

November 15, 1955

Letter from Choi Duk-shin to Dr. Syngman Rhee

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Summary:

Choi Duk-shin submits his "last report" as Corps Commander.

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Excellency:

This will be my last report in the capacity of Corps Commander, after having attended, probably for the last time as a Corps Commander, the Corps Commanders' Conference of yesterday in Seoul at Headquarters AFPE/8A.

I clearly remember what Your Excellency said after the "Maneuvre" at the field the other day. "Some people say that a war can be won if you have big guns. But there must be men to shoot the guns. The men must be strong both physically and mentally." What I have done so far has always been to improve our soldiers' living within limited economy in order to raise their morale and make them be strong mentally and physically. I deeply regret that I have not finished my work before my farewell from the Army. However, I would like to promise that I will always be in full readiness to come running to Your Excellency whenever Your Excellency calls me. I am now only 42 years old, the age which is still young enough both mentally and physically to perform any mission in the Army.

During my approximately six months' duty with this Corps, I have tried my best to follow Your Excellency's instruction, even though failing to make any obvious achievement.

I am glad to report Your Excellency the following information which are very much honorable for this Corps. Recently, this Corps has received honor by the following two happy occasions.

1. The 20th Division under this command has received a glorious plate for its excellent performance in preventing the deserters and has gained "Superior" the top grading when the inspection was made by the ROKA Headquarters and FROKA. This was also reported at the Corps Commanders' Conference and such an outstanding result could solely be attributed to the constant and assiduous efforts made by Brigadier General Kim Sang Bok (金相福) during the last four months.

2. The 9th Division under this command has also received a glorious plate for sustaining the minimum vehicle accident in the ROK Army, and this was to be attributed to the outstanding leadership of Brigadier General Kang Tai Min (姜泰珉).

I consider it my greatest honor to see that units under my command could go ahead of other units in receiving the first glorious plates. The only two plates ever given to the ROKA units are all in the possession of this Corps.

Now, I would like to make a brief report on the Corps Commanders' Conference of yesterday.

1. As for the enemy situation, it was reported that the enemy recently withdrew its two Armies, about 100,000 of strength, from the North Korea. This must be another propaganda

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made by the enemy. We must know that the enemy always announces boastfully the outgoing of its strength and keeps quiet about the incoming. We must keep our eye on the enemy's constant training of their forces in order to launch another aggression. General Lemnitzer said that the problem is not how many they withdrew, but where do they go after the withdrawal. If they put their forces permanently in readiness along the other side of the Yalu River, the threat to us is as great as they are posted in the North Korea territory. The enemy is trying to make us believe that he is withdrawing his forces, in order to obtain good data for his diplomacy. However, we must not be deceived by the enemy and must persuade America and other allies to realize the falseness.

2. When a question was raised by General Lemnitzer about whether the clothing problem was solved for the winterization program, General Chung and Lt. Gen. Kang said that the problem has been almost solved.

3. General Lemnitzer also asked about the electrical situation. To this question, General Chung said that the poor electricity gives great handicap to the ROK Army activities and, therefore, we need much more generators.

In this connection, I expressed at the Conference the following opinions:

1. The nearer the winter approaches, the longer the darkness becomes and the shorter the daylight. Therefore, due to shortage of generators and no anticipation to supplement, we are facing serious difficulties in performing our duty after the sunset. We need much more generators.

2. The problem of cooking and heating system is another matter of importance. Even a soldier in the utmost front must have a responsibility to protect trees from being cut down. That means every body in our Army is complying with the National Policy "Forest Conservation". At the present time, they are picking the fallen leaves and decayed trees for heating and cooking. If they can be supplied with diesel oil, diesel stoves, and other facilities, protection of trees will surely be possible.

The fuel problem is also a very serious problem, especially during the winter. So, it is urgent.

I would like to mention about the kitchen used in the ROK Army. Comparing with the weapons and equipments in the line units, our kitchen system is felt very poor. Oil kitchen is recommendable and I already submitted a plan on the oil kitchen to higher Headquarters. By utilizing the oil kitchen, we may expect the mobility, convenience, and cleanness and further we can prevent cutting woods. We must note that those diesel oil stoves used in the densely populated cities or towns would cause so many big conflagrations during the cold winter. By moving all the diesel oil stoves and oil from the cities and towns to the line units, there will be the following benefits:

1. Fire danger resulting from the misuse of oil stoves can be eliminated.



2. Fuel problem for the line units will be solved.

3. Domestic-made coals and stoves will be utilized in the cities and towns so as to improve our people's economical situation. Most of the stoves given by the United States Army have lost their original efficiency and therefore the use of such stoves in the cities and towns is always apt to bring us a great disaster.

As for my mission to South Vietnam, I am awaiting Your Excellency's appointing my successor. Only after a formal relief of my duty as a Corps Commander, I can prepare for departure for the post. I wish that Your Excellency would nominate the new Corps Commander as soon as possible. If Your Excellency kindly permits, I would like to recommend one of the listed Generals in the attached paper.

With my deep sentiments of loyalty and esteem, I am concluding this last letter to Your Excellency.

Respectfully,

Choi Duk-shin
Lt. Gen. ROKA
Commanding, I ROK Corps

His Excellency
Dr. Syngman Rhee
The President of the Republic of Korea
Seoul, Korea