

The Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre
Truth and Justice for the Unforgettable Past



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* The romanization of Korean names in this book follows the <The Jeju 4·3 Incident Investigation Report> of 2003. However, names as in the US national report in 1950s are also included in bracket. All Korean names are transliterated in the standard fashion: last name first.

What is the Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre?



Have you ever heard of the Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre?

Jeju is a beautiful island located in the southern part of Korea. It is well known for its beautiful beaches and mountains, and one of the favourite holiday destinations in South Korea. However, not many people are aware that this island was covered by blood 70 years ago.

“The April 3rd Uprising and Massacre” is a tragic incident that happened between 1 March 1947 and 21 September 1954 on Jeju Island. It was a chaotic period right after the independence from Japan, and the Korean peninsula was entering into the Cold War era. Some people, including the first president of South Korea and the US government, wanted to establish a separate government in South Korea while others wanted to establish a unified country with the North. Jeju islanders courageously



Taegeukgi (the national flag of Korea)
by Jung Younsung

stood up against the division of the Korean peninsula and strongly protested against the first election that formed the Republic of Korea in the South in 1948. Unfortunately, military and police officers severely cracked down on Jeju islanders. Approximately 30,000 people (10% of Jeju’s total population) lost their lives during this period. This booklet is

about this tragic history.

Article 2 of the “Special Act on Discovering the Truth of the Jeju 4·3 Incident and the Restoration of Honor of Victims” defines the term “Jeju 4·3 Incident” as “an incident in which the lives of inhabitants were sacrificed in the riot that arose on April 3, 1948, starting from March 1, 1947 and in the process of armed conflicts and suppression thereof that took place in Jeju-do and the suppression thereof until September 21, 1954.”

Before we look into what happened during this period, it is necessary to explore the background of the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre to understand its historical context.

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Liberation from Japan in 1945

On 15 August 1945, Korea became independent from the 35-year rule of Japan’s colonial empire. It was a happy day for most people as they were liberated from conscription, forced labour, and name changing programme.¹⁾ On the other hand,



Joy of liberation. Independence movement activists who were detained in Seodaemun Prison cheer after being released following liberation.

1) During the Japanese colonization, the Japanese government forced Koreans to change their name into Japanese name.

for those who colluded with Japan and who wanted to protect their wealth by collaborating with the power, independence was a disturbing moment. These different views among people were one of the causes of tragic incidents after the independence. Both the Daegu Autumn Uprising (1946) and Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre (1948) happened within 3 years after the independence, and the Korean War (1950) followed around 5 years after the independence.

“
***Why did independence bring
difficult times to Koreans?***
”

There are many reasons for the tragic events that followed, such as conflicts between the left and the right and/or the US and the Soviet Union. However, the fundamental reason was that Koreans were not able to gain independence with their own hands. As is well known, Japan was defeated by the Allied Forces during the Pacific War and they lost control over the Korean peninsula. Korea became independent in the due process. Koreans were not able to defeat Japan by themselves.

“
***Then why did
the Allied Forces fight against Japan?***
”

They fought against Japan, not because they sympathized with the Koreans but they wanted to gain power in the Asia-Pacific region. The Korean peninsula's geopolitical situation was too crucial for many countries and therefore, the North was occupied by the Soviet Union while



Japanese flag in front the Japanese Government-General of Korea is replaced by the US flag

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the South was occupied by the US, even though it was not a defeated country. It was unlike Germany, which was divided into two countries after the WWII as a defeated country.

When they came to the Korean peninsula, the US Military Government²⁾ announced Proclamation No. 1 by General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the People of Korea, “All powers of Government over the territory of Korea south of 38 degrees north latitude and the people thereof will be for the present exercised under my authority.” And since then, the US Military Government ruled the South for 3 years before the Government of the Republic of Korea(South Korea) was established in 1948.

2) Its full name is the United States Army Military Government in Korea(USAMGIK).

Who owned the Korean Peninsula?

It was, of course, the land of Koreans. Therefore, the Koreans could not let the US and the Soviet Union rule their own land. Many people stood up to establish Korea with their own hands.



Lyuh Woon-hyung

Lyuh Woon-hyung was one such individual. When the collapse of Japan was close, some people including Lyuh established the “Alliance for National Government.” Later, the Alliance for National Government was developed into the “Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence.” This Committee even temporarily took charge of security maintenance.

Soon, it changed its name to the “People’s Committee.” This was a pan-national organization made by Koreans after the collapse of Japanese imperialism to establish a new state and it was a genuine grassroots movement for democracy. Naturally, its branch office was set up in Jeju as well.

However, the US Military Government who occupied the South of the Korean peninsula did not recognize the new state made by the People’s Committee but declared “the US Military Government” as the only “legal” country under the 38th parallel. Since the People’s Committee gained wide support from the people and was rooted in various areas of the country, the US Military Government forcibly dissolved the People’s Committee so that they could rule over the country. Under the justification of establishing an “effective” ruling system, the US Military

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Government rehired officers from the Japanese colonization as their officers, instead of punishing them for collaborating with the Japanese Empire. This policy antagonized the Koreans even further.

Political situation in Jeju after the liberation

After liberation, the movement to build a new country was active in Jeju as well. While the People’s Committees in other regions were dissolved by the US Military Government or changed its name, the Jeju People’s



People’s Committee by Kang Yobae

Committee remained undiminished and maintained strong social cohesion. It was because the power of pro-Japanese was relatively weak in Jeju, and many people who joined in the independence movement against Japanese imperialism came back to their hometown and then became members of the People’s Committee. In Jeju, 80% of the farmers were independent farmers while the country’s average was 40%; thus, class conflict also was not that serious. In addition, Jeju had a strong community culture that made it easier for the People’s Committee to be an autonomous organization.

Most of all, the People's Committee put a lot of effort in education, and actively participated in establishing schools. As is clear, the People's Committee showed its leadership in Jeju after independence. In a larger sense, the US Military Government ruled the country, but the People's Committee had more influence in people's lives on the ground. Therefore, the US Military Government considered the committee an important partner, and sent official documents to the People's Committee as they did to public offices. E. Grant Meade, an officer from the US Military Government, said "The Jeju People's Committee was the only political party in the island and the only organization acting like a government."

However, as time went by, conflicts between the US Military Government and the People's Committee were mounting. Instead of fully enjoying their independence, people faced the situation in which the same vicious police officers and corrupt public officers under the Japanese colonization continued their positions under the US Military Government. The conflict became serious on 1 March 1947, the so-called "March 1 shooting incident" at the anniversary of the Independence Movement of March 1st, 1919.

“

In every aspect, the Jeju People's Committee was the only political party and the only government in Jeju island.

”

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Jeju people's lives after the liberation

Generally, people are interested in their daily lives rather than politics. If their lives are happy, people normally do not care much about politics. However, at that time, life was harsh for Jeju people. After the independence, around 60,000 people, who went to Japan during the colonization to earn money, came back to Jeju. As a result, jobs were scarce and the society was unstable.



Downtown Jeju after liberation

“After the liberation, many people who left their hometown as workers, forced labour, conscription came back to Jeju with a lot of expectations. But there was no way to earn money in Jeju. Some people say that the Jeju's April 3rd occurred because of the South Korean Labor Party, but that was a secondary reason. People resisted because even after the liberation, pro-Japanese were not punished, no jobs were available and corrupted police suppressed them.”

- Testimony by Kang Soon-hyun (Oh-hyun Middle School teacher, then 27-years old)

Even worse, when people came back to Jeju from Japan, the US Military Government did not allow them to bring money that they earned in Japan. During Japanese colonization, daily necessities were imported from Japan, but this was not possible after the liberation. As a result, Jeju people's economic situation became dire. Moreover, during the summer of 1946, cholera broke out in Jeju and there were around 50 patients

daily, in addition to heavy drought which resulted in a shortage of food. Under this severe situation, corrupted officers from the Japanese colonization kept their seats in the US Military Government and continued to exploit the people.

Jeju people were outraged because of this injustice. Most of all, young people were conscious of the unfair society, and many others joined the cause.

Commemorating the Anniversary of the Independence Day Movement of March 1st, 1919 in 1947

Conflicts became visible on the 1 March 1947, the day of the so-called “March 1 shooting incident” at the anniversary of the Independence Movement of March 1st, 1919. This tragic incident triggered the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre.³⁾

On 1 March 1947, the commemoration ceremony was held in various places in Korea, including Seoul. In Jeju, “the 28th anniversary of the Independence Movement of March 1st, 1919” was held at the Buk Elementary School in Jeju-si. Unlike in Seoul, where the left wing and right wing groups had two separate ceremonies, there was only one ceremony in Jeju. By that time, there was no division between the left and the right in

³⁾ On 1 March 1919, independence uprising movement against the Japanese colonization was held across the Korean peninsula. This was one of the most important momentum in the independence movement.

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Liberation by Kang Yobae

Jeju. The unprecedented number of people gathered in Jeju, calling for a real independence and a better society.

As the situation worsened even after independence, people tried to overcome the difficulties by following and remembering the spirit of resistance against Japanese colonization in the past. That was the March 1st Independence Movement commemoration ceremony in Jeju.

Around 30,000 people gathered at the Buk Elementary School with the slogan, “Let’s achieve Unification, Independence with the spirit of the March 1st.” The Korean people knew that the reason they were su-



Mounted police officers of the US Military Government at that time

ffering even after independence was because foreign powers were dominating the country's fate. Also, Koreans worried about the division of the country because of the US and the Soviet Union. Since the division of the country would bring war,

they called for unification and independence. In other words, Koreans believed that if they were able to establish an independent country without foreign powers, then social conflicts would be resolved naturally.

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A shooting incident on 1st March triggers the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre

The tragic incident happened when the ceremony ended. Around 2pm, after the ceremony at Buk Elementary School, people marched toward Jeju Gwandeokjeong Pavilion. When people marched west of the Gwandeokjeong Pavilion, a boy was hit by a mounted police officer. The police did not pay attention to the injured boy and left, which resulted in people's outrage. Outraged people followed the mounted police and threw stones at him.

At 2:45 pm, shots were fired. When the marching crowd left the site and ran after the mounted police who was running toward the police

station, police officers at the watchtower of the police station fired shots towards the crowd. As a result, 6 civilians were killed and 8 were injured. But by this time, no one imagined that this shooting incident would trigger the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre that resulted in 30,000 deaths.



Killing by Kang Yobae

Ahead of the 1 March commemoration ceremony, the US Military Government deployed around 100 police officers from the police reserve. The police officers who fired the shot on the day were also part of the deployment from the mainland.

It was definitely an overreaction by the police against unarmed people. Most of the killed people were shot from behind, which is evidence that the police aimed at the people who were running. One of them was a woman carrying a baby and others were students and bystanders. If it was a mistake, the police should have apologized and remedied the situation. Unfortunately, the police insisted that their action was in self-defense. Moreover, the police started to arrest and detain those who initiated the commemoration ceremony of the Independence Movement of the March 1st. People were infuriated.

“
***Who ordered the shooting?
Was it possible to shoot at that time without
the order of the US Military Government?***
”

General strike of Jeju islanders

Strong resistance and protest by Jeju people started a general strike on 10 March 1947 that continued until 22 March. Students refused to attend school; vendors did not sell anything in the market; even public officers did not go to work. Even though it was difficult for them to sustain their living when they closed their stores, people went on strike as a form of protest against the shooting on 1st March.

If the US Military Government wanted to “install” democracy in Korea, then it should have listened to the Korean people's voices and agony. Unfortunately, the US Military Government reacted in a completely opposite manner. They designated Jeju Island as an “Island of Reds” and indiscriminately arrested people. According to records, some government officers at that time argued, “Originally, 90% of Jeju people are tinged with left-wing ideology.” However, studies so far proved that this



Gwandeokjeong at the time of the general strike by Kang Yobae

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argument is unjustifiable and not based on facts. The whole island was furious against the US Military Government's policy.

There were some people who tried to find a rational solution from the situation. The then Jeju governor, Park Gyeong-hun, submitted a resignation letter as a form of protest, saying that he would take responsibility for all troubles as a governor. He issued a statement that included expressions such as “independence is not complete even after the liberation,” “all 300,000 Jeju people are expressing condolences to the killed people of this tragic incident,” and “for our unified independence in the future.” From these expressions, we can imagine the situation of Koreans at that time.

However, these efforts were not effective since the US Military Government continued to suppress Jeju islanders instead of listening to their voices. Around 550 people were arrested in a month after the commemoration ceremony and 245 people were detained. Before the April 3rd Uprising in 1948, around 2,500 people were arrested in a year. This means that most of the smart young people were arrested by the US Military Government. The Jeju April 3rd Uprising did not happen all of a sudden. Jeju people's animosity toward the US Military Government had piled up under this unjust environment.



Park Gyeong-hun
The first Jeju governor
under the US Military
Government

“
*Within a month, 500 people were arrested and 245 people were
detained among who joined the March 1st commemoration ceremony.*
”

Seobuk Youth Association and Jeju Island

Seobuk Youth Association(Northwest Korean Youth Association) was a group of people (landowners) who were forced to leave North Korea because of political changes, such as land reform and punishment of the pro-Japanese groups. It was natural that they were hostile to the left wing. They learnt that Jeju Island was the “Island of Reds,” and therefore, killing Jeju Islanders was not a crime to them. Together with police officers from the mainland, Seobuk Youth Association was deployed to Jeju island after the 1st March 1947 incident, ordered by the US Military Government. They were given the title of “police officers” but no wage was given, and therefore, they looted Jeju Islanders in order to survive.



Seobuk Youth Association. During the whole period of the Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre, Seobuk Youth Association caused unforgettable trauma on Jeju islanders.

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“When a request was made by the government to come to a region where the leftists went wild, Seobuk Youth Association was deployed. What objective standards could we have? One example was Jeju Island. Jo Byeong-ok(Chough Pyung-ok), head of the police, called us as soon as the April 3rd incident happened. He said that a big incident happened on Jeju Island and requested us to send around 500 people, equipped with anti-communism, as riot police.”

- Moon Bong-jae (head of the then Seobuk Youth Association)

Taking responsibility for the 10 March General Strike, Park Gyeong-hun, the first Jeju governor under the US Military Government, resigned. As his successor, Yoo Hae-jin(Ryu Hai-chin) assumed the position on 10 April 1947 and he came with seven members of the Seobuk Youth Association. Since then, until the April 3rd Uprising in 1948, around 760 members of the Seobuk Youth Association entered the Island. Later, 1,700 members were added. At the beginning, they wore police officers’ costumes and later, soldiers’ costumes.

When we found out that our schoolmate Kim Yong-cheol died at Jocheon police box after being tortured, our anger toward the police and the Seobuk Youth Association grew. So, we handed out brochures “No more vicious police!” We were shocked watching people who initiated the April 3rd Uprising getting killed by the police. It was not possible to live in my village due to the police and the Seobuk Youth Association, so I went into the mountain in February 1948. I was a second-year student of Jocheon middle school. I did not expect for this situation to continue for that long. By coincidence, I met Lee Duk-koo, the second commander-in-chief of the guerrilla unit. He used to be my school teacher and I was happy to see him. He looked at me with an anxious face and asked me why I was there, and not studying.

- Kim Min-joo (17-years old at that time)

3 April 1948

Let's now talk about what happened on 3 April 1948. It was a month before the first election on May 10, which was held by only South Koreans and formed the Republic of Korea in the South. As mentioned earlier, Jeju islanders were in great anguish because of the oppression by the Seobuk Youth Association, who were above the law. The South-Korean-only election made the Korean peninsula more restless. If the country were to be divided into two, a war might occur. In fact, the Korean War occurred two years later, and tensions between the North and the South have been heightened since then. Those who invaded the police stations on April 3rd strongly opposed the division of the country. This is how and why the April 3rd Uprising started. On the day, 12 out of 24 police stations were invaded and 14 were killed. Armed resistance group announced "Resist against the Oppression!"

“
*There's no other choice between 'sit
and killed' and 'stand up and fight.*
”

However, Jeju was not the only place where this kind of uprising occurred. Many Koreans did not want a divided country after the hard-won independence from Japan. Since a division of a country may bring war, they refused to hold the South-Korean-only election. Therefore, other parts of Korea also had similar uprisings. When the uprising first rose in Jeju, people thought that the police force was enough to calm people down and would not require an army. If various parties could



Attack by Kang Yobae. Imagery of the night of uprising

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have solved the problem peacefully through dialogue and negotiation at that time, the incident would not have deteriorated into a situation that resulted in 30,000 victims. Unfortunately, severe crackdown was waiting for Jeju islanders instead of a peaceful solution.

28 April Peace Negotiation and Arson of Ora-ri

The police under the US Military Government propagated the April 3rd Uprising as a “disturbance by communists related to the North.” However, it was proven wrong. Even at that time, many people pointed out that this accusation was not based on facts. Public Prosecutor General Lee In pointed out, “The behaviour of wicked officers of the US Military Government was the major cause of the Incident.”

The Korea Constabulary(army) also identified that the nature of this

incident was a conflict between Jeju islanders and the police and Seobuk Youth Association, hence, they were reluctant to intervene. However, as time went by, the Korea Constabulary had no choice but to crack down on Jeju islanders under the command of the US military army. At the end of April, the US Military Government ordered the army to crack down on the April 3rd Uprising.



Key people of the Peace Negotiation
Kim Dal-sam(left), Kim Ik-ryeol(right)

Meanwhile, Kim Ik-ryeol(Kim Ik-yul), the Commander of the 9th Regiment tried to solve the situation peacefully. As a result, on 28 April, less than a month after the April 3rd Uprising, a negotiation table was set up with the armed resistance group who initiated the April 3rd Uprising. On 28 April 1948, the 9th Regiment commander Kim Ik-ryeol and the organization department head of armed resistance group Kim Dal-sam (his real name was Lee Seung-jin) finally reached a significant and successful conclusion after a heated debate. They agreed upon completely ceasing battles within 72 hours, gradual disarmament and guaranteed safety of armed resistance group.

If these agreements had only been implemented, the April 3rd Massacre would not have happened. However, sabotage actions to break the Peace Negotiation started on 1 May. On 1 May, only three days after the Peace Negotiation, unidentified men, disguised as the armed resistance group, set fire in Yeonmi Village, Ora-ri. This was the so-called Arson of

Meanwhile, Kim Ik-ryeol(Kim Ik-yul), the Commander of the 9th Regiment tried to solve the situation peacefully. As a result, on 28 April, less than a month after the April 3rd Uprising,

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Ora-ri. The US Military Government documented this arson from the sky and the ground, and it soon became a propaganda documentary film titled Cheju-Do May Day. It was later found that the fire was set by the right-wing Seobuk Youth Association but at that time, this arson was fabricated as a fire set by the armed resistance group to break the agreement, and it had a decisive effect on the annulment of the agreement. It was clear that the US Military Government was behind this fabrication.

On 3 May, civilians who came down from the mountains, trusting the Peace Agreement, were shot by police officers who disguised themselves as the armed resistance group. It was planned so that the armed resistance group could be blamed for breaking the Peace Negotiation with the aim to annul the agreement.

The US Military Government dismissed Kim Ik-ryeol who realized what was going on and strongly criticized it. Park Jin-gyeong(Park Chinkyung), a hardliner, was appointed as the Regimental Commander, replacing Kim Ik-ryeol. Park Jin-gyeong served as a second lieutenant of the Japanese army during the Japanese colonial period and was favored by William F. Dean, head of the US Military Government. His position was completely different from that of Kim Ik-ryeol. At his inauguration, he said “In order to suppress a riot in Jeju, it is fine if 300,000 Jeju people are victimized.”



Arson of Ora-ri It was later found that it was fabricated by the right wing group.



People of Halla Mountain by Kang Yobae.
Imagery of people who climbed the mountain to boycott the 10 May General Election

The breakdown of the May 10 General Election

On 10 May 1948, a general election was held for the first time in the South. To establish a government, it was necessary to elect parliamentarians to enact the Constitution. As mentioned earlier, some people were concerned that the South-Korea-only election might bring war in the future and thus refused to hold such an election. Kim Koo, the last Premier of the Provisional Government of Korea during the Japanese colonization and later a Korean nationalist politician, said “Even though I collapse on the 38th parallel, I cannot cooperate with the establishment of a divided country.”



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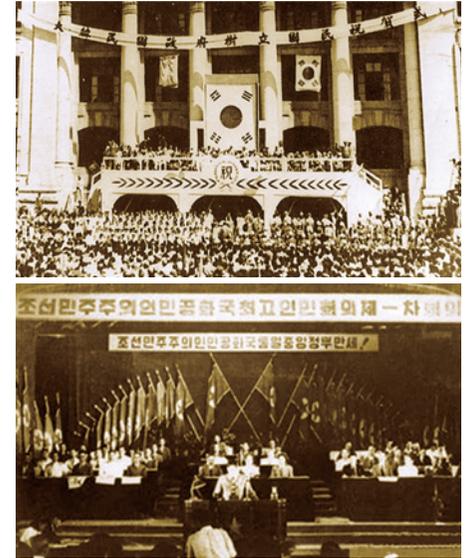
People who refused to vote and entered the mountain are walking down the mountain

This was also the known cause of the April 3rd Uprising by the Jeju chapter of the South Korean Labor Party. For this reason, the 10 May election was not held properly in Jeju. Two out of three constituencies in Jeju boycotted the General Election and therefore, only one parliamentarian was elected instead of three. The breakdown of the 10 May General Election heralded a tragic event in Jeju.

Two governments in one country

Even though the General Election to elect members of the Constituent Assembly was not properly held in Jeju, election was held in other parts of the country.

Members of the Constituent Assembly were elected and they announced the first Constitution was proclaimed on 17 July 1948. Against this backdrop, the Republic of Korea was formed on 15 August 1948 and the first president was Rhee Syng-man. Then the North rapidly declared their own government. Democratic People's Re-



Two separate governments were established on the Korean peninsula

public of Korea(North Korea) was established on 9 September 1948.

In any case, it was an important chapter in Korean history. Unfortunately, this history became a horror for the Jeju people. After establishing the government, Rhee Syng-man wanted to remove any obstacles of his legitimacy. For him, the Jeju islanders who strongly resisted against the South-Korea-only election were a nuisance.

At the same time, a process of the United Nations approving the new government was scheduled in December 1948 and this made Rhee impatient. To be approved on an international level, domestic issues had to be cleared up by December 1948. The US Military Government, which was supposed to leave Korea by the end of 1948, was also running out of patience and wanted to clear up issues before its withdrawal. Unfortunately, what they chose was total destruction, instead of peace.

Era of madness since the fall of 1948

Severe crackdown started from 17 October 1948. Song Yo-chan(Song You-chan), who was appointed as the 9th Regimental Commander, announced a decree to “impose quarantine on the area further inland than 5km from the coastline of Jeju Island and in the mountainous area. Those who defy the quarantine, no matter what the reason is, will be recognized as rioters and be shot to death.” This was a decree that seriously violated human rights and killed Jeju people without any legal process. This also violated the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide(Geneva Convention), which stipulates “people

who do not take part in the fighting should be protected and respected, and must be treated humanely” to protect prisoners of wars and civilians.



Quarantine 5km from the coastline of Jeju

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On 17 November of the same year, the Martial Law was declared. Originally, the Martial Law was a temporary measure to allow the army to take control of judicial, legislative and administrative powers of the country under the state of emergency. It is still doubtful that Jeju island at that time was at that level of crisis to justify Martial Law.

Even though the announcement of Martial Law was justified, it was(and still is) illegal to kill people without proper legal process. However, most villages situated in the middle of Mt. Halla were burnt down and villagers who were not able to leave the villages were brutally killed. Women, children,



Rhee Syng-man encouraged the army dispatched to Jeju



Cry of Sky by Kang Yobae.

Imagery of people who were forced to leave their village under the Operation Scorched Earth

and the elderly were no exception. These killings were illegal even during the war, and this merciless carnage continued for a while even though it was not during the war. Cruel and brutal killings at that time are too horrendous to describe in this booklet.

At the beginning, the number of armed resistance identified by the military and the police was around 500. However, to crack down on 500 people, they sacrificed 30,000 people. During that process, evil and unimaginable acts were committed. This is why people call this period “an era of madness.” The era of madness continued until the spring of 1949. Young people who wished to clean up deep-rooted evil from Japanese colonization and establish a unified country escaped to the mountain areas, smuggled themselves into Japan, or got killed if they stayed in Jeju.



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Excavation of remains at the Jeju International Airport.

This excavation project started 60 years after the massacre. 127 bodies were found in 2007 and 261 bodies were found from 2008 to 2009. Some bodies are still buried under the airport. The third excavation is scheduled in 2018.



Wailing by Park Kyung-hoon

National Day of Commemoration, April 3rd

The Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre was a tragic incident in which the casualties are second only to the Korean War in modern Korean history. Most Jeju people are directly related to this tragic history.

Even so, the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre has been a taboo for a very long time. Those who were in or close to power were responsible for this tragedy, and therefore, systematically concealed the event. Deep-rooted evil from the time of Japanese colonization were still in existence, and it managed to silence the people.



Memorial ceremony for the victims of the April 3rd Massacre. Every year, a memorial ceremony for the victims of the April 3rd Massacre is held at 10am on 3 April at the April 3rd Peace Park.

Eventually, history reveals the truth. Forced silence cannot last forever. Many people courageously exerted efforts into raising voices of the Jeju people related to the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre. Crackdown by the government was expected in the process of seeking the truth of the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre, so great courage and sacrifice were required to find the truth.

June Democratic Uprising in 1987 which served as a momentum for democratization in South Korea also motivated people to talk about the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre. On 3 April 1989, people held a commemoration ceremony of the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre in public for the first time. These fearless efforts shed light on the truth of the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre.

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The efforts of ordinary but courageous people resulted in the <Special Act on Discovering the Truth of the Jeju 4·3 Incident and the Restoration of Honor of Victims> of 2000 and <The Jeju 4·3 Incident Investigation Report> of 2003. Soon after, the then President Roh Moo-hyun made an official apology by saying “I, as the President, holding the responsibility of government, accept the Committee’s suggestion and truly extend my official apology for the wrongdoings of those national authorities in the past.” In 2014, Park Geun-hye administration designated April 3rd as the National Day of Commemoration.

The April 3rd Uprising and Massacre is not over yet

Sadly, the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre is not yet resolved. Many obstacles are still found in different parts of the country. Even though Koreans impeached former President Park Geun-hye, rooted corruption



Official apology by the former President Roh Moo-hyun



Unnamed Monument. The unnamed monument is exhibited at the entrance of the April 3rd Peace Park exhibition hall.

still continues to exist.

This applies to the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre. No one was punished for the vicious and tragic past as a perpetrator. Worse yet, it is not even clear who the said perpetrators are. For a long

time, those who are responsible for the massacre denounced the spirit of the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre as “communism” instead of apologizing for what they did. No proper acknowledgement was given to those who were killed while protesting against the division of a country and war. They are simply mentioned as “victims” or even considered as offenders against state power. They were even framed as “reds” and as is clear, being called “reds” justified all illegal actions against them.

“

What Jeju islanders wanted to achieve was a united and peaceful country without the threat of war.

”

Unfortunately, their efforts failed and now, the Korean peninsula is one of the countries with the highest risk of a possible war. The political situation is unstable because we do not know when a war might break out. If a unified country had only been established 70 years ago, these tensions and anxiety would not exist. This is why the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre is an ongoing issue.

By any chance, do you know how much the South Korean annual

national defense budget is? As of 2017, it is around 40 trillion Korean Won (=40 billion USD). Can you even imagine how big this number is? 40 trillion Korean Won equates to a salary for 1 million people with an annual income of 40,000 USD. Currently, youth unemployment rate is very high in South Korea. If the country was not divided into two, we could have used a large portion of the national defense budget for social welfare. Then, people’s lives could have been filled with more happiness than now.

The April 3rd Uprising and Massacre is still ongoing. It is between people who insist on “starting a war” and “no war.” Which side are you going to be on?

1948 ——— 2018

Remember the Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre

The Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre started from the 1st March commemoration ceremony in 1947 and it was an expression of Jeju Islanders’ aspiration for a unified country. It was not only those of Jeju Islanders but of all Koreans. At the same time, the Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre is a tragic history where people’s right to life was brutally violated and destroyed by the state forces. It reminds us of the importance of people’s lives and human rights.

Jeju Island which suffered from the conflicts between different ideologies and went through a catastrophic tragedy during the Cold War should be reborn as the island of peace. The Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre must be remembered to avoid repeating the tragic past.



Candlelight Revolution in South Korea, 2016

What is
the Jeju April 3rd
Uprising and Massacre?

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