Global Significance of the April 19 Revolution

By George Katsiaficas

On the way home from school,
Bullets flew through the air
And blood covered the streets.
The lonely discarded book bag
Was as heavy as it could be.
I know, yes, we all know
Even if Mom and Dad say nothing
Why our brothers and sisters were bleeding.
—Elementary school pupil, April, 1960

“The evil influence of political power has swallowed up the people’s right of fair elections, which constitutes a minimum requirement of democracy. The knavish railings of ignorant despotism have trampled down all remaining hopes of freedom of speech, assembly, association, and thought. With an overpowering joy and happiness, we are now lighting up the torch of freedom. Behold! We are proud to toll freedom’s bell which will shatter the stillness of the Dark Age.”
—South Korean student declaration, April 19, 1960

When pruned, some varieties of trees wither and die. Others grow back stronger than ever. The same may be true of peoples. In the twentieth century, Koreans responded to the severity of Japanese colonization and the devastation of the US war by rebuilding with reinvigorated strength. The cunning dialectic of history meant that the Korean War’s extermination of old social structures nearly wiped out the yangban aristocracy and prepared the grounds for the emergence of the minjung—the new subject-object of Korea’s history. Comprised of the vast majority of people—excluding very rich landlords and industrialists, former Japanese collaborators, elite military men and police officials—minjung became the name for the cross-class social force that overthrew decades of US-backed dictatorships and shaped southern Korea into an egalitarian and prosperous society. The first minjung victory came with the overthrow of the Syngman Rhee regime, a globally significant event. First, some background.

Rebuilding Korea After the War

In both North and South Korea, governments drew upon their impressive human resources, especially the civil society produced by 5,000 years of culture, to reconstruct quickly and efficiently after the devastation of one of the world’s deadliest conflicts. In three short years, five million lives had been extinguished.1 U.S. bombs and artillery had destroyed nearly every major city, including every large building in northern Korea.

Despite being reduced to rubble, Korea’s recovery made it the envy of many Third World countries wishing to emulate its rise from rags to riches. One of the world’s poorest

---

1 Dong-Choon Kim, Der Korea-Krieg und die Gesellschaft (Munster: Wesphalisches Dampfboot, 2000) estimates 1.3 million South Korean soldiers and civilians killed, 2.5 million North Koreans, an additional 650,000 refugees from the North who were killed in the South, and in addition, Chinese and American troops.
countries in 1953, Korea grew at “miraculous” rates for three decades. Although the North today lags far behind, in 1980, the two Korea’s were roughly equivalent economically. South Korea continued its fabulous development from one of the world’s poorest countries to one of its wealthiest. Today it is an OECD member with the world’s 11th largest economy (in 2015) and a substantial high-tech sector. Her modern infrastructure, efficient public transportation, and safe social spaces make the US and much of Europe seem archaic. Gross National Product (GNP) is more than 100 times what it was in the 1950s—having increased from $200/person to more than $20,000 in 2008 (before falling back slightly during the financial crisis that began that year). As a sign of how the country has grown, the average male today is fully 5 inches taller than his 1961 counterpart.

Although it now seems unlikely, the North may even have outpaced the South in economic growth until 1978. At the time, many people maintained that it was superior in people’s satisfaction with government and economy as well.\(^2\) Che Guevara visited North Korea in the mid-1960s and described it as a model for what Cuba should become. Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett and British economist Joan Robinson both admired the North for its progress. Land reform was thoroughgoing and comprehensive, and millions of families still own their own land. Although it retains substantial technological sophistication, a number of factors combined to impoverish the country: decades of confrontation with the US and the ROK in the aftermath of an armistice—not a peace treaty—at the end of the war in 1953; systematic US economic blockade of material goods and financial services; collapse of Pyongyang’s main trading partner, the USSR; poor decisions made by high leaders; and devastating droughts and floods. Korea’s division into two states—named the “division system” by Paik Nak-chung—enervates the both nations’ dynamism and eats away at their souls. In both North and South, the existence of an “enemy” regime claiming the right to rule the entire peninsula means limited political freedom and enormous sacrifices. Precious resources are diverted into unnecessary military expenditures. In both Pyongyang and Seoul, paranoia, hatred, and fear run wild, and an elusive sense of national security poisons government decisions.

During the Cold War, as in West Berlin and Taiwan, massive US aid was distributed to build South Korea into a model for the “superiority” of American capitalism (as opposed to communism). In Korea, US benefactors maintained elite rule by promoting former Japanese collaborators into high positions of power in the American imperial order. The result was a harshly regulated system that strictly compelled millions of people to decades of backbreaking toil in exchange for meager rewards. Aided by the US, the South Korean economy grew at astonishing rates, with GNP increasing an average of 9% or better from the 1960s into the mid-1990s. Millions of laborers paid for economic progress through a world record-setting industrial accident rate, a six or even seven-day workweek, and a centralized decision-making apparatus that restricted political inputs to a few men’s ideas.

In this context, Syngman Rhee thrived, able to convince his supporters in the US to grant him enormous sums of money and considerable leeway as the “frontline” of their Cold War. In 1953, foreign assistance was well over 14% of GNP (reaching 22.9% in 1957).\(^2\) Published CIA data reported that until 1978, North Korea was ahead of South Korea in GDP per capita.
Throughout all of Rhee’s tenure as President, foreign aid was a substantial portion of the total government budget. Between 1953 and 1963, the ROK was the beneficiary of what Alice Amsden called a “unique” amount of foreign aid as the US sustained three-fourths of South Korea’s total investment. By the end of the 1950s, five-sixths of all economic inputs were from direct US grants. Dependence on America meant that in 1961, more than half of all consumer goods were provided by US aid. Even though the US annually provided some $100/capita to the country, corruption was rampant, and thousands of people scavenged daily meals in garbage dumps. Extreme poverty compelled many others to work in dangerous and dirty jobs. US Army bases nightly brought in truckloads of young Korean women to service the soldiers.

While Rhee relied on the US for his base of support, behind American largesse and military might stood the ROK armed forces—at 600,000 men, the country’s most powerful institution. Rhee had ceded sovereign control of the military to the US, but it didn’t deter his machinations in power. Rhee increasingly ruled with an iron fist, and his murderous grip on power turned thousands of patriotic citizens into victims of persecution. Running on a platform of peaceful reunification of Korea, moderate politician Cho Pong-am received two million votes in the 1956 election as the candidate of the Progressive Party. Subsequently accused of being a North Korean spy, Cho was arrested in 1958 and executed in 1959.

Rhee and his team of advisors directed industry to produce for the domestic market in line with their policy of import-substitution. Using the model of Japanese zaibatsu, they organized family-owned conglomerates (like Hyundai, Daewoo, and Samsung) at the core of the country’s economy, a legacy still central to South Korea’s industrial and financial organization. As economic development between 1948 and 1960 demanded more off-line workers, the number of colleges in Korea doubled (from 31 to 62), and the number of college students nearly trebled (from 24,000 to 97,819), with a great proportion of students concentrated in Seoul. Although Korea’s GNP was less than one-tenth of England’s, it had more college students per capita, and Seoul was “one of the largest educational centers in the world.” The country’s secondary schools experienced a similar surge in growth. In August 1959, an autonomous labor federation formed—the Korea Trade Union Council—which explicitly opposed the yellow FKTU’s ties to government. The new democratic union signed up more than 160,000 workers in its first year.

4.19: Students Overthrow Syngman Rhee

Rhee’s disdain for ordinary Koreans finally became his undoing. In elections on March 15, 1960, Rhee and his cronies shamelessly stuffed ballot boxes or stole them from neighborhoods known to be opposition strongholds. When the official vote tally was

---

announced, Rhee claimed an overwhelming mandate for himself and for his notoriously corrupt vice-presidential candidate, Lee Ki-bung. Weeks before citizens went to the polls, many people suspected that the results had already been decided. In Daegu on February 28, high schools students had gone into the streets to warn of Rhee’s plot to extend his rule, and 120 people had been arrested. As soon as the election results were announced on the evening of March 15, a contingent of 10,000 students led a huge march in Masan, which converged on city hall and demanded fresh elections. Police immediately attacked, killing 8 students and wounding 123 more. As he always did, Rhee called the protests “communist inspired.” Before the situation spiraled out of control, US commanding General Carter Magruder approved Rhee’s request to send elite Korean marines to quiet the citizenry. Undeterred by the army, similar outbursts occurred in Pohang, Daejon, Suwon, Osan, and Jeonju. Organized groups of professors, journalists, and lawyers made public statements in support of protesting students.

On April 11, a fisherman discovered the bloated body of 16-year-old Kim Ju-yol in the sea near Masan. The young teenager from Namwon, a freshman at a Masan commercial high school, had been hit in the eye by a tear gas canister. Police claimed he was a communist, a charge “proven” by papers linking him to North Korea found in his pockets (which many people believed had been planted). Both the murder and the cover-up detonated a new explosion of protests. Immediately, 40,000 protesters gathered to view Kim’s corpse, and by evening, an estimated 140,000 people had arrived. As people refused to remain quiet, once again police resorted to force and killed many demonstrators. Sporadic mobilization by high school students in several provinces refused to let the Rhee regime continue its unreasonable use of violence to impose its will.

In his arrogance, Rhee continued to believe unbridled force would convince Koreans to submit. On April 18, gangsters in Seoul attacked a protest by Korea University students near Dongdaemun. Using chains and metal rods, members of the Anti-Communist Youth Corps mercilessly beat unarmed students. Police witnessed the beating of students but did nothing to stop it. The chief of presidential security had summoned the goons to stop the protests. In response to the attack, students from seven Seoul universities called for an all-out mobilization the next day. On April 19, thousands of students took to the streets of Seoul. By the time they approached the presidential palace, their ranks had swelled to as many as 100,000 people. For the first time, students found massive support for their demonstrations among the general public. During the march, some students chanted, “Let us destroy communism by getting our democracy right!” Here was an early indication of what would become the global New Left’s opposition to dictatorships of both the communist and capitalist variety, of a gut-oriented intuition of freedom that cared little for the ideology of governments that unnecessarily limited it.

8 Interview with Paik Han-gi, Masan, October 29, 2009.
9 Sungjoo Han, The Failure of Democracy in South Korea (Berkeley: UC Press, 1974) p. 29; Henderson, p. 175.
At the presidential palace, the massive crowd demanded to see Rhee. They were answered when palace guards opened fire, killing at least 20 people in the first volley. Remarkably, students fought back, refusing to be intimidated by clubs and guns. They regrouped and spontaneously formed small action teams that destroyed the headquarters building of Rhee’s Liberal Party as well as that of the Anticommmunist Youth League, the editorial offices of the government newspaper, and five police substations. Students burned houses belonging to Rhee’s high-ranking subordinates, wrecked City Hall, and attacked dozens of other buildings linked to Rhee and his party.

Throughout the country, thousands of high school students mobilized, especially in Incheon, Jeonju, Mokpo, and Daegu. In Gwangju on April 19, high school students demanding new elections surged downtown. Organizers sent runners to visit every school in the city, and as soon as the initial protests occurred, the number of people swelled to 15,000—1,500 of whom were from Chosun High School. Police and firemen fired water laced with red dye but failed to disperse demonstrators. Unpaved roads provided plenty of rocks for ammunition to fight back. Throughout the night, battles continued as protesters controlled the streets. In Busan, protesters set fire to many government buildings.

Before the violence ended, gunfire on “Bloody Tuesday” had claimed dozens of lives. In Seoul alone, more than 100 people were killed and over 1,000 wounded. Ultimately, martial law was declared, the army was called out, and a 10 p.m. curfew was strictly enforced. Remarkably, the army did not open fire. General Song Yo-chan ordered his troops not to shoot, and soldiers and students reportedly shouted to each other, “We are brothers!”

The next day college students again massively mobilized. For seven consecutive days, there were major demonstrations in Seoul. On April 24, as the entire country appeared to reject the “honesty” of the elections, Vice-President elect Lee Ki-bung publicly declared he would not accept office. He and his family subsequently committed suicide. On April 25, some 258 university professors gathered at Seoul National University and issued a message proclaiming that, “Student Demonstrations are the Expression of Justice!” They marched through the city to demand Rhee’s resignation as well as those of the nation’s Chief Justice and speaker of the National Assembly. By the time they arrived at the National Assembly, more than 100,000 people were with them, and people listened intently as professors announced a 15-point declaration. This event was significant for many reasons, not least because it marked the first time in Korean history that professors as a group had entered the struggle against tyranny. The spontaneous gathering of so many people was unprecedented in a society where dictatorships had ruled for so long.

Higher education in Korea had expanded, but there were fewer than 100,000 college students in the entire country and scarcely more than a quarter million in high schools, numbers that fail to account for central role of universities and high schools in

---

13 Ingeborg Göthel, p. 73.
overthrowing the government. Positioned centrally in the cities and afforded great respect in the world’s most Confucian society, students and teachers detonated a widespread social explosion.

People took full advantage of their newly found freedom to act—space created by the sacrifice of so many lives. After the gathering at the National Assembly, some 50,000 protesters attacked Vice-President Lee Ki-bung’s house. Placing his elaborate furnishings on the street to be photographed, people proceeded to burn them before demolishing the house. Their message was clear: not only must Rhee go, so must his entire administration. Evidently, the massive outpouring of anti-government sentiment and the capacity of people to act despite deadly police violence convinced the US to support Rhee’s departure. A note delivered to the ROK embassy in Washington made clear his American handlers thought it was time for him to go. Rhee would never have been able to become President without US backing, nor was he able to remain in power without American support. On Friday, April 26, the US ambassador and General Magruder personally paid Rhee a visit to insure that he would to step down. They offered him the same means of transportation back to the US that had been provided him in 1945 to bring him to Korea: a US military aircraft. Shortly after the American officials had left, Rhee announced his resignation and boarded a US military plane bound for Hawaii.

Immediately, joyful gatherings suddenly cropped up everywhere. Thousands of arrested students were released, and police withdrew from public view. Students now directed traffic on city streets and took over many police stations. All over the country, as they swept the cities clean of the debris left behind from their hard-won victory, young people proudly stepped into positions of authority amid public acclaim. With the army in the streets, raucous celebrations transpired—spontaneous and joyful expressions of hope for the future of democracy. The success of the uprising in winning power surprised everyone—most of all those who had been at the center of organizing it.

---

17 Mi Park, p. 65.
Decades of pent-up grievances were suddenly possible to discuss in public. As one observer described it: “The April revolution was a giant social revolt...The students...touched off a general revolt in society. The people revolted against the government. The young revolted against the old. In many schools, students revolted against their teachers. In some government ministries, junior civil servants revolted against senior civil servants. In a more serious vein, some eight lieutenant colonels revolted against some generals, requesting that the army be cleared of corrupt elements.”

When the dead were identified and totaled, they numbered 186. At least 46 of those people were high school students (7th to 12th grades), and the vast majority of those killed were less than 30 years old. An additional 6,000 people had been injured.

---


19 See Sungjoo Han, “Student Activism” p. 159; Interview with Kim Ye-Hyan, 419 Institute, Seoul, December 13, 2001. Other reports provide a variety of figures: Lee Chae-Jin reports 115 killed and 730 injured p. 43; Wickham claims 142 students were killed, p. 231; Gleysteen asserts that when students marched on Rhee’s residence to protest the rigged elections, some 200 were killed by his guards, p. 9; Ingeborg Göthel reports 183 dead and 6,259 wounded, *Geschichte Südkoreas*, p. 76; finally a church source tells us 185 students or citizens were killed. See *Lost Victory*, p. 14.
Table 7: Age of People Killed in the April Uprising, 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 or younger</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or over</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>186</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: So Baek O (editor), *Uriga koroon kil (The Path of Our Life)* (Seoul: 1962) p. 341 from Han, “Student Activism,” p. 159.

Evidently, a new generation had moved to the center of Korean political life. In 1960, more than half of all South Koreans were 19 years old or younger. In a highly literate society, youth’s newly found powers derived from more than their numbers: Confucian ethics accorded students great respect as well as a felt need among ordinary citizens to protect them. Concentrated on campuses with room to reflect amid the idealism of youth, students’ passionate involvement in politics would soon sweep the world in the global revolt of 1968.

The 1960 victory won by Korean students inspired others around the world. Newspapers reported that protesting students in Turkey bowed their heads to show respect to their Korean counterparts. US activist Tom Hayden, one of the main authors of the Port Huron Statement, the founding document of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), remembered his feelings when he first heard the news from Seoul: “I was exhilarated when I saw young people our age overthrow the dictator Syngman Rhee. Through that movement, I learned the history of the Cold War for the first time. Those events challenged our naive belief that our parents were fighting for a free world. I can tell you that movement helped inspire SNCC [the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] and the black movement in the South. Two days after Syngman Rhee’s forced resignation, SDS held its first meeting.”

Japanese colonialism and the Korean War had destroyed much of the traditional Left. The 419 Movement was spontaneously democratic and anti-dictatorial. Korean students clearly expressed political affinity with the global New Left when they articulated their aspirations by chanting, “Democracy in Politics, Equality in Economy.” The professors who led the April 25 demonstration were also harbingers of new social forces that would appear globally in struggles during the 1960s. Dubbed the “new working class” by Serge Mallet, proletarianized professionals and white-collar employees increasingly played a significant role in social movements. As an especially privileged sector, professors were easily co-opted by being handed plum positions and held in high status. Significantly, farmers, industrial workers, and rural dwellers were marginal to the national movement that overthrew Rhee. Indications of the new social landscape constructed after the Korean

---

20 Tom Hayden made these remarks in Gwangju during a speech at the International Conference Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Gwangju Uprising in May 2010.

21 Recent evidence indicates the possibility of collaboration between protesting professors and the US Embassy.
War’s devastation also included the increased capacity of ordinary people to organize themselves without central control, to rise up against entrenched power and overthrow it. The absence of entrenched opposition leadership may have facilitated the movement’s success. As Sungjoo Han understood:

“…the demonstrating students and masses did not have an organized leadership of their own. Although leaders of the Democratic Party later claimed that they were largely responsible for touching off the protest movements, their actual leadership within the demonstrating masses was not present. Ironically, this absence of clearly definable leadership may have contributed to the early abdication of Syngman Rhee.”

Outside his coterie of pro-American Koreans, Rhee had no real base of support. When the time came to rally around him, no one did, not even the US—which repeatedly sacrifices discredited regimes (Trujillo, Diem, and Pinochet) to install new government that continue to defend American interests while dissipating revolutionary upsurges.

**Social Movements in the Second Republic**

On July 29, 1960, a few scant months after the student revolution, elections swept the Democratic Party into the leadership of the Second Republic. Emboldened by their newfound power, students grew increasingly visionary and militant. Student power was so strong, they even organized talks aimed at reunification with North Korean students at Panmunjom. Alongside demands like lower tuition and a cultural break with their elders, students continued to lead the entire society.

The uprising’s success led to an upsurge of movements among many different sectors of the population and ushered in a vibrant new realm of possibilities. After April 19, students and ordinary citizens were energized as never before. Decades later, activist Kim Gun-tae explained that, “Since 1960, street protests became a tradition in Korea politics.”

Street mobilizations remain to this day significant vehicles of political participation in South Korea. In the first year after Rhee was sent home to the US, some 2,000 demonstrations involved around a million persons. The military would later release an estimate that an average of 3,900 people took to Seoul’s streets every day. Many protests demanded stiffer penalties for ex-Rhee officials, reunification of the country, and a declaration of permanent neutrality.

Hundreds of labor disputes suddenly occurred, involving 340,000 workers. Wage increases of 15% to 50% were won, and 315 new unions created, including among teachers, bank employees, and journalists. On June 14, 1960, about 400 Samsung workers went on a hunger strike, demanding the reinstatement of 152 fired colleagues, an end to an illegal lockout by Samsung, and for the company to respect existing law.

---

22 Han, *The Failure of Democracy in South Korea*, p. 32.
23 Interview with Kim Gun-tae, Seoul, August 2, 2008.
July 4, police were called in to evict the sit-in, and the struggle ended without success. To this day, Samsung still has no union. The country’s unemployment rate stood at 28%, a major problem for 51,000 demobilized soldiers and tens of thousands of college students who finished their studies at the end of 1960.

Buoyed by their newly found powers, students organized themselves into a force that sought to alter Korea’s division into two states. The Student Federation for National Unification and left-wing trade unions together demanded immediate reunification. Simultaneously, a coalition of 17 parties and organizations campaigned against the US-Korea economic accord. Seeking to initiate direct discussions with their counterparts in North Korea aimed at reunifying the country, students set a date for a joint meeting, and a large rally in Seoul called on the government to support the talks. On October 8, 1960, after many defendants charged with the April shootings were found not guilty in the absence of a special law, students who had been wounded during the uprising occupied the empty National Assembly building.27

Led by the Democratic Party after the July 29 general elections, the new Chang Myon government had immediately instituted freedom of the press. The second republic’s bicameral legislature functioned with greatly reduced presidential powers. Under the new regime, hundreds of police officials who had remained since the days of Japanese occupation were fired, and police chiefs who had ordered their men to open fire of unarmed protesters were punished. Nonetheless, most of Rhee’s mid-level officials remained, and Chang showed little interest in qualitatively changing the institutions. Although he initiated an investigation of the massacre on Jeju, Chang closely consulted the US, especially CIA station chief Peer de Silva, on nearly all major decisions.28 At the same time as protesters continued to call for even more extensive punishment of politicians and police authorities responsible for the use of violence against the movement, the new government came under increasing pressure to clamp down.

People continued to struggle for democracy. On November 28, sixty members of the Student Christian Federation were arrested in the Christian Broadcast System building. When a new repressive law was proposed, a significant all night protest remained in the streets on March 22, 1961. Uprisings are crucibles that temper activists, hardening them to lead the next phase of struggles. The 1960 revolution transformed Christians from ardent supporters of the regime—as they had been under Rhee—to some of the most important opponents of dictatorship. As one Christian publication put it, “The April 19th Student Revolution was the moment of repentance for the Korean Church.”29 The National Council of Churches was even more explicit: “The church finally opened its eyes to see what was going on, and opened windows to see the dawn of a new day...The nation has achieved a revolution, fought against tyranny...The Christian papers which were so eloquent until the eve of the revolution have suddenly turned into silence.”30

28 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, p. 344.
29 Democratization Movement and the Christian Church in Korea during the 1970s (Seoul: 1985) p. 23.
Students’ euphoric belief in their autonomous power after they had overthrown Rhee led them to intensify their initiative to reunify the country. They proposed a joint North-South conference that would create a confederation whose highest body would be composed of an equal number of representatives from North and South, an idea personally considered by Kim Il-sung. For Koreans, with tens of thousands of families divided by the nation’s partition, reunification was a heaven-sent prospect, but not for the US, whose next war against communism, this time in Vietnam, was just beginning.

Four days before the scheduled conference in Panmunjom, a small coterie of US-backed officers, with leading roles played by Park Chung-hee and other former members of the Japanese army, seized control of the government. As the coup d’état unfolded at midnight on May 16, 1961, the army moved into cities with force. At 3:30 a.m., Chung Myon telephoned Magruder for US troops to put down the coup, but the US refused the government’s request. The next day, although the US retained operational control of South Korea’s military, Park moved two full divisions into Seoul without Magruder’s formal approval. Defenders of the US maintain there is no known evidence of prior US knowledge of the coup, but recently released CIA documents indicate that the United States had advance knowledge of Park Chung-hee’s coup d’état. Moreover, James Hausman (leader of the US campaign to suppress the Yeosun Insurrection in 1948 and self-described “father of the South Korean Army”) claimed to have had advance knowledge. Professor Carlos Muñoz of UC Berkeley, who worked in the Intelligence (G2) section of the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) in 1961, also told me he had advance knowledge of the coup. Twenty years after the coup, Hausman was honored by US military commander General John Wickham with a “Meritorious Civilian Service Award.” The citation carried the following words: “Through his close personal relationship with President Park, he was able to persuade the military junta to take actions which eased the apprehensions of US officials, and his comprehensive understanding of the background and aspirations of newly emerged military leadership enabled him to convince US officials at a national level that under this leadership, the Republic of Korea would move forward in a manner that would enhance the United States position in Asia.” Remembering that Hausman had personally intervened with Rhee to save Park’s life in 1948, we can only guess how much Park was indebted to him in 1961.

The day after the coup, a “revolutionary committee” of 30 generals and colonels pledged to return power to civilians. But in their first acts, coup leaders arrested 2,000 political leaders, including Chang Myon. They quickly purged more than 13,000 government officials and armed forces officers, and closed 49 of Seoul’s 64 newspapers. Cracking down on freewheeling urban youth culture, they used stiff penalties, corporeal punishment, haircuts, and imprisonment to impose cultural conformity. The day after Park’s coup, the investigators of the 1948 Jeju massacre were arrested. The dictatorship

---

31 Cumings, 1-175.
32 In 2010, I filed a Freedom of Information Act request for documents related to the coup (as well as to Park’s 1979 assassination). On August 19, 2016, the CIA released documents that were only partially redacted. Unredacted portions clearly indicate advance US knowledge of both the coup and assassination. Researcher An Chi Yong’s web site also contains such information: http://andocu.tistory.com/
33 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, p. 349.
34 Harvard University Yenching Institute, Hausman archive, Box 7, p. 3 of the citation.
35 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, p. 351.
clamped down on all investigations of past atrocities, so any public hint of the Jeju massacre would have to wait until 1978 when Hyun Ki-Young published his short story, “Aunt Suni.” Only in 1999 would the US slaughter of hundreds of unarmed refugees at No Gun Ri in 1950 first be reported. Nearly half a century would pass before dozens of such massacres would become publicly known.

**Looking Back at the April 19 Revolution: Significance of the UNESCO Archive**

Korean culture continually returns to yin and yang, to the dialectical unity of opposites. In its early history, three consecutive dynasties lasted nearly half a millennium each, yet in the 20th century, Korea has an unmatched and unique history of grassroots social movements, uprisings and social upheavals.

Indigenous Korean political developments in the first half of the twentieth century were stunted by Japanese colonialism, after which the Korean War uprooted and destroyed long-standing social relationships. The modern culture that emerged from colonialism and war contains one of the world's most robustly civil societies, a resource that makes possible political transformations with a minimum of bloodshed. The April 19 revolution created a lasting legacy. It bequeathed to Koreans a means of expressing the people's will through massive and militant protests that subsequently helped to make possible the 1980 Gwangju People’s Uprising, the 1987 June Uprising and workers’ rebellion, the 1997 strike against neoliberalism, the 2008 candlelight protests against a lopsided American beef treaty. Most recently, massive protests against the Park Gun-hye presidency led to her impeachment by the National Assembly.

By preserving essential documents and artifacts from the 1960 revolution, this archive will help to ensure that future generations will be able to look back upon the social conditions, popular ideas and emotions that produced one of the world's first examples of what is today called People Power. The important new ground broken by the April 19 revolution is significant not only for Koreans but for all the peoples of the world.

In the 21st century, social media make possible unprecedented opportunities for citizens whose voices have often gone unheard to make public their needs and desires. No one should overestimate the world-historical possibilities opened by procedures for translating grassroots aspirations into political change without military force. For far too long, humanity has suffered murder, torture and abuse at the hands of those who would maintain unjust power. For generations to come, this archive will help insure that Korea’s April 19 revolution will remain a shining beacon of people’s enduring need for freedom.

---