

## Soh Jaipil's Message to Korea March 1, 1949<sup>1</sup>

I, Soh Jaipil, am giving this speech in the U.S. In honor of the March First Independence Movement, I have to say this.<sup>2</sup> That is because I want to sincerely inspire all Koreans, regardless of age or sex, to be of one heart and one mind in making every effort to build Korea into an independent country.

The unprecedented March First Independence Movement could happen because all the people in the country were of one mind and worked together, and their strength became amazingly greater. The Korean Independence Movement made the international community aware of the Korean people and that they should be recognized and loved. The March First Independence Movement surprised the world. Among many nations, it seemed that the Japanese were the most surprised.

Compared to 30 years ago, Korea has moved closer to becoming a more advanced society in that Korea now has an independent government and the international community recognizes that government. Even though the government was created with support from foreigners, the maintenance of the Korean government fully depends on its people. Support from foreigners would be greatly helpful if Koreans could receive and utilize it to develop Korea as a truly independent country, help its economy flourish, and protect democratic rights. However, the permanent independence of Korea cannot be achieved if we depend heavily on foreigners. There is no doubt that the true independence of Korea depends entirely on its people. France supported the United States in its independence, but the U.S. would not have become an independent nation if the American people had abandoned their responsibilities, no matter how much support was provided to the U.S. by France. It seems that the U.S. is willing to support Korea now and for several more months. However, the true

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by Ms. Hyun Jung Lee (이현정) of The Graduate Institute of Peace Studies, Kyung Hee University.

<sup>2</sup> There is a part of his speech which sounds like "even tomorrow" but the part is not translated since it does not make sense.

independence of Korea can never be achieved if the Korean people abandon their responsibilities either by entirely depending on or by opposing the U.S. Hence, the Korean people should clearly realize that the true independence of Korea entirely depends on Koreans.

By realizing our own responsibilities and reviving the spirit of the March First Independence Movement, all people in Korea should be of one mind and work together. That's the right thing to do and that's what we should really achieve. Now, the United Nations is making efforts to unify the two Koreas by sending representatives, but that is also support from the international community. If Koreans want to utilize that support, we should accept our responsibilities. The unification of Korea will only be achieved when Koreans want to unite the country. If not, there will be no unification no matter how sincerely the international community supports Korea. Thus, it is beyond question that the rise and the fall of Korea completely depends on Koreans.

Today, we should realize the spirit of the March First Independence Movement. If all Koreans in the South and on Jeju Island would be of one mind and work together, then Korea will rise. If we reject or fail to revive that spirit, then there is no bright future for Korea. Thus, it is our duty to realize the spirit of the March First Independence Movement again and lead the rise, not the fall, of one Korea. If we fail to realize that spirit, Korea will eventually cease to exist. In such a case, neither people in the South nor people in the North may survive. Hence, our first and foremost goal is to ensure the existence of Korea. There will be some people who are smart enough to grasp the big picture. Unfortunately, there will be other people who cannot imagine it and instead do some stupid things; we should minimize the number of such people. For that purpose, education is essential. Hence, those who have been given knowledge and education and those who love their own country, I ask you to tell Koreans this: "United we stand, divided we fall." If Korea falls, neither people in the South nor in the North may survive. Why would we choose to disappear? Choose the right way to live.

Since I came back to the U.S., I have felt that I am physically stronger and

healthier, but I still do not know when I will be able to feel Korean soil beneath my feet. Whether I make it or not, I'm asking you to help Korea survive no matter what. If Korea survives, both people in the South and the North can live together. If Korea falls, both people in the South and the North will die together. The fate of Korea entirely depends on Koreans, not foreigners. I believe that no one in the South or the North would want their homeland to disappear. However, there are some Koreans who have different opinions or objections regarding the nation's dependence on the global community. We have been a unified country for four thousand years. Why should we be divided into two different countries now? If Korea splits into two, both countries would be weaker and thus unable to survive for long. We are in the same boat: if either of us falls, the other shares the same fate. Therefore, our primary purpose is to prevent the boat from sinking. Please never forget this purpose. When you meet someone who disagrees, please explain clearly and convince that person, do not brand that person as an enemy. If you inspire that person with such wise words, it is highly likely that Korea will remain. Whether or not I will be able to see you in person in Korea, I sincerely hope that you help our homeland survive. Approaching spring, please give my regards to my friends. Even though I am in the U.S., my soul is there with the Korean people. Hence, I desperately want you to become of one mind and utilize support from foreigners to help Korea survive no matter what.