

FIRST UNDERGROUND DPRK JOURNAL LAUNCHED

The first bi-monthly magazine reporting internal news directly through North Korean undercover journalists was launched on November 20th. The Korean language magazine, “Rimjingang,” is also expected to launch in English and Japanese by the end of this year. The inaugural issue contains interviews with staff members of the central state enterprise on current North Korean economic issues, public sentiment following the North Korean missile launch last year, interpretations of the North Korean internal image, as well as reports on local occurrences and accidents.

Once news is directly gathered and prepared by North Korean residents, the manuscript is then sent to the outside world where it is printed as the “Rimjingang” magazine. This magazine’s inaugural press conference was held at the Seoul Press Center on the afternoon of November 20th. The conference attracted enthusiastic coverage, with over 30 domestic and international press corps members in attendance, including Fuji TV and international wire services such as AP and Reuters.

With the help of Japan’s Asia Press, the North Korean journalists involved in the production of “Rimjingang” have been filming local footage, conducting interviews with residents, and recording the daily debriefing sessions of citizens for the past five years. Much of the video footage currently distributed to South Korea and Japan has been recorded by the journalists themselves.

Magazine publication officials revealed that the “Rimjingang” would also be distributed within North Korea. They added, “the North Korean reporters seek subject matter that reflects how North Korean people live, what they think, and what they want,” and, “the only real evidence that reflects how North Korea is changing is given through the North Korean people.”

There are currently 10 North Korean journalists affiliated with “Rimjingang.” The diverse list includes a staff member of the central state enterprise, a schoolteacher in his thirties, a worker from a foreign currency earning company, the first journalist to release his pen name to the outside world, a resident in her forties from Pyongan Province, and journalist in his thirties from South Hamkyeong Province.

An official from Asia Press said, “Over the years, more than 600 North Korean defectors have been interviewed around the China-North Korea border,” and, “there have been a few among them with intentions, like us, of delivering news from within North Korea to the outside world, so we have been training them in journalism since 2002.”

“We explained to them what ‘journalism’ was, and taught them the format of news articles as well as the operation of video camera..they then returned to North Korea and began gathering news, and since 2004, some of the news they collected has been released through Japanese and Korean press, as well as U.S. and European press.”