

**Full Spectrum**

# Contrasts in Independence

**March 1st and Plan PATRIOT**

by Charles H. Briscoe

## **Korean Independence, 1 March 1919**

On 22 August 1910, Japan formally annexed Korea, ending the Chosŏn dynasty. General Terauchi Masatake became the first governor-general of Korea and Japanese minister of armed forces. Religion was the only organized activity permitted by the Japanese military government. During the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919, President Woodrow Wilson promulgated self-determination for oppressed peoples everywhere. Though Korean nationalists applied, attendance was denied to Dr. Syngman Rhee, head of the North American Korean delegation and to the exiled New Korea Youth Party representative who carried a petition for independence. However, Korean university intellectuals and students at home were not deterred by the rebuffs and appealed to religious leaders for support.<sup>1</sup>



Independence Proclamation signatories gathered in a Seoul teahouse on 1 March 1919 to sign the document.

This watercolor depicts the clashes between Korean citizens and Japanese military and police after the Independence Proclamation was made public.

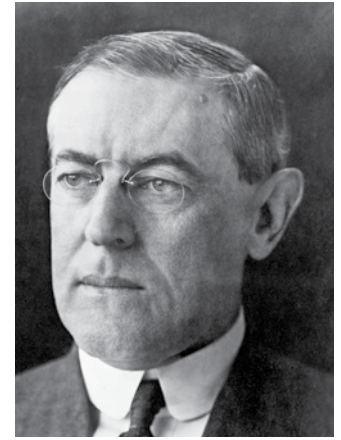


Thus, on 1 March 1919, Son Pyŏnggi read the Proclamation of Independence in Pagoda Park, Seoul. Secretly authored by poet Ch'oe Namsŏn, the proclamation had been signed by thirty-one Christian, Ch'ondogyo, and Buddhist leaders. The signatories and students that had rallied a crowd were quickly arrested and interrogated. Nonviolent demonstrations spread like wildfire throughout Korea as did the simple mantra, "*Mansei* (Long live) Korean independence!" The gatherings prompted Japanese authorities to respond and violence escalated. After six weeks more than 7,000 Koreans were dead, another 15,000 injured, and 40,000 imprisoned.<sup>2</sup>

The "March 1 Movement" spawned no less than five provisional governments in Seoul, Vladivostok, and Shanghai. They were finally united in Shanghai on 9 November 1919 as the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea. American-educated Dr. Syngman Rhee was named president and General Li Tung Hui, the prime minister.<sup>3</sup> Today, both North and South Korea celebrate *Samil Undong Il*—"March First Movement Day"—that symbolizes the struggle for independence.<sup>4</sup>



Dr. Syngman Rhee



President Woodrow Wilson



Early Provisional Government of Korea, circa 1919.



Koreans gathered in Pagoda Park in Seoul on 1 March 1919 to listen to the Proclamation of Independence from Japan.



Non-violent *Mansei* marches supporting independence from Japan took place throughout Korea in the spring of 1919.



In 1920, Korean communities in California marched in support of the independence movement at home.

# Plan PATRIOT Contrasted 1919 Nationalism with Communist Aims in 1952

The 5"x 8" product (below) on green paper explaining the significance of March 1, 1919, was the first propaganda leaflet approved for Plan PATRIOT. Mr. Kyoo-Teck Kim, a Korean civilian artist working for 1<sup>st</sup> RB&L in Tokyo, did the illustration of a Korean crowd cheering as the Proclamation of Independence was read publicly on March 1, 1919. Mr. Kim took great pleasure in this project because he was among the crowd on that auspicious day.<sup>5</sup> The leaflet contrasted the 1919 spirit of independence and nationalism with Communist aims in postwar Asia and promoted the slogan "Tong Il Dog Lip Mansei" just like America and Great Britain adopted the "V" for Victory" sign during WWII.

Another leaflet for Plan PATRIOT entitled "1919 Revolt" (right) was directed towards North Koreans encouraging them to break free from Communist slavery. An illustration emphasizing the *Taikuk* flag contained a forlorn figure huddled against the cold. ⬆



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## Endnotes

- 1 Djun Kil Kim, *The History of Korea* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2005), 125-127; Andre Matles Savada and William Shaw (editors) *South Korea: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, June 1990), 20.
- 2 Kim, *The History of Korea*, 128-130. **The Japanese casualty numbers are typically low and Korean statistics tend to be exaggerated.**
- 3 Kim, *The History of Korea*, 132; E. Grant Meade, *American Military Government in Korea* (NY: King's Crown Press, Columbia University, 1951), 38.
- 4 Frank Gosfield and Bernhardt J. Hurwood, *Korea: Land of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (NY: Parents' Magazine Press, 1969), 70.
- 5 GHQ, FECOM, 1<sup>st</sup> RB&L Group Psywar Leaflet #1162, "The Meaning of March 1, 1919," in Korean dated 20 February 1952, Haynes Collection; "Psywar Pushes Independence Theme," *The Proper Gander*, 1 March 1952, 1, 4, Broderick Collection.
- 6 GHQ, FECOM, 1<sup>st</sup> RB&L Group leaflet #1162 dated 20 February 1952, Haynes Collection.



Excerpts from the leaflet (above):

"Now, during Korea's desperate life struggle against the barbarous Communists...now as this country's life blood flows in the streets and in the mountains...now the spirit of Son Pyong Hee and the Independence Declaration must burst out across the land.

Together, every Korean must again shout 'Tang Il Dog Lip Mansei.' Write it on the walls, on the buildings, in the snow and in the sands. To every friend you meet say, 'Mansei.' Together, every Korean must stand in freedom, strong against the Reds..."<sup>6</sup>

