

Two Koreas move a step closer despite attempts to stop them

by Lydia Cherry

The two Koreas July 26 officially scheduled the first meetings between their prime ministers since the peninsula was divided 40 years ago. The two sides will meet in Seoul Sept. 4-7 to discuss cooperation and the easing of political and military confrontation. A second round of talks will be held in the North Korean capital Pyongyang on Oct. 16-19. In signing the accord, North Korea granted tacit recognition to the legitimacy of the Seoul government which it had denied since 1948. The news is to be credited to the Noh Tae Woo government's tireless "Northern" diplomacy, first elaborated in October 1988.

The two sides have moved this far despite South Korea's "Made in the U.S.A." radical opposition. The parliamentary opposition and extra-parliamentary dissident coalition have been functioning as a wrecking operation to block the fragile communication between the two governments, despite the fact that South Korea's National Council of Churches (NCC)-connected opposition has touted reunification as its number-one goal for decades.

Engineered by NCC darling Kim Dae Jung, who heads the Party for Peace and Democracy (PPD), on July 23 all 79 opposition lawmakers resigned *en masse*. They demanded new elections and charged that President Noh was trying to use relations with North Korea to divert the public from South Korea's worsening domestic problems. The pullout led to the merging of the two opposition parties with the large extra-parliamentary dissident Coalition for National Democratic Movement (Chonminyon). Over the July 21-22 weekend, this new grouping staged a rally against President Noh of over 400,000.

In reporting Kim's move, the July 24 *Washington Post* said the resignations were not likely to force a new election. "It could upset the government's delicate talks with communist North Korea over arranging a meeting of prime ministers and organizing a trial opening of their sealed borders." To no one's surprise, the North Koreans supported the resignations and urged a stepped-up struggle against the Noh government, accusing "the high-handed action by the Democratic Liberal Party (DLP) gangsters" of railroading anti-popular bills through the National Assembly, "causing such a serious crisis as wholesale resignation of the opposition assemblymen," reported North Korean news service KCNA.

The Noh government has made clear it wants to be in control of attempting to reunify the peninsula, but the U.S.

continually attempts to subvert the process. An indication of this surfaced in a seminar on disarmament at Stanford University the first week in July. Seoul is insistent that arms control is a low priority, but the Stanford conference—attended by State Department officials, U.S. "back-channel" academics, and representatives from North and South Korea—focused on the North's demand for arms control.

Portending more trouble from the U.S. was news released July 24 that Henry Kissinger has just been asked to mediate between the Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China regarding the "normalization" of Korean-P.R.C. relations. According to the Korean Cultural Broadcast Co., Kissinger has accepted South Korean President Noh's request to travel to Beijing after the Asian Games this fall and will meet with Deng Xiaoping.

North Korea preparing a shift?

There are indications that North Korea is preparing to shift away from its hermit-style existence. These signals include a North Korean representative in Paris telling reporters the first week in July that Pyongyang is seeking recognition from the European Community. It includes North Korean overtures to Malaysia and to the Philippines during May. But most significant, North Korea, which had heretofore called for negotiations with the U.S. only—charging that Seoul was just an appendage of the U.S.—finally began talking to Seoul officials.

This crack followed months of leaks of dissention in the ranks. In January, Japanese specialists on North Korea revealed that party cadres had been demoted or purged because they proposed that the government open up the country. In April, there were reports that workers at a chemical factory in Hamhung, Hamkyong-Namto, North Korea, staged a riot. A student demonstration in Pyongyang was reported by Seoul's *Korea Times* and Japanese press. Earlier in July, Prof. Silvio Brucan, a former senior official of the Romanian government, reported that an anti-establishment organization existed in the North which included high-level officials. Brucan, who claims a group of high-ranking North Korean officials had come to him, said this grouping is attempting to push the North Korean leadership toward unification. Brucan claimed the officials, including three unidentified members of the Central Committee, were trying to oust Kim Il-Sung.

Prof. Nakajima Mineo, who this spring was in Pyongyang leading a delegation of the Japan Association of International Relations, told *EIR* of the growing economic ties between North Korea and Taiwan. "While in Pyongyang—I'm very interested in Taiwan's economic development so I several times mentioned the possibility of making close economic ties with Taiwan, and the North Korean side, they were very much interested." He explained that heretofore, there were no diplomatic or economic ties between the two countries, and though diplomatic ties may be far away, since his discussion with officials from the North, "a commercial group from Taiwan has visited Pyongyang "via Hong Kong, and there already exists some trade between Taipei and Pyongyang. This will be increased." Professor Nakajima thinks this is "crucial."

North Korea is attempting to increase the availability of consumer items, but scant reliable information is available on North Korea's economy. On June 27, Japan's External Trade Organization released a report claiming that the North's external trade is rapidly tapering off. Exports to its 33 major trading partners dropped 6.6% to \$1.56 billion last year, while imports fell 12.1% to \$2.52 billion. North Korea's trade with the Soviet Union, its largest trading partner, dropped 9.6%—the first decline in six years. Even its trade with China edged down 2.8% to \$562 million.

Fearing a bloodbath, Seoul moves slowly

South Korean officials are convinced that reunification can't be done the same way as in Germany. Prime Minister Kang Yong-hun told press in Paris July 18 that "Circumstances in South and North Korea make it difficult for us to follow the German example, which means one side's assimilation of the other." South Korea prefers "changes amid order" in North Korea over the kind of revolution that swept Eastern Europe, South Korean news service YONHAP reported.

Dr. Kong Dan-Oh, with the Rand Corp., thinks that if a revolution comes in North Korea it will not be peaceful, like Czechoslovakia, but bloody, like Romania. "Seoul does not want to see the people who are its own race suffer a bloodbath like Romania. It is proceeding carefully," she told *EIR*.

Indicative of the shift, according to Professor Oh, is that the type of people now defecting over the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) are no longer quasi-criminal elements, but are now from "establishment circles, the educated technocrats—those who have assessed what the trend is." She noted the defectors are regularly debriefed in Seoul and that Korea's more recent tendency, to try to keep the dialogue going, is because of greater knowledge of what exists on the other side of the DMZ. The fact that at least 1,700 North Korean students were brought home from Eastern European countries after the turmoil had already peaked, Oh suggested, will increase in significance.

Another reading is that the previously staunch pro-Kim

Il-Sung organization of Koreans living in Japan, the General Association of Korean Residents of Japan (Chongnyon), split this spring, and half are now calling for Kim's ouster. A great deal of money goes into North Korea from the Koreans in Japan, and a one-time senior official of Chongnyon, Ha Su-to, issued a call July 16 to cut off all money to Pyongyang to expedite the process of the fall of the Northern regime. Denying charges that he is now tied to South Korea "or anyone else," Ha Su-to charged that the Japanese government fears a unified Korea would become too strong and would pose an economic challenge.

Though echoed in the South Korean government, Ha Su-to's assertion is doubtful, since Japan is gearing up the entire Asian-Pacific region economically. A clearer statement could be made regarding the U.S. elites who see in the process of Korean reunification a potential rerun of that which took place in Germany, culminating in the German-Soviet agreements of July 15-16.

Soviet-South Korea talks on reunification have many similarities to the German situation. In the Korean case, much like the German, discussions between Soviet and South Korean leaders, industrialists, and businessmen, have centered on economic deals. South Korea's Hyundai Group is pushing ahead with the construction of a large-scale gas pipeline linking Siberia with South Korea via North Korea, first announced April 7 by Seoul Domestic Service. The President of Hyundai is reported by the Korean news service explaining the plan: "He indicated that the construction of a pipeline from Siberia to our country via North Korea also would greatly benefit North Korea, which suffers from a shortage of electric power. Chong Chu-yong, president of Hyundai, said it is highly possible that under certain circumstances the construction of the natural gas pipeline may be initiated before political issues between South and North Korea are resolved."

Also in March, South Korean and Soviet industrialists hammered out the optimal economic hookup between the two countries. They concluded, according to Seoul newspaper *Hanguk Ilbo* on March 28: "It is known that the Soviet Union has encountered difficulties in utilizing the technology of its advanced frontier industry (space science and basic materials industries) in manufacturing and producing commodities. Therefore, what is a most urgent problem for the Soviet Union today is to graft its science and technology with our production technology. The Soviet side's offer to exchange technology cannot but arouse our interest as we have encountered difficulties in our export front due to our backward technology."

South Korea and the Soviets are now planning a tripartite economic symposium, Seoul daily *Choson Ilbo* reported July 17. The goal is "to get together and frankly exchange opinions and views on the overall economic situation with the goal of expanding economic exchanges between North and South Korea and between South Korea and the Soviet Union."