

KOREAN-AMERICAN COUNCIL,  
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FOR RELEASE AT 12 O'CLOCK NOON  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24th, 1942.

The following is the text of the address of Dr. Syngman Rhee, noted patriot and father of the Korean Republic, to the Town Hall Club of New York City Tuesday noon, February 24th:

"Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am grateful for the honor you pay my country by inviting me, its representative in the United States, to be your guest and by granting me the privilege of addressing you.

I am asked to speak to you on what the people of Korea can do to help defeat Japan. For the benefit of the younger persons in my audience may I first be permitted to give you a few facts regarding Korea? No, I do not impugn your scholarship but for more than 30 years American textbooks have contained only Japan's version of Korea. I need not tell you how recent events have testified to the treachery and lies of the Japanese. You Americans now are learning what we Koreans have known for centuries.

The people of Korea have had a national existence of more than 4,000 years. Their homeland is that great peninsula that juts out from the Asiatic mainland. The Japanese rightly call Korea "a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan." It is. But in the past it has been a dagger used only for the protection of Asia against the island savages to the east. It has been used successfully by the Koreans not once, but many times. I believe you will be fair enough and generous enough ---- on the basis of historical facts rather than imaginary data ---- to agree that my people can do in the future what they have repeatedly done in the past. All we ask of the American people is that you give us a chance. I contend there is a moral duty for you to do so and I shall tell you why.

Situated as Korea is between the great Chinese Empire to the west; Manchuria, Mongolia and Russia to the north and the war-like island tribes of Japan to the east, my country has been the battle-ground of her warring neighbors for all the bygone centuries.

But the Koreans have managed to protect and maintain their existence as an independent nation for more than 42 centuries. As time goes, that is a considerable period, don't you think? In fact, we enjoyed our freedom until the white man of the west came and gave to the warrior race of Japan the superior weapon of war.

Without the white man's material and moral aid (or should I say "immoral"?) Japan never would have defeated China in 1894, Russia in 1904, Korea in 1910 and Manchuria in 1931.

Without your supplies of war machines and materials, so generously made available by you to the war lords of Tokyo, Japan since 1937 could not have bombed, burned and destroyed Chinese cities.

Your scrap-iron, your munition, your oils and gasolines have added up the grisly total of hundreds of thousands men and women and children of China who lie dead and buried beneath the debris of a fine old civilization.

And now these bombing planes and tanks and machine guns - all products of your inventive genius --- are being used in what manner?

Why, my dear listeners, they are enabling the savage tribes of Nippon to drive out all the white men from the East. They are responsible for the conquest of the Philippines and the Malay peninsula, the fall of Hong-Kong and the surrender of Singapore, the invasion of the Dutch East Indies and Australia. They are actually a threat to your own Pacific Coast. And do not forget Pearl Harbor either.

Now, my friends, I do not use this roll call of disaster to frighten you. The dreadful news since December seventh is, I know, familiar enough to all of you. You are reasonable men and women and I feel you will regard as

reasonable the desire of 23 million Koreans to be of help to you in this time of grave emergency.

You see, Korea was known as the "hermit kingdom" in the past century. Tired of the bickerings of the outside world and being a staunch believer in peace, our "land of the morning calm," as we term it, had withdrawn from the company of other nations. We really worshiped peace. Why, among ourselves, instead of saying, as you do, "How do you do?" and "Good-bye", our salutation was, "Are you in peace?" and our farewell was, "Go in peace."

To this peaceful land came Americans some sixty years ago. The Americans said, in effect: "Come join the outside world. Open your ports for trade. Let your people enjoy the blessings of progress. We will take you by the hand. We will guide you. We will protect you."

So it came to pass, in 1882, that the people of Korea entered into the solemn treaty relations with the people of the United States. You know, that very same treaty still is on your books. It has never been repealed. Its beautiful language remains unchanged. It is not for me - a fugitive from the Japanese who have long had a price of \$100,000 on my head - to criticize the American Government. The American people have given me sanctuary and have given me help. And, without exception, those Americans, who know the true story of the diplomatic relations between my country and their own, have spoken out courageously and have demanded that justice be done. I appeal to you to add your voices to theirs.

Suffice it to say, Japan with weapons from the white man of the west swarmed over Korea in 1905 and the enslavement of my people then began. This was the first step in Japan's new order in Asia.

My friends, do not be misled. The Japanese are not puppets of Germany. They are not acting on the orders of Hitler. They are not imitating the Nazis. They are a cruel and carefully planning people. Their single aim is the conquest of the world.

You are all familiar with the Tanaka memorial which calls for world domination. Do you think the idea it expresses is new to the Japanese? It is not!

Why, in 1590, Hideyoshi, the great military hero of medieval Japan, sent letters to Korea, China, the Philippines, the Liuchiu islands and even to India to inform them he was embarking on a program of world conquest.

This happens to be one instance where the Japanese were actually polite enough to announce their plans in advance. They failed to show you the same consideration in Hawaii. I would like to quote a few sentences from Hideyoshi's letter to the king of Korea. They bear out the old French proverb which says, "The more things change, the more they are the same."

After giving the Sun partial credit for his birth and stating his benevolent rule would be admired by nations in all directions, Hideyoshi goes on to say the super-nation he intends to create should not be separated by mountains or seas but should include them all. I quote:

"In starting my conquest I plan that our forces should proceed to China and compel the people there to adopt our customs and manners. Then that vast country, consisting of more than 400 provinces, would enjoy our imperial protection and benevolence for millions of years to come. You, king of Korea, are hereby instructed to join us at the head of all your fighting men when we proceed to China." That's the end of the quotation.

The invasion occurred on schedule. It ended eventually in the defeat of the Japanese and their retreat back to their islands. The Koreans were able to achieve victory largely through the genius of our great admiral, Li Sunsin. He invented an iron-clad boat -- yes, the first iron-clad boat -- and accomplished the destruction of the Japanese navy.

You've heard, of course, that the Japanese have a timetable for this war . . . the Philippines reduced by such a date, Singapore to surrender by February 11th was it, and so on. Well, Hideyoshi also had a timetable and although

his was not carried out, he has remained the idol of the Japanese people all these 350 years. They still retain the timetable idea of conquest. Only a few days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, for example, Admiral Yamamoto revealed that he had written -- nearly a year before, mind you -- that he would not be content merely to capture Guam and the Philippines and occupy Hawaii and San Francisco, but he was looking forward and I quote "to dictating peace to the United States at the White House in Washington." That's the conclusion of the Yamamoto letter. Doesn't it echo, down the centuries, the spirit of Hideyoshi?

Ladies and gentlemen, I have had an unusual opportunity to get to know the Japanese. Since I saw the Japanese war books in 1895 entitled, Illo Junjang, which means Russo-Japanese war, and Ilmi Junjang, which means American-Japanese war, I tried to warn my own people of Japan's aim of military conquest. But my own people refused to believe me until Japan betrayed and enslaved them in 1905. Since I came to America, more than 30 years ago, I tried to warn my American friends against Japan but few of them took me seriously until Pearl Harbor. Even now only a comparatively small number of Americans really know the peril to their country that Japan's ultimate object is.

We Koreans know the Japanese. We have never accepted their domination. We have revolted against their tyranny and we are ready to rise up again. We have studied the weaknesses of the Japanese. We understood the strange way in which his mind works, how he seeks to degrade and to debase his fellow man. We know his cruelty, his ruthlessness, his treachery.

Don't you think that 23 million Koreans can be a powerful force to help you Americans, to help the Chinese, the Dutch, the Australians and the British at a time like this?

Isn't this the moment when every available element should be utilized to accomplish the one aim of all the Democracies - to crush the gangster nations?

My countrymen have been fighting Japan for the last 37 years at home and abroad, in every conceivable way, while

China, the United States and all the rest of the world were asleep . . . . when all the world had not the slightest idea of what Japan was preparing to do.

Right now, the Koreans have their Provisional Government in Chungking, China. They have their own army fighting alongside the Chinese against the common enemy. As the representative of that Government, I have asked your State Department to extend recognition to the Republic of Korea. So far the State Department has withheld action.

Our American friends have formed the Korean-American Council and they, too, have asked the State Department to act, but as yet to no avail.

Our American friends say that if the American people knew the whole story of Korea, they would demand and they would get action. As rapidly as possible, with the limited means at their disposal, they are telling the story of Korea. They ask you to write your senators and representatives, to write the State Department and to the White House, requesting that Korea be recognized. Think of the psychological effect on 23 million people, on Japan's doorstep, ready and willing to fly at the throat of every Japanese, the moment a little encouragement and aid are given them.

Please remember that recognition of the Korean Government by the United States Government does not mean independence for my people. We shall have to fight for that ourselves and we are prepared to fight for it.

Recognition would mean, however, ~~that some of the~~ planes and guns and munitions you are turning out of your arsenal of democracy would not be denied us, as they are now. We offer you our tremendous man power in the hope you will accept it for our common cause. Every Japanese engaged in fighting Koreans is one less Japanese to fight an American soldier.

At the end of this week we are holding in Washington a Korean Liberty Conference. We meet to commemorate our revolution of 1919 against the Japanese and to reaffirm the

declaration of independence we adopted that same year.

We meet to declare the adherence of the Korean people to the Declaration of United Nations.

We meet once again to ask the Government of the United States to recognize our Provisional Government.

We meet to plan the 1942 revolution of the Korean people against the Japanese.

I hope that many of you who hear my voice will be able to attend that conference. Believers in Liberty need no formal invitation to rally to her sacred cause.

The Korean-American Council, with headquarters in the Colorado Building, Washington, D. C. wishes to enlist your moral support and your financial support. Money is needed to take the story of Korea to the people.

We know the spirit and the integrity of the American people. We know they never have nor ever shall countenance the enslavement of a fellow nation.

We know what Liberty means to you and that you know full well what it means to us. We have been denied it for 37 long and tyrannical years. Our enemy now is your enemy. Will you help us? We stand ready to help you if you will but let us."

Thank you.