

# Correspondence

## South Korea

To the Editors: Mr. Edward A. Olsen in his article "Movement Toward Democracy in South Korea" (*Worldview*, October, 1979) made several sweeping statements in regard to the situation in South Korea. Particularly in reference to the dissidents. Among many views he expressed I'll attempt to deal with only four of the main points. *First* of all his conclusion—"South Koreans now have before them a long-term prospect never before enjoyed by Koreans"—is unreal. Has he heard the latest scandal about the YH Company incident, where a young woman worker, Kim Kyong-suk, twenty-one, died in a clash during the police raid? She had read a workers' resolution and appeals representing the protesting workers only hours before the incident. Is he aware that the Japanese investors in Masan Free Export Zone are preparing to return home? Does he know that the World Bank and the IMF are warning the investors to restrain their investments in South Korea? There is no more "miracle" economic development there. Economic performance recorded is misleading because about three-fourths of Korean GNP reflected trade, and an official estimated amount of trade deficit is approximately \$5 billion at the end of the year [1979].

Inflation has also been severe, especially in the basic areas of foodstuffs, fuel, and electricity. The rate of inflation so far this year is about 57 per cent. Production is also down. Hyundai Motor is currently producing less than half the number of cars when compared with the early part of this year.

*Second:* Mr. Olsen writes of "a prosperous economy directed by a stable government responsive to their needs and aspirations." Whose needs and aspirations is he referring to? Mr. Olsen said: "every day the voice of South Korea's economic elite grows more important." And this economic elite group who supports the Park regime will bring democracy someday, according to Mr. Olsen. He is surely confused with needs and aspirations of the people and the small economic elite group, just as he is confused with a stable government and a dictatorial regime. Have we not learned

a lesson, from Vietnam to Nicaragua, that any kind of dictatorial regime is not stable? On October 16, 17, and 18, 1979, in both Pusan and Masan, the largest street demonstration in recent years against Park's regime involving more than five thousand students and the citizens was staged. Martial law was declared, and tanks and the bayoneted M-16 rifle-carrying soldiers watch over the cities. Masan is the place where the murder of a student by a government official touched off the April 19 Students' Revolution in 1960 that put an end to the Syngman Rhee regime. Mr. Olsen said: "the South Korean masses genuinely support Park." It sounds more like a statement from the Ministry of Public Information in Seoul than a man who claims expertise on Korea.

*Third:* In spite of the unrest and the unstable situation in South Korea, Mr. Olsen suggested that "... dissidents are not likely to bring about significant change." Haven't we heard that before? The spokesman of the American CIA commented after the Iran revolution that "nobody expected the old man living outside of his country could influence such movement." True, we probably would not have gotten involved in the Vietnam war if American policy-makers in Washington anticipated such a tragic outcome. We do not learn from our past experience because we, Americans, refuse to be humble. We will probably, as Mr. Olsen does, to convince ourselves that "Korea different." Korea, then, will become another Iran or Nicaragua before we realize it.

*Fourth:* Mr. Olsen has insulted the Korean dissidents by saying that "the dissidents . . . are grossly ill-informed." Who were informed better than the American CIA agents, newspaper reporters, and experts on the Iran problems? The dissident Iranians who overthrew the Shah regime. May I suggest to Mr. Olsen my latest book, *America's Dilemma in Asia: The Case of South Korea*, published by Nelson-Hall Co. He will become more informed about the Korean dissidents and their foreign friends.

As for the Korean dissidents, they do not deny the necessity of economic development in building a democratic society, but they do not believe that the dictatorial regime of Park could contribute to bringing about democracy in South Korea. Mr. Olsen's message is no

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## WORLDVIEW

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Worldview* is to place public policies, particularly in international affairs, under close ethical scrutiny. The Council on Religion and International Affairs (CRIA), which sponsors the journal, was founded in 1914 by religious and civic leaders brought together by Andrew Carnegie. It was mandated to work toward ending the barbarity of war, to encourage international cooperation, and to promote justice. CRIA is independent and non-sectarian. *Worldview* is an important part of CRIA's wide-ranging program in pursuit of these goals.

*Worldview* is open to diverse viewpoints and encourages dialogue and debate on issues of public significance. It is edited in the belief that large political questions cannot be considered adequately apart from ethical and religious reflection. The opinions expressed in *Worldview* do not necessarily reflect the positions of CRIA. Through *Worldview* CRIA aims to advance the national and international exchange without which our understanding will be dangerously limited.

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War II. "Based almost completely on documents until now classified," their book carefully recreates the events leading up to the surrender, clearly delineates the parties involved in it, and, most important, shades in the political overtones, especially the growing conflict between the Allies and the USSR.

As they note, Operation Sunrise, far from being a symbol of German defeat, was relatively inconsequential to the outcome of the war. Days after Sunrise, Hitler committed suicide, and immediately thereafter the Germans capitulated on all other fronts. Few lives and little property were saved by Sunrise, but the Nazis involved, especially Wolff and his subordinates, benefitted immensely. Their roles in helping to bring about peace saved them from the war crimes trials, thus quite possibly saving their lives. On the other hand, the operation contributed more to the cold war hostilities than any other World War II event: "...it is fair to say that Operation Sunrise and its offshoot in Trieste played a circumscribed part in speeding Dulles and other American leaders on their journey to that confined state of mind where the world was made up of 'us' (the West) and 'them' (the East), and where there were few reservations about what it was permissible to do to 'them.' This development not only necessitated a shift in the American image of the Soviet Union, it also required...a shift from the picture of Germany as an evil and aggressor nation to that of a comrade in the struggle against Communism."

In other words, it is asserted that Sunrise marked *the* turning point in East-West relations. This is not supported by the facts. As even the authors admit, the Allied-Soviet alliance was merely one of military necessity, one to be maintained only until the Third Reich was defeated. Lest we forget, Stalin and Hitler signed a nonaggression pact in 1939—short-lived, to be sure, but certainly indicative of the nature of Soviet constancy. So the Soviet protests against being excluded from the Sunrise talks and their antics at Trieste (through Tito's armies) were due less to the Allies' covert activities than to characteristic Communist posturing.

Also annoying is the portrayal of Allen Dulles as a crafty, scheming "super spy" who was more concerned about furthering his own career than about

ending the war. No doubt Dulles was an ambitious man, but to imply that he was somehow disloyal because he employed covert methods is not unlike labeling an infantryman a traitor because he fires his rifle at people. Everyone has a duty to fulfill, and he must use whatever tools he is issued. The ones to judge the propriety of these tools are moralists, not historians.

Aside from these departures from objectivity, the scholarship and impact of the book are marred by stiff writing, a minuscule type face, and an occasional tendency to overdocument the trivial (e.g., the exact time and duration of a minor conference) while glossing over important events, such as the April 22 meeting between Ambassador Rahn and Nazi officials concerning Axis surrender plans. In sum, this is the best-documented account of Sunrise, and its glaring biases of interpretation are therefore the more regrettable.

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#### Correspondence [from p. 2]

different from that of President Park, who advocated that "the citizens ought to be patient because better things are coming to them." He had been dictating for eighteen years, but the vast majority of the citizens have not benefited from his policy.

It is about time the policymakers in Washington be aware of who really are the friends of democracy in South Korea. In order to avoid another tragic war in Korea, the American public should be informed and analyze the situation rationally and wisely. We don't want another "Vietnam" in Asia.

Harold Hakwon Sunoo

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#### Edward A. Olsen Responds:

I am afraid that Professor Sunoo missed the central point of my article. I certainly did not suggest all was well in South Korea, either economically or politically. I am thoroughly aware of the many problems he mentions, some of which occurred after the October piece was submitted for publication. What I did suggest was that the social changes being brought about by ongoing economic growth—and, despite problems, it is *still* ongoing—have the potential for moving South Korea toward a hierarchical faction-based form of democracy, akin to that of Japan, which would incorporate a broad spectrum of society. I believe there were signs of such a system under Park. I stand by that contention. Economic continuity is today even more crucial to the future peace and prosperity of South Korea.

I suggested in the article that the most idealistic critics of the government[s] in Seoul are unlikely to be satisfied with anything short of a complete overhaul of the South Korean political system. It may surprise Professor Sunoo, but I too am a supporter of democratic reform in South Korea. Let me make one thing abundantly clear: I am not an apologist for Park's excesses and resent any intimation that I am.

In my years as the State Department's intelligence analyst for South Korea (1976-79) I strived diligently to give senior officials an objective and accurate picture of the legitimate aspirations of democratic forces in that country. Though my audience was not always ready to hear such analyses and I was the subject of some criticism for my zealotry in reporting human rights violations, on balance I think I succeeded in transmitting the unvarnished facts. I have many Korean friends (and in-laws) and hope a government will emerge in Seoul that will enable them to enjoy the benefits of democracy. However, I also am a pragmatist and am prepared to see Korea adapt Western democratic ideals to indigenous values and traditions.

I do not expect Professor Sunoo to agree with all that I have said. It may surprise him to hear that I expect him and other reformers to keep up their pressures on Seoul. For, without their ideals, South Korea could quickly succumb to another Park. However, I do hope he and his fellow advocates of