

LaRouche: U.S. Food for Peace to North Korea

by Kathy Wolfe and Marcia Merry Baker

Lyndon LaRouche, Democratic Party Presidential pre-candidate in the 2004 elections, called on President Bush on Nov. 29 “to conduct an immediate food-relief effort into North Korea, with absolutely no political strings attached. . . . The food aid is urgent to avoid a devastating famine, and would serve as a prelude to discussions between the United States, North Korea, and other interested parties, concerning all of the unresolved bilateral and multilateral issues currently on the diplomatic table,” a campaign release said.

“LaRouche declared that the food assistance program should constitute a preemptive action, to avert an otherwise severe famine, and that it must be clear that this is an unconditional humanitarian intervention. Nevertheless, LaRouche emphasized that such an action, on the part of the Bush Administration and others, would serve as a useful foundation for opening productive discussions on other issues,” the release said.

“It is better to win a peace, than fight a war,” LaRouche added on Nov. 30.

United States-North Korea relations are at an impasse; negotiations have broken down due to threats of war by a minority faction of extremist “Utopians” in Washington. Where traditional American policy was to “win the peace,” by sending the Army Corps of Engineers to reconstruct a foe’s economy, the Utopians are demanding “regime change” and pushing North Korea into a corner.

LaRouche proposed to mobilize the power of the U.S. Presidency. Since President Bush and his traditional U.S. military and diplomatic advisors do not want war, what is needed now is to outflank and discredit the Utopians within councils of government. For example, President Bush speaks of simple Christian values—such as feeding children.

The urgent call for U.S. famine relief for North Korea is, first of all, the simple human thing to do. Second, it speaks directly to the heart of President Bush and all sane leaders in Washington. Third, it reveals the true ugly nature of the “Utopians,” who would rather destabilize and overthrow governments than feed people.

Inside North Korea

Inside North Korea, the situation is desperate. In late November, the UN World Food Program (WFP) issued an urgent, international appeal for additional food aid, saying that it was out of funds and would soon have to cancel food aid to

some 4.5 million people in the worst-hit but most isolated parts of western North Korea.

The WFP has been providing food assistance to up to one-third of North Korea’s 23 million people in times of crop failures and severe weather over the past decade, and the United States has provided some 65% of that assistance.

As of two months ago, the WFP had to cut aid to 3 million people in western North Korea, and without more food donations, the agency said it will have to cut off another 1.6 million by early in 2003. The UN agency has issued repeated appeals, especially since April, when the food relief pipeline, for what was then 6.4 million recipients, began drying up.

The WFP’s total food need for North Korea was 810,010 metric tons this year at a cost of \$306 million, and is estimated at the same or more for 2003.

No official American response to the UN aid appeal has been made public by the Agency for International Development (AID), headed by Andrew Natsios, which administers American food relief. But USAID spokesman Harry Edwards reportedly told Reuters on Nov. 26, that shipments will be stopped on political grounds. “We’ve informed North Korea that additional food aid this year was contingent on improving monitoring and access” to food recipients, Edwards told Reuters; the United States frequently charges that food is diverted to the military. “We regret North Korea has not responded to that.” Anonymous U.S. officials further told Reuters that Congress had left Washington without passing appropriations for AID’s food budget, just as they failed to pass appropriations for extended unemployment benefits for 1 million Americans—so further food aid to North Korea is also jeopardized on accountant’s cost-cutting grounds.

Gerald Burke, a UN World Food Program spokesman, however, refuted Edward’s political charges, saying there has been, in fact, an improvement this year in UN monitoring which ensures that aid goes to intended recipients. Monitors are watching the food from the unloading of incoming ships, to transportation, warehousing, and distribution at schools and hospitals, he said. A UN survey of 6,000 households was completed, and more monitoring visits have been made, to ensure food goes to the hungry, mostly children and the elderly.

On a more hopeful note, State Department spokesman Philip Reeker said on Dec. 3 that the United States is “looking at” the new WFP request for North Korea, and that American criteria for considering it would be “strictly humanitarian.”

The division of Korea is the fundamental cause of the famines, because it cut off the northern industrial belt from the southern rice belt. At best, only 14% of the land of North Korea is arable; almost all of it is mountainous, and the weather is highly variable and hostile to farming. North Korea was dependent for decades on Soviet-supplied food supplementation. When crops in former Soviet republics fell sharply in the early 1990s, North Korea came to suffer repeated, severe food shortages. The only real solution will be Korean reunification, not finger pointing or political manipulations.