

Some Rays of Sanity Show on Korea Policy

by Kathy Wolfe

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun completed a May 11-16 state visit to Washington, where he met with President George Bush and other top Administration officials, but failed to win an iron-clad pledge from the U.S. government, that there would be no U.S. pre-emptive military action against North Korea. Prior to the summit, in discussions with *EIR*, Washington sources had dismissed, out of hand, any prospect of a firm pledge to write off military action at this stage of the negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang, negotiations that had just begun in April in Beijing, with Chinese participation. In a May 15 TV interview with PBS anchorman Jim Lehrer, President Roh had confirmed that he had decided not to even raise the issue with President Bush.

Instead, Bush and Roh issued a joint statement on May 14 warning that they would take “further steps” if North Korea escalated its nuclear program. North Korean Vice Economics Minister Pak Chang-ryon, in a Pyongyang speech on May 20, attacked the statement in the harshest terms, warning that with such wording, North-South relations could go “back to zero” and Seoul could face “an unspeakable disaster.” Pak’s speech deadlocked a top-level North-South economic meeting in Pyongyang for three days.

Yet, “Korea is a land of surprises,” as wise men say. Early on May 23, the North-South meeting suddenly reconvened, where it was announced that the two Koreas will reconnect their rail lines in mid-June. On the third anniversary of the June 2000 heads of state Pyongyang summit, on June 13-15, Korea’s eastern and western lines will be linked in joint ceremonies, reported the Seoul daily *Chosun Ilbo*, in breaking news from Pyongyang. In Seoul, the state-run Korea Development Bank issued a forecast that reconnecting the western Seoul-Pyongyang “Kyongui” Line, by itself, would create over \$7 billion in new economic gains.

‘Development First’ Policy Taken Up

Dr. Ra Jong-yil, President Roh’s National Security Advisor, had laid out the key to forging peace against the odds, in a May 13 *International Herald Tribune* column, “Engagement with the North: Step by Step to One Korea.” Seoul should promote “economic engagement” with Pyongyang now, he wrote—and worry about “grand agendas” for paper-only political pacts later, despite Pyongyang’s nuclear program. As South Korean Foreign Minister Yoon Young-Kwan noted

after a March trip to Washington, “nuclear weapons are not the beginning and the end of all foreign and economic policy.”

Ra explained in his *Tribune* article: “The principle is simple: To move unilaterally toward reconciliation with North Korea, gradually expanding the areas of common concern,” despite their nuclear program. “This approach deviates sharply from that prevalent last century. In place of pursuing a grand agenda in the name of national glory or ideology, rather the policy of engagement is aimed at addressing the basic necessities: better food, medical care, education and a wider range of choices for everyone. . . . We want to avoid the fate of great political achievements that were initially welcomed with enthusiasm but did little to improve the conditions of life and instead led to enormous suffering and misery.”

Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche had called for just this approach, in early May: Put real physical economic and technological development first, and paper agreements second, he urged. In a memo, “Six-Power Plan for the Eurasian Land-Bridge in Korea,” LaRouche proposed to policy-makers, that the United States, Russia, China, Japan, and South Korea resolve the crisis with North Korea, by forging ahead to build the “Iron Silk Road” between South and North, and the full Eurasian Land-Bridge from “Tokyo to Pusan to Paris.” Do this, LaRouche advised, without waiting for far-flung disarmament and other paper accords, to avoid the fate of “permanent war” which has caught up the Israelis and Palestinians.

LaRouche had developed this idea in 1981, while designing what later became President Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), the memo noted. At that time, he proposed a cooperative U.S.-Soviet space program, for the joint development of new generations of industrial technologies. This would have made nuclear weapons obsolete—and revolutionized the industrial base of Russia and the United States.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, LaRouche then proposed to re-connect the rail lines of West and East Europe on the same model, introducing magnetic levitation trains and other leading-edge technologies. LaRouche’s 1992-94 program to extend this revolution in technology in a “Eurasian Land-Bridge” from “Paris to Pusan” or “New Silk Road,” was based on the same method.

In his new memo circulated in May, LaRouche proposed that negotiators in Korea should drop today’s approach, identical to the Israeli-Palestinian “recipe for failure. . . . For over 50 years, Israel and the PLO have failed, by putting formalities and weapons treaties first, and economic development second,” the memo says. “The Mideast needs water. Had they built de-salination plants and greened the desert as in California, everyone would have more land, and problems would be solvable.”

In Seoul, the weekly magazine *Economy 21*, published by the progressive *Hangyoreh* newspaper, publishes a 30-page

feature on the “Iron Silk Road and Eurasian Land-Bridge,” in its May 27 issue. It features a prominent photo of LaRouche, and starts with a full-page description of his “Six-Power” plan to use the New Silk Road for the economic reconstruction of the region and the continent. Also interviewed are experts from across the Korean economic scene, including officials from the Presidential Blue House.

“LaRouche is talking about creating a Eurasian Superpower for Peace,” a spokesman for *EIR* is quoted. “The reality is, you can’t have peace in Korea unless all the powers of the region cooperate with economic development. But the good news is: If Korea, Japan, China and Russia do cooperate, you create a new superpower! So hopefully, the United States would want to be friendly and cooperate, too. . . . Rebuilding the infrastructure across the Korean Peninsula is the key to unlock the development of vast areas of Western China and Russian Siberia. Once you have transport through Korea to continue on through West China and Siberia, you open those large areas to a burst of growth.”

Opposition to Threats in U.S.

The Washington policy establishment has also begun to openly reject the flirtation, by neo-conservative extremists, with nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula. Former President Bill Clinton, speaking in Trenton, New Jersey on May 19, made his third call in as many months for “winning the peace” with North Korea. Unilateralism has gone too far, Clinton said to great applause, and has no place on the dangerously armed Korean Peninsula. “North Korea should be handled diplomatically, by moving now to make a final and complete deal. North Korea wants to eat and stay warm, and to be recognized,” he said, and it will give up its nuclear program, so this should be done now.

Even more surprising, the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), founded and funded by Congress and affiliated with the State Department, on May 16 issued a ground-breaking special report entitled “A Comprehensive Resolution of the Korean War.”

“Our concept here is that the fundamental cause of all the problems on the Korean Peninsula, is the lack of any resolution to the 1950-53 Korean War,” said author William Drennan, USIP Deputy Director of Research, speaking on May 16 with remarkable clarity. It is absurd, he pointed out, that after all these years, we still have nothing but the cease-fire which went into effect 50 years ago on May 16, 1953. No treaty of any kind has ever been signed all these years; and firing could, in theory, break out any moment. As long as North Korea, not to mention South Korea and all their neighbors, feel threatened with imminent war, naturally the situation will tend to deteriorate; what else can one expect?

More surprising, Drennan was addressing a conference jointly held by USIP and the Pentagon’s National Defense University on the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War. Drennan, a retired Air Force colonel, who served as Ronald

Reagan’s Air Force aide in 1981-84, noted that the United States should “re-seize the diplomatic initiative” with a positive proposal that all powers in the region can accept.

He proposed that the United States request the convening of a United Nations meeting of the 19 nations that were belligerents in the Korean War (most of them under the UN flag). The UN, in Drennan’s outline, should formally cede the right to create a peace treaty to the main four belligerents (the two Koreas, the United States, and China). The four powers, with help from Russia and Japan, should then sign a peace treaty in the normal manner, in return for the verified dismantling of North Korea’s nuclear weapons.

In particular, the plan calls for the “recognition of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Koreas,” which, of course, the current extremists in Washington have refused to do, and which is the nub of the entire political problem, since North Korea believes that it is therefore the “next Iraq.”

Administration Stays With Provocations

This was a far cry from the Bush Administration’s public response to South Korean President Roh’s pleas for peace. Dr. Ra Jong-yil’s May 13 column and several others, including speeches by President Roh, were “trial balloons,” floated before the Roh-Bush summit May 14, to see if Bush or his officials would respond positively, a diplomat told *EIR*. “The Administration’s response, however, was highly negative,” the diplomat said. “Both Condoleezza Rice and Donald Rumsfeld made public comments rebuffing President Roh’s overtures.” Rice told a press conference on May 14, only hours before Roh met Bush, that the United States “will keep all options open” and “will not rule out pre-emptive strikes against North Korea under any circumstances.”

Therefore Roh decided not to even ask Bush to rule out military strikes, “to avoid forcing Bush to refuse,” the source said.

President Roh could not even get Bush to rule out pulling U.S. troops out of South Korea, the diplomat fumed, “which, at a time like this, would be tantamount to Dean Acheson’s 1949 speech which put all of Korea outside the U.S. defense perimeter,” and which many analysts blame for the outbreak of the Korean War. The day after the summit, on May 15, Rumsfeld told a Pentagon briefing that he is “not going to freeze the forces; the numbers could be lowered.”

Evidently this level of insanity at the top, is causing a revolt inside Washington, not to mention Seoul.

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