

Korea braces for national election

by Linda de Hoyos

Gaston Sigur, assistant secretary of State for Far Eastern and Pacific affairs, has issued the official warning from Washington to the South Korean government that the Korean military not be permitted to interfere in the Dec. 16 presidential elections. Placing a U.S. veto on movement of South Korean ground troops, Sigur stated, "We cannot foresee any circumstance under which the election would have to postponed or canceled." Any move to undermine the elections or to put aside the results, Sigur intoned, would lead to condemnation by the Korean people and the world's democratic community, according to the Dec. 11 *Washington Times*.

The warning was delivered amid rumors circulated in the last week before the elections that Kim Dae Jung, the preferred candidate of the State Department and the private networks of Project Democracy, is likely to win the national presidential elections.

The South Korean military has made it plain that it will not accept Kim Dae Jung as President, because of his stated goal of accommodation to the North Korean dictatorship of Kim Il-Sung. Furthermore, the South Korean military rightly perceives that Kim Dae Jung's election would open wide the gates to a total assault on the national institutions that have turned Korea from an agricultural nation to an industrialized nation within the space of one generation.

From his side, Kim Dae Jung stated that if ruling party candidate Roh Tae Woo wins the elections, then "there will be an uprising." Threatening a repeat of the 1980 Kwangju uprising, Kim stated Nov. 29, "If the present government now blocks a free and fair election, there will be a second Syngman Rhee or a second Park Chung Hee"—that is, a student uprising and/or assassination of ruling party leaders.

There is no doubt that Kim Dae Jung could make good on this threat. On Dec. 7, he met at his home for several hours with Rev. Moon Ik-Hwan, the chairman of the theology of liberation's United Minjung Movement for Democracy and Unification, who has led thousands of students into street battles with police. And to underline the point, Kim Dae Jung dispatched his student radicals to violently break up the rallies of Roh Tae Woo throughout the last week of campaigning.

In a speech before the World Affairs Council Dec. 10,

Sigur boasted that Asia is the "leading edge" of a worldwide movement toward democracy—despite the fact that, in the Philippines, such "democracy" is bringing the country toward civil war and political disintegration. The "democratic process" imposed on South Korea by the United States has created a crisis of national institutions. "This is a high-stakes game," a longtime resident of Seoul was quoted as saying. "It is the biggest period of uncertainty that I can remember."

In the last days before the election the prospects are becoming likely that:

a) Government candidate Roh Tae Woo will win, in which case there will be an uprising of Kim Dae Jung's radical student base—heavily penetrated by North Korean spetsnaz—forcing the South Korean military to take harsh action; or

b) Kim Dae Jung wins the elections, in which case the military—with or without U.S. sanction—may well carry out a coup, also leading to bloodshed.

In either case, a South Korea in turmoil is an advantage for both the Soviet Union and North Korea, with North Korean special forces well-prepared to take military advantage of the chaos to the south.

The only other option is the victory of Kim Young Sam, who worked in South Korea against the government while Kim Dae Jung was in exile in the United States. While the latter's base is comprised of the radicalized students, others who have also been steeped in the theology of liberation, and his own provincial base in Cholla, Kim Young Sam has mass support within the middle class and is seen in Korea as a possible route to stability. Although the U.S. press has reported that he appears to be gaining in the final days of the campaign, observers on the scene have told *EIR* that it is doubtful that Kim Young Sam will be able to pull out the lead against Kim Dae Jung. His vote could be crushed between the radical vote for Kim Dae Jung, and a vote for the government in the hopes that Roh Tae Woo can impose stability on the country through a combination of reforms and military strength.

Kim Dae Jung has already declared that either he or Kim Young Sam should drop out of the race, in deference to which of the two Kims appears to be in the lead. In the meantime, Kim Dae Jung has ordered his student base to put maximum pressure on Kim Young Sam to withdraw. In Seoul, students carrying posters for Kim Dae Jung are demanding a "unity candidate" against the government. On Dec. 6, a 29-year-old student died after setting himself on fire to protest against the lack of a "unity candidate." In addition, unconfirmed reports from Seoul say that Catholic Cardinal Stephen Kim Sou Whan is attempting to act as a mediator to bring about such a unity candidate.

Project Democracy agents enter Korea

From the United States, the Project Democracy networks that Sigur belongs to, will attempt to arbitrate the elections

through the international press in the same way they dictated the final results of the February 1986 elections in the Philippines.

On Nov. 28, the South Korean government stated that it would not permit either U.S. congressmen or any other foreigners to act as official observers of the elections—thus avoiding the error made by the deposed Ferdinand Marcos. “As far as we are concerned, it is an insult to the strong determination of the Korean people to have a fair election,” said government representative Park Soo Gil. “It involves a matter of principle; it involves a matter of sovereignty.” Americans should not come here “with the illusions that they are the guardians of a backward democracy,” seconded an editorial in the *Korea Times*.

However, aides of Rep. Thomas Foglietta (D-Penn.) and Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), both of whom are known as supporters of Kim Dae Jung, announced that they are going to Seoul. In addition, a so-called “Permanent Observer Mission” to Seoul for the elections has been organized by Mr. Choi of the Korean Institute for Human Rights in Washington. Choi is known in the U.S. Project Democracy circuit as a “close friend and supporter” of Kim Dae Jung, and his institute is considered one of Kim Dae Jung’s organizations in the United States.

Members of the “Permanent Observer Mission” include:

- Virginia Foote, whose husband Leslie Maddeson is director of Robert White’s International Center for Development Policy, which helped sponsor Kim Dae Jung’s return to South Korea in January 1985;

- Edward Baker, of Harvard University’s Yenching Institute, a Kim Dae Jung supporter who helped Kim attain a year’s fellowship at Harvard’s Center for Strategic and International Affairs during his exile;

- Pharis Harvey, director of the North American Coalition for Human Rights in Korea and principal in the U.S. National Council of Churches; he is also in close contact with Rev. Moon Ik-Hwan;

- James Leahy, president of Emory University in Georgia, a close friend of Kim Dae Jung;

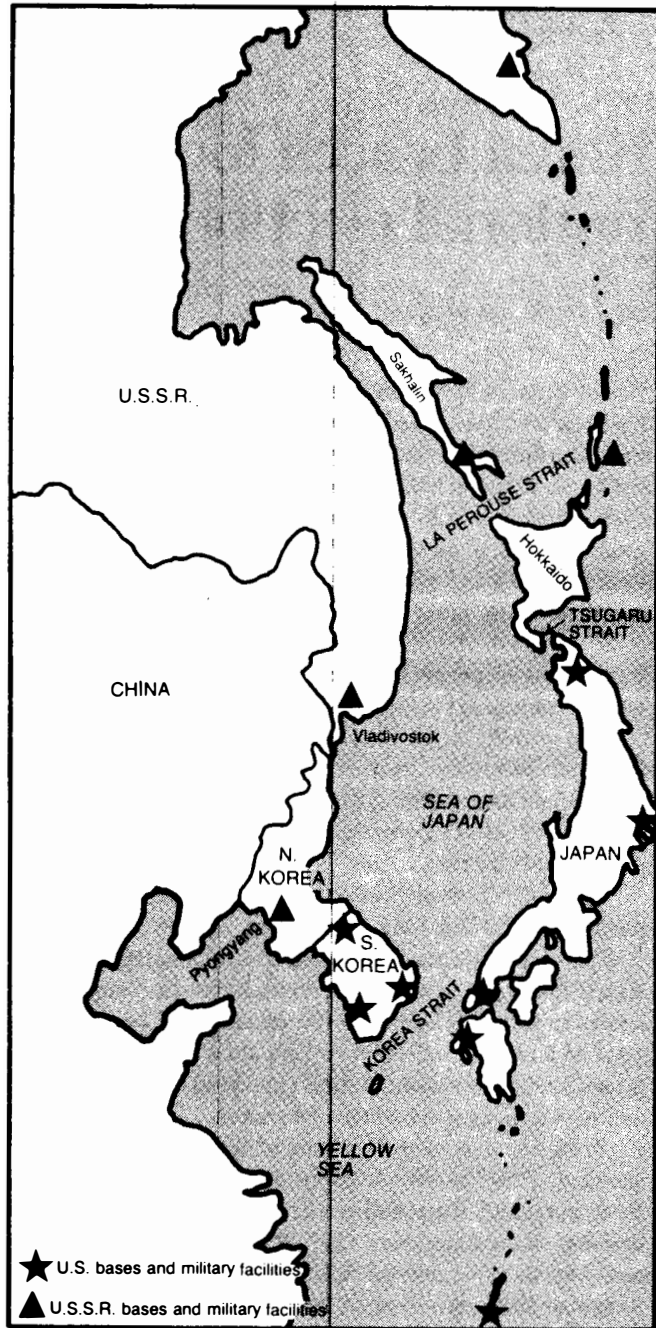
- Four representatives from the Physicians for Human Rights based in Somerville, Massachusetts; Director Jonathan Fein is another close friend of Kim Dae Jung;

- Six representatives of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, an official affiliate of the State Department’s Project Democracy, led by Brian Atwood. This grouping is considered more “non-partisan,” in keeping with official U.S. policy.

- Robin Teske, coordinator of the Washington, D.C.-based International Human Rights Law Group. Already in Seoul, Teske and others are receiving “evidence” of vote fraud from the Kim Dae Jung camp, according to the Dec. 11 *Washington Times*.

- The National Coalition for a Democratic Constitution, the other self-appointed “watchdog” on the scene, led the riots against the government in June.

Northeast Asia: strategic chokepoint



The map shows the U.S. and Soviet military bases and facilities in the Northeast Asian theater. The concentration of forces, including the 800,000-man armed forces of North Korea, makes this region a flashpoint, and internal stability of South Korea and Japan a critical feature of U.S. and allied strategic strength here. On Dec. 9, while Mikhail Gorbachov was signing the INF treaty with President Reagan in Washington, a Soviet medium-range TU-16 “Badger” bomber flew into Japanese airspace over Okinawa. The Soviet plane ignored all radio warnings from Japanese jet fighters, which scrambled into the air against it. Several warning shots had to be fired at the Soviet bomber before it left Japanese airspace after a total of 11 minutes. The Japanese government issued a formal note of protest for the intrusion, the second such Soviet violation of Japanese airspace this year.