

July 31, 1957
**Letter from Choi Duk Shin to Senator William F.
Knowland**

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Summary:

Based on his recent travels, Choi Duk Shin offers three perspectives on the political thoughts of developing nations in Southeast Asia possess towards communism.

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C O P Y

Saigon, July 31, 1957

My dear Senator,

It has been a long time since I heard from you last. I have recently completed my goodwill tour of Southeast Asian countries, which has lasted nearly three months. During this tour, I had the opportunity to meet many leaders and people of this area, and it is really a pleasure for me now to write and communicate to you the impressions I have had during the trip.

My recent trip to the Southeast Asian countries has taught me much about the fears of those newly recovered nations. I found that there are at least three reasons that have pushed several nations in this area to take the "neutral" position, which undoubtedly is beneficial to the Communists, and harmful to the Free World.

These three reasons are : one, the Communist threat; two, the threat of old imperialism which is the re-entry of Japanese power in this area; three, the doubt of the spontaneity of the Free Nations to come to their rescue in case their independence and existence are menaced.

The Communist danger is an open fact. The seven years old aggression in Korea, the partition of Vietnam, the bitternesses experienced in China, and the many other disturbances caused by the Reds in almost every place in the world, have sufficed to awake the people of the Free world, and make them clearly see the true face of Communism. The Free World is now well aware of the danger of Communist expansion, and fortunately begins to adopt a more firm position against it. This has been proved by the recent decision of introducing modern weapons into the Republic of Korea and the move of the U.N. Command headquarters to the actual battleground. Moreover, your Secretary of State John Foster Dulles has clearly condemned Red China, in a recent statement, still as an aggressor.



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I believe the Communist advance in this area has been checked. The main question now is when the Free World will counter-attack to regain the lost grounds and to totally wipe the Communist threat off this area. It is time for us to take a counter-offensive, and to that purpose, the Republic of Korea and U.N. armed forces in Korea on one hand, the Republic of Nationalist China forces on the other hand, are ready for action.

The second threat, a no less dangerous one which is menacing the independence of the newly recovered nations in this area, is the re-entry of the Japanese imperialistic power.

As far as Japanese danger is concerned, the American friends often misunderstand the Korean position. They think that the Korea warnings on Japanese imperialism is stemmed out from the past hatred occasioned by the long years of Japanese domination over Korea. This is not the truth. The re-entry of Japanese imperialist power is a matter of serious concern not only to Korea, but to all Asia. The people of this area have for a long time suffered under colonial rule. They hate to be dominated again by any other power. For them, the colonialism is not only represented the white men's colonial rule, but also and chiefly by the old Japanese imperialism under which they have suffered most.

I feel obliged to warn our good friends of the sentiment of the Asian leaders and people with regards of Japan.

It is very regrettable that Japan will not awake from the old imperialist dream of "Co-Prosperity Sphere". It is also very strange to us that the U.S.A., as leader of the anti-colonialism, is now trying to introduce into the under-developed Southeast Asia a more cruel Japanese colonial power.

Time Magazine of July I pointed out that Kishi's project would make Japan the political and economic leader of Asia. I am pretty sure that no independent nation wants to be led by another nation. Apparently, the U.S. Government officials are formulating this policy in the hope to build up Japan as the leading power in the fight against Communism. We do not think that Japan will ever fight against any communist; Japan just wants to get strength as rapidly as possible and then be the leader of Asia. We hope that our good friends will not fall again into a Japanese trap.

Japan's Prime Minister Kishi's plan for a U.S. financed Southeast Asia Development is an insult to all nations in Southeast Asia. If the U.S. Government is really going to support Kishi's plan and finance it with U.S. dollars, it will be a big mistake by U.S. Government.

There is another serious news; that is the U.S. Government is planning to finance Japan with the purpose of building up her Armory-factory and produce arms to supply the Southeast Asian countries. From the strategic point of view it is unsound at all; because to put whole Armory-factory in one nation is very vulnerable for attack. And in case of war the countries in Southeast Asia cannot depend on so long a distance of transportation. Furthermore, I feel this kind of policy is to rebuild the Japanese imperialistic military power in Asia which will undoubtedly again threaten the very existence of Asian independent countries. I do also believe that the strong military power of Japan still will be the very menace to the security of U.S.A. The leaders of the Southeast Asian countries wish to have the Armory-factories in their own soil in order to meet the combat-readiness for their own armies. To depend on Japan for arms is unthinkable.

In my opinion, the danger which represents Japan to Southeast Asia is even greater than the Communist one, because the latter, being an open fact, is not supported by Your Government.

I am certain that your Government's support of Japan to become a leading nation in Southeast Asia has much discouraged the Asian peoples and also receives dismay from the French and British friends.

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As far as the third point is concerned, the doubt of the good intention of Western help can be dissipated by a harder work from the Free Nations, especially from the U.S. to gain the real understanding of the people in this area and to better know the aspirations of their leaders. Your non-colonialist policy and good intention to help should be clearly displayed, and your assistance should go directly to them. What those newly recovered nations hope is that the Western leading democracies will assist them to solve their long-standing economic difficulties. The appeal of these countries should not be neglected, and assistance and aid should be forwarded to those countries to help them gradually develop themselves.

I wonder if my modest idea would coincide, in certain points, with your opinion. In any case, please believe, my dear Senator, whatever that has been said above come frankly from a friend whose main aim has always been the full development of the United States' grandeur and Korea's sovereignty.

In deep appreciation of your continued efforts toward the welfare of the people of the Free World, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Choi Duk Shin
Envoy Extraordinary and Minister
Plenipotentiary of the Republic
of Korea to Vietnam.

The Honorable
William F. Knowland
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