

North Korea and State Department seek deal for Korean peninsula

by Linda de Hoyos

The same day that Soviet Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachov declared through the pages of the Indonesian newspaper *Merdeka* that the Soviet Union would be willing to pull back its SS-20s from the Asian theater as well as from Europe, a "peace offer" for the Korean peninsula was issued from the North Korean capital of Pyongyang. The regime of Kim Il Sung proposed in an official broadcast that it join with both South Korea and the United States in talks to reduce military forces on both sides of the Demilitarized Zone, bring about the withdrawal of the 40,000 U.S. troops currently in South Korea, and achieve the reunification of the two Koreas.

The North Korean proposal fits into a pattern with Gorbachov's offer, which was timed with the first anniversary of his famous Vladivostok speech, in which Gorbachov asserted Russia's role as an "Asian power." As with the North Korean proposal, the Russian offer is aimed at diplomatically forcing back the lines of the U.S. military presence in Asia—although it is the Soviet military presence, not American, that has increased dramatically in the region over the last decade. Gorbachov said the Soviets would not increase the number of Soviet aircraft in Asia if Washington agrees to do likewise; proposed that the Soviet and U.S. naval fleets be reduced and limit areas for nuclear-armed or powered navigation; and proposed to eliminate nuclear testing. The offer is designed to convince Asian nations of Soviet sincerity in its drive for regional "nuclear-free zones." Along with the ASEAN nations, the Korean peninsula is targeted to become "nuclear free"—a euphemism for removal of U.S. military forces.

There is little doubt that Pyongyang and Moscow coordinated their "peace bids." In the last two years, the Soviet Union and North Korea have grown closer than ever before, and Moscow has provided North Korea with nuclear energy and military aid. For Pyongyang, however, the peace bid has the additional advantage of asserting the North's presence into the election campaign now building within South Korea itself.

Roh Tae-woo takes the high ground

Only a month ago, the North Koreans were happily viewing events in the South, as thousands of protestors, led by the opposition Reunification Democratic Party, were threatening to bring down the government of President Chun Doo Hwan. Under conditions in which the U.S. State Department was

demanding a "transfer of power" in South Korea, it appeared that either the military would directly intervene and crush the growing protests, or the U.S.-backed opposition and student movements would succeed in overturning the Chun government.

The Chun government, however, with Roh Tae-woo, the presidential nominee of the ruling Democratic Justice Party, found a third option. In an action that stunned the opposition and the world, Roh Tae-woo and President Chun Doo Hwan acceded to opposition demands for direct elections and release of political prisoners, bringing an end to the rioting that had begun on June 10.

In Korean society, student protests have a far greater moral and psychological impact than similar protests in Western countries. As one Korean expert explained it: "The students consider themselves the voice of society. It is a role which Korean students have had for centuries. . . . Korean society appears to authorize students to be a conscience for society which is, and ought to be, above and beyond the power of the society to reject. . . . Never has there been a moment in Korean history over the last 600 or 700 years . . . where anybody would consider repressing a student moral protest without very, very carefully considering the consequences. . . . [The students] consider themselves morally invulnerable. They may get busted but the more they're busted, the more they will be vindicated, because the very fact that they're busted proves that they are right, and the other people are ogres. So everything you do to them only confirms their self-image. The instinct to martyrdom is a very strong part of it."

On Monday June 29, Roh Tae-woo, a former general and close associate of President Chun, managed to avert the acute danger to the country, by announcing that he would press President Chun to agree to opposition demands for direct elections. If the President did not accede, he stipulated, Roh would step down as presidential nominee. According to news reports in the *Wall Street Journal* corroborated by U.S. intelligence sources, Roh pressed his demand through the leadership of the Democratic Justice Party and then on to Chun. On June 22, the DJP leaders had called upon the government to compromise. The removal of Home Affairs Minister Gen. Chang Se Dong, the leading proponent of a coup, from the cabinet, in the wake of the scandal over the police torture-

death of a student, gave Roh the leverage to press his demand.

For Koreans, the turnabout “had the effect of a political nuclear bomb,” reported the Japanese daily *Mainichi*. In South Korea’s Confucian society, where the premium is placed on consensus and loyalty, Roh’s direct challenge to Chun sent a shockwave through the country, and silenced the opposition.

After 48 hours, President Chun himself addressed the nation, giving his promise that, depending upon agreement on constitutional revision with the opposition, direct elections will be held late this year, in time for Chun’s scheduled departure from the Blue House in February 1988. The President appealed to South Korean patriotism and pride. “Now, let all of us create another legend to bring our country into relief in world history, not simply as an economic example, but as a political example. After giving up past practices of misunderstanding, mistrust, and mutual hatred, we, as members of the same nation and country and as fellow democratic citizens, must expand trust and reconciliation.”

The President further warned that “if any attempt were to be made to cause social disorder by lawlessness and violence for any reason whatsoever, it will be regarded as an attempt to destroy the liberal democratic system, and the people will not tolerate this.”

The government has since made additional concessions. President Chun resigned from the leadership of the Democratic Justice Party, the cabinet was reorganized in order to give the appearance of assuring fair elections, and on July 22, the leading parliamentarians of both parties agreed to waive a clause in the constitution which prohibited opposition leader Kim Dae Jung from running for President.

The government has managed to seize the moral high ground, for the moment. In addition, it hopes that the tensions between the two opposition leaders—Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam—will be exacerbated and lead to a divided opposition that can thus be defeated.

For the Korean military, the danger is the ascension to power of Kim Dae Jung, whom they suspect of being an agent of the North, and key generals have let it be known that the military would not permit Kim to become President. Certainly, Kim Dae Jung would be a willing negotiating partner with the North for the expulsion of the U.S. military presence in South Korea and a Soviet-Chinese-sponsored “reunification,” and this is why his return to South Korea and bid for power has been sponsored by the U.S. State Department and its Project Democracy fronts. A demand from Kim Dae Jung for the immediate creation of a caretaker bipartisan government was heralded on the op ed page of the *New York Times*.

Only the day before Pyongyang issued its peace offer, Assistant Secretary of State Gaston Sigur addressed the Foreign Policy Association in New York and urged that Pyongyang cooperate “in lessening conflict and strengthening regional peace.”

Alfonsín, IMF push Argentina to brink

by Cynthia Rush

The Argentine government of Raúl Alfonsín is portraying the upcoming Sept. 6 elections for several key gubernatorial and congressional posts as a test of the four-year-old regime’s success as a “democracy.” In the midst of extraordinary economic crisis, which will deepen as a result of new accords with the International Monetary Fund, Alfonsín is telling Argentines that if Radical Civic Union (UCR) candidates aren’t voted into office over opposition Peronists, the country will sink into chaos.

Acts of violence—bombings, murders, assassination threats—have accompanied this election campaign, as also occurred prior to the 1985 congressional elections, when citizens were told that a vote against the UCR was a vote “against democracy.” In recent weeks, bands of unidentified terrorists have bombed several UCR offices around the country; the editor of the ultra-right-wing newspaper *Alerta Nacional* was murdered; and word of an assassination plot against Alfonsín by French terrorists was leaked to the press.

On June 29, news that the tomb of Gen. Juan Domingo Perón had been desecrated by an unknown commando shocked the nation. Individuals entered the Perón family tomb at Chacarita cemetery in Buenos Aires, stole the general’s sword and cap, and severed the hands from the cadaver. Letters received by Peronist leaders Vicente Saadi and Carlos Grosso warned that the hands would be “pulverized,” unless the perpetrators received the sum of \$8 million to pay “a debt owed us by Perón.”

The government promised an immediate investigation, but promptly announced that “right-wing extremists,” wishing to destabilize the nation, had carried out the desecration. To date, the investigation appears to have gone nowhere; and few have bought the “right-wing destabilization” explanation.

The word on the street, among angry Peronist activists and trade unionists, is that “the government did it.” Political observers speculate that the State Intelligence Service (SIDE), a bastion of UCR political appointees which is advised by the Israeli Mossad, was likely involved, perhaps in connivance with other government officials. They also fear that in combination with the devastating economic situation, and contin-