

Leftist Controls Seoul and Diplomacy with Japan

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Dangerous mayor elected

In a mayoral election in Seoul on Oct. 26, pro-Pyongyang leftist civil activist Park Won-soon beat Na Kyung-won of the ruling Grand National Party. The election came after Seoul Mayor Oh Se-hoon resigned for his failure to block a free school lunch program in the city's referendum in August. Oh had opposed the program led by leftists controlling a majority of the city's assembly, claiming that free lunches for all elementary and middle school children could amount to a socialistic pork-barrel spending project. As the Democratic Party, the largest opposition group in South Korea, failed to field any candidate, independent Park unusually became a unified candidate for opposition parties.

Park is a dangerous man who has made explicit pro-Pyongyang remarks. "The Lee Myung-bak administration is responsible for pressuring North Korea into sinking the Cheonan patrol boat." "The National Security Law is a wrong law. We do not have to comply with any wrong law. We should not crack down on those shouting 'long live Kim Il Sung.'" "The U.S. base in Pyeongtaek is a base for a war of aggression and the Cheju naval base construction is illegal." He is a founding member of the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, a leading South Korean leftist group known as PSPD.

Demand for compensation

The Lee government made a surprise proposal in September, requesting negotiations on Japan's compensation for Korean comfort women. Behind such unbelievable anti-Japan move has been pro-Pyongyang leftist groups that communicate closely with Park.

When Japan normalized diplomatic relations with South Korea in 1965, Japan granted South Korea \$300 million and signed a bilateral agreement confirming that South Korea's pending claims regarding the period of Japanese rule had been completely and finally settled. During a

bilateral friction over the comfort women issue that was triggered by false campaigns by anti-Japan people in Japan in the early 1990s, the South Korean government secretly asked Japan to admit the coercion of Korean women and offered to pay money to those women. While investigations found there had been no coercion by the Japanese authorities, the Japanese government accepted the South Korean request and issued a statement by then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono effectively admitting the coercion.

In March 2006, however, the Roh Moo-hyun administration vowed to ask the Japanese government to take responsibility for such inhumane offenses as the Japanese military's comfort women that the bilateral claims settlement agreement did not cover. A panel that compiled the policy included Son Hyuk-Jae, chair of the PSPD Steering Committee.

Japan's apology is backfiring

Taking advantage of the policy, the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, another pro-Pyongyang leftist group, launched a suit claiming the South Korean government's failure to demand compensation for comfort women as unconstitutional. On Aug. 30, the Constitutional Court endorsed the suit. The Japanese government told South Korea that it would not enter negotiations on the matter. But the South Korean government, bound by the unconstitutionality ruling, may continuously raise the issue at diplomatic talks with Japan only to deepen an emotional confrontation as hoped for by pro-Pyongyang leftists. The unilateral apology to South Korea by then Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa and then Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono is now backfiring.

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