

**THE  
KOREAN  
WAR**

**AN  
UNANSWERED  
QUESTION**

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the United Nations,  
Republic of Korea,  
1960-1961**

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The author was born in 1909 in the northern part of Korea the year before Japanese annexation of the peninsula. After graduating Soong Sil College in 1930 Liem attended Lafayette College in the United States. There he shared the hope of other expatriates like Syngman Rhee and So Jae-Pil that the United States could be won over to the cause of Korea's independence. There he also met his wife and comrade of 60 years, Popai Lee.

Upon graduating Lafayette College in 1934, Liem attended the New York City Theological Seminary while serving as Pastor of the Korean Church and Institute in New York City. He entered Princeton University in 1941 where he enlisted the support of liberal minded intellectuals such as Albert Einstein and Edward Corwin for Korea's liberation. He earned his Ph. D. in Political Science in 1945, the year of Korea's liberation from Japan, and served as an instructor at Princeton for two years.

He returned to Korea (south) in 1948 as an advisor to the American Military Government and as first secretary to So Jae-Pil who was Chief Advisor to General Hodge. Dismayed by the partitioning of Korea he returned to the states within the year, took a teaching post at Chatham College, Pittsburgh, PA., and waged an overseas campaign against the Rhee dictatorship.

Following the overthrow of Rhee by the April 1960 student uprising he served as Ambassador to the United Nations in the reform government of Chang Myon. He resigned in protest a year later in the aftermath of the Park Chung-Hee military coup.

While teaching at the State University of New York at New Paltz, Liem led opposition to United States support of the Park regime. By the early 1970's he became convinced that only reconciliation with North Korea could ensure democracy and independence for Korea. In 1974 his wife, Popai, journeyed to North Korea and in 1976 Liem made his own first visit. These contacts strengthened his conviction that reunification could be achieved peacefully without interference by foreign powers.

Now retired, Professor Liem and Mrs. Liem live in New York State where they continue to write and speak on behalf of the peaceful reunification of Korea.



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## **Introduction**

This monograph seeks an answer to the nagging question: who started the Korean War? In late June 1950, fighting broke out along the 38th parallel in Korea. In the West, the United States in particular, and in South Korea it has been taken for granted that the war (1950-53) was started by North Korea on orders from the Kremlin. North Korea, joined by the People's Republic of China, maintains instead that South Korea as a “puppet” of the United States unleashed the war. The controversy continues.

Over the past several decades historians in the West who have examined relevant documents released by the United States as well as other sources have begun to challenge the official version emanating from Washington and Seoul. They assert that it is no longer defensible to blame North Korea and the USSR for full responsibility for the Korean War, absolving the US and South Korea of any culpability. At the same time they note that to date solid evidence in support of the North Korean and Chinese claim has not been uncovered.

Some scholars suggest that the war is distant history, and, therefore, we should move on. If this view is caused by sheer fatigue following a long and tedious search for a definitive answer to the origins of the war, I can well sympathize with them. If, however, they mean that the question has little contemporary significance, I beg to disagree. The war has not ended. Only an uneasy truce prevents the reoccurrence of another catastrophic war. Hence, the Korean people on both sides are pressing all parties to the conflict to replace the 1953 armistice with a peace treaty.

To be sure, the inexorable movement of the Korean people for peaceful reconciliation, coinciding with the end of the cold war in Europe, is beginning to bear fruit. Most noteworthy have been the entrance of North and South Korea into the United Nations in the fall of 1991, the withdrawal of United States nuclear weapons from the southern side, the signing, December 13, 1991, of the

“Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, and Cooperation and Exchanges between the North and the South” and the signing of the Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, January 30, 1992. However the peace process has been and remains subject to derailment by numerous obstacles. The government of the Republic of Korea (south) continues to enforce its National Security Law by which a broad based movement for democratization and peaceful reunification remains suppressed. Moreover, the issue of nuclear weapons inspections on the peninsula is only the tip of an iceberg of obstacles that need to be overcome between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (north) and the United States before demilitarization of the Korean peninsula can be assured. The conclusion of a permanent peace in Korea, though more promising than ever before, remains far from sight.

The question of “war or peace” in Korea, however, is not solely a matter to be resolved by governments. Successful policies require national consensus. Thus far, the widely propagated image of North Korea as “bizarre,” “unpredictable” and “terroristic” has enabled the United States to fight a war in Korea and then to expend vast sums of its resources to support the status quo of a divided Korea. This perception, I submit, has served only the purpose of obfuscation and has had devastating consequences for the American and Korean peoples, as evidenced by the historical record.

Today Koreans in the South know much more about the United States than did their forbears. Through fiery trials they have learned the truth about their own leaders, past and present, and are bitterly chagrined. They hold their incumbent leaders in utter contempt, and the latter are well aware of it. Though they remain wary of the communist North, they reject the anticommunist propaganda of their government and seek the truth. Nor do they trust the United States. The louder the US extols democracy, while backing dictatorial oligarchs in Seoul, the deeper their distrust becomes. In the face of such changed circumstances it is incumbent upon the American people to join with Koreans in a critical reexamination of Korea's cold war history and to take stock of Korea's situation today.

Here it must be noted that socialism has proven to be far more resilient in Asia than in Europe, and perhaps in North Korea most of all. While the end of the cold war in Europe was symbolized by the tearing down of the Berlin wall

and the absorption of East Germany by West Germany, the December 13th agreement signed last year by North and South Korea pledges both sides to respect each other's social system. While the newly democratized societies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union look to the United States as a sole model, anti-Americanism in "democratic" South Korea is at an all time high.

Although no one can predict the long term success or failure of socialism in Asia, or, for that matter of capitalism, the prospect that socialism may survive the cold war cannot be ignored. If so, is there a basis for peaceful reconciliation between the communist North and capitalist South that is more fundamental and compelling than the differences between the two, such that peaceful reunification is not contingent upon the demise of one or the other? Millions of Koreans believe that there is. It is their common heritage of thousands of years as a People. But as long as the cold war image of North Korea as a "little evil empire" prevails in the minds of the American public and its leaders, I fear that the possibility of peaceful reconciliation between the DPRK and the US and between North Korea and South Korea will remain beyond grasp.

With the belief that a critical reexamination of the origins of the Korean War has much to reveal of the inadequacy of America's contemporary understanding of Korea, I have decided to publish my findings on this subject based on two decades of research. In preparing this monograph I have reviewed numerous writings, oral commentaries and correspondence by various persons who played significant roles in, and relating to, the Korean War, beginning from the early 1940's to the present.

Among those authorities most directly involved in the conduct of the war were: Lt. General John R. Hodge, Commander of the US Army Forces in Korea; General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers and Commander of the United Nations Forces in Korea; Chang Myon, former Prime Minister of South Korea; John Foster Dulles, former US Secretary of State; Lt. General Choi Duk Shin, Observer at the Panmunjom Truce Talks on behalf of President Rhee; Mr. Yoon Yong Mu, veteran of the Korean Liberation Army in China and a member of the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS) enlistees in China; Dr. Philip Jaisohn, leader of the reform movement in Korea and Chief Advisor to the Commanding General of the US Army in Korea; Dr. Kyusik Kim, one of the "Big Three" leaders in Korea; Kim Koo, head of the Korean

Provisional Government (1932-45); and Kim Song-Soo, Vice President of Korea during the Korean War. Of those Western scholars who have investigated the origins of the war, I am most grateful to I. F. Stone, distinguished journalist and author, and to Dr. Bruce Cumings, expert on the Korean War, for their writings as well as the conversations it has been my pleasure to have had with them.

I also wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to my children, Ramsay, Paul and Joan for their helpful insights and constructive criticisms of my manuscript. Last but not least important I thank my wife, Popai, for her unfailing encouragements. I wish to add, however, that I alone am responsible for the views presented in the pages that follow.

# CHAPTER ONE

## The Legal and Historical Significance of the “First Shot”

As is now widely known, the Korean War was not the result of a sudden, unprecedented outbreak of fighting on the Korean peninsula in the early morning of June 25, 1950. Indeed, forays into both halves of the peninsula took place continuously for a period of several years prior to this time and increased in intensity during 1949 as pressure by Seoul “to get the job of invasion done” grew more intense. In fact, some students of Korean affairs contend that the war actually started that year. A fierce battle of May, 1949 which South Korea launched with six infantry companies and several battalions took a toll of 400 North Korean and 22 South Korean soldiers.

The United States, however, did not rush to support this apparent attempt of Rhee at northward invasion. Although the prevailing opinion among military analysts in Washington and Seoul was that South Korean forces were superior to the North's in every respect, the United States restrained South Korea's pleas for an "invasion northward now" in 1949. Given the perception of Stalin as expansionist and the triumph of Maoist China, Washington was fearful of a World War III so soon after the Second World War. Yet, from a military point of view, South Korea's President Syngman Rhee was probably right in pressing for attacking the North then. North Korea was weaker, Mao Zedong had not yet consolidated his control over China, and the morale of South Korean soldiers was at its height.

More importantly, the United States had another reason to resist Rhee's wishes at this time. For Washington the question, “who fired the first shot?”, carried a special significance. As revealed post factum in testimony given by Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs, John D. Hickerson, before the Senate Appropriations Committee, 1950, the United States had devised a plan

prior to the start of the war to gain approval from the United Nations to send its troops to Korea under the UN flag in the event that South Korea was attacked. It was imperative, therefore, that the “first shot” be fired by the North, or at least that such an argument could be made. Ironically, if South Korea was found to have fired the first shot as would have been likely during the May, 1949 incident, the United Nations Charter would have called upon its members to censure South Korea as the “aggressor” and any subsequent UN intervention would have been directed at defending North Korea from further aggression.

Although there were no impartial eye-witnesses to testify which side had started the shooting, the United States nevertheless succeeded in persuading the Security Council to approve a US resolution to intervene in defense of South Korea largely on the basis of an inconclusive report submitted by its Ambassador in Seoul.

Whether or not the Security Council’s acceptance of the United States proposal was based on sound evidence was first questioned by I. F. Stone in his *Hidden History of the Korean War*. As Mr. Stone described it, the official UN record shows that Secretary General Trygve Lie had been alerted to North Korea’s “invasion” by means of a phone call from Deputy UN Representative, Earnest A. Gross. According to this account, Ambassador Gross read a message, allegedly from John J. Muccio, American representative in Seoul, reporting that “North Korean forces had invaded the territory of the Republic of Korea at several points in the early morning hours...” “An attack under these circumstances,” Gross said, “constitutes a breach of the peace and an act of aggression” and he asked for an immediate meeting of the Security Council.

However, by comparing the text of the UN account of Gross’ phone call with the text of Muccio’s cable, Mr. Stone found that Ambassador Gross had not read the actual cable from Ambassador Muccio to secretary General Lie. He had read instead a 38-word statement that had been prepared by the State Department paraphrasing Mr. Muccio’s 171-word cable. Mr. Muccio had cabled that South Korean reports of an invasion were “partly” confirmed by the American Military Advisory Group in Korea. The State Department’s paraphrase flatly stated, “The American Ambassador to the Republic of Korea has informed the Department of State that North Korean forces invaded the territory of the Republic of Korea at several points in the early morning hours of June 25.”

Moreover, the full text of Mr. Muccio's cable was withheld from the Security Council for over a month; by then it was too late. The implication raised by Mr. Stone's investigation was that the United States made its case, with specious evidence. With the exception of I. F. Stone, no one within or without the Government raised any doubt.

Here I must point out that the question of who fired the first shot, in spite of its "legal" significance, completely obscures the more fundamental question of how it was that there came to be "two Koreas" who could shoot at each other in the first place. History has recorded that the US and the USSR split Korea into two at the end of World War II, the former occupying the southern half and the latter occupying the northern. Koreans were aghast, for it meant probable doom for their ancient land. However, the administrative policies of the United States and Soviet occupation forces differed sharply. The Soviets allowed an indigenous Korean administrative apparatus to function in their zone. Gradually its personnel underwent osmosis whereby nationalist communists led by Kim Il Sung took over the reigns of government. Shortly thereafter the Soviet departed.

In the US zone American authorities refused entirely to recognize any Korean authority and set up an American Military Government which ruled through interpreters. Americans were in complete control and eventually Syngman Rhee, largely on the basis of his staunch anticommunist outlook, was selected to lead South Korea even though Gen. Hodge, commander of US forces in Korea, called him utterly unqualified. After three years of occupation during which time Rhee effectively decimated his opposition by extra-legal means, the United Nations, at the urging of the US, sponsored separate elections in South Korea. As expected, Rhee, a fiery advocate of unification through military means, was elected President of the Republic of Korea (1948).

Given the emergence of an anticommunist state in the south and shortly thereafter a communist state in the north, the cold war had solidified its grip on Korea and the possibility of open conflict had become a fact of every day life for the Korean people. In the eyes of many South Koreans today, it is these events rather than the "first shot" argument of the Truman Administration that constitute the smoking gun of Korea's division and the tragic war which ensued.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Who Started the Korean War: Conflicting Claims**

This in brief is the official United States-Republic of Korea (South Korea) position on the start of the Korean War. Communist North Korea under the direction of the U.S.S.R. triggered the war on an unsuspecting South Korea on June 25, 1950. At about 4:00 a.m. that day North Korean forces launched an all-out, premeditated attack on the South with overwhelmingly superior manpower and weapons. However, since the North Koreans had conducted numerous raids on the South during the two previous years, the southern defenders were not sure if this latest attack was just another momentary excursion or the "real thing." By 8:00 a.m. the Northern offensive had spread all along the border and it appeared almost certain that this was it. At that point John J. Muccio, American Ambassador to Seoul, dispatched his report to Washington. It read as follows:

“According to Korean Army reports which are partly confirmed by the American Military Advisory Group in Korea (AMAG) field advisors' reports, North Korean forces invaded the Republic of Korea territory at several points this morning. Actions were initiated at 4:00 a.m. today. Ongjin was blasted by North Korean artillery fire. At about 6:00 a.m. North Korean infantry commenced crossing the 38th parallel in the Ongjin area, Kaesong area, and Chunchon area, and an amphibious landing reportedly was made south of Kangnung on the east coast. Kaesong was reportedly captured at 9:00 a.m. with some ten North Korean tanks participating in the operation. North Korean forces, spearheaded by tanks, are reportedly closing in on Chunchon. Details of the fighting in the Kangnung area are unclear, although it seems that North Koreans have cut

the highway. I am conferring with AMAG advisors this morning concerning the situation. It would appear from the nature of the attack and the manner in which it was launched that it constitutes an all-out offensive against the Republic of Korea.

Muccio”

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) flatly denies the US-ROK contention. They claim instead that the South Koreans, on orders from the US, unleashed the war. While agreeing with the US-ROK that all-out fighting began in the early hours of June 25, 1950, they nevertheless emphasize that it had actually begun two days earlier. They say that at 10:00 p.m., June 23, ROK forces on the eastern Ongjin peninsula began bombardments and shelling with 105 mm howitzers and heavy mortars across the border into DPRK defenses. The pounding went on for six hours, they claim. Although the South Korean forces had done this many times previously as a smoke screen for their commando raids, this was the first time the shelling lasted for so long. Hence, the North Koreans theorized that this might well be a more serious incursion coming as it did only a few days after an inspection trip to the 38th parallel by John Foster Dulles, special envoy of the United States, and his entourage. They took this unprecedented, lengthy pounding to be a prelude to the pukjin (northern invasion) which Syngman Rhee had long threatened.

The six hour pounding was followed by a period of silence and then reignited with somewhat reduced intensity continuing until approximately 4:00 a.m., June 25. This further roused the Northerners’ suspicion that it was a lull before an all-out attack by the South. Their suspicion was further supported by intelligence reports that the ROK Army forces along the western, central and eastern fronts were poised for action. The details which follow are recounted in a Pyongyang foreign languages publication, 1979:

“The puppet army (ROK army) launched an attack at dawn all along the 38th parallel, intruding 1 to 2 kilometers deep into the territory of the northern half in the direction of Haeju, Kumchon and Cholwon. In the western sector of the front the 17th Regiment of the puppet Metropolitan

Division came attacking in the directions of Taetan and Pyoksong, the 1st Infantry Division in three directions from the Kaesong area, and the 7th Infantry Division in the direction of the Ryonchon area. In the eastern sector of the front the 6th Infantry Division of the puppet army came rushing in the directions of Hwachon and Yanggu, and the 8th Infantry Division from three directions towards Yangyang on the east coast.... An order was issued to the Korean People's Army and the Security Forces of the Republic to halt the enemy's advance and go over to a decisive counterattack at once.... Thus started the Fatherland Liberation War against the armed invasion of the US imperialists and their stooges.”

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **An Examination of the Conflicting Claims**

The foregoing claims of the two sides are fair, if not detailed, accounts of the US-ROK and DPRK versions of how the Korean War started. Let US now briefly examine them.

#### **A. The United States - Republic of Korea**

Ambassador Muccio's report reveals a number of points requiring attention. First, it was based on indirect and “partially confirmed” reports. Consequently, Muccio was guarded in his assessment of the situation at the border. Second, the source of the report was ROK Defense Ministry officials who relayed it to the American Military Advisory Group (AMAG) field advisors. As US officials frequently observed, the credibility of ROK officials was often questionable. Third, AMAG field advisors were relatively few in number and since they were obliged to rely on Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) officers for information on developments at the front, it is doubtful whether they could have independently verified ROK reports. Fourth, Muccio’s initially guarded statement was subsequently contradicted when he wrote: “North Korean forces invaded ROK territory at several points...” and added: “It would appear from the nature of attack and the manner in which it was launched that it constitutes an all-out offensive against the Republic of Korea.” Fifth, after definitively stating that the North Koreans “invaded ROK...,” he seemed to back off from this claim again by adding that he was planning to investigate the reports further. To summarize, the Muccio cable was a tentative report.

In Washington the Muccio cable was treated as definitive, however. Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs, interrupted his dinner and quickly rushed back to his office on being told of the report from Seoul. He called together a number of middle level officials. Nevertheless, neither Secretary of State Acheson nor President Truman was immediately notified of the crisis in Korea. Acheson, who was on his farm in near-by Maryland, was notified hours later. President Truman, visiting his home town in Missouri, was notified even later and was told that there was no need for him to hurry back to Washington.

That was odd. On the eve of the third most costly war which the US has fought, the two men with authority to shape the US response, the President and the Secretary of State, remained out of town. Those who gathered at the State Department were middle level officials whose duties were not to make policy but to carry out the orders of their absent superiors. The United States was later to claim that it was caught completely by surprise. Judging by its early actions, however, this contention was at best disingenuous. The relative calm with which Muccio's cable was greeted is totally inconsistent with the claim of a surprise North Korean invasion.

Notwithstanding Washington's initial response to the Muccio cable, the fact is that there were no impartial eyewitnesses to the beginning of the fighting. The sole individual who was near the front was a member of the AMAG field advisors attached to the 12th Regiment of the ROKA. But he had spent the night at the AMAG compound located well to the rear of the 38th parallel. Furthermore, when he was awakened by artillery fire, it was about 5:00 a.m., an hour after the fighting had begun. The only honest message Muccio could have sent would have been that it was impossible to tell which side fired first.

## B. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The question of whether or not the North Korean advance into South Korea was an offensive or a counteroffensive will probably not be answered definitively until the wounds of the war heal and extensive interviews can be conducted with the soldiers who clashed on the morning of June 25, 1950. However, based on the research that I have been able to conduct and on my

personal knowledge of Rhee, his activities, and others close to him, I believe that the DPRK's assertion that South Korea unleashed the war as a "stooge" of the United States is an oversimplification. More precisely, I believe that it was rather Syngman Rhee with behind the scene support of John Foster Dulles who triggered the war. Rhee's clamor for Korean reunification through military means and Dulles' advocacy of "roll back" policy against the communist world by the US brought them together.

As the cold war heated up and congressional elections in the US drew near, lobbying for a "dynamic" anticommunist US policy by Rhee and Dulles, the leading spokesman of the Republican Party on foreign policy, began to pay off. President Truman brought Dulles into his administration in hopes of mending a growing bipartisan rift over US policy vis-a-vis the communist world. This sealed Korea's fate. In the pages that follow I will attempt to reconstruct the events which brought Rhee and Dulles together.

The United States in the years immediately after World War II was beset with too many domestic and world-wide problems to initiate a war. Americans were extremely war weary. They wanted their sons and husbands sent home. They demanded relief from crushing wartime taxes and restrictions. They did fear the rise of communism around the world, to be sure, but that was primarily in response to Stalinist expansionism in Eastern Europe. Although they conceded the strategic importance of Korea to the US, such interest lay on the outer periphery of American concern. Hence, the US attitude toward Korea was ambivalent.

Nevertheless, rapid developments at home and abroad pushed the Truman Administration to the defensive. Americans, weary of long Democratic rule, blamed almost everything they didn't like on the "20 year Democratic rule." Furthermore, they were persuaded by the Republican charge that China was lost to the communists because the Democrats were soft on communism.

Thus, the intertwining of American domestic politics and the escalation of the East-West cold war inexorably pushed the Truman Administration to the view that the fall of South Korea to communist rule might well be on Stalin's agenda. With the congressional elections of 1950 approaching, Republican charges that Truman was "soft on communism" were growing louder. President Truman, who had been instrumental in preventing Greece and Turkey from falling to

communism, was not about to sit tight and let the Republicans red bait his administration. He decided to draw a line in Korea even if that meant war. By early 1950, Chang Myon, ROK Ambassador to Washington, reported to President Rhee: "I am informed that the State Department and Pentagon are planning a firm stand with respect to US Oriental policy. In this anticommunist plan Korea will occupy an important position."

Pursuant to that policy, President Truman recruited a hawkish Republican spokesman on US foreign policy, John Foster Dulles, as a special Ambassador ostensibly to advise the Secretary of State on matters pertaining to the peace treaty with Japan. In reality, however, Truman's intention was to mute the Republican attack on his administration and to strengthen the US position vis-a-vis communist nations. Hence, it was natural that Dulles who was one of America's most militant anticommunists would wield an immense influence on United States policies on East Asia. This meant, too, that Rhee had a powerful ally in the Truman Administration. Thus, Ambassador Dulles, who had admitted to being "abysmally ignorant about Korea" until after World War II, became one of the closest ideological allies of the South Korean President.

As a member of the US delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, Dulles had played a leading role in inducing the UN to recognize the Rhee regime as the only legal government of Korea, having been established as a result of the "valid expression of the will of the Korean people." In doing so, Dulles' interest was not in promoting democracy in Korea nor in supporting Rhee per se, but in establishing a base in East Asia from which the United States could launch a titanic roll-back campaign against communism in Asia. This was evident in his repeated assertion that South Korea would play an "important role in the great drama which would soon unfold." This was a remarkable reversal of position, for prior to 1945 he had been not only "abysmally ignorant about Korea," but had also supported the administration's denial of Rhee's application to attend the United Nations Organizational Conference held in San Francisco in April of that year.

Yet within two years Dulles became an ardent supporter of Rhee's push for a separate government in South Korea, calling it a "bastion of democracy." The South Korean President regarded Dulles as one of his closest friends. Their friendship, however, was one of convenience. Rhee's ambition was to become a

life-long ruler of a unified Korea, not just the southern half; Dulles' was to help Rhee win the Presidency of South Korea with the purpose of gaining a base on the Asian mainland not only for the conquest of North Korea but also China. "Who fired the first shot," notwithstanding, war in Korea ensued. With regard to the breadth of the conquest, i.e., to invade the North all the way to the Yalu river, the two saw eye to eye. However, when the fighting was stalemated, Dulles advocated a truce. Rhee opposed it vehemently but in vain.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Was the War Inevitable?

Was the Korean War inevitable? It was not. All Koreans were deadset against their country's division, it is true. But most of them were for peaceful reunification and a democratic and independent Korea. Nor did the United States have any intention of engaging in a war in Korea initially, as far as I know. Lieutenant General John Hodge, commander of US forces in Korea, said his plan in case of war on the Korean peninsula, was to evacuate his forces from South Korea smoothly. Furthermore, shortly after the US occupation of South Korea, Secretary of State James F. Byrnes along with his Soviet and British counterparts, declared in Moscow that the three powers agreed to effect peaceful unification of Korea. Toward that end they were instructing the US and USSR occupation commanders to appoint a Joint Commission to consult with political, social and cultural organizations of both zones and to submit a recommendation on the formation of a broad based, democratic provisional government for all of Korea. All evidences were that the Soviet Union was sincere in wishing the Korean issue resolved peacefully.

\* When Dr. Philip Jaisohn accepted Hodge's invitation to join him in Seoul as his chief adviser in 1947, and asked me to accompany him as his aide, I agreed. The general, who was in Washington for consultation, called me and asked if I could come with Dr. Jaisohn. I told him I would and asked him whether I could bring my family with me. He said, "No," adding that war in Korea was a distinct probability and in such an eventuality his first duty would be to evacuate US personnel from Korea. Not wishing to be further encumbered in it, he had issued an order

prohibiting all his men from bringing their dependents. “All my associates as well as myself have left our families at home,” he said.

What went wrong to derail the hopes of all the parties concerned? The answer may be summarized as follows: In the first place, the thickening cloud of the cold war blurred the rational vision of all parties leading them to fall victim to passions and prejudices against one another. Secondly, in South Korea unlike in the North, US occupation personnel were short on knowledge about Korea and Koreans but long on presumptuous theories. As a consequence, the US Military Government sank deeper and deeper into a hopeless morass with each passing day.

As I arrived in Seoul in early 1948 and saw what was happening there, I was reminded of an incident which occurred on December 7, 1941. At the time I was a graduate at an American university where I elected a course in international politics taught by a stimulating professor. One of his pet theories was that war between great powers was all but out of the question as they had too many things in common and war would only result in mutual losses. He expounded the theory with such contagious enthusiasm that many students were mesmerized. Before the semester ended, however, Japan attacked the United States. Shortly after noon on December 7th, I casually turned on my radio and was stunned. It reported briefly that Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor, but that was all. Electrified, I called up one of my classmates and asked him whether he had heard the news. He answered that he indeed had, and went on excitedly: “I just called up Professor Sprout and asked whether he had heard the radio report of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He said he had not heard it, but added ‘I do not believe it.’”

America paid a stiff price for its ignorance of Japan. Until Pearl Harbor only a few Americans, sons of US missionaries in Japan, had studied in Japanese universities. Consequently, when the US went to war with Japan, America’s war effort was seriously hampered by a lack of experts in Japanese language, geography and culture.

Americans knowledge about Korea and Koreans at the time of the US occupation of South Korea was even less than their knowledge of Japan prior to Pearl Harbor. What little they did know was a caricature of Korea as they had learned it from Japanese sources which, for obvious reasons, portrayed Korea and Koreans in a negative light.

Consequently, the United States treated Korea as a virtual no-man's land and Koreans as semi-barbarians. At the end of World War II it proposed, and the Soviets agreed, to divide Korea into two, without consulting any Korean leaders. When it ordered its forces into Korea south of the 38th parallel, Washington announced that American forces were entering Korea as liberators. But General Hodge, commander of the US troops in Korea declared in no uncertain terms that he was the ruler of the southern zone in Korea and that his troops were occupation forces. They came, however, without any preparation for their duties. There was virtually no one within or outside the US State Department who could have been considered an expert on Korea. There was not a single university in America which offered advanced courses on Korea. Officials of the State Department's East Asian section were mostly "Japan hands" who were even more misinformed on Korea.

Americans understood even less about North Korea. They simply believed, whether true or not, that the most educated and well-to-do Koreans had fled south to the US zone, that its mining and industrial facilities built up by the Japanese lay idle and that North Korea had, therefore, become a "satellite" of the USSR. This extraordinary ignorance of the actual conditions in the North precluded a realistic estimation of a potential adversary. How might one more accurately portray North Korea and "Uncle Sam" on the eve of full scale war?

#### A. The Encounter of Two Titans

First in Washington; there a small coterie of junior officials in the State Department was assigned to study the US role in East Asia in the post-war era. A full report of the study was never made public but some of its contents have become known, a portion of which dealt with Korea. Among its recommendations were: that the United States should not return to its pre-WWII, hands off Asia policy but should play a major role in the region with Korea as a focal point; that in order to do so, the US should not support any Korean nationalist leader or group but should keep its options open until the end of the war; and that, should it be deemed necessary for the US to declare a position on Korea's independence before the conclusion of the war, it should be stated in general terms with qualifications designed to maintain maximum flexibility.

These recommendations were prepared without any regard for the interests of the Korean people. No Koreans were consulted about them or shown the final draft. At no time during the war did the US declare its intention regarding post-war Korea except in the Cairo Declaration (1943) which stated that Korea would become free and independent “in due course.” This stirred heated protests among Koreans, but Uncle Sam refused to clarify what “in due course” meant.

Next, somewhere in the mountains of northeast China adjacent to Korea and Far Eastern Russia a youthful Korean guerrilla leader, Kim Il Sung, and his followers were busy preparing for reconstruction of their fatherland now in the hands of the Japanese. In their nationalistic struggle they received sympathy and encouragement from the Chinese and Soviets, and in time they embraced communism.

As far as I am aware, the facts are these: he quit high school and educated himself while recruiting fellow guerrillas and waging war on the Japanese Army in China; he won the goodwill of Korean and Chinese peasants behind Japanese lines by helping them raise crops during the daytime. By the 1930’s his fame as a guerrilla warrior spread throughout northern Manchuria, Far Eastern USSR as well as Korea. Furthermore, through trial and error he learned how to establish communes and administer them behind enemy lines. Thus, not only did he build a base of support for his guerrilla war, but he also acquired experience in governance which later proved invaluable when he became the head of North Korea.

Following Japan’s defeat in 1945, both Kim Il Sung and Uncle Sam arrived in Korea, the former in the North and the latter in the South, glaring at each other, figuratively speaking. Since their encounter foreshadowed the Korean War, a further review of their respective characters is significant, in my opinion.

Contrasts between them couldn’t be more striking. Uncle Sam was tall, elderly and imperious; Kim was only in his mid-thirties, and exuded self-confidence. Uncle Sam was the representative of the world’s mightiest power and leader of the anticommunist world, while Kim was a communist. Most important of all, Uncle Sam came to Korea in order to wield influence over East Asia with Korea as its anticommunist bastion. Kim, a fiery nationalist, vowed to liberate Korea from any foreign control whatsoever.

Given such conflicting goals and the prevailing ignorance of Korean nationalism on the part of US policy makers, it was certain that the two would

collide sooner or later. Collide they did after the US intervened in the conflict in July, 1950. Uncle Sam had expected Kim to yield, but Kim was defiant; Korea belonged to Koreans, and Uncle Sam must get out of Korea. Furious, Uncle Sam tried his best to punish him in the name of the United Nations. But the war would end in a draw, both sides claiming victory of a sort; the US insisting that it had shown the DPRK that “aggression does not pay” and the DPRK claiming that it knocked the US cold in its bid to conquer the whole of Korea.

To be sure, Uncle Sam may have won in an all-out war, but that would probably have meant World War III. China, however, would intervene, forcing the US to a truce at the place where the war began. But that was not the whole reason why Uncle Sam chose to quit fighting. The US found out after sacrificing over 55,000 American lives and expending \$20,000,000,000 that Korean nationalism and the will to fight for it were too formidable to ignore.

The most serious cause of US military weakness lay not in its armed forces but in Washington’s bungling policy makers. They could never clearly explain to the GIs why they were sent to Korea. The boys were sent “to destroy the communist enemy” but what they heard from all sides in Korea was: “Why are you killing US? All that we are doing is to oppose our oppressive landowners and ‘pro-Japs’ in the government who take away our crops.” The GIs could never understand why they should go to an impoverished land and kill people who knew neither communism nor democracy and wanted only to be left alone. The only sensible words they heard were those of General Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US Army. During the heated controversy in 1951 over whether to accept a negotiated settlement of the Korean War or to fight until victory, Bradley argued forcefully in favor of the former, asserting that the Korean War was a wrong war against the wrong enemy at the wrong place in the wrong time. Those of US who were old enough to hear Bradley make his case before the US Senate were deeply moved.

## B. The United States and Syngman Rhee

Ironically, Korean nationalism proved also to be a part of the problem for the US in dealing with its ally in the south, Syngman Rhee. Unlike Kim Il Sung, however, Dr. Rhee spent most of his life seeking a great power to serve as

Korea's benefactor. During the days of the Yi dynasty, feudal China had played this role vis-a-vis the royal court of Korea. In the twentieth century, Rhee sought to bring the US to Korea's rescue. Rhee's contact with the US dates back to 1905, when he submitted a petition from Koreans in Hawaii to President Theodore Roosevelt. In it the Koreans had informed President Roosevelt that Japan was usurping Korea's sovereignty in violation of the Korea-Japan Treaty of 1876 and asked that he use his good office to effect an amicable resolution in accordance with the 1882 Korea-United States Treaty.

Rhee was given the run around. The President of the United States told him that he could receive the petition only if it were presented to him through the State Department. At the State Department Rhee was advised that the petition could be received only if submitted by the Korean Minister in Washington. At the Korean Legation, the Charge told Rhee that he could not deliver it without orders from the government in Seoul. Rhee was not then aware that earlier that year, in a secret pact, the US had given Japan de facto control over Korea, that Japan had taken control of Korea's foreign affairs with Washington's acquiescence and that the Korean Charge had been advised of the fact. Bitter at his failure, Rhee gave up and entered George Washington University as a student.

Rhee's next experience with the State Department was in 1919. Following the First World War, Koreans, encouraged by the Wilsonian Fourteen Points which espoused the right of self-determination for all nations, rose up in nationwide demonstrations for independence from Japan and elected a Provisional Government with headquarters in Shanghai, China. Rhee was named President. Presumably, the chief reason for his election was that he had had a special relationship with President Wilson. Rhee was a graduate student at Princeton University when Wilson served as its president and the two had known each other personally.

However, the erstwhile relationship between the two proved meaningless. Not only did President Wilson refuse to recognize Rhee as the Provisional President of the Republic of Korea, but he also directed that all messages from the latter be sent to the State Department. The State Department ignored Rhee's request even to issue a visa for him to attend the Peace Conference at Paris.

In contrast, Russia's Lenin not only declared opposition to imperialism anywhere in the world, but also warmly received a group of Korean leaders who

came to Moscow. During a meeting with the Koreans he surprised them by inquiring how large a contribution they wished. The Korean visitors, after a momentary pause, stammered: "About a half million rubles." Lenin responded: "You cannot accomplish much with that," and reportedly gave them a million rubles.

The reactions of the United States and Russia to the aspirations of the Korean people were bound to influence the attitude of the Korean leaders. They were split. Some, like Premier Lee Tong-hwi, turned pro-Russian; some, led by Ahn Chang-ho, insisted on independence through self-reliance, however long it required; and others led by Rhee, chose to rely on Washington.

As it happened, all parties were ultimately interested in only immediate gain. Wilson was so obsessed with the League of Nations that in order to obtain Japan's support he chose to please Japan at the cost of Korea. Syngman Rhee left the Provisional Government in Shanghai after a brief visit in 1921 and returned to Hawaii. He told his colleagues in Shanghai that he was leaving them in order to work for the independence of Korea through diplomacy in Washington in spite of the fact that he had been repeatedly rebuffed by the State Department. In fact he told his friends that he was not a diplomat but an agitator. What he did was carry on a running feud with the US Administrations in power.

Even after the US occupation of southern Korea, Rhee's application to the State Department for permission to return to Korea was initially turned down. It was only after intercession by MacArthur Headquarters that he was able to return to Seoul. Hodge, commander of the US forces in Korea, was in deep trouble on arrival in Korea in 1945 and gladly approved Rhee's return. He thought Rhee could help him win the goodwill of the Koreans.

A total stranger to the country, Hodge had committed serious errors upon his arrival in Korea such as calling the Koreans the same breed as Okinawans and allowing the Japanese colonial rulers of Korea to participate in governing South Korea after accepting their surrender. Those actions astounded Koreans. Hence, on being told about Rhee's background, Hodge was delighted to authorize his return. With a man like Rhee at his side, he thought his job in Korea could be made much easier. Thus, Rhee became the first Korean exile to return home following the US occupation of southern Korea.

On the way home, Rhee stopped over in Tokyo to pay a courtesy call on the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), General Douglas MacArthur. They hit it off from the moment they met. Sometime later I observed the two men together at Rhee's inaugural ceremony which was held in front of the Central Seoul Government building where I worked on the second floor. Rhee's inaugural address was, put it simply, a call to war. Evidently MacArthur liked it for as they walked away together, the General put his arm around Rhee's shoulder and said something to the new South Korean President. Subsequently, I learned from a high military officer who walked behind them that MacArthur told Rhee that: "If ever your country is attacked by another, I will defend it as I would defend California."

To my knowledge General MacArthur played a passive role in actually starting the war. But once the war began he accepted his appointment as the Supreme Commander of the United Nations Forces in Korea with relish. MacArthur's main interest was to drive Mao Zedong out of China and to install Chiang Kai Shek in his place. This is not to say that MacArthur was disinterested in Korea. But like the Japanese militarists before him, he tended to view Korea as the road to China. But this is skipping ahead of the events which led up to the war.

Rhee arrived in Seoul in mid-October, 1945 to a hero's welcome and was introduced to a huge welcoming throng by General Hodge, himself, who told them: "I give you your leader."

Dr. Rhee's brief remark in response pleased Hodge immensely. The grey-haired Korean leader began his talk reminding the people that Koreans faced grave problems and ending it with the need to "unite, unite, unite." Hodge beamed with delight. He believed that Rhee would, indeed, help Koreans unite behind the AMAG's goal of establishing a broad based, democratic and, presumably, pro-American government for all Korea. Hodge subsequently honored Rhee by naming him Chairman of his Supreme Advisory Council and placed the government owned radio, the only such facility in Korea, at his disposal.

The Hodge-Rhee honeymoon did not last long. Hodge's hope was that Rhee would help him organize a united front, excepting extreme rightist and extreme leftist groups, which would subscribe to a democratic as well as pro-American

form of government. Hodge was convinced that such a united front in the South plus noncommunist Koreans in the North would easily outnumber the communists in both zones of Korea. Rhee could be very helpful in insuring success of the plan.

To Hodge's keen disappointment, Rhee would not cooperate. He was not only a rabid anticommunist; he let it be known that only those groups and individuals that subscribed to his position should be admitted into the ranks of the "united front." Hodge told Rhee that with all due respect, he could not agree that Rhee alone had the right to dictate the terms of Korea's future. From then on the two became bitter enemies; Rhee regarded Hodge as a communist suspect, and to the latter Rhee was a "trouble maker" for Korea.\*

\* Since my position was that of the "eyes and ears" of the doings and thinking of all Korean leaders for Hodge and Jaisohn, it was my duty to meet Dr. Rhee as well as General Hodge. As such I visited both leaders numerous times. It was quite embarrassing to hear Rhee referring to Hodge as a "dupe of the communists," while Hodge described Rhee in expletives.

John R. Hodge was not an ignorant simpleton. He was an intelligent and conscientious man. But as an engineer by training and a professional soldier since World War I, he had had no opportunity to acquire knowledge of Korea. Nor could he rely upon Washington for any rational insight into the political traditions that had been forged in Korea after 40 years of struggle against the Japanese colonialists and their allies among Korea's feudalists. Rather than reason, it was essentially the anticommunist direction of US foreign policy which led Hodge to rely upon South Korea's extreme right wing in his efforts to forge a "democratic" united front in that country, an effort doomed to failure by its very premise.

Hodge was saddened by Rhee's obstruction. He was also deeply offended by Rhee's snide remarks about him behind his back. Nevertheless, he did not abandon his hope of forging the united front with or without Rhee's participation. This infuriated Rhee who subsequently devised a plan to get Hodge out of Korea. He began by calling his chief followers to a top secret

meeting at his house and told them that if they raised a fund—Korean Independence Fund—of thirty million Won, representing 1 Won each from 30,000,000 Koreans, he would go to the US with it and bring back Korea's independence. The participants at the meeting agreed to raise the fund and immediately pledged their own contributions. Kim Sung-Soo pledged one million Won in his and his brother's name. Within six weeks the whole sum was raised.

Thereupon Rhee went to see Hodge. Without showing a trace of the bitterness he harbored against Hodge, he told the General that he had to make a brief trip to America to take care of some personal affairs and asked for his permission. Hodge suspected that Rhee had something else in mind. At first he thought of refusing to grant Rhee's wish; however, on further thought, he didn't wish to appear petty and gave in.

On arrival in the US in early December, 1947, Rhee checked in at the Carlton, one of the most expensive hotels in Washington. He then called Robert T. Oliver, his publicity agent in America, and directed him to take leave from his teaching at Syracuse and join him. He also surrounded himself with several other aides, and began his campaign with a sumptuous reception to which several hundred prominent Americans were invited.

What was Rhee's mission? It was two-fold: to have General Hodge removed as the Commanding General of the US Army in Korea and to push for the establishment of a separate government in the US zone of Korea. He completely failed to accomplish his first objective. Regarding the second, the establishment of a separate government in South Korea, it was not clear at first whether he was successful or not. Many thought, including this writer, that he had failed, for the State Department asserted that no decision on it had been reached. But Rhee claimed that the State Department's promise of separate elections in the South was "in his bag." In fact there was no movement in that direction for months. On the contrary, Secretary of State George C. Marshall announced that he was planning to request that the stalled US-Soviet Joint Military Commission be reconvened, leading observers to believe the claim by Rhee to be presumptuous. However, the Marshall statement regarding the reconvening of the Joint Commission might have been only a pro forma gesture. In the fall of that year the US requested that the United Nations General Assembly assist in setting up

separate elections in southern Korea. Although Rhee's claims of success were exaggerated, there is little doubt the noise he and his followers had raised did play a role in this decision.

Rhee and his partisans were jubilant. On the other hand, those Koreans who favored Korea's reunification through peaceful means were stunned. They believed that the separate elections would inevitably result either in a fratricidal war or in an indefinite division of Korea. This was the line advocated by Rhee and his followers. Rhee was a staunch advocate of unification through military means. The events which followed proved valid the fears of those who opposed the separate elections of 1948.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Clandestine War

To what extent Syngman Rhee influenced the US decision to hold separate elections in southern Korea is not clear. Nevertheless, that Rhee's persistent campaign aimed at persuading the US to take such a course contributed to the State Department's decision seems incontrovertible. With the cold war heating up and the Republican Party's pressure for a get-tough policy against communism mounting, the Truman Administration could not afford to stand pat. Furthermore, Major General John H. Hildring, who had recently been appointed as Assistant Secretary for Occupied Areas, was sympathetic to Rhee's views.

Under the aegis of the United Nations, separate elections were, in fact, held in the US zone on May 10, 1948 to elect the National Assembly. The duties of this body were to draft a constitution and to establish the government of South Korea. General Hodge lent his full support to the implementation of the elections by appointing an election commission and deploying the Military Government's national police and civilian personnel to see to it that the elections were carried out without fail. In private, however, he was not happy. Of South Korea's three best-known leaders, two declared that they were boycotting the elections which they believed would lead to Korea's permanent division or war or both. Moreover, deep inside, Hodge thought Rhee was the least qualified candidate in the field.

Dr. Rhee chose to run for the National Assembly in the East Gate District. As soon as this was known, his followers warned that no other candidate would be allowed to enter the race against him in that district. They wished to make sure that Rhee was elected "unanimously." But this caused grumbling among the

district's residents who complained that it was a mockery of democracy. In response to their complaints, a former American educated college professor, Choi Nung-jin, offered himself as a candidate. However, pro-Rhee thugs harassed him until the last day of registration. Shortly before the close of registrations, as Choi approached the election commission headquarters, he was waylaid and his petition with voters' signatures stolen. The election commission declared him disqualified.\*

\* Shortly after the elections Choi was arrested on a trumped-up charge of attempted sedition and was executed following the outbreak of the Korean War.

During the following two months the National Assembly adopted a constitution which was virtually dictated by Rhee. The Assembly also chose a name for South Korea. It was called DAEHAN MINKUK (Great Korean Democratic Republic). When some foreign observers commented that the name sounded a bit too grandiose for one-half of a tiny country, pro-Rhee lawmakers said: "Not at all; since we in the South have two-thirds of Korea's population, we represent the whole of Korea." They also decided that the President should be elected by the National Assembly.

Following adoption of the constitution, the election of the President was held on July 19, 1948. Rhee was elected with 84 out of 100 votes. Kim Koo who had boycotted the elections received thirteen. Ahn Jae-hong who had held the post of Chief Civilian Administrator in the American Military Government received two. Dr. Philip Jaisohn, Chief Adviser to the Commanding General of the US Army in Korea, received one vote.

On taking office, President Rhee declared that his inauguration marked only the first step of a northward march.\*

\* Following Rhee's election, I wrote him a note of congratulations. In his reply of July 23, 1948 Rhee thanked me for it and added: "You know where my office is. Drop in when you can. I would be glad to see you." A couple of days later I did just that. As I got up to bid him good-bye, he said, "When you return to Princeton, please give my best regards to

Professor Sly. I am sorry I couldn't write to him, but till now it has been impossible. I've had to wage inch-by-inch fight all the way. I still have a big fight ahead. (He pointed his finger to the North as he spoke.) When that is over, I will invite him out here."

In fact he had already sent secret agents to the North. His plans for commando raids into the North "as a dress rehearsal" had to be postponed because of an army mutiny in Yosu and Soonchon that fall. By the following year the rebellion was largely put down, and Rhee ordered his Army to step up forays across the 38th parallel.

#### A. The Henderson Memorandum

Needing weapons and money as well as training of his Army, Rhee, who had begun his campaign to oust Hodge from Korea by calling for withdrawal of the American Army from Korea in 1946, now asked the US to remain in Korea until he was ready to invade the North. To that end he also ordered his military officers to persuade their American counterparts and politicians of the necessity of invading the North without delay. The following memorandum (August 26, 1949) by Gregory Henderson, an American Embassy secretary, reveals a typical example of Rhee's campaign to sell his plan to reunify Korea by force. Hence, the memo is worth quoting in full.

"Subject: Conversation with Colonel Kim Baek Il

On August 25, I had dinner with the following officers of the Korean Army, Col. Kim Baek Il, Commandant of the School of Arms; Col. Min Ki Sik, Assistant Commandant of the School and recently returned from the Infantry School, Fort Benning;

Col. Song Yo Chan, Commander in Chief last year and now Commandant of the Cadets at the School of Arms; and Lt. Col. Chung Chong Keun, Assistant G-3, KA Headquarters.

Col. Kim laid some emphasis on the great sentiment existing in the Army for invasion of the North. He stated that the morale of the troops,

especially of new troops, was generally very high but that this morale was based on the feeling that they were coming into the Army to get the job of unification done. The morale of those troops who had gone to the parallel with this feeling and had remained month after month digging fox holes and repelling attacks without being able to bring the attack to the enemy, had fallen off badly. Col. Kim stated that he felt 'that the troops needed about six months more training before being really prepared.' The implication of what they would be prepared for seemed understood by everyone.

Col. Min, a bright, aggressive young officer, stated two things of some interest which appeared, from their reception in the group, to be not entirely down the official alley. 'One usually hears,' he said, 'that the Army never attacks North Korea and is always getting attacked. This is not true. Mostly our Army is doing the attacking first and we attack harder(sic). Our troops feel stronger.' There was some slight protest in Korean against this remark accompanied with some blushes. Col. Min then said in connection with some remarks on defections, 'Almost all our troubles come from the officers. Hardly one per cent of the enlisted men are disloyal. They know nothing. But they are easily led.'"

The memorandum strongly suggests that the ROKA conducted more raids into the North than did the Northerners into the South, that the rank and file of the South Korean military forces had enlisted in the ROK Army in order to get "the job of unification done," and the longer they had to wait, the lower their morale got, and that in about 6 months or so they would be ready for action. The officers' implication was obvious: the troops must be given marching orders not too long thereafter, i.e. the spring of 1950.

#### B. Rhee's Impatience for Pukjin (northward invasion)

Compounding the necessity of hastening Pukjin for Rhee was his stunning defeat in the National Assembly elections of May 30, 1950. In these elections every candidate who ran with Rhee's support was defeated, and those who favored reunification of Korea through North-South dialogue constituted the

majority in the new National Assembly. While this was good reason for Pyongyang's not wishing to start a war with the South with undue haste, it definitely was a stern warning to Rhee that his time was running out. The fact was that at age 76, Rhee had suffered, by all accounts, an irreversible political defeat. By June, 1950, he had virtually no base of support at home. For his survival and realization of his dream of Pukjin, he had only the United States upon which to rely. But with the Truman Administration wavering in its support for his plan for Korea's reunification through war, how reliable was the United States?

Contributing to Rhee's understanding of the parameters of support of the United States was a letter from his agent in America, Robert T. Oliver, dated October 10, 1949 written in response to earlier correspondence from Rhee of September 30, 1949. Oliver's letter was as follows:

“Your letter of September 30, and the copy of your September 30 letter to Ambassadors Chang and Chough, have been read with utmost care, and I have come in to Washington to confer with them. There are several matters in it to which I give you my best answers:

On the question of attacking northward, I can see the reasons for it, I think, and sympathize with the feeling that offense is the best and sometimes the only defense. However, it is very evident to US here that any such attack now, or even to talk about such an attack, is to lose American official and public support and will weaken our position among other nations. It is too bad that this is true, yet I am positive that such is the fact. The tension is equally great in Korea, Germany and Yugoslavia just now, and not much less so in Greece. The strong feeling in American official and public circles is that we should continue to lean way over backward to avoid any semblance of aggression, and make sure the blame for what happens is upon Russia(sic). I can fully concur in your disgust that we must still continue to retreat and appease, after four years—but I do think the time is not too far away when a turn will come and Russia will be thrown back.

I have written a Periscope on the military situation which I hope is in accord with what you have in mind, and (if it is) I'll do my best to get this

point of view set before various influential public figures and in the magazines and press. But to approach Truman or any other high officials now to suggest an attack across the 38th parallel would, I feel sure, be disastrous...

Before you get this you'll know whether the Congress adjourned without passing the Aid Bill. Just now we find it in a bad snarl. The Senate is voting to pass it this afternoon, but the House may put off any action until next January. I have just had a talk with Congressman Riehlman, and he says the five Congressmen who were in Korea will assemble tomorrow morning to see what pressure they can bring on the House leadership to pass the bill. Riehlman is the only one who is back today; the others get in the morning. They are good friends—were much impressed by you and by what they saw in Seoul—and will do all they can.

We who are here can (and will) try, of course, to change the opinion that the Republic must not attack the North, but until and unless that opinion does change, I personally feel most strongly that either to attack or to indicate that you may plan to do so would be to take a grave risk of losing all support by either the US or the UN. Meanwhile, if we do lose the “cold war,” that would only result in its becoming “hot” and that may well be the only way in which the issues finally can be settled. With warmest of good wishes and respectful regards....”

As noted the letter was in reply to Rhee's correspondence of September 30, 1949. In that letter the South Korean President had pressured Oliver and his Korean aides stationed in America to intensify their efforts to secure US aid for his “aggressive measure” against the North. In it Rhee asserted: “now is the most psychological moment to take an aggressive measure. Our loyal allies in the North are waiting. The ROKA, together with friendly communist forces in North Korea could easily topple Kim Il Sung from power, and then his men would be driven to the mountains where they could be starved out.”

Oliver and Ambassadors Chang and Chough were alarmed that if the content of Rhee's letter were leaked it would destroy any chance of his winning US support. He had to be told the truth. Yet hoping to allay Rhee's tempestuousness, Oliver wrote his answer, dated October 10, in a manner calculated to help Rhee

understand the parameters of United States support and also to offer hints of a better alternative to achieving his goal, i.e. that “we should continue to lean way over backward to avoid any semblance (sic) of aggression, and make sure the blame for what happens is upon Russia.”

Since Oliver went to Washington to discuss Rhee’s letter not only with Messrs. Chang and Chough, but also with influential American friends of Korea, I submit that Rhee regarded Oliver’s advice as a recommendation of those Americans that the way to win US military support for his conquest of the North was to provoke an attack by the North in such secrecy that the world would view the ensuing war as North Korea’s aggression. Although Rhee would have preferred an iron-clad, formal, and bilateral mutual defense treaty with the US, he was anxious to move ahead with Pukjin and in his zeal interpreted their backhanded advice as a green light. He could not, after all, wait indefinitely.

By happy coincidence, the year 1950 was a Congressional election year in America. The Republicans had many things going in their favor. After 17 years under Democratic Administrations, the country showed strong signs of weariness, and Harry Truman had not been a charismatic President. The first post-war recession had hit the nation. Most serious of all, the cold war was heating up. The Truman Administration was increasingly on the defensive against the Republican charge that it was soft on communism and “had lost China to the communists.” The charge became shrill following the Acheson speech of January, 1950 before the National Press Club in which the Secretary of State excluded Korea and Taiwan from the US defense arc in the Pacific. Truman was, thus, forced to take action in order to blunt a serious partisan split on US foreign policy. Consequently, he brought into his Administration John Foster Dulles, as mentioned earlier. Dulles was given the title of Ambassador, in which capacity he was to help create a sense of bipartisanship in foreign policy and advise the Secretary of State on matters pertaining to the US-Japan peace treaty. In fact, however, he acted as though he were co-Secretary of State in charge of East Asia and, as mentioned earlier, he quickly embraced Rhee.

Was his firm and energetic support for Rhee a result of judicious inquiry? Hardly. Prior to Rhee’s return to Korea in 1945, their acquaintance was casual, as far as Dulles was concerned. Dulles had never met any other Korean leaders. He had never been to Korea. All he knew was what he had learned from the

Japanese; that Korea, a tiny country, was a colony of either China or Japan. What he knew about Rhee was from the latter's followers in America who described him as a staunch anticommunist and that he was by far the most influential of Korean leaders. Those assurances were sufficient to secure Dulles' trust in Rhee.

### C. The Eve of Pukjin

Rhee's obsession was to become the President of a unified Korea for life. An old man already, his time was running out and he was in a hurry. Hence Rhee was thrilled by the appointment of John Foster Dulles as Ambassador with broad responsibilities. Rhee finally had a powerful ally in the Truman Administration. He ordered his aides to intensify the campaign of unifying Korea before the communists consolidated their power. In order to impress American officials and foreign reporters, he "beefed up" the ROK Army by increasing its size, making sure that his troops looked and acted like battle-ready US GIs. He sought to raise their morale and combat capability by sending them to the North to wear down the northern forces.

Such incursions into each other's territories were carried out by the troops on both sides. However, the southerners attacked the northerners more frequently and harder, as the Henderson memo and General Roberts' statement show. Between January, 1949 and June 25, 1950 the ROK Army made over 2,000 attacks on the North. A North Korean historian estimated that in several of the fiercest attacks the southern forces hurled many thousand troops.

More importantly, President Rhee maintained close contact with Ambassador Dulles through his own Ambassador, John Myon Chang. The most important contact was made on June 12, 1950. On that day Ambassador Chang called on the "State Department dignitary" with urgent instructions from Rhee to convey a message to Dulles. The gist of the message was that the Republic of Korea was in grave crisis, and the ROK desperately needed an official guarantee of protection from the US. That led Dulles to make a hurried visit to Seoul from June 17 to 21, 1950.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Who Fired the First Shot?

On June 14, 1950, two days after his meeting with John Myon Chang, Ambassador Dulles left for Korea. As he left Washington, he announced that his trip was “only for the purpose of getting first-hand information. I have no mission to negotiate about anything.” Nevertheless, he hinted at the importance of his trip by adding that he was going in order to “firm up” American policy on Korea. With appropriate State Department officials, he planned an itinerary including a meeting with the South Korean President, a visit to the 38th parallel and an address before the South Korean National Assembly. This visit was understood in Pyongyang as US support for Rhee’s Pukjin plan, a view shared by some officials in Washington.

#### A. Dulles’ Visit in South Korea

Ambassador Dulles’ visit to South Korea roused great curiosity in Washington and Seoul. Following Dulles’ appointment traffic between Seoul and Washington had noticeably increased as Ambassadors Muccio and Chang stepped up their undisclosed contacts with one another. Arriving in Seoul on June 17, Ambassador Dulles, accompanied by high US and Korean officials, made an inspection trip to the front the following day and described himself as well pleased by what he observed.

On the 19th, Dulles delivered an address before the National Assembly. It was a pep talk, comparing the potentiality of twentieth century Korea with the great accomplishments made by the United States during the nineteenth century. The United States, he said, set an example for the world to emulate; the

Republic of Korea could serve the same function in the twentieth century, he extolled. He concluded his address with these words, which were written by his State Department colleagues: “You are not alone. You will never be alone so long as you continue to play worthily your part in the great design of human freedom.”

Both his speech before the Korean National Assembly and his visit to the border received wide publicity. However, the most important item on his agenda—the meeting with President Rhee—went completely unreported. Was it due to negligence by the press and media? That was out of the question. Had the meeting been canceled? It surely was held on the 18th. Then the reason for the news blackout could only have been to maintain its top secrecy.

But Rhee had had little luck keeping secrets. It was no different with the secret understanding which I am proposing that he and Dulles reached at this meeting. This was inevitable because the plan of action could not be implemented by Rhee alone. Others had to know. The gist of what went on at the meeting is provided by two sources of which I am aware.

According to one writer, Choe Jae Il, Rhee had claimed that “The division of Korea must be brought to an end before the Chinese communists consolidate power. Otherwise, world communism will win the cold war.”

According to a former Lieutenant General Choi Duk Shin, ROKA, with whom I was personally acquainted, Dulles had assured Rhee that America was ever ready to help those nations which were ready and willing to fight communism. Dulles indicated that he was impressed by what he had seen at the 38th parallel and told Rhee that if he was ready to attack the communist North, the US would lend help, through the United Nations. However, he advised Rhee of the need to persuade the world that the ROK was attacked first, and to plan his actions accordingly.

Alas, there is no physical evidence to document the precise content of Rhee and Dulles’ secret meeting other than hearsay, no matter how well informed. Yet in light of the fact that the Truman Administration would not give Rhee an official endorsement of his desire to pursue a military conquest of the north, there is no question in this author’s mind that it would have been completely consistent with Rhee’s character and modus operandi to seek a back door solution to the problem of securing US military support, and that Dulles was just the man to open the door

for him. Thus, relying on his words with Dulles as asserted by the aforementioned sources I believe that Rhee's plan unfolded as described earlier: the six hour shelling of the northern defenses in Ongjin, a brief pause, and massive attack across the 38th parallel in the early dawn of June 25, 1950.

## B. Bungled Execution of the Rhee-Dulles Plan

The plan was clumsily executed. In the first place, the northerners had already been alerted to a probable offensive by the ROKA when they saw Dulles inspecting the border behind his binoculars, accompanied by a large entourage of military and civilian leaders. Secondly, Rhee had grossly underestimated the North's military prowess.

Those secret agents of Rhee who had escaped liquidation by North Korean security forces were more interested in feeding him information designed to please him than in sending him factual intelligence. Thirdly, as pointed out earlier, the Dulles-Rhee plan ceased to be a secret after Rhee had broached it to his aides, and before long the northerners were tipped off.

Apropos the controversy over which side initiated the Korean War, what happened in Seoul and Tokyo on June 25, 1950 is quite revealing. Initially, there was calm in both capitals. It being Sunday, most of their inhabitants slept late, oblivious to the fighting along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in Korea. In Seoul, Rhee was awakened at 6:30 a. m. by his defense minister who brought him the news. Rhee calmly gave orders to "resist with full force" and, so far as it is known, all was quiet at the Presidential Mansion during that morning. No emergency conferences were held. No orders to his ambassador to request US aid were sent. However, unbeknownst to anyone at the Mansion, except, perhaps, his wife, Rhee did telephone General MacArthur in Tokyo to report the outbreak of the fighting and to appeal for help.

Following the call by the Korean President to MacArthur the SCAP Headquarters was thrown into commotion. Senior aides to the General were hurriedly called into emergency conferences. They were agog, not that war had broken out in Korea, but because of how it was said to have occurred. Soon there after the rumor began to spread through the SCAP, the city of Tokyo and beyond.

What was the rumor about? That morning John Gunther, a prominent author and his wife were on a sightseeing trip in Nikko, accompanied by two aides to MacArthur. As they returned to their hotel for their mid-morning tea, one of MacArthur's aides was called to the telephone. When he came back to rejoin the others, he whispered to them in suppressed excitement: "A big story has just broken. The South Koreans have attacked the North." However, the Gunther Party was told on its return to Tokyo by the MacArthur staff that the initial report was inaccurate; the fact was that the "North Koreans had attacked the South." Considering that the original version of MacArthur's aide's report continued to circulate in Tokyo during that afternoon, Gunther's retraction of it as a "misunderstanding" seems unconvincing. Later in the afternoon South Korea's minister in Tokyo telephoned the Presidential Mansion in Seoul to report a "very distressing rumor" about the Korean War being circulated in the Japanese capital. It made the President very nervous. Evidently the rumor referred to by the minister in Tokyo was the same one relayed to Gunther earlier in the morning.

That phone call plus the unfavorable report from the battle front so unnerved Rhee that beginning from the evening of the 25<sup>th</sup> his close aides had to shield him from all but those news items sanctioned by his wife. By late Monday, June 26, he could think of virtually nothing but fleeing from Seoul. That evening Kyongmu Dae, the Presidential Mansion, was a scene of turmoil with arguments for and against the President's leaving Seoul debated between Rhee and his partisans on the one side and several "elder statesmen" and US Ambassador Muccio on the other. In the pre-dawn hours of June 27<sup>th</sup> while Rhee's cabinet was meeting in an emergency session, the President and his party slipped out of Kyongmu Dae and fled south by train. Arriving in Taejon, Rhee went into a bitter tirade against the United States accusing it of "never living up to its promises."

What an over-reaction for Rhee, who had boasted that he could conquer North Korea in three days, to be the first to flee as the tide of fighting turned unfavorable! Was it not a tacit admission that he had provoked the war through his inept implementation of the Rhee-Dulles secret agreement? Did he not panic as he imagined himself being executed as a war criminal should the US let him down and the North win the war?

Not only did Rhee botch his part of the Rhee-Dulles plan; Dulles also contributed to the bungling. In the first place, why he chose to inspect the 38th parallel on June 18th so ostentatiously as he did is a mystery. If it was for his own publicity at home, he was successful. However, the manner in which he showed up at the border attracted the attention of the northerners and served as a warning to them to take precaution. In the second place, like most conservative Americans, Dulles blithely overestimated Rhee's popularity among the Korean people of the North as well as the South. Hence, when he learned that there was no outpouring of welcome for Rhee in the North while the tide of the fighting turned against the South, Ambassador Dulles, now in Japan, hastened to firm up US commitment to South Korea. In a cable to Secretary of State Acheson he wrote as follows:

“It is possible that the South Koreans may themselves contain and repulse the attack and, if so, this is the best way. If, however, it appears that they cannot do so, then we (Dulles and John M. Allison, Director of the Office of East Asian Affairs who was accompanying him) believe that United States should not sit by while Korea is overrun by unprovoked armed attack. It would start a disastrous chain of events leading most probably to world war. We suggest that the Security Council might call for action on behalf of the world organization under article 106 by the five powers or such of them as are willing to respond.”

The cable is significant both for what it did and did not say. In it Dulles referred to the fighting in Korea as an “unprovoked armed attack” by North Korea. But he did not explain how he knew that it was “an unprovoked armed attack.” He was not in Korea when it happened. Hence, was this not an inadvertent admission that the fighting was in accordance with his secret understanding with Rhee?

In the aftermath of the Watergate and Iran-Contra scandals, such off-the-record activities of high ranking Washington officials seem tragically passe. But in the less contentious period of the 1950s who would have imagined that plans were being hatched behind the back of the Congress and the American people to go to war in support of a ruthless dictator in some unheard of Third

World country thousands of miles away? The fact is that shortly following WWII, “roll back” versus “containment” was a subject of heated debate in Washington. There was no consensus in Congress, let alone in the country as a whole, on which policy presented the most desirable means of dealing with the Soviet Union and with communist movements for national liberation throughout the Third World. Yet, faced with the fact that the Korean people of the South as well as North were united in wishing to oust Rhee and reunify Korea peacefully, it did not appear that a policy of “containment” towards Korea was feasible.

The question, then, for Truman, as it has been for so many of his successors, was how to respond decisively to the emergence of a communist State, in this instance, Korea, when a consensus in Congress, not to mention his own party, was lacking. Truman recruited Dulles, a Republican anticommunist crusader, to advise the State Department on this matter. Dulles and Rhee devised an answer, i.e. commit the US to “defensive” military action in Korea on the pretext that South Korea had been the victim of brazen aggression by the North. Moreover, if the war could be dressed up as a multilateral “police action,” who could oppose vigorous US support of such a United Nations undertaking?

Rhee who had been eager for attack on the North hastened to implement the Dulles-Rhee agreement. On his orders, ROKA military officers commenced action in haste. It backfired, however, because their northern counterparts, tipped off by crypto communists in the Rhee regime and forewarned by the conspicuous Dulles’ visit at the front, had been prepared for the Rhee offensive. According to North Korean veterans whom this writer interviewed, Rhee’s strategy had been to pin down the KPA (North Korean Army) along the central and eastern fronts of the 38th parallel, while his crack Army in Ongjin struck hard for the strategically important city of Haeju on the northern side. To that end the ROKA began massive bombardments against the North in the Kaesong area the night of June 23, 1950, but the 6-hour shelling and bombardments failed to crack the KPA’s defenses in Ongjin near Haeju. ROKA succeeded only in breaking into the city briefly suffering heavy losses. The KPA counterattacked on the morning of June 25. Had Rhee’s forces succeeded in destroying the northerners near Haeju and occupied the city, the ROKA could have encircled the KPA at the central front leading to Seoul. In other words,

Rhee started the Korean War in accordance with the Dulles-Rhee secret agreement but was defeated due to bungling by both.

### C. Damage Control by Washington

At the beginning there was virtual unanimity in the West about the origin of the Korean War. It was an aggression by communist North Korea on orders from expansionist Stalin. Editorials and commentaries in the press throughout the non-communist world echoed the US contention. With only one abstention, the United Nations Security Council voted to request that North Korean forces cease military action and return to their positions north of the 38th parallel. Even such an astute scholar-statesman as George F. Kennan saw no reason to doubt the prevailing view when he was told about the war for the first time. He wrote in his memoir: “It was clear to me from the start that we would have to react with all necessary force to repel this attack to expel the North Korean forces from the southern half of the peninsula...”

The sole exception to this view was provided by a respected journalist, I. F. Stone. He cautioned against making a hasty judgment. His rationale for advising caution was related to me in the late 1970s during a leisurely lunch. He admitted to being woefully uninformed about Korea, let alone Kim Il Sung. But he thought himself well enough informed about the USSR and Stalin. As far as he knew, Stalin was imperialistic; however, the USSR had suffered such staggering losses in manpower and property as a result of WWII that it would have been the height of folly for Stalin to challenge the US. And Stalin was not Hitler, a reckless gambler. So, why all the rush since the odds against North Korea defeating the US-backed South Korea without all-out support by the USSR would be overwhelming?

Nevertheless, the United States was bent on convincing the whole world that communist North Korea, on orders from Stalinist Russia, invaded the unsuspecting Republic of Korea which had been established by the United States as a showcase of democracy in East Asia. Toward that end it adopted sundry stratagems, such as planting stories and pictures in magazines calculated to prove its case, and publishing “documents” in support of its contention. For instance, the United States tried to deny the authenticity of a letter from

President Syngman Rhee to his agent in America, Robert T. Oliver, dated September 30, 1949, a portion of which was as follows:

“I feel strongly that now is the most psychological moment when we should take an aggressive measure and join with our loyal communist army in the North to clear up the rest of them in Pyongyang. We will drive some of Kim Il Sung’s men to the mountain region and there we will gradually starve them out. Then our line of defense must be strengthened along the Tumen and Yalu rivers.”

In another example, the *Reporter*, a new and popular magazine, showed an inflammatory picture in its issue of September 26, 1950. It depicted a big, burly Russian officer, “Colonel Kalinov,” throwing a puny North Korean onto a flaming Korean War. But Kalinov was an invention. The caption had been planted by the CIA. The magazine folded up not long thereafter.

The most important campaign by the United States to prove North Korea's guilt was its revelation of “captured documents.” On May 2, 1951, the United States representative to the United Nations, Warren R. Austin, transmitted a special report to the United Nations Secretary General, Trygve Lie, from the Commanding General of the UN Command in Korea, Matthew B. Ridgeway. It included two documents said to have been captured from the North Korean Army forces. The first document, Reconnaissance Order No. 1, dated June 18, 1950 was reportedly discovered in Seoul on October 4, 1950, when the UN forces entered the city. Allegedly, it was issued by the Chief of the Intelligence Section of the North Korean Army to the Commander of the 4th Infantry Division of the North Korean Army.

The second document, Operation Order No. 1, dated June 22, 1950, was said to have been captured near Taejon on July 20, 1950. It was reportedly issued by the Commander of the 4th Infantry Division of the North Korean forces, Lee Kwon Mu. General Ridgeway wrote that these documents, both written in Korean, were in the possession of the United States Government.

The Commander of the United Nations Forces emphasized that the two Orders issued to the North Korean forces on June 18 and June 22, 1950 provided “clear and documented confirmation of the fact that the attack against

the Republic of Korea, launched on the 25th of June, 1950” was carefully prepared and was carried out in accordance with a deliberate and preconceived plan for the conquest of the Republic of Korea.

#### D. Were the Documents Genuine?

On examining the documents, however, one finds them more confusing than convincing as to their authenticity. Although the Commanding General of the UN Forces had declared that they were carefully prepared by the leaders of the North Korean forces, in my view their authorship remains seriously suspect. For example consider the following with regard to Reconnaissance Order 1.

As noted, Ridgeway submitted English translations of the captured documents to the UN claiming that the originals were in the Korean language. Shortly thereafter, the North Koreans disputed the authenticity of the documents partly on the grounds that the English transliteration of these "originals," in particular the Reconnaissance Order 1, repeatedly made reference to Korean towns and cities in Japanese, a practice which had been allegedly outlawed in the DPRK in 1947. One month later US Ambassador to the United Nations, Ernest Gross, moved to discredit North Korea's rebuttal. In effect, he affirmed that the “original” Reconnaissance Order was indeed written in Korean, but “clarified” that the actual document which had been captured was a Russian translation of the Korean original. Its purpose, he claimed, was to communicate the Reconnaissance Order to “a person familiar with the Russian language but not with Korean.” He went on to explain that the Korean-to-Russian translator had used Japanese to identify Korean towns and cities because Russians were accustomed to this practice.

Obviously, the veracity of this explanation rested on Gross’ ability to produce the original Korean language document showing the proper North Korean references to places. But he made no mention of this document. He simply declared, in passing, that the Russian language version had been “translated from the Korean.” In the absence of the Korean original, one could just as easily speculate that it had been fabricated by ROK Army personnel, who, like the Russians at that time, were accustomed to using Japanese names for Korean places. Even more damning is the fact that the US has never even been able to

produce the alleged captured documents (e.g. the Reconnaissance Order 1 purportedly written in Russian) in response to requests by scholars. I submit that only someone already firmly committed to the belief that North Korea invaded the South could find the US explanation of the captured documents convincing.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Time to End the Polemics

It is time for the vituperative invectives between Washington and Pyongyang to end. Judging from personal observations in America and North Korea during my several visits there, I can say positively that this is counterproductive for both the United States and Koreans. During a recent visit in Pyongyang I heard a gentleman ask, “Did you know that during the Korean War the American imperialists almost put Syngman Rhee to death? I wouldn't have minded that as he was a traitor to Korea. But when I also learned that the US CIA tried to assassinate our President, Kim Il Sung, by offering a bribe to a Cherokee Indian, code named Buffalo, I was furious. How could the US be so barbaric?”

I told him I was aware of those attempts. At the same time I reminded him that it was a Korean in South Korea who shot Mr. Kim Koo, one of our great leaders, to death. I added, “Since the murderer was one of our fellow Koreans, does it not show that all of US and all human beings the world over are capable of committing such barbarities under certain conditions?” The gentleman agreed and said: “I hope that the people of the South as well as North and indeed of America would soon learn to live as good neighbors.” We told each other we should work toward that end.

On learning that I was from the United States and that I had lived there for nearly a half century, my new friend was also eager to hear what I thought of America and its people. I told him that by and large they were much like any other country and people. Assuming that he had been told mainly of the seamy side of America and Americans, I told him of their admirable qualities by citing two examples. One was their generosity under crushing adversity exhibited during the Great Depression of the 1930s. I told him that with nearly a quarter

of the American population out of work and hundreds of thousands of banks and business firms going bankrupt every year the government of the US was so desperate to provide even a few jobs for hungry Americans that it tried to ban foreign students in America from holding even part-time jobs. When this plan, the Doak Ruling, was announced by the Secretary of Labor, virtually all of the heads of American colleges and universities registered heated protests, calling it heartless and un-American. The government was forced to rescind the rule. Had the rule been enforced I, myself, would have been forced to quit school.

The other example was one that I experienced during World War II. I was pursuing graduate studies at Princeton University while simultaneously employed by the government as consultant to the US Offices of War Information and Censorship. In spite of the heavy workload I accepted as many invitations for talks and consultations on Korea by civic organizations and magazines as I could. These activities made me known to many prominent persons at the university as well as in the town of Princeton. In discussing the future of Korea, all of my listeners agreed that after the war Korea must immediately gain her independence. When I suggested that a committee be organized to voice this view, they readily consented. Thus, the Princeton Committee for a Free Korea was formed with Professor William Starr Myers, ex-consultant to President Hoover, as Chairman. Among its members were Professors Luther P. Eisenhart, Dean of the Graduate School, Princeton, Edward S. Corwin, noted authority on the US Constitution, Joseph D. McGoldrick, Comptroller of the City of New York and M. D. Thompson, President of the Bank of Elmira whose founder was also a catalyst for the Woonan Mining Company. Professor Albert Einstein was its honorary member. These men, representing a wide spectrum of views on world affairs, had no doubt whatsoever that the people of America shared their views on Korea. Many scoffed at the idea that peace and prosperity in the world depended solely upon large and powerful nations simply by virtue of their size and might. They believed that all nations regardless of size and military strength had an equal right to sovereignty and independence as all persons are endowed with the same rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Their view was clearly echoed by Professor Albert Einstein. During a visit with him in 1955 which unfortunately turned out to be my last, the noted

scientist commented that in his view the United States was manipulating the UN for its benefit. He added that the world organization was being exploited by the great powers at the expense of the small nations. He asked me whether I had read *The Hidden History of the Korean War* by I. F. Stone. When I answered that I had and found it an excellent research, he was pleased. He went on to say great powers do not act on the basis of facts only but manufacture the facts to serve their purposes and force their will on smaller nations.

Dr. Einstein emphasized that peace in the world depended on the common people the world over who know the facts as they are and adhere to them regardless of what the great powers tell them. He then proceeded to ask me questions about President Rhee and Premier Kim Il Sung; what sort of men were they? I had no difficulty briefing him on Dr. Rhee as I had known him long and intimately at times. On Premier Kim, I had to beg his indulgence until our next visit for my knowledge about him was severely limited at the time.

It was through these several anecdotes that I had hoped to share with my acquaintance in the North my conviction that in spite of years of hostilities Koreans and Americans could be friends.

However, for this friendship to be realized both sides must come to share a more accurate understanding of the other. Even now Americans know very little about President Kim Il Sung of North Korea. What little they know is propagated by Washington. They found themselves at war in Korea forty-one years ago, not knowing why. If they continue to be uninformed about the facts that led to the war, they may find themselves at war again. The life and works of President Kim Il Sung are far beyond the scope of this writing. However, in order to help lift the curtain of ignorance and encourage an end to polemics, I offer the content of a document which shows how different President Kim Il Sung is from the man portrayed by Washington and Seoul. The following is based on a memoir by the Chinese Ambassador to North Korea during the Korean War.

In mid-September of 1950 when the UN Forces were pushing menacingly toward the Yalu border, Prime Minister Chou Enlai of China flew to the USSR, accompanied by an interpreter. His aim was to explain to Stalin that China had decided to enter the Korean War in support of the DPRK and to seek the Kremlin's support in money and material. Since the Soviet leader was vacationing on the Black Sea coast, the Stalin-Chou meeting took place at the

Soviet leader's seaside resort. Prime Minister Chou told Stalin that in order to check the drive by the UN Forces close to China's border and thus to insure peace in East Asia, his government had decided to intervene on behalf of North Korea. Chou explained to Stalin that, having only recently defeated the Kuomintangites, China desperately needed aid from its Russian comrades. Specifically, China needed ammunition, airplanes, money, and means of transportation.

Stalin's response was discouraging. He was fearful that China's entry into the Korean War would ignite World War III, especially in view of the recent massive landing of the US Army in Inchon. Pointing out that the USSR had been devastated by the Second World War both in manpower and economic resources, he did not see how he could accede to Chou's request. He then added that it might be advisable that should Kim Il Sung be forced out of Korea, he might be allowed to set up his exile government somewhere in northeast China and wage guerrilla war.

Upon Chou's return home, Mao Zedong called an emergency meeting of top leaders of the Party and Government on October 13 to hear Chou's report and debate the course China should take. Following a full discussion, it was unanimously decided that sending volunteer forces to support the DPRK Army was in the best interest not only of their fraternal DPRK, but also of China, Asia and, indeed, the world. It was noted that if China failed to go to the aid of North Korea and allowed the enemy to reach the Yalu, the reactionary forces at home and throughout the world would feel encouraged to rise up in rebellion against the People's Republic of China. Moreover, northeast China would be immediately exposed to danger, tying down the People's Army in that region and depriving China of vitally needed electric power supplied from Manchuria. It was decided that China had no choice but to send military aid to the DPRK. The advantages of China of doing so far outweighed any sacrifices she might incur.

Thus China, braving the awesome military might of the US and without Russia's help, undertook the staggering duty of international solidarity and plunged in to aid North Korea. Accordingly, on October 18, Mao Zedong telegraphed Ni Ziliang, China's Ambassador to the DPRK, instructing him to inform Premier Kim Il Sung that China would send volunteer forces to help him defend his country.

That night Ambassador Ni Ziliang and Ambassador-designate Tsai Chongwen drove through dark streets of Pyongyang to Premier Kim Il Sung's headquarters. It was located in an underground shelter below Moranbong, the entrance to which was hidden under camouflage and covered with sandbags on both sides. The Chinese envoys entered it and walked down the winding passageway. At its end was a large, well-lighted hall. The Premier's office was at one end of the hall. As they walked into his office, they were confronted with an unexpected situation. The Premier was engaged in heated argument with another man, oblivious to their presence. The Chinese envoys didn't know whether to interrupt them or to walk out. The man with whom Premier Kim was arguing was North Korea's Vice Premier and Foreign Minister, Pak Hon Yong. He was also leader of the South Korean Labor Party.

Only after Pak had left did Kim notice the Chinese envoys and greet them. Still tense, he exclaimed: "That impossible man! He is dead-set against retreat into the mountains to enable US to continue war against the enemy." Thus Kim explained what the argument was about. After the three were seated, Ambassador Ni showed Premier Kim a telegram from Mao informing Kim that China was preparing to send volunteer forces to North Korea. Kim was so delighted that, forgetting his quarrel with Pak Hon Yong, he kept exclaiming: "How wonderful!" Kim asked the Chinese envoys to please extend his thanks to Chairman Mao and his associates and to assure them that the people of the DPRK would do their utmost to prove worthy of their trust.

Then Premier Kim led the Chinese diplomats out to the Conference Hall, picked up a bottle of whiskey from a side table and filled three glasses. He offered one to each of them and, holding one in his own hand, he said: "Let US drink to our common victory." The toast buoyed the spirits of all. The Chinese Ambassador, usually a man of reserve, found it impossible to restrain himself. Lifting his glass ebulliently, he said: "In the past we Chinese and you Koreans stood together shoulder to shoulder and fought against the Japanese and vanquished them. This time we will again stand together shoulder to shoulder and fight on until the Americans are defeated. Let US drink to that victory."

The foregoing encounter indicates that contrary to Washington's belief that Stalin had ordered Kim Il Sung to start the Korean War, the Soviet dictator opposed it. Moreover, relations among the three communist leaders—Stalin, Mao

Zedong and Kim Il Sung—were clearly not hierarchical. Each acted according to what he believed to be in the best interest of his country.

Kim went to war against the US-backed Syngman Rhee regime because the latter attacked the North. With regard to China's decision, certainly the revelation of Mao's telegram to the Soviet ruler requesting aid for China's entry into the war (New York Times, Feb 26, 1992) should convince all that Washington's belief that the war, including China's role, was of Stalin's design was deadly wrong. Rather, Mao entered the war because he believed that the destruction of North Korea by the United Nations Command was a threat to the People's Republic of China. True, the USSR gave modest aid to North Korea but only because, having helped establish the DPRK, it felt obligated to assist in the defense of the country.

Finally, as the argument between Kim Il Sung and Pak Hon Yong revealed, Kim was not an irresponsible opportunist but rather a man of resolve. When the war went badly for the North, Pak was for surrender and placing themselves at the mercy of the enemy; Kim flatly opposed surrender and called for retreat to the northern mountains, if necessary, in order to continue fighting.

Had the United States known the aforementioned facts—that Stalin was against the Korean War, that China would not sit by with folded arms in the face of the US-ROK. invasion of the DPRK and that Kim Il Sung was a reliable and steadfast nationalist whose resolve was, and is, Korea's unification and friendly relations with all nations—would the United States have acted the way it did?

Having known Syngman Rhee for over 30 years and closely associated with him during World War II, I can claim that I knew him well. He was also excessively egoistic which resulted in his equating his own will with "patriotism" for Korea. On his return to Seoul after World War II he waged his presidential campaign on one issue: reunification of Korea through conquest of the North. Since this objective coincided with America's cold war priorities, Rhee became its "fair-haired boy," and he won handily. Still, he did not dare invade northward until 1950 for he lacked the necessary means—money and weapons.

Kim Il Sung was in a similar situation as was Rhee; he was unprepared militarily and economically. Neither were the USSR and China prepared for war. Rather, Kim knew too well that the people of Korea wanted peaceful

reunification and, being a young man, he was in no hurry to engage in military adventurism, I believe. Given these circumstances, would Kim have chosen the course of aggression? Contrary to the opinion of many Americans Kim Il Sung was, and is, an extraordinarily rational individual. However, this is not to say that he would cave in to an attack. As history shows he did not.

Whatever else Americans may feel about Kim Il Sung and North Korea, there is no profit in continuing the US promoted isolation of North Korea on the grounds that Kim Il Sung is an irrational, reckless leader. He is in my view, above all else a staunch nationalist with the will and intelligence to negotiate a lasting peace with the US. It is time to end the polemics.

## Conclusion

Of all of Korea's nationalist leaders in 1945, Syngman Rhee, alone, favored unification by means of military conquest. Rhee's tact prevailed, I submit, not because of popular support among Koreans nor due to "irrational" leadership in North Korea, but because in its desire to check the "Soviet threat," Washington supported him. Ultimately it was John Foster Dulles, a fiery advocate of "rolling back" communism, who saw virtue in Rhee's militarism and conspired with him to provoke a North Korean drive into the South in June, 1950. The rest is well known.

My inquiry leads me to further conclude the following:

1. The United States involved itself in Korea in utter ignorance of Korea and Koreans. It did so under the assumption that with the defeat of Japan and the advent of the cold war, Korea should not be lost to communism.

2. The US decided, apriori, that Koreans were incapable of governing themselves and that it should undertake the responsibility of preparing them for self-government.

3. Upon occupation of the southern half of Korea, the US played a leading role in creating a separate right-wing State in the south over which it still maintains military control and political influence.

4. Although there was much ado about "building democracy" in Korea among US officials, South Korea has remained an authoritarian state except during a brief interlude between 1960 and 1961.

5. The US is responsible for keeping the Korean peninsula in a state of “no war, no peace,” which keeps the cold war alive there while almost everywhere else it is disappearing. It saps the resources of northern as well as southern Korea which are vitally needed for the social development of both.

6. Stationing 40,000 US troops in South Korea not only costs billions of dollars annually, but also tarnishes America's image abroad as anachronistic and imperialistic.

7. The peoples of North and South Korea want the Korean War Armistice replaced by a permanent peace treaty, however the US and ROK governments persist in propagating the theory that the North cannot be trusted.

I submit that it is incumbent upon the American people to realize, after 45 years of United States involvement in Korea, that Koreans are one people, indivisible; never have they taken the road of aggression abroad, the sole exception being South Korea's involvement in Vietnam under the prodding of the Johnson Administration. Koreans are fiercely nationalistic and will, sooner or later, tear down the barrier that has split their country in two. Koreans will regard as friends those nations who support them in their aim of reunifying their country. Clearly the American people must make a choice—to stand with the Korean people in their struggle for national sovereignty or to acquiesce to the status quo at the risk of another war.

Let there be peace in Korea, not a fragile truce. Let Korea be free of foreign troops and nuclear arsenal. Let her reduce her arms to the lowest level sufficient for defense. Let her be reunited as one nation in peace and friendship with all nations including the United States. Let there never be another Korean War.

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