



Sowing Seeds in the Spring

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For many years Cho Sung-nak worked very closely with Dr. Pak Bo-hi. He was instrumental in helping establish Pyonghwa Motors in the early stages, and has visited North Korea more than almost any other South Korean. He is presently involved in coordinating conferences and education for Ambassadors for Peace in Korea.

MY first visit to North Korea was in January 1994. At the time I was working as the private secretary of Pak Bo-hi, then president of *The Segye Times*. In July of the same year I returned to North Korea with Dr. Pak: He had been invited as a messenger of condolences on behalf of True Parents at the time of Kim Il-sung's death. I have been to North Korea on various occasions since the establishment of Pyonghwa Motors, working for economic cooperation between North and South Korea. The last time I traveled to North Korea before this was for the assembly plant groundbreaking ceremony.

Walking on the North Korean soil after two long years, I felt anything but indifferent. My first impression of Pyongyang this time was that the atmosphere was a whole lot brighter than before. While I was going through the entry formalities at Soon An Air-

port, the electricity went off all of a sudden. I've never experienced something like that, and I didn't know the actual cause, but I don't believe that it was the result of a general lack of electrical power in North Korea. As an old Korean saying goes, "A girl gets an abscess on her back on her wedding day." I just felt sorry that something like that had to happen on this special day for North Korea.

On the way to Pyongyang from the airport, I looked carefully at the propaganda billboards. They have changed quite a bit. They used to have horrible slogans such as "Peel the skin off of the Americans." This time, though, I couldn't see that kind of thing anywhere. During the more recent process of negotiations with America and Japan, they seemed to have quietly disappeared. Instead, I could see far more slogans supporting the status quo such as "The Great Leader, Comrade Kim Il-sung is with us forever," or "Mansei for the Great Leader, Comrade Kim Il-sung, the sun of the 21st century," and so on.

For the first time in the North, I saw the slogan "Let's love trees." When I was young, in the 1960s, I used to plant acacia trees or alders on the bare hills of South Korea during the campaign to "make the mountains green." I assumed that North Korea has entered that kind of social phase nowadays.

We arrived at the Potong River Hotel

where we were to stay. When I entered the hotel lobby, my mouth dropped open. Since our foundation took over the hotel ten years ago, I know very well the complicated procedures members have had to go through to get repair and maintenance work done for the building, the work to improve the lighting in the lobby and the work to modernize the coffee shop. Looking at the place, I was totally speechless. Inside the brilliant show window—the like of which you never see in North Korea—gorgeous looking imported clothes were displayed. At a glance, I could tell they were very expensive. The gift shop next to it looked very neat and clean. What was more surprising was that the convenience store, full of expensive imported goods, was lit like daylight with many fluorescent lights.

Thanks to such repair work, when I entered my room the bathroom looked a lot cleaner than on previous occasions. The soap, shampoo and towels looked much nicer, too. When I used the elevator, I didn't have to worry about whether or not I'd get stuck between floors because of the power situation. Although the changes may not have been very noticeable at a glance, however, there were obvious changes if one looked at things closely. The expressions on the faces of people walking on the street looked so much brighter and more relaxed. I believe

Pyonghwa Motors President Park Sang-kwon speaks to the guests and workers



that they must have done maintenance work on a grand scale in Pyongyang in time for the April spring festival and Sun Day celebration (April 15, Kim Il-sung's birthday). It was obvious to me that North Korea is changing gradually. There is the genuine possibility of reunification of North and South through economic cooperation.

North Korean leaders think that they can establish a strong and prosperous nation and that they can unify Korea if North Korea maintains its status quo. They may not notice that they themselves are changing gradually. I believe that here lies a very good window of opportunity for us. I believe that True Parents see that, and that is why they are investing, slowly but steadily, in North Korea.

I believe that we can eliminate any possibility of war if we help the North Korean economy through economic cooperation with the South. In addition, I think we can hasten the moment of unification if we can solve the problems of food, clothing and housing by supporting the exhausted North Korean economy in ways the law allows. We may well have to face difficulties and problems at the outset, but with wisdom we should be able to overcome them.

If we can put our heads together and maintain a common goal—the mutual prosperity of South and North Korea—we should be able to unify the economy of the two Koreas. The more economic exchanges builds trust between South and North, and the more of a synergy effect is produced for both Koreas' prosperity, the better chance we have for the unification on a societal level. If we can reach that point, the situation could develop whereby

unification can be actualized politically, through a unified election between South and North. This would lead to complete reunification. I cannot stress enough the importance of programs promoting economic cooperation between the Koreas. In the beginning, unilateral investment by South Korea is necessary, but I am sure it will develop into something beneficial for both South and North in the end. What is important is that the Koreas must build mutual trust through these kinds of program. Without trust, development as I have described will not be possible.

In many respects, the opening of the Pyonghwa Motors assembly plant was a successful event. More importantly, it will become a clear milestone on our way to the unification of Korea. Until now, the Hyundai Mt. Kungang tourist business was the model for business endeavors between the Koreas, but it has run into serious trouble. They are having many business difficulties.

I have analyzed this and I find that first, they failed to notice that South-North economic cooperation was at the beginning stage of economic integration. Second, they were too hasty, without having worked things out on a long-term basis. Third, they even went against public opinion in paying too

much money to work in the tourism sector in North Korea. They were too eager to monopolize the North Korean tourist industry.

Hyundai thought it was a business investment upon which they would later collect, so did not worry about pouring in money. North Korea, on the other hand, had a different view. They saw Hyundai's investment as proper compensation for the company coming in and utilizing the North's land and property. Hyundai believed that through this investment they would come to monopolize the whole North Korean tourist industry, thinking they would build up trust with the North Koreans.

There is such a management structure in the North—everything begins at the top. Money doesn't speak for you in the same way it can in other countries. Although Hyundai might have thought that through its financial power it is the one in control, North Korea thinks of Hyundai as being another organization that will come under *its* control in time.

Pyonghwa Motors is not on as large a scale as Hyundai's Mt. Kungang tourism business, and there weren't any loud advertisements for Pyonghwa through the media, either. The business has been developed through open communication based on the trust we have built up with the North. That is how we have been able to reach the point we are at today. There is no doubt that Dr. Pak and the president of Pyonghwa Motors, Park Sang-kwon, are the ones truly responsible for the successful development of the company to this point.

However, as a person who has been working for the businesses in North Korea from the very beginning, I feel strongly obligated to testify to the effort True Parents have made in guiding us from A to Z, out of their deep love for North Korea and especially for their hometown, the eternal holy ground of Chongju.

Dr. Pak with Kim Young-soon and Shin Kyoung-rin (in the front) with FFWPU leaders in the Pyonghwa plant



Looking over the first car



In going to the opening of the Pyonghwa plant, we used a recently completed ten-lane highway between Pyongyang and Nampo, where the plant is located. It took us only thirty minutes. On previous trips, the road had not been thoroughly paved. It was an inconvenience and the trip took longer, but in the back of my mind I felt compassion for the North Korean laborers who must have worked hard to build the road in heat that would have easily dried their sweat.

As soon as we reached the end of the highway, Pyonghwa Motors, in all its dignity, appeared before us. Two years ago, in the snow, at the time of the groundbreaking ceremony, it was just barren land. I couldn't believe my eyes that such a wonderful looking plant now stood there. Although it was a rainy day, an orderly crowd of about three thousand North Koreans were waiting for the ceremony to begin.

The Secretary of the North Korean Workers' Party, who is also the chairman of the Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, Kim Young-soon, was there, as was his vice chairman, Son Ho-kyung, Cabinet Counselor Joo Il-churl, Cho Sun company president Lee Jung-churl, Choson Ryunbong Combined Company (the North Korean investor) president Shin Kyung-rin—and other people of high social standing. This turnout demonstrated North Korea's great interest in Pyonghwa Motors. From our side, Dr. Pak Bo-hi, Rev. Hwang Sun-jo, Rev. Peter Kim and Park Sang-kwon participated in this historic event.

Many of those who were at the groundbreaking two years ago were on hand to celebrate the completion of the construction. The only difference was the weather. Then it snowed, now it rained; but in two years, something great was created out of nothing. Where once there was only deserted land now stands a beautiful, grand factory with the most advanced facilities and equip-



The welcoming banquet, held at the Potong River Hotel

ment. It was really a moving moment.

It is a big mystery to me that in this, the most advanced scientific age, the 21st century, such a feudalistic nation as North Korea exists. People can travel around the entire globe in a day; the world is becoming a global community. Only North Korea resists taking its place in that community. I don't understand how they have the nerve to say that they can live in their own way, by themselves. It's an enigma to me.

They don't seem to hide, however, the fact that it is very hard to force into reality what they are trying to achieve. They acknowledge it, but at the same time, they try to appeal to people to overcome the present difficulties. They have slogans such as, "We should smile even if things are rough," and "We will see who is smiling in the end!" I can't figure out why it is so, but they seem very certain of a successful future.

I could describe North Koreans as people who have a religious fanaticism toward their leader, Kim Il-sung. From my several visits there, I've arrived at the conclusion that it is a feudalistic country with a national religion I would call "Kim Il-sungism." Without understanding this aspect of the North, it is impossible for anyone to understand what is going on there. The Keum Soo mountain palace, where Kim Il-sung's body lies is always busy with visitors 365 days a year. Kim Jong-il keeps hold of his political power by maintaining the image of a filial son who is absolutely following his father's will. Chairman Kim Jong-il uses the method, traditionally employed by his predecessor, of giving on the spot guidance. In that way, he appeases the laborers and those from neglected areas and social classes by showing them that their leader is interested in them. Sometimes, this method is shrewdly used to convince laborers working on assembly

lines that they have a lot in common with the top leader of the country. They also dig out "heroes" from all walks of life, such as a simple factory worker, a woman farmer or an athlete, so that they can maximize their effectiveness and reach the goal of all organizations, in line with a planning program they call "learning from heroes." I think that we could learn something from their organizational skills, as we are people who have the ultimate goal of realizing the settlement of the *Cheon Il Guk* and the liberation of our homeland in this, the age of *Cheon Il Guk*.

North Koreans are very ideologically oriented, strong in morals and ethics. But the problem is they don't have a lot to eat and wear. Once they solve these basic needs they will gain self confidence. When you are hungry you can still say that you are full, but ultimately you cannot hide your suffering face. For this reason, the North Korean authorities do not really look forward to the family reunions [that are from time to time being arranged between families separated between North and South] because of the difference in appearance between the North and South Koreans.

When basic needs are fulfilled, however, they will regain confidence. And so too when they interact more socially and politically. The final fruit of confident political exchanges would be general elections embracing both South and North.

Needless to say, we should take Pyonghwa Motors seriously, as it is our first step on a thousand-mile journey. I am not directly involved with the company now, but I would like to contribute to it as much as I can. I close my testimony with my deepest wish for the Pyonghwa Motor Company's eternal success. ♦

Cho Sung-nak is of the 6000-couple Blessing



The production line