OMNI NORTH KOREA NEWSLETTER #1, July 19, 2012. Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace and Justice.

Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters: http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/ For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation for change.

Contact Your Congressional Representatives

- **Congressman John Boozman**: Lowell office: (479) 725-0400; Ft. Smith office: (479) 782-7787; Harrison office: (870) 741-6900
- **Senator Mark Pryor**: Little Rock office: (501) 324-6336
NUCLEAR WEAPONS and the KOREAN WAR

Dick Bennett

Many of OMNI's newsletters examine the causes, consequences, and cures of the US empire. Here we ask: What is the cause and what the cure for the hostility between NK and US?

The Jan. 3, 2012 NAT printed a cartoon on the editorial page showing the new ruler of North Korea, Kim Jong Un, standing in front of an H-Bomb with a pacifier in his mouth. Are we to understand the cartoonist to mean that NK is a danger because a baby controls such enormous power?

Why not interpret the cartoon as suggesting the new ruler’s potential for learning from his father, Kim Jong Il, that NK is safe from attack by the US because it has acquired the bomb. After all, the US had bombed Japan with nuclear weapons, and since 1945 it had threatened to use the weapon against alleged enemies over a dozen times, despite world knowledge of the bomb’s extraordinary destructiveness, a terror weapon indiscriminate in its killing. The US was no infant in experience with the nuclear bomb, yet during the Korean War in 1950 President Truman threatened publicly to use the atomic bomb against North Korea, and in April 1950 he sent a squadron of planes carrying the bombs to the Western Pacific. And not only Truman, but General MacArthur, the Pentagon chiefs, the field commanders, and later President Eisenhower requested or approved their use. And we all know that President Bush poisoned the well of diplomacy by naming Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as the “Axis of Evil,” and then invaded and occupied Iraq, which had no nuclear weapons, and the US continues to threaten Iran, which also has no nuclear weapons.

So let’s ask our newspapers to stop repeating the warrior dogmas about so-called enemies, to quit reinforcing US permanent war, to cease accepting the official jingoistic history of US wars, and instead to ask questions about that history, to help citizens examine rather than march lockstep.
THREE ALTERNATIVE VIEWS OF NORTH KOREA

See: Korean War

Harold Sunoo 2012

Tim Beal 2011

Bruce Cumings 2011

Dr. Harold W. Sunoo: “Let us end the war and bring peace in Korea!”

President Truman said at the Peace Conference with Japan in San Francisco in Sept. 1951 that "It is a treaty that will work. It does not contain the seeds of another war. It is a treaty of reconciliation, which looks to the future, not the past…. Let us be free of malice and hate to the end that from here on there shall be neither victors nor vanquished among us, but only equals in the partnership of peace."

The winner of the bitter war was willing to let by gones be by gones, it was a great gesture indeed.

Why, then, has America not made peace with North Korea for over 60 years? The Korea War, 1950-53, was a humiliation for U. S. which viewed itself after World War II as the Supreme Power in the Pacific. For the first time in U. S. history all they got was a stalemate. So they have stayed in South Korea ever since, refusing to sign a peace treaty and trying in every way to inflict damage and pain on the North Korean regime.

North Korea has survived more than sixty years of unrelenting American hostility. The people of North Korea continue to build the Juche (self-determination) socialism while defending their hard-won sovereignty.

How do we in America to reconcile with North Korea? Have you ever heard anything positive about North Korea on American television, radio, or in the newspapers? Everything is negative, degrading and poisonous. Any North Korean who is elevated to leadership is belittled and abused. The language is personally insulting to the highest degree and is totally subjective.

Where does this hostility come from? This is the hostility of the pure discrimination of the early slave-masters relationship.

It is particularly galling to Americans that the authority of North Korea continues to choose descendants of Kim Il-Sung to represent the state in the highest capacity. Selecting these leaders is how the Korean
authority tells the world that the DPRK will continue its tradition. It remains true to the ideals that many generations of Koreans have fought for.

When Kim Jong-il died on Dec. 17, 2011, there was speculation in the West and America that there would be a power struggle in North Korea. Kim Jong-un, son of Kim Jong-il, was selected collectively by to Supreme Authority of the Regime.

There are many seasoned revolutionary leaders in North Korea who have learned how to deal with U. S. Military, diplomatically and politically. They supported Kim Jong-il’s many difficult decisions to put defense of the country at the top of their national agenda.

The Bush administration referred to North Korea as part of the “Axis of Evil”- which was a list of countries the U. S. intended to invade, and Bush administration did invade Iraq.

Now the leaders and entire country are united behind Kim Jong-un who will continue the path set by Kim Il-Sung. He will do his best to defend the sovereignty of North Korea and its right to the social system of its own choosing.

Do the political leaders in the U. S. follow the will of its people? The half of American population has now been officially classified as the poor or near poor . U. S. corporations make billions of dollars but they don’t help the people only the richest 1% of the population.

A majority of Americans don’t want foreign wars, but America is at war. People don’t want tax breaks for the rich, but the rich get them anyway, e.g. General Electric Co. made $14 billion in 2010, but did not pay tax. The people want good schools, but thousands of teachers are dismissed. The people don’t get what they need.

American people don’t trust the politicians and know that they work for the rich. 80% of the U. S. Senators and 40% of the members of the House are the millionaires. What can the people expect from them? That’s the way the American politics work, but not in North Korea. In North Korea, the wealth of society is publicly owned and is not in to hands of 1% like in America.

North Korea was completely destroyed by the U. S. in the 1950-’53 War, but they rebuilt the country. Their economy thrived in the 1960’s and 1970’s, but it has had to spend much of its resources on national defense. It has a food problem because of prolonged drought, poor climate and 80% of its territory is high mountains and narrow valleys.

Today the U. S. has pushed tough sanctions on North Korea through the UN Security Council, creating extreme hardship.

What can the American people do to help the North Korean people and help end the war in Korea? How can we help to bring reconciliation with North Korea? Long ago President Truman made an eloquent speech at the peace conference to reconcile with Japan. Why can’t the political leaders in America do the same today?

We must tell it to the American leaders again and again until they understand the problem, and what is right thing to do for America and Korea.
Today American media still believe that North Korea is a Stalinist Communist Country. That is totally wrong. North Korea is uniquely Juche Socialistic Country. The Juche Idea is based on human spirit, not Marxist materialism.

Let’s advocate that the U. S. leaders bring a peace treaty with North Korea as soon as possible, which will help to maintain a peace in the Northeast Asia, and peace in the world.

Harold W. Sunoo, Ph.D.
Distinguish Professor Emeritus of the
Central Methodist University, MO

Founder of
Harold W. and Sonia S. Sunoo

NK NOT THE VILLAIN IN RECENT NK/SK CLASH

Tim Beal, North Korea: The Struggle Against American Power. Editor of the online newsletter, the Pyongyang Report. “Korea, America, and the Road to War.” Z Magazine (February 2011). Argues that the recent clash between N. and S. Korea, contrary to claims by S. Korea backed up by the US and US mainstream media, was provoked by S. Korea. “South Korea and the United States have rejected calls by China, echoed by North Korea, for negotiations, but have, instead, launched further war exercises….”

Bruce Cumings: Latest North Korea Provocations Stem from Missed US Opportunities for Demilitarization

Tension is rising on the Korean Peninsula following North Korea’s underground nuclear test on Monday and a series of subsequent missile tests. The United States and South Korea have raised their military alert level after North Korea said it would abandon the 1953 truce that ended the Korean War. We speak to University of Chicago professor Bruce Cumings, author of several books on Korea.
JUAN GONZALEZ: Tension is rising on the Korean peninsula following North Korea’s underground nuclear test on Monday and a series of subsequent missile tests.

The United States and South Korea raised their military alert level Thursday after North Korea said it would abandon the 1953 truce that ended the Korean War. The US-South Korea Combined Forces Command alert level is now at three, the highest it has been since North Korea’s only other nuclear test in 2006.

Earlier in the week, South Korea announced it would join a US-led initiative to intercept ships suspected of carrying nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, components or missiles to deliver them. Pyongyang has warned it would consider South Korea’s membership in the Proliferation Security Initiative to be an act of war.

AMY GOODMAN: At the United Nations, the US and Japan have circulated a draft UN Security Council resolution condemning Pyongyang’s nuclear test and calling for strict enforcement of UN sanctions imposed on North Korea after its first atomic test in October of 2006. The US-backed draft also demands that North Korea not conduct any more nuclear tests, cease any advances in the ballistic missile program and allow the return of international nuclear inspectors to monitor North Korea’s nuclear activities.

On Thursday, President Obama’s National Security Adviser James Jones addressed the North Korea situation during an interview on National Public Radio.

JAMES JONES: Nothing that the North Koreans did surprised us. We knew that they were going to do this; they said so, so no reason not to believe it. But the imminent threat is the proliferation of that kind of technology to other countries and potentially to terrorist organizations, non-state actors. And that is, in my view, the most imminent danger.

AMY GOODMAN: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has accused North Korea of acting in a “provocative and belligerent manner.”

HILLARY CLINTON: North Korea has made a choice. It has chosen to violate the specific language of the UN Security Council Resolution 1718. It has ignored the international community. It has abrogated the obligations it entered into through the six-party talks. And it continues to act in a provocative and belligerent manner toward its neighbors.

There are consequences to such actions. I want to underscore the commitments that the United
States has and intends always to honor for the defense of South Korea and Japan. That is part of our alliance obligation, which we take very seriously.

AMY GOODMAN: We’re joined now by Bruce Cumings. He’s a professor at the University of Chicago, author of several books on Korea, including Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History and North Korea: Another Country.

Professor Cumings, welcome to Democracy Now! Talk about the significance of this underground test that’s believed to be bigger than the nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

BRUCE CUMINGS: Well, thank you, Amy. What we have here is another train wreck that, if you’re paying attention to US-North Korean relations, you can see coming from a mile away. And we already had this train wreck in 2006. As you just said, the US and South Korean forces moved up to a level-three defense alert after the North Korean bomb, the first bomb, was detonated in October 2006.

But if you backtrack to our Independence Day, July 2006, North Korea tested a long-range missile, several—six or seven—medium-range missiles that could hit Japan, and they purposely chose July 4th to get the attention of the Bush administration. This time, they tested the missiles first and then chose our Memorial Day to test their second bomb on May 25th. They do these things with great calculation. This was—this latest bomb test was an obvious attempt to get Obama’s attention.

And they’re acting out of the same playbook that worked for them in 2006. In other words, George W. Bush, who didn’t talk to evil and didn’t reward bad behavior, turned around within weeks of the first North Korean test in October of ’06 and started direct bilateral talks with the North Koreans in Berlin. This led to the February 2007 agreement to freeze and dismantle the North’s plutonium facility. That was the second time the North had agreed to freeze and dismantle its entire complex. The first was with Bill Clinton in 1994. So, unlike Iran, we have two pieces of evidence that North Korea was willing to give up its plutonium program for eight years. It was frozen for eight years. And then they agreed again in 2007 to do this.

So, the media—I should say the mainstream media, not Democracy Now!—they pay no attention. Along comes North Korea trying to get our attention. They do a bunch of provocative things. And there’s no question that what they’re doing is provocative, but it’s nothing new for them. And then people pay attention, but without the context that’s so essential to understand this.

The Obama administration, and especially Secretary of State Clinton, are running on the same tracks as George Bush did in ’07 and ’08. They’re even talking about the Proliferation Security Initiative, PSI, which is something that was handcrafted by John Bolton to put pressure on North Korea. So President Obama needs to pay attention to a situation that he actually might be able to solve if he paid attention, get back to talks with North Korea. And if he can solve this problem, as his predecessors did, at least temporarily, he would put tremendous pressure on Iran also to give up its enriched uranium program. So I think that’s what’s going on.

But you really—I mean, you have to read the fine print of even our paper of record to find any of this out. For example, this morning we learn, of course, they’ve raised the alert to high levels, but our commanders say there’s no unusual military activity in North Korea. North Korea doesn’t want a war. But this train wreck could have been seen coming from a mile away, or two years away, at least, and the Obama administration is just not paying attention.

JUAN GONZALEZ: Professor Cumings, if we can take sort of a longer historical view, one of the things that apparently North Korea has done is that it’s tearing up the truce agreement that ended the
Korean War. But the Korean War was sixty—almost sixty years ago now. And most Americans don’t even know that there was really no final peace agreement to that war. Why has a final agreement between Korea and the United States eluded our government and their government for so many years?

BRUCE CUMINGS: Well, it’s a very good question. It actually goes back before the Korean War, because in 1945 the US divided Korea unilaterally. The Soviets eventually supported that. We put 25,000 combat troops into Korea, deeply shaped post-war Korean history through a three-year military government. And here we are sixty-four years later, having stumbled into a civilizational thicket that we didn’t understand then and don’t understand now, and we have no exit strategy and the possibility of a new war. So this is a failed policy.

The Korean War ended with an armistice that the South did not sign, refused to sign it. And the North Koreans have used that against the South ever since. But in the last fifteen years, they’ve been calling for a peace treaty or a peace agreement to finally end the war. And there was a great deal of negotiation in the mid-’90s under the so-called four-party talks that Bill Clinton and Kim Young-sam, South Korean president, and Kim Jong-il involved themselves in, along with the Chinese. They got very close to an end to the Korean War, some sort of an agreement that would end it.

But after that, and really for the last decade, the North has threatened many times to break the armistice. They’ve said many times they’re not bound by it. This is another—you know, it’s .8 on their ratchet-up-the-tension scale. But it doesn’t really mean much. It’s a lot of rhetoric. What it means fundamentally is they’d like to end the Korean War. And that’s another thing President Obama could get done, if he’d pay attention and get rid of a lot of Bush holdovers and Clinton holdovers in his administration.

AMY GOODMAN: What do you mean by that? Who is being held over? And who do you think is not constructive in solving the problem with North Korea?

BRUCE CUMINGS: Well, we’ve already—we’ve already discussed the Bolton PSI initiative. President Obama has brought people into his administration, some of them confirmed, some not, like Kurt Campbell, people in the 1990s who weren’t concerned with our specific problems with North Korea that go back sixty-four years, but were overwhelmingly concerned with nonproliferation and saw North Korea entirely through the lenses of nonproliferation. And we’re hearing that again. We heard it at the top of the hour from General Jones.

Now, just to make a comment on this proliferation threat, the US has North Korean plutonium samples from their Yongbyon reactor. They’ve had them since about 1993. If North Korea were to transfer plutonium to some country or terrorist group and they used it, eventually the US would get that signature, and they would do what Colin Powell said we would do in 1995, which is to turn North Korea into “a charcoal briquette.” I mean, that’s the way we talk to North Korea, even though the mainstream media doesn’t pay attention to that kind of talk. “A charcoal briquette.” Well, we did that already during the Korean War with conventional bombing. So, this situation is one where neither side really gives quarter, when it comes down to it. Nonproliferation is a worthy goal, but if we don’t solve the North Korean problem, the Non-Proliferation Treaty really is just a piece of paper. It’s already in shreds.

JUAN GONZALEZ: What about the role of China, Japan and the other major powers in the area? How are they reacting to this—once again, this rise in tensions?

BRUCE CUMINGS: Well, Russia doesn’t really count. Neither does Japan, although Japan makes things very difficult by focusing on eight or nine people that the North Koreans allegedly abducted and can’t produce for the Japanese. The Japanese seem to think eight people are more important than finding a solution to North Korea’s atomic bomb.
South Korea has become a huge obstacle to dealing with the North. And the North absolutely hates the current president, which is a new situation and again a very unfortunate one.

This is really now, and has been really since 2006, a situation where the major players are the United States, North Korea and China. China wants to preserve a friendly regime on its border. It’s not going to take actions that will lead to severe stress on North Korea. On the other hand, it certainly doesn’t want North Korea testing nuclear weapons, when its great fear is that Japan will go nuclear. And Japan could go nuclear overnight. They have huge stockpiles of plutonium. It would just take a decision to do so. I think Japan is quite far from going in that direction, but that’s China’s great fear. And it could then cascade through South Korea and Taiwan getting nuclear weapons. So this is a very dangerous proliferation threat.

But the context, going back to the Korean War, for North Korea is that we have targeted North Korea with nuclear weapons since 1950. We are the only power to put nuclear weapons into the Korean Peninsula from 1958 to ’91. And when you look back at Don Rumsfeld’s antics in 2003, when he thought he had won the Iraq war around May or June of 2003, he was asking Congress for new bunker-busting nuclear weapons to go after Kim Jong-il and the North Korean leadership. There’s an article in the New York Times where someone in the Pentagon—I think it was Rumsfeld, but it was anonymous—was quoted saying, “If I’m Kim Jong-il, I’m running around wondering, you know, what’s likely to hit me next.” Is this any way to run a foreign policy, to threaten to decapitate the leadership of a country that we’re technically at war with? So—with nuclear weapons? So this is the real situation. And if I or you were in North Korea, uppermost in our mind would be American nuclear weapons.

I think the ultimate way to solve this is to actually implement the Non-Proliferation Treaty by the major nuclear powers drawing down their nuclear weapons eventually and hopefully to zero. In the meantime, it’s just an unequal treaty, where we get to have nuclear weapons, but other countries don’t.

AMY GOODMAN: Bruce Cumings, the two American journalists who are now being held in North Korea for nearly two months, supposedly the North Korean government says they’ll put them on trial in June, Laura Ling and Euna Lee, who work for Al Gore’s network, Current, why are they being held? Do you know their story?

BRUCE CUMINGS: As far as I can tell, they stumbled across the North Korean border inadvertently, giving the North Koreans a nice catch, like Iran. There’s been much less attention to these two than there was to the woman reporter who was recently released by Tehran. But there will be a lot of attention next week when they come to trial in Pyongyang on June 4th. I think—one never knows, but I would guess that the North Koreans will declare them guilty and then kick them out of the country.

But it could be—there’s been a lot of talk that Al Gore might actually go to North Korea. Within the Clinton—excuse me, Freudian slip—within the Obama administration, as I understand it, there has been talk of an even higher-level emissary than Stephen Bosworth, who is the emissary they appointed to deal with North Korea. So it could be that next week you’ll see a breakthrough, on at least the journalists.

I think, though, it’s important to remember that from the North Korean standpoint, after they blew off their missiles and busted off their first bomb, Bush turned around and talked to them and made an agreement with them, and they may well think this is the way to get Washington’s attention and get another agreement.

AMY GOODMAN: We want to thank you very much, Bruce Cumings, for being with us, professor at the University of Chicago—

BRUCE CUMINGS: Thank you.
AMY GOODMAN: —author of a number of books on Korea: Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History and North Korea: Another Country.

Printer-friendly version
Email to a friend