

# Political Migration of Korean Activists through Czechoslovakia in the Post-World War II Period

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The existence of intra-Korean migration between World War II and the Korean War is well known: North Korean landowners and Christians, South Korean communists, and millions of war refugees fled across the 38th parallel, resulting in over two million separated families on the Korean Peninsula. But there were several Koreans who had resided in the US for decades who found their way to Pyongyang via Prague between World War II and the height of the Cold War. Why did they leave for North Korea? Why through Czechoslovakia? What were their fates after they landed in North Korea? This is a story of eleven Korean activists, from three groups, who left their footprints in Czechoslovakia on their journey between the US and North Korea. Eight of them continued to Pyongyang, two returned to the US, and one remained in Czechoslovakia for good. Eight vanished after arriving in Pyongyang, two survived and led comfortable lives in the US, and one took his own life in desperation in Czechoslovakia. We explore the settings in which their stories unraveled, the destinies of the eleven migrants, and the links among them, corroborated by witness interviews and newly discovered materials from Korean, US, Czech, and Russian archives.

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