

Anarchists at Korean Peace Conference

Howard Besser

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The Korean Anarchist Federation hosted an international peace conference October 28–31 in Seoul. Approximately two dozen delegates from 15 countries in Europe, Asia, Australia, and North America attended, with all expenses paid for by the Korean comrades.

It was a rather formal academic conference held in a hall that resembled a City Council's chambers. Each delegate presented a paper related to the general topic of international peace, and most of the papers reflected an anarchist perspective. Papers covered the relationship between military technology and capitalism, the necessity of world revolution to assure international peace, the de-radicalization that occurs when peace groups lobby governmental bodies, the necessity of assuring alternative sources of information regarding radical movements, and a number of other topics. [The published complete text of all the talks is available (in english and korean) from: Professor Ha Ki Rak, 706-022 Suseongku, Manchon 2-Dong 990-44, Taegu, Korea.]

As with most conferences, the most interesting and provocative parts took place outside the conference halls in conversations between the delegates. All the delegates considered themselves anarchists with the exception of the delegates from Poland (an unaffiliated progressive) and from the Soviet Union (an apologist for perestroika). The four North Americans felt rather isolated, as the vast majority of the delegates took a syndicalist perspective. There were constant arguments between us and the others over issues centering around work and technology, with North Americans being roundly criticized for demonstrating in front of nuke plants instead of trying to organize the workers there. To me, it seemed like the anarchists from other parts of the world had not gone beyond the anarchist ideology of 50 or 100 years ago.

More details of the conference, as well as a description of the Korean Anarchist Federation will be covered in a future issue of FE.

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