

[The Final Statement]  
Rep. Lee Seok-ki  
at the appeal court on the  
insurrection conspiracy case

Jul. 28, 2014

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Though it has been around 100 days since the Sewol Ferry Incident, the reality surrounding us doesn't seem to be improved. The enactment of the special law on the Sewol Incident is the minimum action the society should take to bring truth to the tragedy and heal the wounds. I strongly suggest President Park Geun-hye makes a responsible decision.

Your Honor,

My case first began on August 28, 2013. Therefore, today marks the 11th month. Recently, I repeated to ask myself: What if the opposing parties had earned more seats than the ruling Saenuri Party at the general election in April 2012? What if a candidate from the opposing camp won the presidential election, instead of Park Geun-hye of the ruling party? Needless to think long, I would not have been here at court for my final statement.

This simple assumption is actually the hidden nature of the case. The current ruling power mobilized the National Intelligence Service (hereafter the NIS) and the prosecution for political reasons. We thought the era of political trial and ideological trial was over long time ago. However, maybe we were too naive to think so. For the last one year, I was called upon the court as few as one time and as many as four times a week. The so-called conspiracy of an insurrection case which was first reported as a huge spy organization case or an Al-Qaeda-like armed terrorist group case has been identified at least what is true and what is false today. The testimonies of Lee Seong-yun, the informer to the NIS were found falsified, while the truth of transcripts was proved. More importantly, I would like to thank the appeal court for correcting the transcripts close to the truth which were manipulated by the NIS and wrongly reported by the mainstream media.

As proved during the trial, I have never imagined an insurrection. Neither I was capable of instigating an insurrection. I also never tried to connect with North Korea. Moreover, neither other defendants who were indicted with me nor colleagues who attended my speech were involved in such an attempt. However, I had to stand at the

court for a long time to confirm this simple and plain truth. Of course, both the first trial court and the prosecution resist admitting the truth even until today.

There was no conspiracy of an insurrection to be revealed. It was a pure fabrication of the NIS.

First of all, the NIS created this case in order to cover its crime of illegally intervening in the presidential election in 2012 and turn the public attention away from it. Second, the case was fabricated in order to suppress and silent the voices of politicians and progressive political powers who stand for self-reliance, a taboo of Korean society. Last, the case was created in order to prevent the opposing camps from making an alliance, and ultimately eliminate the possibility of power shift by stigmatizing parts of opposing powers as pro-North Korea Reds and demolishing them. Therefore, the defendants to stand here at the court are not me, but the NIS and the security forces defending the NIS.

Not a single paper was found in relation with the so-called conspiracy of an insurrection, let alone a gun. For three months before and after the meeting on May 12, 2013, I didn't contact with the executives of the party's

provincial branch, to say nothing of meeting them. Moreover, I didn't meet or contact with them for the last three years, except at official events or duties. Nevertheless, the prosecution charged me for ordering and plotting an insurrection as the chief leader of the RO, which I never heard of. Even today I don't understand how such a thing is possible without any meeting or communication for years.

What I did was simply delivering a speech on the request of the Unified Progressive Party (hereafter the UPP) Gyeonggi Branch. Though there were a few aggressive or militant expressions made in my speech in order to emphasize how serious the surrounding rapidly changing situations was and how grave our contemporary mission as a progressive was, I could not imagine the speech would be turned as a provocation and conspiracy of an insurrection.

The case is characterized by the prosecution's prejudice, insults, arbitrary cut and paste, and fabrication on the speech of May 12. The term 'post' is a good example. In the speech, a post meant the business fronts of activists in the UPP Gyeonggi Branch, such as "a toy library, study rooms for low-income family children, eco-friendly feeding center, and medical coopera-

tive.” However, the prosecution understood it as a post for a rebellion. How can people plot a rebellion at a toy library for kids?

Another example is the interpretation of my answer to a question “is the peace treaty important” after my speech. I didn’t say the peace treaty was not important, though I had some doubts on existing anti-war campaigns, overlooking the structural problems of the conflict on the Korean Peninsula. I simply expressed my opinion that campaigns to collect signatures for a peace treaty had limits as the peace treaty should be made by the grand bargain between the U.S. and North Korea, believing it was a related issue to my speech on the need of independent and responsible position.

I thought the U.S. policy on North Korea, the strategic patience failed. I already suggested the National Assembly holding the four-party talks and lead the agenda-setting to declare the end of the war and bring the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula as I believed the six-party talks would not easily bring the significant fruit. As such, I understood a total war was impossible on the Korean Peninsula due to its geopolitical status and other surrounding factors.

I thought the current military confrontation between the U.S. and North Korea would ultimately be turned to a peaceful negotiation stage while tensions and crises on the Korean Peninsula have been deliberately managed or repeated with the aim of taking advantage for negotiations. However, just in case a military provocation by the U.S. against the will of Korean people would occur, like the crisis of 1994, though the possibility was slim, I wanted to emphasize that the people of the progressive camp should have a responsible and alert mindset to prevent such a tragedy from happening in advance. The main message of my speech was to fully prepare ourselves to prevent co-destruction of Korean people.

For a long time, Korean society has understood the influence of the U.S. as a constant on the Korean Peninsula. However, the world is already changing. The head of the Chinese Communist Party made a state visit to Korea. The Korean government treated him with exceptional respect and celebrated the best ever relationship between Korea and China. Then, should we depend on China from now on? I don’t think so. Rather than choosing one between the U.S., the old ally and China, the emerging super power, we need to stand on our feet, embrace

North Korea, and strike the balance. The situations surrounding the Korean Peninsula are drastically changing every day. We have to change accordingly.

However, there are people who instinctively think of an armed revolution whenever I propose the need to change.

Korean society also has the history when the politics used violence as a means to control the people. May 16 Coup, December 12 Coup, and Gwangju Massacre were the tragic examples. However, since the 1987 Democratic Uprising (June Struggle) and the peaceful power shift in 1997, no reason to mobilize violence can be justified when there is need to change the society.

Needless to say during the grim days of the 1970s and 1980s, some activist groups discussed a lot about whether a peaceful power shift would be possible in Korean society even during the 1990s. However, then presidential candidate Kim Dae-jung of the opposing party succeeded in power shift in 1997. I was deeply moved by the success though I was in hiding due to my activities for democratization.

I was so impressed and that's why I

dedicated myself to supporting a legitimate progressive party as soon as I was released from the prison. Today, I am standing here as an incumbent member of the National Assembly. The reason why I decided to be a politician was because I believed in the possibility that my lasting belief would be realized on the foundation guaranteed by the Constitution.

Historically, progressives have sought reforming society by coming to power. Diverse struggle lines and means ranging from an armed rebellion to a popular revolution have been explored as a means to seize power. However, the reality is fastest changing. A new line emerges only when the reality is far ahead. Only then the new line begins to attract more people who support it. A line or theory can never go ahead the reality. The legitimacy of a theory is to be proved by practices.

'Revolution through election' is the word to define my struggle after the 1997 power shift.

If a group does not come to power through election, in other words, if the people do not choose it as the ruling power, the group cannot achieve the power to reform society. Moreover, only when the group seizes power through election, it can have the

strong support and protection of the people. I have consistently believed and practiced the strategy for the progressive camp to come to power that if there would be a revolution in Korean society, it should be an electoral revolution. Nevertheless, the NIS and the prosecution attack me with books that might have been referred to only in the 1960s or the 1970s. They ridiculously accuse me of being involved in an armed revolution or socialist revolution. Even they insist I am far more dangerous as I am 'internalized pro-North Korea' without actual connection with North Korea. I feel even sorry for them, sticking to dozens-year old books while the world is changing day by day.

A worse problem is that the prosecution regards progressive activists as unconditional followers of North Korea. It's no more than regarding progressives as a fool who has no independent opinion or Don Quixote who charges at a windmill. The media once ridiculed its quick move to be loyal to a new power, calling it 'the prosecution without a soul.' The prosecution should not misunderstand others also don't have a soul like them. More importantly, progressives are the ones who consider the present of the country more seriously than anyone else. They may criticize opinions of me and

other progressive activists, but we can never tolerate if they denounce us of being puppets of someone else.

The spirit of the times today is self-reliance. The politics to realize this zeitgeist of self-reliance is progressive politics. Unlike the past, Korea's relations with the U.S. have significantly changed. However, the U.S. still has the wartime operational control of Korean troops and the direction of the U.S.' Northeast Asia strategy decides Korean people's future.

Korea is the world's 15th largest economy and ranked the world's top ten military powers with 3% of its GDP or 14% of its governmental budget in national defense. Nevertheless, Korea has no authority to control its troops. Moreover, the present government is opposing the agreement made in the previous government to recover the operational control.

Politicians seem not to have the guts to speak out the stunning reality and even not to know how shameful it is to ignore it. It is why late president Rho Moo-hyun lamented, asking 'until when are you going to depend on the U.S.?' Late president Rho was criticized of being pro-North Korea, simply because he proposed Korea being a balancer in Northeast Asia. An

official of the U.S. even insulted him of being 'insane.' As such, speaking of self-reliance has been tabooed in Korean society. However, how can we survive without self-reliance? I believe self-reliance is already the zeitgeist of the time and the fundamental mission of progressive politics is realization of self-reliance.

President Park Geun-hye presented reunification to be a jackpot early this year.

Korean economy already lost its growth dynamic. Reunification can certainly be a jackpot. Not only in terms of economy and military power, but also peace and security guarantee, reunification is for sure a new world to be explored. The Park administration's jackpot reunification strategy is another expression to seek for a breakthrough of the reality.

However, President Park's jackpot reunification theory lacks substantial contents. It is because the spirit of the June 15 Joint Declaration and October 4 Declaration is missing.

Whenever I hear that North Korean children are far shorter than South Korean children, I feel so sad. Some may look down on North Korea for this. However, it must be also a natural re-

sponse to feel pity on them. While the majority has a negative view of North Korea, there should be at least some people who see the reality as it is and find positive things in it. Reunification, I think, can be achieved when more people compliment and trust one another.

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I have long believed that self-reliance, democracy, and reunification are the imperatives of our times. And the belief that self-reliance, democracy, and reunification can be realized by a progressive party's coming to power through election has driven me to continuously move towards. However, today self-reliance, democracy, and reunification are at the brink of being gagged. Politicians advocating these three values are sent to prison on charges of 'a conspiracy of an insur-

rection' and the political party advocating them is forced to be dissolved. It is a reactionary and retrogressive move. If we are afraid of what history says, we should immediately stop the wheel from going backwards.

Since I first became a politician, I have been continuously stigmatized under the charges of being pro-North Korea, involved in illegalities of primary election, and finally a scary crime of an insurrection conspiracy. However, I believe many of you now clearly understand what the truth is. All of these charges were fabrications resulted from the conflict between the ruling power that sought for return to power and the progressive power that recently gained increasing popular support.

Up to date, I have sincerely reflected on myself, following the old lesson to look at oneself before blaming others when things go wrong.

Now, the darkness is receding and the bright dawn is approaching. The triumphant days of the Park Geun-hye administration after putting me in prison are soon to be over as no regime against the will of its people can succeed no matter how forcefully it controls the people. Korean people already raised their voice to stop

the Park administration's unilateral and self-righteous move at the previous local elections. Although I see the world only behind bars today, I newly acknowledge the fundamental truth that the retrogression of history is only temporal and it cannot be lasting.

Your Honor,

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my appreciation for the judges who have led the proceeding and the defendant lawyers who have spared no efforts for me and my colleagues. My special thanks also go to German Rep. Inge Höger who came all the way to visit me from Germany and Pope Francis who prayed for my family. I also thank Cardinal Yeom Su-jeong, Monk Jaseung, and other religious leaders who appealed for my release. Last, I am really grateful to fellow members of the UPP and fellow Koreans who have observed the trial with a great interest. Your support was the greatest encouragement for me.

We live in a divided country. Many countries have the conflict between the progressive and the conservative. Many countries also have struggling democratic people against a military dictatorship. However, no trial like this would be held if Korean peo-

ple were not divided. Nevertheless, I have never felt sorry for living in this land. A tiny plant or a pebble is invaluable. I love everything in this land. I am proud of this land. It's because I am confident of our people's dynamic power. It's because I am sure no one can stop or change the flow of history. The division is temporary. It cannot last forever. A power or a theory is to disappear one day. Super powers that

seem never to collapse will fade into the mists of history one day. However, the people will remain forever.

I have dedicated myself to ending the era of division and ushering in the new era of reconciliation and reunification. However, sadly, I am at the court of the division era today. I sincerely hope I would be the last defendant at the court of the division era. Thank you for your attention.