

March 31, 1961
**Cable from the Chinese Embassy in North Korea,
'Estimates Regarding the Development of South Korea's
Current Situation'**

Citation:

"Cable from the Chinese Embassy in North Korea, 'Estimates Regarding the Development of South Korea's Current Situation'," March 31, 1961, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-00581-02, 6-9. Translated by Anna Beth Keim.
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111302>

Summary:

A Chinese analysis of the protest movements in South Korea.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

- English Translation

[...]

Estimates Regarding the Development of South Korea's Current Situation

To the [Chinese] Foreign Ministry:

The South Korean people have recently started off a new storm of struggle in opposition to the "Anti-Communist Special Provisionary Law" and "Mass Protest Movement Law" drafted by the Jang Myeon clique. Ever since drafts of these two reactionary laws were made public, [they have been] universally condemned by all South Korean reformist political parties and public opinion. "Committees For the Shared Struggle Against Anti-Democratic Evil Laws" started in Seoul and across the country by the Central Committee for Self-directed national Reunification, the United Socialist Party, the People's Socialist Party, etc., call for launching "maximum struggle". From March 18-25, mass denunciation meetings and protests, involving several thousand to several tens of thousands of students and urban residents, were held in locations including Daegu, Seoul, Busan, Masan, and Kwangju, denouncing the Jang Myeon clique's plot to suppress the people and shouting such slogans as "Oppose the two great evil laws", "Down with the Jang Myeon clique", "Establish a reformist government", "Give us jobs and food", "Fight for civil rights" and "Achieve South-North reunification". Thirty-nine reformist political parties and student groups – over 20,000 people – participated in a mass denunciation meeting in Seoul on the 22nd; the masses attending the meeting fought off encirclement and suppression by over 1,000 police and the sabotaging activities of the "League for the Destruction of Communism" and other proponents of White Terror, and persevered in finishing the mass meeting. In addition, 4,000 to 5,000 people carried out demonstrations after the meeting, ripping up the reactionary slogans in front of the "People's Legislative Assembly" and destroying a police car, and over 300 people occupied Jang Myeon's residence, clashing with police.

A Hapdong Press report on the Daegu protest situation said: "Their forceful struggle has the same momentum as last April's resistance." This struggle has always been mutually combined with the anti-U.S. struggle and demands for South-North reunification. For example, on the 22nd in Seoul a portion of the masses protested in front of the U.S. embassy, shouting slogans including, "Yankees go home!"; according to the East Sea Press, this action "intensified anti-American sentiment". Following the March 24 "Korea-U.S. Economic Talks" it was rumored that the U.S. had turned up the pressure to merge South Korea's three electric companies and raise electricity prices; opposition parties immediately warned that "the government has taken America-worship too far" and, "the American side has unjustly interfered in Korea's internal matters." On March 25 some students in South Gyeongsang Province's Gimhae carried out anti-U.S. demonstrations. The same day, in the city of Chonju, over 10,000 people joined in a mass rally for South-North reunification.

This year the calls of the South Korean people for national autonomy and South-North reunification have been growing by the day; struggles opposing the Jang Myeon clique's opening the door to Japanese monopoly capital, opposing the humiliating forfeit of national sovereignty constituted by the "Korea-U.S. Economic and Technological [Development] Agreement", and fighting for the right to subsistence and democratic rights, are happening everywhere. Recently yet another "Oppose the Two Great Evil Laws" struggle was set off; the anti-Chang and anti-American atmosphere grows thicker by the day. U.S. and South Korean authorities have all been keeping a careful eye on the "April Crisis", fearing that the first anniversary of the South Korean people's anti-Rhee uprising will spark another major storm. In Seoul and other locations the Jang Myeon clique has mustered army and police [troops], declared a "state of alert", carried out suppression drills, drafted anticommunist and assembly-and-protest-limiting laws, etc, all to counteract this situation's development. Recently the Jang Myeon clique, besides arresting the masses who joined in protests (123 were arrested in Seoul, 75 of whom have already been released), has ordered the arrest of 50 people including the ten reformist party leaders Yun Gil-jung, Kim Dal-ho, etc., more than ten "Student Committee to Struggle Against Evil Laws" officials, and People's Socialist Party propaganda department head Seon Yu-jeong [sic] (whether all have been arrested yet is unclear), seeking to suppress reformist party activities and struggles by the masses.

Based on the relevant circumstances, our estimates regarding the developmental trends and possibilities of the South Korean people's present struggle are as follows:

(1) Even larger-scale struggles may occur, but will not reach the point of overturning the Jang Myeon regime. The South Korean people were tempered to a definite degree by last year's struggle to overthrow the Syngman Rhee regime; to date, there has not been the slightest improvement in [their] living [conditions] or predicament, anti-Chang and anti-American political consciousness has risen noticeably, and the flames of struggle could easily be ignited and spread. Recently Comrade Kim Il-Sung said that according to confidential reports, South Korea's starving peasants and students could both revolt; especially important is that there could also be revolt among army troops. But according to the estimates of South Korea's underground Party, people's dissatisfaction with Jang Myeon has not yet reached the level of hatred they once felt for Syngman Rhee. [North] Korea's Labor Party believes that as long as the U.S. Army does not leave and there is no strong party leader, the whole situation will not reach the point for a decisive battle, and at present maintains a policy of conserving and developing strength and keeping their main forces under wraps. We believe that these estimates by the Labor Party and the policy they have chosen are correct. At this time South Korea's reformist parties are still incapable of uniting; although they can manage some unified actions, they have not yet formed a legitimate public party with relatively large influence among the masses and capable of contending with the Democratic Party. This state of affairs differs from that of last year, when during the overthrow of the Rhee regime many South Korean young adult students placed their hopes with the Democratic Party and the U.S. also supported it. Based on analysis of the abovementioned circumstances and the guidelines adopted by [North] Korea's Labor Party, it is estimated that the South Korean people's anti-Chang, anti-American reunification struggle could continue to develop or intensify and form a new upsurge during April, but that the possibility of general revolt leading to a regime overthrow like last year is not great. The masses' struggle may grow tense and ease up again according to suppression, concessions, trickery, or disintegration on the part of the Jang Myeon clique – for example, in the case of [them] giving up the anticommunist law, revising the original security law, etc. – but will continue to alternately rise and subside, developing unevenly. This possibility is relatively likely.

(2) Overthrow of the Jang Myeon regime is also a possibility if the momentum of the masses' struggle intensifies and patriotic forces in the army join in. It is said that the forces of patriotism and leadership are quite strong among the troops. For now they will implement a policy of keeping their forces under wraps. However, if the masses' struggle gains great momentum, or if they are further provoked by suppression from the Jang Myeon clique, or if troops with latent patriotic forces are sent to suppress the masses, it could lead to a spontaneous uprising among the troops. Under these circumstances, patriotic leaders among the troops could guide the uprising to victory, to the point of seizing power or forcing the reorganization of the Jang Myeon Cabinet to include progressives. At this time, this possibility appears rather small. If they do seize power, there are also the two possibilities – even if they present a moderate face – that they will consolidate power or be suppressed by the U.S. Army and reactionary forces.

Currently the [North] Korean Labor Party is actively supporting the South Korean people's struggle and attaches great importance to the support of all socialist countries - especially ours - for the [North] Korean people's struggle. We suggest, in addition to strengthening our Pyongyang-based press coverage of the South Korean and related situations, that our newspapers and broadcasts support the South Korean people's anti-Chang, anti-American reunification struggle by reporting and quickly issuing some comments, exposing the repressive actions and various plots of the American imperialists and the Jang Myeon clique, emphasizing the compatibility between the [North] Korean Labor Party's pro-peaceful reunification stand and actions and the South Korean people's urgent demands. If a large-scale army-backed struggle occurs in South Korea, [we] could consider adding strong support in the form of mass rallies and demonstrations. In the next short while we will pay special attention to, figure out and quickly report back on the development of the South Korean people's struggle.

The [Chinese] Embassy in [North] Korea

March 31 [1961]