NAPSNet Daily Report 20 April, 1998

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 20 April, 1998", NAPSNet Daily Report, April 20, 1998, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-20-april-1998/

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- 1. ROK-DPRK Talks

I. United States

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1. ROK-DPRK Talks

United Press International ("KOREA TALKS COLLAPSE," Beijing, 04/18/98), Reuters ("TALKS ON N. KOREA FAMINE RELIEF COLLAPSE," Beijing, 04/18/98), the New York Times (Erik Eckholm, "TALKS BETWEEN 2 KOREAS COLLAPSE IN MUTUAL BLAME," Beijing, 04/19/98, 8) and the Associated Press (Renee Schoof, "NORTH, SOUTH KOREA TALKS BREAK OFF," Beijing, 04/18/98) reported that talks between the DPRK and the ROK, which were scheduled to resume Saturday, instead broke down late Friday night. Jeong Se-hyun, the head of the ROK delegation, said that the DPRK pulled out because the talks were deadlocked. Jeong stated, "At midnight North Korea unilaterally told us they did not think it was necessary to hold another session because there was no change in our positions." He said that the DPRK delegates "kept repeating their stance that the donation of fertilizer would lead to the solution of all other issues, but avoided making a clear commitment to a schedule." However, he added, "It is not correct to call it a breakdown, because we both hope to restart talks in the future." Chon Kum-chol, the chief DPRK delegate to the talks, argued that "the South Korean administration is using fertilizer as a means of political provocation,"

and he called on the ROK to provide aid without any preconditions. The PRC's official Xinhua news agency quoted an unnamed DPRK source as saying, "It is meaningless to have any further talks."

Reuters (Paul Eckert, "KOREANS BLAME EACH OTHER TALKS' COLLAPSE," Beijing 04/18/98) reported that the DPRK and the ROK blamed each other for the breakdown in talks on Saturday. Chon Kum-chol, the chief DPRK delegate to the talks, argued, "South Korea is responsible for the failure to reach agreement because it politicized a humanitarian and economic issue." He added that he was "pessimistic" about the future of ties with the Kim Dae-jung government because it would not donate fertilizer without strings attached. However, Jeong Se-hyun, the head of the ROK delegation, said he thought that the DPRK's international isolation would force it back to negotiations eventually. He stated, "Faced with a grim international situation, North Korea has no choice but to turn to South Korea for help."

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2. DPRK Famine

The Associated Press (Daniel J. Wakin, "POPE INVITES CHINA BISHOPS TO SYNOD," Vatican City, 04/19/98) reported that Pope John Paul II called attention to the DPRK famine during his noon blessing from his window over St. Peter's Square on Sunday. He stated, "In this moment, my thoughts go, in particular, to the people of North Korea, suffering from hunger and want." He urged Catholic charities and other countries to come to the aid of the DPRK.

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3. ROK Labor Unrest

The Associated Press ("S.KOREAN WORKERS CLASH WITH POLICE," Seoul, 04/18/98) reported that on Saturday striking ROK workers protesting planned layoffs clashed with riot police in downtown Seoul. The 2,500 protesters included striking workers from Kia Motors Corporation, steel and subway workers, taxi drivers, and student activists. The march was organized by the Korea Confederation of Trade Unions.

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4. Japanese-Russian Summit

The Washington Post (Kevin Sullivan, "YELTSIN, HASHIMOTO VOW BETTER ECONOMIC TIES," Kawana, 04/19/98, A26), the Associated Press (Yuri Kageyama, "RUSSIA, JAPAN CHIEFS PROMISE TREATY," Ito, 04/19/98), the Los Angeles Times (Sonni Efron, Carol J. Williams, "TIELESS YELTSIN, HASHIMOTO TALK TIES SUMMIT," Kawana, 04/19/98) and Reuters ("YELTSIN, JAPAN'S PRIME MINISTER HAIL TALKS," Kawana, 04/19/98) reported that Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto on Sunday concluded summit talks which they termed a major step forward in relations. Hashimoto stated, "The talks have deepened friendship between our two nations." He added that the two agreed to include discussions about a possible return to Japan of islands captured by Soviet forces at the end of World War Two in future negotiations on a peace treaty to formally end hostilities by the year 2000. Yeltsin stated, "Progress in Japan-Russia ties has been very fast." He added that Hashimoto had made a "serious and interesting" proposal on the Kuril islands issue, but the two leaders declined to make the proposal public until Yeltsin and the Russian government study it. However, acting Russian Prime Minister Sergei V. Kiriyenko on Friday told the Duma that Russia has no intention of surrendering the islands. Meanwhile, Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Y. Nemtsov stated, "It is practically impossible to have a resolution of

the political problem without a change in public opinion. The question is how to bring closer the positions of the peoples of the two countries, and the only way is through intensive cultural and economic contacts." According to a Japanese spokesman, the two sides agreed to jointly conduct projects on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and space exploration, and Japan agreed to provide Russia with US$1.5 billion in loans over two years. Yeltsin also invited Hashimoto to visit Moscow this autumn and said he would like to come to Tokyo in 1999 as part of the "energetic and intensifying" dialogue between the two.

The Associated Press (Yuri Kageyama, "YELTSIN OFFERS POW PAPERS TO JAPAN," Ito, 04/18/98) reported that Russian President Boris Yeltsin promised on Sunday to hand over to Japan World War II-era documents from the interrogation of Japanese generals captured by the Soviet KGB. Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's response was not immediately known. Meanwhile, Japanese Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi said on a Sunday morning television talk show that Japan could accept a new Russian proposal for a broader, "friendship" treaty, but only after the two nations settle their territorial dispute.

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5. Japanese Chemical Weapons in PRC

Reuters ("JAPANESE FIRMS WANT TO DISPOSE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN CHINA," Tokyo, 04/18/98) reported that Japan's Nihon Keizai Shimbun said Sunday that seven groups of Japanese and foreign firms are seeking contracts from the Japanese government to dispose of chemical weapons abandoned in China at the end of World War II. The government plans to convene a panel later this month to study the proposals for the project, reportedly worth hundreds of billions of yen.

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6. Taiwan-PRC Talks

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN TO SEND DELEGATE TO CHINA," Taipei, 04/17/98) reported that Chang Liang-jen, a spokesman for Taiwan's semiofficial Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), said that SEF deputy secretary-general Jan Jyh-horng will travel to the PRC April 22-24 to meet his PRC counterparts. Jan's visit is expected to pave the way for a trip to Beijing by SEF Secretary-General Shi Hwei-yow. Also Friday, 16 PRC journalists arrived in Taiwan to meet with colleagues on the island, the largest such delegation ever.

II. Republic of Korea

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1. ROK-DPRK Talks

ROK and DPRK officials resumed high-level talks in Beijing Friday after a midnight breakthrough on helping reunite separated families and supplying fertilizer to the DPRK. ROK officials said the two rivals had agreed in principle to hold Red Cross talks this month to discuss details for helping reunite families split by the division of Korea in 1945. The breakthrough came at a dinner meeting between the two sides late Thursday that lasted beyond midnight, ROK chief delegate Jeong Se-hyun told reporters. The venue and timing for the Red Cross talks have yet to be decided upon. The first inter-Korean government talks in nearly four years had come to a standstill over the ROK's demand that the DPRK make a clear pledge to help contact and reunite separated families in return for fertilizer aid from the ROK. (Korea Times, "INTER-KOREAN TALKS RESUME AFTER MIDNIGHT

BREAKTHROUGH," 04/18/98)

Despite the breakdown in talks between the ROK and the DPRK Friday night, top negotiator Jeong Se- hyun expressed optimism about future contacts. In a news conference following the collapse, Jeong said that he was trying to establish a framework of reciprocity for the dialogue, but that if the DPRK officials did not want to negotiate then the ROK would not force them to. He commented that the meeting could be interpreted as a success in that both sides exhibited a common awareness of the importance of the displaced families issue, and that he expects another meeting would be possible on this matter. According to analyses by officials from the presidential office, the DPRK delegates made the mistake of thinking that they could get more from the ROK because President Kim Dae-jung's government demonstrated more flexibility towards the DPRK. They also pointed out that the DPRK may feel that contact between displaced families might increase cross-border traffic and create political problems for the regime there. The officials stressed that the policy of reciprocity will be maintained. (Chosun Ilbo, "JEONG EXPRESSES OPTIMISM OVER FUTURE NK CONTACTS," 04/20/98)

The NAPSNet Daily Report aims to serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange among peace and security specialists. Conventions for readers and a list of acronyms and abbreviations are available to all recipients. For descriptions of the world wide web sites used to gather information for this report, or for more information on web sites with related information, see the collection of other NAPSNet resources.
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