

Keith Bennett on the Relationship of Father Moon and North Korea

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August 23, 2014



Keith Bennett

Keith Bennett has tried to understand the relationship of Father Moon with North Korea. He has visited North Korea regularly since 1983. He has many friends there. He loves the Korean people and thinks they are blessed with the finest qualities of human nature. He feels the Korean peninsula is unsurpassed in its physical beauty.

As a regular visitor to North Korea I have been able to see with my own eyes something of the surface of this work. Things like the Potokang hotel that was renovated by Rev Moon and maintained by the Unification Movement. The Peace and Convention Centre in front of the Potokang Hotel. The Billboards of the Peace Motors is the only non-political advertising in all of North Korea.

He knew that Father Moon was ideologically opposed to North Korea. He knew of the two times that Father Moon had been imprisoned in North Korea. He was very surprised in 1991 by the ground breaking visit of an arch enemy of NK to meet President Kim Il Sung. At that time there was no North Korean mission in the UK so he called his friend in the North Korean Mission in Paris. His friend seemed to be as surprised by the news as he was. His friend explained that as Korean people get old they think more about their native place and he felt Rev Moon would not be an exception.

This is not the full story but part of it.

The visit in 1991 created a sense of family obligation that has continued beyond the life of Father Moon and President Kim Il Sung. This was a start of a process that is continued by his family and his movement. It is difficult to allow North Koreans and South Koreans to meet each other. Rev Moon sent major figures to attend the funerals of President Kim Il Sung and President Kim Jong Il. Key figures from North Korea were sent to attend Father Moon's funeral and on the anniversary since then.

Rev Moon's visit to North Korea took courage wisdom and foresight. It occurred not only in the context of events on the Korean Peninsula but also of developments in the world for which Korea is so central. The bridge building to North Korea was preceded by bridge building with the Soviet Union and a meeting with President Michael Gorbachev.

Keith Bennett then read from Father Moon's biography, 'A Peace-Loving Global Citizen' about a conversation at the conclusion of that meeting. Father Moon is quoted (p.252): 'As I was coming out of the Kremlin after meeting Mr Gorbachev I turned to Bo Hi Pak and gave him a special instruction, 'I need to meet President Kim Il Sung before the end of 1991. There's no time. The Soviet Union is going to end in the next year or two. Our country (Korea) is now the problem. Somehow I need to meet President Kim and prevent war from occurring on the Korean peninsula.'

'The Korean peninsula is a microcosm of the world. If blood was shed on the Korean Peninsula then blood would be shed in the world. If reconciliation occurred on the peninsula there would be reconciliation in the world. If the peninsula was unified this would bring about unification in the world.' (p. 252-3)

Keith Bennett continued with a quote from pages 268-9:

'When I went to North Korea, I thought of it as my homeland and the home of my brother. I didn't go there with a desire to get something from them. I went with the purpose to share with them my heart of love. The power of love touched not only President Kim Il Sung but also his son Chairman Kim Jong Il. Since then, and continuing to this day, we have maintained a special relationship with North Korea. Each time North - South relations become difficult, we have played a role in opening the gateway. It is all based on the fact that I met with President Kim Il Sung, conveyed my sincere heart, and built a relationship of trust with him. That is the importance of trust.'

According to an Associated Press article after Father Moon's passing, 'Father Moon was an early practitioner of the conciliatory politics that was followed by the now abandoned sunshine policy. South Korean President Kim Dae Jung visited North Korea nine years later. Father Moon's role in North Korea may turn out to be his most enduring legacy.'

I can carry on the work with my friends in the Unification Movement for the well-being and prosperity of the Korean people and for world peace. I think that is what Rev Moon would have wanted.