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What Seoul Saw, What Gwangju Knew:

Journalism and Censorship During the Kwangju Pro-Democracy Movement

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The Republic of Korea has a history of pro-democracy movements, starting with the April Revolution of 1960, that led to the ousting of the first president Rhee Syngman, to the candlelight revolution of 2015-2016, that resulted in the resignation of the President Park Geun-hye. Among these pro-democracy movements was the historically significant Gwangju Pro-Democracy movement that was brutally suppressed by the Chun Doo-hwan regime in 1980. Closely examining the newspapers produced by the Korean press during the movement can reveal how heavy the censorship of the Chun regime was and therefore allow a further understanding of the extent of the Chun regime rule by iron fist. Furthermore, examining the national newspapers shows what information reached Seoul during the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement. Before examining censorship of newspapers during the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement, it is important to first understand South Korean politics from 1979 to 1980, the nature of social movements in 1980, and the situation of Korean newspapers at the time.

Contemporary Korean politics had a rough start with three authoritarian regimes, that of Rhee Syngman, Park Chunghee, and Chun Doo-hwan, all of which closely followed each other. President Park Chunghee, who had absolute political power in South Korea through the 1960s and the 1970s, was assassinated on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1979 and his death created a political vacuum.<sup>1</sup> However, the authoritarian rule of Park Chunghee was soon followed by yet another military dictator. On December 12<sup>th</sup> 1979, Chun Doo-hwan led a successful coup d'état within the military and appointed his men in powerful military and political positions, effectively taking control over state politics.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, he held more political power than President Choi

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<sup>1</sup> Cheongsik Lee, "South Korea in 1980: The Emergence of a New Authoritarian Order." *Asian Survey* 21, no. 1 (1981): 125.

<sup>2</sup> Seongyi Yun, "Democratization in South Korea: Social Movements and their Political Opportunity Structures," *Asian Perspective* 21, no. 3 (1997): 152.

Gyuha.<sup>3</sup> By April of 1980, Chun Doohwan had gained control over the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) and military intelligence.<sup>4</sup> Following the assassination of Park Chunghee, hope for democratization arose and was called Seoul Spring. However, the December military coup d'état and subsequent gain in political power by Chun Doohwan was a turn of events that not only made potential democratization impossible but created a more oppressive regime than the Park Chunghee regime.

Social movements and resistance by people against the government were already an occurrence during the Park Chunghee regime. “The lack of legal channels for open political contention in the early 1980s led South Korean student activists to resort to unconventional and often illegal measures. Some of the unconventional measures included various forms of [가투] *gatu* (illegal street demonstration), [대자보] *daejabo* (wall newspapers), “consciousness raising” letter campaigns, and situational plays.”<sup>5</sup> The popular protest in the late 1970s and early 1980s was largely influenced by leftist ideologies such as Marxism, Leninism, and the North Korean self-reliance ideology of Juche.<sup>6</sup> According to Mi Park, “In a situation where even moderate political dissidents were tortured and jailed by the state, Leninist clandestine methods of organization had great appeal to radical students and intellectuals.”<sup>7</sup> The popularity of leftist ideology may also be due to the Chun Doohwan government being an authoritarian and conservative government that used anti-communism to maintain US support and punish political

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<sup>3</sup> Seongyi Yun, "Democratization in South Korea," 152.

<sup>4</sup> Tim Warnberg, "The Gwangju Uprising: An Inside View," *Korean Studies* 11 (1987): 36.

<sup>5</sup> Mi Park, "Organizing Dissent against Authoritarianism: The South Korean Student Movement in the 1980s," *Korea Journal* 45, no. 3 (2005): 280.

<sup>6</sup> Mi Park, "South Korea: Passion, Patriotism, and Student Radicalism," in *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness*, ed. Meredith L. Weiss and Edward Aspinall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012): 135.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

dissidents. Because of such popularity of these ideologies many of the protests were associated with labor movements, and in many cases these protests were led by students. The antigovernment protests in 1979 and 1980 were no exception. At the end of the 1970s, the South Korean economy fell into a crisis and workers demanded basic rights, including workers of the Y.H. Trading Company in 1979.<sup>8</sup> The government brutally suppressed the sit in of the workers and cracked down on the opposing New Democratic Party, which was sympathetic to the protest.<sup>9</sup> These incidents triggered a large antigovernment protest in Busan and Masan in which six thousand and eight hundred university students participated in respectively.<sup>10</sup> This lead directly into the assassination of Park Chunghee in October.

Popular protest resurged in the spring of 1980, following Chun Doohwan's December coup d'état and seizing of political power. With the transitioning of one authoritarian regime to another, people were frustrated with the government, especially after losing the chance for democratization that had emerged after Park's assassination. 50,000 to 60, 000 students in Seoul and other major cities held demonstrations on May 14<sup>th</sup>, which was the deadline that the students had set for the removal of martial law.<sup>11</sup>

Of the social movements against the newly emerging Chun regime, the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement was especially significant and has left a lasting impact on the Korean people. One of the main causes of the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement were the changes in the political atmosphere that occurred at the end of 1979 and beginning of 1980, associated with the transition of power from Park Chunghee to Chun Doohwan. A direct cause of the Gwangju

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<sup>8</sup> Park, "South Korea," 133.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>11</sup> Seongyi Yun, "Democratization in South Korea," 155.

Pro-Democracy movement were the events of May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1980, a day before the outbreak of the movement. In addition to arresting of 110 student leaders who were meeting at Ewha Women's University, the regime decided to extend martial law nationwide to include Jeju Island, as of 24:00.<sup>12</sup> A new much harsher martial law number 10 was decreed, which forced universities to close, outlawed all political gatherings, required all publications be screened, etc.<sup>13</sup>

Another major trigger of the movement was the arrest of Kim Daejung. Kim Daejung was arrested at 10 P.M. on May 17<sup>th</sup> and taken to the Martial Law Enforcement Headquarters.<sup>14</sup> Kim Daejung states in his autobiography that Chun Doohwan's military faction had arrested Kim with the expectations that the people of Gwangju would rise up in protest upon hearing of his arrest.<sup>15</sup> Kim wrote that, "The fact that they dispatched the elite airborne troops—Ranger Commando Force 7th, Airborne Brigade 33rd, and 35th Squadrons—to the outskirts of Gwangju *before* the uprising is a testament to this."<sup>16</sup> These prior actions were highly unpopular among the people and the frustrations of the people lead to the civil movement in Gwangju. In fact, the demands of the people who participated in the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement were the release of Kim Daejung, the removal of martial law, and the resignation of Chun Doohwan.<sup>17</sup> These prior events lead to the outbreak of the movement on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

The Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement is a complex event and the experiences of the individual people who were in Gwangju during the 10 days vary. However, the main events of the movement have been recorded in a consistent manner by those who witnessed it. On May

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<sup>12</sup> Cheongsik Lee, "South Korea in 1980," 130.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Dae Jung Kim, "Conscience in Action: The Autobiography of Kim Dae-Jung." (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019; 2018): 255.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Seongyi Yun, "Democratization in South Korea," 152.

18<sup>th</sup>, about 200 college students gathered and marched to the Provincial Office Building in downtown Gwangju, where the group, by then about 500 people, held a peaceful demonstration.<sup>18</sup> Then, the riot police came to disperse the crowd using tear gas grenades, but by the afternoon they were replaced by military troops that had been trained to fight North Korea soldiers, rather than to suppressing domestic student demonstrations.<sup>19</sup> The continuing violence suddenly escalated to another degree on May 21<sup>st</sup>, when around 1:00 P.M., the martial law troops opened fire on the crowds and the citizens took up arms, becoming what was known as the Citizens' Army.<sup>20</sup> The indiscriminate shooting by the martial law troops killed at least 50 people.<sup>21</sup> The Civilians' Army armed themselves and started their counterattack around 3:15 and the clashes continued near the Chonnam National University Medical School until the martial law troops evacuated and the Civilians' Army had taken control most of the city, including the Provincial Office Building.<sup>22</sup> On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, one committee called the Citizen Resettlement Committee and another called the Student Resettlement Committee were formed with the purpose of negotiating with the government on the behalf of the citizens of Gwangju.<sup>23</sup>

After some delay, the martial law commander agreed to the following:

1. The entrance of the military into the city would be delayed.
2. It was admitted that there had been "excesses."
3. The wounded would be cared for and the dead provided for.

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<sup>18</sup> Linda Sue Lewis, "Laying Claim to the Memory of May: A Look Back at the 1980 Kwangju Uprising" (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002): 3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ahn Jong-chul, "Simin'gun: The Citizens' Army during the Kwangju Uprising," in *Contentious Kwangju: The May 18th Uprising in Korea's Past and Present*, ed. Gi-wook Shin and Kyung Moon Hwang (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013): 13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 15.

4. Prisoners would be released. 5. There would be an accurate reporting of events. 6. As a precondition to any agreement, the citizens must collect and turn in all weapons.

7. Regret was expressed to the families of the dead.<sup>24</sup>

May 23<sup>rd</sup> to May 26<sup>th</sup> were relatively calm. The conclusion of the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement came on May 27<sup>th</sup>, and around 3 A.M. the army began moving into the city with tanks and percussion bombs.<sup>25</sup> Around 3:30 the military operation had begun and by 4:00 there was a line of tanks in front of the Provincial Office Building.<sup>26</sup> The army then besieged the Provincial Office Building and began shooting, killing at least 30 to 40 of the approximately 500 people who were in the building and then proceeded to attack the YWCA.<sup>27</sup> In total, the estimated number of casualties from May 18<sup>th</sup> to May 27<sup>th</sup> ranges from 300 to 2000 deaths depending on the source.<sup>28</sup>

During times of authoritarian control and popular protest for democracy, suppression of interpersonal communications and the media is inevitable. According to Misook Lee, the core of democracy movements is the desire of people to choose their government representatives and have their voices reflected, which is a means of communication between people.<sup>29</sup> Because of this, for an authoritarian system to continue to exist, the suppression of communication between people is considered to be a necessary condition.<sup>30</sup> Not surprisingly, the relationship between the

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<sup>24</sup> Jean W. Underwood, "An American Missionary's View," in *Contentious Kwangju: The May 18th Uprising in Korea's Past and Present*, ed. Gi-wook Shin and Kyung Moon Hwang (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013): 35.

<sup>25</sup> Warnberg, "The Gwangju Uprising," 45.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis, "Laying Claim to the Memory of May," 54.

<sup>27</sup> Jong-chul Ahn, "Simin'gun," 20.

<sup>28</sup> Warnberg, "The Gwangju Uprising," 46.

<sup>29</sup> 李美淑, 『韓国民主化運動における地下情報の発信：越境的な=キリスト者ネットワーク形成の背景と活動を中心に,』 *コンタクト・ゾーン= Contact zone* (2012), 5: 145.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



government and the media was strained in Park Chunghee's Fourth Republic and lasting until the end of Chun Doo-hwan's Fifth Republic, both of which were characterized by authoritarianism. Chun Doo-hwan cracked down hard on the media soon after entering office. In fact, Chun removed some 700 journalists and editors for "unethical conduct" and "lacking proper journalistic abilities", as well as merged the 27 daily newspapers into 21.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture and Information was given a great amount of control over newspapers, such as issuing guidelines on how to report events, putting limits on the length of articles and the number of pages, as well as determining where correspondents were to be placed, etc.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) exhibited harsh control over the press, resulting in many newspapers to be considered to be similar to each other.<sup>33</sup>

One of the greatest issues with this research was reading and understanding the Korean newspaper articles as well as translating the titles and commonly used words. The Korean newspapers were written in Hangeul with Chinese characters intermixed. Furthermore, in many cases the Chinese characters and sometimes the Hangeul were hard to distinguish because of the quality of the documents. Another issue was the style of romanization of Korean because unlike Chinese and Japanese romanization that has universal romanization systems such as the Hepburn system and the Wade-Giles system respectively, there is no standard system for Romanizing Korean.<sup>34</sup> This is attributed to the fact that the Library of Congress promotes the McCune-Reischauer system of romanization, while the Korean Government promotes the Revised

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<sup>31</sup>Roger du Mars, "South Korea: Fear is a hard habit to break" in *Losing Control: Freedom of the Press in Asia*, ed. Louise Williams, Roland Rich (Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Australian National University E Press, 2013): .

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>33</sup> Sunwoo Nam, "Republic of Korea" in *Newspapers in Asia*, ed. John A. Lent (Hong Kong: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982):135.

<sup>34</sup> G. M. McCune and E. O. Reischauer, "The Romanization of the Korean Language Based Upon Its Phonetic Structure," Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1939, 1.

Romanization system.<sup>35</sup> In order to maintain consistency, I have used the Revised Romanization system to avoid the use of diphthongs to increase the readability but have left the romanizations in direct quotations in their original romanizations. In addition, the most common Korean family names 이, 박, and 최 written with the Revised Romanization would be transcribed as “I,” “Bak,” and “Cheo,” rather than the more commonly used “Lee,” “Park,” and “Choi”. In addition, 이승만 is most commonly Romanized as “Rhee Syngman,” which does not follow either of the standard romanization systems. For names of significant historical figures such as 이승만, 박정희, 전두환, I have used the most common spellings, Rhee Syngman, Park Chunghee, Chun Doohwan, none of which follow the standard romanization systems. In addition, English names in this paper are written with the first name first, while Korean names are written with the traditional method of the last name before the first name, such as Chun Doohwan.

National newspapers in the Republic of Korea are predominately conservative and the “big three” conservative newspapers are the Chosun Ilbo, the Joongang Ilbo, and the Donga Ilbo.<sup>36</sup> Considering that the Chun Doohwan government was conservative and these newspapers generally are in support of the government, it can be expected that these papers were more likely to follow the government line when reporting on the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement. On the other hand, leftist newspapers were only about 10% of the newspaper market and the main newspapers were the Hankyoreh Sinmun and the Kyunghyang Sinmun.<sup>37</sup> In order to compare the

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<sup>35</sup> Chris Doll, “Korean Romanization,” Is It Finally Time for the Library Of Congress to Stop Promoting McCune-Reischauer and Adopt the Revised Romanization Scheme?” *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, no 165, 2017, 1

<sup>36</sup> Hundt, Walton and Lee, “The Politics of Conditional Citizenship in South Korea: An Analysis of the Print Media,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49, no. 3 (2019) 447.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

extent of government censorship over conservative newspapers and liberal newspapers, I have selected one conservative newspaper and one liberal newspaper to examine. Of the conservative newspapers I have chosen the Chosun Ilbo because of accessibility of the Chosun Ilbo archives through the University of Michigan. Of the liberal newspapers, I have chosen the Kyunghyang Sinmun because the archives are available online through the Naver News Library and because the Hankyoreh Sinmun was established in 1988, which was 8 years after the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement. While the Chosun Ilbo was conservative and the Kyunghyang Sinmun was more liberal, it can be expected that the government would have had a stronger control over these papers because they were national newspapers that were based in Seoul.

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, the first day of the movement, the Kyunghyang Sinmun published a two-page newspaper extra with an article on the first page titled, “戒嚴司 발표 不正蓄財·騷擾 조종혐의---26 명 조사 金鍾泌·金大中씨 連行, *Kyeomsa Balpyo Bujeong Chukjae/Soyo Jojong Hyeomui 26 Myeong Josa Kim Jungpil/Kim Daejung Ssi Yeonhaeng*, Martial Law Command Announcement, Suspicion of fraudulent accumulation of wealth and organizing public chaos---26 people interrogated, Mr. Kim Jongpil and Mr. Kim Daejung arrested.” Only a newspaper extra was published on this day because it was a Sunday and the Kyeonghyang Sinmun regular papers were not published on Sundays. The article announced the arrest of the 26 people for suspicions of corruption or instigating chaos in society, including Kim Daejung. The article says that Kim was arrested for suspicions of causing chaos in society and backing students and labor unions to cause riots.<sup>38</sup> On the second page of the extra, there was an article titled, “政

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<sup>38</sup> “戒嚴司 발표 不正蓄財·騷擾 조종혐의---26 명 조사 金鍾泌·金大中씨 連行, *Kyeomsa Balpyo Bujeong Chukjae/Soyo Jojong Hyeomui 26 Myeong Josa Kim Jungpil/Kim Daejung Ssi Yeonhaeng*, Martial Law Command

治활동 禁止全大學 休校令, *Cheongi Hwaldong Geumji Jeonhaehakkyo Hyuhakryeong*,

Political Activity Banned, All Universities Ordered to Close”. The second page included the official Martial Law Number 10. Neither of the pages mentioned anything about demonstrations in Gwangju. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, the front-page articles were also about the arrest of Kim Daejung and about the extension of martial law nationally. When the Martial Law Command made its first announcement regarding the movement on the afternoon of May 20<sup>th</sup>, the media in Seoul did not let the public know right away.<sup>39</sup> Instead, the front page of the *Kyeonghyang sinmun* was dedicated to the death sentence of Kim Jaekyu, the assassin of Park Chunghee. The late announcement by the Martial Law Command on the 20<sup>th</sup> as well as the delayed reporting of it in the 21<sup>st</sup> suggest that the government wanted to delay the disclosing of the Gwangju movement as much as it could.

The first time that the word Gwangju appeared on the *Kyeonghyang Sinmun* was on May 21<sup>st</sup> in an article titled, “光州일원 騷擾 學生示威市民합세 軍警 民間 6 명 死亡, *Gwangju Ilwon Soyo Haksaeng Siwi Simin Habse Gungyeong/Minkan 6 Myeong Samang*, Gwangju area in chaos- Student demonstrations joined by civilians, 6 civilians and police dead”. The article stated that the Martial Law Command officially announced on the 21<sup>st</sup> that there was chaos in Gwangju area and that it started on May 18<sup>th</sup> and had been continuing for three days.<sup>40</sup> The remaining article was solely the announcement made by the Martial Law Headquarters word for

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Announcement, Suspicion of fraudulent accumulation of wealth and organizing public chaos---26 people interrogated, Mr. Kim Jongpil and Mr. Kim Daejung arrested,” *경향신문*. May 18, 1980.

<sup>39</sup> “政治활동 禁止全大學 休校令, *Cheongi Hwaldong Geumji Jeonhaehakkyo Hyuhakryeong*, Political Activity Banned, All Universities Ordered to Close,” *경향신문*, May 18, 1980.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

word. This article contains information saying that 1 civilians and five soldiers and police officers had died and 30 soldiers and police officers had been injured as of 7 A.M. on May 21<sup>st</sup>, while the number of civilian injuries had not been calculated.<sup>41</sup> Not only did this greatly minimize the number of civilian deaths to one, but made it seem as if the number of soldiers deaths was much greater than civilian deaths. The announcement said that the reason that the situation in Gwangju had become worse and more violent was because after the martial law was expanded, students that caused uproars at schools, thugs and others unhappy with the present situation had gone from Seoul to Gwangju in large numbers and made up and spread false rumors (유언비어, *yueonbieo*).<sup>42</sup> The announcement warned people not to believe these bad rumors and gave examples of such rumors. For example, on the 18<sup>th</sup> 40 students died and Geunnam-ro became a sea of blood but the soldiers even tore apart female students' brassieres, a student from Hanshin University was injured and died, the Martial law troops were on the move with APC (Armored Personnel Carrier) and ran over people and killed them, etc.<sup>43</sup> This article makes it seem as if the main driving factor of the violence in Gwangju is rumors spread by outside thugs rather than retaliation to military violence. It also denies any atrocities by the military by saying that they are simply groundless rumors. On the next morning, an article was published on the headlines of the Chosun Ilbo, titled “光州일원 소요사태: 나흘째 學生 · 市民 합세, *Gwangju Ilwon Soyo Sate: Naheuljjae Haksaeng · Simin Hapse*, Gwangju area in chaos-Fourth day, students and citizens joined.” It contains the same rumors that the Martial Law

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> “政治활동 禁止全大學 休校令, *Cheongi Hwaldong Geumji Jeonhaehakkyo Hyuhakryeong*, Political Activity Banned, All Universities Ordered to Close,” *경향신문*, May 18, 1980.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Headquarters warned against in the Kyeonghyang Sinmun. It also has a direct quote from the Martial Law Headquarters which is exactly the same as what is reported the same evening on the front page of the Kyeonghyang Sinmun. In addition, the Chosun Ilbo also described the beginning of the movement saying that 669 students from Cheonnam had started it, giving a more precise number than the 600 some students mentioned by the Kyeonghyang Sinmun the evening before.

One the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Kyeonghyang Sinmun published an article titled, “光州 일원 深刻 事態 , *Gwangju Ilwon Simkak Sate*, Gwangju area in serious situation,” and reported that Martial Law Commander released a comment on the 21<sup>st</sup> sometime after noon regarding the situation in the Gwangju area.<sup>44</sup> The rest of the article consisted entirely of the released comment word for word. The announcement says that their ultimate goal is self-evident and it is clear that the worsening of the situation will have catastrophic consequences on the fate of the nation and its people.<sup>45</sup> The Martial Law Commander also listed three warnings, which are roughly translated as the following: 1. The current riots in Gwangju that started on the 18<sup>th</sup> make maintaining order very difficult and the Martial Law Troops have the authority to take necessary measures for self-defense against those who obstruct order with violence. 2. The rioters that are breaking the law and causing chaos are a small group and we understand that the majority of the people of Gwangju are good citizens with nationalism.<sup>46</sup> The article also said that the good citizens should stay indoors and away from the streets as much as possible to avoid unjust

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<sup>44</sup> “光州 일원 深刻 事態 , *Gwangju Ilwon Simkak Sate*, Gwangju area in serious situation,” 경향신문, May 22, 1980.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

injuries caused by rioters.<sup>47</sup> This seems to be a method for justifying violence of the Martial Law troops and saying it is self-defense. The second warning makes it seem like the government is understanding and benevolent, and it also minimizes the movement to appear like a riot caused by small number of people. Overall, this news article does much less of reporting the current situation, and the article itself acts as a tool to warn the protestors in Gwangju.

On the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Kyeonghyang Simmun published an article titled, “美 정부 強力 警告 光州事態惡用 어떤企圖도 不容, *Mi Jeongbu Gangryeok Gyeongko Gwangju Sate Akyong Eotteon Gidodo Buyong*, US Government forcefully Warns Plots to Misuse Gwangju Situation Not to be Tolerated.” This is an article written from Washington, and says that the US government warned on the 22<sup>nd</sup> that in the case of any plot by external forces to use the current unrest against Korea, the US will respond according to the Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea.<sup>48</sup> The article says that although the announcement does not specifically mention North Korea by name, it is referring to North Korea by “external forces.”<sup>49</sup> The sole purpose of this article is to let readers know what the US said about Korean defense during the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement and does not describe the event itself. Also on the front page of the Kyeonghyang Sinmun had another article on the movement titled, “朴總 TV 談話 ‘光州는 治安不在상태 金鍾泌·金大中씨는 布告令위반 連行, *Bak Chung TV Damhwa ‘Gwangjuneun Chian Bujae Sangtae Kim Jongpil/Kim Daejung*

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> “美정부 強力 警告 光州事態惡用 어떤企圖도 不容, *Mi Jeongbu Gangryeok Gyeongko Gwangju Sate Akyong Eotteon Gidodo Buyong*, US Government forcefully Warns Plots to Misuse Gwangju Situation Not to be Tolerated,” 경향신문, May 23, 1980.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

*Ssineun Pogoryeong Wiban Yeonhaeng*, Park Prime Minister TV Dialogue ‘Gwangju in absence of public order, Kim Jungpil and Kim Daejung arrested for breach of decree’. Prime Minister Park Chunghun said in his televised dialogue that Gwangju was in absence of public order and asked that people not be deceived by rumors made by the fifth column, referring to thugs mentioned in earlier news articles.<sup>50</sup> He also said that negotiations were going on between the Martial Law Headquarters and the civilian representatives and that he believed firmly that there will be a positive outcome.<sup>51</sup> Prime minister Park also said that the quicker the Gwangju situation is resolved, the quicker political and economic improvements could be made and that as soon as national and political plans are agreed upon, that they would be put on the ballot for people to vote on.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the article also described what Prime Minister Park had said about the arrest of Kim Daejung and mentioned four corrective objectives for the nation. This article is also strictly about the Prime Minister’s announcement regarding the situation in Gwangju and did not describe what was actually happening in Gwangju. So, on the May 24<sup>th</sup> Kyeonghyang Sinmun, nothing was published about what was going on in Gwangju and articles were about the political atmosphere during the movement.

On the 24<sup>th</sup>, although the headline article was on the execution of Kim Jaegyul, Park Chunghee’s assassin, the Kyeonghyang Sinmun also published an article titled, “美대사관 高位官吏 밝혀 光州事態 평화적 解決을, *Mi Daesakwan Gowi Gwanri, Balkhyeo Gwangju Satae*

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<sup>50</sup>朴總 TV 談話 ‘光州는 治安不在상태 金鍾泌·金大中씨는 布告令위반 連行, *Bak Chung TV Damhwa* ‘Gwangjuneun Chian Bujae Sangtae Kim Jongpil/Kim Daejung *Ssineun Pogoryeong Wiban Yeonhaeng*, Park Prime Minister TV Dialogue ‘Gwangju in absence of public order, Kim Jungpil and Kim Daejung arrested for breach of decree,” 경향신문, May 23 1980.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



*Pyeonghwajeok Haegyeoreul*, US Embassy High Official Clarifies Need for Peaceful Resolution in Gwangju” on the front page. According to the article, high ranked diplomats of the Embassy of the United States in Seoul, such as the US Ambassador William Henry Glysteen released the US’s position on measures in dealing with the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement and North Korean threats in terms of security, stability of the economy, and public welfare. Unlike the *Kyeonghyang Sinmun* that summarized the announcement in four main points, the *Chosun Ilbo* provided a translated quotation from the US Embassy. The *Chosun Ilbo* also had another major article on the situation in Gwangju. The article said, “해결기미를 보이고 있다, *Haegyeongimireul Boigo Issta*, Showing signs of resolution,” indicating optimistically that the conflict was being talked out.

On May 25<sup>th</sup>, the *Kyeonghyang Sinmun* was not published because it was a Sunday. On May 26<sup>th</sup>, the *Kyeonghyang Sinmun* published an article titled, “戒嚴司 25 일下午 發表文 光州 事態 계속 緊張, *Gyeomsa 25il Hao Balpyomun Gwangju Satae Gyesok Ginjang*, Martial Law Command announcement after noon on the 15<sup>th</sup> Gwangju situation with continued tension.” This article said that the Martial Law Command made an announcement on May 25<sup>th</sup> at 8 P.M. that the situation in Gwangju was regaining order, but that extremist rioters were taking back weapons and ammunition that had once been recovered by the martial law troops and were inciting a hard struggle which was creating a hostile atmosphere. The rest of the article directly quoted the announcement by the Martial Law Command.

On the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup>, the *Kyeonghyang Sinmun* published an article titled, “戒嚴司 발표 「事態」 10 日만에, *Kyeomsa Balpyo 'Satae' 10 Ilmane*, Martial law Command

Announcement on the ‘Incident’.” on the headlines as well as an related article titled, “10 일만에  
秩序...光州, 10 Ilmane Jilseo... Gwangju, Order in Gwangju First in 10 Days” on the 7<sup>th</sup> page.

The article on the first page said that the Martial Law Command announced that the martial law troops had entered the city at 3:30 A.M. and had succeeded in taking control over the city by 5:10 am, while killing two resistors and arresting around 200 people.<sup>53</sup> However, the article did say that there were sporadic gunfights around the Provincial Office Building, all of which had stopped by 6 am.

On the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup>, the Chosun Ilbo report titled, “계엄군, 광주 장악;  
17 명사망 · 2 백 96 명 보호중, Gyeomgun, Gwangju Jangag; 17 Myeong Samang · 1 Baek 96  
Myeong Bohojung, Martial Law Troops take control of Gwangju: 17 Dead, 295 in custody”,  
which reports that the Martial Law Command announced that it had successfully taken control of  
the city.<sup>54</sup> The announcement said that 295 civilians had been arrested and 17 civilian deaths had  
been reported, but they were all part of a mob that refused to put down arms and continued to  
shoot at the troops.<sup>55</sup> The article elaborates saying that of the civilians, 11 had died at the  
Provincial Office Building, 3 had died at the Cheonil Building, more dies at the Gwangju Park,  
etc. The article says that 2 soldiers had died on their post and 12 had been injured.<sup>56</sup> The article  
not only fabricated the number of deaths and injuries, but added details backing up their own

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<sup>53</sup> “계엄군, 광주 장악; 17 명사망 · 2 백 96 명 보호중, Gyeomgun, Gwangju Jangag; 17 Myeong Samang · 1  
Baek 96 Myeong Bohojung, Martial Law Troops take control of Gwangju: 17 Dead, 295 in custody,” 조선일보,  
May 28 1980.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

numbers that further made the event seem like it was largely in the control of the Martial Law Troops. Overall, despite the fact that the Chosun Ilbo is an ultraconservative newspaper and the Kyeonghyang Sinmun is a left leaning newspaper, the content of all of the articles aligned with each other and had nearly identical contents. This supports the idea that the strict press censorship molded the newspapers to fit the government line causing all Korean newspapers to look the same. Minor differences in the content may be due to the fact that the Kyeonghyang Simun was published in the evening and the Chosun Ilbo articles published in the morning had more up to date information.

Some prior study has been done on the coverage of the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement by the Korean press. A study by Heo, Kang, Park and Baek discusses what the major national Korean newspaper the Dong-A Ilbo called the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement from 1980 to 2008. According to the study, the movement was solely called the “Gwangju Incident” by Korean newspapers in 1980<sup>57</sup>. Also, the term “[광주사태, *Gwangju Satae*] Gwangju Incident” was first used by the Martial Law Command and that was a type of “지배 담론의 용어, Jibae Damron ui Yongeo.”<sup>58</sup> The Dong-A Ilbo first reported on the movement on the 21<sup>st</sup> calling it a “[데모사태, *Demo Satae*] Demonstration Situation” and the term “Gwangju incident” was first used on the 22<sup>nd</sup><sup>59</sup>. This term “Gwangju Incident” emphasizes the situation itself and the outcome, rather than the participants and issues of responsibility.<sup>60</sup> Like in the

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<sup>57</sup> 허윤철, 강승화, 박효주, 채백, “한국 언론과 5.18 광주민주화운동 담론: 동아일보의 보도 기사와 사설을 중심으로,” 한국언론정보학보, (2012): 138.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Dong-A Ilbo, the term “Gwangju Incident” was commonly used in both the Kyeonghyang Sinmun and the Chosun Ilbo. Peace Corps volunteer Tim Warnberg, who resided in Gwangju during the movement, also reviewed the coverage of the movement in the North Korean press, the Chinese press, the Soviet press and the Korean press. Warnberg’s focus was on the *Korea Herald* and the *Korea Times*, both of which are English-language newspapers that are published in South Korea. In these newspaper reports, casualties of soldiers and police were emphasized, whereas civilian casualties were downplayed.<sup>61</sup> The overall trend of the national English-language newspapers is therefore similar to that of the other national Korean-language newspapers in Korea. This further helps to confirm that the national newspapers in Korea were strictly controlled and made consistent with each other and the government’s position. Moreover, Warnberg describes the press reports of South Korea by saying, “The South Korean reports of the incident minimized and greatly distorted the event by mixing truths and half-truths.”<sup>62</sup> While the newspaper articles did not deny that there was a struggle going on in Gwangju, not everything in the articles was true in order to portray the government and martial law troops in a more positive way.

In addition to portraying the movement in the favor of the martial law troops, censorship also affected newspapers by preventing the publishing of certain articles. For example, according to Lee Jeonghwan, on May 20<sup>th</sup>, the Choongang Ilbo national newspaper journalists had written articles on the Gwangju Pro-Democracy movement that were not published.<sup>63</sup> Such articles were titled, “공수부대의 무차별 살육에 분노한 시민들이 시위 가담, *Gongsu Budaе ui*

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<sup>61</sup> Warnberg, “The Gwangju Uprising,” 47.

<sup>62</sup> Warnberg, “The Gwangju Uprising,” 47.

<sup>63</sup> 이정환. 백발의 해직 언론인들이 한국 언론에 던지는 조언.

*Muchabyeol Saryuge Bunnohan Simindeuri Siwi Gadam*, Citizens angry at random slaughter by paratroopers join demonstrations)” and “광주 시민정신은 살아 있었다, *Gwangju Simin Jeongsin Sara Isseossda*, Gwangju Citizen Mentality is still alive”.<sup>64</sup> The newspaper articles were written by journalists were not just edited to remove sensitive information but the full articles were entirely rejected. This shows that there was a large amount of information that could not be published because of censorship.

The two main local newspapers are the Cheonnam Meil Sinmun and the Cheonnam Ilbo. Cheonnam Meil Sinmun and the Cheonnam Ilbo newspaper articles, in addition to many other newspapers, are available online through the Korean National Archives. However, the number of articles that can be obtained through the archives is very limited due to the circumstances in Gwangju during the 10 days of the movement. During the period from May 18<sup>th</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup>, the Cheonnam Maeil Ilbo only published on May 18<sup>th</sup> and May 19<sup>th</sup>. This is because both the Cheonnam Ilbo and the Cheonnam Maeil Sinmun stopped printing entirely between May 21<sup>st</sup> and June 1<sup>st</sup>. On May 19<sup>th</sup> the Cheonnam Maeil Sinmun published an article titled, “光州「通禁」 밤 9 시부터: 光州市內일원만 實施 18 일부터 3 時間연장 , *Gwangju “Tonggeum” Bam 9 Sibuteo: Gwangju Sinae Ilwonman Silsi 19 Il Buteo 3 Sigan Yeonjang*, Gwangju curfew from 9 P.M.: Implemented only in Gwangju City area, extended 3 hours starting on the 18<sup>th</sup>.” was published, announcing the curfew from 9 P.M. to 4 A.M. to start on 9 P.M. on May 18<sup>th</sup> until a further official order with the purpose of maintaining public order.<sup>65</sup> The article included the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> “光州「通禁」 밤 9 시부터: 光州市內일원만 實施 18 일부터 3 時間연장 , *Gwangju “Tonggeum” Bam 9 Sibuteo: Gwangju Sinae Ilwonman Silsi 19 Il Buteo 3 Sigan Yeonjang*, Gwangju curfew from 9 P.M.: Implemented only in Gwangju City area, extended 3 hours starting on the 18<sup>th</sup>,” 전남매일신문, May 19 1980.

exact order by the Cheolla Martial Law Headquarters commander. The article includes a quote from the city governor who mentions public chaos caused by students in Gwangju and asks that parents of students and cooperate with the Martial Law Command to maintain public order.<sup>66</sup> This could be a reference to the student demonstrations on the 18<sup>th</sup> in front of the Provincial Hall, but it greatly minimized the event. This is the earliest that student demonstrations in Gwangju was mentioned on any of the examined Korean newspapers during the duration of 10 days.

In addition to the published article on May 19<sup>th</sup>, on May 20<sup>th</sup>, news articles regarding the Gwangju Uprising were written by the journalists of the Cheonnam Maeil Sinmun. However, these articles, similar to the case of the Choongang Ilbo, could not be published and instead the newspaper stopped publishing for thirteen days. The articles were titled, “18·19 일 이틀 동안 계엄군에 학생 시민 피투성이로 끌려가 , *18/19 Il Iteul Dongan Kyeemgune Haksaeng Simin Pituseongiro Kkeurryeoga*, For Two Days on the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup>, bloody students and citizens dragged by Martial Law troops).”<sup>67</sup> Even just the titles of these unpublished articles are very different published articles in the national newspapers because they have raw details of the event. These titles also showed the Martial Law Troops in a negative light and described the event as bigger and more violent than the national newspapers. Furthermore, the articles were written one to two days before the first official newspaper stories on the movement were published. This shows that the journalists of the Cheonnam Maeil Sinmun had tried to put the reality of the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement as it was happening in the newspaper as it started and escalated but were entirely unable to do due to government censorship. In addition, this shows

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> 금준경, “생각이 크는 인문학 17 미디어 리터러시,” 2019.

that the Korean government censorship reached out to local newspapers and getting around censorship could not be done even at the local level.

Journalists of the Cheonnam Maeil Sinmun wrote a combined resignation letter signed on May 20th and scattered copies of the letter throughout the city.<sup>68</sup> The resignation letter roughly translated says, “We saw it. We clearly saw with our two eyes people dying a dog’s death. However, we could not even put one line in the newspaper. In embarrassment, we put down our pens.”<sup>69</sup> The journalists of the Cheonnam Maeil Sinmun were in Gwangju at the time of the movement and saw what had happened. Furthermore, most likely they were locals of Gwangju, they were most likely emotionally impacted by the event and frustrated that they could not let the public know what was going on in their city. Jeonghwan Lee states that in a way, this four-line resignation letter scattered through the city acted as an underground newspaper.<sup>70</sup>

In order to determine the full extent and effectiveness of government censorship as well as the relationship between the government and the press, it is necessary to make a comparison between what was written in South Korean newspapers to sources that were not censored. One way to make such a comparison is by examining the newspaper articles published in South Korea that went through government screening as well as newspaper articles in foreign newspapers that were published outside of Korea and seeing how they are different from each other. For this study I decided to do such a comparison with the New York Times because the New York Times is a major newspaper in the US that widely influences other media. I was able to access the original articles of the New York Times from May 18<sup>th</sup> to May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1980 through

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<sup>68</sup> 미디어오늘. 대한민국 프레임 전쟁: 뉴스를 덮는 언론을 말하다, 동녘출판사, 2017.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> 이정환. 백발의 해직 언론인들이 한국 언론에 던지는 조언.,

the BGSU library. On May 18<sup>th</sup>, there was no newspaper article in the New York Times that specifically had to do with the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement. However, the New York Times did have at least one article every day on the movement between May 19<sup>th</sup> and May 17<sup>th</sup>. Gwangju first appeared in US newspapers on May 19<sup>th</sup>, the day after the beginning of the movement. In the New York Times, an article titled “5 Believed Dead in Clashes in South Korean City” was published from Seoul. This article was published two days before the first news reports in Korea that announced that 5 policemen and 1 civilian had died as of May 21<sup>st</sup>, showing that even the first reports in Korea were reporting significantly fewer casualties than the US news articles. This article included witness statements, saying that “Witnesses said that soldiers arrested all students in sight. Those seized were reportedly forced to take off their clothing and to lie face down on the street.”<sup>71</sup> Another article in the New York Times, also on May 19<sup>th</sup>, was published with the title, “Seoul Vows New Restrictions Won’t Delay Democracy”. The article described the events in Gwangju in short, saying that 5000 students had battled the riot police and troops for several hours and scored had been reported as injured on both sides.<sup>72</sup> The article also acknowledged that the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement’s demonstrations were the biggest since the 1960 April Revolution that brought down the Rhee Syngman regime. However, the article was focused on Seoul and the rounding up of political dissidents, most likely due to the fact that the reporter James P. Sterba was located in Seoul.

On May 20<sup>th</sup>, British journalist Henry Scott Stokes wrote on the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement for the first time. Because Stokes was in Seoul rather than Gwangju, much of the information comes from other reports. The article is mainly about the entire cabinet

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<sup>71</sup> “5 Believed Dead in Clashes in South Korean City,” *New York Times*, May 19 1980.

<sup>72</sup> James E. Sterba, “Seoul Vows New Restrictions Won’t Delay Democracy,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1980.



of the government resigning in order to take responsibility for the unrest in Gwangju, as well as other developments in Seoul such as those regarding Kim Jaegyu.<sup>73</sup> In the article, Stokes wrote that The Associated Press reported from Seoul that witnesses had said that troops in Kwangju had opened fire on civilians on the 21st when they tried to drive buses and APCs at the troops, and killed at least three.<sup>74</sup> Such witness reports used in US newspapers shows that US newspaper journalists used witness accounts in their articles, while the Korean newspapers mainly relied on reports by the Martial Law Command. Stokes wrote in his article, “The soldiers, using tear gas, seized people riding on vehicles and beat them,” describing violence in Gwangju, but does not write Later in the article, there is a report about citizens attacking a broadcasting station that was owned by a chain that had supported the Park Chunghee regime, angry because deaths and injuries were not broadcasted on May 19th, while hospitals were reportedly full of people who were injured.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, the New York Times gave an updated number of casualties in an article on May 21<sup>st</sup>, titled “Protestors Control South Korean City; At Least 32 Killed.”<sup>76</sup> This article was written by Shim Jae Hoon who was in Gwangju at the time. In his article, Shim reported that at least 32 people had been killed and points out the numbers given by the Korean government: “In the confusion it was not possible to determine the mounting total of dead. Some witnesses maintained that 600 people were shot dead in the last four days, while martial law authorities in Seoul said that five policeman and one civilian had died.” This shows that the numbers that were reported in Seoul were much smaller than any other reports coming from Gwangju.

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<sup>73</sup> Henry Scott-Stokes, “Cabinet Resigns in Korea as Riots Grow,” *New York Times*, May 20 1980.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Henry Scott-Stokes, “Cabinet Resigns in Korea as Riots Grow,” *New York Times*, May 20 1980.

<sup>76</sup> Shim Jae Hoon, “Protestors Control South Korean City; At Least 32 Killed”, *New York Times*, May 21, 1980.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, four articles were published in the New York Times in relation to the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement. Shim Jaehoon reported in an article titled, “Unsuccessful Truce Talks Held in South Korean City”, that representatives of the demonstrators met for the first time with the commander of the army in order to come to an agreement.<sup>77</sup> The article said that the talks were unsuccessful but did not elaborate on why, other than by saying that the citizens of Gwangju came up with the seven demands and mentioning the prime minister’s failed attempt to enter Gwangju, which contributed to increased tensions. Shim also wrote that the four hospitals in Gwangju reported 57 deaths and 400 wounded as of May 22<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>78</sup> According to Shim, Park Choong Hoon described flew over Gwangju in a helicopter and described the situation in Gwangju optimistically: “The banks were not destroyed,’ he said, ‘The government functions. Water and electricity supplies continue.’”<sup>79</sup> This highlighted how the Korean government wanted people to think that the situation in Gwangju was under control. Also on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, an article titled, “U.S. Urges ‘Maximum Restraint’ on South Korean Military Leaders” written by Bernard Gwertzman was published. This article was about how the truce talks in Gwangju had failed and mentioned that the Secretary of State, Edmund Muskie expressed his disappointment that Korea had moved away from liberalization with Chun Doohwan increasing his power. The article raised concerns and uncertainty about the Chun regime, but did not describe what was happening in Gwangju. The other two articles were written by Henry Scott Stokes, and were titled, “Seoul Army Charges Foe Plotted Revolt” and “South Korean Army Moves to Try Foe.” Both articles were largely about the reports released on the interrogation of Kim Dae Jung and how the Korean government was planning on trying him for instigating the Kwangju Pro-

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<sup>77</sup> Shim Jae Hoon, “Unsuccessful Truce Talks Held in South Korean City”, *New York Times*, May 22, 1980.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Shim, “Unsuccessful Truce Talks Held in South Korean City”, *New York Times*, May 22, 1980.

Democracy Movement in order to overthrow the government. Neither of the articles described the events that were happening on the streets of Gwangju.

On the 24<sup>th</sup>. Much like the Korean newspaper articles, it discussed Carter's worry for "dangerous miscalculations by external forces" and his warning that the US would "react strongly" to any attempt by North Korea "to exploit the situation". Overall, the article is very similar to the Korean newspapers that similarly reported on Carter's statement. Also, on the 24<sup>th</sup>, Henry Scott Stokes wrote an article titled, "Assassin of Park Is Put to Death In South Korea," referring to Kim Jaekyu. Although most of the article is about the execution of Kim, Stokes briefly mentions the events in Gwangju. He wrote, "In Kwangju yesterday, a crowd of 20,000 demonstrators, some carrying carbines and grenades, erected barricades with trucks and buses around the provincial government office on a main square of Kwangju."<sup>80</sup> This article describes the demonstrators and had very little information on the martial law troops. On May 25<sup>th</sup>, Stokes wrote another article that analyzed the Kwangju Pro-Democracy Movement, titled "Old Grudges Spur a New Revolt in South Korea". He mainly focused on the new Chun Doo-hwan regime and its incompetency, earlier popular protest, historical relations between Kwangju and the Park and Chun regimes dating back to the Silla period, and the Chun regime blaming the movement on North Korean agitators. There were few details about the situation in Gwangju itself.

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, Henry Scott Stokes was in Gwangju and wrote his first article from the city titled, "Rebels Seek U.S. Help." The article described how the demonstrators wanted the US Ambassador Gleysteen to help as an intermediary so that a truce could be agreed on between the committee and the Korean military. Stokes also described an interview with the demonstrators:

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<sup>80</sup> Henry Scott-Stokes, "Assassin of Park Is Put to Death In South Korea," *New York Times*, May 24, 1980.

“The militants, in an interview in the offices of the provincial government, said they had counted 161 bodies and that casualties were still coming in as sporadic shootings continues in this city of 800,000. They asked the Korean Red Cross to send a mission to Kwangju to check the casualties and provide badly needed medical supplies.”<sup>81</sup> The interview also included a request that the International Red Cross urge the Korean government to provide aid to the 400 seriously wounded, many of which had gunshot wounds. This interview shows the severity of the situation and the movement from the perspective of the demonstrators, which cannot be seen in the Korean newspaper articles.

On the 27<sup>th</sup>, the New York Times article on the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement was also by Henry Scott Stokes, and it was titled, “When the Troops Finally Came, Kwangju Revolt Became a Rout.” Stokes wrote that he was in a dark room of an inn and was listening to the clashes on the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup><sup>82</sup>. Stokes described what he heard, writing that, “From time to time there was the pop of a student’s carbine. The weapons sounded like firecrackers. Then came the answering bass rattle of army machine guns, 100 rounds, for every shot that a student got off.”<sup>83</sup> The article also said that according to the citizens of Gwangju, 261 people died, 2,000 were injured, and about 50 paratroopers had died during the uprising.<sup>84</sup> The last part of Stokes’ article describes the random nature of the paratroopers beating the citizens.

The differences across articles in US newspaper articles can be attributed to who the journalist was and where the journalist was at the time of the movement. For example, the article written by Bernard Gwertzman from Washington had an US perspective with few details about

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<sup>81</sup> Henry Scott-Stokes, “Rebels Seek U.S. Help,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1980.

<sup>82</sup> Henry Scott-Stokes. ““When the Troops Finally Came, Kwangju Revolt Became a Rout,” *New York Times*, May 27, 1980.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

what was happening in Gwangju. On the other hand, Shim Jaehoon was in Gwangju during the movement and his reporting was much more active with direct observations as well as personal interviews. Henry Scott Stokes was also in Gwangju on the 27<sup>th</sup> and described what he heard from the darkness of his hotel room. Because of this, articles written by Shim and Stokes were the most useful in grasping what was reported from Gwangju and most relevant in understanding what newspaper articles written by people who were in Gwangju looked like uncensored. Another consideration that must be taken when examining US newspapers is the use of witness reports, most of which were anonymous. It is difficult to tell the reliability of these reports because there is a possibility that the reports were exaggerated because of panic or other emotional factors of those who were experiencing or had just experienced the events in Kwangju.

The exaggeration of information can also be seen in other methods of spreading information used during the movement. According to Ahn Jong-chul, on the night of May 20th, after the troops had begun shooting demonstrators, leaflets were scattered through the city to let the citizens know what had happened because most citizens who were not involved were still unaware. The leaflets said, “500 people dead, 3000 wounded, 3000 arrested! The bastards started shooting. People of Seoul, Taegu, *Masan*, *Chunju*, *Kunsan*, *Iri*, *Mokp'o* also rose up! In *Chunju* and *Iri* police joined the citizens! The Student Revolutionary Army stole weapons from the [상무대] *Sangmudae* (army)!”<sup>85</sup> These such leaflets created by the Committee of Citizens for Democratic Struggle and Student Revolution Committee greatly exaggerated the number of casualties and injuries and urged the people of Kwangju to take up arms.<sup>86</sup> These leaflets are also

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<sup>85</sup> Ahn, “Simin’gun,” 12.

<sup>86</sup> Ahn, “Simin’gun,” 12.

significant as methods taken by demonstrators to spread information about the movement. Because the newspapers could not inform the citizens of what was happening, these leaflets may have acted as an alternative underground media source during the Kwangju Pro-Democracy Movement. However, it shows that while the Martial Law Command and the Korean government reports were not reliable sources for accurate information, the same goes for information that came directly from Gwangju. Therefore, it is very difficult yet important to examine sources all sources before assuming that they are accurate. This is especially so because there is already a lot of uncertainty about what exactly happened during the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement.

Overall, US newspaper articles tended to describe what was happening in Kwangju in detail objectively. The Korean newspaper also does describe the events to an extent, but the main focus was on the destruction of buildings and vehicles by civilians. The Korean newspaper articles also had several ideas that were continuously used throughout the span of the movement. One of these ideas was that the Kwangju Pro-Democracy Movement was accelerated because of false rumors. Considering that there is no doubt that exaggeration can be seen in the information circulating among the citizens of Gwangju, such as the leaflets, there is some truth to these statements. However, the Korean national newspaper articles repetitively mentioned rumors as a force that caused the escalation of the situation and also stressed that the rumors were spread by thugs and rioters from Seoul. In fact, the Chosun Ilbo had a single panel drawing of a character walking around the words “유언비어, *yueonbieo*,” which acted as a propaganda image urging people to not believe what the government said were rumors.

Aside from the content, one of the most noticeable differences between the Korean newspapers and the US newspapers is the speed at which information regarding the movement was released. News of the events in Gwangju reached US readers two days earlier than newspaper readers in Seoul, despite the fact that it was international news from a distant country. Another noticeable difference between the Korean newspaper articles and the US newspaper articles is that the Korean newspaper articles rely heavily on the announcements of the Martial Law Command. Many of the articles say something along the lines of, “the announcement by the Martial Law Command is as follows...” This is seen much more often in the Kyeonghyang Sinmun than the Chosun Ilbo. One possible explanation is that the ultra-conservative Chosun Ilbo elaborated more and justified the actions of the martial law troops, while the liberal Kyeonghyang Sinmun reported only the official announcement as to follow censorship guidelines but not show open support for the government and military’s actions.

Korean government censorship delayed the transmission of information to the public and minimized the event by preventing the publishing of newspaper articles releasing details of what had actually happened. Korean government censorship also distorted the cause of the movement and its escalation, as well as the number of injuries and casualties. An overall trend that can be seen in the Korean newspapers is that the main source of information for the articles was the Martial Law Command and, in many cases, direct quotes filled up a considerable portion of the articles. Because of this, little active journalism can be observed, especially compared to US newspapers, where the voice of the individual journalist can be recognized. Also, the national newspapers look very similar and use the same wording, sometimes with identical wording, especially in titles. The purpose of the media was not to inform citizens of what was going on in society, but rather it was a propaganda tool that the government used. The contents of the

newspapers reflect what the government wanted the people to know and think about the Gwangju Pro-Democracy Movement and what information the government selectively chose to release or distort. Therefore, the Korean media as well as the contents of the newspapers tell more about the Korean government and the Martial Law Command than about the newspapers and the journalists.



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