

# Understanding North Korea

By Edwin Madunagu

Union) met to share out their war gains and loots. All the territories "liberated" and still to be "liberated" from the Germans, Japanese and Italians, were to be carved into "spheres of influence." The three leaders went to Yalta with large maps and political geographers.

When it came to the turn of Korea to be carved up, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin agreed that both Soviet and American troops would occupy the country. The Americans would enter from the South and the Soviets from the North. Latitude 38 degrees parallel was fixed as the line of demarcation between the two armies. Nothing was given to the British, for neither Roosevelt nor Stalin could guess Churchill's post-war plans. But Roosevelt and Stalin knew what each other wanted. Stalin wanted a "sphere" of the world, an "allocation" which would be respected by all the victors in the war and which would constitute an outer perimeter of the world socialist system. Roosevelt wanted the same thing in respect of capitalism and imperialism.

The war-lords' agreement on Korea was a *de-facto* partition of the country. They knew and accepted it because it suited them. Their talk about the eventual establishment of a "unified and independent democratic Korean government" was meant for historical record only. Roosevelt and Stalin also knew that with the Yalta agreement a communist government would be established in the North and a bourgeois one in the South. It also followed, and

the two leaders knew it, that the North would pursue a socialist oriented social and economic programme and that the South would do the polar opposite. They knew that no unification was possible, in the foreseeable future. It was only the Koreans, especially those who had fought the Japanese, that rejected the *de-facto* partition. Incidentally the armed Korean nationalists who opposed partition also happened to be Communists. One of these Korean fighters was Kim Il-Sung, a captain in the Red Army who was 32 when the Yalta agreement was signed.

The course of history went exactly as projected. Within three years (1945-1948) the Korean People's Democratic Republic had been established in the North with the Communist Party under the leadership of Kim Il-Sung, in power. In the South a Republic of Korea was established with Syngman Rhee (whom even the American leaders acknowledged as "right-wing") as President. The relation between the two parts of the divided country became that of war. A full-scale war was expected, and it broke out in June 1950.

It took the North Korean forces just two weeks to over-run the South and bring the entire country under their control. But then, like in the Gulf War in 1991, American troops, carrying the United Nations flag, intervened. After three years of bitter fighting, the North Korean Army compelled the UN (American) forces to sign a truce.

Throughout the conflict the South Korean government remained an on-looker. It had no troops on the ground, neither could it mobilise Koreans to fight on its side. For the ardent wish of most Koreans was to regain their freedom and dignity — both of which they identified with Kim Il-Sung and his leadership.

American troops fought for the South Korean government. After failing to subdue the North, the Americans agreed on the terms of armistice on behalf of the South. Despite protests from the puppet government in Seoul, America signed a peace agreement ending the war. Today, more than 40 years after the Korean war, the American-South Korean relation remains the type between an invalid and his protector. South Korea has remained a protectorate, an overseas province, of America. Although "prosperous" by capitalist and imperialist standards, the country is a sickening dependency and a grossly unequal society.

Here then is the "riddle" of North Korea. The forces which fought against the Japanese occupation before and during World War II and then fought against the partition of Korea in 1945 are still in power in Pyongyang. It was these forces that later fought the Americans for over three years and have kept vigil, for 40 years, at the 38th parallel. For this long American troops and North Korean forces — led by Kim Il-Sung — have faced each other across this line.

It is almost certain that North Korea has acquired the nuclear capability, just like Japan, America's chief ally in Asia. Kim Il-Sung is not Saddam Hussein and the Workers' Party of North Korea is not the Communist Party of Soviet Union. The rulers of America may meet their Waterloo in Korean peninsula.

THE image of Kim Il-Sung which the Euro-American media, inspired by their imperialist sponsors, feed to the world is that the North Korean leader is ignorant, senile, paranoid — even superstitious — and brutal, and that the country over which he rules is primitive, impoverished and under chains — waiting to be liberated. But after Boutros Boutros-Ghali the Secretary-General of the United Nations, visited the country a couple of months ago he reported that the "strong-man of North Korea" was well-informed of the world situation, including the upsurge and manouvres of the new imperialism. He also reported that the country is not as impoverished as the Western media would want the world to believe. What then is the true situation?

The real problem with North Korea, as far as imperialism is concerned, is that its leadership or its peoples have refused to dissolve the country and accept integration into the South — *a la Germany* — under a renewed American hegemony. The imperialists hope that if Kim and his Communist Party are overthrown and a puppet regime installed, then the new Korea will join Japan and other "Asian dramas" (Singapore, Taiwan, etc) to increase the "counter-weight" to China. That is the imperialist strategic plan, the cause of its impatience. The hysteria over North Korea's inaccessible nuclear arsenal is simply a ruse.

Many Nigerians do not know this because North Korea sounds so far, so small and so unimportant. But this

falsehood has to be combatted at least for two reasons. First, our youths are entitled to know the truth about the world they live in and its history, that is, we uphold the truth for its own sake. Secondly, our youths have more to learn from North Korea than from the South.

North Korea is a product of history — like other countries and peoples. But imperialism is unable to understand this. After suffering invasions and military occupation for several centuries the Korean peninsular (encompassing the present North and South Korea) was formally *annexed* by Japan in 1910. And as the Israelis were later to do in the West Bank and the Golan Heights after their 1967 and 1973 wars with the Arabs, the Japanese started a huge programme of settling Japanese families in Korea. The conquerors thought that Korea would be theirs for ever. In this they were, predictably, wrong.

The Koreans fought against the Japanese army of occupation. Leading the struggle were Korean communists. They were doing this when World War II broke out and changed the alignment of forces. The Koreans knew that the Allied Forces would enter their country in their war against Japan; but they also knew that this entry alone would not guarantee freedom. In this they were proved right.

Yalta is a Black Sea Port in the Crimea (in present-day Ukraine). It was here, between February 4 and 11, 1945, that Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin — the leaders of the Allied nations (America, Britain and the Soviet