follows:

“The so-called newspaper, as found in Japan, is none other than piling types and printing them. The thing is read by both government officials and private citizens, and is greatly talked about among the citizenry.

“The person who publishes it makes a trade of it, and its reader is either delighted or disgusted at what he reads. The types are as small as sesame seeds, and are finely shaped.

“When there is nothing of matter, it keeps quiet, but when there is work it jumps up with alacrity. Even when it sees a small thing it leaps up and makes a thorough job of it. This I think is its nature.”I

This report was apparently instrumental in the founding of Korea’s first modern newspaper, the Hansong Sunbo, in October, 1883. It was indeed intended as a court journal, whose regulations stipulated that official announcements be given priority in publication, and after these, articles “to enlighten the people, encourage industry, and foster growth of public moral standards.” Every high government official

I. BHKP, 6

[page 17**]** and office in both Seoul and the provinces had to subscribe, and the paper was available to the general public at a reduced rate. Its staff members were government officials paid by the Foreign Ministry or the City of Seoul. A Japanese progressive and educator named Yukichi Fukuzawa sent three reporters to Korea to train local journalists, plus experts in printing, typography, and type casting. At first the paper was printed in Chinese characters only, because of a lack of Korean types. Later a mixture of Chinese and hangul was used. The paper was published every ten days, and each issue contained sixteen pages.

Though these facts suggest simply the ordinary official journal with a little technical modernization, the Hansong Sunbo was in reality much more. As a rallying point of the progressive court faction, men like Kim Ok-kyun, Pak Yong- hyo, So Kwang-bom, and Hong Yong-sik, it was actually a powerful advocate of modernization, and came under attack by the dominant conservative faction at court. This is why I call it the first modern Korean newspaper, since I have identified the press movement here with the reform movement.\*

The paper was accused of being pro-Japanese, which was no doubt true, and anti-Chinese; and even of aiding the spread of Western religions, which sounds like pure calumny under the circumstances. In 1884 it was sacked and burned by a mob instigated by the conservatives. Revived as a weekly called Hansong Chubo in 1886, it was permanently suspended two years later, leaving Korea without a newspaper of any kind for eight crucial years.

Many sources give 1896 as the year of the founding of

\* Mr. Choe Chun, associate professor of journalism at Chungang University, agrees with this dating, however. See KJ.

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the first modern Korean newspaper; and certainly The Independent, or Tongnip Shinmun,\* established on April 7 of that year, was the most important and influential of all the early papers, despite its short life span. This publication, initially four pages issued three times a week, was entirely in hangul, though it did contain some articles in English. It was published, strangely enough, under a court subsidy that survived several overturns of power.

The Independent was the creation of one of the most re-markable of the early nationalist leaders, So Chae-pil, known later as Dr. Philip Jaisohn, who had been associated with the old Hansong Sunbo. Forced into exile because of reform activities, So became the first Korean to receive a degree from an American university. Moreover, he was a medical doctor. Finally, he had also obtained an American wife and American citizenship. It was this last that allowed him to be much more outspoken in The Independent than he could otherwise have dared to be.

The Independent came out strongly for nationalism and human rights. One commentator gives the paper a rare accolade indeed: it was “progressive but not politically factional.”2 In the first issue, So stated the journal’s purpose as follows:

“We publish The Independent for the first time today, and declare our policy both to the foreigners and Koreans in Korea.

“We are, first of all, not biased. We are not related to any party. We make no distinction of both the upper and lower classes. We will treat them all alike as Koreans, and

\* One volume of a projected facsimile reproduction was issued in the 1950’s; it is now out of print, but may sometimes be found in used book stores.

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will speak fairly for the sake of Korea only.

“Not only for the citizens of Seoul but for all the people of Korea we will speak. We will also tell the people of what the government is doing, and the government of the conditions of the people. If the people know clearly what the government is doing, and also if the government is acquainted with the affairs of the people, nothing but good will come of this communication, removing dissatisfaction and suspicion.

“Since we publish the paper not for profit’s sake, we have fixed the price at a low rate. We use the Korean alphabet exclusively, so that both men and women, the noble and the lowly, may read it. We punctuate and space the sentences and phrases so that reading may be easier.

“Since we act according to what we believe is right, we will speak out even when government officials err. It we detect corrupt and covetous officials, we will disclose their injustices to the world. Even private citizens who commit lawlessness we will expose and explain in the paper. Since we are the people of Korea, loyal to the king, our sovereign, and to Korea, our paper shall not carry partial arguments or reports with favoritism...”3

The Independent urged a constitutional government based on democracy. “It criticized the court for selling out Korean interests to foreign concessions. If it favored any foreign power, it was probably China, because China was the least ambitious in this matter of concessions.”

There were several exposes in each issue. Typical of So’s muck-raking, perhaps, is an item which reads: “We are informed that the mayor of Pyongyang has been doing

3. BHKP, pp. 17-19

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some fine, work in the line of squeezing, and that consequently the people are on the verge of revolt.” This almost gossip-column approach was much used. A favorite target of the scientifically-inclined So was sorceresses, and he also struck hard at Japanese encroachments:

“...When was it that Japanese subjects were accorded the privilege of travelling at will about the country without passports, to be protected by the Korean government at a risk of $5, 000 a head? ...But how stands the other side of the account? The Korean Repository strikes the nail on the head when it says, ‘Kill a coolie in an alley—$5, 000; murder a queen in her chamber —gomen nasai.” (May 2, 1896)

The Independent set the style for Korean press typogra- phy, orthography, punctuation, and spacing for many years to come. So’s insistence on the use of ‘hangul only’ irritated court officials, one of whom wrote the paper that he could not read the “vulgar onmun script.” So’s response was to publish an announcement in the next issue that “the editor will not bother looking into any communications written in Chinese ideographs.”

Ministers and officials were dealt with peremptorily by the paper, but the royal family was handled discreetly, for So felt that only the king could move to enforce the reforms demanded by The Independent. Indeed, the king did publicly promise to make many of the changes advocated by So and the Independence Club that had grown up around the newspaper, but by that time he did not have the power to do so, trapped as he was between the conservative court faction and the pressure of pro-Japanese elements. Steadily, these enemies sought for a means to get rid of the newspaper and break up the Independence Club. The inevitable end came when the paper reported rumors [page 21**]** of an impending forced sale of the southern port of Masan to Russia. This added another empire to the list of So’s opponents. It is said that the Russian ambassador to the United States approached President Theodore Roosevelt directly to exert pressure for the recall of So.4 The fiery Korean editor’s government subsidy was cut off and his position in Seoul became untenable. In 1898 he left Korea to practice medicine in Philadelphia, returning only once for a visit to Korea in the late 1940’s, shortly before his death.

The two pioneering papers so far discussed may be considered to embody the Young Progressives movement. With the stimulus of The Independent which, though largely suspended with the departure of So, continued in an English edition under the missionary Henry Appenzeller until 1899, many additional papers sprang up. These may be regarded as belonging to the period of Japanese Encroachment, and we will examine here only three of the more important journals.

The Hwangsong Shinmun, or Royal City Daily, was founded in 1897 by Chang Chi-yon. It consisted of four pages and was issued twice weekly, becoming a daily in 1898. This was perhaps the most influential among a number of early papers Having a Protestant Christian orientation. These included the Korean Christian Review (Chosun Hoibo) of Henry Appenzeller, the Christian Messenger (Christ Shin-mun) of H. G. Underwood, and even the Taehan Shinbo of a Japanese Christian missionary society.

The Hwangsong Shinmun had a rather literary tone, as most of its writers were scholars of classical Chinese. Its

4. KT

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policy embraced the advocacy of Westernization, and exposure of the stealthy extension of Japanese influence, exemplified by this report from an early issue: “Of late, Japanese merchants in Chingogae, in dealing with Koreans, instead of referring disputes to the law courts when such arise between them, which is fair and honest, beat them up with force, and take them to their own police station, where the Koreans are imprisoned for weeks and are most grievously handled, according to reports. This kind of barbarity is neither good for the friendship between the two countries, nor becoming to a country that has awakened earlier than ours. The practice is most regrettable, and we urge the authorities concerned to act always according to the laws of the nation.”5

The paper had a rather dramatic demise. In 1904, when the Protectorate Treaty of Japan over Korea was signed, Hwang- song Shinmun published a front-page editorial entitled: “This Day We Weep.” In order to escape Japanese censorship, which had already been instituted earlier that year under the pretext of military security during the Russo-Japanese War, the paper was distributed very early on the morning of November 21. It reached its readers, but Publisher Chang was arrested and the Hwangsong Shinmun disappeared forever from public view.

It was not until 1907 that the Japanese forced the promulgation of newspaper regulations justifying the de facto censorship that had been going on for three years. Their sensitivity to the influence of the Korean press is explained by these remarks by a Japanese commentator: “The people considered the newspaper as a kind of protest against the

5. BH p. 26

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ruler. The small papers spread throughout the country, not only in the capital but in its adjacent areas. After a subscriber read them, he sent them to his neighbors in the village, and sometimes one copy had 200 readers. At that time, people did not have adequate economic means, and transportation facilities for distant localities were lacking.”6

The second influential paper of this era was the Maeil Shinmun, which first appeared in 1898. It was published under several names, which has led some commentators to ascribe to it a much shorter life span than was actually the case. Not counting numerous suspensions and deletions, it appeared under various headings until the final press blackout in 1910.

The Maeil Shinmun was always closely associated with the pioneering Paijai Mission School, and certainly the young Syngman Rhee had much to do with the paper in its early days, However, it seems an exaggeration on the part of Rhee’s biographer Richard S. Allen when he writes: “Rhee with other students bought a press and began his own newspaper in 1896 (sic).”7 It is true, however, that Rhee wrote many of the early editorials in this all-hangul publication. After his arrest in 1898, it is said that he continued to smuggle articles from jail which were published anonymously in Maeil Shinmun; and that these gained the sympathy of Lady Um, consort to the king, who learned the identity of the author and was instrumental in gaining him lenient treatment in prison.

When Korea signed a treaty with Japan in 1904 giving the latter the right to advise on political administration, as a preliminary to the actual Protectorate Treaty late the next

6. BHKP, pp. 41—42

7. KSR, p. 15

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year, the Maeil Shinmun protested forthrightly: “The right to advise is, after all, the first step of aggression.”

It was in this period that the long history of persecution of misprints began. When a paper called Cheguk Shinmun attempted to print the phrase “mansei,” or long life, to the king, it came out “mangsei,” or perdition. The president of the paper was arrested.

The case of the Taehan Maeil Shinmun, established in 1905, shows certain parallels with that of The Independent of the preceding decade. Both papers escaped censorship and fended off persecution due to the fact that their proprietors were foreign nationals; both became so influential and dangerous to the Japanese overlords that elaborate efforts were made to get them out of the way. And in both cases, unfortunately, such efforts were at last successful.

The Taehan Maeil Shinbo was registered under the name of Ernest J. Bethel, a British journalist in Seoul who had become sympathetic to the cause of Korean independence. Yang Ki-tak was its Korean editor. The paper first appeared in mixed Chinese and hangul; but its phenomenal success, reaching a record peak circulation of 16, 000, permitted the establishment of separate all-hangul and English editions.

These papers stood at the forefront of the anti-Japanese movement, setting the pace for their contemporaries which, however, did not dare to go to the lengths permissible for the foreign-registered Taehan Maeil Shinbo.

“So keen, vigorous, and influential was this daily in voicing Korean protest against Japanese domination that the Japanese governor-general,”8 Hirobumi Ito, stated:

“The power of newspapers in Korea is extraordinary. One

8. KLP

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sentence by them moves the Koreans more effectively than a hundred words of Ito. Besides, a foreigner is publishing the Taehan Maeil Shinbo and continually agitating the Koreans by exposing various proven instances of Japanese mis-government, for which the resident-general must be responsible...”9

The paper was, of course, harassed in every possible way by the police, and Bethel once put a sign on the door stating: “No Japanese Allowed.”

But, inevitably, the handwriting was on the wall. No matter how tenaciously Korea’s patriots and friends might struggle on her behalf, it appears in retrospect that the political situation had long been hopeless. Mr. Lew Chi-ho, in his perceptive thesis on the Korean press, suggests that the crucial period in Korea’s political history during this era fell roughly between the years 1888—1896, when there was not a single newspaper in the entire country to inform, guide, and rally progressive patriotic opinion.

Thus the press revival from 1896 to 1905, vigorous and even heroic though it seems, was foredoomed to failure. The crucial events were occurring outside the country, where Japanese military and diplomatic successes, climaxed perhaps by the Portsmouth Peace Conference, were winning gradual acquiescence from the Great Powers in accepting the island empire’s broadened sphere of influence, including hegemony over Korea.

Assured of support—or indifference—abroad, the Japanese net began to close around Ernest Bethel and the crusading Taehan Maeil Shinbo. On April 17, 1908, the paper featured a story of the assassination in San Francisco of the vacationing

9. BHKP, pp, 40-41

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American advisor to the Japanese resident-general by Korean patriots. Bethel was accused of disturbing order and inciting unrest with a view to encouraging hostilities between the Korean government and people, on the basis of this and two other articles.

The complaint was lodged with the British legation, which invited a judge from Shanghai to come to Seoul to conduct formal appelate court proceedings, held in the British consulate in Chong-dong, Seoul, on June 15, 1908. Bethel was found guilty and sentenced to a three-week jail term, which he served in Shanghai.

After his imprisonment, the determined Briton returned to Seoul, stating: “My fight for Korea is heaven-ordained. I will work, regardless of my personal safety.”

However, perhaps in part due to the great pressures under which he had been placed, Bethel was by now drinking excessively, and fell ill in early February, 1909. He died of complications on May 1, at the age of 38. Quite appropriately, Korean press circles in 1964 set up a monument to mark the grave of this doughty fighter for Korean independence in the Seoul Foreign Cemetery.

The unexpected death of Bethel left his newspaper a helpless prey to the Japanese authorities. The governor-general had for some years been pursuing a policy of subsidizing rival papers, which in effect became covertly pro-Japanese organs, for the purpose of confusing and splitting Korean public opinion. The relative failure of this policy made him more than ever determined to gain outright possession of that festering thorn in his side, the Taehan Maeil Shinbo.

Even before Bethel’s death, the government had begun persecution of Yang Ki-tak, his Korean lieutenant, accusing [page 27**]** him of bond issue embezzlement. The courts threw out the case, howerer. With Bethel out of the way, the paper came under the management of his secretary, a Mr. Manham, who was made of no such stern stuff as his erstwhile employer. Under pressure, he was persuaded to sell the paper’s copyright to the resident-general’s office, and to leave the country in June, 1910.

The Japanese had won, and as if to emphasize their victory, they made the captive Taehan Maeil Shinbo (dropping the first word of its name) their principal official organ for a number of years. With the signing of the Annexation Treaty on Aug. 10, 1910, they were able to suppress under one pretext or another all the remaining independent papers, leaving only approved Japanese and pro-Japanese publications. This state of affairs continued for some ten years.

The Mansei uprising, or peaceful demonstrations, staged by Koreans on March 1, 1919, left the Japanese in a quandary. Signs of discontent were so widespread in Korea, and outrage at Japanese brutality in retaliation so strong in certain quarters abroad, that at least some superficial reforms in the colonial administration seemed called for. The first ten years of the occupation had been largely administered by the military, which could thus be made to serve as a scapegoat —though this would not have been possible a few years later. Accordingly, a new civilian-dominated admin-istration was appointed by Tokyo, with the civil police as the organ of coercion or enforcement.

Actually, this made little difference; and in effect it marked the beginning of an even more insidious Japanese policy, that of cultural assimilation, under which eventually Korean history, customs, language, and even names [page28**]** were to be gradually prohibited in favor of their Japanese counterparts. This movement, if successful, would have presaged the death of the spirit rather than that of the body. But the usurpers had not reckoned with the tenacity of their intended victims, a border people who for many centuries had had to withstand direct and indirect incursions of stronger and more ancient civilizations than Japan could boast. And they made a singularly obtuse error in permitting the Korean language press to resume during this period.

The plan was to license a strictly limited and stringently censored press, government control over which would be tight enough to prevent any serious opposition from gaining expression. As a matter of fact, there was trouble from almost the very beginning.

At first, only three papers were to be permitted, carefully selected for balance of viewpoints, to serve as a window-dressing to the outside world. These papers, all originating in 1920, were the Dong-A Ilbo, with an avowedly nationalist outlook; the Chosun Ilbo, originally mildly pro-Japanese; and the Sisa Shinmun, an outspoken organ of pan-Japanism, which quickly failed as a commercial venture. In the middle 1920’s the Chosun Ilbo was reorganized as a nationalist paper, and began a brief flirtation with socialist leanings that proved disastrous. In 1925 came the Sidae Ilbo, which stood against the socialist trends of the day.

It is not the purpose of this account to trace the vicissitudes of these or later papers during the following twenty years: their management and economic difficulties, and their adherence to this or that faction of the underground or exiled independence movement. It is sufficient for our purposes to emphasize the tenacity with which the journalists fought what seemed at the time to be a losing, and eventually [page 29**]** lost, battle.

As Prof. Choe Chun writes: “Because of the Japanese monopoly in the fields of politics and business, many Koreans in those years took great pride in investing their wealth and talent in the newspaper or magazine publishing business. Fatal blows such as confiscation or suspension of publication were dealt the newspapers frequently. Although they were sure to lose, investors continued to support newspapers despite the enormous financial requirement.” It is especially significant that publishers were well aware of the difficulties of managing a newspaper. They continued to invest anyway...

“Due to strict censorship on reporting of political activities, they focused more or less on the advancement of social life and culture... Thus, the newspapers served to enhance the spiritual modernization of the Korean people under the Japanese colonialism.”10

That Korean papers never gave up the attempt to comment on political matters is, however, amply documented by statistics on their suppression. The Dong-A Ilbo alone in twenty years was confiscated 489 times, sale was banned on 63 occasions, and it was censored 2,423 times. Confiscation averaged 15 times a month between 1920 and 1923. The paper was suspended indefinitely four times, these bans ranging from a few weeks to a number of months. In addition, the arrest, imprisonment, and torture of reporters, editorial staff members, and even executives of all papers were frequent happenings.

The triviality of the Japanese censorship is illustrated by this episode, recounted by Mr. Lew Chi-ho: “A Christian missionary weekly, the Christian Messenger, in 1920 produced

10. KJ.

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an editorial leader on Spring. It was the usual semi-poetic outpouring... how fine was the rebirth of the year when all things are again new and fresh and green, and men are heartened anew thereby. Japanese officials censored it, saying that the editorial was suggestive of a revolt against Japan.”

The Dong-A Ilbo, in its inaugural issue, put forward a challenge that must have seemed revolutionary in its time, for it spoke confidently of a future that was scarcely in sight:

“...The 20 million people of Korea, in this rose-of-Sharon-decorated corner of Asia, are now to behold a new light and breathe a new air. Truly, we are alive again now. We have been resurrected. Devoting our entire energy to our goal, let us march forward. Our goal is none other than freedom and progress.”11

As a part of its campaign for “freedom and progress,” the paper in the same year began an attack against antiquated Confucianism, leading off with an editorial entitled: “Knock the Heads of Falsely Learned Persons.” This enraged the strict Confucianists, who attempted a boycott of the paper.

Only a few months later, though, the editors were at it again, this time with an article ostensibly attacking idolatrous superstitions, but also rather obviously poking fun at the sacred objects of the Shinto religion. This resulted in the first indefinite suspension of the paper, which lasted over three months.

In 1922, a new government tactic was initiated, that of broadening the number of papers to be licensed, but imposing an even stricter censorship. The Dong-A Ilbo commented that this was like offering food and taking away

11. BHKP, p. 77

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the spoon to eat it with.”

A dispute over a tenant farmers’ movement erupted in 1924. It started with the arrest of five farmer and labor leaders of Sunchon-gun, Cholla Namdo, by Japanese police on March 13, 1924, under a false accusation of thievery. All the youth groups in the area held a public rally denouncing the police action, and demanded a formal apology from the police.

Dong A-Ilbo said in an editorial: “Unparalled brutality, indiscriminate torture, and trampling of human rights by the colonial police are now a daily occurrence. They seem to be made such that if they don’t indulge in such atrocities, they itch. Such police forces exist only in Korea, and they are ubiquitous in this country. Besides, they boast a 15-year history of inhuman activities. How many innocent citizens of this land must have suffered and shed silent tears during those fifteen years!...The so-called authorities may interpret resistance as an evil, and continue to oppress the people. However, sinful are those who drive the people to resist, not those who rise up against oppression.”

In the same year, the president and executive editor of the paper were beaten and threatened with a pistol by pro-Japanese functionaries after publication of an article critical of Korean collaborators with the Japanese.

Chosun Ilbo, on the other hand, got into difficulties due to its espousal of the newly-introduced Socialist movement. An editorial published on Sept. 28, 1925, said in part:

“Korea has reached a breaking point both politically and economically, and a breakthrough of the present situation is urgent. The shortest road to achieve this is to abolish imperialism in the political sphere and capitalism in the economic field, and bring in other reasonable systems. The [page 32**]** movement must be put forth in line with the world-wide revolutionary work initiated by Russia...”

The paper was suspended, and only after a purge of 17 staff members did it reopen under a more strictly nationalistic policy. Thereafter it gained increased popularity with the addition of a crude but effective comic strip called he Fool, which satirized current topics, a new form of journalism in Korea, since then widely used.

Around this time, the resentment of the police toward the newspapers was so strong that the Tongdaemun Police Station placed a sign on the door reading: “No Dogs or Reporters Allowed.” Press pressure was such that the police were forced to remove the sign and apologize.

Japanese sensitivity toward leftist movements in Korea was so marked that in 1925 the Dong-A Ilbo was suspended for carrying a congratulatory telegram from a Soviet farm association on the occasion of the anniversary of the Sam Il Movement Again in 1930, the same paper suffered its third indefinite suspension merely for carrying a congratulatory anniversary wire from the editor of The Nation, an American magazine. The gist of this message was: “Under the present circumstances of Korea, the mission of your paper is great. This is so innocuous that the only possible objection would seem to be that at this period The Nation was considered a left-leaning and Communist-sympathizing publication.

The 1930’s were a time of increasing hardship for the Korean press. The Japanese adopted ever more stringent censorship regulations as they edged closer to outright aggres-sive warfare in the Far East. Provisions of a 1937 press code included:

“I) Never handle articles or pictures in a way that may debase the dignity of the Imperial household. When handling [page 33**]** such articles and pictures, special caution should be exercised to avoid misprinting letters.

“2) Do not use ‘Majesty,’ etc., for Korean kings... The titles of emperor or empress may not be used for Ko-jong, Sunjong, or their queens.

“3) Do not enter historical facts about the Japan-Korea annexation or events thereafter. In sentences referring to the period after the Japan-Korea annexation, do not use such phrases as ‘our dynasty,’ ‘this dynasty,’ ‘imperial court,’ ‘heavenly court,’ ‘heavenly ambassador,’ ‘heavenly general,’ ‘heavenly army,’ etc. Do not carry articles that encourage respect to Ming and hatred to Ching, which may be taken to imply anti-Japanese sentiments; sentences or phrases that excite sorrow over the historical fact of Japan-Korea annexation; or sentences praising persons who opposed the annexation. Do not show many of the names of those who opposed the Japan-Korea treaty of annexation. Do not carry articles about persons who destroyed Japanese corsairs. Do not carry articles praising the loyal subjects at the end of the Koryo Dynasty, thereby comparing the situation of Korea after the annexation with that period. Do not carry articles concerning the Hideyoshi invasion, representing Japanese armies committing excavation of tombs, arson, rape, etc., nor words such as ‘enemy’ or ‘thief’ in this regard. However, suitable words such as ‘the enemy general,’ ‘the Japanese,’ etc., may be used. Do not suppress articles concerning the participants and helpers in the Japan-Korea annexation.

“4) Do not handle speculative articles concerning the appointment or dismissal of the governor-general.

“5) It is a pity that there are so few articles concerning the unity and harmony of Japan and Korea. In the future [page 34**]** this should not be so formalistic. Handle such good articles often and sincerely.

“6) In referring to things Japanese, care should be taken not to make Japan or the Japanese appear like a foreign country and foreign people.

“7) In compliance with the policy of the government- general to use the national language as much as possible, handle more articles in the future written in the national language. (Japanese).”12

One last incident, which is perhaps the most widely-known story in all the annals of Korean journalism, is that of the famous Olympic photograph. In the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, Son Ki-jong set a world record in the Marathon, entered, of course, as part of the Japanese team. The photo of his victory was air-mailed to Seoul, but when it appeared in Dong-A Ilbo’s August 2 edition, the Rising-Sun flag on the breast of the athlete had been painted out. For this affront, the paper received its last indefinite suspension, lasting nine months. Ironically, another paper, the Chosun Chungang Ilbo, had done the same thing on its own initiative, but the authorities hadn’t noticed. Nevertheless, this paper voluntarily suspended publication as a gesture of solidarity with Dong-A Ilbo. This seems a fitting final symbol of the ideals of Korea’s crusading press.

The situation under these conditions gradually became impossible. In November, 1939, the police bureau chief asked for the voluntary suspension of both Dong-A Ilbo and Chosun Ilbo. The papers stubbornly held out until August 10, 1940, when for the third time in little more than half a century, an ominous pall of silence descended over Korean journalism.

12. BHKP, pp. 133—135

[page 35**]** When that pall was raised in 1945, a very different world, with new trials, new opportunities, and new responsibilities, faced both veterans and newcomers in the galvanically revived Korean press.

But that is another story. (-1966)

[page 36**]**

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(Library material and files were sampled at the Korean Press Center, Korean Research Center, and Dong-A Ilbo, and certain selections translated by Mr. Lee Tae-yong.)

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