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1993

# South Korea

## Appeal for the release of human rights activist Noh Tae-hun

SEPTEMBER 1993

Amnesty International is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Noh Tae-hun, 30-year-old young human rights activist who was arrested on 15 July on charges under the National Security Law. Amnesty International believes that Noh Tae-hun is being held for his non-violent political activities. His arrest appears to be his work to protect human rights.

Noh Tae-hun is a long-standing and well-known human rights activist who is associated with a number of South Korean human rights organizations, including the recently established *Human Rights Foundation* (South Korea), *Human Rights Conference on Human Rights* and played an active participation in the World Conference on Human Rights. He has also worked with *Minkahyop Association* (South Korea) and *Saranghang* (Group for Human Rights).

Noh Tae-hun was arrested by officers of the Security Division of the National Police Administration at around 6.30pm on 13 July. He had already been detained by his lawyer until the morning of 15 July. On this occasion the warrant for his arrest was incorrectly filled in, and the charges against him or his place of detention. The police officers did not follow the correct legal procedures and were themselves responsible for his arrest. Noh Tae-hun was taken away for questioning.

From 15 July until 24 July Noh Tae-hun was held in custody. During this time he was subjected to long periods of intense interrogation and sleep deprivation. For most of this period his lawyers were not able to meet him in private.

On 11 August, Noh Tae-hun was charged under Article 7 of the National Security Law. The basis of the charge is that he possessed and published a number of pamphlets and books written by political prisoners with the purpose of praising and glorifying these works, entitled *Life and Death and Night in Prison*, were written by former long-term political prisoners in South Korea and North Korea.

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# amnesty international

## SOUTH KOREA

### Appeal for the release of human rights activist Noh Tae-hun

SEPTEMBER 1993

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Amnesty International is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Noh Tae-hun, 30-year-old year old human rights activist who was arrested on 15 July on charges under the National Security Law. Amnesty International believes that Noh Tae-hun is being held for his non-violent political activities. It is concerned that the real reason for his arrest appears to be his work to protect human rights in South Korea.

Noh Tae-hun is a long-standing and respected human rights activist who is associated with a number of South Korean human rights groups. He is a key member of the recently established umbrella group KONUCH (Korean NGO Network for the World Conference on Human Rights) and played an active role in organizing Korean NGO participation in the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in June 1993. He has also worked with *Minkahyop* (Association of Families), STIK (Stop Torture in Korea) and *Sarangbang* (Group for Human Rights).

Noh Tae-hun was arrested by officers of the Security Division of the National Police Administration at around 6.30pm on 15 July while he was visiting the office of his lawyer. He had already been detained for interrogation from the morning of 14 July until the morning of 15 July. On this occasion his lawyer and a colleague noticed that the warrant for his arrest was incorrectly filled in and failed to show the summary of charges against him or his place of detention. They urged police officers to follow the correct legal procedures and were themselves threatened and beaten. Noh Tae-hun was taken away for questioning.

From 15 July until 24 July Noh Tae-hun was interrogated by the police. During this time he was subjected to long periods of interrogation, threats and sleep deprivation. For most of this period his lawyers were not able to meet him in private.

On 11 August Noh Tae-hun was charged under Article 7 of the National Security Law. The basis of this charge is that he possessed and published a number of pamphlets and books written by former political prisoners with the purpose of "praising" and "siding with" North Korea. These works, entitled *Deprived Days* and *Days and Nights in Prison*, were written by former long-term political prisoners in South Korea and

mostly contained reflections on their prison life. The books and pamphlets are publicly available in South Korea and the authors have not been arrested. Noh Tae-hun, however, faces a prison sentence of up to seven years.

Amnesty International is concerned that the real reason for Noh Tae-hun's arrest appears to be his work to protect and enhance human rights in South Korea. It believes that provisions of the National Security Law place unnecessary restrictions on the rights of freedom of expression and association and may easily be used to silence government critics. Amnesty International has repeatedly urged the authorities to amend the National Security law to bring it into line with international standards.

During his speech to the World Conference on Human Rights, the South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke of the important role played by individuals and non-governmental organizations in the protection and promotion of human rights. Weeks later the authorities effectively curtailed the work of Noh Tae-hun, one of the most prominent advocates of human rights in South Korea.

Noh Tae-hun is held in Seoul prison. He has been refused release on bail.



Photograph of Noh Tae-hun, taken at the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, Austria, June 1993

**KEYWORDS:** ARBITRARY ARREST / TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT / HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS / PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE / POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CRIMINAL CHARGES / LAWYERS / UN / INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS /

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED KINGDOM

**WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SECURE THE RELEASE OF NOH TAE-HUN AND PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOUTH KOREA**

- ◆ Write to the Minister of Justice and the President seeking the immediate and unconditional release of Professor Noh Tae-hun; send copies of your letters to diplomatic representatives of South Korea in your country;
- ◆ Encourage others to send appeals;
- ◆ Contact professional groups and others in your country and urge them to take up the case of Noh Tae-hun.

**Send appeals to:**

Mr Kim Doo-hee, Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
1 Chungang-dong  
Kwachon-myon, Shihung-gun  
Kyonggi Province,  
Republic of Korea.  
Fax: +82 2 504 3337



President Kim Young-sam  
The Blue House  
1 Sejong-no  
Chongno-gu  
Seoul  
Republic of Korea  
Fax: c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs: +82 2 720 2686

**Send copies of your letters to:**

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**amnesty international**

# SOUTH KOREA

## Letters from Prisoners and their Families



March 1993  
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 Distr: SC/CO/GR

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED KINGDOM

# **SOUTH KOREA**

## **Letters from Prisoners and their Families**

Amnesty International groups throughout the world are campaigning on behalf of political prisoners in South Korea. At the time of writing there are some 370 political prisoners, many held under the National Security Law which prohibits "anti-state" activities and contacts with "anti-state" organizations (including North Korea). They include prisoners convicted of the broadly defined offence of "espionage" for visiting North Korea, making unauthorized contacts with North Koreans or alleged North Korean agents in third countries, or expressing support for North Korean or socialist positions.

Amnesty International groups are campaigning for the unconditional release of a number of prisoners of conscience, held for the peaceful exercise of their rights of freedom of expression and association. Amnesty International members are also expressing concern to the government about other prisoners about whom they have less information but who they believe may be prisoners of conscience. Some of the prisoners were tortured and ill-treated and some may have been convicted after an unfair trial.

Prisoners, their families and Amnesty International groups frequently enter into correspondence, although some prison authorities are believed to restrict prisoners' mail to and from other countries. This document contains excerpts from letters received by Amnesty International groups during 1992 and early 1993 from prisoners and their families. They show the encouragement and support prisoners and their families derive from such correspondence.

Some of the prisoners whose cases are described in this document remain in prison. Others were recently released.

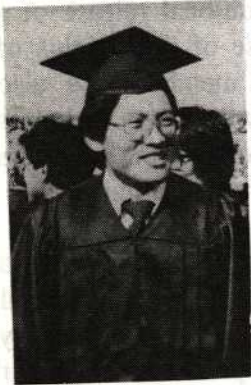
### ***Long-term prisoners Kim Song-man and Hwang Tae-kwon***

Kim Song-man, aged 35 and Hwang Tae-kwon, aged 37, are serving lengthy prison terms under the National Security Law. In the 1980s the two men studied together at Western Illinois University in the USA where they are said to have read widely about the political system in North Korea. They both met the publisher of an overseas Korean publication who is alleged by the South Korean authorities to be a North Korean agent. Kim Song-man visited Europe on several occasions and met North Korean diplomats in Hungary and East Germany.

Kim Song-man and Hwang Tae-kwon were arrested under the National Security Law in June 1985 when they returned to South Korea. They were accused of passing state secrets to North Korean officials and encouraging South Korean students to engage in

"anti-state" activities. Both were held incommunicado during their interrogation by the Agency for National Security Planning and claim to have been tortured. In 1986 Kim Song-man was sentenced to death and Hwang Tae-kwon to life imprisonment. In a presidential amnesty in 1988 Kim Song-man's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and Hwang Tae-kwon's to 20 years.

Amnesty International believes that there is no evidence that Kim Song-man and Hwang Tae-kwon carried out espionage activities. It has adopted them as prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release. It is also calling for an inquiry into reports that they were tortured.



Amnesty International groups in Norway, France and the UK have been campaigning for the release of Hwang Tae-kwon. In January 1993 Hwang Tae-kwon received his first letter from an Amnesty International group in Arendal, Norway for three years. He replied:

*"Arendal! It has been a dream town in my memory. Three years ago I received a photo book entitled 'Arendal' but I never knew who sent it to me. They just showed me the book for a second and didn't allow me to keep it. . . Since then Arendal has remained in my imagination as a place in a fairy tale. Maybe this beautiful imagination was exaggerated by the contrast between my grey concrete cell and the colourful landscape of your home town. Anyway the book gave a fresh stimulus to my monotonous prison life. . . Thank you very much for your warm concern and efforts for my release. I am not lonely as long as there are people like you. The fact that there are friends who worry about me on the opposite side of the globe inspires me with redoubled courage and hope."*

Amnesty International groups in Belgium, the USA, Sweden and France are among those who have campaigned for the release of Kim Song-man. In 1991 the French Section of Amnesty International released a short film featuring 30 prisoners of conscience from around the world. In July 1992 Kim Song-man's mother wrote to the French Section:



*"I am writing this letter to express my deepest appreciation for your kindness. I have received a copy of the video tape about my son. I really admire all your efforts for human rights and special consideration on my son's case. It's my son's great fortune to be selected as [one of] 30 prisoners of conscience and he is very pleased. Because he is not allowed to write a letter abroad, I'm writing this thank you letter on behalf of my son. . . We are convinced that truth and justice overcomes everything always. You are the people who helped to prove his truth."*

### **Long-term prisoner Ham Ju-myong**

Ham Ju-myong was born in the 1930s in what is now North Korea and came to South Korea in 1952 during the Korean War. He was arrested in 1983, charged under the National Security Law with passing state secrets to a North Korean agent and sentenced to life imprisonment. Ham Ju-myong denied the charges against him. He claims that he was tortured for some 60 days after his arrest and forced to sign a false confession. Amnesty International believes that Ham Ju-myong may have been convicted after an unfair trial, on the basis of a confession obtained under torture. It is urging the South Korean authorities to review his case.

Amnesty International groups in Canada and Denmark have been campaigning on behalf of Ham Ju-myong. In late 1992 the Amnesty International group in Canada wrote to Ham Ju-myong's family and in December 1992 his sister replied to the group:

*"I could not help crying with joy and thankfulness because your letter was the first one we received from human rights advocates abroad. My brother has not received a single one of the many letters you have sent him during the last two years... I was very much moved to cry because of your deep love and concern for humanity. I will give him your messages soon. I am sure that he will be very encouraged and thankful to you. . ."*

### **Student Im Su-kyong**

Im Su-kyong was a 22-year-old student of French literature before her arrest in 1989 under the National Security Law. She was sentenced to five years' imprisonment under the National Security Law for making an unauthorized visit to North Korea to attend the 13th World Festival of Youth and Students on behalf of *Chondaehyop* (National Council

of Student Representatives). Amnesty International adopted Im Su-kyong as a prisoner of conscience until her release in December 1992 under a presidential amnesty.

Im Su-kyong's family were in regular correspondence with an Amnesty International group in France. In May 1992 her mother wrote to the group:

*"Thank you for your efforts to release my daughter Su-kyong. On 3 May I visited Su-kyong and found her healthy. You and your friends' passionate support encourages my family. She does not want any special gift from Paris but your warm heart. . . I'm very happy to inform you that your friends of Amnesty International are sending letters and leaflets constantly and they have strengthened my family's exhausted mind."*

#### **Parliamentarian Suh Kyung-won and his secretary Pang Yang-kyun**

Suh Kyung-won, aged 55, was an opposition member of the National Assembly in 1988 when he visited North Korea and met several North Korean Government officials. He was arrested in June 1989 and charged under the National Security Law with making an unauthorized visit to North Korea and passing on state secrets. He was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment, later reduced to ten years. Suh Kyung-won's secretary, 38-year-old Pang Yang-kyun, was arrested in July 1989 and charged with failing to report Suh Kyung-won's visit to North Korea and passing state secrets to a North Korean agent. Both men denied the accusations of espionage and claim to have been tortured during interrogation by the Agency for National Security Planning.

Amnesty International believes there is no evidence to suggest that Suh Kyung-won and Pang Yang-kyun conducted espionage on behalf of North Korea. It believes that the mere fact of travelling to North Korea and talking to North Korean officials without evidence of espionage activity or the use or advocacy of violence does not justify imprisonment. It has adopted the two men as prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release. It is also urging an inquiry into reports that they were tortured.

Amnesty International groups in France, Norway and the USA are among those who have campaigned for the release of Suh Kyung-won. In May 1992 Suh Kyung-won's wife wrote to the group in France:

*"Thank you very much for your warmest letter and merry presents. . . Repeatedly thank you very much for Amnesty International's interest in our family. . . I respect Amnesty International's work for justice."*

In October 1992 Suh Kyung-won also wrote to the group in France:

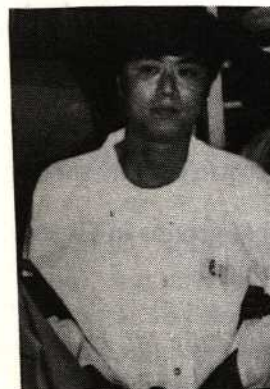


*"I am proud of my action and think most people know this. . . Now we must all help to solve ecological and political problems and strive for peace because we are one people who must live together on this earth. . . I received the parcel you sent: one pair of socks, seven photos, biscuits and a jacket. Thank you very much. Looking at the photos, I pray for you and your families."*

Amnesty International groups in Norway, Zambia, Taiwan and the USA have been campaigning on behalf of Pang Yang-kyun and the group in Taiwan have established a regular correspondence with Pang Yang-kyun and his wife. In July 1992 Pang Yang-kyun wrote to the group in Taiwan:

*"I and all my family are fine, thanks to God's patronage and your support. I thank you very much for the vitamins and cakes you gave to my children. Seven days ago, my wife and children came to see me. We had a very pleasant time together. Although you are busy, I thank you very much for helping both materially and morally."*

#### **Political activist Kang Ki-hun**



Kang Ki-hun, a 27-year-old political activist, was arrested in June 1991 and charged with aiding and abetting the protest suicide of a colleague in May 1991. At that time, he was an active member of the dissident group *Chonminnyon* which was at the centre of a series of protests and demonstrations. Dissidents and human rights groups claimed that the authorities had fabricated a case against Kang Ki-hun in order to damage the moral standing of *Chonminnyon* at a time of social unrest.

Kang Ki-hun was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. The evidence against him consisted exclusively of an analysis of the handwriting in the suicide note, which the prosecution claimed he had written. Amnesty International found this evidence to be both inconclusive and unconvincing and does not believe that Kang Ki-hun can be held

responsible for writing the suicide note or for aiding and abetting the suicide. It has adopted him as a prisoner of conscience and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Amnesty International groups in Sweden, France and Germany are campaigning for the release of Kang Ki-hun. In December 1992 Kang Ki-hun's mother wrote to an Amnesty International group in Sweden:

*"Thank you for your concern about my son's case. . . My family all appreciate your concern and encouragement. About once a week, I go to the jail where Ki-hun is confined to meet him. He is well. I told him about you and gave him your letters. It may happen that he will be released next year by the new government of my country. I hope so. We will never give up. Thank you again for your concern."*

#### **Teacher and trade unionist Lee Bu-yong**

At the time of his arrest in June 1991, 47-year-old Lee Bu-yong was acting President of *Chunkyojo* (Korean Teachers' and Educational Workers' Union). He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for organizing a rally which was held in May 1990 to mark *Chunkyojo*'s first anniversary. He remained in prison at the end of this term to serve a further 18-month sentence from a previous arrest, also for his activities on behalf of *Chunkyojo*. Amnesty International adopted Lee Bu-yong as a prisoner of conscience until his release in March 1993, in a presidential amnesty.

*Chunkyojo* was inaugurated in May 1989 but was declared to be illegal as both public and private school teachers are prohibited from establishing or joining trade unions. Since 1989 some 1,500 teachers have been dismissed because of their union membership and over 60 have been arrested. Because *Chunkyojo* is seen as illegal it rarely receives authorization to hold demonstrations.

Lee Bu-yong and his wife corresponded with Amnesty International groups in Greece and Sweden. In December 1992 his wife wrote to the group in Sweden:

*"I'm very glad to receive your letter. You're very kind. . . My daily life is a bit hard, sometimes blue, but I'm all right because my husband is right and people like you encourage me. Don't worry about me, I'm strong. I have to take care of my husband and children. I can't help being strong. And I believe my husband to victory. Thanks very much again. Your work is wonderful."*

#### **Army conscript Park Kil-nam**

At the time of his arrest in June 1989, Park Kil-nam was an army conscript in the 35th Division. In late 1988 he deserted from the military in order to make a "declaration of conscience" in which he expressed his views about the treatment of army conscripts, and about the current government and political system. He was later arrested and sentenced to five years' imprisonment for desertion and for "anti-state" activities. Amnesty International believes Park Kil-nam may be a prisoner of conscience, held for the peaceful expression of his views. It is also calling for an inquiry into reports that he was ill-treated during interrogation.

Since 1987 over 40 army conscripts have deserted from the military in order to make a "declaration of conscience". Some were arrested and sentenced and others remain in hiding.

Amnesty International groups in France and the UK have been campaigning on behalf of Park Kil-nam. In June 1992 Park Kil-nam wrote to the group in France:

*"I thank you for your sincerity. Your parcel and message give me courage and energy. . . I think that France is a beautiful country. Seeing the picture-album (sent by the group) I thought the following: how much blood and sweat have many people shed to build such a wonderful society? But this world needs yet more sweat and blood from many people. The peoples of Africa, Asia and South America don't live a rich life and the proletariat of this world live a life of agony. . . Though I am in prison, I try to live a busy and vigorous life because the human being must labour and laziness hasn't contributed to the world up to now."*

#### **Reverend Hong Keun-soo**

Reverend Hong Keun-soo, 54-year-old pastor of Hyang Rin Presbyterian Church in Seoul, was arrested in February 1991 under the National Security Law. Among other things he was accused of praising North Korea in his sermons, speaking in favour of reunification during a television debate on KBS (Korea Broadcasting System) and publishing a collection of writings which included an article about a North Korean lecturer in Christianity at Kim Il-sung University in North Korea. Reverend Hong Keun-soo was adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience until his release from prison in August 1992. In November 1992 he wrote to the Amnesty International group in Germany who had campaigned for his release:



*"I want to let you know how much I am indebted to you and your organization for helping me during the most difficult time of my life. Particularly I am grateful for your adopting me as a prisoner of conscience during a time when I was discouraged and frustrated. Thank you for your petitioning on my behalf, informing the public, and all your other efforts. Your international support and solidarity greatly alleviated my sense of loneliness and isolation."*

### **Socialist student Im Bong-kyun**

Im Bong-kyun was one of over 50 student activists arrested in December 1990 under the National Security Law and accused of belonging to *Chonminhangnyon* (National Students Democratic League). The authorities claimed that *Chonminhangnyon* was linked to *Sanomaeng* (Socialist Workers' League). Both were said to be "anti-state" groups which sympathised with North Korea and sought to overthrow the government by means of a violent revolution. Since 1990 at least 100 *Sanomaeng* and *Chonminhangnyon* members have been sentenced to prison terms of between one year and life imprisonment. Amnesty International is concerned at reports that many were ill-treated during interrogation and believes that they may have been imprisoned for their non-violent political activities. Im Bong-kyun was sentenced to two-and-a-half years' imprisonment and his case was taken up by Amnesty International as a possible prisoner of conscience.

Amnesty International groups in Germany, Norway, the USA and the Netherlands knew little about Im Bong-kyun but sent many letters of inquiry to the South Korean authorities and to the prisoner himself. On 1 January 1993 Im Bong-kyun replied to a Christmas card he had received from an Amnesty International group in the Netherlands:

*"I received your card. Thank you and your friends. Now it is the peak of winter in Korea [but] all Koreans greet the new year with hopes and expectations. I will also have a happy new year with the help of kind people like you. I hope that you stay in good health and have good luck in the new year".*

On 8 January he wrote again:

*"Thank you very much for your card. I had a happy new year because of your help. I will be able to do many good things this year because I received a card from overseas. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to you and your friends. Happy New Year!"*

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PRISON RELEASE GREETINGS

Jeonju Central Catholic Church  
 January 2, 1993  
 10:30 A.M.

Most venerable Bishop, senior Fathers and my fellow Fathers!  
 And dear brothers and sisters of the congregation whom I longed to see even in my dreams!

On this day bringing in the new year, words cannot describe the joy I feel in seeing all of you again, all of you whom I missed so much. I am deeply grateful for all your prayers for me and for welcoming me so warmly today.

Joining me here today, before all of you, is Father Lim who has plowed through a long road of suffering. Isn't this a profound providence of God? The fact that I am standing here with Father Lim moves me deeply and I am awed and electrified by the providence of God who works over us, the Korean people of suffering.

As you well know, Father Lim left our diocese in 1942 during the Japanese colonialism and went to China, only to return to our homeland, to our diocese, on 29 December 1992. During those years he has spent 14 years imprisoned in a foreign land. After 50 long years he has finally come home. Who has forced such extreme hardships on this man? The history of hardships that Father Lim has plowed through speaks for the suffering of the colonized people. It is an indictment of the crime of the twentieth century human history which has been split up by ideologies. You and I cannot imagine the ups and downs of Father Lim's life. Father Lim endured such hardships under the socialist government of China.

But what about the capitalist society here? Do you know this? In 1945 our homeland was divided by foreign powers, and from 1950 to this day there are those who have been forced to endure more than 40 years of imprisonment. We call them long-term political prisoners. How well do we know about these long-term political prisoners? In order to get pieces of paper renouncing one's ideology signed, the south Korean governments in the past used unimaginable tortures on these old men who only had few breaths left in their lives, and as a result, many have died and many remain imprisoned.

What is ideology and what is political system? Is it more valuable than the Korean people and more noble than a human being? How valuable is it that it forces such cruel suffering on Father Lim and so many others?

What is socialism and what is capitalism? And what is this division that has been forced upon the Korean people by foreign powers? What is so great about a political system or ideology that it forces brothers to hate each other, that it bleeds them and sends them to prison?

Disunity is a mistake, the Korean division, a crime. Disunity is the crown of thorns that the splintered mankind must wear, and division is the cross of suffering that our divided people must bear. It is not a cross to be borne by any one person, but a cross borne by us all.

When asked to explain the division of our people, I once explained this way. Being one people is different from being a piece of wood. We do not remain a new piece of different shape when broken up or sawed into two. But a people is like a living organism. If we are wounded and cut up, we continue to bleed. What is the Cheju April 3rd Uprising which has stained our history with blood? What is the Keochang Massacre and more recently what is the Kwangju Massacre of 1980? What is the countless deaths of so many young people all about, and what is the suffering of the many reunification activists and political prisoners still in prison all about?

Who among us can say all these are not related to the division of our land? Who among us will claim that he is not part of the bleeding from this division? If there is such a person, he will also be not part of Jesus Christ who bleeds along with our people on the cross of division. If such a religious faith exists, that is a faith not related to the God's faith of reconciliation, of God who is dressing the wounds of our people.

The Korean division is a crime. Any law or order that justifies division no matter by whom and for what reason, it is a crime.

Together with Su Kyong, I crossed over the military demarcation line, the line symbolizing 45 years of agony. Knowing that all kinds of denunciations and imprisonment awaited us, we walked across the cross of division. We came with the St. Francis' Prayer for peace. I declare firmly. My decision was not made because I loved one half and hated the other half of our divided land. It was not made because it was beneficial to one and detrimental to the other.

Reverend Moon Ik-Hwan once said this. "Some people say I am being used by someone, something. But so what if I am being used? I simply want to embrace the other side. So what if we are duped, when south and north come together and embrace each other and feel the body temperature, from this the divided nation begins to become one. The immediate warmth of the our oneness is felt no matter how we are duped and used..."

Our brothers and sisters in the north were very surprised when we declared our intention to return to south Korea by crossing the military demarcation line. They knew what will happen when we cross that line. Through Su Kyong and my firm resolve, our northern brothers and sisters came to understand the meaning of Christ's teaching "there is no greater love than sacrificing your life for a friend". They were impressed by the south Korean Catholic priests' resolve to support Im Su Kyong. From that point on the northern people began to address me as "Father" Moon rather than "Mister" Moon. At last they joined me in making the cross over our hearts. Not hate, but the resolve of reconciliation, risking suffering, was able to transform people and society.

But that was no more than a first step. As soon as we touched upon the southern soil, we were immediately arrested by officers under the U.S. military unit and turned over to the south Korean authorities. At that time one of the high ranking officers aimed a M-16 rifle and threatened to kill me. Our hands and feet were bound by the steel chain called the National Security Law, and I had to confront the countless stones of hatred thrown at me. You call yourself a priest? How can a priest break the law? They sneered.

I am not ashamed. In fact I am proud that I disobeyed the law of hatred in order to put into practice the law of love. I am not the one who should be ashamed. Rather it is the dictatorial regime which punishes those who show love for our brothers in the north in the name of national security, and when one of their own makes contact with the north it is permitted as an act of exchange, it is they who should be ashamed. If the law and order of our divided land makes it a crime to love our brothers in the north, then I believe it is the road of the priest to walk the road of suffering with Christ who preaches "love your neighbor as you would yourself". I believe that political power is short-lived but our people will remain for eternity.

Following the decision of the clergy I accompanied Su Kyong and went to north Korea to protect her. And now I have been released along with Su Kyong. To the end I try my all to carry out the work of a priest to practice the gospel of reconciliation, and I have returned to my brothers after being freed from the chains of prison.

However, although I have returned to be with you I have not been freed from the yoke of being a criminal. Do you know what parole means? It means that they can always put you back in prison if they don't like the way you talk or act. There is around my neck an invisible tag that says that I am a criminal with unpaid debt still remaining. I stand before you not as a reunification activist who should get respect but as a criminal who needs to be pitied.

I cannot but be angry. The fact that the flower of reunification, Su Kyong, and I and Reverend Moon have been used as ornamentation in releasing the corrupted government officers of the 5th and the 6th Republics is the most humiliating thing I have experienced. We have become a wrapping paper to hide the stench-ridden crimes of the 5th and the 6th Republics.

I condemn them. I condemn their conspiracy of exchanging our unadulterated desire for reunification with the criminals of government corruption while keeping imprisoned Reverend Moon who is more than 70 years old and the aged, long-term prisoners who are spending the last days of their lives in prison, and other victims of government frame-ups.

Moreover, I will watch the new government. I will watch to see if the new government will implement concrete actions to promote reconciliation and unity of the divided land. If the new

government acts the same as the old, that is, discuss reunification while keeping in prison reunification activists and victims of the division, I will denounce their falsehood and walk once again on this road of struggle.

At the beginning of this speech, I said that this gathering today is where the providence of God's reconciliation shines. Father Lim, in his eighties, comes to us after suffering so much in a socialist country. Although my suffering is much smaller in scale to his, I have suffered in this capitalist society and have come back to you. Isn't this a profound providence of God? We did not suffer in order to support one political system or ideology or oppose one political system or ideology. In order to indict the disunity and division we became the victims of the disunity and the division of Korea, and therefore, we are at one with Christ's road of suffering.

Our meeting today also signifies the hope of resurrection. Although the day of reunification may be far off this gathering symbolizes that day of reunification where we will all be hugging and dancing. It symbolizes the day when the people of south and north Korea will become one despite the fact that we have so long been in ideological opposition. Although our beginning today is small and not much to look at, on that day of reunification this place will become a place of joy and tears, where all political prisoners are freed and the Korean people, former enemies, will embrace each other.

My revered fellow clergy members!  
All my brethren of the congregation whom I love!  
The dark has never defeated the light. It's been hard and difficult up to this point, but in your embrace I no longer am lonely. Seeing all of you who have given me such a warm welcome, I realize anew what has nourished me and given me the power to walk this road thus far. In these times of frustration and despair I will do my best to live as a worthy priest of God. Thank you.

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상반기 자료

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KOREA

Draft text of booklet for CIIR. March 1993

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Notwithstanding the Korean war and the Seoul Olympics, Korea remains little known and still less understood by the wider world. Images of dynamic economic growth jostle and jar with those of riots and repression. Above all, the hated division imposed in 1945 remains in place in 1993, even though the cold war which created it is no more.

This report offers a brief introduction to Korea today. It chronicles the successive traumas - imperialism, colonial occupation, partition by the superpowers, a terrible civil war, forced-march industrialization - which have marked this ancient nation's experience of modernity. And it asks whether South Korea's hard-won democratization and prosperity are now secure: or whether the long-cherished impossible dream of reunification may after all come true, but as a sour and costly nightmare.

7/12/93

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## Introduction

Korea is a paradox. One of the oldest nations on earth, it was largely unknown to the wider world until recent times. That changed with the tragedy of the Korean War (1950-53), involving as it did troops from some twenty nations. More recently and happily, the 1988 Seoul Olympic games showed the world a South Korea which had grown much more prosperous, if not yet free from tensions. Hyundai cars, Samsung TVs, Goldstar microwave ovens, and a host of other Korean products now have a global reputation and reach.

Koreans tend to see their country as small and vulnerable: 'a shrimp among whales', as one of their pithy sokdam (proverbs) has it. And yet South Korea's GNP of nearly \$300 billion (larger than India's, with one-twentieth of the population) and trade volume of almost \$160 billion are both within the world's top fifteen; as would be the 66 million population of a unified Korea. Not so much a shrimp as a dolphin, it might be thought. Much commentary indeed dubs South Korea as a tiger or dragon, alongside the other fast-growing economies of East Asia.

Yet the legacy of a harsher past persists. The Korean War is not over - literally so, in that forty years after it ended no peace treaty has ever been signed. Two huge armies, totalling some 1.7 million men, even now face one another across the ironically named Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). While communism has collapsed in Russia and Eastern Europe, or reformed in China and Vietnam, it persists in hardline form in North Korea, still ruled by its original leader Kim Il Sung. The Cold War may now be history elsewhere, but on the Korean peninsula it remains very much alive.

Whether as an economic 'tiger' or a political flashpoint, Korea deserves to be much better known and understood than it is. I hope that the present booklet will assist in this task. It aims to provide a brief but broad introduction to Korea today, taking in past, present and future. The tale is in many ways a dramatic and indeed a tragic one, of an ancient civilization which in the space of less than a century has undergone a series of traumas: political decline, imperialist encroachment, loss of independence, brutal colonial occupation by Japan; then partition by the supposedly liberating superpowers, a terrible civil war, tough authoritarian regimes, and forced-march industrialization. Few nations have been dragged so fast or so fiercely out of age-old self-sufficiency into the hurly-burly of the modern world.

Telling this story may help outsiders to understand why many Koreans sound a less than triumphalist note about their country's progress. And yet South Korea is by any standards a success, having conquered in barely one generation the mass poverty which still disfigures so much of the Third World. Different Koreans nonetheless offer conflicting evaluations of the balance of gain and pain in this process, just as social scientists disagree on interpreting how they did it.

But above all, the story is not yet over. Reunification, which for decades seemed an impossible dream, in the wake of the German experience now looks like an all too possible nightmare. For better or worse, the status quo on the peninsula is unlikely to last much longer; it could alter very rapidly. The study concludes by looking at various scenarios for change.

I should like to thank the Catholic Institute for International Relations on two counts: for asking me to write this booklet; and for their patience whilst waiting for me to produce it.

Geographical context

Korea is a peninsula in north east Asia: not south east, as is sometimes inaccurately said, particularly when bracketing it with the other "little dragons" or newly industrializing countries of the region. Its latitude, between 43 and 34 degrees north, is comparable to southern Europe and much of the United States, and gives it a continental climate with the same four seasons that are familiar to any European or North American. Summers are hot and sticky, while the Korean winter came as a dreadful shock to the millions of foreign troops who found themselves embroiled in the Korean war. As against these extremes, spring and autumn are mild and beautiful: generations of Korean poets have waxed lyrical about blossoms and falling leaves. They have also celebrated streams, trees, and hills. Only one fifth of Korea is arable, and it is said that nowhere in Korea is out of sight of mountains.

Most of the population historically has lived in the (relative) plains of the west and south, which are also the main rice growing areas. The mountainous terrain made communications difficult until this century, which may be one reason for the strongly felt regional identities which loom large in current South Korean politics. There are several major rivers, two of which form Korea's northern border: the Amnok (Yalu) flowing west, and the Tuman flowing east. There are also hundreds of islands to the west and south of the peninsula, mostly small but including the sizeable sub-tropical Cheju with its many fascinations: traditional feminism (women dived, men stayed at home); bloodily suppressed leftist insurrection in the late 1940s; and today, South Korea's favourite holiday playground and honeymoon destination.



Korea as a whole has an area of 221,074 sq km, almost as large as the UK. It has been partitioned since 1945, first at the 38th parallel and subsequently along the ceasefire line of 1953 after the armistice. North Korea is territorially the larger half, with 120,538 sq km as against South Korea's 99,274 sq km (comparable respectively to Greece and Portugal). In population, however, the south outnumbers the north by two to one, with almost 44 mn as against 22 mn inhabitants (comparable to Spain and Romania respectively). South Korea's population density, at around 440 per sq km, is the third highest in the world after Bangladesh and Taiwan (excluding city-states like Hong Kong and Singapore).

Taken as a whole, Korea's 66 mn population exceeds that of any European nation except Germany and Russia. A further 5 mn or so live outside Korea: mainly in China, Japan, the USA, and the CIS, but with smaller groups in almost every country in the world. Virtually all of this migration has taken place in the 20th century.

For most of its history Korea's only land border was with China. As a result of Tsarist expansion in Siberia, however, since 1860 it has also shared a very short frontier (just 17 km) with what is now once again Russia, but was for most of this century the USSR. There is also a maritime border with Japan. One artefact of Korea's partition, given the impermeability of the DMZ, is that South Korea is in effect an island.

Rice is the traditional staple, but maize and other grains are also grown, particularly in the north - which also has the lion's share of forest cover (albeit much damaged by napalm during the Korean War), and of mineral resources which include coal, iron ore, lead, zinc, and tungsten.

Historical background

While space forbids a detailed account, some understanding of Korean history is essential - not least, as a guide to how Koreans themselves interpret their country's vicissitudes.

Korea is one of the oldest and least artificial nations in the world. While claims of a 5,000 year history are questionable, a recognizably Korean cultural identity stretches back for at least two millennia. Political unity is also ancient. Most of the peninsula was unified in AD 668, when the southeastern kingdom of Silla, having already conquered Paekche in the southwest, overran with Chinese help the once powerful northern state of Koguryo. Unified Silla was followed by Koryo in 918 (from which comes 'Korea' in western languages), which in 1392 gave way to the Yi or Choson dynasty. The latter lasted into the present century, until Japan took control of Korea in 1905.

This ancient nation is also ethnically homogeneous. Except for a tiny Chinese community, Korea has for centuries been populated almost exclusively by Koreans. As a people, Koreans are descended from tribes who moved to the peninsula in prehistoric times from continental north east Asia. Their language is quite distinct from either Chinese or Japanese, although it contains many loan-words from the former (which modern nationalists in both north and south have sought to expunge). Korean was first written in Chinese characters, which are still used in South Korea; the north's abolition of them, while nationalistic on one level, also serves to prevent Koreans today from reading what Koreans yesterday wrote.

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Since the 1440s Korea has had its own specially devised alphabet. Although today this is a matter of pride (South Korea even has a public holiday for it), it was for centuries scorned by the literati: only barbarians had their own script, and this was fit only for slaves and women. That comment sheds light on the nature of traditional Korean society. Internally it was highly stratified, with the monarchy and the yangban (the scholar-gentry ruling class, modelled on the Chinese pattern) dominating the great mass of peasant farmers. Below these came lowborn and outcast groups, a mixed bag including monks and shamans, prisoners and jailers, kisaeng (female entertainers), butchers and others. Slaves comprised up to one third of the population for most of the Choson period, and slavery was only abolished in 1894.

Externally, Korea's relationship with China was crucial and complex. From - or through - China came powerful cultural influences, not least in religion. Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and even Catholicism all first entered Korea from China. Political institutions and social norms were also adopted from China, especially under the Choson dynasty which was strongly Confucian. Choson policies included curtailing the rights of women, and dealing with the powerful Buddhist monasteries much as Henry VIII treated their English equivalents. Chinese influence is also apparent in Korean arts, including painting, ceramics, and poetry. For many centuries Korea was not technically independent, but paid tribute to China until the late 19th century.

Modern Korean nationalism looks askance at all this, criticizing the Choson policy of sadae (serving the great) as sadaejui (flunkeyism). And yet this dependence in no way smothered the distinctiveness and vibrancy of Korea's own civilization, which has to its credit inventions

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such as the world's first moveable metal type - in 1234, two centuries before Gutenberg or Caxton - and ironclad ships. Equally distinctive are Korean ceramics, particularly celadon, and the lovely sijo lyric poetry which is all but unknown outside Korea.

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Korea's long history has rarely been peaceful. As well as internal upheavals within and between dynasties, including peasant insurrections as well as strife among the elite, the country suffered invasions from (amongst others) the Mongols in the 13th and Japan in the late 16th centuries. Although the latter failed in their bid to conquer Korea - largely thanks to the naval skills of Admiral Yi Sun Shin, Korea's equivalent and contemporary of Sir Francis Drake - they inflicted terrible damage, and from then onwards the Choson dynasty went into a long decline. As a result, when the wider outside world finally began to impinge in the 19th century, it found Korea fatally enfeebled and ultimately unable to prevent imperialist encroachment. Nonetheless, Korea's stern efforts to quarantine itself against foreign influences led to its being dubbed 'the hermit kingdom', and included the wholesale martyrdom of the country's first Catholic converts.

In opening up Korea Japan was once again in the forefront, prising it free from Chinese suzerainty in 1876. The ensuing decades saw political and economic competition between a number of powers for influence in Korea, with each courting different factions of the elite. (Among the machinations of this era was a secret and ultimately abortive Russo-Japanese proposal in 1896 to partition Korea at the 39th parallel.) But the other main contenders, China and Russia, were themselves empires in decline; and their defeat by Japan in the wars of 1894-95 and 1904-05 respectively sealed Korea's fate. The country became a Japanese protectorate in 1905, followed by formal annexation in 1910.

## Colonialism and its legacy

While hardly an unusual route to modernity, colonialism in Korea was both bitter at the time and remains contentious in retrospect. Though very brief by comparative standards, four decades of Japanese colonial rule turned Korea upside down. As elsewhere in the world, this was a two-edged sword: in a sense laying the foundations for economic growth, but for the colonizers' benefit and imposing great suffering on the colonized.

In agriculture, for instance, the Japanese conducted a thorough land survey, introduced more scientific farming methods, and greatly increased rice production. Yet few Koreans gained from this. Many lost control over their land; by 1945 almost 70 per cent of farm households were tenants, while in the 1930s at least a million people were forced into eking out a bare subsistence from neo-primitive "slash and burn" agriculture in upland areas. Since most rice was exported, Koreans' own diet worsened even as their output grew.

Mining, industry and infrastructure were also developed, again for Japan's own benefit. Korea's mineral resources - mostly in the north, and including coal and iron as well as non-ferrous and precious metals - were increasingly exploited from the 1930s to fuel Japanese aggression in China and beyond. Both heavy and light industry grew, and by 1939 manufacturing (including mining and timber) contributed almost two-fifths of Korean economic output. Infrastructural development was greater than in many colonies. In particular, an extensive railway network - motivated, to be sure, by the Japanese thrust into Manchuria and beyond - did much to break down the traditional barriers between regions in this mountainous land.

Economic ferment had its social, cultural and political counterparts. At a mass level, millions of Koreans moved or were moved from their ancestral villages to labour in mines and factories, whether in

Korea, Manchuria or Japan. Meanwhile, the spread of education (much of it pioneered by the churches, as we shall see later) produced a modern intelligentsia, eager both to devour outside ideas and to debate their value for Korea. Given the lateness of Korea's colonization - a wholly twentieth century experience - we have the paradox that while some Koreans were just leaving feudalism for proletarianization, others were already reading James Joyce.

Worlds apart as those experiences might seem, in Korea as in most intelligentsias the Narodnik tendency was strong, and intellectuals debated passionately - when the Japanese censorship allowed - how to save their people and nation. There were predictable splits: between those who thought that revitalizing Korean culture took priority (and was safer), and others who insisted that politics must come first. These latter in turn were divided into left and right. The Bolshevik revolution and rise of the USSR reverberated in Korea as elsewhere in Asia, and socialist and communist ideas were influential - at least as theory. Practice was more problematic. After the vicious suppression of a nationwide non-violent mass protest movement on 1 March 1919, effective political activism was largely driven underground or overseas. A 'Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea' was formed in Shanghai in April 1919, with Syngman Rhee as its president, but was not very effectual. In the 1930s, small communist guerilla bands harried the Japanese on Korea's northern border; one such was led by the youthful Kim Il Sung.

Nothing described so far makes Korea's experience of colonialism much different (*mutatis mutandis*) from that of dozens of other nations. Yet in 1993, fully two generations after colonial rule ended, Japanese films and records are still banned even in South Korea; and Seoul's traffic jams must be the only ones in the world which are devoid of Japanese cars (ironically, there are probably more on Pyongyang's empty boulevards). Not

until 1965 did South Korea even establish diplomatic relations with Japan, amid mass protests. And though Japan has gone on to become South Korea's second biggest trading partner (after the USA) and major source of technology and capital goods, public attitudes are still hostile. Why is this?

The answer probably lies in the last decade of Japanese rule, which witnessed an attempt at nothing less than cultural ethnocide. The Korean language was banned in schools and official contexts, while Koreans were forced to worship at Shinto shrines and even to adopt Japanese names - this in a society where personal identity was and is deeply rooted in clans which trace their name and lineage back for centuries. Nor was the Japanese assault confined to culture. World War II brought intensified mobilization on many fronts, and by 1944 as many as 4 million Koreans - almost one in six of the population - found themselves outside Korea, working in mines and factories or for the military.

What rankles above all is not only the memory of these traumas as such, but persistent Japanese reluctance to admit responsibility and make amends. A current case in point is that of the so-called "comfort women" - a phrase and a phenomenon as abhorrent as "ethnic cleansing" - who were drafted in their tens of thousands for the sexual use of Japanese troops, and who are now claiming compensation for their terrible ordeal. If one wonders why it has taken so long for this to become a public issue, however, then arguably others should stand in the dock alongside imperial Japan, at least as accessories after the fact. Authoritarian governments and Korea's own patriarchal culture for decades concealed and thereby compounded these women's misery, offering them no solace but treating them as defiled and an embarrassment; hence adding to their initial injury the extra burden of almost half a century of gratuitous suffering in shamed and solitary silence. That too is a crime, and a Korean one.

Liberation, partition, and civil war

Japan's surrender in 1945 brought Korea its freedom, but imposed a wholly new and unforeseen disaster: partition. To add insult to injury, no one seems to have planned this. It arose from a proposal made almost casually in Washington, in response to the unexpected speed of Japan's crumbling after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (whose victims, incidentally, included thousands of Koreans). Soviet troops were advancing rapidly into Korea, and the US proposed a temporary partition for the limited purpose of accepting the Japanese surrender there. Two junior officials, one of whom was the young Dean Rusk, were given thirty minutes to find a suitable dividing line. They chose the 38th parallel, which put the capital Seoul in US hands.

Thus the fateful decision which would sunder an ancient nation for half a century was made in just half an hour. An ad hoc policy, devised in haste as a short-term expedient, ended up not only unleashing their worst inferno yet upon the long-suffering people of Korea (in the form of the Korean War of 1950-53), but also played no small part in cementing the broader Cold War divisions which would structure global international relations and perceptions for the next forty years. Even in his later career as Secretary of State, no action by Dean Rusk ever had such far-reaching and indeed tragic consequences.

Koreans themselves, unsurprisingly, were dismayed and outraged by the proposed partition - particularly as they were implementing other plans. The Japanese authorities ceded power to Yo Un Hyong, a left-leaning but independent nationalist, and a network of local people's committees sprang up rapidly across the nation, leading to the declaration of a Korean People's Republic (KPR) in Seoul on September 6.

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From this point on, the Korean story becomes two stories. More than two, in fact, inasmuch as telling the story is contentious in itself. The Cold War assumptions which have hitherto permeated much Western scholarly and public opinion tend to dismiss the KPR as a communist front, and to accept the claims to sole legitimacy of the Republic of Korea which was proclaimed in the south in 1948. The United Nations upheld this view at the time, to the point of intervening militarily to defend the south against northern invasion in June 1950. The fact that most Western countries have never recognized the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (proclaimed in the north later in 1948) tends to reinforce the presumption that the south is the real Korea, while the northern regime is viewed as an alien Soviet puppet imposition - like the satellites that were being set up in Eastern Europe in the same period. Kim Il Sung had spent several years in the USSR, and returned under Soviet sponsorship (even, it is said, in Red Army uniform). The picture seems both clear and familiar.

Actually, it is neither. During the last decade more thorough and critical scholarship, particularly the work of Bruce Cumings, has at the very least definitively shown the fluidity and contentiousness of Korea in the later 1940s. In the north, there was no formal Soviet occupying government: the people's committees were at first left in place, even as Kim moved to secure his own power and eliminate rivals. What did occur was social revolution. 1946 saw a spate of legislation, of which land reform was the most crucial, but also including nationalization of major industries and measures to improve the conditions of workers and women. Although communists led and dominated these processes, they appealed to a wider Korean constituency in two linked ways: by firmly tackling social ills, and in making a complete break with the hated Japanese regime.

South Korea was different. The Americans banned the KPR and set up their own military government (USAMGIK), which did not increase its popularity by relying on Koreans who had worked with the Japanese (even in the police). Putting down the people's committees and other protest was a prolonged and violent process: that on Cheju was not rooted out until 1949, after the destruction of three-quarters of the island's villages and a death toll numbered in tens of thousands. Much of South Korea was in a state of turmoil (if not insurrection) between 1945 and the outbreak of war in 1950, and the war itself cannot be properly understood without awareness of this background.

Like the agony of the "comfort women", however, none of this was safe to speak about in South Korea for forty years. The democratization since the late 1980s has changed that, but has also enabled radical students and others to read the 1940s in an almost metaphysical way. In a mirror-image of official propaganda, this view pictures South Korea as tainted by original sin: founded by foreign occupiers and collaborators, and rooted in the suppression of a revolution that should have been. Some who think this also add a corollary: that the northern regime, whatever its faults, is nonetheless in some sense more authentically legitimate.

This seems a distinctly perverse judgment in the 1990s, and is heard less now than a few years ago. Setting the past to rights is crucial, but such are history's ironies that doing this offers no straightforward clues to understanding the present or predicting the future. Irrespective of one's views on the legitimacy of their respective birth and parentage, half a century later South Korea enjoys rude health (though given to hypochondria), while North Korea looks sick unto death. Somehow the counter-revolution did take root and even make good; while the revolution, as usual, got betrayed.

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Returning to our narrative, the partition of 1945 and the ensuing consolidation of rival regimes with hindsight led inexorably to the civil war of 1950-53. Here too there are rival interpretations. No one now believes (as a few once did) North Korean protestations that it was the invader rather than the invaded; particularly since the opening of archives in Moscow confirms a degree of collusion (and also that Soviet airmen played a combat role, a secret which subsequently denied them the war memorial that was their due as veterans). On the other hand, Kim Il Sung is now seen as the main initiator and Stalin as assisting, rather than vice versa; while China, having only just emerged from two decades of wars, was initially reluctant to undertake what became a heavy commitment. (Chinese casualties alone may have numbered more than one million.)

The actual course of the war is well known. The initial northern invasion swept all before it, until only a small area around the south eastern port of Pusan remained unoccupied. This was reversed by MacArthur's landing behind northern lines at Inchon (so great is the tidal range on Korea's west coast that there were only twenty minutes in which to get ashore). Now it was the south's turn to sweep north (with crucial help from sixteen Western allied nations, spearheaded by the USA, under UN auspices). North Korea might well have been wiped off the map had it not been for Chinese intervention, which pushed the UN forces back down the peninsula. All this happened in the first year of the war, with Seoul changing hands four times in nine months. There followed two years of military stalemate (which did not exclude fierce fighting). The armistice eventually signed (but not by South Korea) in July 1953 left the border not very different from the pre-war partition: further south in the west (a mere 40 km from Seoul), further north in the east.

To say that the war devastated Korea would be an understatement. The south lost a third of its housing and almost half of its industry, and suffered casualties amounting to around 1.3 million. The north fared even worse, since for most of the war the UN side had command of the air, and could and did bomb with impunity. US bombers were even grounded at one point, since there were simply no more targets left in North Korea. Every major northern industrial enterprise was destroyed, as were dikés vital to rice production and much of the country's extensive forest cover (this, not Vietnam, was the first war in which napalm was extensively used). In the northern capital Pyongyang only two buildings remained undamaged, and its population fell by 80 per cent. The north's human losses are put at half a million military plus one million civilian casualties, and they show up to this day in its population structure. North Korea's subsequent relentless hostility to the United States is surely rooted in memories of this holocaust at least as much as in ideology.

To compound Korea's misery, whereas before 1950 the 38th parallel had been a difficult but not utterly insuperable barrier to movement and contact, the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) which succeeded it from 1953 proved wholly impermeable. After this devastating yet inconclusive civil war (in which both sides committed documented atrocities), not only did the two rival regimes cold-shoulder one another almost without respite for a further third of a century; but they also ensured that their respective citizenries, on pain of death, did likewise. Hence the millions of family members separated by the maelstrom of war remain to this day without news of their loved ones on the other side, unable even to write or telephone one another, let alone visit. Not even the Berlin Wall was as cruel as this. Henceforward the story has to be told the way it has had to be lived: separately, in worlds apart.

North Korea

In 1993, North Korea looks an extreme anomaly. One of the world's few surviving communist regimes, and one of only two (the other being Cuba) to set its face resolutely against political and economic reform, it is still ruled by its original leader, Kim Il Sung, who at 81 is now the doyen of world statesmen. Even by the standards of Stalin or Mao, Kim has taken totalitarianism and the cult of personality to extremes. All citizens wear a badge bearing his image, while portraits and statues of him are ubiquitous - as are his writings, and quotations therefrom. Since the early 1980s he has been joined in the pantheon by his son Kim Jong Il, who has been designated as his successor, and who now receives the same paeans in the Pyongyang press to his genius and omniscience as his father has long enjoyed.

The society ruled by the two Kims is shot through with paradoxes. It might be characterized as modernization without modernity. North Korea has experienced substantial industrialization and urbanization, such that today most citizens - like their southern compatriots - live in towns and cities and work in factories and offices. Housing is provided by the state, and is mostly apartments in country and city alike (high-rise in the latter case). Eleven years of schooling are both free and compulsory, a rare achievement in Asia. Rarer still anywhere is a claimed universal creche and kindergarten network, itself not unrelated to still another unusual and perhaps unique feature: an actual majority of the formal labour force (57 per cent in 1987) is female.

Yet this sociologically modern society and welfare state coexist with a political system whose tone is that of medieval absolutism or sultanism, even if its slogans and techniques are modern. Kim Il Sung has carried an

avowed quest for "ideological monochromaticity" to extremes undreamed of even by Hoxha or Ceausescu. What is striking about North Korea is not only the relentlessness of the totalitarian impulse, but the apparent success of its accomplishment. With information from and about the outside world tightly controlled, the few foreign visitors find no visible sign of discontent or dissidence: let alone the seismic rumblings that toppled communist rule in its original homeland. Kim and his regime have outlived their original Soviet sponsors. Compared with South Korea, now in its Sixth Republic and on its seventh president, the north presents an image of stability - or stagnation.

There are many difficulties in taking a balanced view of North Korea. Kim Il Sung has been thoroughly demonized ever since the Korean War, and it must be said that he plays the part with some conviction. The sheer existential strangeness of Pyongyang's massive monuments and empty streets, plus the lack of reliable data on almost everything, compound the analyst's problems. The key to understanding, however, is twofold. Kim must be seen in Korean rather than Western terms; and he must be credited with a degree of charisma and early accomplishment, alongside the evil.

As mentioned in the previous section, North Korea's early land reform and other measures were popular. Even collectivization a decade later seems to have been fairly consensual, if only because the Korean War had rendered most landholdings useless without state aid. Somehow Kim avoided being blamed for unleashing the war; instead he scapegoated and executed the leading southern communist and potential rival Pak Hon Yong. And he then redeemed himself by presiding over a spectacular burst of economic growth, such that by the 1960s per capita national income in the north certainly exceeded that in the south. Overall, then, Kim Il Sung secured

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substantial legitimacy during his first quarter century in power, by fulfilling popular aspirations for social change and economic betterment.

Above all, though, Kim was and is a Korean nationalist. He frustrated his Soviet mentors by refusing to join Comecon, preferring to spend Moscow's aid on industrializing Korea. He also managed the unique feat of remaining neutral in the Sino-Soviet dispute, and indeed played off both these giants with some skill. Ideologically, he early proclaimed the doctrine of *juche* (self-reliance), which over time has replaced nominal allegiance to Marxism-Leninism. In his obsession to seal his domain from foreign influence, Kim is a true successor to the Taewongun: the 19th century regent whose seclusionism led to the epithet "hermit kingdom".

In the end, however, the Taewongun's defiant stance proved untenable in the face of internal weaknesses and external encroachment alike. The same twin challenges confront North Korea in the 1990s. Its economy began to run out of steam in the 1960s, and since then has sunk ever more deeply into the predictable morass of interlinked crises familiar from other centrally planned regimes: inflexibility, bottlenecks, shortages, falling output, and too little investment in consumer goods and farming. To these must be added outdated technology and worn out machinery: North Korea went on a spending spree of Western capital goods in the early 1970s, then welshed on its debts, and unsurprisingly has been shunned ever since.

Economic growth in consequence slowed to a halt by the late 1980s, and in the 1990s has actually gone into reverse. GNP is thought to have fallen by up to 5 per cent in each of the last three years, with many factories producing at less than half capacity because of shortages of materials and power. To make matters worse, the USSR ended most aid in 1991, and from this year China has followed suit. Importantly, this reflects not only political change and shifting allegiances, but also

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sheer exasperation in both Moscow and Beijing with a client who always took but never gave. In fact *juche* was all along something of a sham, or even a con. Soviet aid in particular had always been a crucial underpinning, and its withdrawal caused North Korea's trade to fall by one quarter in 1991. Those who fret about dependency in South Korea might do well to ponder the lessons of the north's palpably much greater vulnerability, all the rhetoric of *juche* notwithstanding.

To economic crisis must be added diplomatic disaster. North Korean foreign policy, which was by no means unsuccessful in the era of the Cold War and the Sino-Soviet dispute, has to date proved wholly unable to adapt to the new alignments of the 1990s. South Korea's tactic of *nordpolitik* (with deliberate echoes of the late Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*) has swept all before it, forging both economic and political ties with Pyongyang's allies in the Third World and the communist bloc. The big prizes were of course Moscow and Beijing, with whom Seoul established full relations in 1990 and 1992 respectively. By contrast, North Korea has failed to win symmetrical recognition from either the USA or even Japan. In 1990 there were hopes of a breakthrough with Tokyo, but subsequent talks have bogged down due chiefly to Japanese suspicions of Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions.

All in all, a question mark must hang over North Korea's future: at least once Kim Il Sung dies (his son markedly lacks his father's charisma) but maybe sooner if the economic downward spiral continues. Living standards are already spartan in the extreme, and how much more even this obedient citizenry will endure without protest remains to be seen. While reforms on the Chinese or Vietnamese model would rejuvenate the economy, the increased openness which this would entail risks undermining Kim's carefully constructed ideological quarantine. These and other dilemmas for the future will be considered further in our final section.



South Korea: politics

By any standards, but especially compared with the stasis north of the DMZ, politics in South Korea during the past half century have been both contentious and turbulent. Four decades after its founding, the country was already on its Sixth Republic. Until the late 1980s, South Korea was ruled by a series of authoritarian regimes, and Seoul's economic development was not matched by political progress. Although divisions still run deep and opinions differ, the accession to power in February 1993 of Kim Young Sam - for decades a doughty opponent of dictatorship, along with his great rival the better known Kim Dae Jung - suggests that the long and bitter struggle for democracy is now largely won.

The unpropitious beginnings of the Republic of Korea were dealt with in an earlier section. Its first president, Syngman Rhee, was already 70 - more than twice the age of Kim Il Sung - when he returned to Korea in 1945 after half a lifetime spent in exile, mainly in the USA; as a young man he had been politically active in the 1890s, during the last years of the Choson dynasty. He proved to be an autocratic figure, alike in confounding his American sponsors (e.g. by refusing to sign the 1953 armistice) and in dealing harshly with rivals and opponents. Nonetheless he held on to power until 1960, and had just begun a fourth term when his bloody suppression (130 deaths in Seoul alone) of student protests against blatant election-rigging led to such a wave of popular revulsion that Rhee felt obliged to resign and go once again into exile. (The role of students in spearheading political protest has been a key feature of South Korean politics ever since.)

The democratic euphoria unleashed by Rhee's ouster soon dissipated into factionalism and corruption, however. This enabled a group of middle

ranking officers, led by Park Chung Hee and Kim Jong Pil, to mount a military coup in May 1961. Park was elected president in 1963 and 1971 and ruled South Korea with an iron hand until his dramatic demise in October 1979, when the head of his own CIA shot him across the dinner table. (Ironically the intelligence chief was more liberal than his master, and turned assassin in desperation when he failed to persuade Park to reform instead of cracking down on dissent.)

Park Chung Hee's almost two decades in power essentially created the South Korea that the world knows today, in two respects. On the one hand, this was the period of Seoul's economic take-off, which is considered in the next section. On the other hand, and not unrelatedly, this was also an era of brutal authoritarianism and flagrant human rights abuses: and one in which the military as a group came to dominate the society in a way not seen in Korea since the late C14. These processes reached their acme in 1972, when Park carried out a virtual coup in office and imposed a new Yushin (revitalization) constitution which in effect legalized dictatorship. Political imprisonment and torture were routine. Kim Dae Jung, the opposition leader who had run Park uncomfortably close in the 1971 presidential election - he took 45 per cent of the vote overall, but 52 per cent in the cities and almost 60 per cent in Seoul - was abducted from Japan by the KCIA, and would have been murdered at sea had it not been for American pressure.

Park's own violent death led to a virtual rerun in 1979-80 of the events of 1960-61. Once again collective relief and moves towards democratization all too soon gave way to factionalism and foreboding, with both government and opposition parties riven by fierce feuding; and once again a group of soldiers saw and took their chance. The coup by generals Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo proceeded by stages over several months, reaching

a bloody climax in May 1980 when a popular uprising in the southwestern city of Kwangju was quelled by a massacre which may have claimed as many as 2,000 lives.

Despite this baptism of blood, Chun like Park before him went on to win both a referendum to change the constitution and the subsequent presidential election. Chun's Fifth Republic (1981-88) maintained Park's mix of economic dynamism and neanderthal politics. Kim Dae Jung was sentenced to death on trumped up charges of sedition (though this was later commuted), and human rights abuses continued. Yet it proved increasingly difficult to keep the lid on a society which prosperity had rendered more self-confident and sophisticated, hence less inclined to put up with the crudities and cruelties of military rule. With students as ever in the van, popular protest built up during the 1980s, reaching a crescendo in 1987 in response to two events: the admitted death of a student under torture (by no means the first such death, but for the first time the state was forced to admit it); and the rubber-stamp choice by the ruling party of Chun's friend, classmate, fellow general and co-conspirator Roh Tae Woo to be its presidential candidate, thus guaranteeing his succession given the country's indirect and loaded electoral system.

반대 운동의 주체

Then the unexpected happened. With the showpiece Seoul Olympic Games barely a year away, Roh forced Chun's hand and agreed to virtually all the opposition's demands - above all, their insistence that the president be elected by direct popular vote. It was a bold gamble, but Roh correctly surmised that personal and regional antagonism between the main opposition leaders, Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam, would fracture their alliance and split the vote. Roh duly won with under 37 per cent of votes cast (the two Kims each polled around 27-28 per cent), and became president in February 1988.

Opinions on Roh's Sixth Republic vary - albeit more so within than outside Korea, and more at the outset than now when he has left office. Many in Korea found it difficult to forget or forgive his past role as a general and coup-maker, and doubted that such a leopard could change his spots and turn into a democrat. The Sixth Republic did indeed replay some familiar Korean scenes: student and labour unrest, sometimes toughly suppressed; and dissidents jailed merely for holding radical beliefs. But much else was new. The press was freed; trade union activity was legalized (although not fully), and flourished; and the national assembly (opposition-dominated from 1988 to 1990) acquired real power, including a humiliating inquisition of the ex-dictator Chun (who atoned for his sins with two years of spartan penance in a remote Buddhist monastery). Above all, both the form and substance of due process in law became the norm rather than the exception. If Amnesty International could not yet close its case book on South Korea, at least it could and did now set up branches there.

Transforming a political system is not easy, and clean breaks with murky pasts are rarely practicable. Like their counterparts in some Latin American countries with even grimmer recent histories - for at least South Korea had nothing like the desaparecidos of Chile or Argentina - Korean democrats have had to settle for evolution and compromise rather than revolution and fresh starts. One such is South Korea's new president. In 1990 Kim Young Sam both astonished and dismayed many of his followers by crossing the floor and merging his party with that of his former persecutors in a new coalition, in a patent bid to secure the presidency which had eluded him before. The gamble worked: enough of the old guard accepted him, the ruling party held together, and in the elections of December 1992 Kim emerged victorious with 42 per cent of the vote. Once

인구의 37%

again it was a three horse race, but this time Kim Dae Jung trailed with 34 per cent; while the third contender Chung Ju Yung, the elderly billionaire founder of the Hyundai conglomerate, saw his bid to emulate Ross Perot collapse with a mere 16 per cent.

This section has sought to give a narrative and partly interpretative account of South Korean politics. We shall return below to some of the social and sociological issues which affect the character of politics - such as factionalism and regionalism, and the role of groups as varied as students, labour, farmers, the middle classes, the military, and of course the churches.

The South Korean economy

In 1993, as mentioned in the introduction, South Korea ranks within the world's top 15 economies in terms of both output and trade. This fact, set alongside the other 'little dragons' of the region - Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore - which have also grown mightily, tends nowadays to be taken for granted. The Pacific Rim's economic dynamism has become a cliché, which obscures the unexpected and even contentious nature of what has occurred. Koreans themselves habitually sound a soberer note than the triumphalism of outside commentators, inclining more towards worry and pessimism - be it about the social and political price paid for growth, or the varied risks of slowdown or dependency. Meanwhile scholars are deeply divided as to how the 'miracle' has been achieved, with different writers stressing market forces, state planning, or Confucian values.

What is undeniable is the fact and scale of the transformation. It is too easily forgotten how desperately impoverished was the South Korea of little more than a generation ago. Rural poverty had been the lot of most Koreans for centuries, compounded by the growth of tenancy under Japanese rule. The partition of 1945 meant the loss of the mineral-rich and more industrial north, while the Korean war inflicted crippling destruction. All in all, and despite substantial US aid, South Korea circa 1959 was widely written off as much of Africa is today: a hopeless basket-case, irretrievably enmired in poverty and corruption.

In 1962 South Korea's per capita income was a mere \$87, on a par with much of Africa. By 1990 it stood at \$5,400: still much smaller than its three fellow dragons (less than half that of Hong Kong and Singapore, for instance), but ahead of Portugal and snapping at the heels of Greece in

the World Bank's league tables. Seoul's exports in 1962 were worth \$55 million; by 1988 they had reached \$55 billion. These figures are at current prices (ie not allowing for inflation), but in real terms too the record is sensational. Real GNP grew at an average rate of almost 9 per cent annually in the three decades 1962-1991 (though it fell to 5 per cent in 1992), one of the fastest speeds in the world. Moreover, this has been accompanied by an income distribution statistically more equal than most - little though this accords with many Koreans' perceptions of their society's inequalities.

Growth has meant structural transformation. By 1991, only 1 in 6 of the labour force still made a living as their forebears had, on the land. Agriculture contributed a mere one-fourteenth of national output, in stark contrast to the one-third provided by industry, which employed 1 Korean in 4 - while almost half the labour force were in commerce or services. 95 per cent of South Korea's \$70 bn of exports comprised manufactured goods. Such figures connote a modern economy which has undergone an industrial revolution.

The scale and pace of change can also be seen in the vicissitudes of the rival northern and southern economies. North Korea grew much faster in the first decade after the Korean war, and fear of this lead was one of the factors which prompted the 1961 coup. No less an authority than the National Unification Board in Seoul reckons that southern per capita income only overtook the north's in the early 1970s. Yet twenty years on the per capita gap is at least sixfold, and a single year's growth in the south (at least until 1992) is bigger than the entire northern economy.

Explaining South Korean growth is not straightforward, and ideological bias often enters in. The laissez-faire doctrines whose hegemony so

marked the 1980s eagerly recruited South Korea and the other dragons as allies, alleging that they demonstrated the superiority of market forces, outward orientation and an open economy as against state intervention, import substitution and protectionism. This interpretation was challenged by studies which claimed the opposite, attributing Seoul's success rather to strong and skilful state intervention. Koreans themselves (and some others) often prefer cultural explanations, particularly the idea of a 'Confucian ethic': a gloss on Max Weber's 'Protestant Ethic' which would surprise Weber, who regarded Confucianism as a formalistic and conservative doctrine tending to suppress entrepreneurialism and innovation.

There is probably some truth in all three of these, and nor do they exhaust the field. On economic policy the balance is well put by the title of a recent book, **Governing The Market**; while Confucianism may be behind the emphasis on education which has certainly been important. (South Korea has more university students than the UK). Here credit must go to Syngman Rhee, who whatever his other sins of political commission and economic omission was responsible for expanding mass education and laying the basis for today's universal literacy.

More reluctantly (he tried to veto it), Rhee also presided over another crucial social change. Like Taiwan, but unlike much of the third world, South Korea has undergone a thoroughgoing land reform. The traditional yangban landlord class were bought out in the late 1940s, as a result of American pressure and the example of North Korea in this field. Landlordism was banned, and individual holdings may not exceed three hectares. Although some tenancy in fact persisted, and the 3 ha limit is now seen as an obstacle to rationalization, this reform succeeded on many levels. By eliminating an ancient discontent, it brought social

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peace, relative equity, and increasing prosperity to the South Korean countryside. Moreover, the highly efficient small farm sector created by the reform also helped to fuel growing industrialization in two ways: not only by delivering food, but also in shedding labour to man (and woman) the new factories.

Yet 'shedding labour' is an economist's euphemism for processes which millions of Koreans actually experienced as profoundly unsettling and painful, irrespective of the aggregate or long run gains. Like all industrial revolutions, this one turned society upside down, shattering familiar ways of life and livelihoods. In the Korean context, forced march industrialization was widely and understandably perceived as just the latest in a long line of disasters: loss of independence, Japanese occupation with all its oppressions and dislocations, the tragedy of partition, the turbulence of the late 1940s, the inferno of civil war - and now this. Being uprooted from your ancestral home and forced to migrate to an unknown city, there to toil long hours in sweatshop conditions for miserable wages, while raising children in a squalid squatter slum - none of it felt much like progress.

Nor, to add insult to injury, did anyone ask Koreans whether they actually wanted this. As with all their earlier traumas, the process of industrialization was something imposed on them. If they resisted or even protested, punishment was swift and harsh. Until the late 1980s, any voices raised by or on behalf of the disadvantaged in South Korea were liable to be viewed as suspect, unpatriotic, even crypto-communist. Trade unionism in particular was a dangerous and persecuted activity.

The social divisions and movements thrown up by industrialization are considered further in the next section. Achieving a balanced evaluation

of the process is difficult. Accounts which stress the progress tend to ignore or brush aside the pain, and vice versa. But both are real. In time, growing prosperity and its taken for grantedness will predominate, as the memories of suffering recede. As yet, however, the very recency of South Korea's economic and political transformations alike ensures the persistence of han or a sense of grudge as a prominent motif in modern Korean culture and society.

Social change and social movements

While much has already been said about the social transformation of South Korea in little more than a generation, it is worth drawing some of the threads together by taking an overall look at this society in the 1990s. Centuries of tradition have given way to, yet also helped to form, a modern South Korea of fascinating and often fractious complexity; and one concerning which different groups offer sharply contrasting perceptions.

The influence of tradition, for good or ill, lives on in a number of ways. Korea's Confucian heritage persists in the hierarchies of age and gender that still structure everything from the job market to the Korean language itself (which has different inflexions depending who is addressing whom). As elsewhere, however, such inequalities no longer go unchallenged. The concerns of women's groups in South Korea include: better career opportunities (women are expected to stop work once married, while in factories they are paid less than half what men earn); political participation (the national assembly's 299 members currently include not a single woman elected by popular vote, and just three chosen from party lists); family law reform (divorce is still quite rare, and the father as family head often gets custody); prostitution, widespread with both local and foreign clienteles; and obtaining justice for former 'comfort women'. An alarming trend in recent years is the abuse of amniocentesis to abort foetuses found to be female, which is already showing up as demographic imbalance.

At least three further aspects of Korean tradition remain potent. It is still illegal for members of the same surname origin group to marry, so prudent Koreans must consult genealogies going back centuries before letting romance blossom. At a wider level not only clan but also regional origins are important, to the extent that in recent years it has been

provincial identities much more than divisions of ideology or class which have determined political affiliations. In the last but one presidential election in 1987, each of the four candidates was seen as primarily representing one particular region; and the pattern of voting confirmed this. Thirdly, loyalty to an individual (who may be a class-mate or a senior) also often overrides other considerations, and factional grouping and regrouping seems as endemic in modern as in traditional Korea. As a result political parties are ephemeral, with frequent mergers and splits.

Of course divisions of ideology and class also exist, but they overlay these older patterns in complicated ways. The virulence of the regional issue, for instance, might not be so much primordial as a reflection of the predominance ever since 1948 of the south eastern Kyongsang provinces, from which all the country's rulers have come and into which the lion's share of investment has gone. This has aggrieved in particular the south western Cholla provinces, which also experienced the Kwangju massacre of 1980 and the persecution of their longtime favourite son Kim Dae Jung. It is possible that opposition regroupings in the wake of Kim's retirement from politics, plus the judicious appointment by his victorious rival Kim Young Sam of a prime minister from Cholla, will render the regional dimension less salient in future.

The new premier is also a former general. Despite this gesture to the social group who have run South Korea for most of its history, the clout of the military will continue to diminish. Their influence had been pervasive, not only in the two coups and the regimes these created, but also through the appointment of retired officers to key business and administrative posts. This practice was already declining, and Kim Young Sam's self-image as presiding over the first truly civilian government in thirty years will ensure that the the imprint of militarization continues

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to fade. South Koreans today, unlike (say) their Thai and Filipino contemporaries, can be confident that the era of military meddling in politics is over.

As in other comparable countries - Taiwan and Brazil both spring to mind - the ouster of military and/or authoritarian regimes reflects not only years of courageous struggle by democrats, but also (paradoxically) the very success of these regimes in creating large new middle and working classes whose social weight ultimately told against their creators. South Korea's middle class is complex and numerous (in surveys, a large majority claim to belong to it). One major internal divide is that between the chaebol - the huge conglomerates such as Hyundai, Samsung, Daewoo and Lucky-Goldstar, built up over the years by government favouritism, who still play a preponderant role in exports - and the great mass of smaller scale businesses who feel less favoured. Although the Hyundai founder Chung Ju Yung's run for president suggested a new degree of autonomy for the chaebol from the state which had nurtured them, his debacle may make other business leaders think twice before entering the political arena.

Like capital, only far more so, labour too was long excluded from the political arena. The crushing of all left of centre politics in the late 1940s led to forty years in which labour and trade union activities were repressed - although never extinguished, thanks especially to the dogged support of church groups. The pent-up frustrations of four decades exploded in a rash of strikes at the end of the 1980s, whose fierceness was seen by some as a sharpening of class conflict. In fact, large wage increases plus better bargaining rights seem to have deflected any more radical impulse, and South Korea still remarkably lacks any kind of mass labour or social democratic party.

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Labour's reluctance to play the role of militant proletariat has disappointed still another distinct group which is perhaps unique to South Korea. Decades of repression spawned their own resistance, creating a strong dissident political sub-culture composed of diverse currents bound together by their hostility to military dictatorship. Students were always the spearhead, but sections of the Christian churches also played a vital role, in a sense filling the gap left by the illegality of explicitly socialist ideas and organizations.

Though ideologically diverse, this sub-culture shares a populist concern with the minjung, the masses of ordinary Koreans. The closest parallel may well be with the Narodniks of 19th century Russia. Like the Narodniks, minjung activists have been diverse both in their activities - which embrace art, literature and theology, as well as politics - and in ideology. The latter has tended to move leftwards over time, with a shift from liberal democracy and Gandhian non-violence towards more radical perspectives: Marxism, Latin American dependency theory, and in extreme cases even Kimilsungism. In the late 1980s, when just about everywhere else in the world leftism was in decline, the influential though illegal radical student organization Chondaehyop was arguing - when not exchanging Molotov cocktails for tear gas with the riot police - over whether South Korea should accept Kim Il Sung's embrace right away, or make its own socialist revolution first.

Unlike the successful struggle for democracy in 1987, when student demonstrators enjoyed wide support, these notions alarmed rather than enthused most of their fellow citizens. In an irony not rare in the history of populist and socialist movements, the activists' embrace of the minjung was never fully reciprocated. Instead, as elsewhere, the lure

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of consumer society (and its delivery, which is less common) seduced the masses, leaving many minjung activists perplexed and marginalized. Yet they have much to be proud of. It was their courage which kept alive the values of respect for human beings during the dark years; it was they who insisted that economic development should not be bought at the cost of trampling social justice under foot; and above all, it was their struggle which ultimately delivered the degree of democratization which South Korea now enjoys. If this outcome is less pure than they would wish, that only reflects the normal ambiguities and compromises of the modern condition. And there is still much unfinished business to attend to: environmental issues, the rights of women, and the ultimate challenge of reunification.

The contribution of Christians to the minjung movement has already been noted. It remains, however, to look at the broader place of religion and the churches in Korean society, which is a fascinating topic in itself. Korea's religious heritage is rich and many layered. Ancestral shamanism still survives, particularly among women and including adherents of other faiths. Buddhism entered Korea as long ago as the 4th century AD and remains numerically preponderant. Historically it was challenged by Confucianism, whose explicit embrace by only half a million South Koreans today is the tip of a much wider iceberg in terms of cultural influence.

The really striking feature of the Korean religious scene, however, is its thriving Christianity. Around a quarter of South Koreans are Christians, the highest proportion in Asia outside the Philippines. It feels like more. President Kim Il Sung is Presbyterian, while his rival Kim Dae Jung is a Catholic. Church towers and spires are an ubiquitous feature of both urban and rural Korean landscapes, even if some spires are made of metal scaffolding topped by a neon cross. A survey in 1989 showed

that while only two in every five Koreans actually professed a religion, (most of the rest should probably be seen as at least passively Buddhist), Christians actually outnumbered practising Buddhists, with a total of some 6.5 million Protestants and 1.9 million Catholics. Both mainstream and other denominations continue to make converts, as well as a plethora of cults and syncretisms of which the Unification Church ('Moonies') is the best known.

Why has Korea proven such fertile soil for the Christian gospel? For one thing, it was originally brought not by missionaries but by Koreans who had encountered Catholicism at the Chinese imperial court. By the 19th century there were believers in such numbers as to invite savage official persecution; these martyrs' subsequent canonization has given Korea the fourth largest quota of saints in any nation. When persecutions ceased later in the century, Protestant missionaries (many American) were active, founding Korea's first modern schools and colleges and pioneering education for women. The translation of the Bible into hangul (the Korean alphabet) rather than Chinese characters boosted Korean nationalism as well as spreading the faith.

Indeed, it is this identification of Christianity with Korean national aspirations which probably accounts for its success. The humiliation of submission to Japan caused many Koreans to query their ancestral creeds, creating a new receptivity to fresh ideas. The sufferings of the children of Israel struck a chord, in a country undergoing its own bondage in Babylon. And colonization by a non-western and indeed a non-Christian power meant that the common equation of missionaries with the colonial enterprise did not apply in Korea. Deep roots were thus put down early, whose subsequent growth and flowering has made Christianity a central and vital component of modern Korea's indigenous culture.

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Inter-Korean and foreign relations

In 1993, the partition of Korea has outlasted the cold war which created it. Despite momentous changes around the peninsula in the last five years, including the belated beginnings of inter-Korean dialogue, tension and hostility remain very high. An army of over one million in the north, said to be deployed in offensive rather than defensive positions, faces one almost as large (nearly 700,000) in the south. North Korea is suspected of developing nuclear weapons - and chemical and biological ones too, according to its Russian former allies. Pyongyang denies this, while implausibly making the same accusations against Seoul.

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Evidently Korea's division has acquired a life and a dynamic of its own. In fact this has been so from the beginning. Neither Kim Il Sung nor Syngman Rhee was a pliable puppet: both proved to be thorns in the flesh of their Soviet and American sponsors. While the sundering of the country in the first place must be blamed on the superpowers, the subsequent implacable hostility even decades later is at least as much a product of the way the two Korean regimes have chosen to play things. To advocate any kind of contact with Pyongyang was until very recently deemed treasonable in Seoul; while actually instigating such contact could bring a death sentence, and still risks imprisonment.

It is illuminating to contrast this with the former German situation. Despite the ugly symbol and harsh reality of the Berlin wall, contact was never completely lost. People could watch each others' television; they could write, telephone, and even visit. Koreans have been denied all these for forty years. Millions live, and millions have already died, not knowing the fate of their children, parents, spouses or siblings on the

other side. (What with labour migration before 1945 and refugee movements thereafter, it is estimated that there are at least ten million members of separated families.)

At government level too, the two Germanies existed within a structured and symmetrical framework, in which each participated in their respective blocs' economic and military alliances: EEC and Comecon, Nato and Warsaw Pact. Korea was and is much messier, with each state involved in a series of bilateral relations. The image of 'two triangles' is sometimes used to describe how this used to be, with the USSR and China lining up behind the north while the USA and Japan supported the south. Yet quite apart from recent changes, this metaphor downplays the awkwardness of several sides of both triangles: be it North Korea's refusal to join Comecon, the Sino-Soviet dispute, or South Korea's touchy relations with Japan. It also elides one major asymmetry: the continuing presence of over 30,000 US troops in the south, whereas no foreign forces have been based north of the DMZ since the last Chinese left in the late 1950s.

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Over four decades the two Koreas have become strangers as well as enemies, in a way that the two Germanies never did. Only once before recent times did the shifting sides of the two triangles bring them briefly together, in the early 1970s when the shock of American rapprochement with China made both Koreas suspicious of what their allies were up to; but talks petered out without result a few years later. Further episodes of dialogue followed in 1979-80 and again in 1984-85, the latter initiated by Seoul's unexpected acceptance of Pyongyang's offer of aid after severe floods. This led to a brief reunion of a few dozen members of separated families, for the first and still the only time. There were also abortive negotiations for the north to have a share of the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

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Sustained inter-Korean dialogue only began on the eve of the 1990s, and reflected broader international and regional realignments. Seoul's policy of nordpolitik as opposed to blanket anti-communism cut little ice with Brezhnev or Mao, but their successors proved more amenable. The presence at the Seoul Olympics of teams from China, the USSR and eastern Europe (except Albania), none of which at that time recognized South Korea, was both a symbol and a turning point. Thereafter both economic and political ties blossomed, even before the collapse of communist rule. Full diplomatic relations with Moscow came in September 1990, and Roh Tae Woo met Gorbachev three times in less than a year (including once in Korea; by contrast, no top Soviet leader ever visited the north). China took a little longer, but trade was already booming before the diplomatic knot was tied in August 1992.

These defections by its two major sponsors have forced North Korea to soften its own hardline stance, particularly since it has failed to make any equivalent progress in improving its own relations with the south's allies in Washington and Tokyo. Thus the two Koreas joined the UN in 1991 once it became clear that Pyongyang could no longer rely on China to veto Seoul's application. North Korea also finally began to permit IAEA inspection of its nuclear facilities. Above all, the two Koreas started their own high level dialogue. What became regular meetings between prime ministers began in autumn 1990, and produced the first ever agreement between North and South Korea in December 1991.

Implementation is another matter, however. The past year has seen Pyongyang jibbing at the mutual nuclear inspections stipulated in the inter-Korean accords, and more recently falling out with the IAEA as well. As a result the comprehensive contacts and exchanges envisaged in the

agreement remain as yet a dead letter. The main exception is trade, only permitted since late 1988, which reached around \$200 mn in both 1991 and 1992: peanuts to Seoul, but enough to make it already Pyongyang's fourth largest trading partner and second biggest source of hard currency after Japan (since over 90 per cent is southern imports, mostly of minerals).

At the time of writing (March 1993) tension is if anything increasing. Not for the first time, North Korea is boycotting inter-Korean talks in protest against the large scale 'Team Spirit' US-South Korean war games, held each spring since 1976. These were cancelled in 1992 as a reward for Pyongyang's move to dialogue, but have been reinstated in 1993 to punish its reversion to intransigence. On past form talks will probably resume in the summer, and it remains to be seen whether the new government of Kim Young Sam will find a way to move dialogue forward. This will be made no easier by North Korea's falling out with the IAEA. After a year of being unexpectedly co-operative, Pyongyang is now refusing IAEA demands for a special inspection of suspect nuclear facilities. All in all, there are question marks over both short and long term prognoses for the peninsula, and it is to these questions that we finally turn.

Prospects for reunification

Even though the overall status quo on the Korean peninsula has been stable - frozen, even, albeit never free from tension - for getting on for half a century, it would be unwise to extrapolate this into a belief that it can endure indefinitely. On the contrary, changes both within and around Korea suggest that the present situation will eventually alter, perhaps radically so and possibly very soon.

The cold war dichotomies have vanished. Indeed the USSR itself is no more, and its Russian successor has alarmed Pyongyang by nooting military as well as other forms of cooperation with Seoul. China will not go that far, but like Russia it has effectively given up on North Korea as beyond salvation. Both Moscow and Beijing have stopped all aid to Pyongyang, and are touting for South Korean trade and investment. For both of them, as for most of the world, there is now only one Korea that counts; the other one is an ingrate, a nuisance, a maverick, and a threat. In the long and bitter rivalry between the two Koreas, whose outcome was by no means always a foregone conclusion, Seoul's victory is now comprehensive and unassailable. In terms of older Korean history, Silla wins again.

This breaking of the cold war mould around (if not yet in) Korea has also led to a sea-change in both the prospects for reunification and attitudes towards it. Reunification had hitherto occupied a contradictory position in the Korean imagination. Most people yearned for it in an abstract way (more concretely, for those split from their loved ones), but did not dare to think it was feasible. Meanwhile both regimes treated it as a pious shibboleth, while viciously punishing anyone who tried to do anything about it other than on their terms.

What has added a new dimension is of course the precedent of German reunification. Its lessons are many, and are still being digested. Two stand out: the rapidity with which a seemingly solid and stable regime can crumble into nothing; and the immense costs - economic, political, social, even psychological - of reunification in practice, even for one of the world's wealthiest economies. Yesterday's impossible dream could turn out to be today's and tomorrow's nightmare. The idealism has been punctured, and reunification has changed sides in the emotional ledger to become one more thing for Koreans to worry about.

In an ironic reversal of decades of hostility, many South Koreans now in effect wish Kim Il Sung a long life and good health - or at least are fearful of what his demise might bring. In fact political elites in both Seoul and Pyongyang now arguably have a shared interest in the continued survival of the northern state, as its collapse would in different ways devastate them both. More precisely, each regime faces a dilemma. For Seoul, there are two nightmare scenarios: a northern collapse, or a northern attack. The fact that the latter was for decades used as a bogey by the south's own dictators unfortunately does not invalidate it. From the invasion of 1950, via the Rangoon bombing in 1983 and that of a South Korean airliner in 1987, through to the row with the IAEA and the highly bellicose rhetoric (even by their normal standards) currently pouring from the Pyongyang media, North Korea has played the role of an actual or potential aggressor with gusto. The fact that it is now friendless, with its economy in dire straits, risks creating a 'cornered rat' syndrome in which desperately lashing out might seem the only option.

Of course there is another option for Pyongyang, namely reconciliation with Seoul and reform for its ailing economy. Indeed the two constitute a

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package. South Korea's chaebol are eager to move on from trade to make investments in the north, and so develop the kind of relationship which has grown up between Hong Kong and Guangdong or Taiwan and Fujian. As yet they have been forbidden by their own government because of fears over the nuclear issue; although there have been hints that Kim Young Sam may delink these two matters in order to break the present deadlock.

It has to be said, however, that to date North Korea has shown little sign of really embracing peace and reform. All the premiers' talks and paper agreements have brought it to the brink - and there it has stalled, if not retreated. Internally, the rule of the two Kims remains as hard line as ever. In particular, Pyongyang has explicitly set its face against the kind of generalized market reforms which have transformed China; the only exception being a special economic zone (SEZ) in the far north east, which despite much hype about regional co-operation has little to offer investors.

North Korea's diehard stance is not irrational, but reflects its own desperate dilemma. To embrace market reforms (a course thought to be favoured by at least some ministers) might well rescue the economy; but it carries grave political risks. For instance, the visible presence of southern chaebol, plus the increased openness generally which inevitably accompanies such reforms, could not but lead to a puncturing of the sealed quarantine which Kim has spent decades establishing. Once ordinary North Koreans learn how much better their southern cousins live, will not the privations of their own lives become intolerable?

Such reasoning, and not sheer incorrigibility alone, seems the best explanation for North Korea's halting of dialogue and refusal of reform. But this too is perilous. The risk of military adventurism does not come

from Pyongyang alone. In the macho political climate of the 1990s, the idea of 'taking out' the suspect nuclear facilities at Yongbyon has already been mooted. Less starkly, there must be limits to how long the North Korean economy can go on shrinking at around 5 per cent annually without precipitating some form of more general collapse. Despite the country's stability and its citizens' docility to date, neither a military coup nor a popular revolt can be ruled out.

One way or another, North Korea cannot endure indefinitely. Not even Kim Il Sung can escape mortality during the next few years, and his death is bound to unleash a fierce power struggle. But whoever succeeds him - reformers or diehards, the military, maybe even Kim Jong Il - is likely to face mass popular pressure for reunification without delay. Once the 'great leader' is gone, it is hard to see what rationale or legitimation will be available for maintaining a separate North Korea in the post cold war era.

It also seems certain that the next few years will see South Korea in some shape or form taking on the burden of rebuilding the north: whether (as Seoul hopes) gradually through aid and investment, or cataclysmically in the event of a German-style collapse leading to unification by absorption. While the former would be much cheaper and safer in the short run, either way the overall task will be immense. North Korean plant is much more run down than was East Germany's; the relative ratios of size and population between the capitalist and communist 'halves' are much less favourable in the Korean case; and South Korea, tiger or no, cannot match West Germany's massive economic might.

Unsurprisingly, various studies which have tried to cost reunification come up with huge sums. The collapse scenario in particular would require tens of billions of dollars annually for at least a decade from government and business alike, for both transitional pensions and regenerative

FURTHER READING

investment. These would impose colossal burdens on South Korea, and could not be financed without overseas borrowing. The current strains on even Germany, as it struggles to cope with such a situation, are sobering.

And yet there are also grounds for optimism. In reunification as in development, Korea will have the advantage of being a latecomer: it can learn from Germany's mistakes. The continuing power of the South Korean state to direct business will also be a boon, enabling a much more planned and determined reconstruction of the north than has been possible in east Germany. Civil society too will play its part, with major contributions both from the churches and those with relatives in the north.

Above all, the psychology will be different. The emotional surge of reunification as a dream come true will surely go deeper and last longer in Korea than it did in Germany, providing motivation and strength to tackle the practical nightmares. There is also a tangible prize for the decade of sacrifice that will be needed. With the north's human and mineral resources, a unified Korea will eventually be an even stronger tiger than the south alone; indeed, it will be the most powerful Korean state ever in the nation's long history. Nor need its neighbours fear that power, since Koreans yearn only to be like Switzerland: neutral, well defended, prosperous, and free to enjoy their mountains in peace.

All in all, the dawning of a new millennium looks set to have a double significance for Korea. By the year 2000, 70 million Koreans will once again be living in a single state, which in essence will be the former South Korea writ large. If there is irony in that outcome, and even if to reach it may still entail a degree of turbulence and sacrifice, it nonetheless promises a happy ending to what for Korea has been an astonishingly action-packed and mostly miserable century. In the land of morning calm, morning will at long last have broken.

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