

April 28, 1994

To: Nancy Ely-Raphel

Subject: South Korea Visit

I leave for Seoul Saturday morning, returning May 6 or 7.

I will be meeting and talking with various human rights groups. Our Embassy is cooperating with the Kim Dae Jung Peace Foundation in arranging my visit (a tentative schedule is attached). There is also attached an outline I will be using as a guide for the presentations I will be making at some of these meetings, either on or off the record. The outline is very similar to my Milwaukee (Wisconsin Univ.) December 1993 speech. I have discussed all of the above with EAP.

George Lister

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cc: Pat Hotze
EAP - Lynn Turk

1. I am very glad to be here with you today, and I appreciate very much the invitation of the Kim Dae Jung Peace Foundation. This is my first visit to South Korea, but I have good friends in your country. When Kim Dae Jung was in exile in Washington during 1983-85 I helped him develop mutually useful working relations with the State Department. I also became a friend of Kim Young Sam at about the same time. In recent years I have had some very helpful discussions with Kim Keun-Tae. And I have met with many democratic Korean groups, both residents and visitors in the U.S. So I welcome this opportunity to continue and expand our dialogue. I am going to talk briefly about our human rights policy, and then I hope we can have a candid exchange of views. As for my own diplomatic background, much of my time has been spent in Eastern Europe, including the USSR and Poland, as well as in Latin America. And I was involved with the development of our human rights policy from the beginning.

2. Now our human rights policy began before President Jimmy Carter, when Cong. Don Fraser (D.-Minn.) held a series of public hearings in 1973/74. Looking back 20 years I cannot believe how far we have come. Of course after Carter took power in 1977, human rights became much more important in the Department. HA was formed.

3. It was tough going at first. There was bureaucratic resistance inside the Department, plus inexperience, lack of information and reference material, etc. But year by year our performance improved, because human rights work is like doing pushups - the more you do the more you can do. Then when Reagan became President, in 1981, many assumed our human rights policy was over, and that HA would be closed. But it soon became clear that the human rights policy had been institutionalized. There was bi-

partisan support in Congress, we still had to get the annual Human Rights Reports to Congress, etc. So our performance continued to improve. There was more information and experience, other governments began to help, etc. The human rights cause had been injected into the State Department's bloodstream.

4. Now the Clinton Administration has given human rights a higher priority. Our Bureau is being reorganized and expanded. Our Assistant Secretary, John Shattuck, has extensive human rights experience with Amnesty International, the ACLU, and Harvard. Last June he represented the U.S. at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the first event of its kind in a quarter of a century, and he recently returned from an interesting and useful visit to China. I have brought along copies of some of Mr. Shattuck's recent public statements which are relevant to our discussion today.

5. At this point I want to correct some widespread misconceptions. The USG does not claim to have invented human rights. There were human rights advocates in the world long before my country existed. Second, our policy does not imply any moral superiority on the part of the U.S. I assume you know we have problems of race prejudice, sex discrimination, violations of minimum wage laws, etc. We have made much progress, but the problems still exist. Nor are we imposing U.S. standards on others. We are guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the U.N. in December 1948. Furthermore, contrary to what some claim, we do criticize human rights violations by both the right and the left. Lastly we do not feel our policy is intervention in the domestic affairs of others. We have a right to decide to which countries we will give eco-

conomic and military assistance. And we have a right to criticize human rights violations in other countries, just as they have the right to criticize violations in the U.S.

6. What are some of the human rights achievements over the past 20 years? Less torture, more elections, more freedom of press, the release of many political prisoners, etc. The main credit for this progress goes to those democratic activists around the world who spoke out for human rights without any protection, such as Andrei Sakharov, Kim Dae Jung, and Aung San Suu Kyi, along with the countless others who died in oblivion. But the U.S. can take quiet pride in our significant contribution.

7. In connection with the above, let me reiterate that human rights work can be risky for those totally vulnerable under repressive regimes. I am sometimes shaken when I think of how many friends of mine have been murdered, by the right and by the left.

8. How is our policy applied? By expressing our concerns to other governments in private conversations, making public statements, cooperating with human rights groups around the world, publishing our annual Human Rights Reports, voting in the U.N. and the OAS, curtailing military and economic aid, etc. Now of course the world is a very complicated place, and no two countries are identical. As Karl Marx said: we are all accidents of History. Furthermore, human rights cannot be the only consideration in the conduct of our foreign affairs. The survival of the U.S. as a free and democratic country must receive the top priority, but human rights has become a key factor in our foreign policy.

9. Our human rights policy has given us a much better overall foreign policy. For example, clientitis has just about been eliminated (to be

discussed). There is much less tendency to identify a country with a government, rather than with the population. And our relations with the democratic left, as distinct from the anti-democratic left, are greatly improved (to be explained).

10. Of course our human rights policy is not perfect. There are about 194 countries, there are only 24 hours a day, and you cannot do this work with computers. Two main ways to judge our performance are the annual Human Rights Reports and the specific measures we take in response to human rights violations. Our annual Reports have improved enormously and are very good, but inevitably imperfect. What to do about human rights violations is much more complicated and difficult to decide. For example, should we stop economic aid to a country with a bad human rights record if the only immediate result would be to lower the living standard? (e.g. Chile under Pinochet)

11. I personally feel the two key rights are freedom of expression and women's rights. Unchecked power corrupts men and women very quickly. I think free speech is more revolutionary than Marxism-Leninism. And you can't be for human rights if you ignore 52% of the human race.

12. Just a quick word on the human rights work of Congress. Congress, including Republicans and Democrats, plays a key role, holding hearings, passing resolutions and legislation, frequently consulting with the Department, etc. Of course, just like the State Department, Congressional performance is far from perfect. But, on balance, it is very helpful.

13. The so-called NGOs also play an important role, often cooperating with Congress and the Department. The NGOs are frequently critical of

our performance, sometimes correctly and sometimes incorrectly.

14. Congress and the NGOs should be kept to the same high standards as the Department, and we should all work together.

15. To conclude, as I said at the outset, I cannot believe how far the human rights cause has progressed over the past 20 years. The world is much more open and smaller than ever before. Who would have believed, even five years ago, that we now receive FAXES from Moscow, telephone calls from Warsaw, human rights visitors from all over the world? A good many governments are now cooperating in the human rights field. South Korea has made noteworthy democratic progress in recent years, and I am sure that groups such as yours can help the cause of human rights and democracy in other countries as well as in your own. I personally feel that the human rights cause has become the authentic World Revolution, democratic, peaceful, and invincible, as long as we keep it honest - equal rights for absolutely everyone. The human race now has a unique opportunity. Let's work together. Thank you for listening.