

President Clinton averts war on Korean Peninsula, for now

by Kathy Wolfe

President Clinton announced plans on June 22 for a “package solution” for a peace settlement on the Korean Peninsula, including the reconstruction of North Korea’s nuclear power industry. The announcement is a foreign policy breakthrough for his presidency.

“Today I want to announce an important step forward,” the President told a White House press conference. “This afternoon we have received formal confirmation from North Korea” of the proposals brought back by former President Jimmy Carter from his June 15-18 visit to North Korean President Kim Il-sung in Pyongyang. As we detailed last week (*EIR*, June 24, p. 38), Kim offered to freeze North Korea’s plutonium production and permit U.N. inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to remain on duty in North Korea, if the United States would 1) agree to help Pyongyang reconstruct its nuclear power production, shifting from older reactors, which produce greater amounts of plutonium, to light water reactors (LWRs); and 2) grant North Korea diplomatic recognition.

Clinton announced that a letter outlining the U.S. understanding of the entire package had been sent to Pyongyang by chief U.S. negotiator Assistant Secretary of State Robert Gallucci, and that North Korea’s top spokesman, Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok Ju, had written back on June 22 expressing agreement. North Korea has agreed “that it will freeze the major elements of its nuclear program,” Clinton said.

“In response, we are informing the North Koreans that we are ready to go forward with a new round of talks in Geneva early next month,” as early as the first week in July, officials added.

“During these discussions, we will suspend our efforts to pursue a sanctions resolution in the U.N. Security Council” against North Korea, Clinton offered. “We welcome this very positive development which restores the basis for talks between North Korea and the United States. We are prepared to discuss the full range of security, political, and economic issues that affect North Korea’s relationship with the international community.”

A focus of the U.S.-North Korean talks will be the rebuilding of North Korea’s aging nuclear plants. “Let me emphasize,” said a senior administration official in a press

briefing following Clinton’s announcement, “that the North Koreans have told us previously, and again through President Carter, that they are particularly interested in the light water reactor, which would then mean that they could abandon their much less proliferation-resistant current nuclear technology.”

Drop IAEA conditionalities

South Korean President Kim Young-sam meanwhile announced on June 18 that he will “immediately accept . . . without conditions” an invitation for a historic North Korea-South Korea summit with Kim Il-sung, arranged by Jimmy Carter with Kim in Pyongyang. Summit preparatory meetings began almost immediately on June 24 and the summit is slated for Aug. 15.

“We also welcome the agreement between South Korea and North Korea to pursue a meeting between their Presidents,” Clinton said.

The George Bush-Margaret Thatcher crowd immediately protested that “they had been robbed of their plans for a lovely little war,” as *EIR* editor Lyndon LaRouche put it. *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, a mouthpiece for the British Defense Ministry, which started the crisis, issued a rush report in London on June 23 saying that North Korea now has at least eight nuclear bombs, which it is about to test on new missiles which can hit U.S. bases as far away as Hawaii.

As for the British, it is clear from their press coverage of the so-called Whitewater affair and their opposition to Clinton’s attempts to re-direct Russia policy, that they would love to torpedo his re-election. But now that it was clear that President Clinton had carried out a foreign policy coup, the Reuters news service had to admit on June 23 that “the step back from the brink Wednesday [June 22] could be for Clinton what the Cuban Missile Crisis was for his boyhood hero, John Kennedy . . . a defining moment of leadership.”

A major factor was the President’s decision to scrap the supranational “conditionalities” which the U.N. nuclear police at the IAEA have been demanding—conditions which no sovereign nation, neither North Korea nor the United States, should have ever tolerated in the first place. The IAEA began the latest phase of the crisis on June 2 by demanding “special inspections” under which North Korea would have

to account for every ounce of plutonium produced in the last five years—before the IAEA would permit the two countries to even talk.

On June 21, however, Clinton announced that he will “look to the future” in Korea, and scrap IAEA demands about the past. “There are some hopeful signs,” Clinton told NBC’s “Today” show. “We have to look to the present and the future, and say we will evaluate words in terms of actions.” The same day, North Korea renewed the visas of the two IAEA inspectors at their Yongbyon nuclear facility, fulfilling Clinton’s request that U.N. monitoring be allowed to proceed now and in the future.

“This could be the breakthrough we need,” a knowledgeable Clinton official told *EIR*. Forget the press flap playing Clinton against Carter, he said; President Clinton is happy. “Now our message is: North Korea should recognize that what it wants is within its grasp, and screw up the courage to put away its nuclear weapons program, and open up to the world.

“In fact,” the official said, “the North Koreans were putting much more stress on getting help from us on converting away from their existing proliferation-inherent technology, to one which is proliferation-resistant, the new LWR. . . . It’s clear now that this is something which we will have to do, to solve the problem.”

President Clinton’s comments on June 22 gave the lie to the establishment media, whose coverage of the crisis has ignored all substantive proposals by Carter, House Foreign Affairs Asia Subcommittee Chairman Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), and Dr. Selig Harrison of the Carnegie Endowment, and has instead created the soap opera illusion that Clinton and Carter were at odds and bungling every move.

“I would like to thank President Carter for the important role he played,” Clinton said. “These developments mark, not a solution to the problem, but they do mark a new opportunity to find a solution. This approach is paying off and we will continue it. This is good news. Our task now is to transform this news into a lasting agreement.” Representative Ackerman on June 23 praised the Clinton move as “a very, very welcome breakthrough.”

Bush cabinet calls for war

As the *Jane’s* of London report indicates, however, in its complaint that “peace is breaking out,” the Thatcher-Bush crowd must be watched, for they will do whatever they can to provoke war. In the days before the Clinton announcement, at least three members of Bush’s cabinet had demanded the bombing of Pyongyang or other military provocations.

Bush National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, a protégé of Henry Kissinger, and Bush Undersecretary of State Arnold Kantor, in the *Washington Post* on June 15, demanded that the United States bomb North Korea’s Yongbyon reactor within the next three months, while the fuel rods are removed to the cooling pond. Robert Gates, Bush’s CIA director, told

the *Los Angeles Times* on June 18 that Scowcroft is right; North Korea must be bombed, and South Korea needs a “Gulf war”-style buildup. On June 20, Bush’s Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, the man who started the Serbian war of aggression in the Balkans by defending Serbian “ethnic cleansing,” also called for bombing North Korea.

Bush league senators John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) traveled to South Korea on June 17-20 and at a June 20 press conference in Seoul, called for “selective air or cruise missile strikes” against the North. After Clinton’s peace announcement on June 22, McCain blustered that Clinton was just “exaggerating. . . . The administration would make a gross mistake by overestimating the importance of more pleasing rhetoric from North Korea.” Thatcher fan columnist George Will wrote in a *Washington Post* commentary on June 23 that, after Jimmy Carter kissed Leonid Brezhnev, the U.S.S.R. invaded Afghanistan; he predicted North Korea will now invade the South.

Senate Minority leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) on June 23 rose to defend the IAEA’s supranational nuclear police against Clinton. “I am surprised at the administration’s readiness to throw in the towel regarding North Korea’s well-known nuclear ambitions,” Dole said. “North Korean words are accepted at face value; talks are scheduled; past [IAEA] preconditions are dropped, and deployment decisions to strengthen deterrence are deferred.”

Some inside the administration also revealed their Thatcherite lingerie. Only hours after Clinton spoke, CIA head James Woolsey announced that failure to halt North Korea’s nuclear program could give it enough raw material for five more bombs later this year.

Joseph E. Hayes, deputy director of the Office of Economic Policy in the State Department Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, told *EIR* that the agreement was “a total non-starter. . . . Nuclear power is not economical as an energy source,” he charged. “We should tell them ‘forget nuclear power. If you want electricity, just shut down your plutonium reprocessors, and we’ll build you some hydro-electric plants, or other conventional power plants. Or South Korea can contract to ship you all the electricity you need—if it’s electricity you really want. But shut down those nuclear plants or no talks.’ They’ll have to take it or leave it.”

Hayes knows full well that Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan are all building nuclear power plants, for which U.S. corporations are submitting urgent bids. So his reasoning rings a bit false. Of course, if North Korea, which is currently dependent on communist China for 80% of its energy needs, really does want energy independence, they will reject such ultimatums out of hand, and President Clinton may indeed be stuck with a war—as Hayes might also realize.

Asked whether anyone in the administration is really listening to the war cries, one Clinton official told *EIR*, “Forget it. . . . It [any strike on North Korea] has been considered—and now you can consider it out.”