

crude oil supply to North Korea. A South Korean TV station reported on June 9 that the Soviet Union, which provides about 40% of Pyongyang's crude oil, had stopped supplies just before the Noh-Gorbachov meeting. Unquestionably, North Korea is one more communist economic disaster which Moscow is seeking to unload, while at the same time scoring significant glasnost propaganda points for its next foray—Asia.

South worried about leverage

President Noh, speaking in Washington after meeting with President Bush on June 7, attempted, as he has in the past, to control the activities of the various players. Noh cautioned against a "hasty U.S. move to improve its relations with North Korea, noting that such a move should be taken place in accordance with due change in Pyongyang's attitude and the security situation on the Korean peninsula," according to presidential spokesman Yi Su-chong. Bush was advised by Noh, according to YONHAP, to ensure that North Korea sign the nuclear safeguard accord of the International Atomic Energy Agency and renounce terrorism and communization of the Korean peninsula by force, *before* Washington seeks to improve ties with Pyongyang. The South Korean newspaper *Hanguk Ilbo* on June 7, however, quoted Spence Richardson, chief of the Korea desk in the U.S. State Department, that the United States was ready to open telephone lines with North Korea, admit North Korean emigrants wishing to settle in the U.S., allow North Korean citizens to visit the U.S. on the basis of invitations, and to promote mutual exchange of scholars and students.

George Bush reportedly promised Noh that there will be no change in the U.S. commitment to the security of the peninsula, but this is a pledge which South Koreans seem to have little faith in. YONHAP reported on March 28 that Washington, despite its repeated pledges to the contrary, unilaterally decided in January to close three air bases in South Korea and make a partial troop reduction. It seems that after Seoul was finally informed of the unilateral decision, to save face, a statement was concocted and simultaneously issued by both sides, to smooth over the U.S. action.

South Korea's wariness of the U.S. agreeing to a settlement for the peninsula without Seoul's input is deep-seated, as was made clear by an editorial in the Seoul daily *Choson Ilbo* last October. "We are concerned about the possibility that the United States, being less familiar with the North Korean authorities' way of thinking and way of behaving than we are, could fall victim to the fraud of the 'Kim-Il-Sungists,' " said the Oct. 8 editorial. "Even when the negotiations were under way for an Armistice Agreement, we objected to being a signatory to it, because we knew very well that it would provide the communists with an opportunity to reorganize and strengthen themselves. As a result, the United States signed it alone. Of course, we believe that the United States would not repeat the same mistake."

Canada drowns at Meech Lake

by EIR's Canada Staff

"To have 11 first ministers, sitting around a room, making suggestions and cobbling expressions of words for the constitution . . . it's just incredible that any country should build a constitution that way. It boggles the mind." Clyde Wells, premier of the Province of Newfoundland, openly stated what many observers, inside and outside Canada, know to be true.

Canada's media have now proclaimed the solving of a constitutional crisis that could, in fact, still dismember the country whose land mass is the second-largest in the world. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, whose popularity ratings plummeted to 15% earlier in the year as a result of disenchantment with his Thatcherite economic austerity policies, stated, "While I do not want to underestimate the divergences, what is in dispute is modest when compared with what is really at stake. What is at stake is Canada."

In fact, the six-day pow-wow held by Canada's leaders June 4-10 did not "sew up" an accord: Both Manitoba and Newfoundland Provinces could still reject it. However, for the time being, financial panic in the Canadian markets has abated. During May, the Canadian government spent \$900 million to prop up the Canadian dollar, which had plummeted in value because of persistent rumors of the imminent dissolution of Canada. This prompted Canadian Finance Minister Michael Wilson, in a speech made to the Montreal-based branch of the International Fiscal Association, to complain that the uncertainties surrounding the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord, were affecting financial markets and shaking investor confidence in the country.

Gorbachov needs Reichmann

The timing of the crisis was highly impolitic. On May 27, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov met Canada's Albert Reichmann, head of the Olympia and York enterprise and of the Canadian-Soviet business council, prior to Gorbachov's trip to Canada and the United States at the end of May. Radio Moscow featured Reichmann on its "New Market" show. Preserving the aura of political and economic stability is essential for Canada to reliably play its role in Anglo-American "perestroika."

So, that meant that everyone had to head back to the

negotiating table, to hammer out what would pass for a constitutional agreement that the public relations firms in London, Washington, and Moscow could boost.

What is Meech Lake, anyway?

Canada's Constitution is an act of the British Parliament called the British North America Act of 1867. In 1980, the government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau initiated the process of "patriation" of the Constitution, suggesting the first major additions to the 1867 document.

Two acts were passed by the House of Commons in 1982.

First, the Canada Act of 1982 transferred to the Canadian Parliament power to amend the Constitution, a power previously vested only in the British Parliament—thus, "patriation."

Second, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms for the first time made part of the Constitution the protection of individual rights and freedoms, including freedom of religion, assembly, association, and the press.

Predominantly French-speaking Quebec, which in 1980 was the scene of a province-wide (defeated) referendum on the right to negotiate an ostensibly independent "sovereignty-association" status with the rest of (English-speaking) Canada, refused to sign this Constitution in 1982. In 1986, the premier of Quebec presented five conditions to be met, before Quebec would agree to sign. Although these conditions were initially agreed upon, and Quebec signed an accord in 1987, several other provinces then dissented. The accord was postponed until, first 1988, then June 23, 1990.

Though the original purported intent had been the reintegration of Quebec into the Canadian fold "with dignity and enthusiasm," instead, the talks were soon expanded to include a series of Provinces' Rights, Native People's Rights, Equality of the Sexes clauses, etc. For example, in Manitoba Province (population approximately 1.2 million) Elijah Harper, a legislator and former Chief of the Red Sucker Lake band of Indians, has led a filibuster after the accord's June 9 signing, declaring, "It's about time that aboriginal people be recognized." Premier Clyde Wells of Newfoundland, who received wild applause when he finally signed the accord on June 9, only minutes later told a CBC correspondent, "I did not sign it; all I signed was an undertaking to submit it, either through the legislature, or to a referendum." Under the 1987 rules, only provincial legislatures, or a popular referendum, can legalize the document.

Substantive issues, such as a proposal for reform of Canada's non-elected Senate, now appointed by a Privy Council (which reports to a governor-general, who reports to the Queen of England) have been deflected. There is not even a commitment to an actual Constitutional Convention. In fact, only sex equality rights managed to be inserted into the Constitution!

Polls published by the *Toronto Star* on June 14 give a partial indication, at least, of the mood of the country. To

the question, "Should Newfoundland pass or block the Meech Lake Accord?" 46% voted to pass, 40% to block. In Manitoba, where the same question was asked, 46% voted to pass, 51% to block. In Quebec, the vote was 41.9% "yes to Meech Lake," 36.3% "no." Man-in-the-street interviews in Montreal, Quebec have reported that in the aftermath of the June 9 signing, there is universal confusion. "People do not understand the Meech Lake process, what it's all about. It's something 'up there,' which the lawyers and politicians fight about," said one source.

Distinct—and disappearing—societies

A "Distinct Society Clause" in the Meech Lake Accord reads, "The Constitution . . . shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with (a) The recognition that . . . French-speaking Canadians, centered in Quebec, but also present elsewhere in Canada, and English-speaking Canadians, concentrated outside Quebec, but also present in Quebec, constitute a fundamental characteristic of Canada, and (b) The recognition that Quebec, constitutes within Canada, a distinct society."

Quebec passed a law in the late 1970s, declaring French the only official language of the province. Canada's Supreme Court declared this law, Capital Law 101, unconstitutional in 1989. Quebec's Premier Bourassa contended, however, that a clause in the constitutional accord of 1987, a predecessor to Meech Lake signed by Quebec and six other provinces, contained a "notwithstanding" clause. That clause was interpreted to mean that, "notwithstanding" the court's decision, the province had a right to "control matters in their area."

The "distinct societies" clause is a weak attempt to postpone the inevitable and impending conflict between French and English-speaking Canada, as well as to ward off the implications of "provincial override" for the already questionable central government structure.

There is a definite parallel—although not an equivalence—between the "nationalities reorganization" now proposed by Gorbachov's presidential office, and Meech Lake's handling of the Quebec question. Behind the conception that is now emerging lies the attempt to organize an imperial "North American Common Market," in the wake of a subjugated Mexico, shattered Canada, and bankrupt United States. As *EIR* has emphasized, such a Common Market is in the national interests of none of the three nations concerned.

An alternative program—including construction of a high-speed transcontinental rail system, the North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA) project, mass production of nuclear power plants for domestic use and export, credit and monetary reform—such ideas would be the useful basis of a profitable discussion of economic and, hence, political independence.

Nationalists would do well to combine efforts to derail the "Common Market" plan now, before Canada drowns itself in pathetic diversions such as Meech Lake.