Syngman Rhee's Efforts in the United States to Promote Korean Independence from 1904 to 1945

by

Jiwon Kim

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APPROVED:

Burton I. Kaufman, Chairman

Ronald J. Nurse

Young-tsu Wong

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(ABSTRACT)

This study examines Syngman Rhee's activities in the United States, from 1904 to 1945, as he tried to gain independence for Korea. Rhee was a prominent Korean nationalist, anti-communist, and first President of South Korea. Chapter One (1904-1918) examines how Rhee began his fight for Korean independence after consequential events in Korean history. Chapter Two (1919-1938) looks at Rhee's activities as a principal leader of Korean independence from 1919 to 1938. After the March First Movement in Korea in 1919, he became the President of the Korean Provisional Government and concentrated his efforts on diplomacy and propaganda in the United States. Chapter Three (1939-1945) focuses on Rhee's efforts for the recognition of the Korean Provisional Government and the guarantee of Korean independence immediately after the war. In addition, the chapter examines why Rhee started to fight against Russian aggression toward Korea. Chapter Four (after 1945) briefly examines Rhee's continuous fight for Korean independence against Russian communism, after he returned to Korea. As this thesis concludes, Rhee's long struggle for Korean independence greatly contributed to the establishment of a democratic South Korea.

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Introduction

Around 1890 there was a great change in the political situation in Korea. Japan, Russia, and China struggled to dominate Korea which had been ruled by the Yi Dynasty since 1392. Japan, in particular, became the strongest power to take over Korea. Through Sino-Japanese war in 1894-895 and the Russo-Japanese war in 1904-1905, Japan removed other influences over Korea. In 1904 Japan concluded a Protectorate of Japan over Korea and in 1910 finally annexed Korea.

Syngman Rhee started his fight for Korean independence in 1896 when he participated in the Independence Club. The Independence Club's purpose was to reform the monarchy system and to remove Japan's influence over Korea. He came to the United States as a special envoy for Korean independence in 1904 and continued his fight for Korean independence throughout his life. He became President of the Korean Provisional Government in 1919 and worked as a statesman to represent Koreans for the Korean cause. Throughout his long years of exile (1904-1945), Rhee pursued

a single goal: to establish a free and united Korea. Rhee carried out his objectives through diplomacy and international commitment. He insisted upon his policy of peaceful appeals to public opinion and to the various governments.

He is a historically significant figure because he worked as a statesman for Korean independence through diplomacy and propaganda. Also he emphasized Korean nationalism through education and his leadership contributed to uniting Koreans. He received a Ph.D. in international law from Princeton in 1910. Rhee was distinguished from other nationalists due to his intelligence. Other Korean nationalists concentrated on military measures to win Korean independence.

This thesis focuses on Rhee's activities for Korean independence in the United States from 1904 when he came to the United States as a special envoy for preservation of Korean independence to the liberation of Korea from Japan in 1945. Although this thesis is mainly concerned about Rhee's activities in the United States, a brief summary of Rhee's activities after he returned to Korea is necessary to evaluate his activities. This is given in Chapter Four which briefly deals with Rhee's activities after 1945.

In general, most of the research on Rhee has concentrated on his presidential period (1948-1960). None has covered, in depth, his activities during the Japanese occupation of Korea which lasted from 1910 to 1945. Rhee's activities in the United States during this period have been examined in a historical context by a few studies and academic investigations which lacked objectivity. Three of the main studies about Rhee's activities are *Syngman Rhee* by Robert T. Oliver, Rhee's adviser, *Korea's Syngman Rhee* by Richard Allen, and *The Origins of the Korean War. Vol. II: The Roaring of the Cataract 1947-1950* by Bruce Cumings. Oliver recorded a lot of facts and

events related to Rhee, mainly Rhee's position. Allen criticized Rhee's activities based on poor sources. Cumings tried to criticize Rhee from several perspectives, but, at times, Cumings criticized excessively without enough evidence.

Some scholars have criticized Rhee as a fruitless negotiator and Rhee's activities for Korean independence as unsuccessful. They also criticized Rhee's policy of diplomacy and propaganda as excessive and felt he lacked the ability to organize military measure against the Japanese. His opponents blamed his leadership. They said Rhee could not unite the nationalist movement under a single leader.

In conclusion, Rhee's activities as nationalist and anticommunist, have not been failures in themselves. U.S. foreign policy and international affairs during that period limited Rhee's achievement of his goal for Korean independence. Although Rhee may have been incapable of accomplishing his ultimate objective before the Japanese surrender, his efforts to bring about Korean independence continued. He started to fight against Russian aggression toward Korea and contributed the establishment of a democratic South Korea.

Chapter One

Syngman Rhee's Fight for Korean Independence (1904-1918)

Syngman Rhee[1] began his quest for Korean independence after several consequential events in Korean history: the Japanese plot to take over Korea, the Portsmouth Peace Conference, and the "Christian Conspiracy Case" in Korea. In 1904 Rhee came to the United States to appeal to President Theodore Roosevelt for preservation of Korean independence. It was the first time Rhee was involved in international appeals for Korean independence. He also wanted to submit a petition to the Peace Conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire which was held from August 9, 1905 to September 5, 1905 between Japan and Russia under mediation of President Theodore Roosevelt. After he failed to achieve his mission, Rhee started studying at George Washington University in 1905 and received a B.A. degree in History. He received his

[1]For the general biography of Rhee, see Anna Rothe, ed. *Current Biography* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1947), 534-535.

Master's degree in European History from Harvard University in 1908, then enrolled in Princeton University for a Ph.D. in Political Science. After graduating from Princeton University, he returned to Korea and worked at the Y.M.C.A. which was involved with church work. But Rhee was forced to leave Korea to avoid arrest by the Japanese during the "Christian Conspiracy Case." In 1912 Rhee returned to the United States and concentrated on educating the Koreans in Hawaii. He had irreconcilable differences with his rivals among the Korean leaders in Hawaii while pursuing Korean nationalism. Rhee maintained his policy that education and diplomacy were the most important to win Korean independence. At this point, Rhee was beginning his long struggle as a patriot and nationalist for Korean independence.

The political situation in Korea explains why Rhee had to come to the United States as an unofficial envoy, to plead for Korean independence. On February 23, 1904, Japan concluded a Protectorate of Japan over Korea. According to the Protectorate, the Korean government had to accept being ruled by the Japanese government and had to ask for advice from the Japanese if they, the Koreans, wanted to improve the administration in any way. In return, Japan promised Koreans independence and territorial integrity. But, as Koreans gave in to the Japanese, they gave them the right to intervene the way they wanted to protect Korea's territorial integrity. Consequently, Japan demanded that Korea not conclude any agreement with a third power which would be "contrary to the principle of the present protocol."[2] First Korea needed Japanese assent. In May 1904, the Japanese also advised the Korean

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[2]U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1904* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905), 437.

emperor to agree to a series of decrees, renouncing all agreements and concessions previously secured by Russia, annulling the power of the Korean emperor, and declaring that all contracts with foreigners must have the approval of the Korean Minister of Finance.

Rhee had been involved in the Korean reform movement since 1896. He joined the Independence club as one of its members and became the head of this club. He aimed to reform the monarchy system and to remove the Japanese influence over Korea. In 1894, Japan started its plan to subjugate Korea. About that time, China and Japan were interested in dominating Korea. Japan forced China to give up all influence over Korea. On August 1, 1894, Japan declared war on China under the guise of freeing Korea from China. After Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895, Japan expelled Chinese influence over Korea and intensified policies to make Korea its colony. Japan kept advisers in Korea who were interfering in Korean affairs. On October 8, 1895, Japanese troops under the command of Viscount Miura murdered the Korean Queen Myungsung in her palace in Seoul because she would not accept the Japanese influence over Korea. Japan also tried to grant the Korean emperor's concessions to build railroads and other facilities in Korea. The Korean emperor granted concessions to Japan to build railroads at several points in Korea.

On November 5, 1897, the emperor commanded that the Independence club be disbanded, and its members be arrested because he thought this club was against the monarchy. From 1897 to 1904, Rhee was in prison in Seoul. The Japanese were watching Rhee after he was released from prison in August

1904 because the Japanese opposed all nationalist movements in Korea. The emperor was already a prisoner in his palace and was losing his power.

Syngman Rhee realized that Japan would soon seize Korea. He met with Premier Youngwhan Min and General Kiusul Han who were the most influential reformers in the court circle. At first, Premier Min and General Han asked the emperor to appoint Rhee as a Minister in the Korean legation in Washington, D.C. But the emperor could not do that because the Japanese would not agree to the appointment. These three men discussed how to save Korea from being swallowed by the Japanese and concluded that they had to appeal to the President of the United States, based upon the "Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation" of 1882, which the United States and Korean governments signed. Part of the treaty reads as follows:

> *If other powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either Government, the other will exert their good offices, on being informed of the case, to bring about an amicable arrangement, thus showing their friendly feelings.*[3]

These men justified their appeal to the United States based on this promise. Min, Han, and Rhee also planned for Rhee to participate at the Portsmouth Peace Conference as a representative of Korea. Finally, they decided that Rhee should go to the United States alone. At that time Rhee had no official appointment by the emperor. These three men could not discuss this with the emperor because the Japanese were always watching him.

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[3]U.S. Department of State, *A Historical Summary of United States-Korean Relations, with a Chronology of Important Developments 1834-1962* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 48.

Nevertheless, Rhee received a student passport and several important diplomatic communications from Premier Min and General Han. He left Seoul on November 14, 1904.[4]

On his way to Washington, D.C., Rhee stopped in Honolulu, where he talked with many Koreans. The Koreans in Hawaii drafted a resolution petitioning Roosevelt to keep Korean independence by invoking the Treaty of 1882. Also, Rhee and P.K. Yoon received a letter of introduction to Roosevelt courtesy of Dr. Wadman, the Methodist Mission Superintendent in Hawaii.

In Deccember, 1904 when Rhee arrived in Washington, D.C., he brought letters to Senator Hugh A. Dinsmore of Arkansas, a one-time American Minister in Seoul. After a friendly discussion with Rhee, Senator Dinsmore appeared sympathetic to Rhee's cause and promised to arrange an interview for Rhee with Secretary of State John Hay. Senator Dinsmore told Rhee he felt sure that Hay would favor full justice for Korea. In February 1905, Rhee and Dinsmore visited the Department of State and Dinsmore introduced Rhee to Hay. Hay expressed sympathy, but said, "I can do nothing for Korea."[5]

In the early Summer of 1905, a Peace Conference between Russia and Japan was held in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, under President Theodore Roosevelt's sponsorship. Rhee hoped to see Roosevelt and present a petition on behalf of the Koreans before the Peace Conference began. On July 7, 1905,

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[4]For Rhee's activities from December 1904 to June 1905, see Young-Hee Won and Chung-Tae Choi, eds, *Collecting of the Writings of Syngman Rhee 1898-1944* (Seoul: Cho Sun Il Bo-Sa, 1995), 97-111. Chapter two of this book consists of Rhee's autobiography.

[5]Young-Hee Won and Chung-Tae Choi, eds, *Collecting of the writings of Syngman Rhee 1898-1944,* 103.

Rhee and P.K. Yoon, a minister of the gospel and the head of a Korean congregation in Honolulu, were allowed to see Roosevelt at Sagamore Hill where the President was vacationing. Although they gave a petition to Roosevelt, he would not accept it.[6] He said, "I cannot interfere for the Koreans against Japan." Instead, he suggested they to obtain the sanction of the Korea Legation in Washington, D.C. Roosevelt would not be able to receive it unless it came to him through the State Department in Washington, D.C.[7]

The Korean Minister in Washington Yunjung Kim, refused to work with Rhee and Yoon to send a formal petition to the Peace Conference on behalf of the Korean government. Pro-Japanese Kim already had had secret agreements with the Japanese and he had secretly informed them of Rhee's activities as an unofficial envoy. He said he could not send a petition without commands from the Korean government. Both Rhee and Kim knew the Korean emperor could not instruct Minister Kim to send a formal petition to the Peace Conference at Portsmouth since the Japanese dominated the emperor. Rhee's efforts to plead to the American government on behalf of the Korean people had failed.

At the Portsmouth Peace Conference in 1905, all Western powers in the Pacific agreed that Korea should become a Japanese protectorate because they wanted Japan to prohibit Russian expansion toward the Pacific.[8] The United States agreed with Japan's interest in Korea. Rhee did not know the Taft-

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[6]Ibid., 114-115. "Will Ask Roosevelt to Protect Koreans." *New York Times* (4 August 1905).

[7]"Koreans See the President." *New York Times* (5 August 1905)

[8]U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1905* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1906), 825.

Katsura Agreement[9] was created in the early Summer of 1905, in Tokyo, by the Secretary of War, William Howard Taft and the Japanese Prime Minister Katsura. In a secret memorandum, the United States decided Japan could rule Korea if Japan promised not to try to take over the Philippines. Rhee continued to appeal to the American people to inform them of a Japanese plot to seize Korea. Also Rhee's conviction that America was the hope of Korea[10] became one of Rhee's most important policies during his life.

Despite his failure to win U.S. support against Japan, Rhee decided to stay in the United States. In 1905, he enrolled at George Washington University. He was classified as a sophomore in recognition of his Korean and Chinese studies in Seoul. While enrolled at George Washington, Rhee began to attend meetings about Korea because he wanted to inform the American public about Korea's situation. He lived off the money he received from these meetings. On June 5, 1907, he graduated from the Columbian College of George Washington University.

In the Fall of 1907, he enrolled at Harvard University for a Master's degree in European History and concentrated on his studies. He was graduated from Harvard University in the Spring 1908 in European History. Dr. Ernest F. Hall, a former missionary to Korea, helped Rhee get admitted to Princeton University on a scholarship for further study. In the Fall of 1908, he enrolled at Princeton University. There Rhee's major was International Law, with minors in American History and in Western Philosophy. While at Princeton Rhee met Woodrow Wilson who was President of Princeton. They talked

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[9]This agreement was not revealed until 1922.

[10]Robert Oliver, *Korea: Forgotten Nation, with an Introduction by Syngman Rhee* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affair Press, 1944), 7.

about political theory and international affairs. This process inspired Rhee to learn Western ways.[11] Dr. Andrew F. West, Dean of the Graduate School, and Wilson helped arrange speaking meeting at which Rhee attempted to mobilize support for the liberation movement and to warn of the ambitions of the Japanese. In the Summer of 1910, he received his Ph.D. in Political Science. During his student years, he made about 170 speeches on the political situation of Korea and on Japan's plot to seize Korea.[12]

While Rhee was in the United States, Korea was annexed to Japan in August 1910.[13] After that, Governor-General Terauchi arrived in Korea and started his policy in the new colony. He applied tyrannical measures to the economy, politics, culture, and other phases of life. The Japanese wanted to turn the entire Korean peninsula into a military camp.[14]

After 1910, the Japanese began to exploit economically their new colony. A land survey began in 1910 and was finished in 1918. By the end of 1914, landlord families constituted a little less than 2 per cent of the population on farms. However, they held about half of the total cultivated area. About 22 per cent of the Koreans, except this two per cent, owned their own land. The

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[11]More detail on the relationship between Rhee and Wilson, for example, how Wilson's political ideas influenced Rhee and how Rhee's concept about democracy is connected to Wilson's, is unknown.

[12]Jungju Seo, *Biography of Syngman Rhee* (Seoul: Mun Wha-Sa,1995), 196.

[13]U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1910* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1915), 681-683.

[14]Chong-Sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 90

remaining populations on farms was about 41 per cent tenant families who owned some land and 35 per cent were tenant families.[15]

The tenants were required to pay fees to the landlords as before. But the Japanese created a new burden for them. The government-general imposed taxes payable in money. Even though the taxes were imposed on the owners of land, the tenants also had to pay the taxes. To pay these taxes and to obtain necessities of life, the Koreans needed to sell their land. Within a few years about 76 per cent of the families on farm became tenants. The majority of them were deprived of their rights to the land and were allowed to stay only through short-term contracts. With a glut of land on the market, its value decreased quickly, and in some cases, land was purchased by the agencies of the Bank of Chosen for one of fifth of its former value. By the tens of thousands Japanese started to come to Korea to settle the lands thus bought for them by the Bank of Chosen. As a result, more than one fifth of the richest lands of Korea were possessed by the Japanese immigrants who had been sent over by this plan. About one million Koreans emigrated to Siberia, Manchuria, and China where situations were more bearable.

In addition to economic pressure by the Japanese, there were several other unjust policies. Since August 25, 1910, all political organizations were ordered to be dissolved within a week. All meetings, debates, and speeches were forbidden. Koreans, particularly members of the elite, cherished their ancient traditions, culture, and observance of Confucian philosophy. The Koreans believed the Japanese civilization was inferior to their own. Although their country had deteriorated economically and politically, they were proud of the quality of their culture. Nevertheless, the Japanese despised Korean

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[15]At that time, farming was the main part of economy in Korea.

civilization. They prohibited the use of Korean in public documents and schools. They also ordered that names of towns and personal names had to be changed from Korean to Japanese.

In short, the main Japanese policies for Korea were economic exploitation and political suppression. Korea was a source of food and materials for Japan. There were two legal systems. One was for the Japanese and the other one was for Koreans.[16] As a result of these policies, most Koreans were poor. Only the pro-Japanese Koreans were given advantages. The standard of living for the average Korean decreased. Rhee said, "Japan's occupation of Korea meant the enslavement of our nation."[17]

After Syngman Rhee received his Ph.D., he returned to Korea. These explanations have been offered for Rhee's decision to return to Korea. One of Rhee's biographers, Jungju Seo[18] emphasizes Rhee's patriotism. Rhee had been famous as a leader during the 1890s in Korea. After the Treaty of Annexation with Japan on August 22, 1910, Rhee wrote a statement to President Roosevelt appealing for Korean independence, but he was turned down. He then decided to return to Korea. According to Seo Rhee thought, "I have to go to my country! I have to go!"[19]

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[16]Michael Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea 1920-1925* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988), 40.

[17]"Say Japanese Kill Koreans in Manchuria." *New York Times* (14 December 1931)

[18]During the Summer and Fall of 1947, Seo interviewed Rhee twice a week to write Rhee's biography.

[19]Jungju Seo, *Biography of Syngman Rhee,* 200.

In contrast, Robert Oliver, a long time personal adviser to Rhee, suggests a psychological reason for Rhee's decision. After graduating from Princeton, Rhee probably felt the same as he did when he was released from prison. He felt obligated to free Korea and there was no doubt he would return to his country. The question was what he would do and how he would conduct himself there.[20]

Finally, Richard C. Allen suggests that Rhee returned to Korea to begin a new career working for the church. After he graduated from Princeton, Rhee may have thought about giving up his cause. Rhee's missionary friends said he should do church work. Rhee had enjoyed his life in the United States and he found it hard to argue with people who knew his cause was hopeless.[21]

In truth, Rhee's decision to return to Korea can be explained by his motivation for studying in the United States. Rhee wrote in his autobiography in 1905, "I am determined to devote myself to the education of Koreans for their enlightenment until I die."[22] He believed that would be possible through church work. After he graduated from George Washington University, he was going to return to Korea. But his father suggested that he stay to study more in the United States. His father was afraid the Japanese would send Rhee to prison or kill him. After Rhee graduated from Harvard University, he again wanted to return to Korea. But his father sent a letter to Rhee convincing him to stay in the United States. When he was at Princeton, he thought once more

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[20]Robert Oliver, *Syngman Rhee: The Man Behind the Myth* (Cornwall, N.Y.: Cornwall Press, 1955), 114-115.

[21]Richard C. Allen, *Korea's Syngman Rhee: An Unauthorized Portrait* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Turtle Co., 1960), 46.

[22]Young-Hee Won and Chung-Tae Choi, eds, *Collecting of the Writings of Syngman Rhee 1898-1944, 119.*

about returning to Korea. So his return to Korea was already decided. How to go to Korea and continue his work while maintaining his freedom was the problem.

Fortunately Rhee had a good reason for his return. About this time, (on behalf of Dr. John R. Mott, Korean international director of the Y.M.C.A.) Mr. G.G. Gregg, of the Seoul Y.M.C.A., suggested Rhee work as an organizer, teacher, and evangelist among the youth in the Seoul Y.M.C.A. Rhee accepted this offer because it provided him a reason to return to Korea.[23] He would also be able to work among young and intellectual Koreans. Furthermore, Rhee thought he could work without conflict with the Japanese. In September 1910, he left the United States and started the long trip to Korea which he had left in 1904.

When Rhee arrived at the port of Pusan in Korea in October 1910 after accepting the job with the Y.M.C.A., he was shocked by the changed circumstances in his country. Rhee recalled "the Korean people in the street looked like prisoners. I felt they were so depressed. To be a colony was a terrible thing."[24]

Although he witnessed the terrible colonized situation in Korea, Rhee was convinced that he could devote himself to the work of the Y.M.C.A. and hoped that he could help Koreans without conflict with the Japanese. So Rhee started to work there in October 1910. During the Fall of 1910, Rhee made two speaking tours of the country and organized local Y.M.C.A.'s. He was particularly popular among young students because he spoke to them about the new concept of democracy, the United States, and the teachings of Christ.

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[23]Ibid., 119.

[24]Jungju Seo, *Biography of Syngman Rhee*, 120.

Specifically democracy was a new concept at that time because the political system of Korea had been dominated from 1392 to 1910 by the Yi Dynasty. He also lectured an international law class at the Y.M.C.A. in Seoul for the young students. Throughout his stay in Korea, Rhee impressed the young, independent-minded leaders. They became participants in the Korean independent movement and some of them were determined to study in the United States. Wonsoon Lee and Ben Lim, who became Rhee's secretaries, were Rhee's students at the Y.M.C.A.

The Japanese watched these religious services and read Rhee's publications. They also watched Rhee carefully. The Japanese officials asked Rhee to come to governmental and social meetings because Rhee had become a dangerous person to them. But Rhee refused. The relations between Rhee and Japanese officials became antagonistic.

For the last several months of 1911, there were rumors in Korea that all Korean Christian Churches were to have their charters revoked and that they would be under the administrative direction of churches in Japan. In fact, in 1911, the Japanese invented the "Christian Conspiracy Case." They arrested over 700 Koreans and charged 123 Christian leaders with a plot to assassinate the General-Governor. They commanded the arrested Koreans to confess to a conspiracy. Through severe torture, they got their confessions.[25] Rhee remembered that at that moment he had a small room in the attic at the Y.M.C.A. He and his roomboy destroyed or hid documents and papers to keep them from the Japanese. Rhee knew if he stayed in Korea much longer he

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[25]Korean Commission, *Korea Must Be Free* (Washington, D.C.: Korean Commission, 1930), 19.

would be arrested and he doubted he would get out of prison alive.[26] Rhee was kept from arrest only by the intervention of Philip Gillett and other Y.M.C.A. officials.

After a year of brutal interrogation involving tortures, three of the arrested Koreans died. Nine others were exiled, and 123 turned over to the district court of Seoul for trial on June 28, 1912. At this contrived trial no witnesses for the defense were permitted. The final decision was based on forced confessions. Finally, 105 men were given prison sentences from five to ten years. Also, the Japanese thought it was necessary to get rid of the leading American missionaries. They felt that as long as some of the leading American missionaries were in Korea, the Koreans would again develop their independence movement. Dr. G. S. McCune, who was the President of Union Christian College at Pyongyang, had to leave Korea because he strongly wanted to keep the principles of Christianity. Christian Educational institutions were closed because they would not follow the Japanese ritual of worship. Furthermore, missionaries were watched by the Japanese police who suspected potential conspirators for some political movement or of being international spies.

Japanese also manipulated the "Christian Conspiracy Case" to make Dr. Horace Underwood and several others appear as accomplices in this conspiracy to assassinate the Governor-general. But the plan was unsuccessful because the arrested Korean men would not sign their names to the manipulated statement to make their missionary friends accomplices in the plot. As a result,

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[26]Syngman Rhee, *Japan Inside Out: The Challenges of Today* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1941), 72.

they died of severe torture.[27] Soon the American Press investigated this case. Dr. Arthur J. Brown, Secretary of the Presbyterian Foreign Board in New York concluded that the case had been contrived. Several missionary representatives came to Korea from Japan to collect evidence. President Charles W. Elliot of Harvard University, who was in Japan at the time, also investigated the case and said Japan would be seen more favorably by Western nations if it changed the way it treated alleged criminals.[28]

After the "Christian Conspiracy Case", intellectuals realized the Japanese intended to punish with all forms of resistance. Although they resisted the repression of the *Uibyong*[29], closure of Korean newspapers, and a ban on political activity, intellectuals found it was too difficult to work for Korean independence in Korea. So, many nationalists left Korea and congregated mainly in Vladivostok, Manchuria, and Shanghai where Korean nationalists created diverse organizations to prepare for an independence movement.[30]

In March 1912, Rhee gave up his Y.M.C.A. lecture work to accept the principalship of the Chong-No academy, the leading secondary school in Seoul. But his fear of the Japanese harassment of Korean Christians increased.

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[27]Ibid., 75.

[28]Robert Oliver, *Syngman Rhee: The Man Behind the Myth* (Cornwall, N.Y.: Cornwall Press, 1955), 119.

[29]*Uibyong* was a sort of Korean civil army. It was different from the regular army.

[30]Michael Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea 1920-25* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988), 40-42.

He was warned that the Japanese were about to arrest him for his activities as a Christian leader and nationalist leader.

In 1912 Rhee had an opportunity to leave Korea. During May 1912, the Quadrennial Methodist World Conference of Methodist delegates was to be held in Minneapolis. The Korean Methodists elected Rhee as their lay delegate to attend the conference, along with two missionaries and a Korean pastor. Bishop Harris, who represented the Methodist Church in North Asia, got permission from the Japanese authorities for Rhee to go to this conference. He advised Rhee to say nothing in America that would be harmful to Korea. Finally he left Korea again on March 1912.

At the conference, Rhee made a speech[31] in which he pleaded for the independence of the Korean Church as well as Korean independence. He was criticized by other delegates for endangering the missionary work that they maintained had to be accompanied under Japanese direction. The conference concluded with resolutions reaffirming the missionary enterprises in Japan and Korea. Rhee could neither return nor continue to work officially on behalf of the Missionary Board since he disagreed with the convention resolution that Korean Christians had to carry on according to Japanese supervision.

While he was in Minneapolis, Rhee was offered a professorship from the faculty of the Chosen Christian College in Seoul by Dr. Horace Underwood, the President of the college. Rhee told Dr. Underwood that he would return only if his security could be guaranteed from the Japanese. He

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[31]His speech can be summarized as follows: " For international peace, the independence of weak nations is essential. Korean independence is indispensable for Asian peace...Christians in the world have to work for these." Seo, 207.

also considered finding a professorship in an American college, but he knew that he could not abandon his work for Korea.[32]

During the next six months Rhee traveled to Princeton, Chicago, and Baltimore (where he attended the Democratic convention), and visited Woodrow Wilson in his summer cottage at Sea Girt, N.J. following Wilson's nomination as the Democratic candidate for President. Rhee and Wilson talked about Korea, but Wilson's position was it was not appropriate for international intervention to free Korea. A few years later Wilson said that "I appreciated the pressure of population in Japan and the need for industrial expansion, and ... I believed that Japan had occupied Korea and was developing Manchuria chiefly because of this unavoidable necessity."[33] After Rhee leaving Wilson, he went on to Ocean Grove, New Jersey, and then to Washington, D.C., visiting friends and trying to develop new plans.

In the Fall of 1912, Yongman Park, one of Rhee's old prison-mates, went to Hawaii and planned, with leaders in Hawaii, to raise funds to establish a Korean school. Park suggested that Rhee be the principal of this school. Rhee decided he would go to Hawaii[34] and work among the Korean residents there.

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[32]There are several different opinions about Rhee's attitude at this time. Some scholars argued that Rhee could not find a job in an American college perhaps because of racial prejudices. But there is no evidence. It is clear Rhee was going to find a professorship in the United States. He did not mention whether he could not find a job or he stopped to looking for one because he wanted to work for Korean independence.

[33]Arthur S. link, ed, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson 1917.* Vol. 44 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 255.

[34]Hawaii was the center of Korean expatriates for the independence of Korea in the United States. Many Asian immigrants to the United States had

In January 1913, Rhee arrived in Hawaii, but he found the situation difficult there. The conflict between Koreans and the Methodists was serious. At that time Rhee's friend Dr. Wadman headed the Korean Methodist Compound School. But the Korean community wanted to establish its own school because it realized that Dr. Wadman received money from the Japanese to manage his school. The Korean residents forced their children to quit this school. Both sides wanted Rhee's support. However, Rhee was going back to the United States because he would not support either side. Finally, the Methodists let Rhee take over the Korean Compound School in Honolulu. Korean boys enrolled in the first to six grade. Classes were taught partly in English and partly in Korean. The curriculum included both Western and Korean education.

Rhee toured the Hawaiian islands to see the conditions in which Korean workers toiled and lived. He found that many Korean girls lived in labor camps and that their parents forced them to marry against their will. As a result, in the Fall of 1913, he established the Korean Girls' Seminary and became its principal. This idea of creating a separate institution for girls was unique. Every morning before the day's work, they attended chapel exercises at this school. They also performed evening devotional services. Although the school began with only five girls, forty students were enrolled by June 1915. Two Korean teachers taught the Korean Alphabet and writing for an hour each

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gotten no further than Hawaii at that time. The first Korean immigrants arrived at Honolulu in January 13, 1903. They were farmers, students, mining workers, and political refugees. The majority of them became Christian. Up to 1905, the number of Korean people who immigrated to Hawaii was 7,226. (men 6048, women 637, and children 541)

day. Four American instructors taught sixty Korean girls American customs, ideals, manner of living and standards of morality.[35]

After Dr. Wadman retired, he was succeeded by Dr. William Fry who emphasized a general program with other racial groups beyond Korean nationalism. Rhee strongly believed, however, that Koreans should learn their own language, history, and customs, and be dedicated to the resurrection of Korea. In the Fall of 1916, Rhee broke with the Methodists and made his own institution in Honolulu which was named the Christian Institute. In this school, the students learned Korean language, history, geography and the spirit of independence for Korea. The Korean community strongly supported the school and its enrollment soon rose to about 140. Walter Jhung wrote, "I am very proud enough to have received such training from Dr. Rhee. I was a student in his school from 1914 to 1921."[36] From 1912 to 1932, and from 1934 to 1938, Rhee maintained this school in Hawaii.

Aside from his efforts to educate Korean children, Rhee also participated in political activities with Koreans in Hawaii. Rhee experienced difficult situations as he pursued his political activities in Hawaii. When Rhee arrived in Hawaii, the one significant political organization was the Korean National Association. Changho Ahn and Yongman Park were its principal leaders. Although Rhee was invited to join them, they could not cooperate.

Above all, the relationship between Rhee and Park, who encouraged Rhee to come to Hawaii, became antagonistic. Park believed Korean

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[35]"Seminary for Korean Girls-Under Educational Direction of Dr. Rhee" *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (28 February 1916).

[36]Walter Jhung, "Korean Independence Activities of Overseas Koreans." *Korean Survey* (December 1952), 9.

independence could be achieved through violent measures against Japan. He established a military academy for Korean youths in Hawaii and concentrated on training, recruiting, and supporting them. He urged Rhee to incorporate his plan in his school. But Rhee did not support this plan because he believed that kind of revolution never succeeded and the Koreans must strive to deserve and to win the diplomatic support of the Western powers and the sympathy of the American people. Rhee also believed that Koreans' friends might turn against them since the United States and England did not want to use force to keep peace in the Pacific. At that time, Park managed the newspaper *Korea Herald* and attacked Rhee severely through it to persuade Rhee to help him. On July 7, 1915, Rhee sent a letter to explain his position but received no reply from Park. Wonsoon Lee, Park's secretary at that time, tried to reconcile Park and Rhee several times, but he failed.[37]

Rhee's other rival was Changho Ahn who came from Pyengyang in Northern Korea. He was the acknowledged leader of Heungsadan, which was a society led by the natives of Pyengyang. In contrast to Rhee, he was poorly educated. Ahn could speak little English and could not read at all. Ahn did not articulate a detailed political ideology because he was not accustomed to the concept of democracy and other Western political ideas. He believed that the Korean nationalism could be achieved only through education. Ahn was a great speaker of Korean language and had a lot of followers. When Rhee first arrived in Hawaii, he wanted to work with Ahn, but it was unsuccessful. Ahn criticized Rhee's policy, and he became Rhee's opponent.

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[37]Wonsoon Lee, *Man Syngman Rhee*, 135-137. Lee met Rhee at the Y.M.C.A. in 1911. He was one of Rhee's students there. In 1914, he took refuge in the United States and became Park's secretary. After Park died in

In September 1915, Chinkook Oh, a Korean youth who followed Changho Ahn, wounded Yongman Park in the San Francisco Hotel in a failed assassination attempt. After that, he took a ship to Hawaii where he intended to assassinate Rhee. However, he killed himself by leaping overboard. Perhaps he was afraid to be arrested when he docked off the ship at Honolulu. The letters describing his plan, where were found in his trunk, were sent to the Korean National Association.

Rhee found it was impossible to cooperate with Park and Ahn. He believed Koreans would be able to pursue independence through education and diplomacy. Rhee founded the Dong-Ji Hoi, a patriotic society devoted to restoring Korean independence. The Dong-Ji Hoi was a major organization for Rhee's leadership and had chapters in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and San Francisco.[38]

During the period 1904-1918, Rhee's efforts for Korean nationalism mainly concentrated on education. Through his Korean Christian student movement in Korea, Rhee taught new concepts to young intellectuals and encouraged them to participate in the Korean independence movement. Rhee's experience in Korea from 1910 to 1912 strengthened his motivation for Korean nationalism. He was determined to fight against the Japanese, but he did not know exactly how to deal with them. In Hawaii, Rhee emphasized Korean nationalism to Korean immigrants in the school. Even though he was not a principal leader in the Korean independence movement, Rhee's educational

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Manchuria, Rhee suggested Lee work with him and then Lee became his secretary. Lee was also President of the Dong-Ji Hoi for twenty years.

[38]Ibid., 138.

background in the United States brought him an advantageous status to become a leader in Korean independence movement in Korea and in Hawaii. During this period Rhee was making a step to become a principal leader for Korean independence.

Chapter Two

Syngman Rhee's Fight for Korean Independence (1919-1938)

During this period, Syngman Rhee continued his efforts for Korean independence as a principal leader. President Wilson's self-determination and the ex-emperor's mysterious death motivated Koreans to show their will for independence. At this time, Rhee was in the United States, concentrating on diplomacy. And then Rhee encouraged a nationwide demonstration for Korean independence. The demonstration, which Rhee insisted be peaceful, took place on March 1, 1919 in Korea. After the demonstration Rhee was chosen to be President of the Korean Provisional Government.

In the Spring of 1919, Rhee planned to go to the Paris Peace Conference to present the Korean case. However, the U. S. State Department refused to let him go. Instead, Rhee sent the Korean Provisional Government's Foreign

Minister, Kiusik Kim.[39] In 1919, Rhee established diplomatic organizations, in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., to inform Americans of Korean situation and requested their support for regaining Korean independence. Rhee once again tried to present Korea's case at the Disarmament Conference in Washington, D.C. Great powers at the conference refused to let Rhee speak. After the conference, Rhee returned to Hawaii and worked on the Korean school, political organizations and newspapers.

After Japan attacked Manchuria in 1931, Rhee reactivated his political activity. In 1933 he went to Geneva to participate in the League of Nations which was discussing Japan's attack on Manchuria. Rhee wanted to present the Korean case and also to stop Japanese imperialism. Although he could not present the Korean case to the League, he did contribute to the withdrawal of Japan from the League.[40]

In 1933 he married Miss Donner Francesca in New York. After that, he made speaking tours in the United States and stayed in Hawaii. After the March First Movement in 1919 in Korea, his role in the provisional government gave him an official basis for his efforts in support of Korean nationalism.

Koreans were unsatisfied with the Japanese colonial rule and they wanted to regain their independence. There were several factors in 1918-1919 which encouraged the independence movement.

On January 8, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson delivered his principle of self-determination for small nations in his address to the Joint Session of

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[39]Arthur S. Link, ed, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson 1919.* Vol. 59 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 475.

Congress. In his "Fourteen Points" President Wilson said: "It is the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak."[41] Wilson's "right of self-determination of peoples" greatly stimulated Rhee. He understood from his wide studies of international affairs that Korea could not get independence easily because Japan had won a claim to special consideration. Furthermore Japan had fought in the Far East where it seized German outposts in China. Rhee believed Korean independence could be accomplished through peaceful appeals to the Americans and other Westerners.

Rhee sent letters and informed Korean nationalists about the self-determination. In the Spring of 1918, some members of the Korean National Association, including Rhee, and other nationalists abroad met in San Francisco to discuss how to fulfill an independence movement for Korea. They decided they should send a petition to the Peace Conference after the war was over and an appeal to President Wilson to recognize Korean independence. At this meeting they selected Rhee and Henry Chung as delegates to the Paris Peace Conference. The Korean nationalists in China, independent of the group in the United States, assembled in Shanghai and chose a delegate to the Paris Peace Conference.

These nationalist activities abroad became known to the leaders in Korea and motivated them to plan for the Korean independence movement. Immediately, several prominent nationalists leaders met secretly in Seoul,

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[40]Jungju Seo, *Biography of Syngman Rhee*, 230-238

[41]Arthur S. Link, ed, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson 1917-1918.* Vol. 45 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 534-539.

formed a committee and began to plan a massive independence movement against Japanese domination.

From 1918 to the beginning of 1919, Korean nationalists abroad and the leaders within Korea exchanged correspondence secretly. Even though Rhee remained in Hawaii, he insisted the independence movement should not be a violent revolution but a peaceful nationwide demonstration to manifest the will of the Koreans for independence. There were different opinions among nationalists about the actual ways to carry out the independence movement against the Japanese. Finally, the majority of the Korean leaders accepted Rhee's policy.

At that time, Japan also planned to attend the Paris Peace Conference. In December 1918, the Japanese forced Koreans to sign to a declaration stating that Koreans appreciate Japanese rule and were rapidly becoming used to this way of life. The Japanese wanted to submit the petition at the Paris Peace Conference. The Ex-emperor, Kojong, refused to sign. And he passed away in his palace in Seoul on January 21, 1919 under mysterious circumstances. The Japanese did not announce his death for two days. Furthermore, the Japanese claimed his death was due to apoplexy. But the ex-emperor had no symptoms of high blood pressure; indeed, his blood pressure was low.[42]

Kojong's death shocked Koreans. Rumors spread in Korea that he was poisoned by the Japanese. Also the Japanese would not permit his funeral ceremony. However, because the Korean people strongly demanded it, the Japanese officials finally agreed that on March 4 they would be allowed to hold commemoration ceremonies for their deceased emperor.[43]

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[42]Wonsoon Lee, *Man Syngman Rhee*,134.

[43]Oliver, *Korea: Forgotten Nation*, 42.

The Korean nationalists were already thinking about an independence movement. Kojong's death mobilized Koreans to fight for their freedom. The nationalist leaders in Korea—Rin Choe, Nam-Son Choe, Chin-U Song, and Sang-Yun Hyon--decided to use the funeral as an opportunity for the independence movement. During several meetings, they organized an Independence Committee in Seoul and decided to demonstrate on March 1, 1919. The committee decided they must have a peaceable demonstration and issued this rule: "Whatever you do, do not insult the Japanese, do not throw stones, do not hit with your fists, for these are the acts of barbarians."[44] Also the committee agreed to execute nationwide demonstrations for independence; issue the declaration of independence in the name of representatives of the Korean people; present memorandums to the Japanese government, to the two legislative houses, and to the government-general; and address a message to the American President and Paris Peace Conference to support Korean independence.[45]

The March First Movement began at dawn when nationalists posted copies of a manifesto in the name of the National Congress on the main street of Seoul. The manifesto declared the Japanese had assassinated the Korean emperor by poisoning him, and it appealed to Korean people to avenge his death and that of the murdered queen. It also showed that many small nations were acquiring their independence through the principles of self-determination announced by Wilson. The time for Korean independence had come, thus Koreans abroad undertook the appeal for independence at the Paris Peace

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[44]Ibid., 43.

[45]Chong-Sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 108.

Conference.[46] The thirty-three signers of the Declaration of Independence rallied at Pagoda park and one of them read the declaration at 2:00 p.m. on March 1. Simultaneously, Koreans from all over Korea started to cry "*Manse* (long live Korea)." The Korean Declaration of Independence heard throughout Korea on March 1, 1919, announced the independence of Korea and the liberty of the Korean people.[47]

The March First Movement was not just a discharge of collected resentment and idealism. More than two million Koreans participated in this movement. It was a national independence movement caused by the principle of self-determination. This movement advanced Mahatma Gandhi's peaceful rebellions in India by ten years. It was the world's first nationwide passive demonstration by which the Korean people announced their inherent right of independence and of liberty.[48]

However, the results of the March First Movement were not all positive. Independence for Korea was not accomplished through this movement. Despite Koreans peaceful demonstrations, the Japanese government savagely suppressed the movement. As many as 7,500 Koreans were killed, 45,000 injured and 460,900 arrested. Japan would not reexamine its policy. Furthermore, the Japanese manipulated the March First Movement. According to an official Japanese reports from March 1 to April 30, 587,641 Koreans were involved in the movement, of whom 26,713 were arrested, and 553

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[46]Ibid., 110.

[47]Donald G. Tewksbury, ed, *Source Materials on Korean Politics and Ideologies* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1950), 48.

[48]Chan Kwon, "March in Korea," *Korean Survey*, 2.

Koreans and nine Japanese killed and 1,409 Koreans and 186 Japanese were injured.[49]

The foreign governments, including that of the United States, did not express any official response to the March First Movement. In early January 1919, the American Consul General in Seoul advised the missionaries not to participate in local political matters. On April 14, 1919 the Department of State told the Consulate General not to let Koreans think the United States would help with their plans or to let the Japanese think the United States government support the Korean nationalist movement.[50] Richard Allen points out that the uprising was ill-timed.[51] In March 1918, Wilson had already decided to support Japan because if Japan helped the United States win the war, the United States and Great Britain would be very powerful. And Japan would never oppose the United States and Great Britain's wishes because Japan was so much smaller. Wilson believed the United States needed to support Japan. Otherwise Japan, Germany, and Russia might form an alliance which might threaten the United States.[52] The armistice had weakened Wilson's ideas which had characterized the war years. Other powers had supported Japan and allies would not oppose them.

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[49]Arthur S. Link, ed, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson 1919.* Vol. 56 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 189.

[50]U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1919.* Vol. II (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934), 462.

[51]Richard C. Allen, *Korea's Syngman Rhee,* 49.

[52]Arthur S. Link, ed, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson 1918.* Vol. 47 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press,1984), 98.

Establishing the Korean Provisional Government was a great accomplishment of the March First Movement. In April 1919, before the demonstrations were finished, the representatives of all provinces met in secret, in Seoul, where they established a provisional government. They drafted a constitution which called for a representative government and stood for personal liberty.[53] These representatives held an election and chose Syngman Rhee as President of the Korean Provisional Government.

A few weeks earlier, refugeed Korean nationalists in Shanghai, in cooperation with the New Korea Young Men's Association, opened an office in the French concession to propagate reports on the independence movement in Korea and abroad. Soon other leaders came from Korea, the United States, Siberia, and Japan. They opened meetings to talk about establishing a permanent organization for an independence movement and established the executive headquarters of the provisional government in Shanghai. Rhee was not directly involved in the March First Movement, but he motivated the Korean people at home and encouraged peaceful ways for this movement. The independence movement of 1919 was so significant to Rhee because the Korean people wanted him to lead them. Although the provisional government had not been elected by all Koreans, appointing Rhee as President was recognition of his growing position in the independence movement.

Rhee began his political activities in the United States as a principal leader for Korean independence. He attempted to communicate the will of the Korean people and their depression under the Japanese. Rhee responded to a statement through the Japanese Embassy in Washington that the Japanese government would not let Koreans rule themselves: Koreans did not need any

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[53]Tewksburry, ed, *Source Materials*, 55-56.

administrative reforms or autonomy from Japan. They longed for the Japanese to return to the Island country.[54]

In the Spring of 1919, the world's statesmen were meeting in Paris to find a way to make peace so that they would really make World War I the "war to end all wars." Wilson promised the right of self-determination to all who had been unjustly confined under foreign rule. Rhee went to Washington, D. C. where he tried to get a passport from the State Department to allow him to go to Paris. He wanted to lay the Korean case before Wilson and the Peace Conference. Since Rhee did not get his passport at the State Department, he tried to see Secretary Robert Lansing or Acting Secretary Frank Lyon Polk personally. This was unsuccessful.[55]

Wilson sent a message to the State Department stating that issuing a passport to Rhee would cause Japanese discontent and would consequently disrupt Wilson's plans at the Peace Conference.[56] Rhee was disappointed that Wilson was planning to sacrifice Korean independence for the sake of power politics. However, the notes of the *Congressional Record* show that President Wilson had not completely objected to bringing the Korean issue in the Peace Conference. In the *Congressional Record* for July 17, 1919, Wilson was quoted as saying: "....the conference would only deal with countries which were affected by the war, and the question of a country at peace, as Korea was, could not be properly raised." A question was then asked of Wilson, "If it could be unmistakably shown that the Koreans were dissatisfied, would the

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[54]"Asks Recognition for Korea" *New York Times* (25 August 1919)

[55]Russel H. Fifield, *Woodrow Wilson and the Far East: The Diplomacy of Shantung Question* (Handen: Archan Books, 1965), 206.

[56]Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 143.

case of Korea then be discussed at the peace conference?" Supposedly, the President said if that were the case, maybe it could be discussed at the Peace Conference.[57]

Although Rhee could not go to Paris to appeal to the Peace Conference, he let the Korean nationalists in China send a delegate to Paris. Also, two copies of a petition for Korean independence were prepared: one for President Wilson, the other for the Peace Conference. Kiusik Kim, the Foreign Minister in Korean Provisional Government, went to the Peace Conference[58].

In January 1919, Kiusik Kim arrived in Paris from Shanghai and submitted Korea's case at the Peace Conference. Kim established the Bureau d' Information Coréen to communicate news about the March First Movement in Korea and to publicize the Korean cause. On May 12, 1919 Kim presented the "Petition of the Korean People and Nation for Liberation from Japan and for the Reconstruction of Korea as an Independent State" and the "Claims of the Korean People and Nation" to the peace conference. Nevertheless the Korean issue was not regarded formally.[59]

At that time, Rhee was in the United States concentrating on propaganda activities and diplomacy. He also carried out his duties as President of the exiled government. Rhee sent a telegram to Wilson in Paris, in which he wrote "This provisional government is the only government which represents the will

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[57]*Congressional Record*, LV III, Part 3 (July 17, 1919), 2699.

[58]Ki-Baik Lee, *A New History of Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 341, 345.

[59]Arthur S. Link, ed, *Woodrow Wilson 1919. Vol. 59*, 644.

of the Korean people." In addition, he requested the Peace Conference recognize the new Republic of Korea and its provisional government.[60]

Even though he was far from the provisional government, he sent instructions and reports to Shanghai by mail and kept a close relationship with the leaders there. On July 5, 1919, he addressed the following memorandum to the leaders in Shanghai: "Our efforts must more or less for the time being be concentrated on the United States. Effectiveness will result from concentration."[61]

Rhee placed his chief faith in the decency and fair-mindedness of the American people. He was impressed by evidence of their friendliness, strong idealism, and commitment to justice.[62] Rhee's detailed study of American history at George Washington University and Princeton had taught him the United States had frequently gone out of its way to encourage peoples struggling for freedom. And beyond this belief in the character and temperament of Americans, he was convinced American intervention was essential in the Far East for its own self-interest and to prevent the Japanese from expanding their power. Due to all these reasons Rhee believed he needed to appeal to American public opinion.

In April 1919, Korean nationalists from the various cities in the United States assembled in Philadelphia at Rhee's encouragement. At this meeting they founded a Korean Congress. On April 16, 1919, the Korean Congress

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[60]Ibid., 473-474.

[61]Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 158. Chong-Sik Lee remarks that "This conviction explains his alleged monopoly of funds for his activities in the United States and his reluctance to visit Shanghai."

[62]Rhee wrote that "America is a peace loving nation that does not harbor any imperialistic ambition."

wrote a memorandum appealing to America. "An Appeal to America by the Korean Congress in the U.S." recalled the American people they also had fought for democracy and liberty. They said, "Our aim is freedom from militaristic autocracy; our object is democracy for Asia; our hope is universal Christianity."[63] The purpose of the First Korean Congress was to promulgate the Korean cause.

On September 19, 1919, the Korean Congress met again in Philadelphia with considerable fanfare. Mayor E. Smith marched in the parade for the Korean Congress through the main streets of the city to Independence Hall, where they rang the Liberty Bell, and Rhee began the first session of the Korean Congress. In that session Senator Seldon P. Spencer, of Missouri, Nebraska's Senator, George W. Norris, made speeches in support of Korean independence. These are shown in the *Congressional Record* for November 14, 1919. As the President of the provisional government of Korea, Rhee addressed formal letters to the heads of state of all the principal nations to suggest starting diplomatic relations. Before the Korean Congress adjourned, it organized the Korean Information Bureau in Philadelphia. The Bureau performed an active campaign to ask American sympathizers for Korean independence.[64]

In the Fall of 1919, Rhee created the Korean Commission in Washington, D.C. Lim, Rhee's secretary, said they would have their headquarters in the Portland hotel until they could rent a room in the continent buildings where they set up the office of the Korean Commission. It was not exactly an impressive office, staffed only by Rhee and Lim. But it was a

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[63]Tewksburry, ed, *Source Materials*, 53.

[64]Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 146.

start.[65] They had little money and not enough funds were coming in. Most of the financial assistance for the independence work came from Koreans in Hawaii and other parts of the United States.[66] Sending funds from Japanese-dominated Korea was not allowed at that time. Rhee spent most of his time and effort on speaking tours throughout the United States. He was trying to get support for the liberation of Korea from the Japanese. At times Rhee was paid for his lectures, and with this, and contributions from Koreans in the United States, he was just barely able to maintain his office. Between 1919 and 1921 the Commission mainly tried to affect the United States government, particularly members of Congress.[67]

In the Fall of 1920, the refugeed Korean leaders decided to meet in Shanghai to discuss several problems of the provisional Republic of Korea Government and to organize the anti-Japanese *Kwangbok* army, which was a Korean civil army for Korean independence in China, Manchuria, and Siberia.[68] There were about 3,000 to 4,000 Korean fighters with various backgrounds organized into several groups.

In the Winter of 1920, Rhee sailed for Shanghai and arrived on December 8, 1920. Lim accompanied Rhee on this trip, which was dangerous since Japanese influence was great and its agents were numerous in Hawaii and in Shanghai. Furthermore, the Japanese were offering $300,000 for Rhee's

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[65]Ben C. Lim, "President Rhee's Days of Exile," *Korean Survey* (March 1959), 4.

[66]Jhung Walter, *Korean Survey*, 9.

[67]Chong-Sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 144-145.

[68]Ben C. Lim, 3.

arrest.[69] Rhee went to Shanghai to reorganize the structure of the provisional government and to examine the records of the exiled government. Instead, Rhee found significant disagreement among the leaders and divisions about the procedure of the independence movement.

The meeting failed because the members of that Cabinet came from several different places where they had been trained differently about politics. At this time, many Korean patriots who lived in Manchuria and Siberia became revolutionists as a result of the Russian revolution. Rhee saw it would be impossible to work in accord with such leaders.[70]

In June, 1921, Rhee returned to the United States. Early in 1921, the U.S. Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, suggested for powers interested in the Pacific area to meet in Washington to discuss limitations upon armaments. On November 12, 1921, delegates from the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Portugal, China, and Japan met in Washington. Rhee planned to present the Korean case and then to obtain an official international hearing for Korea at the Disarmament Conference.[71]

Rhee telegraphed the provisional government in Shanghai to send him a set of official credentials for the conference. Rhee sent the credentials to Secretary Hughes and received no reply. But Rhee continued his efforts through the Korean Commission, which aimed at securing extensive publicity for Korean independence while the conference on disarmament continued.

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[69]Wonsoon Lee, *Man Syngman Rhee*,162.

[70]Jhung Walter, 9.

[71]Wonsoon Lee, 172-173.

Rhee had several newspaper interviews and explained the reasons for Korea's claim for independence.[72]

As chairman of the Commission, Rhee enlisted Frederic Dolph as his lawyer and former Senator Charles S. Thomas of Colorado as his special counsel. The name of the Korean Commission was changed to "the Korean Commission to the Conference on Limitation of Armaments" for a while. The Korean delegation was not allowed to present its case to the conference. On October 1, 1921, the Commission addressed a letter of appeal to the United States delegation. They sent another letter to the disarmament conference, and a petition for independence, signed by 108 leaders within Korea, which condemned the annexation and stated the provisional government as the authentic government of Korea. The letters of appeal and the petition were not officially recognized by the disarmament conference.

In September 1922, after the conference was over, Rhee returned to Hawaii where he continued to manage the Korean school in Honolulu and the Dong-Ji Hoi, and the *Pacific Weekly* which was founded by Rhee in 1920. It was written partly in Korean and partly in English. Rhee wrote the editorials in it from 1920 to 1939. In January and February 1924, he again traveled from Hawaii to New York, via the Panama Canal, addressing diversified groups en route. In the late Fall of 1924, after several months in Washington, he returned to Honolulu. In October, 1929, he started to San Francisco for another trip across the United States and again came back to Hawaii in January 1930. During these years he concentrated on speaking to various groups about Korean independence and asking their sympathy and hope. Rhee clarified his position by saying he would not trouble the friendly relations of the United

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[72]"Dr. Rhee Will Demand Hearing at Disarmament Conference." *New*

States with other nations. Koreans wanted to fight for their independence themselves. They wanted Americans to listen to the Korean case sympathetically and the United States to officially acknowledge the Government of the Republic of Korea.[73]

In September 1931, Japan attacked Chinese forces in Manchuria as Rhee predicted. Rhee had warned the United States of Japanese imperialism over and over again. Manchuria was important to Japan for industrial and commercial expansion. It was also a source of vital raw materials. In March 1932, the Japanese created the puppet state of Manchukuo out of the three historic Manchurian provinces. In response to the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, Rhee and the Korean Provisional Government reactivated their efforts on behalf of Korean independence. Rhee felt it was his duty to speak on Korea's behalf. There were more than one million Korean immigrants in Manchuria. They had fled there to escape Japanese rule. Japanese soldiers began their systematic slaughter of Koreans in late October.

Hundreds of Koreans were arrested and put into prison. Korean refugees who gathered in Kalwon, Munsun, Chul Lyung, Kirin and other places, numbered more than 9,000 during the first week in December. Rhee said, "my cable advises show the murder of 349 men and women and the ruin by fire of 254 dwellings. Thus far the total number of Koreans killed in Manchuria is more than 1,200.....One can only imagine their wretchedness in brutal violation of solemn treaty obligations marches her soldiers into

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York Times (29 August 1921)

[73]"Asks Recognition for the Koreans." *New York Times* (25 August 1919)

Manchuria and again renders thousands of Koreans homeless."[74] These helpless refugees, many of whom were students, had no means to return to their home land and many were dying daily due to hunger and cold.

Rhee sent a letter to Senator Willard Borah of appealing to the American people to support the cause of Korea. He asked for the sympathetic cooperation of the United States for the 20,000,000 Koreans in Korea, 2,000,000 in Siberia, 600,000 in Manchuria, 7,000 in Hawaii, and 3,000 in the United States. Rhee's letter said, "it is beyond question that Japanese militarism is a growing menace in Asia just as was Prussian militarism in Europe before the great war. If Japan is permitted to pursue her ruthless source, 'a policy of blood and iron,' she will inevitably involve not only Eastern Asia but the entire civilized world in a terrible war."[75]

In the Spring of 1932 Rhee went to Washington, D.C. After a discussion with the provisional government in Shanghai and the Korean community in Hawaii, Rhee decided to go to Geneva to present the Korean case to the League of Nations, where Japan's conduct in Manchuria was being discussed. In December 1932, he sailed for Europe and arrived in Geneva on January 4, 1933.

In Geneva, Rhee had a number of interviews with delegates and newsmen.[76] On January 26, 1933, the *Journal de Geneva* printed a long story in French which Rhee had prepared on the terrible situation of the refugeed

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[74]"Says Japanese Kill Koreans in Manchuria," *New York Times* (14 December 1931)

[75]"Korea Appeals Borah; Says Vast War Is Threatening," *New York Times* (30 December 1931)

[76]For Rhee's activities in Geneva, see Seo, *Biography of Syngman Rhee,* 220-238. There are Rhee's diaries in Geneva.

Koreans in Manchuria, who suffered from the harsh treatment of the Japanese. Rhee had made an effort to have the delegation of one of the states members of the League present the Korean case in a formal way to the League.[77] He also wanted to check Japanese imperialism for peace in the Far East.

In 1932, the League sent a commission of inquiry to examine Japan's action in Manchuria. After six weeks of research in Manchuria, the commission submitted its report in September 1932. It concluded Japan was an aggressor. The Japanese denied the Lytton report and circulated Document 568 in Geneva. According to this document, Manchukuo was created by the will of the people in Manchuria. The document contained Korean signatures. Rhee immediately wrote a protesting statement against the document as Korean and then prepared to submit a formal statement to oppose the Japanese Document 568. Also, he let Koreans in Hawaii send a telegram, in which they opposed Document 568, to the Chinese representative in Geneva. This telegram was forwarded to the League and published by several newspapers in Geneva.

On February 8, the League of Nations Secretariat received a communication signed by Rhee which asserted that "any solution of the Manchurian problem without just and equitable solution of the Korean problem cannot be lasting."[78] On February 16, Rhee talked over the broadcasting facilities of the League of Nations of "Korea and the Far Eastern Dispute." The February 22 issue of *La Tribune D'Orient* published a long front page article on Rhee's activity. Rhee wrote a letter to Sir Eric Drummond, Secretary

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[77]U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1933.* Vol. III (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), 164.

[78]"Appeal Is Made For Korea," *New York Times* (9 February 1933)

of the League of Nations, where he stated Japanese imperialism would be greatly obstructed through restoration of Korean independence.[79]

During February, Rhee prepared a statement which claimed the Koreans in Manchuria opposed the Manchukuo. He also explained the terrible conditions of the Koreans in Manchuria. The Chinese representative presented Rhee's statement to the League on February 22. This statement stirred controversy about Japan's action in Manchuria within the League. The League also disapproved of Manchukuo. In March 1933, Japan withdrew from the League.

Rhee felt the major powers in Geneva would not really consider Japanese imperialism in Asia. He also knew Secretary Stimson did not have a lot of support for his policy of not recognizing Japanese conquest in Manchuria. Japan probably only needed to change its wording enough to allow the great powers to agree with Japan while at the same time not really acknowledging Japan's intention to expand its power.[80] After Japan withdrew from the League, the League made no effort to compel Japan to return the territory it had conquered. Rhee asked to see a copy of the Lytton Report at the League on Japan's seizure of Manchuria, but he was unsuccessful.[81]

Rhee was able to publicize on Korea's behalf, but the League of Nations refused to consider the Korean question. At this point, Rhee made a new plan. He thought the League would punish Japan if Rhee found strong evidence to

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[79]Oliver, *Syngmna Rhee*, 160.

[80]"Appeal Is Made For Korea." *New York Times* (9 February 1933)

[81]Jungju Seo, 236.

show Document 568 was wrong. Rhee decided to go to Paris[82] and to Moscow and to Manchuria to collect evidence against Document 568. Rhee also hoped to examine the possibility of securing the cooperation of the Korean leaders in Siberia and Moscow. But after his arrival in Moscow in July 19, 1932, Soviet officials commanded Rhee to leave the Soviet Union. The officials told him that the issue of the visa was a mistake. The Russians refused the request of the Korean exiled leader to remain in Moscow because, at the time, the head of the Japanese Railway Commission was in Moscow supporting the Russian position on the East China Railroad. Japan argued with the government of Russia about Rhee staying there. Russia did not want to aggravate Japan because they did not want to lose Japanese support.[83] Rhee left Russia the day after he arrived and crossed Europe by train to Nice. From there he started for New York.

In 1933 he had a big change in his personal life. On October 8, 1933 he married Miss Francesca Donner, the daughter of a well-to-do iron merchant in Vienna. They married in New York when Rhee was 59 and she 34. While Rhee was at the Maitre d'Hotel in Geneva before he started for Moscow, he met Miss Donner in the dining room. Rhee was seated at a table where she was dining with her mother.

Rhee was single when he met Miss Donner. In 1890 he had been married to Park in Korea, but they were separated before Rhee came to the United States as a special envoy in 1904. In June 1905, Yongman Park brought Rhee's son, Taesan Rhee, from Seoul to Rhee in the United States. But Taesan died in February 1906. After that Rhee only worked for Korean

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[82]Rhee had to go Paris for his passport to Russia.

[83]Jungju Seo, *Biography of Syngman Rhee*, 240.

independence. Rhee found that Miss Donner was familiar with the Korean question. He was impressed because she was interested in Rhee's activities. They became friends and then fell in love. The Koreans strongly opposed this marriage because such a marriage between other nationalities and Koreans was very uncommon in Korea. Since Rhee was a principal leader, the problem was more serious.[84] Nevertheless, after they married, Miss Donner helped Rhee to carry out his goal to establish a free and democratic Korea. She served as Rhee's wife, secretary, housekeeper, supporter, and adviser.[85]

In January 1935, Rhee returned to Hawaii after speaking tours in the United States and again made speaking tours in the Hawaiian islands. He renewed the Dong-Ji Hoi and continued the direct guidance of the Korean Institute, and in 1935 a new Korean church was created under Rhee's leadership. Rhee remained in Hawaii until 1939, mostly working for the Korean community there.

After the March First Movement, Rhee became a principal statesman on behalf of Koreans. During the period 1919-1938, Rhee pursued his objectives through diplomacy and propaganda. Rhee insisted upon his policy of peaceful appeals to public opinion and to the various governments upon whose support Korea must rely if they were to have any hope of success. Rhee believed lawless and violent measures could not secure victory and would only strengthen the Japanese for ever-tighter controls and continued police control over Korea. In particular, his efforts for Korean independence focused on appeals to the United States. Rhee appeared at hundreds of public gatherings

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[84]Wonsoon Lee, *Man Syngman Rhee*, 185.

[85]Ben C. Lim, 4.

to urge the American statesmen and foreign diplomats to help Korea. But they would not listen to him.

Rhee did not limit his goal to Korean independence. As a visioned statesman, he warned of Japanese imperialism and tried to keep peace in Asia. But the great powers attempted to guarantee lasting peace in Asia by assisting Japan to become the dominant power in Asia. Rhee sought every opportunity to demand that Korea's cause be heard and considered. Due to Rhee's inspired leadership, the Korean Provisional Government continually appealed to the conscience of the world.

Chapter Three

Syngman Rhee's Fight for Korean Independence (1939-1945)

During the period 1939-1945, Rhee worked as a spokesman in the United States for Korean independence. He primarily concentrated on negotiating with the American government for recognition of the Korean Provisional Government. He also started to fight against the Russian aggression toward Korea.

In 1941 he wrote a book titled *Japan Inside Out* to appeal to the American people and to gain support for Korean independence. He predicted Japan would attack the United States and the United States had to prepare for that.[86] His prophecy was soon evidenced at Pearl Harbor. In December 1941, the United States declared war on Japan.

From 1941 to 1945, Rhee sent letters to the State Department to appeal for American recognition of the Korean Provisional Government. Rhee also

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[86]Syngman Rhee, *Japan Inside Out*, 199.

offered Korean's support to defeat Japan. But the State Department disregarded Rhee's claims and doubted his position as the representative of Korea.[87]

After Pearl Harbor, Koreans in the United States were considered enemy aliens because Koreans were categorized as subjects of Japan. In 1942 Rhee appealed to Attorney General Francis Biddle and Secretary of War Henry Stimson to remove the restrictions on Koreans. He succeeded.

From 1943 to 1945 several events influenced Korean independence. At the Cairo Conference from November to December 1943, Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, Chiang Kai-shek, and Joseph Stalin announced a declaration to take from Japan all the territories it had occupied since 1914 and to regain Korean independence in due course.[88] At the Yalta Conference from February 4 to February 11, 1945, President Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin decided on a trusteeship for Korea after liberation.[89] From July 17 to August 2 1945, the Allied Conference of World War II was held in Potsdam, Harry S. Truman, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin discussed ways to achieve peace in Europe and how to defeat Japan.

Rhee strongly objected to the great power's conditional plans for Korean independence because Koreans wanted to establish their own government immediately after liberation. He also opposed a coalition plan

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[87]U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1942.* Vol. I (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 36-37.

[88]U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin 1945.* Vol. I (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), 309.

[89]Ibid., 309-310.

because his goal was to establish a united democratic Korea. But the great powers decided the Korean future in their own interests regardless of the Korean will. On August 15, 1945, Korea was liberated from Japan and Rhee returned to Korea on October 16, 1945.

In April 1939 Syngman Rhee returned to Washington, D.C. The Korean Commission had not been active since 1922 when the Disarmament Conference finished. After that there were no international conferences on Korea's behalf. During the World War II period, Rhee reactivated the Commission and fulfilled propaganda and diplomatic activities. In Spring 1941 Koo Kim became the President of Korean Provisional Government. Rhee now worked as the chairman of the Korean Commission and as spokesman for the Korean Provisional Government in the United States.

By 1940, the world struggle was moving toward a climax in Europe and the Orient. Rhee realized that Japan was expanding its military power in the Pacific and would continue its expansion. Rhee had always warned that Japan had a basic rule of military expansion which could be stopped only by a restoration of Korean independence. In 1940, Rhee decided to write a book to appeal to the American public and to ask support for the Korean independence movement. It was titled *Japan Inside Out* and was published early in 1941. In this book, Rhee discussed and explained his conviction that the Japanese would finally attack the United States. He predicted that soon Japan would either seize coastal Siberia or would march into the South Pacific.[90]

In this book Rhee also stated his ideology. There would be no peace and safety in the world if it were divided into half democratic and half

totalitarian. It had to be one or the other. The Americans needed to face the international situation and respond immediately to keep democracy. They had to cooperate with peoples who were struggling to keep their liberty or to restore their lost freedom. Rhee asserted that how the Americans acted was crucial because the American attitude would determine the maintenance of democracy in the world.[91] Furthermore, Rhee stated that the old treaty of amity between the United States and Korea was a pledge of American protection based on his studies in international law at Harvard and Princeton. He said the United States Senate, the President of the United States, and the State Department approved and signed the treaty to create it as a law of the United States. Thus if the Korean emperor's request for American protection against Japan based on this treaty was unwise, the Koreans were not responsible for it. He asserted that this was a really shameful part of American history.[92]

In this book Rhee concluded the United States should enlist all its economical, moral, and military power to check Japan to avoid ultimate fighting with Japan.[93] Rhee's predictions were soon proven by Pearl Harbor, when Japan attacked the United States through naval and air forces on December 7, 1941. On December 8, 1941, President Roosevelt delivered a war on Japan message to Congress, "I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a

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[90]Syngman Rhee, *Japan Inside Out*, 200.

[91]Ibid., 13.

[92] ", 168, 176.

[93] ", 13.

state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire."[94]

Pearl Harbor changed the American-Japan relationship. The Korean nationalists believed this event would significantly affect Korean independence and soon the question of Korea's position would be reconsidered. It seemed Rhee had gained a more advantageous position compared to that of the nationalists in Shanghai and Chunking because Korea's restoration would arrive not through China but from across the Pacific.[95]

Rhee immediately requested the provisional government in Chunking to send him a cabled declaration of intention which showed the exiled republic could support the United States to defeat the Japanese. Rhee believed the provisional government would be recognized since the idea that the United States would not confront Japan could apply no more.

Rhee sent the official statement from the provisional government to the State Department, asking the United States Government's recognition of the Korean Provisional Government. But during the early part of the war, Rhee gained no official recognition from the State Department.[96] In 1942, Stanley Hornbeck, Secretary of the State Department, stated Rhee was completely unfamiliar in Korea and the provisional government could not represent all Koreans because the State Department thought it was merely a self-composed group with limited membership among expatriates.[97]

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[94]Samuel I. Roseman compiled, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt.* Vol. 10 (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1941), 514-515.

[95]Allen, *Korea's Syngman Rhee*, 63.

[96]U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations 1942.* Vol. I, 859.

[97]Ibid., 858.

Rhee telegraphed Chunking[98] asking the assembly and cabinet to announce a formal declaration of war against Japan so the exiled government could be on the list of nations participating in the democratic alliance. The State Department officials, however, disregarded this declaration.

On January 2, 1942, Rhee visited the Department of State to see Alger Hiss, a special assistant to Secretary Cordell Hull, and Dr. Stanley Hornbeck, Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs. Rhee asked that the United States give the Korean Provisional Government the same recognition and support as was provided to a growing list of governments-in exile from Nazi-dominated Europe. Hiss said this was impossible because the United States Government had no standard of judging whether Rhee truly had the support of the Korean people. Rhee also asked about the possibility that the Korean Republic be recognized with the condition that its leadership would be selected in a post-war election to be held by American officials. Rhee informed him about the Soviet aggression toward Korea. Russia had been looking to the all-year warm water sea ports of Korea as outlets for Siberian trade for more than fifty years. Rhee said Russia would definitely move in and dominate Korea if the United States failed to recognize Korean independence prior to the Russian move. Hiss, however, replied the matter of what happened to Korea would remain to be seen after Japan's defeat. Rhee regretted that such an unprofessional man in Eastern politics could influence American policy in East Asia.[99]

Early in 1942 the members of the Pacific War Council discussed the question of making a statement about the future independence of Korea and of

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[98]The Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai moved to Chungking in 1937 because of the Japanese influence in Manchuria.

[99]Robert Oliver, *Syngman Rhee and American Involvement in Korea: 1942-1960* (Seoul: Panmun Books Korea Company Ltd, 1978), 7-8.

allowing some kind of recognition of the Korean Provisional Government in Washington, D.C. They decided not to do anything until they determined on what the best course of action in the Pacific.[100]

On March 14, 1942, Rhee wrote to Secretary Hull, reaffirming the will of the Koreans to aid the United States to defeat Japan and to try to get recognition of the Provisional Government of Korea. "The Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea", he said, "is the sole representative of the Korean people, whether they are residents in Korea proper, Manchuria, Siberia, China or elsewhere."[101]

The State Department made no mention of recognition of the Provisional Government of Korea. Since the United States and other foreign nations were in a state of war with Japan, Rhee thought this determination was difficult to understand. The Chinese government agreed with the provisional government on military matters. The provisional government received material support from Chiang Kai-shek's government, but this was not equivalent to recognizing it as the legal government representing the Korean people. The government of the United States would not acknowledge the Korean Provisional Government.[102] The U.S. government said it had no basis for deciding which of the several claimants really represented Korea.[103]

Rhee was convinced the true reason was an American-Russian relationship. The United States did not want to confront Russia. When he

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[100]Kyung Cho Chung, *Korea Tomorrow, Land of the Morning Calm* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), 182.

[101]U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations 1942.* Vol. I, 865.

[102]Ibid., 873.

[103]Ibid., 36-37.

discussed this with Alger Hiss, Rhee was convinced any solution of the Korean problem would have to be delayed until a postwar conference with the Soviet Union. Rhee also knew how communism had influenced the State Department and Cordell Hull would not give Koreans independence because he did not want to agitate the Russians.[104]

At this time Korean nationalists had two problems. First, factionalism among the nationalists increased after 1940. This problem was directly connected with the matter of leadership. The measure of power among the nationalists in China was decided by how many followers each leader had and it brought factional conflicts.[105] Since Rhee was in the United States and his policy was different from those of other nationalists in China and Siberia, he could not become only one dominant leader among Korean nationalists.

Second, the problem of ideology was arising. After Japan's attack on Manchuria in 1931, the Soviets and the refugeed Koreans joined together against the Japanese in the borderlands of Manchuria and Siberia because for them Japan was a common enemy. Communism was creeping into Korean politics in China and was rapidly spreading. The tension of separation according to ideology became particularly critical after 1940, when the Chinese Communists commenced to take an active interest in Korea.[106] Several Korean expatriates went to Moscow for their education, and a Korean branch of the communist party was established in China. Rhee openly blamed Koo Kim, the new President of the Korean Provisional Government in Chunking, because

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[104]Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 194

[105]Hak-Joon Kim, *The Unification Policy of South and North Korea* (Seoul, Korea: Seoul National University, 1977), 26-27.

[106]Chong-Sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 231-232.

Koo Kim ordered admitting communists into the cabinet in December 1942.[107] In December, 1941, the Korean National Revolutionary Party (communist) chose a manifesto to promise to assist the Korean Provisional Government. On May 15, 1943, Rhee sent a letter to Roosevelt to warn of the danger of the Russian expansion in the Far East.[108]

Since Pearl Harbor, the United States recognized the special interests of Japan in Korea. The American policy and military operations in the Far East focused primarily on defeating and limiting Japanese power. The United States believed it could contribute to the future security of the United States in the Pacific.[109]

At the Cairo Conference in 1943, the matter of Korean independence received world recognition. On December 1, 1943, The Cairo Declaration was issued. It was prepared in November at the First Cairo Conference and was approved by President Roosevelt, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The declaration stated that "in due course Korea shall become free and independent."[110] In other words, Korea had been guaranteed its independence, but under the condition "in due course." Rhee was greatly alarmed by the phrase. He was convinced it would only mean the indefinite postponement of independence. He issued a series of statements criticizing this restrictive phrase, and addressed letters to the State Department

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[107]Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 193-194.

[108]U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1943.* Vol. III (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 1094.

[109]Legand M. Goodrich, *Korea: A History of U.S. Policy in the United Nations*(New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1956), 10.

and to President Roosevelt asking for an explanation of this phrase, but he received no answers.

Secretary of State Hull mentioned in his memoirs later that he thought the due course inappropriate because the Koreans wanted their independence immediately after liberation and not in due course. In addition this phrase made the Koreans worry they would be dominated by China.[111]

In American policy, the due course provision meant the gradual introduction of self-rule into colonial areas which lacked the self-government experience.[112] Cordell Hull wrote in his memoirs that on March 27, 1943 Roosevelt suggested to him "that Korea might be placed under an international trusteeship with China, the United States, and one or two other countries participating."[113] The United States had only experienced that matter in the Philippines, where it had taken the people about fifty years to prepare for self-government. Roosevelt thought that the period might be twenty to thirty years in Korea.[114] As a result, "in due course" meant a joint-trusteeship of maybe five years of military occupation, and Korea was defined as a united political entity.

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[110]Samuel I. Roseman, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 531.

[111]Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948), 1584.

[112]Samuel I. Roseman, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 476.

[113]Cordell Hull, *Memoirs* ,1096.

[114]U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Malta and Yalta 1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), 770.

At times, Americans supported Rhee's position, although the American Government ignored Rhee's political opinions. Sumner Welles, who had been an acting secretary of the State Department said, "With the restoration of Korean independence, one of the great crimes of the twentieth century will have been rectified, and another stabilizing factor will have been added to the new international system which must be constructed in the Pacific."[115] Mayor La Guardia stated that "there can be no permanent solution in the Far East or assurances of peace until Korea is free and independent." Senator William H. King, Dr. H. H. Kung, Vice Premier and Finance Minister of China, Col. Carlos P. Romulo, resident commissioner of the Philippines urged immediate recognition of the Korean independence.[116]

Rhee continued his official negotiations with other departments' officials. In March of 1943, Dr. Harold M. Vinacke, head of the Far Eastern Division of the Office of War Information offered Rhee to broadcast through the facilities of the Office of War Information. Rhee encouraged the Koreans to prepare for the day when they would be liberated because that day would come.[117]

About this time Major Wallace H. Moore of Army Intelligence suggested Rhee talk with Colonel M. Preston Goodfellow, Chief of the Office of the Strategic Services. Colonel Goodfellow said even though the United States would not recognize the Korean government, the War Department could recognize the leaders of the group enough to develop some cooperative plans.

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[115]"Korea Now Key Role in Pacific" *Washington Post* (30 July 1944)

[116]"Korean Leader Asks for Arms, Munitions." *New York Times* (30 August 1944)

[117]Wonsoon Lee, *Man Syngman Rhee*, 210.

Both Rhee and Goodfellow created a plan. Rhee would try to collect one hundred young Koreans. If he could assembled these Koreans, they could be secretly trained. At the right time, they could parachute into Japan or Korea to perform sabotage and contact underground Korean nationalists who could help them. There was a prerequisite for them. They had to be able to speak Korean and Japanese so as not to be doubted as foreigners since Koreans in Korea were compelled to use Japanese.[118]

To enlist one hundred young Koreans in the second and third generations of Koreans in the United States was difficult. Only a few of them spoke Korean fluently and fewer could speak Japanese. Finally Rhee assembled a group of qualified Korean men. They trained and then waited until this group of men could be utilized, together with another Korean group given similar training in China. However, as the plans for defeating Japan were developed, the campaign was directed up through the Pacific Islands, rather than calling for a landing on the northern Chinese coast. The Allied war plans did not need the dissolution of Japanese supply lines through Korea. The Korean volunteers were not used.[119] But after the Japanese surrender, they were placed in the Far East and carried out several responsibilities.[120]

Rhee sought Korean nationality during the war when the United States Government restricted enemy aliens in the United States. Koreans were classified as subjects of Japan. On behalf of the Koreans in the United States, Rhee asked Attorney General Francis Biddle to lift these restrictions. On February 9, 1942, Biddle issued a statement lifting restrictions from some

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[118]Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 184-185.

[119]Ibid.,185.

[120]Wonsoon Lee, *Man Syngman Rhee*, 203.

enemy aliens. All Austrians, Austro-Hungarians and Koreans who registered as such under the Alien Registration Act of 1940 and who had not since intentionally become citizens or subjects of Germany, Italy, or Japan were not restricted.[121] Through Attorney-General Biddle and Secretary of War Stimson, Koreans in the United States were exempt from alien restrictions such as those requiring identification certificates and forbidding the possession of cameras.[122]

Meanwhile, the Korean Commission issued bonds for the independence movement. Rhee's funds were low and the money Rhee received was too little to support either a lobbying or public relations program. The Commission stated that, "the Korean Provisional Government has difficulties in pursuing the Korean independence movement because of the poor funds...We will redeem the bonds after establishing the Korean government." As a result, Koreans in the United States bought these bonds and the Korean Commission collected large amounts of money. After liberation, the Korean government decided to redeem the bonds and ordered the Korean Embassy in the United States to do so.[123]

In February 1945, thirteen months after the Cairo-Teheran Conference, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union convened at Yalta. At the Yalta Conference, the Pacific war and Far Eastern problems were considered in several meetings. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin agreed an interim international administration or trusteeship should be founded in Korea "either under the United Nations or independently of it, and

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[121]Ibid., 202-204.

[122]Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 188-189.

[123]Wonson Lee, *Man Syngman Rhee*, 210.

that the United States, Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union should be included in any such administration."[124]

The Korean leaders were again frustrated. Although the agreement among the Allied leaders at Yalta was secretly decided at the time, Rhee was convinced Korea had been sacrificed to Soviet intervention. In fact, at Yalta, Stalin agreed with President Roosevelt that Soviet troops would have to enter Korea. In return, Stalin made it clear the price for Russian participation in the war was Korea. The Yalta Conference had great significance for the future of Korea. Stalin's intention to enter the war against Japan implied the Soviet Union would have an important position in determining the future of the Japanese Empire.[125]

Rhee requested repudiating any secret agreement that might influence the political, administrative, and territorial integrity of Korea.[126] Rhee received no reply from the legislators and then he held a press conference and claimed a secret deal publicly. He criticized the trusteeship proposal for Korea as an insult to Korean who had been independent for four thousand years. He also asserted that the attempt to rule Korea through a four-power agreement would not work. In addition he warned Russia would use the trusteeship period as on opportunity to communize Korea.[127] The State Department in Washington, D.C. announced a formal rejection of the secret agreement at Yalta. Rhee

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[124]U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Malta and Yalta 1945*, 359.

[125]Goodrich, *Korea: A History of U.S. in the United Nations*, 11.

[126]U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1945.* Vol. VI (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), 1028.

repeated his charge. The White House issued a refutation. The communiqué issued after the Yalta conference did not mention Korea nor the main aim of the meeting, obtaining Soviet agreement to participate in the war against Japan.

Rhee knew about Russian plots on the Korean peninsula from his experience since 1896. During his early leadership of the Independence Club, Russia had been one of the powers trying to dominate the weakened and powerless Korean monarchy.[128] The Korean emperor Kojong had been sheltered in the Russian embassy in Seoul for almost one year. He wanted to protect himself from Japan at the price of yielding to the dominance of the Czar's ambassador, M. Waeber. Through the Russo-Japanese war and the Portsmouth treaty, the Russians efforts to dominate Korea were stopped temporarily.

Korea was placed in the center of the strategic triangle of North Asia. Any power strong enough to control Korea would also be a threat to Japan, Siberia, and Manchuria. Rhee well understood Russia's hunger for adequate Pacific seaports since Vladivostok was not useful during the winter. The Russians were greedy for Hamhung, Wonson, and other Korean warm water harbors. Russia also wanted North Korea's iron, timber, coal, and gold.[129]

On February 5, 1945 Rhee sent a letter to the Secretary of State. He wrote that "the Korea communist Army maintained in Siberia by Russia might rush into Korea at an opportune moment and overrun the entire peninsula, before the Korean Nationalist Democratic Government in Exile could find a

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[127]Robert T. Oliver, "Syngman Rhee of Korea," *Catholic World*, CLXXII (January, 1951), 281.

[128]"Will Ask Roosevelt to Protect Koreans." *New York Times* (4 August 1905), Syngman Rhee, *Japan Inside Out*, 8.

chance to return to Korea." In his letter of June 5 to Joseph C. Grew, Acting Secretary of the State Department, Rhee stated the best way to prevent conflict between the United States and the Soviet Republics was to set up only democratic governments.[130]

In April, 1945, when the United Nations Conference was held in San Francisco, Rhee decided to use the opportunity to secure a dependable guarantee of Korean independence. He assembled all the leaders of the various Korean factions and set up headquarters in the Maurice Hotel. Rhee asked them to insist on a simple program of absolute independence for Korea. The question of leadership would be decided later. Rhee asked Secretary of State to attend the conference as an observer in the name of the United Korean Committee, but this request was refused.[131] Furthermore, the United Nations Conference did not show any response to the appeal from the Korean Provisional Government. The nationalists negotiated with various delegations at the conference and lobbied to admit Korea as a charter member of the United Nations, but no one was willing to acknowledge the Korean Provisional Government.

At this point, Dr. T.V. Soong, Foreign Minister of China invited the Koreans to a dinner on May 22 to suggest they support a coalition government for Korea. The coalition government was to establish a combined democratic and Communist government. Rhee refused to attend the dinner and to accept the proposal because he thought it meant yielding Korea to Communism. He disbanded the United Korean Committee. The Korean National Association

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[129]Allen, *Korea's Syngman Rhee*, 69.

[130]U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations 1945.* Vol. VI, 1023.

[131]Ibid., 1025.

group separated from his delegation and established other headquarters in San Francisco.

After the death of President Roosevelt and the San Francisco meeting of the United Nations, Stalin and the United States agreed to a short term, four-power trusteeship in a conversation with Harry Hopkins in May, 1945. The fact that Soviets agreed on these matters was kept secret since Russia had not yet declared war against Japan.[132]

The United States avoided offering an official recognition of the Provisional Government. On June 8, 1945, Acting Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew issued a public statement denying that any secret agreement contrary to the Cairo Declaration had been created at Yalta. Grew further pointed out Korea had not attended the San Francisco Conference because all United Nations members were legally constituted authorities while the Korean Provisional Government did not have the necessary qualifications for getting recognition by the United States as a governing authority.[133]

At the Potsdam Conference in July, 1945, the allied leaders, Truman, Stalin, and Churchill, reaffirmed the Cairo Declaration on Korea and endorsed that Japan would not be allowed to maintain Korea. At the Potsdam Conference the 38th parallel became an issue again. It had not been an issue since 1896. Then, during negotiation with Russia on a divided Korea, Japan had suggested Korea as a frontier between the West and East.[134] The military

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[132]Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper, 1948), 903.

[133]United States. *Department of State Bulletin* Vol. 12 (January-June, 1945), 1058-1059.

[134]Kyung Cho Chung, *Korea Tomorrow*, 184.

staffs had discussed the matters about the bi-zonal occupation by the Soviet and American forces at Yalta. On July 26, 1945, it was decided at the Conference that American troops would take over the Japanese surrender south of the 38th parallel. Soviet troops would occupy the north. As a result, occupation of the two zones was already fixed before a sovereign government could be established. The 38th parallel division of Korea between occupation forces of Russians in the North and Americans in the South was a result of American determination to get the Soviet Union involved in the Pacific war. In this way, Japan might be attacked from all sides at once.

On July 24, when the Allied leaders were meeting in Potsdam, Rhee sent a telegram to President Truman asking Truman, Churchill, and Stalin to recognize the Korean Provisional Government. He remarked that this would remove the possibility of a civil war in Korea between the Communists and Nationalists. He also said it would clearly prevent international peace and break relations between Russia and Korea.[135]

On July 25, 1945, Rhee sent a letter to Frank P. Lockhardt, the Acting Chief of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs. Rhee argued that "there is no qualification which we know of that the Korean Provisional Government fails to possess for recognition by the United States." According to Rhee there were two conditions for recognition in international law: stability and the support of that government by the people themselves. First, Rhee said, the Korean Provisional Government was stable because it had existed for over a quarter of a century and was still the only Korean government. Second, Rhee said, it had been supported by the people themselves. Then he claimed that the overwhelming majority of Korean people, both inside and outside Korea,

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[135]U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations 1945.* Vol. VI, 1031.

solidly supported the Korean Provisional Government. Rhee reminded them that the Korean government was originally established in Seoul in 1919 by the representatives of the thirteen provinces of Korea. Rhee enclosed a copy of the original Seoul Proclamation.[136]

Rhee expressed his position about Korean disunity, which was widely publicized by the pro-Japanese and by the pro-Communists. He stated the disunity among the Koreans was just the common disunity existing in all the democratic nations between the minority Communists and the majority Nationalists. The other Korean groups which the State Department had been mentioned were merely minority Korean Communist agitators and pro-Communist groups whose purpose was to work toward a Lublin Committee for Korea. Since all the problems relating to the Korean communists were only a small number of pro-Communist agitators in the United States and China, there were no communist problems in Korea.[137]

In addition, Rhee insisted that to create a government of Korean choice would be impossible under Soviet domination. Finally, this policy would bring the United States disadvantages.[138] Rhee received no reply from Washington. This was his final effort to get its recognition for the Korean Provisional Government.

On August 2, 1945, before Japan surrendered, 125,000 Russian troops under Colonel General Ivan Chistyakov advanced on northeast Korea, and quickly marched south. The Soviet troops made a drive the 38th Parallel and occupied and plundered the city of Kaesung. After the American troops

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[136]Ibid., 1032-34.

[137] " ,1034-35.

[138] " , 1035-1036.

landed, the Russians withdrew from Kaesung, seizing the city's large amount of ginseng and all the money in the banks. Both sides of the 38th parallel got ready to defend themselves. The North Korea soon built fortifications.

On August 15, 1945, Japan finally surrendered to the Allied Forces and the Koreans restored their independence. On that day Rhee made a statement in the *New York Times*: "The Japanese surrender means the end of that long nightmare of terror and oppression of Korea. The Korean people will forever be grateful to the American people for breaking the hated chain which bound them."[139]

On September 8, 72,000 American troops arrived in South Korea to carry out their commitment under Lieutenant General John R. Hodge. After a few days, Hodge came to South Korea, it became clear the Russians were not going to cooperate with them. Hodge sent a trainload of supplies into North Korea in exchange for a load of coal. But the Russians kept the train and did not send back any coal.[140]

On September 18, 1945, President Truman announced the liberation of Korea. He said Koreans would assume the responsibilities and functions of a free, independent country and would eliminate all Japanese control over their economic and political lives, but this would take time and patience. Independence was near and would be reached by Koreans and their allies working together.[141]

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[139]"Free Korea Avows Gratitude to U.S." *New York Times* (August 15, 1945)

[140]Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 212.

[141]*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 325.

All Korean leaders wanted to establish an independent country immediately after liberation. However, the frontier at the 38th parallel gradually became tightly closed and the Koreans recognized the division of their country.

From the start, the Americans and the Russians chose different basic techniques. The American Military Government had two purposes: "the establishment of a responsible administrative bureaucracy and the development of democratic Korean leadership for the formation of a semilegislative assembly."[142] But Korea was one of many problems for American policy makers trying to form a plan for the surrender of Japanese troops. The Truman administration was still not familiar enough about the details of Roosevelt's diplomacy.[143] Carl Berger remarked "The sad truth was that Korea was the only important area occupied by American troops in the Pacific for which detailed, concrete preparation had not been made by any branch of the United States Government."[144]

The Soviet brought with them some expatriate Korean communists, who had been educated in Siberia and at Yenan to control Korea and set up a puppet government. The Russians organized a provisional Korean regime under Soviet rule. In both zones, North and South, convenience determined who took responsibility created by the political vacuum. The Koreans in both zones wanted to rule themselves with help from the United States and the Soviet Union. However, they were thwarted by a divided country and different

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[142]Kyung Cho Chung, *Korea Tomorrow*, 188.

[143]Allen, *Korea's Syngman Rhee*, 69.

[144]Carl Berger, *The Korea Knot* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), 49.

policies. In addition, the Soviets and the U.S. occupation was temporary and merely caused more confusion.

At the time Hodge was landing at Inchon, Robert Oliver, Rhee's adviser since 1941, talked with Rhee and Mrs. Rhee. Oliver knew Rhee's concerns about Soviet ambitions in Korea. At that time Rhee was trying to resist the policies of the United States and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless Oliver suggested Rhee that he cooperated with the Russians. Also, Oliver reminded Rhee that he would have to cooperate with the Russians because Korea was located within the Soviet area of influence. He concluded that there would be a communist coalition government in the Korea. Rhee would not accept Oliver's suggestion. Rhee strongly insisted that Koreans had to establish their own government through a free election. Rhee said he had struggled for Korean independence throughout his life and refused to allow his life to end with acceptance of Soviet domination.[145]

Rhee was still in the United States struggling with the increasing problems. He was consulting with some of the best professionals at Princeton about establishing constitutional government and holding free elections.[146] He strongly wanted to return to Korea before the coalition plan could be developed. He requested a passport. On September 5, the State Department issued it. He also asked for a military permit to enter Korea, which General Douglas MacArthur immediately allowed. But, because the State Department knew the permit was issued to Rhee as "high commissioner from Korea to the United States," his passport was canceled. During the discussions about the

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[145]Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 205-206.

[146]"Korean Situation Causes Anxiety." *New York Times* (15 September 1945)

route and the means of travel by which Rhee would return to Korea, his return was delayed .[147]

On October 16, 1945 Rhee finally returned to Korea after long years of exile. General MacArthur suggested that Hodge welcome Rhee as a national hero. To two generations Syngman Rhee had represented independence, reform, and democracy. As soon as Koreans knew he had arrived, a mass of people crowded in the courtyard of the Chosun Hotel to cheer him. Hodge reserved a three-room suite for Rhee on the third floor. The cheering people gathered under his windows and shouted "*Manse*."

During the period 1939-1945, Rhee had focused on negotiating with the U.S. government for recognition of the Korean Provisional Government. The United States, which had no intention of recognizing the Korean Provisional Government, claimed there was a lack of unity among Korean nationalists. Though Rhee's political view was accurate, it did not help the Korean decision. The future of Korea was decided by great powers in their own interests regardless of Korea's will. The United States needed the Soviet Union to defeat Japan, and Russian intervention meant a divided Korea. But Rhee did not give up fighting for Korean independence. At times Rhee denounced American policy and warned of the Russian expansion in East Asia and he rejected the coalition program.

Rhee finished his exile. Rhee's fighting for Korean independence against Japanese oppression and imperialism was over. The Korean people regarded Rhee as an almost legendary leader who had lead and motivated Koreans since 1897. On the other hand, although Korea was liberated from Japan, it was divided in half by American and Soviet occupation and projected

into the struggle between Communism and Democracy. It was likely Korea's situation was no better than it was under the Japanese. The threat of Russian aggression in Korea was increasing. At this point, Rhee strengthened his efforts to fight against the Russia's power so he could establish a united democratic Korea.

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[147] Oliver, *American Involvement*, 17-18.

Chapter Four

Syngman Rhee's Fight for Korean Independence (after 1945)

Rhee's long fight for Korean independence brought him great popularity. This was demonstrated on his arrival in U.S.-occupied southern Korea in 1945. Even though other leaders in exile had arrived in Korea and received some support from Koreans, they could not be a force to unite Koreans. Rhee became a force to guide Koreans in a politically confused situation. Every political party in Korea, including the Communist-dominated People's Republic Party, offered him their chairmanship. But Rhee decided not to align himself with a party. General Hodge, commander of the American troops in Korea, recognized Rhee's leadership and appointed him chairman of the Representative Democratic Council, which General Hodge made as an advisory body. The policy makers in the U.S. State Department

judged that Rhee was an extremist and he did not represent Koreans. They believed that Kiusik Kim was the proper politician and tried to support Kim.[148]

From 1945 to 1948, Rhee undertook a campaign of anti-communism which taught Koreans about the democratic cause and Korean independence. At that time, Koreans in South Korea did not recognize the danger of communism. Furthermore, many Koreans were inclined toward Soviet Union. The Russian army in North Korea quickly created a new paper currency for the northern area, gathering in all the old currency in circulation. They sent large amounts of the old currency to its agencies in the south. The communists set to work systematically to buy newspapers and motion picture theaters in the south. They also printed posters which were scattered freely so that communism became popular among the population.[149]

On December 28, 1945 the Moscow Foreign Ministers Meeting of the Big Four Powers, the United States, the Soviet Union, China and Great Britain, proclaimed a four-power trusteeship of Korea for a period of up to five years.[150] Rhee issued a denunciation of this agreement and led the fight against a five-year trusteeship proposal. Rhee insisted that the U.N. had to consider the Korean problem. At first the Communists agreed with this rejection, but in the middle of the demonstration they received a command from Moscow to support trusteeship and changed their attitude from rejection to agreement to the trusteeship.

Rhee started weekly addresses over the Korean radio. In these addresses he stated that a trusteeship managed by four separate powers could not possibly work;

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[148]Bruce C. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War. Vol. II: The Roaring of the Cataract 1947-1950* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 47.

[149]Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 216.

[150]Legand Goodrich, *Korea: A History of U.S. in the United Nations*, 15-16.

that the five-year term could be extended; and that an immediate effect of the plan would be to extend Russian influence directly over the whole of the peninsula. In February 1946 Rhee made a six-week speaking tour in every city and in many of the towns and villages in South Korea. He warned of the danger of communism and asserted the necessity of fighting against it at all costs.

Rhee and General Hodge had different perspectives on how to establish Korea as a democratic nation. The military authorities tried to impede Rhee's anti-communist campaign, and sought to put together a coalition of left and right forces, while postponing independence until an agreement with Russia could be made. The conflict reached a climax when the military government authorized an "Interim Legislature" for South Korea in November 1946. Rhee's followers gained forty-three of the forty-five elective seats in the Interim Legislature. Nevertheless, General Hodge, who was authorized to appoint forty-five additional legislators, chose one of Rhee's follower and forty-four of Rhee's opponents.

After this appointment, Rhee came to Washington, D.C. on December 7, 1946. Rhee believed that Russia would not agree to the establishment of a free government for all of Korea. Consequently he felt it was the time to establish a separate government confined to South Korea. He established a "strategy council" for his activities there and spent three months in conferences seeking a basic change of American policies in Korea. On September 17, 1947 the State Department denounced the Moscow trusteeship agreement and presented the Korean case to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The General Assembly readily agreed that an election should be held in all of Korea in order to permit the Korean people to create a free government of their own choice. But Russia refused to allow the U.N. Commission to cross the 38th parallel line. The question was again returned to the Interim Committee, which recommended keeping the election in all parts of Korea available to the

Commission. On May 10, 1948, 90.6 percent of all registered voters elected 198 members of a new National Assembly.

In May 1948, when the National Assembly convened, Rhee was elected as chairman by a vote of 189 to 8. The National Assembly adopted a constitution and under it Rhee was elected President for a four-year term by a vote of 180 to 16. Since August 15, 1948, he had headed the Republic of Korea in its continued efforts to establish economic, political and military stability. Also, President Rhee continually asked the United States for enough equipment for defense against a full-scale attack from the north, but American officials have opposed this view because they thought Korea had little strategic interest and no strategic purpose to continue the U.S. military troops.[151]

In the early Fall of 1949, communist forces, of up to 4,000 men, launched south of the 38th parallel on the Ongjin peninsula. This was a barren area above Inchon on the west coast. General Roberts, who was in charge of the 500-man military advisory force of U.S. troops serving in Korea, told President Rhee to withdraw from the peninsula and let the communists have it because it had no strategic significance. Rhee refused and wondered whether the United States believed communism could be defeated by retreating before its attack. On January 12, 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson stated Korea was not included within the United States defense perimeter in Asia.

On Sunday morning, June 25, 1950, the first communist troops moved across the 38th parallel east of Kaesung at 4:00 A.M. and started full attack. There is a new interpretation about the Korean war. Bruce Cumings argues that the Korean war was not a war between communism and democracy but "a civil and

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[151]Bruce C. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War,* 60.

revolutionary war to unify and transform the country."[152] Who started the Korean war is the wrong question. He contends that the establishment of separate northern and southern regimes in 1948 was "only the final expression of patterns forged in 1945 and 1946"[153] and the Korean war was the final outcome of the struggles during the preceding five years. In particular, the year 1949 initiated a stage of direct battle along the parallel by regular army units.[154] Burton I. Kaufman said, "By 1950, South Korea's American-sponsored and supported rightist government, headed by Syngman Rhee, had virtually eliminated leftist guerrilla activities south of the 38th parallel." Nonetheless, the conditions in South Korea were shaky and this weakened the already fragile power of Rhee's government.[155]

President Truman had been involved in Korean war because he knew the world was in a crisis. He worried about maintaining the international prestige for the United States. He also concerned about keeping his own prestige in the United States. Truman felt that he must respond to Moscow's obvious aggression in Korea.[156]

Rhee ordered his defense minister to resist with full force and at any cost. Nonetheless, the North Koreans seized Seoul on June 29, 1950. In September 1950, the war faced a new stage after the U.N. armies landed successfully at

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[152]Ibid., 667.

[153] " , xxii.

[154] " , 398.

[155]Burton I. Kaufman, "Decision-making and the Korean War," *Reviews in American History* (December 1992), 562.

[156]Burton I. Kaufman, *The Korean War: Challenges in Crisis, Credibility, and Command* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 212.

Inchon. They occupied Pyengyang on October 19. But the forces from Communist China poured across the Yalu River to help the North Korean communists, and on November 28 General MacArthur announced that an entirely new war had started. President Truman stated that under no condition would the war spread to China. The United States did not want another war.

As the truce talks in Korea progressed in 1953, there was a big gap between the United States' and Rhee's position. Rhee opposed the truce because he felt it amounted to a surrender to communists aggression and a danger to future peace. But the United States and the U.N. wanted to limit this war. The Korean war affected recent American history because it globalized the cold war. The U.S. military presence increased worldwide. Furthermore, the United States started to think about the Communist threat beyond Europe and the Middle East.[157]

Finally Rhee agreed with the truce. In return he made it clear that the United States promised to support the Korean military establishment and economic development. South Korea could not be independent economically because the main industry in Korea was concentrated in northern Korea.

Rhee was reelected in 1952, 1956, and 1960 as President. But his government was characterized by corruption and mismanagement. Rhee's leadership also was authoritarian and was opposed to democratic ideals. Before the second presidential election in 1952, there was not enough possibility that the National Assembly reelected Rhee as President. As a result, Rhee pressured the National Assembly to change the Constitution and was reelected by direct popular vote, rather than by the National Assembly.

In 1960, the election fraud, with the corruption and repression of Rhee's government, resulted in the April 19 revolution which was an uprising against

Rhee's government. On April 27, 1960 Rhee resigned as President and then went to Hawaii. He strongly wanted to return to Korea, but the Korean government persuaded him to stay in Hawaii where he died on July 19, 1965. He was buried in the National Cemetery in Seoul on July 27, 1965. After that Mrs. Rhee returned to Austria and in 1970 President Park suggested she return to Korea. She stayed in Rhee's house *Ewhajang* in Seoul until her death in 1992. She made efforts to publicize Rhee's activities and his patriotism. She was buried in National cemetery. *Ewhajang* has been open as a historical place since 1988.

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[157]Ibid., 215.

Conclusion

Syngman Rhee sought Korean independence during a turbulent time in Korean history. Many events influenced Korea's political situation. During his life, the political system of Korea changed from the Yi Dynasty to a Japanese colony, to the Republic of Korea.

Rhee started his fight for Korean independence as a member of the Independence Club in 1896 when Korea was the focal center of the global power struggle. He continued his fight as President of the Korean Provisional Government since 1919 and mainly worked as a statesman for Korean independence. He became the first President of the Republic of Korea in 1948. Rhee had a goal: the establishment and defense of Korean independence. He pursued this goal persistently throughout his life of 70 years. Whether the enemy was the ambitious Japanese militarism or the Russian Communists, he always insisted that the real solution to Korean freedom was to keep the rights and independence of the people.

Rhee has been described by some historians and writers as "The problem child of the United States"; "A little Chinag Kai-shek"; "Terroristic dictator"; "The

founder of the new Korea"; "A messianic Leader"; "Catalyst of democracy in Asia", and "The greatest political prophet".[158]

According to the CIA, Rhee was intellectually shallow and his behavior was irrational and childish. Nevertheless, the CIA finally decided he was a distinguished, astute politician.[159]

In his book *The Origins of the Korean War*, Cumings is highly critical of Rhee; Before 1945 Rhee was less popular than Koo Kim, Kiusik Kim, and Ilsung Kim.[160] He described Rhee as "a strange hybrid," completely Korean to Americans and alien to many Koreans.[161] Rhee was more like Emperor Kojong than Hitler.[162] Rhee had less military and political experience than Chiang. Chiang governed millions of people for decades and his regime was independent from American influence at least from 1927 to 1941.[163] Rhee was closely aligned with Chiang's policy "to act is easy, to think difficult," and opposed to Mao's theory, "to think is easy, to act is difficult."[164] Oliver wrote that Rhee had an ability to see the simple, clear issues that lay underneath complexities.[165]

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[158]Chan Kwon, "The Leadership of Syngman Rhee," *Korean Quarterly* (Spring 1971), 42.

[159]Cumings, 227.

[160]Ibid., 224.

[161] 〃 , 228.

[162] 〃 , 192.

[163] 〃 , 224.

[164] 〃 , 209.

[165]Oliver, *Syngman Rhee*, 270.

Chan Kwon criticized the fact that Rhee thought he was the only man who could accomplish Korean independence and so believed he was sent to rule Korea. He thought he was strong, the people were weak; he was superior, the people were inferior.[166]

Chongsik Lee has criticized Rhee's excessive reliance on diplomacy.[167] Some scholars have also maintained that Rhee was only one of several Korean claimants for leadership and that he did not really represent the masses of the Korean people. They also charged Rhee with being a fruitless negotiator and said his activities were failures.[168]

One can fairly evaluate Rhee on four grounds; personal attributes, motivation, leadership, and activities.

Rhee was intelligent and prophetic about international situations. He foresaw events and developing movements in world politics. Long before the West recognized the dangers, he warned of Japanese militarism, the evil of Russian communism, and the civil war in Korea. Rhee was so unique and complicated that it is difficult to compare him to anyone. Cumings contrasts Rhee with Emperor Kojong, but Rhee was very different from Kojong. Kojong became emperor when he was eleven years old. His father dominated Korean politics until he became an adult. After he married Myunsung, she expelled her father-in-law and became the first figure in Korean politics. After Queen Myunsung was murdered by the Japanese, Kojong was confused between Japan and Russia.

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[166]Chan Kwon, 45.

[167]Chong-Sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 125.

[168]Chan Kwon, "The Leadership of Syngman Rhee," 48. Frank Gibney, "Syngman Rhee: The Free Man's Burden," *Harper's Magazine* (Jan-June 1954), 29. Hak-Joon Kim, *The Unification Policy of South and North*, 23-24. Richard Allen, *Korea's Syngman Rhee*, 235.

Finally Korea was annexed to Japan in 1910. Kojong was an inappropriate figure to be a leader. Rhee had great characteristics as a leader. He was intelligent, strong, tenacious, ambitious, and a natural speaker and writer. At times, Rhee was criticized and opposed by his rivals because of his strong and dynamic personality. In shaping policies for Korean independence he would decide all important decisions himself. He wanted to be a principal leader rather than follow other leaders.

At times, his uncompromising and ambitious personality was a problem. Rhee pursued his policy continuously and without compromise once he believed it was right. When there were different opinions about achieving Korean independence among Korean nationalists, he did not compromise with them. Perhaps he should have if he had accepted other ideas about Korean independence, the factionalism among Korean nationalists might have been lessened. Rhee's diplomatic efforts for Korean independence mainly focused on the United States. But he did not view Korean and international problems from an American point of view.

Rhee was primarily motivated by his patriotism. But another factors also motivated Rhee were the Japanese policy toward Korea and his own experience with Japanese suppression of Koreans from 1910 to 1912. In addition, he was ambitious and strong, and was determined to be a principal leader.

Rhee's leadership was problematic in some respects. As President of the Korean Provisional Government, he could not lessen factionalism among the Korean nationalists and as President of South Korea, his policies and behavior often were opposed to democracy. He disregarded popular opinion of Koreans and constitution in enacting laws. The April 19 revolution in 1960 brought his resignation and this fact marked a great mistake in his life.

One notable thing was his attitude about personal possession. He worked as a principal Korean leader from 1919 to 1960. In particular, he had been President of South Korea for 12 years and his government was corrupt. Nevertheless, he did not plan for himself and his future. Before he married Miss Donner, he told her his only property was a traditional Korean comb his mother left him. When he had to shelter Pusan during the Korean war, he and his wife had 50,000 *won* ($63). After his whole life, he left only a house, *Ewhajang*. When he returned to Korea, he had no place to stay. So 30 Korean business men collected some money and gave him a traditional Korean house. Most dictators are out to increase their personal wealth. Rhee was not like that even though he was described as a dictator.

In considering Rhee's activities, an obvious question is whether or not they were failures. This question may be answered in two ways. One has to do with the execution of his policy and the other has to do with how his activities influenced history. An answer is not available on whether Rhee's policy to win Korean independence could have worked if it had been carried out fully. The United States and other great powers prevented this from happening. In fact, Rhee's activities did not have sufficient American public support to assure his success during this period. As a leader of a small nation, his influence over international politics, where power is greater than law, was limited. It was beyond Rhee's ability or efforts to establish a united democratic Korea. The great powers decided the divided occupation in Korea before the liberation to their advantage. The United States was partly responsible for that decision.

American policy in the Far East prevented it from supporting the fight for Korean independence. Indeed, the United States had no consistent policy toward Korea. At this point, Rhee directly appealed to public opinion, the media, and some American leaders.

In truth, although his activities or policies directly influenced Korean independence, this was not the whole story. First, upon his return to Korea, Rhee was in a better position to deal with the U.S. government. During his exile, the United States usually ignored Rhee's policy or his efforts. But after he returned to Korea, the United States needed to cooperate with Rhee. At times he criticized American policy and was unyielding to it. At other times, he was convinced that Korea ultimately needed U. S. support to establish Korea. Rhee also was aware the United States wanted to establish democratic Korea's own government Through the years in exile, he had learned a lot about how to deal with the U.S. government. He became an expert in diplomacy and applied his learning to Korean-American diplomacy after he returned to Korea. He was uncompromising and as a result he maintained his will and secured many advantages for Korea.

Second, he created a center for Korean independence among Koreans and taught about democracy and the dangers of communism. His educational efforts were connected to Korean nationalism and Korean independence. Rhee's status among the Koreans was obvious after his return to Korea. He was much more popular than Kiusik Kim and Ilsung Kim. When he returned to Korea, the United States did not support Rhee. Until 1947 they tried to support Kiusik Kim. Nevertheless, Rhee filled the political vacuum in Korea.

In conclusion, Rhee's activities in the United States did not directly influence the U.S. policies toward Korean independence during that period. Korean independence did not result from Rhee's fight for Korean independence but from the great powers' decision. He was limited in achieving his goal. However, Rhee's efforts for Korean independence greatly contributed to the establishment of a democratic South Korea.

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Vita

Jiwon Kim was born on May 20, 1966 in Seoul, Korea. She received her B.A. in English Language & Literature from Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Korea. She received her M.A. in Western Art History from the same university.

In the Fall of 1994, she began her graduate program in History at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. She will receive her Master's degree in History in the Spring of 1996.

Jiwon Kim

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