

## THE TWO KOREAS (PART II)

On October 19, 1950, more than 400 thousand voluntary Chinese combatants, on orders from Mao Zedong, crossed the Yalu and waylaid the US troops that were advancing towards the Chinese border. The US units, surprised by the vigorous response of the country they had underestimated, were forced to withdraw towards a region near the southern coast, pushed back by the joint action of the Chinese and North Korean forces. Stalin, who was immensely cautious, offered far less support than Mao had anticipated, though the MiG-15 aircrafts piloted by the Soviets, over a limited 42.5-miles front, proved valuable help during the initial stage of the conflict in protecting land forces during their intrepid advance. Pyongyang was again recovered and Seoul re-occupied once more, attempting to fight back the incessant onslaught of the US Air Force, the most powerful which has ever existed.

McArthur was anxious to attack China with nuclear weapons. He called for their use following the shameful defeat they had tasted. President Truman saw no other choice but to dismiss him from his command and appoint General Matthews Ridgeway head of US air, sea and land forces in the theatre of operations. Next to the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Greece, Canada, Turkey, Ethiopia, South Africa, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and Colombia took part in the imperialist adventure. Colombia, then under the unitary government of conservative Laureano Gómez, who was responsible for the mass slaughter of peasants, was the only Latin American country involved. As we said, the Ethiopia of Haile Selassie, where slavery still existed, and a South Africa still under the domination of white racists, also took part in the invasion.

It had been scarcely five years since the world slaughter that began in September 1939 had come to an end, on August 1945. Following bloody combat in Korean territory, Parallel 38 once again became the border separating North and South. It is estimated that, in that war, about two million North Koreans, nearly half a million or one million Chinese and more than a million allied soldiers perished. Around 44 thousand US soldiers lost their lives. No few of them had been born in Puerto Rico or other Latin American countries, recruited to take part in a war they were driven to by their condition as poor immigrants.

Japan was to reap many benefits from the conflict. In a year's time, industrial output grew by 50 % and, within two years, it again reached pre-war production levels. What didn't change, however, was how the acts of genocide perpetrated by China's imperial troops in Korea were perceived. The governments of Japan have paid tribute to the acts of genocide carried out by their soldiers, which, in China, had raped tens of thousands of women and brutally murdered hundreds of thousands of people, as was explained in a reflection.

Hard-working and tenacious, the Japanese have transformed their country, bereft of oil and other important raw materials, into the second most powerful economy in the world.

Japan's GDP, measured in capitalist terms, though the data varies across different Western sources, is today over 4.5 billion dollars, and the country has over one billion dollars in hard currency reserves. This

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is twice China's GDP, of 2.2 billion, even though China has 50% more hard currency reserves than Japan. The GDP of the United States, of 12.4 billion dollars, for a country with 34.6 times more territory and 2.3 times Japan's population, is only three times that of Japan. Its government is today one of imperialism's main allies, at a time when it is threatened by economic recession and the sophisticated weapons of the superpower put at risk the entire human species.

These are historical lessons which cannot be forgotten.

The war, however, took a considerable toll on China. Truman instructed the 6th Fleet to prevent the landing of Chinese revolutionary forces that would achieve the complete emancipation of their country by reclaiming the 0.3 percent of their territory that had been occupied by the rest of the pro-Yankee forces of Chiang Kai-shek that had fled there.

Sino-Soviet relations were to deteriorate later, following the death of Stalin, on March 1953. The revolutionary movement splintered nearly everywhere. The dramatic call issued by Ho Chi Minh made evident the damage that had been done and imperialism, through its immense media apparatus, poked the fires of extremism among false revolutionary theoreticians, an area in which US intelligence agencies were to become experts.

Following the arbitrary division, North Korea had been dealt the most rugged part of the country. Each grain of food had to be reaped through sweat and sacrifice. Pyongyang, the capital, had been razed to the ground. Many, who had been wounded or mutilated during the war, were in need of medical attention. They were enduring a blockade and had no resources available. The Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist block were in the process of recovering from the war.

When I arrived at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on March 7, 1986, nearly 33 years following the destruction caused by the war, it was still difficult to believe what had transpired there. That heroic people had constructed myriad things: large and small dams and canals to store water in, generate electricity, service cities and irrigate fields; Thermoelectric plants, large mechanical and other types of industries, many of them underground in the depths of the bedrock, all created through hard, methodical labor. Because of copper and aluminum shortages, they had been forced to use iron to create electricity-guzzling transmission lines, iron which, in part, was produced from coal. The capital and other cities that had been devastated were reconstructed, inch by inch. I estimated that millions of new homes had been built in urban and rural areas and that tens of thousands of other kinds of facilities had been set up. Countless hours of work were contained in stone, concrete, steel, wood, synthetic products and machinery. The fields I had the opportunity to see, wherever I went, looked like gardens. Well-dressed, organized and enthusiastic people were everywhere, ready to greet visitors. The country deserved cooperation and peace.

There was no issue I didn't discuss with my illustrious host Kim Il Sung. I shall never forget this.

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Korea was divided into two parts by an imaginary line. The South was to have a different experience. It was the more densely populated part and endured less destruction during the war. The presence of an enormous foreign military force required the supply of local manufactured and other products, from crafts to fresh fruits and vegetables, not to mention services. The military spending of the allies was huge. The same thing occurred when the United States decided to retain extensive military forces in the country indefinitely. During the Cold War, Western and Japanese transnationals invested considerable sums of money, siphoning out incalculable wealth from the sweat of South Koreans, a people who are as hard-working and industrious as their brothers in the North. The great markets of the world were open to their products. They were not blockaded. Today, the country has high levels of technology and productivity. It has suffered the economic crises of the West, following which many South Korean companies were bought over by transnationals. The austere nature of its people has allowed the State to accumulate significant reserves in hard currency. Today, it is enduring the United States' economic depression, particularly the high prices of oil and food, and the inflationary pressures from both.

South Korea's GDP -787.6 billion dollars- is almost equal to that of Brazil (796 billion) and Mexico (768 billion), countries with abundant hydrocarbon reserves and incomparably larger populations. Imperialism imposed its system upon these nations. Two fell behind; the other made much more progress.

There is hardly any emigration from South Korea to the West. There is emigration en masse from Mexico to what is currently US territory. From Brazil, South and Central America, people emigrate everywhere, in search of employment and lured by consumerist propaganda. Today, they pay them back with rigorous and contemptuous laws.

The position of principles on nuclear weapons supported by Cuba within the Non-Aligned Movement, ratified during the Summit Conference held in Havana in August 2006, is well known.

I met the current leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kim Jong Il, when I arrived at the Pyongyang airport. He was standing discretely beside his father, to one side of the red carpet. Cuba maintains excellent relations with his government.

When the Soviet Union and the socialist block collapsed, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea lost important markets and sources of oil, raw materials and equipment. As in Cuba's case, the consequences were severe. The progress that had been attained through great sacrifices was at risk. In spite of this, they showed themselves capable of constructing a nuclear weapon.

When the nuclear test was conducted around a year ago, we conveyed the government of North Korea our points of view on the damage this could cause poor Third World countries that were waging an unequal and difficult battle against imperialist designs, at a decisive moment for the world. It might not have been necessary. Kim Song Il, at that point, had already decided, beforehand, what he had to do, mindful of the geographic and strategic characteristics of the region.

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We are pleased to see North Korea's declaration on its intentions of suspending its nuclear weapons program. This has nothing to do with the crimes and the blackmail of Bush, who now touts the declaration as proof of the success of his policy of genocide. North Korea's gesture was not aimed at the government of the United States, before which it never budged an inch, but, rather, at China, a neighboring ally, whose security and development is vital for the two States.

Third World countries are interested in the friendship and cooperation between China and the two Koreas, whose union need not be from coast to coast, as was the case of Germany, today a US ally in NATO. Step by step, unhurriedly but indefatigably, as befits their culture and history, they shall continue to knit the bonds that will unite the two Koreas. With South Korea, we are developing more and more ties. With North Korea, these have always existed and we shall continue to strengthen them.

**Fidel Castro Ruz**

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