

January 20, 1977
**Letter from Andrew C. Nahm to President James E.
Carter, January 20, 1977**

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Summary:

Professor Nahm from Western Michigan University sent a letter to Jimmy Carter, giving two suggestions including the elimination of the threat of nuclear weapons.

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January 20, 1977

ZB
President James E. Carter
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear President Carter:

On this historic day of your inauguration as the President of this great nation, I wish to offer my sincere congratulations on your taking the most important office in the world. In my humble opinion, the President of the United States of America is not only the head of this nation, but also the leader of the world. Indeed, it is our fortune to have you as the President to launch this ship of freedom for its third century's voyage with all its heritage, hopes, and dreams. I have no doubt, as I had no doubt even before your election to the presidency, that you will be a great leader and make significant and historic contributions to the fulfillment of American dreams, aspirations, and hopes.

I am a Korean-born naturalized U.S. citizen, having lived most of my adult life in this great land. Arriving at the shore of this wonderful country in 1948, I was fortunate enough to receive my advanced educational training in this country, earning all my academic degrees, and playing a small part in cultural and educational development of this nation as a university professor. I consider myself a loyal citizen of this country, yet I cannot help but realize that the blood which runs in my veins is that of my Korean parents. It was because of my loyalty to my adopted nation and my compassion for the land and people of my ancestors, upon whom the sorrowful fate had fallen with the division of that land and its people, that I accepted a mission—presumably assigned to me by the National Security Council—and visited North Korea and talked with the leaders of that country in 1974. My sole purpose was to assist the government of the United States to solve its nagging diplomatic problems related to Korea, and at the same time, to do whatever I could to help the leaders of the divided Korea solve their national problem of reunification. I still do not know who sent me, or who invited me to visit North Korea, but I am still willing to make some contributions to improve U.S.-Korean relations as well as to the peaceful settlement of the Korean question.

On this day of joyous inauguration of the 39th president of our country, I would like to make, with your indulgence, two small suggestions

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in relation to your foreign policy: First, the elimination of the threat of nuclear weapons. Millions upon millions of the peoples of "small and weak" nations, as well as big and powerful nations in the world are fearful, as you undoubtedly are aware, of the possible consequences of a continued arms race, particularly the race of strategic weapons among big and powerful nations. I have no doubt that these "small and weak" people as well as thoughtful people of the world cast their eyes upon you, as the leader of the world, and seek your leadership in eliminating the threat of nuclear weapons. Your humanitarian compassion and your noble aspirations for the improvement of world peace and the conduct of international affairs with strong moral principles are supported by millions upon millions of the people throughout the world. It is my earnest wish to see that you pay particular attention to this vital matter, and make extraordinary efforts to eliminate the fear of extinction of mankind from the hearts and minds of the people of the world.

The second suggestion which I would like to make -- with humility -- is related to the Korean question. Needless to say, and I am confident that you would agree, a new war between the two Koreas must be prevented at all cost. For this reason, the security of the Republic of Korea, which is our valuable ally despite its weaknesses and shortcomings, must be strengthened and somehow the United States should foster the establishment of a new relationship between North and South Korea. At the same time, I believe that there should be a dialogue between our country and North Korea in order to improve not only the international situation in East Asia, but also the improvement of the relationship between our country and the People's Republic of China. It is my conviction that both official and unofficial efforts should be made for the sake of achieving these objectives.

There is no doubt that democratic institutions and way of life should grow in the Republic of Korea. However, I believe that any threats to the government of the Republic of Korea, or any coercive force, whatever the nature of such force may be, would do greater harms not only to the existing ties between our country and the Republic of Korea, but also the promotion of democratic way of life in that country. I earnestly hope that you will search for new ways -- effective and beneficial -- to guide and help the Korean people to nurture their parliamentary democracy and foster civil liberties and human rights.

I heard many expressions of pessimism and fear in Korea regarding the fate of South Korea when you assumed office. The Koreans, who had historically been friendly toward, and relying on the United States for their security and well-being, are fearful of possible American abandonment of South Korea. When I was in Korea recently, I was told a story about a religious meeting of some Catholic people. On that occasion, an American Catholic bishop told his congregation that he

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was pleased that you were elected to succeed Mr. Ford, and he remarked that when you take office, you will cut-off American economic and military aid to the Republic of Korea -- unless the Korean government mends its ways in dealing with its dissidents. Thereupon, a member of the congregation, a poor laborer, got up and said to the bishop that he was told Mr. Carter was a friend of poor and weak people; poor and weak Koreans have been greatly helped by President Park and his government in recent years and their economic and social conditions improved vastly with American economic aid and they could sleep better with a greater sense of security because of American military aid; but now you say that Mr. Carter would cut-off all American economic and military aid to our country, then what would happen to us poor and weak people? The worker concluded his remarks saying: "Is not Mr. Carter a friend of poor and weak Koreans also?" Upon hearing this remark of a worker, I was told, the bishop retracted his remarks about your possible action against South Korea.

Although the above story is a simple one, I believe it has a significant element within. That is, the poor and weak people of South Korea appreciate what President Park and his government have done for them with U.S. aid, and they have regarded you as their friend also. They were worried that if you take the office of the president, you might cause new hardships for poor and weak workers and farmers of Korea. I included this story for your information.

I did not intend to write such a long letter as this. Please accept my apologies.

I trust that you have received many letter of this type, but I wished to indicate how happy I am to see you as the new president of this magnificent country. I offer my sincere congratulations from the bottom of my heart as you take the office today. At the same time, I, as a citizen of this great nation, submit my thoughts to you for the love of my country.

May the Lord bless you, guide you, and help you, and may all your hopes become fulfilled for the sake of the happiness and well-being not only of our own people, but also of the people of the world.

Respectfully yours,



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