

Defence Of The Pacific

EVEN those who suspect the peaceful intentions of the Communists are not unaware of the reasons which have helped an armistice in Korea. Neither side had won a military victory in Korea. It is conceded that, under the conditions in which the Korean war has been fought, a military decision is not possible. This is the overriding strategic consideration which Mat-Arthur and his followers advance in favour of an extension of war to the Chinese mainland. It is implicit in the declaration issued by the nations fighting the war on behalf of the United Nations that, in the event of a renewed war, it may not be possible to confine it to Korea.

Washington is, however, acutely aware of the reaction to any such military action. Peking is secure in the knowledge that Americans will not succeed, except under certain special circumstances, in cajoling or coercing her allies to extend the war beyond Korea. This is the main strategic reason which has forced both sides to the realisation that there can be no military conclusion to the Korean war. That is why both sides have agreed to sign an armistice. This has been an achievement. For, without an armistice, negotiations could not start for a settlement of the political problems.

If there are reasons why it has been possible to conclude an armistice in Korea, there are equally definite reasons why both sides are in a mood to bargain about the solution of political issues. America is not opposed to a peace settlement in Korea on her terms. Red China is not unwilling to accept a solution of the Korean problem which suits her real interests in the Far East. On wider interests, there is conflict between America and Red China. Each is suspicious of the other's political and strategic intentions. That is why the post-armistice negotiations are not making progress.

America may have ulterior motives, but she is not without diplomacy. There are differences between America and the Communists about the composition of the Political Conference. These differences stem from deeper causes. They underline the issues relating to the agenda of the Conference.

America is diplomatic in her argument that only the belligerents should participate in the Conference whose immediate objective is to settle Korean issues. What is its immediate objective? America finds it convenient to maintain silence about it. But Rhee is more vocal. He demands unification of Korea. This is the ultimate objective of the United Nations. But it is now widely realised that it may not be possible to unify Korea for the present.

It is for the Political Conference to evolve an intermediate solution of this problem. In such a settlement, pending the ultimate unification of Korea, the United Nations cannot be unconcerned. That being so, America is not logical in arguing that the non-belligerent member-States are not concerned with a settlement of purely Korean issues; that, therefore, they have no light to join the deliberations of the Conference at the initial stages. If America is not logical in this argument, she is equally unconvincing in her stand that she will not oppose participation by Russia, India and some other non-combatants as representatives of the Communists. It is clear that Russia will never join the Conference as a representative of "the other side". Nor will India, Indonesia, Burma

and Pakistan. All of them are entitled to be members of a Conference which will discuss problems which are the prime concern of the United Nations.

In reality the dispute over the composition of the Conference is a conflict about the agenda. To such an interpretation, America will reply that there is no controversy about the agenda. Washington is not willing to extend the composition of the Conference when it starts negotiations on wider issues. It is difficult to appreciate why America is so adamant about the initial members of the Conference. This can only provide the Communists with an excuse for delaying tactics. As the agenda is more vital than the composition of the Conference, America's attitude can only mean that she wants to settle the purely Korean questions on her own terms. This is a policy which not only the Communists, but even the non-Communist member-States, may find it difficult to endorse.

In rejecting the General Assembly's recommendation about the composition of the Conference, the Communists are indulging in shadow-boxing. Their basic concern is about the agenda. They have made a counter-proposal for including Russia and four Asian

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nations as members of the Conference on the ground that their membership is justified as the Conference will have to settle wider issues than the purely Korean questions. Mr Dulles has, by implication, conceded India's right to join the Conference when it starts talks on Indo-China. Although Red China has not accepted Indo-China as a possible item on the agenda of the Korean Political Conference, Peking has let it be known that it prefers a solution of the problem of Indo-China on the lines of Korea.

It may be politic of Mr Dulles to mention Indo-China as an example of how the scope of the Korean Political Conference can be extended at later stages to include other issues. But Peking is not so naive as to be confused by such diversionary tactics. Red China has made no secret of her demand for admission to the United Nations. This demand is endorsed by many member-States. America is not opposed to it, although she insists that the Korean and Far Eastern issues must be solved first before the question of Red China's admission to the United Nations can be taken up for consideration.

America is not likely to meet with strong opposition to her calculated time-table for discussions on the wider issues, including Red China's admission to the family of nations. It is to Peking's interest to make political capital out of this American attitude. But Red China may not refuse negotiations on Far Eastern issues merely because America insists that these and Korean issues must be reconciled before she can be admitted to the United Nations.

America may succeed in confining the Korean Political Conference to Korean and Far Eastern issues. But Red China is equally likely to insist that, besides Indo-China, the Far Eastern issues involve discussions on her abiding geo-political interests in Korea and Formosa, and on the problem of Japan's relations with her immediate neighbours. On these issues, there are substantial differences between America and Red China. America's Pacific system of defence involves certain strategic considerations. It involves the use of Japan, Formosa and South Korea as fortification bases. This Pacific strategy of defence is in direct conflict with the interests of Red China and

Communist Russia.

America, a Pacific Power, must necessarily be interested in maintaining a balance of power in the Far East. Britain is no longer a Pacific Power. Nor is France, although she is less opposed to America's Far Eastern policy than Britain because of her commitments in Indo-China, and because of American help to her in her Indo-Chinese war. Even as America, now a major Pacific Power, is interested in Japan, South Korea and Formosa, both Peking and Moscow are concerned about power-groupings and alliances in this region. Britain, if not France, and many other Asian-Arab member-States concede that Red China has strategic interests in Korea and Formosa, and that she cannot be unconcerned about Japan's future alliances. These are the main problems which the Political Conference will have to settle. It is clear that these problems cannot be solved without conceding most of Red China's claims. It is equally clear that America is not yet prepared to accept such a solution of the Far Eastern problems. That is why the outlook for the Korean Political Conference is discouraging.



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