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AMERICAN-KOREAN RELATIONS, 1945-1953:
A STUDY IN UNITED STATES DIPLOMACY

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Based on the appropriate archival collections, official documents, and various published materials, this dissertation is an investigation of American diplomacy in Korea from 1945 to 1953. Between the end of World War II and the close of the Korean fighting, the United States moved from a limited interest in Korea to a substantial involvement in that nation's affairs.

Korea's liberation from the thirty-five years of Japanese colonial rule came on August 15, 1945, with the Japanese surrender at the end of World War II. Just before the Pacific War ended, the United States proposed, and the Soviet Union accepted, the temporary division of Korea at the 38th parallel as a means of disarming local Japanese forces on the peninsula. American troops occupied the southern half of Korea up to the dividing line, facing a Soviet-occupied North Korea. This temporary military division became permanent as cold war politics came to dominate the policies of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Unable to arrange a settlement with Russia for the reunification of divided Korea, the United States referred the Korean problem to the United Nations. The Soviet refusal to cooperate with U.N.-supervised elections in Korea led to the emergence of two rival Korean governments. This

development completely destroyed any chance for a peaceful reunification.

The outbreak of the Korean War forced the Americans into an unwanted military involvement in Korea. Although the United States seemed to have ruled out its defense of South Korea on strategic grounds, when the aggression actually occurred, the American leaders unanimously agreed that larger political considerations made South Korea's defense unavoidable. The United States interpreted the Communist attack in Korea as part of a worldwide pattern of Soviet expansion and immediately sent in the American troops available in Japan. The United States also took the issue to the United Nations Security Council and, in the absence of the Soviet representative, obtained sanction for and assistance in providing military aid and troops to the Republic of Korea.

America's initial objective in the Korean conflict was to restore South Korea's border at the 38th parallel. The United States had no intention of completely destroying the enemy forces. After the Inchon landing, however, the United States decided to cross the parallel and unify Korea through military action. This change of policy prompted the Chinese Communist intervention in the war. The massive Chinese attack forced the Americans to give up any idea of unifying Korea by military means. After Communist China's intervention, the official American policy was to negotiate while

fighting as hard as possible to drive the aggressor out of South Korea.

The search for an armistice in Korea threatened to degenerate into an American-sponsored coup against Syngman Rhee. The armistice did not settle the Korean question. It was merely a military agreement to stop fighting at the battle line. The military demarcation line ran slightly north of the 38th parallel. The South Korean government agreed to accept the cease-fire only after the United States promised a mutual defense treaty as well as economic aid for reconstruction.

This study concludes that United States diplomacy in Korea during the years under review was successful in pursuing American national interest of containment in that country. The United States had achieved its political objective of denying South Korea to the Communists.

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CHAPTER I

KOREAN BACKGROUND

From Hermit Nation to Colony

Korea, the "Land of the Morning Calm," is a small country lying in the heart of the Far East. It is a peninsula of 85,285 square miles, which is approximately one-third the size of Texas. Korea has a population of sixty-four million. Like Germany, Korea is a divided country. Communist North Korea confronts South Korea across a heavily fortified demarcation line. Most of the population, about thirty-seven million, live in South Korea. North Korea is somewhat larger in area than South Korea, but it contains ten million fewer people. An eminent American educator, Shannon McCune, described Korea as "a place where Americans have sacrificed lives, have donated services and goods generously, and have shared concern and hope with the Korean people . . . for freedom and responsible democracy."¹

The modern history of Korea dates from the beginning of the Yi dynasty in 1392. The Yi dynasty, which had twenty-seven kings, lasted 518 years and ended with the Japanese annexation of the country in 1910. After the Japanese

¹Shannon McCune, Korea: Land of Broken Calm (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1966), p. vii.

shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasion of 1592, which was checked by Admiral Yi Sunsin's ironclad "turtle ships," Korea isolated itself from the rest of the world for two and a half centuries to avoid the devastation of further foreign attacks. Aside from its close ties with China, Korea fended off virtually all contact with the outside world and became a hermit nation until 1876 when Japan broke into Korea's seclusion by a display of force. The resulting Japanese-Korean treaty of Kanghwa recognized Korea as an independent nation, opened the hermit nation to Japanese trade, and abolished Korea's tributary relationship to China.²

The United States was the first Western nation to sign a commercial treaty with Korea. In the spring of 1880, Commodore Robert W. Shufeldt, using Japanese mediation, tried in vain to negotiate a treaty with the Korean authorities. Li Hung-chang, the Chinese official with primary responsibility for Korean affairs, heard about Shufeldt's unsuccessful efforts and invited the Commodore to meet with him in Tientsin. Li gave Shufeldt promises of aid in negotiating a treaty with Korea and offered him the possibility of a

²A detailed account of forced opening of Korea by Japan can be found in Kuk-Ju Shin, Kundae Chosun Woegyo Sa (Modern Diplomatic History of Korea) (Seoul: Tamgu Dang, 1965), pp. 25-65. See also "Adm. Yi's Patriotism Still Alive," Korea Herald, 27 April 1980; and C. I. Eugene Kim and Han-Kyo Kim, Korea and the Politics of Imperialism, 1876-1910 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 207-18.

position in the Chinese navy.³ About a year before his meeting with Shufeldt (1879), Li had encouraged Korea to enter into treaty relations with Western nations. Li hoped the treaties could be used to check Japanese influence.⁴

With Li's assistance, Commodore Shufeldt actually began to negotiate a Korean treaty in the spring of 1882.⁵ During the negotiations, Li Hung-chang attempted to retrieve the ceremonial suzerainty over Korea which had been lost by the Japanese treaty of 1876. Li had asked, and Shufeldt had refused, to include a clause acknowledging the dependence of Korea upon China.⁶ Li and Shufeldt drew up the final American-Korean treaty in Tientsin and sent it to Korea in a Chinese vessel. On May 22, 1882, Korean authorities signed the treaty in the Korean port of Inchon. It provided for an exchange of diplomatic and consular officers and gave the United States trading rights and other privileges in Korea.

³Charles O. Paullin, Diplomatic Negotiations of American Naval Officers, 1788-1883 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1912), pp. 299-301.

⁴T. C. Lin, "Li Hung-chang: His Korean Policy, 1870-1885," Chinese Social and Political Science Review 19 (1935): 202-18.

⁵For details on the negotiations, see Charles O. Paullin, "The Opening of Korea by Commodore Shufeldt," Political Science Quarterly 25 (1910):470-99; and Paullin, Diplomatic Negotiations, pp. 303-22.

⁶Ibid., p. 315; Tyler Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia (New York: Macmillan Co., 1922), pp. 457-62.

The treaty became the basis for official United States-Korean relations and "served as a model for subsequent treaties between Korea and other Western nations."⁷

The American-Korean treaty of "peace, amity, commerce, and navigation," according to Paullin, was "the most notable success of the American navy in the peaceful field of diplomacy." Dennett commented that where the Japanese treaty of 1876 was the first wedge to be driven between China and Korea, the American treaty was the second. It was "a step toward the dismemberment of the Chinese Empire," as well as "the instrument which set Korea adrift on an ocean of intrigue which it was quite helpless to control." In Robert T. Pollard's view the treaty also "set in motion the train of circumstances which led first to the Sino-Japanese War, then to the Russo-Japanese War, and finally to the annexation of Korea by Japan."⁸

⁷U.S. Department of State, A Historical Summary of United States-Korean Relations, With a Chronology of Important Developments, 1834-1962, Far Eastern Series 115 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 4. Hereafter cited as U.S.-Korean Relations. The text of the treaty is printed in U.S. Department of State, Treaties and Conventions Concluded Between the United States of America and Other Powers (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1889), pp. 216-21.

⁸Paullin, Diplomatic Negotiations, p. 328; Dennett, Eastern Asia, pp. 461-62; Robert T. Pollard, "American Relations with Korea, 1882-1895," Chinese Social and Political Science Review 16 (1932):425.

Li Hung-chang helped Commodore Shufeldt negotiate the United States-Korean treaty in the hope that the American presence on the peninsula would create obstacles that would keep Japan from attaining a position of unique influence. But the hope was not fulfilled. The United States was the first nation to support Japanese expansion to the Korean peninsula. The treaty was merely a means for the promotion of American commercial interests in China and Japan. Korea appeared to be the drawbridge between Japan and China for American seamen. The best the United States could offer in maintaining the territorial integrity of Korea would be to exert a moral influence upon potential aggressors.

The Shufeldt treaty, as the American-Korean treaty became known, paved the way for the conclusion of similar treaties with other major powers, and Korea had ceased to be a hermit nation, thus entering its period of modernization. During the late nineteenth century, however, Korea became the focal point of bitter rivalry among China, Japan, and Russia, as well as the United States and Great Britain. The Western powers and Japan were anxious to terminate China's interest in Korea. The Sino-Japanese rivalry for control of Korea climaxed in 1894, when Japan declared war on China under the pretense of freeing Korea from the Chinese yoke. Korea asked for American help in mediating the conflict, but the United States was determined to remain neutral. In view of the negligible American interests in Korea, the United

States intervention in the Sino-Japanese War was inconceivable. The United States held to a policy of neutrality toward the belligerent powers, but it was a pro-Japanese neutrality when the war occurred on Korean soil.

The war between Japan and China would bring to the victor a monopoly of influence on the Korean peninsula. Fearing such a Japanese monopoly, Great Britain asked the American government to participate in a joint intervention with the European powers in order to guarantee the independence of Korea. Britain proposed that Japan receive an indemnity for the expense of the war. The United States refused to take part in the projected action to guarantee Korean independence. The Japanese victory over China terminated Chinese influence in Korea. By the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895), China recognized the complete independence and autonomy of Korea. China also gave Japan the right to maintain troops on the Korean peninsula.⁹

Following the war with China, the Japanese pursued policies aimed at making Korea a colony. The only power that challenged Japan in Korea at this time was Russia. Both countries had the same goal in mind. They regarded Korea's situation as a golden opportunity to expand their economies and broaden their foreign influence. Korea was

⁹Shin, Kundae Chosun Woegyo Sa, pp. 382-94; Roy H. Akagi, Japan's Foreign Relations, 1542-1936 (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1936), pp. 159-60.

important to Russia, if it were to dominate much of the Chinese coast. Russia's advance into Manchuria and Korea presented Japan with a very serious challenge. For Japan, Korea was obviously an indispensable mainland corridor to conquest in Manchuria, China, and the rest of Asia.¹⁰

By the Treaty of Shimonoseki, China had ceded the Liaotung peninsula to Japan. Russia took the lead in organizing a tripower intervention, that included France and Germany, and forced Japan to return the entire peninsula to China. The main reason for the Russian intervention was that the Japanese occupation of Liaotung was clearly directed against the Russian railway. Also the Japanese presence at Port Arthur could entail the eventual acquisition of all Korea. Russia then leased Port Arthur from China and transformed it into a naval and military fortress. The Russians also established a sphere of economic influence in the eastern provinces of China, thus threatening the northern border of Korea. Japan made a strong protest to Russia about these activities, but its protest went unheeded. Thereafter Russia had been a serious competitor with Japan for the domination of Korea.¹¹

¹⁰Hilary Conroy, The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1868-1910 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), pp. 281-330.

¹¹William L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902, 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 1:182.

The post Sino-Japanese War period also saw the active participation of American businessmen in Korea. In July 1895, James R. Morse obtained a concession for the Ulsan gold mine. In early 1896, Morse also obtained a concession for the construction of the Seoul-Inchon railway. Unfortunately, due to the lack of capital, he was later forced to sell out to the Japanese. Two other Americans, Henry Collbran and Harry Bostwick, acquired a franchise for a street-car system and an electric plant in Seoul. By May 1899, they had completed the construction. In addition, American businessmen had established other minor enterprises in Korea.¹²

American Christian missionaries had also been steadily increasing. Horace N. Allen led the first American presbyterian mission in Korea. The extended American business relations and the increased numbers of Christian missionaries brought about the idea that the United States would need Japanese cooperation to protect American interests in Korea. Thus, the American policy became one of letting Japan hold the Korean peninsula and check Russia, while the United States sought to uphold the Open Door in China.

¹²An account of the growth of American business interests at the turn of the century is given in Fred H. Harrington, God, Mammon, and the Japanese: Dr. Horace N. Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1944), pp. 144-88.

At the turn of the century one of the main concerns of the United States in East Asia was Russia's growing Asian presence. Russia had advanced southward into the Pacific through Manchuria, China, and Korea. Japan and Great Britain were also concerned with Russian expansion and concluded the first Anglo-Japanese naval treaty on January 20, 1902. In the treaty, they agreed to guarantee the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China and Korea. They also agreed that, in the Far East, each member of the alliance should be neutral if the other were attacked by one other nation, but that each should aid the other if it were attacked by two or more nations. The treaty remained in force for five years.¹³

By the fall of 1903, Japanese leaders believed that the Russian influence in Manchuria must be removed even if it meant war. Otherwise, Russian power would spread over Korea and constitute an intolerable threat to Japan's security. In the negotiations with Russia in 1903, Japan found that the Russian government would agree to nothing that would recognize Chinese territorial integrity in Manchuria. Furthermore, the Japanese learned that Russia also insisted upon a "neutral zone" in North Korea, an area in which

¹³ Akagi, Japan's Foreign Relations, pp. 213-14. The Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902 was renewed in 1905 for ten years and again in 1911 for additional ten years. It was finally cancelled at the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-22.

Russian influence would probably prevail.¹⁴ On February 10, 1904, after six months of fruitless negotiations, Japan launched a surprise attack on Russian naval forces at Port Arthur.

During the Russo-Japanese War, President Theodore Roosevelt was strongly pro-Japanese and showed a willingness to recognize the Japanese control of Korea. When news came of the Japanese naval victory at Port Arthur, the president wrote to his son, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., "I was thoroughly well pleased with the Japanese victory, for Japan is playing our game."¹⁵ What pleased Roosevelt most was that Japan's victory indicated that Japan would likely establish itself as an effective counterbalance to Russian expansion in the Far East. He believed that Japan would defeat Russia in the war. During the last days of the war, he wrote to Cecil Spring-Rice in London that Japan would drive Russia out of East Asia.¹⁶

Two weeks after the war broke out, Japan began to squeeze from the Korean government the first set of treaty

¹⁴ Raymond A. Esthus, Theodore Roosevelt and Japan (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), pp. 13-22.

¹⁵ Elting E. Morison, ed., The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, 8 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951-54), 4:724.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 1233-34; Esthus, Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, p. 30.

rights that would legitimize, step by step, its domination of Korea. The Japanese forced the Korean emperor to sign an agreement on February 23, 1904, which gave Japan the legal ground to interfere in and supervise the internal affairs of Korea. Moreover, it allowed Japan to use Korean territory as a base for military operations against Russia.¹⁷ Before the end of the war, Japan pressured Korea into concluding three more treaties: the first, signed on August 19, 1904, stipulated that Korea should have Japanese advisers on financial and foreign affairs; the second, signed on August 22, required Korea to consult the Japanese government in advance before dealing with foreign powers; and the third treaty of April 1, 1905, obligated Korea to assign the control and administration of its postal, telegraph, and telephone services to the Japanese.¹⁸ Thus, during the Russo-Japanese War, Japan was highly successful in gaining control of several important functions of the Korean government.

Meanwhile, President Theodore Roosevelt realized that the United States could not interfere on Korea's behalf against Japan, because Korea "could not strike one blow in

¹⁷Conroy, Japanese Seizure of Korea, p. 332; Kim and Kim, Politics of Imperialism, pp. 121-22.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 123-24.

their own defense."¹⁹ "If peace should come now," the president opined, "Japan ought to have a protectorate over Korea."²⁰ He also agreed with the Japanese terms of peace "in so far as they include Japan having control over Korea"²¹ Having convinced himself that Korea would be gone at the end of the Russo-Japanese War, Roosevelt might have been prepared to exchange his recognition of Japanese domination of Korea for a Japanese pledge renouncing any aggressive designs on the Philippines and supporting the Open Door in China. Consequently, he approved the Taft-Katsura memorandum of July 29, 1905, which recognized Japan's "suzerainty" over Korea.²²

Great Britain was also anxious to make a diplomatic deal with Japan before the end of the Russo-Japanese War. In August 1905, Britain renewed its alliance with Japan and recognized Japan's status in Korea in return for a Japanese

¹⁹Morison, Roosevelt Letters, 4:1112.

²⁰Ibid., p. 1116.

²¹Ibid., p. 1162.

²²Ibid., p. 1293. The text of the memorandum is printed in Tyler Dennett, "President Roosevelt's Secret Pact with Japan," Current History 21 (1924):15-18. Raymond A. Esthus, "The Taft-Katsura Agreement: Reality or Myth?" Journal of Modern History 31 (1959):46-51, argues that the memorandum was not a "secret pact" or agreement, but simply an "exchange of views." Jongsuk Chay, "The Taft-Katsura Memorandum Reconsidered," Pacific Historical Review 37 (1968):321-26, claims that the memorandum amounted to an understanding that was "more than a mere exchange of views."

assurance of cooperation in British India.²³ Great Britain and the United States appeared to be competing for a chance to make a diplomatic bargain with Japan over Korea.

Through the mediation of Theodore Roosevelt, the Russo-Japanese War ended in a victory for Japan. The protagonists signed a peace treaty at Portsmouth, New Hampshire on September 5, 1905. In the treaty, as expected, Russia agreed to leave Korea to Japan. On November 17, about two months after the end of the war, Japan established a protectorate over Korea, thereby taking over the full direction and administration of Korean foreign affairs.²⁴ Korea cancelled all its treaties with the other nations, which recalled their representatives from Seoul. Simultaneously Japan's international agreements were extended to include Korea. The United States was one of the nations withdrawing its legation from Seoul. The act terminated diplomatic relations that had started only twenty-three years earlier. A. Whitney Griswold noted that a balance of power in Manchuria, the security of the Philippines, and the inability of Korea to stand alone had impelled the United States to adopt this policy of disregard for the Korean people.²⁵

²³Akagi, Japan's Foreign Relations, p. 270.

²⁴Kim and Kim, Politics of Imperialism, p. 131.

²⁵A. Whitney Griswold, The Far Eastern Policy of the United States, 2nd edition (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 146-47.

The Korean emperor tried to make an appeal for help. He secretly sent a delegation to the Hague Peace Conference in 1907. Led by Yi Chun, the Korean delegation sought membership in the conference, but the conference delegates denied their request. Bitterly frustrated, Yi Chun committed suicide in the Hague. The Japanese responded to the emperor's appeal for help by forcing Korea into greater bondage. Emperor Kojong had to abdicate in July 1907, and his successor was a "very dull boy."²⁶ The Korean people still refused to submit to the Japanese protectorate. Insurrection erupted throughout the peninsula. Degraded yangban (old ruling elite) led many rebel groups in the rural areas. Teachers organized militant student groups, and newspapers encouraged revolt. The Japanese army ruthlessly suppressed the Korean riots. Unfortunately the worst still lay ahead. Korean youths murdered D. W. Stevens, a Japanese-appointed adviser on Korean foreign affairs, in San Francisco in 1908. Stevens was on a leave from Korea at the time. In October of the following year, An Chung-Gun, a Korean patriot, assassinated Ito Hirobumi. Ito was regarded as the personification of Japanese oppression. Two months later, Prime Minister Yi Wan-Yong of the puppet government

²⁶Conroy, Japanese Seizure of Korea, p. 363; Kim and Kim, Politics of Imperialism, pp. 146-47; Takashi Hatada, A History of Korea, trans. and ed. by Warren W. Smith and Benjamin H. Hazard (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-Clio Press, 1969), pp. 108-10.

was stabbed. All these expressions of the anti-Japanese feelings "threatened Japanese control of Korea to some extent and so contributed to the Japanese decision to annex the country."²⁷

Japan annexed Korea in August 1910 and made it an integral part of the Japanese empire. The annexation was a tragic end for Korean independence as well as for the Yi dynasty. Japan ruled Korea as a colony from 1910 until the end of World War II. During this period, Korea provided Japan with markets and much of its food requirements and natural resources. This enabled the Japanese to concentrate on their industrialization. Moreover, the Japanese completely ignored the rights of the Korean people and seized Korean lands without proper compensation. They formulated the political system for the primary purpose of the economic exploitation of Korea. They took other measures, such as the preemption of the Korean language by the Japanese language, to eliminate Korean nationalism. The Japanese also forced all Koreans to worship in Shinto shrines and to participate in the program for a Greater East Asia. Korean collaborators held government positions, and intellectuals were urged to speak in favor of Japanese expansion on the Asian continent. Koreans, of course, resented the Japanese

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 110-11.

colonial rule but could do little to overthrow it. Many of them therefore emigrated to Siberia, Manchuria, and China.²⁸

Nevertheless, the desire and aspiration for independence "never ceased to exist both as an organized movement and as a spiritual force in the life of the Korean people."²⁹ Korean nationalists at home and abroad made their attempts to regain Korean independence. President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the doctrine of national self-determination in his fourteen points of January 1918. Wilsonian self-determination, if it meant anything at the time, was intended to be applied to European countries, particularly to the territory of the defeated powers. But the impact of this principle upon Korean nationalism was of great significance in promoting the Korean independence movement at home and abroad. The principle of national self-determination became the guideline for Korean nationalists against Japanese imperialism, even though Wilson had not intended to stir up the Korean independence movement.

Koreans welcomed Wilsonian self-determination. Korean nationalists in China, Manchuria, and Siberia carried out

²⁸ Louise Yim, My Forty Years Fight for Korea (New York: A. A. Wyn, 1951), pp. 90-99; George M. McCune and Arthur L. Grey, Jr., Korea Today (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 25-27. See also G. Trumbull Ladd, "The Annexation of Korea: An Essay in Benevolent Assimilation," Yale Review, New Series, 1 (1912):639-59.

²⁹ McCune and Grey, Korea Today, p. 27.

various activities for their independence movement. Korean students in Japan also responded to Wilson's pronouncement. They organized the Korean Youth Corps in January 1919 and through it continued their struggle for Korean independence. In the United States the Korean nationalists numbered about 6,000. They had already been organized into the Korean National Association. They had appealed to Wilson for his good offices in securing self-government for the Korean people at the Paris peace conference. Syngman Rhee and Henry Chung of the Korean National Association sought passports from the State Department to represent Korea at the Paris peace conference. The State Department refused to issue passports because they were "subjects of Japan" and should therefore obtain passports from the Japanese authorities.³⁰

News of Korean nationalist activities abroad inspired the leaders in Korea, and a big day in the Korean independence movement came on March 1, 1919. Under the leadership of Son Pyong-He, hundreds of thousands of Korean people participated in the so-called March First Movement through-

³⁰ Details on Korean nationalist activities in China, Manchuria, and Siberia before 1920 can be found in Dae-Sook Suh, The Korean Communist Movement, 1918-1948 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 4-24. For Koreans' response to Wilson's pronouncement in Japan and the United States, see Chong-Sik Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 102-05.

out the country. This movement is also known as the "Mansei Uprising." One of the significant features of this patriotic movement was the declaration of Korean independence, drawn up by the movement's thirty-three leaders. Mimeographed copies were rushed to all parts of Korea. The declaration referred to the Wilsonian principle of self-determination and urged the Japanese government to grant independence before Koreans obtain it through violent revolution. The Koreans hoped to win sympathy from the great powers and finally achieve their independence from Japan, but once again the United States was indifferent to the Korean independence movement and treated Korea as a part of the Japanese empire. The State Department instructed the American ambassador in Japan to inform the consulate in Seoul "not to encourage any belief that the United States will assist the Korean nationalists in carrying out their plans." Moreover, the dispatch stated that the consul "should not do anything which may cause Japanese authorities to suspect [that] American government sympathizes with [the] Korean nationalist movement."³¹

The Japanese ruthlessly suppressed the "Mansei Uprising," but the independence movement continued both inside and outside the country. Inside Korea, under heavy Japanese

³¹Quoted in U.S.-Korean Relations, pp. 55-56.

surveillance, the movement went underground. Outside Korea, most of the organized groups supported the Korean provisional government in Shanghai, which had been formed in 1919. Under this government-in-exile, an independent army was formed to wage a guerrilla campaign against Japan. Some of the Korean exiles in Shanghai also received Russian aid. As a result, a Korean Communist party was organized in Seoul in 1925. Kim Il-Sung, now premier of North Korea, headed a Communist group in Manchuria.³²

The Korean provisional government remained in Shanghai until the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. As the Japanese control over China expanded, it was moved first to Nanking, then to Hankow, and finally to Chungking. Immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Korean provisional government in Chungking declared war on Japan, and many Koreans fought side by side with the Chinese in Manchuria and China. Meanwhile, the Korean independence organizations in the United States decided to support the Korean provisional government in China and to set up a Korean Commission to bring Korea's urgent desire for independence to the attention of the Western nations. The Korean Commission, with Syngman Rhee in charge, remained active until Korea's liberation in 1945.

³²Woo-Keun Han, The History of Korea (Seoul: Eul-Yoo Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 477-80; Hatada, Korea, pp. 128-30.

Korea in Allied Wartime Diplomacy

After the Japanese annexation of Korea, the United States had not been in position to encourage the leaders of the Korean independence movement because of its friendly relations with Japan. The United States remained apathetic about Korean independence. With the Pearl Harbor attack, however, the United States assumed that the defeat of Japan would bring freedom to Korea as well as to the other subjugated countries of Asia. A forgotten nation since 1910, Korea reemerged as a separate entity, but the United States did not agonize over the problem of Korean independence. Nevertheless, Korean nationalists and the Chinese people both hailed the American entry into the Pacific War. Convinced of an eventual American victory, the Korean people awaited the destruction of the Japanese empire and their liberation from the thirty-five years of Japanese colonial rule.

In early 1942, Korean nationalists launched an all-out campaign to advance their cause of independence and to seek recognition of their provisional government in Chungking by the United States. Syngman Rhee, chairman of the Korean Commission in Washington, D.C., arranged for the provisional government to send him a formal declaration of war against Japan to present to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Rhee thought American recognition of the Korean provisional

government would follow, but, instead, the United States treated the act with caution.³³ The American response indicated that the Korean independence movement was not to be given a high priority in the United States. The United States did not recognize any single Korean organization as the primary instrument for attaining Korean independence.³⁴ Besides Korean nationalists, Chiang K'ai-shek also requested American recognition of the Korean provisional government in Chungking "without delay," but the United States hesitated to accept the Chinese suggestion because of "the lack of unity existing among Korean groups and the possibility that the groups now existing outside of Korea have little association with the Korean population in Korea."³⁵

Preoccupied with the prosecution of other wartime issues, the American government had little time to plan for

³³ Robert T. Oliver, Syngman Rhee: The Man Behind the Myth (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1954), p. 175. Details on the strenuous efforts of the Korean provisional government to gain its recognition from the United States can be found in U.S. Department of State, "Korea," Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, Vol. 1: General, The British Commonwealth, The Far East (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), pp. 858-81. Hereafter Foreign Relations volumes are cited as FR with the year and volume number or special subtitle.

³⁴ Berle to Syngman Rhee, February 19, 1942, *ibid.*, p. 862.

³⁵ Hull to President Roosevelt, April 29, 1942, *ibid.*, p. 873; Hull to U.S. ambassador in China, May 1, 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 873-75.

the future independence of Korea. Moreover, Korea was not important to American military strategy. America's first priority was to defeat Germany, not Japan. Rhee and other Korean exiles, however, kept on appealing to the United States for recognition of their provisional government as well as for military and financial assistance. On March 27, 1943, when President Roosevelt met with British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, they exchanged views on the postwar status of Korea. Roosevelt suggested that Korea be placed under an international trusteeship of the major powers. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who also participated in the discussion, interpreted Eden's reaction to this suggestion to be "favorable."³⁶

For nearly two years after Pearl Harbor, there was no announced American policy regarding Korean independence. American policy on the future status of Korea was announced, for the first time, in the Cairo Declaration of December 1, 1943. The United States government arranged for the Cairo conference between Roosevelt, Chiang K'ai-shek, and Winston Churchill. Roosevelt wanted to use the conference to prop

³⁶Hull Memorandum of Conversation, March 27, 1943, FR, 1943, 3:36-38; Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1948), 2:1234-36, 1595-96. See also Herbert Feis, Churchill-Roosevelt-Stalin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 124; and Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, On Active Service in Peace and War (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), pp. 599-600.

up the prestige of Chiang's regime and to discuss the post-war status of Asia.³⁷ For his part, Chiang needed a diplomatic success to offset his weak performance in the war. At the meeting, Chiang was promised all the Chinese territory previously lost to Japan, including Formosa, Manchuria, and the Pescadores. In the Cairo Declaration that was issued at the end of the conference, the Big Three jointly declared that "mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea," they were "determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent."³⁸ This declaration implied a formal American commitment to eventually secure Korean independence.

The original text of the Cairo Declaration drafted by Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's special assistant, was quite different. The draft he prepared on November 24, 1943, stated that Korea would become independent "at the earliest possible moment." Roosevelt, however, revised the phrase to "at the proper moment" when Hopkins submitted the text to him. Finally, the revised draft was given to Churchill. The British prime minister substituted the words "in due

³⁷ Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), p. 773; Soon-Sung Cho, Korea in World Politics, 1940-1950 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 17-18.

³⁸ U.S.-Korean Relations, p. 58. The text of the Cairo Declaration is printed in Han-Kyo Kim, ed., Reunification of Korea: 50 Basic Documents (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Asian Studies, 1972), p. 1.

course" for "at the proper moment."³⁹ Roosevelt did not advise Secretary Hull of the changes before releasing the Cairo Declaration. Hull "learned from other sources than the President" what had occurred at the Cairo conference.⁴⁰ Hull later wrote in his memoirs that he thought the phrase "in due course" was unwise and unfortunate because the Korean people wanted their independence immediately after Japan's defeat, not in due course, and he "feared that their country would be placed under the control of China."⁴¹

The phrase "in due course" gave cause for considerable concern to the Koreans who were looking forward to immediate independence. Although the Cairo communique implied the expulsion of the Japanese from Korea, there was no agreement as to whether Korea would be granted independence immediately or only after a period of international trusteeship. Korean nationalists in China expressed their fears of China's intentions towards Korea and requested an interpretation of the phrase "in due course" from American officials.⁴² From the United States, Syngman Rhee issued a

³⁹For details on the evolution of the Cairo Declaration, see FR: *Conferences at Cairo and Teheran*, 1943. pp. 248-61, 399-404.

⁴⁰Hull, *Memoirs*, 2:1110.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 1584.

⁴²Gauss to Secretary of State, December 7, 1943, FR, 1943, 3:1096.

series of statements condemning the phrase and sent letters to Roosevelt and the State Department asking for a clarification of America's intention. Neither Roosevelt nor the State Department responded to Rhee's letters.⁴³

The ambiguous phrase "in due course" has no exact equivalent in the Korean language. The Korean provisional government in Chungking translated the phrase as "immediately" or "within a few days." Thousands of copies of the Cairo Declaration containing the erroneous translation were smuggled into Korea and circulated throughout the country. The United States was unaware of this misinformation until September 1945, when American troops landed in Korea.⁴⁴ They found that most Koreans believed the United States had promised them almost immediate independence and self-government upon the surrender of Japan.⁴⁵

The Russian view of the postwar status of Korea was not clear until Roosevelt met Marshal Stalin at Teheran, just before the release of the Cairo Declaration. Along with the much publicized discussion of Russian participation in the Pacific War, Roosevelt suggested to Stalin that Korea would

⁴³Oliver, Syngman Rhee, p. 190.

⁴⁴Benninghoff to Secretary of State, September 15, 1945, FR, 1945, 6:1049-53.

⁴⁵Yim, Fight for Korea, p. 223; E. Grant Meade, American Military Government in Korea (New York: King's Crown Press, 1951), p. 44.

"need some period of apprenticeship before full independence might be attained, perhaps forty years."⁴⁶ Stalin tentatively agreed to the idea of an international trusteeship.⁴⁷ Korean nationalists strongly opposed the idea of an international trusteeship. Even before the Cairo-Teheran conferences, Syngman Rhee wrote President Roosevelt that "all Koreans desire absolute independence only and therefore are opposed to any understanding or suggestion concerning postwar international guardship [sic] of Korea."⁴⁸

American commitment to the independence of Korea, however, was conditional, and the United States regarded the Korean question as only a peripheral phase of the broader international issues of the postwar world. In Korea's case, everything depended upon the course of the war and the cooperation of the Allied powers. Although the Cairo Declaration had committed the United States to participate in postwar Korean activities, American policy makers did not want sole responsibility for the Korean trusteeship.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, p. 777.

⁴⁷U.S.-Korean Relations, p. 10; Minutes of the Pacific War Council Meeting, January 14, 1944, FR: Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, 1943, p. 869.

⁴⁸Rhee to President Roosevelt, May 15, 1943, FR, 1943, 3:1093.

⁴⁹Memorandum of the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East, May 4, 1944, FR, 1944, 5:1235-36.

A State Department briefing paper for Roosevelt's use at the Yalta conference stressed the desire to avoid a zonal arrangement in favor of a multi-national centralized administration. Such an arrangement, the State Department believed, would avoid the "serious political repercussions" inherent in a single power occupation.⁵⁰ At Yalta, the United States had no illusions about what the Soviet Union wanted in the Far East. The Russians had long made this clear. The Soviet Union desired the Kuriles, southern Sakhalin, and special railroad and port concessions in Manchuria. At the Yalta conference, the Russians also promised to enter the war against Japan after Germany's defeat.

American military planners were anxious to have the Russians share the burden of the final conquest of the Japanese empire. The Joint Chiefs of Staff estimated that even with Russian help it would take eighteen months after the defeat of Germany and cost at least 500,000 American casualties to subdue the Japanese.⁵¹ Russian entry into the Pacific War, therefore, was highly important to the United States. American policy makers believed that some form of agreement on participation had to be reached and

⁵⁰Postwar Status of Korea, Briefing Book Paper, FR: Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945, pp. 358-60.

⁵¹William D. Leahy, I Was There (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), p. 260; Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1955-56), 1:265.

that Russia's traditional interest in Korea made it almost mandatory that it be included, whether it joined the war against Japan or not. The State Department briefing paper for the Yalta conference suggested the possibility that an interim international trusteeship be established in Korea, either within or beyond the framework of the United Nations, and that the United States, Russia, Britain, and China be included in the trusteeship.⁵² However, evidence indicates that Roosevelt never got around to reading this document.⁵³

America's main objective at the Yalta conference was to complete plans for the Russian entry into the Pacific War. So the discussion of Korea was limited to one brief exchange between Roosevelt and Stalin. On February 8, 1945, Roosevelt expressed a desire to see a trusteeship, of perhaps twenty to thirty years in duration, set up in Korea. The trusteeship he proposed was to be composed of the United States, China, and Russia. He also stated that the only experience the United States had in such matters was in the Philippines. Roosevelt added that the Filipinos took about forty years to prepare for self-government, but in case of Korea, the period might be from twenty to thirty years.

⁵²Briefing Book Paper, FR: Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945, pp. 359-61. See also *ibid.*, p. 770.

⁵³James F. Byrnes, Speaking Frankly (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), p. 23.

Stalin agreed with Roosevelt's idea but said that "the shorter the period the better." He was not receptive, however, to Roosevelt's suggestion that Great Britain be excluded from the trusteeship since he believed Churchill's resentment would be strong and that Britain should be included in the Korean trusteeship.⁵⁴ Except for this oral exchange of opinions between Roosevelt and Stalin, there was no formal agreement at Yalta on the postwar status of Korea. Syngman Rhee and other Korean exiles were unhappy about Roosevelt's handling of the Korean question at Yalta. Roosevelt's idea of trusteeship, however, seemed to reflect a desire to prepare the Korean people for self-government on the basis of American experience in the Philippines.

Although the Yalta conference did not produce any formal agreement on Korea, it had considerable significance for Korea's future. Stalin's promise to enter the war against Japan meant that the Soviet Union would have an important role in determining the future of the Japanese empire. While the terms of Russian entry into the Pacific War did not mention Korea, they did provide for Russia's pre-1905 rights in Manchuria, and consequently must have

⁵⁴ Bohlen Minutes, February 8, 1945, FR: Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945, p. 770; Max Beloff, Soviet Policy in the Far East, 1944-1951 (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 155; Cho, Korea in World Politics, pp. 31-34; Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, p. 868.

suggested by analogy that the Soviet Union would later assert the historic Russian interest in the future of Korea as well.⁵⁵ Korean exiles suspected that some sort of deal had been arranged at Yalta, and they grew increasingly restive. They particularly resented America's non-recognition of the Korean provisional government. But the United States continued to refuse to grant it recognition and strongly opposed issuing an invitation to attend the United Nations meeting in San Francisco.⁵⁶ In the week after the Yalta conference, Syngman Rhee wrote the State Department of his fear that the Soviet Union might advance into Korea with its Korean Communist army and establish a government under a "Korean Liberation Committee." The State Department believed that Rhee's fear was unsubstantiated, and the Far Eastern Division recommended that Rhee's letter not be answered.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Truman, Memoirs, 1:265-66; Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., Roosevelt and the Russians (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1949), pp. 327-30. The terms of Russian entry into the Pacific War can be found in U.S. Senate, A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941-1949 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), pp. 33-34.

⁵⁶Grew to U.S. ambassador in China, February 20 and March 20, 1945, FR, 1945, 6:1022, 1024-25; Grew to U.S. chargé in China, April 9, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 1025.

⁵⁷Grew to U.S. ambassador in China, March 20, 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 1024-25; Footnote 23, *ibid.*, p. 1026. See also Rhee's letters, *ibid.*, pp. 1027-29.

Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945. His death was undoubtedly a great blow to the nation and to the Allies. The inexperienced new president, Harry S. Truman, however, revived the Allied confidence when he promptly announced that the San Francisco conference would take place as scheduled on April 25, 1945. Truman knew that there was no formal agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union with regard to the Korean trusteeship. Therefore, he asked Harry Hopkins to include the Korean question in the conversations he held with Stalin in late May and early June 1945. To Hopkins' satisfaction, Stalin on May 28 "fully agreed with the desirability of a four-power trusteeship for Korea."⁵⁸ In the course of the same conversations, Stalin also expressed a desire for an occupation zone in Japan, a desire duly transmitted by Hopkins to Truman, who evaluated it in the light of his growing dissatisfaction with Russian policy in Germany and Eastern Europe.⁵⁹

Stalin also had conversations with the visiting Chinese foreign minister, T. V. Soong, in Moscow in early July 1945. A report from W. Averell Harriman, the U.S. ambassador in Moscow, gave some indication of Stalin's thinking about

⁵⁸Memorandum of Conversation, May 28, 1945, FR: Conference of Berlin (Potsdam), 1945, 1:47; Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, p. 903.

⁵⁹Beloff, Soviet Policy, p. 108; Truman, Memoirs, 1: 265.

Korea at the time. "As to Korea," Harriman reported, "Stalin confirmed to Soong his agreement to establishing a four-power trusteeship. Molotov interjected that this was an unusual agreement with no parallel and that it would be necessary to come to a detailed understanding." Stalin said that "there should be no foreign troops or foreign policy in Korea."⁶⁰ Harriman went on to report that Soong understood that the Soviet Union had two Korean divisions in Siberia. Soong also believed that these Russian troops would be left in Korea and that there would be Soviet-trained political personnel who would also be brought into the country. Under these conditions, Harriman said, Soong was fearful that even with an international trusteeship the Russians would dominate Korean affairs.⁶¹

Soong's pessimistic forecast cannot be taken as a well-informed evaluation of Russian plans for Korea in the summer of 1945, just before the Potsdam conference. However, the Russian estimate of the postwar Korean situation might have included a four-power trusteeship, a brief period of occupation followed by the withdrawal of all foreign troops, and the establishment of a Korean provisional government in which Russian-trained Korean Communists would have a favorable chance to win power. In any case, the Russian position

⁶⁰Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 316-17.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 317.

on the Korean situation was kept secret, because Russia had not yet declared war on Japan. The Soviet Union did not officially become a party to the Cairo Declaration until after it committed itself to the Potsdam Declaration.

In his dispatches from Moscow, Ambassador Harriman urged that the Allies undertake the discussion of the Korean trusteeship at once.⁶² Other American policy makers continued to be apprehensive about Russian attempts to set up "friendly" regimes. They still felt that a Korean trusteeship offered the best alternative to unilateral action.⁶³ Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson was one of the concerned individuals. He specifically warned the president that even though Stalin urged that no foreign troops be stationed in Korea, the Russians had already trained one or two divisions of Korean natives, which Stimson assumed would be used in Korea. Stimson also feared that regardless of whether or not there was a trusteeship, the Russians would "probably gain control [in Korea] and influence the setting up of a Soviet dominated local government rather than an independent one." He nonetheless recommended that the trusteeship be established and that "at least a token force of American

⁶²Document 203, FR: Conference of Berlin (Potsdam), 1945, 1:234.

⁶³Briefing Book Papers, Memoranda, and Notes, *ibid.*, pp. 310-15, 926-29.

soldiers or marines be stationed in Korea during the trusteeship."⁶⁴

Despite Stimson's warning and recommendation, the Korean trusteeship problem received scant attention at Potsdam. During the session of July 22, 1945, Soviet Foreign Minister V. M. Molotov asked for an exchange of views on the Korean question. The issue was quickly side-tracked to a discussion of Russian desire for a trusteeship over the former Italian territories in North Africa.⁶⁵ As reported by Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, Stalin's concept of trusteeship was simply a desire for territory.⁶⁶ The only concrete result of the discussion was an agreement that trusteeship matters should be referred to the Council of Foreign Ministers.⁶⁷

At Potsdam, most of the Allied discussions of Korea involved planning military operations. In the July 24 session, the Russians learned that the United States had no immediate plans for the occupation of Korea. During this meeting, General A. I. Antonov, Soviet chief of staff,

⁶⁴Document 732, July 16, 1945, *ibid.*, 2:631.

⁶⁵Thompson and Cohen Notes, *ibid.*, pp. 244-68; Leahy, I Was There, p. 408.

⁶⁶Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, p. 76.

⁶⁷Notes on July 22 Meeting, FR: Conference of Berlin (Potsdam), 1945, 2:252-53, 264.

wanted to know if the United States would operate against the shores of Korea in coordination with Russian forces. General George C. Marshall, the U.S. chief of staff, replied that "such amphibious operations had not been contemplated, and particularly not in the near future." Marshall said he realized the importance of Korea to the Russians, but felt that the best American aid would take the form of air attacks.⁶⁸ On July 26, the Soviet and American leaders discussed establishing zones of operations in the Sea of Japan and on the Asian mainland. Marshall asked for a division of naval operations beginning at the 38th parallel on the Korean coast and running easterly between northern Hokkaido and southern Sakhalin. The Pentagon also proposed the same line for air attacks, except that it would cross the northern tip of Korea and go on into Asia. The Russians proposed, and the Americans accepted, a line approximately the same as the second one for both activities.⁶⁹ American forces were to operate south of, and Russian forces to the north of this line. No line was set up for land operations since the United States did not expect to carry out such operations in

⁶⁸Notes on July 24 Meeting, *ibid.*, pp. 344-53.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 408-17; U.S. Department of Defense, Entry of the Soviet Union Into the War Against Japan: Military Plan, 1941-1945 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), pp. 92-104; Truman, Memoirs, 1:382-83.

Korea.⁷⁰ Admiral William D. Leahy, Truman's chief of staff, described the entire series of meetings at Potsdam as very friendly.⁷¹

On the same day (July 26), the United States and Great Britain issued the Potsdam Declaration. The Declaration demanded Japan's unconditional surrender and reaffirmed the Cairo Declaration that called for Korean independence "in due course."⁷² The Soviet Union did not sign the Potsdam Declaration, since it was not yet at war with Japan, but when the Russians entered the war on August 8, they formally endorsed it and thus associated themselves with the pledge of eventual Korean independence.⁷³ Although the Korean problem received scant attention at Potsdam, the Allied agreements were of great importance for Korea's future. The Russian promise to enter the Pacific War and Marshall's indication of American unpreparedness to occupy Korea left the peninsula open to Russian influence.⁷⁴ World War II

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 383.

⁷¹Leahy, I Was There, pp. 415-16.

⁷²The text of the Potsdam Declaration is printed in Truman, Memoirs, 1:390-92; and U.S. Senate, Basic Documents, p. 50.

⁷³For the text of Russian declaration of war on Japan, see U.S. Department of State, The Record on Korean Unification, 1943-1960, Far Eastern Series 101 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), pp. 43-44.

⁷⁴Cho, Korea in World Politics, pp. 43-45.

ended shortly after the conclusion of the Potsdam conference. The United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. The second bomb struck Nagasaki three days later. Almost simultaneously, the first Russian troops went into action in Manchuria. On August 15, the Japanese surrendered. The day marked the conclusion of thirty-five years of Japanese rule in Korea.

As has been shown, by war's end, the United States, Great Britain, China and the Soviet Union were openly committed to Korean independence. The abrupt end of the war caught the United States unprepared. The United States quickly had to decide what it was going to do in Korea. The Russian presence in northern Korea was ominous. Either the United States would allow the peninsula to fall by default to Russia, or it would be necessary to divide the country into zones, obtain Russian acceptance of them, and then dispatch an occupation force. Ultimately, American policy makers decided to divide Korea into American and Russian zones of occupation for the purpose of receiving the surrender of the Japanese troops on the peninsula.

The Thirty-Eighth Parallel

The American decision to divide Korea at the 38th parallel was an unfortunate result of World War II. During the feverish days of August 10-15, 1945, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee held long sessions to coordinate and

make decisions concerning Japan's surrender. The subject of Korea was discussed at a meeting on the night of August 10-11. The State Department had suggested that American forces receive the Japanese surrender as far north as possible. Faced with a lack of forces for Korea, the military leaders pointed out that it would be difficult to reach very far north into Korea before Russian troops entered the area. According to Dean Rusk, who then was a colonel in the War Department, "the military view was that if our proposals for receiving surrender greatly overreached our probable military capabilities, there would be little likelihood of Soviet acceptance."⁷⁵

Rusk and Colonel Charles H. Bonesteel III, chief of the Policy Planning Section of the War Department, were asked to come up with an immediate proposal which would "harmonize the political desire to have the United States receive the surrender as far north as possible and the obvious limitation on the ability of the United States forces to reach the area." According to Rusk, the 38th parallel was selected as the most natural point of division because it was believed important to include Korea's capital in the American zone, even though it was further north than American troops could reach in the event of Russian disagreement. Bonesteel

⁷⁵Rusk to Chief of the Division of Historical Policy Research, July 12, 1950, FR, 1945, 6:1039.

believed that the primary consideration was to get as far north as the Russians would accept. Consequently, the 38th parallel was proposed as dividing line, because it cut Korea almost in the middle and gave Seoul to the United States.⁷⁶

The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee considered the proposal in the early morning hours of August 11, 1945. The Navy suggested moving the line to the 39th parallel, but the Army thought such a move would be unacceptable to the Russians as it would bar them from Dairen, Port Arthur, and the other ports of the Liaotung peninsula. Assistant Secretary of State James C. Dunn felt that Korea was more important politically to the United States than Manchuria. Thus, the 38th parallel was subsequently used in the General Order No. 1, which defined areas of responsibility for accepting the surrender of all Japanese military forces in Korea. To Rusk's surprise, the Soviet Union accepted the dividing line.⁷⁷

Truman later wrote in his memoirs that the 38th parallel was intended to be only a temporary dividing line to be used to accept the Japanese surrender prior to establishment

⁷⁶Ibid.; James F. Schnabel, Policy and Direction: The First Year (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1972), p. 9.

⁷⁷Ibid.; FR, 1945, 6:1040; Dong-A Ilbo, 15 August 1970; Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), p. 449. See also Arthur L. Grey, Jr., "The Thirty-Eighth Parallel," Foreign Affairs 29 (1951):482-87.

of a joint trusteeship throughout the Korean peninsula.⁷⁸ But it was an expedient which ignored long-range questions concerning occupation policy. From the American point of view, the line was probably a better deal than could have gained through military means. The United States was also assured of an opportunity to uphold the Cairo Declaration of 1943. The Soviet Union, unsure of how the United States would react and wanting to maintain Allied cooperation, accepted the division of authority in Korea.⁷⁹ Regardless of the motives behind the proposal and acceptance of the 38th parallel as a line of demarcation, it was a fateful decision because it resulted in a permanent political barrier. If there had been no division, however, the Russians probably could have overrun most of the country before the American troops arrived. The line of division thus limited the area of Communist control.

Japan's sudden collapse allowed little time for the proper preparation of occupation troops. General Joseph Stilwell's 10th Army was to occupy Korea, but Chiang K'ai-shek's objections to his old antagonist and transportation difficulties caused the shift of the responsibility to Lieutenant General John R. Hodge and his 24th Corps in

⁷⁸Truman, Memoirs, 2:317.

⁷⁹Cho, Korea in World Politics, pp. 55-56; Beloff, Soviet Policy, p. 156; Grey, "The Thirty-Eighth Parallel," p. 486.

Okinawa.⁸⁰ Under General Order No. 1 issued by General Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander of the Allied Powers in the Pacific, Hodge was to occupy Korea up to the 38th parallel while his Russian counterpart, Colonel General Ivan Chistiakov, was to accept the Japanese surrender north of that line. A native of Golconda, Illinois, General Hodge had compiled a distinguished combat record in the Ryukyus, Okinawa, Leyte, and the Philippine Islands. He was well-prepared to lead a military invasion, but not to direct the military occupation and administration of Korea.⁸¹

General Hodge's instructions were meager and ambiguous. From Manila, where he was waiting for formal orders to enter Korea, he cabled the State Department, near the end of August 1945, that he had not received any directive regarding the scope of his duties in Korea. General Hodge concluded that MacArthur's General Order No. 1 was the initial plan to be utilized for the administration of Korea. This meant that the American commander would use Japanese Governor-

⁸⁰Gregory Henderson, Korea: The Politics of Vortex (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 123; Footnote 32, *ibid.*, p. 416; Barbara Tuchman, Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945 (New York: Macmillan Co., 1971), pp. 520-21.

⁸¹John R. Hodge File, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo.; Robert K. Sawyer, Military Advisers in Korea: KMAG in War and Peace (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1962), pp. 3-4; William J. Lederer, A Nation of Sheep (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), p. 70.

General Abe Nobuyuki and his staff temporarily in order to facilitate the orderly takeover of the civil government. Hodge asked for an immediate directive on Korea.⁸² But he received no directives prior to the arrival of the American troops in Korea on September 8, 1945. Therefore, General Hodge used MacArthur's directive. Hodge's duties were to enforce the Japanese surrender, maintain order for an effective government, and train the Korean people for self-government.⁸³ Hodge's staff, however, had only a few men trained in civil affairs and no one who was an expert on Korea. In addition, Hodge possessed no adequate information regarding conditions in South Korea. Korea was little more than a place on the map to the great majority of the American occupation army. "Despite ignorance of their duties and their lack of background," the occupation authorities "were charged with the execution of vital American policies."⁸⁴

On September 9, 1945, General Hodge accepted the formal surrender of all Japanese forces south of the 38th parallel

⁸²Richard E. Lauterbach, Danger from the East (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), pp. 197-99; Steintorf to Secretary of State, August 26, 1945, FR, 1945, 6:1041.

⁸³MacArthur's General Order No. 1, signed September 2, 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 1043-44.

⁸⁴Henderson, Korea, pp. 124-25; Meade, American Military Government, pp. 51-52.

and took over command from Governor-General Nobuyuki.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, on August 12, almost a month before the arrival of the American forces, the Russians began their military operations against the Japanese in Korea.⁸⁶ Some 150,000 Soviet troops under the command of General Ivan Chistiakov marched into North Korea and, throughout the period of occupation, carried out an intensive policy of communizing North Korea and building a strong native Communist government. They forced the people of northern Korea to accept a regimented political regime and a socialist economic system.⁸⁷

The primary objective of the occupation forces was to demobilize the Japanese forces in Korea and liquidate the Japanese administration. The former turned out to be almost a routine task, but the latter was difficult, since it carried with it the necessity of substituting another regime for the Japanese administration. The occupation forces

⁸⁵ Dong-A Ilbo, 10 September 1945; U.S. Department of State, Korea's Independence, Far Eastern Series 18 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), p. 2.

⁸⁶ Grey, "The Thirty-Eighth Parallel," p. 483.

⁸⁷ John N. Washburn, "Russia Looks at North Korea," Pacific Affairs 20 (1947):152-60; U.S. Department of State, North Korea: A Case Study in the Techniques of Takeover, Far Eastern Series 103 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 12-16; Dae-Sook Suh, "A Pre-conceived Formula for Sovietization: The Communist Takeover of North Korea," in Thomas T. Hammond, ed., The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 475-89.

completed the disarming of Japanese troops in Korea by the end of 1945, and all Japanese soldiers were out of the country. However, as Assistant Secretary of State Dunn had admitted, there was "no agreed United States view as to the character of administration of civil affairs in Korea" beyond the ardent hope that the administration of the American and Russian zones might be combined at an early date.⁸⁸

In the meantime, the seething unrest of the Korean people made the normal operation of government and the maintenance of law and order difficult. Koreans had expected immediate independence and bitterly resented the arbitrary division of their country into two zones of military occupation. Korean political activists kept the southern zone in a constant state of turmoil as they competed for position and favor with both their own people and the American occupation authorities. When the Japanese surrendered, the Korean people had no opportunity to create an internal organizational base with which to take over the country and build a new government. Japan's repressive control had prevented the development of any trained, native administrators and military leaders.⁸⁹

⁸⁸Dunn's Draft Memorandum, n.d., FR, 1945, 6:1037-38.

⁸⁹Sawyer, Military Advisers, pp. 5-7; Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, p. 221.

Due to the absence of trained Korean administrators and American distaste for the excitable behavior of the numerous Korean political parties that came into existence after the Japanese surrender, General Hodge's initial decision was to rely on the Japanese for help in maintaining law and order. This action caused considerable discontent among those Koreans who had expected the speedy expulsion of all Japanese. The State Department soon instructed General Hodge to remove the Japanese governor-general, other Japanese officials, and collaborationist Korean administrators.⁹⁰

A native Korean government that had been established just before the arrival of the American troops further complicated Hodge's task. Japanese Governor-General Nobuyuki helped to create this native government under the leadership of prominent Koreans who would safeguard Japanese lives and property. On August 15, the day of the Japanese surrender, Nobuyuki persuaded Lyuh Woon-Hyung, a famous patriot and one-time Communist, to form the Committee for Preparation of Korean Independence. Nobuyuki staffed this organization with many leftists, because he was unaware of the Allied plans for the division of Korea. He assumed that the Russians would occupy most of Korea. The committee soon gained the support of much of the Korean population. Its

⁹⁰ Ibid.; Memorandum by Acting Chairman of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, September 10, 1945, FR, 1945, 6:1044-45.

local branches were known as People's Committees.⁹¹ Pak Hon-Young, the most influential Communist leader in the south, helped to increase the Communist role in the People's Committees. He controlled the Communists within Lyuh's committee, claiming Soviet instructions to do so. Many of the non-Communist activists were eventually dismissed from the committee.⁹² Because of the dominant influence of the Korean Communist party throughout the country, the People's Committees were generally leftist leaning.⁹³

On September 6, 1945, two days before the arrival of the American occupation forces, the Committee for Preparation of Korean Independence called a People's Legislative Assembly of 1,000 delegates, which proclaimed itself the People's Republic of Korea.⁹⁴ In order to achieve a semblance of legitimacy, the People's Republic appointed

⁹¹Ki-Ha Yi, Hanguk Chongdang Baltal Sa (History of Korean Political Development) (Seoul: Uihoe Chongchi Sa, 1961), pp. 19-24, 39-50; Tae-Su Han, Hanguk Chongdang Sa, (History of Korean Political Parties) (Seoul: Shin Taeyang Sa, 1961), pp. 18-20, 38-44.

⁹²Bok-Sung Chang, Chosun Kongsan Dang Pajaeng Sa (History of the Factional Struggles of Korean Communist Party) (Seoul: Taeryuk Chulpan Sa, 1949), p. 49; Man-Ki Yi, Lyuh Woon-Hyung Sonseng Tujaeng Sa (History of the Honorable Lyuh Woon-Hyung's Struggle) (Seoul: Minju Munhwa Sa, 1946), pp. 156-57.

⁹³Robert A. Scalapino and Chong-Sik Lee, Communism in Korea, 2 parts (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 1:257.

⁹⁴Yi, Lyuh Woon-Hyung Sonseng, pp. 235-36.

Syngman Rhee its president. Other exiled leaders received cabinet posts. But all those named were abroad and could not function in their posts. Vice-ministers, who were mostly Communists, assumed their positions. Further, by the end of 1945, the Communists had formed enough other front organizations to enable themselves to be the prominent political force in Korea.⁹⁵ When General Hodge landed in Korea, the People's Republic presented itself as the government of Korea. Hodge immediately disavowed this government. He thought it did not adequately represent the Korean people. Moreover, his instructions did not allow him to recognize any group that challenged his authority. Hodge asserted that the U.S. military government was the only legal government in the American zone of occupation.⁹⁶

On September 13, 1945, five days after the American arrival in Korea, Major General A. V. Arnold was appointed the military governor of South Korea. General Hodge retained overall responsibility for the occupation.⁹⁷ The Russians, however, used local Korean People's Committees to rule their zone of occupation. Soviet occupation plans were

⁹⁵ Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea, 1:257, 268, 312; Henderson, Korea, p. 119; Cho, Korea in World Politics, pp. 68-69.

⁹⁶ Meade, American Military Government, p. 59; Lauterbach, Danger from the East, pp. 197-201.

⁹⁷ New York Times, 14 September 1945, p. 3.

the same as those of the United States, but they gained a tactical advantage by ruling through the already-existing local branches of the People's Republic. They did not establish a military government.⁹⁸ Hodge's refusal to recognize the native government led to the resignation of Lyuh Woon-Hyung, and Lyuh's departure left the People's Republic in the hands of more radical leftist members.⁹⁹

General Hodge's perception of the Korean situation was reflected in a memorandum to the State Department from his political adviser, H. Merrell Benninghoff. Benninghoff described Korea as a "powder-keg ready to explode," because the Korean people, expecting immediate independence, failed to understand the meaning of the term "in due course." The failure to gain their immediate independence had left them disappointed and agitated. Benninghoff reported that many Koreans had been on "a prolonged holiday since August 15, interpreting independence to mean freedom from work" at Japanese industrial establishments. There was no doubt, he continued, that Russian agents were spreading their ideology throughout South Korea, hoping to bring chaos and a repudiation of the American occupation in favor of "Soviet freedom and control." Benninghoff's report closed with Hodge's

⁹⁸ Suh, Korean Communist Movement, pp. 297-99; Cho, Korea in World Politics, p. 88.

⁹⁹ Han, Hanguk Chongdang Sa, p. 46. Lyuh later organized a new political party called the Korean People's Party.

recommendations. He suggested that Hodge's staff be upgraded, and that the Korean provisional government be returned to Korea to act as a figurehead government until the situation was stable enough to hold an election. Finally, Benninghoff requested detailed information on future American policy in Korea.¹⁰⁰

Initially, the State Department had considered Syngman Rhee and other prominent Korean exiles to be liabilities and had tried to prevent their return home, because they were fiery advocates of immediate independence.¹⁰¹ At Hodge's recommendation, however, the State Department dropped its objections to allowing Rhee and the other exiles to return to Korea as long as they would sign an affidavit to the effect that they would return home as individuals, not as a government. "Outright support of any one political group presently outside Korea is not contemplated," Acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson said, "but because of the chaotic conditions within Korea, elements having constructive ability and willing to work within the framework of military government are encouraged to enter and might be transported

¹⁰⁰ Benninghoff to Secretary of State, September 15, 1945, FR, 1945, 6:1049-53.

¹⁰¹ Won-Sun Yi, Ingan Yi Sung-Man (The Human Syngman Rhee) (Seoul: Shin Taeyang Sa, 1965), pp. 258-60; Oliver Syngman Rhee, pp. 210-12; Henderson, Korea, p. 128.

by airplanes controlled by the Army when space is available."¹⁰² Consequently, exiled Korean leaders returned home as private citizens before the end of 1945.

On September 29, 1945, Benninghoff dispatched a lengthy analysis of the political situation in Korea to the State Department. He described South Korea as politically divided into two distinct groups. The first was the democratic or conservative group, which included the professional and educational leaders trained in the United States or in American missionary schools in Korea. This group wished to follow the Western democracies and "almost unanimously" desired the early return of Syngman Rhee and the Chungking group. The second group was the radical or Communist group composed of several smaller groups from left-of-center to radical. Emphasizing that the Communist group provided most of the leadership, Benninghoff asserted that the attitude of the American occupation forces was one of "aloofness as long as peace and order is maintained." He was also concerned that little was known about what the Russians were doing in North Korea, beyond having ejected the Japanese and having set up local governments based on the Soviet system.¹⁰³

¹⁰²Acheson to U.S. chargé in China, Sep-ember 27, 1945, FR, 1945, 6:1060.

¹⁰³Benninghoff to Secretary of State, September 29, 1945, ibid., pp. 1061-65.

Meanwhile, the American military government moved to provide order to the chaotic political situation in South Korea. On October 5, 1945, General Hodge appointed an advisory council of eleven prominent Koreans headed by Kim Sung-Soo, a conservative rightist leader. The council was to give advice on political and economic matters and to build up in the consciousness of Koreans the feeling of participation in their government. Hodge wanted it clearly understood that the American military government under General A. V. Arnold was the sole authority south of the 38th parallel, and he implied that force would be used, if necessary, to stop activities designed to disturb peace and order.¹⁰⁴ Hodge's firm policy, which was a blow to the leftist elements, led to the rise of Korean conservatives in South Korean politics.

On October 10, 1945, Benninghoff sent an assessment of the Korean political situation to George Atcheson, MacArthur's political adviser in Tokyo. Benninghoff reported that strong evidence indicated that radical or Communist groups in South Korea were receiving "support and direction from the Soviet Union." The conservative group, he said, while less aggressive than the radicals, represented "the thought of the majority of thinking Koreans." Benninghoff

¹⁰⁴ Benninghoff to Acting Political Adviser in Japan, October 9, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 1069.

added that this group was willing to cooperate with the military government and realized that a period of trusteeship, preferably American, was necessary.¹⁰⁵ Thus, Benninghoff's assessment made it clear which group he wished the United States to support in Korea. Alarmed by reports from Seoul, Acheson urged the State Department to give up its policy of political aloofness in Korea and throw its support behind Syngman Rhee.¹⁰⁶

Acheson's recommendations marked a sharp break from previous American policy in Korea. But the time seemed to have come for positive American action in the Korean political field. Rhee was widely respected and could serve as an initial nucleus along with Kim Koo and Kimm Kiu-Sic, two other popular Korean leaders. While outright support of any one group or leader was contrary to the past American policy, the prevailing situation fully warranted such a step, because failure to do so would increase the American difficulties. If the United States did not act, the Communist group in North Korea with Soviet backing would profit, expanding its influence into South Korea.

¹⁰⁵Benninghoff to Acting Political Adviser in Japan, October 10, 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 1070-71.

¹⁰⁶Acheson to Secretary of State, October 15, 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 1091-92. Syngman Rhee returned to Korea aboard General MacArthur's personal plane on October 16, 1945. See also Henderson, Korea, pp. 128-29.

At about the time of Acheson's recommendations, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee issued a "Basic Initial Directive" for the administration of civil affairs in Korea. Washington sent the initial Korean policy directive to General Hodge on October 17, 1945. It advised the American commander that Korea should be developed progressively from the interim period of military government to a period of trusteeship, and finally to the establishment of a free and independent nation capable of joining the United Nations. Achievement of this goal would require the elimination of all traces of Japanese control over Korea and "eventual substitution of an independent Korean government, economy, and social institutions." In carrying out this policy, Japanese and Korean collaborationists could be used in "exceptional circumstances" on a temporary basis and only after informing the Korean people of the exceptional nature of their employment. Hodge was to encourage political parties and organizations, if their activities were consistent with the interests of the American military government. Finally, the directive warned Hodge not to extend official recognition to "any self-styled Korean provisional government or similar political organizations."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷The initial Korean policy directive is printed in FR, 1945, 6:1073-90.

General Hodge's subsequent actions seemed to favor Syngman Rhee over others. Rhee was Hodge's dinner guest on October 17, at which time the Korean leader was "outspoken" in his criticism of Russian policy. Secretary of State Byrnes, in his reply to Acheson's memorandum of October 15, 1945, expressed displeasure at this event, because he had not yet completely abandoned his hope of working with the Russians to preserve the postwar peace and to prevent the imposition of an iron curtain across the 38th parallel.¹⁰⁸ Despite the policy directive and Byrnes' remarks, General Hodge still believed that Communist activities in Korea were reaching the point "where they may gain control unless positive action is taken." The best response to this threat, in Hodge's opinion, was to utilize "the services of Rhee and Kim Koo to help screen additional Koreans to be brought to Korea," and to use them in responsible government positions. Hodge also noted that Rhee's presence appeared to have a favorable influence on consolidation of political parties. Hodge's views were transmitted, through MacArthur, to the Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall in Washington.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸Byrnes to Acting Political Adviser in Japan, October 25, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 1104.

¹⁰⁹Hodge to MacArthur, November 2, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 1106; MacArthur to Army Chief of Staff Marshall, November 5, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 1112.

The State Department, however, believed that any acts of favoritism would encourage the Soviet Union to take a similar course of action in its zone and would jeopardize the success of negotiations regarding the opening of the 38th parallel.¹¹⁰ So there existed policy differences between the State Department and the American military government in Korea. These differences were also reflected in attitudes toward cooperation with the Russians in Korea and the idea of trusteeship.

From the beginning of the occupation, General Hodge had little success in dealing with the Russians. The headquarters of the Soviet occupation forces were located in Pyongyang under the command of General Chistiakov. Hodge expected that an effective liaison with the Soviet commander would pave the way for a normal flow of goods, travel and communication between the two zones until more normal and complete arrangements could be made for a centralized administration of all Korea. But the Russians cooperated only slowly and grudgingly. They had also forcibly replaced "self-rule councils" in North Korea with Communist-dominated "People's Political Committees." Meanwhile, it became increasingly evident that any negotiations of importance would be futile at the military level. While some "small and

¹¹⁰Vincent Memorandum, November 7, 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 1113-14.

strictly military problems of a local nature" might be settled, it was unlikely that "fundamental matters involving questions of broad principle" would ever be discussed unless "negotiations at the highest levels in Washington and Moscow" brought instructions to the commanders in Korea.¹¹¹

The military dividing line between North and South Korea led to the occupation of border towns by both American and Russian troops to control the movement of civilian and military personnel across the boundary. This proved to be a difficult task because the boundary line lacked any topographical basis. Moreover, there was no mutual agreement on its exact location. Both American and Russian troops established roadblocks along the 38th parallel after their arrival in Korea. By the end of 1945, traffic in both directions was strictly curtailed and a series of incidents along the border became a source of irritation. But they were minor compared to the damage of economic dislocation created by the arbitrary division of the country. South Korea included the chief agricultural regions, but North Korea contained key mineral deposits, especially coal, as well as the country's industrial base and hydroelectric power. Yet the Soviet authorities had persistently rebuffed Hodge's efforts to initiate negotiations leading to an

¹¹¹ Benninghoff to Secretary of State, October 1, 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 1065-66.

economic and social unification of the country. As tension mounted between American and Russian forces, the two zones of occupation increasingly functioned as separate entities. The temporary line of the 38th parallel became almost an international barrier.¹¹²

In Washington, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee remained insistent on the point that General Hodge should try to attain the "maximum possible coordination with the Soviet Commander through liaison on a military level." The American policy sought to eliminate the zonal occupation as soon as possible in order to introduce a trusteeship. Rivalry among foreign powers for the control of Korea could develop once more unless the four major powers reached prompt agreement on the form of Korean trusteeship.¹¹³ On November 3, 1945, Secretary of State Byrnes wrote Ambassador Harriman in Moscow that the 38th parallel had become a "closed border," leading to a great disruption in Korean national life. Byrnes instructed Harriman to seek an agreement that would lead to the regular delivery of coal and electric power, the resumption of rail traffic and coastwide

¹¹²U.S. Department of State, The Record on Korean Unification, pp. 4-5; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, pp. 52-60, 93-120; Carl Berger, The Korea Knot: A Military-Political History, 2nd edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), p. 56; Beloff, Soviet Policy, p. 159.

¹¹³Report by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Subcommittee for the Far East, October 20, 22, and 24, 1945, FR, 1945, 6:1094-1103.

shipping, the adoption of uniform fiscal policies, the orderly settlement of displaced persons, including Japanese, and the resumption of normal trade between the two occupation zones.¹¹⁴

Harriman, in his November 9 reply to Byrnes' letter, indicated that the secretary's requests had been promptly given to Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov, but he was not optimistic about the Russian acceptance of the American proposals. Four days later, Harriman dispatched a somber note on Korea. He stated that the Soviet Union had made it clear that historically Korea was regarded in the same light "as Finland, Poland, and Rumania--a springboard for attack on USSR." Therefore, the Russians "may be expected to seek predominant influence in Korea." An international trusteeship would not guarantee Soviet predominance since it would divide governing power. Harriman believed that there was nothing to suggest that the Russian army was behaving any differently than it had in Eastern Europe. He correctly predicted that once the Russians had created obedient and strong Korean military forces and militia it was possible that the Soviet Union would withdraw its troops from Korea and ask the United States to do the same.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴Byrnes to U.S. ambassador in Moscow, November 3, 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 1106-09.

¹¹⁵Harriman to Secretary of State, November 9 and 12, 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 1119, 1121-22.

Meanwhile in Washington, on November 10, 1945, President Truman met with Prime Minister Clement Attlee of Great Britain and Prime Minister MacKenzie King of Canada to discuss Korea and other problems. It was agreed that immediate steps would be taken by the United States to set up a trusteeship in Korea under the direction of the United States, Britain, Russia and China.¹¹⁶ American policy makers in Washington apparently felt that they had no choice but to carry out the establishment of the Korean trusteeship agreed upon by the four major powers. They appeared to believe that only a trusteeship would bring free and independent self-government in Korea. The Koreans were still vehemently opposed to the idea of a trusteeship, and the American military command was likewise strongly opposed to it. General Hodge reported to Washington that the entire trusteeship idea was repugnant to all parties and social elements in Korea and that it might be wise to give up the scheme.¹¹⁷

General Hodge believed that the Russian and American occupation of Korea created an impossible condition. The Korean people blamed the United States for the arbitrary division of their country, which resulted in growing resentment against the Americans. South Korea was fertile ground

¹¹⁶Truman, Memoirs, 1:539-40.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 2:318; Walter Millis, ed., The Forrestal Diaries (New York: Viking Press, 1951), p. 125.

for the expanding communism and the steady influx of Russian and Chinese-trained Korean Communists made the situation worse. Strong evidence also existed that the Russians had established an "effective field works system of defense against invasion just north of the 38th parallel." Dangerous border incidents were possible under the existing conditions. In Hodge's view the time had come either for positive action on the international level or for the United States to initiate the removal of the 38th parallel to unify Korea. If no corrective policy was forthcoming, the United States should reach an agreement with the Soviet Union for simultaneous withdrawal of American and Russian troops, leaving "Korea to its own devices."¹¹⁸ Bitter over the division of their country and eager for independence, the Korean people grew restless. The United States therefore initiated discussions on the Korean problem at the Moscow conference of foreign ministers in December 1945.

¹¹⁸ MacArthur to Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 16, 1945, FR, 1945, 6:1144-48; Truman, Memoirs, 2:318.

CHAPTER II

AMERICAN SEARCH FOR KOREAN UNIFICATION

The Moscow Agreement on Korea

In December 1945, the Allied foreign ministers met in Moscow to discuss post-World War II problems including Korean unification. At this conference, the Americans and the Russians affirmed their commitment to Korean unification and devised a procedure to lead the divided country through a period of trusteeship. Secretary of State Byrnes initiated the discussion on the Korean problem at the first formal session on December 16. He wanted the agenda to reflect an agreement on trusteeship, but Soviet Foreign Minister V. M. Molotov declared that there had never been a formal agreement for a Korean trusteeship, only an "exchange of views."¹

Byrnes believed that cooperation between the occupied zones would be the first step toward a unified administration and a trusteeship. He therefore tried to introduce the problems that had arisen from the division of Korea. But Molotov could not see how such problems as commodity exchange, resumption of trade and transportation, coastal

¹Details on the first session of December 16 can be found in FR, 1945, 2:610-21.

shipping, and settlement of displaced persons were related to the general question of a Korean government. He contended that a general agreement on the formation of a Korean government and trusteeship was necessary prior to any discussion of specific issues relating to the reunification of Korea.²

At the second session of the Moscow Conference on December 17, Byrnes proposed immediate action to abolish the separate zones of military occupation with Koreans being used as much as practical as administrators, consultants, and advisers. In addition, he proposed the establishment of a four-power trusteeship as a preliminary step to Korean independence. The trusteeship, in American opinion, seemed to be the only way of preventing a complete takeover of Korea by the Soviet Union. It would last "for no longer a period than necessary to allow the Koreans to form an independent, representative, and effective government." Korean independence would be granted within five years, but the trusteeship powers could extend it another five years if necessary. British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin agreed with Byrnes' proposal, but Molotov asked for time to study it.³

²Ibid., pp. 617-21. See also Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, p. 111; Beloff, Soviet Policy, p. 159; and Truman, Memoirs, 2:318-19.

³Ibid., p. 319; Berger, The Korea Knot, p. 58; Byrnes,

Molotov studied the American proposal until December 20 when he said he could now see that the Americans distinguished between urgent questions and those of a long-range nature. He agreed that the urgent problems should be assigned to the local commanders and that a four-power trusteeship was the immediate solution. On the same day, Molotov proposed the creation of a joint U.S.-Soviet commission representing the military commands in Korea. This commission would assist in the establishment of a provisional government in consultation with various Korean parties and social organizations. The commission would work out the proposals for a provisional government and submit them for joint approval by the United States, Russia, Britain, and China. The Soviet proposal also suggested that within two weeks the field commanders meet to consider urgent problems in both zones of occupation and to work out a means of permanent coordination.⁴

At the December 21 meeting with Molotov and Bevin, Secretary Byrnes told his Russian host that he had only a few minor changes to suggest. According to Byrnes' changes, any recommendations from the joint commission would still be presented to the four trusteeship powers, but the final

Speaking Frankly, p. 222; U.S. Proposal on Korea, December 17, 1945, and U.S. Delegation Minutes, December 17, 1945, FR, 1945, 2:639-43.

⁴U.S. Delegation Minutes, December 20, 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 696-700.

decision would lie in the hands of the Americans and the Russians. Molotov promised to study these changes. The next day, he accepted the changes and the agreement on Korea was incorporated into the final communique of the Moscow Conference.⁵ Thus, the Soviet proposal, which appeared to represent the American viewpoint, became the basis for the Moscow decision on Korea.

The foreign ministers released the final Moscow communique on December 27, 1945. The Moscow agreement provided for the creation of a "provisional democratic Korean government" to develop the industry, transportation, and agriculture of Korea. It included a four-power trusteeship for Korea of up to five years. A joint commission composed of the American and Russian commands in Korea would present its recommendations to the trusteeship powers, although the United States and Russia would make the final decision. The commission would promote interzonal relations, working out details of the forthcoming trusteeship. To settle urgent problems that affected both zones, the commission was to assemble a joint conference of the American and Russian commands within two weeks.⁶

⁵U.S. Delegation Minutes, December 21 and 22, 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 716-21, 728; Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, pp. 220-23.

⁶Moscow Communique Regarding Korea, December 27, 1945, FR, 1945, 6:1150-51.

The Moscow decision on Korea was vague, especially in relation to procedure leading to the formation of a provisional government, but it did at least set up a procedure for the creation of an independent Korea. It remained to be seen whether the joint U.S.-Soviet commission would work and whether the Korean people would accept a decision reached without their knowledge. The United States assumed that the establishment of an effective democratic government in Korea required outside assistance for a transitional period. It was clear, also, that the United States and Russia were forcing the Korean people to choose between trusteeship and partition. The temporary continuation of outside control, in American view, seemed to be the only means for securing Russian cooperation in the reunification of Korea. The American suggestion to create an international trusteeship for Korea was what the "in due course" clause of the Cairo Declaration apparently meant.

Reaction to the Moscow agreement on Korea varied. The American press felt that it was a forward step toward the achievement of a smoother and safer working arrangement with the Russians, but that it was not the solution Korea's friends hoped for.⁷ The Russians hailed the Moscow decision as the first practical test of the trusteeship principle.

⁷New York Times, 28 December 1945, p. 1; *Ibid.*, 29 December 1945, p. 12. See also Robert T. Oliver's Letter to the Editor, *ibid.*, 6 January 1946, p. 22.

They said cooperation would produce a swift economic recovery and political stability for Korea.⁸ The British press commented that the Korean arrangement was satisfactory. A five-year trusteeship, in British opinion, was not excessive in view of the lack of Korean experience in government under the Japanese rule.⁹ The Nationalist Chinese still feared that any trusteeship would complicate the Korean-East Asian situation. They were especially suspicious of the Russian attitudes.¹⁰

The news of the Moscow agreement produced an immediate and violent outburst of opposition in Korea. The Korean people were openly hostile to the trusteeship plan and demanded immediate and unconditional independence.¹¹ The intensity of Korean reaction to the Moscow decision varied "from depression and disillusionment to anger and open defiance." Extremists held demonstrations, closed stores and schools and staged work stoppages. Vocal youth groups roamed the streets intimidating American military government personnel, while distributing leaflets and posters express-

⁸ Beloff, Soviet Policy, p. 160.

⁹ Department of State Telegram to U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, December 31, 1945, Record Group 59, 740.00119 Council/12-3145, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰ Memorandum of Acheson's Conversation with Ambassador Wei Tao-ming of China, January 4, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:606-07.

¹¹ Dong-A Ilbo, 30 December 1945.

ing the strongest possible opposition to the trusteeship plan. Hoping to minimize the importance of trusteeship, General Hodge stressed that the question of trusteeship had not yet been decided and that the removal of the 38th parallel barrier and creation of a provisional government would be important first steps toward Korean independence.¹²

With the support of all Korean political parties, Kim Koo, the former president of the Korean provisional government in Chungking, organized an anti-trusteeship committee, which urged "an immediate walkout" by all Korean employees of the American military government.¹³ The work stoppages and mass demonstrations which followed Kim Koo's move brought public opposition to the trusteeship to a state of hysteria. Syngman Rhee and other rightists supported Kim Koo. The leftists, led by the Communist Party, at first also strongly protested, but after several weeks they suddenly reversed their stand and hailed "the trusteeship plan as a guarantee that Korea will not fall into the hands of the Western imperialists."¹⁴

¹²Emmons to Secretary of State, December 30, 1945, and Hodge to MacArthur, December 30, 1945, FR, 1945, 6:1152-54.

¹³Meade, American Military Government, p. 155.

¹⁴Yim, Fight for Korea, p. 247. See also Dong-A Ilbo, 10 January 1946.

The rightists subsequently charged that the leftist reversal came on orders from Moscow.¹⁵ The rightist groups attacked the headquarters of the Communists and their allies everywhere. The leftist policy reversal on the trusteeship issue created a clear split between the two political groups. Consequently, the trusteeship question became an important issue in the domestic power struggle.¹⁶ The rightists regarded the trusteeship as a fait accompli all the while. The American military government emphasized that it was not and insisted that the interim agreement might lead to an early removal of the division of Korea. General Hodge's political advisers from the State Department thought that most of the resentment was being directed at the Russians. But Hodge told MacArthur, his superior in Tokyo, that the leftist actions were creating anti-American sentiments.¹⁷ General Hodge came to view any support for trusteeship as Communist-inspired. In his mind only the conservatives reflected what he believed were truly popular desires.¹⁸

¹⁵Oliver, Syngman Rhee, p. 217.

¹⁶Ho-Jae Lee, Hanguk Woeogyo Chongchek ui Isang kwa Hyonsil: Yi Sung-Man Woeogyo wa Miguk (Ideology and Reality of Korean Diplomacy: Syngman Rhee and the United States) (Seoul: Pangmun Sa, 1969), pp. 137-38; Yi, Hanguk Chong-dang Baltal Sa, pp. 168-69.

¹⁷Emmons to Secretary of State, December 30, 1945, and Footnote 66, FR, 1945, 6:1152-53.

¹⁸Ibid.; Leland M Goodrich, Korea: A Study of the

On December 30, 1945, in reaction to Korean protests, Secretary of State Byrnes stated that the joint U.S.-Soviet commission "may find it possible to dispense with a trusteeship," since the ultimate goal was to hasten independence.¹⁹ This statement bore no relationship to the Moscow decision and was a purely unilateral American action. In response to the Korean complaints and without Russian approval, Byrnes added a qualification to the Moscow agreement. Truman expressed a similar view in his State of Union message of January 14, 1946. He said that the United States would proceed "as rapidly as practicable" toward the establishment of a democratic government in Korea "by the free choice of the people of Korea."²⁰ Thus, the trusteeship did not appear to be a keystone of American policy.

General Hodge seized upon Byrnes' statement to reassure the Korean people that a final decision on trusteeship had not been reached and that the United States did not intend to implement the Korean trusteeship.²¹ He urged Rhee and

United States Policy in the United Nations (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1956), p. 53.

¹⁹U.S. Department of State Bulletin (December 30, 1945), pp. 1035-36; Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, p. 222.

²⁰Truman's State of Union message is printed in U.S. Department of State Bulletin (February 3, 1946), pp. 135-45.

²¹Langdon to Secretary of State, December 30, 1945, Record Group 59, 740.00119 Korea/12-3045, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; New York Times, 31 December 1945, pp. 1, 4.

Kim Koo to call off the riots and strikes that were sweeping South Korea. The rightist leaders reluctantly ordered the strikes to stop, but they continued to demonstrate against the Soviet Union and the Communist party, accusing the Russians of delaying Korean independence. At any rate, Hodge continued to assure the Korean people that the United States would pursue the goal of early independence for Korea and warned that continued demonstrations could only create an unfavorable impression of Korean political capabilities.²²

The Russians apparently had a different view of the importance of trusteeship to the Moscow agreement. On January 23, 1946, Stalin informed Ambassador Harriman that American-Soviet relations in Korea had not gotten off to a favorable start. The Soviet leader suspected that the Americans were advocating abrogation of the trusteeship. He also pointed out newspaper articles which reported that "only the U.S.S.R. and not the U.S. had insisted on trusteeship." Harriman could do nothing but note that the "alleged statements" attributed to American officials in Korea were not representative of his government's policy.²³

On January 25, 1946, in a statement published by Tass, the Soviet news agency, the Russians attacked the Rhee-Kim

²²New York Times, 20 January 1946, p. 19; Ibid., 21 January 1946, p. 6.

²³Harriman to Secretary of State, January 25, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:622.

rightists and labeled them "reactionaries." The Russian statement claimed that incorrect reports were being spread that made it seem like the Soviet Union alone had sought the establishment of a Korean trusteeship. The Russians insisted that this was not true, because the United States had initiated discussions on the subject in Moscow and had always wanted a trusteeship for Korea. The Russians argued that their proposal had been much more generous than the American plan, since it limited the trusteeship period to five years and provided for the creation of a Korean provisional government.²⁴ The Soviet Union now appeared to be the true protector of Korea.

The Tass statement shocked the Korean people and was a severe blow to the credibility and prestige of the American military government. Koreans now felt that the United States had abandoned them to the Soviet Union. General Hodge was so embarrassed that he asked Tokyo and Washington for information and direction so that he might respond to the Russian statement. The State Department verified the Soviet claim that the United States had been the prime mover behind the trusteeship plan. It was also explained that the United States considered the trusteeship essential to the goal of preventing the Russian domination of Korea. In the

²⁴Kennan to Secretary of State, January 25, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 617-19. See also New York Times, 27 January 1946, p. 19.

absence of trusteeship guarantees, Washington told Hodge that it would have been possible for the Soviet Union to take over the democratic provisional government in Korea.²⁵

General Hodge and his staff read the State Department's verification of the Russian claim with surprise. It meant that Washington had taken a stand on trusteeship completely opposite to the stand which they had been assuring the Korean people the United States would take. The Korean leaders now believed that it was the United States that had betrayed them. To quiet the Korean protest against the trusteeship and to save some face for the American military government, John Carter Vincent, chief of the Far Eastern Affairs Division of the State Department, on January 27, 1946, stated that "trusteeship is only a procedure, which may or may not be necessary since independence of Korea is the goal." He further stated that whether or not there was a trusteeship depended upon the ability of the Korean people to work with the joint U.S.-Soviet commission in establishing a democratic provisional government capable of unifying and governing Korea.²⁶

²⁵Berger, The Korea Knot, pp. 64-65; Cho, Korea in World Politics, p. 109. See also MacArthur to Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 2, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:628-30.

²⁶U.S. Department of State Bulletin (January 27, 1946), p. 108.

There was undoubtedly a lack of communication between Washington and the American military government in Korea. Responsibilities for Korea were divided between various departments of the United States government. The Civil Affairs Division of the Army carried out the military government operations, while the State Department was responsible for general policy, and the War Department (and its successor, the Department of the Army) was responsible for carrying out policy and for all phases of administration in occupied areas. The local military command was expected to act with discretion when it was unable to obtain instructions from Washington. General Hodge repeatedly complained of the lack of instructions from Washington. He had "the distinct feeling of being let down by the authorities in Washington."²⁷ He offered to leave his post if such an action would save American credibility and prestige in Korea. If he were not removed, Hodge demanded to be kept fully informed about future American policy decisions in Korea.²⁸ The judgment of the local commander had not been given enough consideration. If American policy makers had acted on the basis of General Hodge's recommendation that immediate independence be given to all of Korea, tensions would have been avoided on the Korean peninsula.

²⁷Berger, The Korea Knot, p. 65.

²⁸Ibid.

Hodge believed that the Moscow agreement on Korea, with its emphasis on collaboration with the Russians, would not work. The Russians, in his opinion, had done nothing to indicate that they would help to unify Korea as long as the United States kept its forces there. He also believed that North and South Korea would not be united until Russia was certain that the whole country was thoroughly communistic.²⁹ George F. Kennan, the United States chargé in Moscow, supported General Hodge's views. Kennan said that "there can now be little doubt that the U.S.S.R. wishes to assure [the] earliest and most complete exclusion of other great powers from all connections with Korean aims."³⁰ By the early spring of 1946, the United States and the Soviet Union were drifting into a new and tense relationship with one another. Korea proved to be an early casualty of the cold war between the two powers.

The Deadlock in U.S.-Soviet Negotiations

On January 5, 1946, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed General MacArthur to arrange a joint conference of the American and Soviet commands in Korea as provided by the

²⁹MacArthur to Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 2, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:628-30; Millis, The Forrestal Diaries, p. 135.

³⁰Kennan to Secretary of State, January 25, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:619-21.

Moscow agreement. Through MacArthur, Washington instructed the American command in Korea to limit their discussion to economic and administrative matters and to defer consideration of all political matters until after the formation of the joint U.S.-Soviet commission.³¹ In an exchange of letters in early January, Generals Hodge and Chistiakov agreed to hold meetings in Seoul. Hodge named Major General A. V. Arnold, military governor of South Korea, to represent the American command. Major General Archer L. Lerch succeeded Arnold as military governor on January 13. The only civilian on the United States delegation was H. Merrell Benninghoff, Hodge's political adviser from the State Department. Colonel General T. F. Shtikov headed the Soviet delegation. On January 15, the Soviet delegation arrived in Seoul to meet with the American representatives.³²

The joint conference of the American and Russian commands lasted from January 16 to February 5, 1946. As the talks progressed, it was apparent that the two delegations had differing interpretations of the Moscow decision on Korea. The Americans hoped to remove the 38th parallel as a barrier and provide for the economic and administrative

³¹Joint Chiefs of Staff to MacArthur, January 5, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 607-08; Hodge to Secretary of State, January 12, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 608-09.

³²*Ibid.*; New York Times, 13 January 1946, p. 18; *Ibid.*, 16 January 1946, p. 2; U.S. Department of State Bulletin (January 27, 1946), pp. 111-12.

integration of Korea. The Russians, however, did not want to address this issue. Benninghoff reported that the American and Russian delegations "approached the solution of economic and administrative problems from widely divergent angles." While the Americans made every effort to open up and unify Korea, the Russians approached the problem as one of "exchange and coordination between two adjoining but separate zones of military responsibility."³³

Because of the impasse created by the two different approaches, the joint conference achieved only limited agreements on rail, truck and coastal shipping, the exchange of mail, the allocation of radio frequencies, and the movement of certain persons from zone to zone. An agreement was also made on the creation of a permanent liaison between the two commands. The question of exchanging rice for raw materials from the north proved to be the issue over which the conference collapsed. When the American delegation disclosed that, as a result of poor harvests and the great influx of refugees from the north, South Korea could not supply North Korea with rice, the Russians refused to discuss a commercial exchange. The Russians did not believe there was a serious rice shortage in the south, and the

³³U.S. Department of State, The Record on Korean Unification, pp. 5-6; Benninghoff to Secretary of State, February 15, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:634-35.

conference adjourned.³⁴

As Benninghoff reported to Washington, the joint conference meetings "carefully avoided" the discussion of political matters, but it was apparent from the attitude of the Russian delegation that the Soviet Union contemplated "a lengthy occupation of at least the northern half of Korea." It was also apparent, in Benninghoff's opinion, that the Russians would "resist all efforts by the United States to open up the country and treat it as an economic and political unit" until they had gained political ascendancy in Korea or were forced to change their attitude because of political necessity.³⁵ The American and Russian commands did not take the collapse of the joint conference talks on February 5, 1946, as permanent and expected to continue their discussion on an agenda.³⁶ In mid-February both sides agreed to establish a joint commission as provided for by the Moscow Conference of 1945.³⁷

Meanwhile, the political situation in the American zone remained tense. In early January 1946, leaders of the five

³⁴Ibid., p. 635.

³⁵Ibid., p. 636.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Benninghoff to Secretary of State, February 20, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 627-38.

largest political parties--the Democratic, Nationalist, People's, New Korean People's, and Communist Parties--sought to achieve political cooperation as a basis for participation in the provisional government. They issued a statement in Seoul that endorsed the Allied guarantee of Korean independence. But they urged that the trusteeship question be handled by the projected provisional government, not the trusteeship powers. They disavowed violence as a legitimate political weapon. However, violent clashes between the rightist groups and the Communists resumed, resulting in the deaths and arrests of many Koreans and the basis for future difficulties in American-Russian talks. Early in February, the conservative and moderate parties jointly called a Korean National Association, which chose Syngman Rhee and Kim Koo as its leaders. The Communist and People's Parties refused to attend and instead announced plans for a democratic people's united front. In Hodge's view the Communists were using Lyuh Woon-Hyung and the liberals of the People's Party, a party that was allegedly under Soviet control.³⁸

General Hodge blamed his difficulties on the Russians and the State Department's refusal to follow his recommendations. He demanded to know who was responsible for advising against immediate self-government and the abandonment of

³⁸Han, Hanguk Chongdang Sa, pp. 46-155; Benninghoff to Secretary of State, January 22 and 23, 1946, FR, 1946, 8: 613-16.

trusteeship. The American commander warned that Koreans were losing confidence in the United States. He urged the adoption of a positive policy to counter rising Russian influence in South Korea.³⁹ Russia's initial policy toward Korea had been cautious, but American acquiescence in the face of Korean protests against the trusteeship plan forced a policy reversal. The Soviet Union considered American action in Korea aggressive, since the area was not vital to the national security of the United States. To insure control in a "friendly" Korea, the Russians placed their trusted clients into positions of authority in North Korea early in 1946.⁴⁰

It is difficult to assess accurately the extent of opposition to communism in the north, since local security police had effectively silenced overt opposition. The northern police purged or liquidated the reactionaries and anti-Communists alike. Consequently, before the meeting of the joint commission, various political parties and social organizations established a united Communist front in the Soviet zone. The North Koreans had elected rural people's committees and village elders under Communist auspices.

³⁹MacArthur to Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 2, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 628-30.

⁴⁰Suh, "A Preconceived Formula for Sovietization," The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers, p. 486; Beloff, Soviet Policy, pp. 164-65.

These groups sent representatives to a special congress at the North Korean capital of Pyongyang. This special meeting created a provisional people's committee of North Korea on February 12, 1946, and elected Kim Il-Sung as its chairman. Kim assured the Soviet commander of North Korean support for whatever line he might take at the upcoming meeting of the joint U.S.-Soviet commission.⁴¹ The American command believed that the Russians wanted the joint commission to accept this regime as the democratic government of North Korea, while at the same time trying to force the United States to accept enough South Korean Communists to insure domination of the provisional government.⁴²

Most Koreans favored sweeping social and economic changes. While the United States delayed action hoping to settle the problem of divided Korea on its terms, the Soviet Union carried out a major program of land reform in March 1946, expropriating the land of the Japanese, collaborators, large landlords, and the church.⁴³ The North Korean regime distributed the land without any payment requirement. Despite prohibition against sale of land and a high tax in

⁴¹U.S. Department of State, North Korea, pp. 13-15; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, p. 180.

⁴²MacArthur to Secretary of State, February 24, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:640.

⁴³McCune and Grey, Korea Today, pp. 201-07.

kind, the people generally welcomed the ouster of the old ruling elite.⁴⁴ More important, possession of land gave the average Korean a stake in the new regime, while forcing the wealthy, the educated, and those who had collaborated with the Japanese to flee to the south. William R. Langdon, acting political adviser to the American command, observed that the Russian reforms have "fallen heavily on the unfortunate conservative and propertied classes, many of whom have taken refuge" in the American zone.⁴⁵

The American policy of delay only increased the probability that the Russians would gain control over the entire peninsula. But American policy makers remained confident that bilateral negotiations would achieve Korean unification and independence. John Carter Vincent publicly stated that the upcoming meetings of the joint commission would constitute a successful test of American-Russian cooperation in the Far East. He emphasized that the United States sought only the creation of a truly representative government and the rapid realization of Korean independence. "Korea," Vincent insisted, "must not become an international political football." Edwin M. Martin, then chief of the Division of Japanese and Korean Economic Affairs, stated

⁴⁴U.S. Department of State, North Korea, p. 57.

⁴⁵Langdon to Secretary of State, August 23, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:728.

that economic unification remained the sole means for achieving economic recovery and political stability. He recognized, however, that the elimination of the 38th parallel and the implementation of long-range plans would have to await the establishment of a Korean provisional government.⁴⁶

Early in 1946, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee prepared guidelines for the American delegation to the joint commission. On February 11, the committee sent a policy paper to General Hodge. It stressed that Hodge's first and foremost goals were to form a provisional government and utilize that government to gain economic, social and political progress in Korea. It also provided a specific procedure for consultation with Korean democratic parties and social organizations. The U.S.-Soviet commission was to select and consult with a group of Korean leaders who should represent, "as far as practicable," the will of the people. The commission should select such Korean leaders after full consultation with all democratic parties and social organizations throughout the country. If the joint commission proved unable to work out consultation on a nationwide basis, the Americans could propose that each power choose individuals from their own zones. If the talks did not produce an

⁴⁶Vincent and Martin Comments, Radio Broadcast, NBC University of the Air, "Korea and the Far East," U.S. Department of State Bulletin (January 27, 1946), pp. 104-10 and passim.

agreement on the creation of an advisory group, the American commander had authority independently to form his own advisory body. In the event of a breakdown at the joint commission, General Hodge would implement "Koreanization" in the American zone alone.⁴⁷

General Hodge disagreed with the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee's view that the joint commission's most pressing task was the formation of a provisional government. He believed the opening of the north and an end to the Russian news blackout to be more important. He proposed to instruct the American delegation to press for complete freedom of speech, press, and movement on the ground that until then the joint commission could not consult freely with the Koreans. Hodge believed that "the more we open up the country and convince the people of our real aims, the greater will be the chance of achieving true democracy rather than a Soviet directed communistic Korean government." MacArthur and Benninghoff agreed that Korean public opinion was this powerful. Hodge was also willing to postpone consideration of the structure of an interim government until the Russians agreed.⁴⁸

⁴⁷New York Times, 12 February 1946, p. 10; SWNCC Policy Paper, January 28, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:623-27.

⁴⁸MacArthur to Joint Chiefs of Staff for Hodge, February 12, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 632-33.

Meanwhile, General Hodge had little success uniting the left and right in South Korea. He called a national emergency congress in early February 1946 and invited all political parties to participate in it, but the leftists refused to do so. This emergency meeting formed a representative democratic council in an effort to seek a balance between the left and right. Speakers included Hodge, Rhee, Kim Koo, and Kimm Kiu-Sic. At the last moment, leading leftist Lyuh Woon-Hyung refused to participate in the council, and Rhee was able to lead the rightist-dominated council to advise the American commander. Hodge announced that he would do what he could to keep up the prestige of the representative democratic council, to gain for his command the full backing of the Korean people, and to discredit the Communists. He believed this would probably "get the liberal and pink press" of the United States on his neck, but he felt any other local action would be dangerous. Reports from the north, he said, indicated that the Russians created an all Korean central government dominated by the Communists from Russia and Manchuria. Hodge was certain that Lyuh Woon-Hyung's People's Party had joined forces with the northerners in return for the promise of political appointments in the puppet regime.⁴⁹

⁴⁹Hodge to War Department, February 24, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 640-42.

There was little doubt that American-Russian relations in Korea were on a collision course. On February 28, 1946, in a memorandum intended for General MacArthur, the State Department severely criticized the Russian policy in Korea. It also advised General Hodge to make a public statement about Soviet obstruction of political and economic unity in order to combat Russian-controlled minority groups in Korea. Washington further instructed Hodge to pressure the Rhee-Kim group into a more progressive stance with threats of a cut off of American support. The State Department approved Hodge's desire to insist upon the right of freedom of expression in consultations at the joint commission. In the event of an impasse, General Hodge would announce that the Russians had opposed free speech and basic civil liberties.⁵⁰

The United States still believed that reunification would bring true economic recovery and political stability to Korea, but the Soviet criticism of American policy in Korea indicated that success at the joint commission in ending the division of the country was unlikely. The Russians denounced Hodge's creation of the representative democratic council as a violation of the Moscow agreement. In response, the Americans denied any intention of unilaterally creating a separate government in South Korea. The United States was

⁵⁰Memorandum for MacArthur, February 28, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 644-46.

merely encouraging Koreans to participate in certain government functions in order to gain experience for the ultimate assumption of responsibilities in the government.⁵¹ The Russians remained unconvinced and charged that Rhee had agreed to allow the Americans to exploit the Korean economy and mineral resources. It was quite clear that the Russians would not permit Rhee and other rightists to participate in the reconstruction of Korea.⁵² For the Americans, Kim Il-Sung was equally unacceptable. Langdon expressed alarm over Soviet consolidation of control in the north and the increase in leftist agitation in the south. He predicted that Korea would soon become "a new Poland" in the Far East.⁵³

The joint U.S.-Soviet commission consisted of ten men, five from each command, with Seoul as its permanent seat. It was to visit Pyongyang and travel to other points in Korea for consultative work. The commission was to consult with all democratic, political and social organizations throughout the country as a prelude to the establishment of a provisional Korean government as agreed upon in Moscow.⁵⁴

⁵¹U.S. Department of State Bulletin (April 14, 1946), p. 644.

⁵²Langdon to Secretary of State, April 10, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:658-59; New York Times, 14 March 1946, p. 14.

⁵³Ibid., 15 March 1946, p. 4; Langdon to Secretary of State, March 19, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:648.

⁵⁴U.S. Army Forces in the Pacific, Summation of United

On March 11, 1946, General Hodge explained to the Korean people that the joint commission's main objective was to assist in the formation of a provisional government and develop appropriate measures to that end. He stressed that the American command did not want a form of government representing only a particular group, but wanted one that would correspond to the wishes of the majority of the Korean people.⁵⁵ In any event, with both powers suspicious of the other's actions, and with both building up opposite political forces in their respective zones, the prospects for successful discussions in the joint commission were not bright.

The joint commission finally began its meetings at Duk Soo Palace in Seoul on March 20, 1946. The American press commented that the U.S.-Soviet negotiations would be successful only if each side made concessions.⁵⁶ General Arnold headed the American delegation with William Langdon and Charles W. Thayer acting as his advisers. General Shtikov, head of the Russian delegation, said at the opening of the meetings that the joint commission's purpose was to implement the Moscow decision on Korea. Foreshadowing

States Army Military Government Activities in Korea (February, 1946), p. 285. Hereafter cited as USAMGIK, Summation.

⁵⁵New York Times, 12 March 1946, p. 15.

⁵⁶Ibid., 21 March 1946, p. 24.

future problems, Shtikov charged that reactionary and anti-democratic forces stood in the way of true democracy in Korea. He also emphasized that the Soviet interest was to see Korea become a "true democracy and an independent country, friendly to the Soviet Union, so that in the future it will not become a base for an attack on the Soviet Union."⁵⁷

During the early sessions of the joint commission, General Shtikov opposed the American proposal for nationwide consultations, favoring instead discussions within each individual zone. The American delegation, in its cable to Washington, expressed dissatisfaction with the Russian position and regarded it as arbitrary. Moreover, the Soviet determination to implement the trusteeship plan surprised the Americans in Seoul.⁵⁸ During the later sessions, General Shtikov opposed any action that would treat Korea as a unit. He also rejected any suggestion of economic integration prior to the creation of a provisional government.⁵⁹ The negotiators, however, reached agreement on the first phase of the joint commission's action. It would include

⁵⁷U.S. Department of State, Korea's Independence, p. 4; Hodge to Secretary of State, March 22, 1946, FR, 1946, 8: 652-54.

⁵⁸Williams to Vincent, March 25, 1946, Record Group 59, 501BB Korea/3-2546, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁹Williams to Borton, April 2, 1946, Record Group 59, 501BB Korea/4-246, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

consultation with parties, preparation of a charter, and the choice of personnel for the provisional government. The commission also organized subcommittees to deal with specific measures for attaining each objective. The Russians were clearly willing to implement the Moscow pledge of Korea's right to self-determination, but only if the Americans agreed to a provisional government and trusteeship prior to reunifying the divided country.⁶⁰

American-Russian talks in the joint commission quickly became a wrangle over what groups to consult. The Russians were against consulting with any groups that had engaged in anti-trusteeship activities. These groups were invariably rightists, since the Communist groups had changed their position from opposition to support on instructions from North Korea. In the process, the Korean Communist Party was "never able again to command the degree of public support that it garnered in the opening months after liberation." The tactical advantage had shifted to the rightists and centrists in the south. Since the final settlement would rest with the powers who had agreed to the Moscow decision, there was no point in debating the trusteeship plan. Therefore, Secretary of State Byrnes agreed that Korean opposition to the trusteeship plan could not be used as an excuse

⁶⁰ Ibid.; New York Times, 31 March 1946, p. 14; USAMGIK, Summation (April, 1946), p. 15.

for exclusion from consultation. The United States insisted that the Korean people were entitled freely to express their views and that acceptance of the Soviet position would deny them a freely chosen government.⁶¹

The initial divergence of views appeared to be resolved, however, when the American delegation accepted the Soviet position, with the understanding that individuals and groups signing a designated affidavit would be admitted to the consultation even if they had previously opposed trusteeship. On April 18, 1946, the joint commission published this compromise in Communique No. 5. It contained a declaration which the various Korean parties and individuals had to sign if they wished to be consulted by the joint commission. The declaration was a pledge to "uphold the aims of the Moscow agreement," to cooperate with the commission in working out the trusteeship proposals, and to accept the commission's decision on the formation of a Korean provisional government. Since this compromise did not require support for trusteeship, the Americans interpreted it to mean that Koreans could express themselves freely against trusteeship when work began on the trusteeship proposals.⁶²

⁶¹Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea, 1:276-78; Byrnes to Political Adviser in Korea, April 5, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:657; Byrnes to Certain U.S. Embassies, April 11, 1946, ibid., p. 659.

⁶²Communique No. 5, April 18, 1946, U.S. Department of State, Korea's Independence, pp. 19-20; Langdon to Secretary

General Hodge was satisfied with the compromise, since it appeared to allow the rightist participation. He tried to persuade the Koreans who opposed the Moscow agreement to sign the prescribed declaration. Hodge suggested that the signing of it did not imply wholehearted support for the trusteeship proposals. He further suggested that "once that government was established . . . , it would be free to devise its own policies."⁶³ Hodge's interpretation was apparently a unilateral one. His suggestion amounted to the possibility of modifying the terms of the Moscow agreement, once the government was formed and was in the hands of the Korean people.

Although the compromise seemed reasonable, the Russian delegation soon indicated its strategy for determining the composition of the Korean provisional government. The Russians argued that a mere signature on a pledge provided no guarantee of support for the Moscow decision. The representative democratic council had already expressed publicly its opposition to the trusteeship plan. The Rhee-Kim group resented having to sign a declaration of support for a policy they opposed. General Shtikov therefore insisted that regardless of formal adherence to the prescribed decla-

of State, April 14, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:660. See also Cho, Korea in World Politics, pp. 120-21.

⁶³David J. Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 303.

ration, the joint commission should consult only with those Korean parties and organizations which fully supported the Moscow agreement. In response, the American delegation prepared for an open break with the Russians over the issue of free expression. The State Department instructed the United States embassies in London, Moscow, Paris, and Nanking to stress American support and Russian opposition for an end to the division of Korea and freedom of speech throughout the country in explaining the deadlock.⁶⁴

In spite of the compromise in Communique No. 5, it soon became apparent that the deadlock in the joint commission had not been resolved. Trouble arose over the selection of representatives. The Soviet proposal required that Korean parties select for consultation only those representatives who had not compromised themselves by active opposition to the Moscow decision. This was totally unacceptable to the Americans. In the meantime, all Korean political groups were becoming restive over the lack of progress at the joint U.S.-Soviet commission. The American command assured the Korean conservatives that signing the pledge would not prevent criticism of the trusteeship. But the leftists and Communists denounced the Americans for supporting reactionary groups and demanded immediate withdrawal of all foreign

⁶⁴Langdon to Secretary of State, April 14, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:660; Acheson to Certain U.S. Embassies Abroad, April 23 and 25, 1946, ibid., pp. 661-62.

troops.⁶⁵

As a result of the deadlock over consultation with the Koreans, the joint U.S.-Soviet commission adjourned on May 8, 1946, without deciding on a date to reconvene. General Hodge, in a statement on the commission's adjournment, placed full responsibility for the breakdown on the Russians. He made it clear that the United States would not agree to any action that denied the right of participation in consultation to more than 100 Korean parties and organizations. To accept the Soviet position would result in minority rule and violate "the universally accepted right for all people to freedom of expression promised them in the Atlantic Charter."⁶⁶ The issue of consultation was far deeper than mere freedom of speech. Both the Americans and the Russians viewed the Korean problem in the larger context of their international competition. While the Soviet Union insisted upon the exclusion of those groups hostile to Moscow, the United States demanded the inclusion of these same groups as a barrier to further Communist expansion. Neither side was willing to permit an unfriendly government in Korea.

After the adjournment of the first session of the joint U.S.-Soviet commission, no one could predict how long the

⁶⁵Langdon to Secretary of State, April 30, 1946, *ibid.*, p. 663.

⁶⁶Hodge to Secretary of State, May 9, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 665-67; New York Times, 8 May 1946, p. 10.

38th parallel would continue to make, in effect, an international barrier. The American and Russian commands therefore began actively to promote, within their respective zones, the political, economic, and social developments needed to strengthen their respective positions. The Russian authorities in the north, through the medium of Korean Communists, strengthened and solidified the Communist control. In the south, the American command encouraged both democratization and an anti-Communist campaign. The competition between the rightist groups and the Communists for control in South Korea had become fully mobilized, and the southern half of the country was on the verge of full-scale civil war.⁶⁷ Though not planned, the rivalry between leftists and rightists probably worked in America's favor by preventing a Communist takeover in South Korea.

The breakdown of the joint commission talks led to a re-examination of basic ends and means of American policy toward Korea. In a meeting on May 22, 1946, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee noted that there was not much hope for future accomplishments in the joint U.S.-Soviet commission and suggested that the United States proceed immediately to hold elections in South Korea. These elections would not be for a national government, but for an interim Korean legislature. The United States needed to stimulate

⁶⁷USAMGIK, Summation (June, 1946), p. 21.

political activity to produce new leadership in Korea. The false appearance of self-rule in the north placed the American military rule in South Korea in an unfavorable light. The Russians used many Koreans in administering their zone in the north and they were making capital out of the lack of Koreans in the American military government in the south. Thus it became important to broaden the base of Korean domestic political support for American policy.⁶⁸

The Americans in Seoul supported the move toward some kind of unilateral action in Korea. Langdon believed that the Russians clearly intended to use a united front, or coalition, government to hasten and simplify their control of the entire peninsula, as they did in Eastern Europe. He predicted that the Russians might delay the resumption of negotiations until natural American impatience, demobilization problems, declining American interest in Korean affairs, and Korean dissatisfaction with their nation's division obliged the United States to accept a Communist-dominated regime. A firm stance, Langdon asserted, would cause the Russians to discover that the establishment of a government acceptable to both sides would best serve their long-range interests in Korea. The United States would then depart leaving the Russians, in their own judgment, a free hand to

⁶⁸Memorandum of SWNCC Meeting, May 22, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:681-82.

pursue their political aims in Korea. In Langdon's view the United States should show a firm determination to stay in Korea as long as necessary both to prevent Soviet domination and to consolidate the position of moderate elements in the south and encourage their resistance in the north. The best way to achieve consolidation was to increase Korean participation in the American military government.⁶⁹

Early in June 1946, the State Department's Office for Occupied Areas issued a new policy statement for Korea. It accepted and indeed called for an even greater emphasis upon the policy of utilizing qualified Koreans in the administration of the American zone. The problem facing the United States was how to achieve policy goals through the joint commission negotiations and through unilateral action in South Korea. The Americans would resume talks with the Russians as soon as possible, since the United States still intended "to achieve its objectives in Korea within the framework of the Moscow agreement." The Americans also intended to stay in Korea as long as their presence contributed to their objectives. However, the Americans should hold popular elections in order to create a new Korean leadership in the south. Through electoral processes, the United States intended to establish an advisory legislative body,

⁶⁹Langdon to Secretary of State, May 24, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 685-89.

the Korean Interim Legislative Assembly, for the formulation and drafting of laws regarding political, economic, and social reform. The legislative assembly was to supercede the representative democratic council, which had no leftists. Such a new legislative body would be stronger and yet would be more acceptable to Moscow, making the possibility of agreement much better.⁷⁰

At about this time, Edwin W. Pauley, Truman's personal representative on reparations matters, echoed the growing feeling in American circles that the United States would need a more definitive action in Korea. Pauley visited both zones of Korea during the early summer of 1946. On June 22, he reported to Truman of his great concern with the American position on the Korean peninsula. He pointed out that Korea was "not receiving the attention and consideration it should." Korea, in Pauley's opinion, was an "ideological battleground upon which our entire success in Asia may depend." He argued that the loss of Korea would endanger the security of Japan and warned against any American concessions to the Soviet Union.⁷¹

Pauley believed that the Russians had no intention of withdrawing early from Korea, because their actions were

⁷⁰Hilldring Memorandum for War Department, June 6, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 692-98.

⁷¹Pauley to Truman, June 22, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 706-09.

designed to build up communism in Korea. The Korean economy was conducive to the development of communism and the Soviet Union wanted nothing less than dominance in Korea. To avoid this, Pauley recommended, the United States should launch a propaganda campaign stressing the Russian violations of existing agreements. He also advised that the Americans should continue to build up South Korea through economic aid. Unless the United States implemented a positive program to meet Korean popular needs and desires, eventual Soviet control over the entire peninsula was certain. Truman agreed with Pauley's assessment of Korea. The best way to persuade the Russians to comply with the Moscow agreement, in the president's view, was to broaden the basis of Korean participation in the administration of South Korea, without creating a separate government there. The increased Korean representation in the American military government should make it easier to negotiate with the Soviet Union. Truman also thought that a policy of unilateral action could provoke the Russians to resume the joint commission negotiations.⁷²

Meanwhile, in accordance with instructions from Washington, General Hodge decided to forsake his attachment to Korean clients in favor of a broader coalition embracing

⁷²Ibid.; Truman to Pauley, July 16, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 713-14.

not only conservatives, but liberals and moderates as well. He sponsored a new coalition around Lyuh Woon-Hyung and Kimm Kiu-Sic. Lyuh was former vice president of the People's Republic and Kimm, formerly vice president of the Korean provisional government in China and now vice chairman of the National Society. Negotiations progressed throughout the summer of 1946 and resulted in the formation of a coalition committee. The committee had a ratio of five rightists to five leftists, with Lyuh and Kimm alternating the chairmanship. The coalition leaders declared that they would establish "a democratic transitional government" on the basis of the Moscow decision and unify the rightist and leftist groups throughout the nation.⁷³

The new coalition intended to eliminate both extremes, the rightists under Rhee and the Communists under Pak Hon-Young.⁷⁴ Rumors quickly circulated that the American military government was preparing to create an interim council excluding extreme conservatives. It was obvious to all that the policy sought to increase popular support for the United States in the south and thus outflank the Soviet Union. In the meantime, on July 1, 1946, General A. L. Lerch, the

⁷³Langdon to Secretary of State, July 13, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 710-11; USAMGIK, Summation (October, 1946), pp. 16-18; Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea, 1:281-83.

⁷⁴Memorandum of Conversation in the Division of Japanese Affairs, July 16, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:715.

military governor, announced a plan for the creation of a South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly of ninety members. Half of the members were to be elected and half were to be appointed by the American military government. Lerch said that the new legislature would not constitute a separate government but was an attempt to discover Korean popular desires and help the Korean leaders to gain some practical experience in legislative matters.⁷⁵

In late October 1946, despite the disturbances and Communist boycott, the elections to the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly went smoothly. The extreme leftists denounced American policy as premature and in violation of the Moscow agreement. Pak Hon-Young carried out a campaign to disrupt the Lyuh-Kimm coalition and charged that the Americans were playing a clever game to maintain control in Korea. The leftists also claimed that the police and rightist youth organizations interfered with leftist candidates. As expected, the elections produced an overwhelming majority of rightists among the forty-five elected members.⁷⁶ On December 10, General Hodge announced the names of forty-five members he had appointed to the Assembly from a slate

⁷⁵New York Times, 2 July 1946, p. 17; USAMGIK, Summation (September, 1946), p. 11.

⁷⁶Langdon to Secretary of State, November 3 and 14, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:761-63, 766-68; Meade, American Military Government, pp. 187-88; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, pp. 78-79.

recommended by the coalition committee. Although no Communist was included, about twenty members were from the leftist parties. The new interim legislature was subject to the ultimate veto power of the American commander.⁷⁷

Hodge's appointments to the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly greatly disturbed Syngman Rhee and his rightist groups. Rhee charged that the American commander "did not intend to permit him to seize power." He went further to declare that his future action would be one of open opposition to the military government. General Hodge, in turn, warned Rhee that he should cooperate or "be destroyed."⁷⁸ The relationship between Rhee and Hodge deteriorated so much that reconciliation became virtually impossible. Rhee's stand was unfortunate because of his large and loyal following.⁷⁹ In December 1946, Rhee went to Washington to present his case personally to the State Department. Since Rhee did not believe that the Russians would agree to the establishment of a free government for all Korea, he proposed that the United States should create

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 79; USAMGIK, Summation (December, 1946), p. 13. For the power and function of the new assembly, see ibid. (October, 1946), pp. 12-18. For the operation of the assembly, see Mun-Ok Pak, Hanguk Chongbu Ron (Korean Government) (Seoul: Paeyang Sa, 1963), pp. 333-39.

⁷⁸ Oliver, Syngman Rhee, pp. 228-29.

⁷⁹ Langdon to Secretary of State, December 10, 1946, FR, 1946, 8:775-78.

an interim government in South Korea to serve until reunification of the divided country. The interim government, Rhee said, should be admitted to the United Nations and allowed to negotiate directly with the United States and the Soviet Union. Rhee's proposal meant the establishment of a separate government in the south. Nevertheless, no new policy for Korea had been adopted, even though some policy makers in Washington agreed with Rhee's views. The State Department's reaction to Rhee's proposal indicated that as yet its thinking had not developed along the same line.⁸⁰

The South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly opened its sessions on December 12, 1946, and soon became united over the matter of opposition to the trusteeship plan. It adopted a resolution condemning Hodge's policy and trusteeship.⁸¹ General Hodge regarded the resolution of condemnation as an act of opposition to American policy. He also thought he could not possibly implement the Moscow decision without the close cooperation of the Rhee-Kim groups. Since the interim legislature opposed a trusteeship for Korea, the possibility of successful implementation of the Moscow agreement was very remote. Meanwhile, the Russians hastened

⁸⁰ Details on Rhee's visit to Washington from December, 1946 to April, 1947 can be found in Oliver, Syngman Rhee, pp. 230-36.

⁸¹ Dong-A Ilbo, 12 December 1946; USAMGIK, Summation (January, 1947), pp. 22-23.

their moves to create a strong Communist system in the north. In February 1947, the North Korean Communists under Kim Il-Sung established the Supreme People's Assembly that remained unchanged until 1948 as the highest legislative body in the north.⁸²

With the creation of the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly, the American military government began the process of transferring government administration to the Koreans. The military government also instituted a policy aimed at silencing Communist activities through closing radical newspapers and arresting Communist leaders. The leftists, including Communists, interpreted the establishment of the new interim legislature as an indication of American decision to form a separate government in South Korea. They coordinated various anti-American campaigns in the south. The moderates, who worked hard for the creation of the interim legislature, were also unhappy because of Hodge's veto power. Yet, despite the political repercussions and misgivings, the interim legislative body gave the South Koreans a voice in their own government and helped their leaders gain some experience in legislative matters.

⁸²U.S. Department of State, North Korea, p. 15; Cho, Korea in World Politics, p. 128. See also Joungwon A. Kim, Divided Korea: The Politics of Development, 1945-1972 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 104-14.

The Collapse of U.S.-Soviet Cooperation

While pursuing a unilateral course, the United States continued to seek a resumption of the joint commission talks. Almost immediately after the adjournment of the first session of the joint commission, General Hodge, on instructions from Washington, began corresponding with General Chistiakov on the subject of resuming U.S.-Soviet talks. On June 15, 1946, Hodge informed Chistiakov that the American command was ready to resume negotiations at any time and suggested an earlier fulfillment of the Moscow pledge.⁸³ The Soviet commander, however, was willing to resume talks on the condition that the joint commission would consult only those Korean groups which "without any reservations" would support the Moscow decision. Hodge then insisted that there was nothing in the Moscow agreement that prohibited Koreans from expressing their views and desires on the formation of their own government.⁸⁴

On November 26, 1946, General Chistiakov proposed the resumption of the joint commission meeting on three conditions. First, the joint commission "must consult those democratic parties and organizations which uphold fully the

⁸³Hodge to Chistiakov, June 15, 1946, U.S. Department of State, Korea's Independence, p. 21.

⁸⁴Chistiakov to Hodge, August 6, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 21-22; Hodge to Chistiakov, August 12, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

Moscow decision." Second, these Korean groups, in turn, "will not voice opposition" or "incite others to voice opposition to the Moscow decision." Third, such opposition would allow, by mutual agreement, the exclusion of the offending group from consultation.⁸⁵ Even though the previous Soviet position remained basically unchanged, these conditions provided a fair assurance of freedom of expression and appeared to offer consultation to all democratic groups that would pledge future cooperation with the joint commission.

General Hodge therefore suggested in his reply of December 24, 1946, that the joint commission should meet again on the basis of the Russian conditions with three modifications: first, the signing of the statement in Communique No. 5 should be accepted as a "declaration of good faith" on the part of Korean parties and organizations; second, the Korean groups should be free to choose their own representatives; and third, the Korean parties and social organizations could be excluded from consultation "only on the ground of fomenting or instigating active opposition" as judged by mutual agreement of the joint commission.⁸⁶

⁸⁵Chistiakove to Hodge, November 26, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

⁸⁶Hodge to Chistiakov, December 24, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 30-31; "Proposals for Reopening Joint Commission," U.S. Department of State Bulletin (January 26, 1947), pp. 168-73.

The Russians, however, refused to accept the American modifications and the joint commission remained adjourned. There was no hope of achieving Korean unification by negotiations on the military occupation level. As early as October 1946, General A. V. Arnold, the chief American delegate on the joint commission, expressed such a view and urged that "if anything is done, it must be on a higher level." MacArthur and Hodge made similar remarks and also urged that "measures be taken immediately to break the U.S.-Soviet deadlock in Korea by diplomatic means." Truman therefore approved Secretary of State George C. Marshall's plan for one more effort to make the joint commission work.⁸⁷

Marshall, in his letter of April 8, 1947 to Soviet Foreign Minister V. M. Molotov, proposed that both governments agree to reconvene the joint commission "on the basis of respect for the democratic right of freedom of opinion" and that a date be chosen for a review by the two governments of the progress of the joint commission. Molotov's reply of April 19 defended the previous Russian position. Without clarifying the issue or accepting the American position, Molotov urged a reconvening of the joint commission on the basis of "an exact execution of the Moscow Agreement on Korea." He also suggested that in July or August of 1947

⁸⁷New York Times, 11 October 1946, p. 10; Truman, Memoirs, 2:323.

the joint commission should present the results of its deliberations to the two governments.⁸⁸

Marshall soon recognized that the Russians intended to use the phrase "exact execution" for continued exclusion of those Korean leaders who opposed trusteeship. As a result, he again wrote Molotov and offered the American viewpoint of the Moscow decision to avoid any misunderstanding. Marshall contended that the joint commission should not deny any Korean representative consultation because of previously expressed views on the future government of Korea, provided each individual was willing to cooperate with the major powers. Molotov's reply stressed that the occupation commanders had adequately discussed the "conditions of consultation" at the joint commission. He therefore agreed to resume the joint commission talks on the basis of the proposals and modifications presented in Hodge's December 24, 1946, letter to Chistiakov, and Marshall agreed.⁸⁹

The Russians were willing to resume the meeting of the joint commission because of a fear that further delay in negotiations would lead the United States to establish a

⁸⁸Marshall to Molotov, April 8, 1947, U.S. Department of State, Korea's Independence, pp. 32-34; Molotov to Marshall, April 19, 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 35-38.

⁸⁹Marshall to Molotov, May 2, 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 38-39; Molotov to Marshall, May 7, 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 39-41; Marshall to Molotov, May 12, 1947, *ibid.*, p. 41. See also U.S. Department of State Bulletin (May 18, 1947), pp. 995-96.

separate South Korean government.⁹⁰ The change in the Soviet position may also have come from realization that Hodge's modifications did not have much substance if the Korean leaders continued their opposition to the trusteeship plan. It was clear that the extreme rightists would continue to oppose trusteeship. As Langdon explained, unless the Russians approved complete freedom of expression, the rightists would not participate. The United States could then expect widespread disturbances and an absence of real progress at the joint commission.⁹¹ In any event, it was unlikely that the Russians would permit any criticism of the Moscow decision.

The Marshall-Molotov understanding hardly constituted a Soviet acceptance of the American position. The Russian delegation would still be able to exclude those Korean groups that opposed trusteeship, but the United States now had an obligation to accept the results. The resumption of the joint commission talks would find the American delegation in the awkward position of supporting the suppression of those groups whose freedom of expression it had demanded

⁹⁰Molotov's letter of May 7, 1947 to Marshall, U.S. Department of State, Korea's Independence, pp. 39-40, seemed to point to a fear of such unilateral action.

⁹¹Langdon to Secretary of State, May 11, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:639-40.

during previous meetings.⁹² American political commentators supported the adoption of a more positive course of action in Korea. The American military occupation had, after all, been an unqualified failure. The division of Korea had contributed to economic deterioration, while the absence of self-government generated rising hostility toward the United States. Only a positive program of economic assistance and education in democracy would produce an independent and self-governing Korea.⁹³

In Seoul, General Hodge announced the Marshall-Molotov understanding and called for cooperation of all Koreans with the joint commission in order to make the forthcoming session a success. Rhee and other extreme rightists, however, stated that they would not participate in the activities of the joint commission until the meaning of "trusteeship" and "democracy" as used by the commission became clear. On the other hand, moderate rightists and leftists declared their support for the joint U.S.-Soviet commission. One can understand the reason for Rhee's actions. He feared that the Russians and the political power of the Korean leftists would prevent him from obtaining the leading position in the

⁹²New York Times, 12 May 1947, p. 20; Beloff, Soviet Policy, p. 168.

⁹³New York Times, 18 May 1947, IV, p. 4; Richard E. Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," Virginia Quarterly Review 23 (1947):360.

new Korean government. Although the Korean desire for self-government was genuine, the extreme rightists were exploiting the trusteeship plan to further their own political ambitions. The American command attempted to moderate the extreme rightist attitude but experienced little success. Thus General Hodge had to warn Rhee and other extreme rightists that continued criticism of the Moscow decision would require exclusion from consultation. This was the Korean situation when the Soviet delegates returned to Seoul. General Shtikov again headed the Russian delegation and General Albert E. Brown, successor of General Arnold, led the American delegation.⁹⁴

On May 24, 1947, the joint U.S.-Soviet commission reconvened for its second session. The American and Russian negotiators seemed to extend eligibility for consultation to all Korean parties and organizations which signed the statement in Communiqué No. 5. They reached an agreement on the methods, procedure, and schedule to be followed by the Korean groups wishing to consult with the joint commission. The negotiators announced the results on June 12, in what came to be known as "Decision No. 12." They invited the Korean groups to submit applications for participation in consultations and to present their views on the form of

⁹⁴New York Times, 19 May 1947, p. 3; Langdon to Secretary of State, May 21, 1947, Record Group 59, 740.00119 Korea/5-2147, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

their future government. The joint commission then held preliminary meetings of the applicants.⁹⁵

The hopeful atmosphere in the joint commission, however, disappeared in the discussions on June 27, 1947. The Russian delegation reverted to the position it had taken in the 1946 meetings, and disagreement immediately developed over the issue of consultation. The Soviet reversal was perhaps another attempt to ensure a leftist-dominated Korean provisional government. The Russians insisted upon the exclusion of all Korean parties and groups opposing the trusteeship plan. Joseph E. Jacobs, the new political adviser in Seoul, reported that the Russian delegation insisted upon the exclusion of several groups belonging to an anti-trusteeship committee unless they quit. The Americans protested that mere membership in an inactive committee was not active opposition to the Moscow decision. Each case, in American view, should be considered on its individual merit. Secretary of State Marshall told the American delegation not to compromise and "stand firm on this point."⁹⁶

The fundamental issue of freedom of expression once

⁹⁵Hodge to Secretary of State, June 26, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:679. The text of "Decision No. 12" is printed in U.S. Department of State, Korea's Independence, pp. 41-45.

⁹⁶Jacobs to Secretary of State, June 28, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:680-81; Marshall to Jacobs, July 2, 1947, ibid., pp. 681-82.

again appeared to be an insurmountable barrier. With the onset of the joint commission deadlock again, American dilemma in Korea became quite clear. If the United States supported Rhee and other extreme rightists, reunification was impossible and true democracy improbable. If the Americans agreed to compromise at the joint commission and exclude the most extreme conservatives, however, a leftist majority was certain. After a trip to North Korea early in July 1947, Jacobs reported that the Russians had established a "Korean Communist State" similar to their puppet governments in the Balkans. Even if the joint commission was successful in implementing the Moscow agreement, the existence of a strong army and police force in North Korea would make integration of the two zones extremely difficult. Jacobs explained that the extreme rightists accurately perceived their only chance for survival in frustrating the joint commission and obtaining American support for a separate government in the south. The United States therefore had to develop a new course of action in Korea.⁹⁷

The United States decided to delay action at the joint commission while it searched for another avenue for escape from the Korean dilemma. Secretary Marshall announced that the United States had no intention of terminating talks with

⁹⁷Jacobs to Secretary of State, July 7 and 25, 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 690-91, 731-33.

the Russians or changing its policy of support for the Moscow agreement. He instructed General Hodge to warn the Korean leaders that only cooperation with the joint commission would produce reunification. The Americans would not consider the formation of a separate government in the south until the complete collapse of the joint commission talks. Marshall also stressed that the United States was determined to defend the rights of every Korean group willing to cooperate with the joint commission and support the Moscow decision.⁹⁸

The rightist campaign against the Russians and trusteeship was partially responsible for the increasing rigidity of American policy. The American delegation found it necessary to defend the principle of complete freedom of expression, since only the participation of the conservative leaders would prevent a leftist-dominated provisional government in Korea. Rhee's opposition to the trusteeship plan reached a climax in July 1947 when he said to General Hodge that he would neither support nor participate in any government that the joint commission sponsored. After the assassination of Lyuh Woon-Hyung by a rightist fanatic on July 29, few Koreans opposed Rhee's policy. To do so and cooperate with the joint commission meant placing their lives in

⁹⁸New York Times, 17 July 1947, p. 10; Marshall to Jacobs, July 14, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:702-03.

danger.⁹⁹ Lyuh's assassination had completed the polarization of Korean politics. Rhee now openly predicted the eventual formation of a separate government under his leadership. Jacobs cabled Washington that the political situation in Korea was deteriorating so rapidly that American support for Rhee was now the only available option.¹⁰⁰ Washington still wanted to prevent a complete victory for Rhee's "corrupt minority," but it was too late to counter the predominant position of the extreme right.¹⁰¹

Despite the Korean rightist protest against the joint commission, the American delegation continued to seek means for establishing a provisional Korean government under the Moscow agreement. On July 29, 1947, General Brown tried to break the deadlock in the joint commission by suggesting that each delegation conduct consultations in its own zone. The Russians rejected this proposal. The next American move was an offer to consult, on behalf of the joint commission, with those parties and organizations to which the Russian delegation objected. The Russians also rejected this

⁹⁹Hodge to Secretary of State, July 17, 1947, *ibid.*, p. 708; Jacobs to Secretary of State, July 19, 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 708-09.

¹⁰⁰Jacobs to Secretary of State, July 21, 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 710-11.

¹⁰¹Borton Memorandum, July 24, 1947, Record Group 59, 895.00/7-2447, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

proposal. The American delegation then put forward a third proposal. It suggested that oral consultations be dispensed with and that the completion of written questionnaires by the applicants be accepted as consultation. In addition, this proposal suggested that the joint commission supervise an election of a national legislature.¹⁰²

The Russian delegation made a counter-proposal. They accepted the omission of oral consultation but suggested the creation of a "Provisional Assembly" to be composed of an equal number of representatives from those parties and organizations in North and South Korea, which had fully supported the Moscow decision. This proposal was unacceptable to the Americans because in spite of the south's larger population, it would have given equal voting power to North Korea.¹⁰³ Moreover, the Russian counter-proposal appeared to show no substantial change from their previous position. There appeared to be no more room to negotiate the question of consultation. The American military government, meanwhile, intensified its campaign against active leftists. It removed the ban forbidding mass demonstrations against the Moscow agreement. The effect amounted to an invitation for

¹⁰²U.S. Department of State, Korea's Independence, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰³Ibid.; U.S. Army Forces in Korea, South Korean Interim Government Activities (August, 1947), pp. 190-93. Hereafter cited as SKIG Activities.

the rightist groups to publicly attack the Soviet Union. The American military government arrested more than 100 ring-leaders of activity of a "revolutionary nature" in Seoul during August 1947 and apprehended many more in the provinces.¹⁰⁴

On August 12, 1947, Ambassador W. Bedell Smith in Moscow presented Secretary Marshall's letter to Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov proposing that the joint commission should report the results of its deliberations by August 21 so that each government might promptly consider what further steps could be taken to establish a Korean government under the Moscow agreement.¹⁰⁵ Molotov's reply to the American proposal arrived in Washington on August 23. The Soviet foreign minister denounced the recent arrests and imprisonments in South Korea as "abnormal and inadmissible." Molotov emphasized consultation with only those Koreans who fully supported the Moscow decision. At the same time, he accepted the American proposal for a joint report on the progress of Korean independence.¹⁰⁶ But the joint U.S.-

¹⁰⁴McCune and Grey, Korea Today, p. 87; Cho, Korea in World Politics, p. 152.

¹⁰⁵Marshall to U.S. Ambassador in Moscow, August 11, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:748-49.

¹⁰⁶Lovett to Political Adviser in Korea, August 23, 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 764-65; U.S. Department of State Bulletin (September 7, 1947), pp. 475-76.

Soviet commission was unable to agree on a report of its deliberations because of Russians' "uncompromising, untenable, and intransigent" attitude.¹⁰⁷

It was now apparent that further negotiations in the joint U.S.-Soviet commission would be fruitless. Thus, on August 26, 1947, Acting Secretary of State Robert A. Lovett proposed a four-power conference to deal with the Korean problem. With the invitation to a four-power conference Lovett presented a new proposal that set forth a substitute for the Moscow agreement. The core of the Lovett proposal was the idea of holding general elections in the two occupied zones under the guidance of the United Nations. Great Britain and China accepted the American invitation. But Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov rejected the Lovett proposal on September 4, saying that the four-power conference would be outside the scope of the Moscow agreement. Molotov argued that the Americans had not exhausted all possibilities of resolving the Korean problem within the framework of the joint commission. He also told the United States that the impasse was "primarily the result of the position adopted by the American delegation" in the joint commission.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Jacobs to Secretary of State, August 25 and 26, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:766-69.

¹⁰⁸ Lovett to U.S. Ambassador in Moscow, August 26, 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 771-74; Lovett to Political Adviser in Korea, August 27, 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 774-75; Molotov to Secretary of State, September 4, 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 779-81; U.S. Department

Molotov's refusal of the Lovett proposal indicated the futility of further bilateral talks between the United States and the Soviet Union. The proposed four-power conference was useless. American efforts to find a negotiated settlement only served to magnify the problem of occupation, while increasing demands in Korea for withdrawal. In effect, the diplomatic impasse in the joint commission ended the U.S.-Soviet cooperation which was needed in establishing a free, unified, and democratic government in Korea. Jacobs warned that unless the United States found a solution to the Korean dilemma, "we may have to abandon the country willy nilly."¹⁰⁹ The only course of action now left for the Americans was to refer the Korean problem to the United Nations. The Americans expected the United Nations to implement policies that they were unable to execute through their own efforts.

of State Bulletin (September 28, 1947), pp. 623-24.

¹⁰⁹Jacobs to Secretary of State, September 8, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:783.

CHAPTER III

AMERICAN DISENGAGEMENT FROM KOREA

Korea in the United Nations

The breakdown of bilateral U.S.-Soviet negotiations on Korea led the American government to perceive that the United Nations would be the only forum through which the problem of Korean unification could be settled. On September 17, 1947, Secretary of State Marshall presented the Korean question to the United Nations General Assembly. Marshall's speech before the General Assembly hinted that the problem was Russian obstructionism. He listed the Soviet refusal to grant freedom of expression as the principal reason for the diplomatic impasse in Korea.¹

Failure to arrange a settlement with Russia for the unification of Korea placed the United States in a very unfavorable position. On one hand, the United States had a commitment to establish an independent Korea along democratic lines and to prevent Communist control of the whole Korean peninsula. On the other hand, the continued American military occupation and administration of South Korea proved

¹Lovett to U.S. ambassador in Moscow for Molotov, September 16, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:790; U.S. Department of State Bulletin (September 28, 1947), p. 624; New York Times, 18 September 1947, p. 3.

to be a source of military expense, trouble, and embarrassment. Furthermore, the cold war and other demands around the world, coupled with domestic pressure for a reduction in military spending, prompted a review of America's Korean policy.

The United States reviewed its policy toward Korea in the summer and fall of 1947. As Truman put it, because of congressional pressure to curtail spending, "I instructed the State and Defense Departments to weigh our commitments and consider where we might safely withdraw."² Some State Department officials thought Korea should be abandoned, while others believed such a course would be short-sighted. Joseph E. Jacobs, General Hodge's political adviser in Seoul, was of the latter point of view. He contended that our ideology justified aid to Korea even if the peninsula lacked strategic value and was, in fact, a liability. Those who shared Jacobs' view in the State Department wanted only control, not permanent military occupation of Korea. In their view, people all around the world could see the struggle and judge for themselves American "sincerity in sponsoring the nationalistic aims of Asiatic peoples." Withdrawal from Korea, they argued, would produce a loss of prestige and result in nationalistic movements being less inclined to

²Truman, Memoirs, 2:325.

rely on American support.³

The Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that from the standpoint of military security, it was unnecessary to maintain 45,000 troops in Korea. The Pentagon felt that the 45,000 men could be better used elsewhere. Their withdrawal from Korea would not impair the American military position in the Far East unless the Soviet Union established military strength in Korea sufficient to attack Japan. The Defense Department, however, warned that a hasty withdrawal might lower American military prestige "to the extent of adversely affecting cooperation in other areas more vital to the security of the United States." They urged that a program of economic, political, and cultural rehabilitation accompany the withdrawal.⁴

The Wedemeyer report was an integral part of the Pentagon's view of withdrawal. Following a fact-finding mission to China and Korea from July 23 to September 3, 1947, General Wedemeyer reported to President Truman that the Russians were achieving their objectives everywhere in Asia, except Japan, without direct action and without incriminating themselves. Like many Americans, Wedemeyer believed

³Stevens Memorandum, September 9, 1947, FR, 1947, 6: 784-85; Jacobs to Secretary of State, July 7, 1947, ibid., pp. 690-91.

⁴Forrestal to Secretary of State, September 29, 1947, ibid., pp. 817-18.

that the United States had to seize the initiative to stop Communist expansion. He supported the idea of economic aid for Korea and any other Asian nations willing to help themselves. General Wedemeyer believed that the Communist inspired the riots and revolutionary acts in South Korea, but that a Soviet invasion was "currently improbable."⁵

General Wedemeyer wanted the American troops to remain in South Korea as long as Russian troops remained in North Korea. He believed a Russian-dominated Korea would be a threat to Manchuria, South Korea, the Ryukyus, Japan, and even to the United States. According to Wedemeyer, there were three possible courses of action for American troops in Korea: first, they could withdraw immediately, thus abandoning South Korea to the Russians; second, they could remain in occupation indefinitely, leading the United States to an international censure after the Soviet withdrawal; and third, they could withdraw concurrently with the Russian forces. General Wedemeyer recommended a joint withdrawal, accompanied by a program of American assistance that would enable South Korea to resist the "potential military threat" of Communist-dominated North Korea.⁶ Thus the best way for

⁵ New York Times, 29 August 1947, p. 7; Ibid., 3 September 1947, p. 10; Ibid., 4 September 1947, p. 14; Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 2:454-55; The Wedemeyer Report to the President, September 19, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:796-803.

⁶ Ibid. See also Truman, Memoirs, 2:325-27.

the United States to achieve a quick withdrawal, with a minimum of bad effects, was to build up South Korea's strength while presenting the Korean problem to the United Nations.

On September 23, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted to place the Korean question on the agenda for the current session. Three days later, the Russian delegation in the joint commission issued a statement in Seoul proposing that all troops withdraw from Korea by the beginning of 1948. The American delegation rejected this proposal because the joint commission did not have the authority to consider the question. On October 9, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov forwarded the same proposal to Marshall, saying that since the American delegation's position prevented the formation of a provisional government in Korea, the occupation forces should withdraw and let the Koreans solve their own problems. The United States rejected Molotov's proposal because the question of troop withdrawal had to be considered as an integral part of the solution of the Korean problem that was now before the United Nations.⁷

In response to the Soviet demand for simultaneous withdrawal of occupation forces from Korea, Warren Austin, the

⁷U.S. Department of State, Korea 1945 to 1948, Far Eastern Series 28 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), pp. 6-7.

American ambassador to the United Nations, submitted a draft resolution to the United Nations secretary-general on October 17, 1947. The United States resolution proposed that the occupying powers hold elections in their respective zones no later than March 31, 1948, for the establishment of a national assembly and a national government. Then the new Korean national government would make agreements for the early and complete withdrawal of the occupation forces. The resolution also provided for the creation of a United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) to supervise the elections, give advice, and report to the General Assembly on the Korean situation.⁸ On October 18, in Seoul, General Albert E. Brown recommended a recess of the joint commission in anticipation of United Nations action. General Shtikov responded that the Russian delegation intended to withdraw from the negotiations permanently, because the Americans refused to implement the Moscow decision. Four days later, the Russian delegation left Seoul, marking the end of Soviet-American negotiations. The peaceful unification of Korea was now entirely in the hands of the United Nations.⁹

⁸Austin to U.N. Secretary-General, October 17, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:832-35; New York Times, 18 October 1947, p. 2.

⁹Jacobs to Secretary of State, October 18 and 20, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:836-37; New York Times, 22 October 1947, p. 4.

Meanwhile, General Hodge reported that the prospect of a mutual troop withdrawal was becoming popular among many South Koreans. He believed the United States needed to push for a speedy solution in the United Nations to head off troubles that might arise from the appealing prospect of ridding Korea of foreign troops. The next Russian move, he said, might be unilateral withdrawal from Korea. The Soviet withdrawal would place the United States in a difficult moral and practical position in keeping its troops in South Korea.¹⁰

The Pentagon had already concluded that the Russians would probably refuse to cooperate with the United Nations, in which case the Pentagon wanted the United States to implement a United Nations resolution in South Korea only. Even if the Soviet Union accepted the United Nations resolution, the Americans could withdraw from Korea after the formation of a national government. In any case, the Pentagon instructed General MacArthur to prepare an outline for the orderly withdrawal from Korea.¹¹

On October 28, 1947, the Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly took up the Korean question.

¹⁰Hodge to Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 3, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:852-53; King to Secretary of State, November 5, 1947, ibid., p. 854.

¹¹Wedemeyer to the Far East Command, November 10, 1947, ibid., pp. 855-56.

The main issues of the question were the participation of elected representatives of the Korean people in the discussion and the withdrawal of both American and Russian troops from Korea. John Foster Dulles, the American delegate, indicated that while the United States was anxious to withdraw its troops from Korea, the withdrawal should follow the establishment of a single national government representing all the Korean people.¹²

The Russian delegate, Andrei Gromyko, maintained that the Korean problem did not fall under the jurisdiction of the United Nations. He charged that the United States was not abiding by the Moscow decision and had prevented the creation of a truly democratic Korean government. Gromyko argued that Korea could not establish its government freely until foreign troops had been completely withdrawn. He offered a resolution calling on the occupying powers to withdraw their troops and leave the problem of establishing a Korean government to the Korean people. The General Assembly rejected the Soviet resolution.¹³

On the question of the participation of Korean representatives in the discussions of the General Assembly, Gromyko offered a resolution to invite elected Korean delegates from North and South Korea to participate in the

¹²New York Times, 29 October 1947, p. 1.

¹³Ibid.

discussions. The General Assembly also rejected this resolution. The Political Committee of the General Assembly decided that United Nations-supervised elections in Korea should first assure the elective character of the Korean representatives. Gromyko then warned the committee that the Soviet Union would boycott UNTCOK if the General Assembly created it without Korean participation in the discussion of the matter.¹⁴

On November 5, 1947, the Political Committee of the General Assembly adopted Ambassador Austin's resolution of October 17 for the creation of UNTCOK and made its report to the General Assembly. The General Assembly, in turn, discussed the Korean question at its plenary session. During the course of debate, Gromyko denounced the proceedings of the Political Committee and declared that the Soviet Union would not accept UNTCOK. He argued that UNTCOK would serve only as a screen for American activities. In the concluding debate, Dulles summarized the American position on the Korean question and pointed out that the action recommended by the Political Committee "would be of considerable assistance to the Korean people in the realization of their aspirations."¹⁵

¹⁴Goodrich, Korea, p. 32.

¹⁵New York Times, 6 November 1947, p. 1; Ibid., 14 November 1947, p. 11; U.S. Department of State, Korea 1945 to 1948, pp. 51-65.

On November 14, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly finally adopted a resolution on Korea by a vote of forty-five to zero, with six abstentions.¹⁶ Based on the American proposals, the United Nations resolution called for elections in Korea no later than March 31, 1948, to choose representatives for a National Assembly. To facilitate and expedite the elections, the resolution provided for the creation of UNTCOK. UNTCOK representatives had "the right to travel, observe and consult throughout Korea." After the elections, the National Assembly would establish a national government as soon as possible. The national government then would arrange for the complete withdrawal of the occupation forces, hopefully within ninety days after its establishment.¹⁷

The General Assembly also called upon the United Nations members "to afford every assistance and facility to the Commission [UNTCOK] in the fulfillment of its responsibilities."¹⁸ But the success of the United Nations plan in Korea depended upon the cooperation of two major powers, because the Korean elections would be valid only if UNTCOK

¹⁶Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁷The U.N. Resolution of November 14, 1947, is printed in *ibid.*, pp. 66-67; U.S. Department of State Bulletin (November 30, 1947), pp. 1031-32; FR, 1947, 6:857-59; and Goodrich, Korea, pp. 215-17.

¹⁸Ibid.

with Soviet permission observed them. During the General Assembly debate, the Soviet Union made it clear that it would not cooperate in the patently "illegal" elections in Korea. The United Nations, however, failed to consider the crucial question of whether UNTCOK should hold the elections if the Russians denied UNTCOK's access to North Korea. This question later became the center of debate between the Americans and certain members of UNTCOK, because one-zone elections would almost certainly legalize the division of Korea into two different zones.¹⁹

In addition to the Russian non-cooperation, UNTCOK also had difficulties with Syngman Rhee and other rightists. Rhee wanted the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly to conduct general elections immediately and form a government that would consult and cooperate with UNTCOK. In his campaign for an immediate general election, Rhee effectively posed the embarrassing question of what the United Nations would do "if the Soviets refused to cooperate with the Commission."²⁰

Secretary of State Marshall anticipated the Soviet refusal to cooperate and instructed the American commander

¹⁹Cho, Korea in World Politics, pp. 185-56; Goodrich, Korea, pp. 32-35.

²⁰Jacobs to Secretary of State, November 19, 1947, FR, 1947, 6:863-64; Hodge to Secretary of State, December 2, 1947, ibid., pp. 866-67.

in Korea to impress upon UNTCOK that it also had the power to conduct elections only in the American zone. UNTCOK delegates arrived in Seoul on January 8, 1948. During their first meeting on January 12, the Soviet Union announced that it would not cooperate in the Korean elections. The United States then went on record in favor of holding an election only in South Korea. The American government announced that it was "eager to have the assistance of the United Nations" in bringing a freely elected government to South Korea.²¹

Meanwhile, the United Nations approach to the Korean problem brought still another realignment of political forces in Korea. Kimm Kiu-Sic, one of the leaders of the American-sponsored coalition, opposed the United Nations-supervised elections on the ground that it would mean a permanent division of the country. Kim Koo, the former president of the Korean provisional government in Chungking, also objected, insisting that the United Nations was a foreign organization and had no right to intervene in Korea's internal affairs.²² Chang Duk-Soo, who had succeeded the assassinated Song Chin-U as head of the Korean Democratic

²¹New York Times, 9 January 1948, p. 12; Jacobs to Secretary of State, January 31, 1948, FR, 1948, 6:1088-89; Truman to Prime Minister of Canada, January 5, 1948, ibid., pp. 1081-83; Marshall to Political Adviser in Korea, January 6, 1948, ibid., p. 1083.

²²Han, Hanguk Chongdang Sa, pp. 99-103.

Party, came out in favor of the elections. Shortly thereafter, on December 2, 1947, several men in "police uniform," alleged followers of Kim Koo, assassinated Chang Duk-Soo.²³ Of all the Korean leaders, Syngman Rhee was most outspoken in favoring immediate general elections, but since he had advocated a separate government in the south in 1947, UNTCOK had anticipated his support in carrying out its plan in South Korea.²⁴

The issue of United Nations-supervised elections marked the final split between Syngman Rhee and Kim Koo. This split had been long in coming. The two rightist leaders had been rivals throughout the period of the Korean independence movement; each claimed the title of president of the Korean provisional government and strongly disapproved the tactics and activities of the other. Rhee had always held that Kim's terrorist activities could only detract from the independence movement by driving away the sympathy of other nations. Kim, on the other hand, thought Rhee's insistence on nonviolence and appeals to international opinion were demeaning to "direct action" against the Japanese. However, the event which actually created the final public break between the two leaders was the trial of the assassins of

²³Hon-Mo Chi, Choe-hu ui Paekbom (The Last of Paekbom) (Seoul: Hanguk Kuksa Yonguhoe, 1960), pp. 28-29.

²⁴Jacobs to Secretary of State, January 29, 30, and February 10, 1948, FR, 1948, 6:1087-88, 1099-1100, 1101-02.

Chang Duk-Soo. Chang was the third South Korean leader to be murdered for his political views.²⁵

Appalled by the political assassinations, the State Department urged General Hodge to restore law and order in the American zone. Washington instructed Hodge to crack down on the South Korean police and force them to preserve stability.²⁶ Accordingly, General Hodge transferred the trial of Chang's assassins to an American military court. Hodge hoped that American legal procedures would expose the persons who were ultimately responsible for the assassination. Since the suspects in this case, as well as in the previous assassinations, were all alleged followers of Kim Koo, the military court summoned the old leader as a witness in the trial. This was a standard procedure in an American court. In Korea, however, a person called as a witness in a murder trial was virtually guilty of the crime by association. Kim Koo therefore asked Syngman Rhee to use his influence with the Americans to ensure that he would not have to take the witness stand. Rhee was unable to help Kim in this matter, and Kim had to appear as a witness. The results of the trial were inconclusive. The trial brought public disgrace to the old nationalist leader and the split between Kim and

²⁵Han, Hanguk Chongdang Sa, pp. 667-74, 678-90.

²⁶Lovett to Political Adviser in Korea, December 11, 1947, Record Group 59, 895.00/12-1147, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Rhee became irrevocable. Rumors circulated that Rhee had arranged to have Kim called to testify in order to eliminate him as a political rival.²⁷

While UNTCOK had no difficulty in establishing a working relationship with the American command in South Korea, all its efforts to gain access to North Korea failed. Direct overtures went unanswered, except for propaganda blasts over the Pyongyang radio. An approach to the Soviet government, through the secretary-general of the United Nations, produced only a reminder from Andrei Gromyko of the Soviet refusal to recognize UNTCOK. By February 1948, it was quite clear that UNTCOK would not be able to carry out its plan in North Korea.²⁸

On February 6, 1948, UNTCOK decided to have the General Assembly's Interim Committee resolve the question of how to handle the Russian non-cooperation. This decision caused considerable discontent in Seoul, because certain UNTCOK members were against holding the Korean elections only in the American zone, while the United States favored such elections. Joseph E. Jacobs, Hodge's political adviser in Seoul, charged that S. H. Jackson of Australia, George

²⁷SKIG Activities (December, 1947), p. 205; Richard E. Lauterbach, History of the American Military Government in Korea (Seoul: Kukche Shinmun Sa, 1948), p. 46; Sung-Myon Hong et al., eds., Haebang Isip Nyon (Twenty Years of Liberation), 2 vols. (Seoul: Semun Sa, 1965), 1:294-95.

²⁸McCune and Grey, Korea Today, pp. 223-24.

Patterson of Canada, and Krishna Menon of India constituted an anti-American UNTCOK bloc. Moreover, the Korean attitude toward these UNTCOK members grew bitter.²⁹ On February 11, Chairman Menon of UNTCOK submitted two questions to the Interim Committee of the General Assembly: first, was it "open to or incumbent upon" UNTCOK to implement the United Nations plan in South Korea?; and second, if not, should UNTCOK conduct the Korean elections in those sections of the country desiring them?³⁰

To complicate matters further, on February 8, 1948, the Russians announced the formation of the North Korean People's Army. This development accelerated the trend toward separate South Korean elections.³¹ While UNTCOK was consulting with the General Assembly's Interim Committee, General Hodge bitterly criticized the "Patterson-Jackson pattern of thinking" on UNTCOK. Neither man, in Hodge's view, had any concept or understanding of the bitter cold war against communism that was going on in Korea. Hodge felt that most delegates and all of the secretariat gave the

²⁹Jacobs to Secretary of State, February 5 and 12, 1948, FR, 1948, 6:1093-94, 1106-08. See also Goodrich, Korea, p. 47.

³⁰U.S. Department of State, Korea 1945 to 1948, p. 70.

³¹Hodge to Secretary of State, February 14, 1948, FR, 1948, 6:1110; Langdon to Secretary of State, February 17, 1948, ibid., pp. 1114-15.

appearance of wishing to appease the Russians. He argued that if the United Nations was indecisive, the United States would have to proceed along with the separate elections, because further delay in positive action in South Korea would be dangerous.³²

On February 19, 1948, the Interim Committee of the General Assembly began to consider the questions presented by UNTCOK. Philip C. Jessup, the American delegate to the United Nations, argued that since the creation of UNTCOK, there had been no unforeseen developments. He added that it was incumbent upon UNTCOK to proceed with its assigned task in that part of Korea to which it had access. Jessup pledged American cooperation in the fulfillment of the United Nations plan and proposed that UNTCOK proceed with the formation of a national government in Korea by means of an election in the south.³³ The majority of the Interim Committee members, after careful study, supported the American proposal and concluded that it should be possible to hold elections in South Korea, if existing conditions made it impossible to hold elections throughout the country.³⁴

³²Hodge to Secretary of State, February 22, 1948, *ibid.*, pp. 1125-27.

³³New York Times, 25 February 1948, p. 22.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 27 February 1948, p. 1; U.S. Department of State, Korea 1945 to 1949, p. 11.

The Interim Committee of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a final resolution on the matter on February 26, 1948, by a vote of thirty-one to two. The resolution called for the implementation of elections in such parts of Korea as were accessible to UNTCOK no later than May 10, 1948. UNTCOK was to observe the situation to insure that the elections would take place in a free atmosphere.³⁵ This meant the holding of elections and the establishment of a national government in South Korea as advocated by Syngman Rhee and his associates. The United Nations victory for the Americans also led the Pentagon to renew its pressures for a firm withdrawal program. The State Department, however, continued to remind the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the need to maintain flexibility in the withdrawal plan. The United States had a moral commitment, the State Department argued, to withdraw only after the creation of an adequate Korean security force. Therefore, it was impossible to establish a firm withdrawal timetable. American withdrawal would depend upon the success of building a South Korea strong enough to resist the Communist threat.³⁶

³⁵ Ibid., p. 12; New York Times, 27 February 1948, p. 10; Austin to Secretary of State, February 24 and March 1, 1948, FR, 1948, 6:1128-29, 1134-36; Langdon to Secretary of State, March 10, 1948, *ibid.*, pp. 1146-47.

³⁶ Butterworth Memorandum, March 4, 1948, *ibid.*, p. 1137; Memorandum of Conversation in the Division of North-east Asian Affairs, March 4, 1948, *ibid.*, pp. 1139-40.

The May 1948 Election in South Korea

The United Nations decision to hold election only in South Korea produced sharp divisions among South Korean political and social groups. The National Association for Rapid Realization of Korean Independence, headed by Syngman Rhee, was the most important right-wing organization supporting the South Korean general election. Rhee maintained that as long as the Russian army stayed in North Korea, there should be an immediate separate election in South Korea. The other major groups supporting a separate election in the south included the Korean Democratic Party, the Chosun Democratic Party, and various youth organizations.³⁷

The leftist groups strongly opposed separate elections in the south and denounced UNTCOK as an instrument of American policy. They advocated a North-South leaders conference and stirred up support for immediate and simultaneous withdrawal of the occupation forces from Korea. The extreme leftists and the Communists encouraged sabotage, riots and strikes, and they organized the "South Korean All-Out Strike Committee Against the United Nations Commission on Korea." Violent demonstrations spread throughout South Korea. They resulted in sporadic armed conflicts between police and

³⁷Yi, Hanguk Chongdang Baltal Sa, pp. 186-92; Han, Hanguk Chongdang Sa, pp. 97-103. See also Cho, Korea in World Politics, pp. 192-93.

rioters.³⁸ The total casualties of the unrest, besides property damage, amounted to a loss of 589 lives.³⁹ Rhee and his associates moderated their criticism of General Hodge to take advantage of the situation. The American military government felt itself irresistibly drawn to the rightists, because they were supporting separate elections in Korea.⁴⁰

The moderate groups under the leadership of Kimm Kiu-Sic, chairman of the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly, originally had supported a unified election throughout the country under United Nations supervision. When the United Nations decided to hold the elections only in the south because of the Russian non-cooperation, the moderates expressed strong opposition to the elections. In Kimm's opinion, as noted earlier, such elections would mean a permanent division of the country. The Korean Independence Party under Kim Koo had cooperated with Rhee up to this time, but now it joined the moderates in opposing the separate elections. Kimm Kiu-Sic and Kim Koo initiated a proposal calling for a North-South leaders conference to discuss the Korean problem. Kim Il-Sung immediately took up

³⁸SKIG Activities (April, 1948), p. 203.

³⁹McCune and Grey, Korea Today, p. 229.

⁴⁰Henderson, Korea, p. 155.

the suggestion and invited them and others who opposed the separate elections to a conference in the north.⁴¹

No one expected the North-South leaders conference, also known as the "Unity Meeting," to produce any settlement with the North Korean Communists. Although prominent rightists attended the conference, Rhee did not support it. Even if the conference produced an agreement with the Communists, it would have been very difficult to implement the agreement, primarily because of Rhee's political strength in the south.

The northern and southern Korean leaders met in Pyongyang on April 19-26, 1948, and passed resolutions that called for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Korea and for nonrecognition of the United Nations-supervised elections. There was little doubt that the Communists had rigged the conference. The southern leaders became propaganda showpieces for the northern audience. Kim Kiu-Sic returned disillusioned and retired from politics. Kim Koo, upon his return, announced that the north had promised not to disrupt the flow of electricity to the south. However, within two weeks of the conference, the north cut off the supply of electricity to the south. This action intensified the bitter resentment among South Koreans for the north and caused the virtual elimination of Kim Koo from Korean politics.⁴²

⁴¹SKIG Activities (March, 1948), pp. 153-54.

⁴²George M. McCune, "The Korean Situation," Far Eastern

Despite the bitter opposition of leftists and North Korean Communists, UNTCOK and the American military government continued their preparations for the elections. To counter leftist opposition, the American command alerted the entire South Korean constabulary for possible action. The rightist Korean groups in all sections of South Korea organized themselves into community protective corps. Their goal was to insure a favorable vote by legal means. This civilian corps ceased to exist after the May elections.

On April 1, 1948, General Hodge issued a proclamation of Korean civil liberties and released 3,140 political prisoners. He allowed them to participate in the election. Statistics for April 9, 1948, showed that eighty-five percent of the eligible South Koreans had registered to vote. On April 28, UNTCOK decided to hold the elections on May 9. The date was later postponed to May 10. UNTCOK also announced that, as a result of extensive field observations in various key districts of South Korea, it had been convinced that "a reasonable degree of free atmosphere" existed.⁴³

Survey 17 (1948):197-202; Hong et al., Haebang Isip Nyon, 1: 294-96; Dong-A Ilbo, 7 May 1948; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, pp. 146-52.

⁴³Cho, Korea in World Politics, p. 206; Henderson, Korea, pp. 155-57; Jacobs to Secretary of State, April 29, 1948, FR, 1948, 6:1184. The date of May 9 was changed to May 10 because of a Korean superstition regarding an eclipse of the sun which was to occur on May 9.

As election day approached, the effectiveness of the Communist campaign diminished. The staff of UNTCOK divided up into observation teams and carried out a comprehensive program of observation. The program covered the whole election process, including registration and the actual election. In accordance with the United Nations recommendation, General Hodge put forth every effort to meet the requirement of an "atmosphere of freedom." There were 902 candidates for the National Assembly, the majority of whom were from Rhee's rightist groups. Although the leftists launched an intensive campaign against the election, the actual polling day, May 10, 1948, was comparatively quiet. Some ninety percent of the registered voters cast their ballots. General Hodge announced that the election was a great victory for democracy and a repudiation of communism.⁴⁴

The May 10 elections resulted in the election of an overwhelming number of rightists, the followers of Syngman Rhee, to the new 200-member National Assembly. Ultimately, the total membership of the National Assembly was to be 300. One hundred seats were reserved for North Korean members who would assume office whenever there could be a free election in the north to choose them. The membership represented the ratio of one to each 100,000 of population in each election

⁴⁴SKIG Activities (May, 1948), p. 143; New York Times, 11 May 1948, p. 1.

district. Following the elections, UNTCOK retired to Shanghai to draw its conclusions and prepare a report for the United Nations General Assembly. On June 25, 1948, UNTCOK reported that "a reasonable degree of free atmosphere" had existed during the elections and that the results of the elections were "a valid expression of the free will of the electorate" in South Korea.⁴⁵

In the meantime, the State Department moved to cement its relations with the Korean rightists. The State Department suggested, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed, to reassign General Hodge as soon as possible after the May 10 elections. Major General John B. Coulter would succeed Hodge. Officials in the Far Eastern Division of the State Department had long felt that the personal antagonism between Rhee and Hodge might jeopardize the negotiations for the transfer of governmental operations. Based on the election results, the State Department expected Rhee to emerge as the dominant figure in the new South Korean government.⁴⁶

Establishment of the Republic of Korea

The organization of the new South Korean government proceeded swiftly. The representatives elected on May 10

⁴⁵Ibid., 14 May 1948, p. 13; U.S. Department of State, Korea 1945 to 1948, pp. 72-73.

⁴⁶Butterworth Memorandum, May 11, 1948, FR, 1948, 6: 1192-93.

convened as the Korean National Assembly on May 31, 1948, and elected Syngman Rhee chairman. The State Department was correct in assuming that Rhee would be the dominant figure in the new southern government. Rhee, as chairman of the National Assembly, expressed regret that the people in the north had been unable to participate in the elections because of the Soviet refusal to cooperate with UNTCOK. He also called attention to the fact that seats in the National Assembly proportionate to the population of the north had been reserved for future use by the people of the north.⁴⁷ On July 12, the National Assembly adopted a constitution. It provided for a strong executive form of government. As one observer noted, the executive branch was so strong that "it could evolve into a government by a strong man or a strong party."⁴⁸ On July 20, the National Assembly elected its chairman, Syngman Rhee, president of the new Republic. On August 15, 1948, Rhee proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of Korea in Seoul.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Dong-A Ilbo, 31 May 1948; U.S.-Korean Relations, pp. 68-69.

⁴⁸ Butterworth Memorandum, July 20, 1948, FR, 1948, 6: 1248; Henderson, Korea, pp. 158-59. The text of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, adopted on July 12, 1948, is printed in U.S. Department of State, Korea 1945 to 1948, pp. 78-95.

⁴⁹ U.S.-Korean Relations, p. 69; Dong-A Ilbo, 15 August 1948.

Because, from August 1948 onwards, Syngman Rhee directed the future of the new Republic of Korea, it might be fitting to review his political career.⁵⁰ Rhee was born on March 26, 1875, in Hwanghae Province in Central Korea. After receiving a classical Chinese education in accordance with the family tradition, he attended Baejae High School, a Methodist mission school, in Seoul. In 1899 Rhee founded and edited the "Independence Daily," the first daily newspaper in Korea.

In 1904 Rhee came to the United States and enrolled in George Washington University. He received his Bachelor's degree in 1907. Then he earned an M.A. from Harvard in 1908, and a Ph.D. in political science from Princeton in 1910. After completing his doctorate, Rhee returned to Korea and worked with the Christian youth movement. By this time, Japan had openly occupied Korea, and Rhee began his political activities by organizing resistance to the Japanese rule. In 1913 he fled to Hawaii where he founded the Korean Methodist Church and edited the "Korean Pacific Magazine." He remained its editor until 1939. Meanwhile, in 1934, Rhee had married Miss Francesca Donner, an Austrian, whom he met at Geneva while he was lobbying in the League of Nations for aid in the Korean independence movement. Rhee always managed to keep in touch with the independence movement in

⁵⁰The best biography of Rhee is Oliver, Syngman Rhee, upon which the following account is largely based.

Korea. He was the first president of the Korean exile government in China and during World War II served as chairman of the Korean Commission in Washington, D.C. The commission worked for the cause of Korean independence.

After many years of absence, Rhee returned to South Korea in 1945. As noted earlier, Rhee subsequently opposed the trusteeship plan proposed by the Moscow agreement of 1945 and demanded the establishment of a separate South Korean government when the joint U.S.-Soviet commission failed to form a provisional government in 1946 and again in 1947. Soon after becoming president of the new Korean Republic in 1948, Rhee organized his rightist groups into the Liberal Party. This party was in power until 1960. Under Rhee's leadership, the South Koreans completed the formation of their new government in early August 1948.⁵¹

The events leading to the establishment of the Republic of Korea provided the United States with a number of new problems. The most immediate problem involved the timing of recognition of the new government. The United States decided not to wait for the United Nations to recognize the new Korean Republic. Accordingly, on July 10, 1948, the State Department sent a policy memorandum to various diplomatic officers abroad. The note stated that the United

⁵¹Dong-A Ilbo, 3 August 1948; Ibid., 5 August 1948; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, pp. 238-40.

States was anxious to avoid any action derogatory to the United Nations' right to make its own decision as to whether the new government in South Korea fulfilled the aims of the United Nations resolution of November 17, 1947. However, as an occupying power, the memorandum continued, the United States had to define immediately its rights toward the new Korean Republic before the United Nations could implement other provisions of its resolution relating to the transfer of governmental functions and the withdrawal of troops. In light of the special relationship the United States had as initiator of the United Nations resolution and as the occupying power in South Korea, the note stressed, any failure to grant prompt recognition would weaken the prestige and authority of the new government to the advantage of the Soviet puppet regime in the north.⁵²

The State Department also felt that a delay in recognizing the new Korean Republic would be an admission of the inability of the United Nations "to give effect to the clearly expressed will of an overwhelming majority of its members in face of opposition of a single power acting in defiance of that majority." On the basis of these views, the State Department informed its representatives abroad that the United States intended to issue a statement of

⁵²Marshall to Certain U.S. Embassies, July 10, 1948, FR, 1948, 6:1235-37.

recognition soon after the formation of the new government in South Korea. The statement would indicate that the United States recognized the new South Korean government as the "National Government of Korea envisaged by the General Assembly Resolution." In addition, the State Department planned to send a special representative (John J. Muccio) to Seoul to negotiate with the new government in South Korea "concerning implementation of the further provisions of the General Assembly resolutions."⁵³

Warren Austin, the American ambassador to the United Nations, disagreed with the views of the State Department. Austin believed that formal United States recognition of the new Korean Republic without prior United Nations support would seriously compromise the American case in the General Assembly. Joseph E. Jacobs, Hodge's political adviser in Seoul, replied that Austin's views were out of date. He believed that the United States did not dare show any weakness in its support of the new government in South Korea.⁵⁴

On August 12, 1948, the American government released a statement which followed the July 10 memorandum and amounted to giving de facto recognition to the new South Korean

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Jessup to Secretary of State, July 20, 1948, *ibid.*, p. 1251; Jacobs to Secretary of State, July 24, 1948, *ibid.*, pp. 1255-58.

government. The Republic of China and the Philippine Republic followed suit declaring that the new Korean government in the south should be recognized as the government of all Korea in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations resolution.⁵⁵

The Early Days of the Republic of Korea

As noted earlier, the inauguration of the Republic of Korea took place on August 15, 1948, the third anniversary of the liberation of Korea from Japanese rule. The dignitaries, who participated in the ceremonies, included General Douglas MacArthur, the supreme commander of the Allied Powers in the Far East; Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, the American commander in South Korea; Senor Luna, chairman of UNTCOK; and Monsignor P. J. Byrne, the Apostolic delegate to Korea.⁵⁶ President Rhee, in his message to the assemblage, deplored the continued division of the country, laid the blame for the 38th parallel barrier on the Russians, and acknowledged the need for continued aid from the United States. In his remarks, General Hodge announced that the American military government would terminate at midnight on that same day and that its personnel would assist in the

⁵⁵New York Times, 13 August 1948, p. 1; U.S. Department of State Bulletin (August 22, 1948), p. 242.

⁵⁶New York Times, 15 August 1948, p. 1.

transferring of governmental operations.⁵⁷ Thus the inauguration of the new Korean government in the south marked the end of American military government in Korea.

On August 24, 1948, Rhee and Hodge signed an interim military agreement calling for the transfer of Korea's security forces and the training and equipping of these forces to Korean government jurisdiction.⁵⁸ Then, on September 1, Rhee requested economic aid from the United States for the reconstruction of the basic industries that were essential to a strong Korean economy.⁵⁹ In the meantime, Charles Saltzman, assistant secretary of state for occupied areas, prepared a lengthy study of future economic aid plans for Korea. The study pointed out that there was no guarantee that an American aid program would maintain South Korea's independence, but without substantial aid there could be no hope for its survival. According to Saltzman's study, it was in the best interest of the United States to consider an economic aid plan of several years' duration, so that the Republic of Korea would be able to establish itself on a self-supporting basis as soon as possible. Subsequently, on

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ U.S.-Korean Relations, p. 70; Jacobs to Secretary of State, August 24, 1948, FR, 1948, 6:1287-88.

⁵⁹ Muccio to Secretary of State, September 3, 1948, ibid., pp. 1290-92.

December 10, 1948, the United States agreed to offer economic assistance to South Korea.⁶⁰

With limited recognition accomplished, American diplomats next had to secure the United Nations recognition of the new South Korean government as the government of all Korea. At the same time, the United States continued to urge the creation of a new United Nations Commission on Korea that would observe the simultaneous withdrawal of foreign troops, facilitate reunification of the country, and report to the General Assembly's Interim Committee on conditions in Korea.⁶¹

Meanwhile, starting in the spring of 1948, in response to the proposed formation of the new government in the south, the Communists in the north had created their own version of a Korean national government. They announced their new constitution on May 1, 1948, and held elections to the Supreme People's Assembly on August 25. Then, on September 9, the newly elected Supreme People's Assembly proclaimed the establishment of a Democratic People's Republic of Korea with Kim Il-Sung as premier.⁶² Korea now had two new governments,

⁶⁰ Saltzman Memorandum, September 7, 1948, *ibid.*, pp. 1292-96; U.S.-Korean Relations, p. 71.

⁶¹ U.N. Delegation Position Paper, October 22, 1948, FR, 1948, 6:1315.

⁶² McCune and Grey, Korea Today, pp. 246-47; Goodrich, Korea, p. 64; U.S. Department of State, North Korea, p. 16.

each claiming jurisdiction over the entire country.

The Communists created their government in the north without reference to the principles outlined in the United Nations resolution of November 14, 1947. The elections were not free and UNTCOK could not observe them. Only one Communist-approved candidate ran for each electoral district and there were no secret ballots. On September 18, 1948, shortly after the formation of the Communist regime in the north, the Soviet government informed the United States embassy in Moscow that the Russian troops would be withdrawn from Korea by the end of 1948. The American reply of September 28 declared that the question of troop withdrawal was tied to the entire problem of Korean unification and independence and that this question would be dealt with at the appropriate time by the American delegation to the United Nations.⁶³

The Soviet Union extended official diplomatic recognition to the North Korean government on October 6, 1948. East European Communist nations and Outer Mongolia soon followed the Russian lead.⁶⁴ On December 6, when the United Nations General Assembly began discussions on the Korean

⁶³U.S. Department of State, Korea 1945 to 1948, pp. 114-16.

⁶⁴U.S. Department of State, North Korea, p. 16; John N. Washburn, "The Soviet Press Views North Korea," Pacific Affairs 22 (1949):58.

problem, the Communist delegates sought to invite North Korean leaders to speak out about repression in the south. They claimed that the North Korean government was truly representative and free, because 99 percent of the North Koreans had voted in the elections as opposed to 72 percent of the electorate in the south. It was a ridiculous argument, and John Foster Dulles exposed its fallacies. Dulles compared the terror and force in North Korea with the freedom of expression and the United Nations-supervised elections in the south. He contended that the United Nations should fulfill its task of assuring Korean unity and independence by recognizing the government of the Republic of Korea. Debate continued for several days, and when the Korean question came to a vote, the General Assembly sided with the American delegation.⁶⁵

The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on December 12, 1948, that recognized the new Republic of Korea as the lawful government of all Korea and called for troop withdrawal as soon as possible. It also created a permanent United Nations Commission on Korea (UNCOK). The new commission, with no enforcement powers, was to help remove the barriers between north and south, work to integrate the two peoples, and be available to give advice to the

⁶⁵ New York Times, 7 December 1948, p. 17; *Ibid.*, 8 December 1948, p. 22; *Ibid.*, 13 December 1948, p. 1.

South Korean government as well as to the United Nations General Assembly.⁶⁶ The United Nations decision in favor of the Republic of Korea led to its de jure recognition by the United States on January 1, 1949. On March 26, 1949, John M. Chang from South Korea presented his credentials to President Truman. John J. Muccio, who was already in Seoul as a special representative, became the first American ambassador to the Republic of Korea.⁶⁷ American diplomats had succeeded in making the United Nations a defender of Korean independence. But, as they prepared the way for withdrawal, they found circumstances forcing them deeper in- to Korean affairs. Korea was becoming a symbol of American determination in the cold war.

In light of the United Nations call for troop withdrawal, the Pentagon believed that the time had come for the withdrawal of American troops from Korea. Moreover, an extremely important policy paper from the National Security Council, entitled NSC-8, had authorized an early withdrawal, and the Army wanted no more delays.⁶⁸ But Far Eastern

⁶⁶U.S. Department of State Bulletin (December 12, 1948), p. 729. The text of the U.N. Resolution of December 12, 1948, can be found in Goodrich, Korea, pp. 217-19.

⁶⁷New York Times, 2 January 1949, p. 1; Ibid., 26 March 1949, p. 4; John J. Muccio File, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

⁶⁸NSC-8, April 2, 1948, FR, 1948, 6:1163-68.

experts in the State Department continued to urge caution in the withdrawal plans. They felt that American troops had to remain in Korea, despite the Army's need for them elsewhere. The constant threat of North Korea and events in China were creating second thoughts among some State Department officials about troop withdrawals from Korea. Since the American withdrawal was tied to the success of the new South Korean Republic, a large military aid program would also be necessary. In June 1948, Secretary of State Marshall informed Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall that the State Department was making every effort to achieve withdrawal by the end of 1948, but that it still was necessary to maintain flexibility in the withdrawal timetable.⁶⁹

Both the State Department and the Pentagon continued to press their opposing views into 1949. General MacArthur, in a memorandum dated January 19, 1949, reinforced the Army's desire to complete the withdrawal from Korea. He stated that the United States did not have the capacity to train and equip South Korean forces sufficiently to enable them to resist a full-scale invasion. In MacArthur's view, if a serious threat developed, the Americans would have to give up active military support of South Korea. MacArthur was anxious to have American troops withdraw from Korea, because

⁶⁹ Marshall to Secretary of the Army, June 23, 1948, *ibid.*, pp. 1224-25.

the country had relatively little strategic importance. The South Korean defense forces, he asserted, should be able to resist internal conflicts, not overt aggression from the outside. General MacArthur consistently opposed the idea of building up South Korean forces, especially if he had to provide their military supplies and equipment.⁷⁰

The reassessment of the American position in Korea in early 1949 led to the adoption of a new policy paper (NSC-8/2) in the spring of that year. The paper restated the earlier belief of NSC-8 that the ultimate goal of Soviet policy in Korea was to achieve domination of the entire country. It implied American intervention if the Russians attempted to use military force to unify Korea. The new policy paper also argued that the Communist control of the whole Korean peninsula would adversely affect the political and strategic position of the United States throughout East Asia. Further, the fall of South Korea following a hasty withdrawal of American troops would constitute a severe blow to American prestige and influence. The correct course of action, the new document pointed out, would be to support

⁷⁰ Butterworth Memorandum, January 10, 1949, FR, 1949, 7 (Pt. 2):942; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, pp. 34-35; William Stueck et al., "An Exchange of Opinion," Pacific Historical Review 42 (1973):541-42. See also William J. Sebald and Russell Brines, With MacArthur in Japan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965), p. 177; and Cho, Korea in World Politics, p. 167.

the Republic of Korea within practicable limits, while reducing the American commitment in men and money.⁷¹

Under the new national security policy, the United States planned to offer Korea military assistance for a well-trained and equipped army of 65,000 men. The army was to maintain internal order and border security. South Korea would also receive American military aid in the form of small arms and ammunition for a 4,000-man coast guard and for a 35,000-man police force. In each case, an American military advisory group would be responsible for training and supplying the forces. The revised national security policy (NSC-8/2) committed the United States to maintaining the South Korean defense forces.⁷²

The revised policy also affirmed the basic decision of NSC-8 that the American troops would complete their withdrawal from Korea no later than June 30, 1949. This was a clear-cut victory for the Army. The Pentagon believed that further temporary postponements of the withdrawal would not diminish the threat of North Korean military aggression. This view, combined with MacArthur's estimate of the American capacity to train a South Korean force, led to a firm decision in favor of withdrawal. But the government decided

⁷¹NSC Report to the President, March 22, 1949, FR, 1949, 7 (Pt. 2):969-78.

⁷²Ibid.

that an "unmistakably clear" announcement that withdrawal in no way indicated a lessening of American support for the Republic of Korea would have to accompany the troop withdrawal.⁷³ This meant that the United States decided to withdraw its troops from Korea in a manner that would make the American military commitment binding in the event of Communist aggression. As scheduled, following the example of the Soviet withdrawal that was completed in December 1948, the American troops withdrew from Korea by the end of June 1949. An American military advisory group remained behind to train the South Korean forces in the basic skills of modern warfare.⁷⁴

The State Department, meanwhile, felt that the impending Communist victory in China would leave the Republic of Korea as "the only remaining foothold of democracy" in the Far East. If the red tide overran the Korean peninsula, it would encourage Japanese Communists and discourage those who were striving to build Japan along democratic lines.⁷⁵ To the State Department, Korea in effect had become an unwanted symbol of the cold war.

⁷³Ibid., p. 978.

⁷⁴Sawyer, Military Advisers, pp. 34-113 and passim.

⁷⁵Untitled and Undated Paper on U.S. Position in Korea, Record Group 59, 895.00/1-149, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

President Truman recognized Korea's increasing importance in his June 7, 1949, message to Congress on the Korean aid bill. The continuation of aid to Korea, Truman said, was of great importance to the successful achievement of American policy aims, because Korea had become "a testing ground in which the validity and practical value of the ideals and principles of democracy which the Republic is putting into practice are being matched against the practices of Communism which had been imposed upon the people of North Korea." South Korea's survival, he continued, would demonstrate "the success and tenacity of democracy in resisting Communism." It would also stand "as a beacon to the people of northern Asia in resisting the control of the Communist forces which have overrun them."⁷⁶ Truman asked for \$150 million for fiscal 1949-50 and told Congress that his request was "the minimum aid essential during the coming year."⁷⁷

Other officials reinforced Truman's recognition of the increasing importance of Korea. In the hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on economic aid for South Korea, a constantly repeated theme was Korea's symbolic

⁷⁶Quoted in Glenn D. Paige, ed., 1950: Truman's Decision (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1970), pp. 28-29. See also Cho, Korea in World Politics, p. 241.

⁷⁷New York Times, 8 June 1949, p. 1; U.S. Department of State Bulletin (June 19, 1949), pp. 781-83.

value and its relationship with the United Nations. On June 8, 1949, Under-Secretary of State James C. Webb noted that "the rest of Asia is watching us in Korea." He characterized Korea as the key outpost of democracy in the Far East. If the United States did not do all in its power, consistent with its worldwide obligations, to help South Korea, Webb prophesied, "countless millions of the peoples of Asia will begin to doubt the practical superiority of democratic principles." Paul Hoffman, head of the Economic Cooperation Administration, observed that if the Americans failed in South Korea, it would disastrously affect the whole future of Asia.⁷⁸

Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan, the Republican supporter of bipartisan policy, constantly referred to Korea's value as "the only symbol left of any constructive interest on the part of the United States in assisting affirmatively to contain the Communist menace in Asia." The senator was more succinct when he questioned General W. E. Todd about Korea. General Todd, director of the Joint Intelligence Group in the Pentagon, stressed that it was the estimate of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Russians had

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 783-86; New York Times, 9 June 1949, p. 18; Ibid., 11 June 1949, p. 4; U.S. Senate, Economic Assistance to China and Korea: 1949-1950, Hearings Held in Executive Session Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, 81st Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), pp. 120-21, 129.

little to gain in aggression against South Korea. In Vandenberg's opinion, the issue was not Soviet intentions, but American intentions. The senator declared that the United States had Korea and "if we should abandon it, it would look like to the whole of Asia that we were washing our hands of it and letting it go away." Vandenberg believed that Korea was of such symbolic importance that the United States could not give it away to Communist aggression. Secretary of State Acheson also emphasized Korea's importance when he appeared in the congressional hearings on the Korean aid bill. Acheson warned that South Korea would fall within a few months if the United States failed to provide economic assistance. He suggested that the Republic of Korea was a showcase of democracy.⁷⁹

However, despite the strong lobbying by the Truman administration, the Korean issue received scant attention in Congress in 1949. The Republican opposition thought that with the fall of China, there would be no chance for the survival of South Korea in case of a Communist attack. They associated the Korean aid program with the larger issue of Sino-American relations.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 179, 185; New York Times, 24 June 1949, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1 July 1949, p. 6; Ibid., 2 July 1949, p. 1.

In the meantime, as the American troops completed their withdrawal from Korea, General Omar N. Bradley, chief of staff of the Army, prepared a memorandum for both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department. The memorandum, entitled "Implications of a Possible Full Scale Invasion from North Korea Subsequent to Withdrawal of U.S. Troops from South Korea," outlined five basic options for the United States in case of North Korean aggression. These options had to be considered, as Bradley noted, because if the United States did not adopt a course of action to counter a full-scale invasion, the Communists might dominate South Korea by default. In other words, since the fall of South Korea would disastrously affect the American position in the Far East, the United States would have to take some action to prevent it.⁸¹

First of all, General Bradley suggested the implementation of current emergency plans to simply evacuate the Americans from Korea in case of an attack. Although this action would acknowledge South Korea's weakness, it would "minimize U.S. involvement in a dangerous situation with unknown complexities." It would also indicate that the United States would not fulfill promises of support. But prudence directed that the Americans would have to invoke this course

⁸¹Memorandum by Department of the Army, June 27, 1949, FR, 1949, 7 (Pt. 2):1046-57.

of action if the situation became alarmingly dangerous.⁸²

The second course of action was to refer the problem to the United Nations for emergency action as a threat to peace. While such a move would result in a Russian veto, it would reaffirm United Nations responsibility for the Republic of Korea, lessen any loss of prestige, and perhaps force the Soviet Union to back down before world opinion. General Bradley believed that this course appeared to be logical and necessary, even though it would involve delays, debate, and recrimination.⁸³

The third option was to initiate a police action with United Nations approval and with troops from member nations. While the Army viewed this possibility as militarily unsound, it did realize that it might be necessary. The Army wanted the State Department to know that a police action in Korea "would involve a militarily disproportionate expenditure of U.S. manpower, resources, and effort at a time when international relations in Europe are in precarious balance." Since such an action might also require congressional authority, as General Bradley pointed out, the Americans should use it only if all other methods failed and if other member states of the United Nations fully participated.⁸⁴

⁸²Ibid., p. 1052.

⁸³Ibid., pp. 1053-54.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 1054.

The fourth course of action was to reconstitute a "U.S. joint task force" in South Korea. This course would inspire respect for the United States, but the move would have some dangers. It would commit the Americans to the defense of South Korea and would compare unfavorably to the withdrawal from China and the Philippines. It might even cause the Chinese Communists to ally with the North Koreans in the defense of the northern half of the peninsula. It would, above all, lead to a long and costly involvement of American forces in an unwanted war. General Bradley felt that this plan was unacceptable since it might lead to a world war. But he did not rule out this course if political necessity required it.⁸⁵

The fifth and final option was to extend the Truman Doctrine to Korea. This action would have nearly the same dangers as the previous choice. It would commit the United States to the defense of South Korea, strain the budget, and perhaps force the government to lower military assistance to other nations. However, it would serve as a "tangible indication of an interest in and support of a part of the world rapidly succumbing to Communism." It would also serve as a deterrent to Communist advances toward Japan. In the Army's view, the extension of the Truman Doctrine to Korea would require effort and expenditures far out of proportion to the

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 1055.

benefits to be expected. The Republic of Korea was a strategic liability regardless of its importance as a symbol of the cold war.⁸⁶

The Army memorandum concluded that in case of a full-scale North Korean invasion, which South Korea could not resist successfully, the United States should adopt the options of evacuation and presentation of the Korean problem to the United Nations Security Council. General Bradley recommended that both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department consider his memorandum for a reassessment of America's Korean policy.⁸⁷ The reaction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff reasserted their previous conclusion that Korea was of little strategic importance to the United States and any commitment of American forces would be impractical in view of America's heavy international obligations and limited resources.⁸⁸

General Bradley's memorandum placed State Department officials in a difficult position. They sympathized with the fear that involvement of armed forces or supplies in Korea might invite dangerous repercussions. But other circumstances had made strong American support for the Republic

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 1056.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 1048.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 1056-58.

of Korea necessary. A strong stand might help ease the consequence of the "loss of China." It might help overcome Republican cries of surrender to communism and would bolster the confidence of America's allies. The State Department thus hoped that it could separate political and economic support from military involvement.⁸⁹

Although the Army memorandum did not lead to any significant reconsideration of Korean policy, it served to place the issue before the key policy makers. The memorandum was an attempt to reach a balanced political and military assessment of the problems faced in Korea and their possible solutions. It addressed itself to the questions, which both NSC-8 and NSC-8/2 had ignored. The National Security Council papers had failed to outline the options available if a North Korean invasion occurred or to suggest a pertinent course of action. The United States had vital commitments elsewhere of greater strategic importance than South Korea, but it was not ready to write-off Korea.

Meanwhile, the State Department continued to concentrate on the stalled Korean aid bill. As noted earlier, it was caught in the larger issue of Sino-American relations. The Korean aid bill symbolized the United States commitment to defend the free world against Communist expansion. In addition, South Korea's need for economic assistance became

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 1058-59.

more apparent with each passing day. Runaway inflation and unemployment plagued the country. The Republic of Korea, above all, wanted to increase the size of the army, but the economy could not support the increase. American policy would collapse with the failure of Korea's economy. State Department officials therefore pinned their hopes on the Korean aid bill.

Early in January 1950, Truman requested a congressional authorization of \$111 million for aid to South Korea.⁹⁰ While Congress was considering the Korean aid bill, Secretary of State Acheson broadly outlined American policy in the Far East. On January 12, Acheson made a controversial speech before the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. He described the American defense perimeter in the Pacific as excluding Korea and Formosa. The defense perimeter, he said, ran from the Ryukyus to the Philippine Islands. In effect, Acheson was repeating General MacArthur's position by placing the emphasis in Asia on an offshore littoral defense. But Acheson added that no one person could guarantee against a military attack in the Pacific. Such a guarantee, however, he argued, "was hardly sensible or necessary within the realm of practical relationship." When attacks occurred, the initial reliance had to be on the people attacked to resist and then upon the commitments of the

⁹⁰New York Times, 10 January 1950, p. 1.

United Nations. Acheson warned against becoming obsessed with military considerations. The United States major fears, he said, were over internal threats rather than external ones.⁹¹

Secretary Acheson added a clear warning about Korea. The United States had given South Korea "great help in getting established" and the president was asking Congress to continue to help until the Republic of Korea could establish itself firmly. "The idea that we should scrap all of that, that we should stop half-way through the achievement of the establishment of this country" seemed to Acheson "to be the most utter defeatism and utter madness in our interest in Asia."⁹²

In any event, Acheson's speech was ill-timed. It came a few weeks after the "loss of China." Because he excluded Formosa, to which Chiang K'ai-shek's forces fled from the mainland, from the defense perimeter, Acheson aroused the anger of Republican critics of the administration's foreign policy. At the same time, Alger Hiss was on trial for

⁹¹Less than a year before Acheson's speech, in March 1949, MacArthur's interview with British journalist G. Ward Price in Tokyo indicated that South Korea would be outside American defense perimeter in the Far East. See Cho, Korea in World Politics, p. 260. See also MacArthur's conversation with George F. Kennan and the Under-Secretary of the Army, March 21, 1948, FR, 1948, 6:706-12. The text of Acheson's speech of January 12, 1950, is printed in U.S. Department of State Bulletin (January 23, 1950), pp. 111-16.

⁹²Ibid.

perjury in an espionage case. Republican critics used this trial to attack the administration for giving up China and for selling out to the Communists. The Hiss trial and Acheson's speech limited the administration's maneuvering room. The House of Representatives voted down the Korean aid bill on January 19, 1950. The defeat was a blow to the Truman administration.⁹³

Despite the defeat, a compromise seemed possible. Republican senators approached Acheson to suggest the inclusion of aid for Formosa in the Korean aid bill. If this were done, they pledged to persuade their fellows in the House of Representatives to ease their opposition to the bill. The Truman administration gave in and replaced the Korean aid bill with the Far Eastern Economic Assistance Act of 1950.⁹⁴ Acheson and the Senate Republicans joined to support the proposed legislation. Acheson's appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee went smoothly, while the Republican senators explained why Formosa merited continued economic aid. The new bill fared equally well in the House. The Far Eastern Economic Assistance Bill became law on February 14, 1950. It provided \$103 million to

⁹³ Ibid. (February 6, 1950), p. 212; Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 358.

⁹⁴ New York Times, 21 January 1950, p. 1; Ibid., 31 January 1950, p. 2.

Formosa and authorized a total of \$110 million to South Korea for the fiscal year of 1950, the first year of a contemplated three-year program with an estimated total expenditure of about \$285 million.⁹⁵

In spite of this promise of American aid, the situation in Korea did not improve. Everett F. Drumright, the United States chargé in Seoul, cabled the State Department that "the Republic of Korea does not recognize [sic] grave consequences of continued deficit spending."⁹⁶ When the downward spiral continued into March 1950, Far Eastern experts in the State Department discussed the problem and concluded that Syngman Rhee would do nothing to stave off economic collapse. Rhee, in their opinion, believed that the United States "could not let the Republic of Korea fall without incurring the gravest political repercussions." The passage of the Korean aid bill in early February had denied the American government leverage with Rhee. Rhee expected the United States to save his government from collapse, and he concentrated his efforts on a possible invasion of North

⁹⁵U.S. Department of State, The Conflict in Korea: Events Prior to the Attack on June 25, 1950, Far Eastern Series 45 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), p. 8; U.S. Department of State Bulletin (March 20, 1950), p. 454.

⁹⁶Drumright to Secretary of State, February 10, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:26.

Korea.⁹⁷

Under the recently approved three-year economic aid program, all that South Korea was to receive before June 1950 was what the United States had left behind in 1949. It amounted to \$110 million in matériel, enough to equip 50,000 men. However, as Drumright had reported on April 20, 1950, this was especially serious because the South Korean army needed spare parts for vehicles and weapons as well as powder and primers for its arsenal program. These military items were not scheduled for delivery until 1952.⁹⁸ The parts situation for the South Korean army was equally disturbing to General W. L. Roberts, chief of the American military advisory group. Early in May 1950, he reported that the six months supply of parts was exhausted and that ten to fifteen percent of the weapons and thirty to thirty-five percent of the vehicles were unserviceable. Roberts was concerned that the spare parts for South Korea would not arrive until 1952. In his opinion, unless the United States would take "prompt, effective and vigorous measures," the South Korean army would be dangerously reduced in firepower, mobility, and logistic support. He emphasized that the best

⁹⁷ Bond Memorandum of Conversation, March 15, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 30-33.

⁹⁸ Schnabel, Policy and Direction, p. 36; Drumright to Secretary of State, April 20, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:46-47.

fighting troops were "virtually worthless" if they could not support themselves logistically.⁹⁹

Ambassador Muccio's telegram of June 14, 1950, contained another pessimistic report on military supplies. Muccio cited superior South Korean training, leadership, morale, and better small arms, but he reported that North Korea's air power, tanks, and heavier artillery gave it superior strength.¹⁰⁰

According to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, the North Korean Communists were capable of continuing their present program of internal subversion, but the program would be insufficient to achieve their goal of controlling the whole of Korea as long as the United States continued its economic and military aid to South Korea. The CIA, however, warned that North Korea possessed a "superiority in armor, heavy artillery and aircraft." The North Korean armed forces therefore "had the capability for attaining limited objectives against South Korea, including capture of Seoul." North Korea was viewed as a "firmly controlled Soviet satellite that exercises no independent initiative and depends entirely on the support of the U.S.S.R. for

⁹⁹Roberts to All KMAG Advisers, May 5, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 93-96.

¹⁰⁰Muccio to Secretary of State, June 14, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 105.

existence." It was thus uncertain that North Korea could control South Korea without the active participation of Russian or Chinese military units. This was unlikely, in the CIA's view, because the threat of a general war would prevent Soviet intervention and because the Russians would oppose Chinese intervention as a possible threat to their control over North Korea.¹⁰¹

The Central Intelligence Agency, however, made it clear that "the ultimate local objective of the Soviet Union and of the North Korean regime" was "the elimination of the southern Republic of Korea and the unification of the Korean peninsula under Communist domination." An open invasion of South Korea had "thus far been delayed in favor of a coordinated campaign involving political pressure within South Korea, subversion, propaganda, intimidation, economic pressure, and military actions by infiltration of guerrilla forces." So far this campaign had not been decisive, but it had been successful "in damaging South Korea's economy to a serious extent." The North Korean ability to continue this campaign far exceeded the South Korean ability to continue effective resistance without American aid. The CIA did not rule out a Communist invasion, but it saw no need to be on guard against an imminent attack.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹CIA Memorandum, June 19, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 109-20.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, pp. 120-21.

Meanwhile, the official American attitude toward South Korean estimates of North Korean strength reflected the outward confidence then evident in Washington. The United States had routinely dismissed South Korean estimates as being 50 to 70 percent too large, even though they turned out to be much more accurate than the American estimates.¹⁰³ The United States also dismissed the anxiety that Acheson's speech of January 12, 1950, had created in South Korea. On April 3, 1950, the South Korean ambassador, John M. Chang, told Dean Rusk of the State Department that he hoped the American defense perimeter could be extended to include Korea. Rusk, in his reply, suggested that the so-called "defense line" was not hard and fast. "Mr. Rusk observed that this was not a subject which he was in a position to discuss, but he did wish to caution the Ambassador against putting too much faith in what he read in the newspapers." Rusk added that "the inference that the United States had decided to abandon the Republic of Korea to its enemies was scarcely warranted" in view of the continued American economic aid and political support.¹⁰⁴

South Korean confidence in the United States was further weakened when an interview with Senator Tom Connally

¹⁰³ Drumright to Secretary of State, May 11, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

¹⁰⁴ Bond Memorandum of Conversation, April 3, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 42.

(D-Texas), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, appeared in the May 5, 1950, issue of U.S. News & World Report. Connally implied that in the event of a North Korean attack, the United States would have to abandon South Korea.¹⁰⁵ According to a subsequent Drumright report from Seoul, Syngman Rhee regarded "Connally's remarks as an open invitation to the Communists to come down and take over South Korea." The senator's remarks had shaken Rhee's faith in the American determination to assist the Republic of Korea in the event of Communist aggression "to an appreciable extent." America's failure to meet Rhee's request for air support and the apparent failure to supply South Korea with military supplies and equipment under the mutual defense agreement had further shaken Rhee's faith. These factors, coupled with the "persistent talk" that Korea was outside American defense line in the Far East, were having "a decidedly unsettling effect on Korean officials and the public."¹⁰⁶

By June 1950, the situation in Korea looked bleak. American military officers believed that the South Korean

¹⁰⁵Rusk Memorandum, May 2, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 64-65. An excerpt of Connally's interview from U.S. News & World Report (May 5, 1950) is printed in *ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

¹⁰⁶Drumright Memorandum of Conversation, May 9, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 77-78. The United States made a mutual defense agreement with the Republic of Korea in January 1950 to "bolster Korea's military position." See Truman, Memoirs, 2:329.

army had enough arms for defense, but they wondered if Korean soldiers had the will to fight for a nation in desperate economic straits. In March and April, the State Department had warned Rhee that "continued inflation in Korea would serve to destroy the basis for further American aid."¹⁰⁷ But Korea's economy continued to deteriorate and Rhee's government seemed powerless to prevent its collapse. There were also repeated armed clashes along the 38th parallel and it was difficult for the American and United Nations observers to determine whether north or south had initiated the frequent border clashes. In addition, Syngman Rhee and Kim Il-Sung kept issuing bellicose statements, each claiming to be the sovereign ruler of all Korea and each attempting to discredit and undermine the other. To some, therefore, it was no surprise when the North Koreans attacked South Korea on June 25, 1950.

¹⁰⁷Hoffman's Letter of March 23, 1950, to South Korean Prime Minister, FR, 1950, 7:36-37; Bond Memorandum, April 3, 1950, ibid., p. 41.

CHAPTER IV

AMERICA AND THE KOREAN WAR

The North Korean Invasion

The North Koreans invaded South Korea at four o'clock, Korean time, on the morning of Sunday, June 25, 1950, almost exactly one year after the withdrawal of American troops from Korea.¹ After an opening two-hour artillery barrage, the Communist troops, spearheaded by approximately one hundred Russian-made tanks, crossed the 38th parallel at several points. At the same time, they carried out amphibious landings along the east coast.²

An immediate on-the-spot investigation by the United Nations Commission on Korea confirmed that the North Korean attack was a "well-planned, concerted, and full-scale invasion."³ Ambassador Muccio's telegram reporting the "all out

¹Korean time is thirteen hours ahead of Washington time. So it was Saturday, June 24, in Washington, D.C. Dates quoted in documents in the footnotes correspond to the sender's local time or the time of the locale where the events occurred.

²Courtney Whitney, MacArthur: His Rendezvous with History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 331.

³U.S. Department of State, United States Policy in the Korean Crisis, Far Eastern Series 34 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), p. 21.

offensive" arrived in Washington on Saturday night, June 24, and Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk immediately telephoned Secretary of State Dean Acheson at his Maryland country home. Acheson, in turn, telephoned President Truman who was spending the weekend in Independence, Missouri.⁴

The United States at once assumed that the North Korean attack was a part of the unfolding strategy of world communism. American policy makers also assumed that the underlying purpose of the Communists in Korea was to test the will of the free world in general and of the United States in particular. The Truman administration therefore believed that if the aggression went unchecked, the "emboldened" Communists would strike elsewhere in the free world, where the vital interests of the United States could force Americans to engage in even larger conflicts.⁵ In short, the administration's view was that the North Koreans attacked South Korea under Stalin's order.

For more than a decade after the Korean War, almost no one seriously questioned the Truman administration's inter-

⁴Muccio to Secretary of State, June 25, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:125-26; Editorial Note, *ibid.*, pp. 126-27.

⁵Transcript of John J. Muccio Oral History Interviews (December 27, 1973), pp. 21-22, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo.; Truman, Memoirs, 2:332-33. American officials believed that Soviet imperialism, employing new skills, methods, and concepts of communism, would subvert the national liberation movements to Russia's advantage. See Dean Acheson Papers (Princeton Seminars), Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

pretation of the causes of the war. Subsequently, however, a great deal of study has been conducted to examine the origins of the Korean conflict. The standard argument has been that the underlying motives of the Communists were far more complex than American statesmen had assumed them to be at the time of North Korean aggression. The popular assumption that the Soviet Union and Communist China acted in concert in starting the war has long since disappeared. Harrison Salisbury and Allen S. Whiting maintained that the Russians alone made the initial decision to attack South Korea. According to Whiting, the Chinese were the most surprised of anyone by the outbreak of the Korean War. Mao's two major priorities in June 1950 were to use his army to reconstruct China and to invade Formosa. His troop dispositions reflected these priorities, and were about as bad as they possibly could have been to support a war in Korea.⁶

The most simplistic argument in favor of the Sino-Soviet joint conspiracy thesis is based on the assumption that some arrangements may have been made between Mao Tse-tung and Stalin in Moscow several months before the outbreak of the Korean War.⁷ But the availability of a clear picture

⁶Harrison Salisbury, War Between Russia and China (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), pp. 70-72; Allen S. Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 43-46, 53-54.

⁷Chum-Kon Kim, The Korean War (Seoul: Kwangmyong

of what went on in Moscow in February 1950 has brushed aside most of the guesswork on the Sino-Soviet conspiracy. The Moscow meeting resulted in the signing of a Sino-Soviet treaty of friendship, alliance, and mutual assistance. In view of what actually went on at the Moscow meeting, it is doubtful that the two Communist leaders had the degree of trust in each other necessary for a "conspiracy" that would start the Korean War.⁸

Stalin never trusted Mao, because Mao advocated a doctrine of revolution quite different from that of the Soviet Union. Mao believed the poor, illiterate peasant constituted the backbone of a successful revolution in China. This theory of revolution was a denunciation of Stalin's more orthodox Marxist line which stressed the leadership of the working class.⁹

The question of Soviet responsibility for the outbreak of the Korean War has produced opinions ranging from the widespread position that Moscow ordered the war, to the opposition point of view that a South Korean attack provoked

Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 59-61.

⁸See, for example, Robert R. Simmons, The Strained Alliance: Peking, Pyonyang, Moscow and the Politics of the Korean Civil War (New York: Free Press, 1975), pp. 71-73.

⁹Salisbury, Russia and China, p. 73. See also Stuart R. Schram, The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), pp. 183-85 and passim.

it.¹⁰ If the Soviet Union started the war, the possibility of American counteraction must have been a deciding factor. The withdrawal of American troops, Acheson's speech on the American defense perimeter, and the voting down of a Korean aid bill in early 1950 may have created the impression that the United States would not defend the Republic of Korea against the North Korean attack.

As to the question of why the Russians were not in the United Nations during the critical period when the Korean War began, the standard explanation is that Stalin simply made a mistake. He did not think the Americans would respond with armed force, nor did he expect the United States to go to the United Nations and ask for a condemnation of North Korean aggression. Scholars generally agree that Moscow wanted to dominate all Korea and neutralize Japan.¹¹ But, despite their questionable origin, the Khrushchev

¹⁰ Karunakar Gupta, "How Did the Korean War Begin?" China Quarterly 52 (1972):699-716, claims that South Korea attacked the North Korean border city of Haeju on June 25 and that incident was the immediate cause of a northern counter-attack. See also commentaries on Gupta's article by Robert R. Simmons et al., with a rejoinder by Gupta in ibid. 54 (1973):354-68.

¹¹ Marshall D. Shulman, Stalin's Foreign Policy Re-appraised (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 139-44; Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu, pp. 34-46; Berger, The Korea Knot, pp. 93-102; Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1967 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), pp. 514-21; Alexander L. George, "American Policy-Making and the North Korean Aggression," World Politics 7 (1955):209-32.

memoirs provide a basically convincing account of Stalin's relationship to the outbreak of the Korean War. Khrushchev is alleged to have said: "I must stress that the war wasn't Stalin's idea, but Kim Il-Sung's. Kim was the initiator. Stalin, of course, didn't try to dissuade him."¹²

Robert R. Simmins has recently attempted to revise the long and widely held views that the Russians were directly responsible for the Korean War and that Korea was merely a battle ground in the post-World War II rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. To Simmons the Korean conflict was first and foremost a civil war; it was only secondarily a "battle of the Cold War." Even though the Soviet Union armed the North Koreans and expected a war, the Korean internal political conditions determined the timing of the attack. The internal political conditions on the peninsula prompted Kim Il-Sung's decision to invade South Korea earlier than the Soviet Union or Communist China had expected. The indigenous conditions included Kim's desire to "out-nationalize" his rival Pak Hon-Young's domestic faction, expectation that the Americans would not intervene in the conflict, anticipation of continued Soviet military support, and fear of South Korea's increased military

¹²Nikita S. Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, trans. and ed. by Strobe Talbott (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1970), p. 368.

capabilities with American help.¹³

According to Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, the North Koreans attacked South Korea in response to Syngman Rhee's increasingly noisy calls for unification by any means. And Rhee was pleased with the Communist aggression, because American military forces could now be used as an instrument to attain his goal of forcibly unifying the two Koreas under his leadership.¹⁴ Rhee had talked about unifying Korea by force, and for that very reason as well as the over-all policy requirements, the United States had refused to give him tanks or other offensive weapons.¹⁵ The North Koreans thought they could overrun the peninsula before the United States could reinforce the South Koreans and therefore decided to move against the south.¹⁶ They may even have

¹³ Simmons, The Strained Alliance, pp. 103-27. See also Wilbur W. Hitchcock, "North Korea Jumps the Gun," Current History 20 (1951):136-44.

¹⁴ Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954 (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 565-84. A debate on the Kolko thesis is presented in William Stueck et al., "An Exchange of Opinion," Pacific Historical Review 42 (1973):537-75.

¹⁵ Transcript of John J. Muccio Oral History Interviews (February 10 and 18, 1971), pp. 19-20, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo.; Samuel L. A. Marshall, "Our Mistakes in Korea," Atlantic Monthly 192 (1953):46-49; Sawyer, Military Advisers, pp. 100-06; William Manchester, American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964 (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1978), pp. 540-41.

expected the United States to stay out of the conflict altogether, because it was publicly declared that Korea was outside the American defense perimeter in the Far East.

Although available evidence remains inconclusive, the most detailed account to date of the Communist movement in Korea strongly maintains that the Russians were behind the North Korean attack. After a year of "ominous" speeches from North Korea advocating unification of the peninsula, Stalin ordered the invasion in early 1950 and so informed Mao Tse-tung. Mao gave his assent, and some forty thousand veteran North Korean soldiers returned home from Manchuria in April, accompanied by Yak fighter planes and T-34 tanks as well as other war matériel. The Communists hurriedly completed the actual planning between June 10 and 25. Only those at the top of the North Korean hierarchy were aware of it.¹⁷

Charles E. Bohlen has labeled as "childish nonsense" any suggestion that North Korea acted independently in June 1950. The North Korean forces, armed and trained by the Russians and "utterly dependent on Moscow for supplies," could not have moved without Soviet authorization.¹⁸ The precise origins of the Korean War may never be known, but

¹⁷Scalapino and Lee, Communism in Korea, 1:394-95.

¹⁸Charles E. Bohlen, Witness to History, 1929-1969 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), p. 294.

there can be little doubt that the Russians did little to discourage the North Korean invasion.

America's Response to the Korean Conflict

In response to the Communist attack in Korea, the United States acted quickly and decisively. On June 25, the day the Korean War began, the United States launched a massive diplomatic counter-attack. Ernest Gross, the U.S. deputy representative to the United Nations, placed a resolution before the Security Council. The Russian delegate was absent because of a dispute over the seating of Communist China, and the Security Council was able to pass the American resolution at once by a vote of nine to zero. The United Nations resolution branded the North Koreans as aggressors, demanded the cessation of all military hostilities, and requested the immediate withdrawal of North Korean forces behind the 38th parallel. It also called upon "all members to render every assistance to the United Nations in the execution of this resolution and to refrain from giving assistance to the North Korean authorities."¹⁹ The Security Council thus established war guilt and put the United Nations behind the official American version of the Korean conflict.

¹⁹Editorial Note, FR, 1950, 7:131. The U.N. Resolution of June 25, 1950, is printed in ibid., pp. 155-56.

The United Nations resolution also presented a number of possibilities, including commitment of American ground forces to Korea. In a teleconference with General MacArthur on June 25, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not believe that the United Nations resolution was sufficient for such action. But they told MacArthur that they might call on him to use American ground and naval forces "to stabilize the combat situation, including if feasible the restoration of the original boundaries at 38 degrees parallel," in the event that the Security Council called on member nations to take direct action in Korea.²⁰ With the help of later resolutions, the first United Nations resolution gave the United States the benefit of the United Nations' cover for military action in Korea.

Ambassador Alan G. Kirk in Moscow wired the State Department on the afternoon of June 25 that the North Korean offensive was a clear-cut Russian challenge, "which in our considered opinion [the] U.S. should answer firmly and swiftly as it constitutes a direct threat to our leadership of the free world against Soviet Communist imperialism." The United States should help the Republic of Korea "maintain its independence by all means at our disposal, including military help." Kirk believed that the Soviet Union was

²⁰Teleconference, June 25, 1950, George M. Elsey Papers, (Korean File), Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

not prepared to risk a full-scale war over Korea. The Russians were counting on an American inclination to allow "neutralization of Korean civil war" in which numerically superior North Korean troops could gain a victory.²¹ The American forces "should be used even though this risks Russian counter moves." If the United States sat back while the Communist attack overran the Korean peninsula, it "would start a disastrous chain of events leading most probably to world war."²²

The State Department's intelligence estimate of June 25 pointed out that North Korea intended to attain a decisive victory in South Korea within the next seven days. It also noted that the militarily inferior South Korean forces could offer only limited resistance. The intelligence estimate concluded that North Korea was "completely under Kremlin control." It was impossible for the North Koreans to launch the attack without prior instruction from Moscow. The open aggression in Korea was "in line with the increasing militancy that has marked Soviet policy during the past eight months." But it was unique in that it clearly carried with it "the definite risk of involving U.S. armed forces and

²¹Kirk to Secretary of State, June 25, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:139.

²²Sebald to Secretary of State, June 25, 1950, ibid., p. 140.

hence the risk of a general war." The Russians could not have taken the risks involved unless their global strategy called for the invasion of South Korea.²³

The Communist domination of South Korea fit into Russian global strategy in several ways. First, it offered "a test on ground militarily most favorable to the Soviet Union" of the U.S. commitment to its announced policy of "total diplomacy." This test would be important in connection with possible Chinese moves to support Ho Chi Minh and Burmese or Malayan Communists, as well as Soviet moves against Yugoslavia, Germany or Iran. Second, it would cause a severe blow to American prestige throughout Asia and would conversely enable the Russians to advance invincibly in the area. Third, the Russian control of South Korea would be a vital step "in making secure the approaches to the U.S.S.R." Finally, the Soviet domination of all Korea would be "an important weapon for the intimidation of the Japanese in connection with Japan's future alignment with the U.S."²⁴

In the State Department's estimate, the consequences of the invasion would be most important in Japan and secondly in Western Europe. Japan's reaction would depend almost

²³Intelligence Estimate by the Estimate Group, Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, June 25, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 148-50.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 150-51.

entirely upon American response to the Korean War. Rapid and unhesitating American support for the Republic of Korea would reassure the Japanese and would weaken existing desires for neutrality. In Western Europe, a successful Russian-sponsored invasion of South Korea would severely damage American prestige, because "the capacity of a small Soviet satellite to engage in a military adventure challenging, as many Europeans will see it, the might and will of the U.S. can only lead to serious questioning of that might and will."²⁵

On Sunday, June 25, Truman flew back to Washington and went at once to Blair House for a dinner conference with his top advisers. In attendance were Acheson, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, Jr., Secretary of the Navy Francis P. Matthews, Secretary of the Air Force Thomas K. Finletter, the Joint Chiefs of Staff Generals Omar N. Bradley, J. Lawton Collins, Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, and others. In an air of tension and crisis, the American leaders held an almost three-hour discussion on the North Korean attack, the United Nations resolution, and possible American courses of action. This was the first of a series of meetings in which the United States decided to defend the Republic of Korea against the Communist aggression.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 151-54.

Acheson made most of the recommendations. Truman asked quick, crisp questions and acted. The president and his advisers assumed, as noted earlier, that the Soviet Union was directing the North Korean attack. They agreed that a positive and immediate American action should check the Communist aggression. The administration instructed General MacArthur to send supplies and a survey team to Korea. It also ordered American air and naval forces to prevent the North Korean army from interfering with the evacuation of American dependents from the Seoul-Inchon area. Truman and his advisers, above all, decided to assess the possible future moves of the Soviet Union.²⁶

America's initial, limited steps soon proved to be inadequate. Early on June 26, Ambassador Muccio informed Washington of a dangerous, rapidly deteriorating situation in Korea. On the same day, the Rhee government appealed for "effective and timely aid." In view of South Korea's inability to contain the North Korean attack, Acheson urged another Blair House meeting.²⁷ Just before this meeting,

²⁶Jessup Memorandum of Conversation, June 25, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 157-61. The best work on the U.S. decision to fight in Korea is Glenn D. Paige, The Korean Decision: June 24-30, 1950 (New York: Free Press, 1968). See also Beverly Smith, "The White House Story: Why We Went to War in Korea," Saturday Evening Post (November 10, 1951):22-23 and *passim*; and Albert L. Warner, "How the Korean Decision Was Made," Harper's Magazine 202 (June 1951):99-106

²⁷Muccio to Secretary of State, June 26, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:170; Acheson Memorandum of Conversation, June 26, 1950,

Truman had revealing conversation with his administrative assistant George M. Elsey. The president said: "Korea is the Greece of the Far East. If we are tough enough now, if we stand up to them like we did in Greece three years ago, they won't take any next steps." "But if we just stand by," Truman continued, "they'll move into Iran and they'll take over the whole Middle East. There's no telling what they'll do, if we don't put up a fight now." Elsey felt that the president was determined to go much further than MacArthur's initial orders.²⁸

At the second Blair House meeting on June 26, Truman and his advisers decided to give full support to South Korea to destroy the North Korean forces. The president ordered General MacArthur to use American air and naval forces to attack North Korean military targets south of the 38th parallel. Truman also ordered the Seventh Fleet to prevent any Communist assault on Taiwan and to keep the Nationalists from attacking the Chinese mainland.²⁹ On the following day, June 27, the president justified his unilateral intervention as being in support of the United Nations resolution that

ibid., pp. 172-73; Truman, Memoirs, 2:336.

²⁸ Truman's Conversation with Elsey, June 26, 1950, Elsey Papers.

²⁹ Notes on Blair House Meeting, June 26, 1950, and Teleconference with MacArthur, June 26, 1950, Elsey Papers.

the North Koreans had defied. "The attack upon Korea," Truman said, "makes it plain beyond all doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war."³⁰ Truman also informed the world of his action through American diplomatic officials.³¹

There were other important developments on the diplomatic level on June 27, 1950. Seeking an endorsement for its action, the United States asked the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions against North Korea. Ambassador Warren Austin told the Council that afternoon that the Communist action in Korea was "an attack upon the United Nations itself." Austin introduced an American resolution and then read to the Council Truman's announcement that American air and naval forces had been ordered into action in Korea.³² The Security Council passed the resolution by a vote of seven to one. The resolution urged members of the United Nations to "furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area."³³

³⁰Truman's Statement, June 27, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:202-03.

³¹Truman, Memoirs, 2:339.

³²Goodrich, Korea, p. 112.

³³The text of the U.N. Resolution of June 27, 1950, is printed in FR, 1950, 7:211.

On that same day, Truman met with congressional leaders, told them of his decision to intervene in Korea, and they went along. But the president never sought consent from the whole Congress.³⁴

In the meantime, the State Department sought to keep diplomatic lines open to Moscow. On June 27, Ambassador Kirk in Moscow delivered a note to the Soviet foreign minister. The American note called Russian attention to the invasion of South Korea and requested the Soviet government to use its influence with the North Koreans to get them to call off the attack. The note also asked assurance that Russia "disavows responsibility for the unprovoked and unwarranted attack" ³⁵ By taking the public position that the Soviet Union was not involved in the North Korean attack, the State Department apparently hoped to give the Russians the opportunity to get out from under the invasion and to limit their reaction to diplomatic channels. The initial Soviet response branded the United Nations resolutions illegal because of the absence of Russia and Communist China. This response seemed to indicate that the Soviet

³⁴Truman, Memoirs, 2:338.

³⁵The text of the American note is printed in U.S. Department of State, United States Policy in the Korean Crisis, pp. 63-64. See also Acheson's telegram to U.S. Embassy in Moscow, June 25, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:148.

Union would not enter the Korean War.³⁶

On June 28, General John Church, head of the survey team that was sent to Korea by MacArthur, reported that the Republic of Korea could not restore the prewar situation without the commitment of American troops. Thereupon, MacArthur decided to make his own survey of the battle fronts. Meanwhile, Seoul fell to the invaders and the South Koreans were in full retreat. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore authorized MacArthur to extend his air and naval attacks into North Korea, but they told him to stay clear of the borders of Manchuria and the Soviet Union. The Joint Chiefs also authorized the use of limited army combat forces to insure "the retention of a port and air base in the general area of Pusan-Chinhae." The decision to use air and naval forces and limited armed forces, however, did not constitute "a decision to engage in war with the Soviet Union if Soviet forces intervene in Korea." If the Russian forces did intervene, MacArthur's troops were to defend themselves without aggravating the situation and to inform Washington immediately of the situation for a decision on proper courses of action.³⁷

³⁶Kirk to Secretary of State, June 29, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 229-30. For a detailed American statement contradicting the Soviet allegation, see U.S. Department of State Bulletin (July 10, 1950), p. 48.

³⁷Roy E. Appleman, South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military

Truman and his top advisers met again on Thursday, June 29, at the White House. This high-level meeting on the Korean crisis explored the use of American ground forces to stop the North Korean army. But Truman and his advisers withheld a final decision until they heard from General MacArthur who had gone to Korea for a firsthand inspection of the battle fronts.³⁸ MacArthur's report arrived in Washington in the early morning hours of June 30. MacArthur reported that the South Korean army was in confusion, that military supplies and equipment had been abandoned or lost, and that the South Koreans were "entirely incapable of counteraction." He further stated that the only assurance of regaining lost ground would be through the use of American combat forces. Accordingly, unless otherwise directed, MacArthur intended to immediately move a regimental combat team to South Korea and "to provide for a possible build up to a two-division strength from the troops in Japan for an early counter-offensive."³⁹ MacArthur received almost immediate presidential approval to use one regimental combat

History, Department of the Army, 1961), pp. 43-45; Whitney, MacArthur, p. 326; Joint Chiefs of Staff to MacArthur, June 29, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:240-41.

³⁸Truman, Memoirs, 2:341-42; Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 411-12; Paige, The Korean Decision, pp. 244-52.

³⁹MacArthur to Secretary of State, June 30, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:248-50.

team under his command, but Washington instructed him to postpone any further build-up until Truman and his advisers could give careful consideration to the request.⁴⁰

At the White House meeting, on June 30, 1950, Truman and his top advisers decided to commit additional American ground forces to South Korea and also to establish a naval blockade of Korea. They also discussed Chiang K'ai-shek's offer of 33,000 ground troops for Korea. Acheson prevented America's acceptance of Chiang's aid on the ground that it might well bring Chinese Communist intervention. Then, relying on his "instinct," Acheson kept General MacArthur from going to Taiwan to explain the rejection. In a subsequent meeting with congressional leaders, Truman reviewed the Korean situation and announced his decision to use American ground troops. There was no dissent from the congressional group, and the president authorized release of a statement to the press announcing his latest decision.⁴¹

With the commitment of ground forces, the United States had become fully involved in the Korean conflict. Yet the

⁴⁰Memorandum of Conversation, Department of the Army, June 30, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 250-53; Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 412.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp. 412-13; Truman, Memoirs, 2:342-43; J. Lawton Collins, War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969), p. 23; Paige, The Korean Decision, p. 263; Editorial Note, FR, 1950, 7: 257; Notes on Truman's Meeting with Congressional Leaders, June 30, 1950, Elsey Papers.

Americans carried out the decision with a full awareness of the possible risks involved, if the Russian or Chinese forces should enter the war. On July 1, 1950, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again cautioned General MacArthur to stay clear of Manchurian and Russian coastal waters in establishing a naval blockade of the Korean coast. American diplomatic representatives soon notified their host governments that such a blockade was effective immediately.⁴² On July 7, at the suggestion of the United States, the United Nations Security Council adopted a third resolution. The resolution recommended a unified command under the United States and authorized the use of the United Nations blue flag in Korea. Truman named General MacArthur the United Nations commander, but the general acted only on orders from Washington. In a few months American combat forces in Korea grew into an army of more than 210,000 men. Ultimately, fifteen other members of the United Nations sent armed units to Korea, but their contribution was meager.⁴³ The United States shouldered the major share of United Nations effort in Korea. Thus, even though the United Nations banner flew over the battle fronts, the Korean conflict was essentially an American war.

⁴²Joint Chiefs of Staff to MacArthur, July 1, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:271; Footnote 1, *ibid.*

⁴³Dulles Memorandum, July 7, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 328; U.N. Security Council Resolution, July 7, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 329; Truman, Memoirs, 2:347; Berger, The Korea Knot, pp. 111-12.

The first American ground troops to reach Korea was infantry-men from the 24th Division under Major General William F. Dean. Most of them were raw, young recruits fresh from occupation duty in Japan. They, too, fell back before the well-organized Communist forces. Finally, early in August, the United Nations forces under General Walton H. Walker established a strong defensive perimeter around the port of Pusan at the southeastern tip of Korea.⁴⁴ Then, on September 15, 1950, MacArthur launched an amphibious attack on Inchon, near the western end of the 38th parallel, which caught the North Koreans by surprise. American troops cut swiftly across the peninsula, trapping most of the North Koreans. Subsequently, the North Korean troops surrendered by the thousands. Others fled beyond the 38th parallel with the United Nations forces in pursuit. The Inchon landing was a daring military maneuver. It involved terrible risks, such as the extreme Yellow Sea tides, which could strand any invasion, and high sea walls girdling much of the port, which the assault forces would have to scale in the face of major enemy resistance.⁴⁵ Within a few days, the United

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 114-16; Truman, Memoirs, 2:343-44, 347.

⁴⁵For details on the Inchon landing, see Michael Langley, Inchon Landing: MacArthur's Last Triumph (New York: Times Books, 1979); Robert D. Heinl, Jr., Victory at High Tide (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1968); and Malcolm W. Cagle, "Inchon: The Analysis of a Gamble," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings 80 (1954):47-51.

Nations forces recaptured Seoul, broke out of the Pusan perimeter, and completely routed the North Korean army in the south.

Meanwhile, American policy makers had debated the ultimate goal of United Nations military operations in Korea. The complex debate centered on what should be done if and when the North Korean forces were driven beyond the 38th parallel. The State Department and the Pentagon initially had different views on crossing the parallel. The State Department, arguing on military grounds, feared that the Soviet Union would not tolerate the damage to its Far Eastern position resulting from such an action, and wanted to put off the decision as long as possible. The Pentagon, arguing on political grounds, favored the unification of Korea by force.⁴⁶ The advantage of a move across the 38th parallel for Korean unification included a major defeat for the Soviet Union and a decisive victory for the West. It would also increase the prestige of the United Nations and the United States, remove a potential threat to Japan, and establish a wedge into the Communist territory.⁴⁷

But there were certain grave risks involved with an

⁴⁶ Webb Memorandum, July 28, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:486-87; Butler Memorandum, August 1, 1950, ibid., pp. 514-16; Draft Memorandum by Department of Defense for NSC Staff Consideration, August 7, 1950, ibid., pp. 528-35.

⁴⁷ CIA Memorandum, August 18, 1950, ibid., pp. 600-01.

invasion of North Korea by the United Nations forces. America's allies and other non-Communist members of the United Nations, who had no desire to become more deeply involved in Korea, might not support the move across the 38th parallel. It would therefore give the Russians a weapon to separate the United States from its Western European allies. Moreover, it would perhaps create an image of an aggressive, self-interested America. The invasion also posed serious risk with Chinese Communist forces. The Russians would welcome a Sino-American conflict since such a conflict would tie down the United States in the Far East and create dissension among America's allies. Of course, American involvement with the Russian troops was also a possibility, because the United Nations invasion of North Korea would be a strategic threat to the Soviet Union. Finally, such an invasion would not guarantee unification and stability in Korea. In the event of defeat, the North Korean forces would withdraw to Manchuria and from there they would attempt to threaten and infiltrate with Soviet help. This Communist action would require the continued presence of American troops on the Korean peninsula.⁴⁸

The general consensus was that ground operations north of the 38th parallel could escalate into a major war involving Russian or Chinese Communist forces. But, on August 25,

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 601-03.

1950, the National Security Council senior staff meeting decided not to stop the United Nations offensive suddenly at the 38th parallel. The United Nations should deal with any Russian or Chinese Communist intervention in Korea. In case of complications, the United Nations forces were to "defend, localize and stabilize" the situation until the United States and its allies could consult and agree upon future moves.⁴⁹ Thus the National Security Council policy decision seemed to favor a move across the 38th parallel in pursuit of the North Korean troops.

On September 1, 1950, through the National Security Council, the State Department and the Pentagon had finally agreed upon a policy recommendation dealing only with military operations in Korea. The new policy decision acknowledged that the United Nations resolution of June 27 was sufficient to authorize military operations north as well as south of the 38th parallel to repel the Communist invasion and defeat the North Korean forces. It also concluded that General MacArthur should have permission to conduct military campaigns in North Korea, provided the Russians or Chinese Communists had not given any indications that they would counter such operations. In consultation with the State Department and with approval from the president, the Joint

⁴⁹McConaughy Memorandum, August 25, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 649-52.

Chiefs of Staff worked on instructions for MacArthur until the latter part of September.⁵⁰ At the time of MacArthur's Inchon landing, therefore, the general had no clear-cut directive for operation north of the 38th parallel.

After the Inchon landing, General MacArthur wished to press his advantage and destroy the North Korean forces by crossing the 38th parallel. Consequently, on September 27, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized MacArthur to conduct military operations north of the 38th parallel, provided there had been no indication of Soviet or Chinese intervention at the time of such actions. MacArthur was to use only South Korean forces in the northeastern provinces bordering Communist China and the Soviet Union. The Pentagon also did not allow him to support his operations with air or naval actions against Manchuria. If Communist China intervened, General MacArthur was to continue the action as long as he had a reasonable chance of success. He was to send any plans for future operations in North Korea to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for approval. Above all, any use of MacArthur's forces for political unification of Korea had to await a United Nations action.⁵¹

⁵⁰Lay Memorandum, September 1, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 685-93. See also State Department's Memorandum, August 1, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 671-79; and Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 452.

⁵¹Marshall to the President, September 27, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:792-93; Footnote 2, *ibid.*, p. 793; Marshall to

With the decision to cross the 38th parallel, the Americans in effect moved beyond their initial containment policy to unify Korea through military action. MacArthur's success at Inchon and the lack of Russian or Chinese reaction to the rapid northward move by the United Nations forces perhaps encouraged the decision to push on beyond the 38th parallel. On October 1, 1950, the South Korean forces crossed the parallel and a week later the United Nations General Assembly passed a British resolution by a vote of forty-five to five to unify Korea. The resolution recommended that "all appropriate steps be taken to ensure conditions of stability throughout Korea" with a view toward establishment of a unified, independent and democratic Korean government. The United Nations forces would remain in Korea only as long as necessary to achieve these goals. The United Nations took the action in the General Assembly to avoid a possible Russian veto in the Security Council.⁵²

America's decision to cross the 38th parallel, according to a recent study, resulted from a desire to contain the Communist expansion in Korea. Since the end of World War II,

MacArthur, September 29, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 826. For the text of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instructions of September 27, 1950, see Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 452-53.

⁵²Editorial Note, FR, 1950, 7:903; U.N. General Assembly Resolution, October 7, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 904-06. The Soviet Union ended its boycott of the Security Council on August 1, 1950.

the United States had resorted to various strategies, including containment, in order to create an independent, unified and democratic government in Korea. Truman and his advisers believed that the Communist regime in North Korea had denied the right of national self-determination to the people in the south and prevented the realization of American goals on the peninsula. The North Korean attack convinced American policy makers that the Korean people could establish a unified, democratic government only after the military destruction of the northern regime. Therefore, about a month before the Inchon landing, the United States had already decided to reunify Korea by military action.⁵³

During September and October of 1950, the United States continued to seek evidence of Chinese intentions in Korea. Earlier, Chinese troop movements from central China to Manchuria had seemed to indicate possible Chinese intervention. But the United Nations command did not think that China would use these troops in the Korean War. The American consul general in Hong Kong also reported that Chou En-lai was emphasizing his country's peaceful intentions, indicating that China would not become involved in Korea. After the Inchon landing, however, Peking took a different attitude. On September 25, 1950, Chou told K. M. Panikkar, the Indian

⁵³James I. Matray, "Truman's Plan for Victory: National Self-Determination and the Thirty-Eighth Parallel Decision in Korea," Journal of American History 66 (1979):314-33.

ambassador in Peking, that China would not allow the Americans to march up to the Yalu. Communist China repeated this warning publicly a few days later. The Chinese people, Chou warned, would not "supinely tolerate seeing their neighbors being savagely invaded by imperialists."⁵⁴

Early in October 1950, the British government reminded the Americans that they should not exclude the possibility of a Chinese Communist military occupation of North Korea since the Chinese would regard the elimination of the North Korean buffer state as a grave threat to their security. In addition, the Russians would be pleased to see the United States involved in a bigger war with Communist China.⁵⁵ On October 3, the State Department learned that Chou En-lai told Indian Ambassador Panikkar that if the United Nations forces crossed the 38th parallel, China would intervene, but would not if only South Korean troops crossed the parallel. The State Department received similar reports from Moscow, Stockholm, and New Delhi. This diplomatic offensive indicated that Communist China would defend North Korea. The United States could not regard Chou's statement as a mere

⁵⁴Memorandum of Teleconference, Department of the Army, August 30, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:659-60; Wilkinson to Secretary of State, September 22, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 765; Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu, pp. 107-08.

⁵⁵British Embassy to the State Department, Undated but delivered to Rusk on October 5, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:814-16.

bluff and had to closely monitor all Chinese military activity.⁵⁶

The United States was deeply concerned about Chou's warnings and sought to reassure Communist China about American intentions in Korea. Washington instructed Loy W. Henderson, the American ambassador to India, to arrange a meeting with the Chinese ambassador in New Delhi through the Indian government or, if this was not possible, to convey to him the message that the United Nations operations in Korea constituted "no threat whatsoever to Korea's neighbors," and that the United States sought "no special position whatever in Korea." The Chinese ambassador rejected all of Henderson's efforts to reach him.⁵⁷

The Netherlands, also alarmed by the Chinese warnings, wanted to introduce a resolution in the United Nations General Assembly, which would suspend all United Nations military operations in North Korea until the end of October 1950. The interval would be used to make an effort to reach a diplomatic settlement. The United States strongly protested the Dutch intention, arguing that Communist China's threats were designed primarily to dissuade United Nations

⁵⁶Truman, Memoirs, 2:361-62; Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 452; Manchester, American Caesar, p. 586.

⁵⁷Webb to U.S. Embassy in India, October 4, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:875-76; Henderson to Secretary of State, October 10, 1950, ibid., p. 921.

members from continuing their support for United Nations action in Korea. Consequently, the Netherlands agreed not to introduce the resolution.⁵⁸

In the light of possible Chinese Communist intervention, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent General MacArthur an amplification of his previous instructions. They reminded the general that, in the event of Chinese intervention, he was to continue his operations as long as, in his judgment, there was a reasonable chance of success. In any case, the Joint Chiefs told MacArthur to "obtain authorization from Washington prior to taking any military action against objectives in Chinese territory."⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Truman decided to have "a personal talk" with MacArthur on Wake Island to clarify his relationship with the general as well as "to get the benefit of his firsthand information and judgment" regarding the threat of Chinese intervention in Korea.⁶⁰ A few days before the Wake Island meeting, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency prepared estimates on the threat of Chinese and Russian intervention. According to the CIA

⁵⁸Acheson to Acting Secretary of State, October 5, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 883-84; Webb to U.S. Embassy in the Netherlands, October 5, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 884-85; Footnote 1, *ibid.*, p. 885.

⁵⁹Joint Chiefs of Staff to MacArthur, October 9, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 915; Truman, Memoirs, 2:362.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 362-63; Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 589-91.

estimates, the Chinese intervention was unlikely in 1950, because such an action would place a severe strain on China's economy and would make the Chinese dependent upon Russian air and naval aid. The intelligence estimates also concluded that there was no evidence of Soviet intention to intervene in Korea and that the Russians would intervene only when it was in "their interest to precipitate a global war at this time."⁶¹

On October 15, 1950, Truman conferred with MacArthur on Wake Island in the Pacific, where the general discounted the Chinese Communist intervention. MacArthur assured the president that while intervention in the first or second month of the conflict could have been decisive, he was no longer fearful of Russian or Chinese intervention. Communist China had 300,000 men in Manchuria, of which not more than 125,000 were probably distributed along the Yalu River. But the Chinese had no air force, and any attempt to get down to Pyongyang would result in "the greatest slaughter." MacArthur firmly believed that "all resistance would end, in both North and South Korea, by Thanksgiving," thus enabling the Eighth Army to withdraw to Japan by Christmas. The general also hoped that the United Nations would be able to

⁶¹CIA Memorandum on Threat of Chinese Communist Intervention, October 12, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:933-34; CIA Memorandum on Threat of Soviet Intervention, October 12, 1950, ibid., pp. 935-36.

hold elections in Korea by the first of the year. Truman agreed that it should be made clear that the Americans were supporting the Rhee government in Korea. The president felt that he had "a most satisfactory conference" with General MacArthur.⁶²

Although the Wake Island meeting had discounted the possibility of Chinese intervention in Korea, the United States did not want to do anything that might irritate the Chinese unnecessarily. Through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the State Department advised General MacArthur to issue a special report indicating that the United Nations operations in Korea would not interfere with the Suiho hydroelectric plant on the Yalu River near Sinuiju. For this report, MacArthur was to consult with President Rhee of South Korea, who should understand "the importance of doing everything possible to avoid a clash with Chi Commie forces at this time." But the general felt that such a statement would be unnecessary because he had no intention of disturbing any peaceful and reasonable application of this power supply. He also did not think it was advisable for him to predict publicly "future policies, decisions and actions" of the

⁶²Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference, October 15, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 948-60; Douglas MacArthur, Reminiscences (New York: Crest Books, 1965), pp. 361-62; Truman, Memoirs, 2:364-67. See also Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 141; and Whitney, MacArthur, p. 392.

United Nations Commission on Korea. MacArthur therefore did not issue the suggested report.⁶³

On October 24, 1950, General MacArthur had removed all restrictions on the use of United Nations forces in North Korea. He instructed his ground commanders to proceed with all available troops to the northern frontiers of North Korea. The Joint Chiefs of Staff questioned this action as being against the instructions of September 27, but MacArthur argued that military necessity forced him to lift the restrictions, since the South Korean troops "could not handle the situation" alone in North Korea. The American troops then advanced north to the banks of the Yalu River which separated Korea from China's Manchuria.⁶⁴ Five days after MacArthur removed restrictions on the use of United Nations forces in North Korea, the State Department learned that the Eighth Army took its first Chinese prisoners. But the Eighth Army believed that there were no sizable number of Chinese troops in Korea.⁶⁵

⁶³Acheson to U.S. Embassy in Korea, October 21, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:987; MacArthur to Joint Chiefs of Staff, October 22, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 991-92.

⁶⁴Editorial Note, *ibid.*, pp. 995-96.

⁶⁵Drumright to Secretary of State, October 29, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 1013-14. A South Korean source points out that as a result of three-way talks between Pyongyang, Moscow, and Peking, the Chinese People's "Volunteer" Army joined the battle in support of North Korea on October 25, 1950. See Pukhan Nyongam Kanheng Wiwonhoe, ed., Pukhan Chung Kam

On November 1, 1950, the American chargé in Seoul cabled Washington that the Eighth Army believed there were now two or three regiments of Chinese troops in North Korea, but the Chinese would "avoid overt intervention."⁶⁶ Far Eastern experts in the State Department were deeply concerned about the reported presence of Chinese Communist troops in Korea. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, however, rejected the concerned viewpoint, even though it agreed that Chinese troops were now opposing the United Nations forces in Korea. On November 4, in response to the president's request for fuller information, General MacArthur sent a calming estimate warning against "hasty conclusions which might be premature" and urging patience during "a more complete accumulation of military facts."⁶⁷

The United States had miscalculated Chinese intentions in Korea. Communist China decided to fight and their big attack came on November 26, 1950. Two days later, as outnumbered American and other United Nations troops were falling back in a retreat, General MacArthur announced that

(General Chronicle of North Korea) (Seoul: Kongsankwon Munjae Yonguso, 1968), p. 964.

⁶⁶Drumright to Secretary of State, November 1, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:1022.

⁶⁷Clubb to Rusk, November 1, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 1023; Stuart Memorandum, November 3, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 1029-30; Barrett to Rusk, November 3, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 1030; CIA Director to the President, November 1, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 1025-26; Editorial Note, *ibid.*, p. 1036.

he confronted "an entirely new war." He also told his superiors in Washington a few days later that he was "facing the entire Chinese nation in an undeclared war."⁶⁸ MacArthur now maintained that the victory would not be possible unless he could blockade China, bomb targets in Manchuria, and use Chinese Nationalist troops for diversionary attacks on the Chinese coast. Truman, his advisers, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed this course, fearing that it would lead to a world war. "if we began to attack Communist China," Truman wrote later, "we had to anticipate Russian intervention." American policy makers, who had banked their "entire foreign policy on the idea of keeping Russia contained," feared that the Russians through their Chinese allies were trying to throw the United States into a "bottomless pit."⁶⁹

Explaining why Communist China intervened in Korea can only be a matter of conjecture since the detailed answer must await future revelations from Peking. An early speculation on Chinese motives was the suggestion of General Courtney Whitney, MacArthur's chief aide, that the Chinese

⁶⁸ Muccio to Secretary of State, November 27, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:1235-36; MacArthur to Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 28 and December 3, 1950, ibid., pp. 1237, 1320-22; Dong-A Ilbo, 26 November 1950; Ibid., 27 November 1950.

⁶⁹ Truman, Memoirs, 2:383; David S. McLellan, Dean Acheson: The State Department Years (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1976), p. 276. See also Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 472-73.

decision to intervene came after the British defectors Guy Burgess and Donald MacLean told Peking that the United States would not strike across the Yalu into Manchuria. It is difficult to believe, however, that the Chinese decided to fight the United States in Korea on the sole basis of this uncertain intelligence estimate. A far more plausible explanation of Chinese motives was that Peking's intervention was a reluctant last resort to prevent the establishment of Northeast Asian anti-Communist coalition of Japan, Korea, and the United States, as well as the threat to China's security and the undermining of Chinese prestige through the loss of a Communist neighbor and an inability to take over Taiwan.⁷⁰

Because of America's failure to anticipate the Chinese Communist intervention, there has been substantial controversy over who was to blame. The Truman administration put the blame for its surprise on its field commander, General MacArthur, who had assured the administration that the Chinese would not enter the war in Korea. But MacArthur attributed his miscalculation of Chinese plans to Washington's refusal to let him strike across the Yalu and to Peking's advance knowledge of this through an intelligence

⁷⁰Whitney, MacArthur, pp. 393-95; Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu, pp. 151-62. See also Harold C. Hinton, China's Turbulent Quest, 2nd edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. 44-49.

leak. The general argued that he had given no fool-proof guarantee and that the State Department, the Pentagon, and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency apparently shared his estimates of Chinese intentions toward Korea.⁷¹ At any rate, MacArthur and the Truman administration shared in the failure to predict the Chinese Communist intervention, since both knew that the Chinese had 300,000 troops in Manchuria who were capable of entering the war in Korea.

America's allies in Europe greatly feared that if the United States now reacted violently to the Chinese intervention, it would escalate into a world war. The United States had to reassure its European allies, especially Britain and France, that it would only act through the United Nations and would not broaden the conflict. American policy makers made it clear that the United States would not give up its commitments for new problems in the Far East.⁷² But Truman's press conference of November 30, 1950, led to fears of a general war in Europe and a tense debate in the British parliament. The president told reporters that he would consider using all available weapons in meeting the Chinese

⁷¹Jessup Memorandum of Conversation, December 1, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:1276-81; MacArthur, Reminiscences, pp. 417-26. See also Manchester, American Caesar, pp. 612-18.

⁷²Truman, Memoirs, 2:381; Acheson to U.S. Embassy in London, November 28, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:1249-51; Austin to Secretary of State, November 30, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 1272-75.

intervention, thereby leaving the impression that the atomic bomb might also be used in Korea. Clement Attlee, the frightened British prime minister, decided to fly to Washington for talks with Truman.⁷³

Prime Minister Attlee and his advisers arrived in Washington on December 4, 1950. The Truman-Attlee discussions which followed ranged over all the problems facing America's allies in Europe, as well as Far Eastern problems and the Chinese intervention in Korea. The major difference of opinion was on Communist China which Britain recognized. The British believed that China was far from a Soviet satellite and possibly ripe for "Titoism." Truman did not agree with this view. The president also reaffirmed that the United States could not allow Taiwan to fall into hostile hands. He further stated that the Americans would not get out of Korea voluntarily. The United States and Britain agreed to try to avoid a general war with Communist China, and to hold on in Korea as long as possible. As for the atomic bomb, Truman assured Attlee that he was not thinking of using it. In a communique issued at the conclusion of the Truman-Attlee talks, the American and British leaders declared that they were ready to seek an end to the Korean

⁷³ Editorial Note, *ibid.*, pp. 1261-62; Holmes to Secretary of State, November 30, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 1269; Footnote 1, *ibid.* See also Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 478-85.

conflict by means of negotiation.⁷⁴

On December 11, 1950, Acheson instructed the United States mission at the United Nations to consider a cease-fire in Korea. He pointed out that the United States should insist upon a cease-fire which would not place the United Nations forces at a military disadvantage and which would not involve political considerations. In order to "insure compliance and prevent worsening of military situation of the U.N. forces during the cease-fire," there should be United Nations observation of the truce operations throughout Korea. The next day, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested the necessary terms for a cease-fire in Korea. They favored a demilitarized zone "on the order of twenty miles in width, with the southern limit following generally the line of the 38th parallel." The cease-fire should apply to all opposing ground, air, and naval forces in Korea, wherever located. A United Nations cease-fire commission should have "free and unlimited access to the whole Korean peninsula." The cease-fire should provide for the exchange of prisoners on a one-for-one basis and should not allow refugees to migrate in either direction. Finally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff strongly felt that the United Nations should

⁷⁴Minutes of Truman-Attlee Meeting, December 4, 5, 7 and 8, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:1361-74, 1392-1408, 1449-61, 1468-79; Butler Memorandum on the December 6 Meeting, *ibid.*, pp. 1430-32; Jessup Memorandum on Truman-Attlee Talks, December 7, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 1528-31.

make provisions for a cease-fire commission before the United States accepted any truce arrangement.⁷⁵ Accordingly, the United Nations tried to arrange a cease-fire, but the Chinese rejected the offer. Communist China demanded that all foreign troops leave Korea. This condition was unacceptable to the United States.⁷⁶

Having decided to try to remain in Korea, Truman, on December 15, 1950, declared a state of emergency and announced plans to increase defense production, expand the armed forces, and set up wage and price controls. He also stated that "the United States was willing to negotiate, if the Communists were, but would not yield to aggression nor engage in appeasement in the face of the great danger created by the rulers of the Soviet Union."⁷⁷

In the meantime, the Tenth Corps began its seaborne evacuation of North Korea to Pusan. It was to be placed under General Walton H. Walker's Eighth Army. At the same time, the Eighth Army continued its southward retreat, not under Chinese pressure, but to establish "a continuous defensive line across Korea at the most advantageous

⁷⁵Acheson to U.S. Mission at U.N., December 11, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 1522; Marshall to Secretary of State, December 12, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 1528-31.

⁷⁶Austin to Secretary of State, December 14, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 1546-48.

⁷⁷Editorial Note, *ibid.*, p. 1548.

position." On December 23, Walker was killed in a vehicle accident, and General Matthew B. Ridgway succeeded him as commander of the Eighth Army. MacArthur told Ridgway that he could "attack, defend, or withdraw, the decision was left to him." Ridgway in effect had the permission to use the Eighth Army as he saw fit without reference to Tokyo. He planned to go on the offensive as soon as he could reinstill the "attack spirit" in his demoralized troops.⁷⁸

The Korean situation had left the American occupation authorities without any combat troops in Japan, and fears arose over Japan's safety. Therefore, on December 19, 1950, General MacArthur requested reinforcements for Japan, but "reinforcements were simply not available."⁷⁹ In the meantime, the world's attention remained tightened on Korea, where the Chinese "volunteers" were about to recover North Korea. They crossed the 38th parallel on December 25. Five days later, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told MacArthur that from all estimates, China had the capacity to force the United States from Korea. They instructed MacArthur "to defend in successive position," inflict as much damage as possible to the Communist forces, and to continue to

⁷⁸Schnabel, Policy and Direction, pp. 300-08; Matthew B. Ridgway, The Korean War (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1967), pp. 81-86.

⁷⁹Truman, Memoirs, 2:432.

mobilize the maximum Korean contribution to sustained resistance.⁸⁰

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that Korea was "not the place to fight a major war" and that the United States should not commit its remaining ground forces to Korea in the face of "the increased threat of a general war." They also believed that since military developments could force American withdrawal from Korea, it was important, particularly in view of the continued threat to Japan, to determine in advance the last reasonable opportunity for an orderly evacuation. It seemed to the Joint Chiefs that if MacArthur was forced back to a position in the vicinity of the Kum River, it would be necessary to begin a withdrawal to Japan. They had requested MacArthur's views on evacuation in the light of his continuing primary mission of defending Japan, for which only troops of the Eighth Army were still available.⁸¹

While the Pentagon wished to begin an orderly evacuation at some predetermined point to preserve American troops for the defense of Japan, the State Department wanted to hold and inflict casualties until they were forced out. The State Department realized the superior priority of Japan

⁸⁰Joint Chiefs of Staff to MacArthur, December 30, 1950, FR, 1950, 7:1625.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 1625-26.

over Korea, but it worried more about the "chain reaction of defeatism and disillusionment" that would result from voluntary evacuation by the United States. The State Department believed that the United Nations forces should continue operations in Korea until military necessity required the evacuation.⁸² General MacArthur, in part, agreed that the best way to protect Japan was to hold out in Korea as long as possible, inflicting heavy damage on the enemy forces. In his reply to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on December 30, 1950, MacArthur reminded the Pentagon that the evacuation of United Nations forces under the present conditions would free currently involved Chinese troops for action elsewhere. He argued that defense in succession was the only way to accomplish the evacuation. The general insisted that the United States should hold out in Korea until it was forced to leave.⁸³

General MacArthur also suggested retaliatory measures which might make the evacuation unnecessary and even secure victory. He believed that the United Nations forces could blockade the coast of mainland China, destroy China's industrial capacity to wage war, secure reinforcements from the Nationalist Chinese troops, and release existing

⁸²Rusk Memorandum of Conversation and Its Annex, December 19, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 1570-76.

⁸³MacArthur to Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 30, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 1630-33.

restrictions upon the Taiwanese troops "for diversionary action (possibly leading to counter-invasion) against vulnerable areas of the Chinese Mainland."⁸⁴ As noted earlier, MacArthur maintained that these measures were necessary for a victory in Korea. He contended that China had committed itself "fully and unequivocally." Therefore, nothing the United States would do could further aggravate the situation. The general believed that Russia would not intervene in the Korean conflict since such a decision "would depend solely upon the Soviet's own estimate of relative strengths and capabilities with little regard for other factors." He felt that his proposals were relatively safe and could be successful if carried out. If the administration should reject them and instead accept the evacuation of Korea, in MacArthur's opinion, it would alienate the people of Asia, including the Japanese. The general thoroughly understood the demand for European security and agreed in doing everything possible there, but not if this meant accepting defeat anywhere else. MacArthur disagreed with the argument that American troops should not become tied down in Korea, because they must also be used to supplement Europe's defenses.⁸⁵

On January 9, 1951, the Truman administration rejected

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 1631.

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 1631-32.

the implementation of MacArthur's retaliatory measures. A naval blockade would require British consent since they had trade with Communist China. The air and naval attacks on targets in China would be permissible only when and if the Chinese attacked American forces outside Korea. Chiang K'ai-shek's Nationalist troops could be better used for the defense of Taiwan and would in any case have no decisive effect in Korea, because their "battle-worthiness" was not of a high order. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore repeated that MacArthur should defend himself in Korea until military necessity forced the evacuation upon him. Then he should withdraw his troops to Japan.⁸⁶

General MacArthur was disappointed at the rejection of his proposals and felt that he was being deprived of the tools he needed to finish the job. On January 10, 1951, he sent the Joint Chiefs of Staff another gloomy message, requesting clarification of his instructions. MacArthur said that he could hold a beachhead in Korea but not without losses. He argued that under the restrictions imposed on him, his position in Korea could eventually become untenable. The general's question, therefore, was whether the present

⁸⁶Truman, Memoirs, 2:433-34; Whitney, MacArthur, pp. 434-35; U.S. Senate, Military Situation in the Far East, Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 82nd Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), pp. 331-33.

objective of the United States was to maintain a position in Korea indefinitely, for a limited time, or whether it was to minimize losses by immediate evacuation. General MacArthur added that if overriding political considerations dictated the United States to hold a position in Korea, his command could do so "for any length of time up to its complete destruction."⁸⁷

MacArthur's message clearly implied that, under the existing restrictions, the United Nations forces would have to evacuate or face "complete destruction." On January 12, 1951, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a new directive for General MacArthur. At the same time, two members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Generals Collins and Vandenberg, left Washington for the Far East to see for themselves just what the situation was. The new directive agreed that it was impossible to hold in Korea indefinitely. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that it would be America's interest "to gain some further time for essential military and diplomatic consultation with U.N. countries participating in the Korean efforts" before ordering the evacuation. They added that it was important to inflict "maximum practical punishment" on the Communist troops and to hold in Korea

⁸⁷Whitney, MacArthur, pp. 435-36; MacArthur, Reminiscences, p. 433; U.S. Senate, Military Situation in the Far East, p. 906.

until actually forced out by military considerations.⁸⁸

Besides the Pentagon's new directive for MacArthur, on January 13, Truman himself sent a personal letter to the general to explain his views "as to our basic national and international purposes in continuing the resistance to aggression in Korea." The president made several points, including the key statement that he would have to give "constant thought to the main threat from the Soviet Union and to the need for a rapid expansion of our armed forces to meet this great danger." Truman further stated that if it became impracticable to hold a position in Korea, MacArthur should continue his resistance from the off-shore islands of Korea. If it became necessary to evacuate, however, it must "be clear to the world that the course is forced upon us by military necessity and that we shall not accept the result politically or militarily until the aggression has been rectified."⁸⁹

Generals Collins and Vandenberg, who had left Washington on January 12, arrived in Korea a few days later and toured the front. They found a much improved situation. Ridgway was launching an offensive to eliminate as many enemy soldiers as possible. He then intended to withdraw

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 907; Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 515-16.

⁸⁹Truman, Memoirs, 2:435-36.

the United Nations forces to main positions. The visiting generals observed that the Eighth Army was far from being a defeated command and that the army could take care of itself. They believed that the United Nations forces had high morale and self-confidence under Ridgway's leadership. They concluded that the Eighth Army was in a position to punish any mass attack. This positive estimate of the battlefield situation led to a firm decision to stay in Korea indefinitely. The Truman administration believed that this course would avoid the serious blow to the United Nations prestige that would result from the evacuation of Korea.⁹⁰

The renewed confidence in the Eighth Army was well placed. General Ridgway had stabilized the battlefield situation by the end of January 1951, and the forced evacuation was no longer threatened. On February 1, the United Nations General Assembly declared Communist China guilty of aggression. By the end of the month, regrouped American troops stopped the Chinese offensive below the 38th parallel. The Eighth Army then began a northward march and, on March 15, recaptured Seoul from the Communist forces for the second and last time. A few weeks later, the South Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel. By April 1951, Ridgway's battlefield gains removed the pressure for immediate policy

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 437; David Rees, Korea: The Limited War (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 183-84; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, pp. 325-27.

decisions and allowed the United States more time to explore the possibilities of a negotiated settlement in Korea.⁹¹

Meanwhile, General MacArthur brought his disagreement with the Truman administration into the open by publicly criticizing its foreign policy. On March 24, 1951, as Truman was seeking arrangements for a cease-fire, MacArthur issued a statement threatening Communist China with an attack and offered to meet the enemy commander in the field to achieve the United Nations political objectives in Korea. The political objectives were to stop the aggression and leave the unification of Korea to time and political pressures. Truman claimed that MacArthur's statement "was an act totally disregarding all directives to abstain from any declaration on foreign policy." It "was a challenge to the authority of the President under the Constitution" and "also flouted the policy of the United Nations." But MacArthur argued that "it was only the local voice of a theater commander who carefully limited his own responsibilities by stating 'the fundamental questions continue to be political in nature and must find their answer in the diplomatic sphere.'"⁹²

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 331-32, 353-54; Dong-A Ilbo, 20 February 1951; Ibid., 15 March 1951; Ibid., 3 April 1951; Ridgway, The Korean War, pp. 106-23.

⁹²Truman, Memoirs, 2:440-42; MacArthur, Reminiscences, pp. 442-43; Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 518-19.

A week and half later, on April 5, Congressman Joseph W. Martin of Massachusetts, then the Republican leader in the House of Representatives, without consulting MacArthur, released a letter from the general. The letter, dated March 20, 1951, contradicted the government's policy of limited war in Korea. It agreed with Martin's view that contrary to the administration's decision, the United Nations command should use the Nationalist Chinese troops in Korea. The general also emphasized that "there is no substitute for victory" in the war. MacArthur's letter was "an open declaration of war on the Administration's policy," even though Congressman Martin argued that it was a voice of authority that needed to be heard.⁹¹

MacArthur's letter to Congressman Martin dramatically raised the question, already suggested in the general's statement of March 24, of who was conducting American foreign policy. Truman could stand no more. The president and his advisers concluded that MacArthur was guilty of insubordination. Of deeper significance were the constitutional issues. The general had challenged the principle of civilian supremacy in government and the president's authority to direct foreign policy. At a special news conference at 1:00

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 519-20; MacArthur, Reminiscences, p. 443; Joseph W. Martin, Jr., My First Fifty Years in Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), pp. 205-07. The text of the correspondence between Martin and MacArthur is printed in *ibid.*, pp. 203-05; and U.S. Senate, Military Situation in the Far East, pp. 3543-44.

a.m., April 11, 1951, Truman announced that he had relieved MacArthur of his command, because the general did not support government and United Nations policies in Korea. General Matthew B. Ridgway succeeded MacArthur as the United Nations commander, and Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet took over the Eighth Army.⁹⁴

The dismissal of General MacArthur surprised most Americans. The outraged Republicans denounced Truman and some even muttered that the president should be impeached. When MacArthur returned to the United States after an absence of fourteen years, he received a hero's welcome in city after city. Most dramatic was MacArthur's appearance before a joint session of Congress on April 19, 1951. The general gave his own version of policy difficulties with the Truman administration. In getting to the root of his views, he said that "war's very object is victory, not prolonged indecision."⁹⁵ Several weeks later, in a congressional inquiry into the general's dismissal and conduct of the Korean War, the Truman administration answered MacArthur's criticism and his desire to "go it alone" if America's allies would not support the kind of policy he advocated. Acheson and General Omar N. Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

⁹⁴Truman, Memoirs, 2:446-50.

⁹⁵For the text of MacArthur's speech, see MacArthur, Reminiscences, pp. 454-60.

Staff, summed up the administration's case. Acheson argued that the president clearly had the right as commander-in-chief to dismiss MacArthur from his command. Bradley said that the Soviet Union, not China, was the main enemy. MacArthur's strategy, he pointed out, "would involve us in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy."⁹⁶

While the Truman-MacArthur controversy held the world's attention, the Chinese Communist armies began to retire to the north. They were unable to advance in face of the Eighth Army and had suffered significant casualties. The American and other United Nations forces followed them closely and, by the end of May 1951, had cleared the enemy from South Korea. The State Department, the Pentagon, and the Far East Command in Tokyo then agreed upon a new statement of basic American objectives in Korea. The United States would continue its attempts to achieve the political objective of establishing a united, democratic Korea without committing itself to do so by military means. The Americans would also work through appropriate United Nations machinery to bring about a political solution of the Korean War that was acceptable to the United States. Until these

⁹⁶Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 524-26; U.S. Senate, Military Situation in the Far East, p. 732. See also John W. Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War, 2nd edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965), pp. 239-56.

objectives could be reached, the United States would continue to inflict the maximum damage upon the enemy forces. In addition, the Pentagon prepared for military action against Communist China in case of the forced evacuation of Korea. Finally, the United States decided to strengthen South Korean military capabilities so that the South Koreans could replace the United Nations troops, who were to withdraw in stages. The Truman administration hoped that the new South Korean army would be able to repulse any future North Korean attack.⁹⁷ Following this new statement of objectives in the Korean conflict, the United States continued to seek a cease-fire arrangement.

The Search for an Armistice

Contrary to a widely held view that the Communists first proposed to end the Korean conflict by negotiation, it was the United States which first suggested a negotiated settlement of the war. At the request of the State Department in mid-May 1951, George F. Kennan, then on a leave of absence at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, wrote a personal letter to Jacob A. Malik, the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations. Kennan suggested that the

⁹⁷U.S. Objectives, Policies, and Courses of Action in Asia (NSC-68/5), May 17, 1951, National Security Council Files, Modern Military Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

two diplomats meet to explore possible avenues of ending the Korean War. Malik's prompt reply advised Kennan of Russian interest in a cease-fire. They met at Malik's home on Long Island on May 31 and again on June 5. During these meetings, the Soviet ambassador assured Kennan that Russia would be willing to start the armistice negotiations as soon as possible.⁹⁸ Malik then delivered a speech on the United Nations radio program on June 23, 1951, declaring that the Korean War could be and should be settled. The Russian people believed, he said, that "as a first step, discussions should be started between the belligerents for a cease-fire and an armistice providing for the mutual withdrawal of forces from the 38th parallel."⁹⁹

A week after the Malik speech, General Ridgway made a broadcast to the Communist commanders saying that the United Nations command would be willing to send representatives to discuss an armistice, if they were ready for a cease-fire. The Communist reply indicated a sincere willingness to begin the truce talks and suggested a meeting place in Kaesong, near the 38th parallel. Truman and his advisers accepted the Communist overture, even though President Syngman Rhee of South Korea was against any negotiated settlement that did not include unification of Korea. Ridgway then named

⁹⁸Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 532-33.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 533; New York Times, 24 June 1951, p. 4.

Vice-Admiral C. Turner Joy to head the United Nations delegation at the armistice conference. Lieutenant General Nam Il, chief of staff of the North Korean People's Army, was the chief Communist negotiator. The real power on the Communist side, however, was General Hsieh Fang, chief of staff of the Chinese People's "Volunteer Army." On July 10, 1951, the truce talks began at Kaesong on the Communist side of the battle line.¹⁰⁰

From the beginning of the armistice conference, the United States believed that the talks were going to continue for an extended period, and indeed meetings between the two commands dragged on for almost two years. Secretary of State Acheson personally felt that "the prospects of a general settlement in Korea were not good" and regarded an armistice as something that the United States should live with for a considerable time and that should be adopted to that end. He also expected trouble from Rhee who would oppose anything less than a unified Korea.¹⁰¹ Secretary of Defense Marshall defined what General Ridgway should try to accomplish at the armistice conference. Marshall said that the negotiation on the battlefield was "an entirely differ-

¹⁰⁰Ridgway, The Korean War, p. 182; Truman, Memoirs, 2: 458-59; Walter G. Hermes, Truce Tent and Fighting Front (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1966), pp. 16-21; Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 534.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 536-37.

ent problem from the negotiation of a political settlement." "If an acceptable armistice can be obtained," he continued, "discussion of the political question can follow on the highest governmental level." The United States was anxious to achieve a political settlement of the Korean War, but only if it would not compromise the security of its forces and of South Korea. America's main concern now was a suitable military armistice.¹⁰²

The cease-fire talks themselves quickly bogged down into the pattern they followed most of the two years of negotiations. One side would present an issue and argue with almost endless repetition until a sudden yielding by it or the other side gave the appearance of progress. Shortly thereafter, the talks would bog down again. Even the wording of the agenda had to go through this process. The agenda proposed by the United Nations delegation was a list of items to be negotiated, but the Communist agenda was a list of conclusions to be implemented. For example, the Communist agenda included such items as "withdrawal of all foreign troops," "establishing the cease-fire line on the 38th parallel," and "exchange of all prisoners of war," while the United Nations representatives insisted on an open wording, such as "establishing a cease-fire line" and

¹⁰²U.S. Senate, The United States and the Korean Problem: Documents, 1943-1953, Senate Document No. 74 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 58.

"prisoner of war exchange," thereby leaving the substance to be negotiated. It took more than two weeks just to reach agreement on the agenda.¹⁰³

On July 26, 1951, the negotiators reached agreement on an agenda containing the following items: first, supervising the armistice agreement; second, determining the military demarcation line between the two sides; and third, the exchange of prisoners of war. These were the only three major issues of the truce talks, even though the negotiators had discussed many matters. Following the settlement of the agenda, the Communists wanted the first point of discussion to center on a return to the prewar situation with the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea. But the Eighth Army was north of the 38th parallel at some points, and the United States wanted its troops to remain in Korea until a genuine peace enabled the Korean people to work out their future free from the fear of aggression. The United Nations delegation therefore rejected the Communist proposal. Meanwhile, General Ridgway continued the United Nations strikes against the enemy forces to reduce their offensive capabilities. Although the two opposing armies had been for the most part stalemated along the 38th parallel since the

¹⁰³A good illustration of Communist tactics in negotiation is C. Turner Joy, How Communists Negotiate (New York: Macmillan Co., 1955). See also Hermes, Truce Tent, pp. 26-34.

beginning of the truce talks, negotiating and fighting would go on together for the remainder of the conflict.¹⁰⁴

The armistice negotiations continued through the summer and fall of 1951 with limited success. On August 22, the Communists abruptly broke off negotiations, charging that the United Nations war planes had violated the neutrality zone around Kaesong. This suspension lasted until October 24, when the Communists accepted Ridgway's proposals to resume talks at Panmunjom in a neutral and unoccupied zone. The two-month recess frustrated the negotiators. In addition, frequent declarations from Syngman Rhee that he would not accept anything less than a unified Korea complicated the negotiations.¹⁰⁵

The State Department, meanwhile, undertook a policy review to determine future actions if the cease-fire talks failed. It produced "pessimistic" and "optimistic" policy papers as contingency plans. The "pessimistic paper" pointed out that "no new ideas had spawned since the days of the MacArthur crisis." It also made some "dangerous and undesirable" suggestions, including possible bombing of military targets in China, blockade of the Chinese coast, trade embargoes, and speedy rearmament of Japan. The "optimistic

¹⁰⁴U.S. Department of State Bulletin (July 30, 1951), p. 188; Ridgway, The Korean War, pp. 185-96.

¹⁰⁵Truman, Memoirs, 2:459; Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 537.

paper" looked forward to the armistice negotiations for a settlement in Korea, even though it seemed to be "beyond the realm of possibility."¹⁰⁶

After resuming the truce talks at Panmunjom on October 24, 1951, the Communists accepted in principle the American position that the demarcation line should be based on the line of military contacts. However, there was considerable effort by the Communists to return to the 38th parallel, the prewar dividing line between the north and the south. Specifically, disagreement continued as to whether the town of Kaesong should belong to one side or the other. The United Nations delegation offered the Communists the choice of either accepting the United Nations version of the existing battle line or agreeing that the demarcation line should be fixed on whatever line of contact prevailed at the time of the signing of the armistice. On November 27, the negotiators finally reached an agreement whereby the existing battle line of the two sides would be the demarcation line if they signed an armistice within thirty days; otherwise, it would be the line of contact as of the signing of the armistice. Thus the United Nations command had won this agenda item, even though the solution was neutral.¹⁰⁷ According to Admiral Joy, this was a turning point in the

¹⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 537-38.

¹⁰⁷Hermes, Truce Tent, pp. 112-20.

negotiations, because after this agreement the United States lacked the military pressure to lever the Communists into more reasonable attitude. Joy also believed that it cost the United States a full year of war in Korea.¹⁰⁸

The negotiators then proceeded to consider arrangements for the implementation of an armistice in Korea. America's original intention was to insist that any cease-fire agreement should include adequate safeguards against a new military build-up and the possibility of another attack by the North Koreans. But the Communists were strongly against the idea of any kind of armistice supervision. They regarded it as interference with the internal affairs of the other side. As a final compromise, the negotiators agreed to establish a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission of six uninvolved nations. The function of this commission was to supervise the execution of the armistice agreements. Each side was to "nominate three nations acceptable to the other side." The United Nations delegation named Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland, and the Communists chose the Soviet Union, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.¹⁰⁹

When the United Nations command said that the Soviet Union was unacceptable, the Communists insisted upon the admission of the Soviet Union. The North Koreans pointed

¹⁰⁸Joy, How Communists Negotiate, p. 129.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., pp. 90-91.

out that it had been agreed that each side could nominate three nations acceptable to the other side. By definition, this meant to them that the Soviet Union was acceptable, being nominated by North Korea. This was a typical, though somewhat extreme, example of the misuse of wording by the Communists. Instead of rejecting the Communist proposal out of hand, the United States politely declined to oppose the Soviet membership in the neutral supervisory commission on the frank argument that the Russians were not neutral in the Korean conflict. The American government, instead, directed the United Nations delegation to oppose the Soviet membership "on the ground that the Soviet Union had a common border with North Korea." This was "an unassailable fact of geography," but "it had little relevance to the issue at hand."¹¹⁰

Closely related to the question of composition of the neutral supervisory commission was that of airfield rehabilitation in North Korea during the cease-fire period. The Communists needed a negotiating device with which to bargain for an agreement that would allow them to construct and repair their airfields in the north after the armistice became effective. To this end, they nominated the Soviet Union as a member of the armistice supervision team and, in effect, asked the United Nations delegation to agree that the Soviet

¹¹⁰Ibid., pp. 91-92.

Union had been and was neutral in the Korean War. To resolve the deadlock on this issue, the United States chose to be conciliatory and approved limited rehabilitation of North Korean airfields, even though it was fully aware of the Communist tactics. Consequently, on April 28, 1952, the negotiators agreed to reduce the neutral supervisory commission to two nations from each side, omitting the Soviet Union and Norway.¹¹¹ Thus it can be said that the Communists got their way in this matter, though perhaps nothing more could have been expected.

In the meantime, Syngman Rhee continued to express his opposition to the truce talks in a variety of ways, the most common being "spontaneous" demonstrations. Rhee's continual agitation against the armistice negotiations disturbed General Ridgway. The South Korean troops were under the United Nations command, but by early 1952, Ridgway felt that the United States should try to get a formal, written agreement with Rhee to prevent anti-armistice actions by the South Korean forces. There was a distinct possibility that the armistice would be short-lived unless the South Korean forces remained under the control of the United Nations command during the cease-fire period. The American government recognized the danger but concluded that the United Nations

¹¹¹Rees, Korea, pp. 310-15; Mark W. Clark, From the Danube to the Yalu (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 104.

command should not seek any formal agreement with Rhee to insure the control of South Korean forces at that time. South Korean emotions were running high, and any such negotiation might jeopardize the achievement of an armistice. The United States therefore preferred to work out the armistice terms first and use the promise of a future American security commitment to Korea to pressure Rhee's compliance and cooperation with an armistice later. In a letter of March 24, 1952, to Rhee, Truman expressed America's concern over the South Korean attitude toward the cease-fire. Truman also tied America's future aid to Rhee's cooperation and pointed out that the United Nations unity of purpose in Korea should be maintained "at all costs."¹¹²

During the spring of 1952, Rhee's relationship with the South Korean National Assembly caused domestic political dissension. This problem was not only embarrassing to the United States but also endangered the United Nations military operation in Korea. With the elections scheduled for the summer of that year, Rhee was determined to change the constitution in order to have the president elected by popular vote. The members of the National Assembly who opposed Rhee were equally determined to keep this function of electing the president in the legislative branch. On May 24, Rhee declared martial law in the temporary capital, Pusan,

¹¹²Hermes, Truce Tent, pp. 214-15.

and had the South Korean army arrest some of his opponents for treason. He charged that they had accepted bribes from the Communists. Rhee justified the continuation of martial law as a measure to counteract Communist guerrilla operations in the Pusan area.¹¹³

Alarmed by Rhee's actions, the United Nations command sought to dissuade him from further steps that might weaken Korean democratic institutions and endanger military operations at the front. Truman, in a June 2 letter to Rhee, expressed regretful disapproval of the loss of confidence in Korean leadership that was taking place, but Rhee did not lift martial law. In any event, negotiations between Rhee and his opponents led to constitutional changes acceptable to the South Korean president. Rhee finally lifted the martial law on July 28, 1952.¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, progress was slow and bitter disputes were common at the armistice conference. The most controversial issue was the matter of the voluntary repatriation of prisoners of war. This issue delayed the armistice by more than a year. Many prisoners in the United Nations camps refused to return to their Communist homelands, fearing death or injury there. The United States, supported by the United

¹¹³ Dong-A Ilbo, 26 May 1952; Han Ma, Hanguk Chongchi ui Chongbipan (A Critical Study of Korean Politics) (Seoul: Chungku Chulpan Sa, 1960), pp. 111-12.

¹¹⁴ Dong-A Ilbo, 28 July 1952.

Nations, refused to force those prisoners to return. The Communist negotiators insisted upon the repatriation of all Chinese and North Korean prisoners. While the truce talks deadlocked on this issue, there occurred a series of bloody prisoner riots in the United Nations camps in the south. The Communist prisoners increased their agitation as the issue of prisoner exchange reached the delicate stage at Panmunjom. The Communist incitement of prisoners reached a peak on May 7, 1952, when they kidnapped Brigadier General Francis T. Dodd, the American commander of the Kojedo camp, and took him to one of their compounds.¹¹⁵

The Kojedo incident took place at the time when the Far East Command was changing hands in Tokyo. General Ridgway replaced General Eisenhower as the supreme Allied commander in Europe, and General Mark W. Clark succeeded Ridgway. The outgoing United Nations commander directed Eighth Army Commander Van Fleet to name a successor to Dodd and to take all necessary measures to release the kidnapped commander. General Van Fleet appointed Brigadier General Charles F. Colson as the new commander of the Kojedo camp, and also sent additional troops and tanks. General Colson finally obtained Dodd's release on May 12, 1952, after tedious negotiations with the Communist prisoners. At Panmun-

¹¹⁵ Details on the Kojedo incident can be found in Hermes, Truce Tent, pp. 233-62.

join the Communist negotiators denounced the American suppression of prisoner riots. With General Ridgway's departure from Tokyo, the Joint Chiefs of Staff also approved the relief of Admiral Joy, the senior delegate to the armistice conference. Major General William K. Harrison, Jr., succeeded Joy in the similarly fruitless meetings with the Communist negotiators.¹¹⁶

The prisoner issue remained the last unresolved question in the armistice negotiations. One reason for the United Nations command's objection to the forced repatriation was the suspicious behavior of the Communists about the prisoners they had taken. Except for a few reports early in the war, they never reported the names of prisoners to the International Red Cross in Geneva. After the cease-fire negotiations started, they refused for months to give a list of prisoners to the United Nations command. Although their radio broadcasts boasted that over 100,000 prisoners had been captured, their list, when they finally submitted it, showed only a little over 10,000 names. The United Nations command therefore realized that the Communists simply had no intention of returning all their prisoners. On the other hand, the United Nations command reported all prisoners to Geneva and gave total lists to the Communists.

¹¹⁶Ibid., pp. 247-53, 266.

The other important reason for the United Nations command's refusal to agree to the forced repatriation was the discovery that many people in the United Nations camps were not soldiers at all, but were civilians. The Communists rounded up some of these civilians for kidnapping to the north. When they were released, they were assumed to be North Korean soldiers and put in camps. The United Nations camps also had other civilians who were considered suspects and arbitrarily sent off to the prisoner camps. It was largely these groups whom President Rhee released shortly before the negotiators signed the armistice agreement in 1953. By May 1952, the Communists had hinted that they might concede if they knew the number of the prisoners not returning, but when they discovered that nearly two-thirds did not want to go back to the north, they refused to discuss the matter further. From May 1952 to April 1953 the armistice negotiations were at a virtual standstill. Meanwhile, on October 8, 1952, the United Nations command called an indefinite recess in the negotiations.¹¹⁷

The prolonged fighting and truce talks must have caused President Truman to think about threatening the Soviet Union and Communist China with an all-out nuclear destruction as a means of ending the Korean War. He had not discussed such

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 135-74, 263-81; Joy, How Communists Negotiate, pp. 146-62; Rees, Korea, pp. 315-27.

thoughts with any official in his administration, but he wrote them down in his handwritten private notes that were only recently opened. On January 27, 1952, Truman wrote:

The situation in the Far East is becoming more and more difficult. Dealing with Communist governments is like an honest man trying to deal with a numbers racket ring or the head of a dope ring. The Communist governments, the heads of numbers and dope rackets have no sense of honor and no moral code.

It now looks as if all that the Chinese wanted when they asked for a cease-fire was a chance to import war materials and resupply their front lines.

It seems to me that the proper approach now would be an ultimatum with a ten-day expiration limit, informing Moscow that we intend to blockade the China coast from the Korean border to Indo-China, and that we intend to destroy every military base in Manchuria, including submarine bases, by means now in our control and if there is further interference we shall eliminate any ports or cities necessary to accomplish our peaceful purposes.

"This means all out war," the president continued. Then, on May 18, 1952, apparently frustrated by the tedious cease-fire negotiations, Truman wrote that the Korean armistice conferences were "propaganda sounding boards for the Commies." He further wrote:

If you signed an agreement it wouldn't be worth the paper it is written on.

You've broken every agreement you made at Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam. You have no morals, no honor. Your whole program at this conference has been based on lies and propaganda.

Now do you want an end to hostilities in Korea or do you want China and Siberia destroyed? You may have one or the other whichever you want. These lies of yours at this conference have gone far enough. You either accept our fair and just proposal or you will be completely destroyed.¹¹⁸

The prolonged Korean War was widely unpopular in the United States, and the Republicans made it a central issue in their campaign for the presidency in 1952. Adlai E. Stevenson, the Democratic candidate, went along with the Truman administration's foreign policy, but Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Republican candidate, in the final days of campaign, appeared to accept the MacArthur approach to the Korean conflict. Eisenhower promised, if elected, to end the Korean War promptly, and he won the election in November 1952 by a landslide. In early December, he went to Korea for a three-day visit. While in Korea, Eisenhower reaffirmed to General Clark that the United States would retain the basic decision to seek a negotiated settlement in Korea. General Clark wished that the new administration would take actions for a military victory in Korea. He also believed that the purely defensive nature of the United Nations effort from the end of 1951 onwards removed the only incentive the Communists had to reach a settlement. In any event, the president-elect made it clear that he would continue Truman's policy and seek an honorable armistice.¹¹⁹

Harry S. Truman Papers (President's Secretary File), Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo. See also Korea Herald, 5 August 1980.

¹¹⁹Clark, Danube to Yalu, pp. 230-33; Rees, Korea, pp. 396-403. For a scholarly work on the Republican party's response to the Korean conflict, see Ronald J. Caridi, The Korean War and American Politics (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968).

The Eisenhower administration took office on January 20, 1953, with John Foster Dulles as secretary of state, Charles E. Wilson as secretary of defense, and Admiral Arthur W. Radford as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Soon after his inauguration, Eisenhower "unleased" Chiang K'ai-shek. On February 2, the new president told Congress that the United States would no longer use the Seventh Fleet "to shield Communist China."¹²⁰ Critics feared that Chiang would attack the mainland and drag the United States into a war with Communist China, but nothing happened. Eisenhower also warned the Communists that the Americans would expand the war beyond the Korean borders and would use atomic weapons at the same time if the cease-fire talks failed.¹²¹ It is not clear how seriously this threat to use nuclear weapons was meant. But the warning to the Communists "not only satisfied the Republican right but gained further credence from (and lent credence to) the cold war myth that America was stopping aggression, doing now to Communists what Britain's Prime Minister Chamberlain should have done to Hitler at Munich."¹²²

¹²⁰Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1963), p. 123.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 181.

¹²²Edward Friedman, "Nuclear Blackmail and the End of

Eisenhower and his Secretary of State Dulles thought that the threat of nuclear weapons, relayed to Communist China through the Indian government, broke the deadlock in the armistice negotiations. According to others, however, it was Stalin's death on March 2, 1953, that had probably accelerated the trend toward ending the Korean War. The removal of external distractions such as the Korean conflict, had been expedited drastically as Stalin's successors concentrated on factional infighting to consolidate power at home. The new Soviet leadership was believed to have urged Peking and Pyongyang to settle the prisoner question.¹²³

The big break in the Korean armistice conference came on March 28, 1953, when the Communist leaders replied to General Clark's request for the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners in accordance with the Geneva Convention. The Communists expressed their willingness to repatriate such prisoners and to resume the truce talks. This break led to a dramatic operation called "Little Switch" that was carried out between April 20 and May 31. Both the United Nations and Communist captors returned all sick and wounded prisoners to their own lines. The final tally of deliveries

the Korean War," Modern China: An International Quarterly 1 (1975):90.

¹²³ Simmons, The Strained Alliance, pp. 223-31; Hermes, Truce Tent, p. 421; Rees, Korea, p. 417; Joy, How Communists Negotiate, pp. 161-62.

showed that 6,670 Communists had been exchanged for 684 United Nations personnel. The "Little Switch" opened the way for the final settlement with voluntary return.¹²⁴

The armistice negotiators resumed their talks at Panmunjom on April 26, 1953, and by early May the Communists agreed to accept the principle of no forced repatriation as outlined in India's United Nations resolution of December 3, 1952. The resolution provided that nonrepatriates would be turned over to the United Nations repatriation commission for disposition.¹²⁵ The Communists suggested a persuasion period of four months, down from the previous figure of six. But the United States wished only the Chinese nonrepatriates to be given to the United Nations, with the remaining Koreans to be freed as civilians on the armistice day. The United States also wanted "a concrete, foolproof procedure by which a prisoner could obtain political asylum." The Communist negotiators did not accept the American proposal and called off the truce talks until the United Nations command submitted a final proposal to the conference in late May. Meanwhile, the United Nations command continued its efforts to dissuade the Rhee government from any rash acts

¹²⁴Clark, Danube to Yalu, pp. 241-56; Hermes, Truce Tent, pp. 411-19.

¹²⁵Ibid., pp. 422-25. The text of the U.N. Resolution of December 3, 1952, is printed in U.S. Department of State Bulletin (December 8, 1952), pp. 916-17.

against the armistice negotiations.¹²⁶

On May 23, 1953, General Clark received the Pentagon directive for a final proposal. The Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed him, against his wishes, to agree to the Communist plan to turn over to the United Nations repatriation commission all Korean as well as Chinese nonrepatriates for the persuasion period. They also told Clark to agree to the Communist demand that a majority vote rather than unanimous vote should decide all disputes within the United Nations repatriation commission. Most important of all, the Pentagon directive stated that if the Communists rejected this final offer and made no constructive proposal of their own, Clark could break off all negotiations and carry out an all-out war. The Pentagon further instructed Clark to confer with Syngman Rhee the same day the final offer was being presented to the Communists. Clark was to explain the final proposal and also deliver a personal letter from Eisenhower. Eisenhower's letter to Rhee outlined the details of American military and economic aid that would be forthcoming if South Korea agreed to the armistice.¹²⁷

An hour before the United Nations delegation presented its final proposal at Panmunjom on May 25, 1953, General Clark and Ambassador Ellis O. Briggs met in Seoul with Rhee

¹²⁶Clark, Danube to Yalu, pp. 259-66.

¹²⁷Ibid., pp. 267-68.

and explained the situations. In return for South Korea's cooperation, Clark promised an announcement by the sixteen involved nations to band together in case of renewed hostilities, American military and economic aid to South Korea, and an arrangement to keep the American troops in and near Korea on the alert until peace was established. Rhee remained unconvinced and still refused to cooperate with the armistice talks. It is doubtful that relations between the two countries had ever been worse. In the days that followed, Major General Choi Duk-Shin, the South Korean delegate at the armistice conference, boycotted the discussions and never returned to Panmunjom.¹²⁸

Rhee then made a personal appeal to Eisenhower. On May 30, 1953, he wrote Eisenhower that any armistice allowing the Chinese Communists to remain in Korea would mean "a death sentence for Korea without protest." Rhee suggested four major conditions that would make an armistice acceptable to South Korea: first, the Chinese Communist and United Nations forces would withdraw simultaneously from Korea; second, the United States would make a mutual defense pact with the Republic of Korea; third, the United States would pledge military and economic aid to South Korea; and fourth, the American air and naval forces outside Korea

¹²⁸Ibid., pp. 268-71. Ambassador Ellis O. Briggs succeeded John J. Muccio in the fall of 1952.

would remain in the area to act as a deterrent to further aggression. In his reply, Eisenhower assured Rhee that the United States could satisfy all these conditions except for the question of withdrawal of all non-Korean forces.¹²⁹

Meanwhile, the Communists accepted all major points of the United Nations command's final offer regarding the prisoner question. It seemed that a cease-fire was finally at hand. After the Communist agreement became known, General Clark again visited Rhee and found him alternating "between despair and defiance." Rhee told Clark that thereafter he would feel free to take any action he considered appropriate. Clark now wondered if Rhee would either release the non-repatriates, who were mostly guarded by Korean personnel, or withdraw the South Korean army from the United Nations command as he often threatened to do. In any case, Clark managed to get a vague promise that Rhee would not take any unilateral actions without prior consent from the United Nations command. At Panmunjom the negotiators had made rapid progress in resolving the remaining disagreements and signed the terms of reference on prisoner exchange on June 8, 1953. Thus, the humanitarian issue of voluntary repatriation had been decided in America's favor after eighteen months of both intermittent talks and bitter fighting at

¹²⁹ Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, p. 183; U.S. Senate, The United States and the Korean problem, pp. 81-83.

the battlefield.¹³⁰

At this point in the cease-fire talks, Syngman Rhee rebelled against the armistice. On June 18, he released some 25,000 anti-Communist North Korean prisoners in order to prevent their repatriation. During the next few days, he released another 2,000, making the total to 27,000 prisoners released in a dramatic operation. This action was a clear violation of Rhee's earlier assurance that he would notify the United Nations command in advance of any South Korean move. The Communists charged the Americans with complicity in the prisoner release and broke off the negotiations at Panmunjom. Rhee's unilateral action had placed the United States in "an extremely embarrassing position."¹³¹ By suddenly releasing so many Communist prisoners, Rhee almost wrecked the delicate negotiations on the prisoner question that had kept the war raging for an entire year after the resolution of all other outstanding issues.

Rhee wanted the United States and its United Nations

¹³⁰Clark, Danube to Yalu, pp. 275-76. The text of the terms of reference on prisoner exchange is printed in *ibid.*, pp. 334-37. America's insistence upon the principle of no forced repatriation, according to the Eighth Army estimates, cost the U.N. command an extra 125,000 casualties and the Communists over 250,000. Some 50,000 prisoners took advantage of the U.S. stand and refused to go back to their homeland. Of the 21,014 Chinese Communist prisoners, 14,325 refused to return to China. See Hermes, Truce Tent, p. 500.

¹³¹Clark, Danube to Yalu, pp. 279-84; Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, pp. 185-86.

allies to continue the war in hopes of unifying Korea. As a result of his repeated attempts to disrupt the American negotiations to end the Korean War, the American officials were torn between overthrowing Rhee, giving him a defense pact, and seeking an American pullout after the armistice. Recently it has become known that the United States had a top-secret plan, called "Ever Ready," to overthrow Rhee during the Korean War. But the United States never attempted to carry it out. High-level planners in Washington had discussed the use of this plan more than once. Again in May 1953, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department seriously considered removing Rhee by means of an American-sponsored coup. Secretary of State Dulles vetoed the plans for a coup. Dulles advised President Eisenhower to offer South Korea a mutual defense pact as the best means of getting Rhee to accept the armistice. Consequently, the United States had dropped both the withdrawal and an American-sponsored coup as policy alternatives, choosing instead to offer Rhee a bilateral security pact.¹³²

By early June 1953, Eisenhower and his advisers decided to send Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson to

¹³²Eddleman Memorandum for Record: Conference on Current Difficulties with ROK Government Due to Their Dissatisfaction with Armistice Terms, with Enclosure (Outline Plan Ever Ready), June 1, 1953, and Decision on JCS 1776/373, June 17, 1953, Box 44, Record Group 218, Joint Chiefs of Staff Geographic Files (Korea), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Seoul for a sixteen-day conference with Rhee. Beginning June 25, Robertson had a daily round of talks with Rhee and his advisers, seeking some sort of written pledge that South Korea would abide by an armistice. Robertson argued the futility of Rhee's trying to go it alone, but the South Korean president remained reluctant. The United States therefore stepped up its pressure on the political level by speculating that it intended to sign an armistice and pull out without consulting the Rhee government. On the military level, the United States decided to slow down supplies and equipment for the South Korean army.¹³³

Robertson's patience and behind-the-scenes contact with Rhee matched America's determination to go on with the armistice. Robertson managed to give assurances of American support if Rhee would be reasonable. Meanwhile, on July 8, the Communists sent the long-awaited reply to General Clark's request for the resumption of truce talks. Despite South Korea's uncertain attitude toward an armistice, the Communists agreed to return to Panmunjom. The enemy's agreement to resume the negotiations and American pressure apparently combined to have an effect upon Rhee. During the next three days, Robertson wound up his discussions with the

¹³³ Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, pp. 186-87; Clark, Danube to Yalu, pp. 288-89; Clark to Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 5, 1953, Box 44, Record Group 218, Joint Chiefs of Staff Geographic Files (Korea), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

South Korean president. At the end of their talks on July 11, Rhee gave Robertson a letter to Eisenhower promising not to obstruct implementation of the armistice.¹³⁴

In return for agreeing to the armistice, Rhee obtained the American promise of a mutual defense treaty, long-term economic aid, expansion of the South Korean army to twenty divisions, an agreement to withdraw after ninety days from a post-armistice political conference if it became stalemated, and a guarantee to hold high-level talks between South Korea and the United States on objectives prior to the political conference.¹³⁵ However, what Rhee had accomplished by his fight was difficult to assess immediately. He had to give up one demand that was not in American power to grant him anyway. This was the demand for the withdrawal of Chinese Communist troops from Korea before the armistice was signed and the unification of the country by military action. On the other hand, Rhee had won the pledge of a bilateral security pact with the United States along with economic and military aid. He had also freed thousands of anti-Communist North Korean prisoners. Above all, Rhee had gained an enhanced image among his own people by showing the world that the Republic of Korea was not a puppet state.

¹³⁴Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, p. 187; Hermes, Truce Tent, pp. 451-57; Simmons, The Strained Alliance, pp. 238-39; Clark, Danube to Yalu, p. 291.

¹³⁵Ibid., pp. 287-88.

The armistice negotiators resumed their talks on July 10, 1953, at Panmunjom. An immediate Communist concern was whether the United States could guarantee South Korea's compliance with an armistice. The United Nations command was able to assure the Communists that the Rhee government would observe the cease-fire arrangements. The United Nations command indicated that it would withdraw its support of South Korea if the Rhee government violated the armistice.¹³⁶ In addition, "the Reds needed and wanted a truce" by now.¹³⁷ On July 27, 1953, after three years and thirty-two days of fighting, the negotiators finally signed the armistice at Panmunjom. As President Eisenhower later wrote, the truce represented "an acceptable solution to a problem that almost defied, in view of world sentiment and the political situation, any solution at all."¹³⁸ General Clark, in a speech after countersigning the truce document at Munsan-ni, "cautioned that the armistice was only a military agreement to cease fire while the opposing sides sought a political solution to the conflict." "Until the diplomats negotiated a permanent conclusion," Clark warned, "there could be no UNC [United Nations command] withdrawal from

¹³⁶Hermes, Truce Tent, pp. 479-81.

¹³⁷Clark, Danube to Yalu, p. 289.

¹³⁸Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, p. 190.

Korea nor any lessening of alertness and preparedness."¹³⁹

In addition to a cease-fire, the armistice agreement provided for the withdrawal of the armies two kilometers from the existing battle line. This ran northeasterly from a point just below the 38th parallel on the west coast to a point some thirty miles above it on the east. A neutral armistice commission, composed of Sweden, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, would supervise enforcement of the armistice terms. It was also agreed to exchange and repatriate willing prisoners within sixty days. The United Nations was to settle disposition of nonrepatriates after a period of persuasion. In order to negotiate the peaceful settlement of the Korean problem, a political conference was to be called later. The Korean War thus ended only a few miles north of where it began and settled nothing. It left the country as divided as before, but on a slightly more rational frontier than a mere parallel of latitude. In short, the armistice had re-established the status quo ante bellum.¹⁴⁰

From June 25, 1950, to July 27, 1953, the United States suffered 142,091 casualties in the Korean War, including 33,629 killed. Moreover, the cost of the war was many

¹³⁹Hermes, Truce Tent, p. 490.

¹⁴⁰The text of the Armistice Agreement can be found in *ibid.*, pp. 516-38; and Rees, Korea, pp. 462-93.

billions of dollars. South Korean military casualties have been estimated at 300,000, with over a million civilian deaths. The North Korean situation was similar and their military casualty list included 500,000 soldiers and one million dead civilians. Communist China had lost 900,000 men in the Korean conflict. Apart from American deaths, the battle casualties of the United Nations forces were about 60,000.¹⁴¹

The Korean War was one of the most destructive conflicts in history. It has never officially ended. The armistice conditions, neither peace nor war, continue to prevail. With the signing of a mutual security pact on October 1, 1953, the United States agreed to remain committed to the defense of the Republic of Korea.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹Ibid., pp. 460-61; Kolko, The Limits of Power, p. 616.

¹⁴²The text of U.S.-Korean mutual defense treaty of 1953 is printed in Kim, Reunification of Korea, pp. 28-30.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

For over two hundred years, beginning in the early part of the seventeenth century, Korea fended off virtually all contact with the outside world to avoid the devastation of foreign attacks. The United States was the first Western nation to break into Korea's isolation by means of its 1882 treaty of amity and commerce. The principal European powers soon followed the example of the United States, and Korea had ceased to be a hermit nation. After its reopening to the outside world, Korea became subject to the pressures of a major rivalry between China and Japan. In 1895, after defeating China in a war, Japan gained ascendancy on the Korean peninsula. Japan formally annexed Korea in 1910 and made it an integral part of the Japanese empire. Since then, at least in America, Korea was almost a forgotten nation until the United States declared war on Japan in 1941.

During World War II, Korean nationalists made unceasing attempts to obtain American recognition of the Korean provisional government in China. They also sought direct American military and financial support in their fight to regain their independence. The United States had never

granted diplomatic recognition to the Korean provisional government in China. The first American commitment in Korea came in late November 1943 at the Cairo Conference. At the end of this conference, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Chiang K'ai-shek declared that they were mindful of the long domination of Korea by Japan and were "determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent." The Soviet Union endorsed the Cairo Declaration, when it entered war against Japan on August 8, 1945, thus committing itself to Korean independence.

During the last few days of World War II, Russian troops entered northeastern Korea. At the suggestion of the United States, the Soviet Union agreed to accept the surrender of local Japanese troops north of the 38th parallel, while Japanese south of that line were to surrender to the American forces. On September 8, 1945, almost a month after the arrival of the Russians, American troops landed in Korea. The division of Korea at the 38th parallel was a military decision to facilitate the Japanese surrender. There was no thought, on the part of the United States, of a permanent division. If there had been no division, the Russians would probably have overrun most of the country before the Americans arrived.

Although the 38th parallel had been selected primarily for the purpose of a military operation, it soon took on a political significance. The Americans ruled their zone

through a military government, and the Russians ran theirs through local Korean people's committees. As tension mounted between the United States and the Soviet Union, the two occupation zones increasingly functioned as separate entities. The temporary military line of the 38th parallel soon became a political barrier. It cut the country in half, disrupting normal Korean social and economic life. Efforts by the American commander in Korea to end this artificial boundary and restore economic and administrative unity of the country were unsuccessful.

In December 1945, the Moscow Conference of American, Russian and British foreign ministers considered the question of Korean unification. The resulting agreement provided for a joint U.S.-Soviet commission to work toward the unification of Korea. In consultation with Korean political parties and social organizations, the joint commission was to sponsor a provisional all-Korean democratic government. Then, after a period of trusteeship, it was to re-establish Korea as an independent state. The majority of the Korean people were against the trusteeship plan and demanded immediate unification and independence.

The joint U.S.-Soviet commission came to an early impasse when the Russians insisted that the commission consult only those Korean parties and organizations which had fully supported the Moscow decision on Korea. The Americans contended that the Korean people were entitled freely to

express their views and resisted the Russian attempt to limit consultation to Korean Communist-controlled groups. For almost two years after the Moscow agreement, the United States had tried in vain to reach a settlement with the Soviet Union for the reunification of divided Korea.

In September 1947, after failing to budge the Soviet Union, the United States referred the Korean problem to the United Nations in order to break the diplomatic impasse in Korea. The Soviet Union objected, offering a substitute plan that would remove all foreign troops from Korea. The withdrawal of foreign troops, the Russians argued, would enable Koreans to form their own government. The United States rejected the Soviet proposal, because an abrupt withdrawal of American forces would leave South Korea vulnerable to an attack by the better-armed north.

Despite the Soviet objections, in November 1947, the United Nations decided to take up the Korean problem on terms suggested by the United States. It created the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) to supervise elections throughout the country for the establishment of a unified, independent, and democratic government. The United Nations also recommended that after the formation of a national government, the Koreans make their own arrangements for the withdrawal of American and Russian troops. The Communists refused to permit UNTCOK to enter North Korea, and therefore UNTCOK supervised elections only in South

Korea on May 10, 1948. The newly elected National Assembly in the American zone adopted a constitution and proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of Korea in Seoul, with Syngman Rhee as president. The United States immediately recognized the Republic as the lawful government of Korea. With the inauguration of the new Republic on August 15, 1948, the American command terminated its military government in South Korea.

The formation of a new government in the south brought a prompt response from the Communists in the north. On September 9, 1948, the Communists formally established the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Pyongyang, with Kim Il-Sung as premier. The United States, of course, did not recognize Kim's government. Two governments had now come into existence, each claiming to represent all of Korea and each backed by a rival power. Thus, by the end of 1948, the avowed American objective of establishing a unified, independent, and democratic Korea was far from realized.

In December 1948, at the suggestion of the United States, the United Nations General Assembly recommended the withdrawal of the occupation forces from Korea. The United Nations then replaced UNTCOK with a permanent United Nations Commission on Korea (UNCOK). The United Nations also called upon its members to cooperate with the new commission in achieving the unity and independence of Korea and declared the Republic of Korea the only lawful government on the

peninsula. But the Soviet Union and other Communist nations recognized only the North Korean government. The Russian forces withdrew from Korea by the end of 1948. The United States completed the withdrawal of its troops from South Korea by the end of June 1949, in accordance with the United Nations recommendation as well as its own military priorities. In any event, because of the continued Soviet refusal to cooperate, all United Nations efforts in 1949 failed to bring about Korean unification.

The United States supported the efforts of UNCOK, but did not supply the South Koreans with heavy military equipment. When the American troops withdrew, they left behind only defensive weapons, mostly small arms and light artillery. Since Syngman Rhee had threatened to unify the country by military action, the United States withheld tanks and heavy weapons that might have been used in offensive operations. The Soviet Union, however, had equipped the North Koreans with tanks and heavy artillery. Therefore, when the occupation armies withdrew, North Korea had a decided military advantage over the south.

The withdrawal of American forces from Korea and certain pronouncements from Washington may have created the impression in North Korea that the United States would not defend South Korea against an attack from the north. Speaking before the National Press Club in Washington on January 12, 1950, Secretary of State Acheson had described the

American defense perimeter in the Pacific as running through the Aleutians, Japan, the Ryukyus, and the Philippines. Areas beyond that line, he said, could not be guaranteed against a military attack. The Acheson statement, though it certainly was not a green light for aggression, gave the impression that the United States would not regard an attack on the Republic of Korea as a threat to its own security.

Whatever the Communist motives, on the morning of June 25, 1950, Korean time, the North Koreans launched well-organized attack along the entire length of the 38th parallel. Within a few hours of receiving news of the attack, the United States requested a meeting of the United Nations Security Council. The Soviet representative was absent. He had been boycotting the Security Council since January in a protest against the United Nations' refusal to seat Communist China and did not return until August 1. On the afternoon of June 25, New York time, without fear of a Russian veto, the Security Council adopted an American resolution that condemned the North Koreans as aggressors, demanded immediate cessation of hostilities, requested the withdrawal of North Korean forces to the 38th parallel, and asked all members of the United Nations to help the Republic of Korea repel the Communist attack.

In response to the South Korean appeal for "effective and timely aid," President Truman ordered General MacArthur to use American naval and air forces to attack North Korean

military targets south of the 38th parallel. The president also ordered the Seventh Fleet to prevent any Communist assault on Taiwan and to keep the Nationalists from attacking the Chinese mainland. On June 27, Truman claimed his unilateral intervention was in support of the United Nations resolution that the North Koreans had defied. Truman and Acheson assumed that the Soviet Union was directing the North Korean attack. On that same day (June 27), the United Nations Security Council passed a second resolution urging United Nations members to offer all necessary help to the Republic of Korea.

On June 30, 1950, after consultations with his top advisers, Truman sent American ground troops to Korea, permitted American air attacks on North Korea, and ordered a naval blockade of the Korean coast. On July 7, at the suggestion of the United States, the Security Council passed a third resolution. It recommended a unified command under United States leadership. Truman named General MacArthur the United Nations commander, but the general acted only on orders from Washington. Besides the United States, fifteen other nations eventually sent military units to Korea. But the United States shouldered the major share of the United Nations effort to resist the Communist aggression. Therefore, the Korean conflict was essentially an American war.

The South Korean army and the first American and United Nations troops to reach Korea retreated before the well-

armed North Koreans. The North Koreans quickly pushed them back to the extreme southeast corner of the country. Fortunately this area included the important port of Pusan. The battle tide suddenly turned on September 15, 1950, when General MacArthur launched an amphibious attack on Inchon, which lay far behind the advancing enemy's lines. By the end of September, the forces involved in Inchon landing destroyed or captured large elements of the North Korean army. The survivors fled north of the 38th parallel. On October 7, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution recommending that steps be taken to establish a unified Korea. Accordingly, the United Nations forces crossed the 38th parallel and occupied most of North Korea.

The United Nations drive to the Yalu brought about a massive Chinese Communist intervention in late November 1950. Within a few weeks, the Chinese "volunteers" and North Koreans pushed the United Nations troops back below the 38th parallel and recaptured Seoul. General MacArthur announced that he confronted "an entirely new war." He maintained that victory would be impossible unless he could blockade China, bomb targets in Manchuria, and use Chinese Nationalist troops in Korea. Truman and his advisers opposed this course, fearing that it would lead to a world war.

America's allies in Europe and other non-Communist countries also feared that if the United States overreacted to the Chinese Communist intervention, it would escalate

into a general war. The United States assured these nations that it would only act through the United Nations and would not broaden the Korean conflict. The United Nations tried to arrange a cease-fire in December 1950, but the Chinese rejected the United Nations proposal. Before they would agree to a cease-fire, they demanded that all foreign troops leave Korea. The United States rejected the Chinese demand. On February 1, 1951, at the urging of the United States, the United Nations General Assembly declared Communist China guilty of aggression in Korea. By April, the United Nations counter-attack had pushed the Communists back across the 38th parallel and stabilized the battle line.

Meanwhile, on April 11, 1951, Truman relieved General MacArthur of his command. Growing friction between the general and the president had resulted from MacArthur's impatience at the restraints placed upon his military activities and Truman's dislike for MacArthur's public criticism of his administration's foreign policy. MacArthur's dismissal set off a great debate in the United States. The issue was whether to limit the war in Korea or to go all out for victory against Communist China at the risk of bringing the Russians into the war. MacArthur summed up the arguments in his assertion, "there is no substitute for victory." General Omar N. Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, put the administration's reasoning succinctly. He stated that a full-scale war against Communist China would

be "the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy."

The initiative to enter into armistice negotiations came from the United States. On behalf of the State Department, George F. Kennan, then on a leave of absence at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, contacted Jacob A. Malik, the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations, and the two diplomats discussed the possible means of ending the Korean War. On June 23, 1951, Malik hinted that the Korean War could be settled if both parties so desired. The Malik statement led to the opening of truce talks on July 10, 1951. The armistice negotiations proceeded with a number of interruptions for two years. By the spring of 1952, agreement was reached on all points except the issue of prisoner exchange. The Communists insisted upon the repatriation of all prisoners of war. The United Nations command would not agree to the forced repatriation of thousands of Chinese and North Korean prisoners who refused to return to communism.

The negotiators deadlocked on the prisoner question until after the 1952 American presidential elections. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the successful Republican candidate, visited the Korean front in early December and declared that he supported the United Nations stand on the prisoner question. After his inauguration, Eisenhower warned the Communists that the United States would fight for victory with atomic weapons if the cease-fire talks failed. He also

removed Truman's ban on operations from Taiwan against the Chinese mainland. Later Eisenhower thought that it was his covert threat to use nuclear weapons that broke the deadlock in the Korean armistice negotiations. In April 1953, after a suspension of six months, the negotiators resumed the armistice talks at Panmunjom. The Communists were now ready to make concessions on the prisoner question. Consequently, despite the violent opposition of President Rhee of South Korea, the negotiators signed an armistice agreement on July 27, 1953.

The armistice was only a military agreement to cease fire. The agreed military demarcation line ran, for the most part, somewhat above the 38th parallel. The war thus ended only a few miles north of where it began and left the country as divided as before. American involvement in the Korean conflict proved costly both in men and money. The United States lost 33,629 men in action and expended many billions of dollars. With the signing of a mutual defense treaty on October 1, 1953, the United States agreed to remain committed to the defense of the Republic of Korea as well as to the continuation of economic and military aid.

Conclusion

Between the end of World War II and the close of the Korean fighting, the United States moved from a limited interest in Korea to a substantial involvement in that

nation's affairs. Although the avowed American objective of establishing a unified, independent, and democratic Korea was far from realized, this study maintains that the United States was successful in pursuing its national interest of containment in Korea during the years under review.

Just before the end of World War II in the Pacific, the United States decided on the 38th parallel as a dividing line between American and Russian zones of authority in Korea. There was neither long-range planning nor ulterior motive in this decision. The United States had no desire to control Korea or to undertake a lengthy military occupation of the country. The 38th parallel was intended to be only a temporary dividing line to be used as a means of disarming local Japanese forces on the Korean peninsula.

The United States sought to bring the Pacific War to a speedy conclusion and seemingly overlooked the political consequences that could result from having Soviet troops in Korea. Korea did not figure prominently in American plans for postwar Asia, and the abrupt end of the war caught the United States unprepared. In view of the multitude of other American responsibilities, it is perhaps understandable that no plans were drawn up for the occupation of Korea. As has been shown, however, Korea too eventually became a major American interest. The United States wanted to establish a non-Communist, independent government in Korea. The best

way to accomplish this goal, in American view, was through an international trusteeship that would prepare the Koreans for self-government.

At the Moscow meeting of the Allied foreign ministers in December 1945, the Americans and Russians affirmed their commitment to Korean unification and agreed on trusteeship as a solution to the Korean problem. The Korean trusteeship, however, failed to achieve the original goal of reunification. The failure was inherent in the trusteeship plan itself as well as in the uncooperative attitude of the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union refused to accept the American interpretation of the Moscow decision, the United States turned to the containment policy to break the deadlock in Korea. The containment policy sought to build a strong, democratic government in South Korea capable of self-defense, thus permitting American withdrawal.

The Russians acted in Korea as they had acted in Eastern Europe. As soon as their troops reached the 38th parallel, they cut the country in half and began changing the north into a Communist state with hand-picked, loyal leaders. A divided Korea was contrary to the fervent desires of all Koreans. The United States apparently misunderstood the urgency of Korean nationalism. After thirty-five years of Japanese colonial rule, the Korean people wanted immediate independence. They were not willing to wait for an American agreement with the Russians on the issue. The United States

could have permitted the Soviet Union to seize control of Korea, but such a policy would have had serious consequences. A Soviet-dominated Korea would be a threat to both China and Japan.

As cold war politics came to dominate the policies of the United States and the Soviet Union, the 38th parallel became a permanent political barrier. Neither nation wished to abandon its prominent role over half of the Korean peninsula for a unified country that might end up in the opposite camp. Unable to arrange a settlement with Russia for the reunification of divided Korea, the United States referred the Korean problem to the United Nations. However, the Soviet refusal to cooperate with United Nations-supervised elections in Korea led to the emergence of two rival regimes. This development completely destroyed any chance for a peaceful reunification. By the eve of the North Korean invasion, Korea had become a symbol of the cold war. The United States certainly could not separate the Korean situation from the Soviet-American rivalry.

The outbreak of the Korean War forced the United States into an unwanted military involvement in Korea. The Korean conflict, which lasted thirty-seven months and two days, was a major American military involvement in the nuclear age. But it was a limited war in the sense that it had a limited objective and the battle was confined to a specific geographical area. Although the United States seemed to have

ruled out its defense of South Korea on strategic grounds, when the aggression actually occurred, Truman and his advisers unanimously agreed that larger political considerations made South Korea's defense unavoidable. The American leaders knew exactly what their assumptions were, and they had no doubts about what they had to do. They believed that the North Korean attack was a Soviet attempt to weaken the United States in preparation for a major assault elsewhere. Thus America's real enemy in Korea, as seen by the policy makers in Washington, was the Soviet Union.

The dominant motive for American intervention was the fear that if the North Korean invasion went unchecked, it would encourage the Communists to set into motion a series of actions that would eventually force the United States into a total war with the Soviet Union. The United States was particularly concerned with halting in Korea what was perceived to be Soviet expansion in Asia. Therefore, the American intervention in the Korean conflict was intended to contain the Soviet expansion as well as to assist South Korea. America's initial objective in the war was to restore South Korea's border at the 38th parallel. The United States had no intention of completely destroying the enemy forces. After the Inchon landing, however, the United States decided to cross the 38th parallel and unify Korea through military action. This change of policy prompted the Chinese Communist intervention in the Korean conflict. The

massive Chinese attack in Korea compelled the Americans to give up any idea of unifying the country by military means.

The American leaders felt that the political unification of Korea by military action was too risky to support under the circumstances. It would involve an expansion of the war effort, thus risking a general war. The risk outweighed the objective's importance. Although the ultimate goal of unifying Korea remained in effect, the United States was unwilling to pursue it by military means. The primary political objectives thus reverted to the original goal of restoring the prewar situation. On the basis of this political adjustment, the United States began the cease-fire talks. In short, after Communist China's intervention, the official American policy was to negotiate while fighting as hard as possible to drive the aggressor out of South Korea.

The armistice negotiations threatened to degenerate into an American-sponsored coup against Syngman Rhee who opposed anything less than a unified Korea. Rhee wanted to continue the war in hopes of unifying Korea. He insisted that the fundamental task of the United States and the United Nations in Korea was to destroy the enemy forces in order to unify the divided country. He contended that this task was in line with American policy of containment. Rhee further maintained that the Americans had sufficient economic and military capabilities to achieve this objective and, at the same time, to fulfill their global commitments. The

United States, however, was determined to seek a negotiated settlement in Korea.

The resulting armistice did not settle the Korean question. It was merely a military agreement to stop fighting at the battle line. The military demarcation line ran slightly north of the 38th parallel. The South Korean government agreed to accept the cease-fire only after the United States promised a mutual defense treaty as well as economic aid for reconstruction. The Korean armistice, now longer than any other in history, is still in effect. Yet it is a tolerable substitute for war. How long the armistice conditions, neither war nor peace, will last is uncertain. Of course, from the strictly military point of view, the Korean conflict was a failure for both sides.

As for divided Korea itself, there appears to be no solution in sight. The question of Korean unification largely hinges upon the basic conflict between the free world and communism. In any event, American diplomacy in Korea during the years under investigation was a success. The Americans had effectively used the United Nations to encircle the Communists. The United States used restraint in the Korean crisis, avoided a general war, and confined the fighting to Korea. By repelling the Communist invasion through a limited war, the Americans struck an effective blow for containment. The United States had prevented the Communists from controlling the whole Korean peninsula.

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