

March 28, 1957

Kolisa-57 Special Report No. 3, 'Trip to Cambodia'

Citation:

"Kolisa-57 Special Report No. 3, 'Trip to Cambodia'", March 28, 1957, Wilson Center Digital Archive, B-330-025, The Korean Legation in Vietnam, Reports from the Korean Mission to the United Nations and Republic of Korea Embassies and Legations, Syngman Rhee Institute, Yonsei University.

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/120905>

Summary:

A report from Minister Choi Duk Shin to Syngman Rhee after his trip to Cambodia, states that the trip was worthwhile and it was the first time to show Korean flag and Korean envoy to Cambodian people.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Syngman Rhee Institute, Yonsei University

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

March 28-30, 1957

CONFIDENTIAL.

KOLISA-57 SPECIAL REPORT NO. 3
TRIP TO CAMBODIA.

Excellency,

I have the honour to submit this Special Report No. 3 covering my trip to Cambodia during the period March 28 through March 30, 1957.

The highway distance between Saigon and Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, is approximately 150 miles and the condition of the road is good, therefore, we decided to drive by car instead of flying. On the early morning of March 28 we drove along the Saigon-Phnom Penh highway and at 1130 hours when we arrived at the outskirts of the city, a Cambodian government officer, who introduced himself as Mr. Lamouth Kang, was waiting at the roadside and stopped our car. He expressed on behalf of his government a welcome and he then guided us to the governmental house where we stayed until our departure on March 30.

I wish to cover the following points concerning my visit to Cambodia :

1. Activities of the Mission
2. General description of Cambodia

3. Meetings with Cambodian people
4. Meetings with foreign diplomats in Cambodia
5. Conclusion

1. Activities of the Mission.

When we called on Prince Monisarra, Chief of Protocol, upon our arrival, I was informed that the Cambodian Government had fallen and that my trip therefore was not well-timed. He also told me that because of the severe political crisis that the Crown Prince and Prime Minister would not be able to see me before April 1.

I stated that even though I knew of this pending crisis I took the trip as scheduled. However, I continued, that if the officials of the Government of Cambodia were too busy to receive me that I would return to Saigon and seek another opportunity. The Prince, the Chief of Protocol, assured me that he would do his best to make arrangements for me to see some persons and that they would receive our mission as government's guests. Therefore, I cabled Your Excellency as follows:

"Arrived Cambodia twenty-eight pd cordially received despite political crisis. Kolisa sp two Choi."

2. General description of Cambodia.

a. General.

Cambodia has an area of 66,800 square miles. Population is estimated at 4,500,000 ruled by King Norodom Suramarit. A modified constitutional monarchy is the form of government. Their Parliament has two houses: Lower House called the National Assembly, 91 seats all belonging to Crown Prince Norodom Siharaut's party; the Upper House called the Royal Council of Kingdom, the Crown Prince's party has 21 of 24 seats. Cambodia is a Buddhist State.

The bulk of its population are rice-growing farmers who live in the basins of the Mekong and Toule Sap Rivers.

The race represents a mixture of Malay and Indian strains, with some mixture of Chinese. Cambodia has a minority of some 250,000 Chinese, most of whom are unassimilated, although some of them have inter-married and some Sino-Cambodians are found among the leading citizens. This country also has a minority of some 220,000 Vietnamese who are almost totally unassimilated.

Devotion to the throne and to the Buddhist religion are strong unifying factors. Other factors making for stability are a homogeneous language. Cambodia as a whole is like other recently re-emerged Asian nations - a proudly nation-

alistic country.

b. Political situation

Since the elections of 1955, in which the Crown Prince's party obtained 85 percent of the votes and 100 percent of the seats, the political situation seems very simple. However, while unity of the country exists to a large degree, opposition sentiment is likely to be greater than appears from the election results. Nevertheless, under the purposeful leadership of the Crown Prince, who towers far above any other leading personality, the country has greater unity and more efficient government than at any time since the war.

The Cambodian threat derives less from the Cambodia Communist Party than from the aggressive policy displayed toward Cambodia by the masters of the Cambodia Communists, the Vietminh Government of North Vietnam.

The present Cambodia Government, while staunchly anti-Communist, pursues a policy of neutrality in foreign affairs. By neutrality, the Cambodian Government understands unwillingness to enter alliances or to allow the establishment of foreign military bases on Cambodian soil. This does not preclude the acceptance of foreign aid, which is in fact welcomed, although closely scrutinized for possible ulterior purposes. Cambodia has in the past shown a tendency to

follow the political leadership of India, and it has subscribed to the "five principles of co-existence". But it has reacted sharply to Communist attacks, and has a tradition of militant watchfulness toward its neighbors and particularly toward the Vietnamese.

The Sun-Yun cabinet had fallen down just on the eve of my visit to Cambodia. We had learned that the National Assembly passed a resolution with 72 to 0, abstention 5 to criticize "economic policy". Since this is a kind of "unanimous" vote to "distrust" the present government, the Prime Minister Sun Yun's cabinet had to submit its resignation to the King.

3. Meetings with Cambodian officials.

a. On March 29 at nine o'clock in the morning I called on Mr. Hem Heng Phansary, Secretary General of the Foreign Office, at his office. He stated that even though Cambodia and Korea did not have any formal diplomatic relationship, that the Cambodian Government and her people sincerely welcomed me as a nice friend. I expressed to him my sincere appreciation for their cooperation in arranging my appointments during my visit to his country.

b. At 9.30 on the same morning I met Mr. Ek Yi Un, President of the Congress. I asked him to convey the best

wishes and sympathy of the people of Korea to that of Cambodia which he accepted with much delight and assured me he would so do through the National Assembly, and further stated that his government's foreign policy is a neutral one. However, the Cambodian Government is well aware of what the Communists are, and, accordingly, it keeps constant watch against Communist activities.

When I inquired regarding the prospect of the political crisis of the Cambodian Government, he replied that the politics of his country rely entirely upon the Royal Crown Prince Sihanouk, who was himself the Prime Minister several times. And he hoped that the Crown Prince himself will form the Cabinet once again.

c. At 1000hrs I called on the Prime Minister, Mr. Sun-Yun, who had just resigned. He seemed, however, to be so concerned with the political situation that he was hesitant to have conversation with me, so I left his office just leaving my usual greetings.

d. At 1030 hours that same morning I met with the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Chaa Chinkoc, who is in fact the man who is in charge of foreign affairs. However, we did not talk much on real business and all refrained only to greetings and words of usual courtesy. Apparently, he was not in too amiable a mood at the moment of his resignation

and I felt also that he could not give much attention to my talk.

e. At 1600 hours the same day I called on Mr. Ung Tin Pak, President of the Chamber of Commerce. We reviewed the possibility of trade between Korea and Cambodia. Since the industry of Cambodia is confined to small establishments processing agricultural products, such as rice mills, tanneries, distilleries, and lumber mills, I believe the Korean products of textiles and other could be sold to Cambodia. When I mentioned my clothes that I was wearing at the time and explained that they had been made in Korea, he was astonished and stated that further contact with Korea would make it possible to have trade business with each other. He pointed out that the rubber, lumber and rice are those goods for export from Cambodia.

f. At 1700 hours of the same afternoon we called on Mr. Penn Mouth who is a member of the Royal Council and one of the brilliant and influential figures in Cambodian politics. He has his office in the King's palace.

After a few words of exchange of greeting between us, I briefly reviewed the general situation of Korea. He stated that he personally admired the Korean people's spirit of fighting the aggressions. He further said that his Government, as a Buddhist nation, will never allow the Communists

to infiltrate into their country in view of the importance of protecting their own religion as well as their freedom.

g. March 30, Saturday.

At 1000 hours we called on Mr. Sam Sary, a very prominent member of the Royal Council at his office in the King's palace. He is one of the oldest statesman in Cambodia. He took a very keen interest in listening to a discussion of our culture and the Buddhist religion in Korea. He expressed his sympathy to our country's division. I thanked him for his sympathy, however, I explained to him that the only obstacle to our unification is the existence of Red Chinese forces in our territory.

It was a worthwhile acquaintance with this so very prominent statesman of Cambodia.

At 1030 hours we called on Mr. Son Sann, Government of the National Bank.

h. On March 30, Saturday, at 1100 hours, I called on Prince Monisarra again and it being my farewell call I thank him for the kindness afforded us by the Government of Cambodia and for the many arrangements made for us despite the difficulty caused by the political crisis.

i. I regret to report that I could not get to see the Crown Prince Sihanouk who is the man who plays the whole show of Cambodian politics. Every political crisis caused

by him is also solved by him. Therefore, without a doubt, he is the busiest man in Cambodia. The Chief of Protocol, Prince Monisarra, told me that the Crown Prince could receive me after April first if I could remain until that date. I expressed my regret that I could not accept his kind arrangements. He expressed his hope that I could come to Cambodia again.

4. Meetings with Foreign Diplomats.

a. On March 29th at noon the U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Carl W. Strom, gave luncheon in honour of me and my mission. I paid a call on Ambassador Strom before noon to express appreciation and to accept his kind invitation and also to get a briefing on the Cambodian situation.

He had invited to the luncheon also the envoys from France, Great Britain, Australia, Thailand and Vietnam, which gave me an opportunity to see them at one time.

At the end of the luncheon, the host, the Ambassador Strom, made a brief table speech stating that he had had the great honour to have served in Korea. He mentioned several times the admiration he had of our fighting forces and the inspiring people. At the close he raised his glass of champagne up high and proposed a toast to the greatest statesman in the present world, Dr. Syngman Rhee.

In my speech of reply I praised the gallantry of the U.N. 56

fighting forces of all participating countries and thanked them one and all.

It was indeed a nice arrangement made by Ambassador Strom to enable me to become acquainted with the individual envoys from the above mentioned friendly countries.

b. The Nationalist China's Consul, Mr. Hsu, came to me in the evening of March 29, to pay his courtesy call and brief me on the general situation of Cambodia.

5. Conclusions.

I admit that the trip to Cambodia was a worthwhile one if I should refrain from saying it was a "successful" one.

It is to be regretted that our trip was timed unintentionally with the political crises and that I could not meet and see the only political figure, Crown Prince Sihanouk.

Nevertheless, this was the first time that our National flag was shown in Cambodia to her people and it was also the first time in their history that a Korea envoy has appeared to them.

The distance between Saigon and Cambodia's capital is not a far one. To make a trip by car to Cambodia is a comparatively easy one. I feel that I should make another trip to them with good timing and arrangements should be made far ahead of time.

I will continue to keep in contact with these people with

-11-

whom I became acquainted on this trip. Although the government was in crisis at this time, these political figures, with whom I had contact, will play an important role only next to Crown Prince Sihanouk.

I conclude this report with the hope that Your Excellency will allow me to try again and I wish to have a more successful trip the next time.

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 Republic of Korea.

58