

North Korea Sends Peace Signals at the Time of Sun Myung Moon's Visit

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In a move that surprised many in the West, North Korean leader Kim Il-sung invited Korean evangelist Sun Myung Moon to North Korea to visit his hometown and to discuss possible partnerships with the West and with South Korea. Kim Il-sung sent his personal airplane to Beijing, where the Reverend and Mrs. Moon had been visitors, to take the party of eight to Pyongyang. The group was met at the Pyongyang airport by Yun Gi-bok, chairman of the Korean Committee for Aiding Overseas Compatriots, and Kim Dal-hyon, vice premier of the Administration Council.

The three-hour meeting of the evangelist with the president, held at one of Mr. Kim's palaces near the east coast industrial city of Hamhung, marked the conclusion of Moon's seven-day visit. This was his first view of his homeland in forty-one years. During the ceremonial luncheon, the North Korean president said he would be "willing to visit the United States and meet President Bush," if invited.

The meeting site was only a few miles away from the labor camp where Mr. Moon was sent in 1948 for "disturbing society" after several Protestant ministers denounced him to the communist authorities as a heretic. Soon after the U.S. landing at Inchon in the early months of the Korean War, Moon escaped and fled, penniless and on foot, to South Korea.



In a dispatch monitored in Tokyo, the official North Korean Central News Agency said the two men exchanged "warm conversation overflowing with the love of compatriots." They agreed that nuclear weapons should not be "manufactured nor deployed" on the Korean peninsula and that a summit meeting between Mr. Kim and South Korean President Roh Tae-woo was needed to resolve unification issues.

The meeting was attended by Yun Gi-bok, chairman of the Committee for Aiding Overseas Koreans, and Deputy Prime Minister Kim Dal-hyun. The Associated Press further identified Mr. Yun as a member of the twelve-member Secretariat of the ruling Korean party.

The North Korean president told the Reverend Moon that he had overruled senior officials who objected to the visit. He invited Reverend Moon to return to hunt wild boar, and the clergyman invited President Kim to go deep-sea fishing with him in Alaska.



Other discussion items included joint business ventures. Bo Hi Pak, who negotiated the Moon visit to Pyongyang, engaged in several long meetings with Deputy Prime Minister Kim Dal-hyun, but no definite projects were announced. Seoul's state-run Yonhap News Agency reported that one official said the North Koreans had requested \$150 million from Reverend Moon to buy oil.

Reverend Moon may have disturbed the Seoul government. At issue is a tenpoint joint statement issued Thursday by Reverend Moon and Mr. Yun, a key Pyongyang official on North-South unification matters, which the Seoul government asserted deviated from the clergyman's mission as a religious leader. Particularly irritating to Seoul's Unification Ministry, which tries to keep strict control of dealings with North Korea by private citizens, is Reverend Moon's apparent success in obtaining promises from the Pyongyang government to facilitate reunions of families divided by the border. This is a highly charged emotional as well as political issue in South Korea.

However, Moon may have been selected by the Pyongyang government because, as a South Korean residing overseas (in the United States), he is not subject to the same travel restrictions as South Korean residents. Kim Il Sung also could use the evangelist to send messages to the United States without the complexity of a state visit. Further, as a known anti-communist, the invitation to Reverend Moon could send a clear signal that North Korea is willing to enter new relations with non-communist countries.



Kim Il-sung endorsed an agreement reached between Sun Myung Moon and Mr. Yun to help arrange the reunion of millions of separated families. Ten million Koreans have been forbidden, by the rival governments in Seoul and Pyongyang, to cross the demilitarized zone or even to send letters. Until now, the North Korean government has said the two sides should make general political and military agreements first.

Reverend Moon was reunited in North Korea with two sisters and his brother's widow. He is one of thousands of Koreans residing in the United States who have returned to their homeland since 1988, when the Seoul government lifted its restrictions on its citizens living overseas.