

Missionary in the Korean Embassy in Washington DC – Part 2

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July 12, 2017

Excerpt from "Messiah -- My Testimony to Rev. Sun Myung Moon", 2000



The author during his tenure as deputy military attaché at the Korean Embassy in Washington, D.C.

A Beautiful Friendship

I now stood on the grand stage of Washington, D.C., the capital of the United States of America. Besides representing their government, diplomats also represent their country and people. Therefore, an important qualification for diplomats is that they must be proud of their homeland.

In this sense, I was well prepared to be a diplomat. Although I was not particularly gifted, and my diplomatic abilities were not outstanding, I did have much greater pride in my country and people than the average Korean. Furthermore, my patriotism had been strengthened by the knowledge that the Korean people had been called by God to give birth to the True Parents of humankind. The Unification Principle had taught me that God had loved Korea and had given this country a great blessing. I was convinced that someday the beautiful country of Korea would be the center of faith for all humanity and become a central country in world events.

My heart was filled with excitement as I took up my new post. I could stand before anyone and say, "I am a proud Korean" – not from arrogance but with a feeling of deep humility, because I believed that Koreans were expected to love the world and humanity more than any other people. I did not see myself as a diplomat from an impoverished country, coming to America with hat in hand in hopes of securing material benefits for my country. Instead, I came to America possessing an expression of truth that was capable of giving life to America as the modern-day Rome.

As attaché, I took every opportunity to address public forums, and I always spoke with conviction and fervor. I told my audiences that Korea was a country with a highly developed culture and that Koreans' love of freedom was unparalleled in the world. I invited American military officers about to be assigned to Korea to the embassy, where I showed them a movie featuring the beauty of Korea and gave a talk about Korea. Always by the end of the presentation I would be struggling to hold back tears and would close by saying, "This is why I love my country. I am a proud Korean." Usually, the audience would stand and applaud. During my time in Washington, I received an award from Prime Minister Yeo Chan Song for my work introducing Korea to the American people.

Not long after my arrival in Washington, a new ambassador took up his post, retired Gen. Il Kwon Chung, a hero of the Korean War. He saw the importance of my expressing my pride in being a Korean and supported me enthusiastically in my work.

Ambassador Chung was many years my senior. I had first met him when he was a general and army chief of staff during the Korean War when army headquarters was located in Taegu. I was a student at the army attaché school. At this time, the army sponsored a public speaking contest on efficient ways to utilize military supplies. I was chosen to compete representing the attaché school. As it turned out, the judges chose me as the best speaker, and I was invited to sit at General Chung's table at the awards banquet. I was still a captain then, and it was very intimidating for me to be seated at the same table with a group of generals – and especially with General Chung, who was a four-star general. I was so nervous I could hardly swallow.

At one point in the meal, General Chung said, "Captain Pak, let's see you demonstrate your speaking skills in front of these generals." I was extremely tense, but like a good soldier I obeyed and began to speak on the efficient use of military supplies. When I finished the generals broke into enthusiastic applause. When Ambassador Chung arrived in Washington to take up his post, he still remembered me from this incident.

One day, the ambassador said to me, "Colonel Pak [I had been promoted to lieutenant colonel since coming to Washington], I really like listening to your English. Let's study English together three times a week."

"Yes, Mr. Ambassador," I replied, that would be an honor." I began visiting the ambassador's official residence three times a week, but as it turned out, we didn't study much English. We would always begin by practicing English, but sooner or later, the ambassador would begin talking about his experiences in the military, especially during the Korean War, and then we would cover a wide range of topics.

One day, he commented that I seemed to have stronger convictions about our country than most other Koreans and asked me how I came to them. I told him about the Divine Principle of the Unification Church and how I first came into contact with this teaching that had made me so proud to be a Korean.

Ambassador Chung was not deeply interested in religion, but he summed up what I told him in one brief sentence. "So," he said, "The Unification Church is a patriotic church."

"Yes, that's true," I told him. "It is a patriotic religion for any person of any country. Not only that, it's an anti-communist religion. It is the only religion that has the power to liberate people living under communism. Since communism is a religion without God, it can be defeated only by the religion that believes in God to the greatest degree. That religion is the Unification Church."

My friendship with Ambassador Chung lasted throughout his tour of duty in Washington and continued until his death years later in Hawaii. He always believed in me and supported me in everything I did.

His friendship and trust in me were tested and proved in 1975 when he attended Reverend Moon's first "Day of Hope Banquet" in Korea. There was a great deal of prejudice against the Unification Church at this time, and it was not easy for an important public official to accept an invitation to an event that was connected in any way to the Unification Church. Ambassador Chung by then had become speaker of the National Assembly, and no one in the church expected that he would attend. When I personally delivered the invitation to him at his office in the National Assembly Building, he said jokingly, "I would probably be punished if I were to turn down an invitation like this from my former English teacher."



Diplomat by Day, Missionary by Night

Soon, I began working at home to translate the Divine Principle into English. There was already an English translation of the Principle, but I set about creating my own as a basis for an outline for lecturing the Principle in English.

When this was complete, I started inviting friends who might be interested to my home. We would sit together in the basement, and I would give them lectures on the Principle in English. Over

time, these lectures grew in popularity, and it wasn't long before American Christians started coming to me and asking me to introduce them to the Principle.

During the day, I continued my work as a diplomat, but in the evenings I was working as a missionary. More and more people were coming to my home to listen to my Principle lectures. Before long, there were more people than could be seated comfortably in our small basement. At this time there were only two Unification missionaries in the United States, both on the West Coast, so the church considered me to be its unofficial missionary for the eastern United States. The meetings in our basement eventually led to the founding of a Unification Church in Washington DC. I am considered the founder of the Washington church.

Life was about to teach me that efforts to do good often encounter unjust criticism and opposition. One day, a Christian minister came to see me. He said he had heard from a member of his congregation that I was sharing some wonderful content. I took him at his word and presented the Principle lectures to him. I thought it a little bit strange that he took an extraordinary amount of notes. As it turned out, his motivation for hearing the Principle was not sincere. He was afraid that unless he did something he would lose members of his congregation to the Unification Church, and he was set on sabotaging my work.

This minister wrote a letter to Ambassador Chung, detailing my activities, which caused quite a stir within the embassy. I wrote a report on my activities, deeply concerned that the whole affair might place Ambassador Chung in a difficult position. When the ambassador called me to his office, though, he spoke in a tone that suggested he was not impressed by the criticism against me.

He said, "You have the ability to present an argument to Americans and convince them that you are right. That's an invaluable tool." Sometime later the embassy prepared a written response to the minister. The gist of it was to remind the minister that America was a country that guaranteed freedom of religion and that there was nothing wrong with an individual sharing the tenets of his faith with interested persons.

The embassy's finding was that my activities did not compromise my work with the embassy. Indeed, in those days, embassy personnel were encouraged to attend American churches every Sunday.

But the controversy did not end there. The minister who wrote the letter took his case to the Washington correspondents of Korean newspapers. He provided them with material they needed to write articles on how a member of the Korean Embassy staff was declaring that Reverend Moon was the messiah.

When these articles appeared in the Korean press, the Christian churches in Korea went into action. They lodged protests with the Ministry of Defense, asking how it was that public funds had been spent to send a missionary of the Unification Church to the United States. The Christian churches then plotted to pressure the Ministry of Defense into removing me from my post. They wanted me to be recalled.

In fact, a recall order was drafted and presented to the army chief of staff, Gen. Jong Oh Kim, for his signature. When General Kim saw the document, he reportedly said. "Colonel Pak? I know Colonel Pak a lot better than any of you. He is a patriot. Stop this nonsense." He angrily tore up the documents and threw them away.

General Kim had been my commanding officer in the Ninth Division when we were fighting the North Korean People's Army for control of the White Horse Highlands. He saw me as a young, hardworking officer. He had invited me to dinner a few times, and we had talked deeply. From that time, it seems, General Kim had a special regard for me. He was the division commander who had recommended me for the Gold Star Hwa-Rang Medal for outstanding military service in combat that I had been awarded in 1953.

Thus, I escaped the indignity of being recalled from my diplomatic post. I thanked God, but I wasn't sure what the ultimate meaning of this experience could be.