

Sauce For The Gander

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON, Nov. 10—One of the early problems to confront Jimmy Carter as President will almost certainly be the ripening scandal of South Korean covert activities in this country. It is a delicate problem with disturbing implications, involving as it does both foreign policy and domestic politics, morals and law.

Agents of Park Chung Hee, the South Korean dictator, have spent millions here in recent years trying to buy influence. That much is already clear from newspaper investigations. What makes it especially awkward for Mr. Carter is that leading Democratic Congressmen have been among the main recipients of the Korean largesse.

The House Democratic whip, Representative John J. McFall of California, admitted after the election—an aide had denied it before—that he got \$3,000 from Tongsun Park, a Korean businessman and operator in Washington. The money was not a campaign contribution but went into general office funds for Mr. McFall's use. He also got an expensive digital watch and silver tea service.

The retiring Speaker of the House, Carl Albert, has had warm relations with South Korean representatives; and he has on his staff in an influential role a person of Korean birth, Mrs. Sue Park Thomson. Last summer the House International Relations Committee, in a rare action, voted unanimously for a resolution that among other things criticized the trial in Seoul of eighteen opponents of President Park. At the last minute Speaker Albert took the resolution off the House calendar.

There are suspicions, too, about the activities of the Korean evangelist Sun Myung Moon. Recent reports suggest

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that South Korea's Central Intelligence Agency (the K.C.I.A.) inspired 1974 demonstrations by Mr. Moon's followers against the impeachment of Richard Nixon.

The K.C.I.A. has also reportedly been using its physical muscle inside the United States. Its agents are said to operate in a large Korean community in Los Angeles, intimidating and even beating individuals opposed to President Park.

All this offends the most basic American sense of self-respect, for a minor foreign power to treat the United States as a target for bribery and intimidation is humiliating.

And South Korea is not the only country to have agents acting here in a brazen way. Chile and Iran are two other examples. The Chilean secret police are believed to have connections with Cuban exiles suspected of various acts of terrorism, including the murder in Washington of the former Chilean Foreign Minister, Orlando Letelier.

Most Americans must find it repellant to have such things happening in our country. But how many have stopped to think that what has been done here is exactly what we have done unto others? The American C.I.A. has paid politicians and editors in countries around the globe. It has planned assassinations, waged secret wars and encouraged military coups against constitutional governments. All that is familiar stuff after the intelligence investigations of the last two years.

The Korean scandal reminds us how dangerous it is for the United States to act as if its constitutional, legal and ethical standards stopped at the water's edge. If we pay foreign politicians as a matter of course, and wiretap our nationals abroad and plot violence, it is hard to object to other countries behaving the same way.

The first step in dealing with the covert South Korean activities is to have a tough official investigation and get the facts out in the open. The next is to make clear that this country will not tolerate dirty tricks here by the secret policemen and agents of other countries—whether their governments are Communist enemies or right-wing "friends." But such actions are not likely to be effective unless we convince the world that we are prepared to abide by similar rules ourselves.

When President Ford was asked in 1974 whether it was his policy to "destabilize" other governments, he replied that every country does that sort of thing. It was a cynical answer—and one that is self-defeating for this country because it does not fit our image of ourselves.

The Carter Administration should move quickly to do what Mr. Ford refused: Limit covert operations by law to situations that, in Clark Clifford's phrase, threaten to have "a profound impact on the continued existence of this country." And the Administration should underline its commitment to law by bringing to book, at last, those United States intelligence officials who lied under oath and committed other crimes.

None of that is easy, but as a matter of self-interest it is necessary. And after all, it was Jimmy Carter who said, beginning as long ago as last March, "Our policies should be open and honest and decent as the American people themselves."