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UNITED NATIONS TEMPORARY COMMISSION ON KOREA

CHANGE OF THE ELECTION DATE.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMANDING GENERAL,  
UNITED STATES ARMY FORCES IN KOREA TO THE  
CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION.

M. Jean-Louis Paul-Boncour  
Chairman, United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea  
Duk Soo Palace  
Seoul, Korea.

My dear M. Paul-Boncour:

With reference to your letter of 27 March 1948, I find it urgently necessary, for reasons indicated below, to change the date of the forthcoming election of representatives of the Korean people, to be held under the observation of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea.

1. From the very beginning it was believed by this Command that at least 80 days would be required between announcement of the date set for an election and the election itself to complete essential arrangements, based on the assumption that Public Act No.5 of 3 September 1947 would be used as the framework for the necessary election legislation. In a letter addressed to the Principal Secretary of the Commission on 27 February 1948, my Liaison Officer, Brigadier General Weckerling, anticipating announcement of election on 1 March, stated that "I would suggest that in order to accelerate completion of preparation for elections in South Korea that 20 May be established as the election date."

After the announcement of the date of 1 March 1948, General Weckerling called attention to the necessity of going forward

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with certain technical preparations immediately, for otherwise the entire election program would be vitiated, and emphasis was again laid on the assumption that the KILA would be applied to the election.

However, there was an unexpectedly long delay in approving an election law. So many changes were recommended by the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea that the complete redrafting of the law was necessary. The discussions of the last of these changes between my Liaison Officer and the Legal Counsellor of UNTCOK took place as late as 18 March 1948, the evening before Mr. Marc Schreiber's departure from Korea. During these 18 days most of the essential technical preparations could not go forward prior to announcement of the final details of the law by the Military Governor.

To quote only one example: As a result of the recommendations of UNTCOK, writing-in ballots are replaced by printed ballots. The printing of the ballots now prescribed cannot be undertaken until after the nomination of the candidates has become final. Taking into consideration that in accordance with the changed election law, each electoral district will have its own ballot and the limited printing facilities of this country, the distribution of the ballots could not be accomplished in time if the original date of May 9th were adhered to.

2. It is vital to the interest of the new Korean nation that the largest possible number of voters cast their ballots. This requires an extensive education campaign as well as the opportunities for the various groups of the population to nominate candidates and for the candidates to present their case to their constituents. In the time now allowed these opportunities would be greatly curtailed, thus detracting from the democratic nature of the election. Since the revised law and election regulations

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have just been promulgated, the instructions to the various election committees, including the voting district election committees on the village level, would reach these committees too late to enable them to familiarize themselves with the important details concerning functions which are entirely new to them. In order to avoid unfairness due to lack of knowledge, this fact alone makes imperative a reasonable postponement.

3. One of the reasons previously advanced for the date of May 9 was the desirability of holding the election before rice planting season. It now develops that the planting season is so advanced that a postponement will not interfere to any considerable extent with agricultural labors. The winter of 1947 in its latter stages was the mildest in the last 30 years and I am informed by the agricultural authorities that it will enable farmers to complete preparations sooner than usual.

4. The National Election Committee and the Military Governor after preparing the necessary schedule of activities and preparations, both urgently recommended a change in the date of election from 9 May 1948 to 24 May 1948. The reasons given by the National Election Committee were made known to you in the letter dated 25 March 1948, addressed to you by the Chairman of that Committee.

5. Although the Chinese Delegate, Dr. Liu, Yu-Jan on 1 March 1948 at a meeting at the Seoul Stadium, announced, after consultation between the Commission and this Command, that elections were to be held not later than 10 May 1948, I must recall to you that this date was only reluctantly agreed to by me because of Mr. Menon's statement in the United States (heard in Korea on 28 February) suggesting that elections be held during the first week in May. Also, my agreement was given before we

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encountered the delay in obtaining the recommendations of the Commission on the Election Law.

I am convinced that the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea will see the wisdom of the short postponement and will realize that such postponement is being suggested only for the most compelling reasons and only after its necessity became apparent in the interest of ensuring that the first democratic election in the history of Korea is a success.

In view of the foregoing, I request that the Commission advise me at an early date as to its attitude in this matter, in order that I may adjust my final decision to the realities of the situation while at the same time be coordinated with the desires of the Commission.

Sincerely,

JOHN R. HODGE  
Lieutenant-General, U.S. Army

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