

The Rise and Fall of South Korea's New Community Movement

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South Korea's cooperative self-help community development program, so successful in the early 1970s in effecting visual village improvements, was expanded nationwide in the following decade to encompass urban neighborhoods, schools, factories, and military sites. Participating organizations proliferated and the whole populace became the target for self-sacrificing involvement and indoctrination. But the 1980s witnessed destabilization and ultimate demise of the program. This study analyzes the rise and fall of the movement, how it lost its public appeal, and how it became discredited and stigmatized. Overcentralization, overexpansion, authoritarianism, mismanagement and corruption brought it to a virtual halt, with the imprisonment of its leaders and a national campaign for "democratization." The authors draw lessons from this experience and suggest directions for the future.

Introduction

One of the most formidable challenges of Asia – the world's most populous and crowded region – is the mobilization of tradition-bound rural populations into nation-building efforts. To increase agricultural productivity and to prevent rural societies from lagging too far behind industrial and urban modernization, most Asian nations have undertaken rural development programs marked by varying degrees of imagination and success.

During the 1950s and 1960s, for example, India developed its *Panchayat Raj* (people's rule) system with its emphasis on the "block development officer." Pakistan had its Village Development Program and its ill-fated Basic Democracies scheme, and Malaysia had its "Red Book" campaign and Federal Land Development Authority. Taiwan inaugurated its highly regarded land reform and farmers associations programs, and of course China developed its rigidly disciplined commune system.

Among Asia's various rural development programs, none received more plaudits than that of South Korea's cooperative self-help community development program (*Saemaul Undong*). So successful in the early 1970s in effecting visual village improvements, the program was expanded nationwide in the following decade to encompass urban neighborhoods, schools, factories, and military sites. Participating organizations proliferated and the whole populace became the target for self-sacrificing involvement and indoctrination, but the 1980s witnessed destabilization and the ultimate demise of the program.

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This study analyzes historically the program from its inception in 1970 to its decline in the 1980s; what went wrong, and how it lost its public appeal and became discredited and stigmatized. It is a story of overcentralization, overexpansion, authoritarianism, mismanagement and corruption that brought the movement to a virtual halt, with the imprisonment of its leaders and a national campaign for "democratization." The study draws lessons from this experience, and suggests directions for the future.

The Context

South Korea is a densely populated country, two-thirds of which is mountainous and therefore not conducive to cultivation. With few natural resources, the country had not fully recovered from the Korean War when, in 1961, General Chung Hee Park established a dictatorship. In 1962, his regime launched two five-year plans (1962-66, 1967-71) which emphasized industrialization at the expense of agriculture and rural development. As a result, the average annual rate of national economic growth between 1962 and 1973 was 9.6 percent, one of the highest in the world. Furthermore, the gross national product (GNP) increased 5.9 times from equivalents of 2.1 billion dollars in 1961 to 12.4 billion dollars in 1973 while per capita GNP increased from 83 dollars to 376 dollars. For the decade 1962- 1971, industrial output grew at an average annual rate of 17.7 percent, with manufactures increasing at an average annual rate of 18.4 percent.

Meanwhile, agriculture, in comparison, stagnated and even declined from 36.6 percent to 20.8 percent of the GNP.¹ While the average rural family owned land acreage below subsistence – only 2.2 acres – 40 percent of all rural families owned less than 1.24 acres. Unemployed elsewhere, they suffered severe income inequality with urban areas, where increasing numbers migrated for brighter opportunities. Indeed, the rural population plunged by 11 percent – from 60.8 percent in 1960 to 49.8 percent in 1970 – thus creating a rural labor shortage when traditional cultivation had yet to yield to mechanization.²

Although agriculture was a troubled and neglected sector of the national economy, paradoxically it was the very success of industrialization that enabled the South Korean government in the 1970s to transfer resulting accumulation of capital to enable rural uplift. The national movement to induce modernization – known as "Saemaul Undong" sought, foremost, to foster development of agriculture, self-sufficiency in food production, increase in farmers' income, and improvement of rural living conditions.

Saemaul means "new community" – the opposite of the traditional community which is negatively marked by passivity, stagnation, disease, and poverty. In contrast, the new community is characterized by diligence, self-reliance, cooperation, development, sanitation, and affluence. These were the qualities that

typify Saemaul Undong, a development movement to break down traditional barriers to rural modernization.

The "Program for Village Environmental Improvement" became the initial thrust of the Saemaul movement, expanding from 10 first-year projects to 20 projects thereafter. First-year projects included: (1) reforestation of nearby terrain; (2) broadening village access roads; (3) repairing and improving village dikes; (4) preparing a village compost barn; (5) deepening the village pond; (6) repairing and maintaining the pond; (7) keeping the village ditches and gutters clean; (8) constructing a community well; (9) exterminating rats; and, (10) establishing a village laundry facility. A more important program purpose was to imbue rural people with the "Saemaul Spirit" of cooperative self-help as they enjoyed the benefits of their collective effort.³

As the "Program for Village Environmental Improvement" evoked favorable response as well as positive results, the "Movement for Increasing Income" became a second successful thrust of Saemaul Undong. Beginning in 1973, Saemaul Undong was expanded to encompass urban areas, factories, workplaces, and schools, until it became a national people's movement for social enlightenment.⁴

After 1970, the Saemaul movement accomplished much and experienced significant change. The South Korean Ministry of Home Affairs divided the movement into three periods: 1971-73 as the foundation or formative stage; 1974-76 as the self-help stage; and 1977-81 as the self-reliance stage.⁵ But the movement did not progress as the government had planned. After 18 years of observation of the scope, programs, and organization of the Saemaul movement, the authors divide the history of Saemaul Undong into these three periods: 1970-72 as the beginning stage; 1973-79 as the proliferation stage; and 1980 to the present as the destabilization stage.

The Beginning, 1970-72

From October 1970 through June 1971, Saemaul Undong was implemented through a pilot project of central government involving the distribution of 335 cost-free bags of cement to each of South Korea's 33,267 villages. Each village was, in turn, expected to use the cement for ten government designated village projects (e.g., access roads, retaining walls, laundry facilities) comprising the Program for Village Environmental Improvement. Initial results far exceeded expectations. The government's evaluation in July 1971 disclosed that its expenditure of the equivalent of \$11 million for the cement had already yielded village improvements valued at \$32.6 million, or nearly three times the government's investment.⁶ These dramatic results convinced the government and villagers alike that the benefits from cooperation should propel forward the Saemaul movement.

The Park government's evaluation, however, also revealed that some villages failed to make improvements, while others were successful. After analyzing these disparities, the Ministry of Home Affairs concluded that the quality of village leadership was the key determinant. Accordingly, the government established the Farmers Training Center, later known as the Saemaul Leaders Training Institute, to train village leaders.

Environmental Improvement

Although the "Program for Village Environmental Improvement" exceeded expectations, certain lessons were revealed, namely: (1) village leadership was the key factor determining project success or failure; (2) positive attitudes of self-help and cooperation of village residents were requisites for successful project implementation; and (3) giving preferential support to those villages imbued with the Saemaul Spirit was more effective rather than giving indiscriminate assistance to all villages.⁷

Once the Park government decided to pursue a more systematic and planned approach to Saemaul Undong from 1972 onward, it chose to give preferential assistance to a total of 16,600 villages, from among the nation's 33,267 villages. These villages had performed well in 1971, had shown a cooperative spirit, and had elected a qualified Saemaul leader. Together with an additional 6,108 villages which opted to join this select group, this total of 22,708 villages completed in 1972 an aggregate of 319,999 projects (2.2 times the 143,663 projects planned) at a value of nine times the government's investment cost.

In the light of the lessons learned, new Saemaul concepts, approaches, and directions were formed in 1972. The simple 1971 environmental improvement program was broadened, and new programs were added to enhance spiritual or attitude enlightenment and to increase rural income. These thrusts continued to be the central components of Saemaul Undong.

Village environmental improvement projects, however, remained the Saemaul movement's main priority, and remarkable results were realized. The major project was to improve village access roads, which accounted for 60 percent of total investment costs and 58 percent of total workdays. New priority projects were targeted such as house improvements (e.g., roofs, bathrooms, kitchens), and the beautification and conservation of village environs. Support was also given for cleaning up public lands and facilities, such as national roadways and tourist facilities. Village infrastructure support projects included installation of village telephone and communication facilities and methane gas systems.⁸

Changing Attitudes

Various educational, media, and other programs were undertaken by the government to change traditional attitudes of villagers. Saemaul education comprised two major programs: education of Saemaul village leaders under the guidance of the Ministry of Home Affairs; and, education of farmers in "Saemaul Schools" under the Ministry of Education.

Besides training Saemaul (New Community) leaders from the villages, the Saemaul Leaders Training Institute trained many government officials, including cabinet ministers. Furthermore, business and social leaders were trained such as professors, students and journalists. These members of the social elite, mostly based in urban areas, engaged in Institute activities together with the village leaders in the classroom, in the dining hall, and on the playing field. Common uniforms and schedules tended to obscure rank and status distinctions. In this way, the program planners endeavored to engineer the active support of the New Community Program by government leaders and members of the establishment, while at the same time reducing rural-urban cleavages and class barriers.

The main purpose of the Institute was not to impart instruction in agricultural techniques, but rather to change attitudes of Saemaul leaders by infusing the so-called "Saemaul Spirit" among trainees. The program was a systematic attempt to produce altruistic leaders who would infuse among their villagers the values of integrity, self-help, cooperation, rationalism, and an optimistic view of life.⁹

With the opening of the national Farmers Training Center in 1972, a two-week course was conducted for Saemaul village leaders at the Center. This was supplemented with a three-day local course at the so called "School for Saemaul Leaders" housed in the local civil service training center. Saemaul schools for farmers were housed in existing local school buildings where a three-day course, utilizing mainly audio-visual instruction, was conducted for a total of 167,012 farmers in 1971 alone. Examples of other Saemaul educational programs were publication and distribution by the Ministry of Science and Technology of a periodical, *Techniques Education*, to spread methods and techniques for Saemaul improvements; production and distribution by the Ministry of Education of a film of visual testimonials and reports featuring the Saemaul Spirit and its successes; and distribution all around the country of disks and recordings that played the Song of Saemaul composed by President Park himself.¹⁰

Saemaul Organization

In August 1971, the Park government established four offices within the Ministry of Home Affairs, to act exclusively with respect to Saemaul Undong. In

addition to establishing the Farmers Training Center in 1972, the "Central Government Council for Saemaul Undong" was organized, comprising the deputy ministers of ministries concerned with Saemaul Undong, to facilitate inter-ministerial cooperation. Thus the initial Saemaul organization was centralized and hierarchical, with the government's Ministry of Home Affairs in charge of supervision and execution with the advice of the Central Government Council. Organizational hierarchy proceeded downward from the Central Government Council to the Province-City Council, to the City-County Council, to the Sub-County Committee, and finally to the Village Committee.¹¹

Lowest in the hierarchy was the village committee comprised of the Lee (village) chief, the Saemaul leader, and a representative of the village's residents. Its role was to formulate, under the guidance of the Saemaul leader, a practical village plan of improvement projects and their cooperative implementation. It was at this level – the village – that the Saemaul Spirit was to evoke the hopes, aspirations, and enthusiasm of villagers. Paradoxically, however, the centralized and hierarchical Saemaul organization threatened to constrain village grassroots creativity and thus tended to be dysfunctional with the same Saemaul Spirit that the organization was expected to enhance.

Evaluation of Beginning Stage

In summary then, the beginning stage emphasized village improvements, attitude changes, leadership training through the Saemaul Leaders Training Institute, organizational development headed by the Saemaul Undong Central Government Council, and increase in income.

This stage was quite successful in effecting visual village changes and providing a direct stimulus for improving the quality of village life. The timing proved efficacious for the transfer of industrial surplus capital to rural development. The approach – of providing village-based Saemaul leaders and of fostering incremental change through inter-village competition for government resources – produced noteworthy results. Above all else, Saemaul Undong was a movement for rural people to live better and to increase their income – through higher agricultural production, cooperative cultivation, improved marketing, and effective use of farming techniques and rural labor particularly during planting and harvesting of crops.

At the end of this beginning stage, the movement still faced the challenge of transforming physical and attitudinal changes into sustainable rural development. Moreover, the highly centralized and authoritarian structure of the Saemaul movement was becoming apparent, and many critics considered that the government's hidden motive was to use the movement to support and prolong dictatorship. On the other hand, it is difficult to envision how a bottom-up Saemaul Undong could ever develop without a coordinated top-down or-

ganization to launch it, especially in the light of Korea's authoritarian political culture and history, and the absence of any precedent for such a bottom-up national movement. As 1972 was ending, the Park regime was determined to push the movement forward.

Proliferation, 1973-79

In 1973, the government classified villages into three categories according to their stages of development: undeveloped (basic), developing (self-helping), and developed (self-sufficient) villages. The grouping was made according to various criteria, such as organization, communal facilities and development performance. The government's goal was for all villages to become developed by 1981.

Undeveloped or basic villages were considered to lack organization and leadership as well as resources required to carry out community improvement projects. These therefore required educational and financial assistance from the government to initiate self-help projects. Accordingly, emphasis in these villages was placed on environmental improvement and provision of necessary infrastructure.

The developing or self-helping villages were considered to have acquired necessary leadership and organizational ability to identify and carry out village improvement projects, but lacked the financial resources to implement them and thus required government support. These villages, therefore, were primarily concerned with the expansion of infrastructure and income.

The developed or self-sufficient villages, on the other hand, were considered to be those that had carried out environmental improvement projects, had raised rural income significantly, and had achieved some degree of financial viability so that they could finance additional rural development projects from their own resources. Thus, these villages stressed the increase of income and the improvement of welfare.

With the 1971-72 experience, and with the classification of all villages into three categories, government efforts were undertaken in 1973 to expand and differentiate Saemaul Undong, in terms of scope, programs, and organization, to make it a truly nationwide movement.

Expanding the Scope

Efforts to make the Saemaul movement nationwide in scope centered on its expansion to all villages, urban areas, factories, schools, and the military. From 1973 onward, all of South Korea's 34,665 villages participated in Saemaul Undong. After the cement distribution program, the government classified all villages into three categories according to their stage of development: basic

(undeveloped), self-helping (developing), and self-sufficient (developed). Thus, 18,415 (over 50%) of all villages were classified as basic, 13,415 as self-helping, and only 2,307 as self-sufficient. As lower ranked villages progressed to a point in meeting development criteria for higher ranked villages, they were reclassified upward in category.¹² Urban Saemaul Undong comprised the development movement undertaken by such urban units as apartment complexes, urban districts (dongs), and media; and, by financial, transportation, commercial, and trade organizations.¹³ Convinced of the success of Urban Saemaul Undong experiments in 1973, the Park government decided to expand the Saemaul movement to all urban areas with emphasis on projects to increase income and to improve education.¹⁴ However, the Saemaul movement was still popularly viewed as a movement primarily for rural areas from where it evolved. Furthermore, Urban Saemaul Undong was questioned in the light of such existing urban characteristics and attributes as heterogeneity of educational levels, variety of employment opportunities, and pervasiveness of individualism. Nevertheless, Urban Saemaul Undong was advanced to encompass the urban workplace, region, family, and school.¹⁵

The policy objectives for spreading the movement to manufacturing concerns, known as Factory Saemaul Undong, were to strengthen competition among economic units, to stabilize relations between labor and management, to raise productivity, and to fairly distribute accomplishments.¹⁶ Systematic control and coordination was assigned in 1973 to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry which supported 500 factories as models for spreading Factory Saemaul Undong.¹⁷

The initial thrust of Saemaul educational efforts was to inculcate the so-called Saemaul Spirit among the populace and to develop altruistic and devoted Saemaul leaders for village, regional, and national development. On this foundation, the decision was made to expand the Saemaul movement to encompass existing schools throughout the nation (known as School Saemaul Undong), and for the schools thereby to serve as instruments for the formation of a new national value system and for participating in regional and national development.¹⁸ Accordingly, the government sought to improve the management of school affairs, to instill Saemaul values through curricular changes, to open schools year round for adult education and Saemaul meetings, and to involve schools in regional service projects. The Park government's announced intention was for this education reform to lead to a Korean-style education, to national development, and ultimately to peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula.¹⁹

In 1975, the government began Military Saemaul Undong at various military installations in order to strengthen war potential, improve camp environments, and transform them as centers for training future Saemaul leaders and workers for regional development.²⁰ Specific projects of importance included in this program were: Saemaul education of the military man, Saemaul

service for civilians, reduction of military supplies, and reforestation of the countryside.

Program Proliferation

Whereas Saemaul Undong prior to 1973 concentrated on community improvement activities, from 1973 onward the emphasis was on increasing rural income. Accordingly, the development unit was no longer restricted to village boundaries, but was expanded to include neighboring villages to foster cooperative inter-village development projects. The major project unit was widened to the sub-country level,²¹ and many projects were correspondingly broadened.²²

During the proliferation stage, the success of Saemaul Undong no longer was to be measured in terms of village cooperative improvement project accomplishments. To boost rural income, the Park government now sought to develop sources of off-farm income and to enhance marketing of agricultural products. By establishing Saemaul factories and undertaking construction and other wage-paying projects in rural areas, villagers could find employment at times other than planting and harvesting seasons. After 1974, the average income of farmers and fishermen was reported to have surpassed that of urban laborers. All villages classified into the three initial categories – basic, self-helping, and self-sufficient – were declared by the Park government in 1979 to have achieved self-sufficiency. Using a new criteria in 1980, the successor Chun government reclassified all villages into three new village categories – self-sufficient, self-managing, and welfare. Self-sufficient villages were those that had constructed village roads, bridges, and more than two village buildings; repaired at least 80 percent of roofs and walls; established a village bank; and, had an average annual household income of more than 1.4 million *won*. Self-managing villages had completed at least 80 percent of all village improvement projects and had an average annual household income of more than 3.2 million *won*. To achieve welfare status, according to the prescribed criteria,²³ all village improvement projects had to be completed (e.g., bathrooms, roads, waterways, drasins), and the average annual income of a village household had to exceed 4 million *won*.

The year 1973 proved to be a banner year as well as a turning point. The number of village improvement projects and total investment costs tripled from the previous year. The Park government decided, therefore, to broaden the environmental improvement program to include such projects as rural housing improvements, providing medical insurance and welfare assistance, and improving infrastructures (e.g., harbors, transportation, railways, mines).

One very important pillar supporting Saemaul Undong was Saemaul education, principally to spread "enlightenment" and, until the end of 1972, to produce Saemaul leaders. In 1973, rural women, field administrators, and magistrates be-

came Saemaul education targets. From 1974 onward, the target group was enlarged to include also urban social leaders, professors, higher civil servants, representatives of various professions, and company managers who were expected to impart to their employees the substance of the same Saemaul education they had received.²⁴ The hierarchy of Saemaul education proceeded downward from the central to the province-city, and village levels. The central unit was represented by the Saemaul Leaders Training Institute which conducted the standard course for Saemaul and social leaders to inculcate patriotism and the Saemaul spirit. Local civil service training institutes represented the province-city level where more practical instruction was imparted to Saemaul leaders. The leaders, in turn, were expected to impart to their villagers the substance of what they had learned.²⁵

Proliferation of Organizations

Within the Park government, new Saemaul positions and offices were established with authority to oversee all aspects of the Saemaul movement. The Ministry of Home Affairs experienced the greatest organizational change. For example, its Bureau of Local Development created in 1973 positions and offices such as the "Saemaul Officer," the "Saemaul Planning Analyst," the "Saemaul Guidance Division," and the "Housing Guidance Division." These offices were similarly structured vertically, from central to local levels, to direct and report on Saemaul affairs within their respective jurisdictions. Other ministries created their own Saemaul units, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Culture and Communication, and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. For example, the Ministry of Culture and Communications established in 1973 the Saemaul Broadcasting Committee.

Membership of the Central Government Council for Saemaul Undong was broadened to include private sector and other organizational representatives. Between 1973 and 1980 various non-governmental Saemaul organizations were formed, including the Committee of Workplace Saemaul Leaders, the Central Council for Factory Saemaul Undong, the Council for Private Saemaul Organizations, the Council for Environmental Protection, the Council for Nature Protection, and the National Committee of Saemaul Leaders. Each of these non-governmental organizations was also structured hierarchically from the central level downward to the village level. The Park government, however, continued to make important Saemaul initiatives and decisions, and its Saemaul administrative organizations were even strengthened during this proliferation stage.²⁶

Evaluation of Proliferation Stage

With only few exceptions, the successful proliferation of Saemaul Undong was limited to the rural areas. In retrospect, it appears a mistake to have expanded the program to schools and urban areas where the movement failed to achieve its objectives.²⁷ Although the movement appeared successful in some factories, it failed in most.²⁸ No study has been made of the efficacy of the Saemaul movement in the military, but the hierarchical and "unity-of-command" character of the military was opposite to the creative and self-help spirit of Saemaul objectives. In short, by endeavoring to encompass every household, school, workplace, factory, and military site in South Korea, the government diluted the movement from its original rural focus. The movement became simply too broad to sustain its momentum and popular support, and appeared destined for desuetude.

Without question, the government had engineered a kind of revolution of rural life, most notably in terms of village residential improvements and reforestation of the countryside.²⁹ But government pressure for highway and village beautification created a situation whereby many villagers, especially those living near highways and tourist sites, felt compelled to incur indebtedness to fund luxurious housing and roadway foliage. Indeed, although rural income increased dramatically during the mid-1970s, widespread rural indebtedness soon wiped out many income gains.³⁰ It is true that for the years 1974-1978 the average monthly income of the farm household had surpassed that of the urban wage earner, but it fell below the latter in 1979-1980 as the proliferation stage was ending³¹ because of accelerating rural debt, together with Saemaul factory failures.³²

Saemaul education was favorably accepted by South Koreans and played a key role in changing attitudes, fostering cooperative self-help activities, and inducing altruistic and self-sacrificing village leadership. But Saemaul program activities in the primary and secondary schools were limited to, and "emphasized inordinately," the inculcation of the Saemaul Spirit – an early accomplished objective.³³ Continuation of this stereotyped indoctrination, with its emphasis on self-sacrifice, was no longer needed or functional in the late 1970s, because modern rationality had already gained wide acceptance. Accordingly, government programs aimed at producing altruistic and authoritarian leadership no longer evoked positive public response and should have been abandoned.³⁴

The Saemaul movement was widely criticized as a massive effort to mobilize national support of the dictatorial Park government. Some critics claimed it was a means for bureaucrats to impose their power. Many charged that the movement became no more than a vehicle for political propaganda when the Park government equated the so-called Saemaul Spirit to its Yushin ideology.³⁵ Although many non-governmental organizations were formed within the Saemaul

apparatus during the proliferation stage, their efforts were more directed toward competing with each other for government attention than with developing new Saemaul programs.

As the decade was coming to an end, the government exercised more rigid control over the movement than ever before, and Saemaul Undong had become even more centralized and hierarchical. Efficiency was in question, and calls for privatization and decentralization of the entire movement were strong.

Destabilization, 1980-Present

By the end of the first decade of Saemaul Undong, all of South Korea had come under its influence, and the movement – although distinct from rural and other development programs – could be regarded as vital for national modernization. Nevertheless, adverse criticisms and consequences moved the new government of President Doo Hwan Chun, after the 1979 assassination of President Park, to replace Yushin remnants with a new constitution and new strategies, including a revitalized Saemaul Undong. The Chun government wasted no time in making two critical decisions: to privatize the Saemaul movement; and to vest its leadership in President Chun's younger brother – Kyung-hwan Chun.

Program Reorientation

By 1976, only one percent of South Korea's villages remained "basic" or undeveloped, and in 1979 all but three percent were classified as "self-sufficient" or developed. In terms of the Chun government's new 1980 classifications – self-sufficient, self-managing, and welfare – 46.3 percent of all villages had achieved self-managing status by the end of 1985, while only 3.4 percent were classified as welfare villages.³⁶ The Chun government's announced goal was for every village to achieve welfare status, a status judged equal to the quality of rural living in advanced countries.

When the Saemaul movement began in 1970, South Korea's population was still predominantly rural at 50.2 percent of the total. By 1983, however, rural-to-urban migration had drastically reduced the rural population to 27.9 percent and increased the urban population by 22 percent, or to 72.1 percent of the total.³⁷ Although urban projects were thus increased, Urban Saemaul never was to achieve prominence.

The major emphasis of Saemaul Undong had shifted from village and inter-village environmental improvement projects in the early 1970s, to income-increasing projects in the late 1970s, and finally to welfare-inducing projects in the 1980s.³⁸ New projects developed during the Chun government in the 1980s included: resort and recreation projects, education for rural women and rural

youth, and projects in preparation for the 1988 Olympics. Despite some new projects, the total scope of the Saemaul movement was basically the same as that of the former Park regime.

Privatization

Once the Chun government decided in 1980 to privatize the Saemaul movement, the non-governmental Central Headquarters for Saemaul Undong was established and came under the presidency of Chun's brother – Kyung-hwan Chun. Four existing "private" organizations became subsidiaries of the Central Headquarters, namely: the National Committee of Saemaul Leaders, the Committee of Workplace Saemaul Leaders, the Central Council for Factory Saemaul Undong, and the Saemaul Women's Association. Four new subsidiary associations were later added: The Central Union of Saemaul Youth, the Central Association for Village Libraries, the Saemaul Soccer Association, and the Association of Village Credit Unions.³⁹

Kyung-hwan Chun's Central Headquarters, located in the capital city of Seoul, had become not only the umbrella organization of the entire Saemaul movement. Because of his kinship with President Doo Hwan Chun, it took charge of all the major planning, coordination, direction, support, education, public information, and research activities of the movement. Indeed, it is not overstatement to characterize continuing government Saemaul organizations – mainly the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Central Government Council for Saemaul Undong – as effectively serving in support roles subservient to Kyung-hwan Chun and his non-governmental Central Headquarters.

Personalization

As the brother of Doo Hwan Chun, President of the Fifth Republic of Korea, Kyung-hwan Chun exercised enormous personal influence over all Saemaul activities and organizations during the 1980s. Although he held no formal government position, his actions were widely viewed as having the sanction, full support, and authority of President Doo Hwan Chun and his "Blue House" establishment. Thus, personalization and privatization of the Saemaul movement went hand in hand, and this meant that Kyung-hwan Chun and his Central Headquarters for Saemaul Undong were not held as accountable for their actions as were government officials and agencies. In short, privatization gave him wide latitude and authority without commensurate accountability.

The first major revelation of possible wrongdoing was publicly aired during the summer of 1985 when Kyung-hwan Chun was accused of having entered into an agreement with the Minister of Agriculture to import cattle from New Zealand, thus greatly reducing the value of cattle owned by South Korean

farmers. Many farmers thereupon engaged in unprecedented public demonstrations.

Student uprisings and widespread demonstrations against the Chun government in 1987 brought about profound changes in the political system. This was occasioned by the adoption of a new constitution; a presidential election, South Korea's first peaceful transfer of power in February 1988 to President Tae-woo Roh; and, the popular election in April of the new National Assembly in which opposition parties held a majority of the seats for the first time

In the April 1988 issue of South Korea's most popular monthly magazine, an article appeared entitled: "The Headquarters of Saemaul Undong: Seven Allegations."⁴⁰ The article made the following allegations:

- (1) Without government permission, a foundation on behalf of Saemaul Headquarters reclaimed coastal land off Younjong Island and coerced Island residents to sell their land far below market prices to the foundation ostensibly for a youth training center site that was never built. Residents were told that should they refuse to sell their land to the foundation, the government would acquire it through its power of eminent domain.
- (2) Instead of using public land as a site for an institute for the aged and disabled, as authorized by the government, Saemaul authorities in fact used the land for another purpose.
- (3) The Ministry of Home Affairs released substantial funds for publication of the *Saemaul Weekly Newspaper* which, however, was personally owned by Kyung-hwan Chun.
- (4) Financial donations were elicited from major corporations by Saemaul Central Headquarters which, in turn, pressured the government to reduce their corporation taxes accordingly, while not properly accounting for the funds received.
- (5) An insurance corporation was also pressured to donate property to Saemaul Central Headquarters for a specific purpose which, in fact, was not so used but was disposed of by the Headquarters at its own accord.
- (6) Saemaul Headquarters collected much more money from 6,600 Saemaul leaders, during 1981-87, than that used to fund their trips abroad, without accounting for the difference.
- (7) Saemaul Headquarters agreed to conduct local food markets by collecting 5 percent of sales to defray costs, but actually collected 12 percent without accounting for the difference.

On April 16, 1988, former Saemaul leader Kyung-hwan Chun was indicted on nine charges to which he pleaded not guilty. On September 5, 1988, he was found guilty of embezzlement and bribe-taking and was sentenced to seven years in prison and fined the equivalent of \$5.8 million for corruption and tax evasion during his tenure as head of the Saemaul organization from 1981 to 1987.⁴¹ Meanwhile, opposition parties and various National Assembly committees

initiated separate investigations of alleged misdeeds of the Chun government and its "First Family."

A net result of these developments was the stigmatization of Saemaul Undong, which became destabilized and widely discredited among South Koreans.

Conclusions

Even prior to the Saemaul scandals, the movement had lost its momentum and popular appeal. A survey published in 1985 of 3,195 respondents enrolled in Saemaul education courses revealed that over one-third (34.3%) viewed Saemaul Undong as stagnating during the 1980s as compared with the 1970s, and that privatization of the movement was not working well.⁴² The survey showed strong support for a bottom-up, decentralized, people's participatory program in place of the top-down "privatized" Saemaul movement that in reality was considered by many observers as not much different from central government domination.⁴³ To the question -- who should plan Saemaul projects? -- 44.2 percent of respondents answered "village residents," while only 31.7 percent responded "the village Saemaul leader."⁴⁴

In spite of the fact that during the 1970s, the village assembly ostensibly selected and could possibly remove the village Saemaul leader, and that the Saemaul program sought to evoke self-help, enthusiasm, and aspirations of villagers, the government's top-down strategy -- of setting targets for villages and giving preferential assistance tied to village performance levels -- produced serious dysfunctions. For example, some villages incurred indebtedness to meet central government targets that were not always consonant with the intentions and desires of villagers, a phenomenon induced by government-dominated top-down Saemaul planning and implementation.

The so-called privatization during the 1980s neither eliminated government domination nor decentralized Saemaul planning and implementation. The government's village investment program increased during the 1980s, while that funded by villagers dropped 20 percent -- from 48.8 percent in 1976 to 27.8 percent in 1984.⁴⁵ Thus, central government support accounted for almost three-fourths of investment costs, and village dependency and program centralization thereby increased.⁴⁶

From an earlier research of Saemaul Undong in the mid-1970s conducted by the authors, it was concluded that regardless of the authoritarian character of Saemaul Undong, the central government may have "unwittingly planted seeds" of a Korean-style village democracy that "may grow to challenge its authority and stability."⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the structure and governance of South Korea's highly centralized local government system continued to remain under the exclusive control of the central government. But by mid-1988, citizens were

expressing "growing unhappiness with stringent state control of local affairs," and were calling for "local solutions to local problems."⁴⁸

From another survey research conducted by the authors from June through September 1983, it was found that more than two-thirds of 532 rural residents were not politically allegiant. Thus the authors concluded:

We assume that the South Korean government wants and needs a rural populace whose attitudes not only largely support it and its policies, but who will also willingly continue to participate in its rural development program. . . . We assume, further, that an allegiant rural public is prerequisite for that bottom-up, grassroots, popular participation upon which most development theorists now agree enduring rural development must depend. If a coercive, top-down, hierarchical/authoritarian approach to rural development were necessary to launch the nationwide Saemaul Undong program, we conclude. . . . that continuation of such an approach may now appear to be counterproductive.⁴⁹

The subsequent national campaign for "democratization" that finally launched a new government in February 1988, and the scandals afflicting Saemaul Undong, served only to reinforce that conclusion.

On July 7, 1988, Deputy Prime Minister Woong-bae Rha pledged that "the government will mobilize all its resources to make the rural areas a really good place to live in the next five years."⁵⁰ To fulfill the government's pledge, the legitimacy of Saemaul Undong must be restored by purging it of wrongdoers and redirecting it from a uniform, top-down, government-dominated program to a situational, bottom-up, truly privatized people's program. Attention must be given to substituting incremental development for big-push take-off approaches of former years, and to reducing social class, economic, and regional inequities by differential approaches adapted to rural diversities. The central government's role should be restricted to providing technical, professional, and financial assistance and advice.

In retrospect, it is believed that the decision to privatize the movement was appropriate, but that it was not effectively realized because its personalization wrought confusion and destabilization. Should the Saemaul movement be returned to its original and exclusive rural focus, and be led by the rural people themselves with privatized organizational support, then South Korea may look forward with confidence to continuing rural development well into the 21st century.

Endnotes

¹Un-tae Kim, "Saemaul Undongui Nonri mit Chekye Jongrip (The Logic of the New Community Movement and its Systematic Analysis)," *Haengjong Nonchong (Public Administration Review)* Vol. 11, No. 2 (1973), p. 17.

²Naemuboo Jibang Kaebalguk (Bureau of Local Development, Ministry of Home Affairs), *Jibang Kaebal Tongkye Jarvo (Statistical Data on Local Development)* (Seoul: Korean

Government, 1984,) p. 85. See, also: Byong Man Ahn and William W. Boyer, "Rural-to-Urban Migration in South Korea: A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach," *Planning and Administration* (The Hague: Netherlands), Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring 1983), pp. 57-70; reprinted in Bun-woong Kim, et al., eds., *Administrative Dynamics and Development: The Korean Experience* (Seoul: Kyobo Publishing, Inc., 1985), pp. 215-236.

³Dong-suh Park, "Saemaul Undongui Mokjok (The Objective of the New Community Movement)," *Haengjong Nonchong (Public Administration Review)* Vol. 11, No. 2 (1973), p. 6.

⁴Kyu-soo Han, et al., "80 Nyondaerul Jihyanghan Saemaul Undongui Jipyowa Kwaje (The Guidelines and Tasks of the New Community Movement for the 1980s)," *Saemaul Undong Haksul Nonmunjip (Treatises on the New Community Movement)* (Seoul: Saemaul Undong Jungang Bonbu (Central Headquarters of the New Community Movement), Vol. 9, No. 2 (1984), p. 175.

⁵Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong Sipnyonsa (A Decade of the New Community Movement)* (Seoul, 1980), p. 209.

⁶For yearly results of Saemul Undong, see: Naemuboo, *Jibang Kaebal Tongkye Jaryo (Statistical Data on Local Development)* (Seoul, December 1984), p. 19; and Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong (The New Community Movement)*, (Seoul, 1973), p. 71.

⁷Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong (The New Community Movement)* (1973), pp. 74-75.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 88, 91.

⁹William W. Boyer and Byong Man Ahn, "The New Community Movement ('Saemaul Undong') in South Korea," *Journal of Korean Affairs*, Vol. VI, Nos. 3/4 (October 1976/January 1977), pp. 48-62, at pp. 51-52.

¹⁰Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong (The New Community Movement)* (1973), pp. 99-100.

¹¹For an organizational chart of Saemaul Undong, see: Chi-ho Nam, "Saemaul Undong Minkan Jojikui Hwalsongwha Bangan," (An Alternative Plan to Invigorate Civilian Organizations in the New Community Movement), *Saemaul Undong Haksul Nonmunjib (Treatises on the New Community Movement)* (Seoul: Saemaul Undong Jungang Bonbu (Central Headquarters of the New Community Movement), Vol. 9, No. 4 (1984), p. 145.

¹²Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong Sipnyonsa (A Decade of the New Community Movement)* (Seoul, 1980), p. 215.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 245.

¹⁴Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong (The New Community Movement)* (1974), p. 30.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, (1975), p. 241.

¹⁶Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong Sipnyonsa (A Decade of the New Community Movement)* (1980), p. 249.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 260.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 276-277.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 279.

²⁰Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong (The New Community Movement)* (1984), p. 267.

²¹*Ibid.*, (1977), p. 71.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 154.

²³For criteria for village classifications, see: Naemuboo Jibang Kaebalkuk (Bureau of Local Development, Ministry of Home Affairs), (*Jibang Kaebal Tongkye Jaryo (Statistical Data on Local Development)*) (1984), p. 23.

²⁴Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong Sipnyonsa (A Decade of the New Community Movement)* (1980), pp. 310-314.

²⁵Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong (The New Community Movement)* (1974), pp. 43, 121.

²⁶Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong Sipnyonsa (A Decade of the New Community Movement)* (1980), pp. 420-518.

²⁷See, e. g.: Lawrence W. Dabrick, "Present and Potential Contributions of the Educational Institution to the Saemaul Undong," *The Journal of Korean Regional Studies* (Seoul: The Institute for Korean Regional Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies), Vol. 1, No. 1 (August 1983), pp. 85-92.

²⁸See, e. g.: Bong-sig Bin, et al., "Kongjang Saemaul Undongui Naesilwha Bangan (An Alternative Measure to Consolidate the Factory Saemaul Movement)," *Saemaul Undong Haksul Nonmunjib (Treatises on the New Community Movement)*, [Seoul: Saemaul Undong Jungang Bonbu (Central Headquarters of the New Community Movement)], Vol. 6, No. 4 (1981), pp. 345-383; Chae-won Lim, et al., "Kongjang Saemaul Undongkwa Nosahyopjo Jongchaek Yonku (A Study of the Factory Saemaul Movement and its Policy for Employer-Employee Cooperation), Saemaul Undong Haksul Nonmunjib (*Treatises on the New Community Movement*), Vol. 6, No. 1 (1981), pp. 85-117; and Hag-phil Kyon, et al., "Saemaul Kongjangui Siltae Bunsokkwa Kaeson Bangan (An Analysis of the Reality of Saemaul Factory and Its Improvement)," *Saemaul Undong Haksul Nonmunjib (Treatises on the New Community Movement)*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1985), pp. 215-255.

²⁹See, e. g.: Do-geun Yun, "Nongchon Jutaeok Kaeryangkwa Ku Jindan (An Analysis of Rural Residence Reform: Problems and Suggestions)," and "Nongchon Jutaeok Kaeryangui Banghyangkwa Munjeom (Problems and Measures for Rural Residence Improvement)," *Sae Nongmin (The New Peasantry)*, Vol. 12 (1972); and Chang-gug Lim and Bu-sig Kim, "Saemaul Chyirakkujo Kaeson Saope Kwanhan Yonku (A Study of the Improvement Project for Rural Residence)," *Saemaul Yonku (Journal of Saemaul Research)* (Seoul: Saemaul Research Institute of Sang Myong Women's University), Vol. 3 (1984), pp. 7-229.

³⁰See, e. g.: Byong Man Ahn, et al., "Nongchon Buchaewui Woninkwa Ku Dacchaeok Kwanhan Yonku (A Study of the Major Determinants of Rural Debt and Its Countermeasures)," *Saemaul Undong Haksul Nonmunjib (Treatises on the New Community Movement)*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1987), pp. 461-485; and Jong-han Ham, "Nongka Buchae Haekyolul Wehan Naui Jeon (Some Suggestions on Rural Indebtedness)," *Jeong-U*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (1987), pp. 66-73.

³¹See Table 2-2, "Ratio of Rural Household Income to Urban Household Income, 1968-1986," in Economic Planning Board, *Social Indicators in Korea, 1887* (Seoul: Korean Government, 1987), p. 78.

³²See, Byong Man Ahn and William W. Boyer, "The Dilemma of Tenant Farming in South Korea," *Korean Studies* (University of Hawaii), Vol. 12 (1988).

³³Lawrence W. Drabick, "Present and Potential Contribution," *The Journal of Korean Regional Studies* (Seoul: The Institute for Korean Regional Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies), Vol. 1, No. 1 (August 1983), pp. 85-92.

³⁴Byong Man Ahn and William W. Boyer, "Rural Development and Leadership Patterns in South Korea," *Korean Studies* (University of Hawaii), Vol. 8 (August 1985), pp. 83-94.

³⁵Thus, President Park declared that Saemaul Undong is *Siwol Yushin* (October Restoration) and vice versa. There is no question that the Park regime viewed Saemaul Undong as a movement to evoke popular support for its dictatorial and repressive Yushin constitution which permitted perpetuation of President Park in office for life. Accordingly, the Saemaul movement became thoroughly politicized.

³⁶For numbers of villages by years according to classifications, see: Naemuboo (Ministry of Home Affairs), *Saemaul Undong (The New Community Movement)* (1985), p. 179.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 85.

³⁸Do-il Kim, *Saemaul Undongui Kundaewha Inyomkwa Baljon Bangan (An Idea for a Modernization and Development Plan of the New Community Movement)* (Seoul: Jiyok Kaebal Josa Yonkudan (Research Task Force for Community Development), 1985), p. 186.

³⁹For organization of the Central Headquarters of the Saemaul Movement, see: Kukto Kaebal Yonkuwon (Institute for National Land Development), *Jumin Jajo Hwaldongkwa Dosi Service (Self-help of Rural Residents and Urban Service)* (Seoul, 1982), pp. 92-94; and Naemuboo Jibang Kaebalkuk (Bureau of Local Development, Ministry of Home Affairs), *Jibang Kaebal Tongkye Jaryo (Statistical Data on Local Development)* (1985), p. 151.

⁴⁰*Shindong-A*, Seoul, April 1988, pp. 390-407.

⁴¹The Korean Herald (Seoul), 17 July 1988, p. 3; and 19 July 1988, p. 3; Susan Chira, "Brother of Seoul's Ex-Leader Is Found Guilty of Corruption," *The New York Times*, 6 September 1988, p. A6.

⁴²Do-il Kim, *Saemaul Undongui Kundaewha Inyomkwa Baljon Bangan (An Idea for a Modernization and Development Plan of the New Community Movement)* (1985), pp. 90-98.

⁴³Byong-tae Kim, et al., "Minkan Judo Saemaul Undongui Munjejomkwa Ku Haekyol Bangan (Problems of the Civilian-led New Community Movement and Their Solutions)," *Saemaul Yonku Nonchong (Review of the New Community Movement)*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1983), pp. 170-172.

⁴⁴Do-il Kim, *Saemaul Undongui* (1985), pp. 90-98. For similar findings, see: Ahn and Boyer, "Rural Development and Leadership Patterns in South Korea," pp. 83-94.

⁴⁵Naemuboo Jibang Kyebalguk (Bureau of Local Development, Ministry of Home Affairs), *Jibang Kaebal Tonkye Jaryo (Statistical Data on Local Development)* (1984), p. 20.

⁴⁶Chi-ho Nam, *Saemaul Undong Minkan Jojikui Hwalsonghwa Bangan (An Alternative Plan to Invigorate Civilian Organizations in the New Community Movement)*, *Saemaul Undong Haksul Nonmunjib (Treatises on the New Community Movement)*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1984), p. 164.

⁴⁷Boyer and Ahn, *The New Community Movement, 1976/1977*, p. 61.

⁴⁸Chung-si Ahn, "Democratization and Local Government in Korea," paper presented at the International Conference on Democracy and Political Institutions, Sejong Institute, Seoul, 8 July 1988, p. 1.

⁴⁹Byong Man Ahn and William W. Boyer, "Political Efficacy and Trust in Rural South Korea," *Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (July 1986), pp. 439-452, at p. 449. See also, Vincent S. R. Brandt and Ji-woong Cheong, "Planning from the Bottom Up: Community-Based Integrated Rural Development in South Korea," in Philip H. Coombs, ed., *Meeting the Basic Needs of the Rural Poor: The Integrated Community-Based Approach*, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980), pp. 524-634; and Vincent S. R. Brandt and Man-gap Lee, *Community Development Program in Korea* (Seoul: Korean National Commission for UNESCO, 1977), pp. 136-145.

⁵⁰*The Korean Herald*, Seoul, 8 July 1988, p. 1.