

KOREA AND UNITED STATES HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

George Lister  
Senior Policy Adviser  
Bureau of Human Rights  
Department of State

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I am very honored to be here with you this evening. Tonight is indeed a special occasion for me. I am deeply grateful to Professor Lee, and to many other Korean friends here, for giving me the opportunity to address the United Movement for Democracy and Unification in Korea. And I am impressed and pleased to note that one of your previous speakers was former Congressman Don Fraser, now Mayor of Minneapolis. Don Fraser played a key role in the development of our current human rights policy, and we are old friends.

We have come together here at a critical juncture in Korean-U.S. relations and I hope we can make a useful contribution to those relations tonight. The subject of my speech is: Korea and United States Human Rights Policy. I do not intend to dwell in great detail on the political situation in South Korea today. Most of you are well informed on that subject. Rather, I prefer to focus primarily on what all of us in this country can do to help Korean democracy, at a time when the eyes of the world are on Seoul, and Koreans are beginning the difficult and complicated task of building a stable democratic society.

First let me turn very quickly and briefly to United States policy. What does our Government hope for in South Korea? The answer is simple: we hope for a peaceful transition to a democratic government. We hope for that for two main reasons: one, we believe democracy is the best form of government; and, two, we believe that over the long run a democratic Korea will prove to be a reliable friend of the United States. We are



convinced that a democratic world, beyond its own intrinsic worth, is in our own self interest as well as in the interest of Koreans.

A very clear and succinct statement on our policy toward Korea was provided recently by Dr. Gaston Sigur, Assistant Secretary of State of the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, in a speech to the Foreign Policy Association on July 21. In that address Dr. Sigur stated the following:

"Koreans have taken remarkable steps in recent weeks to build toward democracy.....While there is still much work to do, it is clear to all that the Korean people have begun the process very well. We applaud those accomplishments and encourage both government and opposition parties to promptly complete the process which has been started. We lend our full support - unqualified - to the Korean people and to whichever candidate they choose to be their next president in an open and fair election. We are prepared to work with a fairly elected Korean government to carry our close alliance and deep friendship even beyond the point it has reached today".

I do not believe one could ask for a more articulate and enthusiastic statement of support for democracy. And I think it is equally important that Assistant Secretary Sigur immediately added the following sentence: "Let me be clear on this point: anyone who claims that he has or will get the support of the U.S. Government as a candidate is wrong; we lend our full and enthusiastic support to the process, but not to any individual or party". Once again, I think our position is crystal clear.

But of course, far more important than what the United States wants in South Korea is what Koreans themselves want, and how much they want it. We can express our hopes, that is easy, but Koreans themselves must build democratic institutions for Korea. That is the hard part. Let me say a few words on that key point.

History teaches us that democracy must be built with care, brick by brick. It is hard work. Those who hold power are often reluctant to share it with others. Demagogues can mislead the masses with promises of quick results. Democratic parties are sometimes crippled by factional in-fighting. Election of a democratic government does not automatically produce a stable democratic society. Political leaders who have called for democracy sometimes sacrifice principles for their personal ambitions, and, once in power, apply that power for their own selfish advantage. Some political groups which pay lip service to "democracy" simply use that word as a tactic to achieve their political goal which, in the case of the Leninists, is the establishment of yet another Communist dictatorship. And then of course there are outside forces which seek to manipulate popular discontent for their own anti-democratic purposes.

In the case of South Korea one such outside force is the North Korean dictatorship. I read the Foreign Broadcast Information Service reports daily. These are the published reports of foreign radio and television broadcasts, along with news agency transmissions, around the world. I find these reports extremely informative and timely, and I recommend them to my Korean friends



here this evening. In the case of Korea it is instructive to read the broadcasts from Pyongyang, which insist that the United States wants a military dictatorship in Seoul and that we are secretly opposed to the Korean people's call for democracy. That is a typical Communist propaganda tactic, of course, seeking to show that the United States is on the side of right-wing oppression, and that the only solution for the suffering masses is to follow the leadership of the Communist Party. Communist propaganda follows the same general line in Latin America and Africa. And sometimes that propaganda is successful in misleading many, at least temporarily.

In this connection it is noteworthy that in the past some right-wing dictators have echoed the Communist thesis, arguing that indeed the people do have only two choices, to support a dictatorship or fall prey to the Communists. We believe there is a better choice, and that the best protection against Communist dictatorship is a strong prosperous democracy.

Well, what are the chances for democracy in South Korea?

I would say that, despite the domestic and foreign problems and obstacles, there are good reasons for optimism over the long run. The Korean people are impressive, very impressive. Their economic achievements are remarkable. Their record in education is astounding. South Korea now stands fourth highest in the world in percentage of college graduates in the total population. Koreans in this country are making outstanding contributions in various walks of life. I usually avoid such generalizations but I

must say that I have been very impressed by the many Koreans I have met during the past five years. And, back in South Korea, as Assistant Secretary Sigur has said, the news in recent weeks has been very encouraging and we applaud both the Government and opposition with their progress toward democracy.

On that same point let me say I have just finished reading Kim Dae Jung's Prison Writings, recently published in this country, and I was greatly pleased to note his emphasis on the need for calm, peaceful compromise. On page 269 Kim Dae Jung describes the ideal approach to political confrontation as follows:

"The best method is to find a unified solution secured by an agreement between the rulers and the ruled which is arrived at through dialogue. There are no victors or losers, and the only issue is what is best. If this kind of agreement is reached, society recovers its vitality and moves forward".

All that is to the good and gives us grounds for optimism this evening.

Also, I believe at least some of you will agree that the return to democratic government in the Philippines last year should be a source of encouragement. Here I might mention that I am an old friend of Raul Manglapus, the Christian Democratic leader and former Foreign Minister of the Philippines. I know that some of you are also personal friends of his. And you probably are aware that one of the subjects he feels most strongly



about is that democracy is not a Western monopoly. In fact Senator Manglapus' recently published book, Will of the People. Original Democracy in Non-Western Societies, is devoted to that theme. As stated in the book's preface, Manglapus maintains that democracy is "a value that is native to all races of humankind". In that connection I well remember the Marcos days, when I would watch Raul leading protest demonstrations outside the White House on behalf of Philippine democracy. Now he is back in Manila, a recently elected Senator, and surely we should all be encouraged by that. I might add that I have also watched my good friend Lee Keun Pal leading similar demonstrations in Washington on behalf of Korean democracy. And by the way you may be interested to know that the last time I had lunch with Raul Manglapus, a couple of months ago, he told me he was going to try to learn some of the lessons of economic achievement in South Korea and Japan, in the hope that they can be applied to the Philippines.

So there is much reason for cautious optimism in South Korea. And I am sure all of us here tonight hope for a prompt, peaceful transition to democratic government. But at the same time we must be realistic and, while hoping for the best, prepare ourselves for the possibility of something less satisfactory and more complicated. As I mentioned earlier, there are many pitfalls on the path to democracy. The days ahead may well prove difficult. Through it all we should work to sustain faith in democracy among the people of Korea. Democracy is a worthy cause; let's give it everything we have. And I am convinced that we here tonight can

play a special role in that process.

That brings me to what I believe is a major point in our meeting this evening: the importance of key sectors of public opinion. I recall that about 15 years ago an able Ambassador, a friend of mine, returned on leave from the Latin American country where he was representing us, and he came into the Department for debriefing. And I remember he opened the meeting by saying: "Well, let me assure you that our relations with (that country) are excellent". And I recall asking myself: now is that really true? I knew what the Ambassador meant, of course. He meant that relations between the State Department and the Foreign Office of that country were excellent. And that is important, and very desirable. But there is much, much more to a country than the Foreign Office, and I knew that our relations with important sectors of public opinion in that country were not good, and that there was much dislike and distrust of the United States Government in various intellectual circles, student organizations, labor unions, left-wing political parties, and even some parts of the Catholic Church.

That can be a problem in the conduct of our diplomatic relations, and it is one which we have sometimes overlooked - to our cost. It is precisely here that our human rights policy is often proving very helpful. Over the past dozen years or so, as that policy got under way and matured, we have developed contact with human rights activists around the world. Fortunately, in the specific case of South Korea, our Embassy in Seoul (including



Ambassador Lilley) and our Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs have successfully maintained helpful day to day relations with both the Korean Government and people. And at the same time, as some of you well know, a steady stream of Korean human rights advocates have come in for meetings with Ambassador Richard Schifter, the Assistant Secretary who heads our Human Rights Bureau. Both Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung have visited the State Department. And I recall that shortly before his return home we invited Kim Dae Jung to address the Department's Open Forum, where guests are welcome to speak off the record on subjects of their own choosing. Kim Dae Jung's speech was very well received by the State Department audience. So I would say that we have achieved considerable progress in our relations with Koreans, both here and in Seoul.

On the subject of human rights, I assume you all know that each year our Human Rights Bureau produces a Human Rights Report on every country in the world. These Reports are required by Congress. We write them and Congress publishes them. I hope that most of you have read our 1986 Human Rights Reports on South and North Korea. I have copies here. They cover the full spectrum of human rights, of course, including, I might point out, the rights of women.

Also on the subject of human rights, I invite your attention to Assistant Secretary Schifter's May 6 testimony on human rights in Korea before the Subcommittees on Asian and Pacific Affairs and Human Rights and International Organizations, of the House Foreign



Affairs Committee. Ambassador Schifter discussed, among other subjects, reports of torture, harsh sentences for politically related offenses, and speech and press restrictions. I have copies of Ambassador Schifter's opening statement at that time, and I invite your attention to its final paragraph, emphasizing once more our basic policy:

"The decision to establish a democratic system on a secure foundation of respect for human dignity, of course, will have to be made by the Korean people themselves. We have every reason to think that they are ready to do so. The United States will firmly support their efforts in this regard".

Well that brings me to my concluding thought and recommendation for this evening. None of us know what lies ahead for Korea in the coming weeks and months. But one thing is certain, we can all work to contribute to United States dialogue and relations with the Korean people. In recent years we have made dramatic progress in expanding that dialogue and improving those relations. We realize that millions of Koreans are warm friends of the United States, and we value their friendship. But clearly there are also many other Koreans who still believe, for a variety of reasons, that the United States Government is hostile to the development of Korean democracy, and that we are secretly advocating a right-wing dictatorship in Seoul. Of course some Koreans will always be opposed to the United States because of ideological conviction and party affiliation, e.g. Leninist



advocates of Communist dictatorship. But there are many more Koreans who have been misled regarding United States policy, and who still sincerely misunderstand our motives and objectives. Most of these people have never been to this country. It is these Koreans with whom I am mainly concerned this evening. I believe, and hope, that with all your experience and understanding of the United States you can help in improving our dialogue with this important sector of Korean public opinion. I am not suggesting for a moment that we should seek their agreement with all U.S. Government policies. That would be absurd. As you know very well, there are millions of Americans who disagree with various aspects of our foreign policy. That is the nature of democracies. But what I am urging is that we try to convince such Koreans that the United States Government does sincerely hope for the development of a profoundly democratic Korea. If we can achieve that much we will have helped both Korean democracy and Korean-U.S. relations.

We have come a long way. Now let's keep moving ahead, together! Thank you for listening.