

in favor of... that aid absorption by Russia... 11, 1996

# S. Must Face Role in South Korean Scandal

the Editor:

This Monday will bring resumption of the trial of former President Roh Tae Woo of South Korea for accumulating a slush fund allegedly extorted from conglomerates. You have maintained (news article, Dec. 19) that Mr. Roh "ushered in" Korean democracy.

Mr. Roh assisted former President Chun Doo Hwan, who is also expected to be indicted for bribe-taking, in staging a military coup in 1979. In 1980 they were responsible for the massacre of hundreds of citizens in Kwangju by Government troops.

During the coup and the Kwangju massacre, South Korean forces were under the operational control of the United States-South Korean Combined Forces Command. The combined forces commander, Gen. John Wickham, released the South Korean Army's 20th Division from operational control.

A 1988 South Korean congressional hearing revealed that the suppression was postponed three days to

await arrival of a United States aircraft carrier and naval forces from the Philippines and Okinawa. Why were they deployed?

Two weeks after Kwangju, the Carter Administration assured Mr. Chun of continued financial support, and in early 1981 Mr. Chun was the first head of state invited by the newly elected Ronald Reagan.

You present the issue as the corruption of two individuals rather than as a systemic problem involving United States support of military regimes. United States-based multinational corporations and military contractors have been partners in forging militarism to capitalism. South Korea is moving to right past wrongs. Is the United States likewise prepared to face the truth?

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Irvine, Calif., Jan. 11, 1988  
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