

**Military, Political, Economic, Social Situation,
Press Review, Civil Intelligence, Miscellaneous**

Selected items for the Information of Commanders
and Staffs of the Far East Command

19 April 49
No. 2414

POLITICAL REPORT

1. Current Developments:

a. President RHEE Speaks: The Korean Republic's defense forces are rapidly approaching the point at which the country's security can be assured, providing the new nation is not called upon to face attack from foreign sources, according to an 18 Apr announcement by President RHEE Syngman. RHEE stated, "Discussions are now under way between representatives of the Republic and of the U.S. concerning the establishment of a date for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Korea. The United Nations Commission on Korea is being advised of the progress of these discussions, and the commission's advice and assistance are playing an integral part in these discussions." President RHEE concluded by commenting on the expected continuation of U.S. aid, and by stating that the discussions comply with several UN resolutions (Intell. Summary 2291). (a)

b. Reform Bill Resubmitted: The Korean Republic's National Assembly, which had recessed 8-11 Apr to allow for hearings on the 1949 budget, returned to action 12 Apr to hear a report from the Legislative and Judicial Committee on its re-examination of the local government reform bill. This measure had been returned to the Assembly on 1 Apr by President RHEE, with the suggestion that the date for implementation of the bill be determined by the executive branch (Intell. Summary 2410).

The committee's report was vaguely phrased, but after another one-day recess for budgetary matters, a group of Assemblymen on 14 Apr decided that the modification suggested by the President had legally altered the original bill, and that presidential changes could in turn be modified by the legislators. Amended to become effective in 90 days, the Assembly passed the bill by a vote of 86 to 83, and it was again returned to the President. (b)

Source Comment: It would appear that a dangerous parliamentary precedent was set when President RHEE returned the measure initially without a formal veto. Assembly opponents of the Chief Executive, unable to muster a two-thirds vote, evaded the rejection by slightly modifying the measure and securing sufficient votes to pass the revision by a simple majority. The President has been placed in a political quandry which will necessitate the vetoing of a measure that has popular public appeal or signing away much of his patronage powers. He probably will adopt the latter course. (b)

c. Cheju Island Elections: Speaking to a large crowd in the public square at the City of Cheju on 9 Mar, President RHEE indicated that elections would be held on Cheju Island, on 10 May, to fill two seats in the National Assembly. The seats have been vacant since the main election of 10 May 48, when the U.S. Military Governor invalidated the ballots in two of the three electoral districts because of Communist terrorism and disruption of voting activities (Intell. Summary 2122). The Chief Executive was accompanied by SHIN Sung Mo, Minister of National Defense, on his one-day aerial visit to Cheju Island. (B-1) (b,c)

Comment: The successful election of two delegates to the National Assembly from Cheju Island will complete the 200-man Assembly for the first time in the Republic's existence. Apparently President RHEE believes that rebel activity on the island will be eliminated or sufficiently under control by 10 May to enable elections to be held in the two districts. The Chief Executive's appearance on the island may instill confidence in the natives, who traditionally dislike and oppose all orders, edicts, and proclamations issued on the Korean mainland.

d. Apostolic Delegate Appointed: Monsignor Patrick J. Byrne, apostolic visitor to Korea, recently was advised by his superiors in Rome that he had been appointed apostolic delegate to the Korean government. (b)

Source Comment: The appointment of the clergyman, who represents the Vatican in lay matters, constitutes papal recognition of the Korean government. (b)

- (a) USAFIK G-2 Tel Rpt, 18 Apr 49
- (b) USAFIK 60236, 16 Apr 49
- (c) USAFIK G-2 P/R 1101, 11 Apr 49

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