

### 3. POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND GOVERNMENT

#### 3.1 Historical Perspective & Recent Events

The last native dynasty (Yi) ruled from 1392 until 1910 when Japan formally annexed Korea. The country remained an integral part of the Japanese Empire until 1945, when it was occupied by troops of the US and the USSR. The 38th parallel was the boundary between the two zones of occupation. In 1947, the General Assembly of the U.N. resolved that elections should be held under the supervision of a temporary Commission. Dr. Syngman Rhee was elected as first president of South Korea.

After abortive attempts to unify the country by negotiation, the North Koreans attacked on June 25, 1950. The armistice of July 27, 1953 eventually left the boundary between the two zones more or less where it had been before hostilities - at the 38th parallel. The Republic of Korea has been officially recognized by the governments of most countries except the USSR and its satellites.

Almost 35 years after the Korean War, the demilitarized zone continues to symbolize the painful reality of a divided people in a tense part of the world. This division dominates all aspects of life in South Korea. Persistent efforts by the unpredictable North Korean Regime to undermine the Republic of Korea's stability, gained international notoriety following the attempted assassination of President Chun at Rangoon in October 1983. Indeed all political problems in the Republic of Korea are viewed by the government of President Chun from a security standpoint. This approach affects the administration's commitment to a more open and democratic government and to the protection of the human rights of the Republic of Korea's citizens.

If the government relaxes the tough security forces and police actions on university campuses and on the streets, some government sections, and probably the military, contend that North Korea will exploit the demonstrations; if a strong clampdown occurs, the Chun government is confronted with increased domestic opposition as well as with international criticism. This international criticism also focusses on alleged human rights abuses. In January 1987, the government admitted that police torture caused the death of a university student and the Minister of Home Affairs and the National Police Chief were removed from office. Within Canada, there is criticism of many Chun government actions, as well as arrest and trial procedures and results. Canadian concerns on the general human rights situation were raised with President Chun, then Prime Minister Lho, senior Korean businessmen and some opposition National Assembly members by Prime Minister Mulroney during his May 1986 visit.