

Korea conference urges shift in emphasis

by Kathy Wolfe

Participants at the annual Korea Church Coalition Symposium in Washington on May 1 congratulated the Clinton administration for its Oct. 21, 1994 Geneva Framework Agreement with North Korea, but urged that Washington move forward to "de-link" the issue of nuclear weapons, from the development of the Korean peninsula.

"We are deeply grateful for what you have done, and for your position that the Korean people are responsible for their own reunification," Rev. Syngman Rhee, head of the National Association of Korean Americans, told the keynote speaker, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Thomas Hubbard. Hubbard explained the status of the Geneva "framework," and expressed hope that difficulties over the question of who will provide new nuclear reactors to North Korea specified by the accord, will be solved through negotiation.

Others, including Selig Harrison of the Carnegie Endowment, however, stressed that the Geneva accord "ultimately cannot hold together unless we adopt a new approach to the entire Korean peninsula, which allows us to concentrate on the economic development of North Korea and Korea as a whole." Harrison said, "The problem is those in Washington who want it both ways: We cannot ask countries such as North Korea to both give up nuclear weapons, *and* to forgo the benefits of peaceful nuclear power." Harrison urged that U.S. laws such as the Trading with the Enemy Act and the 1978 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act be speedily amended so that U.S. companies such as Westinghouse, Combustion Engineering, General Motors, and others eager to invest in North Korea, may do so.

End the 'fixation on the bomb'

The United States "must end fixation on the bomb, and think more about the economic development of the entire Korean peninsula," a senior South Korean figure told *EIR* in Washington on May 2. The politician said that he had met with chief Clinton negotiator Robert Gallucci, and urged him to work out a compromise over the new nuclear reactors to be built in North Korea. The United States, he said, should "de-emphasize total control by South Korea" over the project, which is making Pyongyang very nervous, by "adding a widening U.S. business participation" in the agreement by the U.S. companies just mentioned.

Top North Korea watchers, including administration of-

ficials and Democratic Party spokesmen at the Korea Church Coalition conference, also pointed out that North Korea is not about to collapse, but rather will be stable, on the model of China. The United States should thus abandon the route of U.N. sanctions and other unilateral acts, they said, since a devastating war is unacceptable.

Staying power

"North Korea will not simply go the way of eastern Europe," said Dr. John Merrill of the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research. "North Korea is not like the D.D.R. [former East Germany]; it's mechanistic to view it as modeled on countries in eastern Europe. Whatever its current difficulties, North Korea is a 'hard' state, with strong staying power, which has been able to tap into the wellspring of Korean nationalism."

"The administration's gotten too fixated on nuclear issues; instead, we need a longer view toward the reunification of Korea," said Robert Manning, director of the Democratic Party's Progressive Policy Institute. "South Korea has achieved cross-recognition with China and Russia, but North Korea hasn't gotten cross-recognition from the U.S. and Japan. Recognition has been tied up in the nuclear issue and that's an error.

"Communism in Asia is much more adaptable than in Europe; witness the China and Vietnam economic policy changes," Manning said. "Kim Il-sung, after 1989, made a strategic decision akin to [President Richard] Nixon's trip to China: to open up a lifeline of relations with the United States, in order to prolong the existence of his regime. North Korea is not playing tactical games with us. They want a long-term relationship, but the U.S. is focused on nuclear details. They're playing chess, and we're only playing checkers.

"If North Korea does unfreeze its plutonium program, and the U.S. moves to sanctions, the U.S. won't get sanctions this time," Manning pointed out. "Japan and China are more concerned to prevent war, than about non-proliferation. None of our allies are really interested in U.N. sanctions."

The idea of a "commonwealth" between North Korea and South Korea dates back to the Reagan administration's idea of sharing technology such as the Strategic Defense Initiative with the communist world, Merrill noted. "Never forget that Ronald Reagan left a legacy of opening up to North Korea," he said, "which in 1988 resulted in then-South Korean President Noh Tae Woo's 'Northern Policy' speech, calling for an economic commonwealth to be created between the two Koreas. I expect a sea-change in U.S.-D.P.R.K. relations."

"Recently, [North Korea leader] Kim Jong-il sent a personal envoy to western Europe to invite top European economists to come in and teach marketing and business," said Kongdang Oh of Pacific Rim Studies in Los Angeles. "North Korea has made a fundamental strategic choice for growing economic relations with the West. They simply don't know where to start, or how to do it."