

Soviet pressure on Japan, Korea could signal new superpower crisis

by Linda de Hoyos

In the fall of 1983, the Soviet Union shot down a passenger airplane flying to Seoul, South Korea, killing all on board. A month and nine days later, this was followed by the bombing-murder of the South Korean government in Rangoon, Burma, by a North Korean spetsnaz (special forces) team that may have had help from Soviet-deployed European terrorists. Together, the two incidents demonstrated the constant potentiality for the Korean peninsula to become a flashpoint for superpower crisis. There is now an emerging pattern of evidence that Moscow is preparing such actions again.

The actual target for Soviet operations in the Korean peninsula is Japan, for which South Korea is a front line of defense. Soviet pressure on Japan has been escalating since November and the re-election of Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, who is firmly committed to upgrading Japan's defenses and who publicly supports the beam-weapons development program of President Reagan. On Jan. 2, the day Nakasone was to meet Reagan in California, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko handed down Moscow's ultimatum to Japan: Japan must cease any ideas of collaborating with the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative and bow before the Soviet Union as the preeminent world power.

The form of Gromyko's ultimatum matched the brazenness of the message. The Soviet foreign minister sent a letter to the editor of the Tokyo daily *Asahi Shimbun*, which then appeared in the Jan. 2 issue. Gromyko declared that a threatening global arms race is underway on land, sea, air, and that "militarist circles" are now planning to spread the arms race to space, which would be a "new source of deadly danger." "These militarist circles push the world to the nuclear abyss," which, Gromyko reminded his Japanese readers, "would be much worse than Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

To avert this, Gromyko suggested surrender or, as he called it: "the conclusion of a non-aggression treaty between the nations of Asia and the Pacific." The problem is Japan, Gromyko said, "which is becoming increasingly involved in militarist preparations. Soviet-Japanese relations can hardly be described as satisfactory." The remedy is for Japan and the Soviet Union to conclude a treaty of "neighborly relations and mutually advantageous cooperation, whereby the U.S.S.R. would not use nuclear weapons against Japan, if Japan consistently complies with its non-nuclear status."

In the last months, the Soviets have also attempted to woo

Japan into such an effective breaking of its alliance with the United States, with visions of investment in Siberia and the Sakhalin Islands. Japan's business community, however, has refused these offers, until the issue of the four northern islands, which the Soviets illegally seized in the aftermath of World War II, are returned.

Korea: build-up for war

Moscow's offers of peace furthermore have no credibility in the face of the Soviet military escalation, globally and particularly in North Asia. According to a report in the Japanese newspaper *Sankei Shimbun*, the Soviet Union has proposed to the regime of Kim Il-Sung in North Korea that the Soviets position SS-20 missiles in North Korea, that Soviet military advisers be sent there, that the two countries' defense forces be integrated, and that Moscow use two North Korean ports for its fleets. The North Koreans reportedly agreed to all these demands save for the port of call for Soviet battleships.

This is the result of a tightening of the North Korea-Moscow alliance over the last 18 months. Kim Il-Sung has gained the Kremlin's approval of his successor, the arch-terrorist Kim Chong-il, who surpasses even his father in his megalomania. For Moscow, however, the aim is to keep a tight hold on North Korea as a blackmail chip against Japan, South Korea, China, and the United States.

After the Rangoon bombing, only the Soviet Union defended the motives behind the North Korean-orchestrated atrocity. Soviet propaganda of the period nearly matched that of Pyongyang's in its ire against South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan's scheduled tour of South Asia, which was brought to a halt by the Rangoon atrocity.

The alliance was further cemented by Kim Il-Sung's May 1984 trip to the Soviet Union and East bloc countries. Kim won promises of shipments of the most advanced Soviet military hardware, and also signed a 25-year Friendship Treaty with the German Democratic Republic. In the last month, the Soviets have delivered MiG-23s to Pyongyang and short-range Scud missiles. In a November trip to Pyongyang, Soviet Vice Foreign Minister Mikhael Kapitsa further arranged agreement to open up rail trade (aside from shipping trade) between the two countries. The Soviets now echo Pyongyang's calls for reunification—a show of support Moscow

has previously refrained from.

North Korea is also a full partner in the Soviet-dominated terrorist axis of East Germany, Bulgaria, Libya, and Iran. Kim Il-Sung's designated son and successor, Kim Chong-il, is in charge of a force of 100,000 spetsnaz terrorists. North Korea also supplies the instructors who brainwash the kamikaze-bombers of Iran.

In Africa, there is a pattern of the North Koreans functioning as proxies for the Soviets. North Korean military advisers are now positioned in 11 African countries, from Libya to Mozambique and Madagascar. North Korean troops, for instance, were reportedly with Libyan forces when Qaddafi invaded Chad.

Question of timing?

In the fall, on the invitation of South Korean President Chun, for the first time talks on economic cooperation began between the two Koreas. The second round of these talks, scheduled for Dec. 5, was postponed by Pyongyang in the wake of the border incident, but will proceed in January. But talks cannot mask the tensions between the two countries.

In the aftermath of the Nov. 24 incident in which a Soviet defector crossed the demarcation zone resulting in a shootout between North Korean and U.S. and South Korean troops on the border, Kim Il-Sung has been restrained from escalation only by the Chinese.

According to the Hong Kong daily *Hsingtao Ribao*, North Korean potentate Kim Il-Sung went to China two days after the incident to get Chinese back-up for a retaliatory strike against the South. Peking flatly refused to support the option. The Chinese leadership instead is using all its leverage on the North Korean regime to force Kim Il-Sung to the negotiating table. China wants to expand indirect trade with Seoul and absolutely requires peace on the Korean peninsula if it is to pursue its own modernization goals.

North Korea may wait to make another provocation or attack until after the Jan. 31 arrival in Seoul of opposition leader Kim Dae-Jung, who is regularly hailed in the North Korean press. Kim, who is also backed in the United States by the same liberals that put Khomeini in power and are working to bring down the Marcos government in the Philippines, has been programmed to be the South Korean "Benigno Aquino"—whose arrival will trigger the destabilization of South Korea. If there is any appearance of weakness in South Korea or in U.S. commitment to the country, Kim Il-Sung, who is known to act even without approval from Moscow or Peking, may make his military move.

Second, if Moscow becomes convinced that the United States commitment to Western Europe is in fact unquestionable, then a North Korean military move on the Korean peninsula will tend to rise on the list of Soviet options for points to win a backdown from the United States.

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