

THE COUNTRY, THE REVOLUTION AND I

INTRODUCTION

THE TASKS FOR THE COUNTRY, PEOPLE, HISTORY

As all my beloved people know, our Fatherland is now confronted with a decisive moment in its history; a moment which will decide whether it will rise or ignominiously fall. We are standing at that important crossroad when we must decide whether we shall be victorious over our ordeals or whether we shall fall into so deep an abyss that we can never rise again. We are fighting an ordeal that no nation has ever overcome, unless it showed remarkable qualities of courage, wisdom and perseverance.

Five thousand years have passed since our sacred and legendary forefather Tangun established the basis of our nation. We are an ancient homogeneous society, so very rare in the present world, living in a narrow 3000-ri area. Despite this positive background we have had repeated periods of schisms, divisions and mutual slaughter. We have, somehow, never emerged out of our vicious circle of feudalistic poverty, degradation, complacency, laziness and fratricidal warfare. Endowed as we are with this rare quality of ethnic homogeneity; beautiful artistic tradition, a suitable physical area, a generous sized population, adequate natural resources; we have never, throughout our long history, managed to create a nation worthy of its

name.

Our history is replete with weariness, anguish, tears and shame. Our past causes us to feel a deep sense of sorrow and, at the same time, deep anger. We are beset by many inner anxieties. How can we break this internal cycle and look to the future? We, could not! Our horizons, our aspirations, were constantly choked by the external pressures placed upon us by China, by Japan and by Russia!

August 15, 1945

This date seemed the starting point of a new period of our national history. It seemed as though a long period of stagnation was finally and decisively coming to an end! The 18 years that followed were, however, far from the beginnings of a new era. They only tended to repeat the vicious circle of unwholesome events that had previously beset our country. There lies the real guilt—the deep guilt—for which the Liberal and Democratic regimes shall be held responsible by history!

They cannot—will not—be forgiven for confounding national affairs with their dictatorship, corruption, incompetence and sloth. Moreover, their guilt is compounded not only by having wasted the rare opportunity to establish a new and viable nation for the first time in our five thousand years of history, but by checking the movement of a national renaissance.

We lost forever, because of this treacherous behavior, this unique opportunity. For almost twenty years we had to spend futile, useless days.

What have we harvested from our Liberation?

We now have 600,000 men in our armed forces—rated the fourth in strength in the world. We now have a large number of buildings and factories.

Whatever their worth may be, they cannot counterbalance the spiritual degradation, apostate imitation of foreign customs, the corruption, the vanity, luxury and indolence, which had their roots in this period. They cannot, by any measure, com-

pensate for the tragedy of the 38th Parallel which has severed our nation.

What is the sum total of the 18 years of our lives after the Liberation? We have lost far more than we have gained! If we have “gained” anything; it is the compulsory transplantation of a blindly imitated, lame, imported democracy.

The weary 5,000 years of our history! A lame, distorted democracy! What are we to do standing in the midst of this empty wilderness?

The answer to this question is really the task for the nation, for the people, for history. Now is the time for all 24,000,000 Koreans to place their efforts behind finding a solution to this problem.

We must concentrate our thoughts, our wisdom and establish a grand national policy to achieve our national goal.

MAY 16 REVOLUTION FOLLOWING APRIL 19 UPRISING

These revolutions were the results of our national spirit striving for the solution to our national dilemma. The blending of this revolution into our national revolution meant an all out rally of the nation to tackle this historic task.

This book tells my views of our country, of the revolution, of life itself.

As everyone knows, I am in a position in which my life, regardless of any volition on my part, is intimately intertwined with the country, the people and its history. I am under the weighty pressure of being leader of the revolution.

The nature of my upbringing had trained me to accept great responsibilities, but never such as those entailed by the May 16 Revolution. In this task I must risk my all in order to benefit my people, my country and its history. Regardless of my position—whatever the future—whether in politics, the army, or in the country at large, I will dedicate my life to the

successful consummation of our national revolution.

It is well known that a revolution is required from time to time in order to overcome social inertia and social stagnation. A repetition of a series of revolutions is, however, indicative of a weak, immature and underdeveloped nation. These revolutions, in chain like reactions, can cause more harm after they have run their course than that which existed before. A revolution, therefore, cannot be made hastily or rashly. If one does occur, it must be in obedience to the overwhelming evident need of the people, the country and history. Once such a revolution is undertaken then it must be resolutely pursued towards its ultimate goal. Its basic resolve must remain as the salvation of the nation, selfless public dedication, correct and honest judgment and unyielding will and determination. Inasmuch as a correct revolution is undertaken in response to historical imperatives, as well as to the demands of the country and people, it should be crowned with a growing consciousness of common efforts common purposes, common responsibilities. Without such a sense of united resolutions and destinies there can be no popular success to any revolution.

May 16 Revolution

This revolution was not simply a change of regimes. It was a new, mature national debut of spirit, marking the liquidation of the continuation of the ancient and medieval times of schism and strife. It marked, too, the end of the 500 years of stagnation of the Yi Dynasty, the oppression and bloodshed of 36 years of Japanese rule and the nagging chronic diseases bred by the residue of the Liberation. It was a national debut, inspired with the courage and self-confidence of people determined never again to be poor, weak, or dumb.

This resolution is the turning point in the history of modern Korea. It is our third start after the Liberation. It is our last chance for a National Renaissance.

Spiritually, this revolution must—and will—establish our self-respect.

Socially, it is to modernize our society.

Economically, it is to industrialize our nation.

It is to revive our people, reconstruct our nation and reform us. This is a revolution of national reform.

As the resultant of this revolution, we are about to establish the Third Republic. The shape of this republic will determine whether or not we shall achieve the permanent goals to secure the future of our people.

As the foundation, the basic needs, we must do a number of things: construction of maximum constitutional reforms, change of generation levels, purification of society, improvement of various institutions.

This revolution has no fixed time limit! It does not end with the establishment of the Third Republic, nor is it delimited by any other deadline. This is an eternal revolution for the people.

This revolution should be inherited by each successive generation until their own goals are concretely realized.

Strictly speaking, the essence of revolution is the fundamental replacement of political ideology and renovation of social and political organizations. The two revolutions of Korea have, however, limitations in this direction and their achievement is restricted by various forces. We cannot deviate from the principle of opposing Communism and building liberal democracy. So long as we adhere to democratic principles we cannot suppress the freedom of public opinion.

This is a revolution in which we must find driving force and power in freedom of debate. This is my ideal of revolution. But it is a very difficult and exacting ideal. We must, however, overcome these difficulties! Indeed, after permitting freedom of political activities, a serious change was brought about in the purity of the revolution. A myth conceived in the purity of the ivory tower became the mundane commodity of the market.

We have to find affirmation and understanding in this open forum of public debate of right and wrong. The failure

or success of this debate will determine whether this revolution will be enhanced or whether history will again repeat our shame.

Once again, taking advantage of a free moment, I ask and write, "Why was the revolution necessary?" I wanted to trace the steps of the revolution and outline some of the hopes of the future. I do this task, not as a mirror reflection only for myself, but for all of the comrades of the revolution, for their new resolve. It is an earnest appeal to all the people and is offered for their reference.

CHAPTER I

WHY WAS THE REVOLUTION NECESSARY?

DOMESTIC SITUATION IN 1960

Why were we obliged to carry out the revolution? Why did the people support the revolution?

We have to establish, once and for all, the logical grounds concerning these points.

Generally speaking, a revolution encounters, however excellent its purpose, some opposition. This was especially marked after the over-all resumption of political activities. A large number of the former politicians denied or criticized the necessity of the revolution, misled the judgment of the people, exaggerated and instigated popular discontent and made haste to gain maximum advantages from it. Inasmuch as the question concerns the destiny of the country and the people, we cannot lightly entomb the matter as a thing of the past, a sentimental human affair, or relegate it to the yonder shore of oblivion. Just as there is no present without the past, there exists no future without the present. Such an effect (a result) could not exist without prior cause.

The April 19 Student Uprising and the May 16 Military Revolution signify the most decisive political disruption wit-