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FAR EAST SURVEY
23 APRIL 1953

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THE KOREAN WAR

North Korean and Chinese Communist propaganda provides no readily discernible answer to the two questions obscuring Communist intentions in anticipation of the resumption of the plenary truce sessions--the identity of the neutral nation to which disaffected POWs would be entrusted, and the ultimate disposition to be made of those who persist in their unwillingness to return home. The following salient elements derive from comment of the last two weeks:

1. Although the Communists insist that the Chou-Kim proposal is "highly constructive" and includes "obvious concessions," parallel references admit that the concessions are "procedural" rather than substantive, and restate the thesis that prisoners must ultimately be treated in strict accordance with Geneva Convention stipulations making full repatriation mandatory.
2. The mild tone of Chinese Communist propaganda specifically related to the new proposals is not reflected in general comment, which continues to assail American bestiality and fear of peace.
3. Peking was quick to exploit the prisoner exchange with highly emotionalized statements contrasting the exemplary treatment accorded Communist-held POWs with the abuse and degradation suffered by captured Communist personnel in U.N. prisoner stockades.
4. Although noted by Peking, recent U.S. statements concerning the integration of the Korean problem with that of Indo-China and Malaya have elicited little comment, and the plan to divide Korea at its narrow waist has been described solely as something which "cannot but evoke our serious attention."
5. Pyongyang has retained an attitude of greater intransigence in regard to present developments, has revived the charge that the U.N. is planning full-scale aggressive action in Korea and has promised that the Chinese and Korean forces will eventually drive the enemy forces out of the country.

Chou-Kim Proposal a "Constructive" Contribution to Peace: Peking continues to insist that the Chou-Kim proposal of 30 March contains "obvious concessions" which constitute a "constructive" contribution to the resolution of the prisoner issue. The Communist reply to General Harrison's letter of 17 April made no mention of the senior U.N. delegate's nomination of Switzerland as the neutral custodial nation, but noted with apparent alarm the threat that the sessions would be curtailed once more should they fail to provide concrete indications of a shift in position on the POW issue.

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Although the reply stated that no further recess should be envisaged in view of the constructive nature of the concessions, parallel comment has admitted that the concessions are procedural rather than substantive and there have been reiterations that all POWs must eventually be repatriated in strict accordance with Geneva Convention stipulations.

Anti-U.S. Virulence Outweighs Amenability: The greater amenability reflected in comment specifically related to the detente on the prisoner issue has not extended to general discussion of the war, and the attacks on U.S. inhumanity and fear of peace have grown in virulence and volume since the exchange of sick and wounded began. Both Pyongyang and Peking have voiced new charges of BW activity and recent prisoner-camp incidents have been conventionally exploited as devices intended to force POWs to refuse repatriation.

Communist "Emaciated Ghosts" Contrast with Well-Fed, Smiling U.N. Repatriates: Peking quickly capitalized on the return of the sick and wounded, with correspondent Alan Winnington noting the "striking contrast" between the "warmly clad, sun-tanned, smiling" POWs returned by the Communists and the "haggard, sunken-faced ghosts of men" who tottered from U.N. ambulances. This line, which was subsequently re-echoed in other propaganda, was anticipated prior to the exchange by frequent reminders that returned Chinese and North Korean POWs would need extended medical treatment to repair the ravages of disease, malnutrition and abuse resulting from inhuman treatment in U.N. prisoner stockades. Frequent charges have also been made that repatriated American personnel will be intimidated to forestall their revealing the facts concerning their good treatment by the Communists and their corroboration of the Communist charges concerning bacteriological warfare.

Malayan, Indochinese Wars Have No Bearing on Korean Settlement: Peking has noted recent American press reports concerning a possible U.S. intention to seek a package settlement of all Far Eastern wars, but beyond noting that the wars in Malaya and Indochina are "utterly irrelevant" to the Korean situation, has made little comment. PEOPLE'S DAILY on 19 April deplored the general tendency in the United States to "obstruct the truce talks and create difficulties" and charged that such hindrances stem from an American fear of peace and the resultant disorientation of America's war-battered economy. The plan to seek a permanent division of Korea at its narrow waist drew only the notation that such a split would place 85 percent of Korea under the Rhee "puppet regime" and "cannot but evoke our serious attention."

Pyongyang Notes Imminence of U.N. Offensive, Predicts Complete Communist Victory: Although North Korean transmitters have faithfully fallen in line with the Communist thesis that the new proposal should bring a quick end to the Korean impasse, there has been little abatement of Pyongyang's virulent anti-American propaganda. The recently dormant charge that U.N. forces are preparing a major offensive to redeem President Eisenhower's pre-election pledge has been revived, and the charge has been countered by the promise that the Koreans and Chinese will eventually drive the enemy out of the country.

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N O R T H K O R E A

U.S. Retains Aggressive Designs: Pyongyang broadcasts on the general scope of the war contain no assumption of an end to hostilities; instead they warn North Koreans of "ever-greater hardships to be overcome before ultimate victory is won." Government concern that the population may relax its war effort in response to the new peace moves is implied in the frequent warnings that the enemy "retains" its aggressive designs on the Fatherland. Pyongyang's warning that the people "must be prepared to deal with any enemy move anywhere at any time" is similar to that voiced late last year in anticipation of an Eisenhower-inspired U.N. offensive.

Although warning of a continued struggle, Pyongyang reassures its listeners of the consistent Communist support for peace as exemplified in the Stalinist peace policy carried on by Malenkov. Molotov's endorsement of the Chou-Kim peace proposals is cited as "another indication" of this same policy.

Pyongyang denounces South Korean opposition to a truce and uses the occasion to repeat the familiar refrain that the "puppets" need the war to retain their power and fulfill their greed. South Korean resistance is ridiculed, however, and there is no attempt to picture the opposition as a serious obstacle to possible agreement.

References to the North Korean release of British and French internees and broadcasts of interviews with these internees prior to their departure are apparently designed to foster the impression of correct and humanitarian treatment of captives by the North Koreans. A NODONG SINMUN editorial explicitly contrasts this evidence of North Korean humanity with the barbarity displayed by the Americans in the prison camps under their control.

Farm Shortages and Political Indoctrination Claim Attention: With the spring farming season at hand, Pyongyang devotes increasing attention to the needs of agriculture. Shortages of manpower, draft animals, fertilizer and tools remain, and comment urges the extensive use of mutual-aid and oxen teams to accomplish necessary plowing and sowing. Special attention is given to the use of "superior seeds" and a Seed Administration Office is to be established to coordinate the raising and distribution of superior seeds under a single State plan. Responsibility for implementing this plan is vested in agricultural experts who are instructed to substitute Soviet agricultural theory and experience for the "unscientific" Japanese methods.

Peasant resistance to the new methods is foreseen and intensive publicity is planned to overcome this. The political unreliability of the peasants also apparently remains a problem, for "politically mature" laborers, clerical workers and army personnel who are to assist in farm work are urged to use rest periods and evening hours to carry out indoctrination of the peasants. Despite the apparent backwardness of the farm population, the Government apparently is more interested in appeasement than in coercion, as demonstrated by the admonition to worker teams to learn the needs and wishes of the farmers so that the Government may respond quickly.

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State Encourages Supplemental Urban Farming: North Korean awareness of the difficulties workers face in providing a secure livelihood is indicated in a recent Cabinet decree calling for encouragement of farming and sideline activities for employees of State bureaus, cooperatives, and other concerns. These activities are deemed important in raising the real wages of the people, in supplementing their food supply and improving their livelihood. The organizations concerned are instructed to take active steps to assist this activity by acquiring farms, ranches and production facilities. Further evidence of the Government's concern is revealed in the order that all province-operated ranches are to be turned over to major mine and industrial establishments for operation by the concerned employees. These measures also seem designed to overcome possible transportation and distribution difficulties by making each urban unit as self-sufficient as possible.

Deference Paid Soviet Progress, Assistance: Comment on the Soviet Union continues to stress the achievements, largely technical, achieved under the Lenin-Stalin leadership and seems designed to reassure the Korean people concerning the strength of their benefactor. Soviet assistance to North Korea is highly lauded on the anniversary of Stalin's gift of 50,000 tons of flour, the only specific instance of Soviet aid to Korea explicitly broadcast during the past year. In contrast to the consistent attention paid to Stalin's gift of flour is the brief mention of Soviet assistance in the form of "thousands of tons of chemical fertilizer," 400 tractors and other Soviet equipment. This mention occurs in comment on spring farming preparations and no special attention is given to receipt of the aid. It seems possible that the equipment and fertilizer were delivered some time ago, for recent receipt of a gift of this size would in all likelihood have received extensive propaganda exploitation.

Official Messages Signed by Vice Foreign Minister: The exchange of messages between North Korean and Hungarian officials on the occasion of the anniversary of Hungary's liberation during World War II reveals that Vice Foreign Minister Lee Tong Kun continues to sign official Foreign Ministry documents. Pyongyang broadcasts have given no indication of Pak Hun Yong's whereabouts, but Lee Tong Kun is still referred to as the Vice Minister and has evidently not replaced Pak officially.

SOUTH KOREA: Pusan Requests Full Voice in Korean Settlement

South Korean reaction to the peace proposals and to the specific problems of repatriation is largely confined to broadcasts of the official resolutions and announcements released by the Government, the National Assembly and by various officials. Early reaction stressed the minimum conditions advocated by South Korea for an armistice, which included the unification of the country. Later comment, however, dealt with various conditions surrounding the question of repatriation, including requests for the return of "kidnapped" South Korean civilians and National Assemblymen. Full citizenship was offered to North Korean prisoners who resist repatriation. Concern over the possibility that the Republic of Korea may not be accorded a full and official voice in all transactions seems paramount in all comment, however.