

Editorial

Korea: Crisis or Opportunity?

Despite the media hype that North Korea is arming for nuclear war against the United States, the reality is that the U.S. has an enormous opportunity right now on the Korean Peninsula, and across Eurasia, to change world history for the good. If we have clear-sighted foreign policy vision in Washington, we can finally end the Korean War, for which a peace treaty has never been signed in 50 years; open the Demilitarized Zone, the last frontier of the Cold War; and, build a New Silk Road from Tokyo to Pusan to Paris.

But, one hears, the North Koreans attacked us at the UN Sept. 30; rejected further talks, and in early October, announced the enhancement of their Yongbyon plutonium reactor. They said they've reprocessed all 8,000 fuel rods, and that the plutonium has been switched from power plant use, to "increasing the nuclear deterrent," i.e., making nuclear weapons.

That's precisely how Vice-President Cheney and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld fooled Americans about Iraq's imminent use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." This time, look at the reality.

From Aug. 27-29, there were Six Power talks in Beijing, organized by South Korea, China, Russia, and Japan—all of whom face immense damage if there is a war in Korea. The four regional powers invited the other two parties, America and North Korea, to talk.

U.S. Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche actually came up with the idea some years ago. He was circulating a memo, prominently covered in the South Korean press, on the Six-Power talks earlier this year. South and North Korea re-linked their railways after 50 years on June 14, and the other governments adopted the Six-Power plan in July. The core of LaRouche's proposal was to drop the confrontational approach, which has failed Israel and the PLO for over 50 years, and put economic development first. LaRouche suggested that the two Koreas, China, Russia, and Japan "just build the railroad"; start building the New Silk Road of high-speed rail and associated development corridors from Pusan to Paris. And they did start.

LaRouche also warned President Bush that invading Iraq would make the North Korean crisis "almost impos-

sible" to solve. He was right. After Bush lumped North Korea with Iraq and Iran as an "axis of evil" in January 2002, cut off North Korea's oil supply in November 2002, and invaded Iraq, North Korea predictably reacted by talking about a build-up.

LaRouche urged Bush to stop the threats, and instead support the Silk Road economic development.

That's where the Six Power talks come in, because, based on a careful reading of LaRouche's ideas, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov in April offered to "guarantee the security" of North Korea, the first time a nuclear power had made such an offer. Russia was quickly joined by China and South Korea. They all promised North Korea that they would convince Washington to guarantee not to use force in Korea.

Based on this, the North Koreans agreed to attend the first Six-Power talks in August. But once at the table, the Bush spokesman refused even to discuss Pyongyang's security worries, and just demanded that North Korea unilaterally disarm. This "does not make any sense," as North Korean Vice-Foreign Minister Choe Su-hon put it in his UN speech Sept. 30. While Washington acts this way, there is no point to the talks, he said. Two days later, Pyongyang began its series of statements about "strengthening our nuclear deterrent."

Almost no one, in the four nations which stand to lose the most from a war in Korea—South Korea, Japan, Russia, and China—thinks North Korea is doing more than bluffing, to get the U.S. to stop its unilateral demands. North Korea "is simply seeking to bolster [its] hand at the next round of the Six-Power Talks," South Korean Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun said Oct. 4. Japan's Cabinet Secretary Fukudo Yasuo responded similarly. China's Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi announced Oct. 3 that a new round of Six-Power talks "will be held in the near future."

American unilateralism must not wreck this opportunity again. South Korea and Russia have already proposed to turn the Six-Power talks into a forum to sign a peace treaty ending the Korean War, and for economic assistance to the North. This proposal is supported by a large wing of diplomats in the U.S. State Department. It could succeed, with Cheney out.