

October, 1999

To: DRL - Harold H. Koh

From: GWU - George Lister ¹

Subject: USG's South Korea Policy - 1980-1999

This memorandum is submitted in response to your request for a brief review of the development and implementation of our South Korean human rights policy over approximately the last 20 years. Of course I have not included all pertinent data, partly because of lack of access to my Department files, and also because, with my current bureaucratic status, this review must be Unclassified. However, I have attached a good many relevant memoranda and press articles, in approximately chronological order, to provide numerous details, and I believe you will find this material responsive to your request.

As indicated in the attached, there were many problems and difficulties in developing and implementing our current human rights policy in relations with South Korea, all the more because of the great dangers posed by North Korea. In addition, South Korea had many domestic problems, our human rights policy was just getting started, and inside the Department there was regional Bureau resentment over what were often seen as invasions of bureaucratic turf. But over the years the human rights cause began to gain growing support around the world, there was some democratic progress in South Korea, and South Korean human rights controversies began to receive more and more attention in the media, in Congress, the NGOs, etc. I personally feel the South Korea story is an excellent example of how the human rights cause has helped to improve our overall foreign policy and to offer a much better future for the human race.

In the early years one of the most dedicated and effective critics of our South Korea policy was Donald Ranard, former Political Counselor in Seoul and subsequently Director of Korean Affairs in the Department. Don retired in 1974 and became Director of the Center for International Policy, a local NGO. Don was an authentic human rights activist, speaking out for human rights consistently, rather than just when that seemed likely to serve his own personal interests. We were friends, although I did not really know him well.

Please read Ranard's articulate criticism of "America's Shameful Record in Korea", published in the Los Angeles Times of June 3, 1980, and carried in Newsweek (see both sides of attachment 1). Ranard wrote the article a few days after the bloody repression of the Kwangju riot~~es~~, following the seizure of power by Gen. Chun Doo Hwan and the arrest of Kim Dae Jung. Ranard emphasized that, in attempting to promote stability in South Korea, the USG focused entirely on the North Korean threat and had badly underestimated the importance of the human rights issue. As a result many in South Korea had come to see the USG "as on the side of the junta". I have also attached Don's April, 1982 statement to the House Foreign Affairs Committee (attachment 2). His specific remarks on South Korea begin on the bottom of page 6, and compare our strong support for democracy in Poland with our reluctance to "press vigorously for justice" under the military dictatorships in Seoul. Attachment 3 is my May 24, 1982 memorandum on a small South Korean demonstration organized by Ranard at Dupont Circle. Don's two sided leaflet calls for "a new Korea policy", with specific recommendations.

Unfortunately, Ranard passed away in July, 1990. Please be sure to read his obituary (attachment 4). You will note that in 1976 Ranard testified

"before a Congressional committee on his awareness in the early 1970s that the South Korean Central Intelligence Agency was providing funds to influence American politicians", and that those revelations led to an indictment of Tongsun Park. But the indictment was eventually dropped, much to Ranard's disgust.

Meanwhile, bureaucratic resistance to our human rights policy had reached incredible extremes inside the Department. As I believe you know, Cong. Don Fraser (D.-Minn.) played a key role, along with Tom Harkin (D.-Iowa), in getting our human rights policy started in the early 70s. John Salzberg was Fraser's main human rights staffer and was brought into HA during 1979-80, to work on East Asian affairs. But Salzberg told me that the EA (now EAP) front office ordered Bureau staff to avoid all contact with him, including refusal to even attend any meetings at which he was present. John said those orders were carefully carried out. Patt Derian complained that she found it very difficult to work with EA. And this was during the Clinton Administration!

I believe Kim Dae Jung's case became the key turning point in our South Korean human rights policy. As mentioned above, Kim was arrested by the army in 1980, touching off the Kwangju riots. Kim was subsequently sentenced to death by a military court, but pressure from the USG (both the Carter and Reagan Administrations) and others resulted in his being released from prison, in late 1982. In return the Reagan Administration invited President Chun Doo Hwan as our first state visitor. As discussed in my March, 1998 report (attachment 5), I met KDJ in early 1983, soon after he came here in exile and, at his request, I urged Secretary Elliott Abrams to meet with him. That proposal was strongly opposed by the EA Bureau, on the grounds that Kim was

a "trouble maker" and a "flake". Fortunately, I was able to persuade Abrams to receive Kim, and the meeting went off very well. Kim was most grateful and, as detailed in attachment 5, I subsequently arranged for him to speak at the Open Forum. Kim's original draft complained that the USG was siding with the ROKG against the Korean people. But I succeeded in persuading him to state, instead, that he knew that we favored democracy in South Korea, but that the South Korean people were not aware of that fact, and therefore the USG should do everything possible to let them know of our support. That session was a major success (two photos are attached, nos. 6 and 7). Kim later stated he regarded his Open Forum meeting and the subsequent 8th floor lunch with Department officials (attachment 8) as his greatest success in the U.S.

Shortly thereafter KDJ returned to Seoul and to house arrest. He was accompanied by a good many supporters, including Congressional Members, NGO activists, Korean-Americans, etc. Cong. Leach (R.-Iowa) hosted an April, 1985 reception for the delegation upon their return (attachment 9). Then, within a couple of months, HA was inundated with numerous visits by large Korean democratic groups, almost always strongly pro-KDJ. For a while I was meeting with a new group every week.

Of course many problems remained. Unfortunately, one of them was our Ambassador in Seoul, Richard Walker (1981-86), who had long adamantly refused to meet with Korean democratic activists. In April, 1985 I attended a local meeting of the Korean Institute for Human Rights, discussing "Prospects for Democracy in Korea. During the meeting Pharis Harvey, of the North American Coalition for Human Rights, recommended that we replace Walker with someone more committed to human rights (attachment 10). Later that year Kim

Young Sam complained to me that Walker had never received him (attachment 11). Bob White's April, 1986 New York Times column referred to Walker as an all-out supporter of the Chun dictatorship (attachment 12). In September, 1986 I prepared a memorandum (unattached) on a visit to Seoul by a National Democratic Institute group led by Brian Atwood. Atwood said the delegation had been dumbfounded by its visit to our Embassy. When Atwood brought up the issue of democracy Walker launched into a long lecture on how democracy is not compatible with Korea's Confucian traditions, culture, history, folkways, etc. Finally, shortly/^{before} departing from Seoul, Walker met with Kim Young Sam (attachment 13).

As James Lilley prepared to replace Walker, in 1986, he was urged by Congress, the NGOs, etc., to develop contact with South Korean human rights advocates. Our Embassy's performance began to improve to some extent, and I feel our subsequent Ambassadors were even more of an improvement, especially James Laney. Our current Ambassador, Steve Bosworth, is a very good representative.

Some bureaucratic resistance also continued inside the State Department for a while. In August, 1987 for example, the Korea Desk Officer adamantly refused to clear the draft of my speech to a local Korean group (attachment 14). Dick Schifter recommended I take the problem to the EA front office, and there was immediate clearance.

I think a very good paper on the development of our overall South Korea policy was submitted in July, 1987, by Prof. Lee Man-woo, of Millersville Univ. (attachment 15). I recommend you read all of it.

As we entered the nineties the basic problems of our South Korea policy had finally been recognized, and our performance continued to improve. A few more relevant documents are attached.

My November 8, 1990 memorandum attached a copy of a Congressional Human Rights Caucus letter, urging President Roh "to reform his undemocratic rule" (attachment 16).

In June, 1989 the USG issued a statement denying our alleged involvement in the Kwangju 1980 massacre (attachment 17). But in late 1996, with the release of some classified documents, there were additional allegations on that score (attachment 18).

In September, 1996 Ambassador Laney was interviewed by the Washington Times (attachment 19).

When KDJ was unexpectedly elected President in 1997 both Richard Holbrooke and Dick Allen promptly came out with statements in the New York Times (attachments 20 and 21), telling how they had helped to save Kim in 1980. And also please read the attached copy of a reprint from The New Republic, discussing Dick Allen's activities back in the 70s (attachment 22).

Finally, to provide a happy American ending, please note my August 22, 1997 memorandum applauding Secretary Albright's great statement regarding "Asian Values" (attachment 23).