

FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE  
KMT INTERVENTION IN BURMA

by

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as a mobile anti-communist force for use in case of Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. They wanted U.S. support in such a venture.<sup>205</sup> The troops claimed that most were indigenous to northern Burma and southern Yunnan and should not be sent to Taiwan. Despite the disparity of the situations, they demanded voluntary repatriation as had been practiced in the Korean War.<sup>206</sup>

In the face of this KMT intransigence, the Burmese became most annoyed. On July 30, Defense Minister Ba Swe said that Burma was going to the UN to have Nationalist China declared an aggressor and unseated from the UN.<sup>207</sup> Finally, on August 8, General Li Tve-fen, deputy commander of the KMT in Burma, after returning to Bangkok from Taipei, announced that 1,700 troops would be withdrawn. He claimed the rest of the KMT were local residents and would not be willing to go to Taiwan.<sup>208</sup> Approximately one month later, Dr. Shao Yu-an, the Nationalist Chinese Ambassador to South Korea, was sent to Burma by Chiang Kai-shek for the avowed purpose of persuading the KMT to withdraw.<sup>209</sup>

As the Bangkok evacuation talks dragged on into mid-September, with no solution in view, Burma again threatened to go to the UN unless Nationalist China implemented the withdrawal agreement of June 22.<sup>210</sup> On September 17, the Burma delegation withdrew from the four-power talks in Bangkok because the Nationalist Chinese would not agree to their demand that 5,000 KMT's be withdrawn in three months and that the remaining 7,000 be out of Burma at the end of six months.<sup>211</sup>

In late September, the air force of Burma began bombing Monghsat to prepare the way for an army assault on the KMT.

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205. *Ibid.*, July 24 and August 1, 1953.

206. *Ibid.*, July 24, 1953.

207. *Ibid.*, July 31, 1953. At about the same time some KMT troops began leaving Burma and entering northern Thailand. *Ibid.*, August 1, 1953.

208. *Ibid.*, August 9, 1953.

209. *Ibid.*, September 4, 1953.

210. Johnstone, *Chronology*, p. 36.

211. *Ibid.* U Ba Swe felt that the Nationalists wanted only token evacuation and that further negotiations under these circumstances were valueless. *New York Times*, October 6, 1953.

The announcement of these military efforts came after a Thai announcement that the first 200 KMT's were to be withdrawn October 5. The government of Burma denied any knowledge of the Thai announcement.<sup>212</sup> On October 6, the bombing of Mong-hsat was halted to permit the KMT to withdraw.<sup>213</sup>

As these events developed, the government of Burma was asking that the KMT question be placed at the top of the agenda of the UN Political Committee.<sup>214</sup> The United States argued that the UN should defer any action on the matter.<sup>215</sup> Over this U.S. objection, the KMT intervention was placed on the UN agenda.<sup>216</sup> The UN debated the affair again in late October but took no new action.<sup>217</sup> Burma's delegate, U Myint Thein, while noting that the Chinese Nationalist government was directly responsible for the KMT's in his country, argued that if the United States was willing to deny support to Chiang Kai-shek because of the KMT's refusal to withdraw, they would depart promptly. The UN tabled the issue on November 5 pending the results of the evacuation.<sup>218</sup>

The negotiations in Bangkok continued during October. U Ba Swe, on October 5, stated that only Nationalist China had not agreed to the evacuation plan.<sup>219</sup> Finally, on October 29, a joint U.S.-Thai-Nationalist Chinese communique was

212. *New York Times*, September 27 and 30, 1953.

213. *Ibid.*, October 7, 1953.

214. Johnstone, *Chronology*, p. 37.

215. Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., said in the UN, "Our information leads us to believe that developments of the next several weeks may considerably alter the situation, and the United States therefore feels that consideration of the matter should be deferred in the hope and expectation that these developments will materialize and reduce the tension in that area." *The Department of State Bulletin*, 29, No. 746 (October 12, 1953), p. 497.

216. Johnstone, *Chronology*, p. 37.

217. The Burmese delegation released at the UN letters reputedly written by General Li Mi and others, to their troops, telling them to stay in Burma, to build an airfield, recruit more troops and continue as an anti-communist base on China's border. *New York Times*, October 31, 1953.

218. Johnstone, *Chronology*, p. 38.

219. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

issued in Bangkok stating that 2,000 KMT's, including their families, were to be withdrawn starting November 7, that Nationalist China would no longer supply the KMT, and that those which remained in Burma would be disavowed.<sup>220</sup>

The withdrawal occurred in three phases. The first began November 7 and continued into December, 1953. The second and third phases were conducted during the periods February 14-28 and May 1-7, 1954, respectively.<sup>221</sup> The first phase of the evacuation was halted the day after it had begun because the Thai police refused to permit Burmese observers at the Thai border to supervise the evacuation.<sup>222</sup> The evacuation process was resumed November 13 after the Thai police permitted a Burmese observer team to enter Thailand.<sup>223</sup>

There is no agreement between Burmese figures and those of the U.S. and Nationalist China on the total number of the KMT's evacuated. At the end of the first period of evacuation in November-December, 1953, the Joint Military Committee reported that 1,810 troops and 439 dependents had been evacuated to Taiwan.<sup>224</sup> Other sources suggest that less than 2,000 were withdrawn. There is general agreement that not all the

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220. *New York Times*, October 31, 1953.

221. United Nations Document A/2739, pp. 5-6. During the evacuation KMT troops were given safe conduct through Kengtung State to Tachilek on the Thai border. There they were to turn in their weapons and go by truck to Chiangmai, Thailand, to be flown to Formosa. The cost of the flights to Formosa was to be shared by Burma, Nationalist China and the United States. Johnstone, *Chronology*, p. 38.

It is safe to assume that the United States paid most of the bill. The U.S. Embassy in Bangkok contracted with Civil Air Transport to fly the KMT's out at a cost of one hundred and twenty-three dollars per person. "Out of Burma to Join Chiang," *Life*, 35 (December 7, 1953), p. 35.

222. *New York Times*, November 9, 1953. Also, there was a dispute over the nationality of 58 Shans who were among the first contingent of 204 KMT's leaving Burma. The Burmese claimed they were KMT recruits from Burma while the Nationalist Chinese claimed they were Yunnanese. Johnstone, *Chronology*, p. 38. The *New York Times* for November 10, 1953, reported there were 39, not 58, Shans in the group. The Shans told U.S. officials at the border they had been recruited by the KMT within the week preceding their evacuation.

223. *Ibid.*, November 11, 1953; Johnstone, *Chronology*, p. 38.

224. United Nations Document A/2740, p. 5.