

December 27, 1984

To: Elliott Abrams

Subject: Korea: Kim Dae Jung

This afternoon I lunched with Kim Dae Jung and his aide, Lee Keun Pal, at their request. Kim was worried about the impact in Korea of Sanford Ungar's December 23 New York Times Magazine article (attached). A few of Kim's comments follow.

The article may make a good impression in America but gives the ROKG openings to exploit. Gen. Wickham is quoted as saying the Koreans were not yet ready for democracy (p. 33). Amb. Walker is alleged to ridicule anti-ROKG protesters as immature (p. 33). The Reagan Administration is reported to be avoiding involvement in Kim's return and one U.S. diplomat is quoted as asking "how much do we have to do for this guy?" (p. 34). A State Department official is cited as insisting Kim's popularity was last tested in 1971 (p. 34). And, on page 48, Amb. Gleysteen is quoted as asserting Kim refused to counsel moderation among protesters and thus "has some responsibility for the clampdown" that followed.

Kim Dae Jung said that Johnathan Fine had recently visited Korea and had been shocked by Amb. Walker's views that the South Korean people are not ready for democracy and that the present situation is not bad. Kim asserted that he felt he had failed in trying to influence USG thinking. He asked why the ROKG should fear his return if, as is alleged, he has little or no support in Korea. Kim maintained he had exerted a beneficial influence on Korean youth, urging that they not be anti-U.S. His personal position is that he is strongly pro-U.S. while critical of some USG policies and tactics. He opposes military government in Korea but is not against the military, as such.

I told Kim Dae Jung that while I am far from being an expert on Korea I know the USG hopes for the development of democracy in that country. I have met Amb. Walker only twice but have very favorable impressions about his views on that score. I added that you are very sympathetic to Kim Dae Jung's hopes.

Kim said he was aware of your sympathy but wondered whether you and I were in the mainstream of Department thinking. He expressed a desire to see you fairly soon. Kim would also like to see the President and/or the Secretary before returning home.

Despite the subject matter the luncheon conversation was friendly and low key throughout. I promised Kim Dae Jung ¹ would pass on to you his request for an appointment. I have also recommended him to the Open Forum.

George Lister

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cc: Tom Murphy