

Dangerous 'Window of Opportunity' in Korea

by Kathy Wolfe

South and North Korean officials announced a set of economic agreements on June 5, which featured a statement that a "test train" may travel across the DMZ on the Trans-Korean Railway (TKR) this Fall, for the first time since 1945. "The South and North . . . shall test run trains on the linked sections of the railways in October 2004," said a joint statement, which forecast regular train runs "by the end of 2005." The two sides will also open the western Seoul-Sinuiju highway and the East Coast road "no later than in October," it said.

The new South-North "peace offensive," ahead of the June 23 Six-Power Talks, included four days of celebrations on the anniversary of the Pyongyang Heads of State Summit of June 15, 2000. A Seoul conference was keynoted by President Roh Moo-hyun and former President Kim Dae-jung—who organized the 2000 summit—and called for Washington to guarantee North Korea's security as the only way out of today's crisis. It featured North Korean Chairman Kim Jong-il's personal representative Ri Jong-hyuk, and Gen. Park Chung-hee's daughter Rep. Park Geun-hye, head of the usually neo-con opposition Grand National Party, to demonstrate a consensus for détente.

For the first time since the 1953 end of the Korean War, plugs were pulled at midnight June 15 to silence the ear-splitting propaganda broadcasts of the two Koreas attacking each other from dozens of high-power batteries along the 248-kilometer border. They also began ripping down the 300 slogan boards and electronic displays. In a paradigm shift, North Korea's last broadcast called for reconciliation, while South Korea flashed a final sign reading: "Peace, reconciliation, and cooperation." South and North opened, that same day, the first military hotline since 1953, with the two navies exchanging radio communications, flags, and signals, making contact at five different locations for two hours. The Koreans also set up a joint agency to run the Kaesong Industrial Complex north of the DMZ, to which test trains would run so that the South can provide water, electricity, and other infrastructure to South Korean businesses to start operations in Kaesong in September. South and North also agreed to each open seven ports to the other. They are even discussing opening an east coast lane across the DMZ this Fall so that southern citizens may drive by car to Mt. Kumgang in the North. Photos of private cars crossing the DMZ would send a powerful message of normalization.

October Surprise

All this is an attempt to address the danger of an "October surprise" military conflict in Korea—before the U.S. election—provoked by the neo-cons to influence the vote. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld announced June 6 that he will pull 12,600 troops out of Korea, not 3,500 as mooted the month before. While many in both Koreas have called for the troops to leave, the timing has caused the same people to warn that the neo-cons are moving their men out to free their hands for a war. Six-Power Talks on North Korea have collapsed twice before, due to Vice President Dick Cheney's dictum to U.S. conferees that "we don't negotiate with evil; we defeat evil." Cheney continues to demand that Pyongyang unilaterally give up arms, which they refuse to do, so the June 23 talks are set for a third collapse. "The neo-cons are putting Pyongyang through a drama of '3 strikes and you're out,' so they can attack North Korea by Fall," a senior scholar told *EIR*. The *Korea Times* editorial June 15 warned there will be war, if nothing is done to shift this scripted course.

The Koreans have announced plans to run trains across the DMZ every year since 2000, but never followed through. Now, some hope they will take the opportunity, due to the danger. "Announcing an October timeframe for running a train means they may really do it, in order to head off any 'October surprise' before the U.S. election," a Korean diplomat told *EIR*. "I don't see how they can run a 'test train' only a few hundred meters; the Korean term implies they may run it from one station to another, such as Munsan or Dorasan [south of the DMZ] to Kaesong Station [north of the DMZ]." Munsan to Kaesong is about 32 km; Dorasan to Kaesong is about 20 km. "This means they would have to rebuild, or redecorate, Kaesong Station. By announcing a date, it's more definite."

Former President Kim Dae-jung may also soon visit Pyongyang, Korean press said June 13, to organize a second North-South heads of state summit in Seoul this year, which would be a major boost for peace. North Korean Chairman Kim Jong-il's failure to visit Seoul for four years, has let the neo-cons call the Sunshine Policy of détente a failure. "The United States should guarantee the security of North Korea and help it enter the international community," Kim Dae-jung said June 15, calling publicly for Kim Jong-il to visit Seoul. "The South Korean people will warmly welcome Chairman Kim to Seoul. Our people want to see the leaders of the South and the North together to discuss cooperation, prosperity and unification of the two Koreas."

Kim also called for North Korea to compromise with the United States to end the 20-month-long nuclear crisis, but endorsed the idea of doing so "in parallel," rather than the unilateral surrender Cheney demands. "The U.S. and North Korea," Kim said, "must come to agreement. Because there is a great deal of distrust between them, both should act simultaneously, or in parallel."

The Seoul meeting June 15 also began to rally interna-



A symbolic train runs a few hundred meters from South Korea's last station, up to the barbed wire at the DMZ on Sept. 18, 2002, for the ceremony to cut the wire. South and North Korean officials have now announced "test trains" will run between the Koreas this October.

tional opposition to a neo-con "preventive war." Former U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Donald Gregg, who sharply attacked the neo-cons in the *New York Times* June 10, was a prominent guest. Gregg endorsed Kim Dae-jung's call for direct talks between Washington and Pyongyang, and said, the longer America refuses direct negotiations, the higher the prospect of North Korea becoming a permanent nuclear power. Gregg has long attacked Cheney's refusal to talk to Pyongyang. He wrote that Bush Administration memos sanctioning torture had "devastatingly undercut America's standing in the world."

In Moscow, officials said June 15 that Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov plans to visit both South and North Korea in early July, Russia's Itar-Tass News Agency said. Lavrov will fly to Seoul and Pyongyang for shuttle diplomacy to "help resolve the impasse over nuclear programs." Moscow and Tokyo have also reached an agreement to coordinate aid on restoring the Trans-Korean Railway across both Koreas to Russia's Far East, Russian diplomats said. Russian engineers now upgrading North Korea's rail lines will receive funding from Japan.

Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong on June 8 openly confronted Cheney's claim that North Korea has a secret uranium bomb plan, in a shocking Beijing interview with the *New York Times*. "We know nothing about the uranium program," Zhou said. "We don't know if it exists. So far the U.S. has not presented convincing evidence of this program." *EIR* alone has covered Cheney's uranium fraud (*EIR*, Aug. 8, 2003) and China's private critique of it (*EIR*, Feb. 20, 2004)—but now China has made its first public charge that the entire North Korean crisis has been "sexed up."

Dick Cheney was repeatedly mentioned to the *Times* as the source of the problem. Zhou also said Washington must "stop using the allegations to hold up the talks," and "stop making charges until it has proof. This is a problem." North Korea "argues they cannot do all this [unilateral disarmament] for nothing and feel they must be compensated," Zhou said.

'Bigger Than the World Cup'

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi also asked President Bush, at the G-8 Summit on June 9, to open talks with North Korea. "Chairman Kim wants economic development," Koizumi said, speaking about his May visit to Pyongyang, "and for this, there is an urgent need for an end to the Cold War environment. The North also requires economic aid, so they have agreed to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." Bush refused, but that Koizumi took such a risk, shows that Japanese foreign policy is dead set against war in Korea.

Lyndon LaRouche has called on the two Koreas for some years to "run the trains now!" as part of an insurance policy against war, but many Koreans are skeptical that all these leaders in Northeast Asia have the courage to follow through. "It's too little too late," one Korean economist said. "President Roh is too afraid of war to upset Washington by an alliance with China and Russia, so he is just playing local games with Pyongyang. Roh wants to convince us that a few feet of train lines can make peace. But this can't stop a neo-con strike on North Korean nuclear facilities in the Fall. . . . What is needed is LaRouche's overall approach: the full regional pan-Eurasian project for a 'New Deal' with Russia, China, Europe and Japan," he said. "But those foreign allies are not moving adequately to guarantee Korea's security. A little sweet talk with North Korea falls far short of the big projects we need, which should include the major infrastructure development projects across the entire region in Russia, China—all of it."

The ceremony linking the South and North Korean rail lines on June 14, 2003 was low key. A plaque was placed after 25 meters of rail were laid on either side of the Military Demarcation Line, and there was no train. "But when the first train runs, then you will see a celebration bigger than three World Cups," a South Korean official told *EIR*, referring to the soccer festivities which lit up Seoul with a month of fireworks in 2002. "I want to stress that the connection of these two lines is not only in the deep interests of the people of both Koreas, but for the good of the people of the entire Eurasian Land-Bridge and the world," he said. "Our strong intention is to not only connect the North-South rails, but to help strengthen and upgrade the entire route all along both the Trans-China Railway (TCR) and the Trans-Siberian Railway (TSR)."