

Landmark Confab that Broke New Ground for Achieving Great National Unity Around Leader

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Abstract: It has been nearly seven decades since the historic Joint Conference of Representatives of the Political Parties and Public Organizations in South and North Korea was held in April 1948. When it comes to 70 years, it means an old age for a man, and as far as 100 years are concerned, it translates to a century.

Keywords: Joint Conference of Representatives, The Political Parties, Public Organizations, Patriotic Korean Nationalists, Unity

1. Introduction

It has been nearly seven decades since the historic Joint Conference of Representatives of the Political Parties and Public Organizations in South and North Korea was held in April 1948. When it comes to 70 years, it means old age for a man, and as far as 100 years are concerned, it approaches nearly a century.

In this paper we have showed that the joint conference was a landmark event that brought together representatives of lots of political parties and public organizations from the north and south for the first time in history so as to reach a consensus about achieving territorial integrity and national reunification and that it was a great national gathering at which representatives from the north and south got together for the first time after the country's liberation to discuss ways to save the country, and it was also a historic event that reflected the unanimous desire of the Korean people to set up a unified democratic government as early as possible.

The facts prove that the joint conference marked an epoch-making event in promoting reverence for Kim Il Sung among the south Korean people and opening up a new era for achieving great national unity around him.

2. Background of the April 1948 Joint Conference

The United States brought the Korean issue to the United Nations in October 1947 against the will of the Koreans and spearheaded the establishment of the "UN Temporary Commission on Korea" in November which was to support the US bid for Korea.

The United States, pulling off its mask as "liberators" and "supporters", overtly enforced a policy of aggression to divide Korea.

The "UN Temporary Commission on Korea", which set foot on Seoul on January 8, 1948 under the control of the United States, released "statement No. 1" on key targets of building Korea (Twenty Years after Liberation, page 215) in a move that created an impression that the United States intended to make Korea a "political sovereign state". The United States alleged it would ensure a "nationwide government" was formed under UN surveillance.

This was an outrageous act of aggression aimed at depriving the liberated Koreans of their freedom and rights and reducing them again to colonial slaves of the imperialists.

All Koreans rose up across the country against such bid.

With its bid impossible in reality, the United States put forward Syngman Rhee to clamour for "separate election" and "separate government".

Syngman Rhee said in a statement (Twenty Years after

Liberation, page 233) on February 22, 1948 that when declaring independence 170 years ago, the Americans were not all united or single-minded as some fathers and brothers pledged allegiance to Britain while others supported independence, adding that such a situation led to a civil war. He embarked on the move to set up a separate puppet government in the southern half of Korea.

It is owing to this move that the United States forced a preliminary session of the UN General Assembly to adopt a decision on holding an election in the southern part of Korea under the surveillance of the UN Temporary Commission on Korea.

At the time the United States intended to use the name of the UN, instead of the signboard of the allied force, to help establish a puppet government in South Korea, thus seeking an international rationale behind its occupation of South Korea.

The south Korean workers took the lead in the campaign against the separate election.

The entry of the UN Temporary Commission on Korea on January 8, 1948 triggered a wave of protest among local industrial workers. Those at the Kyongsong Textile Mill in Yongdongpho and other factories in the areas around Seoul and Inchon published a declaration saying that "it is time for workers to rise up now that the people are suffering in distress and the country is in jeopardy due to the unfair intervention of a foreign country (the US)". They then went into strike, signaling the start of the widespread protest actions.

Their strike was followed by a general strike on January 19 which involved workers at 23 factories in Seoul, especially the Kyongsong Electronics Company. Such a move spread like wildfire across south Korea.

Early on February 7 postal and railway workers launched into general strike across south Korea, which evolved into a sweeping campaign that involved workers in seaport, metallurgy, mining, textile, foodstuff, print and other industries.

Protesters put up such slogans: "No to the UN Temporary Commission on Korea that enforces divide and rule!", "Ensure a simultaneous withdrawal of the Soviet and American troops and entrust the establishment of a unified democratic government to Koreans!", "Down with Syngman Rhee, Kim Song Soo and other reactionaries who serve the imperialists!" and "Hand over the power to the People's Committee!" And they lodged terms for improved livelihoods.

Meanwhile, on February 7, 23 vessels that were anchored on Port of Pusan blew a whistle all at once on the stroke of 9:00 am, a clarion call for 15,000 dockers, 7,000 railway workers, 3,200 millers and 1,180 seafarers to go on a general strike. The strikers were joined by thousands of citizens in different parts of the city.

3. Significance of the Joint Conference

President Kim Il Sung said:

"The Joint Conference of Representatives of the Political Parties and Public Organizations in South and North Korea

will be a great national assembly at which representatives of the political parties and public organizations in south and north Korea meet together for the first time after liberation to discuss measures for national salvation; it will also be a historic meeting reflecting the unanimous desire of all the Korean people to establish a unified democratic government as soon as possible."

The joint conference was a landmark event that brought together representatives of political parties and public organizations from the north and south for the first time in history so as to reach a consensus about achieving territorial integrity and national reunification. And it was also an occasion that gave wide publicity at home and abroad to the distinguished personality of Kim Il Sung as a peerless patriot and national hero.

First of all, the joint conference was a nationwide gathering that helped bring South Korean people of all strata closer to Kim Il Sung under the banner of patriotism.

Kim Il Sung saw that patriotism is a common feeling shared both by communists and nationalists and that it is the lowest common denominator that ensures the communists and nationalists reconcile, unite and cooperate in the efforts for the nation. Patriotism was really an artery that linked communism to genuine nationalism and it was also a motive force to push genuine nationalists to cooperate with communists.

He was convinced that the joint conference could serve a substantial occasion to make the entire nation unite and work together to seek a path to national salvation free from the United States, with patriotism serving as the artery and motive force.

He proposed holding inter-Korean negotiations by means of consultative meeting or conference of representatives of the political parties and public organizations in south and North Korea, at a session of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Democratic National United Front of North Korea in early October 1947. His initiative was hailed by many Koreans.

An increasing number of political parties and public organizations in South Korea voiced their support to the initiative and demanded contact with northern counterparts, giving an impetus to the bid for negotiations.

Political parties, public organizations and people across the country held meetings to express their unanimous and full support to the initiative while launching campaigns to thwart the US bid for separate election in South Korea.

South Korean personages who attended the joint conference to meet Kim Il Sung spoke highly of him, calling him "a dear friend of the people" and "a brilliant statesman", overwhelmed by happiness and pride in upholding him as the leader of the nation.

A Trip to North Korea wrote that "such a remarkable development (democratic development in north Korea) is credited to General Kim Il Sung, a brilliant leader," adding that "you need to look no further than Hitler or Tojo to see that a country could break down when led by a wrong leader". "You will also know who fought to win back Korea's sovereignty as a patriot," the book said. A group of journalists

from south Korea said that “the south means destruction but the north is all about construction” and that “the motive force to save south Korea lies in north Korea”. “When anti-democracy, darkness and despair grow worse, North Korea serves as a ray of hope for us. The development in North Korea is of global significance. It is the first time for a small nation to make great stride in such a short span of time. We’d like to express our thanks to Chairman Kim Il Sung once again,” they said.

After they talked with him under his close concern and looked achievements in the northern half of Korea by themselves, they were all overcome by emotion with profound trust in and reverence for Kim Il Sung. “I was surprised to see north Korea achieving rapid growth in all fields of construction in a matter of two years,” a representative from South Korea said after he visited the then Hwanghae Iron Works. “General Kim Il Sung is just a brilliant leader of the Korean nation.”

“I’ve come to north Korea to attend the joint conference. I cannot but be impressed by the substantial achievements made by the North Korean people, and I’d like to extend my sincere gratitude to Chairman Kim Il Sung for his superb leadership,” another south Korean said.

Kim Ku, who had been engaged in anti-communism all his life, revealed his feeling after he met with Kim Il Sung at the joint conference:

“I’ve come to north Korea to see everything myself but I’ve come to realize that such a man as General Kim Il Sung is a genuine communist. If communists are like him, why would I dislike them?”

“It is no accident that he is much concerned with the people because he came from a humble background,” Kim Ku told his relatives later after he visited Mangyongdae, the birthplace of Kim Il Sung. “Only when he leads Korea can it be well-off. If I knew that a communist’s politics is that of General Kim, there is no reason I would oppose it. I’ll follow his path, and it is the path our nation should go along.”

“Among the representatives from south Korea was almost all personages but Syngman Rhee. The fact that the majority of South Korean figures accepted the attendance illustrates that they cherished a desire for national reunification whatever the reason,” an American writer said.

These facts tell that North Koreans’ free and happy life amid democratic reforms carried out the people by themselves greatly encouraged the South Koreans who were subjected to absence of rights and poverty and that it made them realize that North Korea was moving along the right road under the seasoned leadership of Kim Il Sung.

The joint conference also demonstrated that when the Koreans were rallied around the leader they could achieve territorial integrity and national reunification without fail, and it motivated the South Koreans to turn out to oppose the US’ separatist policy and bid for separate election.

The country’s reunification and territorial integrity can be achieved only when all the Korean nationals unite firmly to launch a nationwide struggle. This is a crucial issue related to

the destiny of the nation, and it is a common cause of all the Korean nationals, beyond any political parties or organizations.

The joint conference was a milestone in Korean history as it brought together representatives across the political divide from the north and south to reach a consensus in working to achieve territorial integrity and reunification.

It showed that despite differences in political views parties, sects and groupings could achieve any kind of unity and work together, and it also demonstrated that however the United States and its stooges tried, the concerted efforts of the Korean nation could foil the enemy’s moves to shape the nation’s destiny.

The joint conference adopted an appeal that called for joining the campaign against the separate election, and urged the governments of the former Soviet Union and the United States to withdraw the UN Temporary Commission on Korea and their own troops immediately from the Korean peninsula. The National Committee against the Separate Election in South Korea was formed to turn the anti-US struggle for national salvation into a nationwide movement.

Upset by the successful joint conference, the United States and its stooges built up an artificial wall of the demarcation line while tightening the crackdown on the political parties and organizations that participated in the joint conference.

The US Military Governor issued a statement that the South Korean politicians like Kim Ku and Kim Kyu Sik who came to north Korea were not allowed to negotiate with the north Korean representatives in their own way.

“If there is no nation, there is no state. If there is no state, there is no political party nor ideology,” Kim Ku said at the joint conference. “The aim of our joint struggle should be directed to opposing the separate election in south Korea.”

He extended full support to Kim Il Sung’s initiative for national salvation and reunification.

After the joint conference, the south Korean people across the political spectrum and belonging were out under the guidance of the National Committee against the Separate Election in South Korea to foil the United States and its stooges’ attempts to cook up a separate government, and afterwards joined the north Koreans in the election to set up a nationwide top legislative body, contributing to the establishment of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea as a unified and nationwide central government.

Indeed, the joint conference was a great national event in which representatives from the north and south got together for the first time after the country’s liberation to discuss ways to save the country, and it was also a historic event that reflected the unanimous desire of the Korean people to set up a unified democratic government as early as possible.

After the joint conference reverence for Kim Il Sung soared among the south Korean people, and the event ushered in a new era in which nationwide efforts are made to achieve great national unity around him.

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