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HAN SOL-YA AND HIS LITERATURE

- NORTH KOREA -

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## HAN SOL-YA AND HIS LITERATURE

[Following are translations of articles  
appearing in Choson Munhak (Korean Literature),  
August 1960, Pyongyang.]

### Table of Contents

<u>Article</u>	<u>page</u>
Han Sol-ya and His Literature .....	1
Han Sol-ya and I .....	29

## HAN SOL-YA AND HIS LITERATURE

[The following is a translation of criticism by Yun Se-p'yang, appearing in Chosen Munhak, August 1960, Pyongyang, p. 173-182.]

Looking back to the illustrious advance and direction of our socialistic realism in literature, modern Korean literature has acquired resourceful creative results with numerous praiseworthy writers. However, without hesitation, we note the distinguished position of Han Sol-ya among them. This is not only attributed to Han Sol-ya's consistent and prolific career as an old professional writer of forty years, and the fact that he is serving a responsible position with the Korean Writers' League at present, but to his powerful literature that transcends the destiny of the past, present, and future of modern Korean literature.

From the early 1920's to the present, Han Sol-ya's creative activities have been linked with the advancement of Korean literature. He is one of the founder of socialistic realism in Korean literature. And his creative process has amplified socialist realism in literature.

From the formation of "Kapi" literary movement in the 1920's to the constructive period of socialist -- communist literature of today, Han Sol-ya's creative activity is directly affiliated with the vigorous struggle for national liberation of the Korean people. Han Sol-ya has consistently concentrated on formulating resolutions of central problems on subject matters in his creative works that relate to his period. And his creative writing is distinguished by its incisive direction and observation of a new outlook that is to come in the future.

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The outstanding modern Korean writer, statesman, and peace-maker, Han Sol-ya, was born at the turn of the century. The past sixty years of Han Sol-ya's life are filled with great historical incidents that linked the destiny of Korean people in its historical development which is tantamount to several centuries in other nations. Moreover, we can speak of the life and activity of Han Sol-ya during this period in terms of the struggle of social and national liberation of Korean people. Han Sol-ya was born on 3 August 1900, of a second son in a disintegrating feudal home in Ham-ju Gun, Ham-kyong South Province.

While his family had been engaged in farming for generations, literary qualities<sup>are</sup> also rooted<sup>in</sup> the family. However, the rapid destruction of the feudal Lee Dynasty and the influence of Japanese aggression left a deep scar on his family environment and growth.

development. Han Sol-ya matured<sup>at</sup> an early age and possessed the faculties to judge and reason intelligently. He grew up with an attitude of sympathy toward the under-dog and a sense of willful expression of humanistic feelings together with a strong and pure spirit of protest toward injustice. Especially, his dissatisfaction and rebellious ideas toward the feudal custom of his family and the Japanese aggression in Korea caused him to burst with anti-Japanese feeling.

Consequently, anti-feudal concepts had been deeply rooted in Han Sol-ya's humanistic thoughts from his early youth. Also, his detestation of<sup>the</sup> aggressor had shaped into<sup>a</sup> strong anti-Japanese feeling. These sentiments contributed a great deal to Han Sol-ya's later thinking process and creative life.

Upon his graduation from the primary school in his hometown, he entered the First High School in Seoul at the age of 16, and in the third year of high school, the great socialistic October Revolution in Russia left a deep impression upon him.

During the 1 March 1919 incident, Han Sol-ya actively participated in the independence movement of Korea from Japanese domination, and had been imprisoned for three months. Eventually, these historical incidents gradually improved Han Sol-ya's view of life which solidified his foundation as an advanced writer. He describes his sentiments of the time in his "My pursuit as man and writer" as follows:

I invariably rebuked and repulsed                      deceit-  
ful weaklings who became pessimistic captives of their  
environment without the courage to solve the difficulties  
and obstacles surrounding them... I disliked oppressive  
authoritarians as much as those who blindly obeyed and  
sacrificed their opinion for                      others.

It is a well known fact that the 1 March 1919 incident  
started the rapid growth of labor movement, and the labor class  
took the lead in <sup>the</sup> anti-Japanese struggle for national liberation  
which opened a new frontier. However, the bourgeois nationalists  
feared the emergence of the labor class and acclaimed the Japan-  
ese so-called "Cultural Rule" which was an enticement. Many  
bourgeois intellectual youth were swept under the pure fabrication  
of the Japanese baneful ideas that spread corrupt concepts.

Han Sol-ya could not bear this sort of atmosphere, and he  
crossed the border and left for Peking in the fall of 1919. At  
that time, Peking was known for bases of operation for Korean  
patriots and revolutionists with North-east China and Shanghai  
area. And it was out of the direct jurisdiction of the Japanese.

But Han Sol-ya never met a true patriot or a revolutionist  
in Peking, although he describes                      them in his autobiographical  
novel "Hot Wind." He saw the miserable life of Koreans wandering  
and the life of the lower class Chinese instead. In spite of his  
awareness of the inconsistencies of society, he could not disco-  
ver a solution to it. Consequently, his search for the truth and  
knowledge became intensive. Whereupon, in the spring of 1921,

Han Sol-ya went to Tokyo and studied social sciences and literature at a university. The three year study in Japan became the turning point of Han Sol-ya's creative life as a devoted writer. Han Sol-ya finished his first unpublished novel "Pioneer" in 1921, under arduous hardship but his spirit was high.

From the beginning, Han Sol-ya firmly based his literary pursuit on real life which tied in with his earnest struggle to develop his own career. Literary pursuit meant to live and fight for Han Sol-ya, and his later works reveal this consistent literary attitude.

In 1924, Han Sol-ya returned home to Puk-chong and taught at a private high school during which time he concentrated on his creative writing.

During this period, he published short stories-"That Night," "Yearning," "Churim," "Benolity," and others. Although these works described essential aspects of social injustice, it was true that they were weak in penetrating the problems of the period pertaining to the struggle of national liberation under the leadership of working class after the 1 March 1919 Incident. Nevertheless, these works were the author's earnest search of life and his experiences on the principles of humanism which were basically in direct opposition to the degenerate bourgeois literature of art-for-art's-sake slogan of the period. They revealed the author's realism in his purpose and artistic method.



Of course, the fact that Han Sol-ya joined the "Kapi" literary movement in 1925 brought him in close contact with his shift of attention to the class distinction of the people in the country.

Han Sol-ya's early works of human compassion and search of beauty in life represents his creative quality which became more typical and brilliant with his creative activities after his consciousness of class distinction.

That is to say, prior to Han Sol-ya's life as a proletarian writer, his love for humanity had been deeply rooted in his heart and his awareness of struggle in life had been positive. And these elements became the background of his individual style.

As a matter of fact, this background of Han Sol-ya's individual style qualified him as a proletarian writer, but the rapid growth of <sup>the</sup> labor movement and the objective elements of Marxism-Leninism propagation became the true background.

In the spring of 1925, Han Sol-ya left his teaching position for Seoul. This period is particularly noted as the conversion point of Han Sol-ya's entire life. It is not only because he began to devote all his efforts to creative writing but because he became a combat writer in the ranks of the advancement of the labor movement. In Seoul, Han Sol-ya became friends of Cho Myong-hi, Ch'oe Se-ho, Yi Ki-yong, Song Yong, and others. Meetings of this group of pioneers of modern

Korean literature and founders of Korean proletarian literature paved the road for a new systematic progress of Korean literature.

Han Sol-ya took an active part in the formation of "Kapf" in 1925, as a central figure with other colleagues. This occasion marked Han Sol-ya's course of action in his conscious realization of class distinction. Above all, Han Sol-ya resolved to become a faithful member of the Korean labor class and pursued as such in life as a writer. Rather than give lip-service to Marxism, he made efforts to reform the labor class as a writer and a son of the labor class. This has been his motive as a consistent writer till today.

Han Sol-ya took great pains in living the life of a laborer and went to the coal mines of Mu-sun in Manchuria. However, he was unable to seek employment there. Instead, he made great efforts in mastering Marxist literary theories and prepared himself in understanding the theories of Marxism and Leninism. During this period, he wrote his famous criticism on "Declaration of Proletarian Art," "On Class Literature," and others.

Han Sol-ya and other proletarian writers were engaged in critical writing rather than creative writing at the time, and this can be explained in two ways.

Early proletarian literature had to destroy the characteristics of bourgeois literature that had been ingrained in the minds of the reader, and in order to develop their foundation

they had to unite with sharp critical activities to crush and expose the reactionary elements of bourgeois literature. In adopting techniques of socialistic realism for the advancement of proletarian literature theoretical preparation was necessary.

These factors have not only brought about historical accomplishments in defeating the reactionary currents of bourgeois literature and preserving the foundation of proletarian literary criticism of the time but invariably contributed to the formation and progress of socialist realism in literature. And Han Sol-ya always acted as the central figure of this critical activity. Han Sol-ya declared in his "Declaration of Proletarian Art" that, "Proletarian literature and art must reveal proletarian ideology and direction of progress, <sup>and</sup> serve as an outpost of the most sensitive nature in the organization of proletarian society. They must expose the bourgeois life, contradictions, falsehoods, and sins; and press hard upon the earliest disorganization of them. In this struggle for the final victory of the proletariat, may our sincere and consistent combat for literature and art grow.

Literature and art must come out the ivy tower and arm themselves and march on as a part of the proletarian mass."

No doubt, this <sup>was</sup> a generalized declaration of "Kampf" literary movement on their position in class struggle and their fighting spirit when Han Sol-ya took a part in it. But at the same time, it is characterized by Han Sol-ya's demonstration of

a combative nature and features of a writer of the working class.

In fact, among the "Kapf" writers, Han Sol-ya's warm affection toward humanity and life on one hand, and his protest toward deformed hypocrisy and stagnancy on the other, flowed out as a fighting purpose which radiated with brilliancy as his aesthetic quality. As Han Sol-ya became the vanguard of labor class ideology with his attributes of humanism, his combative purpose burned with revolutionary sparkles. This turned Han Sol-ya into a revolutionist.

Henceforth, as a writer, Han Sol-ya was called a fighter for his revolutionary view of the world and his literary quality.

Afterwards, Han Sol-ya began to observe reality in the eyes of a revolutionist of the labor class, and directly integrated the benefits of class struggle and revolution to literary work.

In the spring of 1927, Han Sol-ya returned to Seoul. And he held secret meetings with Cho Myong-hi, Yi Ki-yong, and others to study intensified measures of the ideologies of "Kapf" organization. At the time, revolutionary spirit of the mass was greatly enhanced by the ideological and artistic need of proletarian literature and art, but "Kapf" could not offer satisfactory need. Furthermore, "Kapf" had to unfold itself of internal conflict and foreign elements that encroached the organization together with attacks from the reactionary bourgeois literary camps under the Japanese oppression.

Under these circumstances, in September 1927, "Tapf" was systematically reorganized, and it adopted a new Marxist platform.

Han Sol-ya took positive action during the proceedings.

In 1929, short stories of superior quality on socialistic realism, such as, "Age of Transition" and "Wrestler" followed "Flood", "A Night at the Boarding-house", and "Artificial Waterfall".

The main character in "Age of Transition", Ch'ang-sun, and that of "Wrestler", Myong-ho, are representative phenomena of labor class heroes' consciousness of class distinction in modern Korean literature. They demonstrated the conception of <sup>a</sup> labor alliance under the guidance of <sup>the</sup> advanced labor class, and manifested the revolutionary progress of realities in life with candor as a historical fact.

Han Sol-ya depicted the life of laborers in his short story, "A Night at the Boarding-house" and "Artificial Waterfall". But after "Age of Transition" and "Wrestler", his creative world was centered around the condition of <sup>the</sup> labor class. He became an outstanding writer who lived, thought, and fought with the vanguard of Korean labor class.

He consciously devoted his creative writing to the conditions of the labor class, not only for the recognition of leadership activities of the labor class which emerged as the leading class in the revolutionary process but to serve as a fighter for the labor class and become a true son of the labor class.

Above all, Han Sol-ya found a new life among the advanced labor class, and it is revealed in the hero of "Wrestler" as Myong-ho portraying a fighter of the labor class. Through Myong-ho's strong features and rough life, his belief in the righteousness of his work and his convincing disposition as a member of the Korean labor class unyielding to the oppression of Japanese rule for the success of a strong revolutionary work has been built in himself. In spite of its expression being extremely restrained, it is overflowed with the author's revolutionary purpose.

Around 1930, the activity of "Kapf" became much more positive. Comrade Kim Il-sung's heroic struggle of armed resistance against the Japanese in the 1930's staged a new armed resistance movement, particularly, in the revolutionary progress of our country. And this became the mainstream of direct inspiration for the "Kapf" writers. At the same time, oppression by the Japanese police toward "Kapf" became extremely severe.

Under these circumstances, Han Sol-ya engaged himself vigorously in creative and critical activities as a writer for the labor class. After being continuously hunted down by the enemy, in 1934, he spent two years in Chon-ju Penitentiary behind bars after the second general arrest of "Kapf" members.

However, the barbaric torture by the Japanese and their intimidation did not divert the will of the author who wished to live as a faithful son of the labor class. While in prison, he

planned his first novel, "Twilight".

After his release from prison, Han Sel-ya, after a long absence, returned to his hometown and concentrated on creative writing. He published his masterpiece, "Twilight", and followed up with short stories like "Sun", "Apology", "Railway Junction", and others. Also, upon Gorki's death, he wrote a serious criticism titled "About Maxim Gorki".

Among his works, his novel, "Twilight" became a land-mark in the development of socialist realism in Korean literature and a work of monumental statue in modern Korean literature. He described the fighting image of a more mature Korean labor class through the attitudes of the fighters of <sup>the</sup> advanced labor class in his hero, Chun-shik and others.

Although this work had been severely restrained under the Japanese censorship system, the author succeeded remarkably in showing the fighting image of the growing Korean labor class of the 1930's. This proved the maturity and endurance to a greater extent of the author as a revolutionist.

Even under the fascist oppression of Japanese rule, the author had the foresight of national and social liberation of the Korean people by the revolutionary inspiration of the Korean labor class that was heightened by the heroic armed resistance against the Japanese by comrade Kim Il-sung. He wrote this work with the firm conviction of victory at hand, and with esteemed purpose.

Consequently, Han Sol-ya rebelled against the attacks of Japanese rule and their fraudulent capitalists who were under their control, and vigorously sought after revolutionary advancement of the Korean labor class by expanding and pronouncing the revolutionary position of its political awareness and unity in the labor class through the motives of the fighting hero, Chun-sik, and others. He created the atmosphere of indestructibility of the fighters of the Korean labor class in the 1930's.

On the other hand, the author exposed the treasonable and immoral crimes of capitalists under Japanese control with burning hatred in the characterization of An Chung-so, and others. And he magnificently described the down-fall of their fate.

But the author's incessant critical pen and his flowing dashes toward the inevitable destruction of his foe derived from his objectives on the economic conditions of political opportunists of the time. Through his exposition of economic conditions, Han Sol-ya exposed the true nature of the superficial political opportunists whom he detested, and recapitulated their process of disintegration with vitality.

Therefore, "Twilight" was filled with typical characters of various classes of the 1930's in broad perspective to the realities of Korea. And that, only the advanced labor class was able to lead the Korean revolution. He also recognized artistically the communist position through the hero, Chun-sik, who shouldered the



destiny of the Korean people with power.

As a point of departure from his "Twilight," Han Sol-ya's creative urge became mature, and his artistic skill reached perfection.

In 1937, he published his second novel "Adolescence," and in 1939, he published his novella "Homecoming," and another novel titled "First Home." In 1940, he completed his autobiographical novel "Tower."

Besides these works, under the cruel oppression of Japanese rule, Han Sol-ya wrote such gems as, "Revenge," "Wine Inn," "Mad," "Malady under the Sun," "Dusk," and many others. Upon completion of his part two of "Tower" which was subtitled "Hot Wind" and published after the World War II, he was organizing part three "Sun Bathing" when the historic 8.15 liberation was declared.

Although after the gloomy period of Sino-Japanese War that had been incited by the Japanese it had been a suffering period for the Korean people, hardship for writers had been much greater. Writers who had supported the proletarian literature at one time came out as spokesmen for the organized literature of Japanese rule. It was considered best for conscientious writers to drop their pen and live in retreat under the Japanese administration.

However, despite the hardship involved, Han Sol-ya who had pledged to devote his life as a writer of the labor class, had no alternative but to concentrate his efforts to creative writing.

On the other hand, under the Japanese rule at the beginning of World War II in the Pacific, Han Sol-ya had a strong conviction that the liberation of Korea was not far off. And in order to prepare for this great event that was to come, in 1943, while he was conferring with comrades, he was arrested again by the Japanese police and suffered over a year at Ham-hung Penitentiary.

These were manifestation of Han Sol-ya's unbending fighting spirit and, at the same time, his creative characteristics of the formative period.

During this period, Han Sol-ya treated the intelligentsia as his subject based on his personal experiences and life. This type of creative trend was closely related to the objective conditions of the time.

As the Fascist oppression became much severe by the day, the entire progress of society obliterated from lawful actions and a state of underground struggle took shape.

This situation tied in with the impossibility of artistic rebirth of a creative trend. However, it was a serious internal struggle for Han Sol-ya who was already established as a writer and fighter for the labor class to pry into the writings of his life and experiences deep into the world surrounding him. It was a challenging struggle to reform himself and the world around him.

Han Sol-ya wrote in "Memoirs in a Cellar" of this period as follows: "I do not think it necessary to depict subjects from

my world of experience as bad form. Only the questions as to how one walks through this world of truth and objectivity remains as a theme and an ultimate problem." And he quoted a phrase from Dostoyevski as follows: "What is the most simple thing that a common man can talk about? It is about himself. That's fine. Then, I shall talk about myself."

In this type of reminiscence by the author, we can understand the reasons for his prying the truth of life through his life experience and his ways of consciously generalizing his time.

As a matter of fact, Han Sol-ya was actively engaged in his internal struggle of the formative period to keep up the pace as a vanguard. He was engaged in an uncompromising struggle toward all the ugly and conventional scenes that surrounded him.

All of his works mentioned above were consistent with his fighting purpose. This combative purpose of Han Sol-ya proved his decisive observation of the liberation of the Korean people and the ultimate destruction of Japanese rule. His hopes were high even during this uncanny situation; and even during the gloomy darkness of the time, he held on to a stroke of light with tenacity.

For example, the novel "Tower" was actually a work where he made attempts to portray the present through his life by telling the unspeakable and undescribable conditions of past life which were pressed upon the Korean people by the Fascist Japanese rule.

Therefore, in "Tower" the author reached and delved into the

fate of the darkness and brightness, destruction and rebirth of the people who were swept under the current of the historical transformation of the last years of the feudal Yi Dynasty.

He found fresh insights for the characterization of U-kil and He-son. And this novel was a sort of preview of the historical transformation of the ups and downs, destruction and rebirth of the Japanese rule. Especially, the author's self-portrayal of his youth in the person of U-kil's description revealed the unbending strength inbred in the Korean people against oppression and authority as a historical fact. To this end, this novel had accomplished its main purpose.

With this, the author protested the so-called assimilation policy that was ruthlessly forced upon the Korean people to adopt the Japanese way of life. The author in "Tower" displayed his utmost skill in the depiction of the natural beauty of Korea, the traditional national customs and mode of life, and the national sentiment. The author led the readers to their realization of patriotic sentiments; and encouraged them with deep thoughts that Koreans will survive even under the tyrannical Japanese rule.

The 8.15 Liberation by the great Soviet Army opened a new frontier of activity for Han Sol-ya to cultivate his creative skill in various directions.

In the joy of regaining the freedom of his unforgettable fatherland after 36 years, and watching the establishment of the

rights of the people which he ardently desired, Han Sol-ya welcomed the newly formed Marxist-Leninist party that was headed by Kim Il-sung and his famed leadership.

As a faithful son and a writer of the labor class, Han Sol-ya was bestowed with a new honor as a son and a writer of the Party. He supported the Party's intelligent cultural policies and devoted wholeheartedly to its accomplishment with all his power and skill.

Han Sol-ya took an active part in the organization of the Party's cultural group immediately after the 8.15 Liberation. In 1946 , he worked in a responsible capacity at the formation of the Central Committee of the Korean Writers' League.

Also, as a national and political activist, he was successively elected to the Central Committee of the Korean Labor Party and the Supreme Peoples' Council of the Republic. In the past, he held the post of minister of the Department of Education and Culture; and at present, he is active as the Vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme Peoples' Council of the Republic.

He is also devoting his efforts to the great work of world peace as the Chairman of the All Peoples' Committee for the Preservation of Peace, and a director of the World Peace Council.

Han Sol-ya's many-sided activities and creative writings after the Liberation were deeply related to his achievement of historical works that confronted the Korean people.

He stood in the midst of social reformation and the creation

of a new mode of life; and enlarged his incomparable focal point in creative writing.

Han Sol-ya wrote short stories, "Coal Mining Town," "Growing Village," and others during the democratic construction period portraying the heroes of the great democratic reformation. He also portrayed our dear leader, comrade Kim Il-sung in his short stories "Triumphal Return," "Blood Line," and others. He published short stories, "Cap," "Face," "Brothers and Sisters," and others which treated the liberators of Korean people, the great people of Soviet Union, as subjects of international friendship.

In the creative writings of Han Sol-ya after the Liberation, characteristics of a new world opened fresh human frontiers of realities, and his works became the basic purpose in realizing the excellent spiritual qualities of the rising workers in the rebirth of a new life.

The character development of Chae-su in "Coal Mining Town," and that of Ch'un-sam in "Growing Village," did not only confirm the historical victory of democratic reformation, but also elucidated the great meaning of labors' artistical intentions through the development of a new human life which sprang out of the creative labor class.

It is a well known fact that in a society of exploiters, labor is considered drudgery. The meaning of labor becomes different when the workers become the master of their country.

Labor is not only a creation of materialistic gifts but a decisive significance in the spiritual life of mankind. Henceforth it is considered, without any doubt, the distinguished service of Gorki who made clear for the first time in world literature the great creative power of labor class in discovering the essence of <sup>the</sup> socialist view of the world for the socialist labor class as a new man.

There are not too many writers who remarkably realized this creative practice, and followed faithfully the teachings of Gorki as Han Sol-ya. In Han Sol-ya's literary works after the 8.15 Liberation, undertones of ideas on artistic clarity persisted through a new life with the power of the creative labor class.

However, this new human growth after the 8.15 Liberation only became possible by the selfless assistance of the great Soviet Army and their people. Because of this, the list of works by Han Sol-ya after the Liberation that deals with subjects of Soviet-Korean friendship occupies a proportionately greater part of his creative writing. And "Brothers and Sisters" is an outstanding work among them.

In this work, the author depicts the Soviet doctor Krivoljak and his rescue of Won-chu who had been drafted into the Japanese Army and suffered a heart attack.

And through this story, the author showed the wonderful friendship relation and blood ties of the people of the two country.

In the characterization of Krivolyak, the author revealed superior spiritual virtues held by dedicated Soviet people in the liberation of mankind who were educated in communism. Moreover, Han Sol-ya wrote how Wen-chu successfully develops his character after the liberation under a new system. There is the brilliancy of the author's thoughts with his noble humanism and his thoroughgoing concept of proletarian internationalism.

The main creative power of Han Sol-ya after the Liberation evolved around the depiction of glorified armed resistance to the Japanese in the 1930's as one of the struggle of the Korean people for freedom. This fact proves Han Sol-ya as a faithful Party's writer for the Party and the revolution.

In welcoming the triumphant return of comrade Kim Il-sung with his 15 illustrious years of armed resistance against the Japanese behind him, Han Sol-ya completed a great character sketch with reverent admiration of our leader of the Korean people in his text-book, "The Man, Kim Il-sung" and "Hero, Kim Il-sung"

And in his short stories "Blood Line" and "Triumphal Return" he described our leader's brilliant countenance as a strategist of armed resistance against the Japanese. He also showed the spiritual features of our leader with his distinguished statesmanship on his triumphant return to the fatherland.

In his novel "Strong Man" which was written during the war prior to the liberation of the fatherland, Han Sol-ya was able



to show the great spiritual features of comrade Kim Il-sung with a much wider perspective.

Above all, in "Strong Man" he turned his main purpose of creation to the cultivation of a new generation of today that stood out for its patriotic and revolutionary tradition built by the heroic partisans of Japanese resistance and the retaliation of the Korean people against the aggressors as a spiritual weapon under the leadership of comrade Kim Il-sung. In this way, Han Sol-ya's "Strong Man" succeeded in showing the splendid revolutionary tradition with a moving artistic image. In the description of comrade Kim Il-sung as an organizer and leader of armed resistance against Japanese rule, the author depicted the deep concern of the people that <sup>was</sup> held only by the communists from various angles.

He described the spiritual countenance with moving passion that transcends the days of liberation.

"Revolutionists must create something necessary even when there is nothing.

"There are no safety zones for us. There is safety only in struggle.

"Has there ever been a revolutionist who fought under advantageous conditions compared to that of their enemies?

"Revolutionists always fought and won under unfavorable conditions compared to their enemies.

"We must unite and conquer our enemy. Nothing is more beau-

tiful than the feeling of conquering an enemy."

These words of Kim Il-sung to his partisans were not only elegant manifestations of his spiritual world as a famed revolution-ist but a generalization of the spiritual characteristics of the partisans in the anti-Japanese movement.

During the Emancipation War of our fatherland, Han Sol-ya published "Tank No. 214," "Hills of Rough Grass," and others besides "Strong Man" where he depicted the heroic actions of our Peoples' Army. In his short story "Sung-nyang" he exposed the savage nature of monstrous murderers of American Imperialism. He also created the novel "Tae-dong River" which portrayed the heroic struggle of the people behind enemy lines when the enemy were temporarily in pover.

For Han Sol-ya, life meant struggle; and his literature which was a reflection of his life, was a literature of struggle. I previously stated that his writings were literature of revolution, but his creative characteristics took on a much more positive fighting spirit in the works after the Emancipation War of our fatherland. In Han Sol-ya's creative writings, this type of combative temper could be explained as an expression of his penetrating communistic nature. Furthermore, one must not overlook his strong humanistic aspects which lies in the inner core of his combative nature.

In "Sung-nyang" and "Tae-dong River," Han Sol-ya exposed the

true character of human hatred and the barbaric conduct of the cruel aggressive enemies of American Imperialism. And, at the same time, he confronted the enemy with the moral characteristics of the noble spirit of the Korean people for their love of mankind and peace. Han Sol-ya artistically defined the inviolability of the Korean people. In "Sung-nyang" the author accuses the tyrannical inhuman cruelty of the cunning American missionary who calls out, "Oh, Lord," in the name of the holy cross in Korea; and by contrasting the missionary with Su-kiil and his mother's virtuous and admirable character. "Tae-dong River," written in three parts, deals with the temporary occupation of American aggressors in Pyongyang where the labor forces of a printing plant fought heroically and courageously against the enemy's misdeeds and their incessant bombardment immediately after the liberation of Pyongyang. The author portrayed the wonderful spiritual potentialities of younger generations who were cultivated under the new system, and at the same time, he definitely recognized the inevitable destruction of

the ruthless American Imperialists.

"Of course, hardship and danger always follows you around day and night. So, what do you care if you die? A lot of young men and women, and fathers and mothers died. We are lucky to be still living. 'I'm still living!'"

In the above, Chom-sun felt happy. But who can say that the great number of innocent sons and daughters who gave their lives to

their fatherland are not in the path of glory?

"What is there to be sad about and afraid of? Am I not moving in the direction of something beautiful and utterly dignified?"

This was the world of <sup>the</sup> hero, Chun-sun, who was engaged in underground activities during the enemy's temporary occupation.

The author revealed in his theme that regardless of the enemy's tyranny and violence, a possessor of this type of noble spirit could not be conquered.

After the war, Han Sol-ya wrote a children's book titled "Man Kyong-tae(Observatory)" which described the childhood of comrade Kim Il-sung. Han Sol-ya published his novel, "Mt. Sol-bong" which was a characterization of the farmers' struggle against the Japanese in the 1930's; and published his novella, "Haeng-che" which delved into the lives of the orphans of war time. He also created the novel "Love" which reflected the realities of the southern half of the country during the American occupation.

These works stand out as the author's passionate love for the country and the people, and as the under-tone of the author's combative purpose and penetrating humanism.

Han Sol-ya's combative purpose almost became an inherent attribute that was connected with the practical struggle of his resourceful life experience. And his enthusiastic humanistic thoughts were linked with communistic ideals. His attempts and strong aims to seek beauty and something noble in the daily life of

common people became intensified, and added to the substantial proof of his ideological perfection.

"Mt. Sol-bong" portrayed the struggle of Red Farm Union in Han-kyong Southern Province in the 1930's, and it particularly dealt with the so-called Sal-mo Incident which had been fabricated by the Japanese police and told from the point of view of the accused. In this work, the author attacked the oppression of Fascist Japanese rule and skillfully recapitulated the revolutionary enhancement of the rising farmers with historic concreteness. He also turned his attention to clarify the highly spiritual characteristics of the Korean people.

Therefore, "Mt. Sol-bong" was consistent with the story of warm human feeling.

Lofty and wonderful ideas of simple ordinary people and revolutionary fighters like Hak-ch'ol and Kyong-tok flourished in the uncompromising struggle against the oppressive Japanese rule and their collaborators.

Especially, the suicide of Sun-tok's mother who was caught in the evil plot of the Japanese rule for covering up her son, and the Japanese police's attempts to incite Sun-tok of matricide while Sun-tok protests with unbending spirit leaves a deep impression on the readers. And this is a reflection of the author's high communistic humanism spirit. Moreover, in Han Sol-ya, this sort of passion for communistic humanism spirit appeared lately in his

successful works of "Brothers" and "Love."

"Brother" popularized the noble and spiritual world of mothers who were bring-up orphans that lost their parents during the Emancipation War of our fatherland.

"Love" portrayed the tragic fate of Pak Man-sung and his family in the southern half of the country that is under the American occupation. Both of these works impress the people in the light of Han Sol-ya's esteemed communistic humanism spirit.

In these works, the author leaves a much lively impression on the majority of the common people who preserve the noble spiritual world as opposed to the morally inferior and ugly world of American imperialism and their collaborators.

This cannot be explained by departing from the author's direction of enthusiastic goals in the search for noble and dignified elements in man and his warm affection toward their life.

Therefore, the combative purpose of Han Sol-ya was filled with persistent passions of humanism and communistic ideals.

In his forty years of creative writing, he has reached a point of perfection, and it reflects upon his works as a preview of the total outlook of his future creative writing.

This year is author Han Sol-ya's 60th birthday. As time flows, his creative activities are approaching perfection in its artistic contents. His vigorous creative energy never declined.

We are expecting a great deal from this veteran writer's

future. And I believe that as the list of his resourceful creative writings increases, a great structure of communistic literature shall grow out of it.

However, when one speaks of Han Sol-ya's concept of vigorous creative activity, one cannot infer that he has exhausted the literary works of post-Liberation.

During his creative activity, he firmly defended our position on socialistic realism in literature, and destroyed the seeping foreign elements and different currents of bourgeois literature. He played and is still playing a leading role in his efforts to consolidate the Party's literary and artistic objectives for writers and artists in support of its policy.

Together with his creative work, Han Sol-ya is educating the younger generation with deep concern for their educational developments. He is devoting a great deal of time to this end.

His life and activities in these educational field are worthy of special mention, and should be described in addition in the future.

## HAN SOL-YA AND I

[The following is a translation of an essay by Yi Ki-yong, appearing in Choson Munhak, August, 1960, Pyongyang, p. 169-172.]

Comrade HanSol-ya and I started our career of a writer at the same time.

After the 3-1 Movement, which was an outgrowth of the socialist movement of the October Revolution, Marxism-Leninism prevailed in the country. As a result, proletarian literature which opposed bourgeois literature, sprouted under the encouraging circumstances and growth of labor and agrarian movement. The proletarian literature developed under the influence of Soviet literature and realism literature, especially, critical realism literature.

At the time, bourgeois writers, Yi Kwang-su, Yom Sang-sup, Kim Tong-in, and others were lecturing on concession, surrender, and defeatism toward the Japanese; and they were also showing their strong reactionary attitudes. They tried to paralyze the revolutionary advancement of labor class that took the lead of the peoples' liberation.

From the beginning, the proletarian literature had continued to



struggle under the reactionary literature of bourgeois and Japanese suppression. Sol-ya had established himself as a writer of the infant stage of proletarian literature and had become one of the founders of Korean proletarian literature.

The literary works and their progress of the Korean proletarian literature in the early stage (Cho Myong-hi, Ch'oe Su-hae, Yi Sang-hwa, Song Yong, Sol-ya, and I) did not exhibit the characteristics of the literary quality of socialism and realism. However, Sol-ya was one of the writers who worked steadily and persistently toward the advancement proletarian literature.

I recall that it was in the spring of 1925 when I first met Sol-ya. I should like to tell you first my intentions for coming to Seoul. When I returned home from Tokyo after the earthquake in Kanto area, I felt an irresistible urge to write. At that time, my family was on the verge of starvation on account of bankruptcy, and farmers in the village were suffering from hunger. I became furious. When I was in Tokyo, I saw 6,000 innocent young Koreans being massacred by the Japanese as "improper Koreans." But now, in my own country, I could not bear to look at the Japanese who were acting as self-imposed rulers while the Koreans were starving. How could it be so unfair and cruel? How could I live in such an environment? I wanted to write my flaming passions and desires and appeal to the people of the world. I didn't care what happened to my own family and started to write thousands of

pages of manuscript on white scratch-paper. This had been my unpublished novel "Darkness." After completing the rough draft, I read the novel to the old men around the neighborhood. Everybody was amused and said that the story's theme indicated the same pitiful life of their own. Their remarks on the novel encouraged me, and I gathered one of the manuscripts and left for Seoul.

First, I called on the editor-in-chief of Chosun Ilbo (Korea News) and asked his opinion of my novel and possibilities of publishing it. He flatly rejected it without even reading it by saying that his newspaper did not have space to print it. With disappointment, I went to see the editor-in-chief of Tonga Ilbo (East Asia News). He, being kind, asked me to leave the manuscript with him and to drop in a few days later. I returned with high hopes but he returned the unopened manuscript and refused to publish it. I was ashamed of being rejected and subsequently threw the manuscript in the river, and swore never to write again. As a matter of fact, I acted rather recklessly like a toothless child trying to chew on hard rice. However, I could not return home and face the neighbors. During my stay in Seoul, I went to the public library every day and avidly read Russian classical and modern literature.

One day, I was browsing through a newly published magazine named "Ilse-byok (Pioneer)," and saw an advertisement of a prize contest for short stories. Instantly, I decided to give it a try. If I failed again, I vowed never to make an attempt at writing.

I hurried back to my boarding house and finished a novella within a week. This was my first story "My Brother's Secret Letter." Fortunately, it was awarded third prize and published in "Maek-byuk(Pioneer)." I returned home after submitting my story but I returned to Seoul when I heard that it had been selected.

P'o-sok, Cho Myong-hi was working on the staff of "Chosun Chi-kwang(Light of Korea)" We had been friends since the days in Tokyo, and he was pleased to hear of my prize story and recommended me to work at "Chosun Chi-kwang(Light of Korea)." Until then, I did not know any writer of established fame except Cho Myong-hi.

I soon became acquainted with Yi Sang-hwa, Song Yong, Yi Ik-sang, Yi Chuk-ho, and others. In the spring of 1925, a criticism of Han Sol-ya's was published in "Chosun Chi-kwang(Light of Korea)" for the first time. This piece of criticism drew close attention since it was a criticism of bourgeois literature and reactionary writers like Yi Kwang-su and No Cha-yong. When P'o-sok read the criticism he said, "Well, we have finally found an inspiring new writer." Soon after the publication, Sol-ya began to drop in the "Chosun Chi-kwang(Light of Korea)" at Ch'ong Chin-dong. He was introduced to Cho Myong-hi, Ch'oe So-hae, and I. At that time, Cho Myong-hi and I had on a Korean frock coat. Han Sol-ya impressed me as a reserved and thoughtful young man. His eyes were shining, and they seemed to be in deep thoughts. We were all very happy to see him, and P'o-sok told him that we had read his critic-

ism. "It is wonderful to meet a comrade like you," said So-hae.

Since I was an inexperienced writer, I did not know what to say and went along with P'o-sok and So-hae. Although it had been our first meeting, we both felt that we had known each other for a long time like Hoeson friends. At that time, it was difficult to meet a comrade or even a sympathetic friend. It was exciting to meet a friend who had the same literary outlook. P'o-sok continued enthusiastically by saying, "We must criticize more of Yi Kwang-su and Kim Uk." Although Sol-ya expressed his own ideas, he paid careful attention to what his elders had said.

Since the establishment of "Kapf", the organization of proletarian writers and the unification of their ideals had been reinforced. And their creative writings and criticisms developed to a deeper plain. Since that time, Sol-ya developed a new dimension of creative writing. He published many short stories after the formation of "Kapf", such as, "That Night," "Yearning," "Banality," "Wrong Desire," "Just Before That Time," "Walking Backwards," and others. During this period, Cho Myong-hi's "To Mr. R." and "Nak Dong River;" Ch'oe So-hae's "Escape Period" and "Hunger and Massacre;" Song Yong's "Elast Furnace" and "Representative of a Stonemasons' Union;" and others were published. I wrote "Poor People," "Farmer Chong To-ryong," "Country Village," and others.

However, immediately after the establishment of "Kapf", progress of proletarian literature had not been smooth.

At the time, we had to fight so-called pure literature and foreign literature factions of the right-wing bourgeois reactionary writers, and anarchists under the disguise of Marxism, and we also had to fight those opportunists who had infiltrated the ranks and files of the "Kampf" organization.

Moreover, under the strict censorship of Japanese police authority, our manuscripts were often confiscated. It goes without saying how difficult a hardship the proletarian writers had had to live through daily. Nonetheless, our problems did not confine itself to the above things.

Most of all, we were unable to provide satisfactory answers to various practical problems that occurred in the labor-agricultural movement because of our weakness and lack of preparation in thinking through our ideals.

That was our painful lesson. And the bourgeois writers criticized our work as not having any artistic value and that it was pointless. However, we did not surrender to these charges.

It was said among our friends that, "Can we afford to do engraving on our sword while our enemy threatens our life? Let us sharpen our sword first and kill our enemy." These words were justified by our determination to fight. We did not dare leave our people in the hands of bourgeois reactionary writers.

Therefore, "Kampf" writers endeavored to bolshevize our literature and refine its ideology and artistry.

Under the circumstances, it was Sol-ya who opened a vigorous campaign in literary criticism. His series of criticism including, "On Class Literature," "Declaration of Proletarian Arts," "Class Struggle and Class Literature," and "From the Point of View of a Proletarian Writer," seemed to thrust a heavy blow on our enemy. Consequently, these criticism contributed to theoretical preparation and ideologies of proletarian writers. Thus, enhancing artistic standards and reforming the "Kapf" organization.

In 1927, Sol-ya played a major role in organizing a new resolution for "Kapf," with the assistance of Cho-Myong-hi, Song Yong, Yun Ki-chung, and Kim Pok-chin.

The purpose of reorganization and adoption of a new resolution was to reconsider the competence of classes and the fighting ability in proletarian literature to meet objectives and realistic demands. However, in composing the new resolution, it was not easy for the writers to express clearly of its purpose and goal, without violating the Japanese law. Sol-ya played an important part in formulating the new resolution.

After the "Kapf" reorganization, I was in charge of the publishing department of "Kapf," and Sol-ya devoted his efforts to the publication of the house organ. The "Kapf" organ "Collective Group" appealed to the public and was widely read. Therefore, not only in Korea but also at abroad, it attracted a wide range of readers. By the time the Japanese authority forced the publi-

cation of "Collective Group" to close, it had its branches in the eastern part of China, Peking, Shanghai, and even in Japan.

All the while, Sol-ya and I became much closer. "Kapl" assigned various writers to different kinds of "Kapl" study groups to study Marxism-Leninism and aesthetics. And Cho-Myong-hi, Han Sol-ya, Song Yong, and I frequently attended "Kapl" meetings.

The gathering of "Kapl" was secret. We held meetings in the wealthy section of P'al P'an-dong, Sa Chik-dong, and Sam Ch'un-dong where the police suspected the least. And at other times, we met at a deserted valley below Mt. In-wang, or near Se Kum Valley, or Mt. Puk Han and Ui-dong. At "Kapl" meetings, members discussed materials taken from Marxist literature and Marxist aesthetics. (At the time, this was called theoretical debates.) They also criticized published works, discussed the plots of forthcoming works or finished manuscripts.

After the reorganization of the organ, it spread not only in Seoul but also in the country and attracted many new young writers. Proletarian culture developed in the field of literature, drama, motion picture, and music. In the field of creative writing there was an epoch making progress. In ideologies as well as in art history, characteristics of socialism and realism came through in beautiful form.

Sol-ya's "Age of Transition" and "Wrestler;" Pak Se-yong's "Night Attack;" Pak P'al-yang's "Demonstration;" Song Yong's

"No Visitors Allowed," and others were vivid examples. As for my works, "Distant Walk," "Papermill Town" were written at the time.

"Age of Transition" and "Wrestler" were works of higher ideological artistic standards than any other previous ones, revealed Sol-ya's talents as a socialist-realist writer. His exceptionally talented novel "Twilight" was published in 1936.

Need less to say, "Twilight" was the monumental masterpiece in the Korean proletarian literature before the Liberation.

I might add that this work was planned while Sol-ya was imprisoned at Chun-chu Penitentiary.

This work exemplified his ceaseless efforts, fighting spirit, and creative passion.

Sol-ya's literature has a certain quality. The literary work of Sol-ya and I possess in common a certain quality of prose but Sol-ya's is exceedingly political.

He showed remarkable accomplishment in the field of criticism, and his novels could be characterized by their political inclinations. Humanistic situations in Sol-ya's works were affectionately praised by a great number of people. And it was because the life and wishes of the people were genuinely and vividly reflected in those works. Only a peoples' writer can create this sort of situation. And we also detect his individualistic characteristics in his creations. This results from his incessant endeavor to cultivate his skill.



Before I close this article, I would like to add a short piece of reminiscence.

In our youth, both Sol-ya and I could not resist a couple of drinks. Whenever we met our friends in Seoul, we used to frequent saloons and spend all the money we had. Once, I recall, P'o-sok, Song Yong, Sol-ya, and I played Yut game, and whoever lost the game was to buy the drinks. Sol-ya lost, but none of us had enough money. So, Sol-ya pawned his overcoat for thirty to buy the drinks. We were all in desperate straits in those days.

During the second general arrest of "Kapf" members, Song Yong, Yun Ki-chung, and I were arrested on the same day; and Sol-ya, as I recall, followed a few days later. I remember seeing Sol-ya's face in the court-room.

Sol-ya is the totality of Korean literature itself. Today, we know through his prolific writing his high spiritual life. Writer, Han Sol-ya's spirituality, humanity and life are reflected upon his works. In this medium, we recognize the author as a great man; and the moral stature of his works through his rich life.

Han Sol-ya's great life long accomplishment in the leadership and consolidation of proletarian literature shall glow forever in our literary history.