

# **BEHIND THE KOREAN REVOLT**



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## The Korean Students' Revolt

This spring the people of South Korea became one with the freedom fighters of Algeria, South Africa, East Berlin and Hungary. The revolutionary overthrow of Syngman Rhee has underlined in incontrovertible terms the nature of that regime brought into existence by America and supported by U. S. political, economic and military aid for the last twelve years. It was a corrupt, oppressive regime resting on police terror. The question now posed by the revolt of the Korean students is: What of the future? Will the conditions for a democratic Korea be established?

The South Korean regime was the product of an underdeveloped nation caught up in the dynamics of the Cold War - a process compounded of American and Russian decisions as well as the impact of those decisions on the social-political forces of Korean society. Unless the nature of that process is grasped by the democratic forces of the West and a radical break with the past forced on American policy makers, the likely result is the re-emergence of the Rhee regime under a different name and another disastrous defeat for Korean democracy.

Russia's responsibility for the tragic partition of Korea and the consequent debacle is well known. America's role, however, is less well known. Secretary of State Herter's statement of support of the Korean Revolt must not be permitted to obscure the nature of that fatal contradiction that has held American policy fast through the reign of four American Secretaries of State, during administrations of both Republican and Democratic presidents.

That contradiction (which at times bordered on political schizophrenia) lay in the attempt to reconcile democratic values and a realistic appraisal of Korea's needs with the realpolitik goal of establishing friendly bases of operation in the Cold War. Once an understanding is had of how deeply that contradiction was embedded in American actions in Korea, it will then be seen how the removal of Rhee only raises in a more imperative form the fundamental questions: Will America be capable of a radical break with its past foreign policy? Will the democratic forces of South Korea be able to mobilize and embark on a line of action that will achieve their aim of a democratic

united Korea, free of both Russia and America?

As we shall see, the past history of the Korean struggle for democracy casts an ominous shadow of doubt over the likelihood of an easy answer to these questions. Although the roots of the present Korean crisis as well as American and Russian involvement in Korea extend back into the 19th century, for brevity's sake we shall focus our attention on the crucial years of Korean political development: 1945-1960.

### The People's Republic

On August 13, 1945, three weeks before the arrival of American forces, Korea was liberated.

On that summer day the Japanese Governor-General of Korea, General Abe, met with the socialist leader of the underground resistance movement, Lyuh Woon Heung, and offered to turn over the government of Korea to Lyuh's movement in exchange for a safe conduct departure for Japanese army and civilian personnel. After securing agreement on a list of demands, all of which amounted to complete civil liberties for all Koreans, Lyuh Woon Heung accepted the surrender of power by the Japanese. (1) Thus, after forty years of Japanese colonial exploitation, democracy was born in Korea.

In the three weeks that followed, a provisional government pledged to extensive political and economic reform came into existence in every town and village of every province of Korea, north and south of the 38th parallel. In this period the Korean people (a people whose backwardness and ignorance was decried by the Japanese and later by the Americans) revealed their genius for democratic organization and administration. Led by a coalition central committee in Seoul that included representatives of more than forty political parties (only two of which were Communist), the People's Republic established a governing apparatus completely independent of the old state machinery of the Japanese. This de-facto government took over a host of state functions and created a new government, the basic principle of which was a radical decentralization of decision-making and police powers. Police powers were taken over by spontaneously created, locally autonomous peasant militia units. This anarchist note was not accidental. In the decade 1920-1930 anarchism as a movement had considerable influence in Korean intellectual circles and among the exploited peasantry of the south.

In 1929 the anarchist movement split, one section becoming the terrorist arm of the nationalists, the other section going over to the communists.

The guiding principle of the People's Republic in the economic sphere was an idea first propagated in Korea by the 19th century peasant movement of revolt, the Tong Hak (later known as Chundokyo). That idea was the cooperative. In the rural areas it took the form of agricultural co-operatives, comparable in all respects to the co-ops of the farmers of North Dakota and Wisconsin. In the industrial factories of the Japanese it meant the taking over and running of these enterprises by councils of workers. When the American forces arrived in the provinces of Cholla Namdo and Kyungsang Namdo they found the textile and machinery plants in many areas in full production under the control and management of workers' cooperatives.

It was a delicious taste of freedom. The prisons were empty of political prisoners, the Christian sects free of persecution for the first time in half a century; there was a veritable blossoming of political organization that covered the entire political spectrum. Mass labor unions and farmer associations sprang up overnight with the universal demand of land reform and nationalization of industry under "cooperative management."

At the end of three weeks the forces of Korean democracy had emerged, forces strongly imbued with revolutionary socialist ideas and a concept of political democracy that bordered on anarchist libertarianism.

### The Suppression of Democracy

With the surrender of Japan the problem of Korea suddenly appeared on the agenda of the State Department and the American military command. A hastily assembled force under General Hodge was dispatched to Korea with a set of directives. These vague directives contained an implicit authoritarian approach to all initial relations with the Korean people.

On September 6 when the American forces arrived in Inchon, General Hodge refused to meet with a delegation of the People's Republic on the basis that the only government he was instructed to recognize was that of the Japanese. On this same day the general looked on as a crowd of Koreans waving hastily made American and Korean flags of welcome



were shot down by Japanese soldiers. The Koreans, it turned out, were guilty of disobeying an American ordinance issued a few days before that prohibited public demonstrations and ordered the Korean people to obey all directives of the Japanese army.

Several weeks later a group of future military commanders of Korea were given more detailed information as to the nature of their mission. General Christ (G-5 for General MacArthur) announced that one of the principle missions of military government in Korea was "to form a bulwark against communism." (2) As it turned out, the "communism" that was to be the main concern of the American Command was not the Russian army in the north, but rather the indigenous democratic aspirations of the people of South Korea.

E. Grant Meade, a former colonel in the American occupation forces, in his little-publicized work "American Military Government in Korea" has revealed in a detailed, documented account the practical meaning of American policy in Korea. The first consequence was the refusal of American military and political leaders to recognize the "People's Republic" under the leadership of Lyuh Woon Heung. The second was to insist that the only government it would recognize or deal with was the Japanese apparatus which at this point had completely vanished in many rural areas. The first year of the American occupation consequently was devoted to uprooting the local governments of the "People's Republic" and replacing them with a centralized police force and other administrative bodies staffed by former Japanese collaborators and reliable right-wing elements. (By 1948 twenty-five percent of the rank and file of the Korean National Police were men who had seen service in the Japanese police force. Fifty-three percent of its officers were of the same origin.) (3) This process of "forming a bulwark against communism," was implemented by a series of ordinances backed up with American military provost courts that held over the Korean people the ultimate sanction against civil disobedience - the death penalty. Among these ordinances (4) were:

Ordinance #19 (Oct. 30, 1945) requiring that all newspapers and publications be licensed and copies be submitted to the AMG. (Shortly after promulgation of this decree a Korean journalist was arrested and imprisoned for suggesting in print that a right-wing politician appointed by AMG as mayor of Seoul was unqualified for his job.)

Ordinance #55 (Feb. 23, 1946) requiring that three or more persons gathering together for political purposes "register" with the AMG.

(What this entailed was a turning over of membership lists of leftist parties to the rightist dominated Korean police.)

Ordinance #118 (Dec. 12, 1946) which set up a "South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly" providing for one half of the members to be elected, the other half to be appointed by the AMG. The power of veto and coercion over the decisions of this body remained in the hands of the AMG commander.

Regarding the elections of October 1946 that resulted in the formation of this "South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly," E. Grant Meade, in explanation of a host of incidents of direct interference by the AMG, writes that:

"In February (1946) the Chief of the Bureau of Information and Public Relations was informed verbally by the high command that elections were planned for the fall, and that while the State Department expected Military Government to continue to operate behind a facade of political neutrality, the Americans were expected to make every effort to secure a rightist victory."(5)

The suppression of the People's Republic government and the creation of an incipient right-wing government would have merited criticism even in the case of an occupied enemy nation. But Korea was not an enemy country. It was a friendly nation whose liberation and independence had been pledged by both Russia and America in the Cairo Declaration of 1943. America betrayed its pledge. Thus Russia was provided an excellent opportunity to step forward as the "champion" of Korean democracy and independence - to come out in support of the People's Republic, a government which had sanctioned land reform and workers' control of industry during its brief existence, a government which was not dominated by the communists, although it had strong communist leadership in crucial areas in South Korea.

But Russia shared America's fear of Lyuh Woon Heung's government. Though utilizing the structure of the People's Republic in North Korea for its own purposes, Russia refused to recognize the authority of the People's Republic in either North or South Korea. The explanation? One hypothesis is that the Russian motivation in this case was similar to the rationale behind the failure of the French C.P. in 1945-46 to launch a struggle for power. Russia in the immediate aftermath of World War II wished to avert any direct confrontation with the West. Another

explanation offered by one Korean socialist is that Lyuh's People's Republic and the "communist" movement involved an independent revolutionary momentum such that control by the Stalinists would have been impossible.

American efforts to create a rightist dominated Korea were countered by a Russian attempt to create a Korean regime in its own image - the result of which was the disruption and defeat of the People's Republic movement, the victory of the rightists in South Korea and the establishment of a Stalinist regime in the north. To understand the dynamics of what occurred we must turn to a consideration of the forces unleashed on the Korean scene by the defeat of Japan, to an examination of the meaning of "right" and "left" in Korean politics.

### "Communism" and "Nationalism"

The iron curtain dropped by Russia at the 38th parallel removed the People's Republic in the northern half of the Korean peninsula from the play of forces it was subjected to in South Korea. In the south the drama was destined to be played out to the bitter end.

In the first act, confusion and chaos was the dominant note. In Seoul the People's Republic quickly disintegrated as the conservatives broke with it to follow the lead of the nationalist leaders flown in by the U.S. Air Force from their exile in China and America. In other areas, however, the People's Republic remained intact well into 1946. But the defection of the conservative nationalists of Seoul together with the American and Russian response resulted in a momentary hesitation and disorientation of the leaders and the rank and file of the People's Republic movement. Looking back on this period, it is evident that the Korean leftists were largely unaware of the danger from the right. For example, during the enthusiastic, turbulent period of the People's Republic, the Korean Communist Party's candidate for the President of the People's Republic was none other than Syngman Rhee. However, in a matter of weeks the basic cleavage of the Korean nationalist movement was made clear to everyone, a cleavage that, despite frequent blurring in the past, was an old one. It was a division along class lines that the ideology of Korean nationalism succeeded in obscuring, but a division that had been implicit in the development of Korean society.

Korean nationalism first emerged as a coherent political force out of the March First Revolution of 1919. That rebellion, though quickly suppressed by the Japanese, resulted in the creation of a "Korean Provisional Government" that went into exile in Shanghai and later Chungking. Though dominated by the popular right-wing nationalist leader, Kim Koo, this government-in-exile, during the 'twenties and 'thirties, represented a broad united front that included even the anarchists and nationalists of a Marxian-socialist persuasion. Even the communists entered into relations with it for brief periods. Syngman Rhee, in exile in America, though the titular head of this government, had very little influence or even contact with its leading circles. For Koreans, the Kim Koo group was the voice and leadership of Korean nationalism.

Over the years, however, nationalist agitation and resistance in Korea came to center in the hands of left-wing nationalists and the communist movement of Korea. Both groups established small but tenacious bases among both the peasantry and the incipient labor movement of Korea.

Although Korea was (and still is basically) an agricultural nation permeated with features of its feudal heritage, under Japanese domination a process of social change was set in motion. Beginning slowly in the 'twenties and then with accelerating speed in the 'thirties, Japan embarked upon the industrialization of Korea. With the appearance of the first factories and plants, the Korean communist movement (formerly splintered into half a dozen bickering groups) came together (about 1925) and gained a small but important following among the lower classes. A sporadic labor movement under communist and socialist leadership also came into existence. It made its power felt in the Seoul Electric Company Strike of 1925, in the Wonsan General Strike of 1928, and in the nation-wide nationalist disturbances of 1929. The rapid growth of a proletarian class in the 'thirties is indicated by the fact that in 1931 that part of the Korean labor force classified as "factory workers" numbered 12,000. By 1939 this number had jumped to 730,000.(6)

Korean labor struggles and peasant resistance invariably took on nationalist coloring since the management and ownership of Korean industry and important agricultural areas were almost entirely in the hands of the Japanese. (By 1939, 80 percent of the total value of Korean property was under Japanese control.) The Japanese also predominated in the administrative and professional class of Korea with the result that the Korean middle class that did manage to emerge was a small, feeble social group closely tied to the

colonial rulers of Korea. Thus the nationalist struggle in Korea itself - in contrast to nationalist emigre circles - became a movement of the lower classes under the leadership of left-wing intellectuals. This fact is important in consideration of the composition of the rightist parties and the ruling clique that emerged under Syngman Rhee's leadership.

### The Nationalists and Ersatz Capitalism

Whatever capitalist class existed in post 1945 South Korea was an artificial creation brought into being by the rewarding of former Japanese enterprises as political plums to Rhee supporters. Though for the major part Japanese heavy industry was located in North Korea, the political spoils in South Korea included the important textile combine, machinery plants and mining concessions. The ruling clique of South Korea that coalesced around the right-wing nationalist parties in 1945-46 was recruited from the most backward sections of Korean society: former wealthy landowners, black marketeer gangsters, money lenders and former Japanese collaborators and police agents. It was this group that turned to the old emigre nationalist leaders and provided them with the organizational strength of their political parties.

In 1945 the right-wing nationalists were roughly divided into five groups. In the years that followed the leading personalities of these groupings crossed back and forth in and out of Pro-Rhee and Anti-Rhee blocs while maintaining a cohesive united front against labor and peasant forces under socialist and communist leadership. The leading components of these groups were:

1. The Kim Koo nationalist party: The leaders of this traditional type nationalist movement, though hostile to the left, were not without principles or integrity. At one point during the American occupation Kim Koo threatened to launch a guerilla war to rid Korea of both the Russians and Americans. After his assassination by a Rhee gunman in 1949, Kim Koo's group, due to a lack of any consistent political perspective, fell apart, some becoming the conservative opposition, others going over to Rhee. However, from 1945 to 1948 the Kim Koo group was in close alliance with the Rhee group.

2. To the surprise of both the right and left, Syngman Rhee, the hero of the old Korean Nationalist Move-

ment, emerged as the leader of the most important rightist political force. The group that formed around Rhee proved to be the most maneuverable party. Their conscious goal of absolute political power permitted them to cooperate with the American leaders when necessary, and even to dump their original allies, the wealthy landlords. The political mentality of the Rhee group is best illustrated in the figure of Pyun Yung Tai, an important man in Rhee's party and later in the South Korean government. In a polemic dealing with opponents who had denounced him as a fascist, Pyun wrote: "Grant that Korea is tending toward Fascism to offer effective resistance to Communism, who is to fear Korean Fascism except her would-be conqueror?" And on another occasion in pleading for a postponement of representative democracy, he wrote:

"Why can we not wait for a couple of years?... The idea that human society should consist of the leader and the led is ineradicable from the Korean mind. Demolish this rallying point and you will have an unworkable Korea. It is undesirable to have our president haggled into a nonentity by a divided, turbulent House at the very first stage of our national renaissance. We earnestly request our American brethren to swallow this rather undemocratic pill for poor dear Korea's sake."

3. To the right of Pyun Yung Tai was an outright fascist movement led by General Lee Bum Suk. Rhee did not trust the general and made several moves to check his ambitions. But Lee Bum Suk's devotion to Rhee never wavered. On more than one occasion his terrorist organization rendered Rhee invaluable service.

4. A small group of genuine Christian democrats adhered to a program of parliamentary democracy. During the occupation, the Kim Kyu Sik group functioned as Rhee's left wing, teetering at times on the brink of a coalition with the social democrats. Later this political force reappeared as the liberal minority wing of the conservative opposition to Rhee.

5. Initially an important force, the wealthy landlord party had their cohesion broken by the land reform pushed through by American pressure. This act however did not destroy the group. As individuals their wealth went into grain speculation and black market activities. Their political allegiance to Rhee remained firm.



It was only a matter of time before these groups came together into two right-wing groups - one in power and one out of power. The social homogeneity of these groups was underlined by the fact that the newly created class of factory owners and black marketeers made it a practice of rendering financial support to both groups. At the time of the "liberation of Korea" these forces were completely overshadowed by the forces of the left. What the rightists desperately needed was time. And this was generously provided by America.

In 1945 the political left of Korea presented a vastly more complex picture. The most complicating factor was the overnight appearance of mass support for Lyuh Woon Heung's socialist grouping and for communist led organizations. Party organization was in a very fluid and confused state. The socialists lacked a cohesive party organization, their forces underwent a constant fragmentation and coming together again. The communists were also subject to the same process, although Pak Hun Yung's C.P. was eventually able to give a sense of cohesion to the communist forces.

At the time of the formation of the People's Republic, even the communists lacked a centralized organization; groups of communists in different locales operated independently of one another. The striking power of both the socialists and communists rested during this period in organizations that were more or less the creation of the workers and farmers of Korea.

Foremost among these were the widespread committees of the People's Republic in whose hands actual state power rested in some regions late into 1946. When the American army succeeded in breaking the power of the People's Republic (7) these committees fractured into Lyuh's Social Democrat Party and other leftist parties, and into the Farmers' Association of which the dominant force was the Communists. The second mass organization was the trade union movement in the cities under communist and socialist leadership. By 1947 this labor movement had split into two trade union federations, each of which numbered several hundred thousand workers, one under anti-Stalinist leadership, the other under Stalinist leadership.

Though vastly complicated by the existence of socialists and "communists" operating independently of any party organization together with a host of minor labor and peasant parties, the main lines of leftist party organizations in the years 1945-47 were as follows:

1. With the dissolution of the People's Republic government, the main body of socialists came together under



Lyu Woon Heung's People's Republican Party. After the disintegration of an ill-fated attempt at a united front of all leftist parties in August 1946, sections of this party split to join the dissident Yen-an "Socialist" party while the rest came out under the label of the Social Democrat Party.

2. The "New People's Party" under the leadership of Pak Nam Un constituted the original "Yen-an Party," the leadership cadres of which were left-wing nationalists, socialists, and Communists who had either passed through Mao Tse Tung's Yen-an or had sympathized with the Chinese communist movement in the past. This party contained a great many Marxist and socialist groupings who shared a sense of political division from orthodox Stalinism. In August 1946 this party split into the South Korean Labor Party and the Diligent Laboring People's Party. The former adhered to an "orthodox Marxist" line, the latter became known as a "moderate socialist" party.

3. The more or less orthodox Stalinists came together under Park Hun Yung's Communist Party. But even this party was not free of dissension. Several years later the leadership of this party was liquidated by the North Korean Stalinist regime for its questioning of Russian hegemony.

At this point we come up against the extraordinary nature of the Korean "communist" in 1945. Korean communists were divided into half a dozen factions: There were "Yen-an communists," "Moscow communists" as well as some strange, indigenous hybrids. For example, there were two communist dominated political parties whose eventual division into separate organizations was based on the old dispute as to which social class, the proletariat or the peasantry, was to play the predominant role in the revolution in the under-developed countries. Other communists proved restive under the subordination of the Korean revolution to the needs of Russian foreign policy. In 1947 a C.P. group under the leadership of Cho Bong Ahm, a one-time member of the Far East Bureau of the Comintern, broke from the communists to go over to the socialists. As an indication of the unorthodox nature of Korean communism, there was the declaration of the important Cholla Namdo C.P. leadership which announced as its purpose the establishment of "a democratic communist government similar to that of the United States, but geared to the benefit of the working people." (The appearance at this same time of virulent anti-American, rabidly pro-Russian C.P. statements in other regions rules out any Machiavellian explanation.)

There is every indication that during the years 1945-47 America, by simply refraining from giving direct and

indirect support to the rightists, could have swung the balance of power to those socialist, labor and peasant forces genuinely committed to a really independent democratic Korea. Lyuh Woon Heung up to the moment of his assassination in the summer of 1947 continued to give every sign of his non-communist, independent socialist position. In any case, the failure in August 1946 of the attempt to form a united front of the leftist parties clearly underlined the fact of the stormy independence of the Korean left. But America chose to support the rightists and to ignore the terror and repression directed toward the socialist and Christian democratic moderates by the police and political parties under American sponsorship. One tragic consequence of this American failing was the demoralization of the independent socialists. Another was the forcing of the heretical communist elements into the arms of the orthodox Stalinists.

### The Republic of Korea

The road to power for the Korean rightists was not a smooth one. America was not Russia. America could not act with the brutal consistency of its rival to the north. The Rhee clique and its American friends had to contend with democratic critics inside and outside of American leadership circles. Resistance to the roughshod methods of the Korean rightists occurred even within the ranks of the American Army Command in Korea, which made several genuine attempts to steer a middle course between the right and the left. The defenders of the AMG and the State Department can point to the land reform pushed through over the protests of the Rhee party, to ill-fated attempts to draw Lyuh Woon Heung's group into a coalition with the Rhee-Kim Koo bloc, and to efforts at restraining the terrorists of the right in the attempt to preserve a semblance of democratic forms.

The case of General Lee Bum Suk clearly revealed the pressures and counter-pressures operating in the American command. General Lee, a favorite of both Chiang Kai-shek and General MacArthur, had initially been provided with both American funds and military advisors in the building of a fascist youth organization which was projected as the nucleus of a Korean army. When the fascist ideology of this organization became too noticeable and when it was disclosed that its major activity consisted of terrorist attacks not only upon the communists but on anti-communist moderates as well, some saner heads in the American command

succeeded in having American sponsorship withdrawn and the organization disbanded.

On one of the few occasions when the AMG succeeded in offending the rightists, the Christian Science Monitor (May 27, 1947) quoted an enraged Syngman Rhee to the effect that he had "an agreement with the State Department which went far beyond what is known by American authorities in Korea." What is of crucial importance in the final evaluation of the American efforts in Korea was the nature of the state apparatus that America brought into existence in South Korea - a police dominated structure, the centralization and bureaucratic complexity of which surpassed even that of the Japanese government in Korea.

The repressive nature of the AMG-created Korean police-judicial system was most clearly revealed in the experience of the labor movement of South Korea during the years 1945-47. During these years over 8,000 trade unionists were arrested by the police and over 160,000 workers (8) were dismissed from their jobs, acts which, in effect, amounted to the purging of the working force of not only its leaders but its militant rank and file as well.

The prisons were emptied by Lyuh Woon Heung in 1945. By 1948 they were once again crowded with political prisoners. Regarding this period, the Voice of Korea, an anti-communist nationalist journal published in Washington D.C., was to write:

"As long as the vicious activities of the cruel reactionaries go unchecked there is no immediate hope for Korean freedom - but only chaos and violence... At the early stage of occupation, the Command alienated the so-called leftists by ignoring them in favor of the reactionaries. The moderates are luke warm toward the half-hearted attitude of the Military Government towards them. The reactionaries are hostile and bitter because South Korea was not turned over to them... Instead of taking the bull by the horns and fighting intelligently, the Command seems to be frozen by its communist phobia." (9)

The end result was a government under the leadership of Syngman Rhee, Pyun Yung Tai and General Lee Bum Suk. The inclusion (due to American pressure) of the socialist, Cho Bong Ahm, in the cabinet of the R.O.K. for a short period of time did little to hide the cold truth regarding the nature of the regime; for when Cho Bong Ahm as Minister of Agriculture became too energetic in carrying out the

provisions of the land reform he was quickly removed by Rhee.

The final act of America in the launching of the Republic of Korea was not without a disquieting note. South Korean socialists along with right-wing nationalist leaders had, up to 1948, favored immediate independence. Together they went out into the streets to protest the 1945 announcement of a joint Soviet-American "trusteeship" over Korea agreed upon by Washington and Moscow for "a period of up to five years." (Park Hun Yung's Communist Party was alone in its defense of the trusteeship.) When the prospect of independence finally arrived, however, and it became evident that partition of their nation was likely, the South Korean socialists and the nationalist leader, Kim Koo, drew back in fear of the consequences.

On November 5, 1947 the Political and Security Committee of the U.N. referred a resolution to the U.N. General Assembly calling for elections to be held in all of Korea not later than March 31, 1948 and for withdrawal of both occupation powers. This resolution, adopted by the General Assembly November 14, 1947, was attacked by the Soviet U.N. delegate, Maniulsky, for its rejection of the Russian proposal that the General Assembly first confer with representatives of both South and North Korea before reaching a decision as to the future of Korea. The South Korean delegation, to its credit, pleaded with the U.S. State Department to accept the Russian proposal in order that the basis of the last Soviet objection to Korean independence be removed. The American State Department rejected the South Korean plea to include representatives of the Korean people in the General Assembly discussions as "impracticable due to lack of time." (10)

The U.N. sponsored elections in South Korea on May 10, 1948 brought a violent reaction from both the non-communist left and the important party of the right-wing leader, Kim Koo. Together, the left and right called for a boycott of the U.N. elections out of the justified fear that the holding of the elections would make definitive the split of their nation into Russian and American sponsored regimes. Dr. Rhee, on the other hand, urged support of the elections.

The U.N. election that was to create the Republic of Korea turned out to be a bloody one. On June 5, 1948 the U.S. Army in Korea announced that 323 persons were killed during the ten days preceding the election. And the U.N. Commission, itself, in its second report stated that it had "experienced considerable difficulty in making contact with left-wing organizations, certain of whose representatives were found to be either in prison or under order of arrest

on some form of police surveillance." The chairman of the U.N. Commission stated that right-wing activity (Dr. Rhee's followers) was "strong" and "blatant." (11)

The boycott aimed at preventing the final partition of Korea failed. The police were able to turn out an overwhelming majority to cast their ballots for the rightist groups supporting Syngman Rhee. U.N. Commissions, on the basis of a spot check of voting booths on election days, gave their stamp of approval to the South Korean elections, while noting in minority reports "evidence of minor infringement and pre-election violence." It has always been the contention of South Korean opposition leaders that the U.N. teams' techniques of observation were such that everyday police terrorization of the peasantry was inevitably glossed over.

In the two years preceding the outbreak of the Korean War the Korean people felt the full brunt of the repressive nature of the Rhee clique. Rhee's opponent on the right, Kim Koo, suffered the fate of Lyuh Woon Heung. He received a bullet in the back of the head. The assassin, a young ROK Army lieutenant, was sentenced to life imprisonment, only to be released after one year by Rhee and promoted to the rank of Colonel (a lesson that was not lost on the ambitious gunmen of Rhee's Liberal Party). Throughout 1949 and early 1950 Seoul's West Gate Prison resounded with gunfire as leftist leaders and intellectuals were brought before Rhee's firing squads. Rhee was rapidly moving toward a complete police state when his horrified American sponsors blew the whistle.

In a sharply worded statement Dean Acheson expressed his displeasure over Rhee's decision to postpone the spring elections of 1950, and pleaded for the holding of the elections with a minimum of police interference. Rhee gave in and the elections were held. This election resulted in a minor setback for Rhee. Several of his strongest supporters were defeated and a sizeable number of opposition members were elected to the National Assembly. But this victory came too late. On June 25 the armies of North Korea launched their invasion of the south, leaving no choice for the Korean people other than the one between Stalinist totalitarianism and the corrupt, reactionary regime of Rhee.

### The Korean War

To America's embarrassment, the war in its first year revealed the almost disastrous lack of popular support for the Rhee regime. ROK Army soldiers, disciplined by beatings, went into battle with the cry: "I die because of my low social status!" Their inability to withstand enemy attack brought near panic to American military commanders. The dumping of millions of dollars of military supplies on Seoul's South Gate black market by ROK officers and government officials did nothing to inspire American confidence in the ability of its ward to carry on the crusade of the free world. In the south, Communist guerilla units received support from impoverished sections of the peasantry. American soldiers embarking for duty in Korea were warned regarding the popularity of the Communist cause among the South Korean people. To save anything out of the Korean debacle required an all-out effort on the part of the armed forces of the U.S.

From America's point of view there was one saving element. The Russian-directed Communist forces alienated many of those who at the outbreak of the war gave allegiance to Communism. As the war dragged on bringing tragic devastation to Korea, more than one Korean Communist leader came to regard the war as a blunder on the part of the Russians. Non-communist intellectuals of Seoul who had initially supported North Korea ended up regretting their decision. Dissident elements in the North Korean camp began to grow during the war. Popular support for the Communist cause even began to wane among the lower classes of South Korea. (The refugees from the north had a few unpleasant tales to tell their brothers of life under Communist rule.) (12) Hunger, suffering, bombardment contributed to the sense of apathy and indifference of wide segments of Korean society. More and more the Korean people came to feel that they had little at stake in the conflict between East and West.

In the meantime the struggle between Rhee and his opposition continued. Despite police and ROK Army interference, conservative independents and the socialist group around Cho Bong Ahm made some show of strength in the 1952 elections. This was followed, however, by the mass arrest of the minority opposition members of the National Assembly and by renewed acts of repression on the part of Rhee's police and terrorist organizations. Six months before the 1952 election, the labor movement of South Korea suffered a new blow. A defeated strike at the Chosen Textile Company resulted in the discharge of 600 workers and a new purge of the South Korean trade union leadership. They



were replaced by die-hard Rhee men.

The existence of such struggles together with face-saving American mediation of the ruthlessness of the Rhee regime gave some small hope to the opposition.

In 1953 peace came to Korea, a peace that left fifty thousand homeless children begging in the streets, a peace that left South Korea ravaged and prostrate, an uneasy armistice that offered the socialists and democrats of South Korea a desperate second chance in their struggle for democracy.

### The Struggle Against the Rhee Dictatorship 1953-1959

Few Americans can imagine what agony and effort went into rebuilding the parties of opposition. They were continually harrassed by police terror and government interference. They were built in an economy that (despite the billions of dollars of American foreign aid poured into it) constantly teetered on the brink of collapse. With great sacrifices the socialists on the left and Christian democrats on the right went out into the streets of the cities and the villages of the countryside to embark upon their struggle against the Rhee regime. With the approach of the first postwar South Korean election, they were finally ready for the first real test of strength.

In the spring of 1956, the political composition of the opposition was as follows: The major opposition party to Dr. Rhee's Liberal Party was the Democratic Party under the leadership of Patrick Henry Shinicky. The Democratic Party is a conservative, pro-capitalist party which includes both old rightist elements and dedicated bourgeois liberals. However, the leader of its right wing, Chough Pyung Ok, in conversations with the author in 1956 declared that his group had "no programmatic differences with Rhee's party," that "only personality issues separated them from the Rhee group;" that "given Rhee's removal, the two parties would merge."

The liberal wing of this party, however, under the leadership of Roman Catholic intellectuals took a strong stand against Rhee's suppression of civil liberties and the corruption and economic reaction of Rhee's administration. It was in the Catholic leaders of this group and their spokesman, Shinicky, that the opposition to Rhee became sharply focussed. It was Shinicky's election slogan,



"We cannot go on living this way!" that brought out angry mass rallies, one of which numbered three hundred thousand people.

The second major opposition party was the democratic-socialist, Progressive Party, then newly organized under the leadership of Cho Bong Ahm. In 1956 its leadership was composed of remnants of Lyuh Woon Heung's social democrats, independent socialists who had followed the lead of the Kim Koo government in China, and a group of ex-communists who had broken from Stalinism in 1946-47. These leaders were men of wide political experience, with decades of work in labor and peasant movements behind them. Their intellectual level was high, and their view of the immense problems facing Korea was sober and realistic. Their long-term perspective was a democratic socialist Korea adhering to a third-camp, neutralist position in the Cold War. Their party organization in 1956 was operating under semi-legal conditions that forced the majority of its membership to conceal their socialist affiliation. Nevertheless, it managed to function as a mass party, polling (despite police terror and fraud) over a million votes and out-voting the Rhee party in certain southern cities by a 2 to 1 majority.

Communism, it should be noted, was completely discredited and nil as a political force in South Korea, a process that reached its completion in 1954. In that year the nature of the Russian puppet state was underlined by a sweeping purge of the Korean Communist Party that almost entirely liquidated the popular indigenous leadership of the Korean Communist Party, including pre-war underground and wartime leaders of the caliber of Park Hun Yung, Lee Sung Yup, Lee Kang Gook and Lim Hwa. The opposition to Rhee in 1956 was an anti-Communist opposition composed of socialists on the left and Christian democrats on the right.

The opposition parties were prepared and capable of using mass action in the streets of the cities to block and combat police interference in the elections. In the scattered villages of the peasantry, however, they proved in a significant number of regions to be powerless against Rhee's centralized mobile police-army.

As the election drew near a tragic blow was dealt the opposition by the death of the popular Shinicky a week before the presidential election. Added to police interference in crucial rural areas, this guaranteed the victory of Rhee. Thus the election that the opposition leaders believed would break the back of the Rhee government ended with Rhee secure in power complete with the public congratulations and endorsement of then American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles.

The students and the poor of the city of Seoul at this time participated in an explosive demonstration of their anger and sense of frustration. When the funeral train bearing the body of the old guard nationalist, Shinicky, arrived in Seoul a mob of ten thousand collected. Marching through the city behind the funeral hearse, they ended up by storming the police barricade before the presidential palace shouting the slogan, "Down with the Rhee Dictatorship!" On that rainy spring evening as the unarmed crowd retreated before the murderous fire of the police, carrying with them their dead and wounded, the cry rang out in the streets of Seoul: "We will return! Someday we march on Kyung Mu Dai again!"

In July of that same year (1956), a few short months after the Kyung Mu Dai riot, the opposition members of the National Assembly walked out into the street in a demonstration against police interference in provincial elections. The government threw an armed cordon around the center of Seoul, cleared the streets, and alerted politically reliable army units for movement into Seoul. This demonstration ended with some seventy elected representatives of several million Korean people being attacked by the professional thugs of the Anti-Communist Youth League. Several representatives were pistol-whipped and then arrested by the police.

### American Complicity

American leaders were not ignorant of these events that led up to the revolt of this spring. National Assemblyman Kim Sun-Tae was beaten to his knees in front of the American Embassy and hauled away to jail in an open jeep with the feet of the police chief of Seoul resting on his head. If the American leaders could not recognize the meaning of the events on their doorstep, then certainly they could have given credence to a worried American Army G-2 Intelligence report of that year which disclosed that the sympathies of important segments of the ROK Army were one hundred percent behind Shinicky and other leaders of the opposition. If nothing else, they could have given careful consideration to the words of an American official who resigned his position with the American government in Seoul in protest over the administration of American economic aid in South Korea.

In early 1957, Charles Edmunson, a one-time editor of Fortune magazine and Public Information Officer of U.S.I.S. in Korea, resigned his post and subsequently published two

statements. His views, by the way, received front page coverage by Japanese and Hong Kong newspapers but almost no coverage in the American press.

In an article in the Nation of Nov. 9, 1957, on the basis of his experiences in the Far East, Mr. Edmunson warned of the dangers of the C.I.A. organization of Allen Dulles. Mr. Edmunson wrote:

"The secret operations of intelligence agents can easily be manipulated to channel public opinion according to the wishes of those in charge... It should never be forgotten that such a huge and well-heeled secret agency as the C.I.A. represents a continuing potential danger to democratic government."

Koreans were well aware of the involvement of the C.I.A. in the internal politics of South Korea. Due to the position of the C.I.A. in American government, this organization is beyond the control of public opinion and criticism. This was no secret to Koreans.

#### Foreign Aid: Down the Drain

Mr. Edmunson's revelations regarding the handling of economic aid in South Korea threw into sharp outline the essence of America's role in Korea. In an article in The Reporter of Oct. 31, 1957, Mr. Edmunson put his finger on the crux of the matter in his discussion of what happened to the 50 million dollars worth of fertilizer granted each year to the South Korean government as revealed by a report of the International Co-Operation Administration of the U.N.

"The fertilizer is given to the Korean government, which sells it to Korean farmers for hwan, which are supposed to go into economic aid and defense funds. The report reveals that less than thirteen per cent of the local currency owed these funds was actually paid in. Most of the other eighty-seven per cent went into political slush funds or was lost through graft.

"Meanwhile, the Korean peasant paid for his fertilizer not the reasonable price agreed to by the American authorities and the Korean government of \$3.72 per hundred-pound bag but an average of two or two and

a half times that much. The tired Korean soil will not produce without fertilizer, but the farmers can't afford to improve their soil at such prices... Why can't the ICA call a halt to the irregularities and corruption that dissipate so much of the U.S. aid money put up by American taxpayers? To begin with, the ICA in Korea is not its own master. The channel of authority runs not only to the State Department and the White House but also to the U.S. Army officer who bears the imposing title of United Nations Commander in Korea... This makes for divided authority. The Army has always opposed any action that might conceivably displease the leaders of Korea's army...

"President Rhee, furthermore, is a shrewd propagandist with powerful friends in both houses of Congress and among key newspapers and news magazines. In failing to report many essential facts about the aid program in Korea, the American press must bear some of the blame for the situation as it now exists. For example, certain American newspapers and magazines whose reporters saw copies of the ICA report scoring irregularities in the distribution of fertilizer did not print the story."

This polite ignoring of the corruption of the Rhee clique meant little to the American people other than the usual fleecing of the American taxpayer, but to the Korean people it meant far more. In 1957 it meant that over three million Korean farmers during the crucial pre-harvest months were forced to subsist on bark, grain husks and grass roots.

Rhee, it should be noted, did accept some American advice aimed at improving the efficiency of branches of his government. The National Police of the Rhee regime were generously supplied with American automatic weapons, U.S. Army machine guns and American advisors. Its leadership cadres benefited considerably from training visits to the schools of J. Edgar Hoover's F.B.I. and to that model force of law and order - The Police Department of Chicago, Illinois.

Police Democracy

However, even this massive police-army had difficulty controlling the elections of 1956. Although opposition political organizers found it impossible to enter many rural areas or to get opposition newspapers into the police terrorized areas, the American supporters of Rhee were able to point to the election of the opposition candidate, John Chang, to the vice presidency over Rhee's candidate, Lee Ki Poong as proof of the existence of democracy, while blithely ignoring the fact that after the election, John Chang was forced by several assassination attempts by Rhee's police-backed gunmen into the barricaded, armed seclusion of his home.

The strong showing made by the opposition in the spring of 1956 failed to improve the political situation. The reaction of Rhee and his police to the growth and organization of the anger of the people was to strengthen repressive control over that part of the Korean electorate most easily controlled - the sixty-five percent of the population consisting of the village peasantry. In addition, measures were taken to gag the press and to strengthen police control over the elected bodies on a local and national level.

With the approach of the National Assembly election of 1958, Dr. Rhee succeeded in dealing a death blow to the one force that remained his most consistent and implacable enemy - the social democrat movement of South Korea. With the acquiescence of the right wing leaders of the Democratic Party, who shared Dr. Rhee's fear of the socialist left, the entire leadership of the anti-Communist Progressive Party was arrested and several of the most prominent socialist leaders of South Korea were brought to trial for "contact and cooperation with a communist espionage unit." The socialist movement was, in effect, outlawed.

Prior to his execution, the Rhee government surrounded the prison with tanks, barbed wire entanglements and an infantry battalion of the ROK Army under the pretense of preventing a "communist attempt at liberation" of the Progressive Party leader, Cho Bong Ahm.

A few weeks before the suppression of the socialist movement the author received an enthusiastic letter from a young Korean socialist who spoke of his great hopes for his party in the coming National Assembly election. The Progressive Party, he wrote, planned "to throw caution to the winds and openly emerge out of its semi-legal state by openly running more candidates in more districts since before the Korean War." With the police liquidation of the



Progressive Party that hope was destroyed in the torture cells and courtrooms of the National Police.

The 1958 elections underlined once again the desperate plight of Korean democracy. In the cities the Democratic Party scored sweeping victories. In the countryside the police brought out a majority of the peasant electorate to insure Rhee's control of the National Assembly. John Chang and the Catholic leaders of the left wing of the Democratic Party denounced the election as "a fraud upheld by police terror."

### The American Press and the Rhee Regime

Secretary of State Herter's (April 19, 1960) reprimand to the Rhee government is to be welcomed, along with the indignant editorials of the American press. But the indignation of American politicians and opinion leaders would have been welcomed by the Korean opposition in the 1956 elections; it would have been welcomed in 1958 when the Progressive Party was smashed; it would have been welcomed during the 1958 elections; it would have been welcomed in the winter of 1959 when opposition members of the National Assembly were again dragged out in the streets to be pistol-whipped by officers of the National Police; it would have been welcomed before, during and immediately after the elections of this spring.

The American attitude to the Korean events of 1958 is best typified by the reaction of two of the important opinion moulders on the American scene. According to Time magazine of May 12, 1958, despite "minor rural attempts at voter intimidation... freedom of the franchise was registered... it was clear that a two-party system was beginning to take hold... Police harrassment of anti-government politicians has slackened steadily."

An editorial of the New York Times applauding the triumph of democracy in South Korea said: "There will continue to be a majority government, and there will continue to be an effective opposition... the basis of the ballot is sound, as it should be. This is a government by consent of the governed."

It is impossible to overemphasize the extent of American whitewashing of the Rhee regime and the deliberate coverup of the facts about Korea. The only publication to give any extensive coverage to the suppression of the

Korean social democrats and the imprisonment of their leaders, and to raise its small voice in protest was the American socialist newspaper Labor Action. (13) In an article (14) dealing with the 1958 National Assembly elections, Labor Action put forth a radical analysis of the Korean situation for the benefit of its several thousand American readers. Copies were smuggled into South Korea into the hands of Korean intellectuals.

The attention of the Labor Action analyst centered on the nature of the deadlock in which Rhee held the opposition. The opposition could not break through the police control of the rural areas. This fact, together with the increasing anger of the impoverished, exploited Korean people, pointed toward a revolutionary solution to the impasse of Korean democracy. In the same issue of that publication a socialist writer went on to emphasize not only the necessity of a revolutionary overthrow of the Rhee regime through a smashing of the urban nerve centers of the National Police, but also its feasibility despite the presence on the scene of the forces of America and Russia.

In short, on the question of the Rhee regime, there was a world of difference between the editors of Time magazine and the New York Times and... the American socialists.

### The Call for Revolution

In early 1959 the first public call for revolution was made in South Korea. In the Seoul newspaper, Kyung Hyang Shinmun, the call for revolt appeared in an article by Choo Yo Han. Ostensibly a discussion of Ferdinand A. Herman's (of Notre Dame University) theory of the tyranny of the majority, the article ended with the following words:

"Political logic bases the principle of the majority on tolerance, magnanimity and persuasion. A true majority, of course, is not expressed solely by elections. If elections are not capable of determining a true majority there may be another way of doing it. It is the way in which a true majority is decided by force, and that is what we call a revolution. The key to grasping the substance of the current crisis may lie in this point." (15)



A few brief hours after the appearance of that issue of Kyung Hyang Shinmun on the streets of Seoul, the author together with the publisher were under arrest on the charge of "treason." But the point had been made. The article was copied, read and recited in hundreds of villages and towns of South Korea.

What occurred this April in the streets of the cities of South Korea was not simply the outbreak of spontaneous mob violence. The rank and file socialists, the young Roman Catholic democrats, the peasant men and women, the laborers and poor of the towns and cities, were prepared and united in their determination to win out. And when they were once again denied their democratic rights, they embarked upon the only course left open to them. Led by the students, they marched unarmed into the fire of police barricades to try to win what the American leaders and the United Nations with all of their power had been either unable or unwilling to give them - political democracy.

#### The Korean Student Revolt - Its Strength and Weaknesses

The circumstances surrounding the student-led rebellion indicate both its strengths and weaknesses as well as the dangers facing the democratic forces of Korea in the period ahead.

The first point to be noted is the deep roots of the rebellion among the lower class of Korean society. In the city of Masan, for example, it was not the students who in the decisive encounter broke the power of the police, but rather a mob of working class women. And in Seoul the victory of the students was assured not by Mr. Herter's statement, but by the conscript peasant soldiers of the 15th ROK Army Division. Sent into Seoul under orders to suppress the revolt, the soldiers surrendered their tanks to the students and refused to fire upon the rebels. It was after this event that the American Ambassador called upon Rhee to break the unhappy news to him that he was finished.

The origin of the student revolt in the southern cities of Kwangju, Masan and Pusan is significant. In a sense, it was inevitable that, given the outbreak of a revolutionary struggle by the Korean people, it should have begun in the towns and cities of the two southern provinces of Cholla Namdo and Kyungsang Namdo. For during the last hundred years of Korea's history these two

provinces have been the birthplace of every Korean mass movement of protest and revolt. It was here that in 1859 there emerged the messianic native religion that came to be known as Chundokyo. This movement raised the cry for an end to oppression by alien conquerors, equality for women, and social justice. It was here that the Christians found devoted converts and that the Japanese were met with peasant resistance movements. It was here that the strong pre-World War I Korean anarchist movement flourished. In the 'twenties and 'thirties the Korean communist and left-wing nationalist movements received their strongest support from the impoverished lower classes in this area. These two provinces were in 1958, at the time of its brutal suppression, the stronghold of the social democratic movement of South Korea and of the trade union movement.

But the predominance of the students in the leadership of the revolt in Seoul and other decisive areas points to a disturbing fact - the disorganized state of labor and farmer organizations as well as the absence of a political party able and willing to seize the initiative. The one political force with its organization and press presently intact is the conservative Democratic Party. This party is under control of its extreme right wing and its ranks are being swamped with the mass desertion of politicians from Rhee's Liberal Party. Everything points towards its emergence as the party of the same elements which ruled Korea under the Rhee police state. Of course, the liberal minority might split and form a new party. But such a party would, judging from past programmatic statements of Korea's "liberals," offer little hope to the poor of the cities and the impoverished peasantry.

There are signs that the students remain suspicious of the conservative opposition to Rhee and doubly suspicious of the most likely ally of that group - America. During the fighting in Seoul the students devoted one of their mass attacks to the attempt to destroy a statue of General Mac Arthur. After the collapse of the Rhee government the conservatives held a mass funeral ceremony to honor the student dead. An American Army band and an American general with flowers-in-hand participated. The students of Seoul voted in favor of a boycott of the ceremony. Despite all the talk of Herter's "break" with the policies of his predecessor, the Korean students were well aware of the meaning of Eisenhower's visit to Franco Spain as well as his intended visit, before the revolt, to Syngman Rhee.

American foreign policy does not make radical shifts easily. Many of the students realize that the temptation will remain strong for America to back any group or strongman who offers the slightest prospect of preventing the

students' revolt from developing into a revolutionary force comparable to Lyuh Woon Heung's People's Republic movement of 1945.

The American State Department and the U.N., of course, can easily carry out the student demand for "free elections with civil liberties for all political parties." But the question remains whether America would welcome the reappearance of a Korean socialist movement dedicated to a re-united, neutralist Korea, free of both Russian and American influence. Such a Korea would inevitably mean a democratic socialist Korea - an almost certain revolutionary factor in the status quo of the Far East. An imaginative American foreign policy would welcome such an alternative. But will the leaders of either the Democratic or Republican parties be capable of breaking free of their realpolitik mystique to embrace and to work for such an alternative? This is a question which American liberals must be prepared to answer in the coming period.

The responsibility placed upon the Korean students is a heavy one. It is quite possible that in Cholla Namdo and Kyungsang Namdo the revolutionary and socialist sentiment of those provinces will raise the political consciousness to a level at which the students will realize that the natural ally in their struggle to achieve their democratic aspirations is a socialist movement representing the interests of labor and the peasantry. In Seoul, however, it is almost certain that the ranks of the student rebels will be split by an effort of various rightist leaders to gain their allegiance. There are indications that both these processes are underway in the respective areas.

#### The Search for a Strongman and the Reorganization of The Korean Socialist Movement

Despite the resignation of Rhee an uneasy truce exists in South Korea. The caretaker government of Huh Chung has given its tentative promise to the students that in three months time new elections will be held. In the meantime, the effective balance of power rests in the hands of the Korean army. The new government has clamped martial law on many of the "trouble spots" of South Korea. It is an uncertain period. The forces of the right and left will maneuver for a foothold. As Korea moves off the front pages of American newspapers a cloud of obscurity will descend upon the day-to-day events in Korea. Therefore it is necessary to pay close attention to two political events which have occurred in the last few weeks.

The first is the attempt of the editorial writers of Time magazine to build up the image of a new candidate for the role of an enlightened strongman of South Korea. For Mr. Luce's braintrust, the hero of the Korean Students' Revolt is General Song Yo Chan, Chief of Staff of the Korean Army. According to Time magazine of May 9, "Rhee might still be there if it had not been for one man: General Song Yo Chan..." The Time account goes on to relate General Song's version of the overthrow of Rhee: how Song through a series of conferences with Rhee brought about his resignation. In the Luce-Song version, the general refused to fire upon the students because he "believed the students' demands were just."

The Luce publication fails to inform its readers that on April 20 while the fighting still raged in the streets of Seoul, General Song publicly vowed that his troops "would crush any further outbreaks without mercy."(16) The general's words were duly recorded by correspondents of the UPI, AP and Reuters news agencies. Moreover, elements of the 15th ROK division, under direct command of Song did fire on the students and did attempt to restore "order." On the basis of news despatches of the three news agencies cited above, the San Francisco Chronicle of April 20 reported:

"In the capital city (Seoul) troops quickly cleared most streets and restored a brooding peace... The 15th ROK Division broke up daylong riots of students who at one point besieged Rhee in his mansion... But in northeastern Seoul, center of resistance against Rhee's Liberal Party, hundreds of defiant demonstrators still roamed. Army tanks and truckloads of soldiers moved on that sector this morning."

What happened when those tanks and soldiers met the students that morning? What happened to General Song's vow to crush the revolt "without mercy?" What caused the about-face on the part of General Song? That evening an ABC radio correspondent speaking directly from Seoul reported that the events which had transpired in the city that day could only be compared to the February Revolution in the Russia of 1917, in that the soldiers were openly fraternizing with the rebel students. It was the refusal of the rank and file soldiers of the 15th ROK Division to fire on the students that brought about General Song's overnight change of heart, and nothing else! When the dust cleared from the confrontation of the students and the army, the students found that not only had General Song come out on "their side," but the entire body of

Rhee's Liberal Party as well.

The mass desertion from Syngman Rhee was the first maneuver of the Rhee clique to check the students' revolt. The next step was taken by General Song on May 7. On that day a company of ROK soldiers invaded the compound of a Buddhist temple in Seoul to break up the first open move to reorganize the socialist movement of Korea. The conference of some one hundred delegates, dispersed by order of General Song, included former members of half a dozen labor, peasant and socialist organizations, including the outlawed Progressive Party of Cho Bong Ahm. According to an account in the New York Times of May 8, "the group was told that such public assemblies violated emergency martial law decrees."

With Korea's promised elections three months away, it is obvious that General Song is taking steps to hamper the emergence of any political force that might be an ally of the students. But it is unlikely that the General will succeed in preventing the formation of a socialist party. Such an overt act of political repression would not soothe the heated tempers of the students nor stay the nervous concern of the American State Department to keep in the good graces of the students.

Time magazine's new-found hero will bear watching in the coming period; for with the reappearance of the Korean socialist movement on the scene the battle lines in the struggle for Korean democracy will once again begin to form.



Notes

- (1) Louise Yim, "My Forty Year Fight for Korea" (A.A. Wyn, Inc., New York, 1951) pp 229, contains an account of Lyuh Woon Heung's meeting with General Abe.
- (2) E. Grant Meade, "American Military Government in Korea," (King's Crown Press, Columbia University, New York, 1951,) pp 52.
- (3) U.N. Document A/575 Add 2, pp 117.
- (4) A. Wigfall Green, "The Epic of Korea," (Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1950,) pp 58-70, contains the sources and a discussion of the ordinances issued by the AMG in Korea.
- (5) E. Grant Meade, "American Military Government in Korea," pp 165.
- (6) Tak, H.J., "Development of Trade Unionism in Korea," an article in the Chungang Economic Review, July 1956, (Seoul, Korea). Prof. Tak's figures are from the "Year Book of Korean Economy," published by the Bank of Korea (Seoul).
- (7) The process of the breakup of the People's Republic varied in different provinces and cities. In some cases the presence of the Americans on the scene was sufficient to mobilize the dormant conservatives within the People's Republic to break with it. In some regions, however, the People's Republic and their militia, the Chianderi, were not dislodged until military force was brought to bear upon them.
- (8) Tak, H.J., Chungang Economic Review, July 1956 - In considering Prof. Tak's startling disclosures on what happened to the labor movement of Korea under American rule, it should be noted that Prof. Tak is a staunch anti-communist and pro-American in his sympathies.
- (9) "Voice of Korea," Aug. 15, 1957, Washington, D.C.
- (10) Louise Yim, "My Forty Year Fight for Korea," pp 272-73. (Louise Yim was a member of the South Korean delegation to the U.N.)
- (11) "Voice of Korea," March 20, 1948.

- (12) North Korean agriculture in contrast to South Korea did not suffer from the severe exploitation and impoverishment of tenant farmers as did the south. Consequently, North Korean land reform measures were utilized to a great extent to break the power of independent landowners and to bring their productive surplus under state control.
- (13) Labor Action, May 15, 1958, New York - (This publication was at the time the organ of the Independent Socialist League, an organization which has since joined the Socialist Party - Social Democratic Federation.
- (14) Labor Action, June 2, 1958, New York.
- (15) New York Times, March 1, 1959.
- (16) San Francisco Chronicle, April 20, 1960.

A Short Bibliographical Introduction to the Korean Problem

Cornelius Osgood, "The Koreans and Their Culture," Ronald Press Co., New York, 1951. This is an excellent over-all introduction to Korean history and culture that even touches upon the political situation of 1945-1950

George M. McCune, "Korea Today," Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1950. This is the most concise and invaluable source dealing with both Russian and American policies in Korea as well as the nature of the regimes of North and South Korea.

E. Grant Meade, "American Military Government in Korea," King's Crown Press, Columbia University, New York, 1951. Originally submitted as a Ph.D. thesis, this little-publicized work provides a wealth of material in the form of detailed accounts of the operation of the AMG in the province of Cholla Namdo. It is in actuality the only source that deals to any extent with the People's Republic of 1945.



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