

~~SECRET~~

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

IMPLEMENTATION OF SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN KOREA

ORE 62

18 November 1947

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL

Document No. 00
NO CHANGE in Class. ☐
☒ DECLASSIFIED
Class. CHANGED TO: TS S C
DPA Memo. Apr 77
Auth: DPA REG. 77 1763
Date: 12/1/78 By: all

Copy No. 3

~~SECRET~~

300054

18 November 1947

Copy No. 3

IMPLEMENTATION OF SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN KOREA

SUMMARY

Soviet tactics in Korea have clearly demonstrated that the USSR is intent on securing all of Korea as a satellite. In pursuing this policy, the USSR has, since V-J Day, adhered to a definite program of infiltration, consolidation, and control. US reaction to this policy has resulted in minor departures from the Soviet schedule of operations but has not forced any change in the fundamental strategy.

Since the US proposal that a UN Commission be appointed to supervise elections for a permanent Korean Government has been accepted by the UNGA, it might appear that the Soviets, adamant against inspection of their zone, would be forced to continue their occupation. In consequence, US occupation would also have to be continued, and the day of full Soviet control would thus seem to be indefinitely postponed. The Soviets, however, making use of their contention that the US, by unilateral action in the UN, has already abrogated the Moscow agreement, could withdraw unilaterally. This they could afford because they can now rely on the powerful military and political machine they have built in the North to carry out their policies in their own physical absence. Under such circumstances, should the US wish to see the UNGA resolution implemented, it would presumably have to force entrance into North Korea, using military force against what the USSR would call an "independent" North Korea which was being ruthlessly trampled upon by an "imperialistic" nation. Similarly, any attempt by the US to act unilaterally in South Korea could be stigmatized as an unwarranted extension of the occupation for "imperialistic" ends, thus producing serious anti-US resentment among the South Koreans.

Unilateral withdrawal, timed to take place prior to the arrival in Korea of the UN Commission, appears therefore to be an entirely probable Soviet tactic. If this step is taken, it will necessarily be accompanied by an order to the North Korean regime to resist at all costs the entry of the UN Commission into North Korea. It is probably the Soviet hope that in this situation the US will yield to pressure and withdraw its forces within a short period of time. Since no effective counterforce can be established by the US in South Korea without the investment of considerable effort over an extended period, US withdrawal would have the effect of leaving South Korea incapable of offering any serious resistance to eventual domination by the North.

Note: This paper has been coordinated with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and Air Force.

~~SECRET~~

IMPLEMENTATION OF SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN KOREA

Soviet tactics in Korea since V-J Day have consistently and clearly indicated a firm intention to accept no settlement which would not insure the acquisition of Korea as a loyal Soviet satellite in the Far East. Details of an alleged Soviet "Master Plan for Korea" were compromised in mid-1946, and subsequent events tend to confirm the fact that the USSR has been following the essential outline of this "Plan" with minor divergencies necessitated by tactical considerations.

Original plans apparently called for an extended breathing-space to be provided by the use of stalling tactics in the US-USSR Joint Commission. The purpose of this was to make certain that no Korean settlement should be forthcoming until a powerful military-political machine had been constructed in North Korea under Soviet auspices. This was to be accomplished by the strengthening of the South Korean Communist Party through an increase in the membership of the so-called Democratic Peoples' Front. The Communist Party itself was to go underground and mask its real strength by working through "front" organizations. It was also to concentrate on infiltrating its members into key positions in the administrative and police organization of South Korea.

The USSR was signally successful in accomplishing the first of these purposes. When the Soviet forces entered North Korea in 1945, there were three main groups in the population which were considered capable of offering any organized resistance to Sovietization. These were: (1) the propertied classes—peasant proprietors and businessmen; (2) nationalist youths, mainly students; and (3) religious groups with a Western orientation. From the outset, the vaunted political, economic, and social reforms accomplished by the North Korean Peoples' Committee have been specifically designed to eliminate this potential core of resistance. The Land Reform Law and the Business Tax have resulted in the actual expropriation of the propertied classes and added them to the stream of refugee dissidents swarming south over the 38th Parallel. The efficient police net established under the Bureau of Internal Affairs has functioned so successfully that the leading North Korean youth group, the Northwest Korean Youth Association, has been forced to move into the US Zone and is now almost solely confined in its activities to terroristic acts against Leftists south of the 38th Parallel. Protestant and Catholic religious groups in North Korea have either been effectively absorbed into the Democratic Peoples' Front or have been declared illegal and their terror-paralyzed leadership placed under house arrest.

All available evidence indicates that the USSR has every reason to be confident in the loyalty and survival-power of its North Korean Peoples' Committee. The subordination of this regime to the dicta of Soviet policy is assured by the fact that it has been carefully "packed" with Soviet-trained Koreans holding dual Soviet-Korean citizenship. Moreover, North Korean military forces have been carefully and soundly developed under Soviet guidance to the point where they are capable of taking over all of Korea without serious delay after the initiation of active operations.

~~SECRET~~

Although not as successful as the consolidation of control in North Korea, the strengthening of the Communist underground in the South proceeded sufficiently well as to encourage Soviet optimism. According to the original "Master Plan," consolidation of Communist strength in both zones was to be followed by efforts directed toward a rapprochement with the South Korean Rightists which was to result in the erection of a coalition government oriented as far to the Left as possible. The USSR would then have made a proposal for mutual withdrawal of occupying forces to which the US could have had no legitimate objection. Following the withdrawal of both forces, a "state of emergency" was to have been produced by Communist *agents provocateurs* in South Korea. The North Korean armed forces, under the guise of quelling these disturbances, would seize effective control of the government, thus completing the task of uniting all Korea under Soviet domination.

Developments were not permitted to follow this smooth pattern, however, because the time required for the rapprochement effort to bear any fruit was too extended, and the US, growing restive at the delay, embarked on a more aggressive line of action which tended to force the Kremlin's hand.

On 11 August 1947, Secretary of State Marshall, in a note to Foreign Minister Molotov, suggested that the Joint Commission be requested to issue a report of progress on the basis of which the two powers would consult as to the steps necessary for the acceleration of Korean independence. The Kremlin promptly seized on the question of the report itself as an opportunity for further stalling. When it became clear that the two delegations would not be able to agree even on a joint report of disagreement, Acting Secretary of State Lovett, on 26 August, dispatched notes to the four signatories to the Moscow Agreement requesting a conference in Washington to meet 8 September. The USSR on 4 September rejected this request, although the Kremlin must have known that the next US move would involve presentation of the case to the UNGA session scheduled to convene on 17 September. This deliberate rejection by the USSR of another opportunity for continued stalling may be interpreted, in the light of later events, as a sign that the Kremlin was so confident in its strength in Korea, and on the countermoves it was contemplating, based on this strength, that it no longer felt any urgent need for delay.

On 26 September, after the US had formally requested the inclusion of Korea on the UNGA agenda, the Soviet Delegation to the Joint Commission proposed mutual withdrawal of all occupying forces from Korea as a preliminary to the establishment of a unified Korean government by the Koreans "themselves." Thus, US reaction to previous Soviet policy had apparently forced a revision in the Soviet plan of operations. The avidity with which the Kremlin's propaganda machinery followed up the withdrawal proposal clearly demonstrated that, although acceptance was not anticipated, the proposal would be employed as a diversionary tactic to obscure and perhaps delay UNGA discussion until the rapprochement phase was completed in Korea and US objections to withdrawal thereby overcome.

The USSR lost no time in pushing its efforts for creation of an all-Korean "coalition" government. On 7 October 1947, a group of relatively unknown Korean politicians approached G-2, US Armed Forces in Korea, after having conferred with the

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Soviet Delegation, and proposed a plan for creation of a unified Korean Government. Although this effort was unsuccessful, it was a clear indication of a Soviet attempt to secure the next objective in the original "Master Plan" under the smoke screen provided by the proposal for mutual withdrawal.

The withdrawal proposal failed to achieve another of its purposes when on 5 November, the Political Committee of the UNGA passed a US-proposed resolution which provided for national elections, under UN observation, for Korean representatives who were to consult with a UN Temporary Commission. These representatives would then constitute themselves a National Assembly which would establish a National Government and, in consultation with the occupying powers, arrange for the withdrawal of armed forces within 90 days "if possible."

Passage of this resolution will necessitate certain further revisions in the flexible Soviet plan of operations to meet changed conditions. However, there is no indication that the resolution will basically alter Soviet policy or even materially jeopardize its fulfillment. The USSR has given ample indication, in both its propaganda and in official statements before the UN, that it will take no part in implementation of the resolution. In effect, this means that no UN Commission will be permitted to enter the Soviet Zone for the purpose of observing the elections called for in the resolution. Such action will put the USSR distinctly on the defensive in relation to the whole Korean problem, both internationally and within Korea itself. Its argument that the North Korean regime is so thoroughly "democratic" that no UN supervision is warranted, will not carry any weight in the face of a sincere US attempt to achieve an orderly solution through the machinery of the UN. The implication will be unavoidable that the Soviets are deliberately preventing observation of a regime which simply will not bear inspection.

It follows that continued Soviet occupation of North Korea under the above circumstances will constitute, in effect, a policy of deliberate defiance of the UN. No mere propaganda gesture that the Kremlin can make at this juncture will remove from its shoulders the onus of unilateral obstruction of the realization of Korean independence. In addition, retention of Soviet forces on Korean soil would have the prime disadvantage, from the Soviet viewpoint, of justifying continued US occupation of the South. Since Soviet theoreticians have now apparently indicated indefinite postponement of the anticipated "general capitalist crisis" in the US, they can no longer look for the appearance of this *deus ex machina* to force liquidation of US commitments in Korea. Thus continued Soviet occupation of the North would carry with it the corollary of continued US occupation of the South, with the consequence that the day of complete Soviet control of the whole peninsula would be indefinitely postponed. This situation would permit the institution in South Korea of precisely the sort of US program which the USSR seems to fear most. For it would enable the US, under the protection of its own security forces, to embark on a long-range program of economic, cultural, and political rehabilitation in South Korea, which would have the effect of offering to the native population of both zones a side-by-side comparison of the respective accomplishments and potentialities of the US and Soviet systems.

~~SECRET~~

Although continued Soviet occupation must always be kept in mind as a policy which the Kremlin may see fit to retain, it is clear that the one move that the USSR can now make which promises recapture of the initiative, is that of ordering a unilateral withdrawal of its occupying forces after declaring the North Korean Peoples' Committee the legal government of North Korea. This declaration will probably include recognition of the North Korean Government's claim to sovereignty over South Korea as well. The Soviet delegation to the UN has already stated that the UN Temporary Commission is an "unrepresentative" body, that the resolution is "undemocratic," and that therefore the USSR will not commit itself in any way to its implementation. Hence, the USSR will not feel bound by Section 4 (c) of the resolution, which stipulates that troop withdrawals may take place only after arrangements have been made between the duly elected national government and the occupying powers. In short, from the Soviet viewpoint, this provision will constitute no legal obstacle to troop withdrawal. This withdrawal would be accompanied by an order to the Soviet puppet regime in North Korea to oppose at all costs the entry of the UN Commission. Legal recognition of the independence of this regime can be amply justified by the Kremlin, since it has been at pains to show that the US has abrogated the Moscow Decision in calling for UN Action in Korea.

Since the UNGA has no forces at its disposal, its only recourse, should it seek to carry out its mandate, will be to request the aid of the US forces in South Korea. Should this occur, the US would be faced with a critical policy decision. Employment of US forces would necessitate, in effect, an "invasion" across the 38th Parallel against the active opposition of the North Korean Peoples' Army. Soviet propaganda would inevitably and incessantly charge the US with the wanton slaughter of innocent "democratic and patriotic" Koreans, while charging the UN with unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of a "sovereign" state. It is probable that the Kremlin considers such outright US intervention in North Korea highly unlikely, even if it should have UN sanction.

The USSR probably estimates that the US will accept the permanent division of Korea as inevitable and will attempt to proceed with a UN-supervised election for the establishment of a permanent independent government in the South. The USSR could then count on anti-occupation sentiment in the South to grow to such proportions as would make the US position as sole occupier of Korea untenable. The success of any US-sponsored politico-economic program in South Korea would be jeopardized by the antipathetic attitude of the native population. For the necessary agitation, the USSR could not only depend on its adherents, who constitute an estimated 30% of the South Korean electorate, but also on the auto-hypnotizing ambitions of the South Korean Rightists, particularly Rhee Syngman. The latter, after his initial shock at the Soviet proposal for mutual troop withdrawal, has already cancelled his plea for retention of US forces and has adopted the line that he is perfectly capable of "handling" the North Koreans once US forces are withdrawn. This persistent delusion on the part of Rhee and other South Koreans is good indication that "coalition" efforts have continued unabated and will be strengthened in the near future. Given the withdrawal of US forces, the North Korean regime can be expected astutely to capitalize on this atti-

~~SECRET~~

tude, effect the "coalition," and proceed with the domination of South Korea according to plan.

Should the prospects for a "coalition" be unfavorable, it would be a relatively simple matter for the North Korean Peoples' Committee to brand the South Korean government "unrepresentative" and "undemocratic" since the South Korean Leftists will have boycotted the elections. Military invasion would thus constitute a "liberation" of the "suffering countrymen" in the South.

In short, the question of tactics is merely incidental to the fact that North Korean domination of the South will be an inevitable consequence of the US troop withdrawal. As has been indicated, there is no evidence of any force in North Korea capable of disrupting, in any way, the smooth functioning control-mechanism of the Peoples' Committee. In addition, following US withdrawal, there will be no force, or coalition of forces, in South Korea capable of effective resistance to eventual domination by the North. The rightist leadership is so single-mindedly bent on dictatorial control that following its accession to power in an independent South Korean government, the moderates would join the leftist camp. Moreover, the rightist leadership has displayed no capacity for extended cooperation even within its own ranks. As real power comes into its hands, intraparty cleavages can be expected to widen to the consequent advantage of the Left. Lastly, without previous US preparation, the South Korean rightist youth groups, police and constabulary, now warring among themselves, cannot be considered as any sort of effective counterforce to the North Korean People's Army and its supporting police and constabulary services.

In the light of these considerations, and in view of recent reports of Soviet preparations for withdrawal, it is reasonable to expect that some time before 31 March 1948, the election date stipulated in the UN resolution, the USSR will order the unilateral withdrawal of its forces from North Korea as a step in the implementation of the general policy outlined above. It is impossible to predict the date of this withdrawal with any degree of certainty, but there is a good chance that the imminent departure for Korea of the UN Temporary Commission may be taken as the signal for the removal of Soviet troops from Korean soil.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1923-6-1947