

was involved in working out a “political deal” with General Ershad, whom she has accused of masterminding her husband’s assassination in 1981. The two women leaders have repeatedly publicized their mistrust of each other, and there is no doubt that their sharp personal differences will emerge in the coming election battle.

The arrest of General Ershad, and perhaps more important, the emergence of the student community as the final arbiter of government policy, will make the Army uneasy. Given the student community’s strong anti-military reflex, if the interim government lets itself play into their hands, the denizens of Savar, a divisional headquarters adjoining Dhaka, will surely get restless. But unlike its counterpart in Pakistan, Bangladesh’s Army is not a monolithic institution. It is heavily politicized and, therefore, fragmented. In the 1970s the army was teeming with Maoists and other varieties of Marxists. But with the execution of Lt. Colonel Taher in 1975 and the subsequent executions of “red-army” officers in 1977, under the direction of General Ershad, the power went back into the hands of “right-wing” Army officers, and the rank and file distributed their allegiance to the major political parties.

Army factor

It is widely known that in 1982, prior to the bloodless coup—also perhaps the most open coup—that brought General Ershad to power, he was meeting regularly with six Dhaka generals to work out the logistics of the coup. One of the six is Lt. Gen. Nuruddin Khan, now Chief of the Army Staff. As President, General Ershad kept in close touch with the Army, and, besides weeding out those who were not considered his supporters, was planning to increase the Army’s strength to 1.5 million recruits. It has also been widely reported that, before stepping down on Dec. 3, Ershad had wide-ranging consultations with his generals. Some say it was their advice which led to his resignation, preventing a showdown with an aroused population.

Following Ershad’s resignation, opposition leaders nominated Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed as the President of the interim government, but not without the approval of Lt. Gen. Nuruddin Khan. It is also telling that President Shahabuddin Ahmed sought the Army’s help after his swearing-in to stabilize the situation. Whether Ershad’s arrest is acceptable to the Army remains to be seen. Under the circumstances, however, any major effort “to weed out” the pro-Ershad Army officers would seem to be fraught with danger. Already two military intelligence officers, the head of the National Security Intelligence Maj. Gen. Mohammad Ashaf Hossain and the Commander of the Defense Forces Intelligence Brig. Nasiruddin Ahmed, have been relieved of their posts. Both officers were close advisers of General Ershad in recent days. A wholesale purge, coupled with the interim government’s deference to the students, may bring the Army back into center-stage with a bang.

S. Korean diplomacy out on a limb for perestroika

by Lydia Cherry

The Asian country that has gone out on a limb the furthest based on the belief of the success of the U.S.S.R. becoming a “truly democratic and economically developed state”—as President Noh Tae Woo describes his vision—is unquestionably the Republic of Korea (R.O.K.). Just one week before Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze on Dec. 20 announced his resignation because “there is a police state coming,” President Noh Tae Woo stepped on Russian soil, the first time that a South Korean head of state had ever visited the Soviet Union.

In light of the chaos, collapsing economy, and growing police-state apparatus in the Soviet Union, President Noh’s approach is to offer Mikhail Gorbachov what Noh sees as Moscow’s best shot, an alliance with his country as part of the Asian-Pacific region, in exchange for Gorbachov’s increased effort to “cool out” North Korea. With the U.S. increasingly pulling out of Korea, and Asia generally, South Korea perceives that without support from the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China, it will be impossible to contain the heavily militarized hermit kingdom of North Korea.

“Two-thirds of the world’s population live in the Asian-Pacific region,” President Noh explained in his introductory remarks upon his arrival in Moscow. “The western littoral of the Pacific—from Korea, Japan, and the countries of South-east Asia to Australia—is now becoming a new center that is playing the main role in world prosperity. . . . The Soviet Union, which has immense potential, and Korea, which possesses tremendous vitality for development, will be able to become fellow travelers in the Asian-Pacific region and thereby open up a new page in history on the path toward the 21st century.” Stepping back to acknowledge the current reality of the Soviet economic and political situation, Noh continued that he was “sure that, although the Soviet Union is experiencing great difficulties, only through perestroika and glasnost will the U.S.S.R. become a truly democratic and economically developed state,” and pledged his country’s support to Moscow’s quest for this goal.

Winter aid from Japan

During the same week President Noh was in Moscow, Japan, whose alliance with South Korea has become much stronger in the last six months, also moved further out on a limb, bending to pressure exerted by Japan's ruling party that it immediately extend economic aid to help the Soviet Union get through the winter. On Nov. 26, ruling party Executive Council chairman Nishio Takeoka proposed that economic aid immediately be extended, warning that, among other things, if Gorbachov's government collapses, the much-awaited solution to the Soviet-Japanese territorial dispute would be delayed considerably. Former Prime Minister Takeshita, head of the largest faction in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, concurred with Takeoka, and within several days the Japanese policy change was implemented.

The Japanese government was quick to welcome the joint declaration signed Dec. 14 between Noh and Gorbachov, where Gorbachov, once again, assured Noh that the Soviet Union supported Korean reunification, and that this was to follow naturally from the reunification of Germany. President Gorbachov, as quoted by TASS Dec. 14, said that he and President Noh had agreed that "at some stage, in a new international situation, it will be possible to implement the aspiration of the Korean people—the reunification of North and South Korea. . . . I want the peoples of Korea to move quickly towards each other."

As a result of this meeting, said the Japanese Foreign Ministry, as reported by the Japanese news service Kyodo, "the closer relations between the Soviet Union and South Korea will help open North Korea's door and exert a favorable influence on inter-Korean talks and negotiations between Japan and North Korea."

What now for North Korea?

On the surface, North Korea's dialogue with both South Korea and Japan has grown by leaps and bounds. Japan and North Korea have edged closer to establishing diplomatic relations, and a rough agenda for normalization talks at the vice ministerial level will begin in Pyongyang, North Korea, in late January, and will continue in Tokyo and Beijing later.

The last round of talks between prime ministers of North and South Korea concluded Dec. 14, but the two sides only point of agreement was to meet again. In analyzing the disappointing result, the South Korean news agency Yonhap Dec. 14 concluded that Seoul's strong card was that "Pyongyang, badly in need of improved relations with Japan to save its ailing economy, is being pressured by Tokyo to continue the dialogue with Seoul," and that "China and the Soviet Union are major behind-the-scenes forces supporting Seoul."

South Korea's economic proposals and concessions to the North have been endless, and almost all have been turned down. Seoul, for example, dropped plans to apply for United

Nations membership this year, which had been a big point of contention between the two sides. On Nov. 27, Seoul proposed a model industrial complex to be jointly developed as an exercise in peaceful cooperation, joint development of oil fields, a joint economic system survey, and trade of agricultural products. On Dec. 2, it was announced that a communications and broadcasting satellite which Seoul will launch no later than 1995 could also be used by North Korea.

Reflecting what may be below the surface, however, North Korean Prime Minister Yon Hyong Muk blurted out, in the middle of the last batch of talks with his Seoul counterpart on Dec. 12: "There is no place in the world where such a great threat of war exists other than on the Korean peninsula." As South Korea clearly has no intention of starting such a war, one has to ask, to what was the North Korean prime minister referring?

In an unconfirmed report that tends to indicate possible disagreement, at least in Tokyo, about Moscow's continuing role with respect to North Korea, the daily Seoul *Sinmun* on Dec. 6 said that relations between the Soviet Union and North Korea have not cooled as has generally been reported. Quoting "reliable security experts in Japan," the newspaper claimed that the Soviet Union this year offered an enormous amount of military assistance to North Korea, including six ultra-modern MiG-29 and ten SU-25 fighter planes similar to the kind of A-10s which the R.O.K. possesses. The experts also claimed that the Soviet Union is also giving aid for expansion of nuclear facilities.

A U.S. military source told *EIR* that the Japanese report was highly unlikely, other than the possibility that certain military supplies had already been in the pipeline, after having been arranged several years ago. "If the Soviet Union had any money, they wouldn't invest it there," the source said.

In its role of promoting peace and development in the Asian region, the Japanese government has consistently voiced concern about the threat of a North Korean nuclear weapons capability. In the upcoming talks between Japan and North Korea on establishing diplomatic relations, North Korea will continue to press Japan to pay reparations for its colonial rule of the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945, and additional compensation up to the present. In return for this, the main issue which Japan will continue to seek satisfaction on is that North Korea must open its nuclear facilities to inspection by the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency. As a Japanese source described it: "We want to talk about this and they do not."

Seoul's 1990 Defense White Paper includes the information that the North will be able to manufacture nuclear weapons by 1995, as it has already completed nuclear reprocessing facilities at a large-scale nuclear research complex in Yongbyong, north of the North Korean capital of Pyongyang. The facilities, which can extract large amounts of plutonium, are expected to begin full operation in one or two years.