



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Koreans protest Japanese control in the "March 1st Movement," 1919

Time period notes: April 15th is a somewhat approximate date, within a few days of when the major protests ended. Much of the planning of the campaign also took place before the time period indicated.

March 1,
1919

to: April 15,
1919

Country: North Korea

Country: South Korea

Goals:

Korean Independence from Japan

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › Declaration of Korean Independence
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 038. Marches
- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 062. Student strike

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 038. Marches
- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 038. Marches

- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 4th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 038. Marches
- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 5th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 038. Marches
- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 6th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 038. Marches
- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 071. Consumers' boycott of businesses supporting the Japanese, intermittently throughout the campaign.
- 168. Nonviolent raids

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

National/Ethnic Identity

Group characterization:

- Korean Citizens

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Son Pyongo-hui, Yi Sung-hun, Han Yong-un, Revered Teacher Euiam

Partners:

Korean Youth Independence Corps, New Korea Youth Association

External allies:

Not Known

Involvement of social elites:

Not Known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Korean Youth Independence Corps
- New Korea Youth Association

Groups in 2nd Segment:**Groups in 3rd Segment:****Groups in 4th Segment:****Groups in 5th Segment:****Groups in 6th Segment:****Additional notes on joining/exiting order:**

Joining order of other regions and social groups not known

Segment Length: 1 week

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Japanese in control of Korea.

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not Known

Campaigner violence:

Not Known

Repressive Violence:

The Japanese used extreme violence on protestors, including torture, bayonetting, live ammunition, clubs, and other similar forms of repression.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

2 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

Although the major goal of the campaign (Korean independence) was not achieved, many of the complaints outlined in the original declaration were addressed by the Japanese in response to the protests. The infrastructure of the organization also survived, hence one point for survival. And the campaign grew to incorporate almost the entire population of Korea.

In 1905, Korea was placed under the military rule of Japan and in 1910 it was officially annexed as part of Japan's thirty-five year imperialist expansion. In Korea, the period of Japanese rule (between 1910 and 1945) is generally referred to as a "Japanese forced occupation," and there was widespread discontent within Korea over Japan's management and strict control of the region.

Energy for a Korean independence movement grew between 1910 and 1919, as the general populace became increasingly educated and willing to stand up against the Japanese. General resentment erupted into wide-scale protest on March 1st, 1919, slightly more than a month after the death of Korea's Emperor Gojong. Slightly over a year before, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson had given his famous Fourteen Points speech that apparently served as a rallying point for students and community leaders in their efforts to form a strong independence movement. The events that followed are referred to as the March First Movement, the Samil Independence Movement, or the Manse Demonstrations.

In January of 1919, Koreans living in Shanghai formed the New Korea Youth Association and sent representatives to France, Korea, Japan, Manchuria, Siberia, and others in order to meet with leaders and look for new ways of proceeding toward Korean independence. This prompted a new student organization to form in Tokyo, which called itself the Korean Youth Independence Corps. They met on February 8th in Tokyo and issued a demand for Korea's independence.

These international catalysts, both Woodrow Wilson's concept of national self-determination and the growing support from international Korean groups, gave hope to Koreans pressing for independence from Japan. Thirty-three leaders came together, made up of Methodist (nine of the thirty-three), Protestants, (seven of the thirty-three), Ch'ondogyo (fifteen of the thirty-three), and Buddhist (two of the thirty-three) religious leaders. This group was led by Son Pyonggo-hui, Yi Sung-hun, and Han Yong-un. Together they drafted a Korean declaration of Independence and prepared to spread it throughout the country.

The death of the emperor, a strong supporter of Korean independence, brought many mourners to the capital city of Seoul for the funeral, which was to take place on March 3rd. On March 1st, the thirty-three leaders proclaimed Korea's independence, and announced a series of nonviolent protests about to begin all across the country. After presenting the declaration, the thirty-three leaders sent out copies of the declaration to activists around the country, called the police to explain what they had done, and were promptly arrested. After that point, the campaign for independence had no primary leader.

Campaigners held nonviolent rallies in Seoul, Ansong, P'yongyang, Chinnamp'o, Uiju, and Wonsan on March 1st, and over the next two days groups organized more rallies and marches in Hwangju, Sangwon, Kaesong, Suan, Anju, Sonchon, and the vast majority of the country's cities and towns. The protestors were school children, housewives, farmers, craftsmen, as well as politicians, intellectuals, and religious leaders. These protests were designed to appeal to the consciences of the Japanese, and erupted unpredictably throughout the country. However, the Japanese power holders' response was brutally violent. By April 10th, more than 300 cities had held nonviolent parades, demonstrations, and nonviolent raids of police stations, post offices, and other Japanese outposts. Over 200 of these were met with violence as Japanese forces fired into the crowd.

On March 5th, students were expected to return to school, yet none arrived. Students continued protesting along with the rest of the populace, as Japanese forces killed or tortured protesters and set fire to buildings, including schools. The protesters also attempted intermittent boycotts, which they were unable to sustain. In all, the pro-independence groups held more than 1500 protest gatherings, in which more than two million civilians took part. The number of deaths is estimated to be around 7,500, along with 46,000 arrests.

People continued protesting into mid-April, yet they continued to be brutally repressed by the Japanese, who, although they were unwilling to allow Korea independence, did change their method of governing so as to be more acceptable to the Koreans. Some of the changes made included exchanging the military police force for one made up of civilians, and allowing a limited degree of freedom to the Korean press. The protest also sparked the creation of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea, a partially recognized government in exile that played an important role in Korean history over the next decades.

Despite the campaign's failure to achieve its goal of independence, March First is celebrated as a national holiday in both North and South Korea today. The campaign for Korean independence is remembered as the most serious act of resistance to Japanese

power of its time, and as a canonical example of nonviolent struggle against a foreign power.

Research Notes

Influences:

Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points (1), rise of Communist party in Korea (2)

Sources:

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Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

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