



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

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TO: DRL - John Shattuck
FROM: DRL - George Lister ^Y
SUBJECT: Kim Dae Jung's Inauguration - Now What?

Following are a few details and thoughts, in approximately chronological order, regarding my February 22 - March 1 round trip to Seoul to attend President Kim Dae Jung's (KDJ) February 25 inauguration. This is the first time in Korea's history that a democratic opposition leader has won the presidential election. I welcomed KDJ's invitation (attachment 1) and the opportunity to witness what may well prove to be a major step forward in Korean history, although numerous dangerous and complicated political, economic and social problems obviously lie ahead. I believe you will agree that this report provides a good example of how our human rights policy has given us a better overall foreign policy.

As you may recall, I first met KDJ in early 1983, when he was released from prison in Seoul and came here in exile. As set forth in Elliott Abrams' 1985 Performance Evaluation of my work (attachment 2), I helped KDJ gain access to the Department and also arranged for him to speak at our Open Forum. Up to that point KDJ had been complaining that the USG was supporting Korea's military dictatorship but, as indicated in the attached, I was able to persuade him that we favored democracy in his country, and he soon became very appreciative of my cooperation. In November 1984, he sent me a scroll of thanks which I still have on the wall of my apartment (attachment 3).

Then in early 1985, KDJ returned to Seoul, and house arrest. Meanwhile we were inundated with visits from hundreds of his supporters, and I soon became involved with our local Korean community. Of course KDJ remained in close contact over the years, as indicated in his August 1989 letter (attachment 4). And you will remember your 1993 meeting with him here, as well as my 1994 visit to Seoul, to speak on human rights, at his invitation. With that background, I was not surprised when KDJ invited me to his inauguration.

The lengthy Northwest Airlines flight (Detroit, Japan, Seoul) was uneventful. Three members of the Foreign Office were awaiting my arrival and facilitated my clearance and transportation to The Shilla. The latter proudly proclaims

itself as the world's best hotel and it is certainly the best I have ever seen. It was very good to be in Seoul once again.

After a good night's rest and a helpful visit to our Embassy, I was invited to Amb. Bosworth's reception for our Presidential delegation, including Sen. Tom Harkin (D.-Iowa), along with other inauguration visitors (e.g. former Ambassadors Laney and Gregg, Steve Solarz, Dick Allen, etc.). Harkin and I have long cooperated on human rights issues and he recalled how I had introduced him to KDJ in the 80's when the latter was in exile. It was a lively and useful function. Toward the end I took a cab over to the reception arranged by the Korean Institute for Human Rights.

The Wednesday, February 25 inauguration was blessed by good weather. Invitees were picked up by specified buses and taken over to the National Assembly. The panorama was magnificent (ref. attachment 5), and I was seated with members of the local diplomatic corps, just outside the entrance to the Assembly. Once the ceremony actually got under way it became a memorable event, with stirring music, performers singing and dancing, a military parade, etc. KDJ's acceptance speech had already been distributed in various languages and I have a copy in English. As usual, KDJ spoke well and there was prolonged applause and cheering. Then the national anthem was played and the huge crowd went wild. Many onlookers were visibly moved.

In the afternoon, a reception for inauguration guests was held at Sejong Cultural Center. Once again, designated buses were provided. Hundreds attended. After some time the President and his wife arrived. There was no opportunity for a substantive conversation, of course, but both Kims thanked me warmly for coming to Seoul.

At one point during the reception I had a rather unusual conversation with Douglas Reed, an American who introduced himself by saying we had met almost 20 years earlier back in the U.S. Mr. Reed said he knew I had long been involved with human rights and he requested that I level with him as to whether our policy is still alive and well. I assured Mr. Reed that the human rights cause is now on the march around the world, and I gave him a copy of my George Washington University February 5 speech on the subject. Reed was clearly moved, remarking that this was wonderful news. I noted with interest that he is teaching at the Johns Hopkins University-Nanjing University Center for Chinese and U.S. Studies, in Nanjing.

The following day, February 26, I was included in KDJ's meeting with the Presidential delegation, along with a few other people, including Tom Harkin, Stephen Solarz, Pat Derian, Dick

Allen, etc. The discussion was friendly and fairly relaxed, but of course there was not enough time for much substance.

One of the best meetings during my visit was arranged by Michael Martin, Embassy Labor Officer. I had told Mr. Martin that I hoped very much to talk with labor and dissident representatives. And with that in mind, Mr. Martin scheduled a meeting with Lee Chang Bok, head of the National Alliance for Democracy and The Reunification of Korea, a leading labor group and an umbrella organization for dissidents. Mr. Martin also interpreted for our conversation. Early on I emphasized to Mr. Lee the unprecedented opportunities now available for advancing the human rights cause around the world, and how we can help each other in that endeavor. Lee did not argue with me, but after listening politely for some time, he remarked that USG policy can be influenced more by money and trade than by human rights. I responded by saying that his criticism underlined the importance of dialogue, and that whenever he has doubts about our performance he can easily discuss them with the Embassy, the Department, Congress and the NGOs. Somewhat later, Lee also remarked that USG policy continually emphasizes the importance of capitalism, whereas Western Europe's democratic socialism is also O.K. I pointed out that the speech I had just given him calls attention to the importance of distinguishing between the democratic and the anti-democratic left. We agreed on that, of course, and I came away feeling that Lee was a good contact. I was very grateful to Michael Martin for all his help.

Later that day I also had a friendly conversation with Nam Kyu-sun and Suzy Kim of Minkahyup, a well-known dissident group. They provided me with copies of their recent reports on political prisoners. I recall that I met with Minkahyup during my first visit to Seoul in 1994, and I felt that meeting was almost a classic example of the importance of dialogue with left-wing NGOs. I had the impression that they had never met with a USG representative before. Their first question (in 1994) was: "Why does your government prevent the unification of Korea?" However, that meeting lasted for well over an hour, during which time they became visibly interested in our human rights policy and at the end we went out for a very friendly and lively luncheon discussion. Some background on Minkahyup is attached (attachment 6).

One pleasant surprise during my visit was a call received from a young American who said he had become interested in making human rights his lifetime career after reading my February 5 speech, "Human Rights - Our World's Best Chance", which was sent out world-wide on the Wireless File. We met at The Shilla for over two hours, discussing ways in which he could become an effective human rights activist.

Now to conclude, as I said at the outset, there are not going to be any quick and easy solutions to South Korea's many complicated problems. All kinds of crises and emergencies are possible: widespread loss of jobs, riots, a stock market crash, an assassination attempt, a sudden ultimatum from North Korea, slush fund accusations, revelations of personal misconduct, political confrontations, etc. As we discussed earlier, I am glad I don't have to bet on the outcome of all this. Nevertheless, if I did have to, I would wager the KDJ administration will survive and South Korea will become a healthier, sounder, and more democratic country. And if that is the outcome, it will be a step forward not only for South Korea and Korean-U.S. relations, but also for East Asian democracy in general. KDJ has sought the cooperation of democratic leaders in the Philippines, Burma, etc., and the KDJ Peace Foundation is dedicated to spreading "the cause of representative government, democratic society and the acceptance of the universality of human rights by all governments through the Asia-Pacific region." Fortunately, over the years, the USG has developed a sound and effective human rights policy, and Stephen Bosworth is a good Ambassador.

Attachments:

As stated

cc: SCoffey, GSmith, JBigus, AIrons
G - Wendy Sherman
EAP/K - David Straub
Seoul Embassy
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