

April 8, 1954

Letter, Syngman Rhee to General James A. Van Fleet

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Summary:

Syngman Rhee suggests General James A. Van Fleet come to South Korea as an ambassador or economic coordinator. He also writes concerning defense forces in South Korea.

Credits:

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April 8, 1954

Dear General Van Fleet:

Your kind letters dated 20 and 23 March I have in my hand. First of all I want to thank you most heartily for the cabled message you sent on my birthday. Mrs. Rhee and I were very happy to receive it on that occasion, only we wished you could have been with us. We do hope that next year our birthdays will be spent together.

When you go down to Palm Beach, if it is convenient I hope you will drop in at Coral Gables where John W. Stagers, who has been here visiting for some time has a beautiful cottage. It is near the Coral Gables Country Club with the golf links in between. I used to drive down to his house to spend a week or so there, once in a while.

Before I forget, I want to tell you that the Children's Choir is leaving today. As you suggested, twenty-five youngsters together with five adults made the party complete, and I hope they will make many friends in America for both our countries. The little ones were so happy that they were finally going. I hope they will not cause any trouble or inconvenience while they are away.

I am glad to hear that Palmer Bevis is in San Francisco as the regional representative there. I hope he will do well. I feel sure that General Christenberry as Executive Director will achieve a great deal.

In a letter Mrs. Rusk wrote to Mrs. Rhee she indicates that Doctor Rusk will sooner or later resign from the first position he has on the Foundation. Of course, it does not mean he will lessen his interest in the Foundation or Korea, but we do wish we could somehow make it



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possible for him to stay if only in name. Of course we all understand how busy a man Doctor Huk is, and how much of his energy is at times demanded by the Foundation.

Since I know you would be willing to accept any such position, I am expressing the wish to some of our friends that you come to Korea as an Ambassador or in some other desirable position. At present the Economic Coordinator Wood does not seem popular either here among Americans, or in America. Confidentially speaking, if he remains here very long we cannot get very far in the economic reconstruction program and I hear from all sides that they are talking about replacing him with someone. If you could come in that position you could do wonders, although we want you here of course, in connection with the army build-up.

I am making a rough draft of another letter to the President, a copy of which I am enclosing here. In our demand for additional defense forces, some think that it would be better to work at it quietly and not publicly because it might give the opposition more strength to thwart the plan. However I personally do not think this is a correct observation. All those positively opposed to our plan are friends of Japan. Secretary of State, I believe, is strongly opposed to it because it will not please the Japanese.

I think it would help for you to contact some of the various publishers and let them be thoroughly convinced of the good sense of our plan so that they may convince others. I believe it is the only way we will get anywhere.

With my warmest regards to you and Mrs. Van Fleet.

Yours sincerely,

General James A. Van Fleet
Route 1 Box #114
Auburndale, Florida