to strengthen national defense. This precipitated a sit-in strike in the National Assembly by the opposition party and renewed antigovernment demonstrations by university students. For their part, Park and his supporters worried that, given the fluid international situation, a change of leadership would jeopardize the economic program and national security. He resolved, therefore, to restructure the government in order to continue in power.

The restructuring amounted to an internal coup d'etat. Park declared martial law, dissolved the National Assembly, abrogated the old constitution, had a new constitution written by an Extraordinary State Council made up of his appointees, and then legitimated the new structure in a national referendum in November of 1972. The result was the promulgation of the Yushin (Yusin) or "revitalization reforms" Constitution and the birth of the Fourth Republic of the ROK.[15] In effect the Yushin Constitution created a legal dictatorship for Park. Indirect election of

Tank guards the Capitol Building at the Kwanghwa during martial law period, 1972. Photo © Norman Thorpe 1972.

the president by a 2,359-member National Conference for Unification (NCU) replaced the old direct election system. One-third of the new electoral college was to be appointed by the president, thus virtually assuring the continuation of the incumbent in office. In subsequent National Assembly Elections, Park's DRP and a new allied party called the Yujŏnghoe captured a two-thirds majority. Park had secured control of selection of the president and an overwhelming legislative majority that would rubberstamp his initiatives.

The Fourth Republic saw growing tensions within Korean society. The rapid pace of economic change had fueled a massive exodus of people from the countryside to the new cities. Labor discontent grew as business continued to hold down wages and demand long work hours. Businessmen knew that when challenged, they could count on the support of the National Police. Student activism increased, and Park's attempt to stop it through expulsion and arrests drove many underground, where antigovernment activities became institutionalized and a professional, extralegal opposition was born. The government faced persistent demands for a new constitution, and the situation grew worse with a worldwide recession in the mid-1970s. Park narrowly escaped death in 1974 when an assassin's bullets missed him only to kill his wife, the very popular Yuk Yŏng-su. While the Korean economy continued to grow, the Fourth Republic became increasingly hostile and unstable in the years after Madame Yuk's death. Park became more reclusive, and the opposition increased its demands for a broadening of human rights and an amelioration of the plight of labor. Violent demonstrations on campuses became frequent. By the tenth National Assembly elections in December 1978, the opposition outpolled the DRP, but given the skewed nature of the electoral system, it still remained out of power.

Beneath the Miracle: Social Change and Discontent

From 1965 until the late 1970s South Korea experienced very high rates of economic growth and a continuing expansion of wealth. There was, moreover, a dramatic expansion of the urban middle class, largely white-collar workers in the expanding bureaucracies of commerce and government. Workers in the new export industries also experienced relative economic mobility, for they were earning wages hardly conceivable in the 1950s. But the dynamic expansion of the economy was also made possible by the efforts of an army of very poorly paid workers toiling in small- and medium-sized factories. Particularly in the textile industry, working conditions were horrible and dangerous. Since the workers had no recourse to labor organization, employers freely exploited them, replacing recalcitrant workers at will. The urban working class was crowded into substandard housing, in many cases company dormitories. During the early years of expansion, workers were more willing to put up with the difficult conditions for a chance to leave the countryside and establish themselves in the cities. Also inhibiting protest was the

fact that a large portion of the growing labor force was fresh from the countryside and inexperienced with labor organization or they were young females working limited-tenure jobs and still under the sway of patriarchal controls, whether parents or the boss. But during the 1970s the growing gap between the consuming power and lifestyle of the white-collar middle class and the low wages and miserable conditions of labor became more obvious and intolerable. And year by year labor strife increased (Koo, 2001).

Just because the deck was stacked against labor organization and the full force of the government's considerable coercive machinery was deployed against it did not mean laborers were utterly cowed or quiescent during the economic boom years. Indeed there was always worker resistance, and labor actions increased after the fall of the Rhee government. Again in the late 1960s and early 1970s wildcat strikes and sit-downs were not uncommon. In 1970 a textile worker, Chŏn T'aeil, immolated himself in the East Gate Market, site of numerous textile sweatshops, protesting the treatment of young women in the industry. As the decade went on, this individual act became a rallying point for increasingly militant labor. Indeed, the Yushin system had been born, in part, out of the government's desire to curb labor unrest. At the same time, the more socially conscious and active segments of the Christian church, such as the Urban Industrial Mission, worked hard to keep the plight of labor in the public eye (Ogle, 1990).

In 1974 workers rioted at the Hyundai Heavy Industries shipyard in Ulsan. Less privileged women workers also began to organize to resist the oppressive conditions and low wages in the textile industry. In 1976 women workers of the Dongil Textile Company, who had been locked in their dormitory during a fraudulent takeover of their union by company-sponsored male workers, broke out and staged a sit-in in the union hall. By the second day the number of women in the strike had grown to 800. When the riot police came to forcibly break up the sit-in, women workers stripped naked, temporarily immobilizing all present with this extraordinary spontaneous act. Ultimately, however, the police set upon the naked women, and the strike was brutally suppressed. The Dongil struggle continued for over a year, with the women ultimately losing control of their union, but their sacrifice publicized the plight of workers and drew sympathy for their cause throughout the country. In 1979, during the second oil shock recession, police brutality toward women workers holding a sit-in strike at the YH Trading Company further exposed the workers' horrible conditions. The YH women ended up occupying the headquarters of the opposition New Democratic Party, where the police again attacked them, injuring dozens and killing one woman (Koo, 2001, chap. 4). The Dongil Strike and YH incident galvanized the labor movement by bringing together intellectuals, religious leaders, and students to publicize the plight of women laborers. In the fall of 1979 labor unrest began to spread to the Masan Free-export Zone, an area dominated by large manufacturing plants and relatively privileged male labor. Eventually the labor strikes in turn stimulated urban protest

sparked by student demonstrators in Pusan and Masan. Troubles were deepening for the Park administration.

The End of the Fourth Republic

Park Chung Hee's end came when he was assassinated by his own KCIA director, Kim Jae Kyu (Kim Chaegyu), at a private dinner on October 26, 1979. That fall the deepening economic recession and simmering political crisis had stimulated a new outbreak of labor and student demonstrations. KCIA Director Kim had been locked in a dispute with Cha Chich'ŏl, chief of Park's personal security detachment. (Cha was killed along with Park that fateful evening.) The issue was whether to use paratroopers to put down the massive demonstrations in the Masan area, which had already been placed under martial law. Kim reportedly had argued for restraint, but Park, under Cha's influence, was getting ready to use the troops. Park's death shocked a nation in turmoil. The people mourned his passing with mixed feelings; he was at once the leader who had orchestrated Korea's great economic development, but he was also the major obstacle to genuine democratic reforms. During the months after Park's death there was genuine hope that the country could bring its politics in line with the remarkable economic and social developments of the last twenty years.

Public optimism was, however, premature. The interim government under Prime Minister Choi Kyu Hah (Ch'oe Kyuha) chose to continue the Yushin system. In December a new election was organized, and the NCU, using the old Yushin machinery, chose Choi Kyu Hah to be president. Choi made early moves to signal a major change in the political system. He pledged to carry out a national referendum on a new constitution, rescinded the hated Emergency Measure Nine, and released hundreds of political prisoners, including Kim Dae Jung, who had been under house arrest since leaving prison in 1978.[16] Early in 1980 Choi restored the civil rights of Kim and 700 other former political prisoners. Progress toward a new constitution, however, stalled in the midst of complicated power struggles between the National Assembly and the administration, between the government and the opposition parties, and within each party as well. The internecine political struggles were mirrored in the streets, as opposition groups of all stripes demonstrated for a return to democratic politics.

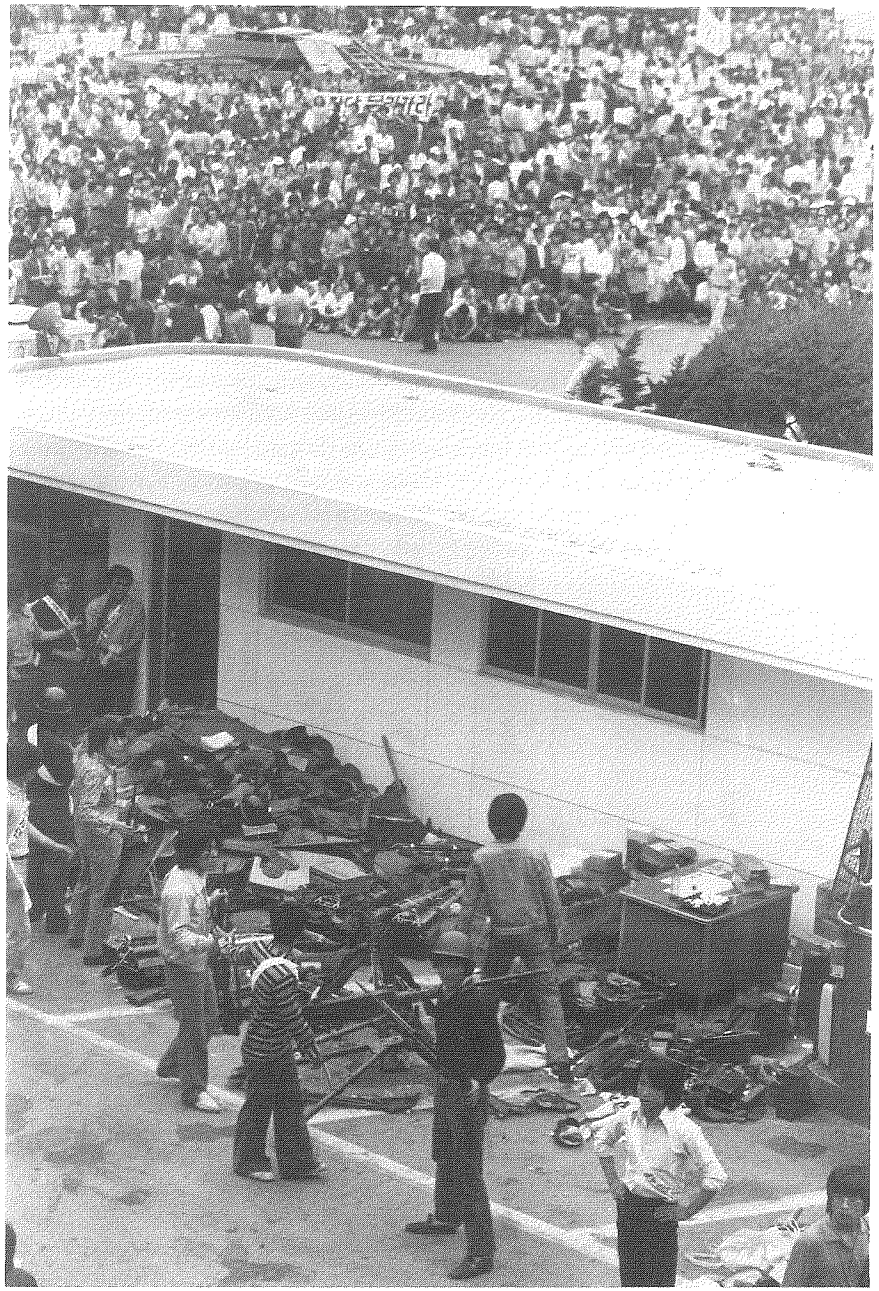
Early in 1980 the question of whether the military would stand aside and let the political transition continue was answered in the negative. On December 12, 1979, Gen. Chun Doo Hwan, head of the Army Security Command and lead investigator into Park's assassination, along with generals Rho Tae Woo and Chŏng Hoyong, carried out a bloody internal coup that placed the entire ROK military under their control. Without giving up his military posts, Chun assumed control of the KCIA in April 1980. Chun's self-appointment touched off furious demonstrations that renewed the call for the rapid abolition of the Yushin system and

the lifting of martial law. Chun responded on May 16 by extending martial law, dissolving the National Assembly, closing all colleges and universities, banning labor strikes, and prohibiting all political discussion and activity. This set the stage for Chun's final moves to assume complete control that culminated in the fall of 1980 in his election by the NCU, packed now with his representatives, as president under yet another revised constitution. All this activity had taken place in a nation under martial law. The opportunity to open the South Korean political system to true democracy was lost in the spring of 1980. In the process of Chun's brutal seizure of power, ROK troops turned on the citizens of Kwangju, the provincial capital of South Cholla, in a bloody massacre that forever tainted Chun's Fifth Republic and that ultimately led to the ascendance of the forces of democratization in the summer of 1987.

The Kwangju Massacre and the Road to Democratization

The demonstrations in the middle of May 1980 that provoked General Chun's final crackdown and later seizure of the government were nationwide. In the southwestern city of Kwangju, the hometown of longtime opposition leader Kim Dae Jung, a small demonstration of Chŏnnam National University students demanding the end to martial law and the release of Kim Dae Jung was set upon by black-bereted paratroopers who indiscriminately beat and mauled, even using bayonets, demonstrators and spectators alike. After several days of such brutality the citizenry of Kwangju responded en masse and drove the Special Forces and police out of the city in what became a full-fledged insurrection. For a week Kwangju was cordoned off and isolated from the rest of the country while a citizen's council attempted to negotiate a truce with the army. They also appealed with no success to the United States to intervene. On May 27, regular troops invaded the city to reimpose martial law. Students who had armed themselves during the insurrection with abandoned weapons were slaughtered in the fight. When it was over, hundreds were dead and thousands injured. The official death toll was set at 200, but witnesses to the tragedy claimed many more had died in the fighting.[17] Chun's willingness to use the army against his own citizens demonstrated his ruthlessness. The Kwangju massacre, however, became the rallying point for a grassroots movement that would decisively alter the course of postwar Korean politics in the summer of 1987.

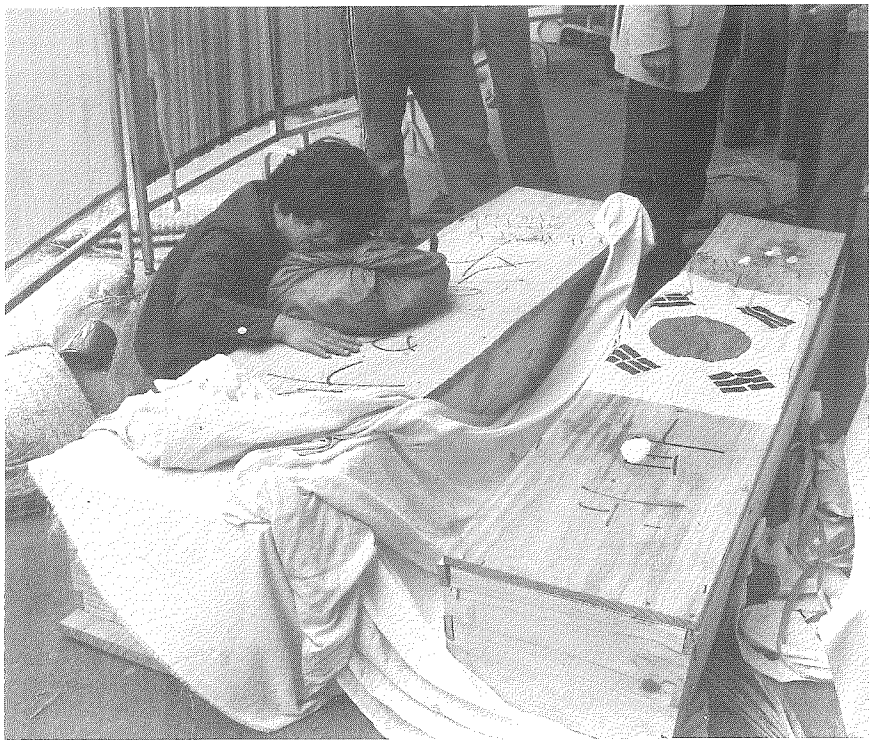
An important issue that swirled around the Kwangju incident was the presumed complicity of the United States in the massacre. In 1980, while there was token international representation, the UN command was comprised of the US Eighth Army, and the ROK Army under the command of a US general. It was assumed that the movement of ROK Special Forces to Kwangju was only possible through a complex system of orders within the UN forces under American control. Thus the public believed that any movement of regular ROK army units to Kwangju, and their subsequent participation in the events there, had been at



Students collect guns at citizens' rally May 1980. Photo © Norman Thorpe 1980.

least passively permitted by the UN commander. To this day the United States denies that it approved of any such troop movement by arguing that the ROK Army had freedom of movement within the structure of the UN command. Such legalistic explanations, however, of the difference between American command and the operational freedom of the ROK army to move its troops at will fell on deaf ears. The lack of any apology or statement of responsibility seemed proof of US complicity.

Chun's Fifth Republic followed the pattern of the 1961 military coup. He created a new party, the Democratic Justice Party (DJP). This party became his political base because the proportional electoral system allowed him to control the National Assembly with the votes of only one-third of the electorate. He packed the government with his supporters, mostly members of his Korean Military Academy class, the eleventh. He denounced government corruption, purged the bureaucracy, and announced his intention to be a one-term president (seven years). Unlike Park, however, Chun did not have the legitimacy of being the architect of economic development, nor did his personal behavior engender popular



Woman grieves at the Kwangju morgue, May 1980. Draped coffin at right marked "unknown." Photo © Norman Thorpe 1980.

respect. Far from the ascetic aura of Park, Chun enjoyed the regal trappings of the presidency, and his wife's family was viewed as corrupt and grasping. Of course, he was viewed as a usurper and responsible for the Kwangju massacre as well. He tried to compensate for his lack of legitimacy by allowing opposition parties more power, and he rescinded the ban on political activities of a number of opposition politicians, this, however, did not include Kim Dae Jung. Finally, Chun announced a number of new social policies; he ended the requirement for military-style uniforms and short haircuts for middle- and high-school students, and he also lifted the nightly curfew that had been in operation since the Korean War.

Chun never gained acceptance for his rule; try as he might, he was unable to distinguish his Fifth Republic from the Park's Yushin system. He had climbed to power on the deaths of soldiers in the December 12 internal coup, and he could never wash the blood of the Kwangju massacre from his hands. His government refused to accept responsibility for Kwangju and continued to charge that the insurrection had been a Communist plot. More importantly, however, Chun's hold on power was ultimately challenged by the massive socioeconomic changes that had transformed South Korea over the preceding twenty-five years. These changes were responsible for the challenge to the Yushin system after Park's assassination, and no amount of physical repression could put the genie back in the bottle. Chun tried in vain to augment the power of his coercive apparatus by adding tens of thousands of young conscripts trained in riot control to the National Police. In spite of their continual presence in the cities, he was unable to quell the swelling opposition and vocal street demonstrations that focused on the evils of his regime and demanded an end to the Yushin system and the continuing suppression of civil liberties and labor organization.

The nature of political opposition had transformed in the 1970s, and after the Kwangju massacre the student movement was pushed to the left, becoming more radical and uncompromising. The Yushin years also had created a large cadre of permanent ex-student organizers among those who had been expelled or jailed during the Park years. A widespread conviction of American complicity in the Kwangju massacre also turned students and other segments of the population against the United States. This added anti-Americanism to the complex mix of leftist, nationalist, and anti-Chun sentiments that expanded the public resistance to his rule. Liberal democracy was no longer the simple goal of the student movement. The issue became the legitimacy of the government itself—in the students' parlance, a government led by a usurper and supported by American neocolonialist power. Students also attacked the structural issues that were embedded in the original division of the country, once again bringing up the issue of reunification.

Another change in the nature of the student activism was a new interest in national identity. Students began to question how the rapid economic development and urbanization of Korea had distanced the society from its original cul-

tural roots. This interest translated into what is now referred to as the Minjung movement, *minjung* meaning "the people" or "the masses." Students began to study folk traditions and organized summer programs to connect with people in the countryside. Here, it was thought, lay the authentic repository of Korean national identity. Farmers' music troops, masked dance clubs, drumming corps, and *p'ansori* became popular on campus. And this study of the folk was translated into the politics of the moment. Students augmented their demonstrations with creative uses of Korean folk rituals drawn from shamanism and appropriated traditional masked dance drama in order to turn its satirical force against what the students believed were the "false" national credentials of the government (Wells, *South Korea's Minjung Movement,* 1995).

By the mid-1980s student organizers were successfully beginning to create connections to a long-smoldering labor movement in Korea. Wildcat strikes and louder calls for a reformed labor law emanated from organizing workers from the myriad textile sweatshops. And these demands were seconded by increased unrest within the huge labor force of the giant *chebŏls.*

By 1986 these forces began to combine in ways that prevented their selective repression by the government. Moreover, the collapse of the long dictatorial rule of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, which had been brought about by enormous public demonstrations, created a sensation in Korea. Ironically, the impending Summer Olympics of 1988 in Seoul also played a key role in bringing the opposition forces together. Korea had been awarded the Olympic venue early in Chun's rule, and the ROK had planned to use the 1988 Olympics as a stage from which to tout Korea's arrival on the world stage as a transformed industrialized nation. Preparations that included the construction of new subways, freeways, airport facilities, and other huge civic projects had disrupted life in Seoul for years. Now the increasing size and belligerence of the demonstrations threatened the successful staging of this coming-out party. Chun deflected the raised tensions in 1986 by acceding to discussions on constitutional revision in preparation for the election of his successor in 1988. But in April 1987, he reversed course and cancelled the talks. Two months later he anointed his colleague, Rho Tae Woo, head of the DJP and candidate for the fall presidential elections. These moves precipitated an explosion of protest.

The summer of 1987 witnessed the worst street fighting since the demonstrations of 1979–1980 following the assassination of President Park. As usual, students were in the lead, but as the situation worsened, it was clear that more and more ordinary citizens were joining in the fight. By June the demonstrations were pulling hundreds of thousands of people into the streets, and the National Police were being overwhelmed. Moreover, the demonstrations had spread to every city in South Korea and were drawing unprecedented numbers of people for what had usually been smaller secondary actions in the provinces. Unlike the situation in 1980, the United States did intercede; it sent Assistant Secretary of State for East

Asian Affairs Gaston Seigur to remonstrate with the Chun government, warning him of the dire consequences in ROK-US relations if he used military force to subdue the demonstrations. The combination of citizen participation, the lack of US support, and the sheer size of the demonstrations compelled the government to back down. On June 29, Chun's handpicked successor, Rho Tae Woo, unilaterally issued a "Declaration of Democratization and Reforms" (Eight Point Declaration) that promised a new election law, press freedoms, local elections of mayors and governors, restoration of civil rights for Kim Dae Jung and other political prisoners, and bold new "social reforms."[18] Two days later Chun accepted the proposal and the crisis passed. At long last and by the sheer force and breadth of public demand, a South Korean authoritarian regime had been forced to accept terms for a peaceful transition toward a new, more open pluralist democracy. The long struggle to democratize Korea had apparently ended in victory.