

Rev. Sun Myung Moon Rescued by UN and US Forces During the Korean War

Hyun Jin Moon
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The Korean War Memorial in Washington DC honors the men and women from the nations who fought together on the Korean Peninsula. Credit: Bluedisk

The UN commemorates the sacrifice and the service of the men and women of their peacekeeping forces on May 29th.

The Korean War was one of the first coordinated peace-keeping efforts under the United Nations' flag and the leadership of the United States. Dr. Hyun Jin Moon's father, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, was rescued by these forces.

June 25, 1950 the Korean People's Army marched across the 38th parallel into the Republic of Korea. Civilians uprooted their homes and streamed south as the ill-equipped Republic of Korea army tried to withstand the carefully prepared northern army.

That same day, Secretary-General of the newly formed United Nations, Trygve Halvdan Lie, immediately alerted the Security Council who quickly issued Resolution 83, followed by an additional resolution

asking member states to “furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and restore international peace and security in the area.” The resolution was made possible in part by the Soviet Union boycott of the Security Council.

The United States stepped up first, with the United Kingdom and Australia close behind. In the end, 30 member states offered assistance in aid, armed forces, medical supplies and transport. The United Nations offered its name and flag as the vanguard for the international troops who would fight for the lives and peace on the Korean peninsula.

At the time, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, was imprisoned in Hungnam Labor Camp. Most prisoners died within a year; Rev. Moon was in his second year of imprisonment. In his autobiography, he recalled his sadness when he realized the northern army had procured its artillery from the Soviets with the fertilizer that he and his fellow prisoners had produced in Hungnam.

By September, the South Korean troops had been cornered in Busan. In a move that the highest levels advised against, General MacArthur led a surprise attack on Inchon harbor on September 15, cutting the North Korean forces in half. It was a turning point that enabled the UN Forces to push the Northern Army as far as the Yalu River. General Haig reflected on this moment in his autobiography, “When you are in a position of trust and a course you know to be right is questioned for political reasons, you must act on your own convictions based on your own experiences...”

General Haig served in the campaign that led troops north toward Wonsan, a major city in the North. In its path was Hungnam.

As the bomb attacks on Hungnam began, Rev. Moon recounted how the Hungnam guards began systematically executing prisoners. Prisoners were marched to a nearby mountain, made to dig their graves, and shot. The day before Rev. Moon’s roll call, the UN Forces liberated the camp. Rev. Moon “walked calmly out of Hungnam Prison with dignity.”

During his life, Rev. Moon consistently expressed his sincere gratitude to the international forces that came to the aid of South Korea.

The estimated death toll on all sides of the Korean war is 1.2 million. Although peace has yet to be achieved on the peninsula, the life of Rev. Moon and many other Koreans were delivered by the commitment and sacrifice of these brave men and women. The Korean people owe a debt of gratitude to these nations.

Today, Korea stands again at a juncture. One road offers unification, the other offers global conflict and destruction. Korea can take up its destiny and honor the investment made by setting a precedent of leadership in many ways: pioneering alternative models of economic development, preserving its traditional family values, setting a precedent as a former aid-receiving nation turned to an aid-giving nation and an example of peace that transcends religious and ideological differences.

What is needed is a common and powerful vision and moral and innovative leadership that can, as General Haig noted of MacArthur, overcome skeptics to do what they know is right.