

ence. Tense atmosphere remains in atmosphere, however, over apparent government inability root out Cheju Island Communists; over evidence, revealed by uprising, of still-existing Communist network South Korea; and over prospect further guerrilla disturbances mainland. Persistent rumors indicate a large-scale Communist disturbance planned November 7. Foregoing added to constant barrage Pyongyang radio upsetting Koreans, especially more literate elements, uneasy and doubtful over prospects Seoul government. As in Yosu, substantial elements may be developing attitude of siding with ultimate victor as they see it, and jumping on bandwagon of apparent "wave of future" should subsequent Communist attacks occur.

This supplements background MYTEL 164, October 28, requesting consideration return UNTCOK Seoul. Also connects with Paris proposals Chinese and Korean delegations that American Army remain South Korea. This message reports psychological attitude of Koreans and is distinct from my conclusions (to be subject later communication) concerning nature situation after United States Army withdrawal and plausible chance success Rhee government. Coulter and I doing all possible our contacts Korean officials and individuals, whose confidence shaken by revolt, to instill confidence in themselves and in government. In this connection, we emphasize incident indicates overwhelming majority police and constabulary loyal and dependable. I have attempted convince Rhee need to improve relations constabulary with police, and of both with populace. Coulter today broadcast message ostensibly to American troops but actually for Korean consumption, urging calm and confidence and exposing details Communist schemes.

Pass Jacobs GADEL Paris.

MUCCIO

• 여수반란에 대한 견해와 관측(1948. 11. 4)

FOR FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
OFFICE OF THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL

RECEIVED TO
(10)

No. 81

American Mission in Seoul
Seoul, November 4, 1948

CONFIDENTIAL

SUBJECT: Review of and Observations on the Iosu Rebellion

SECTION OF
NORTH EAST ASIAN AFFAIRS
DIVISION OF
STATE DEPARTMENT

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,
WASHINGTON.

SIR:

With reference to Seoul Mission telegram No. 153, October 25, 1948, I have the honor to submit herewith more complete information on the recent uprising in South Cholla Province. Data contained herein have been compiled from various U.S. Army Intelligence sources, from American press correspondents who were on the scene, and from Vice Consul David E. Mark, who toured the trouble zone during the period. While it is believed that reports from the latter two sources are generally accurate, Army Intelligence stresses that its reports are of two types. The first group, which consists of second-hand reports passed on from Korean Constabulary and Police sources, is to some extent contradictory and, in any event, of low evaluation. The second, which consists of confirmed reports from American sources and of evaluated intelligence submitted to higher headquarters, is generally accurate, or, if not, is evaluated by standard letter-number system. Due to the nature of the revolt and the short period since its termination in which a complete picture may be pieced together, most Intelligence sources used in the preparation of this despatch are of the first variety.

THE CAMPAIGN

Between 7 p.m. and midnight of October 19, 1948, approximately seven Korean soldiers of the 14th Constabulary Regiment in Yosu, South Cholla Province, led by a Sergeant-Major, began harassing a larger number of Constabularymen (40 or more) with a view to usurping control of the regiment. The ostensible occasion for this demonstration was opposition by the rebellious group to being sent to Cheju Island to assist in maintaining order there against Communist guerrilla elements. When the 40 or so additional soldiers had been won over, partly by persuasion and partly by threats of violence, the enlarged force seized an ammunition warehouse and proceeded, with the help of the arms thus obtained, to gain the adherence or submission of the remainder of the garrison. According to several reports, many Constabulary men were induced to join the rebellion by being told that this was just one incident in a successful nation-wide mutiny of the Army. Others apparently were under the initial impression that they were participating in a move to put down a police rebellion in Yosu and to restore the city to the national government.

In any event, all sections of Yosu were under rebel control by 5 a.m. of October 20, 1948. Two loyal Coast Guard cutters, which had been anchored at the port section when the trouble started, departed under rifle fire shortly thereafter, without casualties but with running lights shot out. Aboard were 60 to 80 Korean soldiers who apparently wished to remain loyal, but who in some reports were made out to be captured rebels.

The first move of the mutineers was to commandeer a train at Yosu and advance to Suncheon. This unit, numbering between 400 and 1,000 men had control of the latter city by 4 p.m. of October 20th. In obtaining control, the rebels had the cooperation of a supposedly loyal company from the 14th Constabulary Regiment. This group, which had been sent from Kwangju to Suncheon in response to police requests for assistance in stemming the revolt, refused to fire at the incoming rebels, and later actually joined forces. The police

in Suncheon put up determined resistance, but were outnumbered and forced to surrender.

October 21st was probably the high-tide of territorial holdings by disloyal elements. On that date, they spread out in all directions from Suncheon. To the east, rebel units captured Kwangyang and moved toward Hadong and Kurye. To the north, they briefly attacked around Koksung. To the southwest, they occupied Posung.

Loyal forces commenced counter action as soon as definite word of the rebellion became known. In general, attack plans envisaged the bringing of reinforcements of both police and constabulary from other areas to the periphery of the trouble zone and pushing inward toward Suncheon as a focal point. From Suncheon, one force would press down the peninsula towards Yosu, while another Army force would land in or near Yosu in an amphibious attack supported by Coast Guard vessels.

In support of this plan, Constabulary units advanced from Pusan and Masan in South Kyungsang Province, Taegu in North Kyungsang Province, Kusan and Chonju in North Cholla Province, and Taegu in South Chungsang Province. The points of major concentration became Kwangju, South Cholla Province, Hadong, South Kyungsang Province, and Masan, North Cholla Province. From these points, pressure inward was exerted as soon as possible.

The first major success came between 3 and 5 p.m. of October 22nd when Suncheon was recaptured by loyal troops converging from Masan and Kwangju. The city fell without much of a fight following three mortar bursts by the attackers. The rebels quickly broke up into small units and, for the most part, headed east to Kwangyang, with a small force turning southwest to Posung and Polgyeri. Earlier on the same day, a force of five to seven hundred loyalists attempted to push westward to Suncheon from Hadong. They were repulsed by rebel troops atop commanding hill sites, however, even before they reached Kwangyang, with a loss of about 5 dead, 50 wounded, and 25 missing, including the commanding officer.

On October 23rd, Posung was attacked by loyal Constabulary forces who were unable to capture the town, but the route from Masan to Suncheon through Koksung was finally secured. An abortive attempt at a Coast Guard supported landing on the Yosu peninsula itself was driven off by well entrenched rebel troops. By this time units of the 11th, 3rd, 6th, 12th, and 15th Regiments were in the battle zone, mostly under the command of the Chief of Staff of the 5th Brigade.

The 15th Regiment again pushed westward from Hadong on October 24th towards Kwangyang, and without meeting resistance, found the objective already in the hands of friendly troops from Suncheon. Since enemy units had apparently evacuated the town for mountainous country northward towards Kurye, both loyal units headed in that direction. On this date, also, the see-saw battle for Posung was finally concluded with the city's recapture by loyal troops which advanced to Polgyo-ri.

A plan for final attack on Yosu had been drawn up to provide for a sizeable land drive to begin at 6 a.m. of October 25th. This was originally to be coordinated with an amphibious landing just north of the city. The land attack commenced on schedule but advanced units which reached the outskirts of Yosu were forced to give way a mile or more by heavy resistance. Details of the sea phase of the operations are obscure. Apparently, some landings may have been made by noon, but most, if not all, amphibious troops were held aboard ship temporarily by a request of the land commander, made late in the day, to keep them there until called for.

The size of this attacking force was about 600 to 750 men. The defenders were variously estimated at from 300 to 2,000. The fight was strongly contested through October 26th, when the Coast Guard joined to rake the shore with machine gun and 37 millimeter gunfire. About 1/4 of Yosu, especially around the port and main business areas, was set aflame, partially from gunfiring, partially by accident, and partially by deliberate act of soldiers from both sides. Around noon on the 27th, resistance ceased with the surrender of remaining rebels.

The fall of Yosu marked the end of major attack by government forces. Some skirmishing continued in the Kurye region with various reports having the town itself in and out of rebel hands. Actually, most disloyal remnants appeared to have taken refuge in the inaccessible Chiri and Paegun Mountain areas. From there, in the Badong, Kurye, Kwangyang region, hit and run raids could be expected to continue. As one reporter put it, this might become "Cheju Do on the mainland".

At present, no responsible official possesses sufficient trustworthy reports to estimate the casualties on either side resulting from military operations, but, in all likelihood, they were not very heavy. All in all, around 600 to 1400 rebel troops have been captured. These are being interrogated by the Constabulary, and some have already been put in the Taejon prison. Many civilians who joined them in the fight have also been rounded up. The latter are also slated for questioning in the areas where captured, but are generally turned over to the police who treat them more roughly and have, in some cases, summarily disposed of them. In no instance is it expected that important figures in the revolt will be found. Such persons are either hiding in the Chiri or Paegun Mountains, or were among the persons seen by American press correspondents escaping by boat from Yosu to points unknown.

NON-MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE UPRISING

Although there was some thought at first by American observers that the entire affair may have resulted from reluctance of elements of the 11th Regiment to embark from their home station for fighting on Cheju Island or from a local quarrel with its commander, it became apparent within a few days that the revolt was sparked, organized, managed, and carried forward by trained Communist leaders. Various reports indicate that the outbreak was premature. These suggest that trouble had been planned for early November but that the impending disruption and isolation of the mutinous Communist core

of the regiment by transfer to Cheju Island, caused plans to be advanced. Whether this is true or not, in the areas where the rebels established themselves in temporary control, they evidenced the same propaganda preparation, the same affiliation to the "Democratic Peoples Republic" of North Korea, and the same course of mass action and terror.

Activities in the two-day rule of Sunchon are probably typical. Soon after capture, the North Korean flag was raised on chief public buildings. Rebels, with the help of sympathetic civilians in the town, began rather systematic searches for leading Rightists, other major opponents of Communism, wealthier elements of the community, and Christians. Middle school boys who seemed Leftist in attachments and Communist in organization were given authority and rifles to aid in eliminating "reactionary" elements. Police-men not killed in the fighting were lined up and mowed down. Other arrested persons were first usually beaten, and then similarly shot. This continued through October 22nd when the rebels departed. As is natural in such a lawless reign, many innocent persons who were merely in the personal disfavor of some rebel were branded as "people's enemies" and executed. Some reports state that a "court" was put in operation to pass judgment in the manner of the "Tribune" of the French Revolution. Other information indicates that not even this formality was observed. The resultant dead in Sunchon alone, in any case, total between five and six hundred.

On October 21st, the civilian leaders of the South Korea Labor Party who had taken control of affairs from rebel Army leaders and raised their party's flag alongside that of the North Korean Government, organized the populace into a mass parade and meeting in behalf of the "Peoples Committees" and the "People's Republic". Communist-slogan banners were supplemented by cries of "Mansai" (10,000 years life) to the "Democratic People's Republic". In conjunction with these activities, public buildings were raided, banks robbed, and records destroyed. So complete were these plans, that when loyalist troops tried to reorganize the city government, virtually all officials had been killed, and new ones had no idea where to start their work.

Upon the entry of government forces on the 22nd, martial law was immediately proclaimed. Troops aided by police started a round-up of all men in the town who were of military age. In this assemblage, no initial attempt was made at differentiating between loyal and disloyal elements. In the heat generated by discovery of the victims of Communist slaughter, and under the poor discipline of the troops, great numbers of beatings and many summary executions occurred. Inevitably, mistakes were made, and innocent persons and Rightists perished with Communists. No accurate count of people thus killed can be made, other than the 25 known dead, but shooting was heard in the town nightly through October 27th. The net result was to alienate some loyal Koreans who had first welcomed police and Army back as a relief from two days of Communist terrorism. With no safety on either side, people assumed a submissive air, humbly obeyed orders, attempted to salvage what they could of property, and bowed meekly at the sight of a jeep or other indicia of authority.

The story in Yosu was apparently not too different. Some police in the city seem to have joined the rebellious forces, but those who didn't were, as in Suncheon, speedily disposed of. In well-organized fashion, a "people's government" was established, friendly students and civilians mobilized, prescribed officials and civilians arrested and killed, and propaganda output commenced. In the latter connection, a copy of the "Yosu People's Press" (an English translation of which is enclosed) found by an American correspondent provides some illumination.

According to it, a mass meeting of citizens was held on the 20th, at the conclusion of which all governmental papers were turned over to the "People's Committee". Loyalty was pledged to the North Korean regime and undying enmity to the Seoul government. A typical Communist platform was endorsed. Affairs were led by local Communist chieftains who emerged briefly from their underground existence to prove that the South Korea Labor Party, the Laborers' Federation (Chung Pyung), the Student's Alliance, and similar groups still functioned. The story was spread that all South Korea was in "democratic" hands except Seoul and the area around Yosu. In the absence of communications and any means of knowing the truth, many citizens believed this. They probably felt they were accommodating themselves to the inevitable by joining in cheers for the troops (rebels) of the 14th Regiment who liberated them from "reactionary" oppression and mistreated rather than kill their brothers on Chajju Island. Printed paper sheets with the North Korean flag and other Communist propaganda, "hammer and sickle" armbands, ready administrative machinery, assignment of Communist teachers to schools with a prepared program, and lists of "enemies of the people" all point to careful arrangements for a revolutionary seizure of power. Perhaps, the time was premature but the planning was quite complete and well-disseminated, even to the burning of rice warehouses as defeat neared.

Reoccupying loyal troops in Yosu were much better disciplined than in Suncheon. Indiscriminate shooting was kept rather well under control and soon, almost wholly eliminated. Probable participants were again rounded up in attempt to weed out those who had actively aided the rebels. Almost no uniformed mutineers were found, however, and it was surmised that either most had fled, or else most had donned civilian garb to help escape detection.

Various rumors have been current, in Seoul, some with the sanction of high Korean officials, that dissident Rightist elements especially those connected with the Kim Koo forces, joined with the rebels in the uprising. These rumors suggest that such union is merely a logical next step to Kim Koo's flirting with leaders in Pyongyang since last April. They point to the fact that Oh Dong Ki, former commander of the disloyal 14th Regiment and now in jail awaiting trial on charges of attempted revolution, is a Kim Koo subordinate.

Although it may be true that Kim Koo is plotting a coup d'etat to overthrow the regime of President Rhee Syngman, it does not

seem likely that he was implicated in the South Cholla Province affair. In the first place, all evidence points to the fact that Kim Koo cut his connections with Pyongyang by denunciations, with Kim Min Sik, of activities of that regime culminating in the declaration of August 25, 1948. His letters at the end of September to the United Nations indicate that this attitude continues. In the second place, most of the people mentioned as plotting with Kim Koo are members of his dissident Rightist group and not likely to be playing the Communist game. Finally the terror which the rebels carried on during the period of their rule was directed against all Rightist and elements opposed to Communism, without exceptions for members of the Korean Independence Party or other Kim Koo groups. So overwhelming is the evidence of Communist preparation, initiation, and control that the affair appears definitely to be their wholly staged show.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Although different observers are already drawing varied conclusions on the military aspects of the uprising, general agreement exists on the political implications. Major General John B. Coulter, Commanding General, USAFII, concluded in a telegram to General MacArthur that the "overwhelming mass of the (constabulary) troops can be relied on to support the government". He added that the Korean Government must solve the problem of weeding out subversive elements in the Korean Army, Coast Guard, and National Police, and push plans for rapid recruitment, training, and indoctrination of the troops. Although the effort made in stemming the revolt would delay completion of constabulary training by a month (to December 31, 1948), it was implicitly stated that the test under fire might, in the long run, prove more valuable experience than training. Those with a similar viewpoint add that it is significant that, except for one company of troops at Suncheon, no military unit joined the rebels after the initial mutiny at Ieou. They point out that the campaign was concluded in eight days and that the rebels were soundly defeated. Furthermore, different Army units learned to cooperate with each other, the police, and to some extent, the Coast Guard. Finally, although American advisers were available with most units and did contribute to planning, the successful campaign was chiefly Korean in preparation and operation.

Less optimistic observers do not question Constabulary potentialities but do doubt its present effectiveness. They note that with trouble confined to one area and a small unit of rebels, there was no question but that the superior manpower and logistic support of the loyal forces would carry the day. They are not so certain of the outcome if simultaneous revolts, even largely among the civilian population, had occurred in many parts of South Korea. Although almost no other Constabulary units sided with the rebels, this may have been natural once other potential mutineers saw that this particular isolated rebellion was doomed to failure. The fact that most of the rebel troops themselves weren't Communists, but merely succumbed to Communist speeches and threats, indicates that similar trouble might occur in other units. As a matter of fact, this susceptibility of many Constabularymen to disorder after inciting speeches by one of their own number has already been demonstrated again in the semi-mutiny of the present week at Taepo, North Kyungsang Province.

The same observers acknowledge that a careful house-cleaning of the Constabulary would go far to eliminate troublemakers and their fellow-travellers. Even though this would not alter the basic brigade, regiment, and battalion organization already established, such a sizeable elimination of personnel would, however, probably necessitate a retraining of units composed of changed and newly-recruited personnel, around cadres composed of men screened and found trustworthy. A wholesale infusion of Rightist youth group members into the Constabulary is already being urged in certain political and governmental circles. The retraining required by these actions would be in addition to much further training of which operations during the squelching of the revolt showed the Constabulary to be in great need.

The greatest deficiency is probably in mobile radio and signal equipment and trained maintenance and operator personnel. All units were generally so out of touch with each other that operations and positions of troops in other sectors had to be obtained in reports from Seoul. Seoul had, in turn, gotten this information by liaison plane observation, plane-to-ground communication, and transmission of reports by motor vehicle.

Another deficiency appears to be a not-yet adequate familiarization by many Korean soldiers with the American motor and mechanical equipment and the American weapons which have been supplied them. Repeated breakdowns occurred, along with careless use of weapons. American press correspondents reported, for example, that an almost childish desire to try out newly issued mortars aboard a Coast Guard vessel plying just off Yosu during the final attack, against the advice of an American adviser, almost cost the correspondents their lives as mortar shells dropped all around them. Army Commander, Brigadier General Sung Ho Song (whose proclamation to the troops in English translation is enclosed) on one occasion, raced his armored car both toward the enemy and then toward his own men, in each case with machine gun blazing. On numerous occasions, he stopped the advance of his column of troops to question civilian passers-by on the road for latest information on the location of rebel soldiers. By relying on this intelligence, the column was several times stopped and deployed on false alarms, while the American newspapermen and the senior American adviser pushed safely ahead alone.

Part of this trouble was unfamiliarity with the correct tactical approach. Some officers were not up to properly directing their men. One report indicated that a tactical move ordered by the zonal commander had been replaced by a different move radioed from Premier LEE Bum Suk in Seoul. It is true that the Constabulary in October 1948 had commenced the one month's unit training, largely to be in the field, due to begin November 1st. However, in view of the large scope of the subject to be covered, of the use of 25% of the Constabulary on guard duties of a "police nature" (and their consequent unavailability for training), and the large numbers of men on specialized study courses (signal equipment, 105 millimeter artillery, etc), it seems that one month's training can hardly suffice.

The foregoing less optimistic observers do not, of course, view these failings as insurmountable difficulties. They note the type of deficiencies disclosed and feel that corrective measures will be a matter of more than the two months' effort now planned before scheduled American troop withdrawal. They compare the period of preparation of the Constabulary with the over two years of effort required before the American Army was ready to mount the major offensive (North Africa) in the recent war. They add, furthermore, that during this period of several months' training,

conditions must allow for all energies to be devoted to organization and training rather than to guarding installations and frontiers and to quelling revolts.

It is at this point that political observations become pertinent. If Communist organization at Yosu is at all typical, and there is no reason to doubt that it is, similar uprisings, controlled and directed from Pyongyang, are possible anywhere at any time. The fact that the revolt will be a lost cause, as in Yosu, apparently detracts nothing from the preparation that goes into its execution. Failure is seemingly worth the tension, confusion, delay, and disheartening effects caused loyal adherents of the Korean Government. Then again, on some occasion, the result may be success rather than failure.

If this political situation is coupled with the views of the less optimistic observers of the effectiveness of the Constabulary, it becomes apparent that a problem arises as to the ability of loyal government forces to maintain even internal order should American troops finally be withdrawn within the next two months. To this may be added the possibility of external attack by the North Korean Army across the 38th degree parallel after American withdrawal. Even should this not materialize in such overt fashion, it is more than probable that if the internal South Korean situation worsens to the extent likely under continuous North Korean-inspired disturbances, the North Korean Army would intervene under the banner of restoring order and aiding "democratic" elements of the population.

It may be that the views of the relative "pessimists" are too extreme and not warranted by events thus far revealed. It seems safe to say, however, that enough data have been uncovered by the recent revolt to provide thought for renewed consideration by policy-making bodies of the U.S. Government concerning the "plausible chance for survival" held by the Government of the Republic of Korea at some future time when American tactical troops are no longer in occupation.

Respectfully yours,



Enclosures:

1. Translation as stated Yosu Peoples Press
2. Translation as stated Gen. SONG, Proclamation

· '비상사태' 를 계엄령으로 오역(1948. 11. 23)

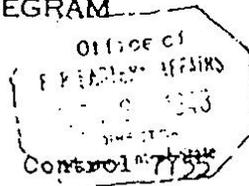
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Rec'd November 23, 1948
4:55 P.M.
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