

Anti-dictator, social, pro-North Korea groups on a South Korean campus

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When I first came to Korea in the early 1990s I was at the campus of Korea University. At that time I first encountered the social, anti-dictator, pro North Korea groups on campus. Once I discovered small pamphlets with the words of Kim Ill Sung in one group's meeting room. I wondered and looked for how could they be pro North Korea. At that time there were demos every day all day on campus with combat police and teargas. They were protesting the Uruguay Round trade talks and were antigovernment and anti-American. Of course they liked me.

I came to understand that there was not one group but an umbrella of groups from moderately to far left including the violent labor unions, that were working together. I began looking into who they were.

Over the years I have watched them and looked for the points that tied them together. What I found was they all believed in a few common things.

1. Antigovernment (dynasty)
2. Anti-conglomerate (yangbang)

3. Anti-foreign influence in Korea (American)
4. Pro all things Korean

I named them the progressive umbrella group.

When I researched the Donghak rebellion I found that their political ideology was the same. I simply put two and two together.

Latter I watched the Mad Cow affair. When Lee Myung Bak lifted the ban on importing beef from America the progressive umbrella group manipulated the public's emotional reaction into huge candle light demonstrations calling for Lee to step down. The entire public as young as middle schoolers were mobilized against Lee. The media, the internet and text messages were used to spread the most ridiculous rumors against the administration. One popular one was that Lee Myung Bak had sold the Dok Do islets to Japan. It went on all summer week after week. Lee Myung Bak refused to resign and served out his term.

Park Geun-Hye is the natural born enemy to the left and they began to organize against her even before she became a candidate for president. Of course her father was their mortal enemy before he was assassinated. Once she took office they began demonstrating against her and calling her to resign immediately. The demos were small but consistent every weekend in downtown Seoul. I watched them march around with flags and banners and bullhorns but everybody ignored them. We are talking only 2-300 demonstrators. They had various issues but none caught on with the public. The momentum began to build with the tragic ferry sinking. The public was very upset and the progressive umbrella group began to blame Park. Now they had an issue that could be manipulated but there was no real traction evidence wise.

It wasn't till last fall that a minor corruption scandal broke it wide open. The bribery scandal seemed to lead to top officials at the Blue House but it didn't explode until accusations of shamanism and cronyism stuck to the president herself. Since last fall the rumors of outrageous behavior have filled the airwaves and cyberspace getting more far out each day. Many Koreans only could say "shame" again and again.

Now, was this affair an orchestrated attack against Park by the progressive umbrella group? Absolutely! Has there been any wrong doing in the Park administration? Absolutely. Is the general level of corruption, influence peddling and cronyism in the Park Administration greater than in the rest of Korean society? That's a judgment call.

Last fall Park's approval rating fell to a ridiculous level, 4%? No doubt she was unpopular but it all depends on who you ask. Now days as the first blush of shame and emotional reactions have passed the situation seems more clear. Every weekend for three months large crowds of pro Park, patriotic folks have gathered to support her. These folks are mostly in their 50s to 70s but are just as sure in their convictions as the younger folks who marched last fall.

Today news outlets are reporting two dead and five injured in street demonstrations.