

World Peace Demands an International Movement!

by George Katsiaficas

Long before Bush's infamous "axis of evil" speech, there were clear signs that his administration had made North Korea a target in the "war against terrorism."¹ In the past few months, the US has not only labeled North Korea part of an "axis of evil," it has also threatened to use nuclear weapons against it.² In more than a year and a half, there have not been any serious talks between the US and North Korea. Moreover, under pressure from right-wing congressmen, the Bush administration is now reevaluating the 1994 U.S. agreement with North Korea, known as "The Agreed Framework."³ Although there are reports that North Korea and the US will soon resume talks, none of us can forget that in 1994, the US came very close to bombing North Korea unilaterally. "The Agreed Framework" which Bush now is reviewing narrowly averted a new Korean War.

In a phrase, military madness defines the mentality of the top US decision-makers. We cannot therefore regard recent threats as empty. In fact, they are a big part of the reason we are gathered here this weekend—to stop US military madness before it results in a renewed wars. In the following remarks, I hope to clarify the specific character of this disease and recommend a possible cure.

Alongside its hostile actions against North Korea, Bush and Co. are waging wars in Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Colombia; they arm Israel and permit it to overrun and destroy Palestinian cities; they are encouraging the revival of German and Japanese militarism; they are attempting to overthrow the Chavez government in Venezuela; they have withdrawn from the International Criminal Court, scrapped the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Kyoto protocols, refused to sign a new international protocol to the 1972 biological warfare treaty, and

¹ On November 19, 2001 in a speech cleared by the National Security Council, Undersecretary of State Robert Bolton named North Korea as a producer of weapons of mass destruction. Five days later, Bush made similar remarks, causing Congressional Republicans to call on him to take a firm hand with Iraq and North Korea. Opinion polls show that over 70% of Americans continue to approve of Bush's policies. As early as November 25, 2001, the Sunday *New York Times* featured a story entitled "After the Taliban, Who? Don't Forget North Korea."

² In March 2002, a Pentagon review of US nuclear policy recommended that the US threaten to use nuclear weapons against 7 countries—including North Korea

³ North Korea agreed to shut down and eventually dismantle its nuclear weapons program. In return, the U.S., Japan, and South Korea would provide the North with light-water nuclear reactors for generating electricity.

dramatically increased military spending. When I say Bush and Co., I do not refer only to one stupid man and his cronies. It is the system he represents that is the problem. No matter who sits in the White House, whether George Bush or Al Gore, militarism has long been and—until we change it—will remain at the center of US foreign policy and economic output. The US Congress is little better than Bush: it rejected the nuclear test ban treaty signed by 164 nations. Currently, with Congressional funding, the US has over 250,000 troops in 141 countries—and they are seeking new bases and attempted to install more troops in places Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

THE HISTORICAL PATTERN OF VIOLENCE

Before they became organized as nation-states, white European settlers in America committed genocide to steal the land of indigenous peoples. Beginning in the 16th century, peripheral areas were rapidly assimilated into a capitalist world system based in Europe. Whether in what is now Mexico, Peru or the US, the pattern was the same. Besides massacring tens of millions of Native Americans, these colonialists enslaved tens of millions of Africans to build up their new empires. Estimates of the number of Africans **killed** in the slave trade range from 15 to 50 million human beings, and that does not count tens of millions more who were enslaved. From its earliest days, the US practiced biological warfare. Lord Jeffrey Amherst, after whom towns in Massachusetts, New York and New Hampshire are named to this today, was celebrated because he devised a scheme to rid the land of indigenous people without risking white lives: He gave the Native Americans blankets carrying the smallpox virus—thereby wiping out entire villages under the guise of helping them. In the century after the American Revolution, nearly all native peoples were systematically butchered and the few survivors compelled to live on reservations.

In 1848, the US annexed almost half of Mexico in the name of expanding “Anglo-Saxon democracy” and “Manifest Destiny.” Even though dozens of US soldiers were executed under orders of General Zachary Taylor for refusing to fight in Mexico, US expansionism accelerated. At the end of the 19th Century, as manufacturers looked for international markets, the US (led by men experienced in the Indian wars) conquered the Philippines. Six hundred thousand Filipinos perished from the war or diseases on the island of Luzon alone. William

McKinley, who went on to receive a Nobel Prize, explained that “I heartily approve of the employment of the sternest measures necessary.” The director of all Presbyterian missions hailed this slaughter of Filipinos as “a great step in the civilization of the world.” For Theodore Roosevelt, the murders in the Philippines were “for civilization over the black chaos of savagery and barbarism.” In 1900, Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana, summarized the colonialist mentality: “We are the ruling race of the world... We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee, under God of the civilization of the world.” One cannot help but wonder what the definition is of the “civilization” to which he refers.

Although Mark Twain and the Anti-Imperialist League attempted to change US policy, imperial ambitions were too strong. Between 1898 and 1934, US Marines invaded Honduras 7 times, Cuba 4 times, Nicaragua 5, the Dominican Republic 4, Haiti and Panama twice each, Guatemala once, Mexico 3 times and Colombia 4 times. In 1915, Over 50,000 Haitians were killed when US troops put down a peasant rebellion.⁴ Marines were sent to China, Russia, and North Africa—in short, wherever the masters of US imperialism needed them.

Since the Great Depression of 1929, militarism has become more than an instrument of colonial conquest: It is also the primary solution to stagnation in the world economy. Since 1948, the US has spent more than \$15 trillion on the military—more than the cumulative monetary value of all human-made wealth in the US. (More than the value of all airports, factories, highways, bridges, buildings, machinery, water and sewage systems, power plants, schools, hospitals, shopping centers, hotels, houses, automobiles, etc.!) If we add the current Pentagon budget (over \$346 billion in fiscal 2002), foreign military aid, veterans’ pensions, the military portion of NASA and the nuclear weapons budget of the Energy Department to the interest payments on debt from past military spending, the US spends \$670 billion every year on the military—more than a million dollars a minute.⁵ The US military budget is larger than the world’s next 15 biggest spenders combined, accounting for 36% of global military expenditures. Thus, the main problem is the US but nearly 2/3 of global military spending occurs outside the US. Recently Japanese and German militarism are being revived, and in South Korea, the military budget is being raised by 12.7% in 2003 to more than \$14.1 billion.

⁴ See the illustrated comic book expose by Joel Andreas, *Addicted to War: Why the US Can't Kick Militarism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2002).

⁵ Andreas, p. 39.

US MILITARISM AND ASIA

Unless we ignore geography, we must understand that Bush's "axis of evil" is entirely in Asia. This is no accident. Lest we forget history, it is in Asia where in the last half century the US slaughtered over 5 million people in regional wars so distant from the US (and Soviet) mainlands that historians refer to this period as the "Cold" War. In a mere 3 years, between 3 and 5 million people were killed in Korea, and in Indochina the US used more firepower than had been used in all previous wars in history combined, killing 2 million people and leaving tens of millions more still looking to recover. Chemical warfare, euphemistically called Agent Orange, was systematic and deadly. Cluster bombs were designed to maim rather than kill, and over 400,000 tons of napalm were dropped on peoples whose only wrongdoing was to want national independence. The kill ratio in these two Asian wars is about 1000 times that of wars in Central America and even higher for more than 200 other US military interventions during the "Cold War."

More recently, East Asia's importance as a market for military goods has been increasing dramatically. After the end of the Cold War, when demand for such products decreased in North America, Western Europe, the former Soviet Union and former Soviet-bloc countries, arms suppliers looked to other markets. US arms exports rose from \$8 billion in 1989 to \$40 billion in 1991. British arms exports rose nearly 1000% from 1975 to 1995 (when they reached \$4.7 billion). According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies: "Between 1990 and 1997, East Asia's share of global defence imports by value almost tripled, from 11.4% to 31.7%. In 1988, only 10% of US arms exports went to the region. By 1997, this had increased to 25%."⁶ Within East Asia, South Korea's share of military spending in 1997 (\$14.8 billion) was nearly as large as the combined total spending of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.⁷ In the wake of the Asian financial crisis, military build-ups were delayed, but Malaysia's recent purchase of three French submarines for \$972 million, South Korea's decision to acquire 40 F-15's for \$4.23 billion and its rapidly increasing military budget are indications of how military spending is growing in the region. According to Kim Kook Hun, a major general

⁶ Tim Huxley and Susan Willett, *Arming East Asia* (International Institute for Strategic Studies/Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 23.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 15.

and director of the South Korean Defense Ministry's arms control bureau, 7 of 17 countries in the world with nuclear weapons or weapons programs were in the Asia/Pacific region, as were 16 of 28 with missile programs, 10 of 16 with chemical weapons and 8 of 13 with biological weapons.⁸

Even more alarming is the revival of Japanese militarism. Five warships have currently been dispatched to the Arabian Sea. In April 2002, Ichiro Ozawa, leader of Japan's second largest opposition party, stated that Japan could easily make nuclear weapons and become stronger militarily than China. More recently, Shinzo Abe, deputy chief cabinet secretary, publicly explained that Japan could legally possess "small" nuclear weapons. Barely a week later, Yasuo Fukuda, chief secretary of the Japanese cabinet, said that Tokyo could review its ban on nuclear weapons. Rather than reaping a peace dividend with the end of the Cold War, East Asia is posed for what could become a regional nuclear arms race and massive buildup of conventional forces.

The need for a peace movement is strongly indicated by the above dynamics. Without a massive and militant peace movement, the political elite will be unconstrained to use military spending to prevent global stagnation, aggrandize national power and enrich large defense contractors. A countertrend can be found in the Filipino example of expelling the US from its huge base at Subic Bay, perhaps an important trendsetter for Asian anti-militarism movements. But as we watch US troops returning to the Philippines today, we must reflect upon the urgent need for a cure to the disease of military madness, not simply a temporary fix for the symptoms. Strategic social movements need to inject long-term ideas into moments of crisis. Necessary for the health of the existing world system, militarism is a scourge that squanders humanity's vast resources and threatens to destroy our hard-won accomplishments. The impetus for militarism resides in the capitalist world economic system, and it there that the peace movement we build must focus if we are to cure the disease and not only treat the symptoms.

THE REAL AXIS OF EVIL

Ultimately we must build recognition that the real axis of evil is the World Trade Organization, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund. Like their predecessors in the

⁸ Michael Richardson, "Fears spread that other Asia nations will seek nuclear arms," *International Herald Tribune*, June 6, 2002,

colonial world, they masquerade as bringing people more freedom. “Free” trade, IMF “bailouts” and World Bank “assistance,” however, too often mean more poverty for people at the periphery of the world system, not more freedom. Historically there is an inverse relationship between the expansion of prosperity and democracy in the core of the world system and poverty and dictatorship in the Third World. This dialectic of enslavement means that greater “enlightenment” in Europe and the US spells increasing misery in the periphery.

Conventional wisdom holds that increasing core democracy should mean more enlightened policies towards the Third World and the improvement of the conditions of life for all people. One recent exponent of this conventional wisdom is Francis Fukuyama, whose hypothesis is that we have reached the “end of history”—that contemporary European/American political institutions are the desired endpoint of human development. Fukuyama believes that the battle of Jena in 1806, when Napoleon defeated the Prussian monarchy, marks the consolidation of the liberal democratic state, and that “the principles and privileges of citizenship in a democratic state only have to be extended,” that “there is nothing left to be invented” in terms of humanity’s social progress.

For Fukuyama, the spatial extension of the principles of the French Revolution mean that the rest of the world will progress. Evidence abounds, however, that the extension of those principles has resulted in increasing dependency and poverty for the Third World. The American and French revolutions helped propel the nascent world system centered in Europe into international domination, concentrating military power in nation-states and accumulating the world’s wealth in the hands of giant corporations and banks. The worldwide penetration of the economic and political system produced by the American and French revolutions, to be sure, has resulted in rapid economic development and some of the most important forms of political liberty that our species has had the privilege to enjoy. For a majority of its people, the US is arguably the freest society in the world. The dialectical irony of history means the USA is simultaneously a white European settler colony founded on genocide and slavery as well as the one of the freest societies in history. But what are the costs of living in this society? Slavery in the Third World? Ecological devastation? Military madness?

The dynamic of increasing political democracy in the North producing intensified

exploitation in the South has a long history. French colonialists in Vietnam provided a particularly graphic example when they placed a copy of the same statue of liberty that France gave to the United States (the one now in New York harbor) atop the pagoda of Le Loi in Hanoi. Le Loi was the national leader who in 1418 had helped drive the Mongols out of Vietnam. Today he is still regarded as a national hero, a man whose mythology includes the Returned Sword Lake, where the golden turtle that gave him the sword that he used to drive the Mongols out reappeared later to reclaim the sword—a story not unlike that of King Arthur in British history. The placing of a statue of liberty on Le Loi’s pagoda certainly was an affront to the Vietnamese, one which demonstrates how the spatial extension of the principles of the French Revolution are an affront to the Third World.

French colonialism was brutal and deadly. Indochinese recall that dead Vietnamese fertilize each tree in the country’s vast rubber plantations. During the great war against fascism, a war I think all of us would have supported in its day, French exploitation of Vietnam was intensified. In a famine from 1944 to 1945, at least a million and a half, possibly two million, Vietnamese starved to death in the North (where the population was under 14 million), at the same time as rice exports to France were fueling its liquor industry. Such blatant disregard for human life in the midst of the war against fascism! Just as it was under John Kennedy—one of the most liberal US presidents in history—that massive use of Agent Orange in Vietnam began, so the strongest French expansionists were staunch anti-clerical progressives who regarded themselves as the ideological heirs of the French Revolution. They were “enlightened” liberals, much like John Kennedy and his administration were “enlightened” liberals who believed they were carrying forth in the tradition of our revolutionary heritage. As Minister of Education, Jules Ferry defied the Catholic Church in France by making education universal, secular, and obligatory. He was later the first French prime minister to make colonialism and its intensification his principle platform. He felt that it was France’s duty to civilize inferior people, and on May 15, 1883, a full-scale expedition was launched to impose a protectorate on Vietnam. Ultra-conservatives in France objected to this colonial expansion. As Vietnam disappeared, subsumed under the names of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin China, even the Vietnamese people lost their identity, as the French referred them to as Annamites. Here we see the spatial expansion of the liberal values of the enlightenment and the French Revolution—values which became the

basis for France's "civilizing mission" (*Mission civilisatrice*), just as the American revolution was turned into "Manifest Destiny." It was the same French troops, bringing with them "civilization," who in 1885 burned the imperial library at Hue, which contained ancient scrolls and manuscripts and was a repository for thousands of years of oriental wisdom—not the "enlightened" liberal wisdom of the West.

In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville, a disciple of the French Revolution and author of the famous book "Democracy in America," watched in Memphis, Tennessee the "triumphant march of civilization across the desert," as he put it. As he observed 3,000 or 4,000 soldiers drive before them "the wandering races of the aborigines" that is, those Native Americans who were lucky enough to survive "Jacksonian democracy" (named after a man who ordered his men to exterminate "bloodthirsty barbarians and cannibals"), Tocqueville was impressed that Americans could deprive Indians of their liberty and exterminate them, as he put it, "with singular felicity, tranquility, legally, philanthropically, without shedding blood," and most importantly, I want to add, "without violating a single great principle of morality in the eyes of the world," the European world, one should say. "It was impossible," Tocqueville said, "to kill people with more respect for the laws of humanity." Fukuyama's spatial extension of the liberal principles of the French and American revolutions could not be more clearly enunciated.

In the name of civilization and liberal democracy, the British destroyed the communal ownership of village land in India, structures which had sustained local culture for centuries, a communal tradition which survived invasions by Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Afghans, Tartars, and Mongols, but which could not, as Fukuyama would insist, resist the perfection of the liberal principles of the British state. Under British enlightenment, large estates developed quickly as peasants were turned into sharecroppers, and in 1867 the first fruits of British liberalism appeared: In the Orissa district of India alone, more than one million people died in a famine. This was a famine that, I might add, was not indigenous to India, with its "backward" traditions (according to European values), but famine that was brought by the enlightened liberalism of European democracy, by the spatial extension of the principles of the democratic state.

Under the direct influence of its great revolution, France proclaimed a crusade against Algerian slavery and anarchy and, in the name of instituting orderly and civilized conditions, was able to break up Arab communal fields of villages, lands untouched by the barbarous and

unenlightened Ottoman rulers. As long as Moslem Islamic culture had prevailed, hereditary clan and family lands were inalienable, making it impossible for the land to be sold. But after fifty years of enlightened French rule, the large estates had again appeared and famine made its appearance in Algeria.

CIVILIZATION OR BARBARISM?

In the above remarks, I have indicated how European capitalist “civilization”—especially its most “enlightened” forms—has systematically slaughtered native peoples and created a centralized world system that demands militarism as a key organizing principle. The spatial expansion of European “liberty” has meant degradation for the Third World. If this were all in the past, we could breathe a sigh of relief, but these very tendencies are today stronger than ever. According to the United Nations, in the 1990s more than 100 million children under the age of five died of unnecessary causes: diarrhea, whooping cough, tetanus, pneumonia, and measles—diseases which are easily preventable through cheap vaccines or simply through clean water. UNICEF estimates that some twenty to forty thousand children under the age of five die of easily preventable diseases *every day* in the Third World. One billion people today are chronically malnourished, at the same time as austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund have resulted in a drop in real wages in the Third World and declining gross national products in many counties. While 70 percent of the world’s wealth is in the hands of 20 percent of its population, one in ten human beings suffers starvation and malnutrition. Despite—or should I say because of—the spatial extension of liberal values in the period after World War II, there were four times as many deaths from wars in the forty years after World War II than in the forty years prior to World War II. At the same time that the world spends more than a trillion dollars a year on its militaries, one adult in three cannot read and write, one person in four is hungry, and we are destroying the planet’s ecological ability to sustain life. The absurdity and tragedy of such a world is made even more tragic and absurd by the ignorance and lack of concern of the wealthiest planetary citizens for the continuing plight of their brothers and sisters in the periphery.

In such a world, there can be no lasting peace. As long as the wretched of the earth, those at the margins of the world system, are branded as terrorists, kept out of negotiations, they have

no alternative but to wage war in order to find food and justice. In order to remedy this irrational system, we need to redefine what civilization means. We know what it is not, both historically and currently (at least for the billion or more “wretched of the earth” for whom increasing planetary centralization and dependence upon transnational corporations, militarized nation-states and the international axis of evil mean living hell). More and more of us are awakening to the fact that this same “civilization” squanders humanity’s wealth, destroys traditional cultures wholesale, and plunders the planet’s natural resources.

The structural violence of an economic system based upon short-term profitability is a crisis that the peace and justice movement needs to address. As long as the vast social wealth remains dominated by the “enlightened” and “rational” principles of efficiency and profitability, there will be increasing militarism, brutal degradation of human lives and unbridled destruction of the natural ecosystem; there will be mammoth socially wasteful projects—tunnels in the Alps and Pyrenees, bridges connecting Denmark and Sweden or Prince Edward Island and the Canadian mainland, redundant World Cup stadiums—rather than constructive use of humanity’s vast social wealth. A few hundred multinational corporations today control this vast social wealth in the most undemocratic of means and for ends benefiting only a few. According to the logic of “enlightened” neoliberal economics, these corporations must grow or die. I say, let them die! Only a fundamental restructuring of the world system can lead us toward an ecologically viable life-world, one in which we decentralize and bring under self-management OUR vast social wealth.

The peace movement must explicitly question the existing structure of the world system. We must build increasing awareness that militarism is rooted in the irrationality of the imperatives of capital accumulation if we are to develop a pro-active world where peace and justice become the lasting legacy of our species. And we must raise and resolve this question internationally. The solution to militarism cannot simply be a concern of Koreans, of Japanese or even of Asians alone.

Our strength resides in forging a new international civil society that can ultimately delegitimize militarized nation-states and socialize greedy transnational corporations. The transformation of Eurocentric capitalist civilization—ending the MacDonalidization of the world—requires an international movement. The lessons we can learn from past liberation

movements are vital here. A few years ago, Vo Nguyen Giap, military commander of Vietnamese forces against the French and Americans, summarized the reasons why the Vietnamese were able to defeat the US. In his list, the anti-war movement inside the US was prominently present. For years, Vietnam cultivated this movement until it grew into a force with which they coordinated their battlefield tactics.⁹

While challenging military madness and corporate greed, the peace movement we build must have a positive vision. Korean unification can play a vital role here. By creating the preconditions for autonomous Korean social development and demilitarization, the Korean example will shine. Rejuvenation of Korea's unique heritage and withdrawing from the capitalist imperatives of the existing world system could go hand-in-hand. Building a new world economic system (or anti-system, as Adorno insisted) is necessary to cure the planet of the disease of militarism. Korea might therefore become a world leader, showing the rest of us how to accomplish the devolution of the existing world system.

Building the New Peace Movement

It is no accident today that the peace events of which we are part have emanated from Korea and Japan. People here understand the vital need for peace and are in a position to act on their needs. In today's world, activists in Korea can play a vital role. A non-Islamic country with a citizenry that is deeply concerned about war, Korea can have a voice that speaks to governments and activists all over the world. If people here were to create a significant peace movement, governments would take note and activists in the US and Europe would be affected—maybe even inspired to act. Asian activists would be even more impacted. The short-term goal should be to mount a peace offensive that will spread internationally and compel Bush and Co. to behave responsibly. Wherever Bush or senior US officials travel, protests should be as militant and massive as possible.

While the need for constraining the US military has seldom been so necessary, much of the world peace movement supports the war against "terrorism." The Germans Greens, whose

⁹ We all owe Vietnam a debt for helping preserve the principles of liberty and democracy. It was their sacrifice and resistance that preserved the idea of national independence, and it was the resistance to the war inside the US that both helped preserve principles of individual liberty and prevent direct US military intervention in Central America in the 1980s. If the truth about US massacres during the Korean War had been known, how many Vietnamese lives

founding principle is pacifism, served a key role in legitimating the US war (to say nothing of the first foreign deployment of German combat troops since Hitler—a real boost to German imperial ambitions). Historical parallels can be found in the German Social Democrats support of the Kaiser in World War I and in the French Communist Party’s support for the war in Algeria. In the US, many progressives mirror the Bush administration’s comparison of bin Laden and Hitler, a mistaken analysis that makes any offensive action seem proper.¹⁰ Incredibly, the main US opposition to Bush’s plans to make war on Iraq come from the Joint Chiefs of Staff—the top men in the Pentagon, who have waged “a determined behind-the-scenes campaign” to question “Iraq hysteria” among senior Bush administration officials.¹¹

Koreans have long inspired other countries in Asia. Today Korean fashion designers, moviemakers and sports figures are internationally influential. It is time for the Korea movement to make itself felt internationally. In building the movement for democracy here in the 1980s, leaders sought to find ways to unite people in the struggle—and the answer was to call for direct presidential elections. In June 1987, after hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets for 19 consecutive days, that demand was realized. Movements for democracy soon blossomed in many Asian countries: Burma 1988, China 1989, Nepal 1990, and Thailand 1992. These revolts were related to each other and today are all treated as forms of “people power,” a term coined in the Filipino revolution of 1986, itself inspired by the Kwangju Uprising of 1980. To inspire such internationally prominent actions for peace should be our goal.

Currently, the Bush administration has a unique window of opportunity to have its way with the world, and they want to use this opportunity to deal with “rogue states”—i.e. to insure that the entire world is open to neoliberal penetration. Not one government outside Iraq (as far as I know) opposed the war in Afghanistan. While several European governments, Kofi Annan and others are against escalation of the war to Iraq, I suspect they all would fall in line if the US

would have been saved?

¹⁰ Professor Richard Falk of Princeton University, widely respected for his condemnation of the Vietnam War based on principles of international law, called the war in Afghanistan “the first truly just war since World War II.” An article in the *International Herald Tribune* quoted a centrist Democrat as saying it “astonishing how little anti-war agitation there has been on the left” in the US. Even those few professors who publicly advocated peace soon after September 11 were accused of being unpatriotic by Lynne Cheney (the Vice-President’s wife who is herself a powerful conservative voice since being head of the National Endowment of the Humanities during the first Bush administration. She also sat on the board of Lockheed-Martin, recently awarded a deal with the US government worth hundreds of billions of dollars to build the next generation of fighters). Cheney’s report is available at <http://www.goacta.org/Reports/defciv.pdf>.

¹¹ Thomas E. Ricks, “Military trying to head off Iraq strike,” *International Herald Tribune*, May 25-26, 2002, p.1.

decides to act unilaterally. For 11 years, the US and Britain have steadily bombed Iraq. If their coming escalation comes to happen and brings a quick and easy victory, Bush and Co. would be so headstrong that taking on North Korea would not be inconceivable. Russia and China might acquiesce, particularly since they would probably be left untouched while Japan and South Korea (China's main regional competitors) would probably be largely destroyed—and have to be rebuilt. Now a member of the WTO, China no longer fears a US invasion and thus no longer needs North Korea as a buffer state.

The situation in Northeast Asia today has a parallel in Europe the early 1980s, when the US and USSR stationed intermediate range Pershing and SS-20 nuclear missiles in Europe. The new missile deployment meant that the US and USSR could fight a “limited” nuclear war in Europe without Russia or the US being directly attacked. Millions of people took to the streets in London, Rome, Paris and Bonn as a massive peace movement suddenly appeared. The European peace movement helped end the Cold War. The emergence of the Green Party in Germany and the presence of so many demonstrators helped Gorbachev convince Russian generals that Western Europe would not attack them—giving the USSR the space to change peacefully, let go of its East European buffer states and end the arms race.

Today, a similar situation exists in Northeast Asia, where it is possible a regional war could be waged without directly affecting the US. Without a visible peace movement here, US political leaders will feel free to expand their war on “terror” to North Korea. They have launched trial balloons in the form of the above-mentioned “axis of evil” speech, *New York Times* articles and other pronouncements by American leaders. If there are no loud and militant protests from Koreans (and there were not ones loud or militant enough when Bush visited), the US will take it as a sign of tacit approval of their militaristic agenda. In the worst-case scenario, as in Afghanistan, they may choose to have a “limited” war in which Koreans fight Koreans. Minimal US casualties would surely make such a war more palatable to the American public.¹² So long as the US exercises operational command over the South Korean armed forces, the outbreak of war is more likely. I know of no other country that permits its military to be governed by a foreign power. Demanding Korean control of its military is not only reasonable; it

¹² Here is one pragmatic reason why keeping US troops in Korea may actually serve as a deterrent to war. The US would be less likely to use weapons of mass destruction in Korea if it were to mean many American soldiers would also die in the ensuing conflict. Paik Nak-chung first brought this insight to my attention.

could also unite nearly all Koreans—including military leaders. Such a demand would encourage North Korean leaders to reengage the South in dialogue as well as sending a signal to the US that war in Korea is unacceptable.

Whatever short-term demands peace activists make, the movement here should continually insist upon a ban on weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and a pledge of no first strike by the US. After all, even if US troops were to leave Korea, its aircraft carriers and missiles could easily—and for the US painlessly—strike at North Korea. Our long-term goals should be in the forefront: a nuclear-free world, a world free of weapons of mass destruction, a world where peace and justice can freely exist; demilitarization of the economy; the use of the vast social wealth for human needs, not the profit needs of giant transnational corporations and *chaebol*; Korean reunification and development of autonomous regions where people can freely choose how to use their resources. Together we can accomplish these goals if we persevere and build sturdy bridges of international solidarity and cooperation.

