

"FANON IS A BROTHER":

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAK SUNAM

Editor's note: Pak Sunam describes herself as a "marginal woman" leading a life of struggle along borderlines. Like Frantz Fanon and Han Suin, she has lived at the border between two cultures. And like them, this position has enabled her to write of the oppressions of the colonial situation with a rare combination of clarity and passion. Her analysis of the "Half-Japanese" Korean elucidates a major social problem of contemporary Japan - that of the oppressed Korean minority. It also contains a powerful indictment of the Japanese New Left in general and Beheiren in particular for its indifference to the Korean problem.

Miss Pak is the author, most recently of a book about Korean victims of the Hiroshima atomic bombing. In addition she will publish shortly a book about the half Japanese and a second edition of prison letters to Ri Chin-u.

AMPO interviews Pak Sunam

AMPO: Perhaps you could begin by comparing the problems of Koreans in Japan with those faced by Blacks in the United States.

PAK: The first difference is the fact that Black people in the U.S. don't have their own native country. Their native country is the U.S. This, I think, is the most essential difference. On the other hand, the Korean population in Japan, which consists of almost 580,000 people, does have its own nation, which, as you know, is divided in two at the 38th Parallel. A second important difference is race. In the U.S. the black population is immediately distinguishable from the white population by the color of their skin. However, Koreans in Japan are physically indistinguishable from the Japanese.

The problem of the Black population in America is rooted in the United States and has a long historical background. However, the problems of Koreans in Japan are a product of colonial rule, the system of Japanese colonial rule. Colonialism continues to exist in Japan today. Koreans are still being ruled by the Japanese state power, and the same thing perhaps is true in the U.S., where the Black population is terrorized and dominated by white violence. With respect to colonial rule, I suppose that the problems are very much the same.

AMPO: The issue of the colonial legacy suggests interesting comparisons to the American scene since many Black Americans have recently begun to analyze their present situation in terms of the problem of imperialism, perceiving the ghetto as a black colony within the U.S. From the perspective of Koreans in Japan, what is the relationship between the colonial era and contemporary problems?

PAK: Let me begin by describing the present situation. The Koreans are a people who have recovered their sovereignty by becoming an independent nation. However, the Japanese government refuses to recognize this, and even the fundamental human rights recognized by international law are being trampled



underfoot in Japan. The nature of government policy became very clear around 1965 when the Japanese and the South Korean governments signed a series of treaties clarifying the relationship between the two countries. As you recall, the South Korean people mounted a great campaign to oppose these treaties, and the people of North Korea as well as Koreans in Japan likewise opposed them. We realized that these agreements meant the resumption of Japanese aggression. This was a program by which Japan attempted to restore domination over Korea. We have much historical experience, having suffered through 37 years of Japanese imperialist rule, and we understand the meaning of neo-colonialism. Within South Korea everyone, from small children to old people, rose up to oppose these talks which culminated in the 1965 Japan-ROK Treaty because they refused to become slaves of Japan again. Much blood was spilled, and the flames of rebellion spread over all of South Korea.

The 1965 Japan-ROK Treaty was written according to an American scenario and it just happened that in February, 1964 South Korean soldiers were sent to fight in Vietnam for the first time. This is a typical manifestation of the policy of using Asians to kill other Asians as a tool of American domination in Asia. It happened that South Korea was the first victim of this policy. Of course there was a great outcry of opposition in South Korea against sending troops to Vietnam, and this came at the same time as the movement of opposition to the Japan-ROK Treaty, since the two issues are one and the same.. In the spring of 1964, during the great upsurge of the student movement in Korea, one 19-year old student named Kim was shot by the Korean police during a demonstration. At exactly the same time, a 19-year old youth of the National Liberation Front was blindfolded and shot to death in cold blood by the Saigon police chief.

The order to suppress the 1964 demonstrations in South Korea was given by the supreme commander of the American forces there. In other words, the movement of protest against this dual colonialism was suppressed by the police and army of South Korea operating under the orders of the American commander. At the same time, a 19-year old boy was executed in Vietnam. The mass media in Japan were mobilized in an all-out campaign against the execution in Vietnam, and a large mass movement of citizens, typified by Beheiren, rose up to oppose the war in Vietnam. But they had very little to say about the incident in South Korea. The Japanese were not even aware that they - including Beheiren - were being accused by the Korean people of being aggressors. We accused them of hypocrisy and deception in opposing what was happening in Vietnam without even thinking about the problems of Koreans, including those in Japan. It is extremely unfortunate that the Japanese as a whole remain unaware of the problems of Koreans. The voices which were being raised in Japan demanding peace were of course voices opposing American domination of Vietnam. But at the same time these voices ought to have been raised in opposition to the Japan-ROK Treaty.

I would like to explain to Americans who may have little understanding of Korean history that the end of the war in 1945 meant something very significant for us. We remembered that the Allies at the Cairo Conference had promised to liberate Korea from Japanese rule. This promise was affirmed in the Potsdam Declaration. Therefore, for us, Japan's defeat in 1945 was an occasion for rejoicing. It meant our liberation from colonialism. But we soon realized that this had been an immense illusion. The American Army which appeared in Korea did not come as a liberator, but as a ruler, as Mark Gayn of the Chicago Sun pointed out in his book Japan Diary. We happily shouted slogans about Korean independence, under the impression that we had just been liberated from colonialism, but the first thing that the American Army did was to destroy our movement for independence. America betrayed the promise of the Potsdam Declaration. At the same time, Soviet armies occupied North Korea. The only thing which could be done by the people in South Korea was to resist the policies of the American occupation. Concretely, this took the form of demanding the reunification of Korea, abolishing the



division of North and South Korea at the 38th Parallel. As a result, we experienced the Korean War.

AMPO: What are the problems of Koreans living in Japan?

PAK: The basic conditions of our existence in Japan are influenced greatly by the conditions in our home country. Today, South Korea is a colony of both the U.S. and Japan. Colonial domination by Japan has become extremely pronounced since the Japan-ROK agreements of 1965. The patterns of subjugation of the Koreans in Japan have in the past taken the form of deportations. People in Japan today are very concerned about the possible deportation of South Vietnamese students, but there have been literally countless cases of Koreans who have been deported. The Japanese authorities expel any person who is critical or who opposes government policy. Deportation not only means physical removal from Japan, it often means sending people to their death at hands of the South Korean authorities.

Right now there two important issues confront the Koreans in Japan. The first is the new Immigration Bill, which would strengthen the power of deportation. Second, the government is trying to pass a bill which would regulate the education of foreigners in Japan. The object of this bill is to deprive Korean children of their pride in being Koreans, to force the Korean population to merge with Japanese society, to become obedient and submissive to the Japanese system. Ever since the Japan-ROK Treaty of 1965, the policy has consistently been to refuse to recognize ethnic education of the children and subject them to Japanese domination. Koreans are encouraged to attend Japanese schools wherever possible and to assimilate themselves to Japanese society. This boils down to forcing them to stop being Koreans. That means that the authorities refuse to recognize their existence as human beings, and this is, of course, an anti-human, inhuman policy.

Of the 580,000 Koreans living in Japan, about 400,000 were born in Japan and know no other language than Japanese. They are very easily influenced and assimilated by Japanese culture, and of course their skin is the same color as the Japanese. They don't know their own native language. Thus, it is easy for them to be swept up by the dominant culture. At the same time, there is economic discrimination against Koreans. Consequently, many Koreans have decided it is better to play along with the system to attempt to hide the fact that they are Koreans.

As a result, there is a whole population of people born here who are semi-Japanese, half-Japanese. They are people who have stopped being Koreans but who are only half-Japanese. This population has been created by the Japanese policy of forced assimilation, but these people are not accepted by the Japanese even when they themselves try to assimilate. There is still legal and economic discrimination against them. The banks deny Koreans loans to buy land or houses. There is terrible degradation in the living patterns of these people who are denied the right to live normal, proud human lives. The extreme poverty and discrimination against Koreans in Japan has created a population of people here who resemble very much the Black ghetto people in the U.S. For instance, a person is born in a slum as a Korean, but he is educated as a Japanese. He knows nothing but the Japanese language and Japanese culture. To all appearances, he is a Japanese, but he can never become a Japanese. His birth determines this. (Editor's Note: The Japanese government denies Japanese citizenship even to third generation Koreans living in Japan.) Thus you have a split in the psyche, a split personality, a person who is born as a Korean but is a Japanese. He rebels against the degrading environment in which he was born; he has an inferiority complex about his own identity as a Korean. While himself a Korean, he feels self-hatred, contempt for Koreans. There is an immense struggle, immense contradiction within the psyche, within the personality of these people. For to be a Korean is tanta-



mount to being bad, to being evil. To be a Japanese is to be good. If one admits to being Korean one accepts this evil. So in order to purge oneself of this evil, one rejects one's identity. One refuses to admit that he is a Korean and insists that he is a Japanese. Almost all the Korean children have Japanese names. If they introduce themselves with their Japanese names, no one will know the difference because they have the same skin color as the Japanese. Externally, no one can see that they are Koreans. This drama of self-rejection is continuously enacted within Korean children.

The most fearful aspect of imperialist rule for me is its destruction of the humanity of the people dominated by it. It creates the state of being a half-human being, a semi-human being. Naturally, one wants to reject this state of incompleteness, one wants to become a whole human being. The only way to rid oneself of this is to become a Japanese. During the period of colonial rule, most Korean children complied with this subjugation and regarded themselves as children of the Emperor, as subjects of the Japanese Empire. The more perfect a subject of the Empire they became, the more they died. They were dead. And today again in 1970, we see a similar situation when the Japanese government insists on assimilating Korean children into the Japanese schools. It applies to them the same "desiderata" that it applies to the Japanese. They propose a set of desirable qualities, their ideal type of human being. To comply with this educational ideal of the Japanese authorities means the death of the Korean children. But it also means the death of the Japanese child as well. It's like a Siamese twin relationship. Both the Japanese and the Korean children are deprived of their humanity. They are destroyed by the system.

I'll give you a typical example of a half-Japanese. The person is dead now, having been given the death penalty when he was 18 years old. His name was Ri Chin-u. He murdered two Japanese girls in 1959 in Edogawa in Tokyo. The incident called the Komatsugawa incident caused a sensation in Japan. Ri was a night school student in high school who used a Japanese name. He had no knowledge at all of Korean culture or language. His father was an alcoholic, his mother a mute. He came from a family of seven brothers and sisters. His is not a special case at all; in fact, I feel that there is a Ri Chin-u in me too. However, one thing about the case which moves me very much is the fact that he was extremely intelligent, almost a genius. He was at the top of his class from elementary school on, but whenever he applied for a job he was refused for the sole reason that he was a Korean. But he was Japanese in every respect; he had nothing of the Korean in him. The only thing that was Korean about him was his nationality. He was like a person suspended in the air; he could find nowhere to fit himself in the world. There was a split between the two aspects of his personality.

Another similar case was that of Kin Ki-ro. He also was a Japanese in the same sense. During the war he was 18 years old. He was willing to give his life for the Emperor, and his only ambition was to become a faithful, loyal subject of the Japanese Empire. People like Ri Chin-u and Kin Ki-ro are being created in large numbers by Japan, which continues to deny Koreans the right to be Koreans. The de-Koreanization, the prejudice, the discrimination against Koreans is all-pervasive. I want to point out that this policy of assimilation which makes people into non-persons is the source of criminality. It creates criminals, and it is no coincidence that there is a high incidence of crime among these half-Japanese. However, I wonder whether it is possible to call this crime in the usual sense of the word. I think in a sense it is a means of self-liberation. I think that the policies that have been and are being followed by the Japanese establishment and the colonial system actually create criminals like Ri and Kin. Therefore, we must indict the Japanese state itself which is being supported by exactly this mentality which makes Japanese contemptuous of Koreans.



AMPO: Your analysis of the half-Japanese, the dehumanization of colonialism and the liberating potential of violence of the oppressed, suggests striking similarities to the thinking of Frantz Fanon. Have his writings been influential among Koreans fighting against Japanese oppression?

PAK: I suggested above that violence, even a very negative, self-immolating type of violence, may become a means of self-liberation. Of course, this could be regarded as criminal violence. Criminality of the half-Koreans is increasing but this is a violence which is highly individualized, segregated, dispersed. It is not organized, and therefore the energy which is released turns into very destructive and disadvantageous forms. The violence latent in all of us, including the half-Japanese, is an immense potential source of energy. As I said before, there is a Ri Chin-u in myself. The key point for our movement is how to harness this latent energy and use it in the struggle against the Japanese authorities. There are two alternatives. One is naturalization, which would mean loss of self-identity through assimilation. The other alternative is to live for self-liberation. I think that the key point in the self-liberation of Koreans in Japan is to restore, regain, reacquire the ethnic culture which has been alienated from us. We are half-Japanese who have been deprived of the Korean language and culture. To reacquire this heritage is the most important means for us to regain our ethnic consciousness, our national consciousness. This acquisition of ethnic consciousness is necessary to enable us to re-integrate our consciousness and to realize who and what we are. This is the only way that we can attain a coalescence of our split psyche and restore our individuality.

I first heard about Frantz Fanon when an American university professor interviewed me two years ago. After he went back to America he sent me Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* in English. The book was published in Japanese in spring of last year. In fact, I have a copy of it here with me, and I find that what he says is exactly what we and I have been saying about ourselves. There's nothing new about this at all. We feel that Fanon is a brother. He speaks the same language as we, especially when he refers to violence and the question of national culture and ethnic consciousness. He also was a half-Frenchman, and I imagine that imperialist patterns of domination work everywhere to create these half-human beings. I think there must be a tremendous store of untapped energy among these half-Japanese or half-French people. It has to be awakened.

There is an immense latent violence among the Koreans in Japan which is aimed against the rulers. The Japanese ruling class fear the Koreans in Japan more than anyone else. They fear them much more than they fear the Communist Party.

The unawakened, unaware, unconscious half-Japanese gives vent to repressed energy in the form of violent crimes such as murders, but I think there are immense possibilities when this energy is unleashed among awakened individuals. There is great potentiality for harnessing it in the struggle to confront the Japanese state power, and in American the American state power.

AMPO: It has frequently been observed that revolutions are preceded by the development of new languages, new vocabulary. Marx provided a new language for revolutionaries in the 19th century, a language which laid bare the relationship between oppressor and oppressed. Such new languages frequently are the exclusive possession of the oppressed and of revolutionaries. We can see new language developing in the ghettos of America today. For example the use of the word "pig" to refer to police. Have any such developments occurred among Koreans in Japan?

PAK: A typical word which was born during the long period of colonial domi-



nation was the word choppari. Choppari is a derogatory word referring to the Japanese. There is also the word han-choppari meaning "half-Japanese." Han-choppari is a word applied to oneself, a word of self-hatred. This is a word which was born in the Korean circles living in Japan. In the field of consciousness I think the most important thing in this respect would be to attain ideational awareness of the phenomena of han-choppari, in other words by transforming this term into a conscious awareness of the problem. The etymology of the word choppari is interesting. It means a cloven hoof, the hoof of an animal. It comes from the habit of the Japanese of wearing geta, the wooden clogs in which the big toe is separated from the other toes. We Koreans were used to wearing very elegant shoes, or rather slippers. When the Japanese first came to Korea, the Koreans noticed that they had this very barbaric custom of wearing clogs, and it reminded them of an animal with cloven hooves.

AMPO: What kinds of movements have developed among Koreans in Japan to control their own communities, their schools, their lives?

PAK: In 1945, following the defeat of Japan a cultural renaissance began among the Koreans in Japan. The movement towards ethnic education, the movement to revive and recapture the language which had been taken away by colonialism ..... small Korean schools came into existence everywhere throughout Japan, and there was a great postwar movement to regain the culture which we had been deprived by colonialism. At this time, the organization of the Koreans in Japan called the Chosenjin Renmei (Korean Alliance) was formed. However, in 1948, the Korean Alliance and its educational system was destroyed by the American Occupation authorities. I want to point out especially for your American readers that at that time we saw through the deception of America as a democratic state. America revealed its true nature at that time. The Occupation authorities ordered this organization of Koreans disbanded and confiscated all of its property. In that year, I was a second year student in junior high school. The Japanese police came out to our school to carry out the orders of the Occupation Army. After it was defeated in the war, Japan adopted a Peace Constitution and turned itself into a democratic state, but the Japanese police armed themselves for the first time in their repression of the Koreans. There was even one Korean student who was killed in Osaka at this time. In Kobe military law was declared, and there were mass arrests of Koreans by the MP's and the Japanese police. They called it Chosenjin-gari, meaning literally "a hunt for Koreans." The Koreans were hunted down. Naturally, we fought all out against this repression of our cultural renaissance.

This struggle made me understand for the first time the realities of imperialist power. Until that time, I had been educated as a Japanese subject, and this had meant my death. But when I transferred to a Korean school at age 12 I began to learn who I was. When this repression came against our school, we learned immediately the necessity to struggle, to fight, in order to live and to protect our schools, our names, and our language. When we were attacked by the armed police, we were only children; we were unarmed; we had nothing in our hands. But we resisted. We fought back, and I and many of my schoolmates shed our blood. I personally will never flee, never run away from the struggle because I know exactly who the enemy is, and this is something I have experienced in my own life.

AMPO: How did the Korean War effect Koreans in Japan?

PAK: Immediately after the Korean Alliance was disbanded, the Korean War began. We immediately organized another organization, and we Koreans were the ones who engaged most energetically in the struggle against the Korean War. The most unfortunate part about this was the fact that the Japanese



Communist Party made use of this energy of ours. The shock brigade of the Japanese revolution was declared to be this brave Korean unit. At the time of the Korean War, we were the most deeply involved in the armed struggle. The JCP later "criticized" this period as the period of the "Molotov cocktail struggle," but we Koreans in Japan in those days were protesting against the fact that the Americans were killing our own relatives, our own families in Korea. We wished to continue the same struggle here in Japan, and extreme forms of violence were used by the Koreans in their struggle against the Korean War. At the same time, the Koreans were the most fiercely repressed in Japan. This extremely fierce repression was mounted against us by the Japanese government and by the Occupation authorities. Our spirit of rebellion against this was like a burning flame.

I was a high school student at that time, but I also participated in this intense struggle. At that point American bombings in Korea were increasing, but Korean resistance was very stiff, and General MacArthur announced that he was considering dropping atomic bombs on Korea. At this time, the Stockholm Appeal was issued to protest against this. We went out and collected signatures. Altogether two million signatures and ¥20 million were collected by Korean school children. This was two million out of the six million signatures which were collected in Japan for the Stockholm appeal. I was a third year student in a Korean high school at that time, and I myself was the leader of the Stockholm appeal movement.

In 1955, a new organization of Koreans was formed, the Chosenjin Sorenmei (Korean Federation). This organization supports the North Korean government, the government of Kim Il-sung. In addition there is an organization of South Koreans called the Kankoku Kyoryu Mindan (Association of Korean Residents).

It is most unfortunate that the Korean communities in Japan came to be dominated by these two rival organizations, the Soren and the Mindan. As a result, all Korean communities were split completely in two. This split began as early as 1948. As you know, the Syngman Rhee government was formed in August 1948, and the Kim Il-sung government was established in September, 1948. At that time the Korean communities in Japan were split in two depending upon which one they supported. The movement of the Sorenmei has been extremely active. All the main leaders of the post 1945 cultural renaissance joined it and played an active part. The Sorenmei is an overwhelmingly powerful force in the Korean community in Japan. It has a membership of about 200,000. It also has a well-equipped educational system ranging from kindergartens to a university. The main mover of the national movement of Koreans in Japan is the Sorenmei. The educational work of the Mindan, which is closely connected with the government of South Korea, is extremely weak. They have only three schools in all of Japan with less than 2,000 pupils. On the other hand, the Sorenmei has a large school system with 40,000 pupils. It is extremely important to realize that these two systems of education produce diametrically opposed ideals of what a Korean ought to be in Japan.

For instance, this appears in the way they view America. In the Sorenmei schools, the pupils are taught to hate American imperialism and to wish to overthrow it. But in the Mindan schools, they are taught that America is the protector of freedom. They proudly cite the fact nearly 60,000 Korean soldiers are fighting in Vietnam. The ideal which is presented to the students is to become a fighter for this type of cause. The split in the Korean communities in organization and in consciousness has deepened during the past 25 years. This has a direct bearing on the half-Japanese that I spoke of before. The national consciousness of such a person is shaped by this split in the Korean community. If, for instance, he decides to become a Korean and he goes to a South Korean school, he will be taught to approve of the dispatch of Korean soldiers to Vietnam. If he goes to the North Korean school, he will be taught the exact opposite. He will be edu-



cated in a spirit of approval of Kim Il-sung and disapproval of American imperialism. There are two kinds of Koreans being created in Japan depending on which nation we choose for ourselves: whether we choose South Korea as our homeland or whether we choose the Republic. So the Koreans reject each other depending upon which homeland they have chosen for themselves. If they have chosen the North, they regard it as the only possible homeland, the only Republic, and they reject the other Republic, and just the opposite is true if the situation is reversed. Emotions of hatred are produced.

The policy of the Japanese government today intensifies the split among the Koreans. The Japanese government applies pressure to aggravate that split.

AMPO: The experience of controlling their own schools - something Black Americans and other community organizers are presently striving to attain - represents one of the landmarks of the Korean community's struggle for independence. How have these schools contributed to furthering that struggle? In what ways have they reflected the post-war cultural renaissance? Have they successfully adapted to the problems of the half-Japanese and other distinctive problems of the Korean community in Japan?

PAK: I can speak again from my own experience. I was educated in the North Korean educational system, and I support the Republic of North Korea. I feel that South Korea is not liberated; it is a yet-to-be liberated colony of American imperialism. It is an extremely abnormal state for my country to be divided into two. I am convinced that the true personality of a Korean can develop only through the struggle for reunifying the homeland. The main thing I learned in the Korean schools was the meaning of my own liberation. I learned this through the struggle against the authorities and I realized very clearly that liberation of the human being cannot possibly come about unless the ethnic group, the nation is liberated. Therefore, I feel that unless our nation is reunited, there cannot be any true liberation of the human being.

A tremendous contradiction remains in our educational system of it has to do with the emphasis on returning to North Korea. Already 90,000 Koreans have returned to the Republic of North Korea. My sister was one of them. Today we are able to return to South Korea or to North Korea. If we return to Korea, there is no longer any difficulty. But this does not do away with the problem of the 580,000 Koreans who still remain in Japan.

In North Korea, Koreans in Japan are regarded as citizens of the liberated Socialist Motherland. However, we are oppressed in Japan. We are oppressed in three ways, by three different powers: Japanese imperialism, South Korea, and America. What does the national education, the ethnic education have to tell us about this? It teaches us absolutely nothing. It says nothing about this. The only thing it tells us is to have national consciousness, to have pride in being a citizens of the Socialist Motherland. It says that if we have this national consciousness, there will be no problem at all. They are very cold and unresponsive to the problems of, for instance, criminal elements such as Kin Ki-ro, whom I mentioned before. They have nothing to say about this. They deny the existence of the large numbers of semi-Japanese, half-Japanese. If you belong to an organization like the Chosen Soren, consciousness of this type of problem is wiped out completely. They merely teach you to "arm yourself with the thought of Kim Il-sung" as the solution for all of your problems. They say that the only absolute good, the only absolute justice, is Kim Il-sung's thought.

AMPO: In effect, then, this nationalistic education geared exclusively for individuals returning to North Korea. That is, it develops a particular



form of Korean national consciousness with no reference to the oppression that Koreans face in their daily lives in Japan.

PAK: They give little attention to the problems of the Koreans in Japan. What they do give attention to is the rights of citizens in the Republic. They do very little to protect the everyday rights and livelihood of Koreans in Japan. It is very interesting that both the Chosen Soren and the Mindan have completely wiped out of their consciousness the experiences of Koreans who were victims of the atomic bomb. All of the problems which mean everything to me: the question of the half-Japanese, the question of the victims of the atomic bomb - all of these are completely outside their frame of reference. Thus, I feel that I am left completely out of their movement.

I first began to write because I became very interested in the Komatsugawa incident. I corresponded with that boy who was sentenced to death, and these letters were published as a book. I was expelled from the Chosen Soren because of my interest in this question of the half-Japanese. In other words, I am a heretic, a marginal man, or rather marginal woman....(laughing) There is one thing which you can say about the existence of the Koreans in Japan and the half-Japanese. They have a dual existence. They are both Japanese and Koreans at the same time. This is perhaps a very wonderful thing. When I say this, I certainly do not mean that their existence in itself, in its present aspect, is wonderful, but I think that there are all kinds of potentialities, that this may be changed, transformed into something positive. To be a Korean in Japan is rather like having two sets of eyes. I am able to understand and appreciate Japanese culture, and I am confident that I can assimilate the national culture of my own people. While we are living here in Japan, we can understand Japan, and we can understand our own country. This enables us to see things, as it were, with four eyes. I would like to add that as a woman, I have an additional privilege of seeing things in another dimension because women are always oppressed by men. Thus, being a woman gives me another pair of eyes. Altogether I have six eyes.

AMPO: Our discussion, which began by noting certain striking differences between the Black and Korean colonies in America and Japan, has come full circle in clarifying many striking similarities. In particular I am struck by the conflict centering on individual attempts to renounce ones cultural identity, to attain success, to accept the definition posed by the dominant oppressor culture of what it means to be a human being. The issue of the half-Japanese is suggestive of efforts by middle class Black Americans to merge with the dominant culture, to become half white - only to remain niggers - white niggers perhaps - but in any event second class citizens.

PAK: Baldwin speaks of the fact that liberation of the black means liberation of the white people, and I think that perhaps we could say the same thing to the Japanese. That our liberation would mean their liberation. One feels that there is a great similarity between what we are doing and the struggle against authority in Japan itself. In fact, our struggle is a sister to the struggle of the Japanese against authority. As I said before we have the disadvantage of being unable to speak any language except Japanese, and therefore we are alienated from both cultures in a special way. We are nothing. However, perhaps we can reverse this and make it into an advantage. Perhaps we ought to create our own culture of half-Japanese people, adopting Japanese as our own language. As for myself, my personal liberation has to do with my liberation from borderlines. It seems to me that the liberation of Japan itself is inseparable from the reunification of Korea. The reunification of Vietnam, the reunification of Germany, the liberation of Asia, and the liberation of the whole world are involved.



AMPO: Could you tell us a little bit more about the nature of your struggle as a "marginal man."

PAK: Recently a friend of mine, a young girl, came to visit me. She is a Japanese citizen, but has a Korean father and a Japanese mother. She asked me for advice, and I recommended that she become a teacher. Since she is a Japanese citizen, she could become a school teacher, and I told her that it would be good for her to teach in Osaka or Kobe, where there are many Korean students. This girl surprised me greatly when she answered that she refused to sacrifice herself for others. She didn't want to live for other people. She also reminded me that she had struggled very bravely in opposition to the Japan-ROK talks in 1964-65, and when the Japan-ROK Treaty was passed she felt an overpowering sense of defeat. It seemed to me that she was being very arrogant and conceited in her attitude, because certainly the struggle does not come to an end with one defeat or even with a series of defeats. It seems to me that you struggle for yourself in living your everyday life, and there is no need even to think about sacrificing yourself for others. My struggle is for my own liberation, for the liberation of my mother, of my sisters, and my struggle is inseparable from the struggle of others. My liberation, likewise, is inseparable from the liberation of other people. Struggling with helmets and wooden staves is not the only conceivable pattern of struggle. Struggle is an everyday matter in our lives.

There is one element among the Japanese population which I feel that I can trust. I refer to the outcast population in Japan who are called mikaiho buraku, which means "the as-yet unliberated villages." Today there are two million of these outcasts in Japan who are discriminated against in marriage, in employment, and economically. They are treated as sub-human. In fact, the Japanese call them "four-legged" because they identify them with animals. The type of alienation which they suffer in their daily lives is very much like that of a colony within Japan. The slums where they live in great congestion are also places where you find Koreans and Okinawans in great numbers. Among the Japanese whom I trust most, many live in these outcast communities. These people are thinking seriously about their own liberation. However, one is also appalled by the hatred and the dissension which one finds in these slums where the outcasts live together with the Koreans. One feels that these are the places where solidarity is most urgently needed, but where it is most lacking.

It seems to me that it is useless to speak empty phrases about Japanese-Korean solidarity while closing one's eyes to the actual conditions in these places, where there are actual killings of Koreans or of Japanese in these slums where they live together. This is what I conceive as my own work: to focus my attention steadily, unflinchingly, on these conditions that I see.