personnel until new institutions could be developed and sufficient Korean personnel trained to fully replace the colonials. He also worked to get back into the country prominent exiles such as Rhee and KPG officials who could provide conservative leadership without facing the stigma of collaboration. Rhee arrived in mid-October, KPG officials a month later.

Rhee quickly emerged as a formidable political operator. He made an initial gesture for unity between Left and Right by creating the Central Council for the Rapid Realization of Korean Independence, but he also lambasted the Soviet Union and its policies in the North. Although Yo and Pak Hon-yong, the leader of the Communists in the South, attended the first council meeting, they soon abandoned it because Rhee refused to work with the KPR, clearly favoring the KDP. His refusal to accept membership in that collaboration-laden party did not hide his rabid anti-Communism. And the return of KPG president Kim Koo merely added to the anti-Communist chorus in the South.44

Hodge’s tolerance of considerable leftist activity in the South did not eliminate concern in Moscow. On the eve of the Moscow meeting, one Soviet official wrote that

the question of creating a united government is extremely complex, because of the multiplicity of political parties and groups, the lack of unity among them and the solicitations of the USA . . . The character of the future government . . . will be one of the decisive moments in the determination . . . of whether Korea will in the future be turned into a breeding ground of new anxiety for us . . . or into one of the strong points of our security in the Far East.45

Despite Soviet concerns about the U.S. position, another analyst concluded that “it would be politically inexpedient for the Soviet Union to oppose the creation of a single Korean government.”46

Stalin was in no hurry to unite Korea. The American position in the South aside, conditions in the North, though well under Soviet control, were far from tidy. Soviet soldiers raped thousands of native women and engaged in widespread pillage, thus alienating many Koreans. As in most Eastern and central European countries, the Soviets mounted a united front policy. This entailed placing Korean Commu-
nists, especially ones who had spent the war in the Soviet Union, in important positions in a government bureaucracy, but also cooperation with non-Communist groups. The Soviets even cultivated the conservative Christian leader Cho Man-sik, allowing him a prominent place in public events organized and endorsed by occupation authorities. Cho often protested Soviet grain procurement policies, and he had plenty of support among Koreans. In November 1945, demonstrations and riots broke out in Sinuiju that had to be suppressed by Soviet soldiers and police.47 Hodge’s policies in the South had generated considerable turmoil as well, both because of his use of Japanese and because his conservative policies toward land and labor left intact many of the social and economic injustices of the colonial period. Yet surely Stalin believed that work remained to be done in the North before moving toward a provisional government. Fortunately for him, Washington accepted without dispute the Soviet counter to the U.S. proposal, which Moscow saw as a ploy to allow Americans to penetrate the economy above the thirty-eighth parallel.48

In all likelihood, Stalin’s aims were similar to those in occupied Germany, as characterized recently by two leading Soviet scholars: “He wanted to establish Soviet hegemony in the USSR’s zone of occupation. Then he hoped to undermine British influence in West Germany, which would not be difficult, provided that American troops withdrew from Europe. As an endgame, he had in mind a unified, ‘friendly’ Germany, leaning toward the USSR.”49 Another Soviet specialist notes that, like many dictators “faced with seemingly flaccid and indecisive democracies,” Stalin believed that the Americans lacked the key quality of “will” and thus were likely with time to retreat from a large-scale military presence abroad.50 By mid-November 1945 the United States had reduced personnel in its armed forces by nearly a third from wartime highs, and the clamor from Congress and the public for a continued headlong demobilization showed no sign of abating.51

The agreement at Moscow in December to negotiate with the Americans in the Joint Commission served Soviet interests nicely, since it included the possibility of a unified provisional government and a trusteeship without making either one inevitable. Thus the Soviets at once averted an immediate clash with the Americans and avoided
giving up anything. Since many on the right wing in the South already had declared their opposition to trusteeship, the agreement might create difficulties for the Americans with their natural allies while giving the Soviets an excuse for trying to exclude them from the process of creating a provisional government.\textsuperscript{32} 

III

The reaction in Korea to the Moscow agreements provided the context within which the final polarization between the Soviets and the Americans and Korean political groups occurred. When word of the Moscow agreement reached Korea in late December, expressions of outrage sprang up immediately among many political groups in the South, Left and Right alike. On January 7, 1946, however, a shift occurred: the Communist Party and other leftist groups joined with the KDP and the moderate rightist Korean Nationalist Party to support the agreement. Unfortunately for the prospects of national unity, that coalition quickly split apart, as the KDP reversed itself and joined Rhee and Kim Koo in opposition to trusteeship.\textsuperscript{33} Hodge, who had warned Washington against pursuing trusteeship because of widespread indigenous opposition, probably encouraged this change.\textsuperscript{34}

In response to the campaign against trusteeship, the Soviets, who in all likelihood had engineered the change in the position of the Communists in the South, launched a sharp attack on the Right. An article on January 12 in the leading Soviet journal, Izvestia, argued, among other things, that the Korean people lacked “sufficient experience to solve the political and economic difficulties on the way to the creation of a democratic state.”\textsuperscript{35} Soon Stalin protested the none-too-subtle resistance of the American occupation to the Moscow agreement.\textsuperscript{36} Even before that, a polarization had begun in the North, where Cho Mansik, the top non-Communist figure in the Soviet zone, adamantly rejected trusteeship. Soviet authorities quickly arrested him, thus ending their united front policy above the thirty-eighth parallel. In February they approved establishment of a central People's Committee in the North, in effect a provisional government, with the thirty-three-year-old Kim II-sung as its chairman and Communists firmly in control. The youthful Kim had made his name as a guerrilla fighter in Manchuria during the 1930s and had spent most of World War II in the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{37} He had no base in the South, and his position largely rested on the support of Soviet occupation authorities. His emergence as the top Korean leader in the North reflected the determination of the Soviets to stay in control there as a priority over unifying the peninsula. The radical turn in political and economic policies, which included the redistribution of land to the peasants, also reflected these concerns, as did the purge of domestic Communists—that is, those who had spent most of the period of Japanese rule in Korea and were not always disciplined in following the Moscow line.\textsuperscript{38}

Almost simultaneously, the Representative Democratic Council was installed under the American occupation in the South. This advisory body was so dominated by the antitrusteeship Right that the leftists appointed to it refused to serve.\textsuperscript{39} Unlike the Soviets in the North, the Americans still tolerated a good deal of dissent in the South, but their continued favoritism of the Right in the face of its opposition to trusteeship demonstrated that unification was not their top priority either.

The storm over trusteeship combined with events abroad to dim prospects for successful negotiations in the Joint Commission. The Right now had an issue over which it could challenge the nationalist credentials of the Left and broaden a popular base heretofore limited by its economic interests and the collaborationist record of some of its members. The Soviets, in turn, could legitimately cry foul over the U.S. occupation’s failure to press South Korean political groups to fall into line behind the Moscow accords. Soviet suspicions were genuine, but Moscow’s sudden championing of trusteeship also was suspect, especially given that its implementation would add Nationalist China and Great Britain as factors in the Korean equation. The trusteeship controversy probably only confirmed Stalin in his view that, for the present, a divided peninsula served Soviet interests better than a united one, and it gave him an excuse to launch an open attack on the Korean Right.\textsuperscript{40}

As for Hodge, January events produced considerable embarrass-