

January 11, 1957
**CDS Report No. 31 from Choi Duk Shin to the
President (Syngman Rhee)**

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Summary:

Choi Duk Shin reports on the general situation in South Vietnam and news from the surrounding region, including the Sino-Malay race riots.

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CONFIDENTIAL

CDS REPORT NO. 031

Excellency,

I have the honour to submit the Weekly Report No. 031 covering the following points:

1. General Review of the Situation of the Republic of Vietnam
2. Publications on Korean Problem
3. What happened in Vietnam
4. News from Adjacent Countries

1. General Review of the Situation of the Republic of Vietnam

Since assumption of power by President Ngo Dinh Diem in July, 1954, the history of Vietnam has reached the turning point. From the first he was confronted with the immense refugee problem: long lines of refugees streaming down from North Vietnam to the Southern part of his country creating the largest such operation known and which was called EXODUS. His second problem was to ask the French to leave; and the third problem the elimination of all the evil activities which were so evident in Vietnam such as gambling dens; houses of prostitution; and opium dens. He had to eliminate the play-boy Emperor Bao Dai, and establish a Republic through the referendum of the people which they exercised for the first time in their history on 26th October, 1955. The ballots gave him absolute majority support of his people.

President Diem has completed all these accomplishments in less than 16 months, and the day of 26th October 1955 marked the first stage of his struggle for full independence.

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He then entered the second stage of his struggle, namely, democratization of his still weak Republic. He immediately drafted the rules of election of representatives and a plan to form a Constituent Assembly. Immediately, however, the corrupt elements of the past wanted to remain "undemocratized" and tried to overthrow President Diem's power and destroy the New Republic. Before the election, the President first had to fight and destroy certain undesirable religious sects who were political rather than religious and hiding behind the cloak of religion.

In March 1956 the people elected their representatives to form the Constituent Assembly. The Assembly worked about four months to draft a constitution and after draft was completed a study of it was made by the President over a period of a further three months. The draft of the Constitution has now been passed by the Assembly and was promulgated on the 26th October, 1956 and marked the foundation of the Republic of Vietnam as a basis of their democracy.

The New Republic is now in the third stage of her struggle: that is to strengthen the New Republic politically, economically and socially, and, at the same time, to raise her prestige among the international society. As for her internal security and order, the laws, regulations and rules governing this internal security and order are going to be written one by one in order to replace the old French style of rule.

In the economic field, the government has established rural credit; rehabilitation of abandoned farms; setting up of industrial plants; and is, at present, setting up a land reform movement. All these important efforts are aiming toward the goal of "economic independence".

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In the social field, President Ngo Dinh Diem has destroyed the corrupt elements such as eradicating gambling and prostitution. This was his starting point in bringing about a social revolution.

His anti-illiteracy campaign; encouraging sport activities amongst the youth; and so on, all aim toward a healthful and intellectual future generation of Vietnam.

Also the anti-Communist movements have been government-sponsored programs under the control of the Ministry of Youth and Public Information. Free Vietnam wants to maintain a high degree of anti-Communist spirit and morale of independence. The President has said "the fight against Communism must be waged on three fronts: spiritual, intellectual and material."

Speaking on the international affairs side, this country has been recognized by some 40 countries. Nevertheless, there are 15 diplomatic representatives and eight consulates from foreign countries to Saigon, and yet from Vietnam to foreign countries there are only ten permanent diplomatic missions and four consulates. One of the reasons for the lesser numbers of representatives to foreign countries, I believe, is due to lack of properly trained personnel.

In order to more effectively train personnel for diplomatic positions the Government of Vietnam has tried to participate in as many of the international conferences and activities as possible, and there will be increasing endeavours to participate in these conferences during this year. It is reported that Vietnam has joined in over 30 international organizations and that during the first quarter of 1956 she has participated in over 30 important international conferences. During the latter part of 1956 Vietnam sent out various missions to other countries which indicates a desire to increase diplomatic relations with these

countries. President Ngo Dinh Diem is endeavouring to raise the prestige of his country among international society.

Although the prospect of Free Vietnam is brightening in her coming future, however, there are also several difficulties with which the Government and the people of Vietnam continue to be confronted.

1) Economic problems which face the Vietnamese are tremendous. There is no local capital; no industries, and no exports. The value of the banknote has been declining since the latter part of last year. There have also been signs that the market is lacking in daily-consumption goods and consequently prices are climbing.

2) The Overseas Chinese problem is still "unsettled" and it is having a grave effect on the improvement of the economic situation. Apparently, the economic-powerful Chinese businessmen are passively resisting the government's policy on 'citizenship' by using economic boycott and non-cooperative measures.

3) The Vietnam Government has to fight corruption since only recently has she taken over the administration from a corrupt rule. The influence of this corrupt rule is still in evidence. As a result, President Diem and his government have to train the governmental officials with a patriotic spirit and new methods of handling the administration.

4) Although the government and the people of Free Vietnam never cease in their effort to take very strong measures to detect Communist activities and also set up more positive programs to fight the Communists ideologically; there still exists the danger of Communist infiltration and subversion. The dissatisfied Chinese among the one million Chinese community may become a good target for Communist infiltration. The more left-leaning neighbouring countries (Cambodia and Laos) constitute the bases for these infiltrations along with the Communist-controlled part of Vietnam.

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However, it is still not likely that Free Vietnam will be openly attacked by the Communists from the North. The dividing 17th Parallel is the narrowest part of Vietnam and the capital of Saigon is very far away from the Northern border making Free Vietnam comparatively easy to defend a military attack from the North.

2. Publications on Korea.

I am glad to note that our National problem is gaining the attention of the newspapers here in Vietnam. The Free Pacific Press, which is sponsored by Archbishop Yu-pin of Nanking, China, has translated the full text of Your Excellency's New Year address and it was published in several Chinese newspapers here.

Also many Chinese newspapers have given the topic of discussions of the U.N. on the Korean problem the most significant space in their daily papers.

I attach a few of these in the newsclipping.

3. What happened in Vietnam.

a. Through the channel of its Embassy in Paris, the Finnish Government requested from the Government of Vietnam the granting of Vietnam minimum customs tariff in favour of goods of origin and coming from Finland, imported into Vietnam. Reciprocally, the Finnish Government accepts the granting of the same privilege to Vietnamese goods imported into Finland.

On December 20, 1956, the Vietnamese Government gave its agreement to the Finnish Government's proposal.

Thus Finland is the 20th country to benefit from the Vietnam minimum customs tariff.

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b. The Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Nationalist China, Mr. Yuen Tse Ksien (袁子健) arrived here on January 8th. To represent me, I sent my First Secretary Son to the airport to greet him. It is reported that never have there been so many Chinese people turn out to greet their countryman as at this time. Tens of thousands were at the airport.

The Chinese people with much anxiety have been expecting their First Minister, Mr. Yuen, whom they hope will be able to solve the many problems with which they have been confronted since last year.

There is a report which says that only 590 Chinese have made the decision to adopt Vietnamese Nationality. Of the one million Chinese population resident in Vietnam it is estimated that the number born in Vietnam is about 300,000.

c On January 7th President Ngo Dinh Diem gave a reception in honour of his newly-appointed Vice-President Nguyen Ngoc Tho. This party took place in the Presidential Palace Park. All Chiefs of diplomatic and consular missions accredited to the Republic of Vietnam were present, together with other distinguished guests and high-ranking government officials. Mrs. Choi and I, accompanied by my First Secretary Mr. Son and my Military Attache, Lt Colonel Lee, attended this brilliant garden party.

d. The National Cultural Convention is holding its meeting in Saigon. It was inaugurated on January 7th under the high chairmanship of President Ngo Dinh Diem and will close on January 13th. Over 1,000 representatives of all cultural branches of the capital and provinces have gathered for this convention.

The Secretary of State for Information and Youth, Mr. Tran Chanh Thanh said in his opening speech:

"After the political, economic and social revolution, comes the cultural one."

The President in his address said:

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"No force can stop a whole people determined to renovate.

A rising culture is the gauge of a strong capacity to live and of the progress of an unyielding people."

They gathered in this convention to map out a cultural program in the national field.

4. News from Adjacent Countries.

a. Malaya.

It is reported that Sino-Malaya race riots have been occurring in Penang of Malaya since January 2nd and have not as yet ceased.

The Chief Minister, and the leader of the Malayan race, is still in London. After the news of the race riots reached him, he announced that he would cut short his stay in London and return soon to Malaya. On the other hand, the leader of the Chinese in Malaya, Sir Chenglock Tan, has hurried to the spot and appealed to his countrymen to live on friendly terms with other races particularly as the eve of independence for the country is so close. He further said that if Penang (the seat of the race riots) did not give a good example that the racial disorders could envelop other states and settlements of Malaya. He suggested the immediate formation of a Sino-Malaya League to develop friendship and understanding between the two major races.

As I stated in my last report, if Malaya's leader, Tenka Abdul Rahman, could not solve the problem of the Chinese population properly he will be unable to be in control of the situation following their independence in the coming August.

b. Cambodia.

The Kingdom of Cambodia has formed the 2nd San Yun Cabinet as recommended by the Crown Prince. It is indeed strange to see a Prime Minister hold all the most important jobs in the Cabinet while the

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other members are only accredited to the Ministers of lesser ones.

The Prime Minister at the same time holds the Portfolios of Foreign Affairs; National Defense; Home Affairs; Finance and Economy, and Cleansing Ministries.

With sentiments of deepest loyalty and highest esteem.

Respectfully,



Choi, Duk Shin
Minister of Republic of Korea
to Vietnam

His Excellency
President of the Republic of Korea.

Attachments: