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CDS Report No. 30 from Choi Duk Shin to the President (Syngman Rhee)

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Summary:

Choi Duk Shin reports on recent South Vietnamese affairs, including the election of Vice-President Nguyen-Ngoc Tho, and the current political environment of South East Asian countries.

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CONFIDENTIAL.

CDS REPORT NO. 030

Excellency,

I have the honour to submit my first Weekly Report of this year covering the following points:

1. Receipt of Instructions
2. New Year's Day Celebration
3. Review of South East Asia
Affairs
4. Vietnam Affairs.

1. Receipt of Instructions.

I received Instruction No. 34 dated December 18 in which Your Excellency acknowledged the receipt of my Report No. 27; No. 35 dated December 21 in which the Korean Correspondent No.66 was attached; and Instruction No. 36 dated December 27, 1956, which acknowledged receipt of my Report No. 28.

I also received the printed copies of the Christmas message from Your Excellency to our compatriots abroad just in time to distribute it to our people here in Vietnam and also to those compatriots who are residing in Thailand and Cambodia. The thirty copies were sufficient to distribute one copy each to a family.

The New Year message from Your Excellency in 16 mm film was received by this Legation on the last day of the year 1956. It also arrived in time to show to our people here on New Year's Day.

2. New Year's Day Celebration.

We invited our compatriots to come to the new location of our Legation at 0900 hours on the 1st day of the New Year. 25 of the 32 residents in Saigon were present. With the raising of our National flag and singing the National anthem of our country we started the celebration of the New Year Day.

I read to them the Christmas message of Your Excellency, a copy of which they had already received at their homes on Christmas Eve. I also mentioned to them the New Year message of Your Excellency which we had received on 16 mm film and invited them to come with their friends to the Legation that same evening to view the film and to hear Your Excellency's message and to view some other films.

With the toasting of "Long life for the Republic of Korea" and "Long life of the President of the Republic of Korea", we closed our simple but solemn ceremony on the First Day of the New Year.

Mrs. Chai had prepared a small reception on the balcony with soft drinks and the variety of foods which Mrs. Rhee had so kindly sent to us and which were received on Christmas Eve. We had decided to share them with our compatriots at the New Year's celebration. The food came as a surprise to our compatriots for they had never expected or thought they would taste them here in Saigon so far away from our own country. We toasted the health of Your Excellency and of Mrs. Rhee, our gracious first lady.

At 1900 hours on the same day we had the showing of Your Excellency's New Year's message and also the "Campaign for entry into the UN". Also we showed a motion picture produced by the Ministry of National Defense called "격퇴". Your Excellency's New Year's message was shown at the beginning and also at the end.

Except for the members of the Legation our compatriots here had never either seen the face nor listened to the voice of Your Excellency. To those Koreans who have not been in the home country since our independence, these films afforded them a great privilege and offered them an excellent opportunity to receive a pictorial explanation of their beloved, but distanced home land and people.

To see Your Excellency in good health and to hear the strength in the voice of Your Excellency gave our compatriots a very brightening look to the future prosperity of our country.

Since I had arranged to show these movies in our huge garden, not only our compatriots who had brought their Vietnamese and Chinese friends to view the films, but people passing through the street had the liberty to come in and share the show with us.

Again I report to Your Excellency that we had a very meaningful passing of the New Year Day in Saigon.

3. View on Asia.

If someone counts Africa as the most underdeveloped land and the least civilized part of the world, I would like to place South Asia, together with Arabia, as the second most uncivilized and underdeveloped areas.

If the Communists' targets are spearheading those underdeveloped areas, South Asia is equally as dangerous as the Middle East. However, the 'one-step-at-a-time' diplomacy of the Free World's leading power sees only the danger of 'existing'. She does not seem to want to foresee that anything will happen in the future, or, instead, she seems to totally ignore the possible and probably coming danger.

In this connection Mr. Ernest K. Lindley, with whom I have communicative contact, writer of 'Washington Tides' appearing

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weekly in NEWSWEEK, said in his recent article "The Hope of Progress" the following:

"It is doubtful if any government will be more successful in foreseeing the most important world developments of 1957".

While the diplomats of the leading nations concentrate their attention and efforts on the Middle East; I personally feel that this is a golden opportunity for Red China to "advance"; and it is very probable that Red China will take some big action in Asia with dual purposes:

- 1) to help 'Soviet Russia' from the recent muddling and to save the prestige of world Communism as a whole; and
- 2) to show the world that Red China is the real powerful leader in Asia.

The smiling and polite appearance of Red's Premier Chou En-Lai is not an indication of peaceful co-existence as the neutral leaders and Western diplomats hopefully think. On the contrary, it is an indication of the terrible events that will follow. "Before the storm is the calm" and before an attack there will be the relating quietness of the preparation.

With the permission of Your Excellency, I would like to review briefly the situation at present in the surrounding countries:

- 1) LAOS. It has been announced that the Laotian Royal Government has signed an agreement with the Laotian Communists (on the last day of the year) that they will form a coalition government.

Secondly, the well-indoctrinated members of the Communist troops are permitted to form a political party called "Laotian patriots Front" and will take part in the political activities and will participate in the coming general election which will take place in April of 1957.

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It was reported that two Cabinet posts have been promised to the Communist-inspired Pathet-Lao.

It is of grave concern to hear a high-ranking Laotian person say that he is sure the Pathet-Lao would not be Communist after amalgamation with the Royal Government.

Further reported are some of the reactions of foreign diplomats in Laos commenting "Americans worry; Indians are happy" and the French say: "it is none of our business".

I feel Laos can be counted as "gone"!

2) CAMBODIA. The center of Cambodian politics is the Crown Prince Sihanouk. As far as my recollection goes he at one time was the King of Cambodia but he gave the throne back to his father and became Premier of that country. In the latter part of last year he resigned as Premier. However, he himself retains the full power of the government. Recently, his puppet, Premier Sangun, has resigned due to the strong attack in the National Assembly on certain corruptions among his Cabinet members. However, the Crown Prince made the following statement:

"Consulted by H.M. the King, about the nomination of a new Premier in case the resignation of the Sangun Cabinet would have been accepted, I have the honour to respond to His Majesty, the nomination of the former Premier Sangun was necessary"

My illustration of this is to show that politics in Cambodia is like a one-man play by the only son of a rich family.

Their dealing with international affairs is likewise very strange. At one time Cambodia had welcomed U.S. economic aid. On occasions during last year she has cried for economic independence and denounced U.S. economic aid. She agreed to receive aid from industrial Japan. Then again, recently, she renounces even

the already agreed projects of Japanese economic aid to Cambodia (this I have already reported in Report No. 29). The only reason for this renunciation is because of Japan repeatedly using the term "economic aid".

Last summer she welcomed Foreign Minister of Nationalist China, Dr. George Yeh. She has also welcomed Red's Premier Chou and was proud of its "neutrality".

The Overseas Chinese problem in Cambodia is worse than in Saigon. It has been reported that it is really very very rare to see some Cambodians doing business at all. Besides the Chinese, there are also foreigners of several neighboring countries, including the Vietnamese, who are doing the remaining part of the business in Cambodia and it is learned that the Communist elements have already deeply infiltrated the Chinese society of Cambodia.

Great danger has long been existent in Cambodia.

3) THAILAND. Thailand is a nation who is proud of their everlasting independence in the past. We were told by Prince Wan, the Foreign Minister of Thailand, when we made the survey trip, that the foreign policy of Thailand is following two patterns:

- a) all international disputes will be solved through the U.N.; and
- b) National security is dependent on SEATO.

The two above-mentioned patterns of foreign policy may assist in the open attack. However, infiltration by the Reds can hardly be prevented under existing circumstances. Certain elements of corruption in the Government and the Overseas Chinese problem offer a weakness toward Red infiltration. Thailand's diplomatic activities may be admirable. However, her internal problems are not optimistic.

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4) MALAYA. Malaya is due to get 'Independence' this summer in the frame of the British Commonwealth. The present chief minister, Tenku Abdul Rahman of the Federation of Malaya will succeed the head of the due independent Malaya. I saw him during my survey trip and talked quite a long while. I believe he is a strong anti-Communist leader and apparently he is the only leader in Malaya at present to lead the Malaysians to independence. I have maintained communications with him.

In Malaya, Mr. Rahman is confronted with the real problem of Overseas Chinese population. Firstly, because the proportion is something like 50 percent Malayan; 45 percent Chinese; and five percent others.

Malaya is the only place where the Chinese population wants citizenship and are willing to fight for it. I know the President of the Malayan Chinese Association, whose name is Dato Sir Cheng-Lock Tan. He is the leader of the Chinese in Malaya. I also have communicative contact with him. He told me that the land of Malaya was mostly discovered and developed by the Chinese people and consequently they should have equal rights with the Malayan people.

Also as in other countries the Overseas Chinese own most of the properties and are engaged in most of the businesses. When we met the leaders both of the Malayan and Chinese in Malaya in the early part of 1954, I had the impression that they were very close associates and very cooperative in the fight for independence from the British. I regret that they now seem to be divided after a promise from the British that they would have their independence.

Malaya is fighting the Communists internally and will be an anti-Communist nation internationally. However, I see a real

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danger if Mr. Rahman, the present Chief Minister of the Malayan Federation and the future head of the State, cannot properly solve the "Overseas Chinese problem". We know that most of the Communists in Malaya are Chinese.

One more fact I would like to mention here is that the population in Malaya, both the Chinese and the Malaysians themselves, have all suffered much more than the Vietnamese, Thailanders, Cambodians and Laotians, from the Japanese oppressors during World War II, and so as a consequence they all hate the Japs very very much.

5) TINY COLONIES. Hongkong, Macao and Singapore, the left-behind tails of the colonial powers, are filled with more than 95 percent Chinese. Especially Hongkong and Macao are so close to Red China and are the lands given to Great Britain and Portugal according to several shameful treaties.

I feel that if Red China fails to 'liberate' Formosa because of fear of intervention of the United States, Red China may demand to have Hongkong and Macao with the following intentions:

- a) using the demand of lands from 'colonial' powers to show the strength and prestige to the Free World and Neutral Nations in order to bargain its international position; and
- b) using the big slogan of "anti-colonialism" to prevent the evergrowing inside "unrest".

I feel the tiny colonies in Asia are in danger. Since Hongkong and Macao are bordering Red China and the United States could hardly stand firm with the colonial powers on this due to the morale factor of anti-colonialism, Red China will claim the return of their tiny colonies and eventually may threaten with force.

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As far as Singapore is concerned, the Communistic elements will continue the tactics of subversion and sabotage.

6) Conclusions. After briefly analyzing the situation of the countries and areas adjacent to my post, I would like to make my humble conclusions as follow:

- a) South Asia is a vacuum and is vulnerable to the Red's infiltration and open attack. Red China did not "advance" significantly in the year 1956; it may seek a bigger "stride" in this year.
- b) The main trouble in Asia is still caused by the Reds existing in the mainland of China; and
- c) Aware of the importance of the 'initiative', the Free world should take certain actions ahead of Red China's starting her "stride".

These certain actions may include:

- (i) using the strongest measures possible to force the Red Chinese troops' withdrawal from Korea;
- (ii) Let the Nationalist China regain the freedom of action to recover its mainland.

Since the United States has not been able to support our entry into the United Nations body in the first place, they should not have any good reason to hesitate in the action of forcing the withdrawal of Red Chinese forces from our country. It is not only vital to our unification, it is also vital to the prestige of the United States and to the authority of the United Nations.

As far as the freedom of action by Nationalist China is concerned, the U.S. has the obligation to assist in defending Formosa and its adjacent Islands from the Red's attack, but should not hold in leash the freedom to rescue their own Chinese people on the mainland. Furthermore, the U.S. should support this action

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morally and even materially, because U.S. together with the majority of U.N. members have condemned Red China as a whole as an "aggressor" and the inhuman cruelties of Red China are long known to the world.

4. Vietnam Affairs.

a. In accordance with the Article 97 of the Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam, President Ngo Dinh Diem has appointed Mr. Nguyen-Ngoc Tho, the Secretary of State for National Economy, as predicted, to the high office of Vice-President and the National Assembly has ratified this appointment during the session of December 28, 1956, with absolute majority (99 out of 101 votes). He will continue to hold the portfolio of National Economy. I have sent a letter of congratulations to him on his highly honorable post.

b. On the first day of 1957 at 1030 hours I was invited to go to Independence Palace to greet the President of Vietnam, together with other Heads of Missions. The Chief of the Diplomatic Corps, Great Britain's Ambassador, Sir Hugh Stephenson, representing the diplomatic corps, read the message of greeting to the President. The President of Vietnam made a short speech in reply saying:

"The Vietnamese people and myself are conscious of our great debt to the friendly countries, and specially to those which, during the most critical hours, have placed their confidence in our destiny. We have endeavoured to measure up to that confidence and by so doing we believe that we enhance the great hope which animates all the small nations in the world, that neither numbers nor the power of arms can defeat the will of a people determined to defend its dignity and its rights.

"It is in the light of these brightening prospects that I ask you, Excellencies, Gentlemen, to transmit to the governments of which you are High Representatives, the most sincere wishes of the people of Free Vietnam"

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The President and the members of his Cabinet wore their National dress and made a very fine appearance. After the President's reply ended, the Chiefs of the Diplomatic Corps proceeded one by one to greet the President. I had the same honour.

With sentiments of deepest loyalty and highest esteem.

Respectfully,

Choi Duk Shin

Choi, Duk Shin
Minister of Republic of Korea
to Vietnam

His Excellency
President of the Republic of Korea.