

Scandals in Koreas Provoke

SEOUL, South Korea—Major scandals that overtook North and South Korea in swift succession have prompted the rival countries to intensify their international propaganda match. In both cases the policy is the same: Blacken thy neighbor by exploiting his problems to the maximum while concealing your own.

Thus the people of South Korea know the "gangster" government to the North has been caught peddling smuggled liquor, cigarettes and hashish through its embassies in Scandinavian countries. They do not, however, know that President Park Chung Hee is alleged to have directed a scheme to pay off U.S. congressmen. The Seoul government has suppressed that news.

The North Koreans have a distorted version of the other half of the story. They know from the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) that the Park Chung Hee "puppet clique"—sometimes identified as "the ferocious human scum"—are accused of bribing the "U.S. imperialists." While condemning the south for censoring all news of the bribery scandal, Pyongyang's propagandists have neglected to in-

form the North Koreans that their diplomats were caught smuggling.

Both regimes in the divided peninsula use control of the news as a diplomatic and political weapon. Virtually closed to the outside world, North Korea conditions its people to militaristic hatred of the Seoul government with a propaganda mix of half-truths and exaggerations that seem laughably crude to moderately well-informed Westerners. With a more open society, the South Korean approach is subtle, manipulative and equally deceptive.

When the smuggling story broke last month, South Korean diplomats quickly circulated derogatory material about North Korean diplomacy to Tokyo-based foreign correspondents. "Smuggling diplomacy" made headlines for days in the Seoul press. Park Shin Il, a press attache at the South Korean embassy in Tokyo, suggested the Pyongyang diplomats "were ordered to live off the land and translate their revolutionary ideas into action."

Confronted with the facts and the questions of unconstrained reporters, officials of the North Korean Resi-

dents' Association in Japan explained the smuggling allegations as a misunderstanding or a trap sprung by the diabolically clever agents of the South Korean Central Intelligence Agency.

The bribery allegations that sullied the name of South Korea's dictatorial ruler were every bit as mortifying to the South Koreans and a news blackout was instituted immediately and remains totally effective. Officials have explained the blackout variously as disinterest on the part of Washington-based South Korean reporters or patriotic self-restraint by the same correspondents against filing unproven allegations against the head of state.

Last Saturday, a senior official reportedly admitted government censorship and justified it as a measure to prevent anti-American riots that would follow if the South Korean people found out that U.S. intelligence agencies may have bugged President Park's Blue House residence.

With its own diplomats pegged as smugglers, the KCNA denounced South Korea's diplomats as intelligence agents. The polemic waxed

a War of Words

fierce and purple. The South Korean government was accused in an Oct. 26 dispatch from Pyongyang of "fin-de-siecle desperation."

Interwoven with what purported to be information from such papers as The Washington Post, The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times, was slanderous and totally fictitious material: "According to information revealed, the Pak Jung Hi puppet clique have regularly provided South Korean women to U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger."

KCNA stated as fact that ex-President Nixon received \$500,000 in campaign contributions from South Korea. In another instance of blatant propaganda, KCNA stated the South Koreans offered a \$5 million gift "to the wife of Ford when this wretch came to power."

In 1972 when the North-South communique marked a brief effort by the two Koreas to negotiate their differences, they agreed to cease trading insults. When the talks broke down the following year, the unremitting verbal hostility returned in full spate. A South Korean official calls it "unfortunate, but inevitable."

While its credibility abroad is generally poor, the North Korean press may be accepted at face value in North Korea's highly controlled society. South Korea, which enjoyed a relatively free press until four years ago, is moving in the same direction with management of the news, press restraint and intolerance of criticism.

Internally, the government now has total control over the press so suppression of the Washington pay-off scandal was easily managed. Publication of foreign-written news is permitted but in a selective manner that gives the South Koreans a false idea of the way foreigners view their country.

South Korea actively seeks good publicity by inviting reporters from all over the world to make free trips to Seoul. In the past year, up to 100 journalists have taken all-expense-paid trips to South Korea. Those who have visited the country before maintain they are able to see dissident figures and write balanced reports. Newcomers frequently complain that they are submerged in hectic whirls from one government office to the next in what seems a deliberate attempt to use up all their time and energy.