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July 11, 1953

My dear Mr. Secretary: (Dulles)

The people who call me a man of iron do not realize the anguish endured during this dreadful time or the hours of prayer which I have devoted to the problems and decisions of these past weeks. If I have not answered immediately your letter of June 22, you must understand that what has restrained me has been my sense of the overwhelming importance of saying nothing and taking no step which would in any way weaken the bonds of warm cordiality between us. Our comradeship is far too precious to be lost.

Mr. Robertson, who has well represented you (2) and President Eisenhower (1), ha s informed you from day to day of the earnest efforts I have made to satisfy the requirements of your Government and of the United Nations, even at the heavy expense of the sacrifice of what all Koreans conceive to be the very hope for the existence of our freedom. You know what has happened to Korea and I need not elaborate for you the fact that unless our people can hold fast to a real hope for the future, what they now endure ~~would~~ must be finally insupportable.

You and I, Mr. Dulles, are friends, as our nations and our peoples are friends. We have endured everything together and we have learned together the meaning of the comradeship that comes only through the greatest of suffering and the deepest of unity. What we must not do is to commence arguing with one another, for no matter how ##### determined would be our efforts to express always our real cordiality, arguments grow thorns which sometimes tear painful lacerations.

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Please believe me, then, when I tell you that I am doing my very best to explain our position to you without any degree of argumentative spirit. I cannot doubt that you know that your letter represents certain facts which lead to one conclusion while ommiting certain other facts which would lead to a different conclusion. I suppose this is inevitable whenever there is a policy to be carried out, but in all humaneness it is also necessary that we keep our minds pure and clear by reminding ourselves not to forget the facts which for reasons of policy we may leave out of a particular statement.

As I reread your letter, and I assure you it has had my most earnest and prayerful attention, its text seems to indicate that I am a heartless wretch without gratitude and without any regard for any human values except perhaps the narrow self-interest of our own people. I cannot think that this is a true representation of your feelings. It is true, of course, that we have asked and asked, and that we have received and received. But as I look out from my windows over the desolate ruins of Seoul and recall the millions of ruined refugees and the hundreds of thousands of our own people who have died, I cannot think that you are unaware of the awful price our nation has paid in our own endeavor to stand as worthy Allies in the common struggle against communist tyranny.

What I feel with most unshakable certainty, Mr. Dulles, is that the entire free world is facing a dreadful threat of extinction by a ruthless power that has the cunning and the strength of complete devotion to evil. The communist enemy is not restrained, as we and our Allies are restrained, by feelings of ~~#######~~ gentlemanliness and

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a decent regard for the opinions of mankind. Our enemy is not constrained, as we are, by pledges and treaties and guarantees. I am sure that few know better than you — though my people and I have learned at terrible cost — the perfidiousness and utter heartlessness with which the communists will use any means, the hope of peace, the longing for the return of loved ones from prison camps, the cunning exploitation of differences of opinion among Allies, as additional means to their preconceived goal of dragging the entire world down into their own mire of terroristic tyranny.

You have described with the eloquence of sincere feeling the efforts that have been made by you and by your nation to help Korea during the past years. In the very depths of our hearts and our souls we feel the genuine comradeship of this help and we know that the friendship of the United States is the greatest boon for which we may hope on this earth.

But, Mr. Dulles, we also believe that the best return we can make is to do our little best to help the United States to understand the nature of the communist threat ~~and to~~ so you may lead the free world — all unwilling as it may be — in a way that will succeed in overcoming the danger.

Korea has often been described as a laboratory in which the United Nations could try out the method of dealing with communist imperialism which is implicit in its Charter — that is, the method of peaceful conciliation and political negotiation. This principle led to our not being equipped with an armed force sufficient to match that of the communists in the north, in the period before the attack. The United Nations, of course, rectified that error of leaving us weak

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by immediately and courageously coming at once to our aid. We may all praise God that the opportunity existed because of the boycott of the Security Council by the Soviet Union. For the sake of the security of the free world, however, we should never forget that it is not the nature of the United Nations which made such quick action possible, but the very fact that for that period of time the United Nations was freed from the impediment of the Soviet veto.

Now we face the future, with the past of no consequence except to serve as our teacher. The communists have won the kind of victory in Korea which they are already exploiting to the full; that is, they have met in battle with a portion of their satellite armies the direct power of the mightiest enemy they confront, the United States, and the result is no worse for them than a draw. They naturally are ready — not for peace, which would mean an abandonment of their plans of conquest, but for a truce, which means only a breathing space and a chance to renew their strength.

Our intentions are not to oppose peace, but to try to achieve it. It is my most solemn conviction that very little time will elapse before you and President Eisenhower will regret with agony of spirit that you have not determined to press in Korea for a limited ## but decisive military victory, as a deterrent to further communist advances and eventual world war.

The enemy now is weak: in Korea, in China, in Eastern Europe, and inside Russia. Your own analysts, I am sure, have accumulated information showing this to be the case. In the face of this weakness of the enemy, the Western Allies can choose either to take advantage of the opportunity to enjoy a temporary surcease from the struggle,

or they could take bolder advantage of it (not by any preventive war) by winning such an unquestioned victory in this limited sphere as to encourage all the endangered and occupied countries and to post an unmistakable warning of disaster for the communist master strategists. In my view, it is a tragic mistake to choose the weaker of these two courses.

For Korea itself, the indesisive ending of this war is our ultimate disaster. You know, as I do, that our nation cannot long survive such a truce as is contemplated. For me to explain all the economic and political and psychological reasons would be only to repeat what you already well understand. Of course if the truce should be followed by a political agreement with the communists to re-unite Korea the victory not only for Korea but for the free world would be unmeasurable. But we both know full well that such a result is absolutely impossible.

Several times you and President Eisenhower and Mr. Robertson have intimated that the United States is prepared to take some kind of effective measures to achieve our re-unification ######## following the expected failure of the political conference. I do not have any indication of what plans you may have in mind, and much as I have searched my mind to try to discover an effective method, I have been unable to grasp a reasonable possibility. We are asked to hope, but we do not know for what.

All of this I am telling you with the frankness and consideration of true friendship and with the earnest hope that you may never reach the point of doubting the sincerity of my concern not alone for Korea but for all the friendly nations whose fate is finally involved with ours.

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Despite the absolute certainty in my mind that the United States will have grave cause to regret the position it has taken in regard to the truce, I have yielded my convictions to the endless persistence of your settled policies. In my talks with Mr. Robertson, and in my letter to him of July 9, I have granted almost every request that has been made upon me. My only qualification is that if the means which you have chosen do not prove to be successful, we must be allowed the final right to do what we can to retrieve our nation from the situation that will exist when the communists refuse to grant in peace what the Allies have refrained from accomplishing in war.

The truce will now be signed, (We shall abide by our agreement) to give the United Nations yet another chance to try out in our nation its prescribed method of political negotiation. I pray to God that my forebodings may prove groundless and that a genuine peace may emerge. If such should not be the case, I hope the United States will stand by us firmly, as we shall stand with you, in seeking to regain once more an opportunity to win a limited victory which will postpone or eliminate the final catastrophe of world war.

With all friendliness and personal good wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Syngman Rhee

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