

Conservation of Korea's DMZ and Peace for Humanity

By Cora Weiss

Let us hope that this meeting will suggest concrete moves that can lead to a reunified, peaceful, nuclear free Korean peninsula and plans to implement a magnificent protected safe space in the present DMZ, home to unusual flora and fauna, where thousands of families, too long separated, can be reunited. The Peace Sanctuary must also serve as an enormous open university for conflict prevention as well as a safe place for conflict resolution and reconciliation. It can become a model for the whole world in prevention of war and post conflict peace education. That may sound like a dream, but “Nothing happens unless first a dream,” said our wonderful poet Carl Sandburg. And remember Brazil's Dom Helder Camara who said, “When we dream alone it is just a dream, but when we dream together it becomes reality.”

Plans to design a Peace Sanctuary must continue, but obviously can not be fully implemented in the current atmosphere of threats, tension and the absence of a Peace Agreement. The Korean War is not over. Unsubstantiated charges of the presence of weapons of mass destruction, yet to be found, coupled with eyewitness revelations of gross human rights abuses, none of which meet the legal requirements for the use of force, nonetheless led to the invasion of Iraq. The same seems to be true of the confrontational build up with North Korea and the attendant stories, no doubt quite accurate, of egregious inhumane eyewitness human rights abuses. Rumors of the nuclear build up may well be true, but until substantiated, we may become witness to another military escalation. I hold no brief for Kim Jong Il or his tyrannical regime and oppressive policies. But the world must learn new ways, which are available, of resolving problems other than through military might. We do not resolve one inhumanity of human rights abuse with another inhumanity of the death and destruction of war when the nature and lethality of weapons are so nearly homicidal. Wade Huntley of the Hiroshima Peace Institute reminds us of President Bush's threat that the world's most dangerous regimes will not be allowed to threaten us with the world's most dangerous weapons. I imagine that a number of countries feel threatened by the sole superpower's military capacity, and North Korea, long abandoned by Soviet and Chinese troops is confronted by 37,000 US troops backed by combat aircraft and a “nuclear umbrella” over South Korea. (Selig Harrison, *Korean Endgame*). Remember Winston Churchill's call for “Jaw Jaw Jaw, not War War War.” Everyone, that is,

everyone except a coterie of hard liners around President Bush, is calling for dialogue, for negotiations, for reciprocal gestures. Even the blue ribbon task force of the Council on Foreign Relations is calling for immediate bi lateral negotiations to dismantle North Korea's nuclear program in return for US security assurances, economic assistance and normalized relations. Women, from North and South Korea and the Diaspora met at a women's reunification rally calling for "every effort to prevent a new war....calling for a framework for a unified society with gender equality where women would participate equally with men in every process of reunification."

There is a remarkable petition campaign started in Australia by Friends of the Earth (<nonukes@foesyd.org.au>addressed to the presidents of the US, China, Russia, South Korea, North Korea, the Prime Ministers of Japan, Australia and signed by 215 members of parliaments and non governmental organizations urging a peaceful solution and a non aggression pact. The highly respected former journalist and frequent visitor to Korea, Selig Harrison, calls for a public pledge not to stage a pre emptive attack on North Korea; not to use our nuclear weapons; not to pursue a policy of regime change; to sign a peace agreement ending the war; normalizing relations; opening the way for large scale energy and food aid; and No Korea must shut down its nuclear program and have inspectors..." We can not expect No Korea to give up its nuclear options if we continue to maintain our "nuclear umbrella" and assert our right to pre emptive military strikes." (NYT 6/7/03 Q and A pg. B11) Bi lateral talks will not be easy, the situation is clearly not clear, containment and deterrence have given way to crisis and the possibility of a pre emptive strike. China's recent suggestion that there be regional talks and parallel bi lateral talks is creative. More recently an impressive delegation of Members of Congress from South Korea, academics, leaders of large women's organizations, leaders of political parties, of the environmental movement, came to the US with a set of 10 recommendations for peace. They called for dialogue between the US and N Korea; for Washington to reveal the sources of its claims regarding No Korea's Highly Enriched Uranium Program; for a non aggression treaty in exchange for N Korea's abandoning its nuclear weapons; and other demands on the North as well as on the US. It's a thorough and reasonable position.

This delegation represents a creative new start and recognizes the need to include civil society and bi partisan cooperation to settle the crisis.

These are but a few of the many examples of initiatives for reconciliation taken by so many groupings of Koreans, including many in this country and North and South

members of the armed forces. The Hague Appeal for Peace endorses the concept of the new democratic diplomacy recognizing that governments alone can no longer resolve disputes, but that the combination of governments, international governmental organizations like the United Nations, and civil society must all be at the table where the fate of humanity is at stake. And included among them must be women, victims, youth and teachers. Why? Because for any peace agreement to succeed, it will be the young people who will have to live with it, the women who will also be affected by it, and as I always say, no women, no peace, and teachers who will have to help students understand it. Peace education must always be a part of any peace agreement for its effective implementation. Peace education is a holistic participatory process geared to democracy that includes teaching for and about human rights, non violence, social and economic justice, gender equality, environmental sustainability, disarmament and human security. The goal is to move from a culture of violence which has defined the past century to a culture of peace which must define this new century if there is to be another century. While my imagination and passion lay with the development of the Peace Park, about which I shall speak in a moment, I realize that nothing can happen until there is a significant reduction in the present atmosphere of threat and confrontation. Toward that end, there is a very important initiative for a North East Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone designed by Japan's Peace Boat and Peace Depot. The Toyota Foundation has made a grant to study "Frameworks for Northeast Asia Security" (I'm so glad I own a Toyota!) And for educational activities to bring these ideas to the public. Peace Boat has organized five tours to North Korea and is well positioned to be a messenger for peace. There are 4 other nuclear weapon free zones, including the Treaty of Tlatelolco covering Latin America and the Caribbean; Rarotonga Treaty covering the South Pacific; Bangkok Treaty covering Southeast Asia, and the Pelindaba Treaty, which is not yet in force, covering Africa. 113 nations are party to these treaties which cover over 50% of the land mass of the earth. These prohibit the use or threat to use nuclear weapons within the zone; and prohibit the development, testing, production, possession etc. of nuclear weapons anywhere in the zone. Why should North Korea dump its nuclear capacity if we don't get rid of ours, and the Russians theirs, etc.? At the end of the NPT review conference, on May 20, 2000, by consensus, everyone, including the nuclear weapons states agreed to "an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals." The US is also a signatory to Article 6 of the NPT which carries an obligation to negotiate in good faith for nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, instead, plans are underway to build bunker busters with

war heads 70 times more destructive than the Hiroshima bomb, and so called low yield new nuclear weapons and under the new Nuclear Posture Review to use them against any country which is believed to either have or to be developing chemical and biological weapons. What's happened to the nuclear disarmament so many millions marched for in the 60's and 80's and for which there are so many agreements?

Peace Boat will be docking in NY harbor on August 8 with 700 passengers to commemorate Nagasaki Day and tour the UN. They will be bringing a statement to the UN calling for a Northeast Asia nuclear weapons free zone. In fact, you can meet the passengers and young people from conflict zones around the world at a concert in Central Park on Saturday August 9 at 6 p.m entering at 5th ave and 72nd street.

Thus I suggest that the DMZ Forum broaden its outreach to include peace organizations from the region as well as in the US; that the Forum join in the call for a nuclear free region, for multi lateral and bi lateral talks, and support the common initiatives that have been taken by so many Korean and Japanese organizations. Ichthyologists and ornithologists, zoologists and ecologists alone can not protect the rare birds and flowers in the DMZ. You need a multi-disciplinary coalition of support. And we need the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines to help in the safe removal of the mines.

What better place to hold talks than in the pristine, untouched, beauty of the DMZ - in a de mined spot, of course. There is never a substitute for a site visit. Surrounded by ancient forests, endangered species of animals and plants, farmlands in their natural state, this unique nature reserve can provide the quiet environment for intelligent talk.

This seems an opportune moment to mobilize world public opinion to the beauty of the DMZ, to its potential, and to the value of a peace park.

My son called to say if we didn't hurry and make the DMZ a peace park it would become an MZ. Ten or more years ago, a housewife from California took her grandchildren on a tour of Washington DC and realized that the statues they saw were all men and horses. She proposed a peace park and got her Member of Congress, George Miller, to attach a request to a bill allocating a section of Hinds Point, also a peninsula, on the Potomac River, to a Peace Garden. The bill, which passed, gave them 10 years to come up with a plan and funds to support it. Needless to say, the

Democratic administration gave way to the Republican and with it the Parks Department which rejected one gorgeous design after another and the funds were finally never realized. But the plan was to use the space for meditation, for study groups, for quiet walks, for safe sites for conflict resolution and for children to come to study peace.

Today there are 600 protected border areas in the world under the World Commission on Protected Areas, dedicated to the maintenance of biodiversity, of natural and cultural resources, and to the promotion of peace and cooperation. Such places can bring together environmentalists, peace workers, government officials, political scientists, historians, futurists, anthropologists, foresters, park agents, land mine removers, educators and more. Lands can be divided into nature preserves, with strict non use, general reserves with controlled use, and space for recreational and educational use. Inhabited areas, without any industry, can support agriculture without hardship to the land, and peace education can flower everywhere.

As we sit here today there is a trek taking place through the borders of Montenegro-Kosovo and Albania. A diverse group of ecologists, historians, peace educators and more are walking the zone looking at it for eco tourism possibilities, noting the traditional plants, thinking of the possibilities of studying wars past, seeing its potential for acts of reconciliation, designing new methods of conflict prevention. This war torn Balkan region cries for demilitarization. The recent wars have left deep scars of hatred and for many unfortunately a call for revenge. This month's trek may well produce next year's peace park. You are no doubt familiar with the My Lai Peace Park in Vietnam, built in large measure by veterans of that terrible war. Or the Scandinavian Morokulien Peace Monument, a demilitarized zone since 1914 bridging Norway and Sweden. There is a Glacier Peace Park between Canada and the US and another between Chile and Argentina. And others.

The DMZ Peace Park has extraordinary potential. First it must be carefully demined. UNESCO should be asked to give it a special designation to prevent further destruction, the World Commission on Protected Areas needs to be brought in. Perhaps regional and bilateral negotiations would suggest that the territory be administered by a specially created UN body. It could become the world's greatest open

university without walls, a safe space where a peace agreement can be negotiated and signed; a place for young people from north and south Korea to camp, to study the ecology, to engage in reconciling activities and learn how to prevent future conflicts. Families long separated can have reunions; the Hague Appeal for Peace would certainly want to hold an international conference of peace educators without spoiling a blade of grass, maybe on the railroad tracks...but the site offers such a wealth of possibilities for imaginative thinking, for creative thinking about making this wonderful terrible place we call home, a world without war. [Www .haguepeace.org](http://www.haguepeace.org)

I can see, in my crystal ball, not too many years from now, the DMZ Forum hosting an international conference of folks from all the professions I've mentioned, and from the United Nations secretariat and its many agencies, and leading a walk through the Korean Peace Park. World public opinion would be happy to join this inspiring, possible and doable effort, and you can't make it happen without them. Let's make sure web sites are linked to yours, every list serve has news about the Peace Park, every civil society organization calling for decency, for peace, for human rights, for respect for international law, carries news of this remarkable peace park. That way we will have world public support and no nation will be able to undermine it.
Good luck.