

SUBJECT: Listing and Comments on Korean Daily Newspapers.

All papers are served by the Associated Press, United Press, International News Service, Reuters and Agence France Press, serviced through the local agencies - Korean Pacific Press and Chosun Press. The Korean agencies deliver their news in approximately five "takes" a day to every paper in Seoul and then try to collect later, on the basis of their estimate of the circulation of each paper. This causes recurring arguments and the agencies consistently have large unpaid sums on their books. Payments by the agencies to the American news agencies however are reasonably prompt.

Enclosure: ✓✓

Listing and Comments on Korean
Daily newspapers.

Provincial Dailies

Chejoo

29. Chejoo Sinbo

Publisher and nominal owner: KIM Suk Co. Address: 1377 1st Ga, Chejoo City. Formerly extreme leftist. Now rightist. Extremely influential on Chejoo Do. Circulation: 5,000.

• 1949년 2월 정치요약(1949. 3. 14)

Despatch No. 142

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THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF DIVISION OF
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NORTH EAST ASIAN AFFAIRS
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MAR 20 1949
American Mission in Korea
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Seoul, March 14, 1949

Subject: Political Summary for February 1949

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

In continuation of Despatch No. 93, February 1, 1949, reporting on political developments in Korea for the month of January 1949, I have the honor to submit herein a review of political events for the month of February 1949.

I Summary

The question posed in Despatch No. 58 concerning when the survival of the Republic of Korea might be assured, could not yet be answered in the affirmative. There were indications, in fact, that the patient might be on the critical list for several additional months at least. It was not at all a matter of bringing in an oxygen tent. Rather, it seemed to be a general realization that some elements of weakness had been undervalued and some signs of strength too hopefully grasped.

The major cause for this re-evaluation stemmed from a discovery that the surgery practiced by the Korean Security Forces on the cancer of rebellion in the Korean body politic had not been the effective operation which earlier reports had suggested. The situation on Cheju Island was, if possible, worse than before. The disorder in South Cholla Province had been successfully maintained by the Communists during the winter months and showed every indication of keeping virtually the entire province in turmoil. Guerrilla activities continued elsewhere on a lesser scale, especially in North Kyungsang Province.

Other developments were not overly encouraging. Dissension between the Executive Branch and National Assembly rose anew in connection with Assembly attempts to implement the National Traitors Act against Presidential opposition. The Assembly itself devoted so much of its time to investigations, resolutions, and invective that not a single law was passed during the month. Several scandals in Government agencies came to light during February, but, except for the replacement of the Minister of Agriculture, no significant changes occurred in personalities or methods of operation. The Government finally admitted that the grain (rice) purchase program was a failure, but failed to adopt effective measures to lessen the threat of food scarcity in the late spring.

CONFIDENTIAL

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Seoul, Despatch No. 143

March 14, 1949

Lastly, although it was still too soon to pass final judgment, it was noteworthy that the United Nations Commission on Korea (UNCKOK) had neither accomplished a miracle of unifying North and South Korea nor given signs of doing so in the near future.

In recording these conditions, it is not intended to overlook more pleasant developments. The President seemed more aware, for the first time, of the seriousness of guerrilla activities in parts of South Korea. His personal intervention gave some promise that more vigorous Police, Army, and Navy operations might produce better results. Much attention was also centered on the Economic Cooperation Administration's aid shipments and program for Korea. Businessmen and government officials began thinking of long-term plans for economic rehabilitation. UNCKOK showed no signs of admitting defeat and, in pressing ahead with its own work, kept Korean hopes alive that something might yet be accomplished.

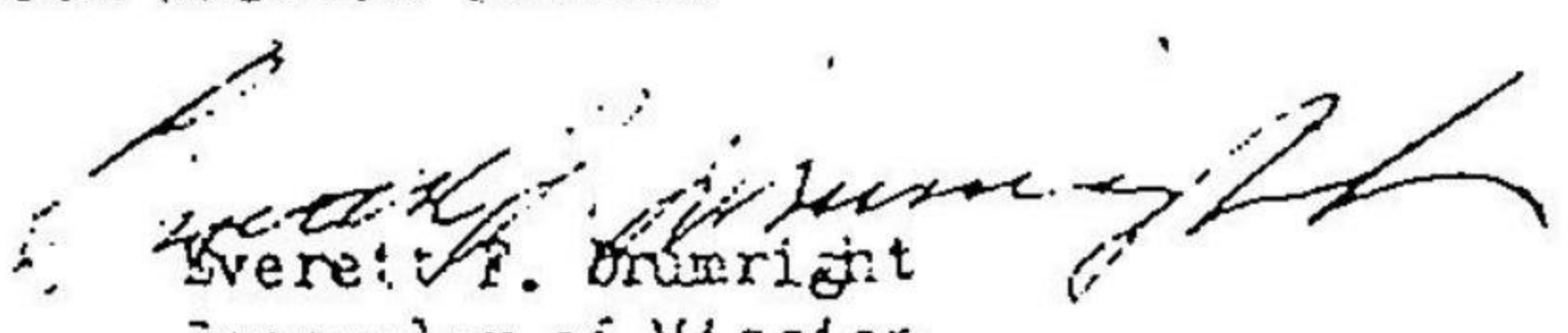
It seemed clear, however, that on balance the Republic of Korea was far from good health. Events of the Spring months of 1949 might well be decisive in determining its future.

VI South Korean Internal Tranquility

From the manner in which the Prime Minister told the story, peace and order in South Korea could hardly be improved. Martial Law, which had been lifted on Cheju Island in January with remarks on how excellent conditions were there, was added in South Cholla Province on February 5th with similar optimistic phrases. Supreme Chief of Staff, Major General Ch'ae Pyung Duk stated that mopping-up operations in isolated areas of both localities, would be completed in short order. On other fronts, the press reported unending arrests of members of the South Korea Labor (Communist) Party and affiliated groups, while the vast bulk of the population, including youth and students, were pictured as enthusiastically supporting the Government. The Korean Army added to the general air by announcing the virtual end of its screening for "undesirable" elements which had resulted in the release of something over 1,000 personnel. The incidents along the 38th parallel were dismissed as mere vindictive raids which the Police and Army could easily handle. As the President stated to the press, "Korea is not like China."

It was unfortunate that this rosy picture did not accord with the landscape as objective eyes viewed it. Reports to the Mission revealed that Cheju Island was in worse chaos than ever before. Guerrilla bands roved at will throughout the island's center. Only short strips of the coastline near the larger towns, and about one mile inland, were safe for non-Communists. While the Korean Army maintained its defensive-minded tactics, the guerrillas had razed seventy per cent of the villages on the island. Tens of thousands of refugees crowded outside the towns for any type of shelter and food.

South Cholla Province had not yet been reduced to this point, but there was little to be hopeful about. True, the large towns and the main highways, railroads, and communications lines were in Government hands, though the latter were sometimes subject to acts of sabotage. However, the preponderant rural population had no peace at all. Marauding bands covered the province while the Army, as on Cheju Island, fought an eight-hour day. Villagers increasingly found themselves caught between two fires. If their goods were seized by the rebels, the Army would punish them for aiding insurrectionists. If they refused the rebels, they were shot as "enemies of the people." It was clear that with guerrilla activity maintained through the difficult winter months, conditions might deteriorate further in spring and summer unless drastic changes were undertaken by the Korean Security Forces. Governor LEE Nam Kyoo, privately expressed of the situation to a Mission officer and said that conditions would get worse unless the National Government took drastic action.


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