

December 1957

Draft Letter from Choi Duk Shin to the President (Syngman Rhee)

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Summary:

In this draft, Choi Duk Shin discusses the 'two-fold' threat of communism and Japanese expansionism in Asia, urging President Rhee to establish a solid collective security structure against these threats as soon as possible.

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Your Excellency:

It is a great honor for me to have this opportunity to express to Your Excellency my views on the ~~general~~ general situation in this area -- views which grow out of my recent memorable visit to your great country and to other states of Southeast Asia.

My journey taught me that the free people of this region face a twofold danger: the ominous and ever-present menace of Communist enslavement and the revival of another sort of imperialism that engulfed us all once before.

The peril of Communism is a fact so apparent that all peoples are coming to see it and take measures against it. As events and aggressions have developed since World War II, the nations of our area and the rest of the Free World have come to see the true face of the Communists, and to resolve to resist ^{their} ~~the~~ conspiracy of world conquest with all the strength and determination at our command. We are moving from weakness to strength in confronting Communism, and a ~~continuation~~ continuation of that trend will assure our victory and the triumph of freedom.

But while we fight the Communists in defense of our liberties and our very lives, there have been most regrettable Asian developments that clearly indicate the renewed contemplation of imperialism by Japan. In its initial phases, this tendency has taken the form of "economic expansion," but that is only a disguise for the old dreams of Southeast Asian hegemony. The first step is economic supremacy, the second is political predominance, and the third is total control.

Under the cover of an attempt to develop the economies of Southeast Asia countries, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi advanced a plan whereby the United States would provide the dollars and Japan would supply the technical know-how and the actual implementation. Japan, it must be remembered, is a donor member of the Colombo Plan, and thereby in a position to do whatever she can to assist less fortunate countries of the area. Why, then, should Mr. Kishi propose an alternative scheme in which Japan would be the sole determiner of aid projects and recipients?

It is already crystal clear in Southeast Asian reaction that other nations realize that Japan hopes to create her own system of satellites and to dominate them economically, then in other ways. Fortunately, American leaders also seem to be awakening to the reality of Japan's designs, and it seems highly improbable that the United States will lend any support to this ill-intentioned plan. But Japan will not give up easily and may try to go ahead on ~~her~~ own. It therefore is incumbent upon all of us to be on guard against continued machinations looking toward Japanese economic domination throughout the Far East.

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As Your Excellency knows, any resurgence of Japanese aggression would pose a common problem for all of Free Asia and would constitute a danger as great as that of Communism. Our protection against it lies in united awareness and collective action, if that be necessary. If Japan again is bent upon a course of treachery and oppression, that country must be checked and checked quickly before it is too late for us to take effective steps of self-defense.

Please permit me to point out, just as emphatically as I can, that the position of the Republic of Korea on Japan is not a reflection of Korean hatred for the Japanese growing out of the 40-year occupation of our country. We do not hate the Japanese and we have hoped to have them as our Free World friends. But all the facts of the present situation indicate that this is not to be for the present, and we therefore must join in warning that the re-entry of Japanese imperialism into Asian affairs constitutes a threat not just to Korea, but to all of Asia.

The peoples of our region have suffered colonial domination for too long to become the easy victims of any aggressive power -- whether that power be located in Asia, Europe or elsewhere. It is our thought that we all have the same objective: that of maintaining our peace and security, and of freely deciding our own destinies and the enjoyment of our own liberties. We are all dedicated to democracy and will resist those who seek to seize it by force or steal it by guile.

This twofold threat -- of Communist or Japanese dominance, or both -- can be met through the medium of collective security. I humbly suggest that all of us in Free Asia give serious consideration to the formation of a system that would ~~also~~ provide mutual assistance in time of aggression, whether the aggressor be Communism or a follower of the older type of imperialism. The true meaning of "Asia for the Asiatics" is that all the nations of our region -- big or small, strong or weak -- should be regarded as equal, and should abide by certain rules and regulations laid down by a democratically constituted tribunal of international justice. There can and should be no supreme power among the Asian nations -- and this is just as true for Japan as it is for the Communist regimes that seek all-encompassing dominance. A united, free, ~~democratic~~ democratic, equal Asia will never ~~know~~ know a master other than the peoples of its own nationalistic divisions.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the renewed assurances of my deepest esteem and consideration.

Choi Duk Shin
Korean Minister to Vietnam

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