



United States Department of State #1

Washington, D.C. 20520

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TO: HA - Dick Schifter  
FROM: HA - George Lister 2  
SUBJECT: Korea: Rev. Ko Yeong Kun

Yesterday evening I attended a supper arranged by local Korean democrats for the Rev. Ko Yeong Kun, a Korean Presbyterian minister visiting the U.S. He was born in North Korea and some members of his family are still there. He became a minister in 1965 and is a strong supporter of Kim Dae Jung, having been arrested over twenty times. Ko came here very briefly in 1983, but speaks no English. He left Seoul about a month ago and since then has been mainly in the Los Angeles area. Supper attendance came to around twenty, mostly local Koreans but including several U.S. human rights advocates.

At the end of the meal the Rev. Ko spoke for close to half an hour, with particular reference to anti-U.S. feeling in South Korea. He was highly critical of USG policy, as he understands it. He asserted that those who are over 50 (approximately his age, I would guess) are grateful to us for our help against the North Korean invasion, but most younger than that see us as tacitly supporting rightwing regimes. He claimed that the USG holds 90% of the political power in South Korea, and he urged that we help in bringing an end to the Roh government.

Following these remarks Ko specifically asked for my comment. I replied that because I respected his human rights record I would answer with total candor. I said that I agreed with some of his criticisms of us and found others ridiculous. I emphasized the importance of dialogue between the USG and Korean democrats and urged that he get to know the USG much better. Then, I predicted, he would still have many criticisms, but they would be far more accurate and thus helpful in improving our performance. I invited Ko to come in to talk with us. Following the supper Lee Keun Pal thanked me privately for my remarks.

My very superficial assessment of the Rev. Ko is that he is sincere, immersed in leftwing political dialogue (especially with students) in his country, and badly uninformed and misinformed about us and our policies. I believe a meeting with you or Bill Farrand would be mutually very helpful. I will be talking with Ko, in any event. He will be available around 4 p.m. today, or about 10 a.m. tomorrow.

cc: Bill Farrand  
Gary Price