

On the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the publication of
the June 15 North-South Joint Declaration

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National Reunification Must Be Realized Independently by the Concerted Efforts of Our Nation Itself

A talk with Mun Myong Ja, a Journalist Resident in the United States
June 30, 2000

How are you, Ms. Mun? You say the medical treatment you have received during your current visit to your homeland has been effective. The traditional Korean clothes you are wearing today make you look much younger.

Six years have passed since I saw you last. I remember shaking hands with you by President **Kim Il Sung's** bier. After that I could not find time to see you, so I wrote a letter in which I expressed a wish to see you when you came to the motherland again. I have not forgotten.

President **Kim Il Sung** often told me about you, particularly after he met you in April 1994. This is why I had long hoped to see you. I had felt "indebted" to you as I promised that I would meet you. So I have found time to pay the "debt."

I was told that you will wind up your visit to the motherland and leave tomorrow, so I planned to see you yesterday. But something unexpected was awaiting my attention. I changed the plan, and am seeing you today. You are deprived of one

day of your itinerary. At first, I intended to see you in Pyongyang after winding up my field guidance, but later I thought there was no need to see you in a spacious office with all formality. So, I asked you to see me here in Wonsan. I intended to talk with you much all day long, but I am afraid I cannot, as you must leave tomorrow. I am sorry to have delayed the day of your departure.

I realized a summit meeting of the north and south of Korea this year for the first time in the history of our divided country. The summit meeting produced a north-south joint declaration. This is of epochal significance in promoting mutual understanding between the north and south, in developing inter-Korean relations and in achieving the independent and peaceful reunification of the country.

In those days I met in Pyongyang several personages from the south side. My overall impression of them was good. President Kim Dae Jung said that when he heard the news carried by the mass media that the north of Korea is united rock-solid, he at first did not know what it meant; he only understood its meaning after witnessing the Pyongyangites welcoming him along the streets and other functions. He must have had a deep impression of our single-hearted unity during his stay in Pyongyang. When the delegation of the south was coming to Pyongyang, at first our officials had not thought of according them a welcome along the streets. Through the June 15 meeting, we not only observed the decorum and morals but demonstrated to the whole world the national conscience the Korean communists cherish. And we gave the international community a feeling that Korea's reunification is not a thing of the distant future, because once people from the north and south meet each other, they can solve the problems arising between them and soon become intimate with each other.

The issue of Korea's reunification is an internal problem of our nation and its supreme task. What we have consistently maintained for the solution to the problem of the country's reunification is independence, and what we clarified in the North-South Joint Declaration is that the Korean nation is the master in solving the problem of the country's reunification, which must be achieved independently by the concerted efforts of the Korean nation itself. The core of the declaration is the article, which stipulates that the problem of the country's reunification must be solved independently by the concerted efforts of the Korean nation responsible for it. Many people have expressed their agreement with this article. And it seems there are also some people who wonder how people who had been at odds with each other could become reconciled and produce such an excellent declaration after seeing each other for only two nights and three days.

When drafting the declaration, our side said to the south side: The July 4 North-South Joint Statement was made public, and some agreements between the north and south were adopted later. They were excellent documents, but none of them have been put into practice. You are proposing reunion of the

separated families and their relatives, economic cooperation and resumption of authority-to-authority talks. To be stipulated in the first and second articles of the declaration before these items are that the north and south agreed to solve the problem of the country's reunification independently by the concerted efforts of the Korean nation responsible for it, and that they agreed to work together for reunification in the form of a federation. The Joint Declaration should by all means be oriented toward reunification and instill in the people a hope for reunification. All things considered, the problem of reunification is the main thing, so it should be mentioned in the first article of the declaration, that is, the country's reunification must be realized without fail in the new century independently and by the concerted efforts of the Korean nation itself; foreign forces must never interfere in the Korean problem. This is how the North-South Joint Declaration was formulated.

The point is how the declaration should be implemented. So during the farewell luncheon held for the south side on the day of their departure, I said that we had made public an excellent joint declaration, that the north would remain faithful in implementing the declaration, and that anyone who went against it would be answerable for it before the nation. It would have been good if you had been present there as an eye-witness.

At that time I told those from the south: Ten days from today it will be June 25, the day the Korean war broke out and the 50th anniversary of the start of the war. I believe that the south is going to hold many events in commemoration of the day, and the United States is going to stage a large-scale function. If you commemorate the war ten days after the adoption of the Joint Declaration, this will be an affront to the north, and the adopted declaration will come to naught. The south side should not go against its promise. I added that the north would hold no commemoration on June 25.

The next issue discussed at the summit meeting and talks was the propaganda conducted through loudspeakers by both sides of the Military Demarcation Line. I said that both sides were slinging mud at each other through these loudspeakers, and that though it was not stipulated in the Joint Declaration, the north would stop doing it to set an example, asking them to follow suit. And that day I ordered the relevant sector to stop all propaganda against the south. Now, I am pleased to say, both the north and the south have stopped sending propaganda messages through loudspeakers.

Through the summit meeting and talks, the delegates from the south must have fully understood what the north demands and thinks, and clearly learned that the north means what it says.

The summit meeting and talks proceeded in the direction of building mutual understanding and confidence. People from the south will acquire a different

feeling during their visits to the north. We think it a success if they availed themselves of this opportunity to be inclined to improve inter-Korean relations whatever their past actions. President **Kim Il Sung** always said that the entire nation should unite, transcending differences in political views and religious beliefs, and prioritizing national interests. This is why I think I cannot take into account the past of those who had been ill-disposed toward us till yesterday, but instead ask for reconciliation today, and demand an apology from them.

Man's consciousness is not immutable. People from the south side are not made of stone, they have their own senses. As they saw and heard things in the north in person, there must be things they learned and were impressed by. I think that if they discard their misguided prejudice of the past and have a correct understanding of the north, nothing would be more pleasant to me.

Repatriation of the unconverted long-term prisoners was agreed at the summit talks; I believe it will be carried out. The draft joint declaration proposed by the south side had not mentioned their repatriation, but at our insistence, their repatriation was treated in the article of the Joint Declaration that deals with the exchanges of visiting groups of separated families and their relatives.

At the summit talks it was agreed that the repatriation of the unconverted long-term prisoners and exchanges of visiting groups of separated families and their relatives would be realized at the same time to mark August 15. Later the south side suggested exchanging visiting groups of the separated families and their relatives in August first, and then it would repatriate the unconverted long-term prisoners in September, saying that it could not repatriate them in August. We made a great concession, and consented to this. We are of the opinion that we should make as many concessions as possible. Hardly a month had passed since the north and south put their respective signatures to the Joint Declaration, yet the south side attempted to dilute it in this way. So, we informed the south side that we would consider the Joint Declaration invalid if the latter continued to take such an obstructive attitude. The south side said it would repatriate the unconverted long-term prisoners in early September without any conditions attached. This issue will be settled at the Red Cross talks that will come to conclusion today at the Mt Kumgang resort.

The summit talks did not deal with both sides' relationship with the United States.

If we had put this issue on the table, the south side would have been caught off guard. To be frank, the south side has to take into account the attitude of the United States, so it was clear it would find it awkward if such an issue were to be dealt with. When discussing in advance the agenda items to be handled at the summit meeting and talks, the south side brought up the issues of "peaceful coexistence" and "peace settlement." I told them: If these issues are to be

discussed, the problem involving our neighbouring countries will be naturally brought under discussion. It will be advisable to avoid these issues. How can we go to the length of discussing problem involving our neighbouring countries when both sides have yet to solve the problem between themselves? So, we had better agree at the first stage that Koreans should solve their national problem independently by their own efforts, and at the next stage discuss problem involving their neighbouring countries. This is why that problem was not discussed at the summit talks.

The problem of the relationship between the north and the United States is an important problem that awaits solution, but the Americans will not remove mistrust and misunderstanding whatever the explanation given by the north. The people from the south try to understand us if we make this or that explanation probably because they are of the same nation, but the Americans are not willing to.

Now the United States is dead set against concluding a peace treaty with the north. It has maintained so far that first the north and south of Korea should meet, and then it would keep step with them. If it is sincere about this, what remains is what approach it will take in practice now that the north and south of Korea have met and adopted an excellent joint declaration. If it is sincere in its wish for Korea's reunification, it should be proactive in improving its relations with the north of Korea, and if it is desirous of peace and wants to put an end to the cold war, it should set an example itself in this regard.

When dispatching a delegation to the United States in 1992, I asked the head of the delegation to make clear to the Americans what I had to say: Why do you pursue a one-sided policy in favour of the south of Korea as you claim that you are defending "security"? You should work for Korea's reunification, not in favour of only one side of Korea. Eight years have passed since then. At the nuclear talks between the DPRK and the United States held after Bill Clinton became president the head of our delegation explained our stand to the American side. It does not seem the Americans understood what our side said.

The "missile issue" is another example of US misunderstanding. The Americans claim that the man-made satellite we launched was a missile. As I said during my visit to China, it was not a missile, but a man-made satellite, a scientific satellite to be more specific. Our Rodong Sinmun newspaper gave an account of it. Since this is an era of science and technology, we ought to keep in step with the advanced countries in the realms of science and technology. To develop our science and technology we manufactured such a satellite. Moreover, the scientists and technicians who had taken part in its production said that it would be better to launch it to mark the anniversary of the founding of the DPRK, not on an ordinary day. I agreed with them. But at the moment some people are

kicking up a fuss, claiming that the north of Korea launched a ballistic missile with a range of thousands of kilometres. The US claims that our artificial satellite was a missile is also a product of its prejudice aimed at stifling us. The Americans' feeling of hatred against us seems to have become inveterate.

Now the United States, which claims to be leading in world trade, sells weapons to the south of Korea in large quantities every year. If it continues to sell the latest weaponry to the south, we cannot but make preparations to cope with this threat to us.

The Americans have not implemented even one provision of the DPRK-USA Agreed Framework concluded in Geneva in October 1994. All things considered; they seem to be applying to us gangster logic. Apparently, they have grown accustomed to the sycophancy and flattering by the pro-American elements in the south of Korea during the 50 years of its domination of the south, and they want the north to treat them in the same way, I think. We have so far done our best to bring them to an understanding of our position.

If the Americans are to sincerely play their due role in the international community and want peace and freedom in the world without any prejudice to the true meaning of the word, they should discard their hostile policy toward us and take the road of improving their relations with us. Since the north and south of Korea have held summit talks and adopted a joint declaration, we will see what attitude they will take.

I do not place a great expectation on them. I do not think their attitude and stand toward us will change overnight. We never want the problem of our relations with the Americans to be solved in such a way that we forfeit our self-respect and are subservient enough to kowtow to them.

I wish you success in your activities. And please take care of your health.