

New Korean Directions Reflect Changing World

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It has become extremely obvious that the new relationships emerging between the US, the Soviet Union, and Communist China are causing dramatic shifts between former friends and former foes, especially in Europe and Asia. A particularly interesting and illustrative example is that of the two Koreas. Not willing to let the super-powers decide their fate, yet unable to totally avoid it --the almost histrionic overtures between Pyongyang and Seoul, unthinkable only two years ago, do more to underscore the importance of the shifting world-power alignment than almost anything else which has directly transpired.

After almost twenty years of mutual suspicion and officially promoted hatred, accompanied by numerous military provocations and infiltration attempts by the Communist North against the South, all indications are that recent developments have come as a shock to the peoples of both nations. The Washington Post (July 5, 1972) reported that South Koreans were "stunned.... surprised.

Some said they were shocked," at the News of the recent secret meetings between high level officials in the capitals of both North and South. One secretary was quoted as saying, "I'm now at a *loss* how to deal with Communism and Communists.... we have been told to hate them."

The problem of public reaction may be no less in the North, in the opinion of Philip Kim of Korea Week. Based on the reports of New York Times' Harrison Salisbury (who visited Pyongyang in June) that "I did not on occasion speak with any Korean except those selected especially for me. Nor once did I even get within shouting distance of a peasant. The hotel we stayed (at) mysteriously seemed to have no occupants but ourselves." Kim feels that the regime isolated the American reporters from "average" North Koreans because it had not found the time or ways to explain the calculated risk of detente with the U.S. to its people, who have been so extremely "anti-Americanized."

Beginning with very tedious joint Red Cross negotiations, to inviting American correspondents to visit North Korea, finally to announcing an exchange of secret meetings and a joint communique on reunification--even more impressive than the scope of these breakthroughs has been the speed of their accomplishment. The Washington Post, in an editorial July 5, 1972, typified the reaction, "...South's President Park, who long seemed a narrow soldier dependent on pumping up crises to sustain his strict rule, turns out to be a shrewd and flexible nationalist able to perceive and act on new possibilities. The North Premier Kim has similarly changed his spots, from brutal and paranoid fanatic to a figure no less shrewd and flexible."

Why the sudden change, why the willingness on the part of both leaders to take such a great risk both in international and domestic considerations? I think there are two factors to consider.

The first is the unwillingness on the part of either regime to become dangerously isolated from changing world inter-relationships, and therefore more vulnerable to having its fate decided by the Big Powers. Seoul, faced with a lessening commitment on the part of her American ally and haunted by the specter of an increasingly isolated Taiwan, is ironically in a parallel situation to Pyongyang, who can no longer depend on massive Soviet military aid or fail to note the plight of Hanoi, increasingly deserted by her Soviet and Chinese allies.

The second factor is the essential bankruptcy of the combination containment-coexistence policy which

has governed the Free World's response to the Communist challenge since World War II. Paradoxically, while the Communists feel that the South needs its militant anti-Communism for stability, it may be that very rigid posture which has stifled many needed reforms. In the free World in general, we can also see the ambiguity of past policies -- rejecting the claims and basis of Communist ideology in the name of freedom, unwilling to really concern ourselves with the liberation of those living in such slave states.

The world is moving, willingly or not, into a higher level of the struggle between freedom and tyranny. After decades of enforced separation between the Communist bloc and the free world nations, we both have the opportunity to create model societies, which would be a reflection of our respective ideologies. This next phase, of intermingling our people and sharing our fruit is undertaken as the only alternative for world unification, other than war. It is fraught with many dangers, and places much greater responsibility on our national leaders. We must not deceive ourselves -- recent developments reflect not "softening" of the militant ideology of the Communists, but rather the belief that they may be able to achieve their goal of world domination without armed conflict between the Big Powers. History has shown they are fully capable of using negotiations merely as a tool of struggle, of repudiating any commitments or agreements if they turn to their disadvantage.

Nevertheless, they are now taking big risks also, especially in terms of explaining such policy shifts to their people. And we should not underestimate the reason why they are taking such risks. The answer is a simple one, yet one which we often forget. Because Communism is a blatantly false, often contradictory view of reality, their struggle to achieve their utopian social goals has consistently been frustrated. They have sought to camouflage repeated failures by blaming the Free World for creating such tension that they must sacrifice their economic and social goal to build incredible "defense" establishments--totalitarian police states, which also stifle any real dissent. According to an objective standard the Communists have less to offer our people through exchange visits than we have to offer their citizens. With that realization, we should actively pursue all forms of interaction between our societies, while still exercising extreme caution.

This new phase of interaction represents the final test of our commitment to the goal of freedom and our will to achieve them not just for ourselves but for all people. A perfect symbol of the spirit in which we should undertake this challenge is embodied in the New Community Movement, announced by South Korean President Park in May of this year. A program to bring the benefits of a free society to a greatly expanded number of the rural peasantry.

it is an opportunity to refute the frequent Communist accusation that we don't care about the common man. Park described it thusly; The New Community Movement is a spiritual revolutionary movement intended to cure the malaise of idleness and complacency which sprouts under the shade of stability, and to eradicate luxury and extravagance which spread in the name of growth..... We will willingly clasp the hand of mutual cooperation on the basis of reciprocity and equality for the realization of world peace.

That same spirit, of revitalized commitment to our ideology of freedom and of transcending the challenge of Communism by surpassing their claims of accomplishments and sharing the benefit--that spirit is the true hope of world peace with freedom, without war.