

Daniel in the Lions' Den: Kim Dae-jung Visits Bush

by Kathy Wolfe

South Korean President Kim Dae-jung's words of wisdom fell on deaf ears in Washington on March 6-8, when he came to explain his "Sunshine Policy" of opening to North Korea, to the Bush Administration. The first goal is "to end the Cold War, to enable the two Koreas to live in peace, to eliminate the threat of war forever on the Korean peninsula," Kim said on March 8 in a speech sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and New York Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). "We must not lose this opportunity. We must assist so that North Korea can continue on the path of change."

Like Daniel in the lions' den, Kim emerged smiling and in one piece, and won his first objective. In a March 7 joint press statement with Kim after their talks, George W. Bush supported the "Second Inter-Korean Summit" which Kim Dae-jung is promoting with North Korean Chairman Kim Jong-il in Seoul this June.

"President Bush expressed support for the Republic of Korea's policy of engagement with North Korea," the joint statement added. It further said that "both Presidents reaffirmed their commitment to the 1994 Agreed Framework" with Pyongyang on freezing its plutonium production, in return for Western nuclear power plants.

But as soon as Kim left the White House, Bush suggested that he was unilaterally halting U.S. talks with North Korea, alleging that Pyongyang may have violated the 1994 agreement, and demanding that the North stop its missile program unilaterally, without talks. "We're not certain as to whether they're keeping all terms of all agreements," Bush told reporters later on March 7. "I am concerned that the North Koreans are shipping weapons around the world. . . . Any negotiations in future with the North Koreans would require complete verification . . . that their ability to develop and spread weapons of mass destruction was, in fact, stopped."

On March 8, while President Kim was speaking elsewhere

in Washington, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was asked at the Pentagon whether he would "advise the President to conduct a first strike" against North Korea if they began testing missiles again, in response to the unilateral U.S. cut-off. Rumsfeld said he wouldn't speculate, but that there would soon be a National Security Council meeting with Bush to deal with this. He added: "You are correct; there's no question but that North Korea has had a considerable appetite for ballistic missiles of various ranges. And they have also been a significant proliferator of those capabilities throughout a good many countries across the globe, and they still are."

Seoul Inter-Korean Summit

President Kim, for his part, has a window of opportunity while the Bush crew are "re-examining" their Asia policy, and he is driving the peace process as fast as possible. The upshot, Korean sources told EIR, is that "President Kim will now invite [the North's] Chairman Kim to Seoul, and continue with his 'Iron Silk Road' policy to rebuild the rails and roads to the North, and continue with his Sunshine Policy."

Kim has been arranging all the pieces on the global chessboard to bring about this second summit. His summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin late late month, Korean sources say, was timed deliberately to come before the Bush meeting, to strengthen Kim's hand.

Just before leaving Seoul, Kim also organized a meeting with his former arch-enemy and ex-Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) chief, Kim Jong-pil, now head of a large right-wing party in the National Assembly. Kim Jong-pil had been openly opposing the Seoul visit by the Northern Kim, making it impracticable. On March 3, Jong-pil agreed to a joint statement with President Kim to support the trip, and "to use Kim Jong-il's early visit to Seoul to dissolve decades of military confrontation and do away with the Cold

War structure.”

“Chairman Kim Jong-il’s visit to Seoul later this year should be made into an occasion to get the peace process on the Korean Peninsula into gear,” Kim Dae-jung told his AEI-CFR audience in Washington. “We cannot say for certain whether North Korea will follow in China’s exact lead, but it is surely opening up.”

Responding to press reports that the Seoul summit might issue a peace declaration, Kim said that this was not yet decided, and pointed out that to conclude a formal peace treaty for the 1950-53 Korean War would require the United States and China to sign as well.

“But what I intend,” Kim said, “is to arrive at some concrete steps toward tension reduction.” He proposed that the 1992 non-aggression agreement between North and South, which has been in abeyance, should be re-activated, with its four basic points: “First, all disputes will be settled through peaceful means. Second, consultations towards arms reduction. Thirdly, that a hotline will be established between the two sides. And fourthly, that a military joint commission will be established to continue the discussions.”

Especially key, he said, is bringing the separated families together, and economic cooperation. “The greatest human rights issue on the Korean peninsula today is that of the 10 million members of the separated families,” on either side of the border, he said.

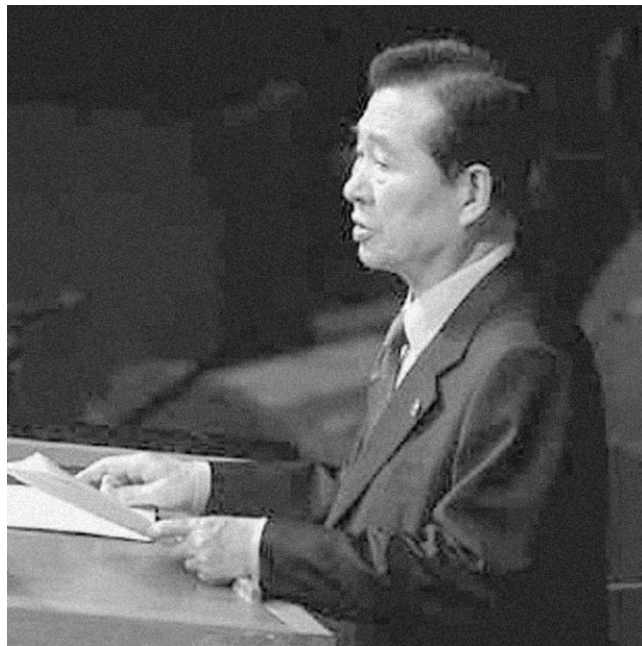
A ‘Good Listener’

President Kim also continued his campaign to introduce Kim Jong-il to the West. “It would be inappropriate to say that I know the Chairman well,” he said; “I was there for three days. I spent a total of nine hours with the Chairman. But my observation of him in those nine hours is, that he is the man in charge in North Korea. And unlike the rumors that were floated about him, he is a bright man. And he was a good listener, and once he was convinced of what you were saying, he would accept it right there on the spot.

“For example, on the USFK [U.S. Forces in Korea] issue, I explained to him how the U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula must continue to be stationed not just for now, but even after unification, to guarantee the balance of power and stability in Northeast Asia. Without the American troop presence, we would have the three surrounding countries immediately engaging each other in a fight over influence, and that would put the Korean peninsula in a very difficult position. So I said the USFK is needed even after unification—and he concurred.”

Chairman Kim also repeated this view “not just to me,” the President said, “but to a group of South Korean media publishers who went there a month later, when he expressed the same views to these people.

“And when I told him how he must try to get along with the United States, build better ties, because only with better ties with the United States will it have assurance for its safety



South Korean President Kim Dae-jung achieved one goal—a joint statement with President Bush endorsing the forthcoming North-South Korean peace summit.

and the economic assistance that is needed to revive its economy—that there is no other way, and I strongly recommended this to him—he also concurred and was very much receptive of this view.”

‘Seize This Opportunity for Peace’

“I truly believe that it is our responsibility and our duty, in light of the lives of the 46 million South Korean people, in light of the lives of the 35,000 U.S. troops serving on the Korean peninsula, to seize this opportunity that we have for peace,” Kim concluded.

The Bush Administration team, however, are not as good listeners as North Korea’s Chairman Kim, it seems. “President Kim personally had a wonderful effect on President Bush, as a younger man, and less experienced,” one Seoul source said, “but we have little sway over his advisers.” From Deputy Secretary of State-designate Richard Armitage, who has directly attacked the Sunshine Policy as “appeasement,” to National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Deputy Defense Secretary-designate Paul Wolfowitz, and Secretary Rumsfeld, “many of them have been against peace with Pyongyang for decades,” he noted. They don’t want to be confused with the facts about the real opportunity here to solve a 50-year problem.

“Once President Kim leaves, who knows what they might do? It looks as if Mr. Bush and others are going to proceed possibly with a different policy” from Seoul’s Sunshine Policy, he shrugged. “As long as they don’t try to stop us, we will persevere,” he said.