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CDS Report No. 32 from Choi Duk Shin to the President (Syngman Rhee)

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Summary:

Choi Duk Shin reports on his future plans for the South Korean legation in Saigon, issues involving Korean seamen, and recent Vietnamese Affairs.

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CONFIDENTIAL.

CDS REPORT NO. 032

Excellency,

I have the honour to submit my Weekly Report No.032 covering the following points:

1. Receipt of Instructions
2. Tentative Plan of my Activities in this year
3. Captain of our boat "CHANG HANG" is hospitalized
4. Vietnam Affairs

1. Receipt of Instructions.

I wish to acknowledge that I have received the following instructions:

- a. No. 37 which enclosed THE KOREA CORRESPONDENT NO. 68.
- b. No. 38 dated January 10, 1957 which acknowledged receipt of my Reports Nos. 028 and 029. I am sincerely thankful to Your Excellency for your consideration in approving my financial request for the purpose of renting a new Legation building. I further wish to acknowledge that this amount of money reached here in the same pouch sent by our Foreign Ministry. I am attaching in this report some pictures of our new building.

My staff and my family join with me in thanking Your Excellency for your Season's Greeting.

- c. No. 39 dated January 10, 1957 which acknowledged receipt of my Report No. 030.

2. Tentative Plan of my activities in this year.

a. Study in the special fields and traveling through various places in this country:

I must confess that I did not make many efforts to travel in this country and to study in more detail the special fields during the past few months for a variety of reasons. However, at the end of the outgoing year I had finished the internal problems of the Legation, including the permanent site of the Chancery. I also familiarized myself with the general situation of this country.

I feel that I am now in a position to spend more of my time studying the countryside itself in more detail by traveling and viewing the special fields one by one. My travel will include not only the major towns, but I rather plan to visit the villages and smaller towns, and especially to concentrate on the many refugee resettlement areas.

My study in the various special fields will include emphasis on the culture, education, economic and social aspects, rather than only seeing the military field as a military man would more likely tend to do.

It is also my plan to take with me my Vietnamese interpreters in order that I can speak with Vietnamese friends without too much difficulty.

Although it is not possible for me to put in writing my whole plan of above-mentioned traveling and studying in advance because circumstances here do not warrant it, I assure Your Excellency that as I develop each plan of action I shall report it as soon as possible. Also I shall arrange each trip not to exceed a full week in order that my Weekly Report will go forward to you as scheduled.

b. To visit the Adjacent Countries: In my report No. 010 dated July 19, 1956, I reported to Your Excellency that the Foreign Minister had given this Legation charge of Consular activities in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, and this Legation has made efforts through post-

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communications with our countrymen living in these respective countries.

There are ten in Thailand; one in Cambodia and none in Laos.

When I returned home in September of last year I reported to Your Excellency orally that it was my intention to make these trips to the adjacent countries. However, until now it has not been possible for me to make these trips but I shall seek the proper opportunity to make these trips this year.

I particularly feel that a visit to Thailand is more necessary than the other two countries. Our countrymen in Thailand are expecting my visit and I feel it is worthy of my visit as an ally in the anti-Communist fighting. And it is with these two purposes in mind that I would like to make a trip to Thailand in the near future.

On the return trip I would like to stop over in Phom Penh, the Capitol of Cambodia, to see our countryman there and also call on our good friend, Mr. Strom, the newly-arrived U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia.

Federation of Malaya. In my Reports Nos. 030 and 031 I reported very briefly the general situation in Malaya. I firmly believe that it is necessary to keep in close contact with this due-to-be independent country. It is my fervent hope that this new country will be able to destroy the Communists from within and stand firm for anti-Communism internationally.

3. Captain of our boat "CHANG HANG" is hospitalized.

As may already be known to Your Excellency, the three cargo ships of the Korean Shipping Corporation are moving around the South-east seas and pretty regularly call at the Saigon port. These ships are the "PUSAN" (부산); "MASAN" (마산); and "CHANG HANG" (장항).

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from

PHYL WOODLEY

Mr Park

Please request
Mr. Hamberg to come
to RMD to discuss
with you.
(See Mrs. P)

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On the 12th of this month, the ship "CHANG HANG" arrived in the Saigon harbour carrying on board the donation of 30,000 yards of Kwang Mok. The following day the Chief Mate called on me and told me that the Captain was very ill and had been hospitalized in a French hospital called "LE Gall". I personally went to the hospital and inquired of the nature of his illness. The French doctor in charge kindly told me that the patient, Captain Choi, was a pre-operative case and that the name of his illness was "acute pancreatic haemorrhage" and that the operation would be undertaken the next morning. On 14th January Mr. Son and I went to see the doctor and the patient. The doctor told us the operation had been successful and that the recovery of the operation is a normal one. It will require two to three weeks in hospital and a further two to three months for recuperation.

After being advised of the result of the surgery, I telegraphed the headquarters of the Korean Shipping Corporation and advised them to take urgent measures on this matter. On 16th January a telegram from the said corporation was received as follows:

"EMPLOYED ENGLISH CAPTAIN AT HONGKONG WILL PROCEED SAIGON
SOONEST ON WAIT NEW CAPTAIN ARRIVAL CM RELAY CHIEF MATE
CHANG HANG"

The said British Captain arrived in Saigon and reported to this Legation on the 17th January and the ship lifted anchor on the morning of this day.

Although the illness of Captain Choi is not a direct result of what I am about to report to Your Excellency, the occurrence of the above mentioned incident has unfortunately brought to my notice conditions which I feel I must report to Your Excellency in order that some remedial action may be initiated. The grievous facts as I found them are:

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Firstly, and probably one of the most important, is the dire need for proper medical facilities. After my visit to the hospital, I went to the ship and asked to see the medical officer in charge. I found that no medical officer is attached to the ship at all and there was only a third mate who is directed to take care of the medicines. When I asked to see the "sick bay", I was told there was none. When I inquired of medical supplies, I was told that none were available before they left on their voyage and that a small sum of money was provided in order that the bare medical necessities could be purchased in Japan. These medical supplies were not purchased in Japan and upon arrival in Hognkong the money was sufficient only to purchase a few vials of penicillin.

In other words, for about 40 men there were no medical provisions whatsoever except penicillin. If the Captain had taken ill on the high seas nothing could have been done for him.

Secondly, and of the same importance, (a) the men are not adequately paid i.e. they are not given shore pay, and (b) they have no proper clothing.

My comments on (a) is that because the men have no 'shore pay' I am afraid they may attempt to deal with unacceptable persons for some unwelcomed behaviour in order that they may gain even a small amount of money in order to be able to have some small enjoyment in the port city. After a long sea voyage confronted with many hardships all seamen I consider are entitled to a day on shore so that they may have a few relaxed hours in which to see and enjoy the 'sights' as the saying goes. If it is necessary for them to resort to unlawful acts in order to obtain 'shore' pay, then under the detecting eye of the police - and in Saigon the police seem to see all - all respect will be lost for the Korean seamen. The loss of respect for the Korean seamen means that loss of respect for the Korean people follows.

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My comments on (b) are that to come ashore seamen from all ships - whether merchant or company-owned - appear to wear a uniform.

It grieves me to report that neither the officers nor the seamen of our cargo-carrying ships have even proper civilian clothing. Not one person on the street could refer to them as Korean seamen or Korean ships' officers. It follows that if a seaman has no appearance at all he cannot be disciplined or controlled because he has no distinction as a man of the sea.

My recommendations to be made to the shipping company of our cargo-carrying ships would be that:

1. adequate medical facilities be provided and be administered by a person qualified to handle medicines. That all ships have a 'sick bay'.
2. that the men be properly paid, and a certain percentage of their pay be given to them before leaving the ship in the form of 'shore pay'.
3. that the Officers and the seamen be provided with proper uniforms; and that the Officers be able to show their rank, as well as the First Class seamen who should have the same privilege.

If a ship is worthy of sailing, then her men want to be worthy of her.

The merchant ships of any country are the means of trade between countries and to me they are as important in their functioning for their country as are diplomats.

We heartily welcome the visit here of those Korean-owned ships with our beloved National flag flying on the high mast. However, we would like to see well-disciplined seamen appearing before the people of friendly nations. I believe a proper "education" and the proper consideration of the "welfare" of the seamen are the most important elements of discipline.

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I will make known these facts to the responsible officer of the Korean Shipping Corporation, but because of the importance of the situation, I take the liberty of making these comments directly to Your Excellency.

4. Vietnam Affairs.

a. The newly-arrived envoy of Free China to Vietnam, Mr. Yuen Tse Kien, presented on January 17th his Letter of Credence to the President of the Republic of Vietnam.

b. The British Commissioner General for Southeast Asia, Sir Robert Scott arrived in Saigon on January 16th. He will stay in Free Vietnam from January 16th through 21st. The Thailand Ambassador, the Italian Minister and I were the only diplomatic heads of missions present at the airport to welcome him upon his arrival. He has served in China for almost twelve years. During the Japs surprise attack on Singapore he tried to flee from Singapore on board a cargo ship. The ship was bombed by Jap airplanes and he was caught by the Japs under terrible circumstances. He was held as a prisoner of war by the Japs until V-J Day. During a reception given that same evening of his arrival by the British Ambassador he came to greet my wife and me. He said that he knew our Minister, Mr. Lee, in London, and he is familiar with the Korean lady's dress. He was Chief of the Far East Bureau at one time in the British Foreign Ministry. We had quite a long talk.

c. General Lemnitzer, CINCFE, arrived in Saigon this afternoon and will make a quick sightseeing visit of this New Republic. Mrs. Choi and I were at the airport to greet him. His party consisted of Mrs. Lemnitzer and their daughter. Because of his tight itinerary, I will not have an opportunity to entertain them. However, Mrs. Choi has been invited by Mrs. Williams to a ladies' dinner in honour of Mrs. Lemnitzer. The General and his party will leave Vietnam this coming Wednesday, the 23rd January.

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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: Photos of the Chancery

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