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Kolisa-57 Special Report No. 11, 'Trip to Thailand'

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Summary:

Choi Duk Shin reports on his trip to Thailand and recommends that Korea exchange ambassadors with Thailand, as the country is becoming the center of Southeast Asia.

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CONFIDENTIAL

KOLISA-57 SP REPORT No. 11

TRIP TO THAILAND

Excellency,

I have the honour to submit this report on my trip to Thailand as follows :

1. Personal guest of Prime Minister.

I was advised by the Thai official in Karachi that he had been instructed to inform me that his Prime Minister Field-Marshal Pibulsonggram would welcome me as his personal guest during my visit to Thailand.

When we arrived in Bangkok on May 8, at 22.45 hours, nearly midnight, we were greeted by Mr. Nai Burlam Viriyakul, Chief of Protocol of the Thai Foreign Ministry and Dr. Han Lih Wu, the Chinese Ambassador. There were also a group of our compatriots at the welcoming line and it gave us a very pleasant feeling. The Thai officer, Mr. Viriyakul, presented each of us with a bouquet of flowers, a presentation of the Foreign Minister and also handed us a well-prepared "PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT TO THAILAND OF GENERAL CHOI DUK SHIN AND PARTY (Informal Goodwill Mission)."

Our activities were almost exactly according to this programme, except that I had requested to lay a wreath at the monument of the Unknown Soldier, and which ceremony took place on May 11, at 0900 hours with full military formalities.

2. Meetings with Foreign Minister and his Deputies.

a. Foreign Minister.

On Day 9 at 1100 hours just after the signing in the Royal Book and touring the Grand Palace, we called on the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Major General Prince Naradhip Bongsprahandh. I had met him on three previous occasions, once in 1953 at United Nations meetings, and the other two times were in 1954 with the Goodwill Missions. The moment he saw me it seemed that we were old friends and greeted each other most cordially.

I congratulated him on his high post of the world organization, the President of the United Nations General Assembly, and also asked him his opinions on the world situation in general and the Far East problems in particular.

His answer was : "There are no immediate prospects of cooling down the high tensions between East and West." He further stated : "The policy of the Thai Government in the Far East is :

"One, Red China's forces withdrawal from Korea and election in North Korea under U.N. supervision;
Two, Red China should denounce using force in the Taiwan Strait."

He gave me the impression that the Thai Government would recognize Red China and vote for admission to UN if Red China would do the above mentioned two points.

He concluded his statement by saying that there is no prospect of any possible solution of the Korean problem this year.

b. Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs.

After half an hour's talk with the Foreign Minister in the same reception hall I was received by the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Nai Rak Manyarachum. I expressed my thanks for the programme for my visit and that despite the fact that my visit was an informal one and also despite the fact that I had made my visit at a very busy and important time - the eve of the greatest celebration of the 25th century of the Buddhist era - his government had treated me and my party as her official guests. He said that it was most natural that his government would do as much as she could to receive a distinguished guest from one of the closest and most friendly nations. He then expressed the regret that our two countries had not yet exchanged formal diplomatic envoys. I expressed the same regret and asked what was his government's opinion on this matter. His answer was we can exchange a note of agreement on this matter first and whenever one side is ready to send out an envoy, she can do so. Then we discussed the rank of the envoys. We had reached the conclusion that it would be better if the exchange of envoys was at Ambassadorial level because most of the envoys of Asian countries to Thailand are Ambassadors and we felt also that Korea and Thailand are among those of the friendliest nations. After we had reached this conclusion, I had to tell him that my mission did not carry an instruction on this matter. However, I would report this to my Government for consideration.

The Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs (and who is the son-in-law of the Prime Minister) is a powerful second man

in the Foreign Ministry. I believe that what he said to me represents the true opinion of his government.

c. Luncheon given by Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs.

After a 30-minute talk, we were guided to a big hall where the Vice-Minister gave a luncheon in honour of our mission. There were also about ten high-ranking officials of the Foreign Ministry present.

During the last course of the luncheon, the Vice-Minister made a short welcoming speech and made a toast to the prosperity of the Korean people and for the health, happiness and success of Your Excellency. In reply, I praised them for the gallant fighting of the Thai Expeditionary Forces in Korea, thanked them and proposed a toast in return.

This was an excellent opportunity for us to become acquainted with so many officials of Thailand's Foreign Ministry.

3. Meeting with Defense Minister and presentation of the certificates.

a. May 10, at 0900 hours, according to the prepared programme we made a call on the Defense Minister, Field Marshal Srisdi Dhanarjata. He is the man who empowered by the Prime Minister is said to have controlled the situation during the elections as well as the post election period. It was told that he was Commander-in-Chief of the Army when he got authority to command the martial law. In the present cabinet of the Prime Minister Pibul, he is Defense Minister and still holds the highest post in the army. His star is

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rising and he is now only next to the Prime Minister. He also gained the respect of the people because he did not agree to use force when the Chief of Police Hai Phao Sriyayanoud wanted to suppress the demonstrations with police force. The Field Marshall did detain the said police Chief for one day and one night in order to prevent the use of police force.

When we arrived at the Ministry, an Admiral met me at the entrance. The Field Marshall and his staffs and officers waited me in the large reception hall. He received me with extreme cordiality and in a very friendly manner. He told me he had been in our country twice and admired the greatness of Your Excellency and the Korean people's courage. He regarded my visit as the visit of a brother because Thai soldiers and Korean soldiers were brothers-in-arms. Our talks were held while the final preparation for the ceremony of presentation of certificates was being made.

b. Presentation of Certificates was held at the same reception hall.

The said certificates had been received by my Legation prior to my departure for this trip. I had instructed my Military Attaché, Lt Colonel Lee, to send them to the Thai Government through the Thai Embassy in Saigon. This he had done. These certificates were for those decoration medals which I presented to them on behalf of our authority in 1954 when I came here on a mission with Mr. Young Philip Lee. These decorations were given to these soldiers who died in the Korean War and the families had received the decoration medals.

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The ceremony was conducted in a solemn manner and I had the honour to read one of the texts in Korean and then let my assistant, Captain Lee, interpret it into English. The Defense Minister made a speech to thank us for our kindness in presenting these decorations and certificates and emphasized the ties between Korea and Thailand.

At the conclusion of the presentation ceremony the Defense Minister offered us champagne and toasted the health of Your Excellency and the fighting spirit of our armed forces. I in reply toasted His Majesty the King of Thailand and also the Armed Forces of Thailand.

I considered it was an excellent occasion to present the said certificates. I noted a big difference between this time and the time when I presented the medals in 1954. At that time in 1954 only a Major General representing his Government received the medals. This time the Defense Minister himself received them at a well prepared solemn ceremony. I feel honoured to report to Your Excellency that this should be a sign of closer relationship between our two countries and also a sign of more respect to Your Excellency.

c. Reception given by Defense Minister.

On the same evening the Defense Minister gave a brilliant reception in honour of me and my mission. All the high ranking officers of Army, Navy and Air Force were present. The orchestra played nice music. There were also present several officers who had been in Korea serving in the Thai Expeditionary Forces.

4. Meeting with the Prime Minister.

The actual title of Field Marshall Pibul Songgram is "President of the Council of Ministers". This post is simi-

lar to that of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom who bears the full responsibility of the administration. During our stay in Thailand we saw him personally three times. On May 11, Saturday, at 1930 hours, he received us at his residence. It was very nice that he could remember the visits we made in 1954. I thanked him for his good memory of me and told him that I still treasured his gift of a Thailand made cigarette case which he had presented me on that occasion.

After we became seated I greeted him on behalf of my government to him and his government. He then motioned toward the wall where a photograph of Your Excellency rests on a stand and told us how much he respects Your Excellency as the greatest statesman in the world today.

I congratulated him on his recent victorious return of elections and expressed the wish that his leadership would continue to make his people prosperous and his country would be one of the few leading anti-Communist countries. He thanked us one and all and asked us to convey to Your Excellency his best wishes for the health and success of Your Excellency. Therefore, I cabled as follows :

"KORPITAL SEOUL

HIS EXCELLENCY PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND ASKED ME
TO CONVEY HIS BEST WISHES AND WARM REGARDS TO YOUR
EXCELLENCY PD RECEIVED WARM HOSPITALITY AS PREMIERS
PERSONAL GUEST PD ATTENDED CELEBRATION OF 2500
BUDDHIST ERA UPON THAI INVITATION PD CHOI SP ELEVEN"

He further stated that because of the arrival of Burma's Prime Minister U Nu and the Buddhist delegations from many countries he could not entertain us specially and

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personally, however, he invited us the same evening to the dinner which was for all the delegates on the occasion of the 25th century of Buddhist era. I and my two assistants attended this dinner.

Upon my return to Saigon I cabled the Prime Minister of Thailand as follows :

"PLEASE ACCEPT MY SINCERE APPRECIATION FOR YOUR WARM HOSPITALITY DURING MY RECENT VISIT TO YOUR GREAT COUNTRY STOP KOREAN MINISTER CHOI DUKSHIN "

I received his cabled reply on 19th May as follows:

"DULY RECEIVED YOUR TELEGRAM STOP REGRET THAT I WAS UNABLE TO ACCORD FULL RECEPTION OF MY OWN AS ORIGINALLY INTENDED DURING YOUR VISIT TO THAILAND STOP I OFFER YOU GRATEFUL THANKS FOR HONOURING MY COUNTRY BY YOUR VISIT AND BEST REGARDS TO YOU SIGNED PIBULSONGRAM".

5. Attending celebration of the Twenty-Fifth Century of Buddhist Era.

a. We learned in Ceylon that in Thailand there would be the celebration of 2500 years of the Buddhist era during the period May 12th through 18th. We felt that we should not interrupt our visit with this ceremony and also thought that our Buddhist delegation might be in Thailand to attend this celebration. So I proposed to change the schedule to leave Thailand on May 12th, Sunday. However, upon my arrival in Thailand and my talk with the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, he asked if we could stay one or two days longer. They said it would be a great honour to them if a Korean dignitary could attend the opening of the celebration of 124

the 25th Century of Buddhist era. Since we were not the accredited Korean Buddhist Delegation we would attend this celebration as a representative of a friendly nation to observe this great celebration to which they agreed.

b. We attended only the first day and second day's morning ceremony. The first day's ceremony should have been presided over by the King. However, due to his health, he could not attend. The second day's ceremony was presided over by the Prime Minister.

We were guided to seats in the honorary cabinet with the foreign diplomats, foreign dignitaries and full members of the Prime Minister's cabinet.

We listened to chanting by 2500 participating Bikkhus. I could not understand exactly what they were chanting. Nevertheless, I felt the chanting of 2500 persons was as though from one mouth. The chanting was so tremendous and impressive that I hoped that these voices in such complete harmony should be a means of might to defend the Buddhist countries against Communist infiltration.

We were also requested to present food to the participating Bikkhus.

At the end of the second day's ceremony the Prime Minister himself personally presented a token gift to each participating foreign guest to thank them for their attendance.

According to my observations in two days of the ceremonies, I felt that the preparation for this very important celebration had been well done and the execution of the ceremonies was excellent. I cannot imagine the amount of

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money the government had spent on this celebration. I only hope that the celebration was worthy of the expenditures and preparations.

c. On the evening of May 13th, Monday, the Chairman of the Committee for this big celebration invited us to a buffet dinner.

The host is one of the famous political figures in Thailand. He was police Chief and the Vice-Minister of Home Affairs of the last Prime Minister's cabinet (the Prime Minister himself was the Minister of Home Affairs). After some of the troubles during the recent election he was promoted to be Minister of Home Affairs. Somebody named him as Minister of Home Affairs with the hope that he would resign the post of Chief of Police. However, the former police Chief Nai Phao Sriyayanoud had replied to the inquiry of his resignation of police Chief by saying that he had been serving as a police officer for more than 28 years. This is about two years short of the 30 years. If he resigned now it would be too much sacrifice to him because the police officer could get a pension only after 30 years of service. Besides he made the above statement openly, he also made strong protest by mentioning why the Field Marshall Bristdi is not resigning his post of Commander-in-Chief after he got the post of Defense Minister. It seemed that he is still in a pretty strong position in the political circle.

He looked very healthy and is a tall, good-looking handsome gentleman. We were welcomed by him and his wife cordially and had been invited to sit at the honour table. At the end of the buffet dinner he presented himself personally a gift to each of the participating foreign guests.

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There were several performances of individual fighting by young boys and girls to illustrate Thai's high fighting spirit. It attracted much praise.

The strong man police Chief's party ended with a very cordial atmosphere.

I regret to have to report to Your Excellency that I tried to see Prince Fridi but was told that he is a sick man and was not in Bangkok. He is hospitalized in a town at a far distance from the city and, therefore, I could not see him. I sent to him, however, my greetings and best wishes for his recovery.

6. Conclusion :

In conclusion I would like to mention that not only is Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, the headquarters of SEATO, but she is fast becoming the center in Southeast Asia for the holding of international conferences. With this belief in mind, I strongly feel that because of the close ties of our country with Thailand that it is important that we consider in the immediate future the exchange of diplomatic envoys. I further consider that because of the growing importance of Bangkok in this area of the world that the exchange be at Ambassadorial level.

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 the Republic of Korea
Attachments 1. Programme of the visit to Thailand
of General Choi Duk Shin and Party
2. Programme of the celebration of the 25th
century of the Buddhist Era.

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