

commentary

from other pens...

North Korea's reforms face United State's test

For a country with a record of more than 50 years of inflexibility, North Korea has been raising eyebrows lately with its recent actions.

The North has embraced capitalist reforms and has been reaching out to old rivals Japan and South Korea, uncharacteristically expressing regret to both for past misdeeds in recent weeks.

But one area where Pyongyang has shown no give is in its weapons program, and that is precisely what a U.S. delegation will focus on during a groundbreaking visit starting today in Pyongyang.

When President Bush designated North Korea an "axis of evil" member last January, along with Iran and Iraq, no one could have predicted that Stalinist Pyongyang would be the most amenable of the three to reform.

"Changes made since July are more dramatic and more noticeable than anything they've done since the end of the war 50 years ago," says Nicholas Eberstadt, a Korea watcher at the American Enterprise Institute.

In a surprise departure from socialist rigidity, Pyongyang decided in July to raise incomes and allow the prices of some products to be determined by the market.

The move was aimed at reviving the North's moribund economy but such reforms can only go so far. Eberstadt and administration officials agree that economic takeoff cannot occur until Pyongyang cuts back on its huge military, which eats up a third of gross national income.

Administration officials disagree over whether Chairman Kim Jong Il is laying the groundwork for converting North Korea into a more normal country, as opposed to the reclusive, inelastic regime it has been.

After visits to Japan and South Korea, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly and the eight other members of his delegation will arrive in Pyongyang today.

Kelly is not expected to engage in the displays of friendship that characterized the October 2000 visit to Pyongyang by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

That visit featured substantive talks about missile sales interspersed with lavish meals hosted by Chairman Kim and toasts to a more congenial relationship. There were few negative comments about Kim and his regime from the U.S. party.

Kelly's visit is likely to be more restrained, without overt displays of friendship. He is going there with no assurance that he will meet with Kim.

The administration's wariness about North Korea was reflected in a speech by Under Secretary of State John Bolton in South Korea on Aug. 29. Bolton referred to Pyongyang's regime as "evil," much as Bush did seven months earlier in his State of the Union address.

"The 38th Parallel serves as a dividing line between freedom and oppression, between right and wrong," Bolton said.

"The brave forces of our two countries stand ready to defend against an evil regime that is armed to the teeth, including with weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles.

"It is a regime that has just a few miles from Seoul the most massive concentration of tubed artillery and rocketry on earth." Despite the rhetoric, North Korea agreed a few weeks later to receive Kelly and his delegation.

The new look that North Korea is projecting these days does not apply to the pervasive cult of personality surrounding Kim.

The veneration was on display in late August when thousands of Kim's countrymen, many dressed in dazzlingly bright traditional costumes, assembled at a plaza in central Pyongyang.

The hoopla was not occasioned by a startling development; Kim merely had come back home from a five-day visit to Russia.

North Koreans have been taught for years that Kim is no ordinary leader. A two-volume "biography" recounts Kim's achievements, crediting him with more than 890 major pieces of writing over the past 30 years.

The speed and quantity of his writing, it said, is "unparalleled in history." One piece alone contained "all the truths of the world."

EDITOR'S NOTE: George Gedda has covered foreign affairs for The Associated Press since 1968.



Missouri town names are odd or peculiar

"Peculiar - 15 miles," the sign said.

It seemed to me most of Missouri is peculiar — or, at least, the town names are odd, strange and unusual.

We were on our way home from the Missouri Press Convention at the Lake of the Ozarks, and the drive was beautiful. The road wound up and down through hills covered with oak and elm. It was still too soon for the fall colors, but the sumac was bright red and here and there a touch of yellow painted the leaves.

Every state has some interesting names — Clyde, Kansas, comes to mind.

Missouri, however, seems to have more odd designations than most.

We traveled through the tiny community of Tightwad.

Boy, wouldn't you just love to know where that name came from.

I can imagine a whole novel, or at least a great short story, on how the town got mad at its founder and changed the name.

Or, perhaps it came from the days of the muzzleloaders, when you had to stuff a wad in the barrel before shooting the gun.

At the big press banquet Friday night, my neighbor told me he was from Louisiana. I was about to ask if he had had any trouble with Hurricane Isidore, which hit the coast earlier in the week, when I remembered that Missouri place names come from all over the atlas.

You can live in Missouri and be from Arab, Arcadia, Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Aurora, Austin, Bismark, Boston, Bowling Green, Breck-



cynthia haynes

• open season

enridge, Buffalo, Cairo, California, Carthage, Charleston, Chesapeake, Cody, Cuba, Denver, Farmington, Fayetteville, Florida, Hartford, Holland, Houston, Iberia, Jamestown, Japan, Lebanon, Lexington, Lincoln, Lisbon, Madison, Manchester, Melbourne, Memphis, Mexico, Miami, Milan, Monticello, Montreal, Nashville, New Haven, Newark, Newcastle, Newport, Oakland, Oregon, Pacific, Paris, Philadelphia, Taos, Troy, Utica, Waco, Warsaw or Washington.

Several people at the convention were from Versailles, because that Ver-sales. I don't think these folks are French.

While Clyde, Kansas, may seem like a strange name, Missouri also has a Clyde. They also have an Archie, Arthur, Clarence, Clark, Craig, Ebenezer, Elmo, Eugene, Gerald, Hermann, Leonard, Leopold, Lewis, Milo, Napoleon, Black Jack, Lone Jack and Jacks Fork.

Missouri is an equal opportunity state, so you could also live in Cora, Cortney, Daisy, Dora, Edna, Emma, Ethel, Florence, Henrietta, Hilda, Jane, Laurie, Myrtle or Shirley.

If all these peoples' name seem to be for the birds, you can choose from Birds Point, Eagle, Rocks, Falcon, Hawk Point or Red Bird.

Wondering who the next Kansas coach will be

Rolling across the state, wondering who the next Kansas football coach will be.

It's not likely that Mark Mangino will be very long up at Lawrence on the Kaw.

The Jayhawks are just 2-3 going into Big 12 play, and it's hard to imagine they are going to have a winning season.

There's nothing unusual about that, of course, but Mangino was not hired to preside over another losing team. He was hired to turn around a perennially bad football program and bring some glory to the university.

So far, he brought more losses, plus his share of personal shame and embarrassment. After the 'Hawks' first game, a nasty loss to Iowa State, the new coach drew poor reviews from sportswriters, who saw him as a poor loser, a coach who abused his players, a guy with a Bobby Knight style without the winning ways.

Then last week, he had to be called out by the officials at a Lawrence High game after he got into it over calls involving his son, the team's quarterback. That kind of thing is bad enough when it comes from some trailer-park papa. It shouldn't happen with a major college coach, someone who is supposed to be a gentleman.

And while KU has had a string of coaches with losing records, most of them have been gentlemen.



steve haynes

• along the sappa

The whole mess is enough to make you long for the days when KU fans could at least count on beating K-State most years. That, of course, was before Vince Gibson, Purple Pride and Power Cats.

Today's Jayhawks play in a much tougher league than the Big 8, a place where even Nebraska is not safe.

I was lucky enough to be in school in the years of Bobby Douglas and the Riggins brothers, and the 'Hawks won some football games. We still figure Penn State stole an Orange Bowl from us.

About the only thing that hasn't changed since then is the voice on the radio. Max Falkenstein started in 1948 and had been doing KU games 20 years by that time. He's into 54 now, an amazing record in any job. And still sounds as good as he did back then, at least as I remember it.

Of course, it might not be just the coach whose job is on the line. There's the new athletic director, Dr. Al Bohl, who has to be accountable for hir-

ing Mangino after he fired Terry Allen, who was a gentleman. Bohl himself has brought some bad publicity to the university, and besides, what can you say for an athletic director who insists on being called "doctor?"

Makes you wonder just what the Ph.D. is in, huh? (Physical education administration, Ohio State, 1987.)

Before the game Saturday, Mangino commenting in passing on his little problem with the high school refs.

"Once you win a few games," he said, "it's amazing how they forget about those things."

Maybe, coach, but some of us think character does count. And the Jayhawks did prevail against hapless Tulsa after a two-touchdown scare in the first quarter.

The KU fan's favorite cheer remains, "Just wait until basketball season."

And the postgame show led off with an ad for "Late Night with Roy Williams," little more than a week away.

My favorite Missouri town — Kansas City. I like the name.

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