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Two Koreas

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with the Korean peninsula still divided, Lee's town was occupied by both sides' forces at different times. He said he remembered his father, a landlord, hiding in a tree on the family property whenever communist forces came by his home because he feared they would kill him or imprison him for being a landowner.

Lee, a retired University of Rochester sociology professor, has lived in the United States with his wife, Soon Ja, since 1973. The couple has two grown daughters, and belongs to a community of about 30 Korean Catholics who meet once or twice a month at St. Anne's for services in their native tongue.

Soon Ja Lee, 59, a former pre-kindergarten teacher, also has painful memories of the Korean War. As a little girl growing up in Seoul, she remembers troops from both sides using her front yard as a campsite depending on who occupied the capital at the time, and seeing dead bodies in the capital's streets. Forced to flee Seoul at one point, she and her mother were separated when a bridge she had already crossed was destroyed by a bomb, leaving her mother stranded on the other side.

"I lost my mother for a week," she said. "Still, I remember — it feels like one month."

Marked by atrocities on both sides and leaving 4 million dead, the bitter war left a deep impression on the Lees, who welcomed the recent summit between the leaders of North and South Korea with some caution. In particular, Kae Yol Lee noted that he still remains skeptical of North Korean intentions toward South Korea.

"In my mind, I don't trust the communists," he said. "Now they're hungry. They're desperate to get something."

Bitter background

What Lee referred to was the famine that has plagued North Korea the past five years. An estimated 1 million North Koreans have died since 1995 when severe floods began destroying crops, only to be followed by droughts in '97 and '98. Fuel and machinery shortages have also contributed to the plight of the North Koreans, thousands of whom have fled to neighboring China.

The Catholic Church has played a role in famine relief, and earlier this year, Pope John Paul II made the first donation in response to an appeal from Catholic agencies to fight hunger and poverty in North Korea. The pope gave \$50,000 to the campaign to raise \$3.6 million to augment



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

From left, Korean immigrants Soon Ja and Kae Yol Lee. The couple belong to a community of Korean Catholics who worship at St. Anne Church, Rochester.

food supplies, assist farmers and provide health care and education.

The fundraising campaign of Caritas Internationalis, an umbrella group of Catholic charitable agencies, is focused on three eastern North Korean provinces where people continue to suffer from flooding and crop failures.

"International agencies like Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops' overseas relief and development agency, have contributed to famine relief in North Korea, but the closed nature of the North Korean state has sometimes frustrated relief efforts.

Against this background of economic plight was the summit that ended with both countries' leaders issuing a declaration that called for five measures to be pursued:

1. North and South agreed to solve their country's reunification independently of outsiders.
2. North and South recognized the legitimacy of each other's reunification proposals. The North wants a federation and the South wants a confederation, though the declaration was vague on the specifics of each side's proposal.
3. North and South agreed to allow visits of families between the two states, and to work on the issue of prisoners held by both sides as well as other humanitarian issues.
4. Both sides agreed to work on joint economic, social, cultural, sports, public health and environmental efforts as well as other cooperative ventures.
5. North and South agreed to continue to hold dialogues between the proper au-

thorities responsible for efforts in the areas mentioned in the other four points.

Won-Ki Choi, editor and researcher at *The Joong-Ang Daily*, a Seoul newspaper, spoke about the summit at an international forum on Korea in Rome, Italy, June 21. Choi sounded both optimistic and cautionary notes about the summit.

He pointed out that both the United States and China should be careful not to undercut the Korean efforts to reunify by unduly pushing their own strategic agendas. He added that both North and South Korea's leaders need to be careful not to exert too much influence on the other side. South Koreans want reunification, he said, and are tired of their country's division and the effect it has on their lives. However, they don't want reunification that comes "with a hefty price tag" like that which came when East and West Germany reunited.

"There is no knowing whether the summit will close the final chapters of the Cold War, the theme of the 20th century, or (be) just a one-time event like a TV commercial that comes and immediately goes," he said.

Korean comments

The recent summit has raised hopes for eventual reunification among many South Koreans who responded emotionally with applause, tears and exclamations of joy when viewing the leaders' meeting on television sets across their homeland.

One such group of Koreans is learning English in Kyungnam University in Masan, South Korea. The students attend an adult continuing education class at the school taught by Matthew W. Cullivan, a

U.S. citizen and professor of English at Kyungnam. (He is the brother of *Catholic Courier* Staff Writer Rob Cullivan.)

Professor Cullivan surveyed eight students in his class after the summit.

For the most part, the students were optimistic in their comments about the summit calling it "great" and "emotional." One student even complimented North Korea's leader as "brave" for hosting it.

"At first I thought Kim Il Jung was a very stubborn person," wrote Byung-ho Jo, 67, a retired teacher. "But nowadays I think he is a very friendly person. He has a sense of humor."

Some others, however, saw the North Korean leader as an insincere actor.

"His opinion will never change toward South Korea," wrote Jong-nam Shin, 42, a teacher.

Almost all the students thought North Korea's motives for opening up to the South were fueled by its economic plight. One student wondered what that meant for the South.

"I want unification, but it will be economically difficult for the people of the South," wrote Okhee Song, a 55-year-old teacher. "In fact, the economic hardship will be more difficult than now."

None of the students had relatives in North Korea, so the summit declaration prioritizing family reunification for both Koreas did not directly impact them.

Like the Lees in Rochester, all but one of the students supported continued stationing of U.S. troops in South Korea, though some indicated they want the U.S. forces to leave if a peaceful reunification of the peninsula takes place. The U.S. presence in Korea has never been completely welcome by all South Koreans, however, and some South Koreans have called for withdrawal of U.S. forces and have demonstrated at U.S. bases.

"I think the U.S. Army is an obstacle for our unification because the North Korea leader doesn't want to be unified with help from other countries, especially the U.S.A.," wrote Mi-Sun Cho, 30. "I also hope we'll unify not for other countries' advantage, but for ourselves."

Papal visit

A papal visit to North Korea on the heels of the summit would keep the momentum of good will going, said South Korea's ambassador to the Vatican.

"The sooner the visit, the greater the impact," Bae Yang-il, the ambassador, said June 16.

A spokesman for South Korean President Kim Dae Jung announced June 15 that during the summit, North Korean President Kim Jong Il said he intended to invite Pope John Paul II to visit. The pope has said he would like to visit, but has also said it would be "a miracle" if it happened.

Father Bernardo Cervellera, director of the Vatican news agency Fides, said that the North Koreans are grateful to the Catholic Church for its ongoing emergency relief and development aid, and the government knows friendly relations with the Vatican could help its stature in the international community.

"The whole summit was followed by the Catholic Church with an enormous prayer campaign so that it would bear fruit," Father Cervellera said.

One woman who would welcome a papal visit to both Koreas was Soon Ja Lee, who said it would bring hope to North Korea's Catholics, who are not allowed to worship freely since religious activity is generally proscribed in the North. While not opposed to a papal visit, her husband disagreed about its value, stressing that Catholics cannot freely speak about their faith in the North.

"They cannot say," she gently rebuked her husband. "But they can feel."

EDITORS' NOTE: This article is the second in a two-part series on Korea. The first, published June 29, dealt with U.S. veterans and the 50th anniversary of the Korean War's outbreak. This article contains additional reporting by Catholic News Service.

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