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June 19

CONFIDENTIAL

MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT RHEE FROM PRESIDENT EISENHOWER

I have learned with grave concern that you have ordered the release of North Korean prisoners held by the United Nations Command in camps which are under the authority of the United Nations Command. Responsibility for the safeguarding of these prisoners was in part entrusted by the United Nations Command to the military forces of the Republic of Korea. Your order has been carried out by the use of open violence by South Korean elements against the authority of the United Nations Command.

On July 15, 1950, you formally advised the Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command that in view of the joint military effort of the United Nations on behalf of the Republic of Korea you assigned to him and to such military commanders as may exercise United Nations Command authority within Korea or in adjacent seas "authority over all land, sea and air forces of the Republic of Korea during the period of the present state of hostilities". I am informed by General Clark and by General Taylor that within recent days you have given them unqualified assurance that you would take no unilateral action at variance with the foregoing without prior consultation with them.

Your present order and the action thereunder constitutes a clear violation of this assurance and creates an impossible situation for the United Nations Command. If continued, such a course of action can only result in the needless sacrifice of all that has been won for Korea by the blood and bravery of its magnificent fighting forces. Persistence

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in your present course of action will make impractical for the United Nations Command to continue to operate jointly with you under the conditions which would result therefrom.

Unless you are prepared immediately and unequivocally to accept the authority of the United Nations Command to conduct the present hostilities and to bring them to a close, it will be necessary to effect another arrangement. Accordingly, the United Nations Commander-in-Chief has now been authorized to take such steps as may become necessary in the light of your determination.

You will appreciate that if the present conditions continue the assurances contained in my letter of June 6, 1953, must become inapplicable. These assurances had as their primary objective the preservation and strengthening of your Government and the ultimate unification of Korea. I am certain that it will be impossible to attain these objectives if the division of authority and lack of mutual confidence created by your action are allowed to continue.

As your personal friend I hope you will find an immediate way to correct this situation. Accordingly, I am not now making this message public. I am confining myself to a brief statement deploring your action which I feel compelled to do to keep faith with my own people and our allies.

S E O U L,

June 19, 1953.

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