

Amazing Evening at ChaiVillageLA Sunday Night Event: New Members Bring Timely Knowledge

Even the most fervent “news jockeys” among us would have paid strict attention Sunday night at a special event co-sponsored by ChaiVillageLA and Temple Isaiah. Jonathan Pollack, veteran member of the Brookings Institution of Washington D.C., gave a masterful history of the “dark kingdom” of North Korea right up to its current and dangerous nuclear potential. Jonathan and his wife Barbara Marom-Pollack are new members of Temple Emanuel and ChaiVillageLA, which couldn’t be more timely and fortunate for us as Jonathan’s specialty has been centered in Asia, with U.S.-China relations and Korean politics and policies chief among them.

It was most interesting to hear Jonathan review the past 100 plus years of Korea. Japan and Russia battled over control of Korea and ended with Japan annexing it. It was harshly occupied by Japan until the end of World War II when it was given independence. However, similar to Germany, it was divided between Communist and Democratic governments. As Jonathan explained, Kim Il Sung, a militant took it over and it has remained in the same family ever since. Kim Jong-Un, his grandson has insured his leadership by orchestrating the death of his half-brother and an uncle. Nearby Japan has as much reason to be nervous of him as South Korea with the North’s military buildup. Jonathan noted that Kim Il Sung was aware of the devastation of atomic weapons which were unleashed on nearby Japan and realized they could be a weapon to give importance to an impoverished country. He was head of a government that was almost destroyed by the United States until China stepped in to befriend it.

It was an evening to take much into consideration. The event was originally scheduled to be at a ChaiVillageLA member’s home but the response was so intense it was moved to Temple Isaiah. Many thanks to Jonathan Pollack for his insights and to Lorna Belman for organizing and moderating the event.