

Report: The Voice of the North Korean People <PART2>

The Domestic Attitudes towards the Missile Launch and Nuclear Test, 2006

2. “Dear General Has Hidden All”

(Reported by Lee Jun)

Reporter Lee Jun met a judicial institution executive official in South Hamkyung Province to seek his opinion about the “October 9th nuclear test.” They are close relatives who often talk frankly over various issues.

Lee Jun: I heard the government conducted an underground nuclear test. Could you explain why it was conducted underground?

Official: That is actually a very important issue. Nuclear tests cannot be conducted aboveground. There is too much risk. Radiation from the test could spread into neighboring countries, including China, destroying them. If we damage other countries, it would be the end for us as well. Therefore, the nuclear test was conducted underground.

“If we lose the war, what will happen?”

This is the question given by the Great Leader (Kim Il-sung) in 1991. Only Dear General Kim Jong-il could answer.

“We will destroy the Earth!”

He answered the question using these words. There was no way in telling what he was really thinking, but we didn’t believe that what

he said had any truth to it. Only international superpowers have the capability to show the world their nuclear strength by conducting surface or oceanic nuclear tests. Our nuclear testing is of a totally different character. This is why this explosion was so small that it didn't even affect our own country.

Lee: Why does the government waste money on such a trivial nuclear test?

Official: From a military perspective, yes, one could say that it is a waste of money but considers it from a diplomatic perspective. Because we are a poor country, we are an outcast in the international community and don't even have enough food to feed our people. We cried out "support us, help us," but no matter how much we asked for support, there were no countries who would lend a hand.

Lee: How about Russia or China?

Official: Our Party members say "There are no permanent friends." Besides, China betrayed us to get economic benefits from the US. Because we are powerless we are in the situation where we can't withstand pressure from China, but at the same time, we cannot turn our back against them, and so all we can do is suffer in silence. Yet, we are not allowed to reveal our true feelings of anger. "The situation may change if we can intimidate the outside world that sees us only as outcasts." This was the very strategy of the



North Korean KCTV announces the October 9th nuclear test. (2006)

supreme commander when he said “We will destroy the Earth.” How happy he was about this strategy! After declaring the nuclear test, he expressed his satisfaction by saying, “This is the proudest moment,

only next to the liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. This is the first time I heard him use the word “liberation” since he passionately said “we must strive for a second liberation” in 1993 when he was inaugurated as the Chairman of the Defense Commission.

He is now saying pompous things like “now that we have declared having nuclear weapons, nobody will look down on us or try to threaten us!”

Lee: Now every Giupso (state owned enterprise) is holding a lecture about nuclear weapons. However, it seems reactions differ, depending on the person. There are those who say, ‘In the past, the Great Leader Kim Il-sung gave the people his first priority and governed the country on the basis of the power of the people. Now the military-first politics are overemphasized with nuclear weapons and the government doesn’t seem to care about the people

anymore.'

When the talk of nuclear weapons began to spread, the people thought, "This type of politics can't be good for us." Judging from the seminars for the executive officers, do you feel that there is any hope for economic recovery?

Official: Even the lectures for the executive officers said that "the dawn for being a powerful nation is now rising." Regarding the economic recovery, the lecturer simply restated the international opinion "North Korea was successful in the nuclear test, so they should be able to put more strength in their economy."

Lee: The lecturer for Party members also said, "We became a powerful nation," What does that mean?

Official: It was not "became," but only that "the dawn is just rising." We also asked the same question to our lecturer. "Will we be a powerful nation in the near future? Does this mean that our economy will recover?" However, the lecturer emphasized that the statement that "North Korea should be able to put more strength in their economy" was a "response from the international community." This means this is not what the North Korean government believes, but an international opinion.

Lee: The time of the Great Leader was good for us.

Official: The national rationing system aimed to provide all people

with "cooked-rice, broth, silk clothes and tile-roofed houses." Currently China reformed and liberalized its economy so that it currently has economical standards incomparable to the past. Obtaining the same standard of living is impossible with the North Korean rationing system. For now, we too must continue to use the national rationing system.

Lee: In the time of the Great Leader, we always received rations.

Official: That was under the time of socialism, the economic system of the Soviet Union. Now it has collapsed.

Lee: There is no solution for this sick economy! The people of North Korea just say "let's watch and see what happens," but what about this talk about becoming a powerful nation? Is this going to turn out as a failure too?

Official: There was a section in the seminar for executive officers in which we were not allowed to take notes. This section addressed the peculiar timing of the nuclear test. Dear General (Kim Jong-il) had hidden his true intentions from the people, the military and even high-ranking officials. When he said "Let us create a powerful nation", he really meant "Let us arm ourselves with nuclear weapons."

Lee: Do you mean that he was deceiving us when he said "Let us create a powerful nation" and that he actually wasn't talking about

economic recovery to improve the life of the people? What about the feelings of the people?

Official: This time, we executive officers also found out exactly how much he didn't believe in the people. In some parts of the lecture material, Dear General said "There was a need to worry about the possibility of invasion." On what grounds did he have the nerve to say, "Let's destroy the earth" when we didn't have nuclear weapons?

Although he knew all along that numerous people were dying of starvation, he didn't keep up the rationing, but rather spent great amounts of money on preparation for the nuclear test only for their own safety.

In the end, announcement of the success of the nuclear testing practically means that he has admitted to committing a serious crime as a politician and a national leader. Does he actually think that the executive officers can't even figure that out??

Starvation is our people's real hardship, not the threat of international military attack. All mountains in North Korea have become bare and the society is in chaos. Nuclear weapons and military-first politics cannot be excuses to avoid the responsibility for his crimes.

3. A Nuclear Test where No One Dies

(Reported by Lee Jun)

-October 2006, reporter Lee Jun shared opinions with many people from different social classes living in the central region of North Korea about the October 9th nuclear test. Lee Jun held this meeting at a diner to hear opinions about the recent nuclear test. At this particular meeting, there was a man in his late-30s who is the head secretary of a governmental institution, a man in his 40s who is a supervisor at certain institution and an antiques salesperson in his early 30s who all participated in the discussion.



Lee Jun (Far right) interviewing a group of people he brought together.
(October 2006) (C)ASIAPRESS

Lee Jun: Now that you've succeeded in the nuclear test, there shouldn't be any problems in unifying the nation, right? Even at the lecture, they said, "How glad would the late Great Leader be."

Secretary: A few days ago, an old person was standing in line all day waiting for rations and they ran out of rice right in front of them. He was so upset he said without thinking, "Damn it, I wish there would be a war!" Do you think this old man was reactionary or not?

Antiques salesperson: Why? Now that we have nuclear weapons, are there any reasons to be afraid of war? If there were a war, we'd win it. Isn't it the Americans' fault that we had to suffer through starvation? The Americans are our arch-nemesis, so that old man's view on war isn't a mistake.

Secretary: But the internally reported reality is saying the opposite. Making such radical statements these days is dangerous. This is not the time to be careless with words.

Lee: It's quite complicated.

Secretary: Honestly, what that man refers to as a "war" just comes from his desire to verbally attack the National Rationing Agency. It's become a custom for our people to represent their internal dissatisfactions in a skewed way with the party's views on war.

Recently, sarcastic remarks about the success of the missile tests became more guarded. Even that man was startled by the attention that was placed on him and mumbled something along the lines of “We need to start a war to conquer those South Koreans. That’s how we’ll get rice.”

Antiques salesperson: I see. Now that we have nuclear weapons, we can take over South Korea and reunify.

Secretary: Well, I don’t know about that...

Advisor: This talk about war preparation didn’t just start recently. In October 1966 the military strategy had already been formed. It was when the members of the Anti-Japan Partisans had complete control of the military industry which is under the second economy<#1>. This is about the time when the people’s living standards began to decline. Today, the actual battle readiness of the average soldiers is lagging. That’s why there are nukes.

<#1> In North Korea, the leadership of all military affairs is held by the members of the Anti-Japan Partisans and their children, in which they run with great secrecy. The second economy is a finance system that is separated from central national finance and is directly administrated by the military.

Executive: Certainly. That’s why we conducted “nuclear” tests that don’t affect people. The Dear General succeeded completely. He succeeded in having an explosion test where not even a single fish or person died. Such a test is impossible in any other country. It is the fruit of our ingenious workers.

Antiques salesperson: Then again if you were to conduct a real nuclear test, you're supposed to wear protective gear. However, this time it was conducted without any type of protective gear. This means that radioactive substances weren't used.

Lee: Where would you use these weapons? What weapons are these?

Antiques salesperson: We'll use them for national reunification. From now, I bet they won't even develop conventional weapons anymore. With the development of the nuke, the days to reunification are getting nearer.

They said, "How elated would the Great Leader be if he saw this" and the Dear General said excitedly, "My wishes have come true. I can now sleep in peace."

Lee: With those weapons, how will they occupy South Korea and get hold of their rice?

Antiques salesperson: But it was said in the lecture that "the U.S. and other foreign countries said that North Korea would move forward to economic reconstruction." So what they were intending to say in the lecture was now we have nuclear weapons, reunification will occur quicker and with the reunification, the economy will recover. This also means that the U.S. also recognized this power. It does sound a little self-righteous, but this

talk of nukes and reunification – it's all pleasant to the ear.

(August 2006 : Edit: The Editorial Staff)

PROFILE:

Lee Jun

Lee Jun is in his thirties and resides in central North Korea. He used to be a laborer at a machine factory. In 1999 during the mass famine of the "March of Tribulation," he crossed the border into China with his family. While living as a vagrant in China, he ran into Ishimaru who was making a report at the time. It was then that he decided to return to North Korea as a journalist to show the world the true situation there. He has been recording video within the country since 2004.

TO BE CONTINUED IN PART 3

*This report first appeared in the 1st issue of the Rimjin-gang
Japanese Edition (April, 2008)*

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