

Speaking of Korea

A EUROPEAN VOICE By special correspondence from London (30 July): Is it possible, we in Europe are asking, that whilst the refugees from the last futile conflict are still crowding the D P camps, whilst we are still wondering how we are to overcome the vast problems created by the terrible years that have passed, men should be turning their thoughts to rearmament and war? I have heard a great deal of what your press is saying and must admit that I am deeply distressed by the irresponsibility with which the American nation is in general (or rather its leaders) contemplating another major conflagration. The attitude seems to be that it is quite an adventure. Just a case of who is the stronger. Will we never learn?

For my own part I think that despite the overwhelming opinion which has been built up in the Western countries to the contrary, the present situation is "six of one and half a dozen of the other". It is true that the United Nations had to condemn the show of blatant military aggression but it is foolish to hold that it is all unexpected. Before the Korean situation became front page news there had already been 18,000 casualties in the "cold war" between the two sectors. Then it cannot be denied that the South was (at least until very recently) openly calling for war against the North. Nor is it denied that the Southern government was corrupt beyond all hope of redemption.

The fact is, and let us face it, that the Western democracies just have no answer to the forceful appeal which Communism naturally makes to the underprivileged and the frustrated. The United States is being driven by her lack of an alternative to support the most corrupt and oppressive regimes. Witness Persia, Chiang Kai-shek, South Korea, Spain, and Western Germany. And what is so tragic the forces of liberalism which, like ourselves, would have neither of these distasteful extremes--communism or imperialistic capitalism--are being driven out of hearing. Men are coming to feel that it is a "yes or no" world. Accept this or that but you must choose one....

We are, I think, deceiving ourselves if we think that the Korean situation is merely the result of Russian intrigue. There is here bound up the very deep feelings of national sovereignty which are stirring all over Asia and the far-East; a new sense of dignity and purpose which is being demanded and found, as by the coloured peoples in Africa. They are no longer content to let us destroy their culture and integrity whilst refusing them admittance to our own. That is perhaps why the Northern Koreans are fighting with such tenacity; they feel that everything is at stake. Compare their energy with that of the Southern population.

A KOREAN VOICE Special to PNL by Dr. Channing Liem of Korea, now professor of Political Science at the Pennsylvania College for Women.

In the first place, the acute poverty of the Korean people did much to invite the crisis. For centuries the Koreans have suffered greater economic hardships than any other peoples, first at the hands of their own tyrannical monarchs and then under the Japanese overlords. When in 1945 Japan surrendered, the farms in south Korea lay in waste through lack of fertilizers and the factories in north Korea remained idle for want of raw materials. The city folks were hungry and the farmers were in virtual nakedness.

A mortal economic blow was added to the country already near collapse when the victorious allies divided it at the 38th parallel. The industrial north faced hunger while the agricultural south faced hunger and cold. When U.S.-U.S.S.R. rivalry made Korea's unification impossible, the north became a Soviet protectorate and the south became a U.S. dependency. North Korea was economically somewhat better off than the south, because it had less population, comparatively greater resources and was under totalitarian control which discouraged profiteering. But in the southern zone the economic plight was far worse. It had practically nothing in the way of resources except grains, while on the other hand its population was twice that of north Korea. Furthermore, pending negotiation with the Russians toward the creation of an independent and unified government of the country, the U.S. chose to remain as mere caretakers. To be sure the U.S. spent large sums of money in south Korea to relieve the economic distress. But at best it was little more than a patch-up job. When it handed over to the Korean government the reign of south Korea in 1948, the latter inherited an economically worsened Korea. And when the northern Korean communist army invaded south Korea, the economic plight of that zone was indeed desperate. In the view of the rank and file of the south Koreans, they had either to reunite with the north, or face eventual death.

Secondly, the growing nationalism among the Koreans had a powerful influence on the Korean war of today. Forty years of Japanese rule over them resulted in the intensification rather than weakening of their nationalism. Then came the World War II. It brought home to them that, given the weapons, they too could free themselves. They saw the Japanese almost conquer the United States. They saw the Chinese repel the feared "Japs." The Russians lost no time in exploiting it to their advantage. They created a Korean regime in their zone modeled after their own. It consisted of men from the lowest economic class. Since the lowest economic class represented ninety per cent of the population and since the latter's retention of political power depended on their cooperation with the Soviet authorities, the Russians had no difficulty in having firm control over the Koreans. These now privileged north Koreans were perfectly willing to believe the Soviet propaganda that, had they been under any other power but the Russians, they, the Koreans, could never dream of taking hold

of the political power. In other words, they believe that the Russians are their benefactors in achieving their nationalistic aspirations rather than obstructionists in this attempt. The Russian order to "liberate" south Korea is, therefore, to them a concrete proof of the correctness of their belief. To conquer all Korea is now their most patriotic duty.

Another cause which needs almost no mention is the American-Russian rivalry in Korea. Had the two powers left the country alone, the present bloody conflict would not have arisen. Nevertheless, in fairness to the United States, her entry in Korea in 1945 was not her own making. Nor did the Koreans at the time resent her arrival. Quite to the contrary, there never was any nation who welcomed the coming of the army of another nation as did the Koreans the Americans. To the best of my knowledge the rank and file of the north Koreans viewed the arrival of the Russians with uneasiness.

Due to the causes which I have mentioned and others which I have not space to go into, the communist soldiers of north Korea invaded the southern zone on the 25th of June of this year, when the supplies of grain were nearly exhausted, when the rainy season favored the northerners who lacked planes and when the south Korean government's popularity had reached a new low. When, to the surprise of the world, the southern forces were being routed, the U.S. decided to throw its aid to the south Korean army and sought and received the sanction of the United Nations.

Is the UN justified in taking the action it did? Greatly deploring the fact that the struggle has had to arise, for I firmly believe that it could have been prevented, I am nevertheless of the opinion that the UN is duty-bound to resist the north Koreans. My reasons for holding this view are as follows. First, the UN was committed to the unification and independence of Korea. The unification of Korea by the north Korean army will not result in the independence but the subjugation of the country under one foreign power. It must be clearly borne in mind that Kim Il-sung's government of north Korea is vastly different from that of China's Mao Tse-tung. While Kim owes his political power to the Russians, Mao derived his strength mainly from the Chinese who were opposed to Chiang Kai-shek. Even if Kim did wish to oppose the Russians, Korea is too small and too close to Soviet Union for him to do so. Until Korea is unified under a truly independent regime and creates a strong national defense force, the only way to Korea's independence is the intervention of the UN and the U.S. must assist the UN in this. Korea wants neither Japanese nor Soviet nor any other power as her protector. The UN is the only organization the rank and file of the Korean people will trust, not because it is perfect but because it is far better than any single power in their eyes.

Secondly, until the time arrives when moral law becomes the standard human behavior, the world must depend upon the rule of international law. If the world is to live under the rule of law rather than the rule of force, arbitrary exercise of armed force by any single nation must be discouraged. It may be that neither party to the present conflict in Korea is perfect. But the main argument is that north Korea is relentlessly on the march to conquer the whole of Korea. This is clearly more than a repulse of the enemy. The UN plea to cease fire has not been heeded by the northerners. In the circumstances the UN could take only one or the other action: throw up its hands in despair and lose its right to exist, or recommend its member nations to invoke sanctions against the offenders.

Thirdly, however logical it may be from the legal point of view, I for one cannot approve of the UN action in Korea if I do not believe that it can bring about satisfactory solution for all concerned. Bearing in mind that what the Koreans want is independence and economic livelihood, it is plain that the UN is in a far better position to win the Korean confidence than any single nation, because, among others, it is far easier for a nation to trust an international organization than a single power. Once the Korean confidence is won, it will be very easy to turn the tide of war. Why? Let us look for a minute at the situation in Korea today. How do the communist forces manage to move their supplies and men so swiftly and efficiently in the face of the constant bombing by the UN planes? Through the cooperation of the Korean peasants who are told by the communists that if they cooperate with them they will receive their freedom to own their lands. To these peasants the UN bombs falling on them are conclusive proofs of the Soviet charge that the Western powers want either to enslave or slaughter the Korean people. Most Korean peasants, therefore, carry on their shoulders the supplies for the communist soldiers and feed them with their own meager rice. When these Korean peasants are won over, I am confident that the communists will be helpless.

~~How can it be brought about? I submit that the best way to victory in Korea is first, assuring the Koreans that their wants will be satisfied, and second, by dropping all over Korea not bombs but the things the poverty-stricken Koreans can use. Let the UN try this for one month and I am sure it will prove most effective.~~

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