

## THE TWO KOREAS PART I

The Korean nation, with its unique culture different from its Chinese and Japanese neighbors, has existed for three thousand years. These characteristics are typical of societies in that Asian region, including those of China, Vietnam and others. There is nothing like it in Western cultures, some of which are less than 250 years old.

In the war of 1894, the Japanese had seized from China its control over the Korean dynasty and turned its territory into a Japanese colony. Protestantism was introduced in this country in the year 1892, following an agreement between the United States and the Korean authorities. On the other hand, Catholicism was introduced in the same century by missionaries. It is estimated that today in South Korea, around 25 percent of the population is Christian and a similar percentage is Buddhist. The philosophy of Confucius had a great influence on the spirit of Koreans who are not characterized by fanatical religious practices.

Two important figures outstand in that nation's political life in the twentieth century: Syngman Rhee, born in March of 1875, and Kim Il Sung, born 37 years later in April of 1912. Both personalities, of different social background, confronted each other due to historical circumstances that had nothing to do with either of them.

The Christians opposed the Japanese colonial system. One of them was Syngman Rhee who was an actively practicing Protestant. Korea changed its status: Japan annexed its territory in 1910. Years later, in 1919, Rhee was appointed president of the provisional government in exile, headquartered in Shanghai, China. He never used weapons against the invaders. The League of Nations in Geneva paid no attention to him.

The Japanese Empire was brutally repressive with the Korean population. The patriots took up arms against the Japanese colonialist policy and succeeded in liberating a small area in the mountain region of the north at the end of the 1890's.

Kim Il Sung, born in the vicinity of Pyongyang, at the age of 18 joined the Korean Communist guerrillas to fight the Japanese. In his active revolutionary life, he attained the position of political and military leader of the anti-Japanese combatants in North Korea, at the young age of 33.

During World War II, the United States decided the fate of Korea in the post-war period. It joined the conflict when it was attacked by one of its own, the Empire of the Rising Sun, whose tight feudal gates were opened by Commodore Perry in the first half of the 19th century, aiming his cannons at the strange Asian country that refused to trade with America.

The outstanding disciple later became a powerful rival, as I have already explained on another occasion. Decades later, Japan successively struck at China and Russia, additionally taking over Korea. Nevertheless it was a cunning ally for the victors of World War I, at the expense of China. It amassed forces and, transformed into the Asian version of fascist Nazism, attempted to occupy Chinese territory in 1937 and attacked the United States in December of 1941; it brought the war to Southeast Asia and Oceania.

The colonial domains of Great Britain, France, Holland and Portugal in the region were doomed and the United States emerged as the most powerful country in the world, matched only by the Soviet Union then destroyed by World War II and by the heavy material and human losses resulting from the Nazi strike. The Chinese Revolution was about to conclude in 1945 when the world massacre ceased. The

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united anti-Japanese combat was taking up its energy then. Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Gandhi, Sukarno and other leaders later carried on the fight against the restoration of the old world order which was already unsustainable.

Truman dropped the nuclear bomb on two civilian Japanese cities; this was a terribly destructive new weapon whose existence they had not reported to their Soviet ally, as explained, one which had been the major contributor to the destruction of fascism. Nothing justified the genocide committed, not even the fact that the tenacious Japanese resistance had taken the lives of almost 15 thousand American soldiers on the Japanese island of Okinawa. Japan was already defeated, and that weapon, had it been dropped on a military target, would have sooner or later had the same demoralizing effect on the Japanese military machine preventing more casualties among U.S. soldiers. It was an act of indescribable terror.

Soviet soldiers were advancing on Manchuria and North Korea, just as they had promised when fighting ceased in Europe. The allies had defined beforehand the point each army could reach. The dividing line would be in the middle of Korea, equidistant between the Yalu River and the southern end of the peninsula. The U.S. government negotiated with the Japanese the rules that would govern the surrendering of troops on their own territory. Japan would be occupied by the United States. In Korea, annexed to Japan, there would remain a large force of the powerful Japanese army. South of the 38th Parallel, the established dividing line, U.S. interests prevailed. Syngman Rhee, reincorporated to that part of the territory by the U.S. government, was the leader the Americans supported, with the open cooperation of the Japanese. This is how he won the hard-fought election of 1948. That year, the soldiers of the Soviet Army had pulled out of North Korea.

On June 25, 1950 war broke out in the country. It is still unclear who fired the first shot, whether it was the combatants in the North or the American soldiers on duty with soldiers recruited by Rhee. The argument does not make any sense if one analyzes it from the Korean angle. Kim Il Sung's soldiers fought against the Japanese for the liberation of all Korea. His armies advanced irrepressibly up to the far reaches to the South where the Yankees were defending themselves with the massive back-up of their fighter planes. Seoul and other cities had been occupied. MacArthur, commander-in-chief of U.S. forces in the Pacific, decided to order a Marine landing at Incheon, at the rearguard of Northern forces which by now were in no condition to counterattack. Pyongyang fell in the hands of Yankee forces, preceded by devastating air strikes. That fostered the idea of the U.S. military command in the Pacific to occupy all of Korea, since the Peoples' Liberation Army of China, lead by Mao Zedong had inflicted a resounding defeat on the pro-Yankee forces of Chiang Kai-shek, supplied and supported by the United States. The entire continental and maritime territory of that great country had been recovered, with the exception of Taipei and other small near-by islands where Kuomintang forces found refuge after being transported there by vessels of the Sixth Fleet.

The history of what happened then is well known today. It should not be forgotten that Boris Yeltsin handed over to Washington the Soviet Union archives, among other things.

What did the United States do when the practically inevitable conflict broke out under the premises created in Korea? It portrayed the northern part of that country as the aggressor. The Security Council of the recently created United Nations Organization, promoted by the victorious powers of W. W. II, passed a resolution that none of the five members could veto. Precisely in those months, the USSR had expressed its disagreement with the exclusion of China from the Security Council, where the U.S. was recognizing Chiang Kai-Shek, with less than 0.3 percent of national territory and less than 2 percent of the population, as a member of that Council and with a right to veto. Such arbitrariness led to the absence of the Russian delegate, with the result that the Council agreed to give the war the character of a UN military action against the alleged aggressor: the Peoples' Democratic Republic of Korea. China, completely outside the conflict, which was affecting its unfinished fight for the total liberation of the country, saw the threat hovering directly against its own territory, this being unacceptable for its security. According to public information, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai was sent to Moscow to inform Stalin of China's point of view about the inadmissibility of the presence of UN forces under U.S. command on

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the banks of the Yalu River which marks Korea's border with China, and to request Soviet cooperation. At the time there were no profound contradictions between the two Socialist giants.

It is affirmed that China's response had been planned for the 13th of October and that Mao postponed it for the 19th, awaiting the Soviet reply. That was as long as he could put it off.

I intend to finish this reflection next Friday. It is a complex and laborious subject which requires special care and information as precise as possible. These are historical events that should be known and remembered.

**Fidel Castro Ruz**

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