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FAR EAST SURVEY
30 JULY 1953

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THE KOREAN WAR

The signature of a truce has not measurably altered the tone of Chinese and North Korean broadcast propaganda which to a considerable degree maintains the note of aggressive watchfulness elicited by Syngman Rhee's release of 27,000 disaffected North Korean POWs. The following elements summarize developments in the past two weeks:

1. There has been little tempering of the abuse which, to varying degrees, pervaded Peking and Pyongyang's comment prior to the truce signature, and which seemed somewhat inconsonant with the progress being made at Panmunjom.
2. The Communists have now shifted ground only to the extent that the threat from Rhee and from American connivance with Rhee is related to implementation rather than to the conclusion of the truce agreement.
3. The need for maximum vigilance to prevent a resurgence of American aggression constitutes one of the dual foci of post-armistice discussion; the other is the fact that the successful attainment of a truce demonstrates the superiority of negotiation over armed force as a means of resolving world problems.
4. The Communists' expressed willingness to relegate the question of the released POWs to the post-armistice political discussions was not foreshadowed in the propaganda, which until Nam Il's conciliatory statement of 19 July had demonstrated no wavering of insistence that all "escaped" prisoners must be returned to their stockade.
5. The continuing faulty coordination between Pyongyang and Peking, and to some extent between the Chinese Communist propaganda apparatus and those determining policy, suggests that the Sino-Korean coalition may have been suffering from a minor touch of the Rhee ailment, or that Moscow and Peking have not been completely in accord on the desirability of a truce.

Communist Virulence Waxes as Truce Nears: The progress being made at Panmunjom did not to any measurable extent temper the virulence of Chinese and North Korean propaganda, which, in varying degrees, has maintained a note of aggressive watchfulness since Rhee's release of 27,000 North Korean recusant POWs threatened to disrupt the talks. The crescendo of abuse reached its peak six hours before the actual signing of the truce instrument in the broadcast of a commentary in which Alan Winnington compared the Americans most unfavorably to the Nazis, revived the dormant BW charges, noted American bestial destruction of North Korean cities, and charged U.S. troops with complicity with Rhee in the Katyn-like slaughter of 7,000 "democratic" South Koreans during the U.N.'s frenzied withdrawal from Taejon in the early days of the war. Winnington also voiced dissatisfaction with the 2½-mile buffer zone, which he considered too narrow to ensure stability and stressed the point (not previously made in the propaganda) that the Communists had wanted a 12½-mile demilitarized area.

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Vigilance Essential to Ensure Implementation of Truce: Winington's further reminder that maximum vigilance is necessary to make the cease-fire a prelude to lasting peace rather than merely a hiatus in the war sounds a dominant and repetitive note of present comment which has shown no relaxation of concern with the possibility that Rhee may again undertake unilateral action to forestall a real peace. To this extent there has been no major shift in the propaganda which now relates the threat from Rhee and from American connivance with Rhee to the implementation rather than to the conclusion of a truce.

Truce Demonstrates Superiority of Discussion over War: Preoccupation with vigilance to prevent further aggressive action by Rhee and the United States forms one of the dual foci of comment specifically related to the final signing of a truce; the other is the loudly trumpeted contention that the present peace demonstrates the superiority of negotiation over war as a means of resolving world problems. Extending this argument, Peking interprets the truce as a victory for Communist perseverance, righteousness, and the concept that people who know what they are fighting for can never be defeated.

Concessions Not Foreshadowed by Propaganda: Nam Il's conciliatory letter of 19 July, which expressed the Communists' willingness to relegate the question of the return of the released POWs to the political discussions, if necessary, was not foreshadowed in the propaganda, which until the moment the note was released had vehemently demanded the return of all POWs to their stockades. In fact, Peking which had demonstrated considerable restraint on the question while Pyongyang was fulminating against Rhee, had recently joined the abusive chorus in what seemed a hardening of tone not conducive to ultimate agreement. It is possible that the Communists, intent on a truce at virtually any cost, wished to place their displeasure on the record for subsequent exploitation, most probably at the political talks. It does not seem likely that they considered their words would have any efficacy in effecting a return of the prisoners; on the contrary they may have felt that the release removed a source of eventual embarrassment should the POWs persist in their resistance to repatriation.

Propaganda Divergence Suggests Possible North Korean-Chinese Differences: The faulty coordination between Pyongyang and Peking, almost up to the very act of signing the truce, and in some degree between the Chinese Communist propaganda apparatus and those determining policy in the war, suggests among other considerations that the Sino-Korean coalition may have suffered from an at least minor touch of the Rhee ailment. Aside from the possibility that the North Korean Government from the viewpoint of its own interests may not be fully in accord with Peking on the desirability of a truce on present terms, Pyongyang's attitude may possibly reflect some divergence between Peking and Moscow, which has adhered more closely to Pyongyang's consistently strong line than to Peking's alternately hot and cold demeanor.

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