

Kim Jeongha (金鼎夏, 1898–1938), an “Unreliable” Revolutionary*

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This paper examines the life and career of Kim Jeongha (1898–1938), a little-studied figure of the Korean Communist non-mainstream “Shanghai faction,” to illuminate the fraught and ambivalent relationship between Korean nationalists-turned-Communists and the Moscow-based Communist International (Comintern). Drawing on extensive archival materials from RGASPI (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History), the study situates Kim within the broader context of Korea’s nationalist-Communist movement, which sought Soviet patronage for both national independence and social revolution while often clashing with Moscow’s shifting priorities. Kim’s trajectory—from early nationalist activism in northeastern China and the Russian Far East, through repeated enrolments and expulsions at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV), to clandestine Comintern missions in Korea and eventual dismissal in 1935 and execution during the Great Purges—illustrates the contradictory dynamics of co-optation and distrust that characterized the Comintern’s treatment of non-mainstream Korean revolutionaries. By reconstructing Kim’s complex interactions with Comintern structures, this article underscores both the agency of Korean revolutionaries and the limits imposed by Soviet personnel politics.

Keywords: Kim Jeongha, Shanghai faction, Communism, Comintern, Communist University of the Toilers of the East

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