

January 19, 1954

Letter, Syngman Rhee to General James A. Van Fleet

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Summary:

Syngman Rhee expresses concern about a Mr. Cromwell's "Rhee plan" for the Korean economy. He also tells General James A. Van Fleet he would like him to be in charge of the training and organization of additional Korean forces.

Credits:

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19th January, 1954

My dear General Van Fleet:

Yours of December 15, mailed just before you left for Los Angeles, reached me the day before yesterday. I hope you spent a very happy time with your family at its gathering on Christmas Eve and over the holiday season. Mrs. Rhee and I thank you for the warm greetings you conveyed in your letter and for the delicious pineapple and papaya you so kindly sent.

We are very glad to know that Mrs. Van Fleet and your daughter are recovering their health, and we do hope that 1954 will bring you many blessings.

For the generous gift of \$25,000 from the Foundation for our needy and those in distress at Christmas time I am most grateful. The ladies will have made the best possible use of the money and I feel sure they will report direct to you on this.

When I was down in Pusan to view the district of the fire disaster the other day I included the Foundations Aid goods for those people who had everything destroyed. They had suffered considerably, but the generosity of our friends has helped them a great deal.

We desired to charter a Korean ship to bring over the relief goods, but the cost was so high we had to give up the idea.

Mr. Cromwell has been writing many letters explaining what he calls the "Rhee Plan" - a plan to relieve the Korean economic problems - which makes me feel rather uneasy. I have no plan of my own especially as many matters are involved. I keep out of such things as far as possible. I wrote a letter to him asking him not to mention my name in connection with any plan he may conceive which involves financial matters of any kind. I have also pointed out that I am not handling the US Aid Funds or any Fund aid, if he wishes me to help him in his program, he should submit his plan to the Combined Economic Board, excluding any connection with my name. If someone got hold of the plan and criticized me for trying to make money in handling the aid funds, it would create a very bad

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impression. Mr. Cromwell wants to make some money, which is not wrong in itself. I may ask the CEB to consider his proposition favourably, but I am not, of course, the deciding factor in matters of this kind.

I am sure your article for the Readers Digest will be of great benefit to our cause and am looking forward with pleasure to viewing an advance copy.

Cardinal Spellman, as usual, was wonderful. He came to see us in Chinhae when we were there during the holiday period and we had a very pleasant talk together with Mrs. Rhee. We talked about you, of course, and he said he would see you when he returned. He does not like the turn of events here, and I think he will do all he can to help correct the mistakes the present policy making statesmen are making.

I wrote a letter or two to Philip Han of our Embassy and instructed him to tell you of the contents in regard to the expansion of our defence forces. There are some other matters, too, which I asked him to take up with you.

Sometimes I feel that this is the right moment for us to declare that the US should make an agreement with us to increase our army with fifteen or twenty divisions together with air and naval strength commensurate with the number of land forces. I would like President Eisenhower to appoint you to be in charge of the forming and training and organization of the additional forces, which I feel would take about six months, during which time we would take no unilateral action. This should provide us with sufficient defence to allow all or any of the UN forces to withdraw from Korea and leave Korea solely responsible for its own defence. This is the gist of what I said in my letters to Philip regarding the defence forces. I told him to keep the subject strictly confidential and advise me of your opinion. I am afraid your President will not approve of it, but I think this a very opportune moment to present the suggestion. I wish you would let me know your reaction and we will act accordingly.

Mrs. Rhee and I extend to you and Mrs. Van Fleet our very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

General Van Fleet,
The American-Korean Foundation.

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