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Kolisa-57 Special Report No. 8, 'Trip to Ceylon'

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Summary:

Choi Duk Shin reports on his trip to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in April 1957, paying special attention to Ceylon's relationship with China.

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KOLISA 57 Report No 8
TRIP TO CEYLON

Excellency,

I have the honour to submit this Special Report No 8 covering my trip to Ceylon during the period April 13-25, 1957.

1. Official Guest.

Before our departure from Singapore for Indonesia we learned from the U.S. consulate that the Ceylonese Government would welcome us as her official guests. However, the scheduled date of our arrival would fall on a holiday week and they asked if we could delay our arrival in order to give us a fullscale welcome. I expressed appreciation of this kind consideration but advised that I regretted that I was unable to change my pre-arranged schedule and said that I would like to spend the holidays with them and celebrate the holidays with the Ceylonese people. The Ceylonese Government accepted this.

Upon arrival in Colombo, the capital of Ceylon, after an eight-hour flight by the Dutch Airline, we were met by the Government protocol officer, Mr. Fernando, the American Charge d'Affaires, Mr. Smith, and the Australian High Commissioner Mr. Eastman's personal representative. We were most warmly greeted by those persons.

The protocol officer accompanied us to the Prime Minister's official residence called "Temple Tree".

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The supervisor of this official residence, Mr. Jayawardene, welcomed us at the gate and expressed the desire of the Prime Minister to welcome us personally but that he was out of town and had asked the supervisor to represent him and to take care of us and he expressed the hope that we would feel at home. Please allow me to admit that we felt greatly honoured and immediately had the at home feeling. The Ceylonese people are most hospitable and like their friends very much.

The protocol officer showed me a tentative itinerary which the Ceylon Government had prepared for us. According to it the party would drive to a place called KANDY about 72 miles from Colombo the next day and on the third day of our stay we would proceed to another place called ANURADHAPURA, about 85 miles from KANDY. On the fourth day of our stay we would return to Colombo, which is another 126 miles drive.

Despite the fact that part of our stay had fallen into the holiday season, the Ceylon Government showed us every hospitality, so I cabled to Your Excellency upon our arrival as follows :

"ARRIVED CEYLON EIGHTEENTH PD WELCOMED AS OFFICIAL GUEST WITH WARM HOSPITALITY AND LODGED IN PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICIAL RESIDENCE"

2. General description of Ceylon.

Ceylon is one of those countries to whom the British granted their independence after World War II and still remains in the framework of the Commonwealth. The location of Ceylon is such that we have to admit its importance for



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the traffic of the East-West and still is not less important than that of the Suez Canal and of Singapore. British Admiral Mountbatten having set up his general headquarters of the Allied Forces in Southwest Asia during World War II made the Island of Ceylon strategically more significant. The Japs did air raid Colombo once by the Japs Air Force base in Rangoon. However, they could not invade the island.

The island is 25 thousand square miles in size. Her climate can best be described as being that of the tropical forest variety.

Ceylon's population, which is less than ten million is not homogeneous, though, through the years, in spite of sporadic signs of this agreement, a sense of unity has grown amongst the people. They are nevertheless divided on ethnic, religious and linguistic grounds, with each group possessing a distinctive race consciousness. Of these groups, the Sinhalese are numerically the largest, with the Ceylon Tamils, Moors, Malays, and Burghers following in that order. There is, in addition, a fairly large number of people of Indian origin, whose future status is one of the serious problems to confront the Ceylon Government.

The linguistic problem is also one of the serious problems confronting the Ceylon Government. Last year the Ceylon Government decided to make Sinhalese the official language and as I said before the Sinhalese are numerically the largest of these groups who form the whole population of Ceylon. However, the second largest group, the Tamils, who are said to be almost two million, are very strongly against the issue of the national language. The Ceylon

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Government is firmly of the belief that language forms the unified factor of a people, particularly in the case of a nation which has just emerged from a state of tutelage. The Ceylon Government has realized that in the process of introducing an official language, difficulties are bound to arise for linguistic minorities and for this reason the Ceylon Government is taking steps to avoid any possible hardships being caused to them. However, the second largest group, the Tamils, will call upon all Tamil speaking people to join in the struggle for the emancipation of the Tamils from Sinhala domination by refusing to pay taxes to the Government. This will be amongst the last steps in the civil disobedience campaign leading up to the establishment of a parallel government. The Tamils also decided to reply to all government correspondence in Tamil only and to write to the government in Tamil only and to develop vigorously a national consciousness among the Tamil speaking people. They said this civil disobedience movement has been launched on the Gandhian ideas of non-cooperation.

Both the above mentioned problems are closely connected with India because the Tamil ancients were Indians. Most of the Tamils are living in the northern and eastern part of the Island of Ceylon. Because geographically close to the Southern part of India and the people living in South India endure the most hardship in living, they were and still are continuously stowing away to the Northern and Eastern parts of the Island where the Tamils, who claim them as the same race with India, are living. 121

Though in international affairs India and Ceylon

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stand together to express their voices in one mouth, however, the Ceylonese are really concerned with the ambition of India which is aimed to emerge this tiny island lying directly in front of India's toe. And the firmly rooted Tamil class with the continuous stowaway immigrating from South India form a very strong fifth column of India.

Although the Buddhist religion is not the State religion, the majority of the people believe in Buddhism, particularly almost all of the Sinhalis are Buddhist and they are proud of their glorious history and ancient Buddhist culture. The Tamils, who claim their ancestors were Indians, of course, believe in Hinduism and there are also a few Moslems and Christians among them. In Ceylon there has been no evidence of disagreement amongst the religions. I think this is mainly because the two largest religious people are living separately and the other two, namely the Moslems and the Christians, form a very small part of the population. The Buddhist religion dominates the Island of Ceylon except in the northern and eastern part of the Island where the Tamils are living.

The main exporting items of this island are tea, rubber and coconut. The main food of the people is rice. However, the products are not sufficient. They had agreements with Red China and Burma to import rice.

The insufficiency of rice is not because of lack of rice paddy but because of the problem of irrigation. The government is now endeavoring to solve this irrigation problem by constructing dams.

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3. Meeting with Ceylonese leaders.

Because our arrival fell in the holiday week, the Ceylonese Government could only arrange for us to tour her country at the week-end of our arrival.

Therefore, we could only have three days for meeting with officials. In these three days I was able to meet ten leading figures in Ceylon. They were all most keen in inquiring about our situation and paid sympathetic wishes to us as we did to them. Although geographically apart they seem to know about our country and are in sympathy with our tragedy.

a. Courtesy call on the Head of the State,

H. E. Sir Oliver Goonetilleke.

Although he is not the Administrator, nevertheless, his position is the highest one in the Ceylonese Government. He welcomed us at the door of his office and guided us to our seats. His manner was most cordial and friendly. I conveyed our best wishes to him and he insisted upon my conveying his best wishes to Your Excellency. It was necessary for me to give him a complete story of war in our country on a map which he placed on the floor in front of us. When I told him the biggest obstacle to hinder our unification was the existence of Red Chinese forces in Korea, he told me what Red China's Chou En-Lai had told him:

"America won World War I. America won World War II.

However, America lost the war in Korea. We will wait to see what will happen. We can wait for ten years, twenty years or a century.... We are not too anxious to be admitted to the United Nations where America

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is dominating."

He said this was just between us. He meant he could not say this to the Western diplomats.

As the half hour was quickly running out the eldest statesman of Ceylon felt regret that he could not listen to more of my briefing on the situation of Korea. He guided us down the stairs and insisted to accompany us to the main entrance of his mansion and until we drove out of sight he remained with a most graceful face.

b. Meeting with Permanent Secretary of External and Defense Ministry, Mr. Gunasena de Soysa.

Mr. Gunasena is the right-hand of the Prime Minister to deal with foreign affairs. He was most interested to talk with me concerning the affairs of the Republic of Korea. He confessed that he had little knowledge of Korea and that it was his desire to have a long talk with me. We had about one hour's talk mostly consumed by my explanations of the situation of our country.

I had brought with me several publications such as "Korean Arts", "Where Korea Stands", "Syngman Rhee", "Syngman Rhee through Foreign Eyes". I commenced with the culture of our country and ended with the question of unification of Korea. Inasmuch as he was so keenly interested to listen and had given me a sufficient amount of time I told him in much detail about the war in our country and the armistice talks and when he praised the brilliant leadership of Your Excellency with great admiration, I told him the full story of how Your Excellency released the innocent, pitiful and helpless POWs - the greatest act of

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protecting the freedom and right of the human being.

The only possible existence of the Communist regime in the North is by Red China's armed forces. The UN's prestige was declined since Red China's aggression in Korea. I further said "If you want to have a world organization with high prestige and strong authority to protect peace-loving nations, you should insist on the restoration of UN's prestige and authority by pressing Red China to withdraw her forces from Korea and obey the resolution of the United Nations."

Finally, we touched on the future relationship of our two countries. He expressed very firmly that his government would strongly back our position.

Since he is the right-hand man of the Prime Minister to handle the foreign affairs and shows so much keenness in studying our problem, I am reporting with confidence that our visit and my talk with him will effect a more or less, quick or slow, Ceylonese stand towards our problem in our favour.

c. Courtesy call on the Prime Minister.

The most important activity of mine in Ceylon was my call on the Prime Minister. He is the man who actually administrates the nation and he was also our host.

On April 24, Wednesday, at 1100 hours, when we arrived at his office on time we noticed that he was just saying goodbye to a guest and I saw also several people were still waiting apparently to see him. He appeared to be the busiest man in Ceylon. Firstly, he asked us if the accomodation /35 in the "Temple Tree" was comfortable and how was the service,

etc.. We were greatly impressed by his very hospitable manner.

We conveyed our best wishes for his people and his government and he reciprocated by asking me to convey his best regards to Your Excellency who, he said, is one of the greatest statesman whom he respects. So I did cable Your Excellency as follows :

"CEYLON CHIEF OF STATE AND PRIME MINISTER ASKED ME TO CONVEY THEIR BEST WISHES TO YOUR EXCELLENCY AND KOREAN PEOPLE PD"

He then showed us his ring on his left hand and told us the story of this ring. When he attended the Asian Relations Conference in 1947 in New Delhi the Korean Delegation had presented him with this ring. We saw also the ring was marked with the typical Korean national flag's sign. I wondered if he wore it customarily or had worn it only for this occasion. In either case it should prove that he has a very keen interest in our country and has sympathy towards our people.

Apparently he has been reported by his permanent secretary on the meeting I had had with the latter, which has been reported in Item 3 (b) above. He said his Government understands the firm anti-Communist position of Korea. He hoped also that we would understand the neutral position of his country. He further stated :

"We are not neutralists, we are neutral. By 'neutral' we mean that we will make friends to all.

"We would like to be 'Switzerland' in Asia.

"America, Russia and Britain, they all have A-bombs and H-bombs and nuclear weapons, but in the future war

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with these kinds of weapons of destruction, neither one could win the war. They may all be destroyed. My Government is against the use of these destructive weapons because it will eventually destroy the whole mankind."

He then suddenly turned the talk to the 'neutral' again. Apparently, he felt the talk was rather becoming very serious and he was afraid of losing the friendly atmosphere. He said laughingly :

"We want everybody to be our friends. For example in February of this year we welcomed China's Chou En-lai here. Today I am welcoming you also."

At this moment, I felt I should say something on Red China. So I commenced thus :

"I know Your Excellency's government has recognized Red China's regime in Peking as the true government of China. There are also some movements to let the Peking Regime represent China in the UN organization. I feel it is too premature.

"Red China was condemned by UN resolution as an aggressor in Korea in the early days of 1951.

"When our armed forces together with UN forces advanced to the Northern border of our country, the Red Chinese forces unprovokedly entered our territory.

"Red China's action in our country is not only hindering our unification but also their actions damage the prestige and authority of the UN on the largest scale.

"We believe that Red China first has to pay the proper price for her aggression in Korea and then be considered for her entrance to the UN.

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"Since your country is a prominent member of the UN and Your Excellency's statesmanship would be in good position to persuade many other nations to advise Red China in this matter".

He merely nodded his head to express his thanks, but did not comment on this matter further. As time was running short I had to stand up and say goodbye. He saw us to the entrance and said to me :

"Please come again, better still it would be if you made us an annual visit."

We thanked him again. He also stood at the entrance to see our departure until our car moved away. I feel the meeting this very high and responsible leader of Ceylon was a very worthwhile one. Since he was appointed as the Prime Minister by the National Assembly and is in control of the majority of its seats for four (4) more years, I believe he is in full control of the Ceylonese interior as well as international affairs for at least four (4) more years.

d. Finance Minister, Mr. Stanley de Soysa.

On his own initiative, he asked his assistant about the inclusion of countries in the Colombo Plan . When he learned that Korea is the only nation in Asia not connected with the "Colombo Plan" he said repeatedly "Why has Korea not been included ?" The assistant explained to him the reason might be that this plan is only confined to the South and Southeast Asia. He further stated that the next meeting of the members of the Colombo Plan will be held in Saigon and he would like to propose that Korea be included in this meeting.

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Since I was not sure of my government's attitude towards this "Colombo Plan", I did not express any comment on his proposal. However, I expressed appreciation for his keen interest and sympathetic attitude towards our country.

e. Talk with the Vice-Chancellor of Ceylon University, Sir Nicholas Attygalle.

Since the Chancellor of the University is the head of the State, so the Vice-Chancellor is actually the administrator of this large university. We were invited to an afternoon tea at his residence.

When we arrived he proposed guiding us through the university's facilities and then we returned to his residence for tea.

From the discussion of the Vice-Chancellor of the University with me I learned that this university is one of the few in the world in which the students are exempt of payment of tuition fees. As he is a medical doctor he also proudly told me that his country is also one of the very few which have free hospitalization. I could not check for myself how true are these facts. However, I had to praise their most noteworthy actions.

f. Meetings with Congressmen.

I was also afforded the opportunity to meet with the Speaker of the House, H.S. Mr. Ismail; the majority leader of the House, Mr. C.P. de Silva; and the President of the Senate, Sir Cyril Soysa.

Although my talks with them were confined to greetings and exchanges of general situations, the acquaintances with these leaders in the Congress were really of great benefit.

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g. The only Ceylonese who had been in Korea invited us to a tea party.

When we talked with the Permanent Secretary of External Affairs and for Defense, he told us that there was a gentleman who had been in Korea. His name is Dr. W.G. Wickremasingh. On the eve of our departure, Dr. W.G. Wickremasingh invited us to an afternoon tea party. We learned from him that he was one of the three members of the UN medical mission in Korea in 1952. Since the other two members were Westerners (one British and one Canadian), he, the only Oriental, had more opportunities to become acquainted with our people. He said he had been received by Your Excellency in an audience in person.

It was most kind of him to offer us tea and to give us an opportunity to renew old friendship with this only man in Ceylon who had been in Korea.

4. Laying of a wreath.

One of the most important activities besides meetings with Ceylonese leaders was the laying of a wreath on the statue of the Unknown Hero who struggled for the Independence of Ceylon. We also paid respect to the Statue of their late Prime Minister who died only a few years ago.

5. Departure.

Just before our departure the Permanent Secretary for External Affairs and for Defense brought with him the Commanding General of the Ceylonese Armed Forces (the only General Officer) to come to "Temple Tree" where we were accommodated and to say bon voyage to us.

The Protocol officer and the supervisor of the Temple

Tree accompanied us to the airport. Meanwhile the Protocol officer showed us the newspaper called "Ceylon Daily News" in which I noticed our Marathon runners were given quite prominent publicity. It appeared as though the Korean runners were the winners and the news item seemed to completely ignore the real winners : America in the first place and the Finlander in second place. My assistants and I appreciated very much the gesture made by the Ceylonese people during our stay in Ceylon. I clipped the photograph and news item and attach it for the information of Your Excellency.

Upon arrival at Karachi we cabled to the Prime Minister as follows :

"HIS EXCELLENCY

SIR R.D. BANDARANAIKE

PRIME MINISTER OF CEYLON

"PLEASE ACCEPT MY MOST HEARTFELT APPRECIATION FOR YOUR EXCELLENCY'S WARM HOSPITALITY DURING MY STAY IN YOUR GREAT COUNTRY AND THE HEARTY WELCOME AND SYMPATHY EXPRESSED TO US BY YOUR EXCELLENCY AND YOUR PEOPLE PROVES THE CLOSE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES AND CHOI DUK SHIN KOREAN MINISTER TO VIETNAM."

6. Conclusions.

a. The present Ceylonese Government has adopted a 'neutral' position; but this does not hinder friendship with us. Our approach should be prompt. To open diplomatic relations is possible.

b. The present Prime Minister of Ceylon is popular in the 'neutral' camp. If we act as we should we may be able to have him affect the policy of certain nations in the 'neutral' camp. /4/

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c. The diplomatic relationship with Red China does exist. This is due to the following two reasons :

(i) Advised by India's Nehru;

(ii) For economic reasons, Red China is selling rice to Ceylon and buying rubber.

d. India is the potential enemy of Ceylon. The India-origin minority problem in Ceylon is similar to the Overseas Chinese minority problem in most countries of Southeast Asia.

e. Japan is making progress in trade with Ceylon.

With sentiments of deepest loyalty and highest esteem,

Respectfully,

Choi Duk Shin
Envoy Extraordinary and Minister
Plenipotentiary of the Republic
of Korea to Vietnam.

His Excellency

President of the Republic of Korea.

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